

COUNTRY FACT SHEET

REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

(June 2014)



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I. BACKGROUND

The United Nations Human Development index ranks Sierra Leone among the poorest in the world in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment and income. The 1991 to 2002 civil war between the government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people (well over one-third of the population), very few of whom are still living in neighboring countries. With the support of the UN peacekeeping force and contributions from the World Bank and international community, demobilization and disarmament of the RUF and Civil Defense Forces (CDF) combatants was completed. National democratic elections were successfully held in May 2002, August 2007 and November 2012 which has resulted in the reestablishment of sustainable democratic authority. There are no more UN Mission (UNAMSIL) peacekeepers in Sierra Leone and the security of the state is now primarily in the hands of the Sierra Leone Military (external) and Police (internal), coordinated by a civilian outfit; Office of National Security (ONS).

The repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees, mainly from Guinea and Liberia, and other West African States was officially ended in 2004. Since September 2000 to now 179,172 refugees returned to Sierra Leone. However, in 2004 alone 25,913 nationals were repatriated and further 92,480 Sierra Leoneans had spontaneous return. In addition, 130 Sierra Leoneans (85 from Ivory Coast and 45 from Libya) were recently repatriated from Ivory Coast and Libya. All these about 120,000 newcomer returnees need critical support for reintegration. However, most of these returnees have been successfully reintegrated into the Sierra Leone society due to the improvement in social conditions and basic infrastructure nationwide.

Even though there is a need for additional and sustainable support to move forward the peace-building process and the recovery, it is good to note that the present government has made some successes in creating an environment conducive to the absorption and retention of returning migrants and environment conducive for private sector participation in national economic development. This is feasible through the provision of employment opportunities, vocational training, on-the-job and business skills training, as well as micro-enterprise development assistance (grants) which are widely accepted as engines of micro-enterprise development, which in turn, is essential to economic development, particularly in fledgling economies.

II. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Executive Branch

On November 17, 2012, Sierra Leone held its third successive, post-war presidential, parliamentary and local council elections which are highly acclaimed by both international and local elections observation bodies as free, fair and credible. In the parliamentary elections, the National Election Commission reported that the ruling All People's Congress (APC) won a parliamentary majority taking 69 of 112 seats, while the main opposition Sierra Leone's People's Party (SLPP) took 43 seats. All other parties who contested the parliamentary election failed to win a single parliamentary seat. As a result of judicial verdict on petition cases in two constituencies (5 and 15), APC now has 70 seats and SLPP has 42 seats in parliament.

According to the NEC official results of the November 17 presidential election, the incumbent, APC presidential candidate Ernest Koroma won 58.3 percent of the total of valid votes cast, while former military leader and SLPP presidential candidate, Julius Mada

Bio scored 38.9 percent of valid vote casted. On November 17 Sierra Leone's National Election Commission declared Ernest Bai Koroma the winner with 58.3 percent of the vote. As dictated by the national constitution, next National Elections (presidential, parliamentary and local councils) are due to be held in November 2017 or early 2018.

Legislative Branch

Unicameral Parliament (124 seats - 112 elected by popular vote, 12 filled by paramount chiefs elected in separate elections; members serve five-year terms) elections: last held 17 November 2012. So far by-elections have been successfully conducted in various constituencies.

Legal system

Based on British Common Law and customary laws indigenous to local tribes;

Judicial Branch

Sierra Leone's judicial system consists of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, High Court of Justice, and magistrate courts. The president appoints and parliament approves justices for the three courts. Local chieftaincy courts administer customary law with lay judges; appeals from these lower courts are heard by the superior courts. Judicial presence outside the capital district remains limited, which contributes to excessive delays in the justice system. Although magistrate courts function in all 12 judicial districts, some magistrates appointed to those courts did not reside there permanently and complained that they had insufficient resources to do their job. However; the Justice Sector Development Programme is complementing Government efforts in this direction. They have rehabilitated the Juvenile delinquency center at approved school in Kissy. They have also built new courts houses in Freetown and the provinces.

1. Economic Overview

Rich in minerals, Sierra Leone has relied on the mining sector in general, and diamonds in particular, for its economic base. Since the cessation of hostilities in January 2002, massive infusions of outside assistance have helped Sierra Leone begin to recover. Full recovery to pre-war economic levels will require hundreds of millions of additional dollars and many more years of serious effort by the Government of Sierra Leone and donor governments. Much of Sierra Leone's recovery will depend on the success of Government of Sierra Leone efforts to limit official corruption, which many feel was the chief culprit for the country's descent into civil war. A key indicator of success will be the effectiveness of government management of the mining sector particularly its diamond industry..

About two-thirds of the population engages in subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 52.5% of national income. The government is trying to increase food and cash crop production and upgrade small farmer skills. Also, the government works with several foreign donors to operate integrated rural development and agricultural projects. Mineral exports remain Sierra Leone's principal foreign exchange earner. Sierra Leone is a major producer of gem-quality diamonds. Though rich in this resource, the country has historically struggled to manage its exploitation and export. Efforts to improve the management of the export trade have met with some success.

In October 2000, a UN-approved export certification system for exporting diamonds from Sierra Leone was put into place that led to a dramatic increase in legal exports. In 2001, the Government of Sierra Leone created a mining community development fund, which returns a portion of diamond export taxes to diamond mining communities. The fund was created to raise local communities' stake in the legal diamond trade.

Sierra Leone has one of the world's largest deposits of rutile, a titanium ore used as paint pigment and welding rod coatings. Rutile and bauxite mining operations were suspended when rebels invaded the mining sites in 1995, but exports resumed in 2005. The iron ore mining and export operations which has been dormant for decades, is now reactivated by huge investments from two multi-national companies; London Mining Company Limited and Africa Minerals Limited for operations in the northern region of the country.

Since independence, the Government of Sierra Leone has encouraged foreign investment, although the business climate has been hampered by a shortage of foreign exchange, corruption, and uncertainty resulting from civil conflicts. The government passed the Investment Promotion Act in August 2004 to attract foreign investors and has been working with international financial institutions to lower its administrative barriers to trade.

Sierra Leone is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). With Liberia, Guinea Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, it formed the Mano River Union (MRU) customs union, primarily designed to implement development projects and promote regional economic integration. However, the MRU which has been inactive because of domestic problems and internal and cross-border conflicts in all four countries is now fully operational to carry out its mandate. The future of the MRU depends on the ability of its members to deal with the fallout from these internal and regional problems. Sierra Leone's economic policy has now shifted from post-conflict stabilization to poverty-reduction efforts, including good governance and fighting corruption; job creation; and food security.

Sierra Leone continues to rely on significant amounts of foreign assistance, principally from multilateral donors. The bilateral donors include the United States, Italy, and Germany, but the largest are the United Kingdom, United Nation and the European Union.

Agricultural products - rice, coffee, cocoa, palm kernels, palm oil, peanuts, poultry, cattle, sheep, pigs, fish

Industries - mining (diamonds, gold, rutile, iron ore), small-scale manufacturing (beverages, textiles, cigarettes, cement, plastic products, footwear).

GDP-purchasing power parity: \$5.013 billion (2010 est.)

GDP Real growth: 5.1% (2011 est.)

Population below poverty line: 76.08% (2011 est.)

2. Public Transport

Public transportation had experienced great difficulties in the past, stemming from wrong types of policies to the rebel war that witnessed the destruction and burning of both government and privately owned vehicles. It is also vital to note that this service is provided both by government and private sector.

Buses, Taxis and Motor-bikes are the major forms of transportation in the city as well as the provinces. There are government buses assigned to all districts head quarter towns and other big towns charged under reduced cost compared to that of privately operated buses.

There is a daily bus to Guinea, our neighboring country. The fare varies from one location to the other. Within the country, the farthest point is Koindu Town, Kailahun district which

costs Le. 70,000.00 per person (equivalent to USD 16.00). The taxi fare is presently Le 1000.00 (USD 0.23) from one point to another.

Underlining the significance of providing affordable and reliable transportation, the government has been providing buses to the state owned transport company- Road Transport Corporation- RTC. Since January 2010 to December 2011 government has provided more than sixty new buses to RTC. There are however poor urban road conditions and maintenance. Most main roads in the capital Freetown are paved but have potholes. Unpaved side streets are generally navigable. There is a major road resurfacing and repair program on going in all the districts head quarter towns and other major towns nation wide.

The Masiaka –Matotoka, Masiaka- Kenema Gberi Junction-- Pamlap (in Guinea) and Lungi- port loko highways have been completed. The Kenema – Kailahun, Makeni- Kamakwie , Makeni- Kabala , Matotoka- Koidu highways are under construction. These highways are a major link to important provincial towns.

Most roads outside Freetown are unpaved and most are passable with a 4-wheel drive vehicle. However, certain stretches of mapped roads are often impassable during the rain season. The Hovercraft, sea taxis and helicopters also transport passengers across the sea to Lungi International airport. The cost varies company by company.

Highways total: 11,300 km, paved: 1,195 km, unpaved: 10,105 km (2013)

Waterways total: 800 kilometers

Ports and Harbors: Bonthe, Freetown, Pepel

Merchant Marine: 2 ships (1,000 GRT or over) 7,435 GRT/8,750 DWT

Airports and aerodromes: about 10

3. Communication Network

The Ministry of Information and Communications regulates this sector. The Sierra Leone Telecommunication Company (SIERRATEL) is the sole supplier of telecommunications service. SIERRATEL is also the top-level domain administration for Sierra Leone. This Country has a very limited telephone network through some modern equipment, including an ISDN capable central switch, which is now available. Quite recently the communication sector received a boost with the arrival of the fiber optic communication facility. Connection waves to Airtel, Comium, Africell (privately owned mobile phone companies) and SIERRATEL, the government owned mobile phone unit have extended their services to almost all parts of the country through the use of GSM mobile phones.

The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Cooperation (SLBC) serves as the major agent for information dissemination throughout the country. There are also private stations in Freetown, the capital city and in the district head quarter towns and other major towns nation wide. The SLBC also manages the national television service, which is the SLBC TV. There are other privately owned and operated TV stations.

Sierra Leone also has a number of privately owned local daily newspapers with correspondents' nation-wide. They are sold at Le 1,500 equivalents to USD 0.34 per copy. At present there is no government owned and operated newspaper in the country. The Government has set-up an Independent Media Commission to monitor information and supervise the activities of radio and print media houses. The Institute of Library, Archives, and Information Studies at the University of Sierra Leone has continued to provide

technical training and support to those wishing to specialize in the area of mass communication.

There is still a marginal telephone and telegraph service. The country code is 232.

The internet is a relatively new technology for Sierra Leone. According to SIERRATEL management, the Internet facilities will be developed in two systems. The first system will be a local area network in which subscribers can log onto the Internet, to communicate and disseminate information within institutions such as the university, hospitals, and the private sector. The second system will provide a gateway outside of Sierra Leone to the Internet's international community whereby subscribers can communicate with others worldwide. Private Institutions providing Internet service in Sierra Leone include the IPTel, AFCoM, Lime Line, and MULTInet. Few other cellphone companies are also providing Internet services through wireless modem connections e.g. Africell, Airtel and Sierratel.

4. Geography and Demographic Facts

Geography - Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Guinea and Liberia, Geographic coordinate - 8 30 N, 11 30 W,

Area – total - 71,740 sq km, land: 71,620 sq km, water: 120 sq km, Land boundaries - total: 958 km, border countries: Guinea 652 km, Liberia 306 km, coastline – 402 kms.

Natural hazards - sand-laden harmattan winds blow from the Sahara (December to February); sandstorms, dust storms

Environmental issues - rapid population growth pressuring the environment; over harvesting of timber, expansion of cattle grazing, and slash-and-burn agriculture have resulted in deforestation and soil exhaustion; civil war depleting natural resources; over fishing and sand mining.

Population – 5.890 million (2011 EST.)

Age structure

0-14 years: 44.7% (male 1,314,305; female 1,317,016)

15-64 years: 51.3% (male 1,467,999; female 1,551,410)

65 years and over: 4.1% (male 105,616; female 133,732) (2004 census projections .)

Infant mortality rate

Total: 89 deaths / 1,000 live births, male: 118 deaths / 1,000 live births, female: 105 deaths / 1,000 live births (2008 est.)

Life expectancy at birth

Total population: 48.4 years, male: 48 years, female: 49 years (2010est.)

Ethnic groups

20 native African tribes 90% (Temne 30%, Mende 30%, other 30%), Creole (Krio) 10% (descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area in the late-18th century), refugees from Liberia's recent civil war, small numbers of Europeans, Lebanese, Pakistanis, and Indians.

Religions

Muslim 60%, Christian 30%, indigenous beliefs 10%

Languages

English (official, regular use limited to literate minority), Mende (principal vernacular in the south and east), Temne (principal vernacular in the north), Krio (English-based Creole, spoken by the descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area, a lingua franca and a first language for 10% of the population but understood by 95%)

Literacy

Definition: age 15 and over can read and write English, Mende, Temne, or Arabic
total population: 38 %, male: 45.4%, female: 18.2% (2000/2007 est.)

III. PENSIONS

1. Legislation

The National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT) is a Statutory Public Trust Charged with the administration of Sierra Leone's National Pension Scheme. The primary responsibility is the partly replacement of income lost as a result of the contingencies of old age, invalidity and death. The trust came into being by the National Social Security and Insurance Trust Act No. 5 of 2001.

2. Preconditions for Obtaining a Pension

To qualify for full pension, the applicant must be at least 60yrs, which is the national retirement age, and he/she must have made a minimum contribution of 180 months in aggregate (15 yrs). Employees are required to contribute 5 percent of their basic pay and 10 percent by their employers to NASSIT on a monthly basis. Through this a worker can earn pension rights between 30% and 80% depending on the number of months that he/she contributed or is credited at the time of retirement. Every additional year attracts an additional 2 percent (0.166) per month.

3. Cost of Pension Insurance

Every employer is obliged to pay to NASSIT for each month in respect of each worker in his or her establishment an employer's contribution of an amount equal to 10% of the worker's earning for the month within fifteen days after the end of each month. Law mandates it for employers to deduct 5% of the workers earning each month and a self-employed person pays 15% of his or her income within 15 days after the end of the month.

4. Required Personal Documentation

To register, one must complete the employer registration form and submit to NASSIT. For employers who are trading in their own names or who have domestic workers only, registration must be done under the name shown in their passport. The employer will then be given an employer reference number (employer registration number and a payment advice form-form SS 4 A).

IV. EMPLOYMENT

1. Labor Market Situation

The bleak job picture in terms of outright unemployment and underemployment is practically one of our most urgent destabilizing problems in Sierra Leone. However, during the past years, UN agencies, other international agencies and local NGOs have established micro enterprises through skills training for a large number of Sierra Leoneans. The agricultural sector employed 65% of the labor force. Productive potential is limited by land tenure system and is mostly in the hands of smallholders engaged in subsistence farming. The mining sector employed 10% of the work force.

2. Placement Service

Placement service is the direct responsibility of the ministry of Labor, Social Security and Employment. All government advertisement and vacancies goes through this ministry. But for the wider private sector, this service is the responsibility of the individual himself with the support of his or her qualification.

3. Unemployment Assistance: Preconditions, Documents, and Insurance

Despite the countries extensive mineral, agricultural and fishery resources, Sierra Leone is an impoverished country. The ten years civil conflict seriously affected the economic activity despite the government attempting to maintain some sort of fiscal regime, the country is almost entirely reliant on loans and aid from donors, from the World Bank and IMF. Therefore, the government is presently unable to render unemployment assistance. However, highly skilled workers are easily absorbed. This assistance is complimented by some agencies. For instances, the Norwegian Refugee Council provided housing facilities for war amputees and their dependants nation wide.

4. Further Education and Vocational Trainings

One of the most important contributions to peace and recovery in Sierra Leone is the diversification of educational facilities and the strengthening of basic education for all. For instance, in 2002, NCDDR placed 6452 former fighters in schools. It has provided sponsorship of school fees, test books, uniforms and subsistence allowances for a year. Some have undertaken professional qualifications in Computer Studies, Accountancy and Management. Specialist courses can now be offered in Sierra Leone institutions to meet the growing needs of specialized workers, e.g. Law, Information Technology, and Medicine etc. The government has also established technical and vocational institutions that will train individuals in all areas of urgent need, especially the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors. The end of the war saw a greater need in the vocational and technical training in all areas, especially the agricultural sector.

Education Statistics - 1.7% of the GDP is used for primary education, 88% of educational infrastructure which was basically destroyed during the war, has been reinstated. 30% of adolescents do not attend school, and 20% of girls at the primary school level do not attend school. Only 1 out of 4 kids have access to textbooks. Nearly half of the teachers are under qualified. There are 156 males for every 100 females attending school. The nationwide literacy rate is 31.4%

V. REINTEGRATION

1. Reintegration Assistance

The reintegration of excombatants, IDP's and returnees is one of the major challenges faced by Sierra Leone after the war. During the war, fighters committed atrocities against those in their own communities. These act of violence created suspicion and fear about the prospect of them returning to their communities in Sierra Leone.

The government established the NCDDR that ensure economic and social reintegration for excombatants, child soldiers and special programmes for the disabled and for women. Their aim was to help excombatants become productive members of their communities, to provide them with marketable skills and access to micro enterprise schemes and to support social acceptance through information dissemination measures, social reconciliation and sensitization processes. Similarly, UN and other international agencies contributed greatly in this drive.

2. Financial and Administrative Support

Reintegration in Sierra Leone was largely dependent on donors making a major contribution since the Sierra Leone government was not able to absorb all the cost though they are making financial contributions.

Transitional allowances referred to as reinsertion packages were given to support excombatants during their first three months in chosen resettlement locations financed by the multi-Donor Trust Fund totaled almost USD 8.7million US. These include transport allowances and basic household needs. They were registered with the NCDDR district and regional reintegration offices for reintegration opportunities.

3. Procedures to start Self-Employment

To start self-employment in Sierra Leone one needs to register with the ministry of Trade and industries and the office the Registrar General and obtain a certificate of trade.

VI. BANKING SYSTEM

1. Bank of Sierra Leone

Prior to the establishment of the Bank of Sierra Leone, the West Africa Currency Board was responsible for the issue of currency in Sierra Leone. It was obliged to buy and sell the currency it had issued, the West African Pound, at fixed rates against the Sterling in London. Following the attainment of independence in 1961 however, the need was felt for a separate monetary institution controlled by Sierra Leone. On 27th March 1963, the Bank of Sierra Leone Act became law and the Bank began operation on 4th August 1964, the day Sierra Leone changed to the decimal system of currency.

Commercial Banks:

Sierra Leone Commercial Bank

Rokel Commercial Bank

Guarantee Trust Bank

Union Trust Bank

Standard Chartered Bank
ECO Bank
Access Bank
Bank PHP
Bank of Sierra Leone
First International Bank
United Bank of Africa
Sky Bank
International Commercial Bank
Zenith Bank SL Limited

There are monetary transactions, which take place in almost all of the banks listed above from abroad. Credit facilities are also available to credit worthy business people or customers of the banks. Monetary transfer also takes place at private foreign Exchange Institutions throughout the country. There had also being credit card (VISA and Master) introduced at the ECO Bank and the Rokel Commercial Banks. There is considerable increase in banking operations in Sierra Leone.

VII. MEDICAL CARE

1. Health Care System

The Ministry of Health and Sanitation is directly responsible for health care delivery in Sierra Leone. The Director of Medical Services is the administrative head of the Ministry. The District Health Management Team controls the provincial health care system. It is however worth noting that the health sector is in an appalling state and immediately requires new resources, policies and structures. It is over-centralized, under-funded and under-staff. Services are severely limited in much part of the country and access depends entirely on how much you can afford to pay.

The public health sector employs only 190 doctors, of whom only 22 are Clinical Specialists; to serve an estimated population of 5.3m. That is about one doctor for every 30,000 people. While Sierra Leone does not train enough doctors, its real problem is retaining them. Of the doctors trained in the past, only 10 % are presently in the country. They are all migrating to other countries in search of greener pasture.

For most Sierra Leoneans, health care amounts to buying basic drugs from pharmacies, some of which are registered and run by qualified personnel, others of which are simply stalls on the street manned by unlicensed briefcase pharmacists.

2. Medical Infrastructure – Number and Equipment of Hospitals

However, with the return of peace and stability, government has redoubled her efforts in restructuring the health care delivery. Most of the hospitals have either been renovated or constructed back with outpatient clinics and four wheels drive vehicles that can facilitate easy transportation of both patients and hospital personnel's.

The provision of health services varies significantly across the country. The private sector barely exists outside the provincial capitals with the vast majority of its resources concentrated in the western area. The same is true of pharmacies. Of the eight public hospitals providing Tertiary Health Care, 5 are in the western area, the others are in the provincial capitals Bo, Kenema and Makeni. Of the 15 public hospitals providing secondary health care, 6 are in the western area and one in every district head quarter town

The table below shows the number of functioning public health units as of December 2013.

District (Provinces)	PHUs
Bo (S)	145
Kenema (E)	135
Moyamba (S)	161
Pork Loko (N)	130
Bombali (N)	116
Kailahun (E)	84
Koinadugu (N)	83
Kono (E)	84
Tonkolili (N)	94
Bonth (S)	53
Kambia (N)	67
Pujehun (S)	71
Western Area	166

The private hospitals owned by religious bodies are better equipped than the government hospitals. Through the Italian Government, a hospital has been constructed to take care of patients in need of transplantation of body parts in Lunsar, northern Sierra Leone. The operation theaters have been upgraded with recent equipments. Connaught hospital in Freetown has been rehabilitated and modern equipments installed there.

3. Availability and costs of medical treatment

There is a cost recovery program established by the government so that people can obtain drugs at minimal costs. But from health posts as well as hospitals, most people working in the public health sector are unsure who should pay how much and for what. The problem has been exacerbated by NGOs supplying free drugs and services through the public health system to certain groups. The government's failure to pay salaries promptly has encouraged the idea of cost recovery subsidizing salaries, and not building up funds to buy supplies.

Private owned pharmacies sell drugs to the people at high prices. There are also briefcase pharmacists who sell with no professional qualification. Their cost is also exorbitant.

The Government of Sierra Leone import duties, regulations and taxes significantly increase the cost of medical supplies and equipments in the private sector. These costs inevitably inflate the price the public has to pay for drugs. Drugs and syringes are free of import duties, but items such as condoms and X-ray film are given tariffs. Conclusively, the cost varies from town to town and is invariably high.

However, the government has tried to boost the health care system by declaring on the 27TH April 2010 free medical treatment and facilities for pregnant women, lactating mothers and under five children.

The "Magbesene" Catholic hospital in Lunsar (northern Sierra Leone) treats those with eye and leprosy sickness. The newly constructed "Lunsar" hospital, supported by the Italian government, will take care of transplanting organs like limbs, legs etc. There are a lot of international agencies providing trauma-healing services, including the counseling center at the Ministry of Social Welfare.

The maternity hospitals are gradually improving with maximum priority placed on children. Those with mental problems are kept at the Kissy Mental Home where they receive

treatment by the psychiatrist in charge. Despite the fact that Sierra Leone is first on the list for high mortality death, women and children receive treatments in most if not all the hospitals and clinics in the country. The “Lakka” hospital is providing treatment for tuberculosis.

4. Health Insurance – National Insurance Company

Its main purposes are to assure a means of subsistence for residents of Sierra Leone who, for reasons beyond their control, are temporarily or permanently unable to support themselves, and to provide allowances and benefits for eligible, insured persons who have accumulated rights.

Insurance premiums are paid to the National Insurance Company, in the same manner in which National Insurance payments are made. People who work for an employer have their premiums deducted directly from their salary at the same time as other taxes. The unemployed and self-employed make special arrangements with the Insurance Company. Those who receive National insurance old-age pensions usually pay a standard, minimal health insurance fee, which is deducted from the pension (depending on the amount). A registration form is bought at the cost of USD 1.00, a certificate of employment is needed, moreover the passport or identity card.

VIII. VULNERABLE PERSONS

1. Assistance to Women and Mothers

Considering the fact that the country is just returning from war, the gender ministry is putting modalities and programs that can assist this kind of vulnerable groups. This effort is complimented by the NGOs and other UN agencies. FAWE (Forum for Africa Women Educationist) for example is providing educational assistance to this category of persons.

2. Old Persons

The National Social Security trust is only providing pensions for old people above 60 years, who have been working and paying the trust dues, or members who are privately employed. International agencies and other charitable organizations have been assisting old people particularly with food and some drugs e.g. Sisters of Charity (the Catholic Organization that caters for the aged and the sick).

3. Persons with Mental disorder

As mention earlier, the Kissy Mental Home situated in the eastern part of Freetown host those with mental disability. Food and medicines are provided with a psychiatrist doctor (Dr. Nahim) particularly assigned to the home. However, better facilities are lacking though the government is fighting very hard to upgrade the status.

4. Disabled and Other Minorities

The Norwegian refugee council assists other minorities like amputees and the war wounded. IOM provided assistance to vulnerable IDP's and their families with shelter materials and transportation to their homes of origin after the war. UNICEF is also providing educational materials for children and access to a better health care. Family Home Movement and Don Bosco Homes are also taking care of children.

IX. HOUSING

1. Housing space and rent costs

Housing space is very difficult to get in Freetown but very easy in the provinces. The cost depends on the size and geographical location. The minimum amount paid for a plot of land in Freetown is Le 10,000,000.00, which is USD 2,317.00. In the provinces the highest can be Le 6,000,000.00 which is USD 1,390.00 US dollars.

Renting a four bedroom self contain dwelling house in the Eastern Freetown Municipality ranges from Le 6,000,000.00 to Le.8, 000,000.00 which is USD 1,390 –USD 1,853.00 yearly based on the location. The Western and Central areas are mostly expensive in terms of rent. It varies from USD 3,000.00 – USD 10,000.00 yearly and usually negotiated in US dollars.

The cost outside Freetown the capital city is lesser. For example in Bo, to rent a house of four bedrooms self contained, costs between Le 4, 000,000.00 - Le 6,000,000.00, which is approximately USD 926.00 – USD 1,390.000 per year. The presence of International and Non-government organizations including the UN, over the past years has resulted to the exorbitant charges on dwelling houses.

The Sierra Leone Housing Cooperation (SALHOC) Lease-Finance Apartment Project aim at providing affordable accommodation for Sierra Leoneans at home for a five years ownership leases of 2 and 3 -bed room apartments.

The only Government owned Low Cost Housing Estate situated at Kissy in the eastern part of Freetown is being occupied by majority of top Government officials. The actual purpose of the estate for low wage earners has been over-stepped.

2. Reconstruction Assistance

The International and Non-Governmental Organizations had complimented government effort in this direction. Between 2001-2004, construction and building materials like C I sheets, nails and cement were distributed in needy communities to Internally Displaced Persons, Returnees and other Community members. However, with the scale down of donor funding and support, these assistance are now fading out.

X. EDUCATION

1. Educational System and Infrastructure

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology directly control the educational system in Sierra Leone. The private institutions worked closely with government and other stakeholders. Until very recently, the educational system was in shambles. This system calls for 6 years in the Primary School, 3 years in the Junior Secondary School, 3 years in the Senior Secondary School and finally 4 years in Tertiary Institution, either the University or Polytechnics.

At the end of 6 years in the Primary School, a National Examination is set (NPSE), the successful candidates then proceed to Junior Secondary School. After another 3 years, which is the end of basic education, the Basic Education Certificate of Education is

conducted. Those who succeed, proceed to Senior Secondary School. The unsuccessful candidates are advised to go to technical Institutions to learn a trade.

To the successful candidates (after three years of Senior Secondary School education) the WAEC - "West Africa Examination Certificate" - is conducted. Those that pass go to Universities and Colleges.

The University of Sierra Leone comprises the following higher learning institutions as constituent colleges. Fourah Bay College (FBC) provides education in pure and applied sciences with special emphasis on professional career development in Engineering, Technology, Law, Arts and Behavioral sciences.

Njala University College plays her traditional role in promoting Science, Agriculture, Environmental sciences and Education.

The Institute of Public Administration and Management upgraded to degree level provide training for the Civil Service including professional courses in accountancy and public administration.

Milton Margai College of Education, Science and Technology train's teachers up to bachelors level and have constituent Poly-technical Institutes/Institutes that combine together to form a basis for Technology and Science. For example Technical Institute at Congo Cross and Hotel and Tourism training institute at Brookfield's. The college itself is based at Goodrich. There are also other teacher training colleges in Freetown, Makeni, Portloko, Bo and Bunumbu in the Kailahun district.

College of Medicine and Allied health sciences promote medical profession.

The Institution of Library, Archives and Information studies also train communication specialties.

Technical and Vocational institutions train the development of self- reliance and self-actualization of individual for society development. Below are few accredited and recognized by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

College of Business Studies – Commercial Oriented College

Saint Josephs Vocational Institute – Commercial and Arts

Institute of Advanced Management and Technology – Computer Studies

Murialdo Vocational Training Institute – Science and Technology

Fathom Vocational Training Institute – General Vocational trades

Adkan Institute of Commercial Studies – Commerce

African Information Technology Holdings – Computer Studies

National Institute for Vocational Studies – Vocational Trades

Washington Computer Studies – Computer studies

Safer Future Youth Training Center – Vocational Trades

There are also available technical Vocational institutions in all major towns and districts in Sierra Leone.

Nursery and Kindergarten education are mostly provided on a private basis.

However, during the war, most educational infrastructure was destroyed. For instance, all the tertiary institutions in the provinces were either damaged or burnt down and the students had to move to Freetown, the capital city. Through the untiring effort of government, the donors and international agencies, most of the damaged school structures had either been renovated or reconstructed. The "Sababu" education project is building schools all over the country inline with the Millennium Development Goals. To date over six hundred schools have been constructed.

2. Conditions for the Continuation of Education

At the elementary level, the child should be above three years and should not have a contagious disease. In the primary schools, the child should be above five years. In the secondary schools, the child must have sat to the NPSE¹ or equivalent, internationally accepted certificate. For the universities, the student must sit to the WAEC² examination and should have obtained five subjects with credits or a certificate from an internationally recognized examination body. The individual institutions in line with the government education policies verify the foreign diplomas.

3. Costs, Loans and Stipends

The primary education is free from tuition fees, although the parents have to buy other necessary learning materials like uniforms, books, pens, pencils etc. This can amount to Le 150,000.00, which is USD 35.00 a year. The costs vary from school to school and depend on the extent of materials needed.

In the case of Private schools, the costs are relatively high and tuition fees are charged as well. Some schools charge amounts up to Le 1,000,000.00 (about USD 250.00) for a term. No loans are provided for education in Sierra Leone. The government grant aid for higher institutions is provided to students who merit it by passing a college first year examination and going through the interview panel set by the college. It covers the entire fees and is renewed upon promotion.

In most of the schools and colleges, some private institutions provide scholarships for students. There is the scholarship given by the Catholic mission, the Lebanese Community in Sierra Leone and other charitable organizations.

XI. UN, IO's AND NGO's IN SIERRA LEONE

1. United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
2. United Nations Fund for Population Activities. (UNFPA)
3. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)
4. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
5. World Food Program (WFP)
6. World Health Organization (WHO)
7. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
8. United Nation's Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNOISIL)
9. United Nation's Office for Projects (UNOPS)
10. International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC)
11. International Rescue Committee (IRC)
12. World Vision International (WVI)
13. International Medical Corps (IMC)
14. Handicap International
15. Medicines sans Frontiers (MSF)
16. Mercy Ship International
17. Coopi International
18. World Bank
19. CARE International

¹ National Primary School Examination.

² West Africa Certificate Examination

20. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
21. International Labor Organization (ILO)
Link to other NGO' and CBO's operation in Sierra Leone
http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia2004/1_coord/1_5slang_2.htm