



Sierra Leone

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Country Snapshot

Population:	5.6 million
Life expectancy at birth:	48 years
Adult literacy rate:	38%
Access to improved water source:	53%
GDP per capita (PPP)*:	US\$679
Infant mortality rate:	123 per 1,000 live births
Maternal mortality rate:	2,100 per 100,000 live births
HIV prevalence:	1.7%

Sources: UNICEF State of the World's Children Report 2010, *UNDP Human Development Report 2009

Program Overview CARE began work in Sierra Leone in 1961, initially focusing on school food programs to improve children's nutrition. More recently, CARE Sierra Leone's priorities have become economic development & food security and public health. By understanding and addressing the underlying causes of poverty CARE is focusing its efforts on long term goals to help the people of Sierra Leone improve their livelihood.

Food Security

In spite of the abundance of natural resources in Sierra Leone, poor governance has locked the majority of citizens into a cycle of poverty. The rural poor—particularly marginalized women and youth—depend on these resources for their livelihoods but face insecure access to land, water, and forest. Rural and peri-urban women who have no access to, or control over, productive assets are excluded from decision-making and have limited community and external support. CARE's impact goal is for these women to have equitable and sustainable access to these assets by 2025, which will lead to their improved nutritional status. The food security program aims to strengthen households' livelihood security, with a particular emphasis on improving economic opportunities. Activities evolve in response to the changing needs of communities, moving from resettlement to rehabilitation to development.

Under the food security program, CARE's Sustainable Agriculture Development Project aims to improve the food security of 12,600 people in northeast Sierra Leone. The project works through 60 Farmers' Associations, of which 45 percent are women, to increase the income and farm productivity of 1,800 households. The project improves organizational capacity of the Farmers' Associations to ensure their autonomy and sustainability, addresses sustainable access to inputs, provides technical skills, and supports associations' involvement in the development of product value chains. CARE sub-grants to local partners and works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security to address sustainability.

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CARE's Conservation Agriculture Project introduces innovative, productive, and sustainable agricultural practices. Land users and marginalized groups—totalling 11,000 people—will benefit. It will build on lessons learned to: 1) promote conservation agriculture through establishment of demonstration plots, improvement of animal husbandry techniques and beekeeping practices, and establishment of fish ponds; 2) encourage agricultural diversification; 3) economically empower women and youth with business training, technical skills, access to inputs, and village savings and loan associations for the women and youth groups; 4) improve land access for women and other marginalized groups through the establishment of land-use agreements; and 5) prevent and mitigate land conflicts.

Agriculture is the dominant livelihood activity in Sierra Leone, but lack of access to finance holds farmers back. Extending Microfinance Opportunities to Poor People is a project implemented through a local partner which aims to improve access to adequate and sustainable financial services for over 6,500 poor but economically active farmers, youth, and women. The project establishes village savings and loan associations and links them with microfinance institutions and/or commercial banks.

The Rice Value Chain Development grant sustainably improves food security by giving farmers access to quality seed, technical training, and backup supports. Farmers will also be linked with banks and large buyers and earn better prices through a new local market place/business centre. The project encourages the private sector to set up grain storage to reduce distress selling. The project also builds operational and business skills of rice millers to produce quality rice and standardize and improve packaging.

Health

Despite ongoing efforts aimed at improving the population's health status, current statistics in Sierra Leone still reveal some of the worst figures in the world. CARE identified health as one of its priority programs and addresses health problems through activities in maternal and child healthcare, water and sanitation, and HIV/AIDS prevention. CARE's goal is to improve the health status of women and girls living on less than one dollar per day with little education. This will be done through linkages and processes that empower women and girls to influence and access improved health care.

Our child survival and development initiatives work to raise awareness of appropriate healthcare-seeking behaviours and improve the nutrition of malnourished children under two. CARE works actively in national- and local-level health policy and advocacy, especially for reproductive and maternal health. In addition, CARE trains community health volunteers to manage the deadly childhood diseases: malaria, diarrhea, and pneumonia.

Since 2003 CARE has worked to reduce transmission of HIV by making condoms available and affordable by encouraging the adoption of healthy, low-risk sexual practices. The project targets approximately 1.5 million sexually active beneficiaries.

Major Donors

Howard G. Buffett Foundation, UNICEF, the European Commission (EC), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UK Department for International Development (DfID), Microfinance Investment and Technical Assistance Facility (MITAF), KfW Bankengruppe (Frankfurt am Main), the Global Fund, and the Government of Sierra Leone.

Last updated January 2011

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