

SIERRA LEONE



Sierra Leone U.S. foreign assistance to Sierra Leone aims to develop a more peaceful, democratic, and politically tolerant society. The United States' efforts focus on shifting Sierra Leone from livelihood security to economic prosperity and supporting the country as it emerges as a constructive and reliable ally for peace and prosperity in the region. Despite its successful post-conflict reconstruction efforts and the successful July 2008 local elections, Sierra Leone must still address a culture of impunity, weak governmental institutions, poor management and governance, corruption, abysmal health conditions, deteriorating educational standards, and widespread poverty. U.S. assistance will focus on rebuilding agriculture and business and on developing the health and education sectors. U.S. assistance also will help bolster an active civil society that includes citizens' participation and independent media. It will be coordinated to support stronger economic growth and job creation by strengthening agricultural productivity, enhancing trade and investment opportunities in agriculture and the private sector, and providing strong support to capacity building in agriculture, health and education.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Sierra Leone has maintained cordial relations with the West, in particular with the United Kingdom. It also maintains diplomatic relations with China, Libya, Cuba, and Iran.

Sierra Leone is a member of the UN and its specialized agencies, the Commonwealth, the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Development Bank (AFDB), the Mano River Union (MRU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

U.S.-SIERRA LEONE RELATIONS

U.S. relations with Sierra Leone began with missionary activities in the 19th century. In 1959, the U.S. opened a consulate in Freetown and elevated it to embassy status when Sierra Leone became independent in 1961. U.S.-Sierra Leone relations today are cordial, with ethnic ties between groups in the two countries receiving increasing historical interest. Many thousands of Sierra Leoneans reside in the United States. In fiscal year 2009, total U.S. bilateral aid to Sierra Leone in all categories was \$32.885 million. U.S. assistance focused on the consolidation of peace, democracy and human rights, health education, particularly combating HIV/AIDS, and human resources development.

Peace and Security: In order to help Sierra Leone consolidate peace, build security, reinforce its territorial integrity, and resist terrorists and other security threats, U.S. programs will provide technical assistance and capacity building for military and civilian authorities. U.S. assistance will help strengthen anti-corruption efforts, combat drug smuggling, stem human trafficking, impede organized crime, stop illegal money transfers, and curtail diamond smuggling. The responsiveness of the criminal justice system will be enhanced through training on community policing, investigative techniques, and crime scene protocols. Military assistance funded by the Department of State will support the Armed Forces Maritime Wing to forestall smuggling, piracy, illegal fishing, enhance civil-military cooperation, and improve programming and budget planning. U.S. support for continued military reform will help consolidate post-conflict gains and help to ensure the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) is prepared to participate in regional peacekeeping operations.

Governing Justly and Democratically: Department of State funding will be used to advance democratic principles and practices in the local government and the decentralization process and to promote transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. In addition, U.S. assistance will support local government efforts to become increasingly responsive to citizen's demands, while strengthening the community-based civil society advocacy movement that promotes public participation and dialogue between communities and the local councils. U.S. assistance will also ensure the participation of women and youth in governance and the integration of gender in program activities. This assistance will support independent media and increase access to accurate information. Support to the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) will continue through FY 2010.

Investing in People: The United States will aim to reduce illness and death among infants, children, and mothers in Sierra Leone, since the country has the highest maternal and child morbidity and mortality in the world. U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs will continue improving newborn, child, and maternal health care by training health and community workers, offering health and nutrition education, and providing supplementary feeding for vulnerable households. U.S. assistance will also support an expansion of polio immunization activities. Sierra Leone will receive funding to support the national HIV/AIDS strategy and the goals of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Focus on Performance: With 2010 funds, U.S.-supported training will go beyond basic awareness of the decentralization law to focus on building the skills of all stakeholders. It will promote greater dialogue between communities and their local District Councils, build the communications and management skills of local officials to enable them to become more responsive to citizen's demands, and help communities take a more active role in community development planning, resource mobilization, and budgeting. The funds requested for FY 2010 will cover activities at least through FY 2011 by which time 50 more individuals will have been trained. The increased funding will lead to a critical mass of both more effective local governments and well-informed and proactive civil society groups and communities. Because of these changes to the nature and scope of the training program, the number of participants will decrease substantially from the FY08 levels. Nevertheless, this shift in strategy to provide more in-depth training, while resulting in a decrease in the number of participants trained, should result in a significant increase in the capacity of the trainees to strengthen the management capabilities of their respective civil society organizations (CSOs). Training in maternal and/or newborn health and nutrition contributes to preventing childhood illnesses and deaths in a country that records the world's highest maternal and under-five morbidity and mortality rates. Training allows for more effective community-based childhood disease prevention and management strategies for better care and nutrition, such as good infant and child feeding practices, full immunization, hygiene practices like hand washing, and prompt referral to health care providers. District health staff, traditional birth attendants, and members of community health committees will benefit from training, refresher sessions and supervision. In the long-term, these efforts will help the Government of Sierra Leone to meet its priority health objective of reducing child and maternal mortality. Increased funding in FY 2010 will enable the U.S. to scale up its contribution to meeting this goal. A new activity, commencing in the third quarter of FY 2010, will fully integrate facility-based care and community-based interventions and will enable the availability of a large pool of trained health professionals and community health workers to influence health outcomes for women and children. In Sierra Leone, agriculture accounts for 45 percent of GDP and is the primary source of employment. The Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) has made agriculture their number one priority sector. U.S. support for agriculture will assist the GOSL to achieve their agricultural development objective and contribute to accelerated growth. In FY 2008, the U.S. built the capacity of 662 associations to transform agriculture, encouraging the privatization of and commercialization of agricultural activities. U.S. beneficiaries have more than doubled their agricultural production. FY 2010 funds will be used to continue building the capacity of small and large-scale producer associations and financial institutions. The funds will help targeted associations to improve their efficiency along the agricultural value chain. Not all of the funding in this Program Area will be used to achieve the targets outlined above. The funds

will be used to create stronger and democratically governed associations that are more capable of influencing decision makers in agriculture, trade, and commerce.

Economic Growth: U.S. assistance through USAID will improve food security and increase farmer incomes through the development of effective programs in agriculture, natural resource management, private sector development, and micro-enterprise. U.S. assistance will increase cash crop exports, create employment opportunities, and increase farmer incomes. It will accomplish this by providing farmers with improved agricultural technologies, and improved access to market information and business development services. In addition, U.S. assistance will enable businesses to compete in the market place by improving their management effectiveness. U.S. assistance will also support activities under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. In support of sustainable natural resource management, USAID will promote agro forestry, watershed management, and wildlife conservation. In addition, U.S. assistance will support policy reforms associated with natural resource management and extractive mining, such as diamond mining, including the implementation of Sierra Leone's Core Minerals Policy.