

USAID/Sierra Leone

Annual Report

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Sierra Leone

Performance:

Sierra Leone has taken important steps toward recovery from its brutal 11-year civil war, which officially ended in January 2002. In the last two years, peaceful and credible elections for president, parliament and paramount chiefs were held; some level of Government authority is now re-established in all districts of the country; and the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program came to its conclusion in December 2003. While the formal DDR-sponsored reintegration program for ex-combatants is now finished, completing the more broadly defined reintegration process will take more time. That process requires people from all sides of the conflict in war-torn Sierra Leone—whether they were combatants, displaced, or otherwise victimized—to constructively engage in rebuilding their lives and communities. It also means that the basic infrastructure and services necessary for normal life must become available. This is difficult to achieve in a country that ranks as the world's poorest country on the UN Human Development Index. Life expectancy is only 38.9 years, adult literacy is just 36%, per capita GDP is \$490, and maternal mortality rates are the highest in the world. This appalling poverty is exacerbated by the damage inflicted on the country's infrastructure during the civil war, particularly in the North and East. Although USAID has done much to address key infrastructure needs in its areas of operation in Sierra Leone, the lingering and very visible legacies of the war can be seen in the crumbling remnants of schools, roads, and hospitals that existed prior to the war. Less visible but also present are the residual social, political and psychological scars that have been left on a population that lived for years in a state of conflict, experienced massive displacement and social upheaval, and lost faith in a corrupt and grossly mismanaged public service.

Despite the poverty and damage seen today in Sierra Leone, the country's macro-economic performance looks optimistic. Real GDP growth continues to hover at an annual rate of more than 6%. Legal diamond exports increased from \$41 million in 2002 to over \$60 million in 2003. In addition, Sierra Leone was able to benefit from debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC), and has qualified for duty- and tariff-free status on certain export commodities to the United States under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). However, in the past year, inflation increased from -3.1 in 2002 to +6.6 in 2003, mainly as a result of the shifting macroeconomic priorities of the Bretton Woods Institutions, but also because of the end of war-time profiteering. Also problematic on the economic front was the delay in resuming the country's rutile (for titanium) mining operation, which was expected to begin providing a dramatic increase in government revenues in 2003. This is a serious setback in a country whose national budget is currently funded at 60% through foreign assistance. Although this level of foreign budgetary assistance is not surprising in a country emerging from a long and destructive war, it is an irony in a nation so well-endowed with natural wealth (rutile, bauxite, diamonds and gold) and with a proven capability to produce commercial crops such as cocoa, coffee, and palm oil for international trade, as well as food crops such as rice and vegetables, for domestic consumption. Clearly, Sierra Leone has the means to reduce or eliminate its foreign dependence if it can break the long standing patterns of mismanagement and corruption.

The biggest preoccupation in Sierra Leone at present is ensuring a durable peace, and coming to terms with a future without the support of the international peacekeeping force, UNAMSIL. By the end of 2004, what was once the world's largest peacekeeping operation is expected to draw down to only an observer presence. The British-led international military advisory and training initiative (in which the U.S. plays a key role) will continue its efforts to retrain the Sierra Leone military, and the Commonwealth will give support to train the police. However, in the near term, the combined efforts of the international and national security forces will have to effectively contend with the threat to stability still posed by neighboring post-Charles Taylor Liberia, as well as potential internal threats to security caused by the country's growing and largely unemployed youth population. The ability of Sierra Leone's police and

army alone to eventually provide for the nation's security and prevent regional conflicts from spilling over the country's borders will be the subject of careful monitoring both domestically and internationally. With the large international presence in Sierra Leone expected to continue through the end of CY 2004, the government and people of Sierra Leone will need to seize this remaining one-year window of opportunity to address the underlying causes of the eleven-year conflict such as corruption, over-centralization, regional marginalization, mismanagement of natural resource wealth, and marginalization of youth and women.

U.S. Interests and Goals: The U.S. has three strategic interests in Sierra Leone. First, the U.S. has responded strongly to what can only be described as a human tragedy. With hundreds of thousands of people displaced, tens of thousands killed and many more brutally disfigured and injured during the now-finished conflict, the U.S. responded with nearly \$200 million in combined direct humanitarian and development assistance over the past three years to help alleviate human suffering. The international community, including the U.S., has invested heavily in the remarkable peace that was won in Sierra Leone, well aware now of the world threat posed by corrupt and weak states and keenly aware also that any backsliding in the process could re-engage the entire region in conflict. Finally, the U.S.'s strongest ally, the United Kingdom, has taken the lead in rebuilding Sierra Leone's governance, physical and military infrastructure. Although the UK accepts the heaviest burden in the country's reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, the British have explicitly requested strong American support in these efforts. To that end, USAID is focusing its assistance program on several activities to accelerate post-war reintegration, stimulate the economy, curtail corruption, and strengthen local communities' ability to participate in democratic processes. U.S. assistance targets three traditionally marginalized districts-Kono, Kailahun and Koinadugu-which were also the longest held under rebel control and are considered to be the most devastated by the war.

Donor Relations: Donors and the Government of Sierra Leone meet regularly to monitor the country's progress toward achieving development performance targets agreed upon at the Paris Consultative Group meetings in November 2002. In total, 32 targets have been set that address security, poverty reduction, governance, economic performance, and aid flows. As of November 2003, Sierra Leone has completed or is on track with 23 of the targets, including completion of the DDR program, primary school enrollment, increase in properly trained police recruits, resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and former refugees, and rice production. However, delays have occurred in other areas, most notably, with immunization, access to safe drinking water, revision of public procurement procedures, privatization, and elections for District Councils.

With several donors and the GOSL simultaneously pursuing activities to support reintegration, reconstruction, and movement toward development, the possibility exists for both overlaps and gaps in programming. USAID minimizes this by coordinating humanitarian and development assistance with the Government of Sierra Leone, other major donors and NGOs, and has been a regular participant at donor-coordination meetings held between the GOSL and the major actors on the assistance scene, including DfID, the World Bank, European Commission, UNDP, and other UN agencies. In addition, frequent USAID field visits to project sites and meetings with donor representatives and NGOs have identified and prevented project overlap. On democracy and governance activities, USAID coordinates quite closely with the UK. USAID, DfID and the United Nations are also coordinating efforts in the mining sector, particularly on diamond mining and trade, and have now established an Ambassadorial-level steering committee on diamond-sector management that regularly interfaces with senior government officials. USAID provides a technical backstop to this committee.

Challenges: The past two years have seen remarkable transformations in Sierra Leone that observers three years ago would not have thought possible, including the official ending of the 11-year conflict that ravaged the country, and the conduct of peaceful, albeit flawed, democratic elections. While winning the peace was a monumental achievement, those who know Sierra Leone acknowledge that the rebuilding and reconciliation process that will take place in the coming years will present its own set of challenges. Although peace has been restored, many of the underlying causes of the conflict that were present before the war still exist. Moreover, the country is now populated by people who have suffered from years of physical and psychological trauma, and life in a country whose infrastructure was severely destroyed.

Regaining what was lost and building a better Sierra Leone cannot depend simply on the efforts of assistance agencies. Dramatic growth in the private sector is needed to absorb the energy and talents of a country whose under-15 population today comprises 44% of the population. If left unattended, the high volume of idle, unemployed young people that exists today throughout the country is in itself a menace to national and international security and stability, and must be dealt with.

Key Achievements: FY 2003 was a year of good progress for the USAID program in Sierra Leone. The transition program was in full stride, with reintegration and good governance programs rolling out throughout the programs focus Districts. After a 14-year absence, USAID has again become a well-known and deeply appreciated entity in Sierra Leone. The start-up of the program presented formidable challenges as the teams worked to shape the technical focus of the program while at the same time established a functioning operation in an environment that is challenging in the extreme. The time invested in developing the Mission's first Performance Monitoring Plan ensured that progress toward agreed objectives and targets was closely tracked.

FY 2003 achievements accrued under the two Special Objectives (SpO) of the program are as follows:

1. Reintegration for War-Torn Population in Targeted Communities Advanced: USAID's activities seek to improve the livelihood of the war-torn population and prevent the reoccurrence of war in Sierra Leone. This is accomplished by encouraging community reconciliation, building mutual respect between ex-combatants and community members, and helping to rebuild shattered lives. USAID's programs helped to re-establish basic social services; train war-affected people in conflict management, peace building and nation building; and provide job skills and employment opportunities for war-affected youth. By end of 2003, 158 micro-enterprise groups were formed, 5,088 ex-combatants/war-affected youth participated in communal civic works projects, 183 community leaders were trained in nation building skills, and 144 community organizations effectively managed and implemented self-selected development projects. In addition, 34 high-impact infrastructure projects were completed, including the rehabilitation of schools, markets, roads, community courts, health post units, and a major District hospital. Through these projects, more than 400 temporary jobs were created. Over 40,000 people have thus benefited directly from USAID intervention. USAID has also supported the return of another 150,000 returnees to the targeted districts. USAID activities promoted reconciliation and peaceful coexistence in 54 project communities. The program has promoted reconciliation and reintegration, increased trust and unity, decreased fear and stigmatization, and has built mutual respect between ex-combatants and their larger communities.

2. Democratic Governance Strengthened: This SpO made some significant strides in enhancing democratic governance and democratic institutions in Sierra Leone. The 2002 national elections and the successful 2003 paramount chieftaincy elections were significant benchmarks in reinstating a democratic political system. USAID-funded activities provided citizens at the grassroots level with the skills and knowledge they need to be politically informed and active, and to help shape the country's emerging democratic system. By end of FY 2003, 89 civic discussion/planning groups that included women and youth aged 18 to 45 were formed by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in 21 chiefdoms in Kailahun and Kono districts. The program assisted 2,582 citizens to participate in 957 Civic Forum sessions, designed to develop participants' skills in identifying common issues and in working together to bring change in their communities. Thirty parliamentarians in USAID-assisted areas received training in improving constituency relations, while their constituencies benefited from town hall meetings with their elected representatives.

Largely as a result of USAID programs, remarkable progress has been made in fostering informed citizen dialogue through popular radio programs and on-air fora relating to topical issues aired on all major radio stations across the country. The program continues to expand radio access to communities that have been cut off from national communications, particularly in USAID areas of operation. With complementary support from other donors, USAID leveraged greater influence in rationalizing diamond sector management and assisting the government of Sierra Leone gain more control of its diamond resources, while ensuring that local communities benefit financially from mining activities. A USAID-sponsored public-private alliance rooted in community participation is leading efforts in reforming the diamond sector

at the District level. A new USAID activity provides the bottom-up pressure to tackle corruption in and provide equal access to justice in USAID-assisted areas.

USAID's Food for Peace strengthened the impact of USAID transition development program in Sierra Leone by providing a total of 26,100 MT of cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, and Corn Soy Blend (CSB), valued at \$19.5 million. Food for Peace, working through the World Food Program as well as CARE, CRS, and World Vision International supported returning refugees from Guinea with a four-month food allocation distributed in two allotments of two months each. Additional activities included infrastructure repair, including housing, community buildings and tertiary roads to enhance overall productive capacity and long-term food security. Fish ponds were established, and 6,660 hectares of tree crop plantations rehabilitated. Over 600 km of feeder roads were also restored, 35 school buildings were either constructed or rehabilitated, and 14 new clinics were built. To improve water availability and sanitation, 40 wells and 538 pit latrines were constructed as well. Particularly vulnerable groups were supported through periods of transitory food insecurity to avoid excess malnutrition. NGOs with a focus on health and nutrition interventions received CSB and vegetable oil to support their therapeutic and supplementary feeding programs.

CARE, CRS, World Vision and Africare have designed and negotiated a three-year developmental relief program with Food for Peace to be implemented in FY 2004-2006. Complementary activities will be centered on increased agricultural production and marketing as well as improved health care and nutrition. The Government of Sierra Leone signed a Host Country Food for Peace Agreement including the contribution of the value of taxes and duties on commodity imports to the program. The total contribution amounts to approximately \$2.0 million. The program is expected to start in January 2004.

USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) focused its efforts on complementing overall USG priorities in Sierra Leone by supporting partners to re-establish life-saving basic services to some of the most vulnerable communities in the war-ravaged northern and eastern districts. A total of US\$ 8.0 million in FY 2003 OFDA funds supported NGO and UN partners to rehabilitate vital health, nutrition, water and sanitation services. In addition, OFDA funds assisted in the provision of emergency support to food-insecure farming families, and helped coordinate activities by identifying the country's most vulnerable populations to ensure appropriately targeted humanitarian assistance.

OFDA-funded partners CARE, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, World Vision International, Medical Emergency Relief International, Africare, Action Against Hunger, and UNICEF succeeded in rebuilding primary health care units, potable water systems and sanitation facilities in rural areas where such facilities had been almost completely destroyed. Through their synergistic efforts, hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leoneans now have access to regular health services, clean water and sanitation facilities for the first time in almost a decade. Children in these areas are now being immunized against the five major preventable childhood diseases, are screened on a regular basis for malnutrition, and when necessary are referred to OFDA-supported nutritional feeding programs. Pregnant and lactating women have regained access to vital pre- and ante-natal care through OFDA-supported maternal child health clinics, a particularly important lifesaving activity in a country that has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world. Just as important, OFDA-funded activities have worked to build the capacity of Sierra Leoneans to continue these services by themselves. USAID skills transfer has ensured that hundreds of rural health workers now have improved skills, community members have learned hygiene practices that are essential for disease prevention, and communities are now maintaining of their own water and sanitation services.

Country Close and Graduation:

N/A

Results Framework

636-001 Reintegration of War-torn Populations in Targeted Communities Advanced

SO Level Indicator(s):

- Number of communities peacefully co-existing
- Number of direct beneficiaries reached
- Number of ex-combatants and war-affected youth cooperating in civic works
- Number of ex-combatants and war-affected youth provided with reintegration skills

- 1.1** Foundations for viable communities established
- 1.2** War-torn populations in targeted communities constructively engaged
- 1.3** Public Infrastructure rehabilitated

636-002 Democratic Governance Strengthened

SO Level Indicator(s):

- Air time devoted to civic education and public information
- Number of Parliamentarians with improved constituency relations skills
- Revenues allocated to diamond producing communities from diamond funds (\$US)

- 2.1** Broadened community-based political participation
- 2.2** Participation in national dialogue facilitated
- 2.3** Broader public/private participation in improved diamond sector management
- 2.4** Increased community response to targeted human rights issues