



Sierra Leone Development Profile 2009

Capital City: Freetown

Population: 6,440,053

Founded in 1787 as a colony for freed slaves that were living in London, modern day Sierra Leone has experienced a somewhat tumultuous history. In 1807 the colony was placed under the control of the English crown, and subsequently was utilized as a base from which to fight the Atlantic slave trade. In 1896, the British declared the Sierra Leone protectorate, whereby the surrounding hinterland was formally incorporate under British rule, giving Sierra Leone the boundaries that are still in existence today. Independence was granted in 1961, however the country was soon to suffer from a long period of corrupt authoritarian rule. Opposition to the central government was gradually eliminated, culminating in the declaration of Sierra Leone as a one-party state in 1978. Infrastructure and livelihoods in the country declined dramatically during this period, placing Sierra Leone at the bottom on the United Nations' Human Development Index even before the start of a ten year civil war in 1991.

The civil war was initiated by exiled group of Sierra Leoneans living in neighboring Liberia, supported by Charles Taylor's Government. The conflict was brutal, displacing over 2 million people (about one-third of the population), killing around 50,000, while injuring and maiming countless others. The war was finally brought to an end in 2001, due to the late intervention of the British and subsequent successful peace negotiations. Since this time Sierra Leone has remained relatively peaceful, nevertheless a huge task remains in rebuilding the livelihoods of the population devastated by a history of corrupt rule and civil conflict.

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Human Development Index ranking:

179th (out of 179)

GDP per capita:

US\$630

Adult Literacy:

37.1%

Life Expectancy:

41.1 years

Physicians per 100,000 people:

3

Under 5 Infant mortality:

262 deaths per 1000 births

Access to safe drinking water:

53% of the population

Electricity Access:

<10% (urban <20%, rural <2%)

Sources: UNDP (2008) *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world*, United Nations Development Programme; UNDP (2008) *Human Development Indices: A Statistical Update 2008*; United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF (2009) *State of the World's Children*, United Nations Children's Fund, CIA (2009) *The World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency; GoSL (2004) *The Energy Policy for Sierra Leone*, Government of Sierra Leone, Ministry of Energy and Power