



UNFPA SIERRA LEONE at a Glance



// WHO WE ARE

Guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, works to deliver its mandate as an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA Sierra Leone is a principal actor and advocate that works to improve the health and well-being of all Sierra Leoneans, especially women and girls. Active in the country since 1971, UNFPA Sierra Leone provides the Government of

Sierra Leone and other partners with comprehensive technical support to implement programmes and improve knowledge around sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, population issues, and adolescents and youth.

// WHAT WE DO

UNFPA Sierra Leone supports the Government of Sierra Leone's efforts to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and revitalize the health system in Sierra Leone, prioritizing mothers and their babies. With maternal death rates at crisis levels, UNFPA also supports the Government's health care initiatives to save the lives of women and newborns.

Currently in its sixth Country Programme Cycle, UNFPA Sierra Leone's key objectives include:

- Advancing sexual and reproductive health and strengthening family planning and newborn health
- Improving sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and young people, and delivering a comprehensive package of services for young people in-school and out-of-school
- Addressing women's and girls' inequality and discrimination through empowerment
- Promoting policies that address women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and GBV prevention, with support to victims and survivors
- Addressing data needs, including data use in governance, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting at all levels

“... UNFPA delivers a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every child birth is safe, every young person's potential is fulfilled...”

// CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sierra Leone has a population of approximately 7 million people. Despite substantial economic growth in recent years, Sierra Leone continues to experience some of the world's most challenging health indicators. The country has one of the highest maternal mortality rates, an estimated 1,360 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The total estimated number of maternal deaths in 2015 was 3,100, with teenagers accounting for forty percent. Teenage pregnancy is a pervasive problem: Nearly a third (28%) of adolescent girls ages 15-19 are already mothers or pregnant with their first child. Access to family planning services in Sierra Leone is low and the national contraceptive prevalence rate in 2013 was 16%.

Sierra Leone also has significant opportunities that can be harnessed to accelerate progress and sustainable development. In particular, nearly half of the country's population are young people. The Government of Sierra Leone has expressed great commitment towards improving maternal health and supporting mothers to survive. Strong partnerships also exist within the country to support the Government in the implementation of the National Health Recovery Plan, formulated following the Ebola outbreak.

// KEY PROGRAMME AREAS



// WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

SDG 3 declares that the highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental right of every person. Reaching this standard requires that health systems become more sensitive and responsive to women and girls' needs and wants, while offering higher quality and more comprehensive and accessible services.

To reduce the alarming rates of maternal mortality in Sierra Leone, UNFPA works closely with the Government to provide family planning services nationwide, taking special measures to reach those most marginalized. In addition to saving the lives of women and children, voluntary family planning helps to empower women and girls, reduce poverty, and ultimately build stronger nations. UNFPA supports programmes that improve access to and affordability of family planning services; offer a broad selection of choices; reflect high standards of care; are sensitive to cultural conditions; and address other reproductive health needs.

UNFPA Sierra Leone works to ensure safe birth and maternity services and improve the quality of basic and emergency obstetric care services. UNFPA also supports the Government's national efforts on health personnel training and capacity building, particularly in the field of midwifery. UNFPA is also engaged in hospital infrastructure rehabilitation as well as the provision of essential equipment and standardized guidelines.

Other important UNFPA initiatives include the Maternal Health Thematic Fund, Ending Child Marriage, Increasing Skilled Birth Attendants, the Campaign to End Fistula, and numerous partnerships tackling maternal and newborn mortality.

// ADOLESCENTS, YOUTH AND GENDER

UNFPA Sierra Leone pays close attention to young people as a crucial cohort needed to reach sustainable development. By advancing programmes and initiatives that help to expand their life choices, protect their rights, and contribute to their own development as well as that of their communities, UNFPA is investing in the next generation. Sierra Leone is in a prime position to reap the “Demographic Dividend”, which is proven to boost sustainable development.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are essential to sustainable development; only when women and girls are able to fulfil their potentials can they fully contribute to the development of their nations. SDG 5, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, is pivotal to the realization of every other SDG, as an empowered girl changes not only her life, but that of her family and her society.

UNFPA works closely with the Government, as well as with local NGOs, CSOs and other development agencies, to strengthen legislation pertaining to gender equality and to remove discriminatory clauses from Sierra Leone’s constitution. UNFPA also advocates for gender-sensitive data collection, and emphasises the integration of culturally sensitive approaches to end gender-based violence, including traditional practices that harm women such as Child Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

UNFPA also recognises the rights, perspectives and influence of men and boys, involving them in the promotion of gender equality and reproductive health, proving that women’s empowerment is the responsibility of everyone, not just women and girls.



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WHAT IS THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND?

As this cohort approaches adulthood, Sierra Leone’s growing youth population is a great opportunity for sustainable development. The “Demographic Dividend” is defined as a boost in economic productivity achieved by having proportionally more people of working age being economically active. The ability of young people to reach their potential (girls in particular) and for the employed to have to have fewer dependents (as a result of voluntary family planning) and more people of working age being economically active are prerequisites for the dividend. Sierra Leone, with nearly 46% of the population being under age 15, has the ability to reap this dividend by declining its fertility rate.

// POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In line with the SDGs’ new emphasis on data, UNFPA Sierra Leone is committed to promoting data-driven change and developing capacity in data collection and analysis to support effective programmes. UNFPA provides the Government, other development partners and key stakeholders with relevant, reliable data and information, as a guide towards evidence-based development planning, policy formulation, service delivery, and monitoring and evaluation. UNFPA also supports the government and partners to develop the National Population Policy.

Alongside other UN agencies and development partners, UNFPA has been instrumental in building the technical and institutional capacities of Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL) in the production and dissemination of national statistical data. Prominent products of this initiative include the 2013 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), the 2015 Population and Housing Census (Stats SL), and the establishment of an Integrated Management Information System (IMIS).

// MAIN IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

- Aberdeen Women's Centre
- Capacare
- CHANGES Consortium
- Fambul Initiative Network
- Haikal Foundation/Organization
- Health for All Coalition
- Marie Stopes Society SLE
- Matei Initiative Empowerment
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Social Welfare
- Ministry of Youth
- National HIV/AIDS Secretariat
- Office of the First Lady
- Planned Parenthood Association SLE
- Statistics Sierra Leone
- Women in Crisis Movement - SLE

// MAJOR DONORS



// LEADERSHIP

UNFPA Sierra Leone and its approximately 45 members of staff are led by Dr. Kim Eva Dickson, the Country Representative, who is supported by three Clusters Leads and an International Operations Manager.

Ensuring rights and choices for all

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