

SAVE THE CHILDREN SIERRA LEONE

COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2019-2022

STATISTICS

Sierra Leone remains a very difficult place to be a child:

- Under-five mortality is at **120 per 1000** live births. Higher than the West Central Africa regional average.
- Maternal mortality is at **1,165 per 100,000** live births. One of the worst globally.
- Only **58 percent** of households have access to basic drinking water; and **16 percent** access to basic sanitation.
- School completion rates are **64 percent** for Primary Education, decreasing to **44 percent** for Junior Secondary Education, and **21 percent** for Senior Secondary Education.
- Only **11.5 percent** of children ages 3-5 are enrolled in early childhood education.
- **23 percent** of women aged 15-19 had given birth/were pregnant in 2017. Young mothers are rejected by their families & communities, stigmatized at health centers, and rarely return to school.
- **29 percent** of women aged 20-24 were married before age 18 in 2017.
- More than **85 percent** of women aged 15-49 years have undergone some form of FGM/C.
- Violence is widespread: physical punishment is widely considered as the most effective form of discipline, affecting **86.5 percent** of children 1-14 years.
- Every year an average of **2,300** sexual violence cases of victims under the age of 18 years are reported to the police.
- Over **70 percent** of the population lives below the national poverty line of USD 2 per day.
- In 2013, Sierra Leone ranked **177 out of 182** countries in the Gender Development Index.

Sources of Data: 2013 DHS, 2017 MICS, National Police Records, 2015 National Census, UNDP.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Save the Children has been implementing humanitarian response and development programmes in Sierra Leone since 1999. Our programming portfolio now includes the sectors of health (with a focus on adolescent and maternal-child health); education; water and sanitation(WASH); livelihoods; child protection; and governance (with a focus on children's rights).

Our programming is supported by an advocacy and communications team that engages with government and civil society stakeholders on key issues affecting children; and with a team of technical experts that helps to ensure that our programmes meet high standards of quality based on global and local evidence, while maintaining strong technical relationships with our government counterparts.

We are well known for our grassroots programming at the community level, working with all ages to improve the situation of children; and in partnership with civil society organisations who are best placed to ensure our programmes are relevant to the socio-cultural context. In 2018, for example, we reached over 280,000 children and over 65,000 adults with programming, advocacy, and support to government agencies across multiple sectors in four districts, including emergency preparedness and response. A range of institutional and private donors supports our current portfolio.

Save the Children's previous country strategy for Sierra Leone expired in 2018. In line with Save the Children International's global strategy, the Sierra Leone country programme developed a new strategy in 2018 to cover the period 2019-2021.

The strategy was developed through a structured and collaborative process. Consultations were held with beneficiaries (including children), government agencies, civil society partners, and community stakeholders in each of our four districts of operation, to gather their inputs on the key issues affecting children in their areas, and what role they think Save the Children should play in addressing these issues.

Desk reviews were conducted to gather secondary data in the health, education, protection, livelihoods, and WASH sectors; a national child rights situational analysis was held with key national stakeholders and partners. These were

combined with a series of internal workshops to review our previous strategy, and analyse our technical capabilities, the donor landscape, potential partnerships, and our current competitors.

COUNTRY STRATEGY 2019-2022

The Sierra Leone Country Programme developed a new country strategy for 2019-2022 built around four key goals and in line with Save the Children's global breakthroughs to ensure that all children are able to survive, be protected and obtain safe, quality education.

- **Goal 1:** Reduction in accepted violence and harmful gender discrimination; adolescent pregnancy and child, early & forced marriage
- **Goal 2:** Inclusive access to quality reproductive, maternal, new born child health services
- **Goal 3:** Children (especially girls) complete a quality and safe primary education and successfully transition to secondary school
- **Goal 4:** Vulnerable women and youth have access to safe and sustainable livelihoods

Each of our four goals is based on a theory of change that is structured along components of Save the Children's global theory of change:

Innovation: We will utilise some of our newly developed global common approaches adapted to the local context, and combine these with our recently developed and tested local methodologies. We will invest more in the use of digital technology and social media; place children and youth, especially girls, at the centre of designing our interventions; focus more on the social and gender norms that drive behaviours and harmful practices; and adopt a more flexible household approach to our economic strengthening interventions;

Voice: We will work together with children and young people, civil society, and government partners to track the delivery of health, education and protection services through locally adapted social accountability mechanisms; and to monitor the implementation of key national laws, policies, and strategies. We will engage traditional and religious leaders to lead the way in challenging social and gender norms that result in harmful and discriminatory practices. We will continue supporting children, child mothers in particular, to speak on their own behalf to influence decisions affecting their lives. Our advocacy work will be increasingly

integrated with our programme activities and technical support to maximize resources and achieve stronger results across common themes.

Results at Scale: We will work with government and partners to develop strategies for replicating some of our tested methodologies, such as our Accelerated Education Programme; our work with community governance structures; and our support to child mothers. We will support the government to plan, fund, and implement some of its key national strategies and frameworks affecting children, such as the National Child Welfare Policy; the national Community Health Worker Policy; the Free Health Care Initiative; Free Quality Education Initiative; and the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Early Marriage.

Partnerships: We recognize that we cannot achieve these goals alone; children, families, communities, civil society partners, and government agencies will participate in everything we do, raising voices together to speak out against harmful cultural or social gender norms and to ensure that all children, including the most excluded, can access quality essential services.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE STRATEGY

- **Integrated programming:** We will continue to integrate our programming across sectors where it makes sense, in order to more effectively tackle the complex problems affecting children; and we will utilize an ecological approach to address issues at each level from the individual child, to the family, the community, and the larger society.
- **Gender transformative programming:** We recognise that gender is an underlying cause of inequality, discrimination, and violence in Sierra Leone,

which perpetuates an intergenerational cycle of poverty and ultimately impedes development. Our strategic goals place girls and women at the heart of our programming and advocacy, and we will work to address the underlying causes of gender inequality to ensure that both girls and boys can equally realise their rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

- **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL):** We will continue to invest in stronger MEAL systems to increase our learning and build evidence of what works and what does not to help improve the situation of children in Sierra Leone. We will work to capture the results of our programmes at higher levels: not so much on what we do but more on how it results in changes that affect children’s lives. We will continue to strengthen our feedback and accountability systems, regularly reviewing our feedback, and ensuring that all of our work is accountable to both our donors and our beneficiaries, *especially* children.
- **Diversification of our funding portfolio and approaches:** We recognise that the civil society landscape in Sierra Leone will become more competitive, with donors channelling more of their resources through the government and national organisations. We will adapt to this by transforming our culture of partnerships to build mutually beneficial relationships and, increase the percentage of our funding that is implemented by local partners; making use of our existing (and new) networks to engage in joint advocacy; enhancing our ability to provide high quality technical expertise to the government; and continuing to diversify our funding portfolio across both institutional and private donors, including the commercial sector.



GEOGRAPHY AND TARGET GROUPS

We continue to work in the most marginalized, hard to reach areas (remote rural areas and urban slums) striving to reach those children who are most at risk of being left behind. This includes maintaining our presence in our four operational districts: Kailahun, Pujehun, Western Area Urban, and Western Area Rural with a *possible* expansion into the underserved district of Bonthe.

We will aim to reach the following groups of vulnerable and marginalised children:

- Adolescent mothers/pregnant adolescents
- Children living in kinship care, orphans with elderly caregivers, child-headed homes
- Children living with disabilities
- Children under five
- Children in harmful/exploitative labor
- Female-headed households
- Survivors of abuse, violence
- Girls transitioning from primary school
- Children in remote, hard-to-reach areas