
SAVE THE CHILDREN IN SIERRA LEONE



Sierra Leone Country Strategic Plan

2011-2014

Sierra Leone Country Programme

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This strategy defines the overall thematic focus of Save the Children UK, Sierra Leone Country Programme for the period 2011 - 2014. Four thematic areas have been identified; Newborn & Child Survival (comprising health and nutrition), Education, Child Protection and Child Rights Governance, all contributing to the overall intervention strategy aiming to fulfill the rights of all children in Sierra Leone.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACRWC	African Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CPI	Child Protection Initiative
CRA	Child rights Act
CRC	Child Rights Coalition
CRP	Child rights Programming
CRG	Child rights Governance
CSO	Civil society Organization
EFA	Education For All
EYE	Education for Youth Empowerment
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practices
INGO	International Non government Organizations
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KAP	Knowledge Attitude and Practice
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MNCH	Maternal Newborn and Child Health
MOHS	Ministry Of Health and Sanitation
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs
NGO	Non Government Organization

SC	Save the Children
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SMC	School Management Committee
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TPP	Thematic Programme Plan
UN CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

1. Introduction

This country strategy will span over four years period to allow for programme development, expansion and implementation essential for achieving lasting changes for children in Sierra Leone. The strategy is informed by inputs from series of consultative and participative processes; district and national level stakeholder consultations including separate consultations with children in each district of operation. Valuable feedback, insights and inputs were gained in the consultation process, validating and qualifying strategic direction of the country programme and its ability to adapt to an ever changing environment in Sierra Leone and in Save the Children globally. The thematic choices and strategies are informed by our Child Rights Situational Analyses in child protection, health and education, various evaluations (health and education programme evaluation), a comprehensive Child Protection KAP survey and teenage pregnancy research and current Thematic Programme Plans. It falls in line with Save the Children's International Strategy, the Theory of Change and Global Initiative Business Plans and is based throughout on a strong Child rights Programming approach.

1.1 Summary of Situational Analysis

Sierra Leone has a population of 6.2 million, of which 50% are children.¹ Nine years after the end of the devastating civil war, Sierra Leone has shown a tremendous improvement in the Human Development Index of the UNDP, from 0.292 in 2005 (second from the last), to 0.317 in 2010 (12th from the last).² This is attributed to the improvements and positive changes in key socio economic situations, such as child and maternal mortality rates.

However, Sierra Leone still remains one of the poorest countries in the world with serious challenges to address; a child born in Sierra Leone can expect to live no longer than 47 years; three quarters of the population lives on less than \$2.00 a day and more than a third of the adult population is illiterate. The important achievements made in the country remain fragile and need to be consolidated to address root causes and longer term development challenges. The same conditions that brought Sierra Leone to civil war remain partly unresolved; namely endemic corruption, idle and unemployed youth, low levels of literacy and education, challenges in the rule of law, crushing poverty and inequitable distribution of resources. These are also the root causes of the limitations of children's right to survival and development in Sierra Leone. Access to basic livelihood and to social services such as education, protection and health remains a huge challenge.

While decentralisation of power to elected district councils has been implemented in the last decade following the civil war, this has in practice meant the creation of district authorities with low capacity and a slow pace of action. Real power is still concentrated at national level, and at district level there is a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities between line ministries and district councils, little confidence and very low capacity to manage resources for development; all leading to inertia in progress and poor accountability towards the general population. This combined with the fact that Sierra Leone still has a long way to go in getting a strong and vibrant civil society essential for deepening democracy in the country and holding duty bearers to account, creates some major challenges in the democratization and

¹ Statistics Sierra Leone (2004) Population and Housing Census

² Human Development Report 2010, UNDP

development process. Although there is a multiplicity of civil society organisations across the country, capacity is very low and the majority of CSOs are not politically well heeled.

The government of Sierra Leone has a strong support from donors and the international community. Significant proportion of the government budget comes from donor funding. The major supporters and donors include DFID, EC, UN, and World Bank. This is a big opportunity for the government; but it also has a high risk as it makes the whole development endeavour susceptible to changes in the Northern world and creates a situation of significant donor dependence.

Internally the restructuring process in Save the Children, Sierra Leone programme decentralizing more authority to the field is still being consolidated and there is a need to focus and develop the way the organization and the programmes learn from their experiences and the way we use this learning and insights to continuously improve on our approach, our programmes and our internal capacity. From 2013, the major changes globally becoming One Save the Children will take effect in the West and Central African Region of which Sierra Leone is part. We are continuing our strategising for this process with our main partners to the country programme, analysing new opportunities and risks in the new organisational structure.

Internal constraints are very much linked to the external environment – namely the acute shortage of qualified local staff still demanding a high number of international staff contributing to high running costs of the programme. Other constraints are the conditions in adopting a Child Rights Programming approach across all sectors; limited market capacity (limited suppliers and service providers), severe capacity gaps among government institutions at all levels, including the inertia in the decentralisation process forcing us to still carry out a high level of service delivery instead of investing more in sustainable capacity development and civil society development through partnerships. In the same line, consultation processes with civil society organisations including INGOs are still not institutionalized in Sierra Leone and policy influence opportunities are therefore often linked to personalities within ministries and councils.

1.2 Identification of thematic priorities

The new Country Strategy of Sierra Leone builds on existing programme strengths in Education, Health and Child Protection while exploring new areas of nutrition and livelihoods under a new Newborn & Child Survival Programme, Empowerment for Youth Employment (EYE) under the education programme and an emerging Child Rights Governance (CRG) Programme recognizing that much of the work in the Child Protection programme and to some extent other programmes falls under CRG.

The new focus on Child Rights Governance as a thematic priority and strategic choice is based on the fact that all Save the Children interventions in Sierra Leone aim to fulfil all the rights of children. The CRG programme will be developed within the first year of this country strategy building on the CRG work that has been initiated especially within the Child Protection programme, but also other thematic programmes. The priority in CRG is based on the fact that Sierra Leone is one of the worst places in the world to be a child. Children's rights are violated at all levels. For example, one in five children in Sierra Leone dies before his/her fifth birthday (*survival rights*); violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children are widespread (*protection rights*); quality education is out of reach for most children

(*development rights*); and children are routinely left out of decisions affecting their lives (*participation rights*).

A new Newborn and Child Survival Programme under the global EVERYONE campaign will be launched in 2011 encompassing both Health and Nutrition components and eventually exploring a Livelihoods component as an option for strengthening and expanding the EVERYONE campaign in which Sierra Leone is an immediate priority country given its deplorable statistics in newborn and child survival; 1 of every 100 delivering women, and about 1 of every 5 under 5 children die largely of preventable diseases with main root causes being weak health systems, poor access to healthcare, poor feeding practices and poverty.

The Education Programme is in the process of developing a new Thematic Programme Plan (TPP) and therefore stated objectives in this strategy will be reviewed as the TPP is finalized including a new component of Empowerment for Youth Employment (EYE) which will be explored and piloted in the course of the strategy. The strategic choices in education are based on the fact that 30% of children still remain out of school (UNICEF 2008) and a large number of children drop out before completing basic education. Very poor quality and relevance of education with about 60% of teachers in SC operational areas being untrained and unqualified, poor and inadequate infrastructure, unsafe learning environments, poverty and strong cultural factors remain reasons for the alarming educational situation in Sierra Leone resulting in a high number of uneducated and unskilled youth with no basis for establishing a reasonable livelihood, also constituting a risk factor for the country's stability. The fact that such a large part of the population remain uneducated, also leads to many other developmental problems in health, protection, economic development etc.

The strategic direction in Child Protection aimed at strengthening child protection systems at all levels is based on lessons learnt of this being the most effective means of reaching all vulnerable children. Violations of children's right to protection are persistent and widespread in the Sierra Leonean society with root causes being high levels of poverty, harmful perceptions and practices towards children and a lack of government services and systems to protect children. All children in Sierra Leone ranging from age 5 – 17 are vulnerable to experiencing one or more forms of harm including physical violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, harmful traditional practices (including child marriage and FGM), child labour, child migration and trafficking.

2 Thematic Priorities

2.1. Thematic Priority – Newborn and Child Survival

Goal: Newborn, child and maternal mortality in Sierra Leone has significantly reduced, contributing to Sierra Leone achieving MDG 4&5 by 2014.

Specific objectives of the Newborn and Child Survival thematic programme are:

Objective 1: *Increase availability, access to and utilization of quality MNCH services for 173,739 children under five and 81,759 pregnant and lactating mothers within supportive national and district policy environments.*

Objective 2: *Improve knowledge, attitudes and practices of 511,000 community members of targeted areas in order to realize their rights to health including MNCH & SRH and Nutrition.*

Objective 3: *Contribute to the reduction of malnutrition-related morbidity and mortality among 9,332 children under five and 3,152 pregnant and lactating mothers in Sierra Leone by playing a key role in national debate on malnutrition and livelihood.*

Target groups: Newborn, Children Under five, adolescent children (M/F), teenage mothers, pregnant and lactating mothers.

Rationale: The 2010 Maternal Newborn and Child Survival global countdown 2015 indicates that around 5,400 women and 70,000 under fives die every year in Sierra Leone. Most of the deaths of children in Sierra Leone take place during the first 28 days of life although considerable progress has been made by the government of Sierra Leone, with the support of Save the Children and other agencies, in reducing the high infant and maternal mortality rates. Extensive public health initiatives have been taken to increase immunization coverage and the proportion of children sleeping under long-lasting insecticide treated bed nets. Nonetheless, women continue to die at childbirth, too many children die of easily preventable diseases for which cost effective interventions exist and sadly, much remain to be done with regard to tackling ill health related to poverty. The adoption of government policy in April 2010 to provide Free Health Care for children under five years of age and pregnant and lactating women is the first step towards addressing inequities in healthcare provision and addressing maternal, infant and under-five mortality. The next step will be implementing the policy and ensure that all children and mothers have universal access to basic life saving preventive and clinical services. Therefore, it is an opportunity for SC to support this endeavour from the child right perspective. Based on the findings in the Health Programme Evaluation of 2010, the new Newborn and Child Survival Programme will support the government of Sierra Leone in its effort to achieve MDG 4 and 5. This work will be done in line with the National Health Sector Strategic Plan (2010-2015) which aims to improve the health system through successful implementation of the Basic Package of Essential Health Services (BPEHS).

Key obstacles to realisation of children's rights to health include:

- A severe lack of quality health services, especially in hard-to-reach areas;
- Absence of dedicated supports and services for children, especially in the areas of adolescent health sexual and reproductive health;
- Lack of sustained and substantial investment in children's health services;
- Lack of training for all those working with children including health professionals;
- Traditional cultural practices such as early marriage (contributing to the number of girls becoming pregnant at an early age) and FGM;
- Knowledge and attitude on medical service, limiting the health service seeking behaviour and leading to traditional practices.

- The absence of effective advocacy mechanisms to represent children and their rights in the health sector; and to monitor services designed to meet their needs;
- Evidence exist that the higher the poverty levels the lower the health status and health service seeking behaviour;
- Severe rates of malnutrition of children; both caused by inappropriate feeding practices, traditional beliefs with regards to breastfeeding, gender roles, and young and unknowledgeable mothers.

General programming approach: Sierra Leone is an immediate priority country for Save the Children's global EVERYONE campaign because of its deplorable newborn, child and maternal survival rates. We will continue to establish global learning communities for innovative approaches and best practises in campaigning for every child's right to survival and health. Save the Children will remain and develop its roles as a leading agency for health in Sierra Leone and a key player within the health sector at national level championing advocacy and policy change in maternal, newborn and child health and financing of the health sector. We will conduct research and establish a basis for programming in the area of nutrition, mainly focussing on community feeding practices for newborn and children under 5. In both areas we will work in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) at local, district and national level, relevant UN agencies and civil society organisations. Some of the key interventions will include:

- Health service strengthening focusing on improving quality and efficiency.
- Community-based service delivery linked to quality referral centers in selected geographic areas;
- Support to improve the supply chain management system to ensure efficient and adequate drug supply system in the health units.
- Link health to other development activities, especially at the district and community level, to address inequity in access to basic services and tackle other cross-cutting issues;
- Strengthen MOHS capacity to plan for and manage health service ;
- Advocacy and campaigning work for policy improvement or policy formulation. The focus areas for policy advocacy are Reproductive and Child Health Policy, Health financing and health budget, Implementation of the Free Health care Initiative, Child Focused Nutrition Policy, and Maternal Death Review.
- Link the health interventions with an increased focus on nutrition;
- Explore areas of livelihood support for vulnerable families in cooperation with Child Protection and Education Thematic Programmes;
- Document and share best practices in innovative programming and approaches with Save the Children globally and with other stakeholders in Sierra Leone.

Expected Scale: Within the overall framework of the Newborn and Child Survival Plan, we will expand our geographical area of intervention in Kailahun and Pujehun to cover all chiefdoms in the two districts and 9 slum communities in Freetown. We will strengthen the nutrition elements in the programme with monitoring of the nutrition status of children and possible nutrition interventions and promotion of infant and young child feeding practices across the areas of operations. We will seek further

opportunities to expand the geographic scope of our programme upon consolidation of existing and upcoming interventions.

Target Population: Direct beneficiaries: 304,300 children and 282,000 adults

Indirect beneficiaries: 402,400 children and 591,500 adults

Total: 706,700 children and 873,500 adults

Estimated Cost: £ 7,6mill

2.2. Thematic Priority – Education

Goal: By 2013, children and youth of school-going age living in remote and marginalized urban and rural communities fulfilled their right to education through increased opportunities to quality basic education in safe and protective environments and increased access to vocational and skills training.

The specific objectives of the education programme are:

Objectives 1: Improved access to quality education and skills training,

Objective 2: Improved quality learning environments that are safe, hygienic, and adequately resourced,

Objective 3: Improved learning outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.

Target group: Children and youth of school-going age living in remote and marginalized urban and rural communities in Sierra Leone. This includes out-of-school children and youth, young people impacted by poverty, orphans, children from single-parent or polygamous families, those lacking a caring and supportive home life, differently abled children, and girls, especially those involved in early or forced marriage or who are pregnant. It is important to note that poor quality of education is a critical problem throughout the country (and hence in our target areas). Because of this fact most of our interventions will be targeting all schools and all children in the target areas, with special focus on access to the specific groups mentioned above (poor children, orphans, children from single parent and polygamous families, differently abled children, girls, etc).

Rationale: With the government's abolition of school fees, Sierra Leone has made great progress in increasing enrolment rates of children in primary schools.³ Yet, many children are out-of-school, missing, or placed at risk of dropping-out. An estimated 300,000 or 30 % of children in Sierra Leone remain out of school (UNICEF, 2008). Economic, social, and cultural factors interplay to create barriers which can prove challenging for young people to overcome. Additionally, schools themselves can be a deterrent for young people's access and retention and success given their poor physical infrastructure⁴, lack of water

³ Primary school enrolment increased from 659,503 in 2001/2002 (MEYS 2007) to 1,322,000 in 2007 (UNESCO 2010).

⁴ Over half of the 111 schools in the CRESA study were identified as being temporary structures with insufficient or decrepit school furniture. This can directly impact school attendance and quality.

and toilets⁵, insufficient learning materials, and lack of qualified teachers⁶. This combined with unsafe environments and excessive verbal and corporal punishment by teachers contributes tremendously to the overall poor quality of education in Sierra Leone leading to very low education outcomes.

Sierra Leone also faces a lack of opportunities for young people not able to continue their schooling or that gained little from their education. The consequence being an influx of unemployed youth who have dropped out or missed out on school opportunities and find it too late to enter into the formal school system yet are not skilled and trained for the workforce. Idle youth was one of the factors that brought Sierra Leone into civil war and 9 years after, the country has not managed to address this problem. Save the Children's involvement in this new area will provide unique opportunities for global learning about the impact of education, skills training and empowerment for employment upon the lives of conflict-affected youth living amidst poverty.

Key obstacles to the realisation of children's rights to education include:

- Low levels of literacy amongst parents and in wider community contributing to a lack of awareness of the benefits of education and motivation to attend school;
- Hidden and illegal costs of education and mismanagement of school fee subsidies;
- Inadequate school infrastructure including WASH facilities;
- Lack of teaching and learning materials and basic school equipment;
- School-related child protection issues including use of corporal or humiliating punishments, sexual abuse of girls, long distances to/from school;
- Inappropriate language of instruction, especially in rural areas;
- Lack of capacity at national and district level to provide supervision and proper education management, including budget management, the establishment of an education information management system (EMIS) and teacher monitoring and supervision.
- High levels of unqualified, unpaid and poorly trained teachers, particularly females, leading to very low learning outcomes;
- Limited affordable options for untrained, unqualified teachers to become qualified, particularly for those living in rural areas.
- Limited capacity and resources for Teacher Training Institutes to deliver quality training for teachers.
- Overcrowded classrooms of under-age and over-age pupils in primary level;
- High drop-out rate due to teenage pregnancy, early marriage, harmful traditional practices, pressures to participate in traditional and seasonal labour activities, or for poverty-related reasons;
- High numbers of unskilled and uneducated youth denied access to decent and/or non-hazardous employment thus facing social, economic and political exclusion which often results in "discontent, crime, and conflict"⁷.

General programming approach: Save the Children will in these four years continue to build on previous focus areas and achievements as followed in the *Rewrite the Future* campaign which include access to education, quality of education, protection in education, and financing of education. However, as results from the RtF campaign suggest as well as recent Child Rights Education Situational Analysis (CRESA) findings, there is a need to focus more on the issue of quality of education and improved learning

⁵ Over 1/3 of schools in CRESA study used a stream for water source; more than half of 111 schools had no latrines and of those that did, 46 % used shared facilities posing extreme health, safety, and protection problem, particularly for girls.

⁶ 60 per cent of teachers in CRESA study were untrained and unqualified; national TPR is 1 qualified and trained teacher for every 107 pupils. Regional disparities exist: Freetown; 1:53; Kailahun 1:130; and Pujehun 1:177.

⁷ "UNICEF's Out of School Children Study (2008).

outcomes for children. Hence, Save the Children will continue to focus its work in improving opportunities for primary school-age going children in basic education with greater attention to the area of quality. Additionally, we will begin exploring and establishing a basis for programming that improves opportunities for youth who have missed out on education and training opportunities leaving them unskilled and unemployed.

In working to improve access to **quality basic education** specifically, we will:

- Continue to be the voice with and for children to advocate the importance of education for children and campaign for improved access and quality for ALL children;
- Ensure that the physical environment of schools meet minimum standards of quality and that children benefit from schools environment that are adequately resourced, safe and hygienic;
- Establish/strengthen mechanisms for child participation in matters and services that concern them including advocacy, decision-making and accountability in school improvement;
- Continue to raise awareness of protection issues in schools and strengthen mechanisms for ensuring protection of children from abuse.
- Support teachers to move towards non-violent and non-humiliating teaching and disciplining methods through continued training in the Teachers' Code of Conduct and strengthened accountability with children and communities;
- Work closely with MEST to build capacity at national and district levels and community structures such as SMCs to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning;
- Work together with Teacher Training Colleges and MEST to improve the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher education;
- Support and strengthen the capacity of children, community members, SMCs, District Education offices and District Councils to establish support mechanisms for the monitoring and supervision of schools and teachers;
- Prioritize the establishment of strategic and programme partnerships with Civil Society Organizations in order to strengthen the CSO advocacy networks at national and district levels as well as build capacity of local civil society;
- Establish links with regional and/or local academic institutions to conduct research activities in the education sector to promote learning and evidence-based analysis of our own project processes as well as build the capacity of local institutes in educational research;
- Coordinate with other agencies working at national level in basic education and skills training to lobby for: 1) improved policy development and dissemination on quality of education including the area of teacher training and female teacher recruitment, 2) improved financing, on-going professional development and support to teachers, 3) improved protection of children in learning environments, and 4) greater transparency in education expenditure and allocations and removal of user fees.

In efforts to expand our programming to include **Education for Youth Empowerment (EYE)**, our initial approach within this strategic period will consist of the following:

- Gain a better understanding of the lived experiences and situation of out-of-school, unemployed youth through initial research and situational analysis beginning with the perspectives of youth themselves.
- Identify key actors and existing efforts in the area of skill development and vocational training in Sierra Leone and identify future possibilities for initiatives where Save the Children could support improved opportunities for unskilled and unemployed youth to become economically able.

- Develop strong knowledge base of evidence-based practice in education for youth employment to inform future program direction and design.
- Coordinate with Protection and Health Programs to strengthen efforts in areas of youth and livelihoods and ensure holistic, integrated programming.
- Build our own staff capacity and expertise for this new area of work.
- Identify potential partners to work with in improving opportunities for youth.

In these four years period, we hope to have formed a strong foundation for our programming for youth by 1) establishing a comprehensive strategy to grow our program to address some of the identified issues amongst unemployed youth that have deprived them of their rights and 2) initiating a pilot process to test ideas in education for youth employment programming before scaling up for the next strategic period. Central to our overall approach throughout this process and in actual programming will be the active involvement and participation of youth themselves in influencing decisions and actions that affect their lives.

Working to improve opportunities for children in youth and to actually achieve results at scale requires strong coordination and partnerships. Therefore, we will continue to strengthen and build new partnerships at local, district, and national levels to share knowledge, influence others and build capacity. Additionally, with innovative ways of working, we will improve documentation and sharing of best practices in our program interventions as evidence-based data to be used in achieving change for young people at a wider scale.

Expected scale: Education activities will be further developed in Pujehun and Kailahun districts to expand from 2 and 8, and gradually cover all chiefdoms in the districts (12 and 14 respectively) and in 9 urban/peri-urban areas of Freetown, consolidating an integrated approach to the development of the 3 thematic priorities in locations where Save the Children also has health and protection programmes. We will also explore opportunities to further expand our programme target areas to new districts if our programmes in the three districts are well established and consolidates and if there could be capacity and opportunities to expand further. At national level, we will engage in capacity-building with the MEST and joint advocacy with other agencies, in particular the Education for All Sierra Leone Coalition on teachers' training, education financing and other areas of policy influencing targeting the fulfilment of children's right to quality education.

Target Population: Direct beneficiaries: 30,000 children and 4200 adults (members of school committees, teachers and other adults)

Indirect beneficiaries: 1.1 mill. children and 1.4 mill. adults

Total: 1.13 mill. children and 1.44mill. adults

Estimated Cost: £7mill.

2.3. Thematic Priority – Child Protection

Goal: By 2014, children in remote and marginalized urban and rural areas of Sierra Leone will be better protected from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect through good quality prevention and response interventions within a strong child protection system.

Objective 1: The national level elements of a child protection system are strengthened through the development and roll out of a national child protection strategy, improvements to the legal/policy framework and the functioning and resourcing of government structures for protecting children.

Objective 2: Increased access to, and utilisation of, quality government structures and services at district and community-level, that prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, reaching 40,000 children directly and 200,000 children indirectly in marginalised urban areas of Freetown and rural districts of Kailahun and Pujehun.

Objective 3: Increased levels of community protection for children through a change in duty bearers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards and in support of children's right to protection, and increased resilience of children to violence and abuse, reaching 40,000 children and 25,000 adults directly and 200,000 children and 250,000 adults indirectly in marginalised urban areas of Freetown and rural districts of Kailahun and Pujehun.

Target groups: The target group is children ranging in age from 5-17 who experience or are at risk of experiencing violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. Of these children, the most vulnerable are children from very poor families, children without adequate care (including children on the move), disabled children, adolescent girls and children living in marginalized rural and urban areas who are excluded from protection services.

Rationale: Violations of children's right to protection are persistent and widespread and include the worst forms of violence and abuse: physical violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, harmful traditional practices (including child marriage and FGM), child labour, child migration and trafficking. A Save the Children study in the Freetown slums found that sexual abuse and child rape topped the list of gross violence against children in their communities, followed closely by physical abuse and violence.⁸ The MICS study of 2005 shows that 27% of women were first married before age 15, while 62% of women were first married before age 18. This same study indicates that 94% of women aged 15 to 49 years are members of a secret societies that practice FGC/M and 34% of daughters of women aged 15 to 49 years are also members⁹. Almost half the children in Sierra Leone (48% according to the MICS survey)¹⁰ aged 5 to 14 years old are engaged in some form of labour¹¹.

The child protection programme has chosen to focus on strengthening child protection systems as the most effective means of reaching all vulnerable children, especially those living in marginalized urban and rural areas with limited or no access to protection services. Within the systems strengthening

⁸ The Daily Realities and Hidden Truths Children Face in Slum Communities; Emily Coinco for Save the Children 2007.

⁹ GoSL/UNICEF MICS 2005

¹⁰ UNICEF 2005a

¹¹ The common definition of child labour is at least one hour of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week for ages 5-11; and at least 14 hours of economic work or 28 hours of domestic work per week for ages 12-14.

approach, interventions will focus particularly on supporting the development and roll out of a national Child Protection strategy for the MSWGCA and partners; influencing the legal/policy framework at national and District levels; strengthening referral pathways and the child friendliness of services in our operational areas; influencing changes in people's knowledge, attitudes and practices with regards to children and child protection; advocating for adequate and appropriate resources to be invested in child protection (both at national and district levels); and advocating for the establishment of a resourced and independent national oversight and monitoring mechanism for children (i.e. the National Commission for Children described in the CRA).

Within the framework of strengthening child protection systems, the Child Protection programme will place particular emphasis on the prevention and response of sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA), gender based violence (GBV), teenage pregnancy, and harmful traditional practices (HTP) (particularly early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)). The programme will also expand its work on children on the move, in line with SC's Child Protection Initiative under the focus area of children without appropriate care. The overall strategic goal of care interventions within the CPI is: *by 2015 16.5 million children without appropriate care and their families, including children on the move, will benefit from good quality preventive and/or remedial interventions within an improved child protection system.*¹² Some research has already been conducted by Save the Children as to the nature of this problem in Sierra Leone, but there is room for further research and programmatic interventions aiming at preventing forced and unsafe movement of children and ensuring that children who move are protected. This will contribute to the overall CPI strategic objective on children without appropriate care by strengthening preventive and remedial interventions for children on the move, within an improved child protection system. Because children on the move is a focus of the CPI, technical support and fundraising opportunities may be available for the Sierra Leone Child Protection program to expand in this thematic area.

Key obstacles to realisation of children's rights to protection include:

- Lack of overall strategic vision and plan guiding the child protection sector in Sierra Leone;
- Weaknesses in the existing child protection system, including gaps in the legal framework; limited coordination between line ministries and agencies responsible for children's issues; shortage of human and financial resources within the MSWGCA; poor general awareness about child protection and welfare; and lack of reliable data and poor information management;
- Limitations of structures and services to prevent and respond to child protection issues (in particular in remote and marginalized communities) and limited technical, financial and logistics capacity of those structures that do exist to provide quality services to prevent and respond to child protection issues;
- Poverty and economic insecurity of families which leads to breakdown of families, inadequate care, exploitation and increased high risk behaviour of children;
- Deep rooted traditional beliefs and practices that are harmful to children, do not promote their best interest and limit participation in decision making affecting their lives;
- Acceptability and prevalence of children living in extended care situations (*Men Pikin*). These children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.
- Impunity for perpetrators of violations of children's right to protection – lack of follow up and action and widespread "compromise" of cases.

¹² CPI Priority Area Strategy 2010-15: Children Without Appropriate Care

General programming approach: Within the framework of the Child Rights programming Approach and the Theory of Change as the overall programming approach the Child Protection program in Sierra Leone adopts promoting child protection systems as its approach.

The child rights programming approach guides us to work with the government to prevent and respond to child protection concerns, support policy development & improved legislation, and advocate for more resources for child protection. This approach also includes community mobilisation, capacity building of communities and families and providing support to children's organizations and activities. The theory of change emphasizes our work with and for children, including through Children's Clubs, the Children's Forum Network and other child led groups, facilitating direct service provision for children, supporting child led advocacy, and strengthening partnerships to achieve results at scale.

Promoting child protection systems is believed to be a pre-condition for achieving a sustainable and lasting positive impact in the lives of children. A national child protection system is widely considered to consist of laws and policies that protect children, a central government coordination mechanism for child protection, effective regulation and monitoring of child protection standards, and a committed workforce with relevant competencies and mandates.

Moving forward, Child Protection interventions and approaches will be increasingly mainstreamed throughout Save the Children's other programmes (i.e. Education, Newborn and Child Survival and CRG). In order to ensure this, the Child Protection programme will work with other sectors to ensure that all staff and partners are equipped with basic Child Protection skills and can recognize the linkages between their programmes and child protection. Finally, in the early stages of this country strategy, those aspects of child rights governance (CRG) which have traditionally been "housed" under the Child Protection programme will be disaggregated and developed into a separate thematic programme plan. This will involve identifying and reporting on CRG interventions included in the current Child Protection TPP and ensuring that the next Child Protection TPP (2012-14) is linked to but separate from a CRG TPP (to be developed).

An advocacy strategy and action plan will be developed by the Child Protection programme in 2011. This will guide the Child Protection programme, and will incorporate local and national advocacy priorities, particularly those in line with the CPI advocacy objectives. It is expected that advocacy in child protection will focus on some of the following areas: promoting child protection systems and promoting more sustained and long term funding for Child Protection, both by government and by donors. Specific advocacy objectives related to SEA, HTP and children on the move will also be developed.

Key activities will include:

- Support the MSWGCA to develop and roll out its child protection strategy;
- Work with the CRC Sierra Leone at national and district level to influence the content of the legal framework for strengthened protection of children;
- Strengthen community based and District level referral pathways and the child friendliness of service providers in our operational areas;

- Develop and implement activities to influencing changes in people's knowledge, attitudes and practices towards children, child protection, sexual abuse and exploitation, HTP and sexual and reproductive health issues (using learning from the CP KAP survey implemented in 2010);
- Strengthen community structures and community leaders with a view of improving community protection of children;
- Strengthen work with child-led groups and expand membership with a focus on the most vulnerable children (with a focus on lifeskills education and conflict resolution);
- Conduct further research in order to develop specific project ideas and develop proposals to address issues facing children on the move;
- Strengthen coordination with other Child Protection agencies with a view of improving holistic service delivery to child survivors of abuse and potentially entering into partnerships and/or consortia for specific programmes.

Expected scale: Currently, the Child Protection programme covers 6 Chiefdoms in Kailahun District, 2 Chiefdoms in Pujehun District and 6 urban slum communities in Freetown. During these four years, the Child Protection Programme will increase coverage in Kailahun and Pujehun Districts to eventually cover all Chiefdoms in both Districts. This will happen in a phased expansion. In Freetown, the child protection programme will aim also to expand, in line with proposed expansion of the Education and Newborn and Child Survival programmes. We will also explore opportunities to further expand the programme beyond the present target areas. Nationally, Save the Children will continue to be a leading Child Protection agency through our support to the MSWGCA to strengthen the child protection system.

Target Population:

Direct beneficiaries:	46,000 children and 28,000 adults
Indirect beneficiaries:	250,000 children and 300,000 adults
Total:	296,000 children and 328,000 adults

Estimated Cost: £2.7 mill.

2.4. Thematic Priority – Child Rights Governance

Goal: By 2014, children's rights in Sierra Leone will be fulfilled through the Government meeting its obligation to monitor and implement children's rights and a strong civil society, including children, holding the Government to account for the fulfilment of children's rights.

Objective 1: Strengthen State institutions and mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of children's rights.

Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and Coalitions to promote and advocate for children's rights and to hold the government and other duty bearers accountable for the promotion and protection of all rights of children.

Objective 3: Strengthen children's capacity to organize themselves and promote their rights.

Target groups: The target group is all children in Sierra Leone; approximately 3.1 million (50% of the population are said to be under 18).

Rationale: Sierra Leone is one of the worst places in the world to be a child. Children's rights, as described in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) and its domesticated version, the Sierra Leone Child Rights Act (CRA 2007), are violated at all levels. All of Save the Children's interventions in Sierra Leone aim to fulfil the rights of children. Some of the work which has been done to this end through existing Child Protection, Education and Health programmes include areas which fall within the framework of child rights governance (CRG). Though it has not necessarily been described as such, Save the Children in Sierra Leone has significant experience in CRG, including:

- *Child Rights monitoring:* conducting studies and research on the situation of children's rights; developing alternative reports to the UN CRC and its Optional Protocols and providing inputs to the Universal Periodic Review process; working with the government to improve the collection and management of data on children; working with Coalitions of civil society actors; and conducting research and advocacy on financing for children.
- *Strengthening national systems:* contributing to legal and policy change to strengthen the national framework in line with the UN CRC; working to make services more child friendly; and advocating for the establishment of an independent ombudsperson for children.
- *Building awareness and capacity:* conducting awareness raising on child rights for communities and children; strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to promote and advocate for children's rights; and supporting child led groups to organize themselves and promote child rights.

In order to build on this experience and further expand our CRG work, Save the Children is including CRG as a specific thematic area in this country strategy. CRG is expected to cut across the CP, NCS and Education programmes and thereby strengthen and add value to them. Practically, expanding our CRG work will include: identifying and disaggregating existing CRG work from other programme sectors; developing an explicit CRG Thematic Programme Plan (TPP), against which achievements in the area of CRG will be monitored and reported; strengthening links with the CRG Initiative at the global level and with other countries implementing CRG programmes; and seeking out additional program ideas and funding opportunities for CRG work.

Sierra Leone has been identified as a priority country for the CRG initiative. Furthermore, strong ties exist between the Sierra Leone country program and Save the Children Denmark - the lead member country in the CRG global initiative. As such, it is expected that technical and financial support and learning and sharing opportunities will be available to support Sierra Leone expand its CRG programming; this will be explored further in the coming years.

Nationally, Save the Children enjoys good relations with the relevant line ministries responsible for implementing children's rights. As such, we are well placed to advocate and lobby for changes in the national legal/policy framework and support in strengthening of national systems to implement child rights. Further, Save the Children is an important member of a number of national and district level Coalitions responsible for influencing policy change and monitoring and reporting on the government's progress with regards to the implementation of child rights. Finally, Save the Children is working at the local level with community members and children's groups to support the promotion of child rights education.

Internally, Save the Children has capacity to develop its CRG programming through the leadership of the CP Advisor and the Learning and Development Coordinator (who is responsible for leading on a number

of cross cutting themes, civil society and partnership and child rights programming, both of which are highly relevant for CRG). The details of how CRG work will be managed and implemented will be developed during the coming months.

Key obstacles to realisation of children’s rights include:

- The absence of effective mechanisms for coordinating government policies and programmes to fulfil children’s rights;
- A lack of awareness of or misunderstanding and resistance about the concept of children’s rights and the Child Rights Act “*The CRA is spoiling our children*”;
- Limited capacity of civil society organizations and coalitions in terms of governance, organizational capacity and capacity to promote and defend children’s rights;
- Challenging political environment for accessing information and civil society involvement at all levels of policy making;
- Limited availability of reliable data on issues concerning children;
- Children’s rights are not prioritized by the Government of Sierra Leone – human development and social protection are under-prioritized in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II (PRSP II), which is the main policy document guiding the GoSL’s agenda;
- Both internally (within Save the Children) and externally (within the GoSL), child rights governance is perceived as a child protection issue, this limits buy in and support from all relevant actors;
- Children’s groups are generally limited in terms of inclusiveness and representativeness of wider (and particularly more vulnerable) children.

General programming approach: The CRG programme will include the following core components, in line with the global CRG initiative: 1) work with the government to support the development of responsive government performance, transparency of decision making and accountability mechanisms for the realization of children’s rights; 2) work with civil society (including children) to support an active and well organized civil society in support of children’s rights as a counterbalance to governmental action. Work with the government will include working with the different relevant line ministries to strengthen systems to implement children’s rights. This will include supporting improved data collection and management, training government service providers at different levels to be child friendly, and supporting the establishment of an independent Ombudsperson for children’s issues (namely the National Commission for Children).

Work with civil society will be guided by Save the Children Sierra Leone’s *Partnership and Civil Society Development Strategy*. We will focus on developing the capacity of civil society partners in technical areas as well as in organizational development. We will work with civil society coalitions focused on different child rights issues to influence policy and improvements to the legal framework as well as to monitor and report on the government’s progress with regards to fulfilling children’s rights. We will also focus on supporting child led groups to become more inclusive and representative of the heterogeneity of children in Sierra Leone and to be equipped to organize themselves to effectively promote children’s rights. CRG work will cut across other programme areas (i.e. Child Protection, Newborn and Child Survival and Education), and is therefore expected to strengthen and add value to them. Advocacy in CRG will focus on encouraging the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) to follow through on its commitments made in response to the progress reviews of the UN CRC (reviewed in 2007), its Optional

Protocols (reviewed in 2009) and the child rights issues highlighted in the Universal Periodic Review (reviewed in 2011). Advocacy will also focus on encouraging the GoSL to submit its first report to the African Committee of Experts (on progress on the ACRWC) and to submit upcoming reports to the Committee on the UN CRC.

Key activities will include:

- Support the Child Rights Coalition of Sierra Leone (CRC SL) to implement its 2011-14 Strategic Plan (focusing on actions to strengthen policy influence, monitoring and reporting, coalition strengthening and child participation);
- Support the Education for All Coalition (EFA Coalition) to implement its Strategic Plan 2010-2013;
- Work with the CRC SL to develop alternative reports to the UN CRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the UPR;
- Work with partner organizations (in particular IRC and UNICEF) to support the MSWGCA to develop of an information management system for data on children;
- Conduct research on financing for children to be used as the basis of future advocacy to increase the budget allocation to the MSWGCA;
- Conduct capacity building of civil society organizations and coalitions in both organizational development/strengthening and child rights advocacy and promotion;
- Support child led groups (i.e. Children’s Clubs, School Advocacy Teams, Child Health Clubs) to organize themselves and promote child rights.

Expected scale: The CRG work has the potential to impact all children in Sierra Leone, in particular through improvements in the national legal and policy framework. Save the Children will continue to work with three line ministries (MSWGCA, MEST and MOHS) to strengthen the national systems to deliver children’s rights. Save the Children will also work with and strengthen three national level civil society Coalitions (and their district level networks) to influence policy and monitor the government’s progress on its responsibility to fulfil children’s rights; and will work with child led groups in all Chiefdoms of Kailahun District, Pujehun District and in 9 urban slum communities to support them to organize and promote child rights education.

Target Population:	Direct beneficiaries:	20,000 children and 5,000 adults
	Indirect beneficiaries:	3.1 million children and 100,000 adults
	Total:	3, 1 million children and 105,000 adults
Estimated Cost:		£600,000

3. Focus, Scale and Risks

3.1. Linkages

In line with the Theory of Change, Save the Children will **be the voice** of children in Sierra Leone by speaking on and for children’s issues in whichever forum and with whichever stakeholders we engage with. More importantly we will be empowering children to voice their own issues and concerns, both at

national and district levels. We will continue to develop our programmes and interventions and together with partners and beneficiaries find **innovative solutions** to development and child rights challenges in our areas of operation that can serve as basis for further development and replication country wide **achieving results at scale**. Through all our programmes and interventions, whether direct implementation, advocacy or policy change, we will **build partnerships** with civil society organisations, including child-led organisations, government institutions, academic and research institutions, media and private companies as we go along.

Partnerships and civil society development: We will develop sound and mutual partnerships of high quality that contribute to strengthening civil society organisations in Sierra Leone. A Partnership and Civil Society Strategy has been developed following the timeframe of the country strategy. Implementing this strategy, we will strengthen and support our civil society partners' technical and organisational capacity for them to perform their role as change agents within their society and carry out advocacy work, constituency building and actions targeting children directly. We will equally strengthen our own capacity in working in partnerships with civil society organisations in order to expand in scope and scale facilitating change for children.

Accountability to Children: We need to ensure that whilst we adopt policies and speak on behalf of children locally and nationally, we develop mechanisms to ensure that our own work and decisions are informed by children and that children can hold us to account on what action is taken or not taken in their name. Strengthening the Child Rights Programming approach, we will empower children and build capacity of staff and partners to involve children at various stages of our programme cycle. Diversity and inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized children and building of capacity will be principles in all aspects of the intervention. We will establish an accountability framework in accordance with the HAP standards on accountability and quality management which Save the Children has signed up to globally and we will cooperate with other stakeholders and participate in forums established to improve on accountability in the various sectors we engage in and within the NGO community in Sierra Leone.

Child Rights Governance: Save the Children is acting and will continue to act as a lead agency promoting child rights; in the areas of protection, health and education we will continue to support civil society organisations and coalitions including child-led organisations to influence the decision-making process and development of longer term policies and strategies which respect and promote children's rights in Sierra Leone. We will continue to take the lead in the implementation of the Child Rights Act (2007), which is the legal framework upholding all the rights of children, including the right to education, protection, survival and health, in Sierra Leone. A holistic approach will be explored to establish and develop the new Child Rights Governance thematic programme and become part of the GRG global initiative. Child rights encompass all rights of children; including health, education and protection and as such an integrated approach will be adopted mainstreaming CRG in the country programme within the next three years and finding innovative ways of working together.

Livelihoods: Rates of malnutrition are significant and although this is linked to the scarcity of viable livelihoods options, it is evident that malnutrition among children is also related to protection issues, such as the decline of traditional family and cultural values (especially in the urban areas), very young teenage mothers with the stigma relating to that, poor health awareness and low levels of literacy. Poor

livelihoods also affect children's access to education and health. Options to create an integrated approach to livelihoods encompassing all three programmes will be explored in the coming years.

Teenage pregnancy: The link between newborn and child survival and maternal mortality and child protection issues such as SEA and HTP will be further developed in programming and advocacy and campaigns. It is SC SL's strong assertion that there is a direct link between the child protection problems faced by girls and child and maternal mortality: girls who are sexually abused or exploited often end up pregnant. Early motherhood is commonly a death sentence for the girl and her baby. As such, SC believes that child and maternal mortality can be reduced by preventing the child protection problems that commonly result in girls becoming pregnant and to make it more likely that those girls who do become pregnant will safely deliver and be able to care for a healthy baby.

3.2. General Advocacy areas

The following priority areas of general advocacy are essential for the fulfilment of all children's rights in Sierra Leone and cut across all Save the Children's four thematic areas. Also, they cannot be addressed successfully by Save the Children alone and we recognize the need for strong constituency building and partnerships/consortiums to be strengthened with other INGOS, local civil society coalitions and donor agencies to address these priorities.

Local Governance: Save the Children will engage in forums of cooperation with various INGOS and local civil society coalitions to engage in joint advocacy efforts for alignment of legislation and clarity of roles and responsibilities between the decentralized structures (council and ministry offices at district level) and central line ministries, recognising that the current situation is leading to inertia in progress and poor accountability towards the general population. Also, we will advocate for and embark on strong capacity development processes for the decentralized structures; both with other INGOS and among donors.

Civil Society Development & coordination: Save the Children will utilize its membership, position and support to various civil society coalitions (Health for All, Education for All and Child Rights coalitions) to advocate for further civil society involvement in policy change and in the decision-making process. We will promote and advocate for the general improvement of a vibrant and healthy civil society environment in Sierra Leone as a prerequisite for deepening democracy and fulfilling children's rights. It is important that civil society organisations including INGOS coordinate their efforts in order to minimize duplication and increase effectiveness. Save the Children will promote increased coalition-building, networking, accountability and coordination among NGOs and civil society organisations in line with the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action on harmonization and effectiveness of development aid and as such continue to take the lead in and influence sectoral working groups established to implement the GoSL Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Agenda for Change) and in the various working group for the implementation and monitoring of the Free Health Care Initiative.

3.3. Geographical Focus

Focus Districts: Kailahun, Pujehun, Western Area (Greater Freetown)

There is little up-to-date reliable and disaggregated data available on conditions at district level. However, evidence from the PRSP process indicates that Kailahun and Pujehun are among the poorest districts in the country. Kailahun and Pujehun are the districts most affected by the war. Taking into consideration their geographical position sharing borders with Liberia and Guinea, Kailahun and Pujehun remain vulnerable due to the influx of populations that may cross the border in case of instability in these two countries. Save the Children will in the next three years be operating in the entire district of Kailahun expanding from 8 to 14 chiefdoms implementing all the core thematic programmes; Newborn and Child Survival, Education, Child Protection and the new cross-cutting thematic area; Child Rights Governance. In Pujehun, we will be expanding from 2 to 12 chiefdoms as the Newborn and Child Survival programme and the Child Protection programme will be covering the whole district. Education is still establishing its modalities of work in Pujehun, but is not likely to be expanding in the same pace as the two other programmes at district level. Rather, the programme will increase its system approach at the national level, especially in the area of teacher education and institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Education at national and district levels.

Although Freetown is the capital city of Sierra Leone, extreme poverty and child rights violations prevail here which is the reason for Save the Children in the coming years will be expanding all its thematic programmes into 9 urban slums of the city from its current 6. Particular challenges concerning children's rights is the breakdown of family and cultural values leading to extreme levels of sexual violations, child labour and exploitation. Due to a particular deplorable sanitation situation in these overpopulated slum communities, a water and sanitation project is implemented in these areas where Save the Children is part of a consortium funded by DFID.

We will also be exploring opportunities to expand our focus beyond the above three geographic areas and move into new districts or explore consortium and constituency building for a broader national scope. This is with the intention of scaling up and replicating successful interventions to benefit more children and increase profile and visibility of Save the Children in Sierra Leone.

3.4. General nature and scale

The Sierra Leone Programme has recently gone through a major organisational restructuring process focussing on improving efficiency and quality of programming and operations. This process is still being consolidated and is lead by a relatively new SMT. We are now feeling confident and ready to consolidate the changes and venture into the new areas of nutrition, livelihoods, empowerment for youth employment under education and in establishing the cross-cutting programme of child rights governance. We also feel equipped to venture into a still larger geographical coverage in our operational districts and expand our funding base. By expanding in portfolio of work to encompass both rural and urban areas and four thematic areas with new cross-cutting elements like partnerships and civil society development and accountability to children, Save the Children will be further strengthened in playing a leading role at the national and district levels influencing policy analysis and development affecting children in Sierra Leone.

3.4.1. Organisational Capacity Development

We will seek to strengthen our organisational capacity in various areas; with the newly established Learning & Development unit and a strengthened focus on technical expertise in each thematic area, our *learning mechanisms* will be strengthened and documented in an overall M&E framework for

further strategic thinking and quality Child Rights Programming. Experience and **best practices in policy influence and programming will be documented** and serve as important evidence to influence national and international debates through Save the Children's international advocacy concerning countries that share characteristics with many of the poorest states as well as fragile states – such as extreme poverty, recovery from long-term conflict, appalling service delivery, endemic corruption and weak governance.

Staff levels of around 110 of which 10 are expatriate is expected to continue some time to come. However, with a more partnership oriented and sustainable rights-based approach, profiles and number of staff needed will be reviewed in the course of this country strategy including the implementation of a new Partnership and Civil Society Development Strategy. We will seek ways to strengthen our **Human Resource Development** in various ways, including significantly increasing capacity development opportunities, with the purpose of increasing staff motivation and commitment at all levels and contributing to retention of qualified staff. Particular attention will be put on strengthening middle-managers capacity with the aim of making the organisation more efficient, but also with the longer-term goal of gradually nationalising more senior positions and strengthening leadership capacity in Sierra Leone.

3.4.2. Target and growth

The programme will expand reaching about 400,000 children and 320,000 adults directly and 3, 1 million children and 1.4 million adults indirectly. These targets are based on current population statistics in Sierra Leone (government and UN), however very unreliable and our calculations in relation to Total Reach is based on our own established figures in our operational communities.

3.5. Programme Funding

Expected funding needed for the four years strategy will be about £18 million. Save the Children Denmark continues to be an important contributor to Save the Children Sierra Leone programme in Education and Child Protection and to the cross-cutting organisational initiative of the Learning & Development Unit. Another major and stable funding source is the private donor; Mr. Michael Edwards, singlehandedly funding a major part of the Newborn and Child Survival programme and parts of the Education programme. Other donors include UNICEF, DFID (WASH), EC, Mr. & Mrs. Lawes (private donors).

A **fundraising strategy** will be developed in 2011 and implemented during the course of this strategy, embarking on strengthening links and opportunities within the new Save the Children structure; strengthening the strong partnership established with Save the Children Denmark in Sierra Leone. Initiatives to work strategically in documenting best practices and building relationships to attract other Save the Children members will be explored within the new global structure of One Save the Children. A major funding for Child Protection is secured and will take effect in 2012 from the Save the Children Denmark Christmas Calendar project. Relationships will be strengthened with the private donor; Mr. Edwards and strategies to maintain this substantial funding will be explored. Comic Relief is a major new opportunity currently being negotiated which, if successful, will significantly change the scope and scale of our education programme, the proportion of the thematic programmes and our influence within education in Sierra Leone. Further opportunities with UNICEF, DFID and the EC will be consciously sought as their strategies in Sierra Leone fall in line with the thematic priorities of the Save the Children programme.

3.6. Management of external risks

Recruiting, retaining and building capacity of suitably, qualified staff: A strategy for gradually reducing number of expatriate staff by strengthening capacity of local staff, in particular middle managers will be developed as part of a vision to make the country programme more sustainable and contribute to capacity development of the human resource base in Sierra Leone. An Extended Management Team including middle managers such as programme, field and district managers will be established as part of this strategy. Retention of qualified staff is a focus of attention and we will ensure to continuously analyse factors of motivation, work environment, terms and conditions and staff development opportunities as part of retaining good staff.

Filling the funding gaps: In order to realize our goals for children in Sierra Leone within the above mentioned thematic areas of priority, the country programme needs a strategic and long-term funding base for the next three years. A fundraising strategy will be developed and reviewed during the course of this strategy to continuously explore relevant funding opportunities and ensure a sustainable approach. The new global structure of Save the Children will also be explored for this purpose by documenting our good work and thereby approaching and attracting new member countries.

Managing and operating within the political climate of the presidential and parliamentary election 2012: At national and district level, political campaigning is already beginning to affect the situation for development. This is both an opportunity and a risk for Save the Children. We can utilize the election process to increase attention and focus on children's issues and rights and we can seek influence with politicians who want to gain public popularity. On the other hand, all delivery of government services including health, protection and education will be heavily affected and hindered by a high level of campaigning and hidden agendas for 'owning' development projects by politicians. Manipulation of the general public for easily bought messages will also be attempted. Risk of conflict is high, both between political party supporters and also within traditional domains (chieftaincy ruling houses) which is highly politicised. Save the Children will seek strategic cooperation with other INGOs and local civil society organisations to influence the political agenda and to sensitize the population about demanding their rights and demanding accountability in times of election. We will promote children's and women's rights, including an increased number of women running for parliament. We will also ensure a staff and partner code of conduct is developed and implemented in times of campaigning to ensure neutrality of the organisation; this includes utilization of Save the Children assets and logo.

Conflicts in the sub-region: The West-African sub-region has been highly unstable during the past couple of years with various civil strife, post-election conflicts and conflicts derived from economic crises and increased poverty. Although some of these conflicts seem to have been partly solved, there is still a high risk-factor. Our new Emergency Preparedness Plan will further analyse sub-regional conflict as a threat and ensure that plans are in place to enable us continuously analyse the situation and development abatement strategies. Conflict in one country in the sub-region has previously led to unrest in other countries including Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the economic consequence of instability can affect the economic situation in the whole sub-region; an example is Ivory Coast constituting about 40% of the regions' economic activity. We are yet to feel the consequence of the economic crises in Ivory Coast as a result of the post-election conflict.

One Save the Children: In Sierra Leone, we see the new global structure of One Save the Children as an opportunity as well as a risk. The opportunities that exist in the new structure will be further explored; attracting more interested partners to support the Sierra Leone programme, utilizing different members' strengths and focus for further strengthening our own capacity and learning from other country programmes. However, there are also risks attached to the new structure; maintenance and development of our good and cordial relationships with supporting members such as Save the Children Denmark in the new structure; our ability to compete for attention and support in a much tougher competitive environment where relationship building, networking skills, ability to document and show impact and organisational efficiency will be key skills and elements for the country programme to survive and grow within One Save the Children. In the next couple of years, we will continue to liaise with our current partners within Save the Children in order to prepare for this new situation and ensure that we gradually employ and/or develop the relevant capacities and strategies for organisational development and structure to align with the new situation. In the process of preparing to go live in 2013, we will engage fully in needed changes and processes to be prepared before we set off. We will analyse the lessons from others and from our own process in order to be as prepared as possible and in order to continue to learn from the process.