

OXFAM IN SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone is ranked 176 out of 177 countries on the UN's Human Development Index



THE SITUATION

Poverty is high in Sierra Leone: 57% live on less than \$1 a day; 74% live on less than \$2 a day. The country's tradition of high education standards has been eroded in the past two decades. Almost two thirds of the population are illiterate, though school attendance has gone up significantly since the end of the civil war, in 2002.

The rebellion caused massive population displacement and prevented the delivery of services to the countryside. Some recent progress has been made, including on food security, but reversing the damage is a long-term, costly task.

Sierra Leone has a high rate of maternal mortality (for every 100,000 live births, 1,800 women die). Women are among the most marginalised members of society in

Sierra Leone; and women's economic and literacy rights are the least discussed and developed. Female literacy stands at just 24%.

Poor operational and maintenance arrangements mean most urban water supply schemes in Sierra Leone are not functioning properly. The water supply coverage for urban areas, in particular the capital Freetown, is about 50%. Sewerage infrastructure is confined to Freetown, where it is limited, old and inadequate to meet the ever-increasing demand.

In August 2007, Sierra Leone held its second election since the end of the war, and the first since the departure of the UN peace-keeping force. Observers considered the elections free and fair.

IN NUMBERS*

200,000
total people helped



Photo: Aubrey Wade/Oxfam

HOW OXFAM IS HELPING

In Sierra Leone, since 2004 Oxfam has been moving away from emergency relief towards a more development-orientated approach, which aims to seize some of the post-war opportunities. We focus on:

- Improving public health through better access to sustainable, safe and sufficient water sanitation and hygiene services
- Supporting the development of appropriate pro-poor water and sanitation policies, and decentralised implementation through modelling good practice in Kailahun, Koinadugu and Freetown
- Strengthening the capacity of women's networks to raise awareness of women's property and literacy rights, and to advocate for women's greater participation in decision-making on property ownership
- Improving women small-scale producers' status in agricultural product value chains

Left: Ashma Turay attends a vaccination clinic with her daughter. Free maternal healthcare, lobbied for by Oxfam was introduced in April 2011

WATER AND SANITATION

Oxfam has been working on public health, water and sanitation in rural Kailahun District since 2002 and in urban Freetown since 2010. We are now working through local partners, government and communities to improve poor communities' health, and to contribute to the reduction of poverty in the 120 poorest communities, where 70,000 people will benefit. We aim to strengthen the decentralisation process of water and sanitation service delivery.

We are providing water points and latrines and developing water sources. We facilitate access to water supplies and sanitation in institutions, schools and Peripheral Health Units, and we teach communities about hygienic practices and behaviour change.

Our urban water, sanitation and hygiene

programme (led by Oxfam and implemented through by four NGOs: Action Contre La Faim, Concern Worldwide, GOAL and Save the Children) is focussed on access to safe water and sanitation, and promoting proper hygiene practices in urban Freetown. The major aim is to improve the health of the most vulnerable people in urban Freetown, by supporting and capacity building the Government and local people, delivering water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, disaster risk reduction and advocacy for pro-poor water, sanitation and hygiene services.

We're also working to improve people's health status and reduce poverty in the 120 poorest communities of Kailahun District, by providing water points and latrines and developing water sources. We've constructed 140 hand dug wells, 30 rain

water harvest tanks, 12 spring boxes and three gravity-fed water systems in targeted schools, primary health units and communities.

Another Oxfam rural school project funded by UNICEF worked in 18 schools and five Peripheral Health Units in Kailahun District to deliver integrated water, sanitation and hygiene services to school children and the community. We completed 21 water points (16 in schools and 5 in the targeted Primary Health Units) benefiting 5,600 people; we completed 37 blocks of VIP latrines in 16 schools, and 5 blocks in the five targeted Primary Health Units; 360 school children took part in hygiene clubs; and we trained 36 teachers in public health promotion.



Photo: Vince Haig/Oxfam

A woman uses a water pump constructed by Oxfam in Freetown



Photo: Jane Gibbs/Oxfam

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Many women lack the power and education to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. We aim to transform the balance of power between women and men, especially with regards to participation and representation of women in decision-making processes at local governance level.

We're working with our partners to strengthen and link women-led efforts, and to promote women's property ownership and literacy rights. Oxfam's

work on this issue will enable 130 women leaders to be actively involved in awareness-raising activities and advocacy work at community level; two district women's networks to be in place in Kailahun and Koinadugu and actively involved in organising and supporting advocacy work at district level; and the launch of a national campaign focusing on property and literacy rights, teaching at least 50,000 people about women's property and literacy rights and its

ENHANCING HOUSEHOLDS' PRODUCTIVITY AND RESILIENCE IN KAILAHUN

We're contributing to food security and poverty reduction in Sierra Leone by increasing and improving domestic food production, and people's capacity to respond to disasters.

We're supporting women small-scale producers in agricultural product value chains of the Kailahun district. We're working to improve livelihood skills in local agro-industry, to overcome gender barriers and to improve literacy development.

With our support farmers' groups have begun to organise themselves into co-operatives to ensure collective participation and inclusion in the value

chain. Cultivated land has increased by 4,000 acres.

Last year 3,440 bushels of rice were produced from the 180 bushels distributed, an increase of 8-10 bushels per acre since Oxfam's intervention. There has been a very large increase in the quantity of seeds requested and distributed to farmers, a large increase in the acreages cultivated, and a large increase in adaptation to new farming practices.

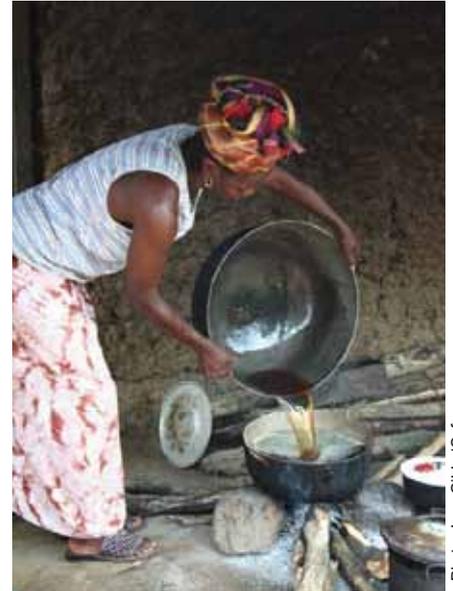


Photo: Jane Gibbs/Oxfam

A member of Gbanahun community demonstrates how to make soap using caustic soda and oil

STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES IN KOINADUGU DISTRICT

We're working to enhance the capacity and leadership of local councils and devolved ministries to ensure good water and sanitation governance practices, and the delivery of sustainable and fair water and sanitation services in Koinadugu District. We focus on putting integrated planning for increased access to water and sanitation services, the accountability and responsiveness of service providers, and

the provision of technical expertise for effective and small-scale community water and sanitation in 16 communities.

We helped organise an "Accountability Forum" as an opportunity for communities and service providers to work together to address key issues. The Forum also provided beneficiaries with the opportunity to hold service providers to account.

We've helped conduct training over 20 wards on water and sanitation monitoring and gender.

Our work here has contributed to the continuation of the Koinadugu "Joint Action Development Forum", where frank dialogue and synergy among water and sanitation stakeholders has increased.



Photo: Vince Haig/Oxfam

Oxfam staff test a water sample to check the acidity of the water