

Educate a Girl, Educate a Nation - Sierra Leone



Summary:

This project supports girls in Sierra Leone who are at risk of dropping out of school by providing scholarships and books / school supplies. The project also provides vocational training and business development opportunities. Traditionally, girls have been offered less educational opportunities than boys. Where family funds are limited, preference has been given to boys. Though attendance rates for boys and girls are almost equal at the primary education level, there is a high dropout rate for girls and their enrolment in secondary education is low with net a secondary school attendance rate at only 19 per cent. This project is helping to level the playing field by promoting and supporting the education of girls.

Challenge

According to UNICEF 2016 statistics, among youth 15-24 yrs in Sierra Leone, from 2009-2014, the literacy rate for males is 73% and that of girls is 56%. Secondary school participation from 2010-2014 puts male attendance at 40% and female at 35%. Only 54% of enrolled girls in Sierra Leone successfully complete their primary education. The greatest barriers to the on-going education of girls are school- related costs, poverty, sexual abuse, early pregnancies, gender-based violence, child marriage and cultural biases, all of which propagate the cycle of gender inequality. Girls have high dropout rates and consistently low enrollment in secondary school. Sierra Leone has one of the world's highest adolescent pregnancy rates, a phenomenon that is largely responsible for the high dropout rate among girls. Girls in Sierra Leone often get married as early as age 11, and more than 60 percent of girls throughout the country are married before

the age of 18. Early marriage further hinders these girls' abilities to pursue an education and gain independence. Shortages of facilities, supplies, and quality instructors have made it virtually impossible for all children to enroll in school, and a preference for boys' education remains dominant. Girls living in rural areas typically have the toughest time reaching secondary school level of schooling due to cultural beliefs that often discourage their participation. Girls are often instructed to stay home and perform domestic responsibilities while their brothers head to the classroom. Due to the insufficiency of social safety nets in Sierra Leone, girls from poor and marginalized families are denied access to basic education. They fall through the cracks ending up in dead-end, hopeless situations.

Solution

This project will provide scholarships for girls to ensure their continued education. Girl-mothers will be equipped with marketable skills and business startup funds to generate regular income to become self-sufficient. The project will also explore the factors that contribute to adolescent girls' economic empowerment and examine three main approaches – financial, employment, and life-skills and social support strategies. To empower girls towards a sound financial strategy, it is important to link workforce development and employment strategies with market needs and opportunities. This project will also be geared towards offering vocational training and employment opportunities and would include these initiatives to match market requirements and opportunities. It will provide quality training processes that build girls' technical and soft skills for self-reliance and also enlist the commitment of employers to hire them.

Long-term impact

By providing the needed support to continue and complete their education, girls will be able to break out of the vicious cycle that entraps unskilled and resource-poor girls. At-risk girls will become emancipated women when given the chance to be well-educated, and develop into useful citizens who are gainfully employed and self-sufficient. The project will explore the factors that contribute to adolescent girls' economic empowerment and examine among others, the main approaches of financial, employment, and life-skills and social support strategies.



Resources:

http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/SLE.pdf

<https://data.unicef.org/resources/harnessing-the-power-of-data-for-girls/>

http://www.developafrica.org/files/Enhanced_participation_of_women_in_development.pdf

http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Overarching_Layout_Web.pdf

<http://www.unfpa.org/news/african-presidents-urge-investment-youth-continent-sees-rare-demographic-opportunity>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/sep/19/why-are-63-million-girls-missing-out-on-education-podcast-transcript>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/out-of-school-children-un_us_57dfe748e4b08cb14096a687

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201609201194.html>



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Empowering lives in Africa so that they can better themselves, their communities and their nations

Develop Africa was established in 2006 and is a 501c3 non-profit organization is working to establish meaningful and sustainable development in Africa. Develop Africa was birthed out of the vision that human resource development is the key to improving nation building capacity in Africa. Develop Africa is involved in a range of programs in Africa supporting education, microfinance and small businesses, job skills / leadership development training etc.

Through training, scholarship, investment and partnerships Develop Africa is helping to develop Africa's people through the promotion of transformational education, resource development, investment training and strategic empowerment. Our premise is based on the notion that in order to change one's personal, national or organizational status there must necessarily be a "change in the thinking and processing pattern of the mind."

We envision an African continent fully developed in terms of its human and resource capacity, free from poverty; ignorance, and civil conflict and where the poorest and most vulnerable people become "leaders" and effectively manage their national resources.

We are involved in the following targeted activities:

- care for orphans
- job skills training
- microfinance / micro-lending and small business training
- scholarships
- books, school and teaching supplies
- basic computer training and computers
- mosquito nets, vitamin supplements, start up tool kits (such as sewing machines), school uniforms, Personal Protective Equipment for health workers etc.

Examples of specific activity: We provide -

- job skills training
- microfinance / micro-lending and small business training
- scholarships
- books, school and teaching supplies
- basic computer training and computers
- mosquito nets, vitamin supplements, start up tool kits (such as sewing machines), school uniforms etc.

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Sierra Leone- Full Country Profile available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sierra_Leone

Sierra Leone (ⁱ/sɪˈɛərə liˈoʊni, -liˈoʊn/),^[5] officially the **Republic of Sierra Leone**, is a country in [West Africa](#). It is bordered by [Guinea](#) on the north, [Liberia](#) in the south-east, and the [Atlantic Ocean](#) in the south-west. Sierra Leone has a [tropical climate](#), with a diverse environment ranging from [savannah](#) to [rainforests](#). Sierra Leone has a total area of 71,740 km² (27,699 sq mi)^[6] and a population of 7,075,641 (based on 2015 national census).^[1] Sierra Leone is divided into four geographical regions: the [Northern Province](#), [Eastern Province](#), [Southern Province](#) and the [Western Area](#), which are subdivided into [fourteen districts](#). [Freetown](#) is the capital, largest city and its economic and political centre. [Bo](#) is the second largest city. The other major cities are [Kenema](#), [Makeni](#), and [Koidu Town](#).

About sixteen [ethnic groups](#) inhabit Sierra Leone, each with its own language and customs. The two largest and most influential are the [Temne](#) and the [Mende people](#). The Temne are predominantly found in the north of the country, while the Mende are predominant in the south-east. Although English is the [official language](#) spoken at schools and government administration, the [Krio language](#) is the most widely spoken language across Sierra Leone and is spoken by 97% of the country's population. The Krio language unites all the different ethnic groups in the country, especially in their trade and social interaction with each other.

Sierra Leone is a predominantly [Muslim](#) country,^{[7][8][9]} though with an influential [Christian](#) minority.^[10] Sierra Leone is regarded as one of the most religiously tolerant nations in the world. Muslims and Christians collaborate and interact with each other peacefully. Religious violence is very rare in the country.

Sierra Leone has relied on mining, especially [diamonds](#), for its economic base. It is also among the largest producers of [titanium](#) and [bauxite](#), a major producer of [gold](#), and has one of the world's largest deposits of [rutile](#). Sierra Leone is home to the third-largest natural harbour in the world. Despite exploitation of this natural wealth, 70% of its people live in [poverty](#).^[11]

Sierra Leone became independent in 1961. [Government corruption](#) and mismanagement of the country's natural resources contributed to the [Sierra Leone Civil War](#) (1991 to 2002), which for more than a decade devastated the country. This proxy war left more than 50,000 people dead, much of the country's infrastructure destroyed, and over two million people displaced as [refugees](#) in neighbouring countries.

More recently, the [2014 Ebola outbreak](#) overburdened the weak healthcare infrastructure, leading to more deaths from medical neglect than Ebola itself. It created a [humanitarian crisis](#) situation

and a negative spiral of weaker economic growth. The country has an extremely low [life expectancy](#) at 57.8 years.^[10]

Sierra Leone is a member of many international organisations, including the [United Nations](#), the [African Union](#), the [Economic Community of West African States](#) (ECOWAS), the [Mano River Union](#), the [Commonwealth of Nations](#), the [African Development Bank](#), and the [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](#).