



CONSOLIDATING THE GAINS

The United Nations Joint Vision at Work in Sierra Leone

The United Nations Joint Vision is a part of the international community's response to the needs set out in Sierra Leone's national recovery strategy, the Agenda for Change. The UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone aims to enhance the UN's contribution to the recovery strategy by fully integrating all of its available assets and resources in the country into the following five key areas:

- Consolidation of peace and stability
- Integration of rural areas into the national economy
- Economic and social integration of the youth
- Equitable and affordable access to health
- Accessible and credible public services

United Nations Support to Economic and Social Integration of the Youth

(See page 4 for story)



Along with our many partners, through the Joint Vision, we help reducing the marginalization of the majority of youth without employment through:

- The development of large-scale programmes of public works, including labour-base road construction
- The establishment of training schemes for agriculture
- The support to technical and vocational education and training
- The creation of business development services
- The provision of small credit
- The operationalization and the development of the capacity of the National Youth Commission for greater youth national representation

10,300 young people have undertaken on-the-job training like this, working on constructing the feeder roads which are opening up rural communities all over Sierra Leone.

Photo: UNICEF/Olivier Asselin

Hearing the voice of the Youth



Photo: Olivier Bilder

Young people under the age of 25 make up 55% of the population in Sierra Leone. The way they chose to channel their energy will shape the nation's future direction. The views below on peace and security were gathered at a meeting in Makeni, Sierra Leone, during June 2011.

"It is good that Government of Sierra Leone has noticed us and made a lot of efforts for us."

"We need to be involved and considered in all decisions. They cant do it without us, they cant do it on their own. "

"Before they used to think of us as the problem-makers, now they see us as the problem-solvers."

"Instead of seeing youth as destructive, the government and the community now see us as productive. We must be seen as the solution, and not the problem."

"Youth are the ones who have the energy and the power to do the work and make a difference. We must just be given the chance."

"For community level development to happen, they must engage the youth. If all youth were to be guaranteed a job, there would be no violence or crime, because it wouldn't be needed anymore. "

"There is a lot of training of youth, especially vocational, nowadays, but it needs to expand. "

"We are the future of Sierra Leone. But we must also be seen as the present."

Indicators of progress

→ In 2009, the All Political Parties Youth Association was established

→ In 2010, the National Youth Commission was established

→ During 2009-2010, a medium-term national youth strategy has been developed and best practise on youth employed identified and disseminated

"For Sierra Leone to be able to reap the benefits of agriculture, tourism and natural wealth, transparency is crucial; transparency by both companies and government in order to maintain credibility, ensure efficient bureaucratic processes and equity and to provide a fair return for the government, the people and the companies investing the country"

The Honourable Henry Bellingham, United Kingdom Minister for Africa

Getting youth on the road to success...

Sierra Leone has the world's highest youth unemployment rate. Over 60 per cent of young people are unemployed, underemployed or in the informal economy. Integrating them into the economy requires innovative, large-scale and long-lasting solutions, with interventions especially needed in rural areas. Many new opportunities are being created through United Nations Joint Vision programmes, with some 10,300 young people involved. This feature story highlights the programmes' potential to transform their lives. A clear success story, it shows how, as individuals, they have experienced an average income increase of over 197 per cent, their food security has improved, and many more are attending school.



It's a hot and dusty Thursday morning on Aberdeen Road in the western part of Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, and Halima Kamara, 23, has just opened up her small street-side kiosk. Six months ago a lot changed when she got the kiosk as part of a UNDP-sponsored project aimed at employing and empowering youth.

Youth unemployment a record high

Remembering how it was before, Halima describes the difficulties of life for a youth in the capital, "I never had any food, did not have a job, was not able to go to school and was dependent on my relatives... I was miserable," she says looking down at her hands. The situation she described is not uncommon in a country with the highest youth unemployment rate in the world, with very low human capital, and where almost half of young people are illiterate. Lack of money had forced Halima to leave the business

Youth taking care of one another: through the network established among young franchisers they find mutual support from meeting to seek solutions to the problems they are experiencing in setting up their businesses. Photo: UNICEF/Olivier Asselin

school she had been attending; the only work she found was at her aunt's house. She explains her change of fortune, "My sister told me about the UN project. I applied with my business plan and was granted the training." Through the help of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), an NGO working in collaboration with UNDP, she has been able to start up her business.

...through Demand-Driven Support to Employment

Gaining skills for a viable future

First she gained her skills in business development, customer care and budgeting. A grant followed which enabled her to start out with a stall in Aberdeen. Today Halima has a micro-franchise, a mobile financial service which gives her a commission based on sales. In addition, she rents out video films. Business is picking up. "I am now able to pay the fees to go back to college," she says. Halima's new prosperity also allows her to fund the schooling of her siblings, a sister 12, and brother, 11. "I love being an entrepreneur," she says. "People respect me now. I have my own salary and many regular customers; and I have done it all on my own."

Networking and mutual help

An important part of the project is the network created by the youth involved, a group of about 20 young micro-franchisers. They meet every month to discuss their business problems and possible solutions. Each contributes a small amount to a savings pool used to help out members having financial difficulties. "We take care of each other," Halima says. Halima's plan is for her brother to work at the kiosk while she's getting her business diploma. "I am teaching him how to run it - but it is still my shop!" she says, laughing.

Shifting from supply- to demand-driven

About 400 youth, in four different districts of the country, have gone through the same training as Halima. Other UN-run labour-intensive projects, managed by ILO throughout Sierra Leone, are targeting over 10,000 youth with many gaining skills in construction and road-building. The aim is to shift from supply- to demand-driven support for youth employment. With the current programmes the UN is working to foster an environment where skills' training is directly linked to labour market demands.



After her change of fortune, Halima Kamara is confidently running her franchise businesses, including video rental, from the kiosk she got with the help of the NGO International Rescue Committee (IRC) Photo: UNICEF/Olivier Asselin

"Take young people's thoughts seriously"

In Makeni, Ibrahim Jalloh, the Bombali District Youth Leader, is addressing a youth meeting of representatives from 10 regional youth organizations. He emphasises the importance of investing in youth and stresses the role the community has to play, saying, "They, the entire community, must take young people's thoughts seriously. They cannot get Sierra Leone to develop without us."

Finally, recognition....

Jalloh is very positive about the focus on Sierra Leone's young people by the United Nations Joint Vision programmes and the Government's Agenda for Change. "We are finally being recognized. I notice efforts all over the country. I am looking forward to seeing it all coming together." "Youth must take part in all decision-making for change to happen. We are part of the solution - the problem-solvers, not the problem makers," Jalloh says. "Many challenges remain but Sierra Leone's youth have a bright future ahead."

Story from cover page:

In the outskirts of Binkolo, a couple of miles away from the city of Makeni, about 70 women and men are working with building one of the feeder road that will connect Mabanta junction with Mabanta village. It is one of several the projects in the area where feeder roads are used to connect villages to main roads and cities and improve the infrastructure in rural areas. As part of the United Nations Joint Vision push to decrease youth unemployment in Sierra Leone, high intensive labour methods are being used in order to create immediate employment opportunities for youth in rural communities. 475 local women and men have so far been skilled in construction with the support of the International Labour Organization, ILO, of which many have subsequently been contracted by larger companies active in construction, minerals and mining. Besides employing youth and giving them skills and training, feeder roads connect communities and enable local development through improved infrastructure.

About Sierra Leone

Whilst many country level indicators are slowly improving, it is important to remember where the country was a decade ago in order to put its recovery into perspective. The eleven year civil war (1991 – 2002) devastated Sierra Leone; over 50,000 people died, the country's infrastructure was destroyed and about one third of its people displaced. Today, celebrating its 50th year of independence, Sierra Leone has experienced peace for just a decade. Safety and security in the country grows and, for a post conflict country, crime is relatively low. In September 2010 the UN Security Council

lifted the arms embargo and the last remaining sanctions imposed on the country since the war because the Government had fully re-established control over its territory and all former rebel fighters were disarmed and demobilized. Investor confidence is gradually growing and the country is moving forward to another round of free and fair elections. From a country that received UN Peacekeeping troops to a country that now deploys Peacekeeping troops (to Darfur under UNAMID) Sierra Leone has made remarkable progress.



- population: **5.4 million**
- life expectancy at birth: **48 years**
- % population female: **51**
- % of adults literate: **40**
- % of women with no education: **65**
- % of women aged 15-49 having undergone Female genital cutting: **94**
- % of women married before 18: **62**
- % of population under 15: **42**
- % of population in urban areas: **40**
- % of urbanization per year: **3**
- % of undernourished people: **47**
- % of children underweight: **30**
- % of children stunted: **40**
- % births attended by skilled health personnel: **42**
- maternal mortality rate: **857** per 100,000 live births
- Under five child mortality rate (per 100 live births): **192**
- teenage pregnancy rate: **34%**
- Contraceptive prevalence rate: **7%**

Remaining Challenges:

→ **Poverty and unemployment.** Unemployment is particularly high among youths and ex-combatants. About two thirds of the population engages in subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 52% of national income. Rural to urban drift is a problem as youths seek work in the cities.

→ **International crime, drugs and corruption.** Drugs cartels, many from Columbia, increasingly try to use Sierra Leone as transit point to ship drugs to Europe fueling corruption and undermining earlier security and transparency gains.

→ **Management of natural resources:** Political stability has attracted back investment in mining and the country is seeing a revival in many areas, notably in bauxite, rutile and iron ore. Off shore oil discoveries were recently confirmed. Minerals are a blessing for any economy, but managed badly they can also be a curse.

Investing in Success



Sierra Leone is a successful example of a multi-lateral approach to conflict resolution. Under the general guidance of the UN Security Council, ECOWAS, Nigeria, the EU and the UK played important roles in bringing peace to the country. The focus today is shifting from peace and security and humanitarian operations to recovery activities and long term development.

Whilst many institutions are back on their feet, progress is not uniform and many challenges remain. Donor commitment must not ease off now, since it is crucial to invest in the success achieved, maintain positive momentum and complete what is almost a great triumph for peace in the West Coast of Africa. The shift from peacekeeping to peacebuilding is complete. The UN Joint Vision signifies the start of the next shift from peacebuilding to ongoing recovery and further development. Traditionally this second shift is problematic and difficult to fund. The UN Joint Vision offers 20 well established and Government approved programmes that make a strong contribution to the peace dividend and continued development. Be part of the success through investing your country's voluntary contributions in the UN's Joint Vision for Sierra Leone!

"As a remarkable success story for post conflict reconstruction of Sierra Leone is taking tremendous strides forward. But sustained assistance is still needed to complete this process and consolidate the gains the country has made"

Ambassador McNee, Canada's Permanent Representative to the UN and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Configuration for Sierra Leone



This brochure is a series of five describing how the United Nations Joint Vision priorities 1-5 are working in Sierra Leone. To obtain more copies of this brochure, or a full set, or more information on the actual programmes within the Joint Vision please contact: **The Strategic Planning Unit, United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, Hotel Cabenda, 14 Signal Hill, Freetown, Republic of Sierra Leone.**

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