



SIERRA LEONE

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 2.8M**

Appeal number **MAASL002**

In support of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society



13

National Society branches



61

National Society staff



16,527

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



40,000

Climate and environment



52,000

Disasters and crises



40,000

Health and wellbeing



75,000

Migration and displacement



23,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Longer term needs

- Disaster risk reduction
 - Disaster response
 - Livelihoods
- Water, sanitation and hygiene

Capacity development

- Digital transformation
 - Governance
- Community engagement and accountability
 - Protection, gender and inclusion

Key country data

Population **8.1M**

Long-term Climate Risk Index **92**

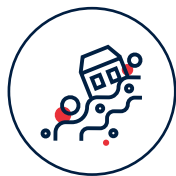
Human Development Index rank **181**

Population below poverty level **56.8%**

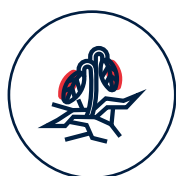
Hazards



Floods



Landslides



Drought



Disease outbreaks



Food insecurity



Civil unrest

Funding requirements

Total 2.8M CHF

Through the IFRC



→ **935,000** CHF

Through Participating National Societies



1.9M CHF

Host National Society



→ **29,000** CHF

IFRC Breakdown

Longer term needs

310,000 CHF

Disasters and crises

360,000 CHF

Health and wellbeing

100,000 CHF

Migration and displacement

65,000 CHF

Values, power and inclusion

100,000 CHF

Enabling local actors

Participating National Societies

British Red Cross

The Canadian Red Cross Society*

Finnish Red Cross

Icelandic Red Cross

Japanese Red Cross Society*

Swedish Red Cross*



NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society was officially established in 1962, transitioning from the former British Red Cross chapter, and it has been highly active in alleviating human suffering across the country. The Act of Parliament that established the National Society was revised in 2012, clarifying the organization's mandates and entitlements as an auxiliary to the public authorities in emergency response and health.

The National Society has a grassroots presence nationwide and a national structure across the five provinces and 16 districts of Sierra Leone. This national structure comprises 13 branches around the country, with more than 16,500 volunteers. With their support, it continues to be a strong, effective national responder that complements the government authorities in responding to disasters, emergencies and other situations of humanitarian concern.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross engages in emergency operations around preparedness, response and recovery, as well as in long-term development programmes. It has a record of accomplishments in disaster risk reduction, first aid, psychological first aid and psychosocial support, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, livelihoods, the empowerment of women and girls, and restoring family links.

The National Society responds to small- and large-scale disasters and crises that affect Sierra Leone. It took a lead role in providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by the country's 11-year civil war, and

it supported the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to respond to outbreaks of cholera and Ebola in 2012 and 2014. In 2017, the National Society worked with relevant actors to respond effectively to victims of mudslides and flooding. It is currently working with the Government to prevent and respond to COVID-19 infections, through both vaccination and social mobilization across the country.

The National Society's strategic plan for 2022–2026 identifies its five priority areas as:

- Health, water, sanitation and hygiene
- Food security and livelihoods
- Disaster risk reduction
- Migration and shelter
- National Society development

The Sierra Leone Red Cross works to alleviate human suffering, irrespective of people's social, political and religious backgrounds. It is strongly committed to humanity and does not discriminate when providing its humanitarian services. Its priorities are driven by findings from community needs assessments and by the Government's national development plans. Despite its auxiliary role to the state authorities and its cooperation with other key actors, the National Society is autonomous and remains neutral, focusing only on people who are suffering.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

Sierra Leone is located in West Africa and is bordered by Guinea, Liberia and the Atlantic Ocean. With a population of approximately eight million, it is divided into five administrative regions of the north, northwest, east, south and western areas. The official language is English, and most people also speak the most common local language of Krio.

Sierra Leone has experienced traumatic times in the last two decades, including a long civil war from 1991 to 2002, the 2012 cholera epidemic, Ebola in 2014–2015, mudslides in 2017, and COVID-19 since 2020. All of

these events cost lives and livelihoods, while damaging infrastructure and institutions, and increasing social and economic challenges for the population. Lack of access to quality health care, household income and safe drinking water, along with climate change and food insecurity, are just some of the country's major public concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a further burden on the health sector and has affected livelihoods. According to the World Bank's Sierra Leone Country Overview (2021), the country's economy contracted by two per cent because of global supply chain disruptions and lockdown measures, and this led to a slowdown in all

sectors. GDP per capita fell by four per cent in 2020, reversing some of the recent gains made in poverty reduction. Real GDP was expected to rebound by 4.2 per cent in 2021, reflecting the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and the implementation of the Government's fiscal response to the pandemic.

The latest United Nations Development Programme data for Sierra Leone (2021) indicates a minor improvement in its Human Development Index, which puts the country in the low human development category at 181 out of 195 countries and territories.

The 2019 Demographic and Health Survey showed that the mortality rate for children under the age of five dropped from 156 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2013 to 122 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019. Similarly, the infant mortality rate decreased from 92 to 75 deaths per 1,000 live births. Many of these infant deaths are due to preventable diseases such as malaria. Thirty per cent of children under the age of five have stunted growth, and this correlates with lower academic achievement. The pregnancy-related mortality ratio was 796 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019, down from 857 in 2013. According to the Government's Education Sector Plan 2022–2026, 21 per cent of teenage girls between the ages of 15–19 have given birth.

Inequality and social protection are significant issues in Sierra Leone, and considerable disparities between groups remain. According to data from 2019, the country has a Gender Inequality Index value of 182 out of 189. In 2020, it had a Global Gender Gap Index of 121 out of 156. These two indexes define gender-based inequalities across the dimensions of reproductive health, empowerment, and economic and political empowerment. In Sierra Leone, women continue to suffer significant inequalities in terms of literacy, access to land and legal protection.

Food insecurity is pervasive, due to extremely low agricultural productivity. Half the population does not have access to adequate nutritious food for a healthy life, and chronic malnutrition is widespread. Food access was already problematic before the COVID-19 pandemic, due to inflation and exchange rate depreciation in the three years to 2020 (African Development Bank) along with a high dependency on food imports. Agriculture is at the core of Sierra Leone's economy, but domestic production by smallholder (often subsistence) farmers is insufficient to feed the population. As a result, Sierra Leone imports more than 70 per cent of the food its population consumes.

In terms of the impacts of climate change, Sierra Leone's high vulnerability and low readiness scores place it in the upper-left quadrant of the [ND-GAIN Matrix \(2020\)](#). The country urgently needs investment and innovation to improve its readiness. Sierra Leone is the 19th most vulnerable country and the 144th most prepared country to face [climate hazards](#). In 2020, 80–90 per cent of people lived in rural areas and most of the population derived their income from climate-dependent natural resources. Climate-related shocks have been common in recent years, including devastating flooding and landslides in 2017, and more major flooding in August 2019. Changes in precipitation and temperature, increased risks of droughts, flooding and rising sea levels are all affecting the country's agriculture, water, energy, infrastructure and coastal areas.

The Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey in 2019 showed that half of households (50.9 per cent) have access to water for at least 12 hours a day. Protected wells have the highest availability, with 92.2 per cent reported to have water available daily. Piped water is much less available when needed, with two-fifths of sources (37 per cent) only having water between three and five days a week. Households in urban settings still use more piped water and protected dug wells (28.6 per cent and 39.8 per cent respectively) as their main sources of water. In the provinces, rivers and streams are the main sources of water for household use.

According to the National Youth Policy 2020, 30 per cent of the country's population is aged between 18 and 35. Youth unemployment is a growing concern, with levels among the highest in the West Africa sub-region. According to International Labour Organization estimates in 2019, youth unemployment represented 8.88 per cent of the total unemployment figure. Youth unemployment affects both people with employable skills and those who have very few or no skills. There are high rates of illiteracy, so most people fall into the latter group.

For decades, there has been limited access to technical education and vocational training, and this has prevented many young Sierra Leoneans from acquiring skills that would make them employable. This forces thousands to migrate through irregular means, often directed by smugglers, which frequently shifts into trafficking situations. Many young people are trafficked after being promised fake employment opportunities in Europe.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Sierra Leone faces many of the social and environmental risks that are common to West Africa. The situation is compounded by the effects of global warming and the challenging economic and political situation in the region. According to the 2018 Sierra Leone Hazard Profile and Assessment, there are nine major natural hazards in Sierra Leone: landslides, floods, droughts, epidemics, coastal erosion, rising sea levels, storm surges, tropical storms and thunderstorms. People are particularly exposed to these hazards in the hilly, low-lying areas and coastal areas of the western area, and in the northern and southern provinces.

It has become evident that climate change is altering weather patterns, increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. People in the poorest and most risk-prone communities are disproportionately affected. On 14 August 2017, a devastating twin landslide and flooding disaster ripped through Sierra Leone's capital city, Freetown, causing millions of dollars of damage to buildings and infrastructure, and claiming more than a thousand lives. Before the landslide, Freetown had experienced three successive days of intense and heavy rainfall, causing part of Sugar Loaf Mountain (the highest peak in the northwestern area of the peninsula) to collapse. Over the same period, further heavy downpours led to flooding in Freetown, Tombo in the western rural district, Kenema and Kailahun districts in the east, and Pujehun, Bonthe and Bo in the south. This flooding was attributed to a combination of:

- Massive unchecked deforestation due to rapid urbanization
- Uncontrolled bush fires
- Rising demand for charcoal and firewood for domestic cooking and other uses
- Subsistence farming
- Timber logging over the last decade as alternative revenue source to the Government

Main actions and areas of support

The Sierra Leone Red Cross is part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) [Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster

impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The National Society plans to engage volunteers, national stakeholders and vulnerable communities to implement environmentally sustainable interventions. This includes planting multi-purpose trees to prevent and minimize the present and future impact of climate change on vulnerable communities.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross is engaged in the IFRC Pan-African Tree Planting and Care Initiative, with the goal of adapting to and mitigating climate change by planting and caring for multi-purpose trees. Other activities in this initiative include environmental care campaigns, promoting energy-saving cooking and lighting solutions, using school environmental clubs to increase climate awareness, and spearheading seedling production.

Along with the IFRC and participating National Societies with experience of similar interventions, the Sierra Leone Red Cross will document successes in tree planting and care practised by school clubs in 160 pilot schools. With support from trained teachers leading the community planting of multi-purpose trees, forest cover will be restored in 320 communities.

In 2023, the National Society will:

- Support communities in taking action to adapt to rising and evolving risks from climate and environmental crises
- Provide communities with the support needed to address climate and environmental crises
- Contribute to mitigating climate change by forming community-based disaster management committees and providing training on climate and environmental crises

- Strengthen collaboration with relevant state actors to monitor short- and long-term impacts of climate change by engaging with national meteorological and hydrological services and regional climate centres
- Reduce the National Society's carbon footprint, promoting environmentally sustainable practices and rolling out environmental policies
- Carry out an assessment of environmental impacts, developing and implementing actions to address those impacts identified
- Support environmentally sustainable practices in communities, including supporting tree planting campaigns and initiatives in branches
- Undertake research on climate change and environmental issues for advocacy

Disasters and crises

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page [Sierra Leone](#)

According to the country's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023, Sierra Leone is exposed to a range of natural and man-made hazards. The population is exposed to recurrent localized hazard conditions, potentially threatening any gains made in development. The country's vulnerability correlates to its climate, geography, high poverty levels and limited environmental management systems.

INFORM Risk Index 2022 data classifies Sierra Leone as a medium-risk country (4.4), but the population's high vulnerability (5.8) and lack of coping mechanisms (6.8) make it one of the most vulnerable countries in Africa.

In 2017 and 2018, the Sierra Leone Red Cross and the IFRC were key national responders in the mud-slide response. They reached 16,000 people through their combined efforts – from the initial emergency response to the early recovery phase ending in March 2019. More recently, since mid-August 2022, the capital city of Freetown has experienced persistent torrential rain. The highest recorded rainfall was on 28 August 2022, when rains caused flooding in low-lying areas and new low-scale landslides. Major roads in the city centre became impassable to both vehicles and pedestrians due to flood waters. In September [the city continued to experience heavy rains](#), while more than 13,000 people had been affected by flash floods and landslides.

A comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis report in May 2021 showed that more than 4.7

million people are food insecure. Of these, 963,000 are severely food insecure and 3.8 million are moderately food insecure. Sierra Leone has seen an increase of more than half a million people being added to the count of food insecure over the last five years. According to the Integrated Food Security Classification Report (IPC) analysis, forecasts for June–August 2022 show that 1.1 million people will remain severely food insecure (IPC phase 3+), an 11.2 per cent increase from 2021. Chronic malnutrition is widespread, with the prevalence of stunting at 31.3 per cent (above the World Health Organization's 'high' threshold of more than 30 per cent). This is leading to millions of children under five years of age experiencing irreversible damage to their physical and cognitive development. Sierra Leone is a net importer of rice, so the supply chain restrictions and national lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic increased food prices. Production of this staple food has declined to such an extent in Sierra Leone that only four per cent of farmers now produce enough to meet the needs of their family for one year.

Nearly one in four fishing families is severely food insecure, followed by households that rely on selling fruit and vegetables. The latter is a livelihood primarily associated with women. Income, education, nutritional quality of foods consumed and hygiene all heavily influence food and nutrition security. The higher the education level of the head of the household, the better their food security. For example, a household headed by someone without formal education is more food insecure than one whose head has vocational training (61 per cent compared with 46 per cent). Women in Sierra Leone have less education than men and often drop out before completing primary school.

Since early July 2022, Freetown has undergone a series of strike actions, with civil unrest triggering a humanitarian crisis affecting people across many parts of the country. On 8 and 9 August 2022, an organized group of civilians coordinated on social media platforms by unknown Sierra Leoneans in and outside Sierra Leone called for sit-at-home action across the country. On 10 August 2022, they took over the streets of Freetown, Waterloo, Makeni and Kamakwei to demonstrate against the Government over unemployment, economic hardship and injustices. Their demands included reductions in fuel prices, economic relief for families in debt, fair prices for agricultural products, employment and labour rights, security and protection. Thousands of people have mobilized around the country, blocking roads and main supply routes. Although these mobilizations began peacefully in the eastern part of Freetown, the

situation deteriorated rapidly. Confrontation between security forces and demonstrators across the country led to increasing casualties.

Disaster risk management is still a new concept in Sierra Leone, and very few legislative and policy frameworks are in place for disaster risk reduction and management. The Government of Sierra Leone has made disaster preparedness and risk management a top priority, creating the National Disaster Management Agency. This agency is currently playing a central role in promoting public awareness, incorporating disaster risk management into development planning, and reducing bureaucracies around accessing funds for effective disaster coordination.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sierra Leone Red Cross has responded to multiple disasters and crises in recent years. In September 2022, it was engaged in two operations supported by the IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), for [floods](#) and for [civil unrest](#).

The National Society's overall objective in its floods response is to provide immediate basic assistance to address the needs of 12,000 people (2,000 households) affected by floods in 10 neighbourhoods of Freetown. This will be done by providing shelter, livelihoods and basic needs assistance, health, water, sanitation and hygiene services in 10 communities including Kroobay, Kamayama, Kaningo, Tengbeh town, Culvert, Wellington, Collen Town, Looking town and Kaningo. Beyond these core areas, the National Society's strategy will focus on the most exposed and at-risk groups, including gender-sensitivity, protection, psychosocial support, and community engagement and accountability in all programming.

The overall objective of the operation responding to the civil unrest is to improve the living conditions of about 1,500 people (220 households) affected by the violence. This includes providing pre-hospital care, psychosocial support, emergency medical and blood transfer services, and multi-purpose cash assistance. It will also mitigate the risk of attacks on the National Society that could lead to it being unable to carry out its humanitarian mandate. Unconditional cash grants will be provided to 150 households to support their livelihoods and cover medical expenses. The Sierra Leone Red Cross has an existing agreement with two financial service providers (Orange Money and Africell) which unconditionally supported cash transfers during the response to the

[Susan's Bay fire incident](#) and the recent [Wellington Oil Tanker Explosion](#) response.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross disaster response teams are trained in disaster risk reduction and emergency first aid, and conduct district and community [vulnerability and capacity assessments](#). The National Society has also supported the development of a location-targeted SMS early warning system and a national disaster law programme.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross has developed an Integrated Resilience Programme, which is aligned to the IFRC Pan-African Zero Hunger Initiative, as well as to Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 (eradicating poverty and hunger by creating decent, productive work for all, and providing access to food).

The programme also contributes to Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023 cluster seven on addressing vulnerability and building resilience in Sierra Leone.

Positive outcomes and improvement from the Integrated Resilience Programme will be measured in the short, medium and long term in relation to:

- Vulnerable households having access to food all year round
- Communities practising climate-smart farming
- Communities managing livestock as a business
- Vulnerable households engaging in income-generating activities and acquiring marketable skills from targeted training provided through food security and livelihoods programmes
- A majority of households living a healthy lifestyle and embarking on worthwhile ventures for self-reliance, with support received through cash-based assistance

The British Red Cross will support the Integrated Resilience Programme. It will provide technical and financial resources to help implement key components of disaster risk reduction, capacity building of staff and volunteers in cash-based assistance, empowering girls and women through direct support, and supporting village savings and loan associations.

In 2023, the Sierra Leone Red Cross plans to:

- Support community understanding of early warning and the use of early warning signs
- Support at-risk communities to take active steps to reduce their vulnerability and exposure to hazards

- Support communities to prepare for timely and effective mitigation, response and recovery to crises and disasters, including early action
- Develop community-based structures in operational districts to increase skills in disaster risk reduction, response and recovery
- Provide people affected by crises and disasters with timely and appropriate cash and voucher assistance
- Enhance the National Society's coordination and collaboration with key stakeholders at national and branch levels
- Advocate for effective and protective disaster-related laws, policies and regulations

Health and wellbeing

Access to health care in Sierra Leone is limited by issues related to the affordability, availability, accessibility and quality of services. The health sector in Sierra Leone continues to face many challenges, including:

- Poor infrastructure
- Poor conditions of service for health workers
- Weak governance and management of delivery systems
- Weak human resource base
- Inadequate disease prevention
- Poor disease control and surveillance programmes
- Poor quality and limited data
- Limited access to sexual and reproductive health services

The Ebola outbreak in 2014–15 had direct and disproportional effects on the health sector, reversing much of the progress made in the previous decade and exposing weaknesses in Sierra Leone's structures and systems. It also led the public to lose confidence in the health sector. Post-Ebola recovery started in 2015 and aimed to strengthen the overall resilience of the health system. The National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2017–21 builds on the initial achievements of this recovery and on the commitments stated in the Government's 2013 strategy paper *The Agenda for Prosperity*, which seeks improvements in health care for the most vulnerable people, particularly women and children.

Water, sanitation and hygiene recovery, reconstruction and development will be essential to addressing structural weaknesses and poor services in this sector that contribute to recurrent epidemics of diseases like

cholera in Sierra Leone. Acute respiratory disease and diarrhoea lead to an estimated 7,000 deaths of children under five years of age every year in Sierra Leone. These diseases are among the leading causes of death in this age group, contributing to one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. According to the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017, only 18 per cent of the population in Sierra Leone can get to an improved water source in less than 30 minutes. For 33 per cent of the population, it takes up to three hours to reach an improved source of water. About 58 per cent of the population have access to basic water and only 15 per cent have access to basic sanitation. According to the 2019 Sierra Leone Demographic Health Survey, water and sanitation coverage is higher in urban areas than in rural areas.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sierra Leone Red Cross's priorities for health, water and sanitation align with the Sustainable Development Goal three that focuses on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for everyone at all ages. These priorities also align with cluster two of the Government's *New Direction Development Strategy 2018–2023*.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross aims to contribute to improve:

- Access to health care
- Access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation
- Sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Behavioural change communication in health and hygiene promotion
- Disease prevention and control
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Maternal and child health
- Community engagement and accountability

The Finnish Red Cross has indicated an interest in supporting the National Society's health, water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, and providing technical and financial support through the BRIDGE programme.

The Government and the Sierra Leone Red Cross aim to scale up the number of community health workers in Sierra Leone to 12,000 individuals, with the support of Africa CDC and the IFRC. This will be part a continent-wide ambition to achieve two million community health workers in Africa, with each worker supporting an

estimated 250 people (50–100 households). The main goal of this initiative is to improve health outcomes for African communities by scaling up and strengthening the integrated community health workforce and system, putting people at the centre of it.

A continent-wide initiative between the IFRC and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will also reinforce the fight against COVID-19 by investing in building resilient public health security infrastructures in Africa. Through the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative funded by the Mastercard Foundation, the IFRC and African National Societies are building a programme that aims to ensure that 60 per cent of African people are vaccinated against COVID-19. The programme supports the procurement and delivery of tens of millions of COVID-19 vaccines to hasten economic recovery. Under this programme, the Sierra Leone Red Cross will deliver critical risk communication and community engagement activities in vulnerable communities, supporting vaccine uptake and making sure that vaccination activities are community-led and well trusted. Other partners in the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative will provide procurement and logistics to a central warehouse (UNICEF), in-country logistic (World Food Programme), management of COVID-19 vaccination centres (AMREF, GHSS) and safety surveillance (AKROS).

In 2023, the Sierra Leone Red Cross will:

- Develop a health, water, sanitation and hygiene strategy and implementation plan
- Strengthen its participation in relevant national public health advocacy platforms, including developing joint messaging on the prevention and containment of communicable diseases
- Support branches to deliver evidence-based and impact-driven, effective, appropriate health promotion, disease prevention and community-based care activities, focusing on vulnerable people in all contexts
- Engage volunteers in passive surveillance and conduct house-to-house sensitization on disease prevention
- Expand the National Society's reach, quality and modalities of first aid activities, including training volunteers, staff and the general public across all contexts
- Contribute to achieve and sustain national targets for vector-borne disease interventions, including coverage with insecticide-treated nets for effective malaria prevention

- Contribute to address the needs of people living with communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, using relevant harm reduction approaches as appropriate
- Support branches to provide contextually appropriate sexual, reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health services
- Support branches in their efforts to respond to mental health and psychosocial needs effectively during emergencies
- Support branches to provide adequate care, support and referral services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in disasters and other emergencies
- Support communities to promote and measure positive behavioural changes in personal and community hygiene among targeted communities, including in the area of menstrual hygiene management
- Promote and measure community awareness of pandemics and epidemics, including cholera, under the IFRC [One WASH](#) initiative, and the means to better mitigate their impact

Migration and displacement

The migration situation in Sierra Leone is underpinned by high levels of poverty and unemployment, especially among young people, women and other vulnerable groups. Opportunities are limited and many young people turn to migration instead. Low levels of literacy and limited experience of entrepreneurship among some young people have also boosted external migration. According to the Government's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023, experiences of migration differ greatly. Men are more likely to be involved in external migration, while women and children are drawn into trafficking for sex and labour.

In 2019, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) estimated the Sierra Leone diaspora population to be 187,000. Four of the five top [destination countries for emigrants from Sierra Leone](#) are in Africa (Guinea, Liberia, Senegal and Nigeria), and the UK comes in fifth place. External migration to Europe, America, the Middle East and other destinations can be deadly. Reports on the experiences of migrants travelling from Africa to Europe highlight the treacherous conditions during the journey across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea, and sometimes on arrival at their destination. Human trafficking and modern slavery have become prevalent features along migration routes.

Money sent back to the country from Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora makes a significant foreign currency contribution to the country's economy each year. According to the World Bank in 2020, personal remittances from Sierra Leoneans equated to US\$59 million (1.452 per cent of GDP). This is among the very highest in Africa because of the impact COVID-19 had on the economy.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sierra Leone Red Cross will increase awareness of the evolving risks associated with Temple Run migration (embarking on risky and potentially perilous journeys to Europe), along with rural to urban migration and human trafficking. It will do this through community awareness-raising sessions, such as the Forum Theatre performances about the effects of irregular migration in border communities. The aim is that community stakeholders are knowledgeable about basic migration, human trafficking laws and policies, and they can provide referral pathways to relevant services. The Sierra Leone Red Cross will ensure it is well prepared to respond to irregular migration and human trafficking in a timely and effective way, and it will make sure that its auxiliary role in migration and shelter management is well defined and recognized.

In 2023, with support of the IFRC network, the National Society will:

- Strengthen existing systems around migration
- Enhance the well-being of survivors of irregular migration
- Coordinate with government and non-government stakeholders at national and local level to identify the main causes of migration in Sierra Leone
- Undertake realistic and productive programmes to prevent human trafficking
- Run youth engagement and empowerment programmes to prevent internal and external migration and to integrate returnee migrants into the wider community

Values, power and inclusion

Sierra Leone regularly ranks at the bottom of global indices of gender inequality, including the Gender Inequality Index (182 out of 189 in 2019) and the Global Gender Gap Index (121 out of 156 in 2020). These indexes are based on measures of health and survival, women's empowerment, economic participation and educational attainment.

According to Sierra Leone's 2019 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), physical and sexual violence continues to be prevalent. 61 per cent of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence since the age 15 (an increase of eight per cent from 2013). This increases to 67 per cent for women aged 25–29. Experiences of physical violence include dragging, beating up, attempting to choke or burn, and threatening or attacking with a knife, gun or other weapon.

Regarding female genital mutilation, according to the Sierra Leone DHS 2019, the percentage of women who were circumcised decreased from 90 per cent in 2013 to 83 per cent in 2019. Sixty-three per cent of women aged 15–49 who have undergone female genital mutilation believe the practice should continue. At around 93 per cent, the prevalence of female genital mutilation is higher in the northwest province than in the southern province (74.1 per cent). The northwest province also presents the highest rates of physical and sexual violence in Sierra Leone.

The Government's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023 lays out a clear development path, which is based on the idea of inclusive, sustainable growth that leaves no one behind. By dedicating one of the eight policy clusters to empowering women, children, and people living with disabilities, it recognizes the key role that gender plays in society.

In a country where 1.1 per cent of the population (an estimated 77,000 people) is physically challenged or lives with a disability, the Government recognizes that these people are among the poorest in society. This includes people who are blind or deaf, amputees, and people with polio. Implementation of plans and legislation concerning people living with disabilities has been weak in Sierra Leone, with government budget allocation being limited and delayed.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sierra Leone Red Cross completed a review in February 2022, and the leadership has appointed a committee and a focal point for protection, gender and inclusion who will work with IFRC regional experts to conduct a nationwide assessment. The results of the assessment will inform practical guidance to mainstream the four principles of protection, gender and inclusion (ensuring human dignity, access, participation and safety) in all sectors. The National Society will also strengthen its risk management systems to limit people's exposure to the risk of violence and abuse and to ensure that current and potential future emergency programmes do no harm.



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By using a community engagement and accountability approach, the Sierra Leone Red Cross facilitates meetings with stakeholders and beneficiaries and has used hotlines for community feedback. The IFRC and participating National Societies have supported training sessions for staff and volunteers, along with awareness-raising sessions for communities. With the skills, knowledge and experience it has acquired in the last three years, the Sierra Leone Red Cross will continue to create space for the views of communities and use this, along with other feedback, to influence decisions around programmes and operations.

In 2023, the National Society will:

- Provide technical support to ensure the protection, gender and inclusion action plan is implemented, based on key recommendations from an organizational capacity assessment
- Systematically apply, promote and support the IFRC [minimum standards for protection, gender and inclusion in emergencies](#)
- Strengthen risk management systems to limit people's exposure to the risks of violence and abuse and to ensure that current and potential future emergency programmes do no harm
- Use community engagement and accountability approaches to equip community members with relevant disaster information and laws, rights and responsibilities so they can take part in decision-making that affects their daily lives and well-being

Enabling local actors

The Sierra Leone Red Cross is committed to pursuing institutional strengthening and carried out the self-assessment part of the IFRC Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2018. The self-assessment part of the OCAC process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities. The Sierra Leone

Red Cross is also committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process, and is at the workplan phase. This approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyze the strengths and gaps of its preparedness and response mechanism, and ultimately take necessary action to improve them.

Engaged

The OCAC assessment showed deficits in both internal and external communications, and the assessors recommended regular engagement with the public and donors on the National Society's work, efforts and successes. In its aim to be the partner of choice in alleviating the suffering of vulnerable Sierra Leoneans, the National Society has embarked on several initiatives to improve how it engages the wider community in enabling humanitarian action. During the transformation process, the Sierra Leone Red Cross made outstanding efforts to profile its operations, improving its image and visibility within and outside the country. These activities included robust engagement with both electronic and print media, updated social media platforms (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok) and a refreshed National Society website. With support from the IFRC and BBC Media Action, it also ran risk communication training for journalists, staff, volunteers and representatives of government ministries, departments and agencies. This training was tailored to address the communication needs of people affected during an emergency.

In order to improve its digital footprint, the Sierra Leone Red Cross is introducing a solar-powered electricity system to maintain the information and communication technology services at headquarters and branch level. With the support of Icelandic Red Cross project funding through the Digital Divide initiative, the solar-powered electricity system will keep these services viable in six branches. It is also exploring other innovative digital solutions to support effective service delivery, and these will be built into the provision of information and communication technology equipment in each branch across the country.

Main actions and areas of support

The IFRC network will support the National Society to:

- Provide the governing board and senior management with development opportunities to enhance their capacity in driving agility, innovation and transformation
- Carry out a digital transformation of the National Society headquarters and branches
- Enhance data protection by adopting and implementing best practices and information security measures in ongoing and new operations

Accountable

The IFRC network will make sure that the Sierra Leone Red Cross is well placed to strengthen its existing relationships within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and with external partners including the relevant government ministries, agencies and departments. The IFRC will support the National Society to leverage its unique status in order to cooperate with other relevant actors both nationally and internationally, keeping up with evolving trends to remain a viable National Society. The Sierra Leone Red Cross will contextualize emerging global concepts and principles into its emergency operations and development programmes to match global standards.

The IFRC will also ensure that the Sierra Leone Red Cross continues to review and upgrade its policies and systems for effective financial management at all levels. It will make sure that the finance department carries out quarterly review processes to enhance transparency and accountability in its financial management practices. It will closely monitor internal control measures and ensure that every level of the National Society adheres to key principles.

Main actions and areas of support

The IFRC network will support the National Society to:

- Roll out policies for fraud and corruption, risks and compliance, and whistleblowing
- Develop a fraud register and update it regularly
- Appoint gender focal points at headquarters and branches, for reporting on abuse
- Hold quarterly reviews of financial management systems and make relevant updates to improve transparency and accountability

Trusted

The Sierra Leone Red Cross has undertaken many initiatives in recent years aimed at National Society development and increasing sustainability. These initiatives enable it to increase its organizational capacity to deliver effective and efficient services for the most vulnerable people. The initiatives have been building on the successes of the 2018 Transformation Plan, the 2019 Due Diligence implementation, the findings of the OCAC assessment, and the [Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment](#) (BOCA). The initiatives offer a way for the National Society to continuously make progress against every element needed to make it a well-functioning National Society in line with IFRC guidelines.

All IFRC network partners in-country have committed to support the National Society in some way to build capacity and develop its branches. The IFRC is committed to support key components of National Society development and other Pan-African initiatives with technical and financial resources. The British Red Cross has committed to support National Society capacity building in critical areas. The Finnish Red Cross is working with the National Society on branch development in six BRIDGE-targeted branches. This initiative encompasses the need to improve:

- Resource mobilization (especially local fundraising) and core cost sustainability
- Financial management and accountability systems
- Human resources management
- Programme monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- Communication
- Procurement and logistics capacity
- Volunteer management, security and safety

It is also expected to address cross-cutting challenges in the branches such as high dependency project funding; inadequate monitoring and reporting; insufficient

volunteer engagement, retention and recognition; and poor institutional data collection.

Support will be needed in critical areas, including improving the quality of the National Society's national governance, staff capacity, complaint and response mechanisms, financial management systems, internal controls, logistics capacity at headquarters and branch offices, national governing board, branch executives and volunteers in general.

Main actions and areas of support

The IFRC will support the National Society to:

- Implement the findings of OCAC and BOCA
- Strengthen engagement with, and accountability to, communities by integrating mechanisms for communication, participation, feedback and complaints within programmes and operations
- Enable youth, volunteers and young community-based drivers of change to contribute to decision-making, innovation and strengthening the National Society's work
- Support youth from all backgrounds to understand leadership and ensure they are reflected accurately in the National Societies' strategic and operational plans and programme delivery

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC's support for the Sierra Leone Red Cross centres on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy, including strengthening its auxiliary role. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme. The IFRC has a presence in Freetown, providing technical assistance to the Sierra Leone Red Cross with humanitarian operations relating to:

- Disasters and crises
- Health services in hard-to-reach areas
- Longer-term resilience-building programmes
- Coordinating IFRC membership support to the Sierra Leone Red Cross

- Enhancement of the National Society's organizational development
- Representing the Sierra Leone Red Cross internationally

In recent years, the IFRC has supported the Sierra Leone Red Cross through a number of DREFs and Emergency Appeal [operations](#) relating to flooding and landslides, civil unrest, explosions and accidental fires. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has also supported the National Society's COVID-19 response and immunization programme rollout, through its [global Emergency Appeal](#).

Participating National Society Support - Bilateral

Name of Partner NS	Funding Requirements	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Engaged	Accountable	Trusted
British Red Cross	CHF 0.61M		●				●	●	
Finnish Red Cross	CHF 0.80M	●	●	●				●	
Icelandic Red Cross		●	●	●			●	●	●

Total

Other Funding Requirements Sources

0.45M

1.86M

IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC's coordination role involves working with member National Societies to:

- Assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs
- Agree common priorities
- Co-develop common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space, mobilizing funding and other resources
- Clarify consistent public messaging
- Monitor progress
- Ensure that strategies and programmes that support people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action and of development assistance, and reinforcing the auxiliary role of National Societies in their respective countries

The Sierra Leone Red Cross is part of four IFRC Pan-African initiatives focusing on Tree Planting and Care, Zero Hunger, Red Ready and National Society Development. These initiatives are reflected under the relevant sections of this plan.

The National Society maintains a consistent, productive relationship and coordination with all IFRC members, inside and outside the country. The IFRC, the British Red Cross, the Finnish Red Cross and the Icelandic Red Cross currently support the National Society with programmes around health, water, sanitation and hygiene, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods, and risk communication, community-friendly approaches, community engagement and accountability.

The **British Red Cross** is supporting the National Society with a two-year project focusing on risk communication, community engagement and resilience building in the western area.

The **Finnish Red Cross** is currently present in the six districts of Pujehun, Kenema, Bo, Moyamba, Bonthe and Kono in the BRIDGE project focused on community-based health approaches, promoting water, sanitation and hygiene, livelihoods and capacity building.

The **Icelandic Red Cross** is supporting the Sierra Leone Red Cross in consortium with the Finnish Red Cross, and supporting through the IFRC the implementation of the Tree Planting and Care initiative in six branches.

Movement coordination

The Sierra Leone Red Cross seeks to build on past cooperation to ensure that Movement partners including the IFRC, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and participating National Societies meet monthly to discuss matters of mutual concern and progress on implementation of action. It will also seek closer coordination with Movement partners to plan and review

the plan, enabling resources to be allocated effectively and avoiding duplication of work in operational districts. This is all carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

Movement cooperation meetings will directly involve the Sierra Leone Red Cross, the IFRC, the British Red Cross and the Finnish Red Cross. They will also indirectly involve the Icelandic Red Cross and the ICRC, in order to adopt strategies and support one National Society plan,

and in line with relevant national government development programmes and policies. The ICRC supports the Sierra Leone Red Cross with communications and National Society profiling.

Coordination with other actors

The Sierra Leone Red Cross collaborates extensively with various government line ministries in implementing its programmes. It works with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Ministry of Social Welfare, local councils and other authorities at national and branch level to enrich the quality and sustainability of its programmes. The National Society leadership and its National Disaster Response Team participate in every planning meeting convened by the Government's National Disaster Management Agency, which has lead oversight for all disaster management and response-related incidents in Sierra Leone.

As part of the response to COVID-19, the Sierra Leone Red Cross is working with partners including Christian

Relief Services, the National Emergency Operation Centre and Freetown City Council to manage and operate the community care centre which acts as an isolation centre for passengers travelling from countries with a high rate of the virus. The National Society also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Food Programme for the management and monitoring of cash-based assistance and distribution of relief items to vulnerable communities. Historically and more recently, the World Food Programme has supported the National Society to build its capacity through volunteer training in food security and livelihoods assessments, cash and voucher assistance, relief management and the humanitarian code of conduct for effectively distributing food to people affected by disasters.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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