



# SIERRA LEONE

## 2026-2028 IFRC network country plan



20 March 2025

### In support of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society



14

National Society branches



16

National Society local units



63

National Society staff



18,000

National Society volunteers

### People to be reached in 2026



400,000

Climate and environment



510,000

Disasters and crises



1.3M

Health and wellbeing



20,000

Migration and displacement



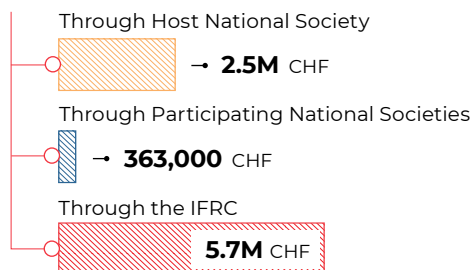
7,000

Values, power and inclusion

### IFRC network Funding Requirements

2026

Total 8.6M CHF



2027

2028

Total 14.3M CHF 300,000 CHF

Projected funding requirements

### Participating National Societies

British Red Cross

Finnish Red Cross

The Netherlands Red Cross\*

### IFRC Appeal codes

Longer-term needs:

MAASL002

\*National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in 2025.

## Hazards



Drought



Floods



Landslides



Food Insecurity



Disease Outbreaks



Civil Unrest

### IFRC network multi-year 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 links

**INFORM Severity rating**

**High**

**INFORM Climate Change Risk Index**

**Medium**

**Human Development Index rank**

**185**

**World Bank Population figure**

**8.6M**

**World Bank Population below poverty line**

**57%**



In Kasiri village, Sierra Leone, Red Cross Society volunteer Isha, trained through the CP3 programme, protects her community from infectious diseases and supports neighbours in times of need. Photo: Sierra Leone Red Cross Society

## Detailed funding requirements

	2026		2027	
	Host National Society	IFRC	Host National Society	IFRC
<b>Longer-term needs</b>				
Climate and environment	400,000	1.2M	410,000	1.4M
Disasters & crises	750,000	600,000	770,000	1.9M
Health & wellbeing	800,000	2.5M	805,000	2.6M
Migration & displacement	150,000	500,000	280,000	450,000
Values, power & inclusion	340,000	600,000	390,000	625,000
<b>Enabling local actors</b>	100,000	250,000	300,000	830,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.5M</b>	<b>5.7M</b>	<b>3M</b>	<b>11M</b>

### Participating National Societies bilateral support

National Society	Year	Funding Requirement	Confirmed Funding	Climate and environment	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration and displacement	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling Functions
British Red Cross	2026	63,000	63,000						
Finnish Red Cross	2026	300,000							300,000
	2027	300,000							300,000
	2028	300,000							300,000

# NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The **Sierra Leone Red Cross Society** was officially established in 1962 and admitted to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1963. Transitioning from the former British Red Cross chapter, 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 Sierra Leone. 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 National Society's Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 identifies its five priority areas as:

- Health, water, sanitation and hygiene
- Food security and livelihoods
- Disaster risk reduction

- Migration and shelter
- National Society development

Since its establishment, the National Society has managed emergency operations (preparedness, response & recovery) as well as long-term development programmes. It has a record of accomplishments in disaster risk reduction, first aid and psychosocial support, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, livelihood, women and girls empowerment as well as restoring family links.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society 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.

In 2024, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society reached 161,000 people through its long-term services and development programmes and 96,000 people through disaster response and early recovery programmes over time.

## IFRC NETWORK ACTION

### 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.

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. 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.

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 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 having water available daily. Piped water is much less available when needed, with two-fifths of sources only having water between three and five days a week. Households in urban settings still use more piped water and protected dug wells 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.

Sierra Leone is facing a sharp rise in the use of 'kush', a highly addictive drug made from mixed substances including opioids, leading to serious health and social consequences. In April 2024, the government declared a public health emergency and launched security crackdowns, but limited data on kush use has hindered understanding of the crisis and contributed to punitive responses that have negatively affected users, particularly youth, who are believed to be the main consumers. While kush use requires urgent action, it reflects deeper issues of poverty, unemployment, and limited opportunities for young people, problems that demand long-term, comprehensive solutions. With little research capturing users' perspectives or the drivers of substance use, this brief draws on available literature and practitioner insights to outline likely contributing factors and encourage dialogue on more effective, multidisciplinary, and harm-reduction-focused responses.

## 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.

Changing weather patterns and more frequent extreme events disproportionately affect the poorest communities, as seen in the devastating 2017 Freetown landslide and floods that caused widespread destruction and over a thousand deaths following days of heavy rainfall. These disasters have been worsened by rapid urbanization, deforestation, reliance

on charcoal and firewood, bushfires, and timber logging, all of which have increased environmental vulnerability over the past decade.

#### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society is part of the [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; (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

To mark this year's World Environment Week, volunteers from the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society's Western Area Branch supported the Environment Protection Agency Sierra Leone during the Green Run. In addition to serving as first responders during emergencies and disasters, the National Society's participation highlights its commitment to working with government institutions and humanitarian partners to promote environmental management, preservation, and protection for future generations.

The Tree Planting and Care Project worked across six districts: Kenema, Kono, Bonthe, Bo, Moyamba and Pujehun, to transplant and plant both economic and forest tree seeds and seedlings. The project advances environmental sustainability by helping restore Sierra Leone's forest landscapes and create a healthy ecosystem that benefits both people and wildlife.

As part of the government's 'Support the Disaster Reduction' campaign, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society conducted several trainings on Disaster Risk Reduction, [Community Early Warning Systems \(CEWS\)](#), and [Sexual and Gender-Based Violence](#) concepts. The training, held at Swiss Hotel in Freetown from 27 May to 1 June 2024, ensured that community volunteers and staff remain equipped with up-to-date skills and best practices. The sessions brought together

programme staff members and community volunteers. The initiative aims to strengthen volunteers' ability to respond effectively to crises and support vulnerable communities.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Collaborate with existing Community Based Disaster Management Committees
- Provide training on environmental sustainability practices and climate change awareness
- Increased collaboration with volunteers in beneficiary communities

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will continue to support the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in engaging communities throughout all stages of planning, implementing, supervising, monitoring, and evaluating projects. It will also support the National Society to engage 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.

The British Red Cross supported the National Society in conducting trainings on Disaster Risk Reduction, [Community Early Warning Systems \(CEWS\)](#), and [Sexual and Gender-Based Violence](#).



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## Disasters and crises

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

The [INFORM Country Risk Profile](#) ranks Sierra Leone as experiencing medium risk, at 4.2 out of 10, with a vulnerability level of 5.6 out of 10. The lack of coping capacity is assessed at 6.3 out of 10, with weaknesses identified at both institutional and infrastructure levels.

Sierra Leone is one of the nations most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, including excessive heat, droughts, wildfires, and floods. The natural hazards associated with climate change are worsened by high population densities, inadequate housing, heavy reliance on agriculture for economic growth, unregulated human interventions with nature, poverty, and a lack of basic socioeconomic necessities.

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.

The country is particularly vulnerable to flooding, mudslides, and landslides due to heavy rainfall, with these disasters occurring annually. One of the government's primary focuses is risk management and disaster preparedness, leading to the establishment of the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) with greater authority to address these challenges. This agency plays a crucial role in raising public awareness, integrating disaster risk management into development plans, and reducing bureaucratic obstacles to secure funding for effective disaster coordination.

The effects of climate change are already being felt across Sierra Leone, with key drivers including heatwaves, erratic rainfall patterns, and rising sea levels. Based on data collected over the past thirty years, it was projected that Sierra Leone would experience more rainfall than usual in June, July, and August. Discussions have focused on the importance of

informing Sierra Leoneans and institutions about the risks associated with seasonal disasters, using a range of national weather monitoring stations, including those for aviation, marine, agriculture, and manual systems.

## Multi-year high-level objectives of the National Society

Disaster risk management (DRM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) frameworks in Sierra Leone are still in their early stages, with DRM being a relatively new concept. The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society has established DRM volunteer focal points across the country, alongside Community-Based Disaster Management Committees and trained volunteer action teams focused on disaster relief and first aid. These committees have conducted assessments on community and district risks and capacities.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society has organized standby volunteer units in the Western Area, always ready to respond quickly to emergencies. At the community level, trained community-based volunteers are on standby to act as soon as any emergency alerts are issued. The National Disaster Law Program and a location-targeted SMS early warning system were also endorsed by the National Society.

The National Society has achieved impactful results in communicating disaster preparedness, response, and recovery activities to the public. These frameworks are sustained at headquarters and across all branches nationwide. Actions include efforts to raise awareness about disaster prevention and provide information on current and future impacts that every Sierra Leonean must consider, along with the need to adapt to climate change. Additionally, headquarter and branches are active participants, effectively coordinating disaster risk reduction issues among key government stakeholders, non-government organizations, civil society, and the private sector. The National Society also ensures that lessons learned and relevant feedback reach the right audience for timely and appropriate action.

The National Society is a key partner in all national platforms established by the government and plays a pivotal role in the planning and implementation of national guidelines, policies, and regulations. Operating in all districts of Sierra Leone, the National Society is also involved in numerous district-level committees, including the District Security Committees (DISEC), the highest decision-making body on security matters, and the district council's disaster management committee.

At the community level, the National Society has helped develop and strengthen disaster risk reduction, response, and recovery skills in operational districts. It has also established and reinforced disaster management systems

and mechanisms at all levels. The National Society continues to support communities in understanding early warning systems and using early warning signs effectively. It ensures timely and effective mitigation, response, and recovery during crises and disasters, including early actions. Additionally, the National Society provides appropriate support to people affected by crises, including cash and voucher assistance. The National Society is committed to strengthening collaboration and coordination with national and district stakeholders and working alongside line ministries to enhance disaster-related laws, policies, and regulations for better protection and response.

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## Planned activities in 2026

- Establishing and enforcing disaster management systems and mechanisms at all levels
- Providing continued community support to improve understanding and use of early warning system and early warning signs
- Timely and effective mitigation, response, and recovery actions provided during crises and disasters, including early action.
- Distributing effective cash and voucher assistance (CVA) to people affected by crises and disasters
- Strengthen collaboration and coordination with national and district stakeholders

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## Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC** will continue to support the National Society in advancing its role as auxiliary to local authorities for effectively contributing to local development and disaster response efforts. It will also provide technical support to the National Society in enhancing its capacity in areas such as cash and voucher assistance (CVA), emergency response, distribution of equipment, among others. The National Society also deploys IFRC mechanisms such as the disaster response emergency fund (DREF) and Emergency Appeals to respond swiftly and effectively to disasters.

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



School Health Club members in Kamasasa village trained under the CP3 programme, use role-play to teach classmates about disease risks and how to report illnesses. (Photo: Sierra Leone Red Cross Society)



## Health and wellbeing

Preventable non-communicable diseases, malnutrition, pregnancy complications, and newborn issues account for nine out of ten under-five deaths in Sierra Leone, followed by acute lower respiratory tract infections and other non-communicable and perinatal conditions (SLMDP 2019-23). The health sector continues to face significant challenges, including poor infrastructure, inadequate conditions for health workers, poor governance, weak human resource bases, inadequate disease prevention measures, and ineffective disease control and surveillance programs. Additionally, there is poor data quality and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The Ebola virus disease outbreak (2014-15) had a direct and disproportionate effect on the health sector, reversing many of the gains made in the previous decade and exposing structural weaknesses. It also eroded public confidence in the health system. Post-Ebola recovery efforts, which began in 2015, aimed at strengthening the overall resilience of the health system. The National Health Sector Strategic Plan 2017-21 built on these recovery efforts and aligned with the Government of Sierra Leone's 'Agenda for Prosperity' (2013), focusing on improving healthcare for the most vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

However, key challenges persist, such as underfunding, inefficient resource use, financial and cultural barriers to accessing care, poor decentralization implementation,

and coordination issues among various actors. Access to healthcare is hindered by issues related to accessibility, affordability, availability, and service quality.

In the WASH sector, recovery and development are crucial to address the structural weaknesses contributing to recurring epidemics, such as cholera. In Sierra Leone, acute respiratory diseases and diarrhea are leading causes of death in children under five, contributing to one of the highest infant mortality rates globally. Hand washing with soap is one of the most effective and affordable methods for preventing these diseases, reducing diarrhea by nearly 50 per cent and acute respiratory infections by almost 25 per cent. However, access to basic water and sanitation services remains limited, with only 58 per cent of the population having access to basic water and just 15 per cent to basic sanitation. These services are more accessible in urban areas than in rural ones, as reflected in the Sierra Leone Demographic Health Survey 2019.

Sierra Leone is facing a sharp rise in the use of 'kush', a highly addictive drug made from mixed substances including opioids, leading to serious health and social consequences. In April 2024, the government declared a public health emergency and launched security crackdowns, but limited data on kush use has hindered understanding of the crisis and contributed to punitive responses that have negatively affected users, particularly youth, who are believed to be the main consumers.

## Multi-year high-level objectives of the National Society

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society will focus on building the capacity of local branches to manage basic service delivery while fostering strong behavioural change communication in health and hygiene promotion. This includes emergency and disaster preparedness, community resilience, disease prevention and control, sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, and enhanced community engagement. Additionally, it also aims to reduce the effects of climate change, promote environmental protection, enhance disaster risk reduction, and strengthen women's rights and inclusion in communities. Sectoral and coordination meetings will continue to foster dialogue with national and local stakeholders on health, WASH, disaster risk reduction (DRR), nutrition, and gender equality.

To ensure communities are well-prepared and resilient, the National Society, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, has engaged communities with lifesaving and health promotional messages on disease prevention and community-based healthcare activities. Community-based volunteers have developed and disseminated key messages on communicable diseases using various strategies, including house-to-house visits, radio discussions, posters, mobile cinema sessions, and megaphones. The National Society reached beneficiaries with health messages on malaria, diarrhea, acute respiratory infections and fistula.

The BRIDGE and CP3 programmes supported wide-ranging community health, WASH, and preparedness activities across Sierra Leone. Through BRIDGE, communities received newly constructed hand-dug wells, inclusive institutional latrines and the rehabilitation of non-functional wells across branches. Volunteers reached people with health and disease-prevention messages using house-to-house visits, radio discussions, posters, mobile cinema, and megaphones. The National Society also participated in national and district coordination meetings with ministries to strengthen collaboration.

Through the Community Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness Program in Kambia and Kailahun districts, community-based volunteers have received training on identifying and reporting priority diseases through real-time data analysis software, which helped inform authorities to take early action. Volunteers conducted passive surveillance through house-to-house visits, community awareness campaigns, and used public address systems during periodic markets, chiefdom meetings, and in schools to enhance early detection and action.

To fulfill its mandate of providing First Aid services during emergencies and public events such as sports and elections, the National Society conducted a Training of Trainers session on advanced first aid for staff and volunteers. This increased

the pool of trainers available to provide first aid services to public and private institutions. The trained staff and volunteers also conducted emergency first aid sessions for various organizations, including the military, banks, parastatals, and mining companies. Additionally, the enhanced community-based first aid training was provided to community-based volunteers, motorbike riders and drivers' union members in BRIDGE operational branches.

The National Society will focus on several strategic priorities including developing and operationalizing a water, sanitation and facilities (WASH) strategy, constructing and rehabilitating more WASH facilities while fostering good hygiene practices in programme communities and supporting branches in adapting and expanding health programming to address the growing needs related to climate change.

The National Society will also empower branches to provide care, support, and referral services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) during disasters and other emergencies. In addition, the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society will promote and measure positive behavioural changes in personal hygiene and community sanitation, with a focus on menstrual hygiene management. It will also work to strengthen its capacity to provide improved access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services in communities at risk of pandemics and epidemics, while increasing community knowledge on preventing such health threats under the One WASH Initiative. Finally, the National Society will enhance health service delivery in areas such as sexual and reproductive health, SGBV, protection, gender and inclusion, safeguarding, psychosocial support and the prevention of communicable diseases.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Develop and operationalize a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) strategy
- Construct and rehabilitate WASH facilities while promoting good hygiene practices in programme communities
- Support branches to adapt and expand health programming to address needs linked to climate change
- Empower branches to provide care, support and referral services for survivors of SGBV during disasters and emergencies
- Support targeted communities to promote and measure positive behavioural change in personal hygiene and community sanitation
- Providing rehabilitation and reintegration support to Kush (drug) victims in formal and informal centres
- Prioritise investigations into the political economy of drug supply to identify effective control measures

- Providing funds to institutions offering mental health support and rehabilitation service

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will provide technical and financial support to the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society for effective implementation of its initiatives. The National Society's efforts in ensuring adequate water, sanitation and facilities, community-



## Migration and displacement

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The migration situation in Sierra Leone is driven by high levels of poverty and unemployment, particularly among youth, women, and other vulnerable groups. The country lacks reliable and up-to-date labour market data, and communication about employment opportunities is hindered by the inadequacy of employment centres, outdated labour laws, and the unimplemented National Employment Policy. There is a significant mismatch between the skills in demand in the changing labour market and those produced by existing educational and vocational training institutions. This mismatch has limited labour market opportunities and contributed to the migration of youth. Additionally, low literacy levels and limited entrepreneurial experience among some young people have further fuelled external migration. According to the Government's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023, migration is more common among men, but women and children who migrate are often subjected to sex slavery and forced labour.

Migration serves as an outlet for Sierra Leonean youth seeking to escape the lack of opportunities in their communities and across the country. Internally, migration is particularly prevalent in the eastern and southern regions, as well as the Western Area. Externally, most migration is directed towards Europe, often via dangerous routes. However, many migrants fail to reach their intended destinations. Numerous reports have highlighted the severe conditions migrants face during their journeys, particularly across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea. Many migrants experience unimaginable horrors, and even upon arrival, they are often met with harsh conditions.

Migrants, including many Sierra Leoneans, were being auctioned as slaves by smugglers in Libya, while others were held in appalling conditions at detention centres. On November 21, 2017, over 160 Sierra Leoneans were repatriated to Freetown by the Sierra Leone Government and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with funding from the Italian government. More Sierra Leoneans

surveillance and first aid are supported by the IFRC. It also includes expanding the National Society's reach, quality and modalities of first aid activities, including training volunteers, staff and the general public across all contexts.

The Finnish Red Cross will support the National Society's health, water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, and providing technical and financial support through the BRIDGE programme.

were repatriated in March 2018, reflecting the growing trend of migration from the country. As this trend increases, various initiatives are being launched to raise awareness and educate the public about the scale of human trafficking in Sierra Leone.

### Multi-year high-level objectives of the National Society

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society is actively involved in several platforms addressing migration-related challenges. During the period under review, the National Society participated in multiple coordination meetings and collaborations aimed at addressing the migration challenges faced by Sierra Leone. A key achievement during this period was the creation of a plan of action on the 'Implementation of Recommendations on Human Mobility in the Context of Migration, Environment, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Reduction in Sierra Leone', developed in collaboration with various partners.

The creation of this Plan of Action was a part of the pilot phase for the IOM disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation integrated human mobility assessment tool in Sierra Leone. This initiative, titled 'Implementing Global Policies on Environmental Migration and Disaster Displacement in West Africa,' is carried out in collaboration with the platform on disaster displacement and with support from the French government.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Collaborate with state and non-state actors to identify causes of migration in Sierra Leone
- Map out migratory routes and work with relevant ministries and WFP on solutions to illegal migration
- Focus on preventing trafficking in persons (TIP) and human trafficking
- Implement programmes to prevent TIPs and illegal migration

- Engage and empower youth, especially young women, to reduce migration risks
- Support integration of returnee migrants into the Sierra Leonean community

migration and to enhance the wellbeing of survivors of irregular migration. It will also support the National Society in coordinating with government and non-governmental stakeholders at national and local level to identify the main causes of migration in Sierra Leone.

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will continue to support the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society's efforts to strengthen its existing systems around



## Values, power and inclusion

Sierra Leone regularly ranks at the bottom of global indices of gender inequality, including the [Gender Inequality Index](#) and the [Global Gender Gap Index](#). 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.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society will continue to create a level playing field for the participation of men and women and persons with impairments through every phase of its emergency and development interventions. The National Society's safeguarding policies are in place to respect and protect the dignity of the most vulnerable people in the country and the National Society will continue to deliver on these objectives. The National Society's risk communication strategy strengthens [Community Engagement and Accountability \(CEA\)](#) by ensuring that vulnerable communities receive clear, lifesaving information before and during emergencies. It uses a wide range of digital tools and the 115 hotline to disseminate real-time messages.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society will continue to use [Community Engagement and Accountability \(CEA\)](#) approach to equip community members with relevant disaster information and laws, rights and responsibilities to be able to take part in decision making that affects their daily lives and wellbeing. The National Society will ensure that this approach assumes and anticipates the knowledge generated by community members for the overall development of the communities.

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### Planned activities in 2026

- Continue leadership capacity building through board meetings, general assemblies, and training on roles and responsibilities
- Promote the principle of 'Do No Harm' in all operations and policies
- Implement safeguarding policies to protect the dignity of those served

- Ensure equal participation for men, women, and persons with impairments in emergency and development interventions
- Implement the [protection, gender and inclusion](#) action plan based on the National Society's assessment
- Use CEA to empower members with disaster information and decision-making skills
- Ensure community knowledge is integrated into local development efforts

implementation of the [protection, gender and inclusion](#) action plan is in line with key recommendations. It will also support the National Society's efforts in areas such as strengthening risk management systems to limit people's exposure to risks of violence and abuse, strengthening safeguarding mechanisms within the National Society's structures and programmes, among others. It also assists the National Society in increasing its support for survivors of [sexual and gender-based violence \(SGBV\)](#) by enhancing the National Society's capacity to respond and prevent SGBV risks through coordinated programming standards and tools.

The Icelandic Red Cross is supporting the National Society's 'digital divide initiative' project funding, the National Society is providing solar-powered electricity system to keep the Information Communication Technology (ICT) viable in six branches.

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will continue to support the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society by providing technical assistance ensuring the

## ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society is committed to pursuing its institutional strengthening and has carried out the self-assessment part of the [Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification \(OCAC\)](#) process in 2018. The self-assessment is designed to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies concerning a wide range of organizational capacities.

The National Society is also committed to the [Preparedness for Effective Response \(PER\)](#) process and is at the Action and Accountability phase. The PER Approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyse the strengths and gaps in its preparedness and response mechanism, and take necessary action to improve it.



### Key Institutional Indicators

The National Society has put in place the following:

- Strategy to strengthen its auxiliary role
- National Society development plan
- Youth engagement strategy
- Health, accident and death compensation for volunteers
- Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) policy
- Digital transformation roadmap
- Strengthened integrity and reputational risk mechanism



## Strategic and operational coordination

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Continue to leverage partnerships to advocate and explore funding opportunities to undertake emergency and development interventions in Sierra Leone
- Build the capacity of National Society branches on resource mobilization
- Link up with key governmental and non-governments actors to mobilize resources and jointly upgrade and expand humanitarian services

- Contextualize emerging global concepts and principles into emergency operations and development programmes to match global standards

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in its efforts to increase its engagement with both internal and external stakeholders for an effective humanitarian response. It will support the National Society to leverage its unique status in order to cooperate with other relevant actors both nationally and internationally. The IFRC is also supporting the

Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in collaborating with other National Societies to advance the implementation of the New Way of Working mechanism, outlined in the IFRC's Agenda for Renewal.

The **British Red Cross** and the **Finish Red Cross** has supported the National Society through technical guidance in ensuring the completion and quality of the unified plan which will serve as a strong foundation for building cohesive response mechanisms, effective cooperation and enhancing humanitarian actions.



## National Society development

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Implement the findings of the IFRC [organizational capacity assessment \(OCAC\)](#) and the [branch organizational capacity assessment \(BOCA\)](#)
- Implement competency, vision, and skills criteria for selecting new leaders, focusing on innovation, adaptive, and transformational leadership
- Ensure 30 per cent representation of women in National Society leadership positions at all levels within the next five years
- Increase the number of active volunteers and achieve high rates of volunteer retention

- Generate over half of National Society's yearly income domestically

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in undertaking initiatives aimed at National Society development and increasing its sustainability. These initiatives include the implementation of the findings from the [OCAC assessment](#), the [BOCA assessment](#) which offers a way for the National Society to continuously monitor progress against every element needed to make it a well-functioning National Society in line with IFRC guidelines. The IFRC is committed to support key components of the National Society development and other [Pan-African initiatives](#) with technical and financial resources.



## Humanitarian diplomacy

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Regularly engage with the public and donors on the National Society's work, efforts and its successes
- Continue to engage with relevant platforms such as social media sites and the media to publicize the National Society's work and enhance its visibility
- Continue to build the capacity of National Society staff and volunteers on effective communication

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in conducting effective humanitarian diplomacy as part of its strategic plan to target decision-makers, international and national partners, and community organizations. It will continue to support the National Society in its efforts to enhance the capacity of its staff and volunteers on communications either through the facilitation of training or other technical support. These efforts are aimed at ensuring that the National Society capitalizes on its auxiliary role and is recognized as the first responder to emergencies in Sierra Leone.



## Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- 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
- 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

- Strengthen and expand the feedback response mechanism
- Ensure programme quality and donor accountability through a Performance Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (PMER) system

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society's effort to enhance its overall accountability through technical and financial support for areas such as financial management systems, internal controls, logistics capacity at headquarters and branch offices and by ensuring the implementation of complaints mechanisms. It supports the National Society's efforts in digital transformation and in developing tools to bolster the National Society's accountability systems.



Sierra Leone Red Cross Society support local health authorities to run a child immunization event in Mambolo, Kambia district. (Photo: Sierra Leone Red Cross Society)

# THE IFRC NETWORK

## The IFRC

The IFRC provides support to the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society through its presence in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Its support to the National Society focuses on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy, including strengthening its auxiliary role. The IFRC provides technical assistance to the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society 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 Society
- Enhancement of the National Society's organizational development
- Representing the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society internationally

In recent years, the IFRC has supported the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society through a number of IFRC disaster response emergency fund ([DREF](#)) and [Emergency Appeal](#) operations relating to flooding and landslides, civil unrest, explosions and accidental fires.

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## IFRC membership coordination

IFRC membership coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing on common priorities; jointly developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need, incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, links with development assistance, and efforts to reinforce National Societies in their respective countries, including through their auxiliary role.

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society is part of the 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 **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 region.

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 Society in consortium with the Finnish Red Cross and supporting through the IFRC the implementation of the Tree Planting and Care initiative in six branches.

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## Movement coordination

The National Society ensures regular exchanges with the IFRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and participating National Societies, for the alignment of support and action between Movement partners. In times of emergencies, closer coordination is organized. This is carried out in line with the [Strengthening Movement Coordination](#)

and [Cooperation \(SMCC\)](#) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The **ICRC** supports the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society with communications and National Society profiling.

## Coordination with other actors

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society 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.

The National Society also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Food Programme (WFP) for the management and monitoring of cash-based assistance and

distribution of relief items to vulnerable communities. 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.

The National Society will engage local councils and other stakeholders using existing platforms to implement key health, disaster risk reduction, water and sanitation, migration and shelter, food security and livelihoods programme interventions and policies, and advocacy for the inclusion of women and persons with disabilities. The various district health management teams will provide direction on government policies, as well as the establishment/strengthening of certain structures.



**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 16 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.

### About the plan

The plan reflects the priorities of the host National Society, the IFRC and National Societies providing international support, for 2026 and subsequent years. It is aligned with IFRC [Strategy 2030](#), representing the collective ambitions of the IFRC membership, and is the result of a joint planning process and will serve for joint monitoring and reporting. It will be revised on an annual basis to adjust priorities and funding requirements to the needs in-country.

### Explanatory note on funding requirements and definitions

- The total funding requirements show what the IFRC network seeks to raise for the given year through different channels: funding through the IFRC, through participating National Societies as bilateral support, and through the host National Society from non-IFRC network sources. All figures should include the administrative and operational costs of the different entities
- Host National Society funding requirements not coming from IFRC network sources can comprise a variety of sources, as demonstrated when reporting on income in the [IFRC network databank](#)
- Participating National Society funding requirements for bilateral support are those validated by respective headquarters, and often represent mainly secured funding
- IFRC funding requirements comprise both what is sourced from the IFRC core budget and what is sought through emergency and thematic funding. This includes participating National Societies' multilateral support through IFRC, and all other IFRC sources of funding
- Figures for the years beyond 2026 most often represent partial requirements that are known at time of publication. Many National Societies have annual internal approval processes for funding requirements, and lower figures do not mean a decrease in funding requirements in future years
- Missing data and breakdowns: data may not be available from all IFRC network members for funding requirements. This may lead to inconsistencies across different reporting tools as well as potential under-estimation of the efforts led by all
- Reporting bias: the data informing this Federation-wide overview is self-reported by each National Society (or its designated support entity) which is the owner and gatekeeper, and responsible for accuracy and updating. IFRC tries to triangulate the data provided by the National Societies with previous data and other data in the public domain
- **Definitions:**
  - » **Local units:** ALL subdivisions of a National Society that coordinate and deliver services to people. These include ALL levels (provincial, state, city, district branches, sections or chapters, headquarters, and regional and intermediate offices, as well as community-based units)
  - » **Branches:** A Branch has its roles, responsibilities and relationship with the National Headquarters defined through the National Society's Statutes, including the level of autonomy given, especially in the area of its legal status, mobilising local resources and building local partnerships, and the decisions it makes. It has a local-level decision-making mechanism through its Branch members, board and volunteers, equally defined through the National Society's Statutes

### Additional information

- [IFRC network country plans](#) • [All plans and reports](#)
- Data on National Societies on [IFRC network databank](#)
- Live data on active emergency operations on [IFRC GO platform](#)
- Live data on [IFRC-Disaster Response Emergency Fund Response and Anticipatory pillars](#)
- [Evaluations and research bank](#) • [Donor response reports](#)

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