

Strategy for development cooperation with

# Sierra Leone

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REGERINGSKANSLIET

Government Offices  
of Sweden

## Memorandum

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### **STRATEGY FOR SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN SIERRA LEONE FOR THE PERIOD ENDING IN DECEMBER 2013**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The present strategy governs Swedish development cooperation with Sierra Leone. The strategy is based on Sierra Leone's own poverty reduction strategy (PRS) and on the priorities identified in the Peace Building Cooperation Framework (PBCF) for Sierra Leone drawn up by the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). In addition, it is based on Sweden's Policy for Global Development (PGU), the overall objective of Swedish international development cooperation, the Swedish Government's three thematic development cooperation priorities: gender equality and the role of women in development; democracy and human rights; and environment and climate. The strategy is to be informed by a conflict prevention perspective and special consideration is to be given to the rights of children, girls and women. All support will be based on the principle of promoting stability, peace and security, be guided by an awareness of the risk of conflict, and be conflict-sensitive. The regional perspective is to be taken into consideration in this connection.

The over-riding objective of the cooperation strategy is to strengthen respect for the freedoms and rights of the individual and ensure greater socioeconomic welfare and security, particularly for women and girls. Swedish development cooperation is to be focused on the education sector. The objectives for this cooperation area are:

- (i) Access to primary education of good quality for all.**
- (ii) Increased access to market driven vocational training and higher education for women and unemployed youth.**

The process objective for the strategy is improved donor coordination and greater coordination capacity and ownership on the part of the Sierra Leonean Government in the education sector.

The strategic dialogue issues are: i) the need to ensure that the education sector is informed by a rights perspective that embodies an inclusive approach aimed at countering discrimination, encouraging the participation of excluded and marginalised groups, and promoting learning and security, and ii) the need to improve systems designed to ensure accountability and transparency with a view to reducing the likelihood of corruption and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in the education sector.

The challenge currently confronting Sierra Leone is threefold: to strengthen peace, to consolidate democracy and respect for human rights, and to reduce economic disparities, which in turn is predicated on increased job opportunities, access to education of good quality and action to strengthen gender equality. Swedish development cooperation with Sierra Leone was previously channelled via the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with mixed results. Swedish development cooperation with Sierra Leone for the period 2009–2013 will amount to SEK 20 million in the first year, and SEK 40 million per year thereafter.

## **Part 1. Aims and objectives**

### **1. Objectives and priorities**

The present strategy takes as its point of departure Sweden's policy for global development (PGU), whose objective is to contribute to equitable and sustainable global development. It is also based on the overall objective of Swedish development cooperation, namely to help create conditions that will enable poor people to improve their living conditions. This objective is based on two perspectives: the perspective of poor people on development and the rights perspective. Further bases for cooperation are the Government Communication on Africa and the European Commission's strategy for development cooperation with Sierra Leone.

**The overall objective of the cooperation strategy is increased respect for human rights and individual freedom, and increased socioeconomic welfare and security, particularly for women and girls.**

The education sector has been chosen as the cooperation area for the strategy. Swedish initiatives within the Sierra Leonean education system will accordingly contribute towards the achievement of the overall Swedish cooperation strategy objective. The strategy is linked to the overall goal - "*poverty reduced to the level of 1990*" - set out in the Sierra Leonean poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) for 2005–2007, and to the over-riding aim of the Peace Building Cooperation Framework (PBCF) drawn up by the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, namely "*to help Sierra Leone to sustain the peace and prevent the recurrence of armed conflict*". The priorities set out in the PBCF, which serve as the basis for the chosen

cooperation area are: *employment for and empowerment of young people, consolidation of democracy and capacity building.*

**The process objective for the cooperation strategy is improved donor coordination and greater coordination capacity and ownership on the part of the Sierra Leonean Government in the education sector.**

As there is no Swedish field presence in Sierra Leone, scope for active participation in coordination efforts and dialogue in the sector is limited. Interventions aimed at achieving the process objective will be undertaken mainly through the selected channel for Swedish development cooperation, and in the form of regular visits to the country by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) personnel. All support will be based on the principle of promoting stability, peace and security, be guided by an awareness of the risk of conflict, and be conflict-sensitive. Account is to be taken of the regional perspective in this connection.

## **2. Direction and scope**

Swedish cooperation with Sierra Leone is to be based on the two perspectives' four underlying principles: *non-discrimination; participation; openness and transparency; and accountability/responsibility.* The conflict perspective must be taken into account in all Swedish interventions and particular attention must be devoted to the rights and security of children and women. The bases for action in these areas thus include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Security Council Resolution 1612, the UN Convention on Women (CEDAW), Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and Resolution 1820, which calls *inter alia* for zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse, and active measures to combat sexual violence against civilians in conflict zones. Measures aimed at improving knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS will be integrated into interventions as deemed relevant.

Of the Government's three thematic priorities particular emphasis will be placed on gender equality and the role of women in development, and on strengthening democracy and human rights in Sierra Leone. Efforts will be made to strengthen security for women and girls and to counter gender-based violence. Human rights also embrace sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The link between environmental impact and the risk of conflict will be made clear in dialogue with cooperation partners. When preparing disaster relief operations, environmental impact assessments will be carried where relevant.

## **2.1 Areas of cooperation**

Swedish development cooperation with Sierra Leone is based on Sierra Leone's objectives for the education sector. The objectives for this cooperation area are:

- (i) Access to primary education of good quality for all.**
- (ii) Increased access to market driven vocational training and higher education for women and unemployed youth.**

Swedish support will initially encompass the entire national education plan. However, particular attention will be focused on the role of the education sector in expanding educational opportunities for women and girls, promoting their rights, security and participation in the community, and combating gender-based violence. Measures aimed at enhancing knowledge of HIV/AIDS will be integrated into interventions where relevant. Quality of education and the focus on reaching unemployed youth, including relevant vocational training according to the context, are also important aspects for Sweden to pursue. Following a needs analysis, decisions can be taken to focus additional attention on certain sub-sectors where increased donor commitment is desirable. Support to Sierra Leone must encompass the entire country, taking into account regional variations in terms of needs, the security situation and prevailing conditions.

## **2.2 Aid modalities**

Planning and preparation of development programmes for education will be accompanied by an assessment, based on aid effectiveness criteria, of the various alternative channels and modalities for Swedish support. Funding in the form of programme-based support directly to the Ministry of Education will be assessed as a first-hand option. Another option to be tested is the channelling of support via an existing pool fund in coordination with other donors. Conditions for collaboration with other donors and multilateral organisations represented in the country will be investigated. In addition to funding modalities, the assessment is to include an in-depth appraisal of Sierra Leone's own education plan and of the feasibility of supporting the plan in its entirety.

Given the Sierra Leonean Government's low institutional and absorption capacity there is a need for a thorough assessment of the prospects of providing support directly to the Ministry of Education. In view of the country's weak government administration and the unstable state of its society, the choice of aid modalities and cooperation partners must be characterised by flexibility. It is also essential that Swedish support be both predictable and contribute to stronger Sierra Leonean ownership.

Swedish humanitarian support to Sierra Leone is governed by the Swedish Government's policy on humanitarian assistance and by Sida's strategy for humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance is needs based; where possible and relevant, particular attention should be focused on bridging the 'humanitarian-development' gap. Closer conformity between long-term development cooperation and humanitarian assistance should be sought.

### **2.3 Dialogue issues**

Swedish dialogue is based on the Swedish Government's Policy for Global Development (PGU), the perspective of poor people on development and the rights perspective, as well as on the Government's three thematic priorities: gender equality and the role of women in development; democracy and human rights; and environment and climate. Given the current situation in Sierra Leone, climate and the environment are not priority dialogue issues for Swedish development cooperation. As Sweden lacks a field presence in Sierra Leone, this dialogue will mainly be pursued via the selected channel for Swedish support, and in the form of regular visits to the country by Sida personnel.

The strategic issues for dialogue are:

**1) the need to ensure that the education system is informed by a rights perspective that embodies an inclusive approach aimed at countering discrimination and encouraging the participation of excluded and marginalised groups, and at promoting their learning and security.**

This includes efforts to reduce gender-based violence and to address the vulnerable position of women. Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1612, 1325 and 1820 are important points of departure. These are supported by Sweden's action plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325. Implementation of Resolutions 1325 and 1820 is regarded as crucial to the goal of strengthening women's role in society in the long term, and essential to long-term sustainable peace and security. Sweden will, in the context of this dialogue issue, encourage other donors to step up their support for non-discrimination, the inclusion of marginalised groups and gender equality in the education sector.

**2) the need to improve the systems designed to ensure accountability and transparency and thereby reduce the likelihood of corruption and enhance efficiency and effectiveness within the education sector.**

Actively promoting an improved system of accountability and transparency reduces the likelihood of corruption in the education sector and creates opportunities for a more efficient and effective government increasingly capable of delivering public services. Reduced risk of corruption strengthens

public confidence in the government, which in turn engenders a more stable democracy.

Dialogue, which will be maintained with the Sierra Leonean Government as well as with bilateral and multilateral donors active in the education sector, must be in close alignment with and complement financial support.

## **2.4 Scope (volume)**

The total volume of Swedish development cooperation with Sierra Leone for the period 2009–2013 will be approximately SEK 20 million in 2009 (compared to SEK 15 million in 2008<sup>1</sup>). This will be increased to approximately SEK 40 million in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. At the same time, Sierra Leone's uncertain political and economic development requires a readiness for flexibility in development cooperation, including possible changes in direction, scope and cooperation channels. Sweden should be prepared to extend continued humanitarian assistance.

## **3. Implementation**

Peace in Sierra Leone remains fragile; the country's political development is directly linked to that of its neighbours, Liberia and Guinea. Any change in the risk of renewed conflict must be identified early and reflected in a flexible interpretation of the strategy's aims and objectives. The wider regional context shall always be taken into consideration when designing interventions in Sierra Leone, in line with the conclusions of the country analysis. As tensions in neighbouring countries have a direct impact on stability in Sierra Leone, periodic assessments and follow-ups of developments in the region are essential to the successful execution of Sweden's cooperation strategy. All development cooperation within the country should also be analysed from the perspective of conflict sensitivity. Such analyses should be based on international donor community principles for responsible donorship in conflict and post-conflict situations, such as the OECD-DAC Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations.

Preconditions for implementation of development cooperation with Sierra Leone can change, depending on developments in the country. Three possible future scenarios, with accompanying courses of action, are presented below.

A. Favourable scenario: The Sierra Leonean Government's policies for boosting economic growth and strengthening the decentralisation process

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<sup>1</sup> However, disbursement could not be effected due to a temporary lack of capacity within the implementing organisation.

lead to a modernised state with greater financial stability, reduced impunity, less corruption and lower unemployment rates.

*Implications for Swedish development cooperation:* Sweden supports the change process and the Government by increased alignment in response to improved conditions. Consideration is given to sector-based programme support.

B. Status quo: The Government remains weak. Political incentives for change are inadequate, financial resources are tenuous, unemployment rates remain high and the country continues to suffer from instability. Violence, primarily against women and children, continues to go unpunished.

*Implications for Swedish development cooperation:* Sweden continues to seek to identify key change processes in the education sector and actors to support. Programme-based support via multilateral actors becomes the primary support modality, possibly combined with direct support for the implementation of the country's education plan. Dialogue aimed at strengthening human rights continues.

C. Adverse development: The Government's capacity and political will is weakened. Organised crime becomes more widespread and internal tensions intensify. The security situation deteriorates, resulting in negative economic development, increased poverty and migration and the potential for renewed conflict.

*Implications for Swedish development cooperation:* Support is largely restricted to humanitarian assistance and support for crisis and conflict management mechanisms delivered mainly through the UN system and NGOs with humanitarian missions.

In scenarios A and B, support is extended to the education sector on the basis of the country's PRS and education plan, with possible supplementary support to achieve Sweden's objective for the cooperation area.

The risk of corruption in connection with implementation of Sida support must be addressed. This will be done partly by conducting a risk analysis while planning and preparing interventions, including the selection of appropriate channels and aid modalities, and partly through follow-up and control systems to be agreed.

A comprehensive review, assessment and possible overhaul of the strategy will be undertaken in 2011. The review will address aid modalities, choice of cooperation channels and the need if any for greater concentration within the cooperation area. It will also assess the extent to which the thematic priorities have been integrated and implemented. The review will also



assess whether there are grounds for changing the aims and objectives or volume of development cooperation, measures that would require a formal government decision.

### **3.1 Cooperation with other donors, including multilateral actors**

Sweden will seek close cooperation with bilateral and multilateral actors on the basis of their relevance and effectiveness. Cooperation will in the first instance be initiated with relevant channels in the education sector. As a leading international development actor in the education sector, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is a relevant cooperation partner, particularly in view of its extensive data collection and analysis activities. Sweden will seek synergies with the European Commission's development cooperation programmes, in particular by supplementing and supporting the Commission's work on gender equality.

### **3.2 Alignment, harmonisation and coordination**

Sweden will actively promote stronger national leadership and ownership of the Sierra Leonean education system, improved donor coordination in the education sector and greater use of the country's systems, and, in that context, focus on promoting gender equality, non-discrimination and increased security for women and girls. Assuming favourable development, the intention is to actively seek opportunities for programme-based approaches in the education sector in the interests of alignment, harmonisation and improved coordination in Sierra Leone.

## **4. Follow-up**

Development cooperation will be results-based and followed up in annual country reports. In these reports, the results matrix, along with indicators derived as far as possible from the follow-up framework for Sierra Leone's poverty reduction strategy, is to be followed up and, where necessary, revised. Sweden will seek to ensure that gender equality is integrated in the follow-up of the PRS as it applies to the education sector, and in other documents setting out guidelines for action in the cooperation area.

Reporting on cooperation with multilateral organisations and the EU Commission will take place in the context of the annual country reports. The purpose of this is to contribute to Sida's overall report to the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

## **Part 2. Background**

### **1. Summary of the country analysis**

Two comparatively free and fair elections have been held in Sierra Leone since the violent civil war in the country (1991–2002), a presidential election and local elections. This trend is an indication of a further strengthening of peace and democratic consolidation in the period leading up to the next elections at all levels in 2012.

Some of the underlying causes of the conflict persist; these include widespread corruption, considerable economic inequality (Gini coefficient: 0.63), centralised power in the hands of a small elite, marginalisation of the rural population, and the very large percentage of unemployed youth living in urban and rural areas. The instability also has regional implications as conflicts in one country create and reinforce insecurity in neighbouring states. Sierra Leone is also a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants both within the region and to the USA and Europe. Few migrants have returned and brain drain poses a significant problem. At the same time, the diaspora is an important factor in the country's economy, not least in terms of their remittances. However, little has been done to facilitate the secure, efficient transfer of remittances.

The country's judiciary is weak and impunity is pervasive. As many as 80 per cent of the population prefer to use the traditional justice system, which generally lacks transparency and discriminates against women and young people. Three important laws on gender equality have been passed. However they are not yet widely known making enforcement problematic.

Despite an annual economic growth rate of 7–9 per cent since 2002, Sierra Leone remains one of the world's poorest and least developed countries. It was ranked last on both the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Development Index (GDI) for 2007. Some 70 per cent of the population live in extreme poverty and the country has the highest maternal and infant mortality rate in the world. Approximately 57 per cent of child deaths are due to malnutrition. National HIV/AIDS prevalence varies between 1.5 and 5 per cent. According to the country's own 2006–2007 report to the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS), only 14.7 per cent of the country's primary schools provided instruction on HIV. On present showing, it appears unlikely that the country will achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Most Sierra Leoneans live in rural areas and have access to arable land. However, livelihoods are precarious due to inadequate infrastructure (roads, sanitation, clean water and electricity). Sierra Leone's principal industries

are agriculture and mining. Foreign aid or loans account for approximately 45 per cent of the government budget. Some 60–70 per cent of today's young people (aged 18–35) are unemployed. Most are illiterate, because of missed educational opportunities as a result of the war. The situation is not only a breeding ground for conflict; it also exposes young people to considerable risk of being drawn into crime and prostitution. As many as 30 per cent of all children do not attend school. Among the causes are financial impediments, long distances to schools, disabilities – often a consequence of war – poverty and malnutrition, and teenage pregnancies and marriage. Over 60 per cent of young girls marry before the age of 18. Getting to and from school – and even attending classes – also poses a major security risk for girls and women. Corruption is widespread in the education sector and there is a severe shortage of resources in the form of trained teachers and educational material. Sierra Leone's own education plan for the period 2007–2015 accords priority to primary education, vocational training, academic education and pre-school, in that order. At all these educational levels, special consideration is given to issues relating to gender, disabled people and children with special needs. After assessing Sierra Leone's application for inclusion in the Fast Track Initiative (FTI), the donors active in the sector jointly approved the plan and noted the need for increased external financing and advice.<sup>2</sup>

Sixty per cent of the population – 50 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women – are illiterate. In Sierra Leone's male dominated society, this makes it more difficult for people, and women in particular, to demand and realise their human rights and take part in the development process. It also affects children's health and their prospects of obtaining an education. Limited or no access by women to decision-making positions at local and national level also restricts their ability to advance gender equality in the country. Gender-based violence is still extremely widespread and female genital mutilation is permitted and commonly practised. Children's rights, too, are continually violated: child labour is pervasive, as are child prostitution and trafficking in children.

A second PRS currently under development is expected to focus on stimulating economic growth through improved infrastructure, development of the private sector, human development and investment in sustainable use of natural resources. A weakness of the PRSPII process is the limited provision it makes for citizens' needs and interests. The country's previous poverty strategy (PRSP 2005–2007) focused primarily on poverty reduction, food security and job creation. Sierra Leone's weak domestic resource

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<sup>2</sup> FTI (2007) Appraised Report. A report which documents the making and appraising of the Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan (p. 9)

mobilisation constitutes a risk factor both with regard to PRS implementation and the long-term sustainability of development initiatives.

The PBC now has a mandate from the UN Security Council to undertake operations in Sierra Leone. The peacebuilding framework for Sierra Leone elaborated by the PBC sets out the following priorities: *employment for and empowerment of young people, consolidation of democracy, capacity building, reform of the justice and security sector, and energy.*

To summarise, the challenge currently confronting Sierra Leone is threefold: strengthening peace; consolidating democracy and promoting respect for human rights; and reducing economic disparities. Meeting these challenges successfully presupposes increased job opportunities, access to education of good quality and action to strengthen gender equality.

## **2. Summary results analysis**

Swedish development cooperation with Sierra Leone in the period 2004–2008 has been governed by the Sub-Regional Strategy for West Africa, which focuses on continued support for return migration, reconstruction and peace and reconciliation initiatives.

During the post-conflict period 2004–2008, Swedish support to Sierra Leone totalled just over SEK 100 million, preponderantly in the form of humanitarian assistance. This was channelled to organisations such as UNICEF, Doctors Without Borders, the Swedish Red Cross and the International Red Cross Committee. Support was targeted *inter alia* at improving healthcare, water and sanitation, education, and protection for vulnerable children and victims of sexual violence or other violations committed during or after the conflict.

Among other things, humanitarian assistance helped facilitate the return of nearly half a million people through reconstruction and start-ups of basic infrastructure such as schools and health clinics. It is estimated, for example, that the number of children registered in primary school has risen by an average of 20 per cent annually since 2002.<sup>3</sup> In 2005, almost 6,000 former child soldiers were reintegrated into society and their families were reunited thanks to the efforts of the Red Cross movement.

Support for long-term development in the country – handled by UNDP – has been transitional in character, focused on peace-strengthening measures, employment and education for young people, as well as support for the decentralisation process. The decentralisation programme played a major

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<sup>3</sup> Situation analysis of children and women in Sierra Leone 2006, UNICEF 2006

role in the immediate post-conflict period and has helped strengthen local institutions and broaden participation in decision-making at local level. However, UNDP has shortcomings in terms of its implementation capability.<sup>4</sup>

Sweden has also contributed to the work of the PBC, extended support via the Commission to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and taken part in the Land Commission.

The conclusions drawn from the development cooperation with Sierra Leone during the present strategy period point to continued need for humanitarian intervention.

### **3. Summary analysis of other donor inputs and roles in the country, including action by multilateral actors and the European Commission**

The main donors in the country are the European Commission and the Department for International Development (DfID), which are responsible for implementing a joint strategy (2008–2013) focused on good governance and social sectors. These organisations also extend general budget support along with the World Bank and the African Development Bank. Other active bilateral donors in the country are USA, Ireland, Germany, via the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), and Italy. Prominent donors within the UN system include UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF. Most of the donors in the country focus on infrastructure, governance and social sectors.

The need for support in Sierra Leone is acute in virtually all sectors. The health sector is the only area where donor overcrowding is evident. Some donors, however, are pulling out of the health sector as results have not been commensurate with the amount of support expended. UNICEF is a key actor and leading donor in the education sector. Since 2007, Sierra Leone has also received support through the Fast Track Initiative – Education for All via a pool fund. Several other donors such as the World Bank, DfID and UNICEF channel development assistance through this fund. According to the donor community's assessment, there is a need for increased external financing and advisory services.

The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) was recently replaced by the United Nations Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). The latter has been given the mandate to strengthen peace, promote sustainable development and consolidate democracy

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<sup>4</sup> Only 12 per cent of the appropriated funds have been disbursed during the agreement period.

through reform and capacity building within national institutions. UNIPSIL is currently elaborating a *vision paper*, a joint document for the UN system aimed at furthering efforts in the areas of rural integration, health and capacity development, with the emphasis on young people and democratic governance.

The UN Peacebuilding Commission was established in July 2006 with the mandate to help post-conflict countries prevent the recurrence of armed conflict. Sierra Leone has received USD 15.9 million from the Peacebuilding Fund linked to the Commission. This support is intended to act as a catalyst and meet the country's most immediate needs until other financing mechanisms are in place. It is essential that the PBC begin producing tangible results in the not too distant future and that the added value of its work be clearly apparent. Likewise, the role of the PBC and its relation to the forthcoming PRSII must be clearly established.

Donor coordination and national ownership of development cooperation in its entirety are under development. Joint funding arrangements have been established, mainly in the health and education sectors.

#### **4. Summary analysis of Sweden's role in the country**

##### **4.1 Conclusions on Swedish and EU policy decisions and processes relevant to development cooperation**

Bilateral Swedish development cooperation shall relate to the European Commission's strategy for Sierra Leone (2008–2013) as well as to the EU Code of Conduct. Sierra Leone is a member of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS). Negotiations between ECOWAS, the EU and Sierra Leone are currently in progress, with peace and security, democratic reform, human rights, good governance and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) high on the agenda.

##### **4.2 Coherence for development**

Trade between Sweden and Sierra Leone is very limited. Sweden is the principal donor to the PBF and Swedish support is expected to continue.

##### **4.3 Other relations with Sweden**

A number of Swedish NGOs are active in Sierra Leone, e.g. Rädde Barnen (Save the Children Sweden), Svenska Kyrkan (the Church of Sweden) and Läkare utan Gränser (Doctors Without Borders). However, the number of Swedish economic actors in Sierra Leone is very limited, as is trade between the two countries.

#### **4.4 Sweden's comparative advantages**

Sweden has built up an extensive body of experience in the education sector, particularly in the field of democracy and human rights. It can also draw on lessons learned from its work in the education sphere in conflict countries such as Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In addition, Sweden has long been engaged in supporting and building educational capacity in developing countries in the fields of primary education, specialised vocational training and adult education. It also has good knowledge and experience of promoting human rights and gender equality in the context of development cooperation. Sweden has been proactive in efforts to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 and is currently engaged in the same process in connection with Resolution 1820.

#### **4.5 Conclusions regarding Sweden's role**

Development cooperation is expected to continue to dominate relations between Sweden and Sierra Leone during the strategy period. Sweden is a new cooperation partner in Sierra Leone. Previous bilateral cooperation between the two countries has mainly been in the form of humanitarian assistance. Thanks to its humanitarian support during the war, Sweden has built up a large fund of trust compared most other actors. A tradition of democracy and transparency and the absence of ties with Sierra Leone's colonial history also makes Sweden a credible cooperation partner on a range of issues including anti-corruption. Sweden is thus well placed to help improve donor coordination in the education sector in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration and the EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour in Development Policy, and to engage in active dialogue aimed at ensuring that the education system is informed by a rights perspective, with particular emphasis on the rights and security of women and girls.

By virtue of an active peace and security policy in the region, and as a representative on the UN Organizational Committee of the PBC, Sweden has an opportunity to help move the peace and security situation in the country and the region as a whole in a positive direction.

#### **5. Considerations concerning the objectives and direction of future cooperation**

Sierra Leone has shown, through democratically held elections and efforts to eliminate corruption and strengthen economic development, that the country is making good progress towards strengthening peace and creating better living conditions for its citizens. At the same time, the country is ranked last on both the HDI and GDI; economic disparities between population groups in the region are strongly pronounced, as evidenced by

*inter alia* the high Gini coefficient of 0.63. The country has a high proportion of unemployed or under-employed youth. The majority of its citizens – particularly women – are illiterate. Illiteracy is also high among young people, mainly due to missed educational opportunities as a result of the war.

The humanitarian assistance programmes and projects undertaken as part of Sweden's previous cooperation with Sierra Leone, have yielded positive results. This applies particularly to reintegration projects and efforts to increase the number of children starting primary school. Limited long-term development cooperation undertaken via UNDP has been successful, mainly through job creation measures for youth. This experience suggests that more long-term development programmes are now a feasible proposition. It also points to the importance of building on the experience gained from humanitarian assistance and of facilitating continued humanitarian support.

One conclusion to be drawn from the country analyses, the experience of cooperation with Sierra Leone, commitments by other donors and Sierra Leone's own priorities is that Sweden shall support the ***education sector as the cooperation area***. This also accords with three of the PBCF's priorities for Sierra Leone, namely youth employment and empowerment, capacity building and democratic consolidation.

By extending support to education, focused particularly on women, girls and unemployed youth, Sweden can help involve children and youth in meaningful activities, which in turn strengthens the prospects of productive employment, reduced poverty and a higher level of security. By including unemployed youth and combating discrimination in the education system, Swedish development cooperation with Sierra Leone has effectively adopted a conflict prevention approach. In particular, it is important to establish basic conditions for returning refugees to integrate into the community. Education is an essential part of this process. Enhancing knowledge and skills among young people, as well as among adults, helps increase awareness and observance of human rights and freedom. It also promotes positive changes in attitude with regard to gender issues, including gender-based violence. The enhanced knowledge and skills obtainable through education at different levels is not only a vital contribution to the development of society on all fronts in Sierra Leone, it also leads to economic growth in the long term.

In sum, support aimed at strengthening the education sector in Sierra Leone can help reduce poverty, enforce civil and human rights and contribute to stable development and sustainable peace in the country.





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