



**Forum:** Sustainable Development Goals 1

**Issue:** The situation in Sierra Leone

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## Introduction

A nation plagued with civil war, corruption and poverty ever since gaining its independence in 1961. Even Though it is one of the only countries in the world with precious natural resources (for example diamond), the country is still going through severe poverty. With the addition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) the poverty has shown no signs of betterment.

The factors of the sub saharan African poverty are very present in the issue of Sierra Leone. High public and private transport costs make civilians think twice before using an efficient means of transportation, it also puts the drivers out of jobs leading to more poverty. Small market sizes making it harder for family run businesses who rely on things like markets and agriculture to suffer deeply. Furthermore, the fewer stores in the market will lead to less customers as there is a lower demand of products. This makes the price skyrocket making poor families even poorer.

Adverse geopolitics also plays a tremendous role in the poverty of not only Sierra Leone but other sub saharan african countries too. The result of this is, Sierra Leon's economic presence in the world is left almost non-existent even though it is one of the top diamond exporters in the world. Moreover, the weak infrastructure adds problems as importing goods and services becomes near impossible in terms of cost, logistics and time.

Sierra Leone has plenty of potential to grow from an LDC to an HDC. However, for this to happen the country must overcome the factors that are bringing its people down.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Civil War

A civil war is a war or conflict fought between the citizens of the same country. For example Sierra Leone has gone through an 11 year civil war that began in March 23th 1991 to January 18th 2002.

### Sub Saharan Africa



The countries that lie south of the saharan region in africa.

### **Geopolitics**

The international relations between two or more countries as influenced by geological factors like location.

### **Corruption**

Dishonest conduct done by people in power, like managers or prime ministers. Usually done in ways such as but not limited to : accepting bribes and gifts, manipulating elections, money laundering, diverting funds and defrauding investors.

### **LDC**

An LDC is a Least developed country. They face struggles in terms of development and are vulnerable to things like economic and environmental shocks. They also have low human assets

### **HDC**

An HDC is a highly developed country. They are more developed in terms of economical and environmental factors. They also have updated technological advancements and use them regularly. Norway is the world's most developed country according to the UN development report.

### **RUF**

The RUF, or Revolutionary United Front, is a loosely organized force that fought a ten year civil war to seize control of the profitable diamond-producing regions of the country. Furthermore, the group wanted to overthrow the Joseph Momoh government. The group funds itself largely through the extraction and sale of diamonds obtained in areas of Sierra Leone under its control.

### **Blood Diamond**

Also referred to as the conflict diamond, a blood diamond is a diamond that has been illegally traded in order to fund military action against the government.

### **Poverty Line**

A level of personal or family income below which one is classified as poor according to governmental standards.



## Background Information

April 27<sup>th</sup> 1961. Sierra Leone gained its independence from Great Britain. A country that was impacted heavily by the transatlantic slave trade. So much so, that the country's capital Freetown was the newfound home for repatriated slaves. Although the country has experienced some economic growth (the GDP increasing from 635 million to 5.05 billion in 12 years), its development stays stagnated due to the decade long civil war and many other aforementioned factors. The country's wealth in rich natural resources like diamonds, have been used against the nation in illegal trading and exporting to fund military action against the government. With a population of 7.65 million, and 4.59 million living below the poverty line, Sierra Leone's history has been overshadowed by the 1992 civil war.

Why do civil wars take place? Conflicts are most likely to be caused by economic opportunities which are a product of greed. Since Sierra Leone was a country with a massive diamond reserve, the competition for seizing control of profitable diamond-producing regions has been widely regarded as a main cause of the conflict.

Although there isn't concrete evidence that the diamonds caused the war, it was pretty obvious to even the naked human eye. The RUF received most if not all of their funding by blood diamonds and this helped the war go on for as long as it did. In only 1991 and 1992 the RUF made a whopping \$200 million in profit through illicit diamond trade. The said diamonds were famously known to be traded with Charles Taylor (who was also one of the causes of the Liberian civil war) in return for ammunition and weaponry. The warfare resources was said to have originated in Liberia but was later proven that they came from outside the continent of Africa.

Even if illicit diamond trade played a major role in the civil war, it does not explain the initial intention of the culprits who were involved in the conflict. However, some of the problems in the diamond reserve are more useful to explain the structural inequality in Sierra Leone, which was a negative addition to the civil war. For example, unequal benefits coming from diamond extraction were argued as the ownership of diamond mines and mining licenses had been given to the ruling families and loyal supporters of the ruling leaders and parties. This resulted in economic inequality leading to growing frustration among the population who were excluded from the benefits. To make the situation more dire, the Government Diamond Office (GDO) encouraged diamond smuggling as retrieving them was a low cost and selling them at high profit made it very cost effective. The result was the inability of the government to increase tax which at the time was necessary for empowering civil sectors including armies.

The RUF's first main goal was not to overthrow any leader, but it was to gain enough profit to allow them to expand throughout Sierra Leone. This however, was not shown publicly by the RUF in order to make their plan more effective. The RUF was founded by three Sierra Leoneans who received military training together in Libya in 1987-88, Foday Sankoh, Abu Kanu and Rashid Mansaray. The



rebels' atrocious behaviour against civilians during the war does not illustrate their initial motivation to start the war.

The Sierra Leone civil war was the result of structural problems in Sierra Leone. This reukted in the increase of grievances among people and led to the emergence of the RUF. Although diamonds played a significant role in financing the war, diamonds more likely contributed to corrupting state institutions in the before the war and emergence of the RUF. The problems of forgotten youth following the collapse of society were also very impactful and serious issues. Without proper education and employment, many young people were left vulnerable to be easily recruited to the rebel forces.

Even Though there are only 2.3k cases of COVID-19 in Sierra Leone, they do not have enough testing kits to perform frequent checks on the public. The supply of PPE (personal protective kit) is very low and health officials do not have enough to distribute among each other and to the public.

Ten years of civil war has set the people of Sierra Leone up against huge struggles. 58.09% of the total population lacks access to a clean water source to drink from. Few people have access to electricity in Sierra Leone. 12% of the urban population and only around 2% of the rural population to be exact. Petrol or diesel generators are often used because most of the regions lack a stable public power supply. This increases carbon emissions. Two thirds of the adult population in Sierra Leone are illiterate and only 143,000 kids were enrolled into primary in the year of 2019. Basic human necessities are not available for the majority of the population.

The current situation in Sierra Leone is showing some sign of betterment after further evaluation, however at this moment in time the positives outweigh the negatives in terms of a better future for one of the poorest countries in the world.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Actions Against Armed Violence (AOAV)

The AOAV carry out field work, research and advocacy to reduce harm by armed violence. They work on helping victims, removing threats from weapons and aid, support and educate communities. AOAV works in Sierra Leone to implement the terms of the Sierra Leone Arms and Ammunition Act of 2012.

### Economic community of west African states (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS is a regional economic and political organisation based in west Africa. They work towards promoting peace and development across the region. ECOWAS helped to stop conflict in Sierra Leone during the Civil War in the 1990s.



## **African Union (AU)**

The AU is a continental wide intergovernmental organization working towards political, social and economic countries in Africa. Their 2063 aim 'The Africa We Want' is to make Africa the global powerhouse of the world through sustainability and technological advancements.

## **International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ)**

The ICTJ works to help with the Sierra Leonean government and civil society organisations to promote strong transitional justice through truth and reconciliation, reparations, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

## **Global Witness**

GW investigates and protests to change the system by exposing the economic networks behind conflict, corruption and environmental destruction. They have been working towards a more peaceful and less corrupt Sierra Leone

## **International Alert**

IA works with local people to build peace by them with training, advice and support. It brings communities together. Moreover they advise companies and governments and International organisations on how to promote, educate and support peace.

## **International development association**

The IDA works to is the World Bank's fund supporting conflict-affected states. The IDA helps those in need of support gain access to health facilities, education, and to economic resources in Sierra Leone.

## **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)**

The IFRC is a worldwide humanitarian organisation providing assistance. The IFRC facilitated disaster response for the Ebola Crisis and development work in Sierra Leone.

## **United States of America**

The USA has had a cordial relationship with Sierra Leone since 1961. Sierra Leone relies on significant amounts of foreign assistance from donors in the States. U.S. assistance supports the government's development efforts to improve the lives of Sierra Leoneans through investments in health service, and economic growth. The United States works to strengthen democracy, human rights, access to justice, and media freedom . In the health sector, the U.S. supports the expansion and scale-up of lifesaving, high impact, health interventions in the areas of maternal and child health, family planning, tropical diseases, and malaria prevention and control. The U.S. also provides technical assistance,



commodities and equipment to Sierra Leone’s primary health care delivery system and the community health worker program.

### United Kingdom

The UK sent the Royal Navy’s medical ship for Sierra Leone. Its cargo: hospital beds, medical equipment, off-road vehicles and a crew of skilled medical professionals. The Ebola epidemic, which made a huge impact on West Africa. Sierra Leone alone was experiencing 20 deaths a day. The UK also played a massive role in ending the decade long civil war by putting operation Palliser into action. This military intervention by the UK proved to be more than successful as a large portion of the RUF had been captured and sentenced to prison.

### The Republic of China

China has mostly positive economic ties with Sierra Leone. From 2000 to 2011, there are approximately 37 Chinese official development finance projects identified in Sierra Leone through various media reports. These projects range from a \$22 million debt relief (loans that do not need to be paid back), to assisting in highway repair projects.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
April 27th 1961	Sierra Leone gained its independence .
March of 1967	Military coup deposes Siaka Stevens government
June of 1968	Siaka Stevens returns to power .
March of 1971	Sierra Leone becomes a republic and the first ever office holder is Siaka Stevens
March 23 1991	The beginning of the civil war   Foday Sankoh RUF began a campaign against President Joseph Saidu Momoh, capturing towns on the border with Liberia.
April of 1992	President Joseph Momoh is expelled in a military coup. Under international pressure, Strasser announced plans for the first multi-party elections since 1967. Over the next 8 years multiple coups expel multiple leaders one after another.



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July of 2000	UN forces, which were in the country to help end the war, come under attack in the east of the country, and then several hundred UN troops are abducted. Rebels close in on Freetown; 800 British paratroopers sent to Freetown to evacuate British citizens and to help secure the airport for UN peacekeepers; rebel leader Foday Sankoh captured.
January 28 2002	After a decade of fighting the civil war finally comes to an end. Disarmament of 45,000 fighters is complete. The UN agreed to set up war crimes courts. British troops leave Sierra Leone after their two-year mission to help end the civil war.
August of 2004	First local election in more than 30 years took place. War crime trials are underway against both parties in the war.
2014-2016	Sierra Leone declares a state of emergency due to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa which persists into 2016, killing more than 11,000 people in the region.

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## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- The situation in sierra leone, 8th october 1997 **(1132)**
- Security Council Press Statement on Charles Taylor Judgement, 27th september 2013 **(SC/11133)**
- Final report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations, 17th March 2014 **(S/2014/192)**
- Secretary-General Appoints Babatunde Ahonsi of Nigeria United Nations Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone, 21 september 2020 **(SG/A/1984)**
- Joint Statement on Sierra Leone by Economic Community of West African States, African Union, United Nations, European Union, 6th september 2017

## Possible Solutions

**Accessibility to basic human needs.**



To collaborate with charitable organizations like the IFRC to implement water wells in rural areas of Sierra Leone where water is not widely accessible. The wells should be simple to use and cheaply manufactured so a maximum amount of products can be made. If a rural area is fairly full, multiple wells can be set up to maximize the quantity of the population to receive water. The wells should be no more than a 1 kilometer walk from each area and should be placed in such a manner that no lives would be endangered in the process of collecting water.

Furthermore, the same method can be used to implement solar panel powered generators for electricity. Having these generators will improve life drastically especially since the climate is known to be dry, hot and sunny. This will maximize the energy output to these areas that don't have access to it.

### **Improving education**

To collaborate with organizations like the IRFC to implement free education camps for youth and adults to go to in rural areas and densely populated areas. The camps should have volunteer teachers from around the globe or delegate employees from the IRFC. The basic syllabus for the teaching should be simple math, English and science. Furthermore, children should be equipped with life skills if they do not want to pursue a further academic career. Programs to promote education should be set up to teach the community the importance of education.

### **Create Jobs**

The first main path to get out of poverty is an opportunity to get a well-paying job. Creating jobs by building infrastructures or factories for example will not only develop the country physically, but the creation of jobs will decrease unemployment rates, increasing the amount of people who are provided with a sufficient income. This therefore will promote activity in the market, where more of the population will buy products, enabling the companies to earn profits, eventually helping the country out of poverty and boost national economy,

### **Improve healthcare systems**

Improving healthcare systems will promote recovery in patients and decrease death rates, avoiding scenarios where the working member of the family is unavailable to provide income for the family due to health issues. Access to quality, affordable health coverage for millions is crucial for a developed country to free up income to be used on basic necessities or just improve the overall lifestyle of an individual.

### **Basic education on finance**

Educating the population about finances and where to use your money, what to avoid, who to trust and where to store cash is very important in the maintenance of income. The 'dos and don'ts' of money can potentially help someone from a financial crisis, and prevent them from choosing an illegal



lifestyle to provide for their families, a route that not only puts people deeper into debt and poverty but also impacts the overall economy of the country along with its reputation. Access to credit in poor countries can also help create sustainable industries that combat poverty and help develop nations.

## Guiding Questions

1. How is your delegation affected by this?
2. How will the violations of basic human rights be tackled?
3. How will human necessities become less of a privilege and more of a requirement to the people of Sierra Leone.
4. How should the country deal with corrupted political officials?
5. How should the country deal with current illicit diamond trades with national and foreign buyers be dealt with.

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