

Country Assistance Policy for Republic of Sierra Leone

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1. Relevance of Assistance

After experiencing eleven years of civil war, Sierra Leone conducted peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections in both 2002 and 2007, including a peaceful transition of ruling party in 2007. It is critical to maintain political stability and peace within Sierra Leone for the country's development as well as for the stability of West African region as a whole.

At the economic front, Sierra Leone has seen steady GDP growth over the past ten years, and in the near future the country is expected to experience further economic growth particularly due to the mineral resource development. However, such challenges as over-reliance on mineral resources (e.g. diamonds) as source of national income, youth unemployment, underdeveloped infrastructure (e.g. lack of electricity and roads), and widening economic disparity between the urban and rural areas have surfaced in Sierra Leone along with the economic development.

Moreover, Sierra Leone's development index, though it has continuously improved after the end of the civil war, remains as one of the lowest in the world. In 2011, UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) Report ranked Sierra Leone 180th out of 187 countries surveyed. Average life expectancy, maternal mortality rate, and average years of schooling are, among other things, serious challenges that the country faces. Assistance to improve these indices is of significance in the sense that "poverty reduction" is one of the priority issues stipulated in Japan's ODA Charter.

Furthermore, taking Japanese private sector's interests in Sierra Leone's oil, mineral resources, and cocoa beans into consideration, strengthening the bilateral economic relationship is critical as well.

Although Sierra Leone has shifted from a post-war reconstruction stage to a longer term economic development phase in the past ten years, the country faces difficulties, including weak administrative capacity due to the loss of human resources during the civil war and limited government revenue. Japanese assistance to Sierra Leone makes significant contribution not only to resolving issues arising from progress of development and reducing poverty but also to facilitating stability in West Africa as a whole as well as in the country.

2. Basic Policy of Assistance: Establishment of Economic and Human Resource Base

to Accelerate Development

Japan will contribute to establishment of economic and human resource base in Sierra Leone, which has shifted from a post-war reconstruction stage to a longer-term economic development phase, so that the country could maintain peace and ensure further economic growth.

3. Priority Areas

(1) Improvement of Infrastructure

Basic infrastructure, which is necessary for economic development and provision of public services, is still underdeveloped due to the damages caused by the civil war. Building on Japan's expertise and past assistance to Sierra Leone in the post-war reconstruction stage, Japan will assist Sierra Leone in infrastructure development and capacity building in the power sector, which is the priority area designed by the Sierra Leonean government.

(2) Strengthening of human resource base

Japan will newly foster Sierra Leone's public servants including those in local governments because many responsible for provision of administrative services were lost in the civil war. Japan will also support capacity building conducive to improving the administrative services. In particular, Japan will grapple with strengthening human resource base in the following areas:

i. Agriculture

The staple food of Sierra Leone is rice, and the country is well-known as a major consumer of rice on the African continent. Sierra Leone, which is a member of the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) Initiative countries, aims to improve its self-sufficiency rate and productivity of rice, selecting it as a strategic crop. Japan, utilizing its experience and technology on rice cultivation, will assist Sierra Leone in such areas as infrastructural development for production and distribution of rice. Japan will also contribute to establishment of more productive and profitable rice cultivation model and its dissemination for small scale farmers in Sierra Leone.

ii. Health

Health sector in Sierra Leone has tremendous challenges as is demonstrated in some health indices like low standards of average life expectancy and high rates of both under-five mortality and maternal mortality. Japan, utilizing its comparative advantage and the past cooperation experiences, will engage in improvement of administrative capacity in health sector.

iii. Education

Although infrastructure necessary for dissemination of primary education is making a progress in Sierra Leone, the quality of education still needs to be further improved. Japan will work towards improving the quality of education, particularly through assistance in science and mathematics education, in which Japan has comparative advantage. Through these assistance, Japan aims to foster human resources who will be the basis of Sierra Leonean society.

4. Points to be considered

- (1) Currently Japan only has a JICA Field Office in Sierra Leone and thus faces limitations to the implementation system of its assistance. Therefore, Japan will actively utilize assistance through international organizations in Sierra Leone and make every effort to ensure efficient and effective implementation of its assistance.
- (2) Japan will pay due consideration to Sierra Leone's national development plan, governmental administrative capacity, and division of labour among development partners in its operation when providing assistance to Sierra Leone.