



# CONSOLIDATING THE GAINS

The United Nations Joint Vision at Work in Sierra Leone

The United Nations Joint Vision is a part of the international community's response to the needs set out in Sierra Leone's national recovery strategy, the Agenda for Change. The UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone aims to enhance the UN's contribution to the recovery strategy by fully integrating all of its available assets and resources in the country into the following five key areas:

- Consolidation of peace and stability
- Integration of rural areas into the national economy
- Economic and social integration of the youth
- Equitable and affordable access to health
- Accessible and credible public services

## United Nations Support to Integrating Rural Areas into the National Economy

Along with our many partners, through the Joint Vision, we support rural people to increase their access to markets, socio-economic facilities, social services and information. This support leads to better food security and standards of living. In practice, our aid focuses on:

- The development of Agro-industrial Growth Centres that provide agro-processing and construction training, support the creation of micro, small and medium enterprises such as processing and packaging, and offer a market for farmers products
- The establishment of Agro-Business Centres used for storage and processing in all 13 districts of Sierra Leone, and linked with Farmer Field Schools
- The construction of feeder roads to connect growth centres and markets
- The development of Community Banks and Financial Services Associations to provide financial facilities to entrepreneurs
- The provision of technical support for the reform of the land tenure policy



**Growth Centers provide a market for Farmers and rural workers.**

(See page 4 for story)

Since his training Sallu Koroma finds customers every day at the market for the tools he's made in his blacksmith's shop.

Photo: UNICEF/Olivier Asselin

## Hearing the voice of the Youth



Young people under the age of 25 make up 55% of the population in Sierra Leone. The way they chose to channel their energy will shape the nation's future direction. The views below on peace and security were gathered at a meeting in Makeni, Sierra Leone, during June 2011.

"Empowerment of the youth and growth centre is by far the most effective way to solve the problem with youth unemployment."

"We already have the local resources, the only thing we need is the skills and we need places where we can get opportunities to learn those skills."

"Small scale farmers cannot do enough, if the incentives are created there will be more business opportunities in farming and more young people would consider that as a career."

"We need more youth farms, where we can learn the skills and make that as our profession." "Sierra Leone has so much potential for farming, we just need more technical skills and investments in the agriculture."

**"I believe that we can be large scale exporters in the future, we have all the potential in the world."**

### Indicators of progress

- 26 Financial Services Associations and 13 Community Banks were established at the end of 2010. That is an increase of 22 FSAs and 7CBs since 2007 (source: UNIDO)
- 188 Agri-business centres were created between 2010 and 2011 (source: FAO)
- The size of feeder roads increased from 830 km in 2007 to 1380 km at the end of 2010 (source: Sierra Leone Road Authority, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security)
- From 2009 to 2010, the number of people who had access to growth centres and their products increased from 6000 to 50,000 (Source: MTI/UNIDO estimates 2009/Growth Centres Records 2010)

"My recent visit to agricultural business centres in Bo and Bonthe highlights the important role of UN agencies in supporting nationwide government initiatives. ABCs are run by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, and the vital role of FAO in providing technical backstopping, sharing lessons from other countries and monitoring the use of donor expenditure is clear to see. For Irish Aid the capacity of UN agencies, such as FAO, to provide long-term, consistent, support to nationwide initiatives is one of their comparative advantages."

Sinead Walsh, *Chargee d'Affaires, Embassy of Ireland*

## Harvesting the fruits of knowledge in rural Sierra Leone

Potentially, Sierra Leone could be much more agriculturally productive, due to its bountiful natural resources and plentiful water supply. Lack of expertise, poor infrastructure and low technological input are all inhibiting expansion in this sector. This feature story describes how, through a jointly-supported programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organisation, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization are helping by training farmers in the country's best four regions agricultural practices and agribusiness.



Using fertilisers and different farming techniques, the trainees at Farmer Field Schools work the demonstration plots and discover

the remarkable increases in productivity that come from applying their improved skills. Photo: Therese Leijon

In a lush green glade, about one kilometre south from Sierra Leone's second largest city, Bo, a group of 25 farmers have gathered for their weekly meeting. They are engaged in the FAO-financed project "Farmer Field Schools". Every Saturday they meet here to learn how they can improve their farming skills through theoretical and practical training. The training begins with sowing the crops and ends four months later at harvest time.

### An obvious difference in productivity

Each group is allocated two plots: one which they farm in the traditional way and one where they must follow a recommended practice, using fertilizers and different farming techniques. "The difference between the two farming plots is obvious" says Mr Richard Allieu, the district coordinator, as he visits to monitor the plots in the project's third month. He explains, "Now we'll discuss the reasons for the difference, what we can do about pests and how to best maximize output. The knowledge they get at the field schools will subsequently be applied to their own land."

### Tools and skills are key

Convinced of the gains to be made from working collectively, Pastor Mikael Sandi, brought the group together and in June 2010, with the support of DAO, access was granted to the training plot. The plot has made a vast difference. Life is better; before this time we used to suffer a lot", says Sandi, stressing the importance of farmers being given the tools and skills to increase their overall productivity. We have all used the knowledge from the Farmer Field Schools course on our individual farms," he confirms. "The team is very committed. We want to operate on a large scale, providing for our region – our dream is even to export," he says.

## Agri-business Centres and Farmer Field Schools



Mamie Jimmy, farmer and Agriculture Business Organization member, happy about the better life her family is experiencing now that she has received land, seeds and access to processing through FAO support Photo: Therese Leijon

### Better processing and marketing means more profit

Across Sierra Leone FAO also supports Agriculture and Business Centres. An integral part of helping farmers process and market their crops for a better profit, the Agriculture and Business Centres are open to anyone in the area. They are built collaboratively by the farmers' groups and set up near the Farmer Field Schools, offering a mill for grinding the cereals and an area for drying grain crops.

She explains her situation, "It has been very difficult; I'm alone caring for my three daughters and my elderly mother." Six more children became her responsibility two years ago when her sister and brother in law died. She says "I could not provide all the children with food and schooling. They had to work on the farm and sell vegetables on the street." Even the youngest were allotted tasks: they were in the fields, acting as scarecrows to keep the birds from eating the crops

### Keeping half the harvest for the family

Last year, after registering with her local farmers' Association, Mamie Jimmy joined the Agricultural Business Organisation, linked with the Agriculture and Business Centres. Things began to look up. As part of a 15 person group, seven of them women, she received two plots of land in Kenema.

"Now we have a drying floor and FAO provides us rice seed. I am able to pay for both my daughters' and my sisters' children's school fees. They no longer have to work for me," she says, her face lighting up in a smile. Helped by the Agriculture and Business Centres, she now keeps half of her harvest for the family and sells the rest.

"We have gained so much from the Agricultural Centre and the training at the Field School", says Mamie. "This has become the meeting point in the community and we now help each other improve our businesses. The future looks bright", she adds. Agriculture and Business Centres and farmer field Schools are being built all over Sierra Leone, providing farmers with the tools and skills they need to push themselves out of poverty.

### Story from cover page:

In the last year 500 people have been trained at the UNIDO-supported Growth Centre at Binkolo, eastern Sierra Leone. Binkolo ably demonstrates the new dynamic of rural revival initiated by the Government. After completing the Centre's "Quick Impact" course trainees can work as carpenters, electricians and plumbers, eligible for the good jobs which will keep them in their communities, and to which previously they had no access. Sallu Koroma, 45, was trained in 2010, learning a new skill after a lifetime as a farmer. Now he produces and sells tools from his own blacksmith shop, earning about \$20 a day. He says, "With just the farm, I couldn't afford food or provide for my six children - but now things are looking better." Tools produced by trainees are also sold direct from the Growth Centre; these are being bought by local farmers. In turn, the farmers find a ready buyer in the Growth Centre for their crops, such as cassava, which are processed for selling on in the market.

## About Sierra Leone

Whilst many country level indicators are slowly improving, it is important to remember where the country was a decade ago in order to put its recovery into perspective. The eleven year civil war (1991 – 2002) devastated Sierra Leone; over 50,000 people died, the country's infrastructure was destroyed and about one third of its people displaced. Today, celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence, Sierra Leone has experienced peace for just a decade. Safety and security in the country grows and, for a post conflict country, crime is relatively low. In September 2010 the UN Security Council

lifted the arms embargo and the last remaining sanctions imposed on the country since the war because the Government had fully re-established control over its territory and all former rebel fighters were disarmed and demobilized. Investor confidence is gradually growing and the country is moving forward to another round of free and fair elections. From a country that received UN Peacekeeping troops to a country that now deploys Peacekeeping troops (to Darfur under UNAMID) Sierra Leone has made remarkable progress.



- population: **5.4 million**
- life expectancy at birth: **48 years**
- % population female: **51**
- % of adults literate: **40**
- % of women with no education: **65**
- % of women aged 15-49 having undergone Female genital cutting: **94**
- % of women married before 18: **62**
- % of population under 15: **42**
- % of population in urban areas: **40**
- % of urbanization per year: **3**
- % of undernourished people: **47**
- % of children underweight: **30**
- % of children stunted: **40**
- % births attended by skilled health personnel: **42**
- maternal mortality rate: **857** per 100,000 live births
- Under five child mortality rate (per 100 live births): **192**
- teenage pregnancy rate: **34%**
- Contraceptive prevalence rate: **7%**

## Remaining Challenges:

→ **Poverty and unemployment.** Unemployment is particularly high among youths and ex-combatants. About two thirds of the population engages in subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 52% of national income. Rural to urban drift is a problem as youths seek work in the cities.

→ **International crime, drugs and corruption.** Drugs cartels, many from Columbia, increasingly try to use Sierra Leone as transit point to ship drugs to Europe fueling corruption and undermining earlier security and transparency gains.

→ **Management of natural resources:** Political stability has attracted back investment in mining and the country is seeing a revival in many areas, notably in bauxite, rutile and iron ore. Off shore oil discoveries were recently confirmed. Minerals are a blessing for any economy, but managed badly they can also be a curse.

## Investing in Success



Sierra Leone is a successful example of a multi-lateral approach to conflict resolution. Under the general guidance of the UN Security Council, ECOWAS, Nigeria, the EU and the UK played important roles in bringing peace to the country. The focus today is shifting from peace and security and humanitarian operations to recovery activities and long term development.

Whilst many institutions are back on their feet, progress is not uniform and many challenges remain. Donor commitment must not ease off now, since it is crucial to invest in the success achieved, maintain positive momentum and complete what is almost a great triumph for peace in the West Coast of Africa. The shift from peacekeeping to peacebuilding is complete. The UN Joint Vision signifies the start of the next shift from peacebuilding to ongoing recovery and further development. Traditionally this second shift is problematic and difficult to fund. The UN Joint Vision offers 20 well established and Government approved programmes that make a strong contribution to the peace dividend and continued development. Be part of the success through investing your country's voluntary contributions in the UN's Joint Vision for Sierra Leone!

“As a remarkable success story for post conflict reconstruction of Sierra Leone is taking tremendous strides forward. But sustained assistance is still needed to complete this process and consolidate the gains the country has made”

*Ambassador McNee, Canada's Permanent Representative to the UN and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Configuration for Sierra Leone*



This brochure is a series of five describing how the United Nations Joint Vision priorities 1-5 are working in Sierra Leone. To obtain more copies of this brochure, or a full set, or more information on the actual programmes within the Joint Vision please contact: **The Strategic Planning Unit, United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, Hotel Cabenda, 14 Signal Hill, Freetown, Republic of Sierra Leone.**

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