



Water, Environment and Sanitation (WES) Sierra Leone

Country Setting

- The destructive eleven-year conflict in Sierra Leone ruined much of the country's infrastructure and continues to have devastating effects on people's lives.
- The country is ranked at the bottom of the United Nations Human Development index and has the highest under-five child mortality rate in the world.
- Since the conflict ended in 2002 progress has been made in the re-establishment of civil administration, peaceful elections and the repatriation and re-settlement of war displaced people.

WES Sector Setting

- Although official water and sanitation coverage rates are not exceptionally low by regional standards, recent surveys indicate that the rates are in fact much lower due to destruction and lack of maintenance during the war years.
- Coverage disparities are also high. Rural coverage is much lower than urban coverage and regional disparities are pronounced, with the worst rates in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.
- Hygiene practices are generally unsafe and hand-washing before eating and after defecation is uncommon – especially in the rural areas – due to lack of knowledge, facilities and water.
- Diarrhoea is a serious threat to child survival, with children suffering an average of 4 bouts a year. There are also annual cholera outbreaks.

UNICEF WES Programme

Main Components

- UNICEF support to WES in Sierra Leone focuses on hygiene promotion, water supply and sanitation in schools, primary health units (PHUs) and their catchment communities in three focus districts.
- Teachers and PHU workers are trained and motivated as front-line hygiene promoters through the programme.
- The programme is shifting from emergency response to development programming in the 2004-2007 programme cycle.

Programme Highlights and Achievements

- UNICEF is the main external support agency in the sector, with a long history of working with government on the emergency and development programme.
- The WES programme demonstrates the effectiveness of an integrated approach to transition by building capacity for community financing and empowerment.
- Support provided to the construction of water and sanitation facilities and the establishment of a community-based maintenance system in the catchment communities.

Basic Indicators

Total population (1000s)	4,971
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000)	284
Total adult literacy rate (%)	36

Water and Sanitation Coverage

	Water (%)	Sanitation (%)
Urban	75	53
Rural	46	30
Total	57	39