

## sierra leone



[Source: CIA World Factbook]

- Sierra Leone is ranked as **one of the poorest and least developed countries** in the world, according to United Nations statistics. The UN Human Development Index (HDI) measures poverty, life expectancy, literacy, education, and other factors. In the 2005 report, **Sierra Leone was ranked second to last -- 176<sup>th</sup>, out of the 177 countries measured.**
- Sierra Leone has the **world's worst infant mortality rate** (28%). Roughly 1 in 4 children will die before they reach the age of 5. **More than half of these children will die of preventable causes, such as diarrhea, malnutrition or dehydration.** [Source: UNICEF]
- Sierra Leone has **one of the world's lowest adult literacy rates, at only 30%.**

## past:

Sierra Leone has had a very eventful 500 years.

The American slave trade was basically launched from Freetown in 1560, and by the 18th century Portuguese and British trading and slaving settlements lined the coast. In the late 1700's, freed slaves from places such as North America were brought to the new settlement of Freetown. Soon after, Britain abolished slavery and Sierra Leone became a British colony. Many subsequent settlers were liberated from slaving ships intercepted by the British navy. These people became known as Krios and assumed an English lifestyle together with an air of superiority, long dominating the government and trade of the country. Independence came in 1961, but the 1960's and 1970's were characterized by many coups. Krios have long ceased to rule the roost in Sierra Leone, but the same old inequalities between the Freetown elite and the poor of the interior remain alive, and were a factor in the recent, savage, decade-long conflict that left the country in ruins. [Source: LonelyPlanet.com]

## present:

Since 1991, civil war between the government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people (well over one-third of the population), many of whom are now refugees in neighboring countries. A lasting feature of the civil war is the atrocities committed by the rebels, whose trademark was to hack off the hands or legs of their victims. The West African country of Sierra Leone emerged from a decade of civil war in early 2002. With the support of the UN peacekeeping force, reestablishment of government authority throughout the country is slowly proceeding and peaceful national elections took place in May 2002. The country now faces the challenge of reconstruction, but the problems of poverty that helped cause the war are far from over. [Source: BBC News Online/World/Africa/Country Profiles]



View from a window of the Children's Center.



A typical village in Sierra Leone has no electricity and no running water. Sanitation and medical care are scarce.