



Project Sierra – A Family And A Future Soroptimist International Quadrennial Project 2007-2011

Sierra Leone – The Facts

- 500,000 people were murdered, raped or left with horrific injuries during the country's bloody ten year civil war
- Sierra Leone has been ranked as the world's poorest country
- For women, life expectancy is just 42 years and the rate of maternal deaths in childbirth is the highest in the world
- Sierra Leone has the worst child mortality rate in the world - nearly a third of all children die before their fifth birthday
- 74% of the population live below the poverty line, surviving on less than £1 (\$2 USD) a day

A Country Broken By War

Sierra Leone celebrated its first year of peace in over a decade in 2003 but the country still remains devastated by war and faces the challenge of reconstruction.

During the conflict over half of the population was made homeless. Tens of thousands of children were orphaned or separated from their families. Boys were recruited as soldiers and forced to commit atrocities, sometimes against their own families. Girls were often held captive for sex and domestic labour.

Before the war, a high proportion of the population was illiterate. The conflict made the situation worse, as it is estimated that every child in school lost at least two years of their education and many children are still denied this basic right. Other vital services such as health, social care, water and sanitation remain deeply affected.

Communities are now trying to rebuild their social and physical infrastructures. Starting again from nothing, they face the challenges of a population that is impoverished and traumatised. Many households are now headed by lone women or frail grandparents.

These children, families and communities need your help to face their futures with confidence.

The Partnership

Project Sierra is a four year partnership between Soroptimist International and Hope and Homes for Children which aims to raise over £1 million (\$2 million USD) to transform the lives of some of the most deprived women and children in the world.

Soroptimist International is a worldwide organisation for women in management and the professions, working through service projects to advance the status of women and human rights for all. Hope and Homes for Children works in Central and Eastern Europe and Africa. They believe that every child deserves to grow up within the love of a family and the security of a home, so they can fulfil their potential. The partnership will:

- Improve the health, self-esteem and life chances of thousands of women and children living in abject poverty
- Promote stability in a post conflict society by integrating the most vulnerable children and young women into family and community life
- Provide education, training, small business and life skills support so that families can become self-sufficient and support their children
- Build the capacity of local childcare professionals and create models of excellence

Making a Real Difference

Project Sierra will concentrate on the most alienated and marginalised children and families within Sierra Leonean society. The project has three components:

Young Mother Support

During the conflict girls and young women were trafficked into sex slavery, often becoming pregnant. Continuing poverty and exploitation following the war has contributed to a further increase in teenage pregnancy. Many young mothers in this situation find themselves estranged from their families because of the stigma of having an illegitimate child and are extremely vulnerable. Project Sierra aims to reintegrate these girls with their families or empower them to be independent members of their communities. School and vocational training will be provided, along with childcare, giving the mothers a firm foundation for their future. Life skills and healthcare classes will help build their confidence and self-esteem. Project Sierra will guide and support these fledgling families on the road to a brighter tomorrow.

Children Living Alone

Project Sierra will work with children under the age of 12 who live on the streets. Alone, vulnerable and at risk of exploitation, trafficking or a life of crime, these children will be helped to return to a caring family environment. The project will give children individual counselling, access to healthcare and nutritious meals. The child's family and community are involved, helping to mediate a safe return to family life and school. This way, more children will know the stability of a caring home.

Integrated Child and Family Support

This will provide a vital lifeline for families at risk of breakdown because of the pressures of poverty, illness or the death of a parent. Community leaders will help identify the most vulnerable families so that Project Sierra will assist those in greatest need. Each child and family will receive an individually tailored support package, providing healthcare, safe and secure housing, education and access to income generation. Farm Resource Centres will provide training, livestock, tools and seeds so that families can grow crops or start a small business. This project helps families to become self-sufficient and care for their children – enabling them to face their futures with confidence.

A Lasting Legacy

Project Sierra aims to strengthen and empower entire communities in Bo, Freetown, Kamakwie, Makeni, Matru and Tambakha. Working with children, their families and the wider community will ensure long term, far reaching effects.

Project Sierra will help some of the poorest communities send their young to school. Depending on the need, Project Sierra will provide individual children with equipment and fees, or it will fund the school directly to benefit every child in the community. This targeted approach will allow more children to gain an education – the key to breaking out of the poverty cycle.

Hope and Homes for Children will work with its in-country partner, Help A Needy Child in Sierra Leone (Hanci-SL), to deliver Project Sierra. By involving a local organisation, Project Sierra will have a true understanding of the culture of the communities with which it works. This will increase its impact while building the capacity of childcare professionals in Sierra Leone, ensuring that the projects will be truly sustainable in the long term.

Each of Project Sierra's three elements are pilot projects which will become replicable models of excellence in child protection and childcare. They will be shared with other NGOs in Sierra Leone and other developing and post conflict countries. This will ensure that Project Sierra will benefit generations yet to come.

Project Sierra locations:



Invest in the Future

Project Sierra will help some of the world's most deprived women and children. By strengthening families at risk of breakdown, helping young children living on the streets return home and empowering vulnerable young mothers, Project Sierra will enable more children to grow up in a caring family environment – giving them the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

£10* will provide a family with seeds and tools to grow their own food

£25 will provide a baby care pack

£100 will feed two families for a month

£200 will provide the fees, clothing and equipment for a child to go to secondary school for a year

£250 will help a mother to start her own small business enterprise

£500 will renovate a family's home, providing shelter and stability

£2,500 will pay 30 children's medical costs for a year

* £1 is approximately equivalent to \$2 USD

For More Information

The involvement of every Soroptimist member worldwide, working together, will help us achieve our goals for Project Sierra: A Family and a Future.

For more information about how you can support this vital work contact your Federation Quadrennial Project Liaison,

email project.liaison@soroptimistinternational.org

or visit www.projectSierra.org

Together we can achieve something which none of us could achieve alone.