

Sierra Leone

MIGRATION PROFILE

*Study on Migration Routes
in West and Central Africa*



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1. Introduction

The Republic of Sierra Leone is a country in West Africa, between Guinea in the North and Liberia to the southeast. It stands at the coast of the North Atlantic Ocean (CIA, 2017). Population estimates of 2015 determine that the country has 6,018,888 citizens (UNDESA, 2015b). The country is extremely poor and underdeveloped with an Human Development Index of 0.420, ranking the country at 179 out of 188 countries (UNDP, 2016). The country has an unemployment rate of 3 per cent, and 70 per cent of its people live below the poverty line (CIA, 2017; World Bank, 2017). Sierra Leoneans suffer from lack of formal education, as only 3 per cent of women and 5 per cent of men have more than secondary education. The economy is heavily reliant on natural resources, making it extremely vulnerable to external shocks. Key economic sectors are diamond mining as well as iron ore, rutile and bauxite mining among others (ACAPS, 2014).



Sierra Leone faced a brutal civil war that lasted between 1991 and 2002, which devastated the country's socioeconomic structure and ensured massive displacement. The conflict occurred between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), backed by Liberian president Charles Taylor, and the government forces. Tactics used during the civil war often targeted civilians and included torture, murder, rape, abduction of children, and mutilation. Women and girls were disproportionately affected by the conflict, experiencing extremely high levels of violence, with up to 250,000 victims of gender based violence during the war period (ACAPS, 2014). Levels of violence were so staggering that a study discussing the attempted taking of Freetown in 1999 by RUF demonstrated that 99 per cent of respondents reported Post Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD)-like symptoms after the attack (de Jong, Mulhern, Ford, van der Kam & Kleber, 2000). Since the Lomé Peace Agreement signed in 2002, the country has come a long way toward stability; since then, it has held several democratic elections and conducted a successful security sector reform (Conciliation Resources, n.d. & UNOWAS, 2017).

Still, the country faces a series of challenges, such as restructuring the economy in order to attract investments and providing livelihood opportunities for its people. One of the more recent challenges the country faced was the Ebola crisis between 2014 and 2016, which led to thousands of deaths in the country. This crisis not only revealed to be a health risk, but it also negatively affected domestic food production and the country's economic performance. It revealed the shortcomings of the Sierra Leone's capabilities, as the state heavily relied on international support to handle this crisis (BTI, 2016). Moreover, the country faces other health issues such as a variety of communicable diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis. Child and maternal mortality are one of the highest in the world, and noncommunicable diseases are increasing in significance (WHO, 2016a). Most recently, in 2017,

the country faces issues with floods due to heavy rain, which killed over 400 people in Freetown by August (Al Jazeera, 2017).

Table 1: Sierra Leone Key Demographic and Development Indicators

Indicator	Sierra Leone
Total area, <i>in sq km</i> ^a	71,740
Population (2015), <i>in million</i> ^b	7.237
Urban Population (2015), <i>% of total</i> ^c	39.9
Population Growth Rate (2016), <i>annual %</i> ^c	2.2
Ethnic Groups ^a	Temne 35% Mende 31% Limba 8% Kono 5% Krio 2% Mandingo 2% Loko 2% Other 15%
Human Development Index (2015), <i>country rank out of 188</i> ^d	0.420 179
GDP Based on PPP per Capita (2016), <i>current international dollars per capita</i> ^c	496.05
Life Expectancy at Birth (2015), <i>years</i> ^d	51.3
Unemployment (2015), <i>% of labour force</i> ^c	2.97
Youth Unemployment (2015), <i>% ages 15-24</i> ^c	4.40
Multidimensional Poverty Headcount (2013), <i>%</i> ^d	77.5
Gini Coefficient (prior to 2015) ^d	34
Foreign Direct Investment (net inflows, 2015), <i>current USD millions</i> ^d	518.7
Net Official Development Assistance Received (2015), <i>current USD millions</i> ^d	946.390
Personal Remittances Received (2016), <i>current USD millions</i> ^d	58.612

^a CIA, 2017; ^b UN DESA, 2015b; ^c World Bank, 2017; ^d UNDP, 2016

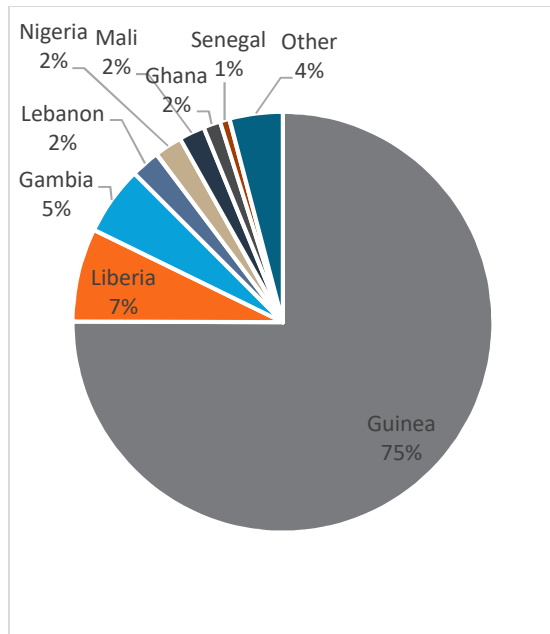
In terms of migration, Sierra Leone faced massive forced displacement due to its civil war. Moreover, the country has a long history of labour emigration, since its lack of economic opportunities led people to go abroad in order to find better opportunities. As a destination country, Sierra Leone is susceptible to instability of its neighbouring countries and has historically hosted a large number of Liberian refugees in particular (UNHCR, 2017b), as will be described in Section 2.1. Figures 1 and 2 represent the origin countries of immigrants in Sierra Leone and destination countries of Sierra Leonean emigrants. According to UN DESA (2015a)¹, the top country of origin for immigrants to Sierra Leone is Guinea, which captures about 75% of the country's immigrant stock (see Figure 1). Guineans typically migrate to Sierra Leone for reasons of geographical proximity as well as instabilities in their country. On the other hand, as shown in Figure 2, the top two destinations for Sierra Leonean migrants are actually non-African destinations: the United States and United Kingdom. These countries are favourable destinations due to language proximities and existing

¹ Note that migration statistics from UN DESA (2015a) illustrate mixed migration stocks and may include some, but not all, of refugees in/from a given country. For further information, visit:

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml>

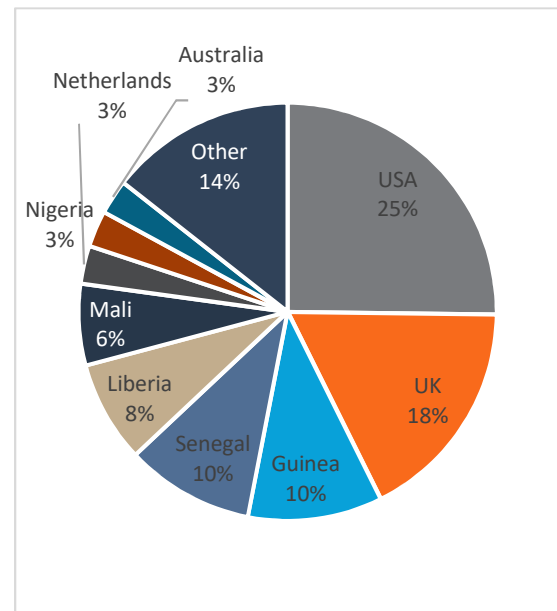
communities of Sierra Leoneans in these countries due to long existing diasporas (UN DESA, 2015). Figure 2 illustrates that neighbouring African countries, like Guinea, Senegal, Liberia and Mali account for about a third of Sierra Leoneans abroad.

Figure 1: Origins of Immigrants in Sierra Leone



Source: UN DESA 2015a

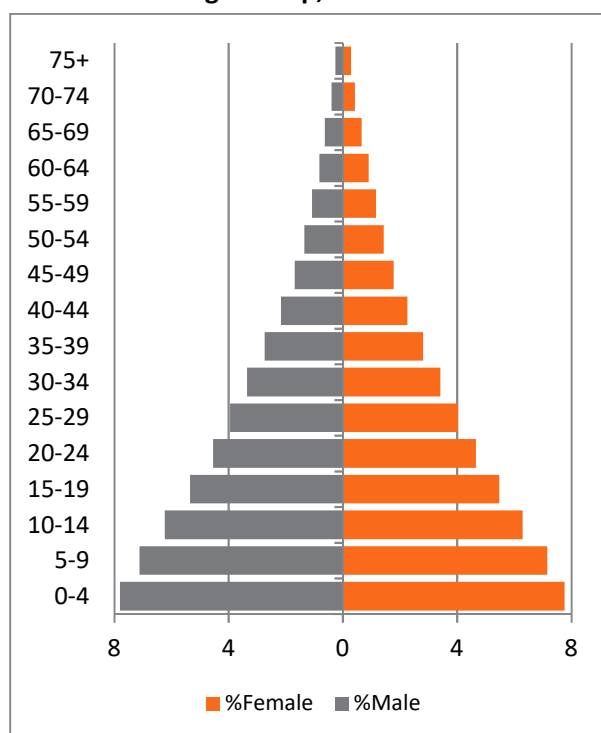
Figure 2: Destinations of Emigrants from Sierra Leone



Source: UN DESA 2015a

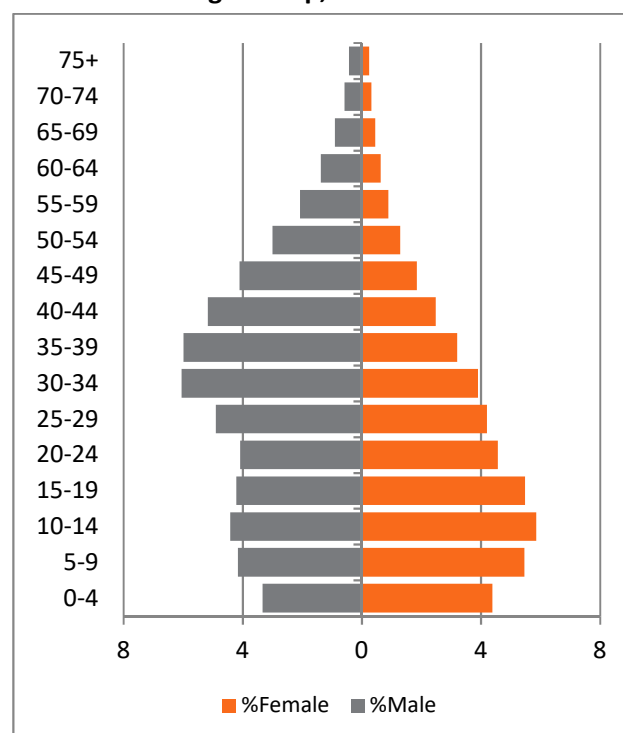
As for the gender and age distribution of the migrants in Sierra Leone, it is useful to compare population pyramids of the country and of its migration stock. These are represented in Figures 3 and 4, respectively. Figure 3 represents a classic pyramid profile for countries with low development status, with a large base and small top, representing high fertility and rates but a short life expectancy. Figure 4, on the other hand, shows a different perspective as it is centred in groups between 30-39 in the male column, whilst having more women in the younger cohorts. Moreover, Figure 4 reveals that the migrant stock tends to be more centred among individuals of working age, perhaps also for purposes of labour migration (UN DESA, 2015).

Figure 3: Total Population in Sierra Leone by Age Group, 2015



Source: UN DESA, 2015b

Figure 4: Migrant Stock in Sierra Leone by Age Group, 2015



Source: UN DESA, 2015a

2. Forced Migration/ Displacement

2.1. Refugees in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone has hosted refugees from neighbouring countries for many years. Since the end of its civil war, it has received great number of Liberian refugees due to the continued civil war in the country (Ward, 2017 & Refugees International, 2002). By 2005, it had received 60,000 Liberian refugees (UNHCR, 2005). Over the years after the peace agreement in 2003, Liberia stabilized and return programs have been put in place by UNHCR and other agencies; through such programs, thousands of people left Sierra Leone and returned to Liberia (IRN, 2007). UNHCR (2017b) population statistics show that Sierra Leone only hosted 683 refugees as of mid-2016.

Table 2: Refugees in Sierra Leone, mid-2016

Country of Origin	Refugees
Liberia	654
Cote d'Ivoire	21
Sudan	8
Total	683

Source: UNHCR, 2017b

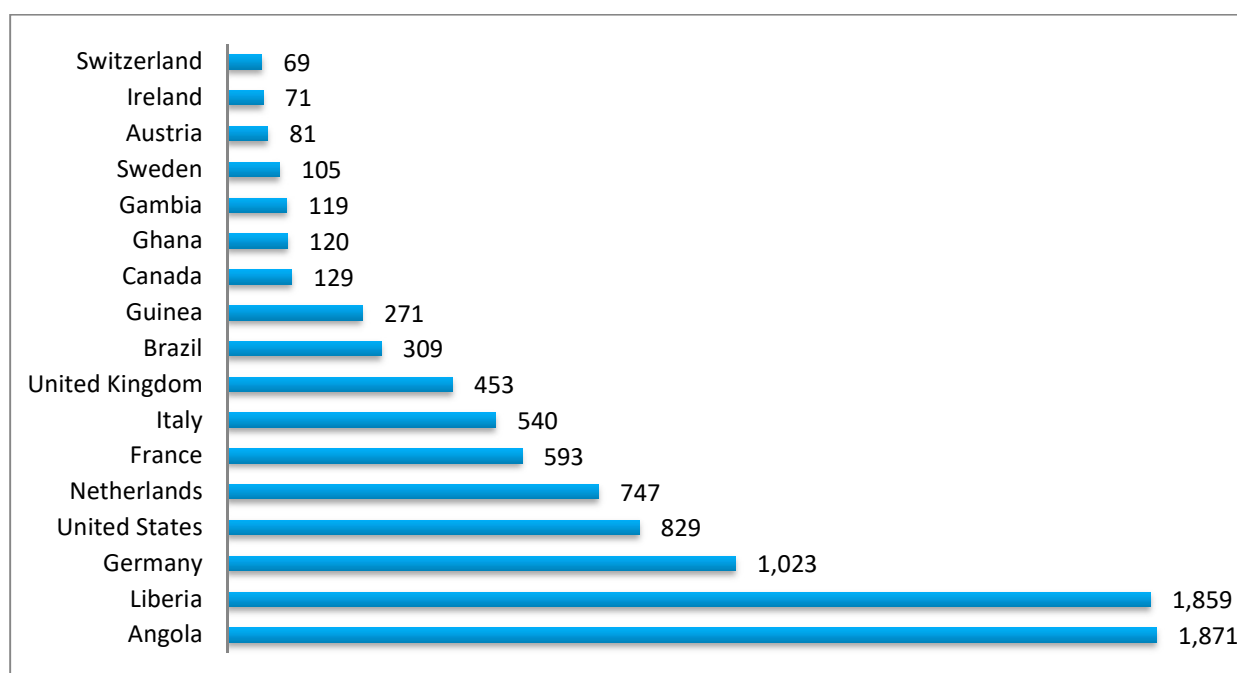
2.2. Refugees from Sierra Leone

Between 1991 and 2002, Sierra Leone faced massive displacement both within and outside of its borders due to civil war (Guberek et al., 2006). Estimates from relief organizations show that up to two million people were displaced in the country, out of a total population of six million (Pagonis & Dobbs, 2008). Of this displaced population, 490,000 Sierra Leoneans sought asylum in Guinea and Liberia, whilst the rest tended to seek asylum in developed nations in North America and Europe (Ward, 2017). The living conditions for these migrants was challenging, suffering from lack of running water and electricity, malnutrition, and disease outbreaks such as malaria in Guinea (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007).

In 2008, UNHCR determined that the country had reached a stable enough condition and that refugee status for Sierra Leoneans abroad could end (Pagonis & Dobbs, 2008). This strengthened the return process of refugees abroad, as started by the UNHCR voluntary repatriation programmes. These programmes benefited an estimated 272,000 Sierra Leoneans between 2000 and 2004. The return programmes had three components: logistics and mass information for voluntary repatriation, multi-faceted assistance to camps, and sustainability of coordinated reintegration support (UNHCR, 2005). The return of these refugees was coupled with a series of reintegration challenges, since post-conflict reconstruction was still under way. Different projects were implemented for this manner, such as nearly 2,000 Community Empowerment Projects (CEPs) in sectors such as agriculture, health, water, sanitation, and community services (Skran, 2017).

Returns have continued throughout the years, both through individual initiatives and through diaspora engagement networks. This prospect is encouraged by the government to be a part of the reconstruction of the country. Sierra Leoneans often travel back to their country to assess the situation before making the decision to engage in return migration (Johnson, 2010). By mid-2016, UNHCR data estimates that there were still 9,884 Sierra Leoneans abroad in situations of concern, of which 4,896 were refugees, 3,509 asylum-seekers, and 1,479 others. The latter group is found in Liberia in probable situations of statelessness (UNHCR, 2016). The main destinations, specifically Angola, Liberia, Germany, the US, Netherlands, France, Italy, the UK, and others, of this population of concern are represented in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Total population of concern of Sierra Leoneans Abroad, 2016



Source: UNHCR, 2017b

2.3. Internal Displacement in Sierra Leone

As a consequence of the civil war, Sierra Leone faced massive internal displacement. Reports vary reporting between 2 to 4.5 million internally displaced persons (IPDs) throughout the 11-year conflict (European Commission, 2007; Skran, 2017). Living conditions of these IDPs were often inadequate, with studies demonstrating 20 per cent of all children in IDP camps in situations of severe stunting due to chronic food insecurity (Owoaje, Uchendu, Ajayi, & Cadmus, 2016).

By the end of the conflict in 2001, IDPs faced new challenges returning to their place of residency. Until 2004, over 225,000 IDPs had returned to their areas of origin under the government resettlement program, whilst a further 245,000 IDPs had returned home spontaneously. The official program of resettlement ended in 2002, causing the government to claim that the country no longer faced a situation of internal displacement (NRC, 2004). However, many issues arise from this trend. For example, IDPs often had to return to areas with no basic infrastructure, creating new humanitarian crisis and needs. Reintegration assistance, however, was limited to registered IDPs, which discounted many thousands of people in need. The degree of voluntariness has also been a contentious issue. International organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have criticized the government's return program for forcing people to return to avoid food aid dependence on another agricultural season. IDPs were often ill informed about their return options and had inadequate support during the transit and rehabilitation phases (NRC, 2003). As such, many IDPs would go on to live in precarious conditions, still away from home. Of special concern is the great number of vulnerable children that compose this group (Maconachie, Binns, Tengbe, & Johnson, 2007).

Another issue has to do with the IDPs who did not wish to return to their original communities, who then became so-called residual IDPs and were not serviced by humanitarian assistance. During this

resettlement phase, many IDPs were also resettled to unsafe areas, making MSF describe the return program as eviction, rather than resettlement. Finally, if IDPs do not wish to be resettled or return, the government in Sierra Leone no longer considers them as IDPs. This leads to the government claiming that there is no longer an internal displacement problem in the country. However, these IDPs still suffer from a lack of livelihood opportunities and lose the formal status that can grant them a series of rights and benefits (McGoldrick, 2003).

Most recently, in 2009 Sierra Leone has faced internal displacement due to grave flooding which affected nearby countries, including Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, and Senegal (Ferris & Stark, 2012). UNOCHA estimates show that Sierra Leone had 1,455 people affected by this crisis (UNOCHA, 2009). Latest estimates of IDMC (2016) demonstrate that Sierra Leone faced 8,400 new displacements in 2013, but reasons for this displacement are not clearly stated.

3. Regular/ Labour Migration

3.1. Immigration

There is little to no information on labour immigration to Sierra Leone. The country is still struggling with development issues and a general lack of economic development, thus prospects to labour immigration are not incredibly attractive in the region. The difficulty in assessing the extent of labour immigration in Sierra Leone also stems from the fact that the country does not have a comprehensive labour migration policy that regulates and governs this trend. There is also a lack of public disclosure on the information of work permits for foreign nationals, which can act as a proxy to understand trends of labour migration in the country (ICPMD & IOM, 2015).

3.2. Emigration

The civil war in Sierra Leone from 1991 to 2002 had a widespread impact on the country's civil structure, destroying education facilities and hospitals and thus encouraging professionals and skilled workers to migrate. Post-conflict, the country still lacks economic development opportunities and is plagued by poor socioeconomic conditions, unemployment, and low wages. These factors encourage labour emigration from the country, in particular to destinations such the US and countries in Europe (European Commission, 2007).

Throughout these years of emigration, Sierra Leone has developed a sizeable diaspora, comprised of historic and recent migrants and their families. These emigrants are primarily located in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Canada and United States. This diaspora group contains a great number of highly-skilled migrants. In fact, 53 percent of tertiary-educated Sierra Leoneans, physicians and nurses in particular, live abroad. As a result, the country faces significant brain drain (World Bank, 2016). Apart from brain drain, an outcome of this migratory trend surrounds remittances sent to the country. Data from UNICEF (2013) demonstrate that the country receives \$79 million in remittances from abroad each year, whereas only \$21 million flow out on an annual basis (UNICEF, 2013). Further considering diaspora engagement of Sierra Leoneans abroad, the World Bank (2016) commissioned a study discussing the main factors influencing diaspora investment and engagement. The main findings suggest that feelings of pride and frustration are prevalent in the

mobilized diaspora community, which also has diverse human capital. Still, there remain substantial gaps in current levels of diaspora engagement, which are made worse by numerous perceived obstacles to investment, such as difficulties in obtaining energy, lack of telecommunications infrastructure, and a general lack of infrastructure (World Bank, 2016).

4. Internal Migration

Internal migration, both between and within urban and rural environments, makes up a significant trend in Sierra Leone. Rural-urban flows are marked by searches for employment, especially in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. Rural-rural migration is common in Kambia and Bonthe, due to the swamp rice agriculture and diamond mining in the south and east of the country. Diamond mining leads to important temporary migration in these regions, with around 10,000 seasonal workers (Maconachie, Binns, Tengbe & Johnson, 2007).

5. Irregular Migration

Irregular migration is common in Sierra Leone, hardened by the difficulty of border patrol as the country is only able to control one fifth of all its crossing points on its south-eastern border. Guinea, on the other hand, secures only 37 points on its more than 1,400 km-long border with Liberia and Sierra Leone (European Commission, 2007).

5.1. Human Smuggling

According to UNODC (2017), migrant smuggling is defined as "a crime involving the procurement for financial or other material benefit of illegal entry of a person into a State of which the person is not a national or a resident." Smuggling differs from human trafficking in three main ways having to do with consent, exploitation, and transnationality. More specifically, this means that migrants engage with their smugglers in a consensual manner; smuggling also occurs transnationally and ends upon arrival at the destination. Victims of trafficking, however, are typically trafficked against their will or have been coerced into giving consent and must endure ongoing exploitation. Moreover, trafficking can occur both internally and internationally across borders (UNODC, 2017).

Human smuggling has been identified in Sierra Leone as being due to mostly economic reasons, in particular due to the high costs of regular means of travel. By 2007, the main smuggling routes were through land routes around the Sahara Desert and through the sea. The Sahara route has a series of people specialised in providing food, accommodation, false documents, and transport smuggling. The maritime route, on the other hand, relies on wrecked fishing and commercial ships, easily bought in West African ports. The lack of regulated maritime routes in Sierra Leone and neighbouring Guinea facilitates the existence and use of ghost vessels (European Commission, 2007).

5.2. Trafficking in Human Beings

Human trafficking is common in Sierra Leone, and men, women, and children are subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Sierra Leone is ranked Tier 2 by the US Department of State's (2017)

Trafficking in Persons Report because, although the state exhibits efforts in fighting trafficking, it does not meet the minimum standards. In particular, the country was active in investigating cases of trafficking, enabling victims of trafficking (VoTs) abroad to return home, and referred other VoTs to support services. However, the country has not convicted a trafficker in more than six years. Moreover, investigations into cases of trafficking and timely support for victims have decreased in recent years. In this regard, the country's government is also reliant on NGOs for providing assistance and support to VoTs.

In Sierra Leone, VoTs often come from rural areas and are recruited to urban and mining centres. In these centres, VoTs are subjected to sex exploitation and forced labour in domestic service, artisanal diamond and granite mining, petty trading, ceramics production, rock breaking, street crime and begging. Other sectors of activities are sex trafficking and exploitation in the fishing and agriculture sectors (US Department of State, 2017). In recruiting children for purposes of trafficking, traffickers convince parents that they will be taken for education purposes, though they are then later trafficked. Boys and girls are used as "cultural dancers" in Gambia. As for the recruitment of adults, victims often migrate voluntarily to West Africa, the Middle East, and Europe and are then subjected to forced labour and forced prostitution.

On the other hand, Sierra Leone is also a stage for VoTs of other countries. In particular, Kenyan, Chinese, and Sri Lankan men forced into forced labour conditions (US Department of State, 2017). During the war, both the RUF and pro-government forces engaged in the trafficking and abduction of children. These victims were later used as child soldiers in combat (NRC, 2003). Human Rights Watch reported on the practice, demonstrating how the RUF would approach children in demobilization camps; these practices included threats such as murders in the camp if child soldiers would not return to fighting ranks. Women and girls, on their hand, were constantly raped by soldiers of the RUF, facing mutilation and murder if they attempted to resist (HRW, 2000).

6. Migrant's Vulnerabilities and Protection Issues

Migrant vulnerabilities are tied to the large scale forced displacement the country saw due to its civil war. After the war ended, young people return to border communities, with few opportunities for skills development and employment. Moreover, weak border management leads to possibilities of trade in illicit drugs, human trafficking, and criminal insecurity. Border communities in Sierra Leone are, therefore, left insecure and susceptible to crime (Conciliation Resources, n.d.). In this regard, children are especially vulnerable in Sierra Leone to child labour practices, often tied to further human trafficking. Save the Children estimates that by 2017, 37 per cent of children aged 5 to 14 in Sierra Leone face child labour (SCF, 2017).

Another main vulnerability faced by people in Sierra Leone are health hazards around epidemics such as Ebola. In 2015, the WHO had great efforts in the country to reduce Ebola-related mortality through prompt identification and effective management of cases (WHO, 2015). The Ebola threat has been neutralized and is no longer a current threat, as WHO declared the end of active transmission in March 2016 (WHO, 2016b). Still, this crisis demonstrates how ill-prepared the country is to deal with such epidemic outbreaks, thus demonstrating to be a main vulnerability of migrants in the country. Moreover, the country faces other health issues such as a variety of communicable diseases, such as

malaria and tuberculosis. Child and maternal mortality are one of the highest in the world, and noncommunicable diseases are increasing in significance (WHO, 2016a).

7. Relevant National Policies and Stakeholders

Sierra Leone lacks a comprehensive migration policy. There are a number of recent initiative in the field of migration and development and the risks of trafficking, however existing legislation on immigration is obsolete and lacks enforcement (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). Table 3 demonstrates key policies and laws that govern migration in Sierra Leone.

Table 3: Sierra Leone's Key Migration Policy Response

Policy	Content
The National Registration Act, 2008	"Being an Act to provide for the compulsory registration of citizens and non citizens resident in Sierra Leone and the issue of Identity Cards to such persons and for the use of public bodies; and to provide for other related matters. ² "
The Non-Citizens (Registration, Immigration and Expulsion) Act, 1965	"Determines registration of non-citizens, disembarkation and examination, conditions of entry, prohibited immigrants, expulsion and deportation, Seamen regulation, jurisdiction over it. ³ "
General Law (Business Start-up) Amendment Act, 2007	"Art. 34 institutes a Work Permit Committee, consisting of representatives from the Ministries of Labour and Social Security, Internal Affairs, and Finance and Economic Development ⁴ "
The Refugees Protection Act, 2007 (No. 6 of 2007)	"Provides for the recognition and protection of refugees. Gives effect to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, done at Geneva on the 28th July, 1951, to the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of the 31st January, 1967 and to the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, done at Addis Ababa on the 10th September, 1969."
The Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2005 [No. 7 of 2005]	"Being an Act to suppress the trafficking in persons and to provide for other related matter. Measures to combat human trafficking, financial provisions and prosecution of trafficking offences. ⁵ "
The Child Rights Act, 2007 (No. 7 of 2007)	"Being an Act to provide for the promotion of the rights of the child compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 th November, 1989, and its Optional Protocols of 8th September, 2000; and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and for other related matters. - Protection from exploitative labour, protection from torture and degrading treatment, minimum age of marriage and right to refuse betrothal or marriage and determines employment of children. ⁶ "

² Full text at: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/87739/100132/F623390103/SLE87739.pdf>

³ Full text at: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/1965-21.pdf>

⁴ Full text at: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2007-6p.pdf>

⁵ Full text at: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/78345/83713/F456980786/SLE78345.pdf>

⁶ Full text at: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/78338/83704/F1971620091/SLE78338.pdf>

Sierra Leone Citizenship Act, 1973	Citizenship by birth in and outside of Sierra Leone, no dual citizenship, Deprivation of citizenship of persons acquiring foreign citizenship/residence ⁷
The Sierra Leone Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2006	"Being an Act to amend the Sierra Leone Citizenship Act, 1973 so as to grant the right of dual citizenship and citizenship by birth directly through the mother. ⁸ "
ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment	Allows for entry in ECOWAS states without a visa. Residency in ECOWAS state up to 90 days without a visa. After 90 days, being allowed to apply for permanent residence permit in the country of destination
Sierra Leone: Resettlement Strategy 2001	"To support the resettlement and reintegration of internally displaced, refugees and ex-combatants with their dependents back into their communities, strengthen their livelihood security and promote reconciliation. ⁹ "

Sources: European Commission, 2007; ILO, 2017; ICPMD & IOM, 2015.

In the past few years a labour migration policy has been drafted and sustained several reviews, hoping to strengthen legal framework and enhance stakeholder capacity to promote orderly regular migration (Milton, 2016). The document addresses issues such as treatment of migrants and contribution to national development. This project comes in line with funds of the EU through the Valetta Summit in 2015, which hopes to address challenges in the area of migration between Europe and Africa (Sesay, 2016).

Stakeholders on migration governance are the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the Ministry of Labour and Social Security; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Presidency; the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs; as well as the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. Under the Presidency stands the Office of Diaspora Affairs which attempts to strengthen diaspora engagement, especially in the United Kingdom and United States. Through migration legislation, there are three main inter-ministerial institutions in the country: the Work Permit Committee, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Trafficking, and the National Task-Force on Human Trafficking (ICPMD & IOM, 2015).

In terms of bilateral agreements, Sierra Leone has understandings with Cuba, China, and India, allowing labour market access without a work permit. Readmission agreements have been drafted with the United Kingdom and Netherlands, whilst it holds several agreements with private companies in the Middle East. For multilateral agreements, Sierra Leone has strong ties to ECOWAS providing special treatment to its migrants, such as reduced work permit fees. Moreover, it is a part of the Multipartite Agreement for the Local Integration of Liberian and Sierra Leonean Refugees in Nigeria in 2007 (ICPMD & IOM, 2015). Sierra Leone is also party to a number of international conventions and instruments that govern migration in the country. These are the 1949 ILO Migration for Employment Convention, the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Refugee Protocol, the 1975 ILO Migrant Workers Convention, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990 UN Migrant Workers Convention, the 2000 Human Trafficking Protocol, and the 2000 Migrant Smuggling Protocol (UNICEF, 2013).

⁷ Full text at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b50610.html>

⁸ Full text at: <http://www.refworld.org/publisher,NATLEGBOD,,SLE,481596b42,0.html>

⁹ Full text at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/SierraLeone_ResettlementStrategy_2001.pdf

A key issue Sierra Leone faces in terms of migration governance is the risk of statelessness and the negative outcomes that spur out of this situation. Statelessness can occur in many ways, particularly if nationality laws do not grant men and women equality in conferring nationality to their children. This gender inequality in nationality laws leads to thousands of children being stateless (UNHCR, 2017a). Sierra Leone has had this issue for many decades, although a 2006 review attempts at remedying this situation by determining that a child born in Sierra Leone after 1971 may acquire Sierra Leonean citizenship by birth if their father, mother, or grandparent is born in Sierra Leone and is of “negro African descent” (UNHCR, 2016). Still, a loophole arises as children born abroad can only be granted Sierra Leonean citizenship through their father, although Sierra Leonean law has a safeguard for these children if they are not granted any other nationality. Work continues to be done in Sierra Leone since, as of 2017, a Constitutional Review Committee is reviewing the 1991 Constitution and proposes a gender-neutral provision of acquisition of nationality (UNHCR, 2017a). Sierra Leone also acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in May 2016 (UNHCR, 2016). The risk of statelessness is still prevalent today, and UNICEF denounces that there are over 40 million children who are unregistered in West Africa. The consequences of this lack of registration and statelessness leads to children being invisible in the eyes of the law, deprived of fundamental rights, and vulnerable to violations such as child labour and child marriage (UNICEF, 2017).

On another note, in light of the large-scale displacement the country witnessed through its civil war, Sierra Leone developed a Resettlement Strategy in 2001. It designed and implemented a plan for voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees and IDPs, which was crucial for the return of these migrants. A second key policy was the Recovery Strategy for Newly Accessible Areas in 2002, which hoped to consolidate peace and lay development foundations (Ferris & Stark, 2012; Ferris & Winthrop, 2010). Moreover, Sierra Leone has a tolerant approach to irregular migration, at least in practice. ECOWAS nationals tend to be tolerated and possibilities to regularise their stay are generalised. Border management is a constant struggle, as the country only controls a handful of its hundreds of crossing points. Even though policies such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2005 and the Child Rights Act of 2007 are in place, capacity to enact these policies is limited. There is a lack of specialised training and of public information campaigns in Sierra Leone, and NGOs and international organizations tend to pull the weight for victim protections (ICPMD & IOM, 2015).

Gaps

There is limited data especially with regards to labour immigration in Sierra Leone; these data gaps limit evidence-based policy making in this regard. Sierra Leone also has several policy gaps as it lacks certain laws to regulate forms of migration and, when it has these laws, lacks the capacity to implement them. First, a comprehensive labour migration policy needs to be developed to provide proper treatment of its migrants whilst channelling the development potential it has (Sesay, 2016). Second, the country needs to develop its capacity to govern irregular migration and minimize cases of human trafficking. In particular, border management needs to be strengthened, as reports show that Sierra Leone can only control a small portion of its crossing points (European Commission, 2007; US Department of State, 2017). Third, Sierra Leone has a continuous issue of internally displaced people who have been invisible to the state since the end of the voluntary repatriation program. These migrants have particular vulnerabilities and remain in the blind spot of the management of forcibly displaced migrants (Maconachie, Binns, Tengbe & Johnson, 2007).

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