

Health System Strengthening and Epidemic Prevention in Sierra Leone, Phase III

Supporting Sierra Leone in Building a Resilient Health System

Context and Challenges

Sierra Leone's healthcare system continues to face significant challenges, particularly in the wake of the 2014–2016 Ebola outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed critical gaps in infrastructure, service delivery, and health data systems. While the Ministry of Health (MoH) has prioritized health system strengthening, focusing on a person-centered approach, implementation remains a challenge.

Rural and underserved areas are especially affected by limited access to quality healthcare, a shortage of trained health workers, and insufficient coordination across health management levels. Maternal and child health indicators remain fragile, underscoring the need for better data collection, workforce training, and targeted service delivery. Additionally, Sierra Leone is a high-risk zone for zoonotic disease outbreaks like Mpox.

These persistent challenges point to the need for coordinated, context-specific interventions to strengthen health systems and prevent future outbreaks.

Our Approach

The Health System Strengthening and Epidemic Prevention project is implemented by GIZ, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in close collaboration with Sierra Leone's Ministry of Health. Running from January 2024 to December 2026, the project builds on previous phases to enhance the resilience and responsiveness of the country's health system.

HSSEP III focuses on four key areas:

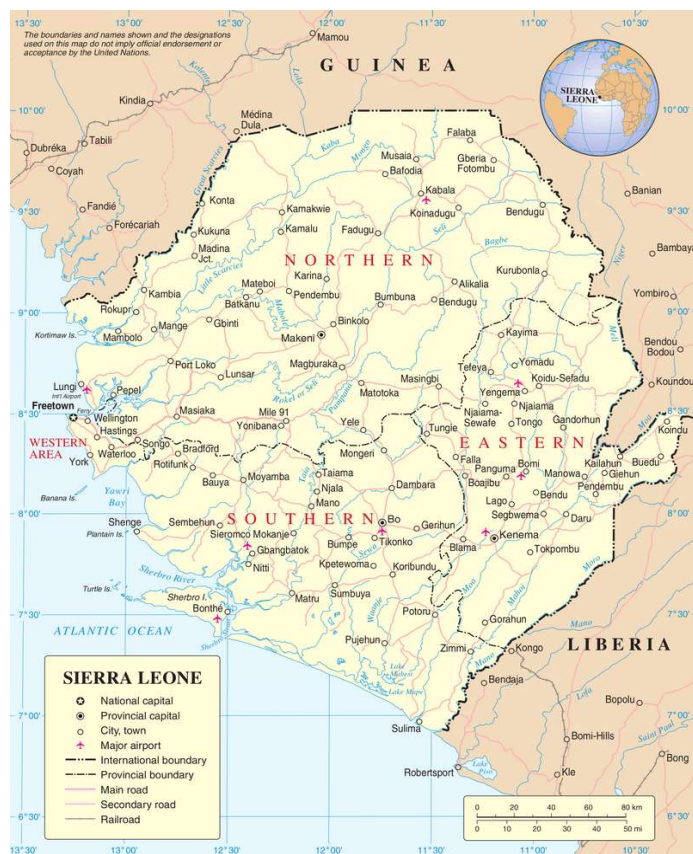
- **Human Resources for Health**
- **Maternal and Neonatal Health**
- **Quality of Care**
- **Epidemic Prevention According to the One Health Approach**

Project Name	Health System Strengthening and Epidemic Prevention in Sierra Leone (HSSEP) Phase III
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project Region	Kambia, Kailahun, and Pujehun
Lead Executing Agency	Ministry of Health (MoH) Sierra Leone
Duration	01.01.2024 - 31.12.2026

1) Human Resources for Health:

In this area, HSSEP aims to enhance the skills of service providers in the health sector in a gender-sensitive manner. By focusing on human resources for health, the project enhances the skills of healthcare providers by developing in-service training plans in the operational districts based on a needs assessment. The tools developed during this process can later be used to scale up the development of in-service-training plans in all other districts and inform national strategies like the envisaged development of an in-service-training strategy based on the national policy. It also supports the MoH to develop a Gender Policy.

HSSEP contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the UN



HSSEP is mostly aligned to the third SDG: Reducing maternal mortality (3.1), achieving universal health coverage (3.8), strengthening the surveillance and response system for reportable infectious diseases (3D), and improving sexual and reproductive health (3.7).



2) Maternal and Neonatal Health:

HSSEP focuses on strengthening healthcare facilities' capacities to deliver emergency obstetric and neonatal care effectively. The project emphasizes maternal and neonatal health by ensuring that healthcare facilities are better equipped to provide emergency obstetric care. This is vital for reducing maternal mortality rates and improving overall health outcomes for mothers and newborns.

3) Quality of Care:

HSSEP promotes accountability in healthcare facilities to improve the quality of services. It uses various quality assurance measures to achieve better care and health outcomes. These include mentoring health workers, conducting integrated supportive supervision visits (ISSVs) and conducting data audits - both supported by digital tools - at district level. Communities are also involved through feedback systems that help to adapt services to local needs.

4) One Health Approach:

The project's One Health (OH) approach enhances epidemic prevention by facilitating collaboration among various sectors involved in health – including human, livestock, and environmental health. This integrated strategy allows for improved disease surveillance and response capabilities across human, animal, and environmental health domains. Institutionalizing these collaborative efforts, and by strengthening the national OH governance approach, Sierra Leone is better prepared to respond to future epidemics. As part of this approach, an Isolation Unit at Ola During Children's Hospital will be built. Ultimately, HSSEP addresses immediate healthcare needs and lays a sustainable foundation for a resilient health system capable of responding effectively to challenges in the future.

HSSEP's Success Stories

Establishment of Chiefdom One Health Committees:

OH Committees were set up in 12 chiefdoms with four committees in each of the three districts. A one-day meeting engaged 60 key stakeholders, including Paramount Chiefs, health supervisors, and community leaders, to introduce the OH approach and define the roles of the committees. These committees were trained on the OH Governance Manual, equipping them to lead local activities focused on disease surveillance and response. With ongoing support, they are now central to strengthening preparedness and response to health threats in their communities, e.g. in the 2025 Mpox outbreak.

Integrated Supportive Supervision Visits:

GIZ is supporting the MoH by conducting ISSVs. ISSVs are collaborative visits by senior health officials to lower-level health facilities to assess, mentor, and improve health worker performance and service quality in a supportive, non-punitive manner. The paper checklist formerly used to conduct ISSVs was digitalized. This has increased the efficiency of the visits. In 2024, ISSVs were conducted in all 160 facilities in Kailahun and Kambia, which in return increases the quality of the health services.

Strengthening Mpox Preparedness in Border Districts:

Training sessions in Kambia and Pujehun equipped 96 health workers and committee members with knowledge on Mpox prevention and response. In Kailahun, community sensitization campaigns improved awareness and encouraged local action to reduce transmission risks. These efforts bolstered district-level readiness against Mpox and other health threats.

Inauguration of Gender Technical Working Group:

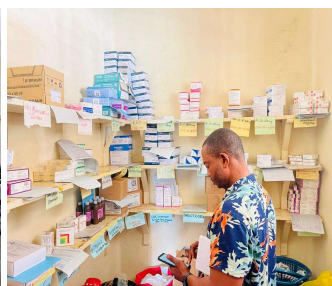
The Gender Technical Working Group consists of experts and stakeholders of different sectors. It guides e.g. the development of a National Gender Policy and Strategy for the Health Sector e.g. by developing a roadmap during a collaborative space amongst the stakeholders. GIZ supported the MoH to establish the working group which is now active.

Facility Management Committees:

33 Facility Management Committees were re-established following intensive training to improve efficiency and ensure equitable, transparent, and accountable health service delivery, while strengthening linkages between communities and health facilities. As they take on their responsibilities, early successes are already visible — such as constructing fences around health facilities and renovating parts of the infrastructure.



Development of SOP on Mpox



ISSV at Kychom Community Health Center

Published by

Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered Offices in Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Health System Strengthening and Epidemic Prevention

GIZ Office Freetown, Sierra Leone 32D Wilkinson Road

Contact: yvonne.schoenemann@giz.de

Building resilient health care systems in Kambia, Kailahun and Pujehun - giz.de

As at

June 2025

Design

GIZ, Freetown

Photo credits

Lisa Seidelmann, Vamunya Sesay

Text

Mareike Stegemann, Sarah Schaller
GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of

German Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

In cooperation with

Ministry of Health Sierra Leone

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