




A GUIDE TO SIERRA LEONE

Population:	5.5 million
Currency:	Leone (SLL)
Languages:	English, Krio, Temne, Mende and fifteen indigenous* languages
Religion:	Muslim 60%, Christian 30%, Indigenous beliefs 10%
Land size:	Slightly bigger than Eire (Ireland)
Average life expectancy:	Male 47 years, female 50 years
Exports:	Diamonds, coffee, cocoa, fish
National symbol:	Lion

*Indigenous = people that have lived many centuries in an area and have their own culture and language.

 **SIERRA LEONE** means **'LION MOUNTAIN'**.
Portuguese explorers in the 15th century said that the thunder in its mountains sounded like a lion roaring.

A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY

Sierra Leone is a beautiful, fertile country with pristine, hidden beaches, green mountains, waterfalls and steamy jungles. Although one of the poorest countries in the world, it is rich in natural resources, especially diamonds. Sierra Leone has been a peaceful nation since 2002 and is making good economic progress. In November 2012, after ten years of democracy, it held a free and fair presidential election.

CONFLICT

But, from 1991-2002, Sierra Leone's beauty was marred by civil war. Around 70,000 people were killed and 2.6 million made homeless. Children grew up knowing only the conflict, teenagers became soldiers instead of students, wives became widows, parents lost children, and families fled to temporary camps as homes, schools, clinics and farmland were burnt to the ground.

The causes of the war were complex, including corrupt leaders, high levels of unemployment, inequality, poverty – made worse by economic measures imposed by the World Bank so that the country could repay its loans – and aggression from neighbouring Liberia. Many of these issues still exist today.

DIAMONDS

Instead of benefiting poor communities, the presence of diamonds in Sierra Leone leads to more injustice and greater poverty, due to bad management by mining companies, and to conflict. Kenema was fiercely fought over during the war because many of the swamps around it are rich in diamonds. Yet poverty is a fact of life here – 67 per cent of the people live on less than 60p a day.

Small-scale diamond mining in swampland areas is not a good way to earn a living. You may find one diamond and feed your family for a month or two but there are a limited number of diamonds and you are unlikely to ever find another. Farming gives families greater long-term security than relying on luck to find a rare diamond.



FOOD PRODUCTION

Mohammed is 14. He lives in Kenema. In this photo he is taking a rest from digging. When peace came, Mohammed started going to school but his family couldn't afford books or fees, so he went to work on the family farm. Three quarters of the people in Sierra Leone are involved in agriculture but not everyone has equal access to food. Land use is not fairly shared and land can be at risk from forest fires and floods.

HUNGRY SEASON

People plant crops during the rainy season, from May until October. As food is scarce at this time, it is known as the 'hungry season'. The price of food and of labour rises. Families like Mohammed's often rely on foraging for wild food and borrowing money in order to eat during the hungry season.

***"When I am older...
I would like a good life
and to provide for my family."***

Mohammed, 14



CAFOD IN SIERRA LEONE

CAFOD has worked in Sierra Leone since the 1970s. In 2006 we opened an office in the capital, Freetown, from which the programme team manages our work in Sierra Leone and in Liberia. Caritas Kenema is one of our partners (local organisations that we work with) in Sierra Leone.

TRANSFORMATION

With Caritas Kenema's help, using funding from CAFOD supporters, Mohammed's community has transformed diamond mines that caused so much fighting during the war into productive sites for growing food. This land is not traditionally cultivated but is ideal for growing rice, cashews and maize. Mohammed's family has been trained in rice growing. Using swampland for farming also means that people no longer have to clear forests for farming. This helps to protect the environment for future generations.

As well as the swamp project, to help people get through the hungry season with dignity and pay the costs of sending their children to school, Caritas Kenema provided start-up funding for a small savings and loan scheme. Community members contribute a small amount each week, approve and issue loans and collect payments. All members receive a cut of the interest borrowers pay – even the borrower!

"AT PRESENT I DON'T GO TO SCHOOL. MY FATHER HAS

TOLD ME TO WAIT... I HOPE I CAN GO NEXT YEAR."

MOHAMMED, 14

LONG-TERM

These projects are designed to be long-lasting, giving people the skills, resources and opportunities to cope with disasters and provide for themselves, rather than being dependent on aid. In Mohammed's case, the family can survive the hungry season and sell the extra food they do not need. Mohammed's mum hopes to use these savings to send him to school next year.

"Swampland is more fertile for a variety of reasons. One of them is that when it rains, manure runs down into the swamp. Whereas traditional farmland can be harvested and planted maybe once or twice, the swamp can be used all year round." Edward Musa, Caritas Kenema



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

WHAT IS IT?

It's sometimes called 'the Church's best kept secret'! Catholic Social Teaching is a collection of teachings by Popes, bishops and theologians reflecting on challenges being faced by society, such as poverty or conflict. These writings are full of wisdom and can help us to see how we can put our faith into action. CAFOD's work is founded on Catholic Social Teaching.

Below are some themes or 'principles' found in Catholic Social Teaching.

1. Read the information about our CAFOD partners' work in Sierra Leone.
2. Look for ways that Catholic Social Teaching is put into action.
3. Write your findings on the chart, (we've done D for you!)

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING PRINCIPLE	EVIDENCE OF...
<p>A. DIGNITY OF HUMAN LIFE</p> <p>We were each made in the image of God, so every human being should be treated with respect.</p>	... people being treated with dignity.
<p>B. CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION</p> <p>Everyone should have the chance to use their talents as part of the community.</p>	...the community working together.
<p>C. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES</p> <p>Because everyone has human rights, we all have a responsibility to uphold those rights.</p>	...people helped to secure their right to enough food.
<p>D. OPTION FOR THE POOR</p> <p>We are called to choose (or 'opt') to consider the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable people first of all.</p>	<p>...working with people living in poverty.</p> <p><i>Where Caritas Kenema works, poverty is a fact of life. 67 per cent of the people live on less than 60p a day.</i></p>
<p>E. DIGNITY OF WORK AND RIGHTS OF WORKERS</p> <p>Everyone has a right to productive work and decent and fair wages.</p>	...the work of the community being productive.
<p>F. SOLIDARITY</p> <p>We are all part of God's global family and called to walk alongside each other and support each other.</p>	...people in the UK supporting people in Sierra Leone.
<p>G. STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S CREATION</p> <p>God created the earth for everyone to share and we are called to look after it.</p>	...the environment being protected.

Curriculum links

Religious Education Curriculum Directory:

Life in Christ: 4.6.6. Major themes of Catholic Social Teaching

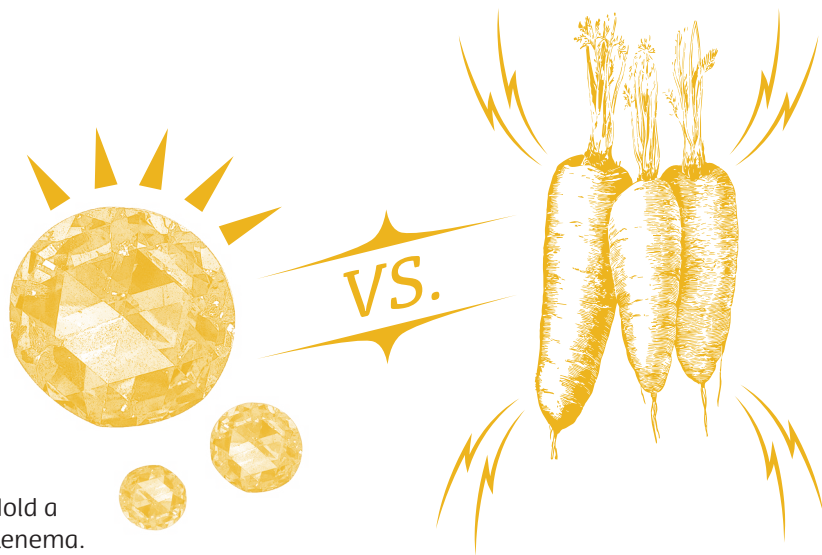
AT2iii Level 6: Explain how religious beliefs and teaching influence behaviour.

CARATS VS CARROTS!

With your neighbour, or in small groups chosen by your teacher, look at the information about Sierra Leone, Caritas Kenema and Mohammed.

Find reasons why it is good that the diamond mines have been transformed into agricultural land. (If you did the worksheet overleaf, include Catholic Social Teaching reasons.) Then think of reasons why it might be better to dig for diamonds than to dig land for growing food.

Write your ideas on the chart, then read them through. Hold a class debate to argue for or against diamond mining in Kenema.



REASONS FOR AGRICULTURE AND AGAINST DIAMOND MINING IN KENEMA	REASONS AGAINST AGRICULTURE AND IN FAVOUR OF DIAMOND MINING IN KENEMA

Now, to practise your Level 7 skills, critically evaluate the reasons you have given:

- Draw one, two or three stars next to each reason, depending on how important you think it is.
- Then, in your workbook or on a piece of paper, write down your top two reasons and explain why you think these are the most important.
- Finally, write your lowest two reasons and why you think these are less important.

As a class decide how you can **Dig Deep** to help other communities like Mohammed's to transform their circumstances. There are lots of ideas at cafod.org.uk/secondary/food

Curriculum links

Religious Education Curriculum Directory:

Life in Christ: 4.4 The Human Community; 4.6. Love of Neighbour