

A GUIDE TO SIERRA LEONE: INFORMATION FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS



A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY

Sierra Leone is a beautiful, fertile country with pristine, hidden beaches, green mountains, waterfalls and steamy jungles. It has a

tropical climate and is rich in natural resources, especially diamonds. Sierra Leone is a relatively small country, about the same size as Ireland, and with a population smaller than London's.

Sierra Leone means 'lion mountain' in Portuguese. Sierra Leone got its name when a Portuguese explorer found the country and heard thunder rumbling over the mountain and thought there was a lion there.



CONFLICT

When people think about Sierra Leone, they often think about its civil war, which lasted from 1991-2002. An estimated 70,000 people were killed and 2.6 million were made homeless. No-one's life was untouched. Children grew up only knowing the conflict, teenagers became soldiers instead of students, wives became widows, parents lost children, and homes and schools were burnt to the ground. The causes of the war were complex, including corrupt leaders, high levels of unemployment, inequality, poverty – worsened by economic measures imposed by the World Bank so that the country could repay its loans – and aggression from neighbouring Liberia. Diamonds were also fiercely fought over during the war.



SIGNS OF HOPE

One of the poorest countries in the world, Sierra Leone is rebuilding itself after the conflict. It is making good economic progress and has been a peaceful nation since 2002. In November 2012, after ten years of democracy, it

held a free and fair presidential election. CAFOD has been working with partners in Sierra Leone since the late 1970s.

TRANSFORMATION

A project set up by CAFOD partner, Caritas Kenema, has transformed diamond mines (the cause of much fighting during the civil war) into a fertile site for growing food, such as rice, cashews and maize. Small-scale diamond mining in swampland areas is unreliable and unsustainable. 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.

LONG-TERM

CAFOD 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.

Curriculum links: This pack includes discussion ideas and cross-curricular activities

PSHE and Citizenship: Preparing to play an active role as citizens, developing good relationships and respecting differences between people

Geography: Geographical enquiry and skills, knowledge and understanding of places, knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development

RE: Catholic Social Teaching

English: Speaking and listening, Non-fiction



DOWNLOAD SAMAI'S STORY AS A POWERPOINT TO SHARE WITH YOUR CLASS AT cafod.org.uk/primary/food

SAMAI'S STORY

Samai is five years old and lives with his family in a village in Sierra Leone. He is a very clever boy. His teachers smile when they talk about him – they say he could achieve anything he wants... if he has the chance. His head teacher tells a story: when he meets Samai in the street, Samai asks him for chalk. This is because Samai wants to give it to his dad so that he can give him extra lessons once he has finished school for the day.

Samai's mum and dad know how important education is and they want Samai to go to school so he can reach his full potential.

Working together with CAFOD, Samai's family are now able to grow crops on previously unused swampland. The food will help them to eat during difficult times in the year. They use the extra money they earn from selling their crops to send Samai to school.

KEY THEMES TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR CLASS

FOOD

People plant crops during the rainy season, from May until October. As food is scarce in this time, it is known as the 'hungry season'. The price of food and of labour rises. Families often rely on foraging for wild food and borrowing money in order to eat during the hungry season. Samai's family now have enough food to eat. This is because CAFOD has supported them to transform unused swampland (formerly used to mine diamonds) into fertile land for growing crops. Samai's family are able to grow enough food to eat and they can earn money by selling any extra crops.



EDUCATION

Like many of the world's poorest countries, many children in Sierra Leone do not go to school. Going to school is vitally important for everyone, but staying alive comes first in hungry households. Mums and dads sometimes have to spend the savings they may have kept for books and fees on providing food for the family. Samai is able to go to school. This is because his family can use the money they earn from growing extra crops to buy books or pay the fees for Samai to go to school. This is giving Samai the chance to reach his full potential.

SUSTAINABILITY

Transforming former diamond mines into farmland is a more sustainable use of land. This is because there are a limited number of diamonds, and even if a family finds a diamond, the money that it gives them when they sell it will soon run out. Farming gives families like Samai's greater long-term security.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Many of the key principles of Catholic Social Teaching are evident in Samai's story. Particular values that could be drawn out are: the dignity of the human person; rights and responsibilities; we are called to stewardship; and solidarity. For child-friendly descriptions of the key principles, go to cafod.org.uk/primary/food

SIERRA LEONE INFORMATION SHEET FOR CHILDREN

KEY FACTS

Population: 5.5 million

Currency: Leone (SLL)

Main Languages: English, Krio

Land size: Slightly bigger than Ireland

Average life expectancy: Male 47 years, female 50 years

Exports: Diamonds, coffee, cocoa, fish



DID YOU KNOW...?

Music and dance are a really **BIG** part of life in Sierra Leone. They are used at important events, like a wedding or the birth of a baby. Music and dance are also part of everyday life. They bring happiness and help people express themselves.



Sierra Leone has the best name for their money in the world! 'Leones'. This means 'lions'. Would you like a bag of crisps? That will be four lions please!

LEARN TO SPEAK KRIO

There are many languages spoken in Sierra Leone, but Krio is the main language that most people understand. It's a mix of many different languages.

What is your name?

My name is...

I am ... years old

I live in...

My mum's name is...

My dad's name is...

My brother's name is...

My sister's name is...

I am hairier than a lion!

My favourite food is...

Watin na you name?

Me name naa...

Me na ... years old

Ar da na salone...

Me mama en name naa...

Me papa en name naa...

Me brother en name na...

Me sister en name na...

Ar get borku hair na me body pass lion!

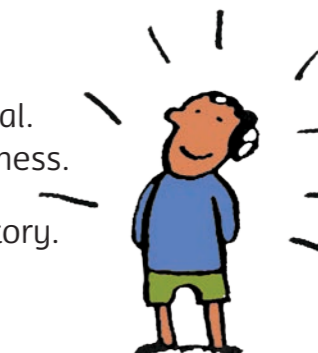
Me best chop way ar lek naa...

THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

God made each of us, which means each of us is very special. This means that we must treat others with respect and fairness.

Look for ways that this value is being lived out in Samai's story.

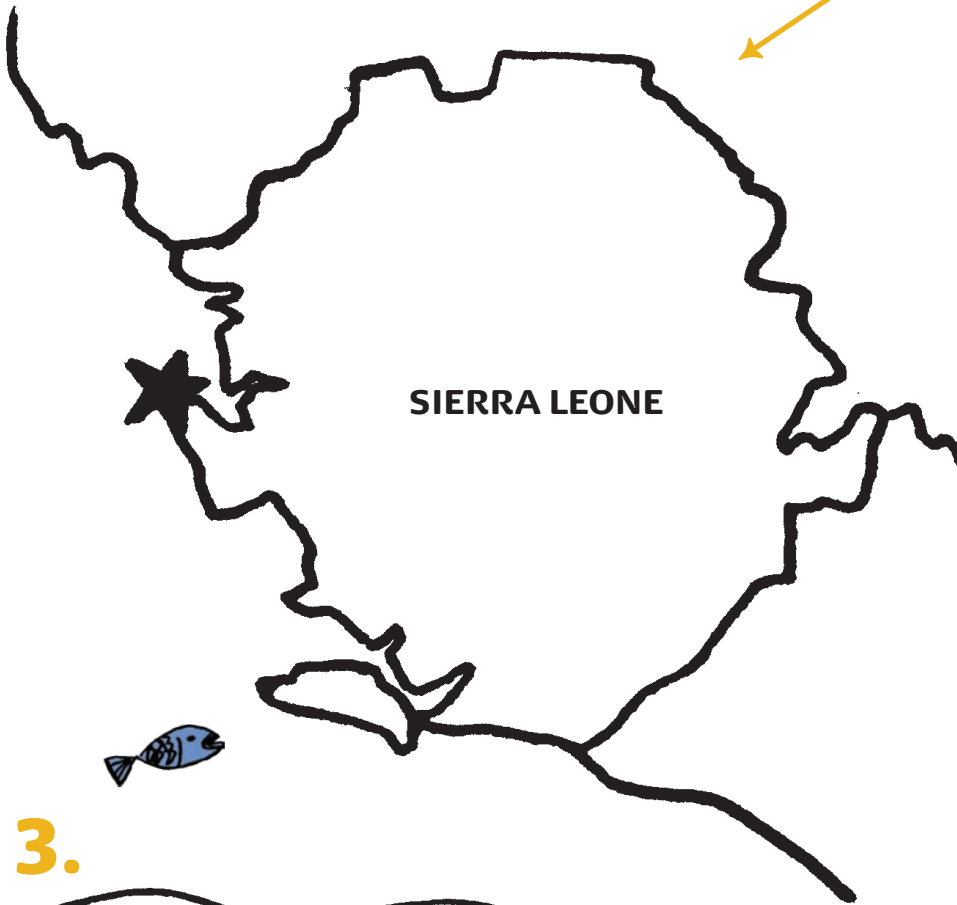
Discuss this in a group, write a poem or act it out.



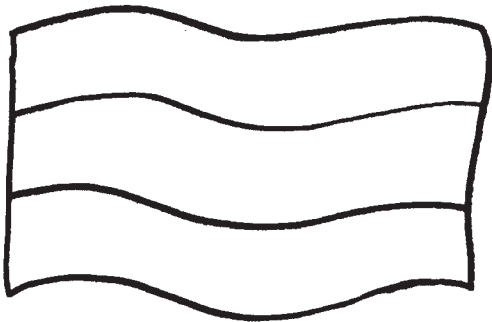
SIERRA LEONE ACTIVITY SHEET

- 1 Label the map e.g. capital city, surrounding countries, ocean
- 2 List some key facts about Sierra Leone e.g. population, languages
- 3 Colour the flag and find out its meaning
- 4 Design a poster about Sierra Leone. Include information and images to tell others about this country

1.



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ABOUT THE FLAG

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2. KEY FACTS

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