

India-Sierra Leone Bilateral Relations

Political

India and Sierra Leone share cordial and warm relationship based on common values and shared vision which dates back to almost six decades. India is committed to being a reliable partner of Sierra Leone in its development journey through soft loans, scholarships, and capacity building.

India and Sierra Leone also cooperate at the United Nations and other multilateral fora. India had played an important role in achieving peace and stability in Sierra Leone by contributing troops to the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 2000-2001.

In line with the Government of India's decision to open resident Missions in more African countries, India opened its Mission in Freetown in August 2020. Sierra Leonean Government is according high priority to establish their resident Mission in Delhi.

India has extended e-Visa facility to Sierra Leonean nationals for ease of mobility. Also, in accordance with the MoU signed in February 2020, diplomatic and official/service passport holders of both countries will be allowed visa-free travel once the MoU is operationalised. These reflect the desire of the two countries to deepen bilateral ties.

During the visit of the Vice President to Freetown in October 2019, India and Sierra Leone agreed to have regular bilateral dialogue at various levels and signed MoUs for having Joint Commission Meeting and Foreign Office Consultation. The inaugural FOC at the level of Secretary/Director General took place in Freetown on 25-26 March 2021.

Visits from India

Hon'ble Vice President Shri Venkaiah Naidu visited Sierra Leone on 12-14 October 2019 for the first ever high-level visit from India. He was accompanied by Shri Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, Minister of State for Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries; and Shri Ramvihar Netam, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha).

Hon'ble Vice President and President of Sierra Leone, H. E. Brig (Retd.) Julius Maada Bio, discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relationship as well as global and regional issues of common interest. The two Leaders expressed commitment to further build on the long-standing friendly ties between the two countries.

A number of MoUs/Agreements were signed during the visit, including a Line of Credit for US\$ 30 million for irrigation development in Tomabum for self-sufficiency in rice production. Another Line of Credit of US\$ 15 million was reactivated for a potable water project.

The two sides also signed Agreements/MoUs for (i) the setting up of a Joint Commission; (ii) Foreign Office Consultations; (iii) Training Programmes for Diplomats; and (iv) Cultural Exchange Programme.

Hon'ble Vice President also met Speaker of Sierra Leone Parliament H.E. Mr. Abass Chernor Bundu and Foreign Minister H.E. Ms Nabeela Tunis. He interacted with the Indian community as well during this visit.

The other high-level bilateral visits from India to Sierra Leone include the visit of Defence Minister Shri George Fernandes in July 2000 and Minister of State for External Affairs Shri Anand Sharma in January 2009.

Shri Sushil Kumar Modi, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, participated in the "Sierra Leone Conference on Development and Transformation" held in Sierra Leone from 30 January to 1 February, 2012. Special Envoy to PM, Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, MOS (Water Resources) visited Sierra Leone on 16-18 July 2016, to deliver PM's invitation to President Koroma to participate in 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit.

An Indian Power Sector Technical delegation comprising of representatives from the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy and NTPC visited Sierra Leone on 8-11 December 2015. The delegation met the Minister of Energy and also made field visits to thermal power station outside Freetown and Lunar iron ore mines and Kenema and Bo substations.

Visits from Sierra Leone

Former President Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, accompanied by Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Trade, visited India on 27-29 October 2015 for the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit with the theme "Partners in Progress: Towards a Dynamic and Transformative Development Agenda" at which the Leaders reviewed strategic partnership and implementation of the Framework of Enhanced Cooperation adopted at the 2nd IAFS held in Addis Ababa in May 2011.

During the visit, a meeting between President Koroma and Prime Minister Modi was held at which the two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest and shared the view that there is scope to scale up bilateral cooperation in the areas of agriculture, mining and ICT.

During the visit of the President, accompanying Foreign Minister Dr. Samura Kamara met with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj and reviewed bilateral cooperation; and Trade Minister of Sierra Leone attended the Trade Ministers' Meet on the sidelines of the 3rd IAFS.

The Deputy Minister of Trade & Industry accompanied by the Special Secretary to the Chief of Staff in the Presidency and two business executives participated in the 10th EXIM Bank-CII Conclave held in New Delhi in March 2014.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Development Momodu Kargbo represented Sierra Leone at the 52nd Annual Meeting of the AFDB held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat on 22-25 May 2017. The Minister of Communications & Information Mohamed Bangura participated in the Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS) held in New Delhi on 23-24 November 2017.

Dr. Anthony Augustine Sandi, Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation led a delegation to attend the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention at New Delhi on 29 September to 2 October,

2018. Finance Minister, Mr. Jacob Jusu Saffa, led a two-member delegation for CII-EXIM Bank India-West Africa Regional Conclave at Abuja, Nigeria on 8-9 October, 2018.

Mr. Alpha O Timbo, Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education of Sierra Leone attended Partners' Forum 2018 on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health held at New Delhi on 10-14 December, 2018.

Election Commissioners Mr. Mohamed Nfah Alie Conteh (CEC) and Mr. Edmund S. Alpha attended the 4th General Assembly of the Association of World Election Bodies and an international conference held at Bengaluru on 3-4 September 2019.

A 4 member delegation visited India from Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone led by Director General of MoFAIC, Sierra Leone 10.04.2022 to discuss and sign MoU between NAFED, India and Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) for supply of 500,000 MTRice to Sierra Leone.

Ms. Haja Isata Abdulai Kamara, Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry of Sierra Leone, attended 17th CII Exim Bank Conclave on 'India-Africa Growth Partnership Creating Shared Futures', held from 9 – 20 July, 2022 at New Delhi.

Col (Rtd) Muana Brima Massaquoi, Deputy Defence Minister of Sierra Leone, along with Chiefs of Air and Navy staffs attended DefExpo-2022 from 18-22 October 2022, and India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) on 18 October 2022 held at Gandhinagar, Gujarat. A bilateral meeting was held between Shri Ajay Bhatt, Raksha Rajya Mantri (Minister of State for Defence) and Col (Rtd) Muana Brima Massaquoi, Deputy Defence Minister of Sierra Leone during the visit.

A two-members delegation from Sierra Leone attended the 90th INTERPOL General Assembly session held in New Delhi from 18-21 October 2022.

A 16 members team led by Mr. Sarjoh Aziz-Kamara, Deputy Minister of Technical and Higher Education, two senior officials from Sierra Leonean Education Department and 13 students participated in the UNESCO-India-Africa (UIA) Hackathon held from 22-25 November 2022 at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India.

Deputy Minister of Finance of Sierra Leone, Mr Bockarie Kalokoh, on 12 January 2023, participated in the Finance Ministers' session of 'Voice of Global South Summit', held virtually from 12-13 January 2023.

A three members delegation lead by Col (Rtd) Muana Brima Massaquoi, Deputy Defence Minister of Sierra Leone, along with Chiefs of Air staffs attended Air Show-cum-Exhibition Aero India-2023 from 12-17 February 2023 held at Bengaluru, Karnataka. A bilateral meeting was held between Shri Ajay Bhatt, Raksha Rajya Mantri (Minister of State for Defence) and Col (Rtd) Muana Brima Massaquoi, Deputy Defence Minister of Sierra Leone during the visit.

A two members delegation from Sierra Leone attended Knowledge and Experience Exchange Programme for the Emerging Economies of the Global South at Hyderabad on March 4-6, 2023 on the

side lines of the 2nd G20-Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion (GPFI) meeting held in Hyderabad on 6-7 March 2023.

A two members delegation headed by Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communications, Republic of Sierra Leone attended 'Global Digital Public Infrastructure' summit on Sidelines of G20 Digital Economy Working Group meeting, held on 12-13 June 2023 at Pune (Maharashtra). An MoU between MeitY (Gol) and Sierra Leone on 'Cooperation in the field of sharing successful digital solutions implemented at population scale for digital transformation' was signed during the visit.

Foreign Office Consultations

The inaugural Foreign Office Consultation between India and Sierra Leone took place in Freetown on 25-26 March 2021 at which the Indian delegation was led by Secretary(ER) Mr. Rahul Chhabra and the Sierra Leone side by Director General Ms. Florence Bangalie. During the meeting, the two delegations reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral partnership and exchanged views of regional, international, and multilateral issues of interest. The delegation also called on President Julius Maada Bio and Foreign Minister Nabeela Tunis.

Relations at UN

India commends Sierra Leone's role as Chairperson of the C10 in coordinating and voicing the position of the African continent on the issue of reforms of the UN bodies and especially on the question of the expansion of the UN Security Council. India and Sierra Leone have similar views on the UN reforms.

India was one of the countries who contributed troops to the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The deployment of the 4000-strong Indian military contingent in the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 2000-2001, led by Maj Gen V.K. Jaitley, had left a positive impact among the Sierra Leoneans.

DFTP

India has included Sierra Leone in the list of beneficiaries for Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme, which is open to all LDCs. The Scheme provides duty free and preferential treatment to about 98% of India's tariff lines.

Standards

In view of Sierra Leone Government's efforts for setting up standards, India has conveyed that Indian standards are available free of cost and can provide solutions to Sierra Leone. A copy of the Guidelines for Adoption of 2019-20 115.37 24.49 139.86 90.88 2020-21 152.11 8.71 160.82 143.40 2021-22 (Apr-Nov) 123.21 11.31 134.52 Indian Standards has been shared. India has also offered training in this regard to Sierra Leonean officials.

Economic and Commercial

India continues to be a major trading partner of Sierra Leone and ranks 4th in terms of imports by Sierra Leone. Compared to 2021-22, India's exports to Sierra Leone in 2022-23 jumped by about 32 %. Bilateral trade figures for the last few years are as follows:

Period	Financial Year April-March	India's exports to Sierra Leone	India's Imports from Sierra Leone	Total Trade	Balance of Trade
2016-17		93.71	12.23	105.94	81.48
2017-18		93.51	24.17	117.68	69.34
2018-19		112.27	11.73	124.00	100.54
2019-20		115.37	24.49	139.86	90.88
2020-21		152.11	8.71	160.82	143.40
2021-22		178.80	16.92	195.72	161.88
2022-23		237.38	49.79	287.17	187.59
2023-24 (Apr-Jul)		111.19	9.01	120.20	102.18

(Source: Department of Commerce, GOI)

Major export commodities from India included engineering goods, rice, pharmaceuticals, plastics and ceramic products. While major items of imports from Sierra Leone included bulk minerals and ores, Iron and steel, aluminium and products of aluminium, copper and products made of copper.

Developmental Cooperation

India is committed to be a reliable partner of Sierra Leone in its development journey. Our developmental cooperation with Sierra Leone through our Lines of Credit and through ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) aggregates to US\$ 250 million covering a range of sectors. The projects implemented/signed/approved are:

- (i) US\$ 15 million for Agricultural projects including procurement of tractors, harvesters, rice threshers, rice mills, maize shellers and pesticide spray equipment in 2008 (completed);
- (ii) US\$ 30 million for Rehabilitation of existing facilities and addition of new infrastructure to supply potable water in 2010 (completed);
- (iii) US\$ 78 million for Transmission line and sub-station project in 2016;
- (iv) US\$ 30 million for Irrigation Development in Tomabum in 2019;
- (v) US\$ 15 million for expansion of rehabilitation of existing potable water facilities in four communities in 2019;
- (vi) US\$ 29.45 million for modernization and expansion of network and infrastructure of Sierratel project in 2010 (through EBID); procurement of buses for university and tertiary institutions through EBID ;
- (vii) US\$ 20 million for public lighting of Freetown and 13 municipal headquarters through solar

- energy (through EBID) in 2011;
- (viii) US\$ 32 million for Construction of University of Science & Technology at Koidu Town, Kono District (under loan agreement signed between EXIM Bank of India and EBID for US\$ 500 million in 2018 meant to be funding projects in ECOWAS countries) in 2020.

Humanitarian & Other Assistance

India has been providing humanitarian assistance packages to Sierra Leone from time to time.

As announced during the visit of Hon'ble Vice President of India to Sierra Leone in October 2019, India extended humanitarian assistance of 1000 MTs of rice to Sierra Leone as a goodwill gesture. The consignment was delivered in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs & IC in March 2021.

In order to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, India provided a large consignment of medicines to Sierra Leone in February 2021.

India extended financial support of US\$ 100,000 to the Sierra Leone Residual Special Court through the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York and US\$ 50,000 contribution to relief efforts for the damages caused by floods and mudslide in August 2017.

To help the Sierra Leonean government combat EVD, in December 2014 Government of India donated US\$ 50,000 worth of medical equipment and medicines to the local government. This donation was in addition to the Government of India's contribution of US\$ 12 million to the UN Trust Fund for Ebola and cash contribution of US\$ 50,000 to WHO to help fight the Ebola virus disease in the three countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.

Earlier, in 2009, India gifted 200 military barracks to Sierra Leone. India also provided 29 packages of indelible ink for Sierra Leone's Presidential and Parliamentary elections held in 2007. India supplied 40,000 tonnes of non-basmati rice to Sierra Leone in 2008 as assistance to meet urgent needs.

In April 2023, India donated 40,000 units of Indelible Ink to Sierra Leone for Presidential Elections held on 24 June 2023.

ITEC & Other Capacity Building Programmes

During the visit of Hon'ble Vice President in October 2019, an MoU was signed for Sierra Leone to participate in our Pan-African Tele-Education and Tele-Medicine initiatives (e-VidyaBharati and e-ArogyaBharati or e-VBAB).

More than 400 Sierra Leoneans have enrolled themselves under the e-VidyaBharati programme so far and have received/are receiving online education in various courses from Indian Universities.

As part of e-VBAB, a Learning Centre has been established in the Library Building at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. The Learning Centre consists of a computer lab and multimedia room for students for attending lectures and taking examinations. All the equipment required for this

project (26 sets of computer systems, large smart-screens, networking equipment, UPS, furniture, etc.) have been provided by GoI through TCIL who will also pay for the monthly charges towards internet, in accordance with the aforementioned MoU. The Centre was inaugurated by the Minister of Technical & Higher Education in July 2021.

Sierra Leone is one of the beneficiaries of ITEC scholarships and is provided 50 seats every year in different programmes in various institutes in India. ICCR also provides 15 slots to Sierra Leone for UG, PG and Ph.D courses in India from 2021.

Also, in 2020-2021, 3 Defence personnel from Sierra Leone attended the Junior Combat Leadership Course in India, under ITEC Programme. In 2021-22, two (2) Defence personnel attended 'Maritime Law and Operations' and 'Maritime Search and Rescue Course' conducted online under this programme. Two (2) Defence Personnel have attended 'The Engineer Officer Degree Engineering (EODE) Course' and 'The Young Officers Electronics, Mechanical and Engineering Course' respectively in FY 2022-23.

One Deputy Director level officer from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone attended 69th Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) held from 03-28 October 2022 at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS), New Delhi.

One personnel from Department of Transport & Communication Sierra Leone Maritime Administration attended the National level marine oil spill pollution response exercise code-named NATPOLREX by Indian Coast Guard, Ministry of Defence, at Goa from 23-25 Mar 2022.

The India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) hosted a virtual eITEC Training Programme for capacity building of the officials of the Sierra Leone National Electoral Commission from 24 August to 26 August 2021. IIIDEM also hosted a 7-member delegation from the Sierra Leone National Electoral Commission for capacity building in ICT and data management from 30 November to 10 December 2021.

Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) conducted a 2-week Special Course for Diplomats from Sierra Leone in virtual format from 21 June to 2 July 2021.

A 3-week special training programme in virtual format under eITEC was organized for the Sierra Leone Civil Aviation Authority (SLCAA) during May 2021.

Under the Netaji Subhas ICAR International Fellowships, one Sierra Leonean has obtained his Ph.D degree in Agriculture already and one is in the third year of the Fellowship. A third Sierra Leonean was selected for the same programme in 2020.

A number of Sierra Leonean women have got training under the ITEC Rural Solar Electrification course at the Barefoot College, Tilonia, Rajasthan, and have successfully installed solar systems in their villages providing inexpensive electricity.

In 2018, five officers from the National Digital Crime Resource and Training Centre (NDCRTC) of IT Wing of the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad visited Sierra Leone and

imparted training to the Cyber Crimes Bureau of the Sierra Leone Police.

Culture

During the visit of the Hon'ble Vice President, India and Sierra Leone signed an MoU for Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2019-2023 to forge friendly people-to-people ties.

As part of Freedom70 celebrations, a Kathak Dance troupe sponsored by Ministry of Culture visited Freetown in January 2018.

The International Day of Yoga is organised in Freetown every year since 2015. Various cultural events under India@75 and 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' have been organized by the Mission.

Indian Community

Early Indian traders are understood to have set foot in Sierra Leone way back in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. According to old records, there were about 600 Indians in Sierra Leone by 1977; two thirds of them were traders, while the rest were teachers and experts.

Presently, the Indian community in Sierra Leone is about 3000, mostly engaged in trade and manufacturing. Indian Mercantile Association is the only Indian association in Sierra Leone. There are two places of religious interest for the Indian community in Sierra Leone; a Hindu Temple managed by Choithram Group / Indian Mercantile Association and a Sikh Gurudwara managed by Jeety Group.

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