

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED)

Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO)

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George Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone

www.mofed.gov.sl/daco.htm

www.daco-mofed.org

December 2017

GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE REPORT 2016



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AfDB - African Development Bank

BADEA - Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa

CAR - Central Africa Republic

CIDA - Canadian International Development Agency

DACO - Development Assistance Coordination Office

DAD - Development Assistance Database

DAR - Development Assistance Report

DFID - Department for International Development

EBID - ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development

EU - European Union

EVD - Ebola Virus Disease

F2F - Fragile-to-Fragile

GOSL - Government of Sierra Leone

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

IDA - International Development Association

IDB - Islamic Development Bank

IDPS - International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building

IMF - International Monetary Fund

MDA - Ministry, Department or Agency

MDBS - Multi-Donor Budget Support

MOFED - Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

MPD - Multi-lateral Projects Division

NEC - National Electoral Commission

OPEC - Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

PSG - Peace Building and State Building Goals

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

UN - United Nations

UNCT - United Nations Country Team

USA - United States of America

USD - United States dollar

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I. OVERVIEW OF LATEST DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE TRENDS

EU NA SALONE

European Union (EU) has been one of Sierra Leone's major development partners providing support to various sectors. The European Union continue to provide Direct Budget Support through Multi Donor budget Support arrangement. European Union provided \$84.8 million to Sierra Leone accounting for 16.6% of total support to Sierra Leone development Partners.

SECTOR	DISBURSED
Public Financial Management	0.2
Transparency and democracy	6.7
Capacity Building of government agencies	2.9
Decentralization	0.1
Private Sector Development	0.1
Agriculture, Rural development and Food Security	2.8
Infrastructure	0.6
Macroeconomic Management	29.1
Road Network	42.1
Health	0.1
Education	0.1
Environment	1.2
Gender	1.2
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	0.1
Total	87.3

The table shows the sectors supported by European Union (EU). Fourteen (14) sectors ranging from Road Network, Macroeconomic Management, Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security, Capacity Building of Government Agencies, Transparency and Democracy, Infrastructure, Public Financial Management etc. these sectors received funding as support for the implementation of projects.

The Road Network has accounted for the largest portion of EU support accounted for almost 50.0% of EU support in 2016. Road construction has been one of government's priorities to improve roads network in the country.

Macroeconomic Management accounts for about 34.3% of the total support from EU in 2016 which include Direct Budget Support to the Government of Sierra Leone.

Transparency and Democracy accounts for 7.9% of the total support from EU with the aim of Implementing SDG initiatives in Sierra Leone.

Capacity Building of Government Agencies, Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security accounted for about 3.5% and 3.4% respectively. These sectors form part of the Presidential Recovery Priorities aiming to revive the economy after the Ebola epidemic.

This Development Assistance Report 2016 is the first full-year Post-Ebola report on development assistance to Sierra Leone. It therefore presents an analysis of aid flows to the country in a comparative long-term perspective to shows the Pre-Ebola trend, the surge in flows in response to the epidemic, and a Post Ebola return of aid flows to Pre-Ebola trends.

The main data source for this report is the DAD. The data has also been validated by Development Partners, as well as the Multilateral Project Division (MPD) at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED).

Overview of Development Assistance flows

The available data shows total disbursement in 2016 at about **US\$ 521.5** million, compared to **US\$ 1.032** billion in 2015. This near-halving of flows reflect a return to the Pre-Ebola development assistance trend at the end of the epidemic and the completion of projects under the Presidential Post Ebola Recovery Priorities.

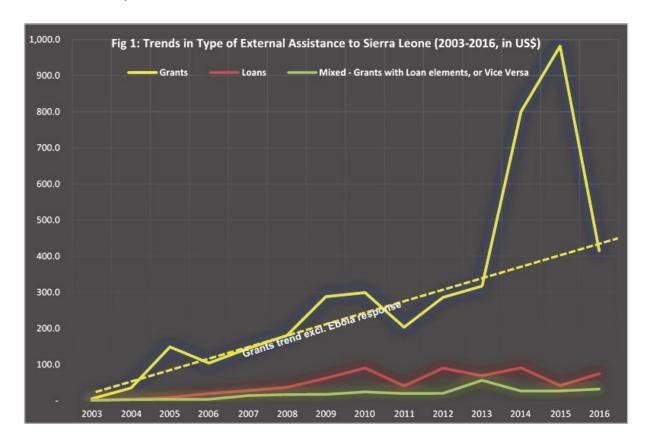


Figure 1 above shows the trends in external assistance to Sierra Leone over the years by type of assistance. We notice from the graph that grants predominate on the aid profile, and the graph shows an immediate return of these flows to the long-term Pre-Ebola trend in 2016.

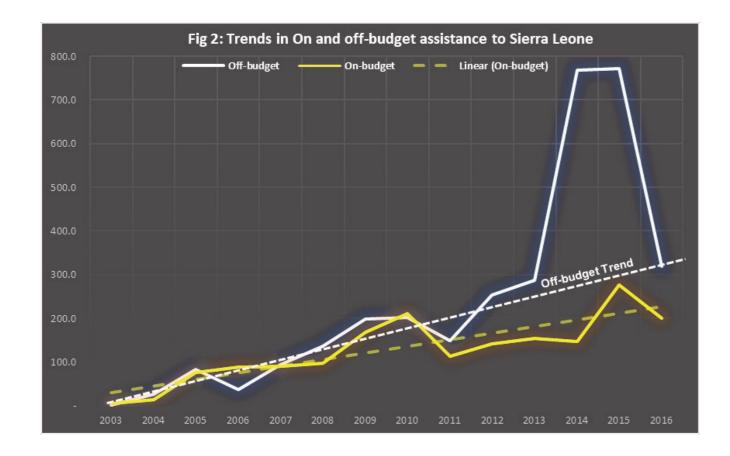
An analysis of the flows by sector revealed that the Health Sector received the most support, estimated at \$116.1 million and accounting for 22% of total support in 2016.

Bilateral partners accounted for **55**% of total support estimated at **\$285.6** million whilst multilateral partners provided almost **\$100** million accounting for **38**% of total support.

The UN Country Team continues to play a key role in the development of Sierra Leone. As an entity the UN Family continues to be the Government of Sierra Leone's (GOSL) largest implementing partner, accounting for almost **26**% of total value of projects implemented in Sierra Leone in 2016, estimated at **\$134.0** million.

Direct Budget Support, which is provided by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the European Union (EU) and the World Bank is estimated \$30.02 million for 2016.

Figure 2 shows that off-budget support to historical trends while on-budget support fell below trend, even though it was slightly above immediate pre-Ebola levels. We notice a surge in on-budget levels in 2015, which is the incremental result of a one-off IMF budget support to the country during the Ebola outbreak, in addition its traditional balance of payment support.



We see in figure 3 below, that development assistance flows have become more and more predictable over the years, and even more so in 2016 in the immediate aftermath of Ebola. This is depicted by the close alignment of disbursements to commitments

WORLD BANK NA SALONE

The World Bank Group continues to play a significant role in Sierra Leone's economic growth and enhancing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

Total World Bank support for 2016 is estimated at almost \$ 50 million and this is a decrease of 64% as compared to 2015 support by the World Bank. Overall, World Bank support to Sierra Leone in 2016 accounted for almost 10% of total support by all Development Partners.

SECTOR	DISBURSED
Ebola Response	11.0
Health	9.8
Public Financial Management	7.4
Education	6.3
Energy and Power	4.3
Private Sector Development	2.7
Agriculture, Rural development and Food Security	2.6
Decentralization	1.6
Mineral Resources and Mining	1.6
Justice Sector Development	1.1
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	0.5
Macroeconomic Management	0.5
Capacity Building of government agencies	0.1
Total	49.5

From the above, Ebola Response and Health accounts for 22.2% and 19.7% respectively of World Bank support in 2016. This was part of World Bank priorities to build resilient health systems in remote areas as well as to improve disease surveillance.

Public Financial Management accounted for 15.1% of total support to Sierra Leone in 2016 from the World Bank which is aimed at improving budgeting, planning and credibility, financial control, accountability and oversight in government finances in Sierra Leone.

The World Bank provided \$ 6.3 million which represents 12.8% of total support to Sierra Leone

to help improve the learning environment in schools and establish systems for monitoring of education interventions and outcomes.

Support to the Energy Sector accounted for 8.7% of total World Bank support in 2016. This was geared towards assisting government increase energy supply nationwide.

World Bank also supported initiatives in Private Sector Development, Agriculture Rural Development and Food Security, Decentralization, Mineral Resources and Mining, Justice Sector, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Macroeconomic Management, and Capacity Building of government agencies, which represents 5.4%, 5.2%, 3.3%, 3.2%, 2.2%, 1.0%, 1.0%, and 0.3% respectively.

AfDB NA SALONE

European Union (EU) has been one of Sierra Leone's major development partners providing support to various sectors. The European Union continue to provide Direct Budget Support through Multi Donor budget Support arrangement. European Union provided \$84.8 million to Sierra Leone accounting for 16.6% of total support to Sierra Leone development Partners.

SECTOR	DISBURSED
Public Financial Management	0.2
Transparency and democracy	6.7
Capacity Building of government agencies	2.9
Decentralization	0.1
Private Sector Development	0.1
Agriculture, Rural development and Food Security	2.8
Infrastructure	0.6
Macroeconomic Management	29.1
Road Network	42.1
Health	0.1
Education	0.1
Environment	1.2
Gender	1.2
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	0.1
Total	87.3

The table shows the sectors supported by European Union (EU). Fourteen (14) sectors ranging from Road Network, Macroeconomic Management, Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security, Capacity Building of Government Agencies, Transparency and Democracy, Infrastructure, Public Financial Management etc. these sectors received funding as support for the implementation of projects.

The Road Network has accounted for the largest portion of EU support accounted for almost 50.0% of EU support in 2016. Road construction has been one of government's priorities to improve roads network in the country.

Macroeconomic Management accounts for about 34.3% of the total support from EU in 2016 which include Direct Budget Support to the Government of Sierra Leone.

Transparency and Democracy accounts for 7.9% of the total support from EU with the aim of Implementing SDG initiatives in Sierra Leone.

Capacity Building of Government Agencies, Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security accounted for about 3.5% and 3.4% respectively. These sectors form part of the Presidential Recovery Priorities aiming to revive the economy after the Ebola epidemic.

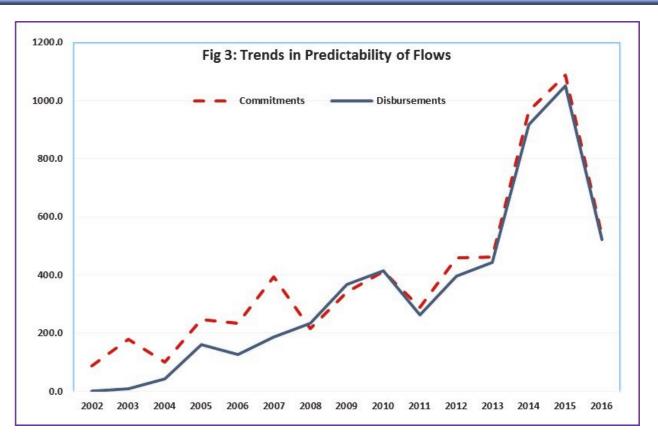
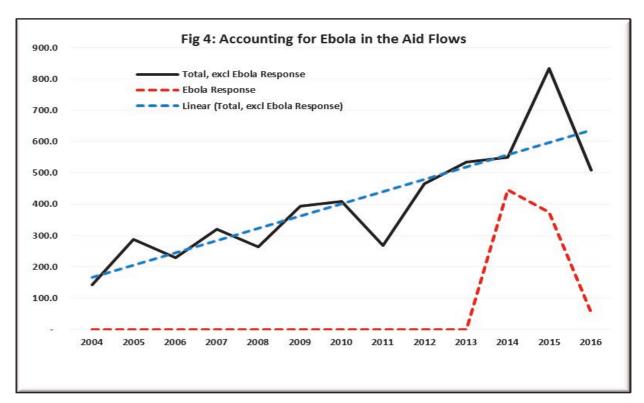


Figure 4 isolates out the Ebola response, including contributions to Post Ebola recovery priorities during 2014 to 2016.



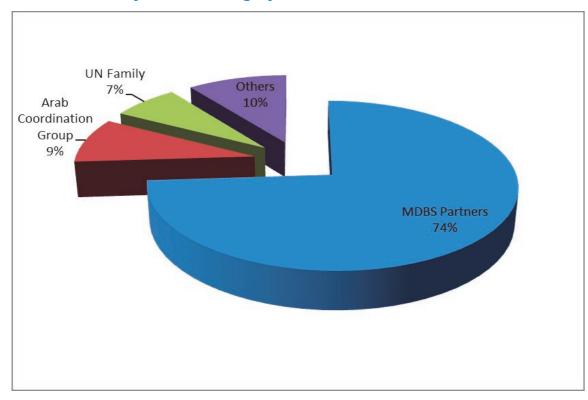
Sierra Leone's Chairmanship of the g7+ Family

The Government of Sierra Leone, through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, continues to chair the g7+ group and co-chair the International Dialogue of Peace Building and State building, thus making significant contributions to the g7+ efforts to address development effectiveness issues in fragile and conflict affected countries.

As depicted in the table below, in 2016, an estimated **\$521.5** million was provided by development partners to support projects and programmes in Sierra Leone. This reflects a decrease of almost 50% as compared to 2015. The drop in overall support to Sierra Leone in 2016 can be largely attributed to the completion of most of the Post Ebola Recovery Priority projects in 2015.

From figure 5, we note that the MDBS partners (AfDB, DFID, EU and World Bank) accounted for 74% of total support provided in 2016 estimated at \$385.7 million. It is important to note that the MDBS partners do not only provide direct budget support but also provide Programme and Project Support channeled through Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the UN Country Team.

Figure 5 Disbursement by Partner Category in Millions of US\$



The UNCT which continues to be a major partner to the Government and people of Sierra Leone disbursed \$36.0 million of core funds to mainly support projects in Education, Health, Capacity Building of Government Agencies, Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security. This accounts for 7% of the total support received in 2016. On the whole, the UNCT implemented an estimated \$134.0 million in 2016 core and non-core resources.

The Arab Coordination group which includes the Islamic Development Bank, the Kuwait Fund, Oil Producing and Exporting Countries Fund (OPEC), Abu Dhabi Fund and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) remains a visible development partner to the government of Sierra Leone. In 2016, they provided an estimated \$ 46.5 million to support projects in Agriculture, Energy, Water, Health and Road construction. This accounted for 9.0% of total support to Sierra Leone in 2016.

DFID NA SALONE

United Kingdom remains Sierra Leone's most significant development partner, due mainly to historic and political ties between the two countries. In 2016 through the DFID, UK provided over \$200 million to support various sectors as shown in the table below. DFID is also a member of the Sierra Leone Multi-Donor Budget Support group which provides direct budget to the Government of Sierra Leone. Total support by the UK Government to Sierra Leone for 2016 accounted for 43% of total support within the year.

SECTOR	DISBURSED
Public Financial Management	5.1
Transparency and democracy	4.8
Capacity Building of government agencies	24.1
Security Sector	1.5
Justice Sector Development	1.2
Private Sector Development	4.0
Agriculture, Rural development and Food Security	0.0
Energy and Power	16.8
Road Network	0.0
Health	89.6
Education	20.4
Water and Sanitation	11.3
Environment	2.2
Ebola Response	39.1
Total	220.5

From the above table, DFID supports thirteen (13) sectors including Health, Education, Capacity Building of government agencies, Water and Sanitation and Energy and Power. DFID was also the leading partner to support Post Ebola Recovery.

The Health sector accounts for 40.6% of total support by DFID in 2016. This support was mainly geared towards improving reproductive, maternal and newborn health, preventing maternal deaths and improving access and equity to the basic package of essential health services in 2016.

Ebola Response accounts for 17.7% of total DFID support to Sierra Leone in 2016. This support is mainly geared towards maintaining a resilient

zero for Ebola and livelihood support to Ebola Survivors.

Capacity Building of Government Agencies, Education and Energy accounts for 10.9%, 9.3% and 7.6% of total DFID support to Sierra Leone respectively. Through support to the Presidential Priorities, DFID assisted Recovery Government of Sierra Leone in building core systems; improving secondary education by making schools more safe for girls, strengthening central and district capacity and improving monitoring and evaluation; and rural electrification by increasing access to clean energy through the creation of environmentally and economically sustainable electric mini-grid systems for small remote rural communities.



II. ASSISTANCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



UN NA SALONE

UN FAMILY 2016 SECTOR DISBURSEMENT OF CORE FUND IN US\$ MILLIONS

SECTOR	DISBURSED ('M USD)
Agriculture, Rural development and Food Security	18.1
Health	5.3
Capacity Building of government agencies	5.3
Education	3.1
Water and Sanitation	1.3
Social Welfare	0.9
Security Sector	0.5
HIV/AIDS	0.4
Youth Development	0.3
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	0.2
Transparency and democracy	0.1
Gender	0.1
Private Sector Development	0.1
Macroeconomic Management	0.1
Justice Sector Development	0.1
Environment	0.1
Total	35.9

The UN Family continues to be a major partner to the Government and people of Sierra Leone. In 2016 UN Agencies provided an estimated US\$ 36 million of core funds to mainly support projects in Education, Health, Capacity Building of Government Agencies, Agriculture, Rural development and Food Security. Overall the UN agencies channeled approximately US\$ 134 million in 2016, this represents un-earmarked 'core funds', as shown above, plus additional 'non-core' funds, i.e. using donor contributions to UN agencies earmarked for specific purposes. These non-core funding arrangements are reported by the donors themselves directly in the DAD structure.

Very often, the UN Agencies work with key MDAs to produce relevant documentation that are used to mobilize resources. These include, for example, support to NEC for the organization and conduct of the 2018 general elections and support the Ministry of Health and Sanitation through the Global Fund to fight and HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Hence, when all the funding lines and upstream policy activities are considered together this makes the UN one of the most important partners to the Government of Sierra Leone

The other traditional partners providing regular project support and/or contributing to trust funds include USA, Irish Aid, Germany, Korean Exim Bank, EBID, and Japan.

Table 1 shows the above analysis in the context of recent trends.

Table 1: Development Assistance to Sierra Leone in 2011-2016 by Key Partners

DONOD ACENOV		YEAR						
DONOR AGENCY	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016		
Abu Dhabi	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	3.5	0.2		
African Development Bank (AfDB)	5.4	8.1	40.9	81.9	20.3	20.0		
Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA)	5.4	5.4	6.9	2.4	0.2	0.1		
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	0.0	0.4	0.0	3.6	3.1	3.1		
Department for International Development (DFID)	70.8	115.8	132.3	365.3	389.1	220.5		
ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)	0.4	28.1	6.5	8.6	1.4	4.3		
European Union (EU)	49.2	78.8	90.0	84.3	295.6	95.8		
Germany	10.4	3.0	14.2	11.1	8.4	21.1		
Islamic Development Bank (IDB)	4.6	7.1	12.5	15.6	20.3	23.1		
Irish Aid	1.5	9.9	5.1	15.9	8.6	5.5		
Japan	9.6	10.9	8.3	6.6	10.2	4.0		
Korean EXIM Bank	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.9		
Kuwait Fund	7.3	3.3	0.4	2.4	0.0	16.0		
OPEC	2.1	4.5	8.5	5.4	0.0	7.3		
UN Country Team	30.7	32.8	28.8	52.1	53.5	35.9		
USA	31.7	27.9	10.2	125.8	69.9	5.4		
World Bank	5.9	53.6	60.2	80.5	136.5	49.5		
Others	28.7	6.7	17.8	54.7	30.0	0.2		
Total	263.7	396.3	442.6	917.7	1,050.4	521,5		

Source: Development Assistance Database (DAD), 2016

Table 2 shows the numbers of projects that were active and disbursing during 2012 to 2016, and shows a significant surge in 2015, due mainly to increased number of intervention projects supported by the UN family and EU. The drop in 2016 to 249 projects is a reflection of the conclusion of Ebola response projects as well as some Ebola Recovery Priority Projects.



V. UPDATE ON SIERRA LEONE'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE G7+ FAMILY



Table 2: Numbers of active disbursing projects by Key Development Partner (2011-2016)

DONOR AGENCY		YEAR					
DONOR AGENCY	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016		
Abu Dhabi	-	-	2	3	1		
African Development Bank (AfDB)	3	12	17	12	9		
Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA)	4	6	3	1	1		
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	2	-	7	7	8		
Department for International Development (DFID)	30	44	47	34	33		
ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID)	3	2	3	1	2		
European Union (EU)	96	107	17	103	81		
Germany	6	6	8	7	10		
Spain	-	-	1	-	1		
Irish Aid	10	7	19	13	8		
Islamic Development Bank (IDB)	6	7	8	9	9		
Japan	13	9	14	17	5		
Korean EXIM Bank	-	-	-	-	1		
Kuwait Fund	2	1	3	-	5		
OPEC	3	3	4	-	2		
UN Country Team	56	44	54	82	50		
USA	10	4	29	24	4		
World Bank/IDA	24	21	9	23	18		
Others	5	7	26	26	1		
Total	273	280	271	362	249		

Sierra Leone continues to chair the g7+ group of fragile states. A role it has been playing since 2014. The g7+ operates with the framework of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States which was developed by the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building (IDPS) and endorsed by development partners at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan, South Korea in 2011.

Sierra Leone, as a founding member of the g7+, is further deepening the localisation of the New Deal in Sierra Leone. Following the national Fragility Assessment that was conducted in 2016, a nationwide dissemination of the findings of this assessment was undertaken in 2017. This exercise has helped in shaping policy around the critical issues that need to be addressed in order to further strengthen the resilience of the county and in informing priority areas that need to be factored in the national budget.

At the global level under the Sierra Leone's Chairmanship of the g7+ a lot of progress has been made in making the 2030 Global Development Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, work for the g7+ countries.

In July 2017, the g7+ held a Ministerial meeting chaired by Sierra Leone's Attorney General and Minister of Justice in which Goal 16 of the SDGs was discussed as it relates to access to Justice in g7+ countries. On the margins of the 72nd UN General Assembly, Sierra Leone as the Chair of the g7+ co-hosted two side events – one on SDG 16 and the other on the UN Secretary General's reform agenda.

The side event on 'Promoting Justice; Accelerating Progress toward SDG 16 Vision' discussed the common priorities and principles to ensure access to quality Justice in g7+ countries in the context of achieving SDG 16 and how to manage international assistance to address the challenges facing conflict affected countries in achieving this

goal. The event concluded with an agreement from g7+ countries to map out areas of collaboration that will assist member states to learn and share experiences in the pursuit of strong and quality justice system. This would also enable g7+ countries to advocate for appropriate support for the Justice sector in countries in fragile situations.

The second event on 'The Pursuit of Peace through Nationally Owned Mechanisms; Learning from Countries Experiences' provided a platform for countries that are or have been affected by conflict and fragility to share their perspectives on attaining and sustaining peace and how this could be factored into the UN Secretary General's reform agenda. Discussions at the side event recognized the role of governments as the lead actors in the pursuit of peace peacebuilding processes and the need for such processes to be truly inclusive. The need for stronger cooperation between security, humanitarian and development actors both before and during conflicts was also emphasized.

Through its activities the g7+ continues to promote sustainable peace and development in Sierra Leone and other g7+ countries using the New Deal Five Peacebuilding and State-building Goals (PSGs) and working within the framework of SDGs.

Under the g7+ Fragile to Fragile (F2F) Cooperation, a form of South to South Cooperation, Sierra Leone received the sum of US\$ 1,000,000 as support during the EVD response as was the case for Guinea and Liberia who received US\$500 each. Furthermore, during the 2016 Fragility Assessment consultations, Sierra Leone benefitted from the expert knowledge of two colleagues from Timor Leste and the Democratic Republic. These colleagues did not only share their experiences and lessons learnt from conducting the assessment in their countries, they contributed directly to the exercise, thereby saving resources that would have otherwise been used in hiring consultants for the assessment. Similar Cooperation has also been extended to Central African Republic (CAR) and Guinea Bissau in response to their crisis.

IV, SOURCES OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUNDING

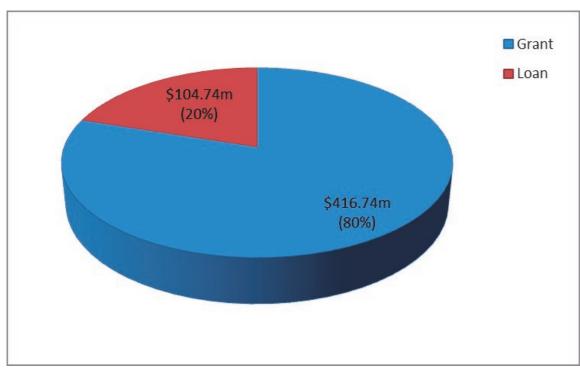


III. SECTORAL ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE



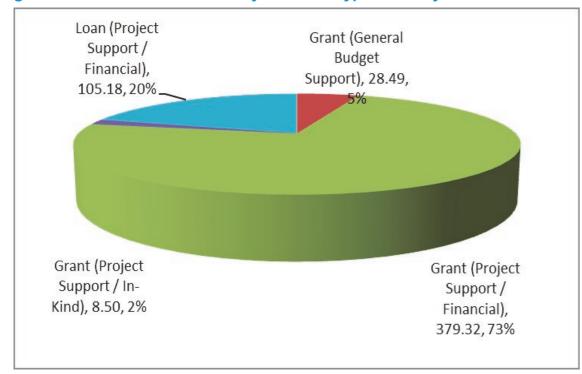
80% of its development assistance as grant and 20% as loans. However, as **Figure 9** depicts, 73% of these grants were project support (financial), 5% as General Budget Support and 2% as project support in kind.

Figure 8: Disbursement by Assistant Type



Source: Development Assistance Database (DAD), 2016

Figure 9: Disbursement in 2016 by assistant type modality



Source: Development Assistance Database (DAD), 2016

The Government of Sierra Leone continues to receive support from development partners for projects and programmes in several sectors as depicted below.

Table 3: Sectoral distribution of Development Assistance in 2016

SECTOR	AMOUNT DISBURSED ('M USD)
Ebola Response	54.6
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	0.8
Mineral Resources and Mining	1.6
Agriculture, Rural development and Food Security	39.4
Capacity Building of government agencies	37.0
Decentralization	2.7
Education	41.6
Energy and Power	31.1
Environment	2.6
Gender	4.5
Health	116.0
HIV/AIDS	0.4
Infrastructure	17.6
Justice Sector Development	2.7
Macroeconomic Management	29.6
Private Sector Development	13.8
Public Financial Management	16.6
Road Network	60.1
Security Sector	2.0
Social Welfare	1.8
Transparency and democracy	13.7
Water and Sanitation	27.7
Youth Development	3.5
Total	521.5

Source: Development Assistance Database (DAD), 2016

Table 2 above depicts support provided to the various sectors in 2016. It is important to note that Ebola Recovery programmes/projects were still ongoing in 2016 receiving support estimated at \$55.7 million accounting for a little over 10 % of the total support. However, in 2015, Ebola response was estimated at \$369.7 million reflecting that fact that Ebola was at its peak in 2015.

The health sector received an estimated of \$116.1 million in 2016 to support Post Ebola recovery activities as well as for strengthening the health systems. This accounted for about 22% of all support provided in 2016.

As part of the Government's strong infrastructural drive, road construction restarted after the country was declared Ebola free in 2016. Consequently, an estimated \$60.1 million was provided by development partners to support road rehabilitation and construction. This accounts for about 12% of total development partner's support in to Sierra Leone in 2016. Compared to 2015, this represents an increase of about 39% support to the road sector.



IV, SOURCES OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUNDING



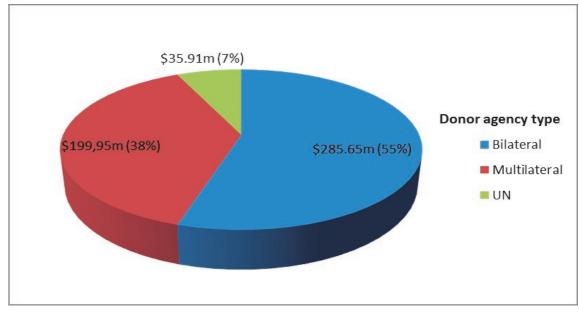
Support to Sierra Leone in 2016 was provided largely by Bilateral, Multilateral and UN Partners. It can be seen from the figures that support from the various categories of partners largely mirrors the general trend in aid inflows. For the period under review, aid inflows from bilateral partners account for 55% of total support, multilateral 38% and the UN family 7%. However, it is important to note that aid inflows from these various categories of development partners plunge significantly in 2016 as compared to the previous year 2015. Aid inflows from Bilateral Partners decreased by 42 %, Multilateral Partners by 56 % and the UN by 34% mainly due to the completion of projects that supports fight against Ebola Viral Disease.

285.63 250.00 150.00 100.00 Bilateral Multilateral UN

Donor Agency Type

Figure 6: Development Assistance disbursed in 2016 by donor agency type





Source: Development Assistance Database (DAD), 2016

Figure 8 below shows disbursement by assistant type, that is, Grants and Loans. However, for the period in review, majority of donor support especially grants were reprioritized or directed towards the Presidential Recovery Programmes/projects. Therefore, in 2016, Sierra Leone received about