Sierra Leone

Socioeconomic Profile

Sierra Leone is a low-income country in West Africa bordered by Guinea and Liberia. Its economy is driven by mining activities, with its principal exports being iron ore, diamonds, and rutile. The country is divided into four provinces and one administrative area and runs a unitary presidential republic system.

In 2019, Sierra Leone’s overall GDP (purchasing power parity) was approximately $13.4 billion, with a GDP per capita of $1,718. With an area of 71,740 km², Sierra Leone has a population of 7,813,215 (2019) and a population density of 105.99 people per km² (2018). According to statistics for 2019, 57.5 percent of Sierra Leone’s population resides in rural areas. Likewise, just under 3 million Sierra Leoneans were found to reside in coastal areas in 2014, such as its capital city, Freetown.

Plastic Industry and Ecosystem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population, 2019 (no.)</td>
<td>7,813,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density, 2018 (people per sq. km of land area)</td>
<td>105.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal population, 2014 (no.)</td>
<td>2,887,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of people living in urban areas, 2019 (%)</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total MSW generated, 2016 (tons/year)</td>
<td>610,222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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296 Jambeck et al., “Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean.”
301 GDP, PPP (constant 2017 international dollars) and GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2017 international dollars).
303 Ibid.
304 Ibid.
305 Jambeck et al., “Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean.”
In 2018 and 2019, Sierra Leone had no domestic resin production. Its conversion industry processed 6 kt of resin (4 kt PE, 2 kt PET) in 2018 and 2019. Sierra Leone is a net importer of plastics. In 2019, 9 million kg of plastics were imported into the country, with PE and PP accounting for about 81.9 percent of the imports.\textsuperscript{306} It relies heavily on Ghana for its plastic imports—92 percent of Sierra Leone’s plastic imports were sourced from Ghana in 2019.\textsuperscript{307} Only 23,200 kg of plastics were exported from Sierra Leone that same year, 95.4 percent of which consisted of PE.\textsuperscript{308}

Sierra Leone has a small plastic manufacturing sector, generating 8,750 metric tons of plastic products.\textsuperscript{309} Fifty percent of locally manufactured plastic products are classed as PE products.\textsuperscript{310} As a formal plastics recycling sector is nonexistent in Sierra Leone, the informal sector is primarily responsible for the recovery of plastic waste.\textsuperscript{311}

### Solid Waste Management

Sierra Leone generates 0.31 kg of MSW per capita per day and this amounts to an overall daily MSW generation of 1.7 million kg.\textsuperscript{312} It should be noted, however, that about 83.8 percent of MSW generated in Sierra Leone is inadequately managed.\textsuperscript{313} Plastic waste accounts for just below 9 percent of MSW arisings\textsuperscript{314}, with a daily generation rate of about 186,000 kg.

### Legislation, Policies, and Other Initiatives

The government ministry responsible for municipal waste management is Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Health and Sanitation, through its Directorate of Environmental Health and Sanitation.\textsuperscript{315} Though the Sierra Leonean government is yet to introduce a law dealing specifically with MSW, it produced the National Environmental Health and Sanitation Strategy. This policy document highlights the proposed actions and activities for enhancing waste management in Sierra Leone, including specific strategies for promoting reuse and recycling.\textsuperscript{316}

\textsuperscript{306} UN Comtrade, “UN Comtrade Database,” 2019.
\textsuperscript{308} UN Comtrade, “UN Comtrade Database,” 2019.
\textsuperscript{309} Anteja, “Sierra Leone Circular Economy in Plastics.”
\textsuperscript{310} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{311} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{313} Jambeck et al., “Plastic Waste Inputs from Land into the Ocean.”
\textsuperscript{314} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid.
Plastic Waste in Sierra Leone

Plastic Generation Hotspots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Locale</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Plastic Waste (kt)</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Area (km^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bo</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.5005</td>
<td>256,325</td>
<td>102.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Makeni</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1.0558</td>
<td>108,225</td>
<td>40.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Freetown</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11.1131</td>
<td>1,139,197</td>
<td>189.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kenema</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.8927</td>
<td>194,015</td>
<td>81.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Annual National Plastic Waste Generation: 67.85 kt

Annual Plastic Waste (kg/km^2)

West Africa Regional Gap Analysis: Plastics Circularity

Location in Region

World Bank Group