

Medical electives in Sierra Leone

Since independence from the United Kingdom in 1961 Sierra Leone has been beset by conflict and a decade of civil war that left tens of thousands dead, many more injured and health facilities destroyed. The conflict

ended in 2002 and the country is dependent on international donors and overseas charities to deliver essential health services.

We have been here since 2005, tackling the incredibly high levels of maternal and child deaths. More pregnant women and new mothers die here than anywhere else. There's a 1 in 8 chance they'll die, compared to just 1 in 48,000 in Ireland. And only three out of four children live beyond the age of 5. The scandal is that just a few simple steps are all that is needed to save lives.



When a mother dies, her children are up to 10 times more likely to die through malnourishment, disease or neglect. And for every woman who dies, 20 more are left disabled, injured or ill – unable to work or look after their families.

Health Poverty Action believes that every woman has the right to give birth safely and live to bring up her children. That's why we're upholding women's rights to life and to health by reducing the chronically high maternal mortality in Sierra Leone.

Bombali District



The northern district of Bombali (right) was one of the last districts to complete the disarmament process. We're based at the district hospital, which serves five chiefdoms. 500 people visit each month – between 150 and 200 have life-threatening conditions.

We're tackling this by training health staff and providing drugs, medical equipment and supplies. On average, 1 in 6 deliveries are complicated and require emergency obstetric care. The impact of our work so far is clear to see: we've lowered maternal deaths by 72% at the hospital. There's still some way to go though - and you can help by choosing to do your medical elective here.

Sample tasks you could be involved with:

Small-scale research

- Design and analysis of Knowledge, Attitude Assessment on Fistula
- Mini-evaluation of first wave Community Health Clubs
- Mini-evaluation of HU Sexual and Gender Based violence interventions
- Patient perception health services
- Patient perception of Peripheral Health units
- Mini-evaluation of free health care initiative

Management Intervention

- Improving processes in the hospital - ensuring patient notes are kept thoroughly so another practitioner can follow up easily
- Improving data collection and self-evaluation of the service
- Sustainability, pricing of service, human resources, customer care and fundraising

Clinical

- Hospital
- Peripheral health units
- Carrying out outreach in villages