

Title: The intersection between Education, Poverty, and Mental Health in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone is a rapidly developing country situated on the west coast of Africa, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and bordered by Liberia and Guinea. The country has a young and growing population of 7,092,113 people. Sierra Leone is categorized as a poor country by the world health bank, with 72.4% of the rural population living below the poverty line. Here the average citizen completes approximately 9 years of schooling, and the adult literacy rate is estimated to be a mere 51%. Access to post-secondary education is limited and the dropout rates can be high, making it difficult to obtain trained professionals. For example, Sierra Leone's only medical school has a 45% dropout rate, so it may not come as a surprise that the country has the fifth lowest doctor to population ratio in the world. Government investment in the health system is lower and resources for residents can be lacking when it comes to health. A major area of concern is mental health, which faces an estimated treatment gap of 98%, along with widespread stigma and a lack of mental health awareness. Individuals displaying symptoms of mental health issues are often labeled with derogatory terms like 'crezman' or 'ful ful,' both of which imply that the person is crazy or foolish. The goal of this research is to better understand the educational system, economy and mental health culture in Sierra Leone and synthesize the obtained information to look at intersection between the three areas. This will be done by performing a thorough literature review, as well as gathering firsthand accounts from those who have visited Sierra Leone within the last 5 years. It is our hope that the information obtained from this study will provide insight into this developing country and highlight some of the areas of need.