

MANUAL MARKETING INTERNSHIP IN SIERRA LEONE



Building an enterprising society through investment in agriculture, water and fashion sectors in Sierra Leone

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PREFACE

At the International Organization for Migration the Netherlands (IOM NL), we know all too well the importance of diaspora engagement in development initiatives. Due to their cultural understanding, language skills, and expertise, diaspora members are able to bridge communities of origin and destination. Moreover, the diaspora is often highly motivated to contribute to a better future for people in their country of origin.

Abubakarr Bangura's successful efforts to contribute to development in Sierra Leone illustrate the aforementioned remarks. We had the pleasure of working with Abubakarr Bangura in IOM's Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D) project, which allows diaspora members to temporarily return to their countries of origin to transfer knowledge and expertise. Abubakarr Bangura did not only participate in the project, but is now also making diaspora engagement more visible through his role as a CD4D ambassador.

The current internship project follows up on the study tour which was undertaken as part of the CD4D project in Sierra Leone. During this study tour in 2017, a delegation from several higher education institutes from Sierra Leone visited the University of Delft in the Netherlands to attend lectures and exchange knowledge. This follow-up internship project has the potential to create an even greater sustainable impact in Sierra Leone, thanks to the efforts of the diaspora. On behalf of IOM NL, we hope that the internship project will allow students to exchange knowledge and ideas, and work together towards a better future.

Kind regards,
The CD4D team





1. INTRODUCTION

Spending part of the study in a developing country is extremely popular among Dutch young people. Many students indicate that they would like to work or study abroad for a while and a number actually do.

Roughly speaking, students that study or intern abroad do so for three reasons or objectives. The first objective is to specialize further in a specific area of their field. These students mainly choose to study at a renowned foreign university. The second objective is simply staying abroad for a while for its own sake. For these students, it is often the first time to be away from home for a longer period of time, and typically opt for more easily accessible destinations such as the United States, Australia or the Cape of South Africa.

The third objective, most closely related to our program, is working to make a difference for others, an almost philanthropic type of study abroad experience. In practice most Dutch students who study or intern abroad have a mix of these three objectives motivating them.

Fortunately, almost every study abroad opportunity offers a mix of ingredients satisfying these three objectives. Take internships in Sierra Leone for example. Sierra Leone ranks among the world's poorest countries but also the country has been categorized by the World Peace index as the 4th most peaceful country in Africa. Sierra Leone thus makes for an attractive internship destination for Dutch students with an interest in Africa. An internship will ask more of you than is usually the case. You'll have to be persistent, stress resistant, have stamina and be more self-reliant than elsewhere. But then again, you'll gain a deep and unforgettable life experience—and our mentors are only one text message away.

This manual offers you essential background information about the Sierra Leone Youth Initiative (SLYI) in the Netherlands and SEP Investment Services (SL) Ltd., two partners that offer end-to-end internship support for Dutch students in Sierra Leone, and have solid experience doing so. The manual provides testimonies

of students from the Delft University who have been on internship at SEP in Sierra Leone and their mentors in Sierra Leone who have taken their time to share their experience working with Dutch students visiting Sierra Leone with the framework of their internship. Great read.

SLYI and SEP have three on-going projects, in fashion, water and agriculture, that need various kinds of knowledge input from interns at every stage of the project cycles. The business cases on each of their projects have been highlighted on this manual. As an intern, you will make a real-world difference to these projects and the people working in and benefiting from these projects. You'll help create jobs, business turnover and economic prosperity in tangible ways. Our collective venture will support the struggle of the government of Sierra Leone in the fight against poverty, youth employment and human capital development in country.

I look forward to welcoming enterprising young people like you to work with young peers in Sierra Leone. Please browse through this manual to get a first glimpse of the possibilities, and by all means feel free to contact us to discuss your interests and skill set, and you could join our team as an intern and make a difference that'll make you proud!

Abubakarr Bangura (M.Ed.)
Founder of SLYI and SEP



More information on Abubakarr Bangura visit:
<https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/2021/abubakarr-bangura/>



2. ABOUT THE HOST ORGANIZATIONS

a. About The Sierra Leone Youth Initiative

The Sierra Leone Youth Initiative (SLYI) is a foundation established in 2005 by Abubakarr Bangura, a Sierra Leonean diaspora member in the Netherlands. SLYI is committed to connecting students in the Netherlands with their counterparts in Sierra Leone to work closely towards sharing ideas, views, experiences and pooling their resources together to undertake initiatives geared towards promoting more open and higher quality education and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth in Sierra Leone.

SLYI creates employment and stimulates micro-entrepreneurship among young people in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Our projects fight poverty and help the new generation build a better future for themselves and their families. Based in Tilburg, the Netherlands, SLYI operates in the Netherlands and Sierra Leone and serves as a bridge of knowledge, experience, products and services that enrich both countries.

Mission:

SLYI stimulates the self-reliance of Sierra Leonean young people by giving them the opportunity to learn a trade and by stimulating entrepreneurship among them. In this way they can actively engage and participate in social development. This way, SLYI contributes to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 8 and 17 in Sierra Leone.

In the Netherlands, the foundation provides information to schools and approaches funds to finance projects in Sierra Leone. SLYI is a member of the Global Awareness Working Group in Tilburg and Partin, the national platform for NGO in the Netherlands.

b. About SEP Investment Services (SL) Ltd.

SEP Investment Services (SL) Ltd. hereafter known as SEP is a social company registered in 2018 with the Corporate Affairs Commission and Freetown City Council, Sierra Leone. SEP was established as a followup initiative after successful end of the online entrepreneurship programme implemented in 2014 and 2016 by The Network University The Netherlands and University of Technology and Management in Sierra Leone and the International Organization in The Netherlands.

SLYI is currently working with SEP to structure the projects implemented by SLYI in Sierra Leone and mobilize young Sierra Leoneans to come together and develop sustainable business.

The company explores and develops the talents of young entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, SEP encourages constructive dialogue between business people, policy makers, and educators to support young and ambitious entrepreneurs in the agriculture and fashion sectors in Sierra Leone.

Our Unique Selling Point is a sharp focus on two high-potential sectors in Sierra Leone—agriculture, water and fashion—and a team in both rural and urban areas of the country where our projects are located. SLYI and SEP collaborate closely with Sierra Leone diaspora (overseas compatriots), business experts and international development students in the Netherlands. Our organization is mature and solid, harboring great potential for future growth of their activities and impacts in Sierra Leone.

Mission:

Our mission is to set up a highly competitive platform of high-value enterprises and provide members with business training, consultancy, lobby and advocacy for funding and support for start-up entrepreneurs in the agribusiness, water and fashion industries.



3. WHAT STUDENTS ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We are looking for passionate students who want to make a difference in the lives of others and who want to concretely build a better world of tomorrow.

Our projects in agricultural development, fashion and clean drinking water need students with expertise in business development (organizational development, value creation, B2B sales/partnerships), marketing (from research to strategy to implementation), export (smart transport, customs), international cooperation (between governments, companies, NGOs), SDGs (analysis, reporting).

It is about raising our plantation, sewing workshop and water pump factory to a higher level in terms of quality, value creation, employment and income for the employees.

Together with you and your teacher or internship supervisor, we look at whether and how your expertise and learning goals match the development needs of our organization. We have extensive experience in supervising trainees, so we know how to organize valuable traineeships.



Picture of Nienke, Laura and Saskia, interns from Delft University, 2019



4. BUSINESS CASES

SLYI and SEP continue to depend its investment and management of sector based business portfolios in, fashion, agriculture and water sectors. Below are the business cases for intervention of students.

4.1 Investment in the fashion sector

Africa's creative industries offer enormous potential for boosting employment and economic growth for the entire continent (Fashionomics, AfDB, 2016). For example, after agriculture, the creative industries are the second sector where jobs are created.

The sector has a large share of women and young people. Approaching the opportunities in the sector, the AfDB encourages governments and the private sector to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and value chain development.

The industry encompasses creative entrepreneurs in advertising, marketing, architecture, crafts, creative hubs, design (product, graphical, interior, etc.), digital media, gaming, fashion, film, TV and radio, performing arts, publishing and literature, museums, galleries and libraries, music, and visual arts and photography and etc.

Like most sectors, the creative industries have been affected by Covid-19, but in many ways it is thriving – people are still making music, designing, writing, dancing, playing, singing, sewing and filming. Enabling people to upgrade their skill sets and creative approaches will help them navigate the challenges of this time and even thrive despite of it.

Addressing these challenges was exactly one of the motivating factors behind the workshop for more than 30 entrepreneurs from the creative industry on 25 January 2022 at the Ministry of Information and Communication at the Youyi Building in Freetown Sierra Leone. The workshop was held in collaboration with SEP Investment Services (SL) Ltd. and Tilburg broadcasting network (OT) from the Netherlands.

In dialogue, the presenters and participants of that workshop identified two key action points to propel the Sierra Leonean creative sector forward:

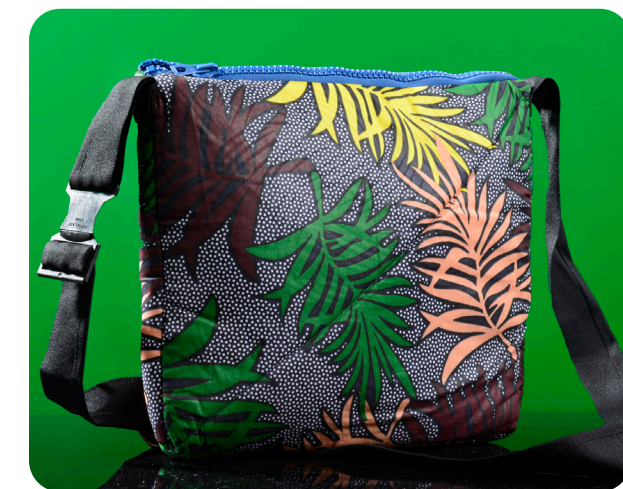
Assignments

a. Research and develop an action plan for **capacity building** for professionals in the creative sector (technical training, business management for micro, small and medium enterprises, MSMEs).

b. Develop **channel building** for the creative sector (domestic marketing and sales, logistics and international marketing and exports).

Expected outcomes

These capacity building and channel building initiatives are expected to increase revenue for creative professionals, more (self-)employment for young talent, more stable livelihoods for their families, additional revenue for the government from taxes, some inbound foreign exchange, savings on government expenses related to unemployed youth. These initiatives will be part of Sierra Leone's contributions to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 17.



Example: Two years ago, SEP developed and implemented a capacity building trajectory for members of the United Tailors Development Association (UTDA) a cooperative of more than 150 tailors in Freetown. The trajectory involves a tailor-made entrepreneurship training, micro credit scheme for 50 members of the union and the implementation of an export promotion strategy to sell hand made products to consumers in the Netherlands. The training trajectory was implemented by student interns within the framework of their minor at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands.

4.2 Investment in agriculture

Food security in Sierra Leone is a national priority. Our intervention in agriculture contributes to the achievement of food sufficiency in Sierra Leone.

SEP agriculture projects at Maconkarie are on the right footing. SEP negotiated with the people of the village for 146 acres of land for the development of SEP agriculture initiative. SEP hired the services of an agriculture specialist to provide the right expertise to the plantation using indigenous human and other resources like tools and seeds to advance the agriculture project, and ensure monitoring and supervising of planting, and preparation of nursery beds.

Following the advisory report from the agricultural specialist, 50 acres of additional land was brushed setting the foundation for our agricultural ambition to plant sorghum and cassava.

Furthermore, we are at an advanced stage with the person in charge of the sorghum-planting project at The Sierra Leone Brewery. We have been enlisted as this year's beneficiaries of the sorghum seed, that is needed in the production of beer.

In the same vein, our palm plantation is on 46 acres of land with different varieties including the dura and tenera varieties from improved seeds. During this period, a strategy to keep the palm plantation accessible was implemented by ensuring thorough cleaning of all areas of palm trees: This close monitoring and supervision contributed to the increase in palm oil yields compared to the previous years: an estimated two drums of palm oil were harvested and sold.

The revenue was used to buy materials to support the primary school at the Makonkarie. Some of the palm oil was sold to support the farm activities in the form of providing an incentive to the full-time laborers on the farm. SEP also succeeded in mobilizing 40 youths at the village to work on the plantation seasonally as needed. In return they get incentives for their work, serving as a stable source of income for many youths at the village.

Assignments

SLYI wants to make local farmers more aware of their role in the production process and how they could create and capture more value along the value chain. This is possible by setting up instructional projects for growing pineapples, rice, cassava, peanuts and potatoes and producing palm oil. These projects can act as a model to bring about behavioral change and awareness among people in Makonkarie and the surrounding area.

The plantation needs a study that identifies how SEP can develop a sustainable profitable business from the plantation's produce. The study will need to focus on value chain development and entering market niches to position and sell products from our plantation.

The outcome of this study should offer advice on ways to actively involve the local farmers in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the learning community centered on the business skills and technical skills (farming and processing) or move up the value chain.



4.3 Investment in clear drinking water

Getting water from a well is heavy and risky. Water wells are available at many schools in Sierra Leone, drawing water costs a lot of energy and can be dangerous for school children.

The Flamingo Water Pump makes water drawing easier and safer for children. By using the pump, they get clean drinking water and the well is also protected against evaporation and pollution. (See photo on front page.)

Clean drinking water is a basic provision to make girls and young women more resilient and stronger.

- Clean water improves the basic health of children.
- Girls and women no longer have to walk long distances alone and are less exposed to sexual harassment and violence.
- Girls have more time to spend on their education.

When they finish school, they have a better chance of a job and economic independence.

Water pumps are not available in many public schools. That is why we provide water pumps in schools where there is no pump.

The Flamingo Water Pump is now being pilot-produced locally in Sierra Leone. This provides employment and contributes to clean drinking water, hygiene and health.

SEP recently installed a total 12 pumps in different locations in Sierra Leone and young and old alike are very pleased with it. The pump, designed by the University of Twente, consists of simple technology, which makes it affordable and reliable. It is also easy to repair with local materials. Three students from Delft University of Technology have installed the pump (see link: <https://www.supporttudelft.nl/project/waterforsierraleone/updates/5610-water-in-sierra-leone>).

Assignment

Develop a marketing strategy and sales plan for these water pumps in Sierra Leone.





5. COST OF THE INTERNSHIP

There are two main costs involved in this internship: air travel and accommodation. The plane ticket is an out-of-pocket expense, while accommodation may or not come on top of your student room, if you keep it, with or without subletting it. Food is a fixed expense for everyone and it'll be cheaper in Sierra Leone. See below a table of expected basic expenditures for a month internship in Sierra Leone. The cost for medication and transportation in The Netherlands and Local transportation and drinks during you stay in Sierra Leone are not included on this table.

If needed, SLYI will help interested students develop a crowdfunding project to help cover the cost of their internship in Sierra Leone.

To, reduce cost, a hybrid internship undertake in the Netherlands at SLYI and for a shorter period in Sierra Leone at SEP could also be designed.

What do you get in return?

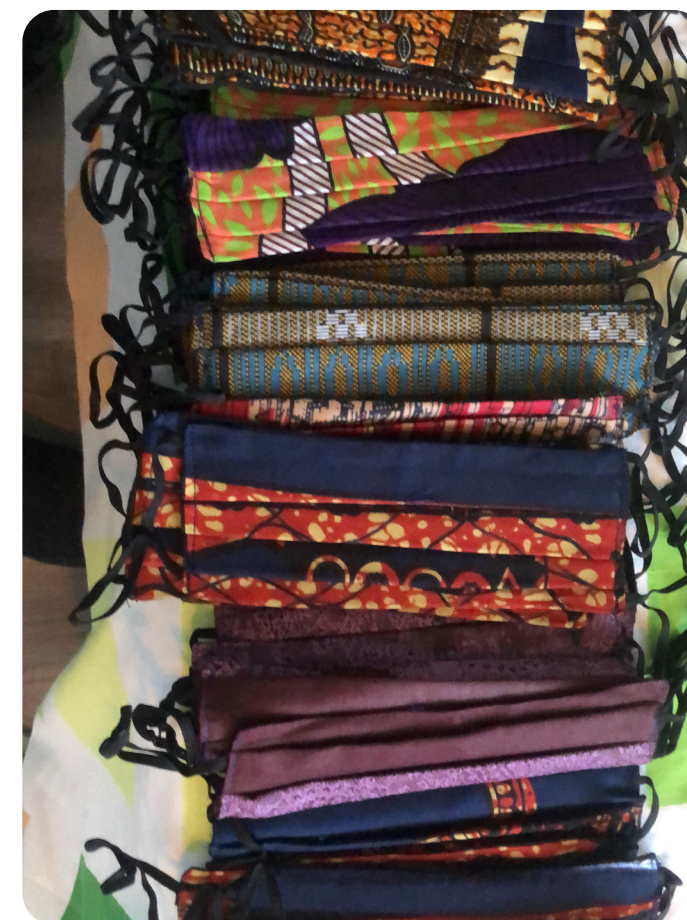
1. Proper preparatory sessions before leaving for the internship. Participants will learn about the culture and other aspects of Sierra Leone during these workshops.
2. Basic and secure accommodation. Every intern will have their own room in a guest house affiliated with SEP.
3. Interns will receive three meals per day. The nature of the food can be determined by students in collaboration with the caretaker.
4. Interns will have an experienced mentor (Abubakarr Bangura, M.Ed. from Fontys) and info kits to guide them in the process of their internship.

Expectation from students

- Respect the professional codes of conduct of the organization during the internship.
- Achieve the learning objectives and create the deliverables as agreed in advance.
- Organise a workshop at one's home institution to present one's internship project outcomes to faculty, fellow students and other interested parties.

What	Costs*
A return flight economy class to Sierra Leone	€ 800
Visa	€ 80
Corona test in Sierra Leone (x2)	€ 130
A return boat ticket to the airport from guesthouse	€ 80
Accommodation and meals, provided through SEP, will be € 20/day. SEP have self contained rooms for 3 students at a time	€ 600 +
TOTAL	€ 1.690

**Estimated*





6. TRAVELING TO SIERRA LEONE

Everyone needs a visa to travel to Sierra Leone from the Netherlands. This can be issued by the Sierra Leonean embassy in Brussels or at the airport in Sierra Leone. Students who have chosen to go to Sierra Leone on an internship can be supported by SLYI to get their visas before traveling to Sierra Leone.

We also ask students who want to go to Sierra Leone to also take good care of vaccinations, mos-quito nets and malaria pills. Information about this can be obtained from the GGD health service. At the moment, visitors visiting Sierra Leone. Are required to get a negative corona test before traveling to Sierra Leone. They are also required to take a corona test upon arrival and before de-pature.

Flying to Sierra Leone from Europe takes about seven hours. There is no direct connection between the Netherlands and Sierra Leone.

Other different possibilities are:

1. Air travel from the Netherlands to Turkey with Turkey Airlines, and from Turkey directly to the Lungi international airport of Sierra Leone.
2. From the Netherlands to Brussels and with Brussels airline to Freetown.
3. From the Netherlands to Rabat, Morocco and from there to Sierra Leone.

When you arrive in Sierra Leone, an SEP staff member will pick you up at the airport and take you directly to our guesthouse at Rokel in Freetown. From the airport at Lungi to Freetown by sea takes about three hours. You can cross this river by boat. The Guesthouse is located at 1 Poultry Road, Rokel, Freetown.

Traveling within Sierra Leone

Getting to know the surrounding nature: Sierra Leone has a beautiful natural landscape. By means of a tour, students can enjoy high mountains, different types of birds, trees, plants and very nice weather. With a bus, students can travel in a group tour or excursion to various tourist and historical places in the country. For example to the Kingimie market. Slaves used to be transported to Europe and America from this place. The natural beach in Lumly and Nr 2 beach, John Obay Estuary around Freetown Peninsula offers students a unique opportunity to enjoy the beautiful nature of Sierra Leone.

Traveling in Freetown and inland can be done in different ways. There are public and private carriers. Public transport includes busses, taxis with a yellow color, the Poda-poda and motorbikes, called Okada.

Cycling in the city is not advisable due to the traffic congestion, it would be too dangerous. The standard cost that someone pays for the taxi depends on the distance driven. The costs can be determined in negotiation with the driver.

There is also the possibility to rent a car for a day, week or month. The costs range from € 50 to € 200, depending on the distance and duration of the trip. When you rent a car, this always includes a driver. Please note that in such a case it is assumed that the traveler also pays for the driver's meals and overnight expenses.

Note: at night or when you are alone, it is not wise to take a taxi. A Poda-poda is safer. It has happened that richer tourists in particular were attacked in a taxi, sometimes by criminals posing as fellow passengers.





Emiel and Yayah Kallon on Okada transport in Sierra Leone

7. STORIES OF STUDENT INTERNS AND THEIR MENTORS IN SIERRA LEONE

There's plenty of information available online on culture of Sierra Leone. Below are a number of tips and experiences shared with you by Joe Gabriel, former student coordinator and Ibrahim Bangura, the current student coordinator at SEP in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, several students at Delft University of technology that have visited Sierra Leone within the framework of their minor in education studies at the university. These students have also shared their experiences and presented hands-on advises for future students going to Sierra Leone.

Tips and insights from Joe Gabriel:

Hello, esteemed interns!

WELCOME TO SALONE – Una Kushe!

I feel like sharing with you some important cultural facts that you need to know as you prepare for your trip to Sierra Leone. As you are aware, Sierra Leone and the Netherlands are two different countries that have several cultural differences so I'm happy to share a few pointers with you.

1. Greetings: Sierra Leone is a country that loves strangers. So as you walk on the streets, a lot of people will want to greet you or even want to become friends with you as soon as they notice that you are a stranger. One of the reasons for this is to assist you with whatever you need and make you feel relaxed and at home. As you are greeted by people you meet along your day-to-day activities/movements, you are expected to do the same. Not reciprocating a greeting makes the other person feel really bad. It could ruin someone's day or you may not get that person's help next time around. Greeting is an important way to show that we care for one another. Treat this seriously.

2. Food: Expect huge differences in food. Our foods are mostly salty and spicy. We also eat groundnut oil or palm oil a lot. Without salt or pepper, food is hardly eaten. Some people will even vomit when their food does not have pepper. Pepper also serves as an appetizer for some people and also helps to improve the taste of the food. Don't worry about this because you will definitely love our foods. Over time one of the things that strangers remember us for is our foods.

3. Admiration: On streets and other public areas you will attract some attention from especially kids. You will hear them calling you "or poto" or say to you "or poto yemadi" or "white man/woman". This is to get your attention. A lot of people mostly the rural illiterate will be looking at you with admiration, some will want to befriend you. But you have the choice to either accept or not. It's not a crime to not be a friend.

4. High Expectations: Most Africans especially the illiterate believe that every white man/woman is rich. During your interactions with people on the streets or other places they will expect you to give them money but being polite by telling them that you don't have money will help a lot or you could even ignore it.

5. Appreciation: Locals feel good when you appreciate them for doing something for you. For instance, when your cook prepares your meal even if you are not satisfied with the quality thank her first before telling her what's off. This can also be done with wisdom and gentleness, such as "The food was great and I enjoyed it very much, however I feel like the food will taste better if you reduce the amount of salt next time you prepare such food".

6. Attraction/Love: Ladies will be attracted to you if you are a man or the other way if you are lady you will be attracted to men. No one will harm you if you decline.

7. Respect for elders: We put much store with this. Our tradition demands that we respect elders. Anyone who is older than you (huge age gap), you cannot call them by their direct names. You can use a honorific Mister, Sir, Madam, Aunty, Uncle when addressing them. For instance: "Mr. Kama-ra, good morning. - Good morning, Mr. Kamara. - How are you, Sir? - Mr. Bangura, when do you expect to finish XYZ...?" Omitting such forms of address is considered disrespectful.

8. Eye Contact: Our tradition puts much emphasis on respect for elders so much that even by looking deep into the eyes of an elder as he talks to you is regarded as disrespectful. It's expected of a minor/junior to look

down on the ground and focus on the speaker. This can be expressed by not doing any body movement. However, this should not be an issue for you because you are strangers and you hold a special place in the hearts of Sierra Leoneans, you can be forgiven for everything.

9. Giving and sharing: Despite the limited resources that we have, we are givers. Families or individuals sometimes starve themselves to satisfy others desperately in need. If you are walking on the street and you see three or more people sharing a bottle of soft drinks or bread it is not because they cannot afford each one rather a culture of sharing and spreading love. Neighbours cook and give each other every day even if the other does not afford to give back for days. In such case, the one that can afford food will increase the quota

according to the size of the family which she gives food to always. One of the beauties also of friendship here is that we share everything in common be it food, dress, household items etc.

10. Visiting: Visits are an important tradition amongst us. We most times visit friends and relatives without even informing them prior to our visit. We care less whether they are available or not or have time for us or not. In case the one you are visiting is not available you will just return and inform him/her later when you see each other that you visited but he was not available or via phone. If you meet the one you visited, it's expected of him/her to serve you with food or drink and in most cases pay your transport fare back home.

Experiences from students

Name: Rolf Bavelaar
Student intern from Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands
Period: 2020



I personally had a great experience in Sierra Leone. The people, the climate, the culture, basically everything was completely different from what I was used to in Netherlands. At the beginning this of course took some getting used to, but because everyone was always so welcoming and compassionate it was really easy to adapt and learn how things work in Sierra Leone.

When I was in Sierra Leone someone from SEP was always with us to help us get around and show us all the nice spots. This was really cool, because it meant that we were always safe and able to emerge ourselves in the culture. We experienced Sierra Leonean food, the extreme traffic, the nice beaches and much more.

All in all, I'm really glad I got to go to Sierra Leone. The trip gave me memories I will remember for the rest of my life and I'm convinced I will go back there one day.

Name: Laurens Visser
Student intern from Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands
Period: 2020



My name is Laurens and last year I visited Sierra Leone for an internship at SEP in Freetown. Together with two fellow students from TU Delft we developed a water pump for SEP just outside of Freetown. The internship in Sierra Leone was our first experience in Africa and we had a great experience thanks to the hospitable attitude of the Sierra Leonean people. Let me share some of my take-aways from my time in Sierra Leone.

Cultural differences

When we arrived in Sierra Leone we first needed some time to get used to the country and its people. The first few days were filled with new impressions and due to the high temperature we needed to change our pace of life and learn to slow down a bit. After a few days of taking it easy and settling in, we started our project and had the first meetings for the construction of the water pump.



Time-management

In the Netherlands we were used to meetings starting exactly on time and this was not the case when we arrived in Sierra Leone. People in Sierra Leone take their time and sometimes don't make it on time for a meeting. At our first meeting, our business partner didn't show up, which got us a bit frustrated. Luckily our supervisor told us that this happens a lot in Sierra Leone, as people have lots of things to handle, which may be unexpected or delayed as well—so we should not stress about it. Over time, we learned to slow down, mellow out, and take things as they come.



Food

The Sierra Leonean food is in many aspects different than Dutch food. The food is often very spicy and is always freshly prepared. Our host, Mariam, prepared our meals every day and took our taste in consideration when she prepared the food. In this way we could taste all the delicious Sierra Leonean dishes, but with toned-down spiciness, so "safe" for us to eat.



Hospitality

Sierra Leoneans are very hospitable, everybody was very interested in the reason that we visited Sierra Leone and people often wanted to make small talk. Our supervisor always joined us when we went out and was of great value at business meetings. As a Sierra Leonean he was used to the Sierra Leonean way of talking business and he therefore gave us many insights in the Sierra Leonean culture.

Overall

We had the time of our life in Sierra Leone, but had to keep some things in mind to guarantee our safety. We always went out with our supervisor or another trusted local person. We rarely went out in the dark, also due to the covid curfew. We did not eat local street food as we were not sure if it was prepared in a safe way. We tried to adjust ourselves as much as possible to the Sierra Leonean culture, we visited local markets and worked together with the Sierra Leonean constructors to finish the pump. In this way we were able to get a true experience with the Sierra Leonean people: not as total outsiders, but as new insiders. I hope that you'll have the same awesome experience in Sierra Leone and enjoy your internship just as much as we did!

Name: Tetsuo Martynowicz
Student intern from Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands
Period: 2020



Inside the guesthouse company with students and their host (Ibrahim and Mariam Bangura, second and third right of the picture)

I visited Sierra Leone for four weeks in January 2021 for my internship with SEP as part of my minor program. The three of us stayed in Rokel Village, close to Freetown, as guests of Ibrahim and Mariam Bangura. The purpose of our internship and trip to Sierra Leone was to teach local SEP employees how to make rope pumps and how to run a business selling these pumps.

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world and for many people struggling is a daily part of their lives. Especially if you've never traveled to third world countries, experiencing this can have a significant impact. It is important to stay humble and to accept the situation, but this can be quite frustrating at first. You will not be able to change a whole country, although you might want to, but you can try to give small amounts of whatever you have to offer.

The country itself is very beautiful and the people are very friendly. People really take care of each other and are very interested in learning about different cultures as well. You will encounter many cultural differences, so it's important to try to see things from their perspective and to be curious about their norms and values.

Lastly, I would advise to try as many things as possible and go beyond the borders of Freetown to see more of the country. Sierra Leone has a ton to offer and is probably unlike any country that you've visited before. I had a great time there and I collected many fond memories for the rest of my life.

Name: Sophie Duin
Student intern from Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands
Period: 2021

From my safe space in the Netherlands, I took a nine-hour flight to go to a country with a completely different culture. This country was Sierra Leone. Did I have a culture shock? Yes. The first couple of days I missed my family and friends a lot.

However I soon discovered how kind the local Sierra Leoneans are and some became my new family. Before going to Sierra Leone, I was told that the locals like strangers and will want to become friends. This was definitely true, also as the only white people in the village. We quickly made many friends with whom we played games in the evenings and told stories about our country. Mariama, our hostess, quickly made us feel at home. She was like a second mother for us there. For every lunch and evening she cooked dinner for us. Lunch was always a local dish (with less spices for us).

I felt very safe in the country. The least safe I felt was on the road. I am very happy we had a driver in Sierra Leone. The highways were chaos and the other roads were bumpy. The car broke down multiple times. Luckily people in Sierra Leone are not great with timing. People were almost never on time, my patience was tested a lot. That is definitely a big difference with the Netherlands. It was also very hard to predict at what time we had to leave because you never knew if there was traffic or an accident on the road. Luckily, I was always surrounded by local people who worked at SEP and very soon became good friends. These friends were the people who got me through the internship. I was so grateful to be surrounded by these nice people. The compound really did become a home for the couple of months I was there.



My experience with Dutch students on internship with SEP in Sierra Leone

By Ibrahim Bangura
Coordinator SEP
Intern Coordinator

(in white shirt standing with Mr John Bangura, our Father and supervisor of the plantation at Makonkarie)



I'm Ibrahim, the host of all three batches in a row of student interns with SEP in Sierra Leone. I live with my wife, Mariam, who has been the main pillar throughout this whole time! So my experience is her experience working with Dutch students. In my experience, Dutch students have been great not least because they are willing to learn and follow the existing structures, but also because Dutch students work hard irrespective of gender, and are detailed and time conscious. They are good at observing and following, or where necessary asking a question.

A case at hand has to do with removing slippers entering our home. In our home we don't enter with slippers (flip-flops). Although they follow this pattern, they inquire why we don't allow in slippers into our home. We told them it's not only a sign of respect for our home but also to keep it clean from any dirt anyone could have stepped upon given the nature of our roads: dusty during the dry season and messy during the rains.

Of course they expect answers to every question they ask at every given moment – the best time for me to interact with them, because I believe I could allay their fears and deepen their knowledge and understanding about things. They are also fine if an answer is deferred! Apparently, Dutch students like to be on their own. I found that they like privacy, and the ladies are somewhat more conservative than their male counterparts who appear to be more outgoing.

In addition, my experience further is that, they like to go to places especially to the beach to relax, to enjoy nature, and like to play football. In their leisure they would like to attend events – they are willing to even go to church, weddings, naming ceremonies, and even to the market with Mariam, as part of their social and cultural experience. Of course they like playing games: Sophia an Emiel taught me to play snakes and ladders, they do play card games and ludo with Mariam, T Boy and Jusu. And they like playing with children, as in the case of Nienke, Saskia and Laura when they relate with Zain-abu (the little girl of my niece). Then, Tetsu, Laurence, and Roff, played with other boys and kids.

They even bought a uniform and books for Umaru, a needy boy from the neighborhood. During this period they had fun, and their hearty laughter could often be heard, especially when playing with members of our family, SEP workers and students of the tailoring institute.

I don't remember anyone of the three batches ever skipped a planned activity for the day to pursue pleasure: always busy doing things, or writing down something, reading a book, typing in phones or computers: always active! Nonetheless, from my experience and from their testimonies, generalization instinct had an effect: "I'm used to this way or that..." They would often drift off into nostalgia and look moody. Mariam or me would talk to them to see what's wrong, and we'd try to lift their mood or help in a practical way. This was generally successful.

So I would encourage you not to hesitate to embark on an internship with SEP in Sierra Leone. Mariam and I, older and experienced in making internships work, will be there to make sure you're have a nice home away from home, from where you can do your internship and explore our wonderful country.

In conclusion

The above provides concrete tips regarding the day-to-day life of people in Sierra Leone. The people in the country are friendly but the culture and way of living are totally different from ours in the Netherlands. We, therefore, advise students going to Sierra Leone to be well prepared to travel to the country and be flexible with issues encountered during the stay. You can always count on us for professional guidance during your stay in Sierra Leone.



CONCLUSION

Sierra Leone has been at war for ten years until 2003. After the war, with the help of the UN post-war development is set in motion. This requires investing in education and private sector development to create new jobs, prosperity and critical and self-reliant citizens. The (SLYI) and SEP have been contributing to this process for many years.

Internships in Sierra Leone open up new opportunities for the country by bringing in new knowledge and ways of thinking, broadens the intern students' horizons, and promotes international networking with other universities.

Join us and seize the opportunities! Have fun and be inspired!





IBMA guesthouse (foto boven en onder)

APPENDIX

ACCOMMODATIONS IN FREETOWN

IBMA Guest House
1 Poultry Road Rokel
Freetown

John Obay Estuary Resort
Freetown
<https://www.estuaryresort-sl.com/about>
00232-76685977

More info:

<https://ntb.gov.sl/minister-of-tourism-and-cultural-affairs-meet-with-tourism-stakeholders/>



John Obay Estuary Resort

PUT SIERRA LEONE ON THE MAP

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