

## Sierra Leone: Hydroelectric Project to Bolster Country Recovery

**June 29, 2005**—Earlier this month, the Bank Group approved a new Country Assistance Strategy for Sierra Leone (see [news release here](#)), as well as a \$15 million IDA grant to finance a Fourth Economic Rehabilitation and Recovery program (see [news release](#)).

The two decisions are the latest signals that the country has emerged from its civil war (that ended in January, 2002), has reestablished security, and is in the process of restoring public services throughout the country. The challenge ahead is to continue the process of rebuilding while also ensuring a good policy environment for the growth and job creation needed for more than five million inhabitants



Managing Director Shengman Zhang (center) and Country Director Mats Karlsson (right) inspecting the Bumbuna hydroelectric site in February this year.

The CAS approval and IDA grant to ensure the completion of the Bumbuna Hydroelectric Project are major steps towards the achievement of these goals.

The completion of the Bumbuna Hydroelectric Project represents the nation's first, long-awaited step to secure reliable and affordable power supply based on its indigenous and renewable energy resources. The completion of the project will enhance economic development and provide opportunities to improve the quality of life for the people of Sierra Leone. Households will finally enjoy a reliable supply of electricity at a lower cost while national industry and small businesses will benefit from reduced production costs due to lower tariffs for electricity. There should also be overall benefits to the economy through increased employment.



Ron Bisset, of BMT Cordah Ltd., hiking toward remote communities in the project area during the environmental impact assessment phase.

### Building on reforms, building the country

"The project will mobilize private capital, promote private sector involvement in the management of the power sector, and encourage sector reforms to underpin the efficiency and effectiveness of the sector," says Donal O'Leary, Task Team Leader of the project. "This is especially important in a post-conflict country such as Sierra Leone."

The BHP will also relieve the country of the burden of expanding foreign exchange earnings to purchase fossil fuel, improving the national balance of payments. Moreover, the greenhouse effect and the emission of other polluting gases will be significantly reduced. Finally, the availability of electricity will lead to substantial improvements in the health and education sectors.

The first component of the project—*Hydroelectric and Transmission Infrastructure*— will be a run-of-river hydropower plant consisting of an 88 meter high rockfill dam. It also includes the construction of a powerhouse and the installation of electromechanical equipment as well as the completion of a 200 km transmission line linking Bumbuna with the capital, Freetown.

The second component—*Environmental Mitigation, Resettlement, Watershed Management and Benefit Sharing Environment Management Plan*— is aimed at protecting the reservoir from excessive sedimentation by improving agricultural practices in the Bumbuna catchment area. It will also contribute to improving the livelihood of farmers and protecting the animal and plant biodiversity, which in the Bumbuna catchment area

includes chimpanzees.

This component will also support the implementation of the environmental management plan (EMP) and the resettlement action plans (RAPs) for the dam/reservoir area and the transmission line. Support will also be provided to the Upper Seli Community Development Initiative (USCDI), which will benefit the indirectly-affected communities in the project area.

The third component of the project –*Management and Supervision*— is geared towards providing support to the Bumbuna Project Implementation Unit, to supervise the implementation of the EMP and the RAPs in collaboration with the Department of Environment and other Sierra Leonean agencies.

### **Consulting with those directly affected**

Bumbuna is also an example where the impact on humans and other living beings is carefully weighed against economic profit and mitigation measures are properly implemented. Stakeholder involvement and effective community participation in large hydroelectric projects has become an unavoidable planning paradigm to achieve sustainable energy development.

During preparation of the project, more than 50 public consultations, involving 1,300 people, were carried out to support the EIA and RAP assessment studies. Communication experts, government representatives, and consultants teams working at various levels in the project, approached the communities, sharing information and opening the floor for frank and transparent discussions since the beginning of project preparation.



A local school in the reservoir area. The school will remain in place and students and teachers should benefit directly from the dam project.

"The extensive consultation that we expect to continue during project implementation," says TTL O'Leary, "ensures that all affected stakeholders have a stake in the success of the project"