

Youth Employment in Sierra Leone: An Agenda for Research

Wendy Cunningham & Pia Peeters
February 7, 2006

Context: Sierra Leone

- Emerged from an 11 year conflict in 2002; post-conflict period is “ending”
- Low growth pre-conflict; Robust economic growth in 2002-2004 due to mining, ag, reconstruction, and donor-financed imports
- Private investment low, dilapidated infrastructure, local markets are depressed
- Ranked 176 of 177 in the Human Development Index & 70% of population below the poverty line
- 2/3 of the population in rural areas
- 34% of Sierra Leoneans are age 15-35; 79% younger than age 35

Context: Youth and Employment

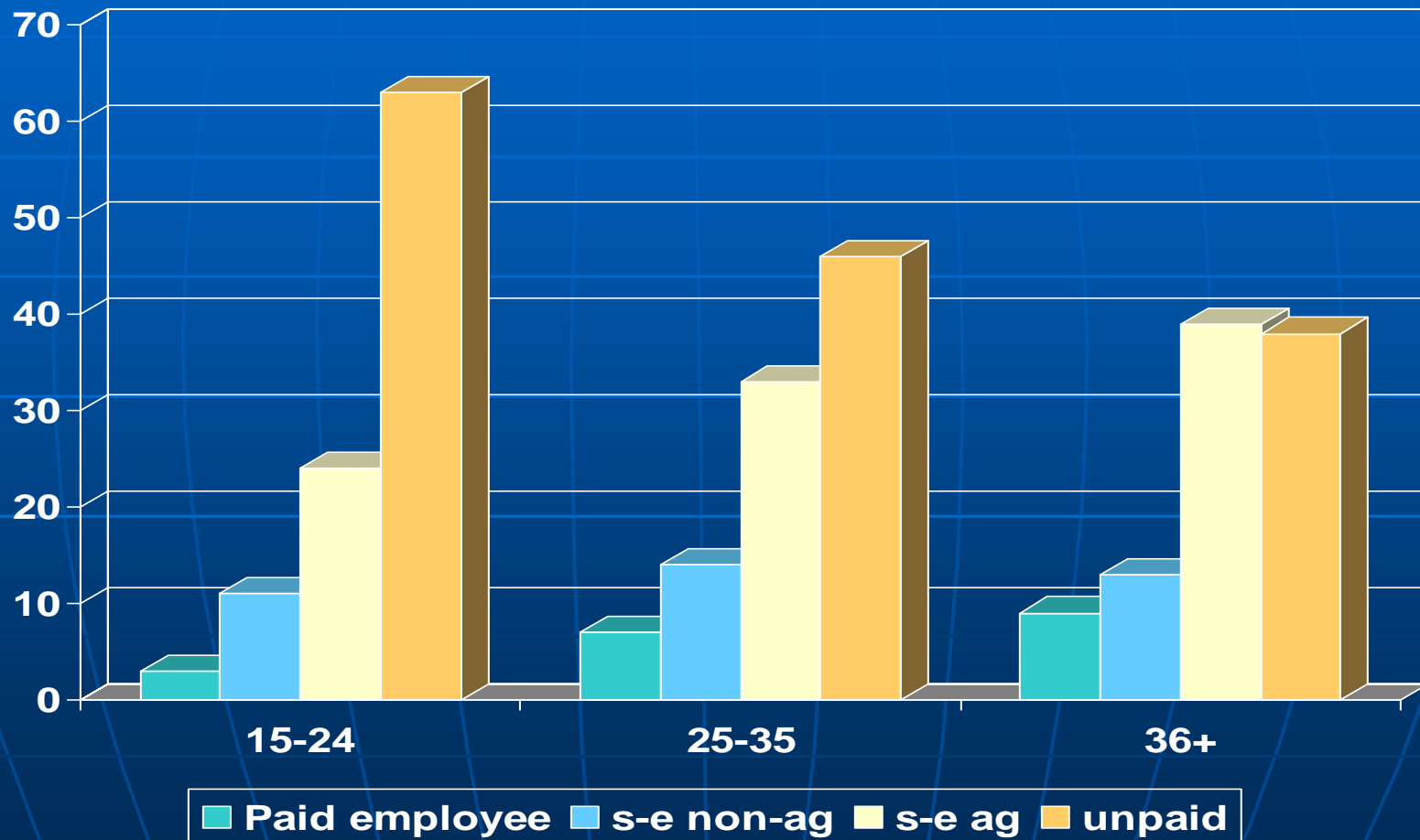
- The war resulted in:
 - mass migration – over 2 million displaced
 - destruction of the economy and productive capacity
 - a “lost generation” of youth – where are the men???
 - Youth were the main fighters in the war, especially men
 - Elections in 2007
- ⇒ GoSL is very concerned about idle youth, especially men, and the implications for the economic growth and political stability of the country
- ⇒ GoSL solution – employ young men (but not in the public sector)

High Employment, Low Unemployment & many female workers

Male / Female	15-24	25-35	36+
Employed	36% / 53%	85% / 88%	94% / 84%
Unemployed	2% / 1%	3% / 1%	1% / 1%
OLF	62% / 45%	12% / 10%	5% / 16%

Source: Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2003

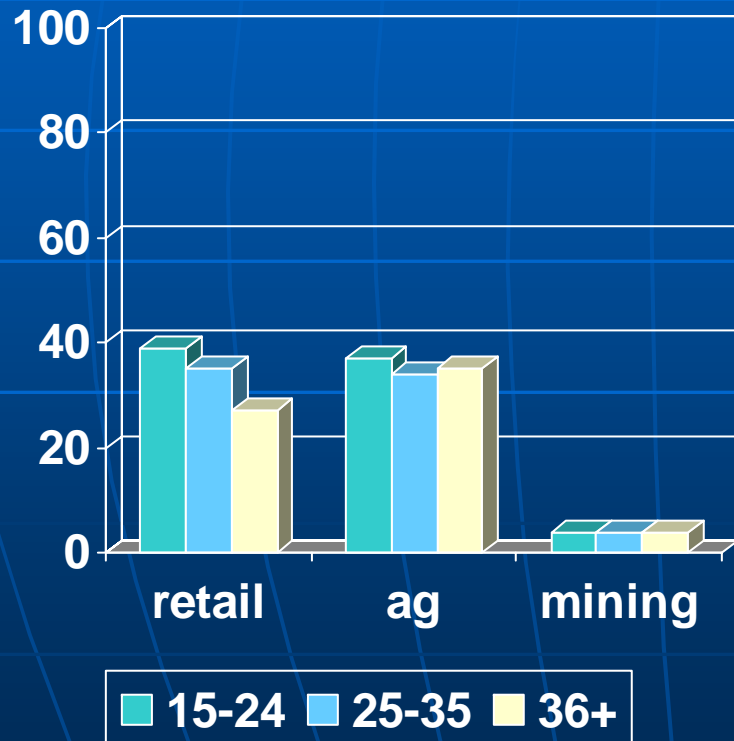
Sector of Work



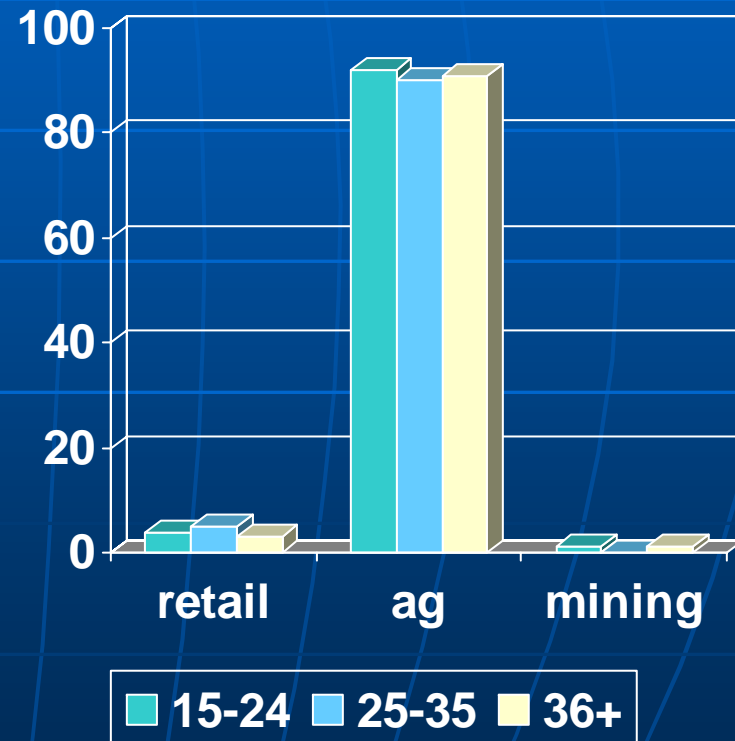
Source: Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2003

Ag and retail (in urban) dominate the occupations

Urban



Rural



Source: Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2003

Low skilled labor force

	15-24	25-35	36+
No school	43%	69%	80%
Senior secondary	10%*	16.5%	8.6%
Apprenticeship	4.2%	7.6%	9.1%

Source: Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2003

* Incomplete education spells

Anomalies – data v. observation

Data shows	Perception
Most youth are employed or studying	Many idle young men
Many unpaid workers	Most are eating
Unemployment and OLF low	High unemployment rates
Few apprenticeships	Apprenticeships are the norm

= > More going on than what the standard indicators suggest

Current GoSL thinking about policy for youth employment

- Provide urban luxuries in rural areas to entice youth to move from Freetown to areas where there is a demand for labor BUT ... why don't youth go to rural areas on their own?
- Youth basket – funding for youth initiatives BUT ... what types of youth initiatives would lead to employment?
- Training BUT ... is there a mis-match between labor supply and demand?

Rationale for the Study

- Inform the GoSL, Bank, and other donors on the main issues related to youth employment and employability and possible policies and investment options
- Inform operations, both Bank and non-Bank (Bank op in the pipeline for 2007)

Plan of Study:

Mapping the situation

I. Characteristics of youth in Sierra Leone (Census, SLIHS, lit review)

- Demographics (age, gender, tribal affiliation, migrant status)
- Geographic (urban/rural, regions)
- Social (social hierarchies)

II. Trends of youth in the labor market (Census, SLIHS + youth focus groups)

- unemployment, underemployment, seasonal employment, sectors of employment, occupation

Plan of Study:

Labor supply & demand

III. Supply of youth labor (SLIHS + youth focus groups)

- Skills of youth by demographics/social group, with respect to the labor market
- Attitudes and expectations

IV. Demand side (employer survey)

- Economic and institutional environment for job creation
- Nature of jobs available for youth
- Employer constraints to hiring young people (real and perceived)
- Attitudes and expectations of employers

Plan of Study: Policy Directions

- V. Assess skill development programs to enhance youth employability (literature review + employer surveys)
 - Vocational and technical training, apprenticeship, literacy
 - Volunteer service, public works, life skill training, business development skills, etc.
- VI. Identify pragmatic recommendations for policy and program design... 2-pronged strategy
 - **Short term**, with focus on job creation
 - **Long term**, investments to increase employability

Timeline

- CP review – October 2005
- Data cleaning – Nov/Dec 2005
- Youth focus groups – on-going
- Employer survey and focus groups – March 2006 (with IFC)
- Data analysis – March/April 2006
- Final report – June 2006
- Project – December 2006