



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

STATE HOUSE

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PRESS RELEASE

Government of Sierra Leone commits to Human Capital Development with "Innovation in Government Incubator"

His Excellency Julius Maada Bio, the President of Sierra Leone wishes to announce the creation of an "Innovation in Government Incubator". The Incubator will digitize public services and apply data-driven solutions to government for the benefit of all Sierra Leoneans.

The initiative will fall under the recently formed Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), which will work with local start-ups, private, public and academic organisations to collaborate on projects that will help citizens access government services and information more efficiently. It will also provide an opportunity for young people to participate, innovate and solve challenges in their local communities.

In September this year at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Goalkeepers event in New York, President Bio took to the stage with Bill Gates to share his vision for the country's development. He spoke of the importance of human capital and his ambition to prioritise investments in the health, education, and skills of the people of Sierra Leone.

President Bio reinforced this message again last weekend speaking at the Global Citizen Festival in Johannesburg, South Africa where he reaffirmed his commitment to spend 21% of the country's total budget on education: "Overseas Development Assistance is welcome, but it is not infinite. We have to first rely on ourselves. By investing our own African resources in free, quality teaching and learning, we are investing in our human capital and empowering our youth to be the generation that will end poverty in our time."

The Incubator is one of the key steps towards realising his vision, and an example of a strategic investment in human capital – Sierra Leone's people. It was initially announced by Dr. David Sengeh, Chief Innovation Officer for Sierra Leone during his session at the Goalkeepers Africa event in Johannesburg on Saturday 1 December.

Mark Suzman, President, Global Policy and Advocacy at the Gates Foundation, welcomed the announcement on the side lines of the Goalkeepers Africa event, stating that: "We are pleased to support the launch of this project as it is a clear commitment from the government of Sierra Leone to invest in human capital. In prioritizing innovation and human capital, Sierra Leone is in a better position to kick-start its own development. This approach can also provide a blueprint for other fast-growing developing countries trying to make the most of their youth boom".

Dr. Sengeh expanded on what the Incubator would mean for Sierra Leoneans: "It's a unique initiative that will bring together the private sector, academia and government agencies. Partners will share data, build models, develop hypotheses and test pilot projects to inform government investments in human capital. For example, a collaboration between Statistics Sierra Leone and a local start-up through the incubator will develop a product that maps the availability of government services in the country. The opportunities are endless, Sierra Leoneans will feel the increased benefits of innovation in their lives."

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