



**NATIONAL BROADCAST ON NEW
YEAR'S EVE BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE, FREETOWN - 31ST
DECEMBER 2021**

Fellow citizens:

1. Just over a week ago, I switched on the CLSG interconnection at Tiloma, bringing sustainable electricity to the regional capitals of Eastern and Southern Sierra Leone.
2. This year alone, working with partners, we have lit up 23 more towns and communities in rural Sierra Leone including Masiaka, Foredugu, Mambolo, Mange, and Rokupr in the north; Moyamba Junction, Taiama, Sumbuya, Koribondo, and Sulima in the south; and, Gorahun, Boajibu, Jojoima, Mobai, and Manowa Town in the East. My Government's 148 MW energy generation agreement for the Western Area has been ratified by parliament. We are refurbishing transmission and distribution assets and lines and planning new investments in the energy sector.
3. Four years on, we have moved from very expensive and dirty temporary energy fixes to more sustainable and affordable options including green energy sources. That is progress.
4. In 2021, we completed the 46 km Bo-Bandajuma Road and substantial work has been done on the Bandajuma to Mano River Union Road including three bridges. The 36 km Moyamba Junction to Moyamba Road including 4 major bridges is complete. The 28km Pendembu to Kailahun Road is near completion. Over a hundred kilometres of city roads in the north, south, east, and west have been or are being completely resurfaced. We have done extensive re-gravelling work on 1,800 km of roads across the country.
5. As a result of my much-derided travels, our friends in the European Union and World Bank among others have given Sierra Leone grants of over a hundred million US dollars for the Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project and modern bridges that will replace hand-pulled cable-ferries.
6. The highway to Masiaka is completed with tree-lined medians. In a few months, I will commission a brand new and modern Magbele Bridge over the Rokel River and a brand new and modern Mabang Bridge over the Ribbi River. That is what national infrastructural development is. That is progress.
7. In 2021, we kept millions of children in school, including girls and children with disabilities. We provided them with free teaching and

learning materials and food in some locations. Radical inclusion is here to stay.

8. In 2021 we have trained thousands of teachers and education sector workers, built or renovated over 100 schools and resourced libraries, updated and reviewed curricula, and, in collaboration with civil society, international institutions, and development partners used cutting edge technologies and introduced ground-breaking policies. We continued to nail our flag on the mast of innovation with a Sierra Leonean, Jeremiah Thoronka, winning a global prize for technology. As a nation, we have been recognised for developing effective home-grown, technology-mediated solutions to fight COVID-19 and deliver healthcare.

9. In 2021, we have delivered on our promises to restructure the governance of tertiary and higher education, resolved the Limkokwing impasse, rehabilitated infrastructure across all public institutions, established and improved TVET across the country, and provided greater access to higher education, especially for women studying STEM disciplines.

10. Social safety-net schemes are now better structured and more impactful for vulnerable populations than 5 years ago. We expanded opportunity for youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Entrepreneurship and stimulus grants, job-creation, skills training, and low-interest loans have benefitted women and youth. From youth farms, youth in fisheries, youth carwashes, and to youth-at-risk training schemes and start-up kits, we are putting thousands of young people on the path to empowerment and economic opportunity.

11. 2021 was the year of strengthening the foundation for transformative change in the health sector even as we battled and prevailed over three waves of COVID-19 attacks. We expanded primary healthcare services by increasing Primary Healthcare Units (PHUs) to 1500, spread throughout the country so that every Sierra Leonean has access to one within a 5-mile radius.

12. For 2022, we are all focused on improving our pandemic preparedness and response; enhancing the quality of services delivered at PHUs through infrastructure and equipment upgrades; improving quality of staff at the different cadres and making high quality drugs

available in hospital pharmacies; and improving the quality of services at all the secondary and tertiary hospitals.

13. In 2021, we increased budgetary allocation to the health sector to 11.6 % of GDP. Our international partners such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria, and the World Bank expressed their confidence in our reforms by increasing their funding support to \$157M, and \$78M respectively. With these and additional resources, 2022 will be an even better year for transforming the healthcare sector, dramatically reducing maternal mortality, improving infant survival, and expanding quality physical and mental healthcare to Sierra Leoneans.

14. In 2021, we provided more garbage skips throughout the country to improve public sanitation, especially in urban centres. We have increased investment in public safety and disaster management. We have improved our climate mitigation and adaptation interventions and we intend to follow through on our green commitments while actively seeking green investments in our business-friendly ecosystem.

15. In 2021, we made progress toward sustainable food security. We made a big push to support private sector engagement in the agriculture sector by establishing 14 mechanisation service centres, making a Le100 billion low-interest agriculture credit facility available for agri-businesses, providing Le8.2 billion worth of improved rice seeds through an e-voucher system targeting youth and women, and cultivated over 15,000 hectares of rice to support food insecure households across the country. As a result of these interventions, there is a 21% jump in rice production from 2020, according to an ECOWAS pre-harvest assessment.

16. From job creation for youth and women, competitive financing for value addition and agribusiness, new tree crop establishments for cocoa and oil-palm, a National Comprehensive Soil Survey, a National Mechanisation Policy, a National Irrigation Master Plan, to the Smallholder Commercialisation and Agribusiness Development Project, we are making steady progress towards food security and wealth creation in the agricultural sector.

17. Across Government, we have made significant improvement in governance and ruling justly. There is more devolution, more engagement with civil society, and greater citizens' participation in local governance. Our much-lauded judicial and justice-sector reforms now mean far greater

access to justice for more Sierra Leoneans than at any time before. We will soon release the Government White Paper on Constitutional Reforms that will account for gaps and lacunae in our current constitution. In 2021, we abolished the death penalty forever and also laid in parliament a seminal law for gender equality and empowerment.

18. For the control of corruption, the Millennium Challenge Corporation scores Sierra Leone at an unprecedented 83% this year - up from a failing 49% for the past government – for our effective fight against corruption. Domestic revenue mobilisation is up, inflation is largely in check, procurement and other financial processes are better monitored, and public-sector salaries are paid regularly each month.

19. In 2021, we launched the geodata from the national geophysical survey, amicably resolved disputes and attracted new investments and created hundreds of new jobs in the mining sector. As a result of our policies and our collaboration with our partners, the mines have stayed open and added more jobs throughout COVID.

20. Reduced telecoms rates and expanded coverage in a more competitive telecoms sector, increased internet penetration, and legislative and other reforms in the communications sector have been truly remarkable in 2021.

21. No journalist is in prison for the practice of journalism; our cybercrime laws are in accord with international best practices, and the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists and international bodies have recognised that media freedoms are at an all-time high. In 2021, Sierra Leone became the fourth African country to sign the global pledge on media freedoms and Sierra Leone will further bolster its global reputation for religious tolerance by signing up to the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance.

22. In 2021, our international profile improved even further with continental leadership of C-10, consideration for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and recognition at several international summits for investing in education and especially girls' education, protecting and promoting women's rights, and for maintaining and widening win-win relationships with historical and new partners.

23. In 2021, our Sierra Leone was recognised as the 4th most peaceful country in Africa. In sports, Sierra Leoneans brought home laurels in dozens of disciplines. We continued to improve on and invest in sports and in a few weeks, Sierra Leone will be playing in the African Cup of Nations after 25 years.

24. As Sierra Leoneans, we have a lot to be proud of. In 2021, we achieved a lot in spite of the turbulence of these times; in spite of the unpredictability of the global economy; and in spite of the misinformation-laden rhetoric of bad politicians. Sierra Leone is forging ahead, undeterred and with purpose. We are determined to keep our nation on the path of a new direction.

Happy New Year and may God bless Sierra Leone.