Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024 – 2030

A Transformative Acceleration Agenda for Food Security, Human Capital Development and Job Creation



Government of Sierra Leone

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Acronyms

ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AFCFTA	Africa Continental Free Trade Area
ASSL	Audit Service Sierra Leone
AU	African Union
BSL	Bank of Sierra Leone
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CG	Consultative Group
CTI	Communications, Technology, and Innovation
DACO	Development Assistance Coordination Office
DAD	Development Assistance Database
DDCC	District Development Coordination Committee
DEPAC	Development Partners Committee
DFS	Digital Financial Services
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EPI	Environmental Performance Index
FQE	Free Quality Education
FX	Foreign Exchange
GANHRI	Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions
GBVIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
HCD	Human Capital Development
HDI	Human Development Index
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICPNC	Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion
INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
INTOSAI	International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions
MDAs.	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MoPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
MTDS	Medium-Term Debt Strategy
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
MTHE	Ministry of Technical and Higher Education
MTND	Medium-Term National Development Plan
MTRS	Medium-Term Revenue Strategy
NCRA	National Civil Registration Authority
NCTVA	National Council for Vocational Training and other Academic Awards
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NDPs	National Development Plans
NFCS	National Framework for Climate Services
NFF	National Fire Force
NPSE	National Primary School Examination
OCME	Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
PIMIS	Public Investment Management Information System
PPF	Project Preparation Facility
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWD	People with Disabilities
SAI	Supreme Audit Institution
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

SLCS	Sierra Leone Correctional Service
SLeCAA	Sierra Leone Commission on Arms and Ammunition
SMEs	Small Medium-Sized Enterprises
Stats SL	Statistics Sierra Leone
TEMA	Traffic Engineering and Management Agency
TVET	Technical, Vocational and Educational Training
UNCDF	UN Capital Development Fund

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FOREWORD

Message from the President



My Government has concluded the preparation of Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan for the period 2024-2030. The new plan builds on gains made from its predecessor implemented during the first term of my Administration. The present plan will address unfinished business from the last plan and emerge challenges, as we renew our determination to accelerate efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

It should be recalled that the global circumstances that surrounded the implementation of the previous plan 2019-2023 was extremely unfavourable for Sierra Leone, as experienced in the rest of the world owing to the widespread effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and other global challenges.

Despite these challenges, my Government stayed the course of implementing priority projects in the previous development plan; efforts that were supported with the simultaneous implementation of crisis mitigation frameworks, such as our Quick Action Economic Recovery Programme and the Health Preparedness and Response Programme that were put together to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our flagship Free Quality Education Programme in the last plan recorded remarkable performance, increasing school enrolment by over one million during 2019-2023. Laudable milestones were also achieved in a range of other sectors, as reported later in this new plan, including the areas of maternal and child mortality reduction, access to justice, fight against corruption, social protection, and gender equality and women's empowerment.

Going forward, we do recognise the mammoth challenges that will confront our elevated ambition to deliver our national goals and SDGs by 2030, including fiscal limitations. Accordingly, my Government has carefully conceptualised *Big Five Game Changers* to provide strategic direction to the state in the next 7 years, with carefully identified enablers. The Big 5s are: 1) *Feed Salone*, aimed at boosting agricultural productivity to ensure food security; 2) *Human Capital Development*, focused on delivering inclusive skills and a healthy population; *Youth Employment Scheme*, aimed at creating 500,000 new jobs for youths; 4) *Technology and Infrastructure*, focused on increasing investment in infrastructure, technology and digitalisation; and 5) *Transforming the Public Service Architecture*, to ensure efficiency and professionalism in the public sector.

We have prioritised *Feed Salone* as our flagship programme among the Big 5s, in light of the need to focus special attention on addressing the grim food insecurity situation of the country, with its dire implications for macroeconomic, social and democratic stability. This flagship programme constitutes a frontier shift from our Human Capital Development flagship programme during the previous plan that will be scaled-up during 2024-2030 along Feed Salone and the other Big 5s.

Let me thank the millions of Sierra Leoneans and others that immensely contributed to the production of this plan, including participants from our state institutions, cabinet ministers, local councils and communities, the private sector, the civil society, persons with disabilities, women and youth groups, traditional leaders, trade unions, members of parliament, learning institutions, students, the academia, and several others.

This document will guide the operations of all development actors in the country, our development partners, non-state actors, and the private sector. Government ministries, departments and agencies and local councils are expected to play a central role in the operationalisation of the plan through the articulation and implementation of sectoral and district development plans, aligned to the national blueprint. As with the previous national plan, the current framework is aligned to sub-regional, regional and global development blueprints, such as the ECOWAS Vision 2050, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs.

I remain proud of each and every one of us that participated in delivering this new plan for our beloved country, Sierra Leone, which we have been able to innovatively produce with far less resources than anticipated. I entreat us all to display the same spirit of collective activism in the implementation phase to deliver desired results through joint resource mobilisation efforts, constant follow-up and monitoring and evaluation of implementation.

His Excellency Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

PREFACE



Sierra Leone successfully endured the global socioeconomic and geopolitical fallouts that derailed the implementation of the country's previous Medium-Term National Development (MTNDP) 2019-2023. The new MTNDP 2024-2030 has been developed with a strong consideration of the lessons learned from the previous plan. Accordingly, the new plan will increase investment in building economic, social and environmental resilience to better ward off future shocks with fewer effects on national development programmes. This generational need has informed the articulation of our government's evidence-based Big Five Game Changers that provide the strategic direction to the formulation and implementation of the new national development plan. This plan illustrates the Government's elevated ambition to bring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) back on-track in Sierra Leone through this national blueprint that is heavily focused on building a capable and effective national economy as a prerequisite for social, economic, environmental and democratic stability.

It is indeed critical going forward with the new plan that we prioritise investment in increased domestic productivity and revenue mobilisation. We will place the people at the centre of financing for development more than ever, while scaling up sectoral coordination and public policy coherence, prioritisation and sequencing. We recognize the increased need for deepening development cooperation and multilateralism in the new plan at global, regional and sub-regional levels, as we will pursue an integrated national financing framework informed by constant analytics of resource options in financing sustainable development in the country; a framework within which ensuring constant pursuit of innovative financing and production of optimal bankable projects is crucial. We shall ensure that gender sensitivity, women's empowerment and advancing climate resilience will remain a continuous guiding principle in pursuing paths to sustainable development.

The new plan will continue the implementation of unfinished relevant programmes in the previous plan; ensure full alignment with global, regional and sub-regional development frameworks, including the ECOWAS Vision 2050 and the g7+, Sendai and climate change frameworks; ensure robust coordination within the public sector and among development partners; and support the transformation and professionalisation of the public sector that is merit-based. We will scale up investment in harnessing the country's Demographic Dividend, Blue Economy and the African Continental Free Trade Area potential; and pursue a *People's Planning Process* that will sustainably ensure the integration of village/chiefdom level planning with district and national planning and implementation processes.

Let me thank ministerial colleagues for their constructive critiques and inputs during the plan formulation process, as I express profound gratitude for the invaluable inputs received from various development constituencies, including government ministries, departments and agencies, representatives from our esteemed development partners, local councils and communities, the private sector, civil society, persons with disabilities, women and youth groups, traditional leaders, cabinet ministers in my Government, trade unions, members of parliament, academia, and many more. Like the previous plan, millions were reached during the consultation process for the new plan in consonance with the leaving no one behind the principle of total inclusivity.

I am proud to note that very few financial resources were committed to the process of producing this plan, yet many government and public sector operatives, staff of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) and ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), as well as stakeholders from the wider public including civil society/Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) representatives, the local councils, traditional leaders, and several others had to sacrifice tremendously to ensure that the plan was produced in record time. I am proud of them all, suggesting that amidst crises, innovation and innovative financing is possible. Thank you.

Madam Kenyeh Barlay; Minister for Planning and Economic Development

Acknowledgements

This plan is a product of mutli-stakeholder contributions to defining the strategic direction and priority programmes of the people of Sierra Leone for the next seven years. The Government of Sierra Leone under the astute leadership of His Excellency Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio is highly recognised for providing overall leadership and oversight to the new plan preparation process. Certainly, this plan would not have been completed without the continuous inputs received from Sierra Leone's public sector experts in the various government ministries, departments and agencies. For this, we would like to express special appreciation to the Chief Minister Dr. David Moinina Sengeh and the Head of Civil Service and Secretary to Cabinet Mr. John Sumailah for the sustained encouragement of the public sector experts to provide data and sector policy papers for the formulation of the plan. The contributions of the Local Councils, the Traditional Leaders, the Parliament and the general public reached through Radio and TV phone-in programmes cannot be overemphasised in ensuring that this plan was successfully produced in time.

It would not have been possible to squarely tailor this plan to the needs of the people had it not been the direct involvement of civil society organisations, NGOs, the youth, women, children, people with disabilities, learning institutions, school pupils, the private sector, the diaspora, and several others at different levels in the plan formulation process. We convey profound thanks and appreciation to all of them.

Members of the Core Technical Committee (CTC) and the Secretariat coordinating the preparation of the plan formed the backbone of the successful production of this document. We cannot thank them enough, indeed. The CTC drew membership from the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Sierra Leone, Statistics Sierra Leone, the National Monitoring and Evaluation Department, the Institute of Population and Development Studies at the Fourah Bay College, Invest Salone, the International Growth Centre, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, the European Union, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, the United Nations Development Programme, and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development that coordinated this Committee. The Secretariat drew membership from a cross-section of these institutions.

The Development Partners Committee (DEPAC) co-chaired by the Government of Sierra Leone, the World Bank and the United Nations Resident Coordination Office has always provided strategic direction to Sierra Leone's national development discourses, the process leading to the production of this present plan not an exception. We thank the leadership of this Committee and the general international community in Sierra Leone and Cabinet Ministers that participated in the DEPAC meetings informing this plan.

Special thanks to the UNDP, UNICEF and the UN Women for complementing the Government of Sierra Leone in financing the preparation of this plan, while we singularly recognise the Minister of Finance, the Financia Secretary and the entire Ministry for squeezing out of the little resources the Government had to support the production of this document.

We profusely thank the MOPED technical team for the preparation of the new plan. The overall leadership of Dr. Sheka Bangura was exemplary and his astute professionalism ensured that the plan obtained the analytical depth required of such a document. Dr. Robert Moikowa, adeptly spearheaded the stakeholder consultations ensuring the required voices were heard during the process of plan development. Their colleagues in the technical arm of MoPED also made significant input into both the process and document output. Mrs. Abi E. Kamara, Mr. Alpha K. Bangura, Mr. Eric Massallay, Mr. Michael Samai, Mrs. Mbalu Kamara, Mr. Joseph Samah, Mr. Manso Saio Kargbo, Mr. Umaru Kabbak, Mrs. Elizabeth Sheriff, Mr. Michael Gbanday, Mr. Ibrahim C Jalloh, Mr. Foday Mansaray, and several others including Mr. Paul Allen of NAMED, and the Technical Staff in the Office of the Chief Minister. The thoroughness and eye for detail of the Technical Adviser, Mr. Alphonso Campbell also proved invaluable. The UNDP's Economic Advisor Dr. Ligane Sene and his technical team deserve commendations, as well as the Chief of Planning and Monitoring at the UNICEF Dr. Robert Ndamobissi for their facilitating role in to support the process.

We wish to profusely thank our Technocratic Minister of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) Madam Kenyeh Barlay for providing overall stewardship of the entire plan preparation process, supported by

her able Deputy Minister Dr. Jonathan Titus-Williams, the Development Secretary Mr. Peter Sam-Kpakra and his Deputies, and the entire administrative wing of MoPED, including junior and support staff.

Finally, we wish to thank the document's editorial, design and layout team for their immense contribution in enhancing the readability and optics of the plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. General overview

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has launched a new Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP). Unlike the previous plans that were implemented for five years, the new plan will be executed for a period of seven years spanning 2024-2030, in order to be fully aligned with the remaining period of implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, summarised in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The current plan is highly strategic and prioritised, drawing from crucial lessons learned in the implementation of the previous plan, the MTNDP 2019-2023. The new plan is focused on the Government's Big Five Game Changers that constitute the country's overarching agenda for 2030 and give strategic direction to the plan.

The Game Changers are: **Big 5.1** *Feed Salone*, aimed at boosting agricultural productivity to ensure food security, inclusive economic growth and social stability; **Big 5.2** *Human Capital Development*, focused on delivering inclusive skills and a healthy population for the 21st century demands through scaled-up investment in human capital development; **Big 5.3** *Youth Employment Scheme*, catalyzing democratic sustainability, economic productivity and national security aimed at supplying 500,000 jobs for youths in the next five to seven years; **Big 5.4** *Technology and Infrastructure*, focused on increasing investment in infrastructure, technology and digitalisation; and **Big 5.5** *Transforming the Public Service Architecture*, to ensure efficiency and professionalism in the public sector to achieve effective service delivery and maximised development results.

Key lessons to inform the 2030 plan

Crucial lessons have been learned in the implementation of the previous plan 2019-2023 that are important for the current *acceleration and transformative plan* to deliver a resilient and robust economy for Sierra Leone by 2030. About *ten months* into the implementation of the previous plan, the world entered into chains of cataclysmic global crises, starting with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019/2020 and the war in Ukraine, in a series that has continued to date with especially debilitating effects for weak economies like Sierra Leone. Therefore, prioritising domestic production processes and revenue mobilisation has become more critical if the country is to build a national capability to robustly respond to future shocks in pursuing sustainable development. It suggests that sustainable growth and development requires optimal placement of the people at the centre of financing for development, while not compromising sectoral coordination and nonduplication of public activities in the management of scarce resources. The need for deepening development cooperation and multilateralism has never been more critical, as well as getting prioritization and sequencing right in furthering judicious use of resources and transforming the economy. Having an *integrated financing framework* informed by constant analytics of resource options is fundamental to achieving sustainable development; a framework within which ensuring the constant pursuit of innovative financing and production of optimal bankable projects is crucial. It is additionally instructive that gender sensitivity, women's empowerment and advancing climate resilience should be a continuous guiding principle in pursuing paths to sustainable development.

The 2030 national goals and the Government's flagship programme

Accordingly, five *national goals* for 2030 have been identified to accelerate efforts towards achieving the country's ***vision*** of becoming an ***inclusive and green middle-income country by 2039.*** Building on the goals pursued in the previous plan, the goals for the new plan are as follows:

- **Goal 1**: Sierra Leone will be food secure by 2030 (directly related to Big 5.1)
- **Goal 2**: A highly skilled, healthy, inclusive and gender-sensitive labour force, with a substantial share of middle-level manpower, and highly developed talents for professional jobs in the private sector and the civil service by 2030 (directly related to Big 5.2)

- **Goal 3:** Creating 500,000 jobs for the youth (with at least a 30% representation of women), including skilled and unskilled, long-term, as well as seasonal jobs across all sectors by 2030 (directly related to Big 5.3)
- **Goal 4:** A cashless economy, increased financial inclusion, vibrant e-government and public administration, expanded energy production, and advanced road and general transport system, well-linked with production centres to markets by 2030 (directly related to Big 5.4)
- **Goal 5:** A public service that is streamlined, attracts and keeps the brightest national talents and is generally robust in tackling challenges to sustainable development by 2030 (directly related to Big 5.5)

To deliver on these goals, the Government has prioritised **Feed Salone** as its **flagship programme** among its Big Five Game Changers. The grim food insecurity situation of the country, with its dire implications for the macroeconomic, social and democratic stability of the state has necessitated the placement of the Big 5.1 as the flagship programme of the Government for the next seven years. About 788,000 (9.3 percent of Sierra Leone's population) were food insecure in January 2023, expected to have risen to 1.1 million (13 percent of the population) in August 2023;[1] with those in extreme (food) poverty continue to be estimated at 12.9 percent (about 974,000) of the total population.[2] The unprecedented reliance on the international market for the supply of the country's staple food, especially rice, had seen a large share of the national budget dedicated to supporting the importation of essential food items—despite the enormous potential for domestic production. The depreciation of the local currency and the general rise in global prices had engendered rising local costs of these imported basic items, which in turn caused widespread upward pressure on the prices of other essential commodities, including non-food needs. Thus, placing Feed Salone at the highest pinnacle of the Government's 2030 Agenda is crucially important.

Achieving food and nutritional objectives under the flagship programme (Big 5.1) is also imperative for achieving the objectives and goals under the other Big Five Game Changers. Having a well-fed and nutritionally secure population cannot be overemphasised towards the production of a healthy population and a well-prepared child to go to school that is critical for the delivery of required human skills (Big 5.2) for increased economic productivity and generation of government revenue for investment in other Big 5 areas, such as in youth employment promotion (Big 5.3), communication, technology and infrastructure (Big 5.4) and capable manpower to effectively run and deliver results in the civil service (Big 5.5).

Furthermore, having Feed Salone as the flagship programme constitutes a frontier shift from the Government's *Human Capital Development* (HCD) flagship programme during the previous plan 2019-2023. While the HCD programme shall be scaled up during 2024-2030, it has achieved a stabilised focus from previous government efforts, with more than 20 percent of the national budget dedicated to the education sector, up from around 18.9 percent in 2018. This level of financing will be maintained while giving principal attention to Feed Salon in the current plan and maintaining minimum desired spending in the other Big Five Game Changers needed to achieve the 2030 national goals and vision of the country by 2039**.**

Principles guiding the plan formulation and implementation

The following guiding principles ensure that the production of this new plan is reflective of lessons learned and contemporary global, regional and national realities towards an implementation strategy that will optimise desired results:

1. Ensuring continued implementation of unfinished *relevant* programmes in the previous plan;
2. Prioritisation and sequencing; full alignment with global, regional and sub-regional development frameworks;
3. Robust coordination within the public sector and among development partners; having a transformative, professional and merit-based public sector;

[1] World Bank's 2023 Sierra Leone Economic Update Report—Enhancing Value Chains to Boost Food Security; Page 37.
[2] Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey Report 2018, Page 267; Statistics Sierra Leone/Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Freetown.

4. Scaled-up implementation of the integrated national financing framework;
5. Harnessing the Demographic Dividend, Blue Economy and the African Continental Free Trade Area potential;
6. Robust pursuit of bankable projects;
7. Ensuring increased sensitivity to climate resilience, renewable energy, gender and youth development; and;
8. Pursuit of a *People's Planning Process*, integrating village and chiefdom level planning with district and national planning and implementation processes.

Plan preparation process

While the preparation of this plan is heavily constrained by financial resources to undertake stakeholder consultations in the depth, breadth and intensity desired, the approach adopted was generally the same as in the previous plan. Consultations were done through national and district-level expert and focus group discussions, topped up by radio discussions involving phone-in programmes. Participants (at all levels) included public servants/experts, civil society organisations/NGOs, trade unions, the private sector (including informal operators), learning institutions, students, consultations with civil servants, local councillors, district and municipal administrators, parliamentarians, development partners, traditional authorities, youth groups, children and those in the diaspora, among others. In all a total of more than 2.3 million people participated in the plan preparation process.

Socio-economic indicators and the situation of the macroeconomy

Some critical milestones were achieved during the implementation of the previous plan. Under the *Free Quality School Education Programme* within the Government's Human Capital Development initiative, school enrolment increased more than one million to date since 2018, covering all school levels, from pre-primary to senior secondary; and gender parity was maintained in primary and achieved in junior secondary, while significant progress was made at senior secondary level. Maternal mortality rate substantially fell to 443 deaths per 100,000 live births to date, from 717 deaths in 2019 and 1,165 deaths in 2013. Infant mortality rate dropped from 92 deaths per 1,000 births in 2013 to 75 deaths in 2019; as well as under-five mortality rate, from 156 to 122 deaths during 2013-2019. In the justice sector, since the country's Legal Aid Board was established in 2015, more than 1,200,000 underprivileged persons have received free legal services from the Board (including more than 800,000 of these beneficiaries since 2018); while a special court was established to try corruption cases. In terms of social protection, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Social Safety Net cash transfer expanded from 35,000 to 100,000 households, with a dedicated quota for people with disabilities, 11,000 of whom were additionally provided with in-kind support during lockdowns for containing the pandemic in the country. More than 10,000 youths were employed in various livelihood engagements, including in agricultural farms, regulated fishing activities, garbage collection and disposal operations, carwash centres, and in various institutions, while thousands more were trained in numerous skills. Critical advances were also made with regard to gender, including the enactment of the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Bill, which has seen a drastic increase in female representation in ministerial cabinet position in excess of 30 percent; and to 28 percent in parliament.

Yet, the remaining challenges going forward to 2030 are significant. Income poverty at current prices remains high at 56.8 percent, while the population in extreme poverty stands at 12.9 percent. Multidimensional poverty has continuously dropped since 2010 but still remains high at 58 percent (2019 estimates), down from 81.5 percent in 2010, 68.3 in 2015, and 64.8 percent in 2017.

Significant attention was focused on diversifying the economy in the previous plan, with significant support from development partners. However, progress in this area has not been as desired. For instance, Sierra Leone's export base in Africa is still relatively small, with only 2.75 percent of exports to the ECOWAS region and only 3.22 percent to the continent, while exports to China and Europe, for example, account for about 40 percent of total exports in 2021. The Herfindahl concentration index, a diversification measure, shows that

Sierra Leone, like many countries in West Africa, has a concentrated export basket, where the average concentration index is 0.28, higher than in East Africa (0.03). The export basket contains only a few goods, five of one type and twelve of another[3] which account for 75 and 90 percent of all exports, respectively, in 2021.

While the agriculture industry experienced modest growth, its reliance on the domestic market has impeded the ability to expand agricultural exports. Agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing as well as mining and natural resources, if properly managed, provide a basis for further diversifying the economy. Despite Sierra Leone's abundant natural resources and periods of high growth in the past, productive transformation is low, and the levels of poverty and inequality, including gender inequality, are high. Manufacturing (included in industry) value added is low at two percent of GDP. A nascent recovery in manufacturing was disrupted by tightening financial conditions and a slump in private investment. Fuel shortages and higher fuel prices increased production costs for transporters and manufacturers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The sector benefited from government support to SMEs through the MUNAFA Fund and Bank of Sierra Leone's SLL500 billion special credit facility at the peak of COVID-19. However, SMEs continue to bear the brunt of the economic shocks, including the lingering effects of the pandemic and the fallout from the war in Ukraine.

Overall economic growth is expected to strengthen further but remains moderate, averaging 4.4 percent over 2022–2024. Manufacturing can play a pivotal role in diversifying the economy and providing employment opportunities to individuals with limited skills and making growth more sustainable. The sector has the advantage of facilitating rapid productivity growth to catch up with regional and global competitors. However, for that to happen, a considerable amount of support is needed for local firms to ensure compliance with required quality and standards, enabling them to gain access to export markets.

F. Macroeconomic Framework to Guide Plan Implementation 2024-2028

The main goal of the Government's macroeconomic management in the medium-term is to preserve macro-financial stability and foster conditions conducive to sustained, inclusive green growth to create high-paying jobs, increase food security and reduce household poverty. These efforts will be supported by the implementation of institutional and business-friendly reforms that will engender private sector participation, increase foreign direct investment (FDI), bring public finances to a sustainable path, contain persistently high inflation, stabilize the exchange rate, and minimize debt sustainability risks. Consistently, these reforms will be complemented by structural reforms to bolster external resilience, strengthen public financial management reforms to enhance the transparency and accountability in the use of public finances and create the needed fiscal space to increase spending on growth-enhancing sectors to create jobs, reduce poverty and food insecurity.

G. Planned Sectoral Policy Areas and Actions

In light of the above background, the new MTNDP 2024-2030 has been framed around five broad overarching *Policy Result Areas (PRAs)*, each reflecting one of the Government's Big Five Game Changers, cascaded into several *Sub-Result Areas*. These strategic result areas will be supported by five main *Enablers* perceived as catalysts to the implementation of strategies for achieving the objectives of the Big 5s. The five overarching PRAs, their Enablers and relevant operational focus areas are presented below.

The Big 5 investment areas

Big 5.1 Feed Salone. As noted above *Feed Salone* is the Government's *flagship programme* among its Big 5 Game Changers for 2030, aimed at the commercialisation and increasing the efficiency of the agricultural sector to propel economic transformation and accelerate economic growth, thus reducing poverty, hunger and undernutrition.

[3] Titanium ores and concentrates, Iron ores and concentrates; including roasted iron pyrites, Wood in the rough, whether or not stripped of bark or sapwood, or roughly squared.

Under this Policy Result Area, the Government will pursue specific strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: 5.1.1 Accelerating productivity and commercialisation of the agricultural sector; 5.1.2 Accelerating productivity and sustainable management of fisheries and the marine sector; and 5.1.3 Ensuring availability, access and consumption of diverse, safe and nutritious foods.

Big 5.2 Human capital development. Scaling-up investment in human capital development such as in education, health, water and sanitation, housing, gender and women empowerment, and social protection is generally at the fore of long-term socioeconomic transformation and development of the country. It is a lead imperative for effective delivery of the objectives of the other Big 5s.

Under this Policy Result Area, government will pursue specific strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: 5.2.1 Accelerating and expanding free quality basic and senior secondary education; 5.2.2 Strengthening tertiary and higher education; 5.2.3 Improving health care delivery; 5.2.4 Scaling-up investment in water, environmental sanitation, waste management and hygiene; 5.2.5 Advancing efforts in gender and women's empowerment; 5.2.6 Strengthening social protection; 5.2.7 Increasing welfare of children, the aged and persons with disabilities; and 5.2.8 Addressing land, housing and urbanisation challenges.

Big 5.3 Youth employment scheme. Accelerating direct investment in youth empowerment will directly impact economic growth and increase the consolidation of national security and social stability. Indeed, the success of this scheme cannot be overemphasised for the effective delivery of planned results in the other Big 5s that will require the input of empowered youth.

Under this Policy Result Area, the Government will pursue specific strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: 5.2.1 General employment promotion for youth; 5.2.2 Sports for Addressing irregular migration and drug issues for youth safety and development.

Big 5.4 Infrastructure, technology and innovation. Strengthening digital services, energy supplies and road systems across the country is highly indispensable in ensuring effective delivery of the *five national goals* that the Big Five Game Changers are combined to achieve by 2030. For instance, the running of an effective and efficient public service sector (Big 5.5) could only sustainably be possible if the requisite investment in infrastructure, technology and innovation is made; especially with respect to improving areas in the public service system such as sectoral coordination and policy coherence, public financial management and general public architecture governance.

Under this Policy Result Area, the Government will pursue specific strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: 5.4.1 Increasing investment in general energy supply; 5.4.2 Advancing road and transportation systems; and 5.4.3 Scaling up investment in communications, technology and innovation.

Big 5.5 Transforming the public service architecture. A capable public service (driven by professionalism, integrity, well-motivated manpower, and strong sectoral coordination/policy coherence) provides the enabling stream for the effective delivery of desired results from the execution of all public policies, plans, programmes and projects. Indeed, the rest of the Government's Game Changers are incumbent upon a strong public service system, as the latter is also highly dependent on the first four Big 5s.

The foregoing summaries depict a strong **nexus/interdependence** required among the Big Five Game Changers necessary to accelerate the delivery of the national goals by 2030. Catalysing this nexus are the five special *Enablers* conceptualised to speed the implementation of direct actions needed under the respective Big 5s for the achievement of the national goals.

Investment areas for the five Enablers to drive the Big 5s

Enabler 1: Scaling up efforts to diversify the economy. Delivering a resilient economy for sustainable development requires adequate structural transformation and economic diversification. Sierra Leone's economy has endured protracted effects from external shocks, like the Ebola epidemic, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. This characterisation can largely be attributed to the highly concentrated nature of the country's economic activities for the generation of state revenue to finance development. In light of this, the Government will continue to work with development partners to scale-up the country's economic diversification programme.

Under this Enabling Area, therefore, the Government will focus on pursuing specific catalytic strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: 1.1 Transforming the tourism sector; 1.2 Strengthening the private sector for trade and sustainable development, putting into effective implementation the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); 1.3 Value addition and efficient management of natural resources; and 1.4 Financial inclusion for strengthened rural and informal economies.

Enabler 2: Governance and accountability. Sustained improvement in the general governance landscape of the country is fundamental to maximising the chances of achieving desired development outcomes. This calls for mobilising needed support to ensure effective political administration, build trust in state institutions, instil integrity in service delivery, as well as full enforcement of the rule of law backed by strong security institutions and legislature, judicious use of state resources, and effective decentralisation of governance and service delivery.

Under this Enabling Area, therefore, the Government will focus on pursuing specific catalytic strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: 2.1 Political modernisation for consolidating peace and national cohesion; 2.2 Strengthening the fight against corruption and illicit financial flows; 2.3 Public financial management; 2.4 Audit services; 2.5 Inclusive and accountable justice institutions; 2.6 Public trust in state institutions; 2.7 Decentralisation, local governance, and rural development; and 2.8 Security institutions.

Enabler 3: Advancing climate resilience and environmental action. In a world continuously challenged by widespread effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and natural disasters, it remains critical that every nation on the earth scale-up investment in this enabling area to save the planet and humanity, and indeed to save itself. It remains critical in the spirit of leaving no one behind, ensuring that human activities are conducted such that both the needs of the present and generations yet unborn are sustainably met.

Under this Enabling Area, therefore, the Government will focus on pursuing specific catalytic strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: 3.1 Building national environmental resilience; 3.2 Scaling up forestry management and wetland conservation; and 3.3 Increasing investment in disaster management and governance.

Enabler 4: Gender mainstreaming. Besides the articulation of a specific strategic direction for advancing women's empowerment within the context of driving Human Capital Development (Big 2), this plan has seen the need to separately treat the issue of gender mainstreaming as a critical and outstanding enabler. This treatment aims at maximising efforts in narrowing the gender gap in critical socioeconomic areas, drawing from the National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and Legislation; noting that while tremendous efforts have been made to address gender differential, the state continues to remain widely gender unequal across levels.

Under this Enabling Area, therefore, the Government will focus on pursuing specific catalytic strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: a) Gender and education, economic participation, technology and communication; b) Gender and health, living with disability and sexual and gender-based violence; c) Gender and governance; d) Gender and justice, human rights and peacebuilding; e) Mainstreaming gender into policies, programmes and legal frameworks; and f) Gender and the environment.

Enabler 5: Financing, partnership for implementation & risk management. This enabler directly provides the means of implementing the plan in terms of mobilisation of the required public and private financial resources, ensuring effective management of these resources through enhanced systems for robust project

management, having an effective implementation follow-up, reporting and public engagement mechanism, and managing risks to implementation.

Under this Enabling Area, therefore, the Government will focus on pursuing specific catalytic strategies under the following broad areas: 5.1 Cost of the plan and financing gap; 5.2 Implementation of an integrated financing strategy; 5.3 Strengthening external relations and economic diplomacy; 5.4 Implementation arrangement; 4.4 Monitoring, evaluation, performance management and service delivery; 5.5 Strengthening statistical systems; 5.6 Communication for development; and 5.7 Risks and mitigation strategies.

Role of the presidential initiative on climate change, renewable energy and food security

The growing implication of having comprehensive strategies for climate change, renewable energy and food security for the effective implementation of national development plans has appealed to the wisdom of *President Bio to institute a Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable Energy, and Food Security*. The three workstreams of the Initiative (climate change, renewable energy and food security) are overarching strategic areas of the MTNDP 2024-2030 that are worth a combined treatment, given their inextricable linkage and operational nexus in responding to the global crises. The need for special and combined treatment of these workstreams at the presidential level makes this crucial Presidential Initiative a compelling enabler to the implementation of GoSL's Big Five Game Changers.

The initiative mainly focuses on pursuing specific catalytic strategies under the following broad sectoral areas: a) Reducing risks and impacts of climate-related disasters, such as greenhouse emissions, droughts and floods on communities and infrastructure; b) Increasing renewable energy in the electricity supply mix, promote energy use efficiency and encourage the transition to clean cooking to reduce demand for fuelwood; and c) 4.3 Bolstering food and nutrition systems by enhancing productivity and green agricultural transformation. ***Goals and specific actions*** have been identified in Text Boxes under these respective broad areas in support of Big 5.1 Feed Salone, Big 5.4.1 Energy, and Enabler 3; Advancing climate resilience and environmental action.

H. Cost of the Plan

The total estimated cost of the new MTNDP 2024-2030 is US$12.05 billion, of which US$6.62 billion represents direct project-related costs, and US$5.43 billion represents the government's statutory expenditures to support project implementation. The government projects to raise US$9.49 billion from both internal and already committed external resources, leaving a total financing gap of US$2.56 billion for seven years (a US$ 366 million average annual gap), for which new money will be sought to fully finance the New National Development Plan. The US$ 366 million annual gap for the new plan compares very well with the annual gap of US$310 million for the previous five-year plan that had a total gap of US$1.55 billion. Essentially, the new plan is highly realistic of the need to ensure increased prudence in the management of state resources in the next seven years, given the challenging fiscal situation that both global and national economies will continue to encounter. The Government will implement a robust integrated national financing framework to mobilise the needed resources, including innovative, climate and blended financing.

I. Mitigating Risks to Plan Implementation

As in the rest of the world, Sierra Leone is expected to continue to encounter plan implementation risks from the ongoing crises engulfing the world: lingering effects of COVID-19, the continued war in Ukraine, rising conflicts in other parts of the world, and the constant effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. These crises are expected to negatively impact the growth, revenue and general socioeconomic performance of Sierra Leone. Accordingly, we will be monitoring the global situation and its implications for the Sierra Leonean economy as we implement this plan, giving special priority to strengthening development cooperation and coordination among all actors and sectors, as well as scaling-up domestic resource mobilisation. Implementation of the country's integrated national financing framework will be especially critical in responding to financing risks going forward.

PART 1: CONTEXT

1. Background and Introduction

Sierra Leone has implemented four comprehensive national development plans (NDPs) following the official end of the country's civil war in 2002. These plans are: the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, PRSP 2005-2007; the Agenda for Change, PRSP 2008-2012; the Agenda for Prosperity, PRSP 2013-2018; and the Medium-Term National Development Plan, MTNDP 2019-2023.[4] Over the past two decades, albeit amid stiff challenges and multiple setbacks, each of these development agendas have been able to gradually propel the country in the direction towards reducing poverty and setting the stage to achieve sustainable development through investment in the country's work force, building of strong democratic and revenue generation institutions, diversifying the economy, and the maintaining of peace, among other interventions. One of the key lessons learnt in the implementation of the previous plans is that the plans were designed mainly to align with the country's political term limits without serious long-term implications. This has significantly undermined the achievement of some critical development milestones over the past two decades.

This current national development blueprint, which is Sierra Leone's fifth NDP, is scheduled to be implemented over a seven-year period spanning from 2024-2030.This approach will not only ensure that this NDP has a long-term focus, but will also ensure it is strategically aligned with other global development agendas, especially the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plan is also aligned with key human development, economic and environmental sustainability targets scheduled to be achieved by 2030 in the AU Agenda 2063 as well as the targets of ECOWAS Vision 2050. The overall objective of this approach is to generally ensure sustained and coherent development focus and engagement for effective socioeconomic transformation of the country.

While the challenges of optimising national development over the last two decades have been generally daunting, a significant thread of achievements linking all the previous NDPs is the sustained consolidation of peace and social cohesion for more than 20 years to date. Crucially, promoting *good governance*, *peace* and *security* has always been a central policy cluster in all of the previous plans, as it is in this NDP for 2024-2030.

Four democratic elections have been held since 2002, which have seen peaceful transfers of government administration from one political party to another. Since then, the state has participated in peace keeping missions abroad, and has recently, once again, secured a seat in the non-permanent category of the UN Security Council for the 2024-2025 cycle, after 51 years when the country was first obliged that opportunity.

It could therefore be argued that while a number of socioeconomic indicators have not been favourable, those that showed significant progress can generally be attributed to the maintenance of peace and security, and in building minimum resilience in the overall economy. Table 1.1 presents the status of key high-level socioeconomic indicators over the period that the last NDPs were implemented**.**

[4] Following the immediate end of the war in 2000/2001, the country implemented a two-year Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy, IPRSP 2001-2002 and a National Recovery Strategy, NRS 2002-2003, both aimed at restoring the socioeconomic and institutional fabric of the state to permit normal development operations in the country.

Table 1.1: Status of key socioeconomic indicators during 2000-2023

Indicators	Coming out of the civil war 2000	IPR/ NRS 2001-2004	PRSP 2005-2007	A4C 2008-2012	A4P 2019-2023	MTNDP 2013-2018
GDP per capita (US$) [a]	139	258	358	558	520	461
Human Capital Development Index (0-1)[b]	0.318	0.335	0.365	0.359	0.470	0.477
Income Poverty (%) [c]	More than 80	66.4	66.4	52.9	47.3 (Same poverty as in 2018)	47.3 (same poverty line as in 2018)
Multidimensional poverty [d]				81.5	68.3	64 (2019
Inequality (Gini index) [e]	0.66	0.22	0.37	0.297		0.701
Inequality (Gini index) [f]	-	-	92.3/120	-	89.1/120	81.4/120
Adult literacy rate (ages 15 and older) (%) [g]		35.4	38.1		48	48
Maternal Mortality rate per (100,000) [h]	1800*	1,367mtr	1,125 mtr	857**	1165**	443mtr
Infant Mortality Rate per (1000)[i]	170*	182*	158*	56**	92*	75**
Under-five Mortality rate per (1000)[j]	323[j1]	286[j2]	267*	140*	156**	122**
Prevalence of Stunting [k]	34*	34*	40*	36**	38**	30**
Life expectancy [l]	39.38	43.2	46	50.53	54.07 Microtrend	55.9 Microtrend
Population with access to electricity [m]	7.73	16.8	13	17.16	26.1	36
Mobile Network Area Coverage (%) n	-	-	-	-	70	89

Notes:
[a] World Bank Development Indicators: https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators# [b] UNDP Human Development Reports, various editions. [c] Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) Reports, 1989, 2003/4, 2011 and 2018; estimates remained reference figures for several years since general takes considerable period (at least 5 or more years) before successors surveys are carried out. [d] Reported by the Sierra Leone 4th National Human Development Report 2019; and Sierra Leone Multidimensional Poverty Report 2019 and 2023, obtained from the UNDP and Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Freetown. [e] Gini Coefficients are obtained from the various SLIHS conducted in (c). [f] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Fragile_States_Index (51 out of 179)(The table below shows the FSI for 2023, with comparisons of each country's current score to previous years' indices. A higher score (with a maximum of 120) indicates a weaker, more vulnerable, or more fragile situation in the country.). [g] UNDP 2009, SLIHS2011 and 2018. [h] Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey MICS 2000, 2002, 2005 (*); Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey DHS 2008, 2013, 2019(**); Microtrend ([mtr]): https://www.macr otrends.net/countries/SLE/sierra-leone/maternal-mortality-rate. [i] Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey MICS 2000, 2002, 2005 (*); Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey DHS 2008, 2013, 2019(**). [j] Sierra Leone Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP 2001) ([j1, j2]); Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey MICS 2000, 2002, 2005 (*); Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey DHS 2008, 2013, 2019(**). [k] Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey MICS 2000, 2002, 2005 (*); Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey DHS 2008, 2013, 2019(**). [l] Sierra Leone Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP 2001), UNDP 2009; Microtrend ([mtr]): https://www.macrotrends.net/countries /SLE/sierra-leone/life-expectancy#:~:text=The%20current%20life%20expectancy%20for,a% 200.68%25%20increase%20from%202020. [m] https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/SLE/sierra-leone/electricity-access-statistics . [n] Sierra Leone Mid-Term Review Report on the Sierra Leone MTNDP (2019-2023); obtainable from MoPED, Freetown.

1.1 Overview of implementation of the MTNDP 2019-2023

The last national development plan (MTNDP 2019-2023) was launched with renewed vigour and determination to address lingering effects of the multiple shocks that derailed the implementation of its predecessor (the Agenda for Change 2013-2018), coupled with lacklustre public sector delivery machinery.[5] The government was determined to robustly pursue implementation on the back of a revamped and resilient

[5] In addition to a weak public sector machinery to effectively deliver programmes, the economy had witnessed protracted outbreak of an epidemic during 2014-2015, the Ebola Virus Disease, starting in Guinea in 2013, with lingering effects. This period witnessed sharp and sustained decline in the international prices of primary commodities, including iron that Sierra Leone had heavily relied on, among other commodities.

economy and sound national delivery mechanism, placing *human capital development* at the highest pinnacle of its agenda. It prioritised education, healthcare and nutrition, the utmost; while resolved to increase domestic revenue mobilisation, improve national and sectoral governance, and build and maintain peace and national cohesion to deliver optimal and sustainable results.

The Government remained focused on pursuing Sierra Leone's ***vision of becoming an inclusive and green middle income country by 2039***: a time when it had hoped to ensure a stable, export-led economy, based on sound macroeconomic fundamentals, with inflation not more than five percent; government revenues standing at least 30 percent of GDP; over 80 percent of the national population living above income poverty line, with no more than 5 percent of Sierra Leoneans out of decent jobs; when over 90 percent of the population will be able to read and write, and all have access to affordable housing; healthcare and delivery system will be situated within not more than 10 kilometre radius of every village; and having life expectancy of at least 70 years, with every pregnant woman having access to a modern hospital in which she can give birth without fear. [6]

Towards achieving the country's vision, the last NDP pursued the following ***national goals*** for *2023:* a) having a diversified, resilient green economy; b) a nation with educated, empowered, and healthy citizens capable of realising their fullest potential; c) a society that is peaceful, cohesive, secure, and just; and d) a competitive economy with a well-developed infrastructure. It ensured that the plan was strongly aligned to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063 and ECOWAS Vision 2050.

Indeed, Sierra Leone was on a promising trajectory for sustained GDP growth and revenue generation to finance public development programmes at the launch of the last plan in February 2019. Growth had increased to 5.3 percent in 2019, from 3.5 percent in 2018; and was projected to positively hover around 4.3 percent in 2020. Unfortunately, 10 months following the launch of the MTNDP 2019-2023, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world economy; which had hoped to significantly recover its GDP from the pandemic in 2021 and the ensuing years, when the Ukraine-Russia War erupted in the first quarter of 2022 (with heightened geopolitical tensions) to diminish the recovery hopes from the pandemic.

Consequently, Sierra Leone, being highly linked to the global economy (dependent on the outside world for its production and consumption activities) had its GDP drop from 5.3 percent in 2019 to -2.0 percent in 2020. It did manage to recover its output growth to 2.9 percent in 2021, following COVID-related national mitigation strategies, such as the Quick Action Economic Recovery Programme (QAERP) and the Health Preparedness and Response Programme of 2020. Yet, the compounded effects from the Ukraine-Russia war had led to a reverse in growth projections for 2022 from 5.9 to 2.8 percent, in tune with global trends. State revenues dipped precipitously in these circumstances, as in many other parts of the world. Grave concerns remain, as the global uncertainties continue to grow to date.

The **uncertainties** for Sierra Leone from these global factors endured throughout 2023 and have been expected to go into 2024, if not beyond, with the following **risks**: a) the likelihood of the global economy plunging into recession and the potential impact on the prices of Sierra Leone's key exports; b) sustained increases in food and fuel prices and the pass-through effects on domestic prices, trade balance and Government's fiscal position; c) continued decreases in international financial assistance; f) continued crisis in Ukraine and its accompanying uncertainties in the global economy; and g) a re-emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies.[7]

Summary of key the challenges

The recent global crises were a major impediment to the implementation of the MTNDP 2019-2023. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine compounded the constant effects of global conflicts, climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution that have not spared Sierra Leone; the country has been noted to be among countries most exposed to the hazards of environmental vagaries. Vulnerability, poverty and food

[6] Previously Vision 2035, which was revised to 2039 in 2018.

[7] See Page 6 of the Statement of Economic and Financial Policies of the GoSL for 2023 Fiscal Year; obtainable from the Ministry of Finance, Freetown.

insecurity were heightened during this period, as financing for the economy remained grossly inadequate amidst general governance challenges in the mobilization of domestic resources.

The fight against illicit financial flows and corruption remained herculean tasks; and there were constraints to unleashing the financing potential of the general population, including the rural/village economy, due to inadequate policy frameworks and implementation capacity of available policies, and limited penetration of digital and other infrastructural opportunities/services in the rural economy. Additionally, not having optimal bankable projects to leverage financing opportunities limited the absorptive capacity of the state to utilize earmarked and allocated resources for national development programmes; and there remained room for sectoral coordination and coordination among partners, including NGO operations. Finally, the development of the private sector was still generally weak in the country, limiting market-led growth opportunities.

Key milestones achieved in selected sectors

Despite the overwhelming challenges enumerated above, critical achievements were made during the implementation of the last MTNDP. Key among these are as follows:

a. ***Education*****:** Under the Free Quality School Education Programme, school enrolment increased in excess of one million to date since 2018, covering all school levels, from pre-primary to senior secondary; and gender parity was maintained in primary and achieved in junior secondary, while significant progress made at senior secondary level.

b. ***Health*****:** Maternal mortality rate substantially fell to 443 deaths per 100,000 live births to date, from 717 deaths in 2019 and 1,165 deaths in 2013. Infant mortality rate dropped from 92 deaths per 1,000 births in 2013 to 75 deaths in 2019; as well as under-five mortality rate, from 156 to 122 deaths during 2013-2019.

c. ***Justice***: To date, since the country's Legal Aid Board was established in 2015, more than 1,200,000underprivileged persons have received free legal services from the Board; and more than 800,000 of these beneficiaries since 2018. A special court was established to try corruption cases.

d. ***Social protection***: At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Social Safety Net cash transfer expanded from 35,000 to 100,000 households, with a dedicated quota for people with disabilities; and provided in-kind support to more than 11,000 persons with disabilities during lockdowns for containing the pandemic in the country.

e. ***Employment***: More than 10,000 youths were employed in various livelihood engagements, including in agricultural farms, regulated fishing activities, garbage collection and disposal operations, carwash centres, and in various institutions, while thousands more were trained in numerous skills.

f. ***Gender***: The enactment of the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Bill was among the critical milestones in the sector, which has seen drastic increase in female representation in ministerial cabinet position in excess of 30 percent; and to 28 percent in parliament.

Lessons learned

In a world punctuated by uncertainties, prioritizing domestic production processes and revenue mobilization was assessed as being extremely critical to building national capability to respond to external shocks in pursuing sustainable development; and sustainable growth and development requires optimal placement of the people at the centre of financing for development. The Government has continued to note that sectoral coordination is critical to scarce resource management: strengthening coordination can engender the production of more public goods and services with fewer resources. It was also evident that deepening development cooperation and multilateralism remains a critical resource for sustainable development; as well as getting prioritisation and sequencing right, which is critical in ensuring the judicious use of resources and transforming the economy. Furthermore, having an *integrated financing framework* informed by constant analytics of resource options is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, which should capture the need for ensuring constant availability of optimal bankable projects to leverage financing opportunities for the

transformation of the country. Additionally, gender sensitivity, women's empowerment & advancing climate resilience should be a continuous guiding principle in pursuing paths to inclusive and sustainable development.

1.2 Towards an acceleration and transformational Plan for 2024-2030

While much was achieved in the previous plan, it is noted in the new plan that much remained undelivered due to the multiple and interlocking challenges at global and national levels, as well as capacity gaps inherent in delivery systems in Sierra Leone. It is within this context that the new plan will be accelerative, building on gains recorded in the previous plan, but also keeping in mind critical lessons learnt. The fundamental goal is to guarantee that the NDP 2024-2030 is a transformational agenda, ensuring that while it builds on gains, it will give special focus to addressing structural impediments to development that remain inherent in the domestic economy. Thus, the new plan is intended to depart from the previous plan in the following ways to ensure more and sustainable results.

Main departure of the new plan from its predecessor

Implementation Timeline—the new plan timespan is 7 years. Sierra Leone, being part of the global development system and taking development cooperation and multilateralism as a critical resource for national transformation, has aligned its NDP with its UN SDG Acceleration Roadmap 2024-2030.[8] This roadmap will pursue elevated ambitions and benchmarks for poverty and inequality reduction for the remaining seven years of the implementation of the SDG 2030 Agenda. This is expected to ensure sustained and coherent development focus and engagement on the socioeconomic transformation of the country.

Well-defined and interrelated priorities—The new plan is highly prioritized and sequenced. This is anchored in the Government's strategic direction expressed in its **Big Five Game Changers for 2030**. The Five Game Changers constitute the nation's general strategic direction, defined by a set of broad results areas that the Government will make the largest investment in the next five to seven years and summarized as follows:

> **Big 5.1 Feed Salone**: Aimed at boosting agricultural productivity to ensure food security, and inclusive economic growth.
>
> **Big 5.2 Human Capital Development**: Focused on nurturing inclusive skills and healthy population for the 21st century demands through scaled-up investment in human capital development.
>
> **Big 5.3 Youth Employment Scheme:** A catalyst for democracy, economic productivity and national security aimed at creating 500,000 jobs for youths in the next five years.
>
> **Big 5.4 Technology and Infrastructure**: Focused on increasing investment in infrastructure, technology and digitalisation. More attention will be given to digital solutions in advancing governance and public service delivery to reduce transaction costs and maximize effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery chain.
>
> **Big 5.5 Transforming the Public Service Architecture*:*** Aimed at empowering democracy and national development and ensuring effective service delivery, efficiency and professionalism in the public sector for maximization of the results.

Green growth and transformation: A fundamental feature of the new plan is that it is environmentally sensitive and anchored on climate resilience, energy transition and sustainable food systems. The growing global realities in light of the mounting effects of climate change and its link to energy and food production patterns, coupled with the severe implication of heavy reliance on imports for energy and foods, will ensure that more focus is given to climate-related financing and investment in energy and food transitions and security.

Harnessing the country's Blue Economy Potential and Demographic Dividend: The Government will scale up the sustainable exploitation of the nation's massive ocean and aquatic-related resources that are critical in advancing the Government's climate resilience, energy transition and sustainable food systems agenda, and

[8] The roadmap can be obtained from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Freetown.

hence in enhancing the fiscal stability of the economy through domestic revenue mobilization and food and energy import reduction.

International Trade and Investment: Creating an investment-friendly climate to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) into the economic diversification ambition of the Government is another unique selling point of this new plan. This will also include scaling *up the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):* The negative macroeconomic and poverty implications of relying on trade outside Africa have perennially held back the socioeconomic development of African countries, including Sierra Leone. Almost every other result area mentioned above (including meeting energy and food security needs) relies on getting the trade balance and fairness right. Therefore, GoSL will give more premium to the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Development cooperation and integrated national financing framework: Sierra Leone will give greater attention to development cooperation and multilateralism, as a critical resource for sustainable development. It will also give greater emphasis on the implementation of the country's Integrated National Financing Framework, bringing innovative financing to the forefront, including full exploration of blended and climate finance, increasing the role of women and the village/local communities, and scaling up the transformation of the informal sector through financial inclusion strategies, among others. The government shall establish a *Project Preparation Fund* to effectively support the development of bankable projects.

These areas of departure from the previous MTNDP essentially reflect the **principles guiding the implementation** of the new plan in the next seven years, which are summarised as follows:

1. Continued implementation of unfinished *relevant* programmes in the previous plan
2. Prioritisation and sequencing
3. Full alignment with global, regional and sub-regional development frameworks, such as the UN 2030 Agenda/SDGs, AU Agenda 2063, ECOWAS Vision 2050, and the Statebuilding and Peacebuilding Goals and g7+ Framework—**Figure 1** and tables 1.2-1.4 illustrate alignment of the Big Five Game Changers in the new national plan to these international and regional development frameworks
4. Robust coordination within the public sector and among development partners
5. Professionalisation and transformation of the public sector
6. Scaling up implementation of the Integrated National Financing Framework
7. Harnessing the demographic dividend, Blue Economy Potential and AfCFTA
8. Robust pursuit of bankable projects
9. Increased sensitivity to climate resilience, renewable energy, gender and youth development
10. Pursuit of the People's Planning Process, integrating village/chiefdom level planning with district and national planning and implementation processes.

Aligning the plan with international frameworks

As Sierra Leone is a signatory to a number of strategic international development frameworks, the Government has ensured that the new national development plan is aligned to these frameworks, as in the previous plan. This includes alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the SDGs), Africa Union Agenda 2063, ECOWAS Vision 2050 and the g7+ Group of fragile and conflict-affected states.

Figure 1: Alignment of Big 5 Game Changers and the SDGs

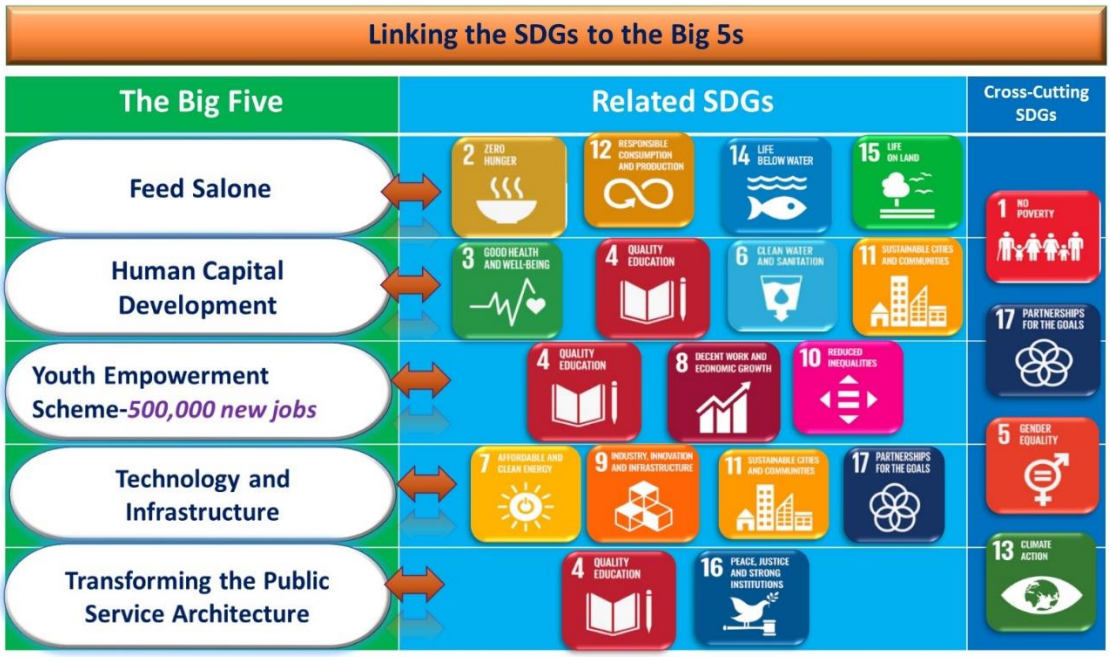


Table 1.2: Aligning the Big Five Game Changers with AU2063 Aspirations

AU 2063 Aspiration	Government of Sierra Leone's Big Five Game Changers 2024-2030
1. A prosperous Africa	5.1: Feed Salone 5.2: Human Capital Development 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme 5.4: Technology and Infrastructure 5.5: Public Sector Architecture
2. An integrated continent	5.2: Human Capital Development 5.4: Technology and Infrastructure 5.5: Public Sector Architecture
3. An Africa of good governance	5.4: Technology and Infrastructure 5.5: Public Sector Architecture
4. A peaceful and secure Africa	5.1: Feed Salone 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme
5. An Africa with a strong cultural identity	5.2: Human Capital Development
6. People-driven development	5.2: Human Capital Development 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme 5.4: Technology and Infrastructure
7. Strong, united, resilient and influential	5.2: Human Capital Development

Table 1.3: Aligning the Big Five Game Changers with ECOWAS Vision 2050

ECOWAS Vision 2050	Government of Sierra Leone's Big Five Game Changers 2024-2030
Pillar 1: Peace, Security and Stability	5.1: Feed Salone 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme
Pillar 2: Governance and Rule of Law	5.4: Technology and Infrastructure 5.5: Public Sector Architecture
Pillar 3: Economic Integration and Interconnectivity	5.2: Human Capital Development 5.4: Technology and Infrastructure 5.5: Public Sector Architecture
Pillar 4: Transformation, Inclusive and Sustainable Development	5.1: Feed Salone 5.2: Human Capital Development 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme 5.4: Technology and Infrastructure 5.5: Public Sector Architecture
Pillar 5: Social Inclusion	5.2: Human Capital Development

	5.3: Youth Employment Scheme 5.4: Technology and Infrastructure

Table 1.4: Aligning the Big Five Game Changers with the g7+ Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals

G7+ Peacebuilding & Statebuilding Goals	Government of Sierra Leone's Big Five Game Changers 2024-2033
PSG 1 Inclusive Politics	5.2: Human Capital Development 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme
PSG 2 Security	5.1: Feed Salone 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme
PSG 3 Justice	5.1: Feed Salone 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme 5.5: Public Sector Architecture
PSG 4 Economic Foundations	5.1: Feed Salone 5.2: Human Capital Development 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme 5.4: Technology and Infrastructure
PSG 5 Revenue and Services	5.1: Feed Salone 5.2: Human Capital Development 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme 5.4: Technology and Infrastructure 5.5: Public Sector Architecture

Theory of change

The theory of change is summarised in **Figure 2**. Five **Strategic National Goals** are being pursued in the new seven-year plan, the MTNDP 2024-2030, each reflecting the Government's strategic focus in one of the Big 5 Game Changers. These *National Goals* in the new plan are expressed as follows across the Big 5s:

National Goal 1:	A Sierra Leone that is food self-sufficient by 2030 (**Big 5.1)**
National Goal 2:	A highly skilled, healthy, inclusive and gender-sensitive labour force, with a substantial share of middle-level manpower, and highly developed talents for professional jobs in the private sector and the civil service by 2030 (**Big 5.2)**
National Goal 3:	Creating 500,000 jobs, including skilled and unskilled, long-term, as well as seasonal jobs across all sectors by 2030 (**Big 5.3)**
National Goal 4:	A cashless economy, increased financial inclusion, vibrant e-government and public administration, expanded energy production, and advanced road and general transport system well linked with production centres to markets by 2030 (**Big 5.4)**
National Goal 5:	A public service that is streamlined, attracts and keeps the brightest national talents and is generally robust in tackling challenges to sustainable development by 2030 (**Big 5.5)**

The plan has programmed ***direct interventions*** to pursue each goal under each of the Big 5s, as illustrated in the figure. To sustain the propulsion of direct actions to deliver each of the five goals across the Big 5 broad result areas, five **Strategic Enablers** have been identified with their respective specific and direct interventions***, referred to as the drivers of enablers***. Thus, alongside the Big 5s listed above are the following **Five enablers**:

Enabler 1: Diversifying the economy & promoting growth
Enabler 2: Governance and accountability
Enabler 3: Advancing climate resilience and environment action
Enabler 4: Gender mainstreaming
Enabler 5: Financing, partnerships and implementation and risk mitigation

Within the theory of change, specific actions will be aimed at achieving specific and measurable targets and strategic objectives (intermediate results) within the ten Broad Result Areas (the Big 5s + the **five Enablers**) towards the ultimate achievements of the overarching **Five Strategic Goals** of the new NDP. The change required also depends on the internal nexuses among the Big 5s and the external **five Enablers.** Within the Big 5s, for example, strengthening digital services across the country under Big 5.4 (Technology and Infrastructure) is critical for propelling actions to deliver the national goal under Big 5.1 (Feed Salone) and actions to deliver the goal under Big 5.2 (Human Capital Development) and vice versa to a large extent. That is, the Big 5s themselves enable and reinforce each other. Indeed, the granular details and dynamics underlying the theory of change could not be depicted in Figure 1.2. This can be further elaborated in the Results Framework and outside of the plan's immediate construct at field/project level activities undertaken by line MDAs. Details can also be found in the operational framework of development partners (including NGOs) supporting the implementation of the national development plan.

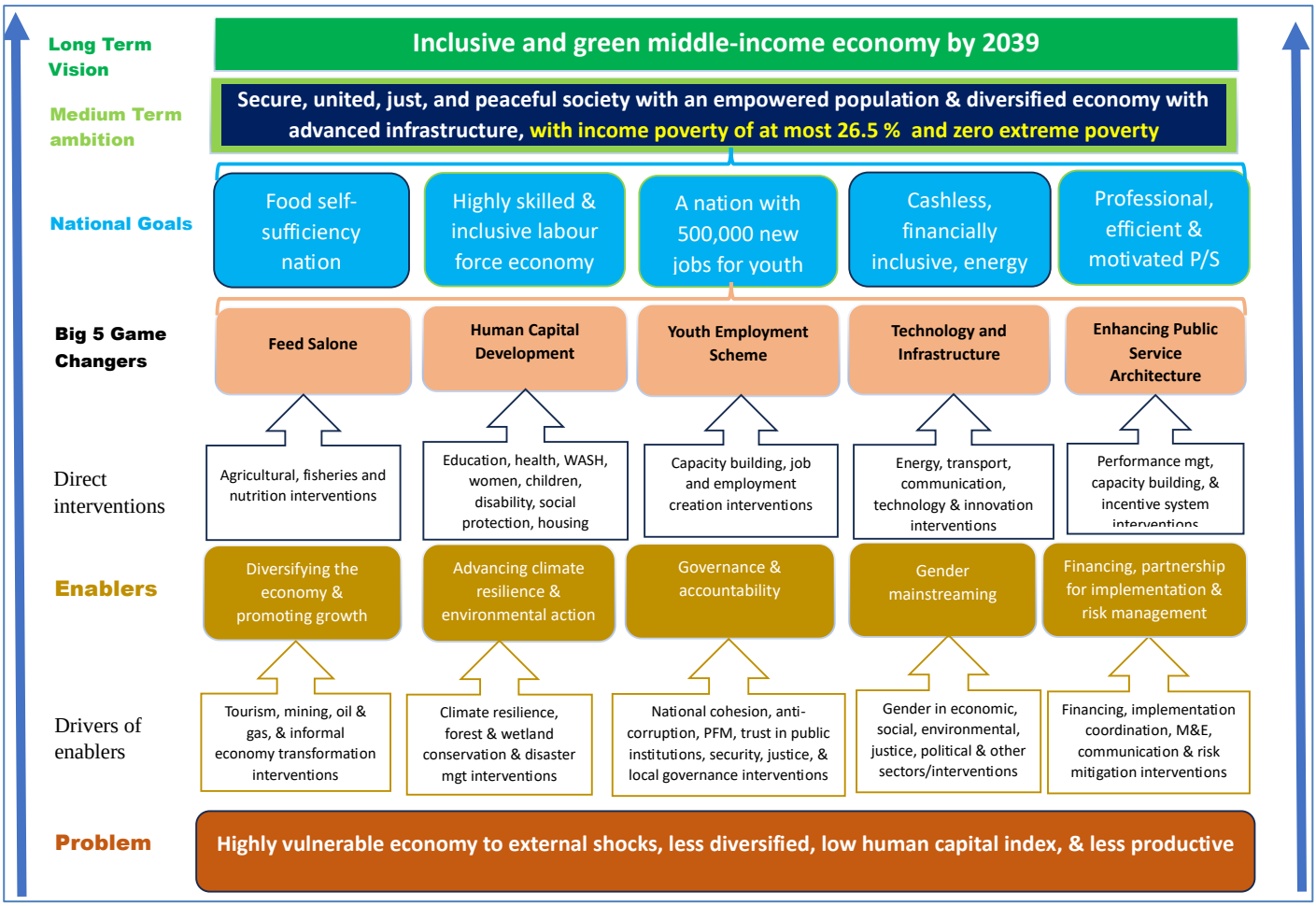


Figure 2: Theory of Change

1.3 Plan preparation process

The current plan was informed by an extensive review of the previous plan, accompanied by series of sectoral reviews and progress reports, studies and frameworks collaboratively done with development partners. The government revised manifesto for 2024-2028 was critical in providing and informing the strategic direction and structural configuration of the new plan. The manifesto was well-researched, reflecting on progress made in the implementation of government programmes for 2019-2023 and presenting strategic highlights of planned policy actions going forward in the next 5 years.

Governance structure

The institutional structure that guided the plan preparation process is divided into four broad layers, presented as follows:

1. ***Ministerial level***: This level provided broad oversight and direction to the plan preparation process. Discussions were held in cabinet, with the president and cabinet ministers providing rounds of inputs and general guidance to the process, starting with a debate on the structural configuration of the plan within the context of the Government's Big 5 Game Changers, and proffering sector-specific inputs in the calibration process of the document.

2. ***Core Technical Committee***. This provided technical support in the coordination of the plan formulation process, ensuring that relevant international frameworks were integrated into the plan, and providing data and background documents in the process. Members supported national, sectoral and district consultations on the plan, and assisted in the review of the various drafts of the document.

3. ***Sector/Results Area Committees***: The plan is framed around the Big 5 Game Changers of the Government, supported by *Five Enablers*. Accordingly, there were working groups (*Sector/Results Area Committees*) supporting the strategic articulation of sectoral policy sections falling under the respective sectors and results areas, estimated at more than 45 areas.
4. ***District Development Coordination Committees***: Across the 16 districts of Sierra Leone, District Development Coordination Committees (DDCCs) were instrumental in coordinating and pulling through district and sub-district level inputs to the plan formulation. They formulated specific district priorities for 2024-2030 across the 2016 districts that are aligned with the Big 5s of the Government.
5. ***The Secretariat***: There was a secretariat coordinating the entire plan formulation process, drawing membership from the various departments in MoPED, and representatives from line MDAs. The secretariat coordinated a total of more than 250 meetings that were held during the process, at central, sectoral, agency, and district/community levels across the country.

Launching the process

The process was officially launched by the Chief Minister on 1st September 2023 at a meeting with all heads of government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). The MDAs were first tasked with the preparation of sector policy papers based on a writing guide provided by the ministry of planning and economic development. Background/desk research documents were utilized in preparing more than 45 policy papers that were consolidated into the first draft of the plan for nationwide consultations towards the production of the successive and Final Draft.

National level consultations

These consultations on the successive drafts of the plan were done at sectoral level within the public/government sectors, development agency level, and non-governmental and private sector levels. Participants were drawn from central government MDAs, development agencies (such as the UN family, the World Bank, the EU, the IMF, and FCDO), formal and informal private sector domains, civil society organisations/NGOs, learning/research institutions, women and youth groups, school pupils, persons with disabilities, Trade Unions, parliament, ministerial cabinet, and others. “

District level consultations

The district-level consultations were broad and intensive, drawing participation from local council leadership, decentralised MDAs, CSO/NGO representatives, all paramount chiefs and other community leaders, women and youth representative at sub-district level, persons with disabilities, and the general public whose inputs were captured through radio phone-in programme.

Validation of the Plan

It should be noted that the government was extremely financially constrained in the production of this plan 2024-2030. It was highly innovative in the process, optimising the little resources it had for the production of the document. Consequently, participants could not be gathered in one place from across the country to do the final technical validation of the document. Rather, the final draft was sent to individual institutions and varied experts to provide final inputs to the document before it was sent for professional editing. The last meeting of the Core Technical Committee was extremely invaluable in providing final comments on the plan.

In all, a total number of more than 2.3 million people are estimated to have been directly reached during the consultations at different geographic and stakeholder constituency levels, within and outside of Sierra Leone. Participants included those engaged through radio phone-in programmes and TV session.

1.4 Organisation of the document

The rest of the document is organised as follows. Section 2 in Part One contains an analysis of the social and macroeconomic context of the country, while Part Two discusses the Big Five Game Changer priorities of the state at the national, regional and district levels. It starts a discussion on Big 5.1 Feed Salone, followed by Big

5.2 Human Capital Development, 5.3 Youth Employment Scheme, 5.4 Infrastructure, Technology and Innovation and 5.5 Transforming the Public Service Architecture. Section 5.6 concludes Part Two with a presentation of district priorities across the Big 5s. Part Three presents five strategies enablers for catalysing the implementation of policy actions under the Big 5s: Enabler 1 Diversifying the Economy and Promoting Growth; Enabler 2 Governance and Accountability, Enabler 3 Advancing Climate Resilience and Environmental Actions, Enabler 4 Gender Mainstreaming and Enabler 5 Financing, Partnership, Implementation, and Risk Management. The last section concludes the Plan.

2. Social and macroeconomic context of Sierra Leone

2.1 Current poverty profile

Sierra Leone's natural resources offer immense potential for scaling up economic growth and helping to end the poverty cycle among most of its population.

The statistics depicted in Figure 2 highlight the progress made by Sierra Leone in its efforts to alleviate poverty since the 1980s. For example, the income poverty estimates have indicated a decline in the poverty headcount from 81.6 percent of the population in 1989 to 66.0 percent in 2003 and 52.9 percent in 2011.

Figure 2.1a: Income poverty headcount[9]

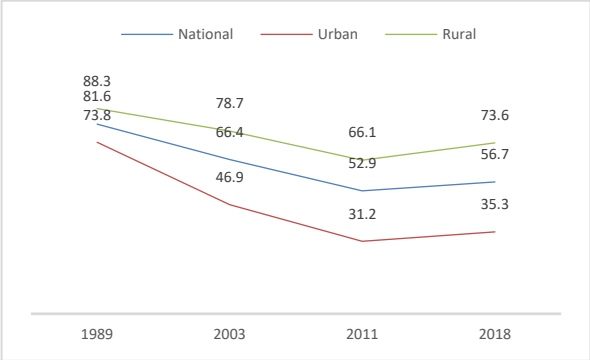
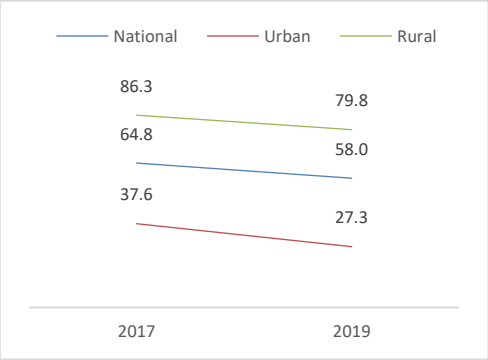


Figure 2.1b: Multidimensional poverty



The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) headcount estimates show a slight decline in the incidence of poverty from 64.8 percent in 2017 to 58.0 percent in 2019. On average six in every ten people in the country is multidimensionally poor. The Multidimensional Poverty Index of Sierra Leone has five dimensions (health, education, living standards, housing, and energy) and 14 indicators.

Despite this progress, poverty in Sierra Leone remains, and hence one of the most serious challenges the country is facing today. Since the Ebola epidemic which struck the country in 2014 and 2015, as well as the floods and mudslides in 2017, Sierra Leone has been grappling with a surge in prices for both food and fuel and a reduced fiscal space due to contraction in economic activities. This situation has been aggravated by COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. These events further heighten inflationary pressures through prolonged disruptions in the supply chains and shortages of goods and services in the country.

The estimates for both income and MPI reveal significant disparities between rural and urban regions. In either case, the incidence of poverty in rural areas is more than twice that of urban areas, underscoring the deprivations and difficulties rural communities face daily as they strive to meet their needs.

[9] Note however that the 56.7 percent coming from the Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) 2018 cannot be compared with the 52.9 percent estimate from the previous SLIHS (2011) because of upward adjustment in the poverty line due to changes in price and other socioeconomic dynamics during 2011-2018. If no adjustment was made, poverty from SLIHS2018 is estimated at 47.3 percent lower than the 52.9 percent from SLIHS2011 and 66.4 percent from SLIHS2003/04.

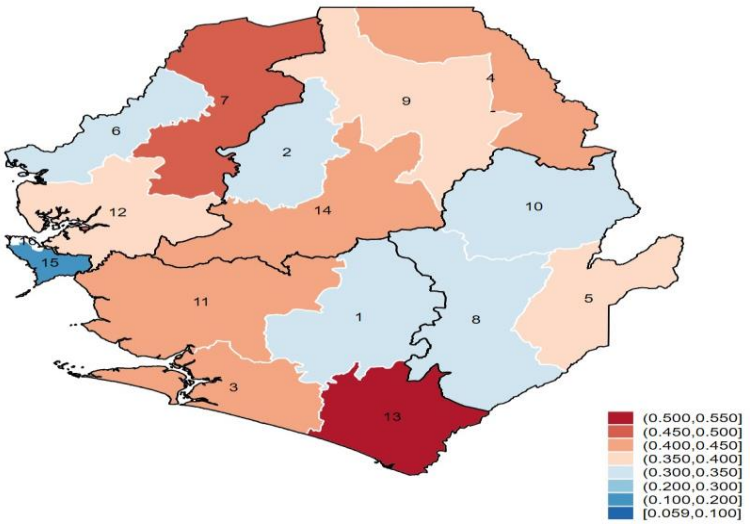
Table 2: Regional Poverty Indices

Year	Region				
Income poverty	**Eastern**	**Northern**	**North-Western**	**Southern**	**Western Area**
1989	80.0	857		77.5	80.8
2003	86	80.6		64.1	20.7
2011	61.3	61		55.4	28.0
2018	64	76.1	62.1	67.8	23.9
Multi-dimensional poverty (MPI)					
2017	67.6	75.8		76	36.2
2019 [10]	63.7	68.8		69.5	21.7
Child MPI					
2017	70.5	76.3		73.7	36

Also, the regional estimates (Table 2) show consistently the Western Area to be better off than the rest of the country since 2003. The Northern region for the most part has shown a higher incidence of poverty than the others.

Figure 2.1c: MPI Scores by Districts, 2019

ID	District	MPI
1	Bo	0.328
2	Bombali	0.314
3	Bonthe	0.406
4	Falaba	0.448
5	Kailahun	0.392
6	Kambia	0.346
7	Karene	0.473
8	Kenema	0.348
9	Koinadugu	0.392
10	Kono	0.330
11	Moyamba	0.433
12	Port Loko	0.395
13	Pujehun	0.500
14	Tonkolili	0.418
15	Western Area Rural	0.180
16	Western Area Urban	0.059



The multi-dimensional poorest districts in 2019 were Pujehun (0.500), Karena (0.473), Falaba (0.448), Moyamba (0.433), Tonkolili (0.418), and Bonthe (0.406), which have MPIs of above the national average of 0.309.

Furthermore, poverty reports have shown that poverty rates are significantly higher for larger households, especially those with 8 or more members compared to those with 1-3 members. This is means that poverty can create considerable stress for families with large household size. Also, female-headed households are less likely to be multi-dimensional poor than male-headed households, while those households with secondary or higher education heads are far less likely to be poor.

Sierra Leone has shown a minor improvement in the Human Development Index (HDI) with an increase of 0.025. Sierra Leone's HDI value for 2021 is 0.477, which puts the country in the low human development category and keeps it 181 out of 195 countries and territories. Life expectancy at birth and average years of schooling increased by 5.4 years and 0.9 years respectively while the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita decreased by 2.8%.

2.2 Population trends

The challenges and opportunities a country has with supporting its population in the short and long term are defined by its age structure. Understanding the implications of changing age structures is essential in assessing

[10] GoSL/UNDP-Sierra Leone (2023) Multidimensional Poverty Index

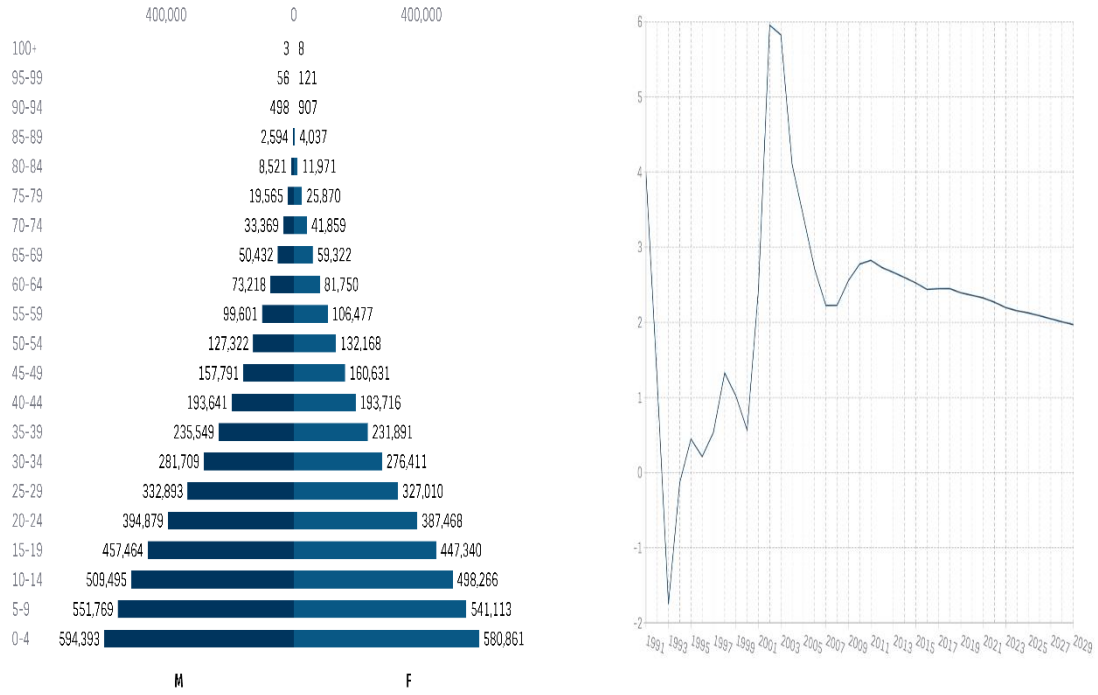
a country's economic potential. Today, after decades of rapid population growth, Sierra Leone has the largest generation of young people in its history. 75 percent of the country's population is below the age of 35; 14 percent is under the age of 5 while 26 percent us below 15 years. Those between 15 and 24 years make up 21 percent of the population and those between 25 and 34 years' account for 15 percent. The population pyramid in **Figure 2.2** below provides the distribution of Sierra Leone's population according to age.

This large, young population represents a good opportunity for economic development, but it also presents challenges because of the demand for social services and employment. If targeted with appropriate and simultaneous investments in quality education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and skills training, this young population represents an opportunity for Sierra Leone to realize sustainable development. These investments can enable the country to harness the potential of the youth population and create a sustainable future for Sierra Leone. Further the energy and creativity of the youth can be harnessed to drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and social progress. The high number of young people can also pose challenges if not properly addressed.

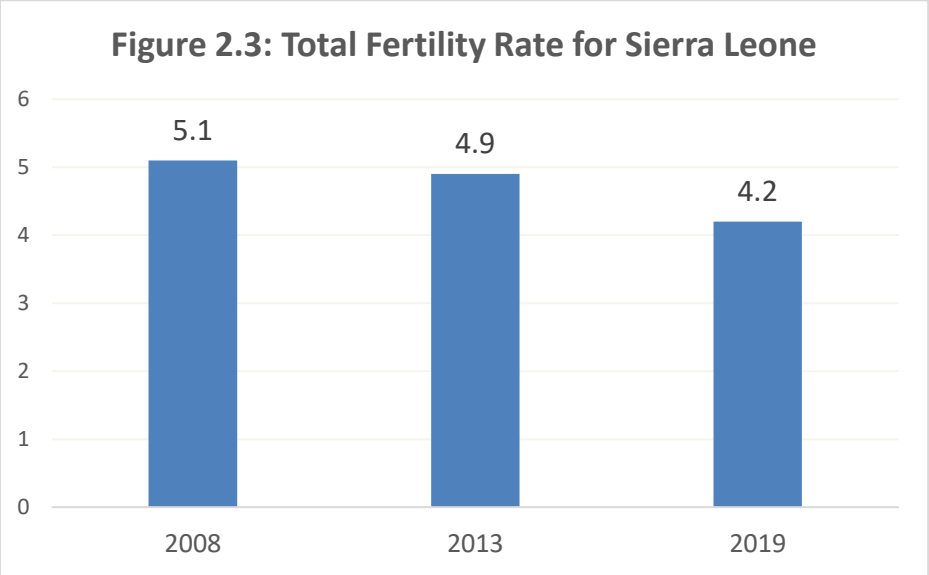
The high fertility rates and a youthful population structure are the driving forces behind the Sierra Leone's relatively high population growth rate; which in turn determines the demand for social services and natural resources as well as the size of the labour force. Rapid population growth can undermine investments in healthcare, education, employment, and natural resources and exacerbate the challenges of poverty, maternal and child health, gender discrimination, and job creation. It also puts pressure on agricultural land, fresh water, and energy resources. Population growth is driven by high fertility which is in turn shapes the size and age structure of a nation's population and determines the demand for social services and natural resources as well as the size of the labour force. Investments in family planning programs - combined with investments in education, health, gender equality, and employment - help lower fertility and slows population growth.

As shown in **Figure 2.3** below, Sierra Leone's fertility rate has remained high, reducing only marginally from 4.9 in 2013 to 4.2 in 2019 in terms of children per woman.

Figure 2.2 Sierra Leone Population Pyramid and growth 2020



Source: Authors with data from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division



2.3 Structure of the economy and growth diagnostic

Since 2002, Sierra Leone has had political stability following the end of the civil conflict. Its economy was outperforming the averages for both West Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa[11] until several shocks occurred in the past decade. The economy has grown at an average annual rate of 5 percent over the past ten years, driven by agriculture and the production of minerals, but macroeconomic stability remains concerning. While positive GDP growth has been recorded, it is largely inconsistent. The Sierra Leone economy continues to be small, open, undiversified and vulnerable to both internal and external shocks. In addition, the growth of recent years has not been inclusive and did not result in productive transformation and the creation of jobs. It has not substantially decreased poverty and inequality, with two-thirds of the population remaining multidimensionally impoverished. Policies focusing on human development issues and interventions supporting the most vulnerable populations need to be taken into account in addition to macroeconomic stabilization measures.

The Ebola epidemic and a decline in iron ore prices in 2014 led to a significant reduction in GDP. Prior to the Covid-19 epidemic, growth was predicted to reach 4.5 percent for 2021–2023. However, the Covid-19 epidemic disrupted the pattern of growth and caused the economy to shrink by 2.2 percent in 2020, with the tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, and services sectors suffering the most.

High energy and food costs in the backdrop of the Russia and Ukraine conflict hindered the economic recovery in 2022. The economy experienced a slowdown due mainly to the global energy and food crises, which disrupted global supply chains, raised inflationary pressures and shrunk the fiscal space. The sharp rise in global food and fuel prices and the pass-through effects on domestic prices, combined with the depreciation of the local currency, resulted in high inflation (50.94 percent in August 2023) that will likely remain in double digits for the near future, given the current trend of global prices for key imported commodities. With the continued uncertainty and geopolitical risks in the global economy largely as a result of the Ukraine war, tight fiscal and monetary policies in advanced economies, and now the war in Gaza that influences other parts of the Middle East, it is anticipated that food and fuel prices will continue to be affected and this might affect growth prospects.

The public debt stock has been increasing owing to several factors, including lower-than-expected revenues to finance government programmes, weakening of the Leone against the US Dollar and rising interest rates. The ongoing multiple crises have made it difficult for the country to maintain stability, limit rising threats to

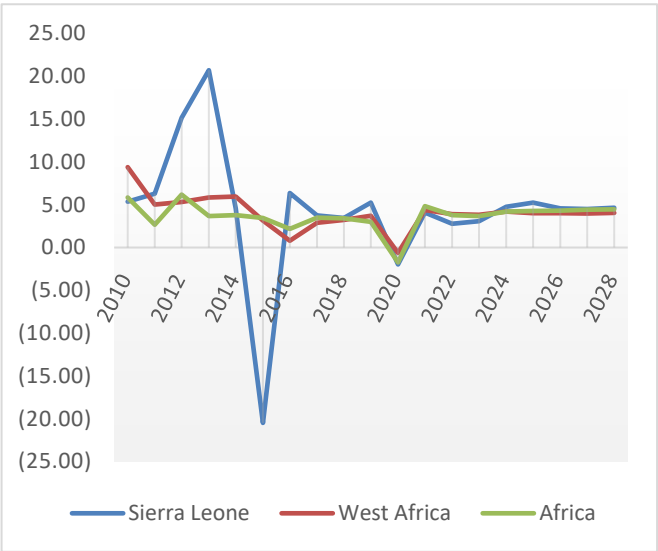
[11] Sierra Leone was among the fastest growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa with annual average growth rate of 10% between 2009 and 2013. Although driven by the extractive industries.

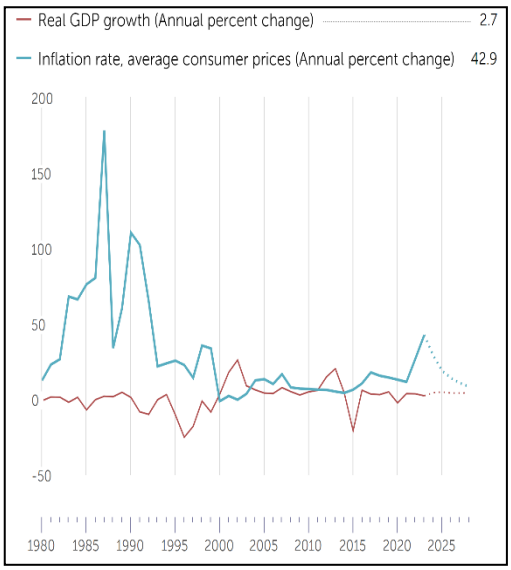
the sustainability of debt and mobilize the resources to finance basic service delivery and have derailed development, crippling economic growth and threatening progress toward the SDGs. Improving the macroeconomic framework and harnessing financing will significantly strengthen economic resilience, promote growth and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

Growth is expected to decelerate to 2.7 percent in 2023 from 3.5 percent in 2022, before recovering to 4.7 percent in 2024. The GDP growth rate has not yet fully recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it currently stands at 1.8 percent, which is below the pre-pandemic levels of 4.2 percent observed from 2017 to 2019[12].

The relatively weak growth and a decline in macroeconomic fundamentals threaten to increase the level of poverty within the current context of inadequate social safety nets to the most vulnerable. The economic growth model remains dependent on public spending and the mineral sector. Macroeconomic conditions are expected to stabilize with the Government's planned interventions to reduce inflation, contain debt, and increase external resilience and resource mobilization, among others.

Figure 2.4: Growth per capita (2010-2028)





Source: Authors - data from the IMF WEO 2023 IMF WEO

Disaggregated Sector contribution

Sierra Leone's economy is complex, fragile and relatively undiversified with few dominant sectors matching up to global competitiveness. The primary sector (agriculture, including forestry, fishing and hunting) remains the backbone of the economy, accounting for 52.85 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010. However, this dropped to 39.26 percent during the Ebola virus disease crisis in 2014 but climbed to 49.94 percent in 2016 and is estimated almost two-fifth (57.5 percent) in 2022 of the country's annual GDP (Stats SL, 2022).

Currently, the agricultural sector predominantly comprises smallholders engaged primarily in subsistence farming, with minimal value addition. Agriculture plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation and mitigating inflationary pressures.

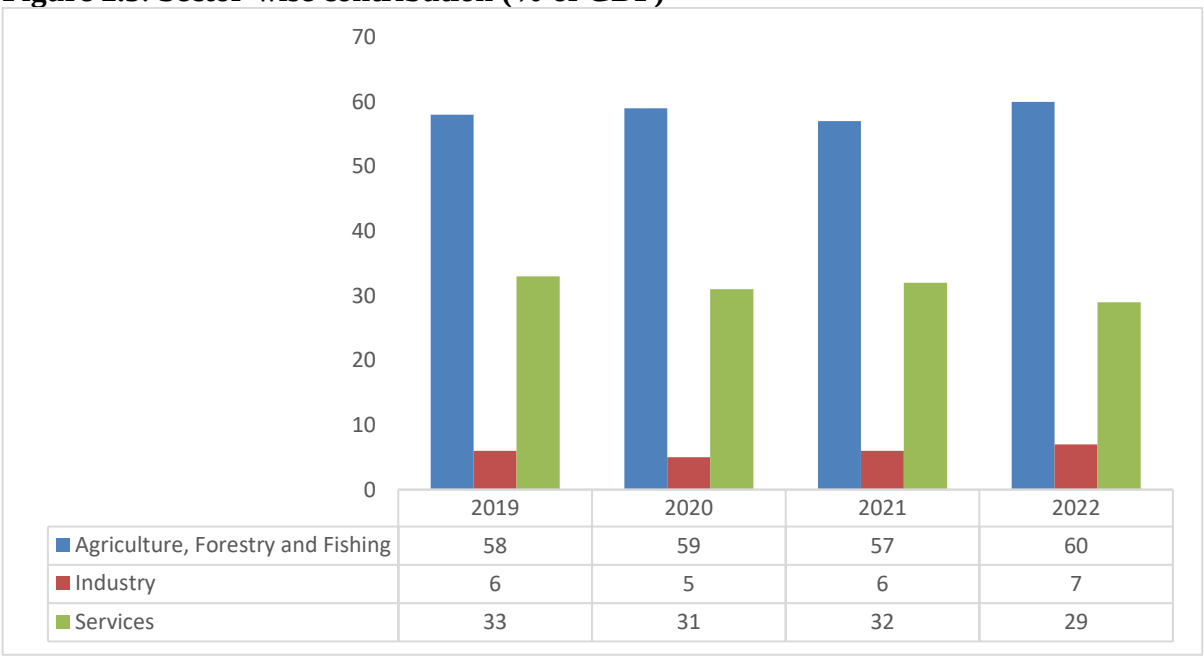
The services sector is the second largest, contributing 32.3 in 2021 percent of GDP and has taken up an increasing share of the economy. However, its growth has been hindered by limited productivity in trade services and the dominance of informal trade and vulnerable employment, while high-productivity sectors have faced difficulties in expanding. The services sector as a whole gradually absorbed a significant share of

[12] IMF WEO and WB, 2023.

workers (Figure 2.5) with its employment share increasing from 26.8 percent in 2000 to 45 percent in 2021. Productivity in this sector is the lowest compared to the other two groups of economic activity. The shift of employment from agriculture to services in recent times is associated with a decline in the relative productivity of the latter. Labour reallocation has not been entirely effective as of yet and there is room for productivity improvement by achieving efficient reallocation of labour. Agricultural and services employment is still largely informal, and the informal employment in general accounts for 93.1 percent of total employment in Sierra Leone. The predominance of informal employment limits workers' productivity and makes it harder for labour laws to be efficiently implemented.

Within the service sector, the contribution of the transport, storage and communication aspects is only three percent of GDP in 2021 and is relatively low compared to the average in West Africa (11 percent) and in Sub-Saharan Africa (9 percent). Transforming transportation systems could be a viable approach for Sierra Leone to achieve the objective of developing high-quality infrastructure to enhance economic competitiveness and socio-inclusive economic development. Moreover, It also provides another opportunity for Sierra Leone to green the transportation systems, which will also create employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth.

Figure 2.5: **Sector-wise contribution (% of GDP)**



	2019	2020	2021	2022
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	58	59	57	60
Industry	6	5	6	7
Services	33	31	32	29

Source: Authors construct based on data from Statistics Sierra Leone

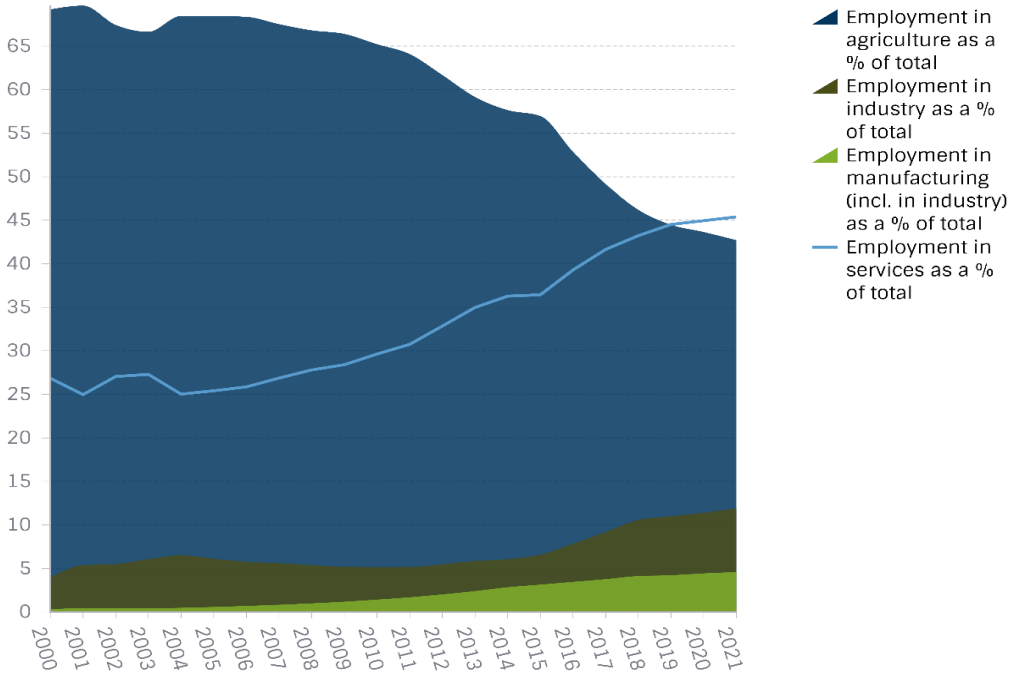
The mining sector, which provided rapid economic growth between 2012 to 2013 until Ebola disrupted this in 2014, accounted for 10.2 percent of GDP in 2016 after hitting a low of 6.7 pulled down by mining and quarrying which was at a low of 3.1 in 2015 from a high of 26.3 in 2014 indicating that the mining sub-sector has been severely constrained by the drop in international prices of minerals and materials.

The share of Industry in GDP increased from 5.3 percent in 2018 to 5.6 percent in 2019 which is mainly due to the high output of iron ore and diamond production in the country. Industry contributes to only 11.9 percent of the country’s labour force.

The outbreak caused the industry to drop from 5.6 percent in 2019 to 5.2 percent in 2020 before increasing to seven percent in 2022 (Stats SL, 2022). The contribution of the manufacturing sector has remained low (2 percent), while the average in West Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa are respectively 13.7 and 12.4 percent. The

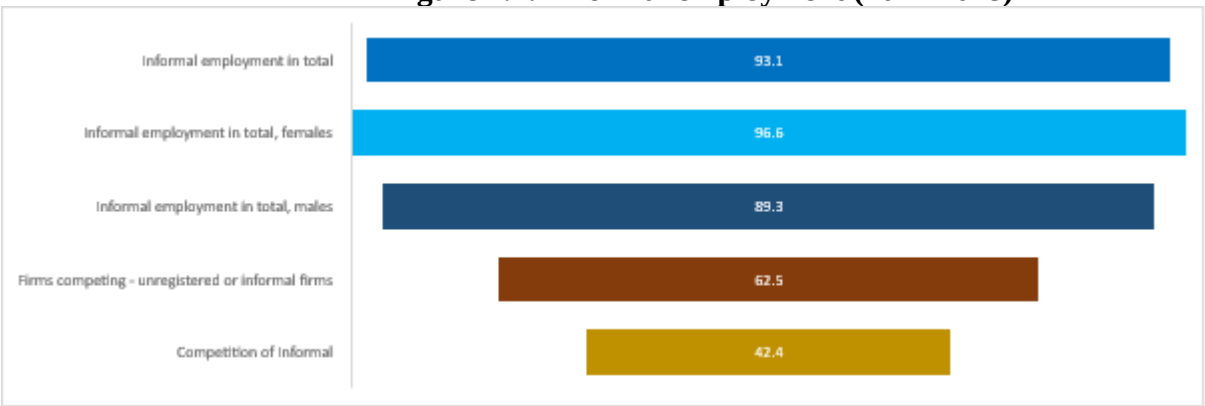
manufacturing sector is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, which account for approximately 98 percent of the country's enterprises (AfDB, 2022).

Figure 2.6: Employment per sector



Source: Authors from the ILO, WB/WDI, UN Stat data

Figure 2.7: Informal employment (2017-2018)



Source: Authors from ILOSTAT.

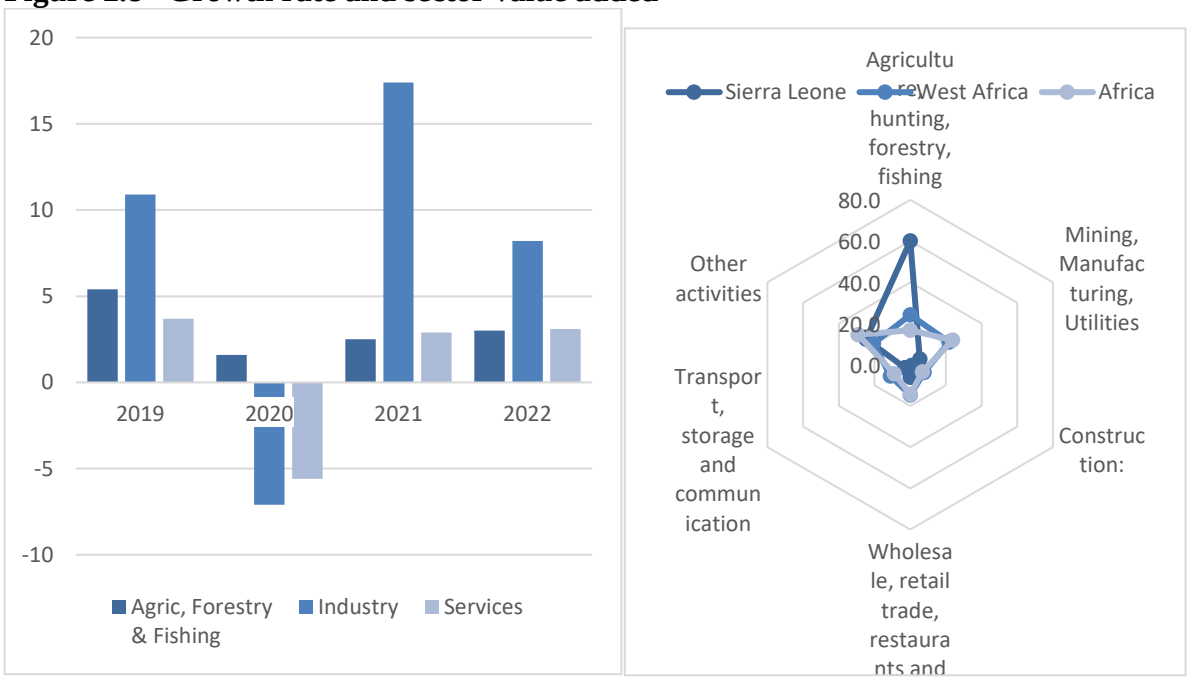
Note: Competition of the informal means % of Firms identifying practices of competitors in the informal sector as a constraint

Sector Growth Dynamics

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing: As in the case of GDP, the growth rate of the sectors (Agriculture, Industry and services) have been fluctuating (Figure 2.8). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, growth in the agricultural sector significantly decreased in 2020 largely due to the measures (e.g., lockdown, curfew, etc) adopted to limit the spread of the pandemic. This significantly impacted the sector resulting in a deceleration in the sector's growth rate from 5.4 percent in 2019 to 1.6 percent in 2020. In 2021, the sector's growth marginally increased to 2.5 percent mostly because the pandemic was gradually being put under control and restrictive measure relaxed. Additionally, the Government supported farmers with seed rice and other inputs to boost production. Though relatively marginal, in 2022, the sector registered a positive growth rate of three percent, compared to 2.5 percent in the previous year and contributed close to 40 percent (the highest share) of overall GDP growth (Figure 2.8). Despite challenges in fertilizer supply chains, the favourable planting and harvest seasons, coupled with adequate rainfall, have resulted in increased output for most crops.

The fall in commodity prices in 2015 resulted to shut down in mining operations of particularly the iron ore mining companies. With the resumption of mining activities in 2019, the sector significantly recovered and registered an impressive growth rate of 10.9 percent from negative 2.5 percent in 2018. However, in 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, mining activities receded, and some largescale mining companies shut down leading to substantial negative (-7.1 percent) growth rate of the sector. In 2021, the sector recovered due to recommencement of mining operations. This resulted to 17.4percent growth rate. In 2022, as a result of a slower growth in diamond production, the sector decelerated, and a growth rate of 8.2 percent was recorded. The mining sector contributed significantly to overall GDP growth (Figure 2.8), thanks to the resumption of iron-ore mining operations at Marampa mines.

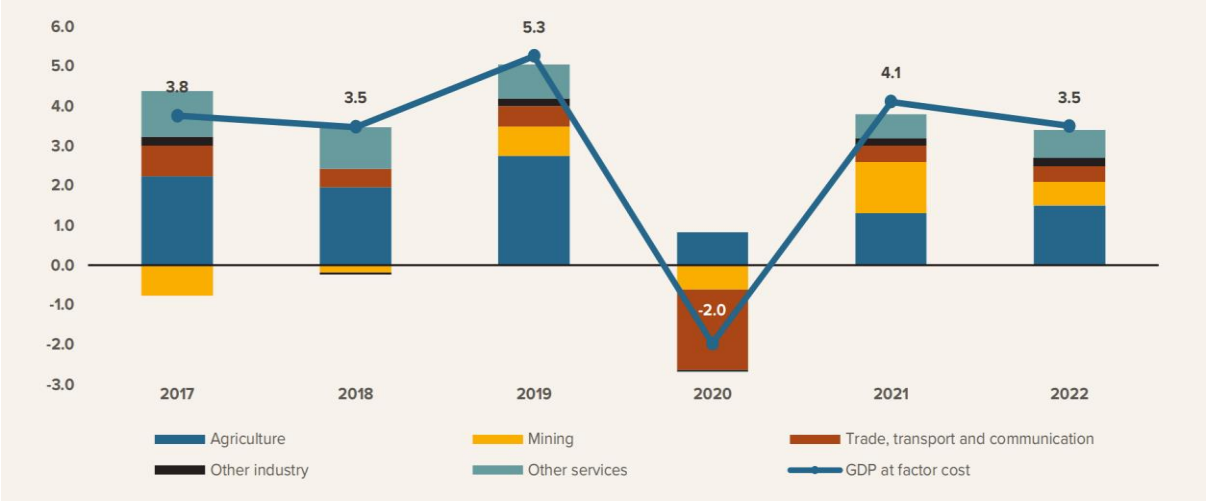
Figure 2.8– Growth rate and sector value added



Source: Authors from Statistics Sierra Leone data, WDI, United Nations Statistics Division National Accounts

While the COVID-19 pandemic generally affected the economy, the services sector is one of the most affected. The measures (e.g. lockdown, restricting people's movement, etc.) adopted to slow down the spread of the pandemic negatively impacted trade, tourism and transportation, among others. This thereby affected the growth rate of the sector. Therefore, the sector's growth rate declined from 3.7 percent in 2019 to negative 5.6 percent in 2020. In 2021, with the slow resumption of economic activities, the sector grew by 2.9 percent while growth rate in 2022 was three percent thanks to continued steady growth in communications and public administration.

Figure 2.9– Shares in sources of growth



Source: WB 2023 - WB and Stats SL estimates.

Growth was primarily driven by public spending on the demand side. Government consumption (the largest driver of growth in 2022 at around 2.9 percentage points) grew by 14 percent (compared to 2021). Demand-side growth was restrained by low private consumption, which was partly caused by inflationary pressures that eroded the purchasing power and strained household budgets and the tightening of financial conditions that restricted private domestic and foreign direct investment.

2.4 Current challenges to macroeconomic development

Economic diversification

The role of Sierra Leone's exports in Africa is still relatively small, with only 2.75 percent of exports to the ECOWAS region and only 3.22 percent to the continent, while exports to China and Europe, for example, accounted for about 40 percent of total exports in 2021.

The Herfindahl concentration index, a diversification measure, shows that Sierra Leone, like many countries in West Africa, has a concentrated export basket, where the average concentration index is 0.28, higher than in East Africa (0.03). The export basket contains only a few goods, five of one type and twelve of another[13], which account for 75 and 90 percent of all exports, respectively, in 2021. Due to this export structure, the country's external balance is heavily dependent on the vicissitudes of international markets. The country's exposure to fluctuations in commodity prices and currency depreciation is amplified by its reliance on an agriculture and mining export-led growth model that focuses on a limited range of products. The dependency on imports to meet Sierra Leone’s food requirements poses a significant threat to food security and progress on the 2030 Agenda.

While the agriculture industry experienced modest growth, its reliance on the domestic market has impeded its ability to expand exports. Agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing as well as mining and natural resources, if properly managed, provide a basis for further diversifying the economy. Despite its abundant natural resources and periods of high growth in the past, productive transformation is low, and the levels of poverty and inequality, including gender inequality, are high. Addressing the gaps and weaknesses in the national production system and enhancing the capabilities (human capital including skills, knowledge, health, etc.) required will expedite the structural transformation process.

[13] Titanium ores and concentrates, Iron ores and concentrates; including roasted iron pyrites, Wood in the rough, whether or not stripped of bark or sapwood, or roughly squared.

Manufacturing (included in industry) value added is low (two percent). A nascent recovery in manufacturing was disrupted by tightening financial conditions and a slump in private investment. Fuel shortages and higher fuel prices increased production costs for transporters and manufacturers, particularly SMEs. The sector benefited from government support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the MUNAFA Fund and Bank of Sierra Leone's SLL500 billion special credit facility, as well as from increased agribusiness investments, due to the recovery in agriculture. However, SMEs continue to bear the brunt of the economic shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

The World Bank's Business Pulse Survey reported that around 88 percent of SMEs experienced a decline in sales during the pandemic, often closing operations and laying off staff, which aggravated their pre-existing constraints of access to finance, land, and infrastructure. Overall economic growth is expected to strengthen further but remains moderate, averaging 4.4 percent over 2022–2024. Manufacturing can play a pivotal role in diversifying the economy and providing employment opportunities to individuals with limited skills and making growth more sustainable. Additionally, it facilitates rapid productivity growth to catch up with regional and global competitors. The emergence of a burgeoning middle class in Sierra Leone, resulting from urbanization, further offer opportunities for local producers to tap into domestic and regional markets. However, for that to happen, a considerable amount of support is needed by local firms to ensure compliance with market quality and standards, enabling them to gain access into export markets. Services and sophisticated manufacturing also demand highly skilled labour. Despite not exhibiting the key features of high-tech firms, some firms in Sierra Leone are innovating.

Figure 2.10: Status of Export Diversification



2.5 Medium-term macroeconomic policy framework for delivering the Plan

Key macroeconomic and budgetary objectives and targets for 2024-2028

1. Reduce the budget deficit, including grants from 10.9 percent of GDP to not more than 3.0 percent of GDP through intensifying domestic revenue collection to 20.0 percent of GDP by 2027 and Keeping Government expenditures with the budgetary limit of 22-23 percent of GDP. In particular, Government will seek to contain the discretionary recurrent budget whilst also seeking to keep the wage bill at sustainable and predictable level of not more than 6.0 percent of GDP.
2. Reduce the current account, including official grants from 5.6 percent of GDP in 2023 to 5.0 percent of GDP in 2028
3. Reduce debt sustainability risks by reducing the public debt from 93.8 percent of GDP to a sustainable threshold of 70.0 percent of GDP in nominal terms and 55 percent of GDP in present value terms. External debt will remain at not more than 40 percent of GDP in present value terms.
4. Gross international reserves of the Bank of Sierra Leone will be kept at a minimum of not less than three (3) month of import cover.
5. Attain and maintain an inflation level that is in the upper single digit.

The main thrust of macroeconomic management in the medium-term is to preserve macro-financial stability and foster conditions conducive to sustained, inclusive green growth to create high-paying jobs, increase food security and reduce household poverty. These efforts will be supported by the implementation of institutional and business-friendly reforms that will engender private sector participation, increase FDI, bring public finances to a sustainable path, contain persistently high inflation, stabilise the exchange rate, and minimise debt sustainability risks. Consistently, these reforms will be complemented by structural reforms to bolster external resilience, strengthen public financial management to enhance the transparency and accountability in the use of public finances and create the needed fiscal space to increase spending on growth-enhancing sectors to create jobs and reduce poverty and food insecurity.

Despite successive external shocks in recent years, the Sierra Leone economy is projected to recover in the medium-term, with growth estimated to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2025, after a faltering performance during 2022-2024. **Real GDP** was projected to grow by 3.1 percent in 2023 and 4.7 percent in 2024, from 3.5 percent in 2022, reflecting an uncertain global environment underpinned by disruptions to global supply chains, higher prices of food and energy supplies and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Economic growth is projected to average 4.5 percent in the medium-term, supported by investments in agriculture, increased donor flows to the implementation of the new National Development Plan and sustained activities in iron ore production. Growth in the non-iron ore economy is projected to average 5.0 percent in the medium-term.
Headline **inflation** (end period) was projected to peak in December 2023 and start gradually declining in 2024, but will only slowly return to single digits in 2027. The projected decline in inflation is underpinned by the expected normalisation of global supply chain disruptions, a fall in global food and fuel prices coupled with increased domestic food production, and relative stability in the exchange rate. Inflation was expected to peak at 44.3 percent in 2023 before trending downwards to 21.9 percent in 2024 and returning to single digits in 2027. Annual average inflation was also projected to decline from 45.8 percent in 2023 to 11.1 percent in 2027.

The evolution of **fiscal aggregates** in the medium-term will be guided by the agreed accelerated fiscal adjustment programme with the IMF, underpinned by robust domestic revenue mobilisation and measures to contain discretionary current expenditures and domestic capital budget. Efforts will also be made to strike an

appropriate balance between revenue efforts and expenditure management. Accordingly, the fiscal deficit including grants was projected to decline to 2.5 percent of GDP in 2023 from 9.4 percent of GDP in 2022. It is projected to rise slightly to 3.0 percent of GDP in 2027.

Reflecting the projected sharp decline in Government financing requirements, the stock of public debt is projected to moderate to 93.8 percent of GDP in 2023 from 99.0 percent of GDP in 2022. It is expected to decline to 66.6 percent of the non-iron ore GDP in 2026 and 40.0 percent of the non-iron ore GDP in present value terms in 2027.

The current account deficit, including official grants, was projected to narrow from 7.3 percent of GDP in 2022 to 5.6 percent of GDP in 2023, underpinned by an expected decline in the import bill due to the expected decline in global food and fuel prices; the import bill projected to decline by 10.2 percent in 2023, leaving the current account deficit averaging 5.9 percent in the medium-term as the trade deficit narrows due to growth in exports and moderation in international commodity prices, including energy coupled with the increase in private transfers over the period.

In the medium term, the overall balance of payments position in Sierra Leone is expected to gradually improve from a surplus of $26.8 million (0.8 percent of GDP) in 2024 to a surplus of $39.2 million (1.0 percent of GDP) in 2027, mainly underscored by improvement in the current account and increase in FDI inflows.

Gross foreign reserves of the Bank of Sierra Leone were programmed to amount to 3.4 months of imports in 2023 and will average 3.0 months of imports in the medium term. The Bank of Sierra Leone will continue to maintain a healthy reserve position in order to insulate the economy from emerging external shocks. This would be supported through scaled-up export diversification, and enhanced inflows of FDI and remittances.

The exchange rate will remain market-determined to enable the economy to adjust to potential shocks. The Bank of Sierra Leone will also maintain adequate reserve buffers and will intervene in the market only to smoothen out excess volatility in the exchange rate. The exchange rate is expected to move in line with the difference between inflation in Sierra Leone and the inflation of our major trading partners.

Risks to the macroeconomic outlook

Despite the relatively benign medium-term outlook of the economy and gradual normalisation of global supply chains, growth outturns remained highly uncertain and particularly susceptible to both external and domestic shocks, including the continued war in Ukraine and the projected slowdown in the Chinese economy, persistently high inflation and pressures on the exchange rate. Medium-term growth is also vulnerable to commodity price shocks, spillovers from a possible escalation of the war in Ukraine, geo-economic fragmentation, policy slippages and increased debt sustainability risks, which could further undermine growth, other global health pandemic and lingering concerns about the health of the global economy.

Key Medium-Term Macroeconomic Policy Actions

Going forward with the consolidation of macro-fiscal gains and addressing remaining and emerging challenges, various policy measures have been highlighted under three broad policy blocks: *a) fiscal policy domain; b) monetary and exchange rate policy domain; and c) financial sector policy domain*.

(A) Fiscal Policy

The objective of fiscal policy in the next *seven* years is to stabilise public finances, reduce debt sustainability risks whilst protecting poverty-related expenditure and complimenting ongoing BSL's effort to stabilise the exchange rate and contain inflationary pressures. To this end, fiscal policy will seek to strike an appropriate balance between revenue efforts and expenditure management through domestic revenue mobilisation, expenditure rationalisation and strengthening public financial management to enhance transparency and accountability in the use of public finances and create the needed fiscal space for priority spending to create jobs, reduce poverty and food insecurity. Consistent with prudent public financial management practice, the

measures will pursue two primary and two secondary targets—achieving the secondary targets depending on the primary targets:

Primary

(i) Reduce total public debt from 98.8 percent of GDP in 2022 to 92.2 percent in 2023 and further down to 66.6 percent by the 2028 fiscal year. External debt will be reduced from 67.7 percent of GDP in 2022 to 67 percent in 2023 and further to 45.6 percent in 2028. Domestic debt will fall from 31.3 percent of GDP in 2022 to 25.2 percent in 2023 and further down to 20.9 percent of GDP in 2028.

(ii) Reduce the overall budget deficit, including grants, from 10.9 percent of GDP in 2022 to 5.6 percent in 2023 and to a level not exceeding 3 percent by the 2028 fiscal year.

Secondary

(i) Increase domestic revenue to 20 percent of GDP by 2028;

(ii) Contain Government expenditures at average of 23 percent of GDP by 2025, from 30 percent in 2022 and 25.2 percent in 2023.

Measures for achieving the *Fiscal Deficit Targets* in the medium-term—progressively reducing the budget deficit from 10.9 percent of GDP in 2022 and achieving the fiscal deficit target of an average of 2.8 percent in 2027 and 2028:

Medium-Term Revenue Mobilization Measures

(i) Review the personal income taxation with a view to harmonising withholding taxes on various forms of capital income and gradually transitioning to a comprehensive global income taxation practice in the medium to long term;

(ii) Review the corporate income taxation system, with a view to broadening its base abolishing tax holidays and reducing tax rates for certain investments as well as incentivising productive investments; and introducing a Minimum Alternate Tax to tackle tax evasion and tax avoidance;

(iii) Reform the excise tax with a view to transitioning to excise taxes on fuels, alcohol, tobacco, vehicles, sugar-sweetened beverages, plastics and others specific to Ad-Valorem rates designed to internalize external costs, thereby reducing harmful behaviour and providing a stable source of revenues.

(iv) Commence the implementation of excise stamps to improve the effectiveness of taxation of excisable goods, including alcohol, tobacco, vehicles, sugar-sweetened beverages, plastics and others to provide accurate statistics for tax purposes, reduce illicit trade and enhance consumer protection;

(v) Adopt the full pass-through formula for petroleum pricing;

(vi) Broaden the base of the Goods and Services Tax, by streamlining exemptions currently provided on machinery and equipment while maintaining exemptions on basic food items such as rice; and extending GST to the informal sector by revising upwards the threshold for registration as well as reforming the Refund Mechanism;

(vii) Explore the possibility of Integrating the management of land and property taxes at the national or central level and allow the National Revenue Authority to take on a greater role in assisting local government on these revenue matters for a fee or commission;

(viii) Institutionalise a policy of not negotiating fiscal issues in all new greenfield investments in the extractive sector, taking a disciplined policy to avoid individual contracts containing special and overgenerous fiscal terms that are stabilised over time outside of the general tax law; and

(ix) The MTRS also introduces a vehicle circulation tax and a tourism levy.

For domestic taxes, the measures include

(i) Improve enforcement of tax compliance with core taxpayer obligations and address specific high-risk taxpayer segment, including high net worth individuals to tackle tax evasion and tax avoidance and international tax risks.

(ii) Increase public education on tax obligations

(iii) Enhance the full functionality and integration of the automated tax administration systems (ASYCUDA, ITAS and ECR)

(iv) Improve access to and management of tax data to support compliance risk management.

Customs administration

(i) Strengthen border controls, enhance border patrols and surveillance and the implementation of the Revised Kyoto Convention and HS classification of Rules of Origin;

(ii) Fully operationalise and roll-out ASYCUDA

(iii) Simplify current set of customs procedures and processes;

(iv) Strengthen customs valuation and post-clearance audit;

(v) Improve management of Customs duty exemptions;

(vi) Strengthen customs data acquisition and management For Non-Tax Revenues.

For Non-Tax Revenues

(i) Digitise the payment of non-tax revenues, including fees, charges, levies and fines and integrate with ITAS;

(ii) Strengthening tax compliance and risk management;

(iii) Simplifying processes in revenue administration including developing an outcome-based Monitoring and Evaluation Framework; and

(iv) Modernising business operations, enhance capacity and productivity through investment in technology and infrastructure, continuous training and improve data management.

Climate finance

(i) Explore the possibility of leveraging climate finance from Sierra Leone's forests, including carbon credits, REDD+ payments, and grants for forest conservation or reforestation;

(ii) Leverage international public finance, including transition and adaptation financing for climate change;

(iii) Leverage the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust facility in the future;

(iv) Consider levying carbon taxes on certain sectors of the economy and explore issuing green bonds in the medium term.

Domestic Revenue Mobilization at the Local level

(i) Develop and implement a new fiscal decentralisation policy and strategy that will provide additional window in the form of enhanced tax bases or new revenue streams for local councils to boost local tax revenues;

(ii) Develop a modernised Property Tax System to reflect current valuation, property roll and increased tax base;

(iii) Support the functioning of district revenue mobilisation committees. The committee is made up of local stakeholders including non-state actors. The primary objective of the committee is to discuss and follow up on challenges with local revenue mobilization as well as monitoring effective implementation of MOUs on tax collection and sharing between local and chiefdom councils;

(iv) Organise inter-district revenue mobilisation committees dialogue fora to discuss progress, challenges and reforms required on local revenue mobilisation and management within their jurisdictions as well as share experiences;

(v) Prepare and roll out local councils' specific revenue mobilisation strategies. The strategy will provide a step-by-step action on how to mobilise internally generated revenues assigned for collection by local councils.

Medium-Term Expenditure Management and Control Measures

The Government remains committed to strengthening public expenditure management to create the fiscal space for spending on priority areas while avoiding the build-up of arrears and enhancing the credibility of the budget. To this end, the Government will sustain efforts to improve the integrity and sustainability of the payroll, continue with efforts to improve budget planning and execution, strengthen cash management, and improve the efficiency of the public investment programme.

Improving the Sustainability of the Wage Bill

Wages and salaries averaged 8.5 percent of GDP during 2021 and 2022 and are projected to decline slightly to eight percent of GDP in 2023. Current projections indicate that the wage bill will stabilize around 7.2 percent of GDP in the medium term. Government's objective is to stabilize the wage bill at 6.0 percent of GDP in the medium term. The transparency and reliability of the Government wage bill has improved in recent years following the implementation of several payroll reforms initiated in 2018. These include reconciliation of the inconsistencies between the employee dates of birth in the payroll database and NASSIT numbers; ensuring new employees brought into the payroll have valid National Identification Numbers (NIN), NASSIT Numbers and BBAN; timely removal from the payroll of public servants who have reached the retirement age of 60 years; and biometric verification of civil servants and pensioners.

While the implementation of these reforms has contributed to significantly improving the transparency and reliability of the Government wage bill, going forward, its sustainability remains a key challenge. To this end, Government with support from the Fiscal Affairs Department of the IMF, undertook a diagnostic study of the Government wage bill. The study identified several factors driving the increase in the wage bill and other challenges affecting the integrity of the wage including wage disparities. The study also made some recommendations, which will form part of the reforms to be implemented in the medium term. The key objective in the medium term is to achieve a government wage bill that is affordable and sustainable. Building on the ongoing reforms, the Government will undertake the following reforms: (i) Develop and implement a Medium-term Wage Bill Management Strategy that introduces additional reforms to strengthen payroll management. (ii) Operationalise the Wages and Compensation Commission following the enactment of Wages and Compensation Commission Act in April 2023. The aim is to have a central body.

Managing Public Debt

Multiple and successive shocks and policy slippages have heightened public debt vulnerability. Sierra Leone is assessed as a country with a high risk of both external and overall debt distress, but debt is sustainable on a forward-looking basis. Implementation of the fiscal consolidation measures mentioned above and lengthening the domestic debt maturity are critical to maintaining debt sustainability. The Government adopted an update Medium-Term Debt Strategy (MTDS) in October, committing therein to (i) stipulate new investment norms for institutional investors; (ii) strengthen communication with banks and non-banks on the MTDS; (iii) updated the auction procedure as proposed by IMF TA; (iv) reviewing the primary dealership agreements and have a performance threshold for the players; and (v) T-bond yields that better reflects market fundamentals. To take further action to address the challenging debt situation, Government will pursue the following actions:

(i) Limit domestic borrowing in line with program projections even after the program ends;

(ii) Limit external borrowing in line with program ceilings even after the program ends;

(iii) Continue to seek grant financing or borrow concessional loans to finance investments in key sectors of the economy, especially infrastructure;

(iv) Continue to introduce local medium- to long-term bonds to extend average remaining maturity, in line with the updated Medium-term Debt Strategy;

(v) Continue to explore non-debt-creating financing models such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) supported by thorough analyses of the potential fiscal risks;

(vi) Implement the updated Arrears Clearance Strategy;

(vii) Annually update and implement the Medium-term Debt Strategy to guide public debt management;

(viii) Continue to strengthen debt management and improve debt reporting and transparency through the regular publication of publicly guaranteed debt;

(ix) Take action through debt operations as needed to reduce the debt service burden over time; and

(x) With support from the African Development Bank, review the Debt Management Act and deploy a contract profiling tool for the effective management of contracts.

(B) Monetary and Exchange Rate Policies

The BSL uses a flexible money targeting monetary framework with reserve money as its intermediate target and broad money its operational target to meet its price stability mandate, and uses special deposit and special lending facilities to signal the stance of monetary policy. The BSL is committed to taking decisive action to bring inflation down**.** In this context**,** BSL will take action to slow base money growth—the BSL's operational target— to 27.2 percent at the end of 2023 by limiting liquidity provision, while the authorities will ensure that any BSL bridge loan to the Government is repaid in full before the end of the year. This will help anchor monetary growth to our projected inflation path over the medium term. To achieve this, the BSL will:

(i) Reduce purchases of government securities in the secondary market in H2-2023, by offsetting the higher-than-expected government securities purchases in H1 2023, with lower-than-expected net purchases in H2- 2023;

(ii) Continue to reduce base money growth in 2024 and over the medium term, including by reducing liquidity provision through net purchases of government securities in the secondary market;

(iii) Continue raising the policy rate as needed to achieve positive real rates over the course of the coming year to send a strong signal of our intention to bring down inflation;

(iv) Consider strategies to enable the use of our own instruments to support effective liquidity m anagement operations including reserve requirements and prudential guidelines;

(v) Improve communication to explain monetary policy decisions, past outcomes, and actions necessary to align inflation expectations with policy objectives. This will be designed to explain basic concepts of monetary policy clearly and easily understandably to stakeholders in the industry and the public. We are working towards publishing quarterly monetary policy reports and decisions in a timely manner; and

(vi) With technical assistance from the IMF, take actions to improve liquidity and inflation forecasting, and computation of the composite index of economic activity (CIEA).

BSL will also continue to strengthen transparency around the currency redenomination. BSL have submitted to parliament a detailed report on the currency redenomination process through end-June 2023 as part of the fulfilment of our reporting and transparency around the reform. BSL remain committed to ending legal tender status for old Leones by end-December 2023 but will allow extended period for the exchange for the new Leones. BSL is also committed to normalizing the BSL audit cycle and the FY 2022 financial audit is on track, including in addressing outstanding data issues with the external auditor. We are committed to recapitalize the BSL and to strengthen its ability to pursue its mandate of ensuring price and financial stability as soon as the audit of our FY 2022 financial statements is complete.

BSL is taking steps to protect our official foreign reserve buffers and support FX market development**.** BSL will continue to limit FX intervention to address excess volatility in case of very large temporary shocks. We

have terminated all temporary FX facilities that were aimed at increasing the supply of foreign exchange for essential imports during the multiple crisis period. We are, instead, planning to take steps to support FX market development, in line with recent Fund TA. These would include publishing the BSL FX reference rate on the day it is compiled; publishing the mid-rate only; simplifying the rules of FX interbank market; identifying market makers for the FX interbank market; and work towards conducting regular auctions to establish a reference rate going forward.

(C) Financial Sector Policies

The policy priorities for the financial sector in the medium-term will be to bolster resilience to minimize the realization and build-up of financial sector risk whilst seeking to enhance financial intermediation and financial inclusion through automation and branch expansion in rural communities. These goals will be achieved through a strategic commitment to modernize operational procedures and policy framework. The financial system which is dominated by the commercial banking system remained stable, profitable, liquid and adequately capitalized with all but two banks meeting all the soundness indicators.

Also, to meet its strategic mandate of preserving financial stability, BSL will continue to provide regulatory and supervisory oversight of the banking system using the risk-based supervision (RBS) approach. To this end, BSL plan to adopt the Basel 2 and Basel 3 frameworks within the next two years to further enhance confidence in banks' ability to perform their intermediation function with prudence and within a risk management culture. BSL is also working to maintain financial system stability and improve the regulatory and supervisory framework for the banking system**.** In this context, the Financial Policy Committee has been established and the first meeting held in September 2023. The Deposit Protection Fund (DPF) Unit has been established in the BSL and a 2-year work plan for launching the DPF Act has been drafted.

Going forward, and with the functioning of the FPC, the BSL is committed to developing macro-prudential instruments with the assistance of resident advisors and short-term experts where necessary**.** The BSL will also follow through on the recommendations of the FSSR and FSAP reports to strengthen the financial system, including finalizing the macro-prudential policy framework, and crisis management plan by the Charter of the FPC by March 2024, enhancing the operational capacity to implement the resolution framework for financial institutions per the Banking Act 2019, and establishing an Emergency Liquidity Assistance framework, building on recommendations from the recent FSSR. The new corporate governance guidelines for banks and financial holding companies, which have been approved, will become effective on 01 January 2024. The BSL will also (i) implement the Domestic Systemically Important Banks (DSIBs) framework for the banking system; and (ii) fully operationalize the Deposit Insurance Fund Act by end-September 2024. The central bank is also in the process of developing a formal directive for implementing the supervisory strategy to address high NPLs with the help of the IMF's Resident Advisor.

PART 2: THE BIG 5 GAME CHANGERS

1.1 The required nexus among the Big 5s to produce desired results by 2030

In compliance with the strategic principle of ensuring informed prioritisation and sequencing of interventions in the services delivery process, mindful of the increasingly scarce resources, GoSL has prioritised the Big Five Game Changers as the vehicle to economic transformation in Sierra Leone. The Big Five Game Changers have been conceived as integrated/interconnected catalysts and multipliers to produce the accelerated and transformative development desired for Sierra Leone by 2030 in the context of the crises the country is facing.

The flagship programme for the Big Five Game Changers for the next seven years is **Feed Salone.** Agriculture will be promoted as the main strategy that would propel the country's economic transformation, accelerate growth thus reducing, poverty hunger and under nutrition. The unprecedented reliance on the international market for the supply of the country's staple food, especially rice, had seen a large share of the national budget dedicated to support the importation of essential food items for which there has been enormous potential for domestic production. The depreciation of the local currency and the general rise in global prices had engendered rising local costs of these imported basic items, which in turn caused widespread upward pressure on the prices of other essential commodities, including non-food needs. Thus, placing Feed Salone at the highest pinnacle of the Government's 2024-2030 Agenda is crucially important.

Besides, achieving food and nutritional objectives under the flagship programme (Big 5.1) is imperative for achieving objectives and goals under the other Big Five Game Changers. with the Five Game Changers. Having a well-fed and nutritionally secure population cannot be overemphasised towards the production of a healthy population and a well-prepared child to go to school that is critical for the delivery of required human skills (Big 5.2) for increased economic productivity and generation of government revenue for investment in other Big 5 areas, such as in youth employment promotion (Big 5.3), communication, technology and infrastructure (Big 5.4) and in eventually producing capable manpower to effectively run and deliver results in the civil service (Big 5.5).

Furthermore, having Feed Salone as the flagship programme constitutes a frontier shift from the Government's *Human Capital Development* (HCD) flagship programme during the previous plan 2019-2023, which shall be scaled up during 2024-2030. The HCD has achieved a stabilised focus, which is continuing to see more than 20 percent of the national budget dedicated towards the education sector, from around 18.9 percent in 2018. This will be maintained while giving principal attention to Feed Salon in the current plan and maintaining minimum desired spending in the other Big Five Game Changers towards achieving the national goals and vision of the country.

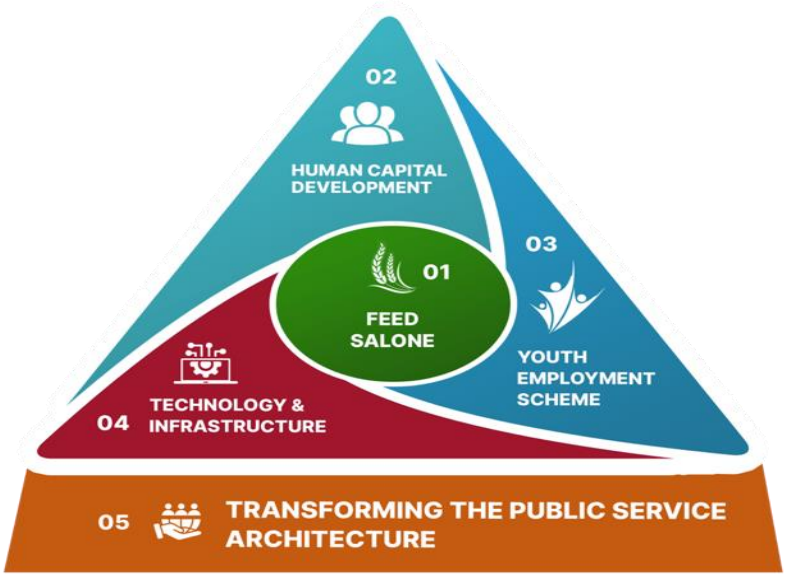


Figure 5.1: Nexus among the Big 5s

Strengthening digital services, energy supplies and road systems across the country under Big 5.4 (Technology and Infrastructure) is highly critical for propelling actions to deliver the national goal under Big 5.1 (Feed Salone), as well as actions to deliver the goal under Big 5.2 (Human Capital Development in terms of running efficient education and healthcare delivery systems, the effective inclusion of women and persons with disabilities in the growth process and service provision, and in advancing social protection and a resilient housing environment). It will generally enhance investment in other Big 5s (in 5.3 for accelerating access of youth to finance and employment opportunities, and hence curbing irregular migration and drug addiction), and in improved governance, public financial management and service delivery in the public sector (5.5).
Indeed, direct investment in youth empowerment (5.3) has widespread positive implications for driving the economy, including maintaining social stability and increased economic productivity, food availability and security (5.1), self-finance for education and participation in social protection/health insurance schemes (5.2), driving the digital revolution that is highly dependent on youth empowerment and inclusion (5.4), and in sustaining effectiveness of the public service through supply of an empowered and capable labour force that is dependent on optimal investment in the youth, upstream (5.5).

Finally, direct investment in human capital development (5.2) in its entirety (in education, health, water and sanitation, housing, gender and women empowerment, social protection and addressing child and disability issues) is generally at the fore of long-term socioeconomic transformation and development of the country through the impact this will have on the other Big 5s, including increased food security (5.1), youth empowerment (5.2), delivering widespread technology, innovation and physical infrastructure (5.4) and ensuring professionalized, capable and effective public sector for optimal delivery of goods and services (5.5).
The above nexus and interrelationships if well invested in, managed and coordinated can deliver the four broad National Goals by 2030, and will engender a secure, united, just, and peaceful society with an empowered population and diversified economy with advanced infrastructure, and with an income and multidimensional poverty of not more than 26.5 and 30 percent by 2030, respectively. This ultimately will increase the chances of the country becoming a green and inclusive middle-income country by 2039.

We now proceed to presenting the current development context and challenges surrounding service delivery under each of the Big 5s, and then define strategic objectives, targets and key policy actions going forward to pursuing delivery of planned results by 2030.

Big 5.1: Feed Salone

5.1.1 Accelerating productivity and commercialisation of the agricultural sector

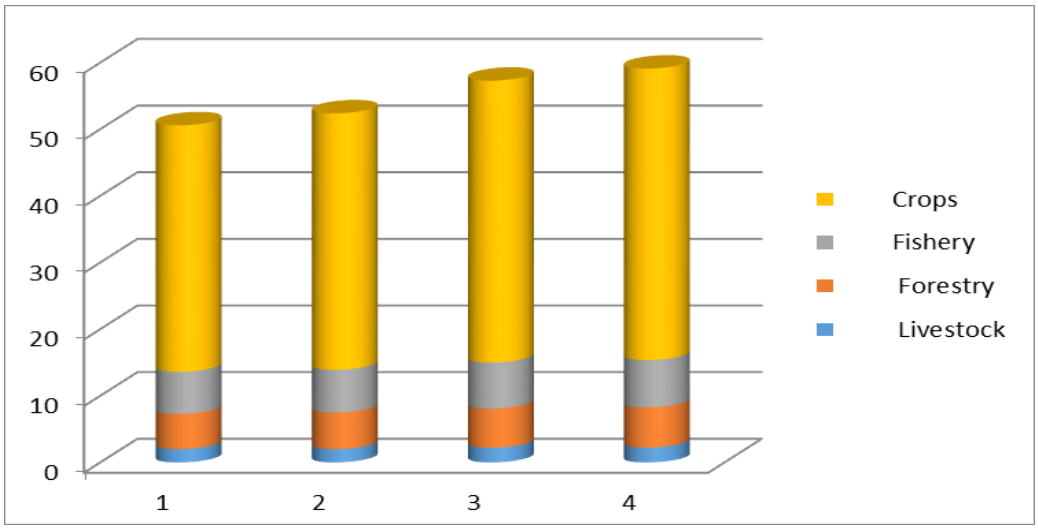
With its abundant domestic potential to supply the required food for the Sierra Leonean population and hence its expected leading role in generating revenue and stabilising the general price level in the economy, agriculture will be at the apex of driving the Government's FEED SALONE flagship programme. This programme will be the central driver of the state's Big 5 Game Changers for accelerated delivery of sustainable development in Sierra Leone for the next seven years covering 2024-2030.

Agriculture, including forestry and livestock, remains the mainstay of Sierra Leone's economy, accounting for more than 50 percent average share of the national GDP, and approximately 10 percent of the total export earnings. The sector directly contributes to the national economy by enhancing food security, income generation, employment (it employs approximately two-thirds of the labour force), wealth creation, and poverty reduction. It has the potential for industrial development and ensuring equitable distribution of resources, and has been enormously crucial in recovering the economy in the face of crises and economic downturns.

The country is blessed with a tropical climate, abundant rainfall, vast fertile land, and multiple rivers with great irrigation potential that could collectively support the production of enough food to meet local

consumption as well as export needs. Its vast arable land can support the cultivation of a variety of crops, including the staple rice of the nation, cassava, maize, cashew, groundnut, rubber, ginger, vegetables, fruits, and cash crops. As shown in the figure below, the sector is dominated by crop cultivation, representing about 44 percent of agricultural output in 2022, followed by fishing with seven percent contribution, forestry with six percent, and livestock accounting for only 2.2 percent. Traditionally, rice dominates the crop contribution to GDP with an average of over 20 percent in the last five years, followed by cassava at 9. 2 percent. The key drivers of the value-added growth within the crop sub-sector in 2022 were Rice, Ground nut, Maize, Fruit Vegetables, Sweet Potatoes and other crops (including cash crops).

Figure 5.2 Composition of Agricultural Output in 2022



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2022

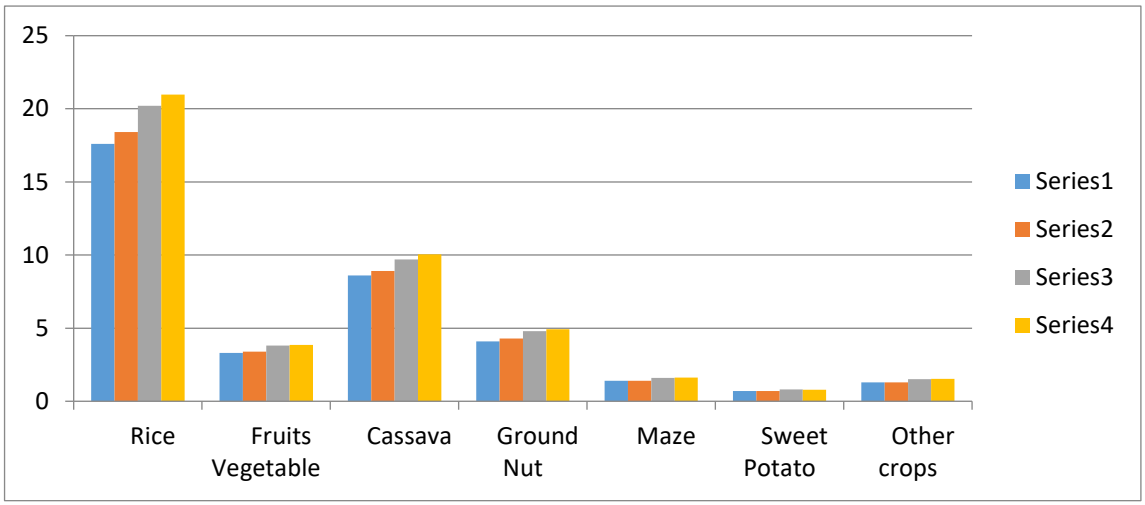
Table 5.1: Production Trends of Selected Crops 2019-2025

Crop/Year	Production in metric tons (Mt)									
	Crops (Cereal, Legumes, Tree crop and Tubers and Cash Crops)									
	Rice	Maize	Chilli Pepper	Oil Palm	G/Nut	Cassava	Sweet Potatoes	Cocoa	Coffee	Cashew
2019/2020 (NASS Survey)	947,464	38,685	19,604	1,413,461	184,042	1,160,121	221,580	14,648	99,263	1,570
2020/2021 (Projection)	1,049,795	26,549	82,919	997,941	77,685	2,143,953	263,140	52,678	111,755	1,610
2021/2022 (Projection)	1,504,191	20,449	76,513	2,383,448	109,934	2,527,291	331,964	54,001	104,309	1,650
2022/2023 (Yield Survey)	1,396,900	22,545	127,042	3,162,900	73,561	2,171,412	254,743	55,356	106,927	1,692
2023/2024 (Projection)	1,536,590	24,800	139,746	3,479,190	80,917	2,388,553	280,217	56,746	109,611	1,734
2024/2025 (Projection)	1,767,079	28,520	160,708	4,001,069	93,055	2,746,836	322,250	65,257	126,053	1,994

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security

As the largest economic sector in the country which contributes more than 50 percent to the GDP, it is plausible to note that economic growth and poverty reduction in Sierra Leone will only be sustained with developments in the agricultural sector. As the sector expands, it will stimulate growth in other sectors through increased demand for tools and chemicals, as well as providing raw materials for agro-based industries. Also, it will generate employment along the agricultural value chain of input supply, production, agro-processing and marketing, including exportation. Figure 5.3 below crop contribution to the GDP in 2022.

Figure 5.3: Crop contribution to the GDP



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2022

Notwithstanding the potential and opportunities for transforming the economy of Sierra Leone, studies have shown that about 80 percent of the food consumed in Sierra Leone is imported, with 75 percent of the country's arable land still uncultivated; Table 5.2 below, showing acute food insecurity in the country despite the enormous potential in agriculture. The sector is dominated by subsistence farming, further constrained by a lack of access to finance, the use of crude implements, and large post-harvest loss. These challenges have over the years prevented the sector from reaching its potential and rendered it uncompetitive. Food insecurity and vulnerability are increasingly taking center stage in national development discourse. Based on the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), food insecurity increased from 57 percent in 2020 to 73 percent in 2022, with severe food insecurity estimated to have dropped from 12 percent to 11 during the same period. Although the worsening food security situation could be partly attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout, this calls for a policy rethink to develop a resilient agricultural sector.

Table 5.2: Food Security by Population

District	% food insecure	2020 Population	Food insecure Population 2020
Bo	56%	635,374	397,850
Bombali	58%	504,775	325,248
Bonthe	71%	236,170	187,311
Falaba	69%	248,644	190,678
Kailahun	60%	625,173	411,693
Kambia	46%	385,185	193,982
Karene	62%	340,781	238,324
Kenema	71%	666,793	527,571
Koinadugu	46%	247,029	123,640
Kono	55%	606,918	367,407
Moyamba	66%	348,312	256,269
Port Loko	52%	609,466	347,641
Pujehun	67%	520,958	392,245
Tonkolili	57%	622,339	389,040
Western Area Rural	25%	515,031	139,279
Western Area Slum	33%	150,000	54,735
Western Area Urban	16%	1,212,313	210,336
Rural	61%	4,899,591	3,304,230
Urban	39%	3,402,245	1,449,017
Total	**57.3%**	**8,301,836**	**4,753,247**

The previous MTNDP 2019-2023 was therefore pursued with the objective of improving performance in the sector as a basis for moving up the value chain into industrial agriculture activities. In the course of implementing the plan, notable progress was made toward the targets of improving the productivity and commercialization of the agricultural sector. A highlight of these achievements includes: annual national rice self-sufficiency increased from 61 percent in 2018 to 75 percent in 2022; increased rice yield from a national average of 1.1 ton/ha to 1.78 tons /ha; Procured and provided 410 tractors and power tiller to establish 15 machine Rings in a Public Private Partnership model; Provided $10 million Agriculture Credit Facility at a single digit interest rate to the private sector; Developed a 30,000 ha irrigation schemes in the main rice cultivation regions of the country; enacted the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) Act 2023; and expanded mechanization to quickly boost local food production during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While these laudable achievements and progress were made in the implementation of this plan, huge **challenges** remain. Among the many remaining and emerging challenges are the limited and slow growth of mechanization services in the sector, despite the establishment of 15 machine rings; weak human capacity; poor access to finance, including financial services for agriculture; climate change and seasonal variability disrupting the farming calendar; high food insecurity poor access to farm implements and improved seedlings; limited extension delivery services; poor road network and access to the market; lack of value addition services; and weak sector coordination, especially the coordination of food and nutrition security activities. Food and nutrition insecurity mitigation is another major challenge that has plagued the sector for years. Furthermore, as the Government embarks on proactive measures to increase yields, strengthening food markets, and improving calorie consumption, challenges remain.

An important opportunity is the policy shift of the Government to prioritize agriculture as the flagship state initiative called 'Feed Salone,' with great emphasis on national development policy on supporting agriculture and fishery. There is increased recognition of the need to have economic diversification as the nerve center of Sierra Leone's socioeconomic transformation agenda and attainment of meaningful poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Accordingly, this new MTNDP 2024-2030 will be focused on consolidating gains in the previous MTNDP 2019-2023, while accelerating programme implementation to overcome the plethora of challenges facing the economy, including the acute food insecurity. It will be highly focused on achieving strategic welfare and general socioeconomic targets at all levels of the population, expected to propel other sectors in the Government's Big Five Game Changer such as human capital development and youth employment.
More specifically, the National Feed Salone Strategy will inform the new Plan's strategic direction to be pursued for meeting food self-sufficiency and security in the country during 2024-2030. The strategic agricultural approach in implementing the Feed Salone strategy[14] involves channeling investments into districts with the highest potential for success and growth by leveraging each district's comparative advantage while also introducing synergistic value chains, and a blended financing model, where the Government combines its own resources and that of the partners to attract private capital. Generally, ***six strategic pillars*** have been articulated in the Feed Salone strategy, as follows:

1. Mechanization and irrigation by expanding rice production areas including inland valley swamps and irrigated rice fields;
2. Seed and input systems using research to ensure high quality inputs for optimal yields for key value chains;
3. Aggregation, processing and market linkages by streamlining processes for maximized profitability;
4. Agricultural finance – tailoring financial instruments and solutions for the sector's unique needs, especially for women and youth;

[14] Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2023). Feed Salone Strategy: A Blueprint for agricultural Transformation in Sierra Leone, 2023 – 2028.

5. Ag-tech and climate smart agriculture through leveraging of technology, supporting agricultural research, promoting digitalization and building robust data systems to inform decisions while safe guarding against climate change;
6. Empowerment of women and youth by ensuring their indispensable role in agricultural development is reflected and elevated across all strategic pillars.

The strategic direction for increased agricultural productivity and achieving food self-sufficiency and security has accordingly been defined within the foregoing general policy direction for Feed Salone as follows.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to promote self-sustenance in key staples, boost export earnings, create new job opportunities and generate income, alleviate hunger and malnutrition, improve climate resilience techniques in crop production and boost productivity in livestock and fish for increased commercialization in the agriculture sector.

Table 5.3: Key Targets for Big 5.1.1 Agriculture

Key Targets	Baseline	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
By 2028, the land cultivated for rice production increased to at least 40 percent	554,401 Hectares in 2023 (MAFS)	586,081 Ha	617,761 Ha	649,441 Ha	681,121 Ha	712,801 Ha	744,481 Ha	776,161 Ha
Increased rice yields by 2028	1.9MT in 2023	2.32 MT	2.74 MT	3.16 MT	3.58 MT	4.0 MT	-	-
Overall Improvement in the Global Food security index (GFSI)	40.5 in 2022	41.6	43.0	44.4	45.8	47.2	48.6	50.0
By 2030, the import value of key staple food (rice, poultry, onions and flour) reduced from $500 million in 2023 to at most $67 million	$ 500 M in 2023	$ 438.14 M	$ 376.28 M	$ 314.42 M	$ 252.56 M	$ 190.70 M	$ 128.84 M	$ 67.0 M

Key policy actions

1. Introduce and deliver functional irrigation systems that support year-round cultivation in key production zones
2. Introduce modern agricultural machines to facilitate and enhance large-scale farming
3. Build a sustainable pipeline of high-quality seeds for targeted value chains and develop systems for delivering other inputs such as fertiliser and agro-chemicals
4. Support and link research efforts at SLARI to the Feed Salone Programme
5. Support aggregation, processing, and market linkages for farmers

6. Establish and implement home-grown institutional feeding programmes and commodity boards and co-operatives for cash crops and rice and other staples
7. Promote agricultural financing to address access to finance challenges for both smallholders and large-scale farmers
8. Promote Agriculture Technologies (AgTech) and Climate Smart Agriculture to make farming practices more efficient, sustainable, and resilient
9. Build resilience in farming communities through Women and Youths in Agriculture.

5.1.2 Accelerating productivity and sustainable management of fisheries and the marine sector

Given Sierra Leone's huge marine assets and the importance of fish in the country's diet, the fisheries and marine resources sector remains a critical part of the Sierra Leone economy and future. Rich in minerals and vitamins, fish is an important part of a healthy diet and provides animal protein for over 80 percent of the Sierra Leonean population. Sierra Leoneans are among the highest consumers of fish, with average per capita consumption of around 22.6kg of fish per year.[15] Therefore, the sector is especially critical to the achievement of the objectives of the Government's Feed Salone flagship programme in its Big Five Game Changers for accelerated economic transformation during 2024-2030.

The fisheries sector currently contributes about 12 percent to Sierra Leone's GDP, contributing an average annual revenue of NLe100 million (100 million new leones). Its huge revenue potential continues to provide prospects for sustained investment in the sector for the supply of dietary requirement of the population, besides contributing to the overall budget of the state towards financing other development sectors and programmes. In 2018 and 2019, when the local currency was relatively strong, the generated revenues in the sector estimated $11 million (Old Le96.6 billion) and $10 million (Le100.5 billion old Leones), respectively. During the global COVID-19 pandemic, revenues dipped badly, estimating NLe86.7 million ($ 8.8 million) in 2020; slightly dropping further to NLe86.3 million ($ 8.76 million) in 2021, NLe102.4 million ($10.39 million) in 2022, and NLe82.0 million ($8.32 million) in 2023 (as at September). Given inflation and exchange rate changes, this gives an average foreign exchange earnings of $5 to 6 million per annum during 2018-2023.

The sector employs about 1,000,000 people (approximately 14 percent of the total population of Sierra Leone). In yield, the country produces 150,000 metric tons per annum. The fisheries and marine resources sector in Sierra Leone include fisheries biomass such as Shrimps, Demersal Finfish, Pelagic and Tuna Fishery, which are caught from marine and riparian sources, as well as land and aquaculture. About 45 percent of the total annual fish produced is sold in local markets in Sierra Leone.

Throughout the implementation of the last national development plan, MTNDP 2019-2023, Sierra Leone made important improvements and reforms to strengthen the sector, even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global fiscal crisis, Sierra Leone's currency crisis, and the war in Ukraine. It improved its monitoring and surveillance to reduce illicit fishing and improved the license scheme to help formalise the sector. Supportive infrastructure was built, including cold rooms (which reduce post-harvest fish loss and help the product meet required standards for export) and six commercial fish farms. Assessments and surveys were conducted to understand boundaries and sustainability in the marine sector. The Fisheries and Regulations Act 2021 was enacted an Aquaculture and Inland Fisheries and Regulatory Framework developed to advance effectiveness and efficiency in the operations of the sector. Over the course of this period, the share of GDP from fishing increased by 4.0 percent. The Government also secured a $55 million grant from the Chinese Government to construct a fish-harbour and ancillary structure.

These achievements lay the foundation for the next national development plan for the acceleration of outcome in the marine and fisheries sector during 2024-2030, as this sector is key for the delivery of the **FEED SALONE initiative** for food and nutrition security, under the Government's **Big Five Game Changers**. It also has an important role to play in the YES (Youth Employment Scheme) initiative and in the human capital

[15] This is above the average consumption of 11.2kg for the rest of West Africa, and the global average of 20 kg.

development drive of the state, articulated in the B5.2 and 5.3 Sections below. For instance, within the youth sector, during 2019-2023, a total of 70 new fishing boats with accessories were provided to the 7.0 coastal districts of Sierra Leone, which generated 1,400 male and female direct beneficiaries engaged in fisheries. Incomes generated from these activities will be highly critical for these individuals in financing skills training for off-farm employment and in support of child schooling. Over the *next seven years*, TVET programmes in marine and fisheries (covering aquaculture, fishing and sustainable resource management, among others) will be pursued, besides boosting areas such as tourism and trade; while investment in the sector is scaled up through private capital mobilisation. This will be achieved through legal and governance reforms, creating incentives for industrial fishing, commercialisation of aquaculture and building capacities, reduction of illegal fishing and supporting infrastructure development to create processing zones.

Nonetheless, there have been key remaining/emerging **challenges** from 2019-2023 impacted the implementation of the Plan' goals and objectives across sectors, including the marine and fisheries sector. This collectively led to constrained fiscal environment of the Government to allocate its budget. The recent outbreak of war in Israel and Palestine may further exacerbate the petroleum price hikes and global economic downturn.

Some of the specific challenges created in this context include: increased petroleum costs due to the Ukraine/Russia war increased overhead investment costs for fishing companies and artisanal fishing operations, leading to a reduction in fish production, an increase in fish prices and reduction in revenue generation; fishing companies are unable to settle debts from fines and licenses that accrued during the Covid-19 pandemic and have requested for waiver; inadequate budget allocation and late disbursement of funds to the sector for implementation of fisheries management programmes; and data limitations constrained the sector from implementing the quota management licensing system. Money from revenues generated was not retained by the sector, which would have been used to enhance service delivery, especially given the late disbursement of government funds.

There is no insurance for seagoing staff; and no roadworthy operational vehicles, thus limiting the provision of extension services across fishing communities; and the absence of a fish harbour complex remains a problem for the effective implementation of shore-based fish processing and dry-docking activities in the fish value chain. Tuna fishing vessels could not be inspected at ports due to the absence of fishing harbours. As the crew on SIK are not on government payroll but on contract, the demand for a transition scheme is very high for newly trained and qualified crew to replace the retired crew. There is an inadequate quantity of pelleted or formulated aquaculture feeds for fish farmers, highly demanding technology transfer to produce feed. Finally, there is an inadequate number of extension workers to enhance proper fishpond management and fish farming.

Critical issues to serve as lesson going forward with the development of the sector include: the concern that some of the levies for offences against the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act and regulations were considered very exorbitant by the industrial fishing Companies, which should seriously be looked into for enhanced and sustained operations in the sector in support of Feed Salone and government's Big 5s in general. In particular, the fine of $1,500,000 for incursions of fishing trawlers into the inshore exclusion zone (IEZ) has been impossible to settle by fishing Companies (indeed, it is more than the cost of a new fishing trawler). To attract fisheries investment and increase revenues, government has been considering requests from fishing companies with regard to the possibility of granting waiver for bad debts accrued during the COVID-19 era.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to scale up production and industrial processing of fisheries and other marine products.

Table 5.4: Key Targets for Big 5.1.2 Fisheries & Marine Products

Key Targets	Baseline	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
By 2030, industrial catch increased to 150,000 MT	122,000 MT in 2023	126,000 MT	130,000 MT	134,000 MT	138,000MT	142,000MT	146,000MT	150,000 MT
By 2030, revenue generation increased from to NLe 150 million	NLe105 Million in 2023	111.43 M	117.86 M	124.29 M	130.72 M	137.15 M	143.58 M	NL150 M
By 2030, certification for export of fish to EU and China market obtained	0	_	1	1	--	_	_	-

Key policy actions

1. Improve surveillance and monitoring of industrial and artisanal fishing activities
2. Support official control inspections for fish processing plants and customs border points
3. Ensure fish biomass is maintained at not less than 400,000 MT
4. Scale-up communication and sensitisation on illegal fishing
5. Improve data collection and management on fisheries operations
6. Mobilize private sector investors along the value chain to promote market for fish and create fish processing zones along the coast.
7. Review and amend the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act of 2018 and regulations of 2019
8. Support artisanal fishing operations, with emphasis on the development of women and youth Fish Farmer Groups across the country
9. Support the construction of Industrial Fish Harbour Complexes across relevant locations in the country
10. Incorporate practical fish farming activities in schools across the country.

5.1.3 Availability, access and consumption of diverse, safe and nutritious foods

The central focus of the Feed Salone Programme is making food, especially the country's main staples, accessible to and affordable by all. The fundamental objective in this regard is to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition through promoting sustainable agriculture and national food systems. A special focus under this policy area is to address childhood malnutrition, which can have long-lasting effects on the growth and educational achievements of the child, making nutrition a core dimension of human capital development. The measure of malnutrition on which policy has generally been focused *estimates the percentage of children under-five who are classified as stunted, wasted, or underweight.*

Addressing maternal nutrition is also essential under this policy areas with respect to improving maternal and child health outcomes. Malnourished mothers are more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and their infants are at higher risk of low birth weight and stunted growth. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to improve maternal health and nutrition in Sierra Leone. Sustained efforts are therefore needed to enhance access to quality maternal healthcare services, promote nutrition education, and address the underlying social and economic factors that affect

During the implementation of the last MTNDP 2019-2023, the Government made laudable efforts towards improving nutrition related indicators in the relevant sectors, including agriculture, health, education, and social protection. On the institutional front, the Government scaled up support for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Secretariat in the office of the Vice President to accelerate the coordination of implementation of projects and programmes aimed at boosting nutrition in the country. According to Sierra Leone's 2019 DHS survey, the proportion of *stunting* children in the country under the age of five decreased from 38 percent in 2013 to 23 percent in 2023[16]; *wasted* children decreased from nine to five percent; and *underweight* decreased from 16 to 14 percent during the same period. Exclusive breastfeeding for children under 6 months increased by 30 percent from 2013 to 2019; while those aged 6-23 months breastfed increased from 7 to 9 percent during the same period. Anaemic children aged 6-59 months reduced from 80 percent in 2013 to 68 percent in 2019. [17] Figures 5.4 and 5.5 present distribution of incidence of stunting, wasting, underweight for different ages of children from 0 to 58 months (Figure 5.4) and incidence across the 16 districts of Sierra Leone (Figure 5.5) in 2019. Figure 5.4 suggests that the incidence of stunting takes peak when a child is 18 to 19 months old, while risks of wasting and underweight peak at nine to 10 months. Figure 5.5 shows the distribution of anaemia, comparing rural and urban settlements, with the former showing the highest risk, for mild, moderate, as well as for severe anaemia. These distributions across ages and residential locals are critical in guiding policy and planning going forward.

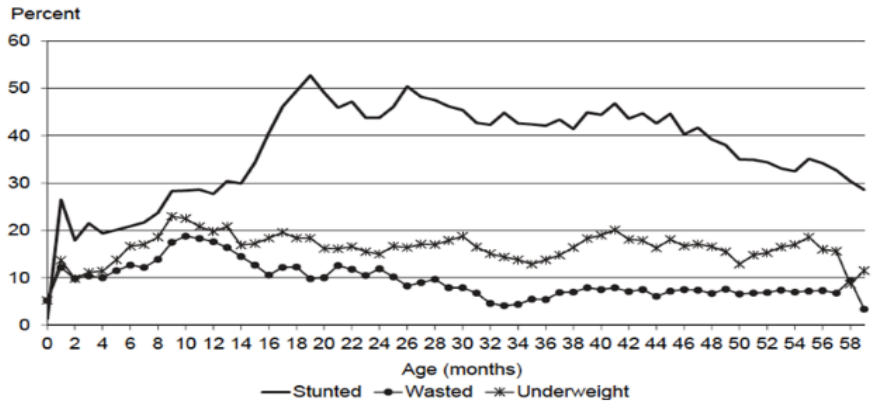


Figure 5.4: Nutritional status of children by age

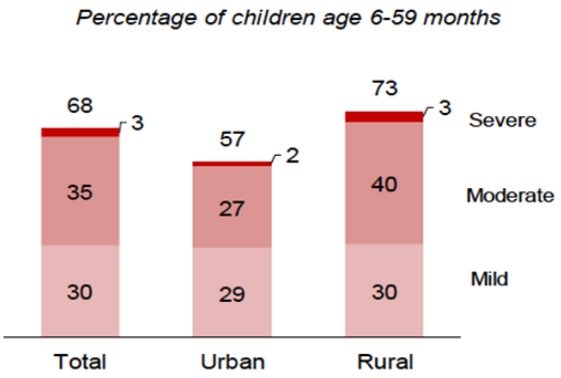


Figure 5.5: Childhood anaemia by residence

[16] From 38 percent in 2013 (DHS2013 survey) to 23 percent (WFP Survey 2023).

[17] See Sierra Leone's DHS 2019, pages 227-240 for details on progress made in advancing nutritional outcomes during MTNDP 2019-2023.

The proportion of women aged 15-49 who are *thin* decreased from nine percent in 2013 and seven percent in 2019; those *overweight* or *obese* decreased from 18 to 28 percent; while those found anaemic slightly increased from 45 to 47 percent during the same period, those taking iron supplementation for 90 days or more slightly decreasing from 30 to 28 percent, but with those taking deworming medication during pregnancy increasing from 72 to 84 percent during 2013-2019. Concerning water and sanitation as a determinant of nutrition, 67 percent of households had access to improved source of drinking water (92 percent urban, 49 percent rural); and 55 percent used improved sanitation facility (84 percent urban, 33 percent rural).[18]

A key **challenge** to address going forward into the implementation of the MTNDP 2024-2030 is the unequal distribution of nutrition-related interventions in the country, with the rural population (especially children and women) appearing remarkably underserved, compared to the urban population. Institutionally, far more is needed to be done in improving nutrition-related governance capacity and service delivery at subnational/district level than at the national level. Generally, budgetary allocations to scaling up nutrition interventions are inadequate, while more is also needed on the data and information front, as well as sectoral and partner coordination for better delivery of nutritional outcomes in the country.

Opportunities to leverage going forward with the pursuit of national nutritional objectives is the availability of political will to support the implementation of the relevant programmes, noting the continued role of the Office of the Vice President where the *SUN Secretariat* is located. This arrangement can be complemented and reinforced through the launch of the *national sustainable agrifood systems transition initiative* and establishment of a *presidential initiative on climate change, renewable energy and food security*. And there is a Multi-Sector Strategic Plan to Reduce Malnutrition in Sierra Leone 2019-2025 that can be rolled-out, which is strongly aligned to Sierra Leone's National Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan 2019-2025; the Malabo Declaration; the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy 2015-2025, the UN SDGs and The UN Global Strategy for Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health 2016-2030.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to increase access to and consumption of diverse, safe and nutritious foods for sustainable reduction of malnutrition, especially for women and children.

Table 5.5: Key Targets for Big 5.1.3 Nutrition

Key Targets	Base-line	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
By 2030, the prevalence of stunted children under 5 years of age reduced to 9 percent	23% in 2021	21%	19%	17%	15%	13%	11%	9%
By 2030, the prevalence of wasting among children under 5 years of age reduced to 3.1 percent	5.2% in 2021	4.9	4.6	4.3	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.1%
By 2030, the prevalence of underweight among children under 5 years of age reduced to 6.1 percent	11% in 2021	10.3 %	9.6%	8.9%	8.2%	7.5%	6.8%	6.1%
By 2030, anaemia in women of child-bearing age reduced to 30.4 percent	47.0% in 2019	44.6 %	42.2 %	39.8 %	37.4 %	35.0 %	32.6 %	30.2%

[18] See Sierra Leone's DHS 2019, pages 49-52 for details on progress made in advancing nutritional outcomes during MTNDP 2019-2023.

Key policy action

1. Support research and monitoring of nutritional status, dietary practices and patterns of physical activities for women and children, with special attention to school pupils
2. Scale-up policy advocacy to increase the mainstreaming of nutrition in sectoral programmes
3. Promote counselling on antenatal care, intrapartum and postpartum care, including breastfeeding, newborn health, and immunisation for mother
4. Develop national food system pathways to improve food and nutrition security
5. Promote integrated food systems and capacity-building along food production, processing, marketing and consumption value chains
6. Undertake public nutrition education on healthy foods and diets
7. Improve access to quality curative nutrition services

Box 5.1 below presents a critical workstream of the ***Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Food Security*** to support national, sectoral and local efforts to bolstering food and nutrition systems by enhancing productivity and green agricultural transformation. The box presents clear *goals* and *specific actions* of the Initiative to provide support in this area.

Box 5.1: Presidential Initiative—Bolstering food and nutrition systems by enhancing productivity and green agricultural transformation

Goals

1. A Climate-Smart Productivity Enhancement and Food Systems program developed by 2024
2. At least 30% of smallholder farmers would have received adequate incentives and have been applying climate-smart and good agricultural practices (including livestock development) by 2030
3. By 2030, 50% of households practicing sustainable land management for food production
4. By 2030, four Green Integrated Agro-food Parks are established in partnership with private sector, propelled by Direct Foreign Investment as part of the strategy of government to promote food security, reduce GHC emissions & enhance resilience of food systems
5. At least two private sector firms are investing in the production, processing, and marketing of nutritious, fortified foods by 2030
6. By 2030 at least 50% of smallholder women in the horticulture value chains are supported to access technologies that ensures better quality produce, reduce wastage and increase their income and profit margins.
7. At least 50% of Green Home-Grown School Feeding interventions are using clean cooking solutions
8. A viable strategic grain reserves system established with relevant national coordination systems, ensuring food security and price stabilization by 2030

Specific actions

1. Establish Food and Nutrition Security Network in collaboration with MAF and other MDAs and development partners to serve as a platform for data, information and knowledge sharing.
2. Support formulation of policy and regulatory framework for the food systems program, including nutritious foods safety standards and commercialization
3. Develop a framework for food processing companies to efficiently produce and responsibly market safe and nutritious food at affordable prices
4. Develop a framework to increase profitability of smallholder farmers
5. Organize workshops, training sessions, and educational programs for stakeholders at various levels, from farmers to policymakers, ensuring a cohesive approach to food sovereignty.
6. Advocate for Local Actions to promote food and nutrition security.

Big 5.2: Human Capital Development

5.2.1 Accelerating and expanding free quality basic and senior secondary education

The Government of Sierra Leone, determined to advance human capital development and reducing by half the learning poverty rate by 2030, committed a total of 22 percent of its annual budget to education. This investment in education was channelled through the Free Quality School Education (FQSE), the Radical Inclusion programmes, and Foundational Learning (FL) which led to the remarkable increase and improvements in gross enrolment rate, transition, and completion numbers and rates at all levels of the education system over a relatively short period of time.

From the table below, between 2017 to 2022, pre-primary school GERs have doubled and the senior secondary school GERs have more than trebled, while primary GER are above 100 percent, owing to the fact that many children enter P1/Class 1 in Sierra Leone primary schools under and above the official entry age of 6 years. The vast difference in girls GER for JSS and SSS during 2020-2022 was as a result of the Radical Inclusion programme.

Table 5.6: Gross enrolment rate for all levels of schooling

Level	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Preschool	11.3 %	12.5 %	13.0 %	15.0 %	18.3 %	20.3 %	19.5 %	21.6 %	23.0 %	25.0 %	24.0 %	26.0 %
Primary	118.0 %	119.9 %	107.0 %	109.0 %	137.0 %	140.2 %	134.9 %	139.0 %	149.0 %	154.0 %	152.0 %	162.0 %
JSS	56.1 %	55.7 %	56.0 %	55.0 %	77.0 %	76.7 %	77.4 %	78.5 %	95.0 %	98.0 %	102.0 %	110.0 %
SSS	28.2 %	25.0 %	32.0 %	28.0 %	58.5 %	54.5 %	60.7 %	57.5 %	73.0 %	72.0 %	84.0 %	90.0 %

Approximately 52 percent of the total national population is in the age range three to 24 years, and over 74 percent are enrolled in basic and secondary education. Poverty, coupled with food insecurity contributed significantly to the out-of-school children from the 2019 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Report. Therefore, school feeding plays an important role in the enrolment and retention rates in primary school. From the table below, in 2019, inflation and partner withdrawals from the programmes led to a fall in the number of schools that benefited from the School Feeding. However, the Government interventions resulted in 1,545 schools being added to the programme from 2019 to 2022.

Primary Schools Benefiting from School Feeding - 2017:2022						
Level	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Primary	2,344	2,894	1,037	1,376	1,437	2,582

Radical Inclusion Programme

The Radical Inclusion programme contributed to the enrolment of pupils with disability at all levels of schooling. From the table below, increase in enrolment for People with Disabilities (PWDs) for boys is 72 percent and girl's 87 percent from 2017 to 2019, while the junior and senior secondary levels showed increases in excess of 200 percent between 2017 and 2022 for both boys and girls.

Table 5.7: Enrolment of pupils with disabilities 2017-2022

Enrolment of Pupils with Disability by Level of Schooling														
Level	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		% Increase in Enrol. 2017 - 22	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Preschool	692	523	627	617	1038	1017	773	715	530	525	893	870	29%	66%
Primary	10,396	9,212	12,811	10,965	17,186	15,130	14,551	13,059	8,315	8,182	14,162	13,621	36%	48%
JSS	1,638	1,480	1,976	1,804	5,555	5,087	4,873	4,413	3,600	3,486	5,530	5,154	238%	248%
SSS	598	483	620	551	1553	1399	1679	1481	1468	1262	2331	2231	290%	362%
All	**13,324**	**11,698**	**16,034**	**13,937**	**25,332**	**22,633**	**21,876**	**19,668**	**13,913**	**13,455**	**22,916**	**21,876**	**72%**	**87%**

The Radical Inclusion policy allowed girls to continue with their schooling during and after pregnancy. In 2022 alone a total of 1,289 girls at various stages of pregnancy were enrolled in school. Additionally, the integration of *child and adolescent health and life skills* into the education curriculum in 2022 will empower learners with age-appropriate knowledge and skills necessary to prevent pregnancies, STIs and other reproductive health issues. This will be complemented by enhanced linkages to sexual and reproductive health services through the implementation of the school-Health Policy.

Table 5.8: Pregnant Girls in School

Level	2020	2021	2022
Primary	111	93	73
Junior Secondary	547	536	693
Senior Secondary	389	321	523
Total	1,047	950	1,289

The increases in enrolment shown below could only be accomplished with the increasing availability of schools and classrooms. The table below shows the change in the number of schools by level between 2017 and 2022. From the table, 781 pre-primary schools were established due to MBSE's investment in Early Childhood Education and Development (ECE&D) through the establishment new pre-primary schools and facilities in communities that are under-served or lacking, providing needed TLMs and teachers/facilitators. Primary schools increased most in number **(1036)** but increases in pre-primary junior secondary and senior secondary schools were remarkable with the latter more than doubling in number **(930)**. The indications are that demand for post-basic education is increasing at a tremendous rate. Primary schools increased most in number but increases in pre-primary junior secondary and senior secondary schools were remarkable with the latter more than doubling in number. The indications are that demand for post-basic education is increasing at a tremendous rate.

Table 5.9: Number of Schools by Level 2017 - 2022

Level	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Increases 2017:2022
Pre-Primary	1,218	1,633	1,758	1,756	1,984	1,999	781
Primary	6,422	7,002	7,154	7,020	7,429	7,458	1,036
Junior Secondary	1,217	1,531	1,633	1,600	1,931	2,079	862
Senior Secondary	401	581	623	658	824	930	529

External Exams

The increase in the number sitting and passing the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) can be considered as the outcome/impact of the FQE problem launched as the flagship program in the concluded MTNDP (2018-2023). The passing rate for boys and girls declined to its lowest in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic causing the closure of schools leading to complete obstruction of the academic calendar. In 2023,

NPSE pass rates are at the highest with 82 percent for boys and 81 percent for girls, which could increase intake pressure at the junior secondary level.

Table 5.10: NPSE Candidates Sitting and Passing by Sex 2018:2023

Year	Male Sat/Rel	Female Sat/Rel	Male Pass	Female Pass	Male Pass Rate	Female Pass Rate
2018	61,496	61,898	49,375	48,351	80 percent	78 percent
2019	68,134	68,392	52,542	50,991	77 percent	75 percent
2020	72,778	73,775	55,401	53,273	76 percent	72 percent
2021	79,438	81,876	62,024	62,517	78 percent	76 percent
2022	79,478	82,319	65,152	66,281	82 percent	81 percent
2023	80,045	83,640	65,281	67,848	82 percent	81 percent

Also, from the table below, the number of passes for male and female increased in 2018 due to the commencement of the FQE program. However, it fell in 2019 and 2020 due to the impact of covid-19 but increased in 2022 to 89percent for boys and 87percent for girls.

Table 5.11: Pass Rate for Basic Education Certificate Examination by Sex 2018-2022

Year	Male Sat/Rel	Female Sat/Rel	Male Passes	Female Passes	Male Pass Rate	Female Pass Rate
2018	45,063	44,933	33,429	31,166	74 percent	69 percent
2019	55,383	55,023	26,580	24,405	48 percent	44 percent
2020	66,603	66,600	47,079	44,937	71 percent	67 percent
2021	65,738	65,745	52,391	51,232	80 percent	78 percent
2022	62,936	64,953	55,789	56,342	89 percent	87 percent

The table below shows the number of individuals who perform well at the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and qualify for entry to first-degree programs. From the table below, the passes in WASSCE have been increasing tremendously in the last few years, with passes in five (5) credits including English and mathematics increasing from 3.19 percent in 2019 to 58.10 percent in 2022.

Table 5.12: Candidates Sitting and Obtaining University Requirements in WASSCE 2019:2022

Year	Entry	Sat	5+ at Cred or Above - With Math and ELang	5+ at Cred or Above - With Math and/or ELang	percent 5+ at Cred or Above - With Math and ELang	percent 5+ at Cred or Above - With Math and/or ELang
2019	105,685	102,621	724	3,156	0.70percent	3.10percent
2020	151,741	151,515	2,144	5,775	1.40percent	3.80percent
2021	164,458	156,231	21,430	51,748	13.70percent	33.10percent
2022	206,784	186,695	37,592	108,418	20.10percent	58.10percent

The Ministry of Education with support from DSTI Introduced a USSD tool to help parents and pupils check their exam results for free, removing cost burden from parents and also increasing accessibility especially for students/parents in rural areas.

Among the key **challenges** that confronted this sector, as in others, during 2019-2023 is the COVID-19 pandemic. Others include: the surge in pupil enrolment which stretched the existing infrastructure to its limit; the unavailability of government financial resources; lack of trained and qualified teachers, especially in STEAM subjects; and limited Teaching and Learning Material for pupils and pupils with special care, more so for pupils in rural communities where these resources are badly needed.
Furthermore, the increase in reports of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in schools during the period 2019 to 2023 has been particularly worrying, as the table below shows the number of schools reporting

incidences increased between 2021 and 2022 instead of decreasing, notwithstanding the pro-active steps taken by the MBSSE and the TSC to reduce incidences. Lack of boards/SMCs in some schools compounded this problem.

Table 5.13: Number of Schools Reporting Incidences of SGBV

Level	2021	2022
Primary	32	61
Junior Secondary	48	65
Senior Secondary	21	26
Total	101	152

The Radical Inclusion programs and Foundational Learning (FL) serve as the main potential in basic education coupled with the passing of the Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act 2023 and the new Education Act 2023. Also, the passing of the new School Feeding Policy to improve the feeding of children in schools as well as the introduction of civics in the education curriculum serves as **potential/opportunities** for maintaining attendance and reintroduction of ethics in schools. Another opportunity comes from the quality education that was provided through the Radio Teaching Programme organised by MBSSE during the Ebola epidemic and Covid-19 pandemic period. This provided opportunities for students' learning that is continuing even now in 2023. Also, the MBSE has learnt that the quality of the administration/head of school determines, to a great extent, the quality of the school and its learning outcomes.

The pursuit of these standards by the Ministry has seen overnight changes for the better taking place in schools, with changes in headship and boards/SMCs. MBSSE learnt that unless closely monitored, some heads of schools inflate enrolment and entries for WAEC conducted exams to the detriment of the system and placed an unwarranted financial burden on the Government; a trend that was substantially discourage during in the previous national development plan. Furthermore, the ministry noted that the availability of school feeding has a positive effect on school enrolment and attendance. Lastly, through district workshops spearheaded by the Minister, the Ministry further learnt that when fully informed about learning outcomes, districts can mobilise to reverse negative trends as shown in monitoring the trend in district performance over the years.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective of the sector is to improve learning outcomes in the education system for all children and youth, ensuring that every child, regardless of circumstance, will have the opportunity to access and complete quality education, whilst showing proficiency in all assessed areas.

Table 5.14: Key Targets for Big 5.2.1 Basic and Senior Secondary Education

Key Targets	Base-line	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Schools and educational institutions with curriculum responsive to needs of labour market	Zero	14%	28%	42%	56%	70%	84%	100%
Pupil-to-qualified teacher ratio reduced to 43:1	63:1	60.1:1	57.2:1	54.3:1	51.4:1	48.5:1	45.6:1	43:1
Children with special education needs provided with support	Zero	14%	28%	42%	56%	70%	84%	100%

Key policy actions

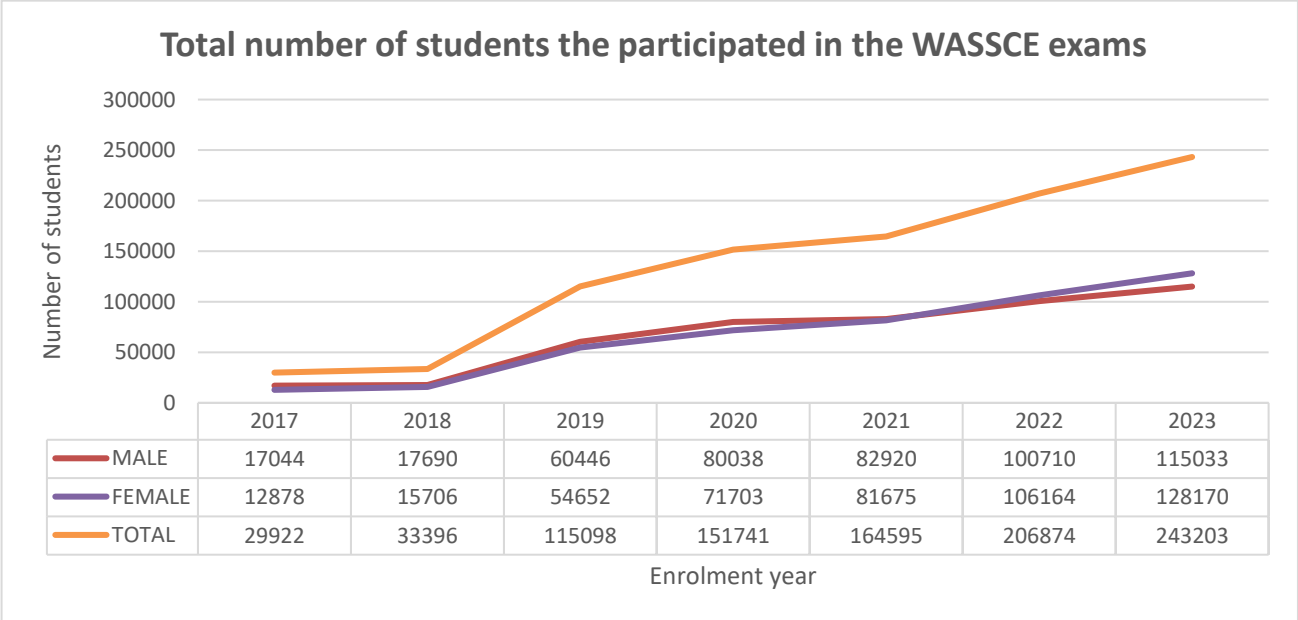
1. Develop modern and contemporary curriculum for all schools that is responsive to the needs of the labour market
2. Support in-service training opportunities for teachers and general school management authorities
3. Provide every child with the opportunity to access and complete quality basic and secondary education
4. Ensure physically and psychologically safe learning institutions that are free from all forms of abuse
5. Scale up implementation of the radical inclusion policy
6. Strengthen school inspectorate activities and general of governance of the sector.

5.2.2 Strengthening tertiary and higher education

The aftermath of the successful implementation of the FQSE had a positive impact on students seeking access to higher/tertiary education as the number of passes for the WASSCE exams increased from 29,922 in 2017 to 243,203 in 2023 as shown in Figure 5.6 below. Accordingly, the enrolment into tertiary education increased from 30,693 for the 2016/2017 academic year to 101,645 for the 2022/2023 academic year as shown in Table 5.15 below. The rehabilitation of resource centres in six Teacher Training Institutions across the country underscores an investment in infrastructure to support FQSE. This progress was attributed to the increase in examination centres from 96 in 2017 to 444 in 2023, as well as the establishment of three new universities in the Western Region (one) and the Eastern Region (two).

The expansion of educational access is not solely numerical; it encompasses a strategic enhancement of infrastructure and academic facilities. This involves a noteworthy increase in examination centres, soaring from 96 in 2017 to a robust 444 in 2023, to cater for the exponential increase in students educated to senior secondary level, due to the FQSE. Additionally, the establishment of three new universities, distributed in the Western and Eastern Regions, has added substantial academic capacity to the higher education landscape. This period also saw a significant legislative stride with the repeal of the Universities Act of 2005, replaced by the 2021 Universities Act, demonstrating a commitment to refined legal and regulatory frameworks for the sector. Recognizing the integral role of the workforce in the education sector, there has been a substantial increase in wages for staff in tertiary education institutions (87.5 percent which the last increment taking into effect in January 2022).

Figure 5.6: Number of students who participated in the WASSCE examinations: 2017 to 2023

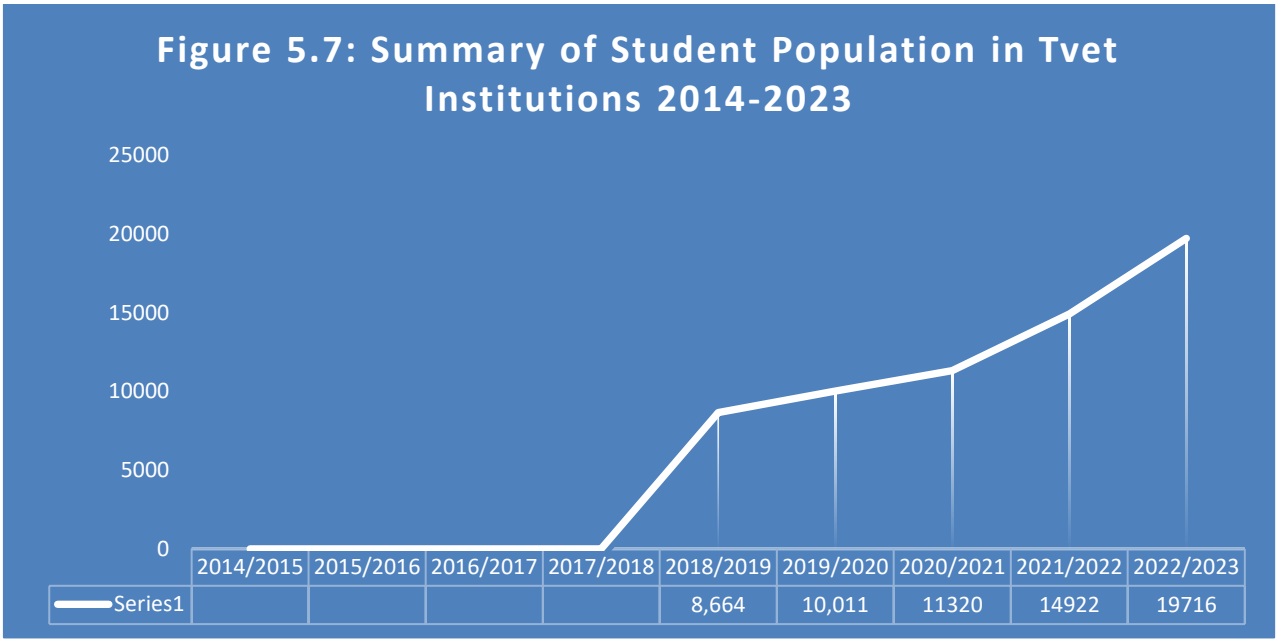


	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
MALE	17044	17690	60446	80038	82920	100710	115033
FEMALE	12878	15706	54652	71703	81675	106164	128170
TOTAL	29922	33396	115098	151741	164595	206874	243203

Table 5.15: Summary of Student population in Public Institutions 2014-2023									
Institution	**2014/2015**	**2015/2016**	**2016/2017**	**2017/2018**	**2018/2019**	**2019/2020**	**2020/2021**	**2021/2022**	**2022/2023**
USL	10,012	10,816	14,589	17,721	19,515	23,807	25,693	28,716	35,339
NUC	7,347	8,680	8,727	8,970	10,730	13,149	14,241	16,003	19,753
EBKUST	2,299	3,572	2,340	1,798	2,024	2,479	2,685	3,016	3,722
MMTU	2,605	3,219	2,542	3,159	2,653	3,286	4,535	6,261	8,842
ETU	1,678	1,619	1,533	2,250	3,477	4,283	5,898	7,991	10,842
FTC	989	877	875	653	662	814	1,182	1,718	2,680
CSC	-	-	87	127	189	234	341	497	750
AFTEC	-	-	-	-	124	157	236	359	582
TVET Institutions							11,084	14,563	19,134
TOTALS	**24,930**	**28,783**	**30,693**	**34,678**	**39,374**	**48,209**	**65,895**	**79,125**	**101,645**

Beyond traditional higher education, there has been a concentrated effort to bolster Technical, Vocational, and Educational Training (TVET) in Sierra Leone. This has been marked by the elevation of the TVET Unit to a Directorate within the Ministry, signifying a strategic commitment to scale up TVET activities nationwide.

While there has been an increase in admissions to universities as shown above, there is an influx of TVET students from 8,664 in 2018 to 19,716 in 2023. This influx of TVET students can be attributed to MTHE and development partners efforts to change the existing misconception that vocational training for dropouts, through expanding and diversifying its vocational training programs to accommodate a more diverse and substantial student population. Towards maintaining the quality of TVET due to the influx of students, MTHE and the National Council for Vocational Training and other Academic Awards (NCTVA) will need to review existing curriculum to ensure it speaks to the labour market, harmonise across public and private training centres, establish effective quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that the expansion of vocational programs does not compromise the standard of education.



Source: Ministry of Technical and Higher Education

In respect of Figure 5.7 above, a premium was not placed on TVET education, hence the lack of available data from 2017 backward. However, with the establishment of the MTHE in 2018, efforts have been made to collect data in respect of the sub-sector.

The above successes in the sector notwithstanding, there have been notable **challenges**. Key among these is the grossly inadequate infrastructure and lack of resources to ensure quality delivery and output due to the exponential rise in the number of students seeking access to higher education. Furthermore, the low-quality teacher training and technical and vocational institutions; the lack of basic modern facilities for scientific research, innovation, and technological development, which was coupled with the non-gender-responsive, disable unfriendly and stigmatization of vocational education compounded the already existing challenges. To address these opportunities and challenges, MTHE will explore collaboration with various stakeholders, including industry partners and international organizations, to access resources, expertise, and further support for vocational training programs.

There were noted **potentials**/**opportunities** to leverage towards improving access and quality of technical and higher education. The foundational pillar will be the existence of strengthened Education Management Information System, and Learning Management System introduced and operationalised in public Universities. The strategic implementation of digital solutions is critical to modernize and enhance efficiency. A priority focus should be on leveraging digital platforms and technologies to streamline core administrative and academic processes including admissions, financial management, teaching methodologies, and data utilization. Additionally, these digital tools should be utilized to drive improved productivity, accountability and transparency in all education operations. A comprehensive digital transformation strategy will enable major systemic improvements, provide better services to students and teachers, and position the education sector to thrive in the 21st century.

In the same vein, in line with the commitment to enhance efficiency and transparency in TVET, the incorporation of digital solutions into various facets of TVET operations stands as a critical priority. A pivotal component of this effort is the ongoing development of a TVET Management Information System (TVET-MIS) platform. Simultaneously, the operationalisation and piloting of the Integrated Certification System has been initiated in 30 TVET institutions. Furthermore, to align with modern educational standards, a Competency Based Training curriculum was produced and implemented across TVET institutions. This forward-looking approach ensures that TVET programs are in sync with contemporary educational methodologies.

In addition to the initiatives outlined above, the comprehensive review of the Education Sector Plan for the years 2022-2026 and the Government Grant-in-Aid policy has been undertaken – with the former providing strategic direction for transforming the technical and higher education sector. The latter has introduced innovative measures to address the financial aspects of accessing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A key component of this effort is the implementation of the Student Load Scheme (SLAON), which aims to provide sustainable ways of financing access to HEIs. This strategic approach ensures that the financial burden on students is mitigated, fostering a more equitable and accessible higher education landscape. The Student Load Scheme is designed to support students in pursuing their academic aspirations without undue financial strain, promoting inclusivity and affordability within the higher education sector. This also makes provision for the inclusion of TVET students. A historical grant in aid scheme will gradually be phased out, as the loan scheme is gradually upscaled. However, a component of the grant in aid scheme will be retained specifically for female students in the science, technology, engineering, agriculture and mathematics (STEAM) fields, as well as for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in private tertiary institutions, commencing from the year 2022 onward. This strategic initiative underscores a steadfast commitment to promoting inclusivity and enhancing accessibility in TVET education.

To strengthen the financial foundations of education, a multi-pronged strategy is imperative. First, sustainable funding models must be developed through innovative thinking - identifying new income sources and stabilizing finances. Second, increasing student access via accessible, sustainable loans should be a priority as aforementioned. Third, resources must be channelled toward developing infrastructure and institutions, creating an optimal learning environment. Fourth, diverse income streams should be established within schools and universities, with transparency in both revenue and spending. This requires carefully exploring strategic business ventures that align with institutional missions, and national sector priorities (BIG 5), building

financial resilience for the long-term. With these four pillars - innovation, access, development, and diversification - the roadmap for fortifying education financially can be charted.

The Government of Sierra Leone, with support from donor partners, is in the process of conducting market surveys geared towards the alignment of the training programmes on offer with the demands of the market to make TVET graduates easily employable or empowered to create jobs for themselves and possibly others. Finally, 11 Government Technical Institutes have been established and operationalised in 10 districts, with six more to be constructed, while 42 other TVET institutions across the country provided financial support for equipment and tools through the World Bank Skills Development Project.

Ultimately, the process of depoliticizing universities through the removal of the President as the Chancellor and the restructuring of key entities like the National Council for Technical Vocation/other Academic Awards (NCTVA), along with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), holds significant potential for enhancing the regulatory framework in the TVET sector.

Ensuring quality assurance in TVET necessitates the establishment of performance indicators aligned with national priorities such as the BIG 5, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and African Union (AU) objectives. A dynamic curriculum review process fostered through collaboration with relevant government agencies and employment sectors, guarantees that TVET programs remain adaptable and responsive to evolving societal needs. Aligning certification with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), maintaining rigorous accreditation standards, and establishing regional centres of excellence all contribute to skill development and uphold the overall quality of TVET programs. The continued existence of the MTHE, established in 2018 as an independent ministry, further catalyzes expediting positive outcomes in the tertiary and higher education sphere.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to increase equitable access to quality higher/skills education that promotes research, innovation, and entrepreneurship for growth, stability, and sustainable national development.

Table 5.16: Key Targets for Big 5.2.2 Higher Education Institutions

Key Target	Base-line	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
By 2030, enrolment in HEIs increased to 171,645	101,645 in 2023	111,645	121,645	131,645	141,645	151,645	161,645	171,645
By 2030, number of students accessing student loan scheme increased to 10,000, with at least 30 percent females	168 in 2023	1,572	2,976	4,380	5,784	7,188	8,592	10,000
	50 Female	472	893	1,314	1,735	2,156	2,5578	3,000
By 2030, an additional 20,000 youth empowered with TVET skills	Zero	2,856	5,712	8,568	11,424	14,280	17,136	20,000

Key Policy Actions

1. Develop, enact and popularise education regulatory policies & instruments
2. Train unqualified teachers, tutors, instructors in relevant disciplines and demand-driven skills
3. Provide digital training for all lecturers/tutors to meet the demands of the fourth industrial revolution.
4. Support hybrid and blended education delivery
5. Develop Quality Assurance Management System to support and guide TVET and HEIs.

6. Strengthen and harmonise accreditation and certification at national and regional level
7. Develop an emergency preparedness, response, and recovery plan for TVET and HEIs
8. Increase financing options for the sector, including innovative solutions
9. Improve infrastructural environment for learning institutions for students, including PWDs
10. Promote distance education and TVET institutions in areas where none exists
11. Support research and innovation and entrepreneurship development.

5.2.3 Improving health care delivery

The Ministry of Health's contributions to Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) for 2024-2030 are pivotal in realising the broader goals of sustainable development, particularly promoting education, agriculture and economic growth, poverty reduction, and improved living standards for the nation. By focusing on healthcare access, infrastructure, workforce, and disease prevention, Sierra Leone can make significant strides towards achieving a healthier population, increased productivity of other sectors and more prosperous future for its citizens.

Over the years, there has been significant progress in improving access to affordable healthcare, both at policy and operational levels despite the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. First and foremost, the budgetary allocation to the health sector was increased from 6 percent to 11.6 percent during 2019-2023, followed by the rehabilitation of a good number of health facilities across the country from 1,397 in 2018 to 1,569 by 2021. The government trained and posted over 5,000 staff (with pin code), while 8,700 community Health Workers were recruited, representing a 50 percent increase during 2018-2021; and supported 21 medical doctors to acquire specialised training.

The sector also established four dialysis stations, treating over 700 patients in the country, increased health infrastructure facilities to some hospitals in the country, including the Brookfields hospital with 80 beds, Rokupr hospital with 100 beds and 34 Military hospital with 100 beds. Cervical cancer screening was established in 8 health facilities in the country, established national blood transfusion unit which has helped to increase the availability and access to safe blood services, and also established 220 solar refrigeration for vaccine storage.

Given sustained efforts in promoting healthcare service delivery, the health sector over the years has significantly contributed to increasing life expectancy for Sierra Leone from 53 in 2017 to 61 in 2023. Stunting of under five children dropped to 23 percent, compared to 34 percent in Africa; neonatal mortality per 10,00 live births dropped to 20, compared to 28 in West Africa; the availability of essential drugs increased by 90 percent. A total of 183,000 girls were vaccinated with the HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) vaccine, and the country achieved over 70 vaccination rates with the COVID-19 vaccines nationwide.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Integrated African Health Observatory Report released in March 2023 revealed that Sierra Leone was among the top three countries in the African Region with the high maternal mortality ratios in 2017 with 1,120 deaths per 100, 000 live births. This rate went down precipitously by 2020, when, according to the global mortality trends estimates that year, the maternal mortality ratio dropped by nearly 60 percent, to 443 deaths per 100, 000 live births. The country's 2019 DHS report had already shown significant progress in health indicators compared to the previous DHS results: Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) came down to 717 per 100,000 live births in 2019, as against 1,165 in 2013 DHS; Under-5 MR 122 per 1,000 live births in 2019, compared to 156 in 2013. The trend is similar for other indicators such as Infant Mortality Rate and Neonatal Mortality Rate. Table 1.1 provides some trends in healthcare service outcomes between 2013 and 2019.

Table 5.17: Status in selected outcome/impact health indicators 2013-2019

INDICATORS	DHS 2013	DHS 2019
IMPACT INDICATORS		
Neonatal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	39/1,000	31/1,000
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	92 /1,000	75/1,000
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	156 /1,000	122 / 1,000
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	1,165 /100.000	717 /100,000
Adolescent birth rate	125/1,000	102/1,000
Total fertility rate	4..9	4.2
OUTCOME /OUTPUT INDICATORS: Reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health		
Percent births attended by skilled staff (public and private)	59.7 percent	87 percent
Percent pregnant women making 4 antenatal visits	76 percent	79 Percent
Contraceptive prevalence rate (percent of women 15–49)	16 percent	21 percent
Unmet need among married women for family planning	25 percent	25 percent
Percent children < 1 year fully vaccinated	68 percent	56 Percent
OUTCOME /OUTPUT INDICATORS: Nutrition		
Prevalence of underweight (wt/age) among children 6–59 months (2SD)	16 percent	14 percent
Prevalence of stunting (ht/age) among children 6–59 months (2SD)	38 percent	30 percent
Prevalence of Wasting (ht/wt) among children 6–59 months (2SD)	9 percent	5 percent
OUTCOME / OUTPUT INDICATORS: Communicable diseases		
Prevalence of HIV (percent of pop. aged 15–49)	1.5 percent	1.7 percent
Percent children sleeping under long-lasting insecticide-treated net the night before	49 percent	59 percent

Challenges encountered in the previous national development plan include: the weak human resource base and inadequate specialised healthcare professionals to handle complicated medical cases in the country, coupled with poor conditions of services for healthcare workers. Also, the Government is yet to fully implement the 2001 Abuja Declaration which states a minimum of 15 percent budgetary allocation to the health sector. Additionally, the sector lacks the necessary infrastructural facilities to promote quality health services and digital health management. We also encountered inadequate medical equipment and diagnostics facilities, weak governance structures to undertake effective monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, limited access to quality sexual and reproductive health services and weak disease prevention, surveillance, control, preparedness and response systems.

A key **lesson** in the last five years is that the health sector saw improved financial management during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, given the extreme scarcity of resources at the time owing to global challenges and decline in donor resource flows; there was rationalisation of available finances to ensure adequate response to the pandemic in the country. An opportunity going forward in the implementation of the new MTNDP 2024-230 is the establishment of the National Public Health Agency, which is hoped to promote health security and universal coverage. Finally, the rising spending by GoSL on overseas medical treatment for public sector officials presents an **opportunity** to increase domestic investment in the health sector.

Government's vision in this current plan is to build a resilient healthcare system that will ensure effective and efficient healthcare delivery in spite of emerging changing circumstances. There is concrete commitment on the part of Government and its partners to ensure that healthcare infrastructure, service delivery and monitoring meet internationally acceptable standards.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to build a resilient and responsive health care system that provides equitable access to affordable quality healthcare services to all Sierra Leoneans across the life stages.

Table 5.18: Key Targets for Big 5.2.3 Health

Key Targets	Baseline	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Maternal mortality rate reduced by 50%	443 deaths/ 100,000	411 / 1000	379 / 1000	347 / 1000	315 / 1000	283 / 1000	251 / 1000	219 / 1000
Infant mortality reduced by 50%	75 deaths/ 1,000 live births	69.7	64.4	59.1	53.8	48.5	43.2	38
Life expectancy increased	54.0 years	55.57 years	57.14 years	58.71 years	60.28 years	61.85 years	63.42 years	65.0 years
Health worker density increased by 50%	13.4 health workers per 10,000 population	14.4	15.4	16.4	17.4	18.4	19.4	20

Key policy actions

1. Upgrade and expand healthcare facilities, including hospitals, clinics, and primary healthcare centres, to meet the growing demands of the population
2. Improve access to antenatal and postnatal care
3. Implement comprehensive strategies for pandemic preparedness and disease prevention and control
4. Facilitate the allocation of 15 percent of national budget to the health sector in line with the Abuja Declaration
5. Extend free healthcare to school-going children nationwide
6. Expand the mobile clinic bus services (*Hospitals on Wheels Initiative*) nationwide
7. Review and implement the Sierra Leone Health Insurance Scheme to expand access to health care and reduce out-of-pocket expenditure
8. Improve general governance of the sector and promote innovative financing mechanisms to ensure sustainable funding for the healthcare sector
9. Expand family planning services to remote rural communities.
10. Scale-up campaigns on communicable and non-communicable diseases
11. Strengthen human resource development in the sector.

5.2.4 Ending AIDS and TB by 2030

HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis (TB) remain a public health concern and threat in Sierra Leone. Accordingly, GoSL continues to give these two diseases special attention in the National Development Plan, expanding on the strategic direction articulated in the previous section on addressing general healthcare issues in the country. This is critical in consolidating and accelerating every effort at advancing human capital development in the country.

HIV and AIDS

The epidemic is feminised and concentrated among key population groups. Although national HIV prevalence is estimated at 1.7 percent, its prevalence among females (2.2 percent) aged 15-49 years is double the rate among males (1.1 percent). Adolescent girls and young women aged 15-24 years are three times (1.5 percent) more likely to be infected with HIV than their male counterparts (0.5 percent). The 2021 Integrated Bio Behavioural Sentinel Survey (IBBSS) and Size Estimate indicate that HIV prevalence is disproportionately higher among

key and marginalised groups. It is highest among female sex workers (11.8 percent), transgender persons (4.2 percent), people who inject drugs (PWID 4.2 percent), persons in incarceration (3.7 percent) and men who have sex with men (3.2 percent). The same study estimated that there are 106,000 female sex workers, 56,006 transgender, 26,331 PWID, and 5,733 transgender persons 5,733 caseloads across these social categories. The disproportionately high HIV prevalence among these key population groups is partially attributable to high rates of stigma, discrimination, repressive laws, socio-cultural and religious factors, which deepens already existing inequalities, violates their rights, and limits their access to essential HIV prevention and treatment services.

While efforts continued to be advanced in this disease sub-sector in the previous plan (MTNDP 219-2023), children and infants remain worse affected by HIV in Sierra Leone. Coverage of interventions to prevent mother-to-child transmission is estimated at 69 percent, currently. Only 4,549 out of 6,600 HIV pregnant women received HIV treatment in 2022. Vertical transmission of HIV is as high as 15.79 percent and accounting for almost 1,000 deaths among infants and children below 14 years in 2022. There are estimated 60,000 HIV exposed children who are unidentified, due to poor integration of HIV and RMNCAH services, persistent breakdown of early infant diagnostic equipment and perennial stockout of HIV commodities in the country. Although the number of people living with HIV on treatment have doubled over the last three years, progress at achieving the 95:95:95 global targets has been slow with the country being at 76:99:45. Of the 77,000 people living with HIV, 59,000 know their HIV status, of which 58,000 were on treatment in 2022.

A summary of challenges encountered in the previous Medium-Term National Development Plan include: perennial stockout of HIV commodities as a result of poor quantification and delayed container clearance at the seaport; inefficient procurement and supply chain management systems, coupled with poor logistic management systems, limiting access to HIV services; dysfunctional laboratory and sample transportation systems, making it nearly impossible to test for viral load and early infant diagnosis of HIV; high level of Stigma and Discrimination; and weak human resource base to provide quality of care;

Tuberculosis (TB)

Sierra Leone is classified as one of the world's 30 most affected countries with TB, accounting for 87 percent of the global tuberculosis burden. The country is classified as a low-income country with a high TB burden based on disease severity (per capita), with an estimated 24,000 TB reported cases per year. It is the sixth cause of death among the top 10 causes of premature death in Sierra Leone. The country's yearly case mortality rate is estimated at 3,000 people, according to the WHO Global Report, 2022.

Sierra Leone did make tremendous progress in TB reduction in the last couple of year, with case notification increasing steadily over the last ten years: from 13,195 in 2010, to 17,865 in 2019). However, serious **challenges** remain, as the country is still not on track to achieving the SDG target of ending TB by 2030. The critical challenges are having 5,000 estimated missing cases, coupled with increasing numbers of drug-resistant cases; and low private sector participation and poor childhood case notification.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to ensure that Sierra Leone ends AIDS and TB by 2030, as a public health threat in line with SDG 3.3.

Key targets

1. By 2030, HIV and TB are eliminated
2. By 2030, achieve HIV epidemic control by reaching the 98:98:98 targets by that date above the global targets of 95:95:95
3. By 2030, the mother-to-child transmission rate of HIV reduced to less than five percent.

Key policy actions

1. Increase equitable access to HIV and TB prevention, treatment, care and support for priority vulnerable populations
2. Strengthen institutional coordination on HIV/AIDS and TB at all levels
3. Strengthen community-level response to HIV /AIDS and TB
4. Strengthen social and economic protection and support for targeted populations
5. Expand vaccination programmes for malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS treatment and control efforts.
6. Scaleup efforts at identifying 95 percent of people living with HIV;
7. Ensure that 95 percent of those with HIV receive life-saving treatment
8. Ensure that 95 percent of those on treatment will be virally suppressed
9. Achieve 90 percent treatment success rate annually for all people diagnosed with TB

5.2.5 Water, environmental sanitation, waste management and hygiene

The need for coherent and enhanced response to the challenges of environmental sanitation and hygiene had preoccupied GoSL, considering the integration of policy and oversight responsibilities for sanitation (including waste management) into the Ministry of Water Resources that was established in 2013. Accordingly, following the June 2024 general elections, this ministry was renamed the Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation with additional responsibilities. This is critical in the Government's Big 5 Game Changer framework to accelerate the delivery of goods and services for the public in a cost-effective way. This will reduce sectoral transaction costs related to delivery of integrated services like sanitation and hygiene from different institutional arrangements.

In the last five years, some significant milestones were recorded in water and environmental sanitation sector, including the establishment of the National Water Resource Management Agency. A Loss Control Unit to ensure effective leakage management in the operations of the Guma Valley Water Company was created in 2020 to undertake leakage monitoring and control across the water supply network in Freetown. With this, 80 percent of the 1,270 water leakages reported in 2020 were resolved before the end of that year, leading to annual revenue increasing by 50 percent from 2018 to 2020, and doubling revenue since 2016; a trend projected to continue into the implementation of the new national development as new investments in water supply systems are implemented.

Additionally, 554 water kiosks, 55 boreholes, and 270 public stand posts were constructed and became functional by 2021, serving about 784,000 people per day in the capital. In Bo, Kenema, and Makeni cities, the average population accessing safely managed water stood at 69.6 percent by 2021, serving a total population of 348,247 out of 500,446 in the three municipalities combined. Under the rural water supply project, the water sector provided boreholes and gravity-fed water supply in 6 districts (Koinadugu, Falaba, Kambia, Kono, Pujehun, and Bonthe Districts) and constructed 100 solar-powered boreholes in 13 districts, while providing gravity-fed Water Supply System in Tombo Town in Western Rural District. Further, GoSL conducted the Sierra Leone hydrogeological mapping of groundwater resources constructed 10 Hydrological Monitoring Network and 25 Groundwater monitoring stations in the country; procured and installed bulk flow water meters, and established the Western Area Peninsular Water Fund Project.

With regard to sanitation, the percentage of the total population using improved sanitation facilities increased from 10.6 percent in 2013 to 55 percent in 2019; the urban shares moved from 21.9 to 84 percent, the rural from 5.4 to 33 percent during the period in 2019; while diarrhoea disease prevalence rate (for 6-11 years), dropping from 18.6 percent in 2013 to 9.1 percent in 2019. These indicators could have further improved to date with new data.[19]

[19] For more details on progress made in this sector, please refer to the Sector Policy Paper submitted to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development on water, environmental sanitation, waste management and hygiene towards the preparation of this National Development Plan.

Despite these achievements, there were enormous challenges to inform action going forward into the implementation of the MTNDP 2024-2030. These include inadequate coordination of different MDA operations relating to the supply of water and sanitation services. The sector also lacks accountability in service deliveries, which limits a good number of communities to access safe water and sanitation facilities. The limited financing had seen weakening and deteriorating water infrastructure. A 2020 report by the Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation revealed that the inadequate water infrastructure and service delivery had resulted to economic losses estimated at $194 million annually (an equivalent of around 2 percent of GDP). This makes the sector's contribution to the country's GDP, according to a 2020 African Development Bank Report, estimate at only 3.3 percent. Other challenges relate to the rapid urbanisation and population growth, the issue of climate change, deforestation and the illegal encroachment of land, the lack of harmonised policies and weak legislation to regulate water and sanitation programmes, and the unwillingness of a good number of people to pay water bills, all of which have greatly affected the effective supply of water and sanitation facilities to most communities. A key opportunity in all of this is the great potential for revenue generation in this sector, covering waste management, which only needs strategic investments to realise it. The country has abundant rainfall, covering most of the year, besides the pool of rivers found across the country.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to increase access to safe and potable water and to promote the provision of safely managed sanitation through relevant infrastructure and hygiene services for the growing population.

Table 5.19: Key Targets for Big 5.2.5 Water and Sanitation

Key Targets	Base-line	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Population with access to safe and portable drinking water increased	63%	66.9%	70.7 %	74.6 %	78.4%	82.3%	86.1%	90.0%
Population with access to safely managed sanitation increased	84% (Urban)	86%	88%	90%	92%	94%	96%	98%
	33% (Rural)	36%	39%	42%	45%	48%	51%	54%

Key policy actions

1. Improve the existing water distribution network in Freetown and other cities
2. Support various technologies and innovations for WASH implementation
3. Develop a comprehensive monitoring plan for sectoral activities in line with the SDGs
4. Support the establishment of data collection platforms and management
5. Strengthen the national WASH coordination forum and develop basic WASH implementation guidelines and training manuals
6. Strengthen sectoral governance and financial management
7. Implement the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation project
8. Support capacity building for the sector, including relevant skills training.

5.2.6 Women's Empowerment

In this plan (MTNDP 2024-2030), we have articulated women's empowerment and gender issues more comprehensively than in previous plans. This section focuses on direct *women empowerment* as a fundament

prerequisite for sustainable delivery of the Human Capital Development objective of the state. This is derived from the process by which women have power and control and equal opportunity and resources on the basis as men to pursue personal, social and economic endeavours at family, local and national levels. Women's empowerment enhances the quality and the quantity of human resources available for development. The focus of *gender mainstreaming* as an enabler in Part Three (Enabler 5.4) is aimed at maximising efforts in narrowing the gender gap in critical socioeconomic areas, drawing from the National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and Legislation.

The Mid-Term Population and Housing Census of 2021 suggests that female population continues to be higher than the male population as in 2015. It accounted for 50.6 and 50.8 percent of the population in 2021 and 2015, respectively. Thus, the protection and advancement of the fundamental human rights of women and the girl child are key to the human capital and socioeconomic development of the country.

For decades, these rights for women have been consistently provided for in a series of international protocols, treaties and conventions that Sierra Leone has been a signatory to at global, regional and sub-regional levels. These instruments include but are not limited to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA); the Vienna Declaration on Violence Against Women; United Nations Security Council Resolutions; Maputo Protocol; among others.

In compliance with the expected implementation of these instruments at member states level, the last five years saw the continued promulgation of a number of policies, strategies, and legislations by the Government of Sierra Leone, including the Sexual Offences Act 2012 as amended in 2019; National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018-2022; Hands Off our Girls campaign led by the Office of the First Lady 2018; Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy 2020; National Male Involvement Strategy for the Prevention of Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone 2020; National SGBV Response Strategy 2021-2023; National Referral Protocol on GBV to include school-related GBV 2022; and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022. Relatedly, the Government continued the implementation of the Free Healthcare programme for pregnant women, lactating mothers and under-five children nationwide, and provided scholarships for women studying STEM subjects. Women now have the right to own land as provided for by the new National Land Commission Act 2022, while a provision was made to empower women in the Mines and Minerals Act.

Access to Education and training, quality health care, employment, access to resources and financial inclusion and political participation are the main drivers of women's empowerment. In the last MTNDP 2019-2023, GoSL laudably maintained parity in girls' and boys' enrolment in primary schools, which was also achieved in junior secondary. The data from the education section (Big 5.2.1) under Human Capital Development suggest an increase in girl gross enrolment ratio in junior secondary from 55 percent in 2018 to 110 percent in 2022, while GER in excess of 100 percent in the primary level was maintained through. Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births decreased by 60 to date from 717 deaths in 2019, while a total of 183,000 girls were vaccinated with the HPV vaccine during this period due to a 90 percent increase in the availability of essential drugs since 2018.

Access to financial services by women is essential to allow them to benefit fully from economic opportunities. However, the country's financial inclusion is the region's second worst (20 percent of the 15+ aged population has an account with a bank or mobile money.[20] With women's level of financial inclusion being far lower than that of men. additional economic opportunities through land and property rights also pose challenges for women.

Sexual and gender-based violence was drastically reduced during 2019-2022. Of the 2762 SGBV cases reported in 2022, 45 percent were peer-to-peer sexual activity, captured as rape due to the Law, which otherwise would not have been included in the figures.

[20] ECOWAS 2030 Integrated Regional Human Capital Development Strategy.

Key **challenges** facing women and girls' empowerment despite the realisation above include inadequate financing for the sector, delays in passing relevant legislation on women and children's welfare; limited prioritisation of their issues in other sectors including ineffective alignment of their plans and programmes with women related legislations, plans, policies and programmes; and weak integration of women's issues and children sensitivity in local level development operations. A major **lesson** generally learned is that a nation can only achieve sustainable development if it optimally integrates women's development in all national development operations, at the central, regional and local levels. A critical **opportunity** to leverage going forward in the new national plan for the advancement of the girl child and women is the existence of the Radical Inclusion Policy in education, the Comprehensive Sexuality Education, the Free Quality School Education Programme, School Feeding, and the Basic Education Act 2023, which if continuously implemented will deliver desired outcome towards ensuring sustained women's empowerment with multiplier effect across other sectors and programmes, including HCD and Feed Salone. Heightened efforts at reducing maternal mortality, the free healthcare initiative and the existence of several legislations present additional opportunities for the sector.[21]

Table 5.20: Trends in SGBV cases

INDICATOR	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL
# of sexual assault cases	2900	4000	3339	2966	2705	15,910
# of physical assault cases	237	196	209	236	234	1202
# of psychological assault cases	0	0	0	0	2	2
# of pregnancy cases	602	598	559	537	451	2747
# of HIV/AIDs cases	7	4	10	18	4	43
# of other STIs	1914	3041	2498	2351	1885	11689
# of referrals from FSU	2900	3668	3174	2960	2762	15464

Source: Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs 2023

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to consolidate and promote gains from the state's investment in advancing the empowerment of women in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres.

Table 5.21: Key Targets for Big 5.2.5 Women's Empowerment

Key Targets	Baseline	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Women's access to financial and financial services drastically increased	25% in 2022 (UNCDF)	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%	60%
Adolescent pregnancy is reduced to 10 percent	21%	19.6%	18.0%	16.4%	14.8%	13.2%	11.6%	10%
Physical and sexual assault cases reduced to 1,000	2,939 Cases in 2022 (MGCA)	2,662 Cases	2,385 Cases	2,108 Cases	1,831 Cases	1,554 Cases	1,277 Cases	1,000 Cases

Key policy actions

1. Expand contraceptive services to the adolescent population
2. Provide special support for women including female youth interested in politics

[21] For more details on progress made in this sector, please refer to the Sector Policy Paper submitted to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development on women's empowerment towards the preparation of this National Development Plan. s

3. Advocate for a fee waiver for female candidates in public elections
4. Strengthen and provide support to the Network of Women Ministers and Parliamentarians (NEWMAP), as well as those of Female Ministers, and the Association of Female Councillors
5. Provide capacity building for elected and appointed female officials to effectively deliver on their mandates
6. Enhance girls' and women's participation at regional and international forums
7. Support capacity-building initiatives for women's skills and entrepreneurship development, access to finance and participation in governance
8. Strengthen sectoral coordination and communication/education programme on women's development related issues
9. Strengthen programming, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on domesticated international instruments/frameworks on the development and advancement of women.

5.2.7 Children, the Aged and Disability Welfare

A standalone and integrated programmatic anchor for the welfare of *children*, the *aged* and *persons with disabilities* could have far desirable effects on accelerating the delivery of government's human capital development initiative than when the needs of these social groups are only addressed in different line sectors. While they are generally heavily captured in a range of other sectors (such as in social protection, nutrition, education, health, water and sanitation), having a standalone integrated institutional platform for the three vulnerable segments will engender the following optimising advantage: the special, standalone integrated institutional/implementation arrangement for the three social categories will aggregate and consolidate interventions from all sectors on the welfare and development the three groups, especially for the health and schooling of their children. This can lead to more effective follow-up on their interventions in an integrated way with better coordination of diverse sectoral efforts pulled on this platform. Operationally, three institutions are critical here to work together in coordinating aggregated and integrated interventions: a) the National Commission for Children; b) the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities; and c) the National Association of the Aged. They can draw oversight/policy support from the Ministry of Social Welfare, that of Gender and Children's Affairs, and NaSCA. Going forward into the implementation of the MTNDP 2024-2030, there is a need for a critical understanding of the situation of these vulnerable groups and the design of appropriate strategies to advance their welfare. This can be offered better when there is a standalone programmatic arrangement towards an accelerated delivery of the Government's HCD objectives, and hence its overall Big 5 *national goals* and *vision* of the country.

Children

The Government pursued a range of specialised interventions for advancing the development of the child in the last national development plan MTNDP 2019-2023. During this period, teenage pregnancy dropped by 33 percent from 62,583 in 2019 to 41,943 in 2022. We saw increased public awareness of sexual violence and referral procedures, leading to a rise in reported cases of sexual violence against minors, as well as prosecution of cases of sexual violence in court. The government declared rape as a state of emergency issue in 2019, followed by the "Hands off Our Girls" campaign to protect girls from sexual violence; and, in partnership with the UNFPA, established One-Stop Centres in seven districts to provide free and comprehensive responses to survivors of sexual gender-based violence, including medical, psychosocial, and legal services. It recruited and deployed more State Counsels and Judges across the country to improve access to justice for survivors of sexual violence and other cases. In furtherance of child welfare and development, GoSL trained border security officials, community-based actors at the borders and other groups on the protection, and identification of victims of human trafficking (including child trafficking) in collaboration with partners like Defence for Children International, World Hope International and International Organisation for Migration. Consequently, the prosecution of cases of human trafficking increased during 2019-2023. Moreover, the Government through

NaCSA provided cash transfers to many vulnerable and poor families across the country that benefited many children in need of care and protection.

On the policy and legislative front, the following were milestones achieved: the review of the 2007 Child Rights Act; drafting of a new Child Rights Bill to cover topical/emerging issues like prohibition of female genital mutilation (FGM) for children, special procedures for the treatment of children in the criminal justice system, diversion and standardising age of consent for marriage. Other laws included the passing of new Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act 2022, repealing the 2005 Anti-Human Trafficking Act; the 2007 Domestic Violence Act; the 2011 Persons with Disability Act; and the amendment of the 2012 Sexual Offences Act in 2019, introducing tougher penalties for perpetrators as well as criminalising the practice of compromise and out of court settlement of cases of sexual violence particularly against minors. The government also reviewed the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and adopted a new strategy (National Strategy for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage) that included strategies to address both teenage pregnancy and child and forced marriage, as well as the enactment of the Cyber Security Act to criminalize and prosecute cybercrimes including cyberbullying and online sexual abuse against children.[22]

Nonetheless, enormous **challenges** remain going forward into the implementation of the MTNDP 2024-2030. According to the 2019 Sierra Leone Child Multidimensional Poverty Report, 66 percent of the children experience deprivation in at least *one* dimension from the following list of basic needs: shelter, education, information, water, sanitation, health and nutrition.[23] Indeed, the poverty measure is very high, although constitutes a reduction from 77 percent in the 2016 Report.[24] This incidence has been more prevalent in rural areas both for the 2019 and 2016 estimates: 85 percent rural, compared to 37 percent urban in 2019; and 87 percent rural, compared to 61 percent urban in 2016.

A national headcount of street children in Sierra Leone, conducted between September and November 2011, revealed that 49,698 children across the country live and work on the street for survival. Since 2011, those numbers have been expected to increase due to the global and regional poly-crises. In addition, there is a growing concern around children living on the street with their disabled parents, who are exposed to the risk of abuse and denial of their right to education, resonating against the Government's Big Five. The statistics on violence against children, child labour, child trafficking, teenage pregnancy, and child marriage still remain among the worst in the subregion and in Africa as a whole for which Sierra Leone is not an exception. For children in conflict with the law, access to juvenile justice has been a serious challenge ever since the cessation of the civil war in 2002. Furthermore, the social protection systems for children are still weak, and there remain inconsistent laws and policies, with more room to be desired in respect the juvenile justice sector. And far more is still to be done in realigning cultural practices and converting stereotypical societal mindsets that continue to significantly undermine the fight against children's rights violations, neglect, and abuse.

Opportunities going forward in advancing the course of children development include: the establishment of child protection institutions and structures at national and local levels, as well as the enactment of child-sensitive legislations over the years. Another opportunity, at global level is the declaration of November 18 as *World Day for the Prevention and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence.*[25]

Strategic objective

As in the previous national development plan, the strategic objective is to ensure a 'children first' approach for the survival, protection, and development of children, including disabled and vulnerable children, as well as to prioritise the best interests of children at all times, with a special focus on addressing sexual violence,

[22] Mid-Term Review Report 2022 on the Sierra Leone's MTNDP 2019-2023 and others

[23] According to the Global report on Child Poverty in the Developing World 2003 (cited in the Sierra Leone's Child Multidimensional Poverty Report 2019, p.9), a child is considered poor if s/he is deprived of at least one of the following rights which constitute poverty: shelter, education, information, water, sanitation, health and nutrition.

[24] Both the 2016 and 2019 Sierra Leone's Child Multidimensional Poverty Report can be obtained from the Ministry

[25] https://www.togetherforgirls.org/en/press/united-nations-declares-nov-18-world-day-prevention-healing-child-sexual-exploitation-abuse-violence

teenage pregnancy, child marriage, orphans, vulnerable children, child trafficking, child labour, and juvenile justice.

Key targets

1. By 2030, child multidimensional poverty reduced to 40 percent from 66 percent currently
2. By 2030, the number of children suffering from violence, abuse, and neglect reduced drastically compared to 2023 levels
3. By 2030, access to rehabilitation and reintegration services for all child survivors/victims of abuse and violence increased drastically
4. By 2030, all relevant laws, policies, and regulations reviewed, updated and aligned with international instruments and passed to address rights of a child

Key policy actions

1. Pass the Child Rights Bill and develop regulations for its implementation and enforcement
2. Support Child Participation and Leadership in relevant child development programmes
3. Implement the Street Children's policy through the MoGCA and local councils
4. Scale-up efforts at prosecution of child abusers
5. Strengthen Child Protection Information Management Systems (CPIMS+) to improve case and information management on child protection
6. Develop and implement Child Justice Strategy and develop and implement Child Safeguarding Policy
7. Increase reporting on the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)
8. Mainstream child protection in sectoral policies, strategies and plans
9. Strengthen child protection systems through effective coordination at national and local level
10. Ensure that child victims/survivors benefit from social protection interventions including cash transfer programmes
11. Strengthen the capacities of the MoGCA and Local Councils to fully implement the Alternative Care Policy and Street Children Policy

Empowering persons with disabilities

The pursuit of the welfare of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in national development plans is driven by the principle of *leaving no one behind* in the UN Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. It is especially consistent with SDG16 on promoting peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, which clearly captures the need for the active inclusion of everyone in development processes, including PWDs, and SDG10 focusing specifically on reducing inequality within and among countries, including empowering and promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, or other status. Other goals on ending extreme poverty, education, economic growth, decent work, and human settlements also include specific targets related to people with disabilities. In addition, SDG1 advocates for a reduction in poverty in all its forms, which suggests the need, among others, for data disaggregation to monitor poverty reduction progress among PWDs. Towards the reduction of poverty, the Government recognizes that PWDs are among the poorest and most deprived in society. This is as a result of limited and delayed government budgetary allocation as well as weak implementation of plans, legislation and interventions related to PWDs over the years. The percentage of the

population living with various forms of disabilities, including blind, deaf, or physically challenged is estimated at less than 2 percent (77,000)[26] of the total population.

Thus, the Government is committed to increasing the protecting of rights and giving meaning and dignity to the lives of people living with disabilities by scaling up development of policies and implementation of interventions for the special segment of the population.

During the period of implementation of the MTNDP 2019-2023, the following achievements were made: the Government provided 35 percent of all cash transfers support to PWDs, and at least 10,000 persons with disabilities were provided with COVID-19-related support, including food and protective equipment. It provided specialised learning materials and buses for schools for the *blind and hearing impaired*/*deaf*; as well as revenue generation assets (tricycles or *kekes*) to all categories of PWDs for direct economic empowerment. Furthermore, the country introduced the *village, loans and savings associations* scheme to empower vulnerable women and provided direct support to homes and institutions of PWD and the Aged.[27]

Despite the following achievement, there exist a number of **challenges** on the road to achieving the objectives for PWD, including inadequate domestic investment/finance in addressing disability issues, limiting provision of facilities and equipment for PWDs. The implementation of the Disability Act has generally been weak, while far more is required on data front to guide interventions better and increase delivery of outcomes for PWDs better. Finally, negative stigma and perception of PWD remain, which would continue to affect effective delivery of interventions and planned outcomes for this social group. Going forward into the new MTNDP, **opportunities** exist to leverage for accelerated outcome delivery during 2024-2030, including existence of advocacy groups on the interests of PWDs, as well as relevant policies and legislations, alongside the sustained drive on the *leaving no one behind campaign;* and the existence of national institutions to coordinate interventions for this group.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objectives are to ensure the comprehensive review and implementation of policies and laws relating to disability; scale-up efforts to make public facilities disability friendly; review and improve incentives for teachers in special needs institutions; provide free health care for the physically challenged; and provide livelihood support to persons living with disability for economic empowerment and self-reliance.

Key targets

1. By 2030, persons with disabilities benefiting from social protection systems (cash transfers) is 20 percent higher than in 2023
2. By 2030, ensure full implementation of the Disability Act
3. By 2030, increase capacity building and resource allocation to the PWD sector.

Key policy actions

1. Facilitate the roll out of the Socio-Economic Empowerment Programme for persons with disabilities
2. Establish a Solidarity Fund financed by public and private sector contribution
3. Support the roll out of Disability Assessment, Identification and Certification System
4. Provide Hearing Aid facilities for students facing hearing challenges

[26] See the Sector Policy Paper submitted to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development on disability-related issues towards the preparation of this National Development Plan.

[27] Mid-Term Review Report 2022 on the Sierra Leone MTNDP 2019-2023; and Government of Sierra Leone Manifesto Commitment Achievement Reports.

5. Increase disability inclusion in the SDG monitoring and reporting
6. Produce braille version of the new MTNDP
7. Provide budgetary resources to implement the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services.
8. Generally, increase budgetary resources to all PWD related institutions.

The Aged

In Sierra Leone, like in other developing nations, the aging of the population is often regarded as a demographic dividend. This population presents tremendous opportunities for socioeconomic growth and development of society if their contribution is effectively optimised, with critical understanding of their varying contexts. Indeed, "several calls and recommendations have been made internationally and throughout Africa, for governments to take older citizens' concerns into account when creating larger plans and procedures for social and economic growth".[28] There are notable functions of the aged in the national development process: a) their active participation in economic activities, especially in small-holder agriculture; "in developing nations, more than 60 percent of aged men and 50 percent of aged women continue to be economically active, accounting for a large proportion of the labour force in farming;"[29] b) provide caregiving roles for child upbringing, including in the promotion of their security, health and school, while maximising savings for more economically engaged parents (of 64 years and below) who engage the aged in bringing up their children; and c) many can continue to impart knowledge and training to society.

The Government of Sierra Leone has been closing tracking the development of the age in the country, monitoring this demographic area through census and surveys conducted by the national statistical office, Statistics Sierra Leone. Table 5.22 shows the trend in growth of population of the age since 1985, who had increased in number from about 201,000 since that year, to about 246,000 in 2015, expected to have increased to date. Table 5.23 suggests that there have been more elderly persons in the rural than urban settlements, and among females than males.

Table 5.22: Share of the elderly population and other indicators during 1985-2015

Population	1985	2004	2015
Total	3,515,812	4,976,871	7,092,113
15–64	1,843,302	2,621,773	3,937,595
Elderly population	201,065	125,038	246,284
The elderly population as % of total	5.7	2.4	3.5
Annual growth rate	1.7	1.8	3.2
Old Age Dependency Ratio	10.9	4.8	6.3
Potential Support Ratio	9.2	21.0	16.0

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone 2015, 2004; and 1985 PHCs and UN Population Division.

[28] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6485422/
[29] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6485422/

Table 5.23: Share of the elderly population by sex and place of residence

Elderly population				Rural		Urban	
Age group	Total	Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
65–69	73617	66.5	33.5	49.6	50.4	49.2	50.8
70–74	65,495	62.1	37.9	47.3	52.7	45.7	54.3
75–79	39,691	67.0	33.0	52.3	47.7	47.0	53.0
80–84	31,344	66.3	33.7	43.6	56.4	38.3	61.7
85–89	15,881	71.3	28.7	48.7	51.3	39.4	60.6
90+	20,256	68.0	32.0	48.7	51.3	29.2	60.8
Total	246284	72.8	27.2	48.4	51.6	45.5	54.5

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

Strategies, including the NaSSIT, NaCSA, SLeSHI and the National Association for the Aged, are critical concerning potential leverage going forward.

Strategic objective

Strategic objectives are to ensure the comprehensive review and implementation of policies and laws relating to the aged; and provide substantial health care and continued employment opportunities for this category to increase and sustain their self-reliance.

Key targets

1. By 2025, the size of the aged population and location in the country fully determined
2. By 2030, support to the aged drastically increased
3. By 2028, a clear framework for the welfare of the aged and participation in service delivery drawn up.

Key policy actions

1. Formulate and roll out effective policy for older persons to improve their well-being
2. Extend support for financial security, health care, shelter, welfare, and other needs of older persons
3. Increase the aged inclusion in the SDG monitoring and reporting
4. Mount national campaign on their role in development
5. Provide and sustain finance support to the National Association for the Aged.

5.2.8 Social protection

The government continues to stay the course of promoting the national social protection agenda from previous national development plans. Scaling up the implementation of strategies in this sector could not have become

more critical today. Sierra Leone's income poverty headcount remains at 56.7 percent[30], relative to 39.38 percent for Africa average;[31] extreme poverty standing at about 13 percent, measuring the proportion of those in serious hunger in the country,[32] while the country's multidimensional poverty currently estimates at 58 percent.[33]

The social protection implication for consolidating and accelerating gains made by GoSL in promoting human capital development is glaring from the current poverty and hunger measures in light protecting especially school going children and their parents in impoverished and most vulnerable households, including those with persons with disabilities. It is in this context that GoSL continues to place social protection on top of its agenda and within the human capital development policy areas as one of the Government Big 5 Game Changers for 2024-2030. This is consistent with the UN's special emphasis on SDG 1, 2 and 10 on addressing poverty, hunger and inequality in its call for accelerated and transformative strides to reverse the derailment of the vast majority of SDG targets; for which scaling up investments in social protection is expected to be among the top priorities in member states plans and programmes for the remaining seven years of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The government made considerable achievements in the previous MTNDP with regard to implementation of social protection interventions, especially at the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Milestones achieved include: provision of emergency cash transfers to 10,962 persons with disabilities (PWDs) during pandemic; with at least 10,000 of these persons generally provided with COVID-19-related support, including food and protective equipment. More than 36,000 household heads were provided with cash transfers, drawn from all 16 district of Sierra Leone; while up to 38,000 beneficiaries (low-income workers in small businesses, tourism and entertainment industry) received one-off COVID-19 Emergency Cash Transfers in Western Area Urban. Additionally, 253 households with a population of 1000 families, including previously locally integrated refugees, vulnerable community members and persons with specific needs received COVID-19 related intervention cash grants and preventive materials.[34] And generally, while income and multidimensional poverty remain in excess of 50 percent national, their current estimates constitute some laudable improvement due to integrated interventions in the previous plans. At 47.3 percent (if the same poverty line is used during 2003/04-2018), income poverty represents an improvement from 66.4 percent in 2003/04 and 52.9 percent in 2011;[35] while at 58 percent, multidimensional poverty represents consistent improvement from 77 percent in 2010, 68.3 percent 2015, and 64.8 percent in 2017.[36] Some of the social protection-related achievements can be seen in related sectors and sections of this plan, such as on children, disability issues, nutrition and youth.

The **challenges** to implementation in the last five years and those emerging include the following: relying on Biometric IDs in processing assistance cases in emergencies would cause unwarranted delays especially dealing with rural communities and may not be cost-effective; and funding is grossly inadequate relative to the high number of persons in need of support, coupled with delay in disbursement of funds of government and partners. There is also the experience of bad geographic terrains posing obstacles in accessing beneficiary locations resulting from poor road network. The risks of having crises continuing coupled with heightened adverse climate effects, biodiversity loss and pollution and conflicts would see more and more population remaining in and/or sliding into vulnerability and poverty with rising implications for investment in social protection; and yet having to put up with extended fiscal crunches.

[30] Note however that the 56.7 percent coming from the Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) 2018 cannot be compared to the 52.9 percent estimate from the previous SLIHS (2011) because of upward adjustment in the poverty line due to changes in price and other socioeconomic dynamics during 2011-2018. If no adjustment was made, poverty from SLIHS2018 is estimated at 47.3 percent lower than the 52.9 percent from SLIHS2011 and 66.4 percent from SLIHS2003/04.

[31] Sierra Leone Economic Update Report October 2023, p.50

[32] Sierra Leone's Integrated Household Survey Report 2019, pp.iii&267.

[33] Sierra Leone National Multidimensional Report 2023, p.5

[34] See Sierra Leone's Mid-Term Review Report 2022 on the implementation of the country's MTNDP 2019-2023, p.53.

[35] Sierra Leone's 2021 Voluntary National Review Report; Sierra Leone's 2018 SLIHS Report; among others

[36] The UNDP Global Human Development Report of 2010; Sierra Leone's 4th National Human Development Report 2019.

One of the **opportunities** going forward for increased investment in the social protection is the renewed global urgency, advocacy and cooperation for scaled-up interventions in this sector.

The current National Social Protection Strategy for Sierra Leone 2022-2026 has the following as its *six* specific objectives including ***human capital development*** (***GoSL Big 5.2***) reflective *six* key life course stages:[37]

1. Stronger state-citizen relationships
2. Enhanced human capital development
3. Effective management of risk and vulnerability
4. Empowerment and livelihood development
5. Sustained social cohesion and nation building
6. Inclusive macro-economic policy.

Specific objective

The strategic objective is to ensure a a strengthened state-citizen responsibilities and relationships, enhanced human capital development, effective management of risks and vulnerability, community livelihood development, sustained social cohesion and nation building, and inclusive macroeconomic development.

Key targets

1. By 2030, cash transfers provided to an additional 35,000 poor households
2. By 2030, employment is provided to 9,000 youths
3. By 2030, provide special support to at least 30 percent of vulnerable populations (including women, persons with disabilities, older persons, and children).

Key policy actions

1. Support provision of a conducive learning environment for children
2. Support provision of improved health facilities across the country
3. Support provision of critical community infrastructures, such as community centres, grain stores, water facilities, community markets, etc
4. Fully implement the National Social Protection Strategy 2022-2026
5. Increase cooperation with other MDAs and development partners in the implementation of social protection interventions
6. Scale-up mobilisation of financing for social protection in the country
7. Increase monitoring and reporting on social protection interventions

5.2.9 Land, Housing and Urbanisation

The Government of Sierra Leone continues to consider the lands and housing sector as a leading contributor to the socioeconomic transformation of the country. Land and housing are critical welfare assets which count a lot in multidimensional poverty metrics among other considered multidimensional indicators in presenting a better understanding of household welfare status. The built condition of a living house is a critical determinant of a child's welfare in light of a number of factors, including whether it is constructed from mud or concrete, roofed with thatch or zinc, whether lighting in the household is from firewood or modern energy,

[37] Sierra Leone National Social Protection Strategy 2022-2026, p.9

and a host of others that determine how well (say, in terms of health and performance in school) a kid would be.

Urbanisation has become a central issue as well; and a growing concern in a lot of respect in the least developed countries, as expansion of urban built spaces, slums and other informal housing developments are a result of a number of factors, including poverty driven rural-urban migration and high birth rates leading to exploding population, all affecting the proper development of the child, and hence the human capital development of a country. Indeed, expanding urban settlements and cities in population without commensurate increases in social services is a recipe for an underprepared child and adulthood for socioeconomic productivity. It is against this background that the GoSL will remain focused on pursing efforts to transform the lands and housing sector and current urban development context.

There remain ***challenges*** faced in this sector are: outdated laws and regulations, weak cadastre system, poor records management; inadequate budgetary allocation, weak institutional capacity and lack of collaboration among MDAs that are relevant to the land development sector.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to ensure effective land management and administration that is environmentally sound and sustainable for equitable access and control over land, including providing affordable housing for low- and middle-income groups to alleviate poverty and promote economic growth.

Key targets

1. By 2030, 20,000 affordable houses constructed across the country
2. By 2030, a National Cadastral Records Management System and Strategy developed
3. By 2030, a National Spatial Development Plan and Strategy developed
4. By 2030, the number of land-related cases in courts reduced by 50 percent

Key policy actions

1. Legislate the Land Commission and Customary Lands Regulations
2. Improve monitoring and management of urban expansion
3. Finalise and support implementation of National Housing Policy and National Building Code
4. Continue to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework of the land sector
5. Facilitate urbanization by creating new cities and additional urban settlements based on principles of sustainable land use planning, management, and administration
6. Collaborate with other sectors and explore opportunities to attract investments in housing, micro cities, tourism destinations, industrial parks, and other urban infrastructure
7. In a PPP model, create 5000 affordable housing units to be constructed under various arrangements for new micro-cities and social housing schemes
8. Establish a modern GIS workstation to support land administration
9. Support protection of wildlife reserves/sanctuaries, forest reserves and national protected areas
10. Provide incentives to support small businesses in the housing construction industry
11. Support the allocation, planning and of dedication of land for industrialisation and economic expansion (including all Special Economic Zones projects).

Big 5.3: Youth Employment scheme

5.3.1 General employment promotion for youth

Sierra Leone's population is young. Young people account for two thirds of the overall population, as depicted by the country's Mid-Term Census of 2021, which reports that out of the country's total population of 7,548,702, about 5,000,000 were recorded as youths. Thus, their role in promoting economic growth and development in Sierra Leone cannot be overemphasised, constituting the bulk of the workforce. Indeed, their full participation in formulating national development plans and implementation can tremendously accelerate socioeconomic transformation of the country. This realisation ensured the sustained inclusion of youth development in previous national development plans, including the MTNDP 2019-2023.

Some significant milestones were recorded in advancing the welfare and development of the youth population during 2019-2023 in the areas of *job creation*, including *life skills livelihood*. Between 2018 and 2021, the Government supported 3,400 youths in rice cultivation across the country; while ensuring the engagement of another set of 3,400 in garbage collection and disposal operations across the country. And to date a total of 26 car washing centres were constructed in different parts of the country to provide mini jobs to thousands of young males and females; a total of 1,120 youths are currently benefiting from these centres, while indirect beneficiaries are estimated at more than 1,700. Seventy new fishing boats with accessories were constructed and distributed to the 7 coastal districts of Sierra Leone, which generated 1,400 direct beneficiaries. The boats were provided partially on loan, and partially on grant. The laudable performance of the loan portion at 70 percent recovery rate has seen the project at an advanced stage of constructing 50 more fishing boats, with female and male participation in fishing under the project standing at 40 and 60 percent.

Additionally, the Government's innovative fishing project for inland districts is currently witnessing the construction of 4 fish ponds in Kalaba, Bo, Bonthe, and Tonkolili, which has trained 1,400 youth in entrepreneurship, book keeping, sea safety and minor repairs on outboard engines; and has constructed and fitted 1 Innovative Fish Farm (Polythene) for youth at Leicester Community in Freetown; while funds secured from the International Organisation for Migration to train 20 young people in Innovative Fish Farming at Njala University, which was undertaken. Other collaborations with IOM offered life changing support to 2,000 vulnerable youth (including 600 young women) who received vocational training, business startup equipment. A fully equipped vocational and technical training centre was constructed in Sumbuya Lugbu, Southern Province.

Furthermore, 1,200 university graduates across the country were recruited, trained and deployed under the National Youth Service Scheme during 2019-2021, 67 percent of them having gained permanent employment at institutions they were deployed for internships, while hundreds trained by the Road Maintenance Skills Development and Training Schemes—the potential of the *National Youth Service* for the transformation of the sector being a **lesson** to take forward in the implementation of the new MTNDP 2024-2030. [38]

Notwithstanding the above efforts and realization of the critical role of youth in the country's socioeconomic transformation, serious **challenges** remain in the sector. Youth bulge could be a demographic dividend or curse depending on the level investment made in advancing this segment of the population. Still, about 70 percent of the youth population is either underemployed or unemployed, while 50 percent are illiterate or unskilled. These statistics suggest a serious continued socioeconomic marginalization of the young people, which presents a grave security concern, given their vulnerability to recruitment into criminal and violent activities. Findings from the Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report remain crucial with their reminder that, the economic disenfranchisement of youth undeniably contributed to the outbreak of violence and eventual civil war in Sierra Leone during 1991-2002; that years of lack of education and employment opportunities drove young people to join battlefronts during the war. It remains worrying, thus, that despite some laudable efforts made to redressing youth problems in post-conflict Sierra Leone, the problems continue to be

[38] Additional details on progress can be obtained in the Sector Policy Paper submitted by the Ministry of Youth Affairs to MoPED as input to the preparation of the MTNDP 2024-2030. See also the Sierra Leone Mid-Term Review Report on the implementation of the MTNDP 2019-2023 on youth.

overwhelming; that socio-economic marginalization of a majority of youth continues. There is visible unemployment, particularly among young men, who can be found in the streets of the capital city of Freetown and other urban centres; that many of the pre-conflict conditions helping to fuel the youth's participation in the civil war still exist today.[39] Obviously, the considerable growth of the country's population, a phenomenon commonplace in sub-Saharan Africa, should be factored strongly in the equation of efforts to provide solution to these problems.

It is thus extremely critical that the Government has placed treatment of the youth problems and overall advancement of the sector within its strategic direction for the next *seven years* 2014-2030 framed around its Big Five Game Changers. The government is poised to build on gains made in advancing the sector in the last five years, while accelerating its transformation ensuring that the plethora of challenge are faced head on as a precondition for social stability and sustainable development. Inadequate funding of the sector will be among the challenges to overcome, among others.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to create a youth sector enabling environment to support young people to utilize their talents, undertake viable and innovative business activities through start-up projects and to promote collaboration among them by taking advantage of their receptiveness to global opportunities, including digital penetration in socioeconomic activities.

Key targets

1. By 2025, a comprehensive manpower plan matching and establishing gaps between supply of labour and market demand developed
2. By 2025, the Decent Work Country Programme Phase II becomes operational
3. By 2025, off-the-shelf youth employment bankable projects developed.

Key policy actions

1. Ensure the enforcement of labour laws that are consistent with youth development
2. Scale up and explore more training opportunities for young people, including TVET and life skills
3. Increase access to financing opportunities, including establishment of financial corridor and one-stop shop centre to support youth development in the country
4. Increase support for the National Youth Service
5. Increase cooperation between the youth sector and others, with special attention to addressing topical issues calling for cultivation of youth leadership, such as the *environment and climate change*
6. Develop a manpower plan to match the supply of labour with market demand
7. Enhance youth employment through agriculture, livestock, aquaculture and value chain, and cooperation with the Ministry of Communications, Technology and Innovation
8. Increase cooperation with relevant development partners in advancing youth employment opportunities, with special emphasis on partnership with the International Labour Organization and the African Regional Labour Administration Centre.

[39] Prior to the war, the youth suffered exclusion from family life, society, jobs, the decision-making processes, as well as living under oppressive traditional and cultural systems in the rural areas.

5.3.2 Addressing irregular migration

In recent times, irregular migration ventures have been pervasive amongst young people as it serves as a survival strategy for lack of employment opportunities for many of these youths. Currently in Sierra Leone, youth unemployment stands at around 60 percent. Unemployment in youth can cause vulnerability to irregular migration and mental health disorders due to feelings of hopelessness, financial insecurity and rapid social change. Furthermore, unemployed youths are opting for irregular migration routes to countries they perceive as holding greener pastures for them. In this regard, urgent actions are to be undertaken in order to increase awareness on the risks of irregular migration, to create and expand regular migration pathways and explore sustainable employment opportunities for youth.

Rural-urban migration occurs mainly from the Northern region to the Western area and the South-Eastern regions in search of employment and business opportunities. Whereas Europe and the Gulf States/Middle East are the major destination countries for migrants from Sierra Leone in pursuance of improved living conditions. In addition to poverty, 'brain drain' remain the key factors of irregular migration. and the Furthermore, limited entrepreneurship space, high levels of illiteracy rate coupled with unfavourable employment regulatory framework and barriers serve as a strong motivation for young people to leave the country.

The nexus between human mobility and climate change partly due to exacerbated environmental degradation is becoming more evident especially among coastal and island communities. Furthermore, disasters as a result of natural phenomena like floods and landslides remain a major cause for internal, regional and international migration in Sierra Leone. Consequently, there is need for an integrated approach to implement development-oriented programmes for people to stay, for people on the move and for people who need to migrate.

While a small proportion of international migration is done legally, the majority is undertaken without proper or no documentation. Irregular migration is often facilitated by human smugglers; and owing to the involvement of criminal networks, migrants are vulnerable to of abuse and exploitation by traffickers and the risk of death. Thus, in the last MTNDP, the Government of Sierra Leone made efforts to tackle the issue of irregular migration by enacting certain laws to address this issue. For instance, the enactment of the Employment, Work Permit and Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Bills, which received Presidential Accent in May 2023. Research was conducted to inform policies on addressing irregular migration.

Among the remaining ***challenges*** to effective migration management in the country include funding constraints to increase awareness raising campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, human trafficking at all levels across the country. Further, the numerous porous borders of Sierra Leone remain a challenge. Data collection and analysis on irregular and regular needs to strengthen.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to ensure that internal and external migration is reduced and effectively managed.

Key targets

1. By 2030, the conviction rate of human traffickers is 5 percent higher than the figure in 2023
2. By 2030, the general public especially the youth are more aware of irregular migration, human trafficking
3. Provide protection services to all victims of human trafficking

Key policy actions

1. Conduct an awareness campaign on irregular migration, human trafficking and in partnership with youth and women's group
2. Implement the Migration Policy launched in 2022 in collaboration with IOM

3. Combat human trafficking through training border operatives and supplying them with the necessary tools and equipment
4. Promote the acquisition of technical and vocational training/skills among the youth to promote employability, through the establishment of district-level vocational centres in partnership with the private sector
5. Increase efforts to arrests, prosecute and convict traffickers, including addressing procedural delays and judicial corruption as well as ensuring survivors' safety and enabling their participation I judicial processes, both to increase prosecution rates and offer survivors compensation
6. Train prosecutors and judges to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases
7. Partner with IOM and relevant stakeholders on the implementation of the National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2024-2028 to enhance counter-trafficking efforts and protect the victims of trafficking including in their reintegration process
8. Enact the protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children
9. Upgrade the existing structure of industrial growth centres pioneered to provide vocational and entrepreneurial skills that are enjoyable and market-driven youth, women and other vulnerable groups
10. Support the implementation of the 23 objectives of the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration Championship Country in collaboration with IOM as Chair of the UN Migration Network
11. Reinforce voluntary return and reintegration programming for stranded, vulnerable Sierra Leoneans in collaboration with IOM
12. Mainstream human mobility in the context of climate change and environmental degradation in Programming by various Ministries as per the Plan of Action on Recommendations to address human mobility in the context of climate change and environmental degradation in Sierra Leone, signed by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, National Disaster Management Agency with support from IOM and UNDP and inputs from various MDAs.

5.3.3 Resolving barriers to youth employment

Two key barriers are addressed here as major bottlenecks to efforts aimed at generating decent and sustainable job for the youths in Sierra Leone. These are: a) limited labour market skills, as a vast majority of youths cannot afford technical and vocational education training opportunities; and b) widespread consumption of drugs, minimising the chances of youth to get skilfully employed. To this end, the following two sub-sections provide strategic direction with the MTNDP 2024-2030 towards addressing these limitations to enhance youth employability in the country.

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET)

Sierra Leone has a youthful population which accounts for about two-thirds of the population and therefore represents a very good potential for development if our human resources are utilized appropriately. Despite this huge potential unemployment remains an uphill task in our nation and a major reason for youth unemployment is a mismatch in skills demanded as against qualifications / skills offered by youth.

Developing the middle level manpower capabilities of any society is crucial in meeting the demands of a growing and dynamic society such as Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, skills training both formal and non-formal are offered by formal training institutions and NGOs and development programmes undertake by development partners that have manifested a strong commitment in supporting TVET and youth empowerment. Therefore, investing in TVET can provide the necessary avenues through which graduates can gain employment or be self-employed thereby addressing unemployment and poverty among youth.

The Education Act 2004 is one of the key legislative instruments that addresses TVET issues. It provides for the structure of the 6-3-3-4 education system including Technical and vocational Education, adult and non-formal education as well as the control of education (and training). Other notable legislative instruments in support of TVET issues include: the National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards (NCTVA) 2001; The Polytechnic Act 2001. Also the Government approved the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy in September 2019.

Challenges in promoting TVET include inadequate physical infrastructure such as buildings and classrooms, workshops, laboratories; insufficient trained and qualified personnel to provide the knowledge and requisite skills needed in contemporary labour market; lack of a vibrant private sector with a growing demand for TVET graduates, perception of TVET among the population, inadequate funding to the sub-sector, low enrolment of female in TVET institutions among others.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to develop a responsive and efficient TVET sub-sector that caters for and produce high quality skilled labour force to contribute to nation building.

Key targets

1. By 2026, TVET policy is fully implemented
2. By 2030, all relevant curriculum reflecting technical skills and vocational training in high demand are developed
3. By 2030, rehabilitate all government training institutions in the country
4. By 2026, undertake capacity building and refresher courses for lectures and teachers in TVET institutions

Key policy actions

1. Review of curriculum of TVET institutions with a view to incorporating the demands of relevant skills in the contemporary labour market
2. Undertake a comprehensive needs assessment of TVET institutions and make necessary recommendations to make them fully functional
3. Undertake a comprehensive capacity development plan to cater for the needs of trainers and instructors
4. Undertake public private partnership in developing TVET programmes
5. Strengthen institutional/sectoral collaboration in the delivery of requisite training for the youth

Addressing drug and substance abuse

In recent times, drug abuse has been rampant in Sierra Leone. Drugs are used as a coping mechanism for lack of employment opportunities for many youths, the unemployment of whom stands at around 60 percent. It is given that unemployment has a close link with substance abuse as *idle time and stress from little income fuels the need for substance consumption to relieve stress and cope with financial hardship*. In this regard, as it is in the case of irregular migration, urgent strategic actions should be undertaken in order to increase awareness about the risks of substance abuse towards creating sustainable labour market pathways for the youths.

As noted above, providing sustainable livelihoods for the youth (aged 15-35, according for almost 40 percent of the total population, according to the 2021 Mid-Term Census) has extremely challenged the country; the reason GoSL has boldly set out a target of producing 500,000 jobs out of the estimated 2,974,188 youth according to the Census. Government notes the proliferation of drug abuse among the teeming youth, particularly the use of the *KUSH drug brand*, coupled with the widespread use of *marijuana*, *tramadol*, *alcohol*, and *pampas* products. Research shows that the causes of youth drug abuse are related to peer-group pressure, poor parenting, limited household finance, stress, social exclusion, genetic orientation, and others. Drug addiction has frequently caused the disruption of peace and security of the state and socioeconomic

development of communities. This has affected the health, physical and psychological functioning of the abusers, leading to the prevalence and promotion of diseases, such as HIV/AIDS through risky sexual behaviour, gender-based violence and mental ill-health.

The government did make some laudable efforts in addressing drug abuse during 2019-2023 through the provision jobs for the youths, as stated above, including the engagement of 3,400 youths in rice cultivation and 3,400 in garbage collection and disposal operations across the country (see details under the section on *General employment promotion for youth* above). Additionally, GoSL strengthened the operations of the Drugs Law Enforcement Agencies for the effective implementation of the Drugs Control Act 2008, the Anti-Drugs Act of 2009; as well as the operations of the Transnational Organised Crimes Unit in the Police to increase implementation of counternarcotics policies and related-investigations.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to mitigate serious drug and substance abuse among young people in Sierra Leone.

Key targets

1. By 2030, Reduce the proliferation and abuse of drugs among youths in Sierra Leone
2. By 2030, improve the advocacy skills of young people in the fight against abuse of drugs
3. By 2030, increase the level of awareness including its effects on drugs abuse.

Key policy actions

1. Strengthening the Drugs Law Enforcement Agencies
2. Levied huge fines and punishment for drugs peddlers and users
3. Conducting regional awareness raising on drugs and substance abuse
4. Conduct youth peer –group training on abuse of drugs and outreach strategies
5. Increased Partnership and advocacy against the proliferation of drugs and substance abuse.

5.3.4 Employment across the Government's Big Five Game Changers

This section focuses on identifying the sources of supply of the planned 500,000 jobs for the youth in Sierra Leone towards achieving the goals of the Government Big 5s. The 500,000 jobs are projected to be sourced from two broad areas: a) through the ***Public Sector***, as relates to anticipated government accelerated efforts to generate and coordinate projects expected to employ large number of youths with private sector participation as service/product providers; and b) through ***Direct Private Sector*** employment, capitalising from the operations of thousands of private business companies in the country, devoid of government's direct involvement.

Public sector generated and coordinated jobs for youths

The government has the leverage to support the generation of thousands of jobs for youth either through direct placement in public sector-coordinated economic growth/development projects and services, or through provision of support for skills development and labour market information that increase the chances of job placement for youth across different sectors. In ***agriculture***, it could support the creation of new rural micro-enterprises for youth, support the establishment of youth farms, "equipping skilled youth to launch larger-scale agribusinesses", and "providing human capital for agro-industrialisation."[40] During 2018 and 2021, for example, the Government supported 5,700 youths in rice cultivation and cocoa and coffee plantation across the country.[41]

[40] https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/Brochure_Job_Africa-En.pdf

[41] See Sierra Leone's 2022 Mid-Term Review Report on the country's MTNDP 2019-2023.

The ***ICT sector*** is continuing to grow in job opportunities for the youth across the country through, for instance, "strengthening digital literacy and computational thinking in secondary schools, and developing coding academies that teach skills ranging from basic digital design to advanced coding language."[42] Through the Government's scaled-up digital infrastructure investment in Sierra Leone during 2019-201, the average number of digital financial services-related customer transactions per month exceeded 12 million. This has vivid implication of the number of jobs, especially for youth that would have accompanied these transactions; expressing the enormous potential that a youth-savvy ICT industry will have for generating job for youth with sustained investment.

Fisheries has also been noted to have the potential of generating millions of jobs in the country, having more 500 km2 of coastline, besides the enormous aquaculture that goes with it. During 2018-2021 for instance, a total of 1,400 jobs mostly for youth were generated through government-purchased fishing boats (70) with fishing accessories that were constructed and distributed to the 7 coastal districts of Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, the role of the public sector in generating self-employment for the youth through promoting access to finance for ***SMEs*** and other opportunities (for both females and males) has been critical in Sierra Leone. During 2019-2023, GoSL established the National Micro Finance MUNAFA fund, which was rolled-out, targeting 5,328 beneficiaries for loans; 10 financial service providers were recruited, and 1000 SMEs-owned women were trained in business development services as a result.

Tourism also continued to be critical during the last plan, providing a total number of 2,890 jobs in 2020, while there have been various other employment areas of public sector support for job creation for youth, including ***public works and community development***-related areas, like ***feeder road works*** and ***maintenance***); and through ***advancing sanitary and health objectives*** with programmes such as garbage collection and disposal programmes, and carwash centres supported by GoSL in the last plan, employing some thousands of youths. The government has also placed in permanent jobs many youths through the National Youth Service Scheme.

Among the strategies GoSL has had for boosting youth employment in public sector coordinated programme, and by extension in direct employment in the private sector are:

1. Adopt a Government policy that encourages the inclusion of youth in public works and infrastructure projects
2. Establish a Youth Opportunity Centre in every district headquarter town to support youth in their quest to get employment
3. Provide special incentives for youths in the ICT and creative industry
4. Design a special programme to create job opportunities for out of school young girls.

Accordingly, the following growth sectors have been identified under the public sector coordination, with high likelihood of generating employment for young people in the country against historical and contemporary policy developments (sectors that are expected to heavily attract private investment): *agriculture*, *fisheries*, *tourism*, *mining*, *transport*, *innovation/digital services*, *SMEs and trade*, *public works and community development*, and *others* (including sports and related activities)—see **Figure 5.3**. In all, we project 30 percent of the 500,000 jobs to be supplied by government coordinated projects in the identified sectors with private sector participation, producing a total of 150,000 jobs during 2024-2030. The projects here are expected to be financed by GoSL and/or donor agencies through the broad projects listed in Table 5.24 among others

[42] https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/Brochure_Job_Africa-En.pdf



Figure 5.3: Projected supply of 150,000 jobs for youth through public sector coordinated programmes

Table 5.24: Relevant government coordinated project areas to support job creation for youth

No.	Institution	Project Areas
1	Agriculture	Development and Promotion of Agro-ecological Zones (New)
		Advancing Mechanisation and irrigation system (New)
		Agricultural Technology and Climate Smart Agriculture (New)
		Empowering Women and Youth (New)
		National Agricultural Census (New)
		Input System: E-Vouchers for Rice Production (Seeds, Fertilizers and Tractor Services)-(Ongoing)
		Strengthen seed and input systems to optimise yields for key value chains.
		Support the development of aggregation, processing & market linkages
		Strengthening agricultural finance
		Rehabilitation of feeder roads and construction of bridges in targeted food cluster areas
		West Africa Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP) Phase 2 AF (World Bank-Grant) Ongoing
		Smallholder Commercialization and Agribusiness Development Project (SCADEP-Grant) (WB/GoSL) Ongoing
		Rice Agro Industrial Cluster (SL RAIC) Additional Finance (AfDB-Grant) Ongoing
		Sierra Leone Agribusiness and Rice Value Chain Support Project (SLARiS-Grant) (AfDB) Ongoing)

No.	Institution	Project Areas
		Sierra Leone Regional Rice Value Chain Development Project (B/BADEA/GoSl-Loan) Ongoing
		Palm Oil Production (IsDB-Loan) Ongoing
		Rural Finance & Community Improvement II (IFAD-Loan) Ongoing
		Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP) (IFAD/OFID/GoSL-Loan) Ongoing
		Land and Infrastructure Development (ndia Exim Bank-Loan) Ongoing
		Global Agricultural Food Security (WB-Grant) New
		Empowerment of West Africa Women SMEs in Rice Value Chain (ESASME) (IsDB-Grant) New
2	Fisheries	Rehabilitation and Development of Fishing Infrastructure (Ongoing)
		Developing Marine Artisanal Fisheries (Ongoing)
		Women Empowerment in the Fishery Sector (Ongoing)
		Strengthening Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Production (Ongoing)
		Promoting an inclusive blue value chain
		Advancing sustainable fisheries and support artisanal fishing operations
		Construction of Fishery Bonded Industrial Park/Fish Harbor (China/GoSL-Loan) (Bilateral)
3	Tourism	Establishment of Tech-Voc Semi-Formal Arts and Crafts Training Center at the Mabala Cultural Village
		Construction of National Arts Gallery
		Construction of Two Tourism Information Offices (New)
		Sustainable Ecotourism Development Project (New)
		Development of the Physical Infrastructure of the Cultural Heritage Sector (New)
		Support to Micro-Small and Medium Enterprises (Munafa Fund) - (Ongoing)
4	Mining	Programme support in the mining sector
5	Transport	Completion of Bo - Tikonko Road
		Construction of Targrin - Lungi - ConaKry Dee Road
		Construction of Bandajuma-Pujehun-Gbondappi
		Construction of Taiama - Njal aRoad
		Major and Minor Regravelling Works on Selected Trunk Roads (40 Lots)
		Completion of Township Roads
		Reconstruction of Kabala -Falaba-Krubola Road (73Km)
		Construction of Culverts within Bumpeh Tabeh Chiefdom
		Rehabilitation of Jojoma Bridge (2no) and Geoma Bridge (1No)
		Reconstruction of Yifin Bridge
		Section Overlay/Rehabilitation of Major Highways
		Construction of 400m Embarkment and 40m bridge and 2 No Relief Box Culverts along Molakika- Gbongboma Stretch in Bonthe Island
		Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Kenema - Zemmi Road
		Moyamba - Sebehun - Shenge Road
		Kambia - Madina - Kunkuna - Konta - Guinea Border Roads
		Magbele Magbang- Moyamba Junction
		Improving Roads Network System
6	Innovation & digital services	Sierra Leone Digital Transformation Projects
		Operationalization and Expansion of eGovernment Platform (New)
7	SME and Trade	Support to Micro-Small and Medium Enterprises (Munafa Fund) - (Ongoing)

No.	Institution	Project Areas
		Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDA)
8	Public works and community development	Rehabilitation of Existing Presidential Lodge (Ongoing)
		Rehabilitation and Upgrading of State House (Ongoing)
		Rehabilitation and Improvement of Miatta Conference Hall (Ongoing)
		Demolition and Construction of Ministry of Labor Administrative Building (Ongoing)
		Rehabilitation of Seven Lift Elevator at Youyi Building (Ongoing)
		Rehabilitation of a Materials Testing Laboratory (New)
		Construction/Rehabilitation of Provincial/District/Administrative Buildings (New)
		Rehabilitation of Government Residential Quarters (Ongoing)
		Demolition of Multi-Storey Building (former UN Building) at Siaka Steven Street (Ongoing)
		Construction and Rehabilitation of Judicial Service Infrastructures (Ongoing)
9	Other Sources (including sports, etc)	Youth in Agriculture (Ongoing)
		Youth in Fisheries Project (Ongoing)
		Youth Empowerment in Car Wash Project (Ongoing)
		Graduate Service Programme (Ongoing)
		Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Project (Ongoing)
		Rehabilitation and reconstruction of Craig Belamy Football Academy
		Construction of multi-purpose complex stadium in 8 districts across Sierra Leone
		Establishment of sports Physio-Therapy and Fitness Centres in the 5 regional headquarter towns
		Support to girls in sport across the 16 districts of Sierra Leone
		Establishing youth opportunity centres in every district headquarter town
		Youth development fund for start-up ventures
		Setting up special funds and partnerships with the private sector for hiring training and upscaling youth
		Providing targeted incentives for the private sector to hire youths
		Provide special incentives for youth in the ICT and creative industry
		Designing a special programme to create job opportunities for out of school girls
	Total	

Direct private sector generated jobs

In February 2016, the Commissioner of Corporate Affairs Commission Sierra Leone, disclosed about 6,240 registered and functional companies in Sierra Leone.[43] This number, which can be expected to have grown overtime (data on the present number not available currently**)** depicts the existing potential for direct private sector employment generation. The likelihood of generating new jobs increases with more friendly business environment and incentives that can be enabled by the Government. Among the incentives GoSL has planned to provide to the private sector for youth employment generation include:

1. Provide targeted incentives (tax and non-tax incentives) for the private sector to hire youths
2. Set aside a special fund to reimburse costs of hiring, training and upskilling of youth incurred by private sector
3. Provide access to capital for youth that wish to start their own venture

[43] https://sierraexpressmedia.com/?p=77335#:~:text=The%20Commissioner%20of%20Corporate%20Affairs,registered%20companies%20in%20Sierra%20Leone.

4. Establish a database to track employment of youth in both public and private sector

Accordingly, we have projected the supply of new jobs from this broad area (the private sector as engine of growth) at 350,000 (70 percent of the government-targeted 500,000 jobs for youths), distributed across ***big***, ***medium*** and ***small*** businesses as shown in Table 5.25.

Table 5.25: Projected supply of 350,000 jobs for youth through direct private sector employment

No	Institution	Job supply weight	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total	Supply coordinating institution
1	Big Business Companies	0.5	9,000	13,500	17,000	23,500	30,500	35,000	46,500	175,000	CAC, Chamber of Commerce, NIB, MTI
2	Medium Business Companies	0.3	5,400	8,100	10,200	14,100	18,300	21,000	27,900	105,000	CAC, Chamber of Commerce, NIB, MTI
3	Small Business Companies	0.2	3,600	5,400	6,800	9,400	12,200	14,000	18,600	70,000	CAC, Chamber of Commerce, NIB, MTI
	Sub-Total	**1.0**	18,000	27,000	34,000	47,000	61,000	70,000	93,000	350,000	

Strategic objective

Going forward with the implementation of the new plan (MTNDP 2024-2030) the main strategic objective of the Government within the Youth Employment Scheme is to explore various avenues to supply at least 500,000 new jobs for the youth in Sierra Leone

Key targets

1. By 2030, create 500,000 jobs for young people
2. By 2025, the public sector is fully prepared to directly supply at least 150,000 jobs for youth
3. By 2025, the private sector is fully prepared to directly supply at least 350,000 jobs for youth

Key policy actions

1. Promoting inclusion of youth in public works and infrastructure projects
2. Ensure the establishment of Youth Opportunity Centres across the country
3. Provide special incentives for youths in the ICT and creative industry
4. Design a special programme to create job opportunities for out of school young girls
5. Provide targeted incentives (tax and non-tax incentives) for the private sector to hire youths
6. Encourage reimbursement of costs of hiring, training and upskilling youth incurred by private sector
7. Provide access to capital for youth that wish to start their own venture
8. Establish a database to track employment of youth in both public and private sector

5.3.5 Sports for youth empowerment and socioeconomic development

The Government of Sierra Leone identifies sports as an *enabler, catalyst means* to support the creation of jobs for young people in particular. Sporting activities contribute to the personal development of people through the promotion of good health, personal discipline, leadership and team building skills. Accordingly, the Government has demonstrated great interest in exploring the potential of sports in accelerating the delivery of

national development objectives. This activity is considered to be a crucial part of social and economic development, as the physical health of a nation is fundamental to achieving a wealthy nation. Therefore, it is of great importance that government continues to prioritise sports development, building on the gains achieved under this sector in the previous national development plan; as it promotes socioeconomic benefits and individual wellbeing.

Youths mostly benefit in significant numbers from the services and opportunities generated from this industry. The sporting landscape in Sierra Leone has the potential to enrich and deliver numerous services and support to the youth population that mostly make up the sport competitors, even administrators and other stakeholders. It is in this light that GoSL has hugely invested in the sports sector over the last five years. The sector remains a critical cost-effective and flexible tool for promoting peace and development objectives relating to achieving *SDG 16 on Justice, Peace and Security*, besides *SDG 8 on Decent Employment*. Therefore, it cannot be more justifiable that the industry is a critical dimension in the Big 5s of GoSL, and to the effective delivery of the National Goals for 2030.

The most outstanding interventions by the Government in the sports sector during the previous plan implementation was the reactivation of the male and female premiership football competitions, as well as increasing budgetary allocation to the sector, and the allowance of athletes in the national teams to motivate them in rekindling the industry. Standard registration criteria for all sporting associations were enforced and stronger governance instruments within national sports organisations was imposed. These structural adjustments helped to bolster cohesion and unity among Sierra Leoneans irrespective of age, tribe or political affiliations; linking youth and sports development to the promotion of peace and national cohesion agenda of the Government, as both an *end* and an *enabler* discussed in PART 3 of this plan.

Tangible progress made in sports, following the revamping of the industry in the last five years, includes the participation of the country in: the African Cup of Nations Tournament in Cameroon in 2022 after 25 years; the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham 2022; the World Boxing Championship in Serbia 2022; the West Africa Football for Under 20 Boys and Girls in Senegal 2021; the Tokyo Olympic Games 2021; the National Female team participation in the West African Football Union Competitions 2020; and the All African Games in Morocco 2019. The country hosted the West African Karate and Boxing Championship in Freetown 2022; reactivated the Inter-Force Sports Competitions;[44] and started the Non-Division Sports Competitions across communities in all sporting disciplines, including boxing, volleyball, karate, strongest man and weightlifting.

Despite the aforementioned achievements, there have been some **challenges** to the implementation of planned programmes for sports, including limited sports infrastructure; lack of strategy to promote mass sports and develop youth talents in different sports disciplines; lack of effective legal framework to meet the current needs of the sector; inadequate financing; unavailability of proper marketing strategy; and perceived lack of trust in the sports management system of the country, with noted capacity gaps in the administration of sporting bodies, including inadequacy of qualified personnel to facilitate sports development. Additionally, there is a limited number of role models in the industry for young talents to emulate, while coordination among relevant institutions, such as sports bodies, local government and schools has been inadequate. Furthermore, space for women, older people, and the disabled is very partial in the sector.

The **lessons** learned during the implementation of programmes in sports include the need to encourage volunteerism in the sector that boosts coaching, assists with requisite facilities, and promotes governance and the overall quality of sporting events. Certain **potentials** and **opportunities** to leverage in addressing challenges and building on achievements exist, including availability of bilateral and international agreements on sports development; high international awareness on the potential of Sierra Leonean athletes, growing demand for branding the country in this area, and the continuing role of Sierra Leonean diaspora in marketing local sports. Also, expectations around quality, inclusion and ethics and governance in sport have risen, thus places pressure on administrators to deliver better; and there is increased private sector opportunities and

[44] The Inter-Force Competitions involve the Sierra Leone Police, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, the Sierra Leone National Fire Force, the Sierra Leone Correctional Services, and the National Scout Association.

investment in sports, as accountability and transparency has increased in the sector, with public scrutiny given the growing financing in the sector.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objective for sports development is to empower the sector to play a leading role in the employment of youth talents, skills and services while serving as a key driver for education, entertainment, general revenue generation, national cohesion, and consolidation of peace.

Key Targets

1. By 2030, the strategy and legal framework to promote mass sports, including development of talents of youth in sports fully developed
2. By 2030, Sierra Leone participates in at least one international competition annually
3. By 2030, at least 70 percent of planned annual national competition events for all sporting activities undertaken

Key policy actions

1. Increase support for sporting activities in learning institutions and communities
2. Increase funding to National Sports Association
3. Review all existing policy documents and regulations for sports development in the country
4. Develop comprehensive strategy and legal framework for sports development
5. Develop awareness and public resource centre to attract local and foreign visitors
6. Establish strong research capabilities in sports
7. Develop education programmes on sports in learning institutions
8. Develop a diversified resource mobilisation strategy for sports
9. Develop a Sport Museum/hall fame as a resource centre for tourism marketing and promotion
10. Facilitate membership of athletes in national sport associations and world governing bodies

Box 5.3: Youth and children's priorities obtained during nationwide consultations

The Big Five Game Changers	Top priorities of young people
5.1 Feed Salone	1. Youth Farms 2. Formulation of laws and support for women's right/access to farming land and livestock 3. Establishment of Farms for all forces 4. Reintroduction of School gardens 5. One-stop shop for locally grown Agricultural produces
5.2 Human Capital Development	1. Provision of Student Loans 2. Provision of free health care (for all categories of children (0-18 years) 3. Free and quality education for PWDs 4. Reduction in examination malpractices 5. Constructions of more equipped health facilities in hard-to-reach areas.
5.3 Youth Employment Scheme	1. Strengthening and decentralised TVET across all regions. 2. Support youth in sport 3. Entrepreneurship training 4. Create well-equipped regional creational facilities for youths' activities 5. Support youth in Agriculture
5.4 Infrastructure, Technology and Innovation	1. Access to free, cheaper, and stable internet connectivity 2. Roads; Electricity; 3. ICT Facilities 4. Provision of Transport infrastructure
5.5 Transforming Public Service Architecture	1. Harmonization of salary for all government officers by grades 2. Improve the application and recruitment processes automated at PSC. 3. Establishment of civil service/public service commission offices at regional level 4. Decentralized the civil service training college 5. Increase funding to the civil service training college

Note: The comprehensive report on the nationwide adolescent and youth consultations on the plan can be obtained from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development for detailed recommendations on the implementation of the plan.

Big 5.4: Infrastructure, technology and innovation

5.4.1 Energy

The strategic objective of the energy sector has always been to produce/generate and distribute adequate electricity and power from renewable and clean sources for increased access for the population to enhance economic growth and development. Access to electricity in 2017 was less than 16 percent mainly attributed to the poor Transmission and Distribution network and the low voltage quality which required huge investment in generation, transmission and efficient distribution of electricity to address the technical losses on the network and low voltage quality due to an overburdening of infrastructure by illicit users.

Over the medium-term 2019-2023, huge investments in the Generation, Transmission, and Distribution system yielded desirable results, as access to electricity more than doubled from 16 percent in 2018 to 36 percent in 2023; households with access nearly doubled from 13.5 percent in 2018 to 25.4 percent in 2021; while the loss of electricity through leakages in the distribution system increased from 38 percent in 2018 to 44 percent in

2019, and fell to 38 percent in 2021[45]. The number of district headquarters towns with reliable electricity supply stood at nine in 2021 out of the 10 planned in 2019. Finally, the Percentage of the population with access to improved ecologically friendly stoves increased from 18percent in 2018 to 20.2 percent in 2019.

Furthermore, to match energy demand with supply, the country had a roadmap of producing 1,130MW by 2030 from 100MW in 2017 of which (64MW of Solar power and over 120MW of Hydro Power). This increase in supply was driven by the projected demand for energy by mining companies, estimated at 650 MW of thermal baseload capacity, and SMEs and commercial entities have been projected to require 350 M. This sector contributes significantly to GDP through the revenue/cash collection process and Management Information System of its utilities (EDSA, EGTC, Mini-grid Operators) and Independent Power Producers (Karpower Ship, SALINI, Serengeti)

Table 5.26: Trends in performance in the energy sector 2019-2021

Indicator	Baseline	2019		2020		2021		Target 2023
		Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	
Percentage of population with access to electricity	15.0 percent (MoE 2018)	21 percent	25 percent	27 percent	30 percent	32 percent	32 percent	44 percent
Percentage of the households with access to electricity	13.5 percent (DHS 2013)	15.0 percent	22.0 percent	17 percent	22.9 percent	18 percent	25.4 percent	22 percent
Installed generation capacity under the management of EGTC(MW)	167.62	260	176	360	180	460	253	650
Number of districts headquarter towns with reliable electricity supply	9	10	9	11	9	13	9	16
Percentage of electricity generated that is lost in the process of transmission and distribution.	38 percent	34 percent	44 percent	30 percent	39 percent	27 percent	38 percent	20 percent
Length of the transmission grid (km)	200	450	-	700	549	950	682	1,500
Percentage of population with access to improve ecologically friendly stoves	18 percent	23 percent	20.2 percent	28 percent	-	36 percent	-	45 percent

Source: Ministry of Energy

While there have been some laudable successes in the energy sector, there remain critical **challenges**, including lack of inadequate staffing, limited inter-sectoral coordination and financing including delay in the disbursements of funds (allocation and counterpart funds) which affect the successful implementation of the mandate of the sector. High inflation and depreciation of Leones affected the efficiency of operations in the sector. Other challenges including commercial inefficiency due to electricity theft, theft of cabling and equipment, vandalization of assets and sabotage of facilities, coupled with the destruction/deforestation of Hydro Power Plant catchment areas.

The country has huge **potential** and **opportunity** for scaling up energy resources, productive use of energy and the development of energy facilities. Some of these opportunities include: the presence of strong political will, a stable political and security situation, a tropical climate conducive for solar power, high levels of rainfall for hydropower, the development of the West Africa Power Pool (WAPP), the development of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policies, development of Sustainable Energy for All (SA4ALL), robust reforms

[45] MTNDP Mid-Term Review Report 2022.

and technical audits, coupled with a large landscape of green vegetation for biomass, good working relationships between government and development partners, and a good environment for doing business.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to provide adequate, affordable and sustainable power supply nationwide, to stimulate economic development through the consolidation, improvement and expansion of existing energy supply infrastructure and ensuring energy security for sustainable development.

Table 5.27: Key Targets for Big 5.4.1 Energy

Key Targets	Base-line	Annual Targets						
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Percentage of population with access to electricity increased	32% in 2021	36%	40%	44%	48%	52%	56%	60%
Percentage of the households with access to electricity increased	25.4% in 2021	30%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%	60%
Number of districts headquarter towns with reliable electricity supply increased	9 in 2021	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

Key policy actions

1. Embark on increasing electricity generation, transmission and distribution
2. Improve on the policy and regulatory environment of the energy sector
3. Restore electricity supply to all district headquarters towns and cities
4. Increase investment in low-cost renewable energy (solar, hydro, wind, and biomass)
5. Improve governance at all levels of the sector- the Ministry of Energy, EDSA, EGTC, EWRC, NSRPA, BWMA- to develop responsible leadership and institutional culture
6. Ensure expansion of the transmission grid nationwide by increasing the annual regular kilometric coverage.
7. Ensure rural electrification is carried out through the engagement and involvement of key stakeholders, including the private sector.
8. Ensure robust monitoring and supervision of Projects.
9. Ensure affordable tariffs

Box 5.1 below presents a critical workstream of the ***Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Food Security*** to support national, sectoral and local efforts to supporting renewable energy production in Sierra Leone. The box presents clear *goals* and *specific actions* of the Initiative to provide support in this area.

Box 5.2: Presidential Initiative—supporting renewable energy production in Sierra Leone

Goals

1. By 2024, a Just Energy Transition Plan (JET-P) developed and approved by parliament
2. By 2034, contribute to grow grid generation capacity from 200MW to 1GW
3. By 2030, contribute to add at least 200 mini grids to support energy access.
4. By 2030, at least 20 percent of households using LPG, ethanol, or other clean energy for cooking

Specific actions

1. Advocate for policies for improved energy efficiency and access to and adoption of renewable energy technologies and use
2. Renewable energy and energy efficiency and conservation projects focussing on production and distribution of clean energy, household efficient lightening, and energy efficient buildings
3. Developing loan programme through financial institutions to support uptake of clean cooking technologies
4. Support youth (female and male) through training and business start-ups support to produce and market clean cooking stoves;
5. Explore fiscal measures to encourage women and youth to manufacture non forest biomass fuel briquettes from agricultural waste, sawdust, etc.
6. Establish a delivery unit for clean cooking and support implementation of the Clean Cooking Strategy
7. Enacting policies that incentivize renewable energy investment and ensure the integration of renewable energy into the national grid.
8. Facilitate policies and advocate for improved energy efficiency and use.
9. Support the generation of carbon credits, through the introduction of clean technologies for cooking and diffusion of clean cooking solutions by the programme.

5.4.2 Road and Transportation systems

Transport is a strategic sector for Sierra Leone's growth and development. The sector contributes considerably towards the country's economic growth, competitiveness, and human capital development. It does this as a stimulator of economic activity, and as an active employer of the working population. The sector facilitates all trade activities including imports, exports, and distribution of products within the country. It facilitates the movement of people both within and out of the country. It therefore enables other sectors like Tourism, Mining, Agriculture, Energy, Finance, and Fisheries. It is estimated that the sector contributes over 15 percent of the country's GDP. As a vital service, public transport is strategically important for the economic and social life of countries. Millions of people rely on public transport for mobility, to access their jobs and other services, and also as a source of work.

The transport system consists of a network of infrastructure including all transport modes such as road, rail, seaports, airports and inland waterways, and the transport services operating on the network.

Sierra Leone is located along the Atlantic coast with a total area of 71,740km^2 which is divided into 71,620 km^2 of land and of 120 km^2 of water. which is conducive for natural harbours. The land area of the country has a huge opportunity and potential for efficient railway and road network connections. Over and above physical infrastructure, the sector is also comprised of transport services, which are provided by the public and private sector alike and includes buses, taxis, motor trikes (Kehkehs), motorbikes (okadas) for land transportation; ferries, water taxis, local motorized boats (Pampas) for water transportation; and airline services. These services are geared towards poverty reduction and building a resilient social and general development of the nation.

On the road subsector, it employs over 200,000 (two hundred thousand) people. These include over 50,000 youths as motorcycle riders (motorbikes and motor trikes), 150,000 people as personal chauffeurs, taxis, mini-bus (poda-poda), and truck drivers and assistants.

The aviation sector, employs over 1,000 people either directly by the airport, the airlines, or the regulator, and about 500 indirectly as travel agents, clearing and forwarding agents etc.

In the marine sector, over 1,500 people earn their living as boat operators, port stevedores, crane drivers, coxswains, or rescue corps.

The transport sector in Sierra Leone is coordinated by nine (9) state-constituted institutions including the Ministry of Transport and Aviation as the Ministry mandated to give oversight to Sierra Leone Maritime Administration, Sierra Leone Ports and Harbour Authority, Sierra Leone National Shipping Company, Sierra Leone Civil Aviation Authority, Sierra Leone Airport Authority, Sierra Leone Air Accident Incident Investigation Bureau, Sierra Leone Road Safety Authority, Sierra Leone Public Transport Authority which regulate Government public buses that provide urban and inter-urban passenger transport. Added to these institutions are many ad-hoc transport unions including but limited to the Sierra Leone Drivers Union, Bike Riders Union, Boat Owners Association, etc.,

Even though there are huge potentials and opportunities in the Sierra Leone transport systems, the sector has been and is still exposed to many shocks including its vulnerability to climate change, flash floods, and landslides. Climate change effects are expected to continue as the weather continues to rise. Funding for major transport infrastructures continues to challenge the sector.

National Road Network

The Sierra Leone Road infrastructure provides for over 90 percent of passenger and freight traffic and comprises 4070km of national trunk roads, 1,904km of district roads, 3,104km of urban roads, and approximately 4,152km of community/feeder roads and local access roads. National roads, of which 953km are paved, connect districts with one another and the country with its neighbours and are the responsibility of the central government.

The public road network of Sierra Leone is functionally classified in the National Road System as Primary Roads or Class A, Secondary Roads or Class B, Tertiary Roads or Feeder Roads, and Urban Arterial and Township Roads. National roads, of which 953km are paved, connect districts with one another and the country with its neighbours and are the responsibility of the central government and managed by the SLRA. The National Road System (NRS) have a direct influence on national welfare by serving international, national and regional road transport needs and also promoting territorial integration. The National Road network is the most widely used transportation avenue and also consists of other means such as rail though it's almost non-existent considering the little stretch it currently covers.

It is noteworthy that over the five years (2019-2023), significant progress was recorded in the National Road Network of the country including, Rehabilitation of 46 Km of paved trunk road and paved with Asphalt 250 Km of trunk roads, Constructed several major bridges including Sewa Bridge (Gondama), Waanje Bridge (Bandajuma Sowa), Mos Bridge (Bandasuma), Mabele Bridge, Mabang Bridge, Kpangbama Bridge, Savage Street Bridge, Work on the way to complete the regravelling of 1,760km of roads to connect all major towns and villages (chiefdom HQ Towns), Expedited the construction of roads linking district headquarter towns including Kenema Kailahun (completed), Bandajuma to Pujehun (80 percent complete to date); Bo-Mattru Road (25 percent complete to date), Construction of township roads in Bonthe Municipal, Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kailahun including the No.2 Lumley-Tokeh road and the Hillside bye pass road, The maintenance of Feeder Roads has been devolved to Local Councils with funding from the Road Maintenance Fund Administration,

Despite the many strides made in developing and improving road networks in the country, there still remain critical challenges that impede Sierra Leone from realising the full potential of its road infrastructure. Key among the many challenges include adequate financing to develop and upgrade existing and new road networks, high cost to undertake road projects some of which are due to endemic corruption, lack of road maintenance culture, encroachment along the roadsides, and poor road security systems to safe road infrastructures.

Specific policy actions will include, a) continuing improvement to major border crossing town and MRU regional trade facilitation, b) continue improvement to the Freetown and other urban roads, c) targeting major connecting roads linking district capitals, d) focusing on roads leading or going through tourist attraction areas,

e) targeting roads leading to potentially viable agricultural areas and major fishing communities, f) targeting major bridges without which economically viable route will be redundant.

Urban Transport

Freetown remains the biggest city in Sierra Leone and is an all-encompassing city politically, commercially and administratively. These factors have made Freetown a destination for internal migration where everybody seeks improved livelihood and better opportunities. This has considerably increased the population in Freetown which also puts more pressure on the demand for public transportation in Freetown and other urban settings in the country. The amount of transportation needed to cope with the growing population in Freetown is still relatively low compared to other Sub-Saharan countries.

However, the school bus service was a considerable boost to the urban transportation system especially in Freetown.

The Government through the Integrated Resilience and Urban Mobility Project (IRUMP) is undertaking road improvement on the West corridor to the Central Business District with signalization at selected intersections at Lumley, Congo Cross, and Ferry Junction. Construction of Eight Pedestrian overpasses in and around the Freetown area.

Four pedestrian overpasses at Lumley, Wilberforce, Shell and Jui near completion; modern market and transport terminal at Lumley near completion; construction of transit terminal at Wilberforce for public transport operators is near completion; developed a Traffic Management Plan that encompasses regulations and policies on traffic management including directional traffic flow structure; completed traffic studies for the installation of traffic lights at 7 critical intersections in Freetown.

Notwithstanding, there remain some key challenges in urban transportation, especially in Freetown and some of these include poor connectivity requiring urgent maintenance and few roads requiring widening and the construction of new road networks and/or other means of transportation that would substitute road transportation methods.

The Sierra Leone Public Transport Authority is the regulators of public bus transportation system and provides formalised public transport in Freetown though currently non-existent except for the school buses. In the absence of public buses, the city has witnessed an influx and growth of unregulated, informal transport operators of small vehicles with a mix of full-sized buses, minibuses (poda posa), motor tricycles (Keke) and motorcycles (Okada).

Many other factors still challenge the urban transport system including increased demand for transportation in Freetown and other cities, constant traffic congestion, inadequate road networks, and no provision for pedestrian routes among many others.

Key policy actions to enhance delivery in this sector will include, a) Expand the Integrated and Resilient Urban Mobility Project at the Ministry of Transport & Aviation to other corridors in Freetown and to other provincial headquarters towns, b) Install traffic signals/lights at critical intersections in Freetown and other parts of the country, c) Consolidate and integrate other modes of transportation into the Urban transport network including river transportation, d) Improve non-motorized Transport facilities – continuous footpaths on both sides of roads, prioritised crossing, overhead pedestrian walkways, and missing links in Freetown, e) Develop an urban transport master plan that will establish the framework for urban transportation improvement, f) Modernised urban transit system with safe, modern, and physically challenged friendly bus systems g) Develop human capital with the requisite technical skills to manage public transport operations for efficient and effective service delivery, h)Introduce intelligent traffic enforcement systems, such as red light running and other traffic enforcement street cameras, i) Establish a Traffic Control and Management Centre (TCMC) that will be focused on real-time traffic congestion monitoring and improving traffic efficiency, j) Establish a Traffic Engineering and Management Agency (TEMA) to operate and maintain all traffic-related infrastructure nationwide effectively and sustainably. iv. Road Safety, k) Fully implement a robust Ministry of Transport (MoT) fitness regime to ensure that trucks and heavy-duty vehicles are road-worthy.

Rail Transport

Until the mid-1970s, Sierra Leone had a national rail network consisting of two lines connecting the Northern and Eastern parts of the country. The operation of the rail halted due to the growing competition and the resulting decline in rail traffic. During the Civil War, majority of the rail infrastructure was either removed or damaged beyond repairs. Thus, it may be extremely difficult and expensive to restore the lines or build a new rail system. However, there is presently a rail system owned by the Government of Sierra Leone and operated by an iron ore mining company that runs from the ports at Pepel to the Tonkolili Mines.

The major challenge is that the rail is still limited to just the mining routes and is mainly dedicated to iron ore carriage activities. However, for the years ahead 2024-2030 the sector is committed to carrying out key reforms to change the face of the railway industry and make it competitive, thereby contributing its share to the socioeconomic growth of the country.

Key policy actions will include, a) Explore the possibility of reintroducing the national railway, b) Conduct Feasibility Study of the construction of railway line along the Conakry- Freetown – Monrovia corridor.

Marine/Sea Transportation Sub Sector

Sierra Leone has 800 km (497 mi) of waterways in Sierra Leone, and 600 km (373 mi) are navigable year-round. Sea transportation is of immense importance for economic transactions as over 80% of all international trade in goods is transported by sea, thus making marine transportation a beacon for international connectivity and globalization.

Sea transport is the next popular form of transportation considering the geography of Sierra Leone

There are major ports in Sierra Leone located in Bonthe, Freetown and Pepel.

One of the largest natural harbours in Africa is located in Sierra Leone, the Queen Elizabeth II Quay in Freetown which represents the country's only deep-water port facility capable of berthing large-hulled cargo or military vessels. The country possesses a merchant marine of two cargo ships exceeding 1,000 GT. Currently, the full potential of Sea transportation is not harnessed as there is no competing mode to transport bulk goods from Freetown to other cities.

Reforms at the Sierra Leone Ports Authority changed the model of the port to a land port from a service port model with increased private participation in the operation of the port of service provision. The current 300,000 twenty-four units capacity of the port is a huge revenue potential for self-financing and sustainability.

Of critical note in the marine sector is the importance of security to enhance the growth and stability of the sector. Consequently, adequate security is required to police the country’s 500 plus kilometres of sea transport routes in the Atlantic Ocean.

Key achievements in the Marine sector over the years includes; a) Secured five Zodiac Search and Rescue Boats to serve the Sierra Leone Maritime Administration, b) Enhanced the search and rescue operations with a modernised state of the art radio communication system that covers the entire country's terminal stations, including coverage on the search and rescue boats, c) The government has established a first-ever search and rescue centre and regional headquarter in Bonthe. Construction of Berths, d) Rehabilitated of Berths 4 and 5 to increase vessel traffic and to accommodate larger vessels at the Port has been completed, e) Reconstructed and rehabilitated the Tagrin Ferry Terminal. This is over 90 percent complete, f) Constructed of a Multi-purpose Berth of 14 meters depth at the QEII to attract trade from South America and to increase productivity.

Despite the many efforts made to improve sea transportation in the country, the sector is still plagued by some challenges, key among which are the limited security to guard the coasts, poor physical infrastructures, poor law enforcement, inadequate safety mechanisms, and exemption of private companies, especially mining companies from paying cargo levies on import and export thereby depriving the sector and the state of much-needed revenues.

Key policy actions will include, a) Explore other modes of transport within Freetown and the Western Area such as the construction of jetties and ferry terminals at strategic locations for commercial ferry and boat transport” with private sector participation, b) Develop a Port facility security Plan as mandated by

International Maritime Organization (IMO), c) Alongside the private sector, explore the possibility of a home-based or locally owned shipping company actively engaged in both imports and exports, c) With private sector partnership, explore the possibility of a second seaport in Sierra Leone, d) Create maritime jobs through increasing the number of Sierra Leoneans at sea in all vessels flying the country's flag.

Inland Waterway/Estuary Crossing

Currently, crossing from Freetown to Lungi is either unsafe, difficult, expensive, inconvenient, and unreliable. Over a million passengers traverse over the ocean to Freetown using vessels with varying efficiency and safety issues. Recently, the near-safe and reliable means of crossing the estuary is by the Water taxis at Aberdeen on the West side of Freetown which are small and fast but expensive.

Over the MTNDP implementation period, the sector accomplished the construction of the Targrin Ferry terminal waiting hall to meet customer's need, b) The SLPA completed the erection of a new multi-purpose berth (275 metres long and 13 metres in draft), thereby accommodating more and larger vessels, cargo throughout and reducing turnaround time.

The major challenges in the sector continue to be the limited forms of safe, reliable and affordable means of crossing; the expensive fare of the few small water taxis, and the dilapidated ferries that ply across the estuary. However, the Government through the transport sector is committed to changing the narrative and making the estuary crossing convenient and affordable.

Key policy actions to realise this commitment include, a) Exploring other modes of transport within Freetown and the Western Area such as the construction of jetties and ferry terminals at strategic locations for commercial ferry and boat transport" with private sector participation.

Air/Aviation Transportation Sub Sector

Air transportation is one of the very important means of global connectivity and a key enhancer of socio-economic growth. However, there has been irregular growth in the air transport market for Sierra Leone over the past decade. Figures in 2016 indicate that Lungi International Airport handled about 200,000 passengers, which is a very low volume when compared to other airports in the West African subregion. Freetown is connected to capitals in West Africa and three countries in Europe, but it lacks connectivity with other surrounding countries. Since the national carrier, Sierra National Airlines, ceased operations in 2006, there has been no sustainable commercial air transport operator based in the country.

Notwithstanding, the industry successfully completed the construction of a new modern First-Class International Airport with a New Passenger Terminal, VIP Terminal, Taxiways and widened runway. The Airport also has annual capacity of One Million passengers with a capacity to handle eight wide body aircraft at any one time.

Also, the Aviation Safety Rating by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), 60 percent was targeted for 2021 but only 40 percent was achieved in that year, whilst 75 percent was targeted for 2023, and a safety rating of 74 percent was achieved following ICAO audit in 2023.

Additionally, the 2022 target on the Aviation Security Rating by ICAO of 83 percent was quite impressive, progress on this indicator was far above the target at 80 percent, progressing well from the baseline of 64 percent in 2014. A figure for the 2021 rating was reported by November of the year, estimated at 80 percent against a target of 83 percent.

Furthermore, the 2021 annual number of International Passengers passing through FNA reported in November that year was approximately 129,979, below the target of 280,000 and the 2017 baseline figure of 200,000; which could be attributed to disruptions of air travel by the COVID-19. However, the figure for 2022 rose to 240,317 as against the target of 288,000.

Notwithstanding, the aviation industry continues to be challenged by the lack of a National Carrier to replace the Sierra National Airlines which ceased operation in 2006.

Specific policy actions will include; a) develop a sound and seamless air transport system that is safe, secured, reliable, efficient, accessible and affordable in compliance with ICAO SARPs; b) improved infrastructure at

the civil aviation authority, c) enhanced a regulatory framework for local, regional and international connectivity, d) Strengthen safety oversight capabilities in compliance with ICAO SARPs; e) strengthening the human and institutional capacity at the Sierra Leone aircraft accident and incident investigation bureau (SL-AAIIB); f)enhance safety recommendations and promote safety culture; g) introduce best practices in the provision of air navigational services to promote safety, security and enhance the certification of the Freetown international airport; h) provide effective oversight on the implementation and operations of all concessionaires at the Freetown international airport; i) Develop the Hastings airport and encourage internal air transportation; and j) Establish a national carrier for regional and domestic operations through private sector participation.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to plan, develop, and implement the national transport infrastructural system in an integrated, holistic, and cross-sectoral manner that will increase connection and safety for better utilisation of the transport system and broader benefit across the country.

Key targets

1. By 2030, safety of life and property at sea significantly improved
2. By 2030, public transport facilities expanded in all major cities by upgrading jetties for water transport and launching a railway rehabilitation project, thereby expanding inter-urban transport.
3. By 2026, all laws, rules, and regulations of direct importance to the sector revised and reconciled, removing all conflicts in legislation that affect the smooth and effective governance of institutions within the transport sector
4. By 2027, domestication of all nine International Maritime Organisation mandatory instruments undertaken

Key policy actions

1. Build sectoral service delivery and technical capacity and strengthen the reporting system between the Ministry and its Agencies.
2. Capacitate the Sierra Leone Public Transport Authority as a regulator to effectively superintend over transport operators
3. Establish an integrated air transportation system that is in compliance with ICAO standards for safety and security
4. Develop a framework to regulate local, regional, worldwide connections and infrastructure.
5. Improve aviation safety and promote global confidence in the industry through the conduct of timely independent investigation to determine causes of accident, incident.
6. Enhance sector governance for improved transportation services
7. Modernise public transportation services and improve road safety
8. Ensure safe, secure and efficient sea transportation services to harness the potential of the Blue Economy and facilitate trade

5.4.3 Infrastructure, technology and innovation

As a game-changer in the economic development landscape of Sierra Leone, technology, with its attendant components of innovation and communication, are viewed as being crucial to achieving impactful change. As

key drivers of economic growth, the communications, technology, and innovation (CTI) sector is critical in promoting general socioeconomic development in Sierra Leone. The sector contributes significantly to the country's GDP, fostering innovation, creating employment opportunities and improving access to education, healthcare, and financial services. Additionally, it helps reduce poverty and social disparities, making it indispensable for Sierra Leone's overall development. The influence of the CTI sector is quite encompassing, as it enables and enhances the performance of a range of key growth sectors such as energy, agriculture, fisheries/marine sector, manufacturing, mining, construction, transport, tourism, trade/commerce, and more; as it facilitates efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness across various industries by providing the necessary infrastructure, connectivity, and innovative solutions. This has enormous multiplier effects in terms of GDP, revenue and employment generation, especially for the **youth** who are at the centre of driving contemporary technological and innovation changes. The cross-cutting nature of the sector makes it a key pillar in the Government's Big 5 Agenda aimed at transforming Sierra Leone into an advanced digital economy by 2030.

During the implementation of the previous national development plan (MTNDP 2019-2023), the CTI sector experienced steady growth, which could have substantially contributed a large share to the country's GDP and revenue generation. For example, Figure 5.8 and Box 5.3 illustrate the growth in digital financial services (DFS) in Sierra Leone in 2020, as reported by a study conducted by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) on the state of the DFS market in the country in that year.[46] From the figure and the box, out of a total of 13 providers surveyed, 12 reported growth in their registered customer base between December 2019 and December 2020. On average, the number of registered DFS accounts grew by 47 percent per provider during this period, with the number of active 90-day DFS accounts reaching 2.2 million in December, from1.4 million in December 2019, representing a 63 percent growth.[47] The average number of DFS-based customer transactions per month in 2020 exceeded 12 million according to the report.[48] This suggests that, if this size of transactions prevailed each year during 2024-2030 (the next seven years) and that a tax of Le 1.0 is levied on each transaction, the Government would receive at least Le 12 million (12 billion Old Leones) each year from DFS; Le 24 million if the tax is Le 2.

Substantial institutional milestones in the CTI sector were achieved by GoSL in driving the production of output in the foregoing paragraphs, including: a) establishment of the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation in the Office of the President to provide the highest political support for digitalisation in the country; b) enactment of the Cybercrime Act 2021; c) launch of the national digital development policy; d) enactment of a new Communications Act 2022; e) advancement of the Digital Infrastructure of the economy; f) extension of the National Fibre backbone to five more districts, and construction of district metro rings for last mile government services; f) increase in the number of internet users from 307,000 people in 2017 to about 2.67 million as of June 2022; and g) rolling-out time/attendance management system to 24 MDAs.

Despite the above laudable efforts made during the MTNDP 2019-2023, critical **challenges** remain going into the implementation of the MTNDP 2024-2030. These include: the high cost of digital services (especially mobile and voice services); lags in the effective implementation of e-governance initiatives, including enhancing digital service delivery, transparency, and accountability; difficulty in migrating from analog to digital broadcasting; and a low level of digital literacy.

[46] See the United Nations Capital Development Fund Office in Freetown, Sierra Leone for the report.

[47] This is directly obtained from the 2020 UNCDF Report on the state of Digital Financial Services market in Sierra Leone, page 15.

[48] Ibid, page 15.

Box 5.3: Growth in the DFS industry in Sierra Leone during 2019-2020 based on UN CDF Report the state of the DFS market in Sierra Leone in 2020, page 15

Increased registration of DFS

Out of the 13 providers, 12 reported growth in their registered customer base between December 2019 and December 2020. On average, the number of registered DFS accounts grew by 47 percent per provider. The number of active 90-day DFS accounts reached 2.2 million in December 2020, from 1.4 million in December 2019, representing a 63 percent growth.

Increased use of DFS through innovative channels

With the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional bank branches became increasingly unsafe, and it became a priority to reduce the over-reliance on cash handling. Consequently, customers shifted to using mobile banking, mobile money platforms, automated teller machines (ATMs) and Internet banking.

Merchant payments, however, remained low, as they have not yet resonated with both customers and merchants. Providers attribute the low uptake to: (i) merchants not using the channel because the option is more expensive than accepting cash or simple peer-to-peer transfers; and (ii) lack of trust and a low level of consumer awareness of the use and benefits of the channel.

Changes in the volumes and values of different transaction types

In 2020, basic transaction types such as airtime top-up, cash-in and cash-out represented a smaller share in terms of total volume and value of transactions in the DFS space compared with previous years. More-advanced service types became increasingly available and attractive to customers. Bulk payments and transfers increased as more corporate entities adopted the technology to facilitate payments, also in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Digital loan products were also designed and developed to offer better services to clients.

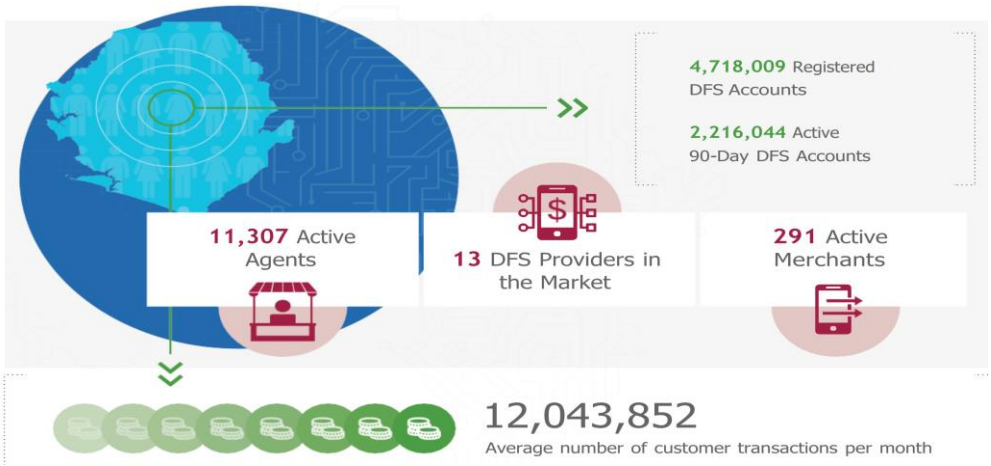


Figure 5.8: Performance of DFS indicators for December 2020
Source: UNCDF Report on the state of the DFS market in Sierra Leone in 2020, page 15

Critical **emerging issues** that the sector needs to pay critical attention to in advancing the CTI landscape of the country include: a) *digital inclusion and accessibility* to ensure that all citizens, including those in remote and marginalised areas have equitable access to digital services and infrastructure, including physical access points; b) *data governance and privacy* necessitating establishment of robust data governance policies and frameworks to protect user data and privacy as digital services expand; c) *capacity building and skill development*, necessary to address shortage of skilled professionals in technology-related fields by investing in training/upskilling and education programs; d) *support for innovation* to foster an enabling environment for local tech start-ups and entrepreneurs to compete with international firms and drive innovation; e) *digital*

divide, which notes the persistence of a significant urban-rural digital divide, limiting access to information, education, and healthcare in unserved and underserved areas; and f) *capacity building & digital literacy*, noting the shortage of skilled professionals in technology-related fields and low levels of digital literacy and awareness that pose a challenge to sector growth and innovation and the adoption of digital technologies among the population.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objective is to increase the supply of communications, technology and innovation services for their increased access and affordability in order to ensure they are effectively integrated into all development initiatives for growth, innovation, entrepreneurship, and building a digital economy.

Table 5.28: Key Targets for Big 5.4.1 Communication, Technology & Information

Area of Intervention	Key Targets	Baseline	Annual Targets						
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Communication, Technology and Information	Number of internet users increased by 60 percent	1.84 million in 2023	2.0 million	2.16 million	2.32 million	2.48 million	2.60 million	2.76 million	2.9 million
	Internet penetration rate increased to at least 50 percent	21.2% in 01/2023	25.3%	29.4%	33.1%	37.2%	41.3%	45.4%	50.0%
	Access to digital financial services increased to at least 50%	25 percent in 2023 (UNCDF)	28.4	32.0	35.6	39.2	42.8	46.4	50%

Key policy actions

Communications Technology

1. Develop policies, strategies, standards, and guidelines to facilitate the deployment of Digital Governance services
2. Increase the current internet broadband and mobile penetration for the population
3. Develop resilience and enhance security in ICT infrastructure networks and digital platforms
4. Upgrade rural telecommunications by improving, accessibility customer choice and affordability for rural areas and underserved communities.
5. Develop and implement an e-Government core network infrastructure and services
6. Develop and implement a Government Data Centre and cloud computing infrastructure
7. Use the postal sector as a platform to deliver government services to all citizens for digital, financial, commercial and social inclusion
8. Promote the increased usage of computers and other technological devices among citizens, including learning institutions
9. Create a conducive environment to empower people to innovate

Digital Financial Services and e-Commerce

1. Streamline the enabling legal and regulatory environment for Digital Financial Services
2. Ensure an interoperable and secure digital financial infrastructure
3. Encourage DFS competition, user protection, and adoption through technology-forward National financial inclusion strategies

4. Create a conducive environment for the development and uptake of digital financial services as an enabler and driver for e-commerce.
5. Expand and strengthen the role of postal network in the digital economy as a Hub for e-Government services.
6. Facilitate access to finance and funding mechanisms for digital enterprises
7. Deploy the essential enabling building blocks for the implementation of a National e-Governance systems
8. Support interventions to strengthen cybersecurity at the national level.

Big 5.5: Transforming the Public Service Architecture

Having an efficient, effective, and inclusive public service is most pivotal to the optimal delivery of public goods and services. This justifies the central place of the sector in the Government's strategic framework for 2024-2030 summarised in its Big 5 Game Changers aimed at accelerating the socioeconomic transformation and development of Sierra Leone. An efficient and effective public service will be achieved through building and strengthening institutional capacity of the sector, sound financial management, optimal administration of public revenues, and integrity of processes in the system. The sector is the Government's machinery and vehicle to maximise the achievements of the SDGs through the formulation and implementation of informed and bankable national policies and programmes. It is by extension at the centre of driving the implementation and attainment of the African Union Agenda 2063 through the effective delivery of the national development plan. Indeed, a sound public service epitomises the principles of good governance, professionalism, patriotism, ethics, and integrity that are indispensable for the effective delivery of sustainable development goals.

The contribution of the public service to Sierra Leone's GDP stands at 6.6 percent for the year 2022, growing from 0.1 percent in the previous year.[49] From 2018 to 2023, a total of 6,113 qualified Sierra Leoneans were recruited into the civil service; the percentage of recruitment noted to have substantially increased from 55 percent in 2019 to 65 percent in 2020. There has been an improvement in reporting on recruitment processes, with the percentage of these processes posted on the Automated System of the Public Service Commission increasing from 40 percent in 2018 to 55 percent in 2019.

Significant efforts were made towards automating the civil service records management system, including the creation of the Document Archive System and Personnel Records Management System, as well as the establishment of a website for information dissemination purposes. The Public Sector Wages and Compensation Policy was developed and approved by Cabinet, and the Bill for the establishment of the Wages and Compensation Commission was passed into law by Parliament. The Civil Service Training Policy was developed and implemented, as well as the Internship Placement Guideline to regulate the placement of students across MDAs from higher institutions of learning, and the Performance Management Policy to guide the management of performance appraisal system for civil servants. Tools, such as the Rapid Results Initiative, Performance Contracts, and Individual Performance Appraisal Systems were advanced to deepen the institutionalisation of Results-Based Management in the public sector. Accordingly, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) ranking on public sector effectiveness increased from 31 percent in 2018 to 42 percent in 2021.[50]

Progress made in the past regarding general Public Service Reforms to build on and implement going forward with the new National Development Plan 2024-2030 include:

[49] See the June 2022 Statistics Sierra Leone's Report on the 2021 & 2022 real GDP; figures obtained at 2006 prices

[50] For more details on progress made in this sector, please refer to the Sector Policy Paper submitted to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development on the Public Sector Architecture of Sierra Leone towards the preparation of this National Development Plan.

1. *Foreign Affairs Reforms*: The Cabinet approved the transformation of the Foreign Service Academy into a Semi-Autonomous Government Agency. This was accompanied by the formulation and launch of the Foreign Service Academy Strategic Plan 2016-2020.
2. *Diaspora Policy*: This was finalised, launched and implemented during 2019-2023; aimed at creating a platform to engage and effectively communicate with the diaspora community; engaging them in the protection of Sierra Leonean migrants returning from countries in crisis.
3. *Decentralisation*: Sierra Leone continued to implement a decentralised system of government aimed at ensuring equal participation and inclusivity. Taking its root from the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2004, a new Local Government Act was ratified in February 2004, leading to the inauguration of local council elections held in May 2004. The Act serves as the launch pad for inclusive governance through various legislative reforms that devolved political, fiscal, and administrative functions from the central government to the lower tiers of government, especially the provincial and the district/local councils. Over the past years, various institutions, and intergovernmental structures at provincial, district and chiefdom level were strengthened to bolster local access to service delivery and to reduce various inefficiencies that characterised the pre-war experiences.

The main **challenges** to address within the new national development plan, while building on gains made in the previous plan, include:

1. Inadequate funding and delay in the disbursement of budgetary allocation to the institutions managing public sector operations, such as the Public Service Commission, (PSC), the Human Resources Management Office (HRMO), the Public Service Reform Unit and the Cabinet Secretariat;
2. Lack of a conducive work environment (including provision of requisite equipment and workspace), affecting motivation at workplace; human resource constraint resulting from poor strategic human resources (HR) planning, non-execution of succession HR plans, and inadequate training to produce fit-for-purpose workforce that is required to drive national growth and prosperity;
3. Duplication of employment patterns, wastage of training-related resources, underfunding of critical training and capacity building (reinforced by the slow progress in the establishment of the National Civil Service Capacity Enhancement Scheme to provide a centralised arrangement to coordinate and fund all Civil Service Capacity building programmes);
4. High staff turnover in the most productive and critical public sectors; overlaps and duplication of administrative functions; disparity in salaries and remuneration at national and regional levels (delay in the implementation of the Wages and Compensation Commission Act meant to address salary disparity across sectors adding to this challenge);
5. Weak human resource information management systems; existence of many inconsistent laws hampering effective service delivery, resulting in conflicting mandates, coupled with continued growth in the number of public institutions leading to underfunding and human capacity gaps; and
6. There have been the entrenched issues of corporate governance characterised by lack of transparency, accountability, and probity in the funding of various commissions, agencies and governance units by development partners.

An institutional opportunity is the establishment of a ministry to coordinate the affairs of the public service in Sierra Leone with a strategic focus on transforming this sector in the next 7 years. Going forward, the main/broad focus areas (as derived from the public service reform plan of the the Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs driving the transformation of the public service architecture) are:

1. Structural alignment and rationalisation of mandates in the public service
2. Human resource management/manpower planning
3. Public sector coordination and management
4. Monitoring, evaluation and performance management for effective public service delivery

5. E-governance; and
6. Pay and incentives

Strategic objective

Accordingly, the strategic objective to pursue during the implementation of the MTNDP 2024-2030 is to create an efficient, professional and result-oriented Civil/Public Service that attracts and retains the brightest talents to be at the forefront of rolling out the Government's agenda as well as tackling complex national challenges for socio-economic development.

Key targets

Structural alignment and rationalization of mandates

1. By 2030, all relevant policies and legal frameworks for the civil/public service reviewed
2. By 2030, highly significant number of non-core government services outsourced
3. By 2030, a bill to rationalise mandates of MDAs is enacted
4. By 2030, a Public Service Act promulgated

Human resource management / manpower planning

1. By 2026, employee head count and gender audit successfully completed
2. By 2030, Public Service Academy successfully constructed
3. By 2026, an incentive scheme to promote staff retention developed and is in use

Public sector coordination and management

1. By 2026, a public sector coordinating body is established
2. By 2026, a clear framework for joint implementation of cross-sectoral programmes/projects developed and launched

M&E and performance management for effective public service delivery

1. By 2025, all existing frameworks for strengthening Performance Management in MDAs reviewed
2. By 2030, all frameworks reviewed for performance management in MDAs and fully operational
3. By 2026, all necessary tools for performance management developed and in use in MDAs

E-governance

1. By 2026, migrating of all public service workers from paper to digital platforms completed
2. By 2026, all reporting formats transformed into digital platforms
3. By 2026, all MDAs have successfully installed a biometric attendance system
4. By 2026, all job adverts are uploaded in one portal platform as deemed necessary

Pay and incentives

1. By 2026, a unified pay and compensation system is established
2. By 2026, an incentive scheme to motivate staff is developed
3. By 2030, a hire purchase and housing scheme is established

Key policy actions

Structural alignment and rationalization of mandates

1. Undertake a comprehensive national Governance landscape scanning of existing policies, legislations, regulations, guidelines etc. in delivering on their mandates

2. Develop a Public Service Policy, Act and Regulations
3. Out-sourcing of non-core government services
4. Undertake structural alignment of MDAs through Management and Functional Reviews to meet contemporary public sector management demands in respect of formulation and implementation of development policies, programmes and projects
5. Enact a bill for rationalization of MDAs mandates, functions and responsibilities.

Human resource management / manpower planning

1. Increase funding to the Civil Service Training College, and its staff capacity to formulate comprehensive curricula for effective capacity building in the Civil/Public Sector
2. Develop incentive scheme to support staff retention, productivity and career progression
3. Transform the Civil Service Training College into a Public Service Academy to improved and strengthen capacity so as to continue to undertake training, research, consultancy and advisory in the Public Service as well as function as a think tank to guide on policy research as well as establishment of e-learning and resource centre
4. Decentralise the Civil Service Training College to provide requisite training and capacity for Civil Servants across the Country
5. Develop and roll out public service competency framework as a tool to attract, select and recruit candidates based on clearly defined competencies and entrench a culture of competency-based performance and capacity building for improved service delivery.

Public sector coordination and management

1. Coordinate the development and implementation of public sector reform programmes
2. Provide policy oversight to promote coordination and collaboration and harmonise regulations, standards and procedures across government
3. Promote coordination and collaboration among intergovernmental and inter-agency in service delivery

M&E and performance management for effective public service delivery

1. Strengthen existing M & E systems within MDAs to enhance service delivery
2. Scale-up support for performance management and tracking service

E-governance

1. Generally, improve digital application in the public service to ensure effective delivery of public goods and services.
2. Ensure the development and effective use of easy and reliable digital applications for the human resource management of the Civil/Public Service
3. Establish Public Service Innovation Centre to incubate and showcase the innovations developed across the service

Pay and incentives

1. Ensure the functionality of the Wages and Compensation Commission to rationalise and harmonise the pay and compensation system across the Public Service
2. Scale up a hire purchase and housing scheme for serving men and women of the Civil Service to enable them acquire capital items in line with conditions and values consistent with their office.

5.6 District Priorities Across the Big 5s

This section presents district/local level priorities for the next seven years across the Government's Big Five Game Changers. Each of the 16 districts of Sierra Leone has its unique geographic and economic features that distinguishes it from each other. Therefore, holding consultations with all the relevant stakeholders in the districts during the plan preparation process was critical to the identification of strategies community level priorities for inclusion in the Plan. These consultations were held in 15 of the 16 districts (leaving out the Western Urban District housing the Capital of Freetown, whose priorities have been largely captured at national level). Each district consultation drew participation from the local council leadership, decentralised MDAs, CSO/NGO representatives, all paramount chiefs and other community leaders within the districts, women and youth representatives at sub-district/chiefdom level, persons with disabilities, and the general public whose inputs were captured through radio phone-in programmes. Below are the district priorities identified during this process, aligned to the Government's Big 5s.

District priorities in the Eastern Region of Sierra Leone

Kailahun District: The population of the district is 550,435, with an area of 3,959 km^2. The district is located in the Eastern Region of the country and shares boundaries with Kono District to the North, Kenema District to the North-West, and the Republics of Guinea and Liberia to the South-East, serving as an important route for international trade and migration. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

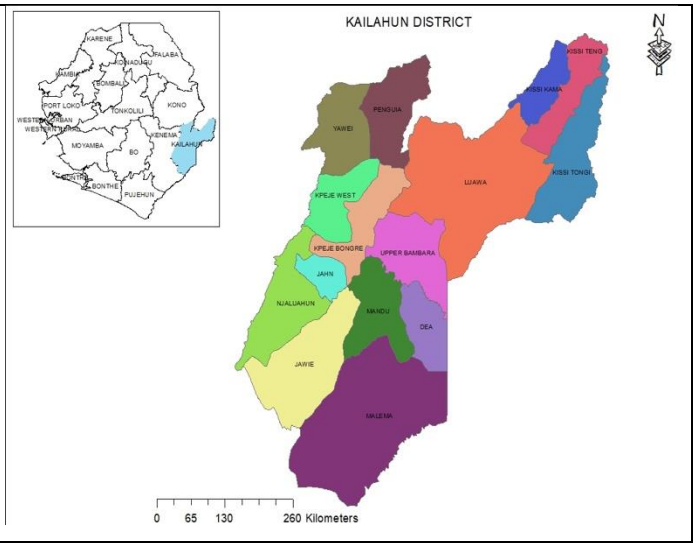
Kailahun District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 550,435 (Male: 273793 Female: 276642)
Land Areas: 3,959 km²
Poverty rate: 56.7 (SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030
Agriculture (Rice, Cocoa, Coffee, Cassava, Small Ruminants)

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Support small-scale and master farmers
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Scale up Early Childhood Development (ECD)
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Youth-led programs on drug/substance abuse
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Construction of Roads and Bridges
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Total devolution and service training for personnel



Kenema District: The population of the district is 772,472, with an area of 6,364 km^2. The district is the Headquarters of the Eastern Region, making it extractive to domestic and foreign trade. It shares boundaries with Kono and Tonkolili Districts to the North, Kailahun District to the East, Pujehun and Bo Districts to the West, and the Republics of Liberia to the South. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

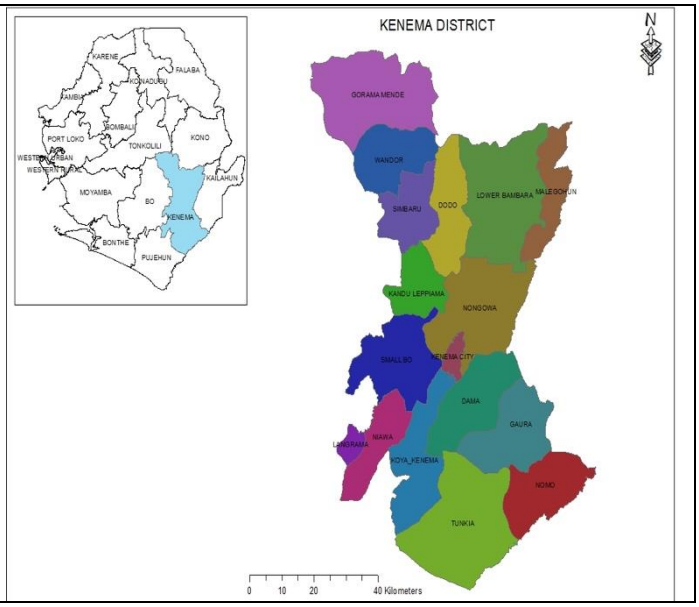
Kenema District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 772,472 (Male: 384173 Female: 388299)
Land Areas: 6364 km²
Poverty rate: 78 (SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture (Rice, Cocoa, Coffee, Small Ruminants, Pulses, Sweet potatoes, Cassava)
Mining (Diamond)
Tourism Gola Forest, Kamboi Hills,

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Mechanization of Agriculture
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Expand and Improve Existing Health & Education Infrastructure
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Youth in Agriculture
Big 5.4: Infrastructure &Technology: Constructions of Roads
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Strengthen Civil Service Recruitment Policies



Kono District: The population of the district is 620,703, with an area of 5,413 km^2. The district is located in the Eastern Region, and shares boundaries with Falaba and Koinadugu Districts to the Northwest, Tonkolili District to the West, Kenema and Kailahun Districts to the South, and the Republic of Guinea to the East, making it attractive for international trade. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

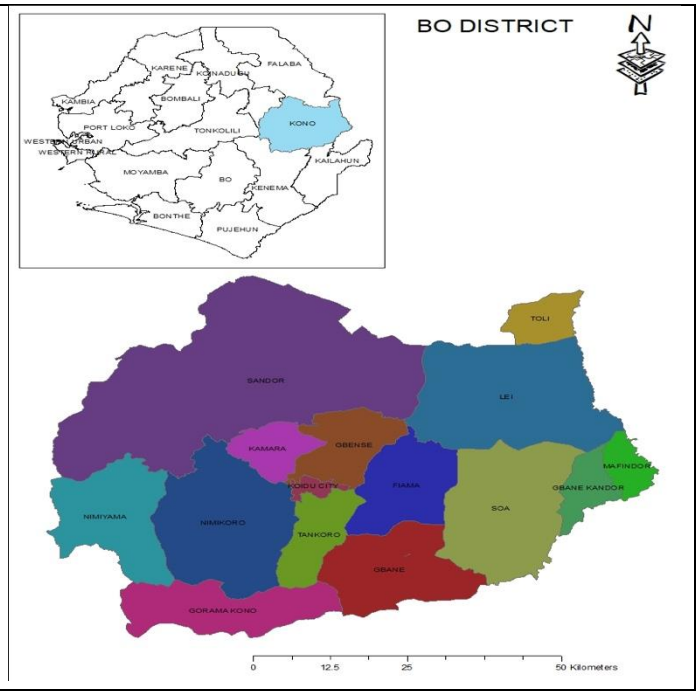
Kono District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 620,703 (Male:311832, Female:308871)
Land Areas: 5,413 km²
Poverty rate: 52.4 (SLHIS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture (Rice, Maize and Soybean, Cocoa, Coffee, Cashew, Tomatoes, Small Ruminants, Pulses, Sweet Potatoes, Cassava)
Mining (Diamond, Gold, and Bauxite)

The top district-level priorities across the Big 5s:

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Establishment of Rice Farms
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Establishment of pre-primary schools in all chiefdoms, Techvoc, and Universities
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Establishment and equip re-creational centres for youths in selected chiefdoms
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Construction of roads
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Professional training for Government Agents



District priorities in the Northern Region of Sierra Leone

Bombali District: The population of the district is 387,236, with an area of 3,885 km^2. The district is the Headquarters of the Northern Region. It shares boundaries with Koinadugu Districts to the Northeast, Tonkolili District to the Southeast, Port Loko District to the South, and Karene District to the Northwest. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

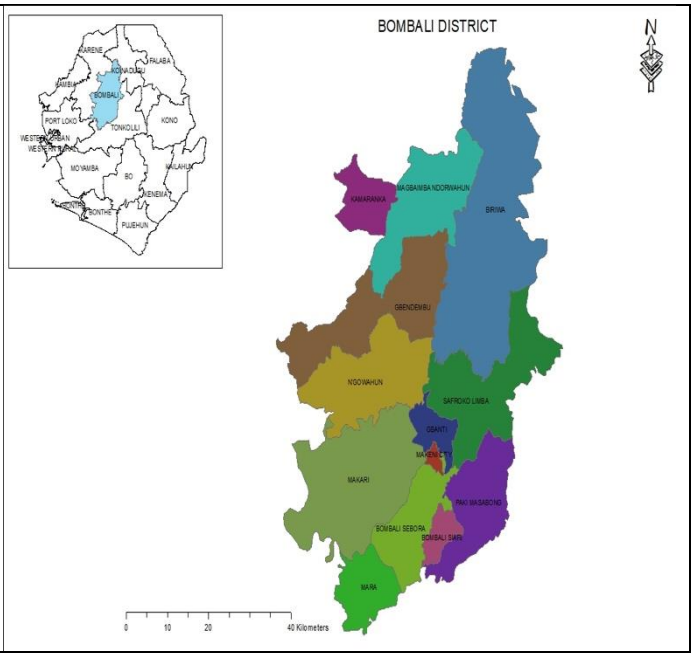
Bombali District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 387,236 (Male:186,824, Female: 200,412)
Land Areas: 3,885 km²
Poverty rate: 64.1(SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture (Rice, Onions, Pepper, Tomatoes, Pulses, Sweet Potato, Cassava)

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Increased crop production and livestock development
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Improved Health Care Facility
Big 5.3 Youth Employment Scheme: Agric Business Development
Big 5.4 Infrastructure & Technology: Feeder roads rehabilitation
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Improved working conditions for teachers



Koinadugu District: The population of the district is 206,133, with an area of 4,964 km^2. The district is located in the Northern Region, and shares boundaries with Falaba Distroct to the East, Kono and Tonkolili District to the South, Karene and Bombali District to the West and the Republic of Guinea to the North, serving as an important route for international trade. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

Koinadugu District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

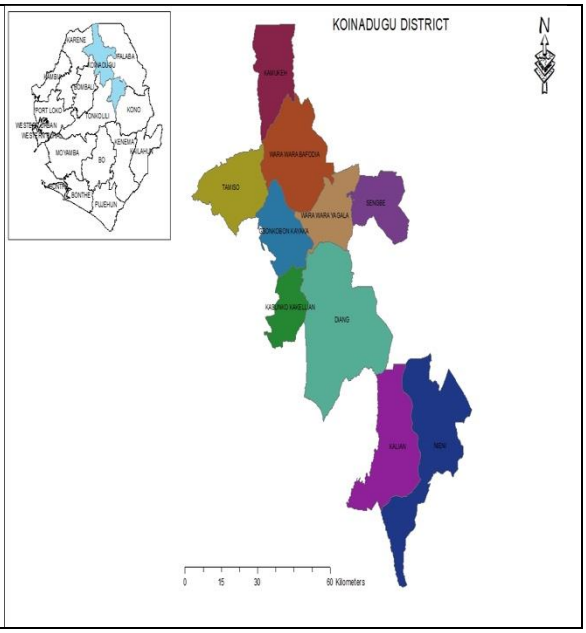
Population: 206,133 (Male:102364, Female: 103769)
Land Areas: 4,964 km^2
Poverty rate: 76.6(SLHIS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030
Agriculture (Onions, Cashew, Tomatoes, Small Ruminants, Palses, Sweet Potatoes)
Mining (Gold)
Tourism: Lake Sonfon National Park, Bintumani Hills

The top district-level priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Support Smallholders farmers

Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Rehabilitation of schools
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Strengthening Technical and Vocational training centres
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Construction of Roads and Bridges
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Complete Devolution to Councils and MDAs



Falaba District: The population of the district is 166,205, with an area of 7,423 km^2. The district is located in the Northern Region, and shares boundaries with Kono District to the South, Koinadugu District to the Northwest, and the Republic of Guinea to the Northeast, serving as an important route for international trade. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

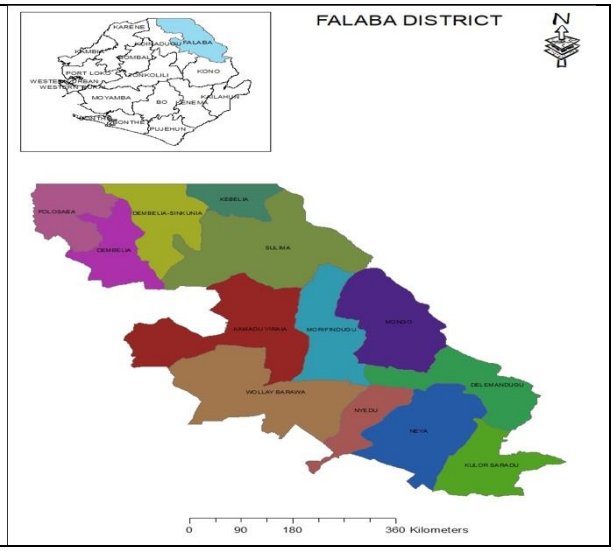
Falaba District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 166,205 (Male: 83622, Female: 82583)
Land Areas: 7,423 km²
Poverty rate: 81.3 (SLHIS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture (Rice, Onions, Cashew, Pepper, Small Ruminants, Pulses, Sweet Potatoes)

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Rice production and productivity
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Construction of District referral hospital
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Youth TecVoc Training Centre
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Construction of Roads and Bridges
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Complete Devolution



Tonkolili District: The population of the district is 557,257, with an area of 6,299 km^2. It is located in the Northern Region of the country, and shares boundaries with the Koinadugu District to the Northeast, Bo and Moyamba District to the South, Port Loko and Bombali Distroct to the Northwest, and Kono and Kenema District to the east. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

Tonkolili District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

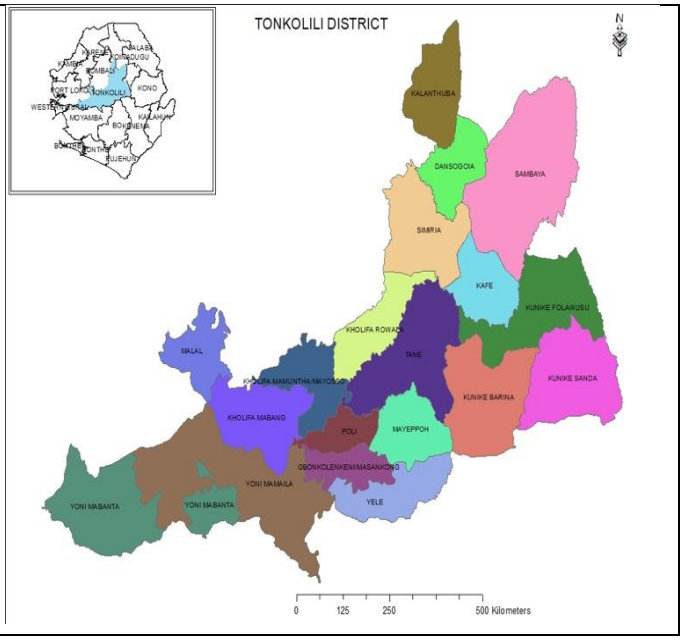
Population: 557,257(Male; 282127, Female: 275130)
Land Area: 6,299 km²
Poverty rate: 84.8 (SLHIS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture: Rice, Poultry, Maize& Soybean, Onions, Cashew, Sugar cane
Mining (Gold, Bauxite, and Iron Ore)
Energy/Tourism: Bumbuna Hydro Dam

The top district-level priorities across the Big 5s:

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: machinery and sub-machinery rings **Big 5.2: Human Capital Development:** safe and healthy environment for all

Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Establishment of sectional farms across the district.
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Construction of roads
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Harmonization and increment of salaries.



Karene District: The population of the district is 290,313, with an area of 5,830 km^2. It is located in the Northwestern Region of the country, sharing boundaries with Port Loko District to the South, Kambia District to the West, Bombali and Koinadugu Districts to the East, and the Republic of Guinea to the North, serving as an important route for international trade. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

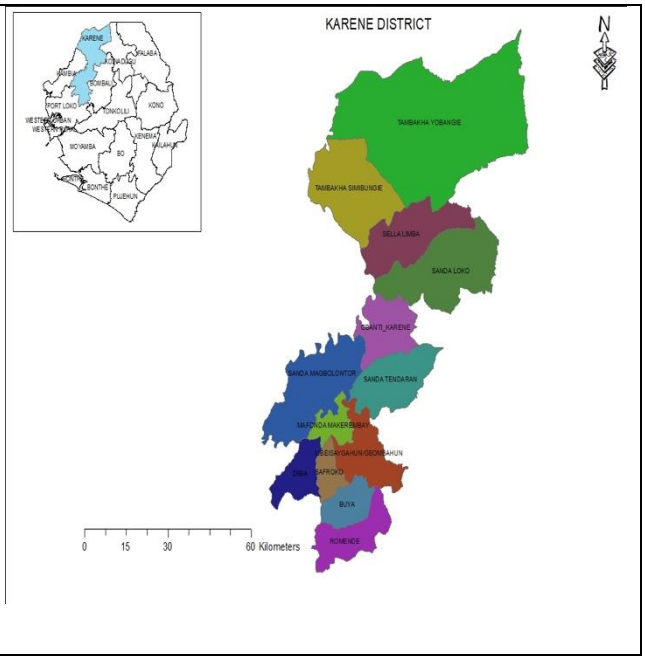
Karene District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 290,313(Male: 147124 Female: 143,189
Land Area: 5,830km2
Poverty rate: 77.3 (SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Mining: Diamond, Gold
Agriculture: Rice, Onions, Small Rominants, orange flesh sweet potato
Tourism: Otamba kilimi (Natural parks and Animal Sanctuaries)

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1: Feed Salone: Mechanization
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Establishment of technical vocational centres
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Training of Youths on entrepreneurship
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Construction of Roads
Big 5.5: Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Construction /Rehabilitation of offices, facilities and quarters.



Kambia District: The population of the district is 367,699, with an area of 3,025 km^2. It is located in the Northwestern Region of the country, and shares boundaries with the Karene District in Northeast, the Port Loko District in the South, and the Atlantic Ocean in the West. The district is commonly referred to as the main rice bowl of the country, endowed with natural resources such as fertile swamps for rice cultivation, as well as long riverine areas along the Atlantic Ocean, presenting huge Blue Economy potential. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

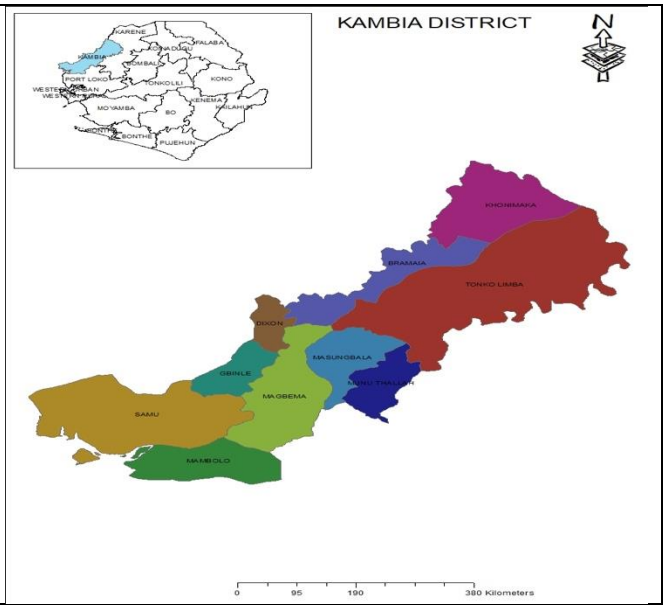
Kambia District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 367,699 (Male: 188560 Female:179139)
Land Areas: 3,025 km²
Poverty rate: 45.8 (SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture (Rice, Onions, Cashew, Pepper, Tamotoes, Sweet Potatoes)
Fishing: Blue Economy

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Mechanization and Irrigation
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Recruitment of Trained and qualified teachers
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Provide Trainings for Youth in Agriculture
Big5.4:Infrastructure&Technology: Improvement of roads infrastructure
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Fighting corruption



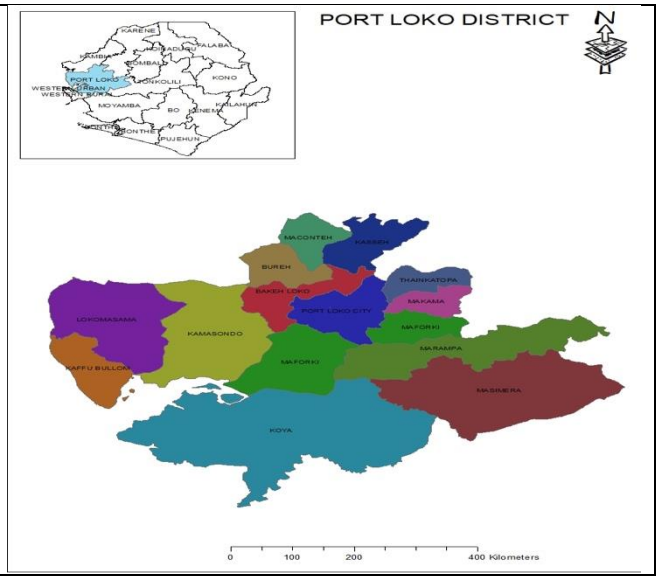
Port Loko District: The population of the district is 528,038, with an area of 4,666 km^2. It shares boundaries with the Kambia and Karene Districts to the North, and the Bombali District to the Northeast, Tonkolili District to the East and the Western Area and Moyamba Districts to the South, and the Atlantic Ocean to the West. The below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

Port Loko District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 528,038 (Male: 253790, Female:274248)
Areas: 4,666 km²
Poverty rate: 64.3 (SLHIS)
Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture: Rice, Maize & Soybeans, Onions, Cashew, Pepper, Pulses, Tomatoes, Small Ruminants
Mining: Iron ore
Fishing: Blue Economy Potential

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Improved seed varieties
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Increase Drugs supply
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Build capacity of young people
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Construction of roads
Big 5.5: Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Capacity Building



District priorities in the Southern Region of Sierra Leone

Bo District: The population of the district is 756,975, with an area of 5,473 km^2. The district is the Headquarters of the Southern Region, and is the second most populous district in the country, sharing boundaries with the Tonkolili District to the North, the Kenema District to the East, the Bonthe and Pujehun Districts to the South, and the Moyamba District to the West. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

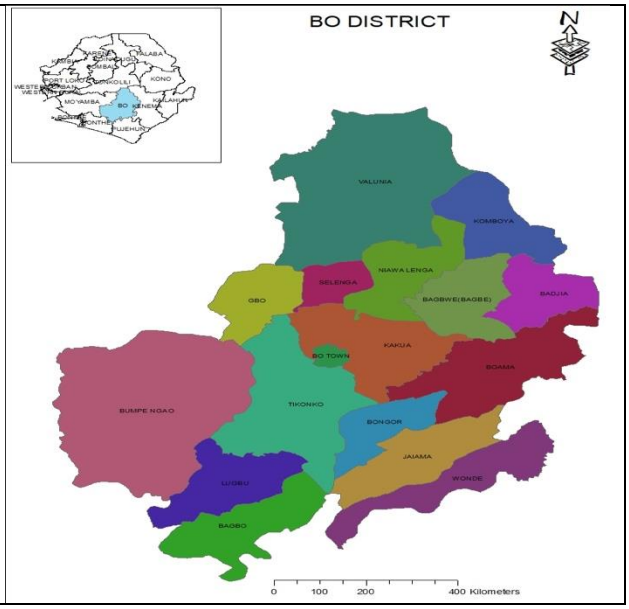
Bo District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 756,975 (Male:366,346, Female:390,629)
Land Areas: 5473 km²
Life expectancy: 47.90% years, MMR: IMR: 30 (MICS)
Poverty rate: 60.2 (SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture: Rice, Cashew, Pepper, Pulses, Sweet Potatoes, Cassava

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Establish Agricultural Development Bank
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Strengthen health care service delivery system
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Promote mechanized youth farming
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Construction and rehabilitation of main/feeder roads
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Equip public offices with adequate technical and professional staff



Bonthe District: The population of the district is 29,756, with an area of 3,589 km^2. The district is located in the Southern Region of the country, sharing boundaries with the Bo District to the North, the Pujehun District to the East, the Moyamba District to the West, and the Atlantic Ocean to the South. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

Bonthe District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

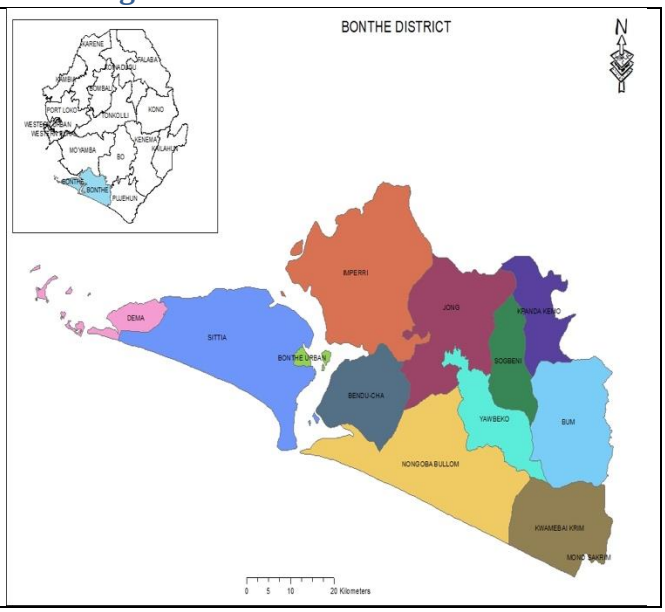
Population: **29,756** (Male:149555, Female:148006, Youth)
Land Areas: **3,589 km²**
Life expectancy: 47.90% years, MMR: IMR: 55(MICS)
Poverty rate: **51.9 (SLHIS)**

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:

Mining: **Rutile**
Agriculture: **Rice, Pepper, Tomatoes, Cassava**
Fishing: **Blue Economy**

The top district-level priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: **Mechanization and Irrigation Methods**
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: **Standard/Referral Government hospital in the mainland**
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: **Strengthen tech/voc disable friendly training centres.**
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: **Construction of main roads and improve the district road network**
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: **Provide remote allowance for public sector workers.**



Moyamba District: The population of the district is 346,771, with an area of 6,972 km2. The district is located in the Southern Region of the country, sharing boundaries with the Western Area, Tonkolili and Port Loko Districts to the Northwest, Bo District to the Southeast, Bonthe Distrct to the South, and the Atlantic Ocean to the West. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

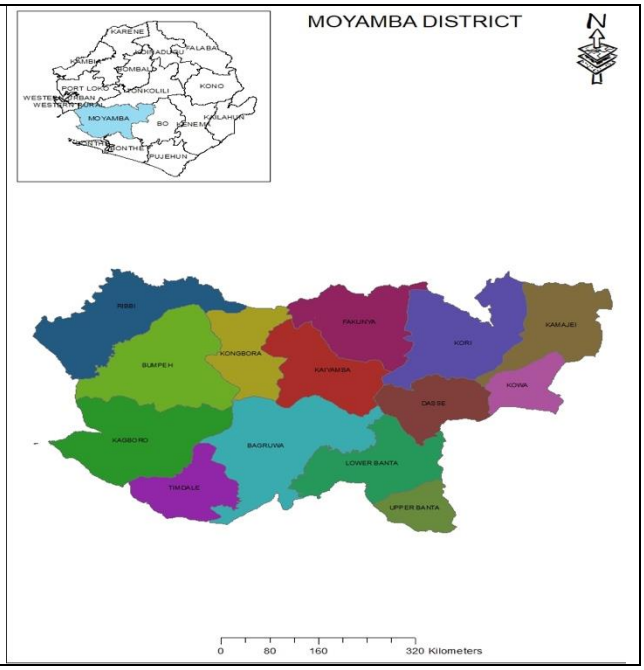
Moyamba District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 346,771 (Male: 167836 Female:178935)
Land Areas: 6,972 km²
Poverty rate: 73.5 (SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Mining: Rutile
Agriculture: Rice, Maise & Soybeans, Cashew, Small Ruminants, Pulses, Sweet Potatoes, Cassava
Fishing: Blue Economy Potential

The Top District-level priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Mechanized farming and crop production
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Trained and Qualified Teachers
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Skills training opportunities
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Road infrastructure;
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: MDA Asset Register and Logistic Management



Pujehun District: The population of the district is 429,574, with an area of 4,192 km^2. The district is located in the Southern Region of the country, sharing boundaries with the Kenema District to the Northeast, the Bo District to the North, the Bonthe District to the West, the Republic of Liberia to the Southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the Southwest. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

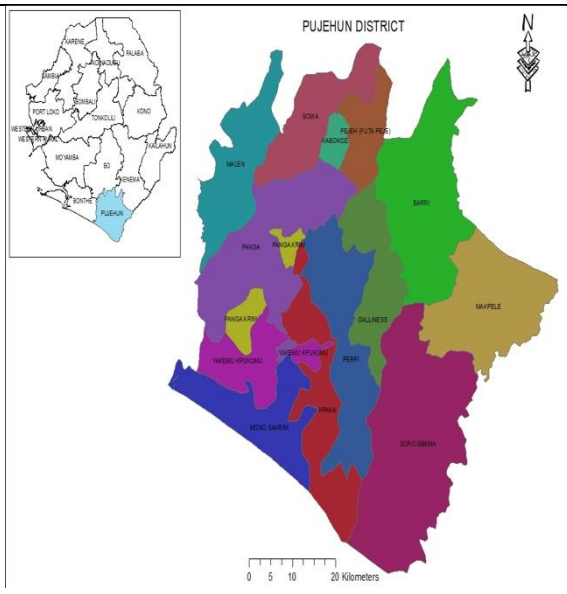
Pujehun District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 429574 (Male:215332 Female:214242)
Land Areas: 4192 km²
Poverty rate: 84.6(SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Agriculture: Rice, Pulses, Cassava
Mining: Diamonds, Oil, and Gas
Fishing: Blue Economy
Tourism: Gola Forest and Tiwai Island

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Mechanization of Agriculture
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Provision of Essential Drugs & Medical Supplies
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Establish vocational institutions in chiefdom headquarters
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Public Infrastructure
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Logistical support for service delivery



District priorities in the Western Region of Sierra Leone

Western Area District: The population of the district is 662,156, with an area of 613 km^2. The district is located in the Western Region of the country, sharing boundaries with the Port Loko District to the North, the Moyamba District to the East, and the Atlantic Ocean to the West. The district has huge potential for Blue Economy resource maximisation. The box below depicts the basic profile of the district, its comparative advantage and development priorities for the 2024-2030 plan implementation period.

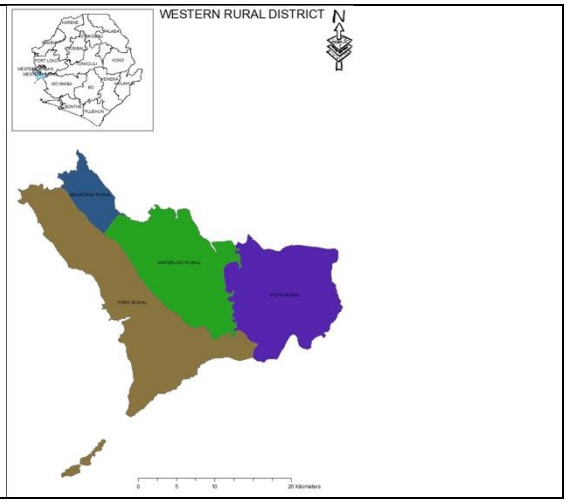
Western Area District's top priorities across the Big 5s for 2024-2030

Population: 662156 (male:322058, Female: 340098)
Land Areas: 613 km²
Poverty rate: 37.7(SLIHS)

Comparative Advantage 2024-2030:
Tourism: Animal Sanctuary, Beaches

The Top District-level Priorities across the Big 5s

Big 5.1 Feed Salone: Rice Self-Sufficient
Big 5.2: Human Capital Development: Health Infrastructure
Big 5.3: Youth Employment Scheme: Technical Vocational
Big 5.4: Infrastructure & Technology: Improving Energy Infrastructure
Big 5.5 Transforming Public Sector Architecture: Complete devolution



PART 3: ENABLERS OF THE BIG 5 GAME CHANGERS

As shown in the Theory of Change in **Figure 2**, five critical enablers have been identified to catalyse the specific interventions prioritised to achieve the ultimate objectives and goals of the Government's Big Five Game Changers. In this national development plan, while all sectors are deemed to be enablers of each other, those discussed in this Part (Three) have been considered highly strategic to the transformative acceleration agenda of the Government towards achieving planned national Goals and targets by 2030. These are: **Enabler 1** *Scaling Up Efforts to Diversify the Economy and Promote Growth*; **Enabler 2** *Governance and Accountability*; **Enabler 3** *Advancing Climate Resilience and Environmental Action*; **Enabler 4**: *Gender Mainstreaming*; **Enabler 5** *Financing, Partnerships for Implementation and Risk Management*. All the result areas discussed under these broad enablers were policy clusters in the previous plan, with clearly defined strategic objectives, targets and key policy actions monitored and reported on, as we headed to the present plan. Essentially, these enablers and their specific focus areas constitute a continued implementation of a broad set of objectives and programmes from the previous plan that remain critical to the achievement of the overall national goals of the new plan and the SDGs. They remain fundamental to the transformative acceleration agenda of the state for food security, human capital development, job creation and hence improved macroeconomic position, drastic poverty reduction and social stability.

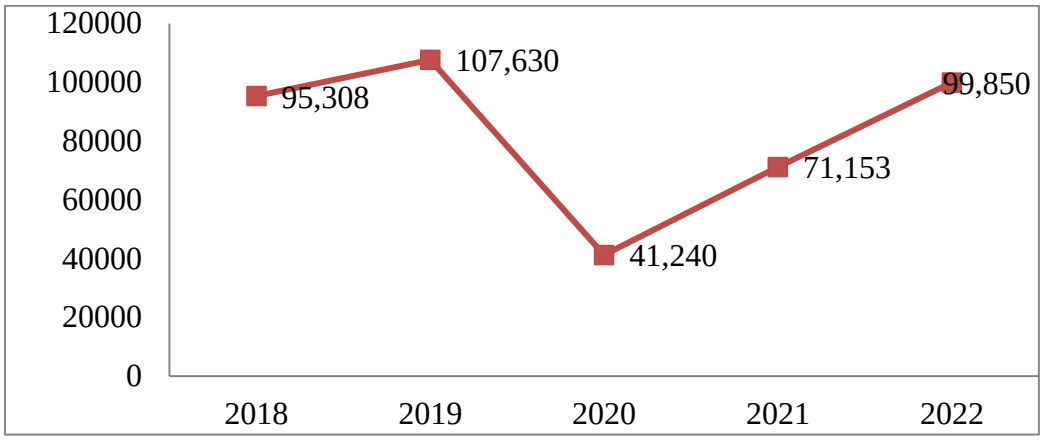
The following sections present the strategic direction of these enablers and their sub-sectors in supporting the Big 5s for the next seven years, reflecting on gains made from them during the implementation of the previous plan and accompanying challenges. Details on progress made in the implementation of projects in these areas during 2019-2023 can be obtained from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development in Freetown.

Enabler 1: Diversifying the economy & promoting growth

1.1 Transforming the tourism sector

In summary, the tourism sector realised an increase in tourist arrivals in the first year of implementation of the previous plan, from 95,308 in 2018, to 107,630 in 2019, before the outbreak of COVID-19. In 2020, arrivals reduced to 41,240 due to the pandemic. The sector drew up a strategic recovery plan that later saw a surge in arrivals to 71,153 in 2021, and 114,533 in 2022, from lower levels in 2020 (Figure E.1 presents trends). The Government generally placed a higher premium on the sector as one of the key areas for economic diversification and growth, with huge potential to contribute to job creation, revenue generation, and poverty alleviation.

Figure E.1: Revenue trends in the tourism sector



Source: Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs

The main **challenges** of the sector going forward include; ineffective regulatory policy frameworks, inadequate and outdated overall tourism planning and registration, and average institutional capacity in product identification and marketing, as well as travel services. Lack of vehicles, motorbikes, working tools and materials to engage in research, outreaches and monitoring. Another critical issue is inadequate basic tourism infrastructure such as credit card facilities, shopping facilities, leisure facilities. Tourist attractions require enormous improvement coupled with the poor maintenance of tourist sites. In addition to the unfavorable image of the country to the international tourism market, which must be overcome, the shortage of skilled labour in the sector is another hindrance to its development. Marinas, amusement parks, and national art galleries are lacking in the sector, and there is loss of prime tourism lands and assets. Finally, air pollution, deforestation, desertification, sand mining, encroachment on environmentally sensitive areas, poor sewage and waste disposal systems, and a dwindling wildlife population threaten the natural beauty and biodiversity of the country, thereby potentially damaging tourism opportunities.

Despite the wide range of challenges, **opportunities** exist going forward with the ongoing implementation of the new Marketing Strategy and completion and implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategic Plan.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to increase state revenue from tourism, provide jobs, and promote the cultural heritage of the country through improving the policy and legal environment, green investment and developing the relevant infrastructure through a holistic approach to diversify tourism and culture in Sierra Leone.

Key targets

1. By 2030, international arrivals increased by at least 50 percent annually
2. By 2030, job opportunities in the tourism, hospitality, cultural and creative industry increased by 30 percent
3. By 2028, awareness about domestic tourism increased by 50 percent

Key policy actions

1. Improve the policy and legal framework of the tourism sector and image of Sierra Leone both locally and internationally
2. Ensure preservation and tagging, as well as proclamation for protection and effective management of cultural heritage sites
3. Promote competition in the sector to reduce costs and improve value for money, through the improvement of standards and quality service delivery.
4. Promote eco-tourism to ensure the protection of the country's rich biodiversity and the enhancement of green investment
5. Support local entrepreneurs and create linkages with international partners to promote tourism-based activities that link with the rural economy, harvest seasons, wildlife tourism, farming practices, creative art and culture
6. Establish public-private community partnerships and promote private-sector involvement
7. Promote domestic tourism and culture through robust decentralization, adventure tours such as safaris, jungle tours, mountain trekking, education and research tourism, etc.
8. Enhancement of inter-MDA collaboration and coordination to support the growth of sustainable tourism and culture
9. Facilitate and coordinate the home coming of peoples of African ancestry tracing their roots to Sierra Leone and also organize national and regional festivals to promote cultural awareness, cohesion, understanding and appreciation
10. Create a platform for dialogue and regulation of the sector through consultative meetings and engagements as well as collaborates with the Department of History and African Studies Fourah Bay College to engage in research and establishment of heritage tourism courses
11. Support skills and entrepreneurship initiatives to advance and empower women in the tourism, hospitality and creative industries

1.2 Strengthening private sector for trade and sustainable development

Major gains in the trade and private sector were recorded during the implementation of the MTNDP (2019-2023). During this period, the share of manufacturing in GDP increased from 2 percent in 2019 to 8 percent in 2020 and 10 percent in 2023; the World Bank Doing Business ranking for starting a business improved from 81 to 51 out of 190 countries. The national industrial and cooperative policies were revised, the special economic zone policy drafted, and the agribusiness policy and national trade policy and strategy were developed and approved by cabinet. These frameworks were geared towards providing information to SMEs on available opportunities in the Agri-business sector; reviving the cooperative movement as a key determinant of economic prosperity; and repositioning Sierra Leone to harness emerging opportunities in the Global Market, especially within the trade framework arrangements of the AfCFTA, ECOWAS and Mano River Union. The National Micro Finance MUNAFA fund was rolled out, targeting 5,328 beneficiaries for loans; 10 financial service providers were recruited, and 1,000 SMEs-owned women trained in business development services. The first cohort of 25 agribusiness SMEs in the country were trained with the second cohort of 40 SMEs already recruited and provided access to Capital for 100 Agro Processing SMEs through the Sierra Leone Ago Processing Competitive Project.

The sector established community stores in eight districts that created market competition and sustained supply of essential commodities; and linked 98 SMEs to big businesses, with 18 supermarkets now selling made-in-Sierra Leone goods nationwide, established 20 block farms in 17 chiefdoms, all geared towards enhancing rural earnings for sustainable livelihood in the underlying communities; increasing job opportunities for women and youths and market access to farmers.

Additionally, the European market ranked Sierra Leone third in the world for the sale of organic cocoa; while Coffee Stenophylla, which is indigenous to Sierra Leone, had global recognition as the most superior flavoured coffee and the country now has a bilateral trade agreement with The Gambia that has removed residential permits for citizens of the two countries and facilitates commerce between them; improving registration processes, which has led to the incorporation of 1558 new companies

Other milestones include the approval of 10 companies for the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme that were already exporting under the scheme, through a scaled-up incentive regime for the private sector; potential investment was attracted in the trade and business industry, leading to the signing of over 10 agreements in various sectors of the economy, including food and beverages, Agro-forestry, construction, and two of the agreements made Sierra Leone a net exporter of Vegetable Oil and increase job opportunities employment.

Going forward in the implementation of the MTNDP (2024-2030), the chellenges to overcome include limited financing to enuring optimal investment in the sector to take advantage of the huge potential it has in supporting the enhancement of economic growth, employment, and income generation. There is generally the macroeconomic development challenges to trade, such as exchange rate fluctuations and inflation.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to strengthen the role of trade in the diversification, infrastructural development and economic competitiveness of the country.

Key targets

1. By 2026, Sierra Leone’s trade repositioned for the Africa Continental Trade Free Trade Area Agreement.
2. By 2030, SEZs and Agro-Parks established through a green Industrialisation program that is inclusive and sustainable
3. By 2030, productivity and export diversification and value in businesses drastically increased during implementation
4. By 2028, the contribution of manufacturing to GDP increased from 10 to 25 percent

Key policy actions

1. Fulfil the legal obligations required of Sierra Leone by its ratification of the AfCFTA Agreement, and put in place the means to take advantage of its rights under the Agreement to the benefit of all, including SMEs, women, and youth
2. Promote industrial development, spur rapid economic growth, and transform economies from low-productivity activities (such as agriculture and simple manufacturing) to high-productivity activities (such as modern industries)
3. Establish effective and transparent mechanisms for consultation between the private sector and government in the area of trade, with consideration to the inclusion of women entrepreneurs
4. Improve trade-related infrastructure including Port, Air, Road, and Digital Infrastructure
5. Improve the business climate, increase access to finance, facilitate Financial Inclusion, and promote local businesses
6. Establish viable PPD Platforms for Trade and Agriculture **Dialogue**
7. Strengthen trade facilitation and logistics development—development of cross-border economic zones, and the promotion of links with regional production networks
8. Reform relevant policies to increase trade and investment opportunities, enhance private sector development, and realize the full potential of global and regional trade agreements
9. Modernize obsolete agriculture legislation and regulations to enhance trade
10. Facilitate access to agricultural inputs, such as seeds, machinery and other support services
11. Develop a roadmap for improving export performance

1.3 Value addition and efficient management of natural resources

Mining

The mining sector in Sierra Leone is highly diversified with large scale production of diamond, iron ore, bauxite and rutile. The mining sector plays a critical role in the Sierra Leone's economy as it accounts for almost 70 percent of the country's export, contributes 6 percent to the GDP, and account for 3 percent of the workforce. In addition to the large-scale minerals produced Sierra Leone also engages in small scale and artisanal mining of gold and certain types of diamond.

Among the **achievements** made in the sector during 2019-2023 include the following: introduction of the Sierra Leone Mineral Policy, Geo-data Management Policy, and Artisanal Mining Policy; review of the 2009 Mines and Minerals Act and enactment of into law the Mines and Mineral Development Act 2022 seeking to improve provisions for the socio-economic benefit of the country; ensuring that at least 20 percent royalty for a district mining development fund be allocated to the affected districts through the District Councils, while making payment of 3 percent export levy on the value of artisanal diamonds to the Diamond Area Community Development Fund (DACDF) to promote rural development and improve the primary livelihood of diamond-mined communities; creation of the Mining Cadastre Administration System and the Web-based GoSL Online Mining Data Repository, which have improved financial transparency and accountability, consistent with the Extractives

Industries Transparency Initiative standards; increasing the number of large-scale mining companies by 83 percent, from 6 in 2018 to 11 in 2023, and small scale mining companies by 86 percent, from 7 in 2018 to 13 in 2023; the total number of mining sector jobs increasing by 73 percent, from 8,552 in 2018 to 14,768 in 2023; while supported over 200 Engineering and Geology graduates with advanced training.

It should be acknowledged at the same time that the sector was confronted by critical **challenges** during 2019-2024. It was badly hit by external shocks, such as the COVID-19, not long after the Ebola Virus Disease fallouts, leading to the closure of major mining companies, causing a huge decline in the economy. Furthermore, activities in the sector have been disrupted by drop in the price of these commodities and interruptions in the global supply chain which has impacted export volumes and value. The current government is endeavouring hard to reform the structure of the mining sector in order to bolter productivity for the benefit of all citizens. Reforms put in place by the New Direction government positioned the sector to rebound faster, and we are already seen the impact in the growth in the sector. There have also been overlapping functions with other MDAs on the administrative oversight of the mines and minerals sector. Funding required to undertake the review and enactment of the proposed legislations and regulations was limited, while provisions contained in existing frameworks, such as the EIRA 2018, have been inconsistent with the fiscal provisions in the reviewed MMDB and most of the Mining Lease Agreements. Also, there were concerns from various stakeholders, including the mining communities, line MDAs, CSOs and Donor Partners, on specific provisions relating to Artisanal and Small-scale mining in the proposed MMDB. Finally, there were envisaged challenges relating to managing the transition from the current polygon system with existing licenses to the proposed block system.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objective is to improve the governance and management of the mining sector, including value addition for employment, poverty reduction, community benefit, environmental rehabilitation, and revenue generation.

Key targets

1. By 2030, increase mining revenue from 10 percent of domestic revenue in 2017 to 20 percent.
2. By 2030, increase the share of the mining sector's contribution to GDP from five percent in 2017 to 20 percent
3. By 2030, undertake environmental rehabilitation in five mined sites in the country.

Key policy actions

1. In the next seven years, the Government will be to:
2. Increase revenue generation in both the short and long term.
3. Protect the local communities' economic and social rights affected by mining.
4. Provide support for artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) in Sierra Leone.
5. Carry out a comprehensive review of key legislative instruments as part of institutional reform of the mines and minerals sector.

6. Introduce enterprise geoscientific management information system (eGIMS) as a viable geoscientific data repository and information management system for Sierra Leone's minerals sector.
7. Reduce illegal and illicit mining in Sierra Leone by using advanced technology-based solutions.
8. Introduce green mining operations for the sector.
9. Increase women's participation in the mining sector.

Oil and gas

Sierra Leone holds a huge potential in the exploration of oil and gas in the near future. The exemplary success story of oil and gas exploration in Guyana which was at par with Sierra Leone in terms of potential has spurred the Government of Sierra Leone to invest in this sector in order to take full advantage of emerging opportunities in this area. The revised fiscal regime and investment in acquiring critical data has allowed the country to be in a better position to start gaining revenue from the sector again.

Among the milestones recorded during 2019-2023 include the attraction of the Nigerian Independent Exploration and Production (E&P) Company and Innoson Oil and Gas SL Ltd. into Sierra Leone in 2021, making them as the first E&P company to enter Sierra Leone's exploration space since 2014. In 2022 Innoson Oil and Gas SL Ltd.'s (IOG) announced a significant commercial prospect in their license area, with a plan to drill this prospect in the third quarter of 2023, hoped to mark the first well drilled in Sierra Leone since 2013. The Fifth Offshore Licensing Round instituted was opened during May 2022-September 2023, while a multilateral agreement to build a 5,660-kilometre gas pipeline from Nigeria to Morocco and then to Europe, passing through Sierra Leone was signed in the last five years, worth $25 billion to be installed over five years.[51]

The realisation of the full potential of this industry was mainly **challenged** by the COVID-19 pandemic, which adversely impacted on the exploration budgets. Integrated Operating Centres (IOCs) reviewed their portfolios and shifted focus to their reserves and producing assets at the expense of frontiers as Sierra Leone. Most of the key performance indicators (KPIs) have precedented relationship with downstream activities that depend on the attraction and retention of companies that were affected by global challenges. And efforts towards the establishment of the Petroleum Regulatory Commission were derailed because of "a precedented relationship with the commercial discovery of petroleum"—that is, discovery has to be at commercial level before the establishment can be pursued, which was not accomplished during 2019-2023. Also, global call for green energy prompted international operators to diversify their operations incorporating renewable energy into their energy mix. This call reduced the total quantum of exploration budgets. Funding constraint has generally limited the ability of GoSL to undertake some of its planned projects, such as creation of Petro physical and geochemical laboratories, as well as training to improve the job-related competences of its personnel and other critical stakeholders.

[51] Further details can be obtained from the Sector Paper on Oil and Gas submitted to MoPED for the preparation of the new MTNDP.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to revitalise the oil and gas industry through sustainable exploration and expansion of its scope, while building the capacity of the sector for operational excellence.

Key policy targets

1. By 2030, transparency and accountability practices mainstreamed into the sector, according to the 2016 Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative standards
2. By 2030, a petroleum commission established
3. By 2030, legal frameworks and laws formulated and promulgated for the sustainable development of the oil and gas industry

Key policy actions

1. By 2030, Sierra Leone attract more exploration and production companies into Sierra Leone to drill more exploration wells and unearth country's world-class oil and gas potential, enabling the country to become an oil and gas producing nation
2. By 2030, petroleum regulatory frameworks rationalised and made attractive to investors, and onshore exploration brought to the fore, with companies already interested in exploring hydrogen as well as hydrocarbon onshore Sierra Leone
3. By 2030, investment in geological and geophysical data increased; pre-qualification criteria strengthened, while transparency in the sector improved to attract the best oil and gas companies.
4. By 2030, negotiations processes and tax structures adequately simplified to maximise benefit from the sector.

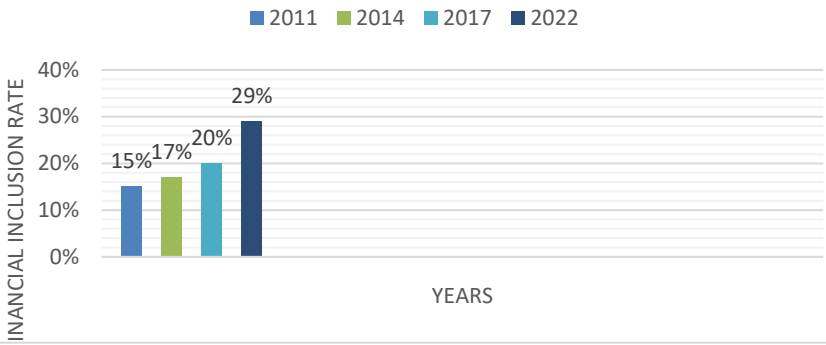
1.4 Financial inclusion for strengthened rural and informal economies

Since 2009, the Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL) has mainstreamed financial inclusion into its operations as evidenced in its membership to the global Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI).[52] Promoting financial inclusion efforts was at a low pace until 2016, when the Mobile Money Financial Services guidelines were rolled out by BSL to permit mobile money operators to transact mobile money businesses. Some of the factors that culminated to its slow progress were attributed to the exclusion of women, youth and rural communities due to the lack of access to finance and mobile coverage. This mobile money financial guideline propelled mobile money operators, commercial banks and non-bank financial institutions to embark on digital transactions with an objective of covering large swaths of rural communities whose business operations are dominated by informal operation, women and youth.

[52] "The Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) is a global network of central banks and policymakers with more than 110 members in over 90 developing and emerging nations. AFI provides its members with the tools and resources to share, develop, and implement their knowledge of financial inclusion policies that work": https://www.youtube.com/user/AFIglobal#:~:text=The%20Alliance%20for%20Financial%20Inclusion,financial%20inclusion%20policies%20that%20work.

Due to the importance of financial inclusion to economic growth, welfare and poverty eradication, it was emphasised in *seven* SDGs, reflected in the icons below. As per the latest Global Findex Report 2022, Sierra Leone's financial inclusion rate estimates at 29 percent—a measure of 15+ years old that have an account at a formal financial institution. These numbers are lower for women (24 percent), youth (25 percent) and rural communities (22 percent).

Figure E.2: Sierra Leone Financial Inclusion Rate (World Bank Findex Reports)



To accelerate the progress in financial inclusion, GoSL developed its first National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) 2017-2020, which was revised later in 2022, leading to the production and launch of the 2nd NSFI 2022-2026 in April of that year. One of the objectives of the latest NSFI is:

> **To promote the development of, and expand access to, client-centric financial products and services geared specifically towards key underserved population groups such as women, youth, rural communities, and MSMEs.**[53]

The GoSL also developed and launched the Tiered Know-Your-Customer Guidelines; established a Regulatory Sandbox to foster growth; developed Guidelines on Use of Agents; conducted a Geospatial Survey on Mapping Financial Access Points; developed the e-money and money remittances guidelines; revised the Borrowers and Lenders Act 2019, the Banking Act 2019, the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating of Financing Terrorism 2019; and amended the OFIS Act 2001. These reforms have led to the penetration of financial inclusion activities nationwide.[54]

Despite these successes during 2019-2022, the limited funding to this sector serves as a key **challenge** to improve awareness and sensitization, and training on financial inclusion, which was compounded by the poor internet connectivity to hold virtual meetings in the absence of funding. Furthermore, the lack of interest from some stakeholders hinders the rolling up of financial inclusion.

[53] See the Sierra Leone's National Strategy for Financial Inclusion 2022-2026, page I, launched in January 2022; Bank of Sierra Leone, Freetown.

[54] Further details can be obtained from the Sector Paper on Financial Inclusion submitted to MoPED for the preparation of the new MTNDP.

The successful implementation of the 2nd National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (2022 – 2026) serves as an **opportunity** to further augment financial inclusion in order to overcome some of the challenges through the development of a Deposit Protection Unit, financial inclusion data templates and a Manual on Market Conduct Supervision to promote and protect fair competition, and consumers. Towards awareness raising, sensitization and Training, the Sierra Leone Financial Inclusion Newsletter Initiative was to be launched, followed by the development of Financial Literacy Core Messages, and the partnership with NGOs to deliver financial literacy trainings/workshops with NGO staff and some of their beneficiaries. With regards to financial technology, the strategy aimed to update the Geospatial Mapping of Financial Access Point Project, Implementation of DigiGov (digitalization of government payment) project initiative as well as the deployment of National Payment Switch Phase 1(under the first Sierra Leone Financial Inclusion Project 1) to provide data on financial access point in order to improve and strengthening financial payment system.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to increase financial inclusion (defined as the rate of 15+ years old that have an account at a formal financial institution) from 29 percent in 2022 to 50 percent in 2030, with a special focus on expanding access of financial products and services to underserved population groups such as women, youth, rural communities, and MSMEs.

Key targets

1. By 2030, access to client-centric financial products and services increased by 40 percent
2. By 2030, the development and usage of digital financial services increased by 60 percent
3. By 2030, financial education, financial literacy and consumer protection increased by 50 percent.

Key policy action

1. Ensure effective implementation of all relevant financial included related projects
2. Roll-out the financial inclusion data templates and dashboard to improve data collection and reporting on the status of financial inclusion in Sierra Leone
3. Ensure effective functioning of the national Fintech Associations to boost its operations
4. Develop regulations for stand-alone fintech entering the Bank of Sierra Leone Sandbox
5. Implement the DigiGov initiative funded by AfDB to improve digitalization of government payments
6. Ensure the full implementation of the National Payment Switch Project/Phases 2 and 3 which includes instant payments and connectivity to the international gateway
7. Improve information availability on the state of Digital Financial Services in Sierra Leone.
8. Improve coordination on the advancement digital financial services
9. Develop and improve guidelines for promoting financial inclusion in the country

10. Improve public education on financial inclusion and promote fair competition, financial stability and consumer protection.

Enabler 2: Governance and accountability

2.1 Political modernization for consolidating peace and national cohesion

Political parties in Sierra Leone are mandated by the constitution (Section 35(1)) of the republic to shape the political will of the people, by publicizing information on political ideas, and national socio-economic programmes. Consequent upon the ineffective implementation of the aforementioned mandate and subsequent civil war in the 1990s. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was empowered by law to make recommendations towards a variety of objectives. The most important objective was to prevent a repeat of the conflict and all the abuses suffered by Sierra Leoneans. Other objectives put forward were to address impunity, respond to the needs of victims, and promote healing and reconciliation. Since the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone has held five presidential and parliamentary elections, two of which resulted in the peaceful transfer of power from one party to another supposedly consolidating democracy.

During the implementation of the previous plan, the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) was established to enhance dialogue among political parties and strengthen national cohesion. The ICPNC focused on peace promotion, mediation, reconciliation, early warning, early response, enhancing national cohesion, advisory to the Government, and coordination and collaboration with programme support and operations as enabling mechanisms for efficient and effective delivery of its mandate. Similarly, the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) effectively regulated the conduct and activities of political parties through the passage of the Political Parties Act No. 25 of 2022 (PPA, 2022), increasing political accountability and transparency in political parties to 40 percent in 2023. Equally, the Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs played a pivotal role in the country's political landscape.

The Commission established and continued to review Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MDAs, Local and International Organizations (CSOs), the Diplomatic Community, and the donor community and work with various stakeholders from all walks of life across the country.

Despite the democratic gains recorded so far, there is an increasingly worrying polarisation and politicisation of all facets of the Sierra Leonean society, among the critical remaining **challenges**. Political parties and their supporters have consistently used ethno-regional values to lubricate their political aspirations. The seemingly unending intolerance, intimidation, and drive to polarize the electorate, has rendered the political environment unpleasant. Elections are gradually becoming a source of tension, mistrust, and lack of confidence in state institutions, particularly the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), the Judiciary, and the security sector. The belief that politics is a must-win game despite the implications of citizens' and institutions' actions on the moral and social fabric of society is a disturbing and lamentable trend that has come to the fore in recent years.

Additionally, the Commission faces significant budgetary, human resources, and infrastructure challenges, limiting its ability to invest in personnel, training and expansion of the institution.

Key **lessons** going forward: A well-defined and robust regulatory framework is essential for ensuring political parties' compliance with rules and ethical standards. The promotion of inclusivity and gender equality within political parties is crucial for enhancing democracy and representation. As the the political landscape can change rapidly, necessitating the ability to adapt strategies and approaches, regularly seeking feedback from political parties, the public, and stakeholders can help identify areas for improvement. Adapting messages to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population can improve the effectiveness of communication campaigns. Engaging local leaders and influencers can help overcome resistance to change and foster community participation in civic activities. Also, timely and effective mediation of conflicts within and between political parties is crucial for maintaining political stability. Public awareness and civic education programs are essential for fostering a politically informed electorate. Finally, maintaining political neutrality and independence is critical for the credibility and effectiveness of the PPRC.

A key **opportunity** remains the existence of the ICPNC as a platform for the provision of leadership that will work with others to ensure that Sierra Leone walks on the path of peace and national cohesion with a focus on attaining SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals), African Union (AU) Agenda 2063(Aspiration 4; A peaceful and secure Africa), the Bintumani III Conference and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to promote a peaceful, united, and cohesive Sierra Leone where diversity, inclusion, transparency, accountability, and human rights are respected.

Key targets

1. By 2030, vast majority of the public are aware and educated about the importance and benefits of national cohesion
2. By 2030, a significant number of community leaders have expert knowledge and understanding of conflict prevention and peacebuilding
3. By 2030, inhabitants of every chiefdom across the country adopt and use citizens led alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve conflicts
4. By 2028, review and reform the Political Parties Act No. 25 of 2022
5. By 2026, the institutional capacity of the PPRC is built to enhance professionalism.

Key policy actions

1. ICPNC will embark on staff capacity building, conflict prevention, and promotion of peace, mediation dialogue, and reconciliation
2. ICPNC will establish a peacebuilding and conflict resolution knowledge management system
3. Develop a framework to monitor and evaluate the progress of political parties towards democratic practices, peace, tolerance, sustainable development, and national cohesion

4. PPRC conducts a comprehensive review of the Political Parties Act of 2022. Organize public consultations and engage stakeholders to gather input on proposed legal reforms
5. Support political parties in developing and enhancing their internal systems, including transparency and accountability mechanisms
6. Develop and implement capacity-building programs for political parties
7. Launch awareness campaigns to educate the public on the importance of democratic practices, peace, tolerance, sustainable development, and national cohesion
8. Establish mechanisms for political parties to report on their progress in adhering to democratic principles and the achievement of key targets
9. The ICPNC invests in confidence and trust-building measures through media platforms relevant to stakeholders and citizens about the different phases of conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes across the country
10. Strategic partnerships with and involvement of religious and traditional leaders, civil society actors, institutions of learning, media, and the UN agencies in designing and implementing confidence and trust-building measures around ICPNC's work;
11. Strategic planning and implementation process that is informed by citizens' and stakeholders' consultations, inputs, and effective participation
12. ICPNC conducts a national fragility assessment analysis that integrates conflict mapping (historical, current, and emerging);
13. Embark on follow-up national dialogue on reconciliation where the findings and outcomes of the national fragility assessment are presented to the security sector and partners.

2.2 Strengthening the fight against corruption and illicit financial flows

Corruption and illegal financial flows remain a challenge to the effective and efficient functioning of government and a threat to the socio-economic growth, development, and stability of Sierra Leone. The empirical evidence suggests fighting corruption and illicit financial flows at all levels is crucial for alleviating extreme poverty and boosting private sector growth and development. The lesser the incidence of corruption in a country, the greater the likelihood of steady economic growth, as investor confidence will increase significantly.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is an independent institution that is charged with the responsibility to lead in the fight against and control corruption through prevention, investigation, prosecution, and public education. The last five years can be considered a significant success in the fight against corruption as there has been progress made in all of the four pillars of the strategic plan of the commission (prevention, public education, investigation, and prosecution). Consistent with ACC's mandate to raise awareness of the ills of corruption and to solicit public support in the fight against the scourge, the Commission continues with a well-coordinated and targeted public education and outreach across the country. This has helped to make many more Sierra Leoneans learn about the work and activities of the Commission and has enabled the Commission to sustain vital public support in the campaign. In terms of prevention, the ACC continues its work to make public institutions stronger and better resistant to corruption. A number of systems and processes reviews of public institutions have been conducted, recommendations emanating from those reviews have been

monitored to ensure compliance and policies have been developed to guide the conduct of public officials.

In the fourth year of the current National Anti-Corruption Strategy, the Commission continued with its vigorous engagements with Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, including local councils, in a bid to mainstream anti-corruption measures, through the integrity management committees operating in those institutions. The Commission made a number of important interventions in the Auditor General's Reports and ensured that other high-profile allegations were probed into with results published. These interventions resulted in the prosecution of public officials and the recovery of public funds and physical assets, which the commission has been returning to the Consolidated Revenue Fund and to the respective public institutions and coffers. The Commission also supports the Government's poverty alleviation strides across the country, by constantly monitoring the World Bank-supported Social Safety Net (SSN) project. Through the Grievance Redress Mechanism component of the SSN, the Commission ensured that the extremely poor and vulnerable groups targeted by the project received the cash transfers in a very transparent and corrupt-free manner with instances of malpractices or corruption dealt with in a timely manner.

The work of the Commission and the country's efforts in combating corruption has made the country continue to perform well in the 'Control of Corruption' indicator of the Millennium Challenge Corporation Scorecard with a 79 percent excellent Score. In Transparency International's Global Corruption Country Rankings, Sierra Leone has moved from 115 in 2021 to 110 out of 180 countries surveyed in the 2022 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (TI-CPI). The country also maintains its 2021 score of 34 in 2022, which is above the Sub-Saharan average of 32, and the highest the country has ever recorded since the CPI rankings began. In the Perception Index (TI-CPI), the country also maintained its 2021 score of 34 in 2022, which is above the sub-Saharan average of 32 and the highest the country has ever recorded since the CPI rankings began.

Challenges encountered during implementation include, the limited number of vehicles, the state of the Commission’s fleets is in a deplorable situation that is adversely affecting the achievement of set targets. Another challenge that is faced by the commission is the lack of working tools such as computers (laptops) and other related gadgets thus limiting the operation of the commission. Untimely and inadequate allocation of funds to finance operational activities.

However, despite the challenges faced by the commission, it is believed that with strong collaboration and engagement with partners in the fight against corruption as well as the availability of working tools and vehicles, the commission will be able to achieve its set targets.

Strategic objective

The ultimate objective of the commission is to reduce corruption significantly through the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of corruption in all its forms and scaling up the fight against illicit financial flows in Sierra Leone to increase domestic revenue to finance development programmes.

Key targets

1. By 2030, systems and processes in public and private bodies improved
2. By 2030, public awareness of the dangers of corruption, and the benefits of a corrupt-free society increased

3. By 2030, law enforcement against corruption, unethical conduct, and illicit financial flows enhanced
4. By 2030, partnership with other MDAs in the fight against and control corruption increased.

Key policy actions

1. Strengthen the preventive approach in ensuring accountability and transparency in ministries, departments, and agencies through a systems and processes review approach that subjects the public sector to more scrutiny by the recommendations and instructions of the review
2. Established mechanism for planning, monitoring, and reporting on development results, referred to as results-based management, wherein development targets will be set at the start of each year and senior managers will be accountable for delivering these results
3. Development of the anti-corruption regulations that provide a detailed step-by-step implementation of the 2008 amended 2019 framework.

2.3 Public financial management

The Government remains steadfast in its determination to ensure continued policy action in advancing effectiveness, probity, transparency and accountability in the use of public resources. It has continued to recognize that the state can only realise effective and sustainable economic management and public service delivery in Sierra Leone if it sustains policy focus on driving effectiveness and efficiency in public financial management (PFM) systems.

In the last MTNDP 2019-2023 that supported the implementation of the previous PFM Strategy 2018-2021, the focus was on implementing instruments aimed at improving revenue generation; effectively addressing fiscal risks; improving public debt management; advancing integrated financial management information systems; strengthening procurement and public asset and payroll management; and improving ICT and e-governance. Policy actions undertaken in these areas included conduct of follow-ups on the implementation of Audit recommendations by the Ministry of Finance (MoF), with issues of non-compliance escalated to higher strategic decision making levels, such as parliament; monitoring of compliance in the implementation of risk-based Annual Internal-Audit Work Plans across MDAs and Local Councils; development of capacity building plan for internal auditors and conduct of training on Risk-Based Internal Auditing and Audit Reporting; production of reports on the Financial Performance of State-owned Enterprises, establishment of a functional debt management framework, ensuring internal controls for non-salary payments and rule based/transparent intergovernmental transfers, and sound payroll management and a budget classification system in line with international standards. Notable improvements reported by the Open Budget Survey 2021, Public Investment Management Assessment 2020 and Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Assessment 2021 were in macroeconomic and fiscal forecasting (PI-14), which improved from a score of ‘C’ to ‘B’; and the payroll controls (PI-23), which scored ‘B+’, up from ‘D+’ in 2017.

Critical PFM **challenges** to address going forward with the implementation of the MTNDP 2024-2030 relate to major weaknesses expressed in the forgoing assessment reports, including "a high variance between the budget and actual expenditure, the non-use of country systems for donor projects (and the information gap it creates), public access to fiscal information, poor information on service delivery and the lack of gender consideration in the budgeting framework." [55]

It is against the above background, efforts and challenges that GoSL has recently launched a successor PFM Strategy for 2023-2027, with a vision to deliver three budgetary outcomes by 2027: a) fiscal discipline, b) prudent allocation of resources, and c) effective service delivery. These outcomes are to be achieved through enforcing policy actions in the following broad operational areas:

1. Strategic Planning and Macro-Fiscal Framework
2. Budget Formulation, Preparation, and Execution
3. Fiscal Decentralisation for Improved Service Delivery
4. Accounting and Reporting through IFMIS (Integrated Financial Management Information System)
5. External Audit and Legislative Scrutiny

Strategic objective

Accordingly, the overall strategic objective for PFM in the MTNDP 2024-2030 is to continue to ensure the prudent, efficient, effective and transparent use of public funds consistent with the Public Financial Management Act 2016 and the new PFM Strategy 2023-2027.

Key targets

1. By 2026, domestic revenue increased to at least 18 percent of GDP from 13 percent in 2022
2. By 2026, debt-to-GDP ratio reduced from 98.9 percent of GDP in 2022 to not more than 70 percent
3. By 2028, public expenditure management architecture significantly strengthened
4. By 2028, fiscal decentralisation notably strengthened for improved service delivery at the sub-national level
5. By 2028, a Transformational Development Fund (Sovereign Wealth Fund) fully established for managing natural resource revenues.

Key policy actions

1. Strengthen macroeconomic and fiscal policy formulation, analysis, coordination and monitoring while advancing research capability to support evidence-based policy design and decision-making
2. Improve the processes of budget planning, execution and reporting consistent with the PFM Act 201

[55] See the Sierra Leone Public Financial Strategy 2023-2027 (Page 13) for the achievement and challenges obtained from the MoF; as well as various Annual Progress Report on the MTNDP 2019-2024 produced by MoPED.

3. Design and develop tax laws, policies and regulations and produce periodic reports on revenue performance and the implementation of revenue legislations, to boost domestic revenue mobilisation
4. Strengthen the accounting, recording and reporting of public funds, including improving the preparation of annual statements of Public Accounts and improving payroll, treasury, records, stores, inventory and asset management
5. Enhance the oversight and effectiveness of internal control systems in MDAs and Local Councils to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of public funds
6. Strengthen fiscal risk management and fiduciary oversight of MDAs, SOEs and public sector project
7. Strengthen public debt management to improve the sustainability of public debt and minimise the risk of high and rising debt distress
8. Scale-up fiscal decentralisation for improved service delivery at the sub-national level through the development of a fiscal decentralisation policy and strategy, improving financial management and delivery capacity, and upgrading the fiscal property cadastral system and ICT environment
9. Implement all activities in the new Public Financial Management Strategy 2023 – 2027 within the time frame stipulated
10. Strengthen private sector coordination and promote innovative climate and green finance initiatives
11. Promote external audit and legislative scrutiny of the national budget implementation process.

2.4 Audit services

During 2019-2022, Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) carried out financial, compliance, and performance audits on the National Development Plan, the 17 SDGs, and other relevant documents including our strategic plan, and issued the reports to Parliament on time. For instance, the 2021 audit report noted that 21(95 percent) out of the 22 Local Councils, got unqualified audit opinions. This performance materially increased by 18 percent when compared to 2020 in which the councils recorded 17(77 percent) unqualified audit opinions[56].

Lack of financial independence and the difficulty in sourcing funds for operations and administrative activities were among the challenges encountered that would need to be overcome in the implementation of the new plan. As a **lesson**, political will to see that audit recommendations are implemented and securing the full cooperation by Parliament in providing reports to the ASSL after concluding deliberations, are critical to the realisation of an increased rate of implementation of audit recommendations.[57]

[56] See Audit Service Sierra Leone Report 2022, p(xii).
[57] Audit Service Sierra Leone Strategy For 2021-2025, p(20)

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to support government institutions in improving revenue generation and service delivery to citizens, by strengthening the independence of ASSL and increasing its audit coverage in undertaking financial, compliance, and performance audits.

Key targets

1. By 2030, full annual performance audits conducted
2. By 2030, revenue audit conducted annually and submitted to Parliament
3. By 2030, a system to fully implement and follow up on all financial audit recommendations set up

Key policy actions

1. Strengthen the independence of the ASSL
2. Increase audit coverage
3. Improve stakeholder engagement and wider publicity
4. Improve the use of Information and Communication Technology
5. Implement the Surcharge Provision in the Amended Audit Service Act once it becomes Law.

2.5 Inclusive and Accountable Justice Institutions

Sierra Leone's Justice Sector continues to play a recognizable role in facilitating reforms crucial to the advancement of the rule of law, promoting justice, and guaranteeing and protecting citizens' human rights. The justice sector has been proactive in ensuring access to justice as a key component of Sierra Leone's thriving democracy. The Sector together with its coordinating institutions including the Ministry of Justice, the Justice Sector Coordination Office which primarily drives justice sector reform initiatives and coordinates the implementation, the Sierra Leone Judiciary, the Law Enforcement agencies, the Human Rights Commission, the Law Reform Commission, the Legal Aid Board, and the Sierra Law School amongst others promoting justice and human rights primarily drives justice sector reform initiatives and coordinate the implementation of sector plans. The sector's continued reforms are fundamental catalysts for promoting sustainable peace and development in the country. The sector has made significant progress in recent years in its effort to ensure access to justice for all citizens and uphold the rule of law**.**

The Justice Sector while implementing the MNTDP (1019-2023) over the past five years recorded some significant gains in promoting access to Justice focusing on legal representation, and alternative dispute resolution which are key components of any thriving democracy.

Legal Representation facilitated by the Legal Aid Board has increased the provision of free legal aid services to indigenes across the country. Presently there is a fair presence of the Legal Aid Board in every District in the country delivering free legal services to indigenes who cannot afford legal

representation. The Legal Aid Board currently deployed 32 state councils providing free legal representation across the country with statistics of cases handled listed in the table below.

Table E.2: Legal Representation 2019-2023

Year	Adult		Juvenile		Total
	Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
2019	12997	3936	134	280	18555
2020	9258	1493	1596	192	12539
2021	10367	934	1612	267	13180
2022	14738	1416	2180	418	18752
2023(Jan-Sept)	11870	1365	2270	287	14798
Total	**59,230**	**9,144**	**7,792**	**1444**	**77,610**

In a bid to reduce the backlog of cases in the court system, the Legal Aid Board has embraced ADR mechanisms. Mediation and arbitration becoming more common for resolving disputes outside the formal legal process, enabling swifter, cost-effective, and community-based resolutions. The table below shows the extent disputes were resolved outside the formal legal process.

Table E.3: Alternative Dispute Resolution ADR 2019-2023

Year	Adult		Juvenile		Total
	Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
2019	12208	23237	5824	8013	49282
2020	9342	15455	4532	7955	37286
2021	12432	30449	9774	22616	75271
2022	15417	38180	14543	30511	98651
2023(Jan-Sept)	17317	40059	11368	27090	95834
Total	**66716**	**147358**	**45841**	**96185**	**356324**

Furthermore, the Justice Sector has made significant efforts in strengthening the paralegal system with more investments made in training and deploying more than 70 paralegals across the country, especially in remote areas, introducing the judicial week and circuit courts Sierra Leone Judiciary Judicial week and circuit Courts to bring justice closer to rural and underserved areas, Upholding the Rule of Law, initiating reforms to strengthen the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, strengthening law enforcement agencies, such as the Sierra Leone Police, and reviewing and updating its legal framework to align with international human rights standards are key achievements of the Justice sector over the past five years.

The Development of a Monitoring and evaluation Framework for Reporting SDG 16+, the Development of the Justice Sector Strategy (2021-2025): and the Development and Publication of the Justice Sector Quarterly Newsletters implementing The Justice Sector Reform Strategy and Investment Plan-JSRSIPIV (2019-2023) are top-notch achievements of the sector.

Additionally and more explicitly the sector, during the past five years and while implementing the MTNDP (20-2023), made landmark achievements including, Increased access to justice by establishing magistrate and high courts in all districts, Establishing a Special Court to try perpetrators of Gender-Based Violence, Completed a Commission of Inquiry of public officials, issued a White

Paper, and gave the opportunity for Appeal, Completed the Constitutional Review process and drafted a White Paper, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone was graded "A" status for the third consecutive time by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights through its accredited body, Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and Reviewed the Criminal Procedures ACT 1965.

Experiences in the sector over the immediate five years have shown that there is an urgent need for a holistic approach, involving multiple stakeholders such as government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners, for the success of justice sector reforms. Furthermore, evidence shows that data collection and monitoring for evaluating the impact of justice sector reforms enables evidence-based decision-making and adjustments to strategies as needed. Prioritizing interventions based on the specific needs of different regions and communities has proven more effective in addressing access to justice issues and increasing public awareness and engagement in the justice system has shown vital for building trust and ensuring that citizens can fully exercise their rights.

Notwithstanding the many gains, the sector grappled and continues to grapple with **challenges** such as inadequate funding and resources, capacity gaps especially relating to relevant skills needed to optimize the delivery of the sector, difficulty concerning access to remote and rural areas of Sierra Leone, where legal services are less accessible, limited public awareness relating citizens, particularly those in rural areas, are unaware of their legal rights and the justice services available to them. The ever-increasing demand for legal aid services outweighs the supply with only 70 paralegals-, and 31 state councils recruited and deployed which is grossly short of the demand required for effective justice dispensation. Another setback is how compromises of cases continue to undermine the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms.

Despite the challenges encountered over the immediate five years, the sector is committed to make improving upon court infrastructure and building more courtrooms to enhance access to justice, digitizing case management with the view to tracking the progress of all matters before courts, Maintaining its grade 'A' status by supporting the Human rights Commission to implement the recommendations of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and strengthen its relationship with the Government and other local and international partners and networks and enact the Criminal Procedures Act 2023.

The strategic objective, key targets, and policy actions outlined below are to improve access to justice and uphold the rule of law for the next seven years.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to ensure that all citizens benefit from a fair, impartial, and effective justice sector through enabling increased access to justice, expedition of justice, protection of human rights, and equal opportunities for economic development.

Key targets

1. By 2030, ensure that the number of cases awaiting judgement for six months is considerably lower than in 2023
2. By 2030, increase public confidence and trust in the justice sector as measured in periodic surveys
3. By 2030, all administrative districts have more resident High Court Judge

Key policy actions

1. Enact the Justice Sector Coordination Office Bill into law to give a legal foundation that will enhance the authority and resources of the sector thus making it the central hub for coordination within the justice sector
2. Initiate policy reviews, and ensure communication amongst justice sector institutions in improving public awareness of the activities of the justice sector
3. Increase the capacity of the Justice Sector Coordination Office through various staff training initiatives
4. Increase funding to the Legal Aid Board
5. Develop and implement a structured inter-agency communication plan to facilitate regular information sharing and collaboration among justice sector actors, including law enforcement, judiciary, legal practitioners, and related agencies
6. Launch a comprehensive public awareness and education campaign to inform the public about the roles, functions, and key processes of the justice sector
7. Implement measures to enhance transparency by making legal proceedings and decisions more accessible to the public
8. Establish feedback mechanisms to enable the public to provide input and concerns related to the justice sector.

2.6 Public trust in state institutions

Public trust in state institutions depends on their capacity to address socio-economic insecurity as well as guaranteeing effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. The building and sustaining of public trust in state institutions is the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy and effective public governance. That said, trust in public institutions remained challenged by perceived widespread corruption, nepotism, and political patronage.

In the past five years, the Government has shouldered its responsibility to enhance public trust and good governance. By initiating reform in the public sector, and recording progress in the MCC 'Control of Corruption' indicator, and freedom of information indicator among others, the Government expressed its determination to ensure state resources are well spent and transparent. In

2022, the Afro Barometer, showed that public perception of corruption in Sierra Leone declined to 40 percent from 70 percent only a few years ago. The government also made progress in the implementation of the HRCSL Universal Period Review recommendations by resuming the constitutional review process with the launch of the Government White Paper and the abolition of the death penalty in fulfilment of its pledge/ commitment. The government continues to reaffirm its commitment to fairly and effectively deliver social services (Free Education and Health programs) to every Sierra Leonean irrespective of their political conviction and socioeconomic circumstances. Additionally, the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) made strides in increasing transparency and accountability among political parties by developing and implementing a robust regulatory framework.

Sierra Leone has experienced political polarization, which poses a serious challenge to the PPRC's efforts to promote unity and constitutionalism. The festering perceived lack of independence in some state institutions (such as the judiciary, the Electoral Commission, and the police) constitutes an enormous public trust challenge. In addition, the deficit in the efficacy of human rights and democratic institutions; coupled with patronage and nepotism in public service delivery continues to impact public trust.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to build trust in state institutions through the implementation of strategies to strengthen national cohesion and ensure a peaceful, just, and inclusive society.

Key targets

1. By 2030, public trust in state institutions is significantly improved compared to 2023
2. By 2030, about 50 percent of the adult population expressed satisfaction that state institutions functioned better than in 2023
3. By 2030, a favourable space for human rights organizations to effectively promote transparency and accountability in an unfettered manner created
4. By 2030, a citizens' bureau that will meet annually with public authorities to review a wide range of issues stemming from the previous 12 months created

Key policy actions

1. Consolidate gains by launching a Presidential Peacebuilding and National Cohesion Basket Fund.
2. Review the National Youth Service Scheme to make it involuntary for beneficiaries of the Government's grant and create opportunities for people in other districts instead of their home districts.
3. Promote a national character in political appointments and civil service.
4. Review the ICPNC Act and develop the capacity to make it more efficient.
5. Strengthen collaboration between the security sector and justice sector resulting in professional and measured responses to serious security threats and incidents.

6. Strengthen the interface among the security sector, the populace, MDAs, and the Government to ensure inclusive security, which is necessary for peace, security, and national development.
7. Review the policy and legal framework for the public service to make it more professional and attractive to Sierra Leonean professionals who would like to work for the Government.
8. Improve incentives to support productivity and merit-based systems in recruitment and progression of the workforce in the Civil Service.
9. Develop an Electronic Personnel Management System to keep track of professionals recruited into the Civil Service.
10. Strengthen the capacity of human rights organizations and organizations promoting democracy, and sensitize the public on their work throughout the country.
11. Strengthen the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law.
12. Commits to advancing the values of a free and open society and providing support to all citizens to fully enjoy the freedoms enshrined in our constitution and inherent in the best democratic practice.
13. Implement the 2023-2028 National Anti-Corruption Strategy with emphasis on the preventative approach to curb corruption in Sierra Leone.
14. Upgrade its operations through digitization of its processes and activities to ensure proper record keeping, transparency, and inter-agency collaboration.

2.7 Decentralisation, local governance, and rural development

In the last five years of implementing the previous MTNDP 2019-2023, efforts to strengthen decentralisation and local governance recorded a number of achievements. Key among the achievements are: The Decentralization Policy and the Local Government Act 2004 were reviewed and new Decentralisation Policy and Local Government Act 2022 were promulgated; 77 percent of the planned devolved functions fully transferred to Local Councils; the People's Planning Process (Wan Fambul Framework) was roll-outs to some chiefdoms; and the District Development Coordination Committees (DDCCs) were re-established and fully functioning in 15 districts of Sierra Leone for effective monitoring, supervision, and reporting on development progress at community level.

Key **challenges** encountered during implementation are as follows: Most traditional authorities and citizens in remote locations found it difficult to relate with local council authorities to access services due to difficult terrains and long distances between district council headquarters towns and local settlements. In most cases, services were located in municipal centres. Additionally, since 2017, the issues surrounding de-amalgamation remain the same, and historically, the de-amalgamation of Chiefdoms in Sierra Leone has accounted for most boundary disputes among other factors. It is important to note that a good number of chiefdoms are still shrouded in sharp conflicts in terms of boundary disputes. As such, allegation of land grabbing and encroachment between chiefdoms is not uncommon. Furthermore, the MLGCA is currently challenged with boundary disputes coupled with the desire from the remaining 27 chiefdoms to be separated as social tensions have been reported frequently in the said chiefdoms. Also, the present situation of staff in the local councils regarding

general conditions of service is very unsatisfactory and fragile, lacking effective industrial relations management and guiding principles.

In urban cities, the growing size of populations, such as in Freetown (1,309,168 in 2023), has made the proper and effective administration of municipalities daunting—the capital of Freetown being especially notable. There are serious challenges of waste management, and revenue mobilisation targets have been falling far below expectation to meet competing demands in administering and providing social services in cities.

An **opportunity** going forward: Towards the resolution of community-related conflict, the MLGCA, in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Minister and the Office of National Security has developed a new architecture with rolling out strategies for settling land and boundary disputes.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to strengthen local governance architecture, address the staff retention deficiencies in local councils, enhance local level food security, and promote local economic development.

Key targets

1. By 2030, the Western Area is divided into five administrative cities
2. By 2030, the Wan Fambul Framework promoting village/chiefdom level planning rolled-out to at least 40 percent of the chiefdoms.

   By 2030, the de-amalgamation process in the remaining 27 chiefdoms completed
3. By 2030, chiefdom farms and district agro-business centres established in at least 35 percent of the chiefdoms and 60 percent of the districts

Key policy actions

1. Redraw political boundaries in the Western Area
2. Establish Village Development Committees
3. Facilitate the roll-out of the Wan Fambul Framework for village-chiefdom planning
4. Support local and chiefdom councils to establish district and chiefdom farms with agro-business centres
5. Develop and implement Local Council Staff Retention Strategy
6. Develop human resource guidelines/policies that will address the critical issues relating to recruitment, postings, and transfers of staff
7. Support the operationalisation and implementation of the provisions in the Local Government Act 2022 for the payment of leave allowance, severance benefits, gratuities, and pensions
8. Strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs

9. Develop an integrated policy framework that speaks to issues on amalgamated and de-amalgamated chiefdoms in terms of land acquisition and ownership
10. Facilitate the de-amalgamating of the remaining 27 chiefdoms.

2.8 Security institutions

The provision of national security remains the primary responsibility of the Government and a prerequisite for sustainable development. The security sector comprises the Republic of Sierra Leone Arm Forces (RSLAF), the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), the Sierra Leone Correctional Service (SLCS), the National Fire Force (NFF), the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA), the Immigration Department, National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Sierra Leone Commission on Arms and Ammunition (SLeCAA) and Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME).

The concluding MTNDP ushered in significant Improvement in infrastructural development in the sector, addressing wide-ranging constraints in the sector. For instance, the Government constructed five Forward Patrol Bases, a young office''s Mess at the Wilberforce Barracks, and a 100-bed hospital for the Military and Sierra Leone Police. The capacity of the Engineering regiment of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces was enhanced with new construction equipment and engaging them in road works. Also, the National Fire Force (NFF), the SLP, NDLEA, and SLCS, had their infrastructure capacity enhanced. Among many other successes, the SLCS constructed Child-friendly facilities at the Freetown and Kenema Female Correctional Centres for babies and children accompanying their detained lactating mothers. In addition, the acquisition of land for the relocation of the Freetown Main Correctional Centre to Masanki underwent cabinet approval.

On the policy, transparency, and accountability front, the sector saw progress as well. A nationwide Managerial Assessment of all correctional facilities in Sierra Leone was conducted and a report was produced. The Fire Safety Policy and Bill was submitted to Cabinet, the policy is awaiting popularization. SLeNCSA amended the SLeNCSA Act of 2010 transforming it into SLeCAA, and the Arms and Ammunition Act of 2012, to ensure compliance with the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The Statelessness Secretariat in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) developed the National Action Plan to eradicate statelessness in Sierra Leone, as per Article 24 of the Abidjan Declaration. NDLEA developed the 5-year Smart National Drug Control Strategy (2023-2028). NCRA completed the United Nations-guided Comprehensive Country Assessment and developed a costed National CRVS & ID Management Strategic Plan for Sierra Leone. NCRA strengthened Civil Registration and contributed to the preparation of the Data Protection Policy and enactment of the Data Protection Act. NCRA strengthened Birth and death registration, interoperability between NCRA and MoHS, and printing of securitized Birth and death certificates. Furthermore, MIA strengthened the fortnightly inter-agency meetings of all Heads of Agencies for security updates to improve coordination and collaboration in the security and safety institutions. The ONS also delivered in the areas of security coordination; protective security; border security; maritime security; counter-terrorism, and election security, with reference to the 2023 elections.

Challenges recorded include low capability in conducting forensic investigation at Scientific Support Unit including the investigation of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) cases at the Family Support Unit (FSU), lack of a clear legal framework within TOCU to enhance its effectiveness;

inadequate manpower to manage the growing FSUs establishment across the country, insufficient holding centres for juveniles that might compromise their rights and welfare whilst in police stations/posts, inadequate number of firefighters, fire stations, fire engines, firefighting and essential communications equipment for National Fire Force. There is insufficient staff due to the high attrition rate in some spheres of the security sector, and insufficient workshop equipment, tools, and machines for SLCS to train inmates for industrial production. Non-availability of office structures in strategic border crossing points and inadequate mobility for operations.

Lessons learned during the implementation of the MTNDP 2019-2023 include, building partnerships and MDA collaboration is key to successful programme implementation. Safety and security, Public Rights-Based Inmate Management Approach, Psycho-social educational and after-care service for discharged Inmates, capacity building for Staff, Construction of Correctional Centres and provision of essential logistics can be improved with an enhanced and timely budgetary allocation. The dynamic nature of threats to national security requires robust planning, training, and logistics to respond effectively to existing and emerging threats.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to have a security sector that is efficient, effective, highly apolitical and professional, one that can contribute significantly to sustainable development and the advancement of democracy and the rule of law, and can ensure a robust response to national threats and emergencies.

Key targets

1. By 2030, national crimes rate reduced by 25 percent from a caseload of 27,018 in 2022
2. By 2030, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces are more modernised and robust than in 2023
3. By 2030, early warning and response capacity of the security institutions is significantly higher than in 2023
4. By 2030, community engagement in security processes and functions is greater than in 2023.

Key policy actions

1. Implement the Safe City project for Freetown
2. Conduct registration of stateless persons throughout the 16 Districts of Sierra Leone
3. Relocate the Freetown Main Correctional Centre to Masanki, Ribbi Chiefdom, Moyamba District
4. Strengthen the management and operations in various Police Divisions, and provide accommodation police officers nationwide
5. Strengthen the National Immigration Regulation System and Information Management
6. Improve the welfare and terms and conditions of service for career-serving personnel
7. Improve the capacity of the security sector to continue to serve the nation and participate in international peacekeeping operations

8. Strengthen the interface among security sector institutions, and between these institutions and the populace, MDAs, and the Government
9. Review existing legislations governing the security sector with a view to bringing them in line with best practice
10. Strengthen the intelligence wing of the security sector to detect and thwart threats to national security
11. Enforce private security regulations and conduct regular joint inspections of private security companies
12. Implement the National Protective Security Framework (NPSF) across MDAs and critical national infrastructure.

Enabler 3: Advancing climate resilience and environmental action

Among the milestones achieved during previous plan implementation in this area was the establishment of a separate Ministry of Environment and Climate Change in 2021, to provide political leadership and policy direction in the environmental governance architecture of the country. Other areas of achievement include the review of six key legislations to enhance enforcement and compliance with climate change and environmental sustainability-related requirements. A National Development-Induced Resettlement Policy was formulated, while the National Climate Change Policy reviewed and updated. Additionally, GoSL produced a national Blue Economy Strategy and comprehensive Action Plan to operationalise the strategy. It also developed a National Framework for Climate Services (NFCS), and an NFCS strategy and action plan for delivering these services. The sub-sections below present key areas of focus in the present plan with respect to addressing climate and environmental issues in the country that were also pursued in the previous plan.

3.1 Building National Environmental Resilience

Inroads were made here during 2019-2023. In 2022, Sierra Leone's environmental performance index score for air quality estimated at 21.60 with a rank of 151st out of 180 countries, jumping 10 places from a score of 161 in 2020.[58] **Challenges** encountered in this policy area include: limited resources and general institutional capacity to implement critical programmes/projects, high levels of poverty and food insecurity that put pressure on land resources to provide alternative livelihood opportunities for the population, inadequate infrastructure, lack of education and awareness about environmental hazards and climate change vulnerabilities, weak regulatory enforcement, high population growth and urbanisation, limited access to clean energy, fragile ecosystems, biodiversity loss, and ineffectively coordinated approach to environmental governance. With regard to nuclear safety and radiation protection efforts, the challenges include: lack of calibration facilities, such as calibration survey meters for radiation monitoring, and inadequate central management facility for handling disused sealed radioactive wastes.

[58] Wolf, M. J., Emerson, J. W., Esty, D. C., de Sherbinin, A., Wendling, Z. A., et al. (2022). 2022 Environmental Performance Index. New Haven, CT: Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy. epi.yale.edu.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to strengthen the environmental governance architecture of the country, promote the sustainable management of natural resources, and build resilience and adaptive capability to climate change, nuclear and radioactive wastes for the well-being and socio-economic livelihoods of Sierra Leoneans.

Key targets

1. By 2030, the Vulnerability Ranking of the country drastically improved
2. By 2030, the Extreme Events Ranking of the country drastically improved
3. By 2028, a significant number of people in Sierra Leone were adequately sensitised and educated on climate change-related issues
4. By 2030, Sierra Leone's access to international climate resilience finance including Green Bonds increased.

Key policy actions

1. Conduct Strategic Environmental Assessments for the agricultural sector and other assessments to produce a state of the environment report
2. Establish monitoring programmes on water pollution and air quality including GHG emission inventory
3. Conduct studies on the use of nuclear and isotopic techniques for the effective monitoring of GHG emissions
4. Establish a standard environmental laboratory to ensure the scientific monitoring of environmental compliance and to enable the speedy detection of pollutants in air, water, waste, and soil samples
5. Develop and implement the National Action Plan on Plastic Waste Management for Sierra Leone
6. Conduct national climate change vulnerability assessments for crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries, and water sectors
7. Strengthen mechanism to access climate finance for the implementation of climate change interventions in the country
8. Develop regulations on air quality, coastal and marine environment protection, chemical and hazardous wastes, lead in paint and review existing regulations (such as the 2010 EIA Fee Regulations and the Environment Protection Agency, the Mines and Minerals Regulations 2013, to align it with the EPA Act 2022
9. Develop Regulations, Guides, and Codes of Practice for both Ionizing radiation protection and non-ionizing radiation protection.

3.2 Forestry management and wetland conservation

During 2019-2023, the number of functional Co-Management Committees on forestry management and wetland conservation increased from 37 in 2018 to 75 in 2023; and the restoration of degraded areas in wetlands and terrestrial ecosystems increased from 70 acres in 2019 to over 300 acres in 2023. There were critical **challenges** to implementation of programmes, nonetheless, including limited funding, irregular weather patterns (including indiscriminate rainfalls), prolonged dry seasons, flooding of lowlands, weak knowledge management system, weak collaboration between Conservation Trust Fund management and relevant stakeholders, inadequate machinery and equipment to support revenue generation efforts, and high expectations from forest-edged communities in terms benefits from forest management-related programmes.

Going forward, there exist **opportunities** and **lessons** to leverage towards effective implementation of programmes in the new national development plan. There exists the Loma Mountain Conservation Project; and the recruitment of community youths as tour guards, providing employment for the local communities, and increasing their interest and participation in forest conservation. The involvement of women in the nursery development and restoration of degraded areas of National Parks creates a livelihood for them and brings them to the fore of the conservation process. The registration of youth and women initiatives as farming groups to undertake sustainable farming practices has increased green and smart climate-friendly farming methods among communities.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objective is to promote biodiversity conservation, wildlife management, research, and the harnessing of ecosystem services in an integrated way for the well-being of present and future communities; and ensure an integrated sector governance structure for the sustainable management and conservation of natural resources in protected areas, while diversifying and expanding resource mobilisation, strengthening multi-stakeholder partnership, and supporting programme development.

Key targets

1. By 2030, the area of national forest/wetlands under improved management for conservation doubled
2. By 2030, the national area under sustainable carbon financing at least doubled from a baseline of 71,000 hectares currently
3. By 2030, an additional 10,000,000 trees planted
4. By 2030, local revenue generation from ecosystem services increased by at least 35 percent

Key policy actions

1. Improve legal and enforcement mechanisms with appropriate laws
2. Develop a Carbon Market Framework
3. Improve the capacity of forest-adjacent communities in forest fire management, restoration, and sustainable farming practices

4. Develop a national tree planting program for regeneration and shared management of forest cover and related products
5. Develop a National Forests and Wildlife Inventory
6. Enhance the management and oversight capacity of regulatory agencies
7. Conduct a study to quantify the total forests and wildlife resources of the country
8. Expand resource mobilization to support conservation activities and natural resource management in the protected areas alongside governance
9. Combat environmental degradation and manage forests and wetlands.
10. Strengthen the capacities of communities in reducing threats on forests including wild forest fires, wildlife trade, and unsustainable grazing
11. Increase marine protection and maintain the number of forest reserves and conservation areas.
12. Promote sustainable financing mechanisms for long-term biodiversity conservation and wildlife management in Sierra Leone
13. Strengthen participatory governance by increasing support for community conservation efforts
14. Facilitate transboundary cooperation to transboundary forest and wildlife resources management and policy harmonization.

3.3 Disaster management and governance

Sierra Leone continues to be prone to both man-made and natural hazards such as floods, landslides, tropical storms, coastal erosion, and droughts that cause severe economic damage and loss of lives with disproportionate effects on the poorest and most vulnerable. The life expectancy of the population may be adversely affected in a cumulative and debilitating way if they are subjected to recurring or prolonged localised hazard circumstances. Climate change and its underlying socioeconomic factors have increased the exposure of people, especially the urban population to disasters, poverty, and low levels of economic development. This climatic or extreme weather situation was made worse by the Ebola outbreak of 2014-2016 and the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic of 2019, whose effects continue to endure. Epidemics and other health-related risks, including cholera and dengue fever outbreaks in the aftermath of floods are another key concern. The vulnerability of Sierra Leone to hazards and natural disasters is directly correlated with its location, climate, extreme poverty, and deficient environmental management systems.

During 2019-2023, the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) was established to strengthen disaster management-related coordination efforts at national level. The NDMA and its partners pursued a number of programmes to build national resilience, mitigate the effects of flooding and enhance poverty alleviation. **Challenges** to address to improve on gains made going forward include: limited funding for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts; lack of strategic stock for effective disaster preparedness and response; unplanned urbanisation and high rate of deforestation; land reclamation, stone and sand mining in wrong places, and environmental degradation. A major **lesson** learned from recent disaster incidents is the need to increase public knowledge and education on risks, hazards, vulnerabilities, and disasters. The poor state of financing for conducting

comprehensive disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts has emphasised the need for enhanced disaster risk financing.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objective is to mainstream disaster risk management into national, sector and local development plans and policies and ensure an integrated and robust national response to future emergencies with minimised human, infrastructural and related costs.

Key targets

1. By 2030, ensure that 80 percent of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation policies, strategies, plans, and programmes are mainstreamed into sectoral and local development plans.
2. By 2030, ensure that 80 percent of disaster risk reduction interventions are decentralised
3. By 2027, national early warning and early response system immensely scaled up

Key policy actions

1. Develop local disaster risk management strategic plans and review standard operating procedures for all districts
2. Institute and operationalise policies, plans, and legal frameworks to reduce risk and strengthen resilience at local levels
3. Set up a robust mechanism to conduct a post-disaster needs assessment to evaluate, record, share, and account for disaster losses and understand their environmental and socioeconomic impacts.
4. Develop and scale up capability to forecast future disaster occurrences, including research capability, improved data systems and general information management

   Improve public education on disaster-related issues

Box E.1 below presents a critical workstream of the ***Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Food Security*** to support national, sectoral and local efforts to reducing risks and impacts of climate-related disasters, such as greenhouse emissions, droughts and floods on communities and infrastructure. The box presents clear *goals* and *specific actions* of the Initiative to provide support in this area.

Box E.1: Presidential Initiative—Reducing risks and impacts of climate-related disasters, such as greenhouse emissions, droughts and floods on communities and infrastructure

Goals

1. Adaptation priorities in all districts identified and prioritised and Climate Action Committees (composed of men, women and youth) established, providing data and information for early warning systems by 2030
2. By 2030, at least 30% of households are better able to cope with climate change impacts due to implementation of locally led and focussed adaption projects
3. Improved climate information system for local communities leading to at least 30% of households using the information in their climate risk management decisions by 2030
4. By 2030, climate action and climate governance is devolved to all 395 wards through mobilisation of resources for financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) Programme.
5. By 2030 ,at least households in urban areas recycling waste, especially plastics, through viable private sector led green investments

Specific actions

1. Build the capacity of communities to take ownership and participate in climate adaptation and mitigation interventions, adopt sustainable practices and climate-smart technologies.
2. Develop standards and guidelines for the sustainable management of forests
3. Develop Blue Economy policy/action plan for the development of holistic Blue Economy
4. Advocate for policies to protect coastal erosion, degradation and minimize landslides.
5. Support the integration of climate change adaptation strategies into the health sector
6. Conduct feasibility of sustainable waste collection and recycling in urban areas
7. Advocate for the construction of coastal sea walls especially along degraded sea fronts in Freetown.

Enabler 4: Gender mainstreaming

Having *gender mainstreaming* as Enabler 4 in the new MTNDP is based on empirical evidence that mainstreaming gender issues in development frameworks, laws and strategies would make a quick and positive turnaround in the lives of an entire populace. Achievements in gender mainstreaming during the implementation of Sierra Leone's previous plan indicate that the country has been on a trajectory towards reducing gender imbalances in the political, social and economic spheres of life. This is reflective of the country's commitment to several normative frameworks at international and regional levels, including the Sustainable Development Goals. As earlier mentioned in Part Two under human capital development and women's empowerment, the gender-narrowing institutional efforts in Sierra Leone have ranged from the promulgation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy 2020, to the National Male Involvement Strategy for the Prevention of Sexual Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone 2020, the National SGBV Response Strategy 2012-2023, National Referral Protocol on GBV 2022, and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022; which are all consistent with international instruments. **Tables E.5** presents some tangible results made to date in closing the gender gap in critical political and decision-making positions—progress in 2023 in **Table E.5** compared with 2018 in **Table E.6**.

Table E.5: Gender differentials in decision making in Sierra Leone 2023

Positions	Number of Observations			Percentage		
	Males	Females	Total	Females	Males	Total
Candidates Nominated as Chairpersons/ Mayors	79	28	107	26	74	100
Candidates Nominated as Councillors	1691	1034	2725	34	66	100
Candidates Nominated as MPs	590	299	889	34	66	100
Elected as Mayors / Chairpersons	19	13	32	41	59	100
Elected as Councillors	310	157	467	34	66	100
Elected as MPs (excluding PCMPs)	94	41	135	30	70	100
Elected as MPs (inclusive PCMPs)	107	42	149	28	72	100
Ambassadors/ High Commissioners	20	4	24	17	83	100
Dep. Ambassadors/ High Commissioners	21	3	24	12.5	87.5	100
Cabinet Ministers	19	10	29	34.5	65.5	100
Deputy Ministers	22	11	33	33	67	100

Source: Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs 2023

Table E.6: Gender differentials in decision making in Sierra Leone 2018

Position	Number of Observations			Percentage		
	Males	Females	Total	Females	Males	Total
Presidential Candidate	14	2	16	87.5	12.5	100
Vice-Presidential Candidate	12	4	16	75	25	100
Member of Parliament	128	18	146	87.6	12.3	100
Paramount Chief Member of Parliament	12	2	14	85.7	14.2	100
Mayor	5	2	7	71.4	28.5	100
Council Chairperson	20	1	21	95.2	4.7	100
Local Councillors	389	90	479	81.2	18.7	100
Cabinet Minister	20	5	25	80	20	100
Deputy Minister	20	5	25	80	20	100
Minister of State	3	2	5	60	40	100

Source: Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs 2018

While the country had made the foregoing laudable efforts in closing gender gap in strategic decision spheres, there are still critical **challenges**, as the state continues to remain widely gender unequal across levels. As a crucial Enabler in the delivery of GoSL's Big 5 Game Changers and the overall transformation of the economy of Sierra Leone, it is imperative that support for gender equality be scaled-up towards the country's 2030 Agenda and its determination to become a middle-income status by 2039. We draw from the general **lesson** that a nation can only achieve sustainable development if

it optimally integrates gender in all national development operations, at central, regional and local levels.

To this end, the strategic thrust of Enabler 4 on Gender Mainstreaming is pulled from the 13 specific policy areas outlined in *the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy 2020*, reproduced as follows:

1. Gender, education and training;
2. Gender, trade, employment, economic development and social protection;
3. Gender-based violence;
4. Gender, decision-making and political leadership;
5. Gender, health, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS;
6. Gender, the environment and disaster management;
7. Gender, media and access to Information and Communication Technology and Innovations;
8. Gender, disabilities and other forms of social inequities;
9. Gender, legal justice and human rights;
10. Gender, culture and family;
11. Gender, peace-building and conflict resolution;
12. Gender Responsive Macro Sector Formation Budgeting;
13. Building women's capacity, leadership and resilience to cope with humanitarian disasters.

The remaining critical challenges to closing gender gaps in the country suggest a great need to address these 13 policy areas. Consequently, these areas will inform the required coordinated actions in the MTNDP 2024-2030 with regard to defining the priority gender mainstreaming needs for closing the gender gaps in the next 7 years.

To ensure effective institutional coordination and follow-up on the delivery of specific strategies in these 13 areas, this list of areas has been further thematised into 6 broad policy action domains aligned to the 13 specific action blocks contained in the GEWE Policy **(see Table E.7)**. The 6 broad themes are listed as follows:

1. Gender Education, Economic Participation, Technology and Communication
2. Gender, Health, Living with Disability and SGBV
3. Gender and Governance
4. Gender Justice, Human Rights and Peace Building
5. Gender Mainstreaming into Policies, Programmes and Legal Frameworks
6. Gender and Environment

Table E.7: Policy themes and specific policy areas

Policy Themes	Specific Policy Areas
1. Gender Education, Economic Participation, Technology and Communication	1. Gender, Education and Training
	2. Gender, trade, employment, economic development and social protection
	3. Gender, media and access to Information and Communication Technology and Innovations
2. Gender, Health, Living with Disability and SGBV	4. Gender, health, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS
	5. Gender, disabilities and other forms of social inequities
	6. Gender-based violence
3. Gender and Governance	7. Gender, decision-making and political leadership
	8. Building women's capacity, leadership and resilience to cope with humanitarian disasters
4. Gender Justice, Human Rights and Peace Building	9. Gender, peace-building and conflict resolution;
	10. Gender, legal justice and human rights
	11. Gender, culture and family
5. Gender Mainstreaming into Policies, Programmes and Legal Frameworks	12. Gender Responsive Macro Sector Formation Budgeting
6. Gender and Environment	13. Gender, the environment and disaster management;

Strategic direction under the 6 broad policy themes: The following summarises the main strategic thrust under these themes derived from the GEWE Policy (Pages 22 & 23):

Gender Education, Economic Participation, Technology and Communication

1. Ensuring equal access to quality education by girls, boys, men and women by providing guidelines to diminish GBV and other discriminatory practices and policies in schools and in education in general by 2025;
2. Strengthening women's access to and control over productive resources to lessen poverty among women in Sierra Leone by 2025;
3. Promoting measures to improve women' s access to and leadership in information and communication technology and innovations by 2022

Gender, Health, Living with Disability and SGBV

1. Implement measures to ensure at least 60 per cent of women and adolescent girls, children and infants have access to health including sexual and reproductive health, cancer and HIV/AIDS by 2025;
2. Eliminate obstacles women and girls with disabilities and special needs face with regards

to equality and economic empowerment, by proposing practical transformative measures;

3. Harmonise relevant laws and strengthen implementation mechanisms to reduce the incidences of GBV in the country by at least 60 per cent by 2025

Gender and Governance

1. Ensuring active participation of women in political leadership and decision-making at all levels by 30 per cent minimum by 2022;
2. Ensuring effective mainstreaming of gender perspective in humanitarian disaster interventions.

Gender Justice, Human Rights and Peace Building

1. Enhance the participation in, and contribution of, Sierra Leonean women to peace-building and conflict resolution by implementing Resolutions 1325 and 1820 and SILNAP II;
2. Upholding women's and girls' human rights by implementing human rights protection mechanisms and strengthening women's access to justice;
3. Promoting equality in the family units and the upholding of women's rights in marriage, divorce and inheritance by strengthening the mechanisms that protect these rights

Gender Mainstreaming into Policies, Programmes and Legal Frameworks

1. Enhance the technical capacity of MDAs, Parliamentarians, Local Councils and the District Budgeting Oversight Committee to ensure that gender is Mainstreamed in sectoral policies, plans, laws, strategies and budgeting operations
2. Provide guidelines for public expenditures and meaningful allocation of public resources including to the Gender Ministry by institutionalizing gender responsive macro sector formation budgeting into all sectors and levels;
3. Establish/strengthen gender focal points/Gender Desks in MDAs and Local Councils.

Gender and Environment

1. Review and/or implement guidelines to increase women's active and effective participation in environmental activities
2. Strengthen women's role in disaster management initiatives

In addition to having the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy and Legislation, an additional **opportunity** to leverage going forward in narrowing the gender gap in development is the existence of the Radical Inclusion Policy in education, the Comprehensive Sexuality Education, the Free Quality School Education Programme with a School Feeding Component, and the Basic Education Act 2023; which if continuously implemented will deliver desired outcome in the strife for gender equality in the country towards the advancement of human capital development, the other Big 5 policy areas and in the overall development of the country.

Strategic objective

The strategic objective is to ensure effective mainstreaming of gender into national, sectoral and local policies, plans, budgets and programmes in order to significantly narrow gender inequality.

Key targets

1. By 2028, women constitute at least 30 percent of the membership in parliament, and in ministerial position, local council mayoral and chairperson positions
2. By 2025, Gender Units are established in all line ministries
3. By 2025, Gender-Based Violence Information Management Systems Plus (GBVIMS+) is rolled-out across the 16 districts of Sierra Leone

Key policy actions

On direct implementation of the GEWE Policy

1. Scale up actions in promoting gender equality in education, economic participation, technology and Communication
2. Improve efforts at narrowing gender gaps in accessing health services and providing welfare for PWDs
3. Scale up interventions in addressing SGBV
4. Consolidate and promote initiatives narrowing gender inequality on socioeconomic and political governance
5. Accelerate actions in addressing gender gaps in the dispensation of justice and human Rights and ensuring the effective participation of women as well as men in advancing peacebuilding
6. Ensure effectiveness in gender mainstreaming in policy, planning, programming/budgeting processes; and enhancing gender sensitivity in all legal frameworks
7. Strengthen gender disaggregated data in the national and sectoral statistical systems
8. Increase gender considerations in addressing climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.

On institutional strengthening for effective delivery of GEWE Policy

9. Strengthen the technical, financial, administrative and functional capacity in the MGCA
10. Provide support for the Gender Unit in the line MDAs for effective mainstreaming of Gender in sectoral planning and financial frameworks
11. Ensure effective institutional coordination on gender-related issues in the country
12. Strengthen monitoring and reporting systems in the MGCA
13. Ensure regular tracking and reporting on the implementation of the GEWE Policy
14. Scale up public communication and education on the GEWE Policy and Act.

Enabler 5: Financing, partnerships for implementation and risks management

The world faces immense challenges, and due to the interconnectivity of various parts of the world, these challenges are felt right across all nations, with the hardest hit being LDCs like Sierra Leone. Indeed, the crises has widened the financing gaps for all nations. At the global level, SDG financing has risen from $2.5 trillion before the COVID-19, to more than $ 6 trillion to date. Thus, financing and implementation would be particularly dauting for weak states like Sierra Leone. Against this background, among the key principles guiding implementation of the plan will be exploration of innovative means of financing the new plan 2024-2030, ensuring strengthened PFM systems, enhancing development cooperation, and scaling up sectoral coordination, coherence and alignment of multistakeholder operations with the National Development Plan, while linking the national plan more strongly to international development frameworks.

This chapter is accordingly organised as follows. It starts by presenting the overall cost of the new plan and financing gap. It presents a realistic gap calculated out of what is realistically needed across the various planned sectors and what is forecast as expected cash inflows within the Government multiyear budget system. Projects considered in the activity matrix are those for which there is foreseeable cash streams and with bankable financing proposals. A financing strategy is then discussed, capturing innovative financing approach with the framework of a scaled-up implementation of the Sierra Leone Integrated National Financing Framework. This is followed by a well-articulated implementation coordination arrangement, linking national, subnational and development partners' role in the implementation, including all the relevant stakeholders that participated in the plan preparation process. Next is an articulation of the monitoring and evaluation requirement, including performance management and service delivery mechanisms necessary for maximising value for money and development results. The role of statistics, data collection and development communications is discussed thereafter, before presenting a highlight of identified risks to implementation and risk mitigation measures, and then conclude the plan.

5.1 Cost of the plan and financing gap

The total projected cost of the seven-year New MTNDP 2024-2030 is US$12.05 billion. Of this amount, the sum of US$6.62 billion represents direct project-related costs, while the sum of US$5.43 billion represents the government's statutory expenditures to support project implementation (see Table E.5.1). The government has projected to raise US$9.49 billion from both internal and already committed external resources, leaving a total financing gap of US$2.56 billion for seven years (a US$ 366 million average annual gap), for which new money will be sought to fully finance the New National Development Plan. The US$ 366 million annual gap for the new plan compares very well with the annual gap of US$310 million for the previous five-year plan that had a total gap of US$1.55 billion. Essentially, the new plan is highly realistic of the need to ensure increased prudence in the management of state resources in the next seven years, given the challenging fiscal situation that both global and national economies will continue to encounter. The Government will implement a robust integrated national financing framework to mobilise the needed resources, including innovative, climate and blended financing.

Tables E.5.2 to E.5.4 present the Government's projected available resources for non-salary, non-interest recurrent expenditure, and domestic and foreign development estimates (capital projects spending).

Table E.5.1: Cost of the National Development Plan 2024–2030 (US$m)

No	Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
5.1	**Feed Salone**	**242.19**	**262.94**	**276.69**	**281.47**	**283.92**	**282.94**	**281.01**	**1,911.17**
	Accelerating productivity and commercialisation of the agricultural sector	233.16	252.99	266.19	270.79	273.57	272.48	270.49	**1,839.66**
	Accelerating productivity and sustainable management of fisheries and the marine sector	8.61	9.44	9.89	9.97	9.68	9.82	9.87	**67.29**
	Availability, access and consumption of diverse, safe and nutritious foods	0.41	0.52	0.62	0.71	0.67	0.64	0.65	**4.22**
5.2	**Human Capital Development**	**191.11**	**206.80**	**226.18**	**237.62**	**247.76**	**254.65**	**262.57**	**1,626.68**
	Accelerating and expanding free quality basic and senior secondary education	35.54	43.70	48.00	48.62	50.84	50.85	52.45	**329.99**
	Strengthening Tertiary and higher education	20.17	18.90	34.60	36.55	37.94	39.00	39.78	**226.95**
	Improving health care delivery	36.75	48.21	60.69	64.65	67.14	68.94	70.30	**416.68**
	Ending AIDS and TB by 2030	0.36	0.44	0.48	0.55	0.57	0.59	0.60	**3.60**
	Water, environmental sanitation, waste management and hygiene	88.45	85.84	72.61	76.87	80.58	84.30	88.26	**576.92**
	Women's Empowerment	1.28	1.37	1.45	1.47	1.53	1.57	1.60	**10.27**
	Children, the Aged and Disability Welfare	0.83	0.84	0.81	0.82	0.77	0.80	0.81	**5.69**
	Social protection	6.10	5.70	5.66	6.12	6.35	6.50	6.62	**43.05**
	Land, Housing and Urbanisation	1.64	1.79	1.87	1.96	2.04	2.10	2.14	**13.55**
5.3	**Youth Empowerment Scheme**	**12.32**	**14.40**	**16.32**	**18.26**	**16.70**	**16.75**	**17.04**	**111.79**
	General employment promotion for youth	0.95	1.04	1.05	1.14	1.19	1.24	1.29	**7.89**
	Addressing irregular migration	0.09	0.11	0.14	0.18	0.13	0.10	0.08	**0.83**

No	Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
	Resolving barriers to youth employment	0.15	0.20	0.26	0.30	0.25	0.22	0.19	**1.56**
	Employment across the Government's Big Five Game Changers	3.18	4.04	5.08	6.35	4.42	4.00	3.79	**30.86**
	Sports for youth empowerment and socioeconomic development	7.95	9.01	9.78	10.30	10.71	11.19	11.70	**70.64**
5.4	**Infrastructure, Technology and Innovation**	**110.50**	**116.15**	**120.05**	**126.33**	**131.52**	**135.37**	**141.40**	**881.32**
	Energy	59.44	61.12	64.39	67.25	69.88	71.30	74.74	**468.11**
	Road and Transportation systems	50.12	53.99	54.56	57.93	60.44	62.81	65.34	**405.18**
	Technology and innovation	0.95	1.04	1.10	1.15	1.20	1.26	1.33	**8.03**
5.5	**Transforming Public Service Architecture**	**2.32**	**2.70**	**2.96**	**3.19**	**3.10**	**3.06**	**3.06**	**30.59**
	Structural alignment and rationalization of mandates	0.10	0.20	0.10	0.30	0.40	0.10	0.20	**1.40**
	Human resource management / manpower strengthening	2.00	1.50	1.20	1.60	0.50	0.90	1.10	**8.80**
	Public sector coordination and management	1.69	2.13	2.49	2.70	2.58	2.52	2.50	**16.61**
	Monitoring, evaluation and performance management in the Public Service	0.63	0.57	0.47	0.50	0.52	0.54	0.56	**3.78**
E I	**Diversifying the Economy and Promoting Growth**	**19.67**	**22.44**	**22.59**	**23.46**	**24.24**	**24.85**	**24.88**	**162.14**
	Transforming the tourism sector	9.54	9.39	8.52	8.76	9.03	9.18	8.72	**40.79**
	Strengthening private sector for trade and sustainable development	4.15	6.06	6.48	6.68	6.81	6.94	7.10	**44.23**
	Value addition and efficient management of natural resources	4.38	5.48	6.21	6.51	6.84	7.12	7.39	**66.28**
	Financial inclusion for strengthened rural and informal economies	1.59	1.51	1.39	1.50	1.56	1.61	1.67	**10.84**

No	Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
E2	**Governance and Accountability**	**118.51**	**139.20**	**158.98**	**166.56**	**174.03**	**182.33**	**191.13**	**1,130.74**
	Political modernization for consolidating peace and national cohesion	106.26	127.58	148.22	155.68	163.28	171.35	179.86	**1,052.24**
	Strengthening the fight against corruption and illicit financial flows	0.13	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.12	**0.76**
	Public financial management	1.08	0.99	0.82	0.86	0.91	0.95	1.00	**6.62**
	Audit services	1.46	1.34	1.11	1.16	1.22	1.28	1.34	**8.91**
	Inclusive and accountable justice institutions	0.20	0.26	0.29	0.27	0.27	0.32	0.38	**2.00**
	Public trust in state institutions	0.80	0.75	0.65	0.63	0.65	0.69	0.72	**4.89**
	Decentralisation, local governance, and rural development	0.33	0.31	0.25	0.27	0.28	0.29	0.31	**2.04**
	Security institutions	8.25	7.85	7.54	7.59	7.31	7.35	7.40	**53.29**
E3	**Advancing Climate Resilience and Environmental Action**	**35.68**	**35.73**	**33.28**	**34.93**	**36.52**	**38.16**	**39.84**	**254.13**
	Building National Environmental Resilience	4.25	5.43	6.29	6.58	6.76	6.93	7.06	**43.29**
	Forestry management and wetland conservation	31.31	30.09	26.77	28.11	29.52	30.99	32.54	**209.33**
	Disaster management and governance	0.12	0.21	0.22	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.23	**1.50**
E4	**Gender Mainstreaming**	**1.2**	**1.42**	**1.7**	**1.81**	**1.8**	**1.7**	**0.73**	**10.36**
	Support the full implementation of the GEWE Policy and programmes	1.00	1.30	1.50	1.70	1.60	1.40	0.60	**9.10**
	Strengthening institutional and coordination capacity of the Gender sector	0.20	0.12	0.20	0.11	0.20	0.30	0.13	**1.26**
E5	**Financing, partnership, implementation & risk management**	54.42	62.93	69.69	72.15	75.38	78.77	82.65	**495.99**

No	Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
	Coordinating implementation of the Plan.	2.53	3.58	3.61	3.27	3.07	2.86	2.95	**21.87**
	Resource mobilization and fiscal management	34.37	43.05	50.95	53.54	56.21	59.01	61.95	**359.09**
	Strengthening statistical systems	17.43	16.22	15.07	15.27	16.03	16.83	17.67	**114.53**
	Monitoring and evaluation, performance management and service delivery	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.08	**0.51**
Total Direct Project Related Cost									**6,615**
Add (Government's Statutory Expenditures							**5,343.46**		
Wages and Salaries							3,472.87		
Debt Service Obligations							1,709.96		
Contingency and others							251.63		
Grand-total National Development Plan							**12,049**		
Less (Projected Available Resources)							9,486.01		
Financing Gap							-2,563		

Table E.5.2: Non-salary, non-interest recurrent budget estimates of the Government of Sierra Leone (US$m)

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Non-Salary, Non-interest recurrent budget estimastes (Goods and Services)	**255.23**	**303.12**	**353.77**	**371.29**	**389.15**	**407.06**	**425.37**	**2,504.98**
Feed Salone	**9.58**	**11.39**	**13.64**	**14.32**	**14.89**	**15.34**	**15.64**	**94.79**
Accelerating productivity and commercialisation of the agricultural sector	5.78	6.97	8.47	8.90	9.25	9.53	9.72	**58.62**
Accelerating productivity and sustainable management of fisheries and the marine sector	3.79	4.42	5.16	5.42	5.64	5.81	5.92	**36.17**
Availability, access and consumption of diverse, safe and nutritious foods	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Human Capital Development	**32.61**	**38.73**	**45.59**	**47.87**	**49.78**	**51.28**	**52.30**	**318.16**
Accelerating and expanding free quality basic and senior secondary education	7.63	9.09	10.59	11.12	11.57	11.91	12.15	**74.07**
Strengthening Tertiary and higher education	8.37	9.86	11.50	12.08	12.56	12.94	13.20	**80.51**
Improving health care delivery	11.43	13.97	16.24	17.05	17.73	18.26	18.63	**113.30**
Ending AIDS and TB by 2030	0.12	0.15	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.19	0.19	**1.18**
Water, environmental sanitation, waste management and hygiene	2.18	2.56	2.99	3.14	3.27	3.37	3.43	**20.96**
Women's Empowerment	0.63	0.75	0.88	0.92	0.96	0.99	1.01	**6.13**
Children, the Aged and Disability Welfare	0.16	0.19	0.22	0.23	0.24	0.25	0.26	**1.55**
Social protection	1.11	0.95	1.59	1.66	1.73	1.78	1.82	**10.64**
Land, Housing and Urbanisation	0.99	1.21	1.41	1.48	1.54	1.58	1.62	**9.82**
Youth Empowerment Scheme	**5.65**	**6.91**	**8.04**	**8.44**	**8.86**	**9.30**	**9.77**	**56.97**

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
General employment promotion for youth	0.29	0.36	0.42	0.44	0.46	0.48	0.51	**2.96**
Addressing irregular migration	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Resolving barriers to youth employment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Employment across the Government's Big Five Game Changers	0.64	0.79	0.92	0.96	1.01	1.06	1.12	**6.51**
Sports for youth empowerment and socioeconomic development	4.71	5.76	6.70	7.04	7.39	7.76	8.15	**47.50**
Infrastructure, Technology and Innovation	**59.91**	**65.59**	**74.00**	**77.53**	**81.33**	**85.14**	**89.35**	**532.84**
Energy	37.79	39.61	43.68	45.70	47.90	50.05	52.50	**317.2**
Road and Transportation systems	21.57	25.31	29.55	31.02	32.57	34.20	35.91	**210.1**
Technology and innovation	0.54	0.66	0.77	0.81	0.85	0.89	0.94	**5.5**
Transforming Public Service Architecture	**1.17**	**1.44**	**1.67**	**1.75**	**1.84**	**1.93**	**2.03**	**11.81**
Ministry of Public Administration and Political Affairs	0.31	0.38	0.44	0.46	0.48	0.51	0.53	**3.10**
Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU)	0.14	0.17	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.23	**1.37**
Cabinet Secretariat	0.27	0.33	0.38	0.40	0.42	0.44	0.46	**2.70**
Human Resource Management Office	0.21	0.26	0.30	0.32	0.33	0.35	0.37	**2.15**
Public Service Commission	0.18	0.22	0.25	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.30	**1.78**
Wages and Compensation Commission	0.07	0.09	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.12	**0.72**

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Enabler 1: Diversifying the Economy and Promoting Growth	**6.77**	**8.21**	**9.55**	**10.02**	**10.52**	**11.05**	**11.60**	**67.73**
Transforming the tourism sector	0.94	1.16	1.35	1.41	1.49	1.56	1.64	**9.55**
Strengthening private sector for trade and sustainable development	1.94	2.39	2.78	2.92	3.06	3.22	3.38	**19.68**
Value addition and efficient management of natural resources	3.88	4.65	5.42	5.69	5.98	6.28	6.59	**38.49**
Financial inclusion for strengthened rural and informal economies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enabler 2: Governance and Accountability	**106.05**	**127.33**	**147.92**	**155.32**	**163.09**	**171.24**	**179.80**	**1,050.75**
Political modernization for consolidating peace and national cohesion	106.05	127.33	147.92	155.32	163.09	171.24	179.80	**1,050.75**
Strengthening the fight against corruption and illicit financial flows	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public financial management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Audit services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Inclusive and accountable justice institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public trust in state institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Decentralisation, local governance, and rural development	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Security institutions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enabler 3: Advancing Climate Resilience and Environmental Action	**4.04**	**4.72**	**5.51**	**5.79**	**6.08**	**6.38**	**6.70**	**39.22**
Building National Environmental Resilience	3.53	4.12	4.81	5.05	5.30	5.57	5.84	**34.21**

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Forestry management and wetland conservation	0.51	0.60	0.70	0.74	0.78	0.81	0.86	**5.00**
Disaster management and governance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Enabler 4: Financing, partnership, implementation & risk management	**29.45**	**38.82**	**47.86**	**50.25**	**52.76**	**55.40**	**58.17**	**332.71**
Coordinating implementation of the Plan.	0.66	0.81	0.94	0.99	1.04	1.09	1.14	**6.66**
Resource mobilization and fiscal management	28.46	37.61	46.44	48.77	51.21	53.77	56.45	**322.71**
Strengthening statistical systems	0.33	0.41	0.47	0.50	0.52	0.55	0.57	**3.34**
Monitoring and evaluation, performance management and service delivery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**

Table E.5.3: Foreign development estimates of Government of Sierra Leone (US$m)

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
	134 .31	159.20	200.10	210.37	219.07	226.23	231.77	1,381.05
Feed Salone	**70.11**	**90.02**	**109.88**	**115.37**	**119.99**	**123.59**	**126.06**	**755.01**
Accelerating productivity and commercialisation of the agricultural sector	69.33	89.33	109.33	114.79	119.39	122.97	125.43	**750.56**
Accelerating productivity and sustainable management of fisheries and the marine sector	0.70	0.63	0.50	0.53	0.55	0.56	0.57	**4.04**
Availability, access and consumption of diverse, safe and nutritious foods	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06	**0.40**
Human Capital Development	**28.77**	**35.56**	**60.85**	**64.16**	**66.70**	**68.64**	**70.01**	**394.70**
Accelerating and expanding free quality basic and senior secondary education	4.88	6.05	7.15	7.51	7.81	8.04	8.20	**49.63**
Strengthening Tertiary and higher education	6.31	3.31	17.61	18.49	19.23	19.80	20.20	**104.93**
Improving health care delivery	12.76	21.83	32.53	34.38	35.73	36.74	37.47	**211.44**
Ending AIDS and TB by 2030	0.24	0.30	0.31	0.38	0.39	0.40	0.41	**2.42**
Water, environmental sanitation, waste management and hygiene								-
Women's Empowerment								-
Children, the Aged and Disability Welfare								-

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Social protection	3.93	3.50	2.79	2.93	3.05	3.14	3.20	**22.55**
Land, Housing and Urbanisation	0.65	0.58	0.46	0.48	0.50	0.52	0.53	**3.72**
Youth Empowerment Scheme								
General employment promotion for youth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Addressing irregular migration	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Resolving barriers to youth employment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Employment across the Government's Big Five Game Changers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sports for youth empowerment and socioeconomic development	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Infrastructure, Technology and Innovation	**0.95**	**0.85**	**0.68**	**0.71**	**0.75**	**0.79**	**0.83**	**5.56**
Energy	0.67	0.60	0.48	0.51	0.53	0.56	0.59	**3.94**
Road and Transportation systems	0.28	0.25	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.23	0.24	**1.62**
Technology and innovation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transforming Public Service Architecture								
								-
Diversifying the Economy and Promoting Growth	**0.70**	**0.62**	**0.50**	**0.52**	**0.55**	**0.58**	**0.61**	**4.07**
Transforming the tourism sector	0.39	0.34	0.27	0.29	0.30	0.32	0.33	**2.24**

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Strengthening private sector for trade and sustainable development	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Value addition and efficient management of natural resources	0.31	0.28	0.23	0.24	0.25	0.26	0.27	**1.84**
Financial inclusion for strengthened rural and informal economies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Governance and Accountability								
								-
Advancing Climate Resilience and Environmental Action	**30.33**	**29.05**	**25.71**	**26.99**	**28.34**	**29.76**	**31.25**	**201.42**
Building National Environmental Resilience	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Forestry management and wetland conservation	30.33	29.05	25.71	26.99	28.34	29.76	31.25	**201.42**
Disaster management and governance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Financing, partnership, implementation & risk management	**3.47**	**3.10**	**2.48**	**2.61**	**2.74**	**2.88**	**3.02**	**20.29**
Coordinating implementation of the Plan.								-
Resource mobilization and fiscal management	2.35	2.10	1.69	1.77	1.86	1.96	2.05	13.79
Strengthening statistical systems	1.12	1.00	0.79	0.83	0.88	0.92	0.96	6.51
Monitoring and evaluation, performance management and service delivery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table E.5.4: Domestic development estimates of Government of Sierra Leone (US$m)

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Total	**389.14**	**393.49**	**366.37**	**329.18**	**378.17**	**376.68**	**379.31**	**2,612.33**
Feed Salone	**162.57**	**161.60**	**153.23**	**151.84**	**149.10**	**144.07**	**139.36**	**1,061.77**
Accelerating productivity and commercialisation of the agricultural sector	158.05	156.69	148.39	147.10	144.93	139.98	135.34	**1,030.48**
Accelerating productivity and sustainable management of fisheries and the marine sector	4.11	4.39	4.22	4.02	3.50	3.45	3.37	**27.08**
Availability, access and consumption of diverse, safe and nutritious foods	0.41	0.52	0.62	0.71	0.67	0.64	0.65	**4.22**
Human Capital Development	**129.74**	**132.51**	**119.73**	**125.59**	**131.28**	**134.73**	**140.25**	**913.83**
Accelerating and expanding free quality basic and senior secondary education	23.03	28.56	30.26	29.99	31.47	30.89	32.10	**206.30**
Strengthening Tertiary and higher education	5.49	5.73	5.49	5.99	6.15	6.26	6.38	**41.50**
Improving health care delivery	12.56	12.42	11.92	13.22	13.68	13.94	14.20	**91.94**
Ending AIDS and TB by 2030	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	**0.00**
Water, environmental sanitation, waste management and hygiene	86.27	83.28	69.62	73.73	77.31	80.94	84.82	**555.96**
Women's Empowerment	0.49	0.43	0.35	0.32	0.33	0.33	0.34	**2.59**
Children, the Aged and Disability Welfare	0.83	0.84	0.81	0.82	0.77	0.80	0.81	**5.69**
Social protection	1.06	1.25	1.28	1.52	1.57	1.57	1.60	**9.85**
Land, Housing and Urbanisation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	**0.00**

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Youth Empowerment Scheme	**6.67**	**7.48**	**8.28**	**9.82**	**7.84**	**7.44**	**7.27**	**54.81**
General employment promotion for youth	0.66	0.68	0.63	0.70	0.73	0.75	0.78	**4.93**
Addressing irregular migration	0.09	0.11	0.14	0.18	0.13	0.10	0.08	**0.83**
Resolving barriers to youth employment	0.15	0.20	0.26	0.30	0.25	0.22	0.19	**1.56**
Employment across the Government's Big Five Game Changers	2.54	3.25	4.16	5.38	3.41	2.94	2.67	**24.35**
Sports for youth empowerment and socioeconomic development	3.24	3.24	3.08	3.27	3.32	3.43	3.55	**23.13**
Infrastructure, Technology and Innovation	**49.74**	**49.83**	**45.49**	**1.93**	**49.55**	**49.52**	**51.28**	**297.33**
Energy	20.97	20.90	20.22	0.95	21.44	20.70	21.65	**126.84**
Road and Transportation systems	28.27	28.44	24.82	0.50	27.64	28.37	29.18	**167.21**
Technology and innovation	0.50	0.49	0.45	0.49	0.46	0.45	0.45	**3.28**
Transforming Public Service Architecture	**1.15**	**1.26**	**1.29**	**1.44**	**1.27**	**1.13**	**1.03**	**8.58**
General Public Service	0.53	0.69	0.82	0.95	0.75	0.59	0.47	**4.80**
Foreign and diplomatic service	0.63	0.57	0.47	0.50	0.52	0.54	0.56	**3.78**
Diversifying the Economy and Promoting Growth	**8.73**	**10.53**	**10.09**	**10.33**	**10.46**	**10.39**	**9.69**	**70.23**
Transforming the tourism sector	4.75	4.80	4.44	4.48	4.54	4.46	3.77	**31.25**
Strengthening private sector for trade and sustainable development	2.21	3.67	3.70	3.77	3.75	3.72	3.73	**24.54**

Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Value addition and efficient management of natural resources	0.18	0.55	0.56	0.58	0.61	0.58	0.53	**3.60**
Financial inclusion for strengthened rural and informal economies	1.59	1.51	1.39	1.50	1.56	1.61	1.67	**10.84**
Governance and Accountability	**12.46**	**11.30**	**10.58**	**10.75**	**10.42**	**10.55**	**10.75**	**76.80**
Political modernization for consolidating peace and national cohesion	0.21	0.25	0.30	0.36	0.20	0.11	0.06	**1.49**
Strengthening legislations, policies, & practice in fighting corruption & illicit financial flows	0.13	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.12	**0.76**
Public financial management	1.08	0.99	0.82	0.86	0.91	0.95	1.00	**6.62**
Audit services	1.46	1.34	1.11	1.16	1.22	1.28	1.34	**8.91**
Inclusive and accountable justice institutions	0.20	0.26	0.29	0.27	0.27	0.32	0.38	**2.00**
Public trust in state institutions	0.80	0.18	0.17	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.14	**1.70**
Decentralisation, local governance, and rural development	0.33	0.31	0.25	0.27	0.28	0.29	0.31	**2.04**
Security institutions	8.25	7.85	7.54	7.59	7.31	7.35	7.40	**53.29**
Advancing Climate Resilience and Environmental Action	**1.31**	**2.11**	**2.18**	**2.28**	**2.23**	**2.16**	**2.04**	**14.30**
Building National Environmental Resilience	0.72	1.46	1.60	1.66	1.59	1.50	1.37	**9.89**
Forestry management and wetland conservation	0.48	0.44	0.36	0.38	0.40	0.42	0.44	**2.91**
Disaster management and governance	0.12	0.21	0.22	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.23	**1.50**
Financing, partnership, implementation & risk management	**21.50**	**21.01**	**19.35**	**19.29**	**19.88**	**20.50**	**21.46**	**142.99**

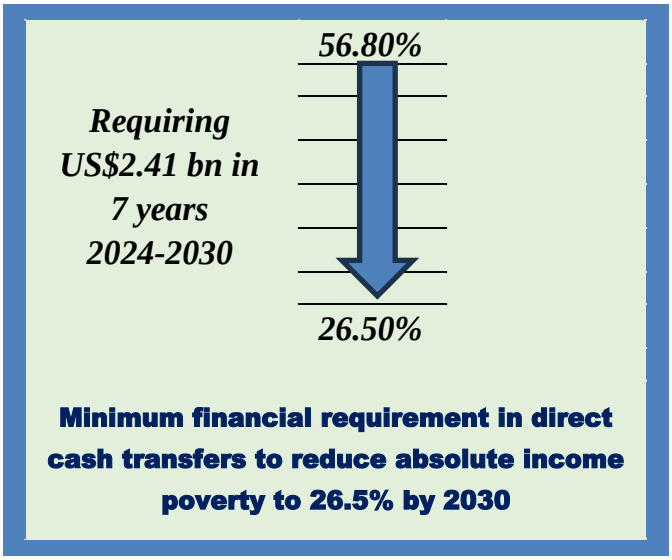
Strategic Programme Areas	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Coordinating implementation of the Plan.	1.87	2.78	2.67	2.28	2.03	1.77	1.81	**15.21**
Resource mobilization and fiscal management	3.56	3.34	2.82	3.00	3.15	3.29	3.44	**22.59**
Strengthening statistical systems	15.98	14.82	13.80	13.94	14.64	15.37	16.14	**104.68**
Monitoring and evaluation, performance management and service delivery	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.08	**0.51**

5.2 Financing requirements for specific high-level interventions

This section provides forecasts of minimum financial investment requirements for achieving the National Goals of the plan by 2030 in specific broad interventions, including reduction of national income poverty to at most 26.5 percent and achieving zero extreme poverty (total elimination of severe food insecurity) in the country. We will present forecasts of:

1. Minimum yearly financial needs in direct cash transfers required to close **absolute income poverty gap** and eliminate **extreme poverty/food insecurity** for the period 2024-2030;
2. Total investment in **energy** required to increase population access to electricity from 36 to 70 percent by 2030;
3. Projected benefits from mobilising the **Blue Economy Potential** of Sierra Leone and current minimum financial investment in critical areas required to scale-up the harnessing of benefit from the Blue Economy;
4. Projected **climate resilience energy** requirement (renewables) for Sierra Leone to meet all 17 SDGs by 2030;
5. Infrastructural demand for effective implementation of the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**; projected Sierra Leone's investment contribution required to maximise benefits from trade in the country and Africa as a whole by 2030.

A). Minimum annual financial requirement in direct cash transfers towards reducing absolute (food + nonfood) income poverty to at most 26.5 percent from 56.8 percent; and elimination of extreme poverty/severe food insecurity from 12.9 percent by 2030—estimated at NLe8.2 billion ($344 million) to close absolute poverty gap; NLe258 million ($11 million) to eliminate severe food insecurity/extreme poverty; total amount for the 7-year period is at least $2.41 billion., and $77 million, respectively.



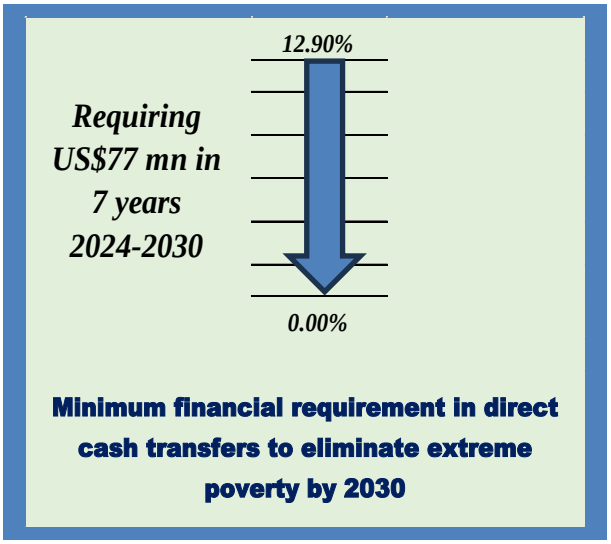
Cash transfers for closing absolute income poverty gap: The current absolute income poverty headcount (the proportion of people living below the absolute income poverty line) in Sierra Leone remains at 56.8 percent, as estimated based on the last Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) 2018. The associated poverty gap for this is 18 percent, given an absolute poverty line at current prices of NLe 10,598.14 per year.[59] Given these estimates, the yearly minimum direct cash transfers to income deprived persons necessary to keep them out of income poverty during

[59] At time of calculating the last poverty indices (from SLIHS2018), income poverty line per day in US$ was 1.22; which would go up to US$ 445.3 per year. The current market exchange rate at the time of these calibration on 15/11/23 was Le 23,800/US$. Thus, in absolute terms, the poverty line per year at current market exchange rate is Le 23,800*445.3 = Le 10,595,140.

2024-2030 is projected at about NLe8.2 billion (or $344 million)—the total amount for the 7-year period is at least $2.41 billion.

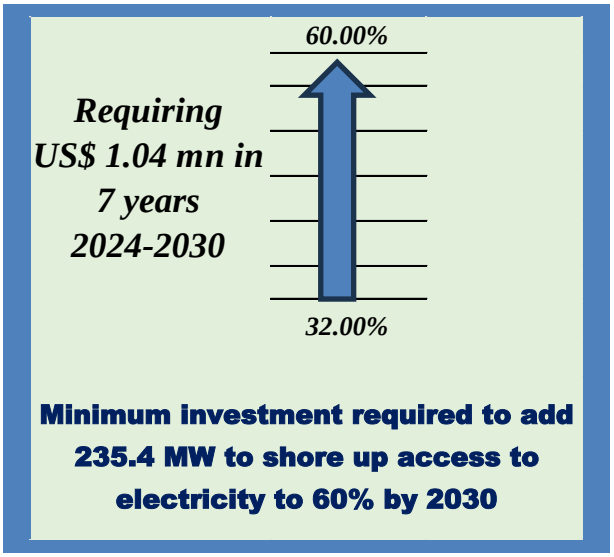
Cash transfers for closing extreme income poverty gap/eliminating severe food insecurity: The current extreme income poverty headcount (the proportion of people living below the food income poverty line) in Sierra Leone remains at 12.9 percent, as estimated based on the last SLIHS2018. The associated poverty gap for this is 2.5 percent, given a food poverty line at current prices of NLe 6,321.88 per year.[60] Given these estimates, the yearly minimum direct cash transfers to give to food deprived persons necessary to keep them out of extreme poverty/food insecurity during 2024-2030 is projected at about NLe258 million ($11 million)—the total amount for the 7-year period is at least $77 million.

These financial projections assume that there would be ***effective targeting*** of the income and food deprived households for these transfers to yield desired results—noting that, these expenditures do not include general transaction costs/investments, including administrative and logistical spending requirements.



B). Additional investment in energy (installed capacity) required to increase population access to electricity from 32 to 60 percent by 2030 is estimated at 235.4 MW, amounting to NLe25 billion ($ 1.042 billion)[61]

Based on energy needs modelling done by the Planning Unit of the Ministry of Energy in Sierra Leone, to increase population access to electricity from 32 percent in 2021 to 60 percent by 2030 will require an installed capacity increase from (150-350) MW to about (385-585) MW, adding a total amount of energy of 235.4 MW to the current capacity. Accordingly, the projected investment required to add the 235.4 MW necessary to shore up access to 60 percent by 2030 is NLe25 billion ($ 1.042 billion).



C) Projected benefits from mobilising the Blue Economy potential of Sierra Leone and the current minimum financial investment required in critical areas to maximise benefit from the Blue Economy up to 2030: $193

Blue Economy is about "increasing human well-being through the sustainable development of ocean resources, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities." It has diverse

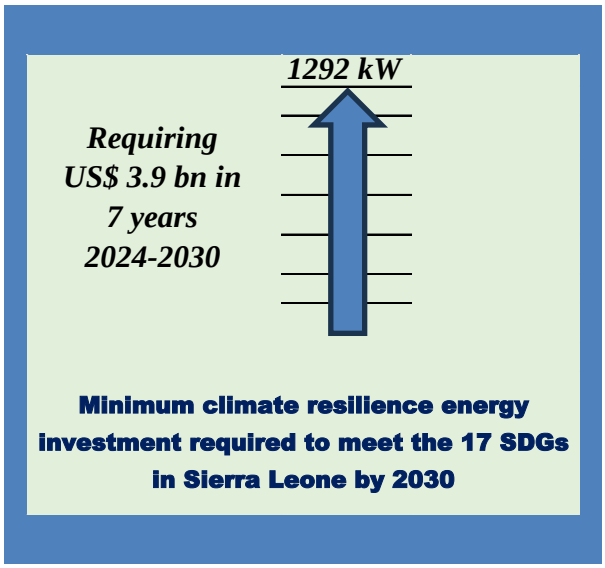
[60] Calibrations are similar to the ones in the last footnote, using the same data from SLIHS2018.

[61] The target level of access of 70 percent by 2030 is set by the Ministry of Energy.

beneficial components, including traditional industries (fisheries, tourism, and maritime transport), and new and emerging activities (offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, seabed extractive activities, and marine biotechnology and bioprospecting). Africa Blue Economy and its components are estimated to have generated $ 296 billion in income to date, with 49 million jobs, reference to the 2012 Rio + 20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, when the idea of the Blue Economy first came up. This is projected to go up to $405 billion and 57 million jobs by 2030. Therefore, all nations with great Blue Economy potential, like Sierra Leone (with more than 500 km coastline), among coastal and island states, are advised to develop a national framework for implementation of initiatives in this direction. Accordingly, Sierra Leone has put together a Blue Economy Strategy with an Action Plan with a minimum investment cost of ***$ 193 million*** during 2024-2030 for undertaking basic operations towards harnessing the bountiful growth, revenue and job potential for meeting the National Goals of GoSL's Big 5 Agenda by 2030. The current investment areas covering these basic operations relate to the following:

i. Promoting food security and economic diversification
ii. Strengthening marine transportation, port, and shipping
iii. Ensuring healthy, productive and sustainable aquatic environment
iv. Advancing maritime surveillance, security and enforcement
v. Exploring blue energy, mineral resources and innovative financing
vi. Supporting blue governance, science, technology and research

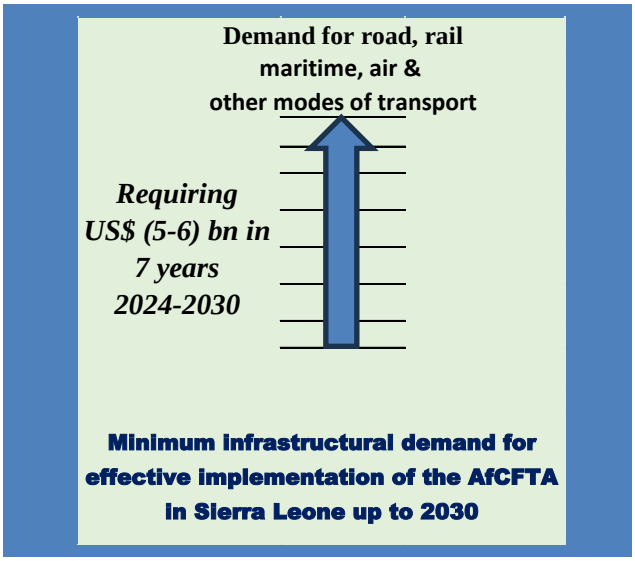
D) Climate resilience energy requirement (renewables) for Africa to meet all 17 SDGs by 2030 is estimated at 250 GW (250,000 MW); the Sierra Leone requirement based on these estimates is about 1.3 GW (1,292 MW; 1,292,000 kW)—minimum financial requirement of $ 3.9 billion



At African level, in order to achieve all 17 SDGs by 2030, an estimated quantity of 250 GW (an equivalent of 250,000 MW) is required by the continent. Given a total African population of about 1.46 billion, currently, the per capita renewable energy requirement in the continent can be estimated at 0.00017 MW. Based on this estimate, the total quaintly required for Sierra Leone to meet the SDGs by 2030 can be projected at 1,292 MW, based on a national population estimate of 7,548,702 from the 2021 country Mid-Term Census. At an estimated unit investment cost of $2,985 per kW ($ 2,984,880 per MW), the projected investment for meeting standard renewable needs of the country to meets the SDGs and hence the National Goals of the new National Development Plan by 2030 can be estimated **at $3.9 billion**—these projections draw from unit cost estimates at African level for Wind Onshore, Solar PV, Hydro Large, Hydro Small and Geothermal/Conventional technologies.[62]

[62] Calibrations were done based on a presentation by Mekalia Paulos Aklilu on *Energy Transition in the face of Climate Change in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges*; Meeting of Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and

***E) Infrastructural demand for effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); projected Sierra Leone's investment contribution to maximise benefits from trade in the country and Africa as a whole is estimated at* $(670-880) million annually, $(5-6) billion for the seven-year period 2024-2030**



Expected to create a continental market of about 1.4 billion people, the AfCFTA is expected to generate a combined GDP of about $3.4 trillion in full gear, "making it the largest free trade area in the world since the establishment of the World Trade Organization." By 2035, it is expected to increase Africa's income by $450 billion, and Sierra Leone should not be left out in all of these benefits. However, the infrastructural demand for the free trade area to yield expected benefits for all countries is huge, *in road, rail, maritime, air* and *in all modes of transport*. It is projected at continental level that between $ (130&170) billion is required in infrastructural financing annually to maximise benefits from AfCFTA, while the current financing only hovers around $ (68-108) billion. The projected per capita investment cost is $(90-117) annually. Based on Sierra Leone's current population of 7,548,702, therefore, the projected investment required by the country can be estimated at about **$(670-880) million** annually for it to contribute to the maximisation of AfCFTA for itself and Africa as a whole; **$(5-6) billion** for the 7-year period 2024-2030

5.3 Integrated financing strategy

Public Investment Programme, Development Assistance and NGO Operations

Traditionally, the Government of Sierra Leone has domestically financed its development programmes through its ***Public Investment Programme (PIP)*** consisting of Domestic Capital Expenditure estimates annexed to the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), processed under the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development through its Public Investment Management Directorate. The Directorate puts together costs for all domestic public capital expenditure committed to project implementation within the MTEF. It coordinates government spending on economic infrastructure such as airports, roads, railways, water and sewerage systems, public electric and gas utilities, telecommunications, and social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and prisons. It also facilitates spending on human capital such as education and health, or financial investments by government institutions, such as sovereign wealth funds.

The PIP framework is the vehicle through which capital projects outlined in the National Development Plan are funded. Over the implementation of the previous MTNDP (2019-2023), a significant amount

Experts in West and North Africa organised by the UNECA's Sub-Regional Offices for West and North Africa; Accra, Ghana, 1 November 2023; Page 13.

of Domestic Public Finance, defined as government/government counterpart funding to donor-assisted projects, was committed to realising the goals of the previous plan. Government's envelope has been informed by macroeconomic conditions and forecasts; constituting a substantial share of government discretionary financing, depending on which projects are priorities amidst global conditions.

Table E.8 presents a summary of domestic capital spending for the period 2018-2022, reflecting government and government-counterpart funding.

Table E.8: Summary Analysis of the PIP (2018 -2022)

Year	2018 (Nle'000)	2019 (Nle'000)	2020 (Nle'000)	2021 (Nle'000)	2022 (Nle'000)
Domestic Budget	1,046,000	901,186	1,060,031	1,201,369	1,390,251
Actual Disbursements	663,937	747,133	1,317,166	1,509,059	1,494,505
Total # of Planned Projects	221	303	236	213	204
% of Projects Funded	25%	34%	36%	63%	40%

Source: Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Freetown

During 2019-2023, critical milestones were achieved on the PIP front, starting with MoPED working in collaboration with development partners such as the World Bank and IMF to conduct a comprehensive Public Investment Management Assessment to determine the status of efficiency and effectiveness of the country's Public Investment Management System. Subsequently, a National Public Investment Management Policy was developed to guide the operations of this system, involving the conduct of MDAs, State Own Enterprises (SOEs) and Local Councils (LCs) in the conceptualisation and formulation of capital projects and their financings and implementation management. Subsequently, MoPED developed a Pre-Investment National Public Investment Management Operational Manual, now at an advanced stage of becoming a more comprehensive manual. In 2023, the PIP was cascaded to the Local Councils, for the first time, realising the amount of project investment made by GoSL and partners at subnational level.

Generally, GoSL's development financing has been far from adequate to meet planned capital development expenditure and results. Widespread global challenges, especially following the eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019/20 worsened the domestic financing situation for LDCs like Sierra Leone that have always required international public finance to fill funding gaps. This made external development assistance and its effective coordination remain more critical during the previous plan implementation.

Accordingly, MoPED ensured that its ***Development Assistance Coordinating Office*** was strengthened during the previous plan implementation, and it will be scaled up going forward with the new plan for 2024-2030. During 2019-2023, the Development Partners Committee (DEPAC) dialogue platform on national development issues was strengthened. Quarterly meetings of government and partners were regularised and organised at national and MDA level to discuss and respond to development challenges, including financing. Presidential DEPAC meetings were also held, which became very effective during the COVID-19 pandemic, when DEPAC was used for coordinating preparedness and response to the pandemic. This development coordination platform was generally instrumental in

discussing progress in the implementation of sectoral projects and funding in a range of sectors, including health, education, energy, trade, agriculture, environment, trade and private sector. In all, during 2019-2023 a total of 12 DEPAC meetings were held, with each meeting proffering recommendations and actions to improve national development plan implementation. A stocktake exercise suggests that 70 percent of the DEPAC recommendations were implemented during 2019-2023. And monitoring of aid flows was sustained during the period, ensuring continued annual publication of the Development Assistance Report, which showed steady increases in aid flows as reflected in **Figure E.2.**

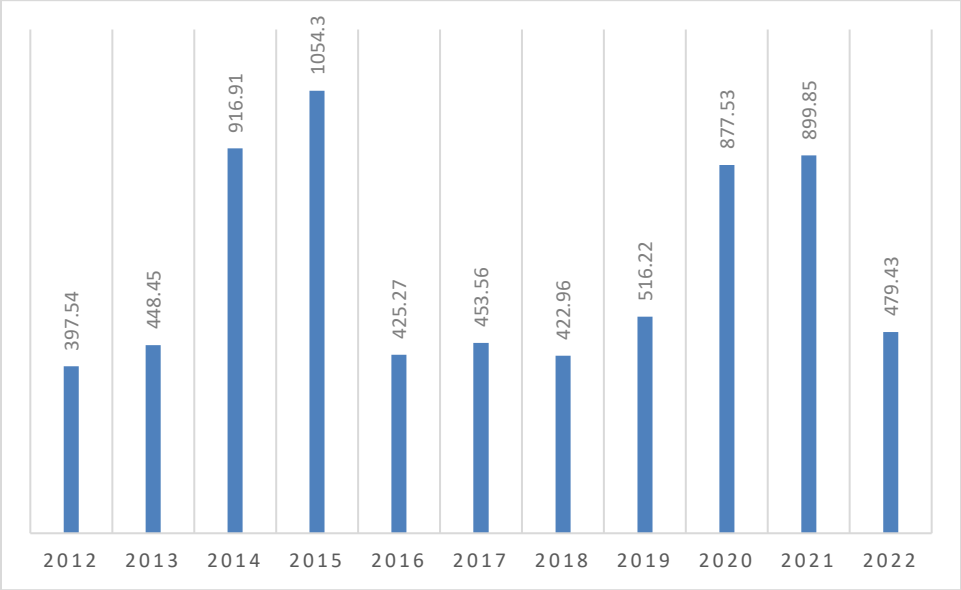


Figure E.2: External aid flows to Sierra Leone 2012-2022 ($ 'mn)
Source: Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Freetown

To scale up coherence and alignment of partner programmes with the National Development Plan, a comprehensive Development Cooperation Framework was produced to strengthen guidance of the operations of development partners in the country. The ***non-government organisations (NGOs)*** through which a great share of external assistance has been channelled to the country was covered in the national Development Cooperation Framework, with MoPED also situating a Directorate for coordinating national NGOs affairs.

The NGO Directorate, which coordinates the registration and certification of NGOs under MoPED, ensured the alignment of NGO activities to the previous MTNDP; and this will be scaled up going into the implementation of the new plan. These efforts have been critical in strengthening public financial planning and management, involving among others, the submission of annual reports on NGO programme implementation, giving GoSL an opportunity to determine performing and non-performing NGOs. The management of this sector was scaled up with efforts towards the development of a web-based database of NGO operations by sector, region and district/communities. A partnership mapping system was put in place in this direction, and key NGO platforms such as for WASH, health and education sectors were well-coordinated with regular meetings. And the NGO Regulatory Framework was revised for the period 2023-2028, while ensuring annual publication of the Gazette of

registered NGOs, to distinguish those eligible to operate in the country from others. In all, a total of 1,261 NGOs were registered in both the new and renewal categories during 2018-2023, as shown in Table E.9.

Table E.9: NGO Registration in Sierra Leone

Year	Category	NNGO	INGO	Total
2018/2019	New	69	7	76
	Renewal	165	73	238
	Total	**234**	**80**	**314**
2020/2021	New	149	11	160
	Renewal	194	80	274
	Total	**343**	**91**	**434**
2022/2023	New	167	20	187
	Renewal	238	88	326
	Total	**405**	**108**	**513**

The ***strategic objective*** for management scale-up of the ***PIP*** is to rationalise projects in the PIP system and the flagship programme of government within its Big Five Game Changers and their enablers as outlined in this plan; ensure that all project and programme outcomes and outputs positively impact growth, development, and job creation, and ensure that the PIP is implemented in line with the National Public Investment Management Policy. This will require but not limited to the following: establishment sustainable Project Preparation Facility, development of off-the-shelf Bankable Projects in line with the Big Five Game Changer Agenda; and establishment a workable and adaptable Public Investment Management Information System (an Integrated Bank of Projects Web-based platform).

For ***development assistance***, a strategic objective is to encourage joint programming and division of labour among donor agencies to reduce fragmentation and duplication of activities. To this end, the DEPAC and sector working group meetings will be strengthened for effective sector coordination, monitoring, and reporting of donor agency operations. Consultative Group meetings will be organised to mobilise resources for the implementation of the new MTNDP.

With respect to ***NGO operations***, the strategic objective will be to scale-up the coordination of operations of these organisations through increased information management on their activities; holding regular coordination meetings at national, sectoral and district levels; building operational capacity including training of NGO Desk Officers across sectors and district; and reactivating of agriculture, youth, education, platforms. The alignment of development assistance and NGO operations to the National Development Plan will be strengthened over the plan implementation period.

Strengthening implementation of Sierra Leone's INFF

The ongoing global multiple crises have made it difficult for Sierra Leone like other LDCs to mobilise resources to finance basic service delivery. This had derailed development during 2019-2023, undermining progress towards the achievement of national goals. As the traditional sources of financing are far from sufficient in delivering the needed financing, Sierra Leone's government has prioritised domestic revenue mobilisation through key policy reforms, including measures to strengthen the country's tax administration and revenue collection. Going into the implementation of the new National Development Plan for the next seven years, the Government will pursue the

implementation of an integrated national financing framework (INFF)-related initiatives. It will strengthen the requisite institutional mechanism for these by enhancing the national INFF oversight committee to effectively and coherently steer strategic decisions, oversee implementation and maximise the flow of resources towards sustainable financing of development programmes.

The MoPED had worked with the UN RCO and UNDP to implement an INFF-related project, *Strengthening Domestic Resource Mobilisation for the Implementation of the SDGs in Sierra Leone*. This project, financed through the UN Joint SDG Fund window, supported the promotion of financial literacy and digitalisation, the operations of the National Revenue Authority, the expansion of the social security coverage of the informal sector by the National Social Security and Insurance Trust, and boosting capacity of local councils in the monitoring of revenue flows and expenditure management. However, this has just been a small aspect in the range of financing options contained in the country's INFF. Therefore, more project resources will be required to implement these options as new ones will be explored.

Recently, GoSL in collaboration with the UNDP concluded the following studies and assessments within the country's INFF: a) a study on *barriers and enablers of women participation in the domestic resource mobilisation in Sierra Leone*; b) a study on *diaspora investment potential in Sierra Leone*; and c) an *SDG Investor Mapping* to identify and propagate market incentives and signals for private investment. Once these studies have been launched, it will be critical to develop and implement projects to scale-up financing for the SDGs in the country.

Given the projected fiscal and financial constraints faced by Sierra Leone, the ***strategic objective*** going forward with the implementation of the new plan here is to maximise the mix of financing options, paying special attention to innovative solutions.

The possible financing options for the investments derived from the identified SDG interlinkages are: tax and revenue reforms, debt for SDGs, climate finance, blended and public-private finance, SDG aligned business environment and investment, accessing financial markets and insurance, remittances, philanthropy and faith-based financing. Looking ahead to the future and in response to emerging challenges that are impacting the sustainable development gains, the Government of Sierra Leone and its partners will need to continue their fruitful cooperation and joint efforts to bring innovative financial mechanisms to scale to enhance sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development, focusing in particular on women, youth and rural communities at risk. The Government will continue to explore optimal financing instruments to leverage and channel private and Diaspora investments into national and local SDG aligned priorities.

Specific policy actions in the regard will include but not limited to the following:

1. Marketing Sierra Leone MNTDP in relevant international donor and investment fora
2. Increasing rebranding of Sierra Leone as a destination for investment
3. Implementing the Blue Economy Action Plan and climate finance strategies
4. Supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA
5. Implementing financing options identified in the INFF
6. Implementing the recommendations from INFF-related studies
7. Undertaking more studies on INFF related potentials for increase financing for the MTNDP
8. Launching and operationalising the national oversight and steering committee on the INFF
9. Increasing coordination among sectors.

5.4 Strengthening external relations and economic diplomacy

The Government of Sierra Leone has a renewed determination to ensure increased investment in its foreign relations and international cooperation as a critical dimension to mobilising sustainable financing for national socioeconomic development. While its renewed focus will include the promotion and defence of national sovereignty, international image, the well-being of citizens at home and abroad and the integrity of national institutions within the traditional foreign relation and cooperation context, priority will be given to economic diplomacy during 2024-2030.

In the previous MTNDP 2019-2023, the following were achieved in promoting international relations for national development: building, commissioning and equipping an ultra-modern Foreign Service Academy; opening additional Embassies in more countries including Morocco, Egypt, Turkey and the United Arab Emirate (UAE) and secured Visa Free Travel for holders of Diplomats and Service Passport Holders to Russia, Turkey, Morocco, and UAE; securing a seat for Sierra Leone in the non-permanent category in the UN Security Council endorsed by ECOWAS and the AU; undertaking community level sensitisation on ECOWAS interventions in Sierra Leone, deployment of ECOWAS Volunteers in various communities in the country, construction of ECOWAS Peace Support Logistics Depot, supporting efforts to scale up nutrition and food security, and reduction of maternal mortality; promoting Adult Education in Technical and Vocational Education and strengthening general data System in the country; and strengthening coordination of and follow-ups on the operations of the Mano River Union (MRU).[63]

Despite these achievements, the country encountered some **challenges** in its strife to maximise external relations and economic diplomacy. Some of these challenges include: limited capacity to fully face the emerging governance realities in the ECOWAS region as well as quickly respond to the rapidly evolving capacity needs especially skills related to Information, Communication, Technology (ICT) and foreign language in responding to changing global context; complexities and dynamics facing the international environment especially security threats issues, have to some extent negatively affected the operations of the sector. Furthermore, the late disbursement of funds and inadequate logistical support posed a serious challenge to the implementation of ECOWAS acitivities and other foreign operations.

A key **lesson** during 2019-2023 is that the extensive international engagements by Sierra Leone in different international forums increased the country's experience in multiple international diplomatic discourses that led to it securing a seat in the non-permanent category of the United Nations Security Council for 2024-2025.

A ***strategic objective*** on the general ***foreign relations*** going forward is therefore to promote Sierra Leone's socio-political, economic, and strategic interests to ensure quality representation in foreign missions as well as increasing foreign direct investments and partnership opportunities for Sierra Leone. The specific aims include but not limited to the following:

1. Increasing international trade and business investments in food security, energy, tourism, mining, education, technology, and infrastructure through mobilising global partnership opportunities;

[63] Further details can be obtained from the Sector Paper on External Relations and Economic Diplomacy submitted to MoPED for the preparation of the new MTNDP.

2. logistically expand Sierra Leone's diplomatic missions abroad by 20 percent to support the country's national development agenda;
3. digitalising at least 60 percent of the ministry of foreign affairs' operations;
4. operationalising the diplomatic academy and increasing the number of trained/career diplomats serving the country by 20 percent;
5. ensuring that the foreign service bill is enacted into law;
6. And meeting all Sierra Leone's financial obligations in all multilateral institutions where Sierra Leone is a statutory member

Strategic objective for strengthening relations within ECOWAS and the Mano River Union

With regard to ECOWAS and MRU, the ***strategic objective*** is to increase the visibility of the two sub-regional blocs in Sierra Leone and their contribution in the country's socioeconomic development, while facilitating Sierra Leone's participation in addressing sub-regional stability and sustainable development. Among the specific focus areas of operations are:

1. Establishing ECOWAS Radio and Television Station in Sierra Leone to promulgate interventions and activities of the Community in the country;
2. Supporting the development of institutional capacity for the effective operations of ECOWAS in Sierra Leone
3. Facilitating the mobilisation of more resources from the Community for Sierra Leone's socioeconomic development, and increasing the representation of the country in ECOWAS
4. Developing and implement an international campaign strategy for Sierra Leone's candidacy as Chair of the ECOWAS Commission of Heads of State.
5. Strengthening the strategic direction of the MRU
6. Constructing multipurpose MRU Headquarters in Freetown

5.5 Implementation arrangement

Implementation of programmes in the medium-term national development plan is coordinated at national, regional, district and community levels. Consequently, there will be decentralised arrangement for the effective coordination of implementation, as it was in the previous plan. The ***Ministry of Planning and Economic Development*** will continue to provide general operational leadership in the coordination of implementation across the different layers at national, sectoral, regional/district and community levels, as depicted in Figure E.3. The ministry will in turn be providing update to ministerial cabinet and parliament on the implementation status on a regular basis.

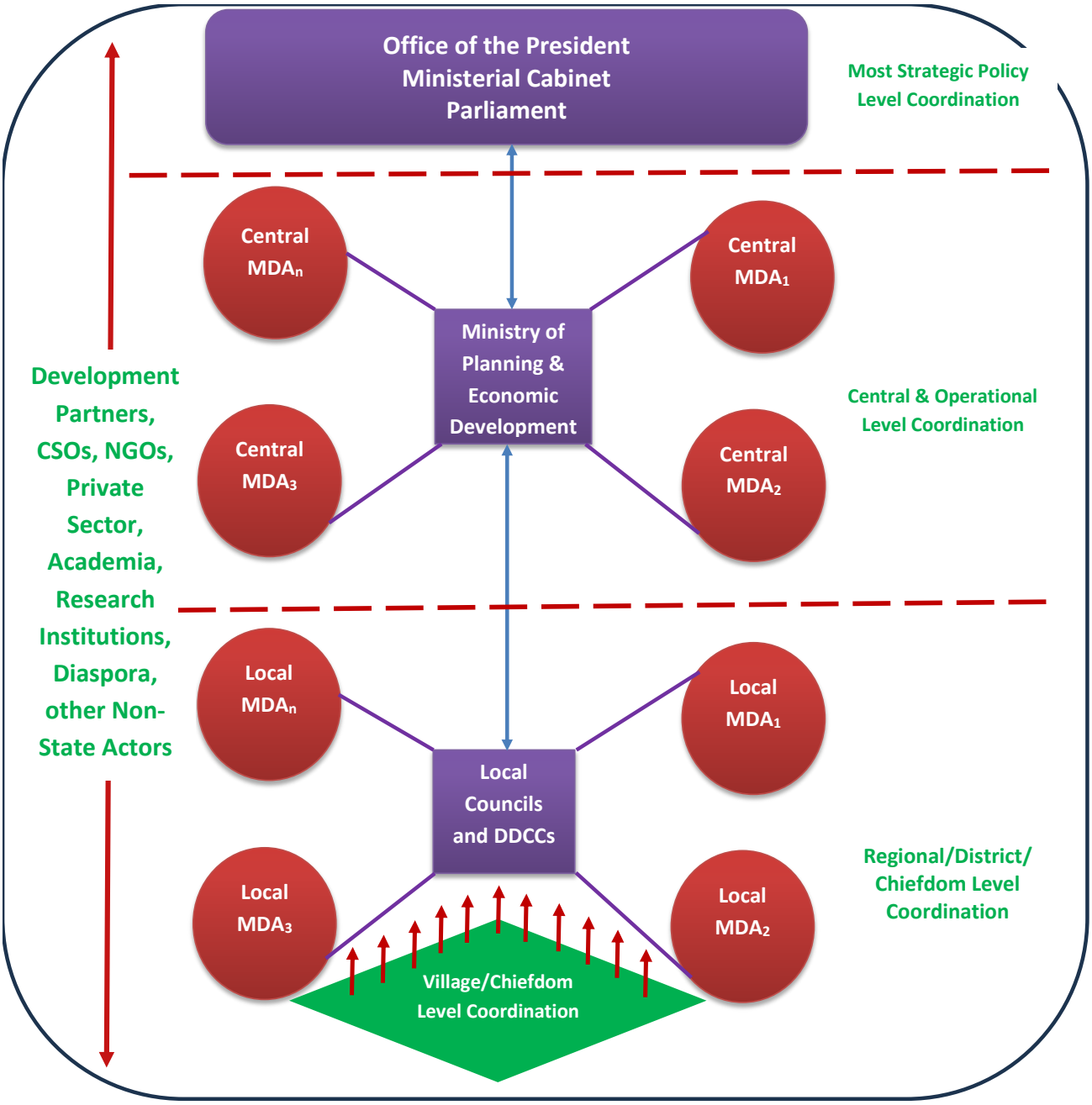


Figure E.3: Flow of implementation responsibilities

Ministerial cabinet level responsibilities

a. Will provide general guidance to the implementation of the national plan

b. Ensure that all projects and programmes implemented are aligned to the priorities identified in the MTNDP

c. Facilitate round table discussions to address general challenges to implementation

d. Play central role in resource mobilisation

e. Review implementation and M&E reports and provide recommendations to strengthen implementation

f. Promote complementary and synergies in implementation across sectors.

Central MDA responsibilities

1. Establish and ensure effective *Sector Working Groups* on plan implementation
2. Ensure alignment of sectoral plans to the national development plan
3. Ensure effective implementation of public projects captured in the National Development Plan.
4. Ensure effective programme coordination at the sectoral level and intersectoral collaboration
5. In collaboration with MoPED, monitor, evaluate, and report on the activities implemented across the sectors
6. Participate in mid-term and other reviews of the implementation of the plan.

District Development Coordination Committees (DDCCs)

The government will increase the functionality of the DDCCs as platforms not only to facilitate planning at the local level, but also to effectively coordinate and report on progress in the implementation of the national development plan at district and community levels. They will perform the following functions:

1. Facilitate the alignment of district development plans with the national development plan
2. Meeting regularly to discuss and report on general development progress as relates to the implementation of the national development plan operationalised through district plans;
3. Provide regular updates to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development on the implementation of the national plan
4. Provide regular updates to line MDAs at central level on status of various district sectoral development projects and programmes;
5. Serve as platforms for discussing, following up and reporting on emerging issues, including response to emergencies at district and community level, as may affect the implementation of the national development plan;
6. Generate information for preparation of annual plans and budgets, partner mapping and ongoing evaluation of sector programmes at district level;
7. Enhance general development communication at community level; and
8. Support coordination of development partners, including CSOs/NGOs at district level.

Government–Development Partner Dialogue

Through the Development Partners Committee framework, the following functions will be performed:

1. The government and development partners will regularly convene dialogue meetings at national level to discuss progress in the implementation of the national plan and provide recommendations for increased implementation effectiveness
2. Will constantly discuss and facilitate financing of the national development plan
3. They will joint support the building of capacity for effective implementation across sectors and at district level
4. Will ensure effective coordination of external assistance, aligning it to the national development plan

Role of the civil society and the private sector

1. Support the mobilisation of resource for plan implementation
2. Support the monitoring of the implementation of the plan
3. Advocate for equitable distribution of the programme resources across the country
4. Strengthen public private partnership/dialogue in the implementation process
5. Support public information dissemination on the plan and plan implementation

5.6 Monitoring and evaluation, performance management and service delivery

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework (RF) of the MTNDP 2024-2030 is to monitor, track and report progress on the implementation of development interventions and targets defined in the RF and identify bottlenecks for early resolution. The RF is also a guide for oversight, coordination and implementation of the plan as well as ensuring that information, data and analysis are of the best quality. The M&E framework is critical for an evidence-based assessment of the plan's performance and to ensure that Sierra Leone can meet its goals. The focus of the M&E for this Plan is to advance results-based planning and performance monitoring, reporting and use of evidence for responsive decision-making to drive M&E activities. The goal is to improve the current and future management of activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts to provide a foundation for the strongest possible implementation of the plan

For effective reporting on the implementation of the plan, district development plan indicators, and indicators for MDA strategic plans, programmes and projects will be aligned to the outcomes and impact indicators set in the national plan results framework. The tracking of these indicators will be done at all levels. The performance of the outputs related to the MTNDP 2024-2030 will be monitored through the tracking of programmes and project outputs by local councils at district and community level, and MDAs at the national level. The findings of the tracking will feed into annual and mid-term MTNDP 2024-2030 progress reports. In addition, routine monitoring in the form of proactive and reactive response will be continuously conducted, and reports produced on projects/programmes implementation for the consumption and information of stakeholders, including policymakers.

Four key principles to guide M&E for the Plan

These are:

1. **Consistency and harmonisation between national and subnational development—**towards setting outcomes, indicators, baselines, and targets across MDAs and LC development strategies.
2. **Comprehensiveness:** This M&E framework covers arrangements for M&E of development policies, programmes and projects covered by MTNDP.
3. **Leverage of ICT:** MTNDP M&E activities will build on the NaMEMIS and existing ICT based monitoring systems (such as IFMIS, MDA Pro and specific MDA systems, including the soon-to-launch online SDG Monitoring Framework).
4. **Inclusiveness:** The M&E Framework is designed to facilitate reporting and data collection from all MDAs and LCs on MTNDP priorities and related outcomes.

Envisaged stages of M&E for the new Plan

General monitoring: This will be carried out for the MTNDP 2024-2030 entirely in line with the Results Framework, the National M&E Policy and the National Monitoring and Evaluation Management Information System (NaMEMIS).

Proactive monitoring: NaMED, MDAs and LCs will conduct routine monitoring of programmes, projects and policies associated with the Plan. Reports from project site visits will focus on tracking programme and project outputs and measuring performance against set development outcomes in the national plan; and reports will include lessons learnt to improve programme implementation.

Reactive monitoring: Projects and programmes that are annually captured in the national budget will require M&E reports on planned outputs to trigger disbursement of funds to MDAs, LCs and contractors by the Ministry of Finance. Accordingly, all MDAs will therefore be required to request NaMED to undertake such monitoring as they request for funds from the MoF.

Evaluation: This will focus on reviewing and assessing the performance of outcomes and impact indicators and targets in the RF of the Plan. Special studies of policy and programme initiatives in the plan will be evaluated to generate information on the best approaches used in the implementation of such policies and programmes. Most importantly, the independent mid-term and final evaluations of the Plan will be conducted aimed at generating policy recommendations for the current plan and improvement of next generation national development plans. Assessment of planned, ongoing, or completed interventions to determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability will be integral to the evaluation plan for the new MTNDP.

Mid-term review: As a seven-year plan, a Mid-Term Review/Evaluation (MTR) will be undertaken to assess progress made in achieving the outcome of the MNDTP 2020-2030 to inform improved service/product delivery in the remaining years of the plan.

Final evaluation: This will be undertaken to assess progress made in implementing the plan and ascertain lessons learnt from its implementation. This will be done within a timeframe necessary to inform the formulation of the successor to the MTNDP 2024-

Reporting: This will be key to inform stakeholders and the public about progress in implementing the MTNDP and achievement of targets as delineated in the results framework of the plan. Reports will provide analysis of the performance of MDAs against the national budgetary resource allocations; largely focused on assessing progress on interventions that are aimed at achieving planned MTNDP programme results. The NaMEMIS will be utilized to fast tracking the preparation of M&E reports at the National and District levels.

Annual progress report: This will be produced from field level data and by self-reporting of MDAs and LCs implementing projects and programmes associated with the outcomes, targets and indicators of the MTNDP 2024-2030. Data generated in NaMEMIS will inform the reports, which will be submitted to cabinet and parliament each year.

Quarterly sector performance reports: This will be produced by MDAs and LGs to provide information on the utilization of funds for the preceding quarter. Reports will be used to support the work-plans and justification for release of sequent funds the project/programme implementation.

Data management: A data repository/bank, that stores all the key information pertaining to the indicators that are included in the MTNDP 2024-2030, will be developed and published. The repository will provide easy access to information relating to definitions, structure, source of information, collection method, quality and use of the data in the MTNDP 2024-2030. The bank will be open source accessible to users, practitioners and researchers. The host of the bank will be determined among key stakeholders, including MoPED, NaMED, and Statistics Sierra Leone, supported by other data generating MDAs and partners. The bank is expected to be linked to the online SDGs Monitoring Framework expected to be launched soon. The MDAs and LCs would be required to provide administrative data on their operations for use in the MTNDP 2024-2030 monitoring and evaluation process.

Capacity building: The M&E capacity of relevant institutions will be strengthened for both public and private actors at all levels. As part of this strategy, NaMED will prepare a detailed training plan for all key stakeholders. The training plan will aim at building a critical mass of civil servants to undertake M&E along the Public Investment Management (PIM) cycle. In addition, MDAs and local governments will be required to allocate more funds to M&E departments to enable them to deploy adequate human, material and financial resources for quality and useful M&E. MDAs and LCs will be the key institutions targeted for M&E capacity building. Capacity building for entering information into NaMEMIS and other existing systems will be enhanced. Mobile based data collection applications such as KoboToolbox using Tablets will be encouraged to enhance collection of primary data.

Performance management and service delivery

At the onset of President Bio's first term administration in 2018, one of the first novel outfits established to strengthen governance and service delivery was the Office of the Chief Minister. With reference to the Government's scaled up fight against corruption, indiscipline and poverty, the performance management system for the public service was strengthened, including increased policy attention to the Directorate of Service Delivery and Performance Management in the Office of the President. Going forward with the implementation of the MTNDP 2024-2030, policy efforts in this direction, alongside broad M&E for the plan, will be strengthened.

Accordingly, the strategic objective for performance management is to promote effective service delivery, ensuring that output performance of the public sector is increased through strengthened leadership and management capability of MDAs and Local Councils for delivery of development results.

5.7 Strengthening statistical systems

Effective and sustainable development requires the availability of accurate, clear, and timely data from Censuses, Sample Surveys, and administrative records on social, health, demographic, economic, and financial activities of the state. Therefore, the Government of Sierra Leone recognizes the importance of data as a powerful resource that drives change and catalyses action in development processes – policy design, planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Sierra Leone's National Statistical System (NSS) is coordinated by Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats. SL) for the compilation and publication of official statistics and for providing credible data for national development. From 2018 to 2023, Stats SL sector strategy focuses on the modernization of the National Statistical System.

Stats SL produces various report from 2018 to 2023 which includes; the 2021 Mid-Term Population and Housing Censuses, the 2019 Demographic and Health Statistics, the 2020 Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey, the 2019 Child Multidimensional Poverty Index, the 2023 National Multidimensional Poverty Index, Census of Business Establishment 2022, National Time-use Survey (Annual, done in 2023), Annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Annual Agricultural Survey, Compilation of SDG data and update of SDG results framework (Quarterly) August 2023, Quarterly Manufacturing Producers' Price Survey, and Compilation and publication of inflation figures (Monthly) August 2023.

Statistic Sierra Leone aims to contribute towards achieving the Government's Big 5 Changers through the production, analysis, interpretation, and application of data to decisions in the agricultural sector that support rural development and food security, as well as embarking on statistical capacity building both at Stats SL and in MDAs. Furthermore, Providing the necessary technology and tools to staff and data collectors and designing policies and interventions to positively impact Job creation in Sierra Leone. Finally, to impart new knowledge, skills and competencies in non-traditional areas such as data science and data analytics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), data visualization, governance and human rights, etc.

Towards acquiring accurate, clear, and timely data, the Government is mindful of the wide range of **challenges** which includes; the lack of a legal statistical framework, Statistical Capacity and Innovation, as well as Limited Adaptation of international standards, and methodologies to coordinate the entire NSS. Furthermore, lack of data certification and data access policy, Data Management, Data gaps, and limited range, coverage, and frequency of high-quality statistics and statistical activities affected the use of official statistics and wide range of statistical product and services.

Despite these challenges, there exist some **opportunities/potential** in the NSS. Stat SL Sector Statistics Plan also serves as a vessel for domesticating Sierra Leone's commitment to the international development agenda. The Data collection plans for the compilation of the multi-dimensional poverty index at the localized level are ongoing and this looks at poverty dimensions beyond income. Also, Provision is made for E-NSDSII implementation, monitoring, and evaluation which include creating E-NSDSII awareness; establishing implementation structures; mobilization of drivers of strategic success, viz., institutional and organizational enhancement, people development; process improvement through innovation; and harnessing technology. In addition, "quick wins"; risks,

mitigation measures; success factors; and pathways to sustainability of the NSS are identified. A monitoring, evaluation, and reporting framework is presented.

Strategic objective

The overall objective of the National Statistical System is to develop an efficient and effective data system, by entrenching the culture of evidence-based policy, planning, and decision-making and providing the enabling environment for statistical production and development at all levels.

Key targets

1. By 2030, the uptake and use of official statistics is significantly increased
2. By 2026, The National Statistical System is significantly harmonised and made coherent

Key policy actions

1. Strengthen the policy and legislative environment of the statistical sector
2. Strengthen statistical systems in the Government ministries, department and agencies
3. Improve logistical and operational environment of the statistical offices in the country
4. Scale up the technical, financial and administrative capacity of the statistical offices
5. Improve the automation and digital applications in the national statistical operations in the country
6. Promote statistical advocacy and communication of development statistics to the public

5.8 Communication for development

The government considers public awareness, knowledge, and Civic Education as integral to the successful implementation of the new MTNDP 2024-2030. To this end, the Ministry of Information and Civic Education (MoICE) has designed an inclusive communication strategy to support the implementation of the Plan, tailored to different segments of society, employing local dialects and braille techniques, among others. This aims to build consensus and facilitate knowledge sharing, driving positive change through information dissemination, civic engagement, empirical research, and two-way communication among stakeholders. Furthermore, the MoICE has produced a development communication civic education roadmap, incorporating key policy actions for dissemination. The roadmap will also promote awareness about the MTNDP and the SDGs, fostering resilience through ongoing dialogue and feedback. Additionally, it will strengthen resilience-focused development communication and civic education across the public sector and policy space, involving various stakeholder institutions, such as MDAs, local councils, parliament, the private sector, development partners, and civil society. Generally, these efforts will be linked to the overall national M&E system and performance management in light of enabling increased participation of the public production of the results, reporting, performance information and civic education utilization processes.

Challenges do remain going forward that are worth considering in the new MTNDP 2024-2030, including limitation of resources and capacity gap of staff to deliver effective development

communication to the public; the overlaps in donor interventions in the sector, and a lack of effective coordination among the donors and MDAs, as well as CSOs. Additionally, due to the diverse target audiences for public information, especially the marginalised groups and those in remote areas, it is important to understand the cultural difference in communication as a key challenge. There are also the capacity challenges for national monitoring and evaluation systems, including mobility constraints for monitoring interventions country-wide.

A key lesson drawn from the implementation of the MTNDP 2019-2023 was the role of private-public partnership in financing development communications, which should be strengthened going forward. It was also noted that adapting messages to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population can improve the effectiveness of public information and civic education campaigns on the national development plan, for which the implementation of strong data privacy measures and adherence to legal regulations was noted to be critical in protecting citizens' information and building trust in public institutions. That is, being flexible and responsive to changing societal needs and expectations is essential to the success of civic education and public information initiatives; that the implementation of a wider and robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be crucially important in driving effectiveness in the delivery of projects/programme results.

Strategic objectives

The strategic objective is to transform the public information and civic education infrastructure, fostering a robust development communication framework

Key targets

1. Annual Media engagement on the implementation of the Plan undertaken
2. By 2028, over 90 percent of Sierra Leoneans are fully aware and engaged in the implementation of the plan
3. By 2025, plan implementation Ambassadors/Champions identified and fully engaged in all chiefdoms across the country

Key policy actions

1. Scale-up national communication strategy for effective public engagement on the MTNDP implementation.
2. Strengthen cooperation between public interest media institutions in the implementation of the Plan.
3. Support the integration of civic education in the curricula of schools and higher learning institutions and promote community-led initiatives and civic awareness on national development programmes.
4. Strengthen the policy and regulatory framework for development communication
5. Promote data-sharing and information protocols among MDAs.

5.9 Risks and mitigating strategies

As the entire globe has been characterised by multiple and lingering risks, Sierra Leone is expected to continue to encounter plan implementation problems stemming from these risks from the ongoing crises in the world. These range from the lingering effects of COVID-19 to the continued war in Ukraine, rising conflicts in other parts of the world, and the constant effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. These crises are expected to negatively impact on growth, revenue and general socioeconomic performance of Sierra Leone.

As noted under the *macroeconomic outlook section* in the introduction to the new plan, despite the relatively benign medium-term outlook of the economy of Sierra Leone and the gradual normalisation of global supply chains, growth outturns remained highly uncertain and particularly susceptible to both external and domestic shocks. These include the continued war in Ukraine and the projected slowdown in the Chinese economy, persistently high inflation and pressures on the exchange rate. Medium-term growth is also vulnerable to commodity price shocks, spillovers from a possible escalation of the war in Ukraine, geo-economic fragmentation, policy slippages and increased debt sustainability risks, which could further undermine growth, other global health pandemic and lingering concerns about the health of the global economy.

Accordingly, we will be monitoring the global situation and its implications for the Sierra Leone economy as we implement this plan, given special priority to strengthening development cooperation and coordination among all actors and sectors, as well as scaling-up domestic resource mobilisation. Implementation of the country's integrated national financing framework will be especially critical in responding to financing risks going forward. The effective implementation of the general macroeconomic policies during 2024-2028 suggested above will be critical to the mitigation of future emergencies.

Conclusion

The previous national development plan (MTNDP 2019-2023) was full of service delivery hopes for the people of Sierra Leone, but it was badly shocked by the multiple and overlapping crises drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the continued fallouts from climate change and other devastating challenges. Nonetheless, the country stayed the course of implementing the previous plan and achieved remarkable results from programme implementation, while managing these crises. The new plan (MTNDP 2024-2030) will build on gains made in its predecessor, while addressing unfinished business and emerging challenges towards achieving our planned national goals and SDGs by 2030, on the road to Sierra Leone's aspiration of becoming a green and inclusive middle-income country by 2039.

To maximise our chances of achieving planned results for 2030, we have been mindful of the need to draw from the following principles during programme/project implementation. We will ensure continued implementation of unfinished relevant projects in the previous plan that are among highly prioritised and sequenced programmes. We will ensure full alignment of the national plan with the global, regional and sub-regional development frameworks, while strengthening coordination within the public sector and among development partners. Ensuring that the public sector is transformed, and becomes more professional and merit-based will be critical to the optimal delivery of the planned results for 2030, as we scale-up implementation of integrated national financing strategies.

Mobilisation of the country's demographic dividend, the blue economy and the African Continental Free Trade Area potentials will be a bastion for the new national development plan, putting in readiness off-the-shelf bankable projects. We will scale-up our sensitivity to climate resilience, renewable energy, gender and youth development, while increasing the placement of the communities and the people at the centre of implementation. We will ensure the integration of village and chiefdom level planning with district and national planning and implementation processes.

There is a Results Framework to guide the monitoring and evaluation of the new plan, while a mid-term review will be expected to capture new issues that may emerge in the first half of the plan implementation. It is critical that lessons learned in the first phase of implementation and emerging needs are identified and incorporated into the process. To this end, we envisage a mid-term review of this plan in 2027, while there will be annual progress reports.