



Sierra Leone
COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS

2022 Update

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1.0 Executive Summary

Sierra Leone was on track to recover economically from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic¹, when the global implications of the war in Ukraine wiped out almost all the economic gains made during the first quarter of 2022. The medium-term outlook remains challenging, as the increase in fuel price and recent global supply chain disruptions are compromising favorable growth prospects² and causing negative impacts on households' purchasing power and business operations. The Russia/Ukraine conflict and other supply side factors have resulted in higher inflation and put pressure on the Leone (local currency), which has depreciated by over 68 percent since December 2021, further fueling import-related inflation³. The budget deficit increased to 5.9 percent of GDP in 2021, from 5.8 percent in 2020 and 3.1 percent in 2019, due to expected revenue shortfalls as the economy weakened and expenditures increased.

The country's political and governance space has witnessed unprecedented political turmoil, shifts, and changes, over the past years. One such incident is the August 2022 demonstrations against rising prices, as long-simmering economic grievances, compounded by the global food crisis impact in the country, erupted into street clashes which cost lives of civilians as well as law enforcement agents.

However, Sierra Leone has made several positive efforts in enacting various legislations and reforms aimed at improving the country's governance, development, and human rights landscape. Some of these reforms/legislations are still ongoing, including the constitutional review process and the electoral reform process. The Gender Equality and Women Empowerments Act was recently passed and received Presidential accent. With the representation of women in governance still weak in Sierra Leone, this Act sets a 30% representation quota of women in all appointive positions as well as in the civil service.

Sierra Leone continues to show vulnerability to the effects of climate change which has resulted in increased severity of droughts, floods, and storms and hence impacted on sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and infrastructure. The country's strategy to combat climate change is contained in its Nationally Determined Contribution document, which was presented at the COP 26 and COP 27 in Glasgow, Scotland and Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, respectively.

Food insecurity and malnutrition remain a challenge in Sierra Leone. The situation has been exacerbated by climate vulnerabilities, market distortions, the COVID-19 pandemic, and lately the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, all contributing to the persistence of a food crisis in the country. Food inflation increased by 3.08% from 43.62 percent in November 2022 to 46.70 percent in December 2022; and the inflation rate increased by 3.08 percentage points year-on-year.

¹ The onset of the pandemic contracted real GDP by 2.2 percent in 2020 from 5.4 percent growth in 2019

² Sierra Leone's real growth was initially projected to average 4.4 % during 2022-24. Growth in 2022 has been revised downwards to an estimated 2.8 percent.

³ Macro Poverty Outlook Report -World Bank 2oct 2022 (imported inflation is the increase in imported goods which lead to **increase domestic costs of production**, and hence lead to increases in the prices of domestically produced goods)

While the country has made considerable progress in terms of school enrolment, retention rate remains equally low for both girls (40 per cent) and boys (40 per cent) in primary schools. The Government's Free Quality Education Programme supports the provision of teaching and learning materials, examination fees, and a school feeding program.

Sierra Leones' resident donor community remains relatively small to support the country's huge development challenges.

2.0 Introduction

The Common Country Analysis (CCA) is a critical element of the work of the United Nations Country Team in Sierra Leone. It is an independent, collective, integrated, forward-looking, and evidence-based analysis of the country context that requires periodic update to reflect current changes in trends in the various thematic topics covered. It is a living document that informs the work of the United Nations and other development partners in the country.

The 2020 CCA was updated in 2021 to reflect changes in the country context including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The analysis in this 2022 update largely dwells on evolving trends in key thematic areas, as the country slowly pushes towards recovery from the pandemic and its related effects on social and economic development. It also shows how the Russia/Ukraine war has constrained recovery, mainly due to disruptions in global supply chains.

The 2022 CCA Update is undertaken inclusively by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), led by the UN Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone, in wide consultation with relevant stakeholders, including UN agencies, Government, development partners, private sector, academia, civil society, groups representing vulnerable populations, etc. The analysis was largely done by members of the four UN Country Team Result Groups, the Monitoring and Evaluation Group, and other thematic groups.

3.0 Country Context

3.1 Political and institutional Analysis

In 2022, Sierra Leone's political and governance space witnessed unprecedented political turmoil and changes, with one notable incident being the 10 August 2022 demonstrations against rising prices, where long-simmering economic grievances, compounded by the global food crisis, prompted the demonstrations that erupted into street clashes in multiple locations throughout the country, including the capital of Freetown. In a bid to stem riots in the following days, a nationwide curfew was imposed, but this also had associated socio-economic costs. The implications of these events are further explored in the sub-sections below.

The upcoming election is heightening Sierra Leone's history of commitment to regional and cross border economic and security issues which have enhanced its development, peace, and security. For example, it has benefited in peace dividends from the treaty which was signed on 3rd October 1973 in Sierra Leone by the Heads of the States of Liberia and Sierra Leone to establish the Mano River Union (MRU). Freetown houses the MRU secretariat headed by a Secretary-General. Though Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire later joined the union, the limited number of the MRU states has necessitated that it collaborates with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which was founded two years after the MRU.

This collaboration has helped to inculcate the country's flair for a regional approach to problem-solving in issues related to cross-border governance, and the various threats to regional peace and security as seen, for example, in the country's participation in the Accra Initiative which seeks to ward off jihadist activities from West Africa's coastal states. Sierra Leone has adopted a peaceful approach to its conflict with the Republic of Guinea over the status of Yenga, a Sierra Leonean border village partially occupied by Guinean troops since the 1990s and has become a subject of varying bilateral tensions between the two countries.

Specific observations about the civil society climate in Sierra Leone were made in the 2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa, published by the US Agency for International Development. It found the country's overall CSO sustainability environment unchanged from 2019 to 2021 and included it among the middle group of the country ranking, considered as 'sustainability evolving.' It noted that the laws governing CSO registration remain unfavorable and contradictory. CSOs are required to register with all government agencies with which they will work and local councils in each of their geographic areas of operation. Unregistered organizations operate freely, but without legal status they may not interact formally with other entities.

The Development Cooperation Framework (DCF) requires CSOs to align their work with government priorities and limits CSOs to working in no more than two sectors, which many CSO leaders believe is meant to hinder their operations. The Civil Society Forum is newly created, composed of national and district-level CSOs, that primarily represents CSO interests as concerns the DCF.

Most national and community-based organizations (CBOs) engage in advocacy, and their cooperation with the government, policy advocacy initiatives, and lobbying efforts reached an all-time high in recent years. Even so, specific instances of civic freedoms and right to expression being under stress, met with intimidation and harassment by state entities, were noted.

CSOs engage with the media to promote their activities, showcase their work, and build a positive public image. The USAID report found that media coverage of CSOs was mostly positive in 2021 and focused on their activities and achievements. CSOs' frequent presence in media such as African Young Voices Television, Radio Democracy, and Epic Radio 99 assure them a role in setting the national agenda. Public perceptions of CSOs are considered positive and communities appreciate CSO contributions. Government and business perceptions are mixed.

3.1.1 Governance, transparency, and Accountability

Looking at Sierra Leone compared to other countries on international rankings, Sierra Leone has varied in its ranking in the last 5 years on the Global Peace Index, dropping from a score of 35 in 2018 to a score of 50 in the most recent 2022 ranking.⁴ Sierra Leone has, for the last three years, progressed upwards in Transparency International's Global Corruption Perception Index rankings, showing progress in combatting corruption. Sierra Leone is the 110th least corrupt nation out of 180 countries, according to the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International.⁵ During the period 2003 to 2021, the Corruption Index score for Sierra Leone averaged 27 points (out of 100 which is very clean) but is at an all-time high of 34 in 2022. According to the Mo Ibrahim's African governance index (2022-IIAG-profile-sl.pdf), Sierra Leone ranked 22nd and improved in all 4 categories of the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) - Security and Rule of Law; Participation, Rights and Inclusion, Foundations for Economic Opportunities and Human Development

In October 2022, Sierra Leone achieved a high overall score in implementing the 2019 Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) Standard (87.5 points). It is based on extensive stakeholder consultations and a review of three templates that reflect the components of EITI Validation, namely "Outcomes and Impact", "Stakeholder Engagement" and "Transparency".⁶ The Validation is the EITI's quality assurance mechanism to assess implementing countries on their ability to meet the provisions of the EITI Standard. Sierra Leone has, for the third time in three years, progressed upwards in Transparency.

Sierra Leone has passed 11 out of the 20 indicators on the US Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) 2023 scorecard used to evaluate countries, making it the country's fourth consecutive 'pass', and positioning it to develop a multi-year MCC program funded by the US Government for up to \$300-450 million. This year's performance was the highest since Sierra Leone started engaging with the MCC 16 years ago. (Previously, MCC and the Government of

⁴ https://www.switsalone.com/41678_sierra-leone-ranked-as-the-5th-most-peaceful-country-in-africa-2022-global-peace-index/

⁵ <https://tradingeconomics.com/sierra-leone/corruption-rank>.

⁶ [Sierra Leone 2022 validation report | eiti](#).

Sierra Leone partnered to improve access to clean water and reliable electricity under a \$44.4 MCC Threshold Programme that included support for reforms to limit opportunities for corruption). For the first time, Sierra Leone passed the MCC *Land Rights and Access* indicator. In the category of *Ruling Justly*, Sierra Leone passed 5 out of the 6 indicators including *Control of Corruption* at 83%.⁷ Other positive scores include *Political Rights* 92%; *Civil Liberties* 92%; *Freedom of Information* 90%; and *Rule of Law* 63%. The country did poorly on *Government Effectiveness* at 40%.

Sierra Leone's Parliament has passed two groundbreaking bills that transform communities' ability to protect their land rights and the environment. The Customary Land Rights Act and the Land Commission Act, both enacted, empower local landowners to negotiate the value of their land with investors and prevent it being leased out without their express consent.

The Constitutional Review Process (CRP) and electoral reforms have been the dominant themes within the country's socio-political milieu in 2022. The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) launched its White Paper on the review of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone on 13 January 2022 following repeated calls from civil society organizations and development partners for the resumption of the CRP. Most importantly, the launch was viewed as a fulfilment of one of the pledges made by Sierra Leone during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Human Rights in May 2021 - to finalize the CRP. Though the White Paper proposed significant changes, it is yet to be presented to Parliament for discussion.

The representation of women and girls in the governance architecture is still weak.⁸ Only 19% of women are represented at local councils in Sierra Leone.⁹ Of the total Parliamentarians in the fifth republic of the Sierra Leone parliament, only 12.9% are women¹⁰ There is a huge gap in the representation of women in parliament, cabinet, the judiciary, and local government. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022 was passed in November 2022 and signed by the President in January 2023. With the new law, all appointed positions, including in the cabinet and Ministries, with agencies, as ambassadors, and in elected positions, including parliament and local councils and wards, must have at least thirty percent women. The law also criminalizes discrimination based on gender and sets equal pay, facilitates access to finance for women, provides for equal access to training and 14-week maternity leave, and requires all private employers with more than 25 employees to meet the thirty percent quota. In addition, the Act has provisions for increasing financial inclusion of women and gender-responsive national budgeting. A Multi-Sectoral Steering Committee will be established to implement the law.

As referenced above, the new Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022 (GEWE Act 2022) could double the number of women in Sierra Leone's next parliament, following the 2023 election. GEWE sets a minimum of 30 percent quota for women in leadership positions. Currently, of the 146 members of parliament elected in 2018, only 12% are women.

⁷ *Sierra Leone Makes Fourth Consecutive Pass on MCC Scorecard, Stands A Chance Developing Multiple Hundreds of Million Dollars Compact Programme – Sierra Leone State House Sierra Leone.*

⁹ Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) 2018 election report

¹⁰ Sierra Leone parliament report, 2022

Sierra Leonean youth complain about the continuous marginalization and infantilization of their communities particularly by political elites. This they believe is contributing to the failure in enhancing the agency of the youth, hindering their representation at both the central government and local authority levels¹¹. It is important to note that the female youth are particularly affected by this challenge, as the patriarchal systems, structures, traditions and cultures have continuously denied them their place and voice in society. Similar to this, there is the continued marginalization of youth with disability and the lack of enforcement of laws and policies that protect and promote their rights¹².

On 6th September 2022, the Public Elections Act, 2022 (Act 17 of 2022)¹³ was assented to and thereby repealed and replaced the Public Elections Act, 2012 (Act No.4 of 2012), to provide for supplementary provisions to Sections 32 and 33 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991),¹⁴ and strengthen the electoral laws of the State. However, there has been strong contention between the two dominant political parties vis-à-vis the suitability and legality of the District Block and Local Councils Proportional Representation (PR) Systems for presidential and national elections enacted by these changes. Whilst proponents of the PR system rationalize its relevance for national unity, the opposition views introduction of the new electoral system as unconstitutional¹⁵ and an attempt to deprive citizens the opportunity to choose their parliamentary representatives directly.¹⁶ This state of affairs has the potential to worsen the already polarized ethno-political and regional tensions within the country and can create impediments for both the election management bodies and contestants to timely adapt to these fundamental changes in elections.

3.1.2 Access to justice

Access to justice remains a challenge especially for the poor, women and persons living in remote villages because of the distance to court facilities, difficulties to get a lawyer, etc., and some legislation needs to be better aligned with the international standards on the rights to access justice. Key legislations such as revisions to the aging Criminal Procedure Act, Human Rights Commission Act 2004 and the Sierra Leone Correctional Services Act, are yet to be tabled before Parliament for scrutiny, update, and subsequent enactment. The Sexual Offences Model Court (SOMC) has proved very effective in punishing offenders of sexual violence, thereby enhancing access to justice for survivors, many of whom are vulnerable women and girls. The SOMC convictions and discharges from January to October 2022 stand at 51 and 39, respectively. However, there remain inherent challenges affecting justice and human rights institutions. For example, access to justice at the district level for people in remote communities remains a challenge, with limited court infrastructure and irregular court sessions.

In addition to legal reforms for advancement of human rights, actions have been taken by the government to address issues of prolonged detention and overcrowding at correctional centers

¹¹ National Youth Policy 2020

¹² National Youth Policy 2020

¹³ <https://sierralii.gov.sl/akn/sl/act/2022/17/eng@2022-09-20>.

¹⁴ Sections 32 and 33 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone provide for the establishment of an Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone and functions of the Electoral commission respectively.

¹⁵ see *Originating Notice of Motion filed by JFK and Partners with the Supreme Court on 28 November 2022*.

¹⁶ <https://politicosl.com/articles/opposition-mps-attack-pr-system>.

nationwide. During the first quarter of 2022, the Judiciary held “Access to Justice through Judicial Week”, to increase access to justice and to decongest correctional centers across the country. Near the capital of Freetown, a total of 17 courts were constituted in the Western Area and one court at Waterloo. In the provinces, judges sat in all the 14 districts headquarter towns for this event. A total of 870 cases were processed and 1,175 detainees had their incarcerations reviewed. In all, 374 detainees were granted bail to secure their release; 259 were from the provinces and 115 from the Western Area. A total of 93 cases of prolonged adjournments, 101 of summary review cases, and 78 with habeas corpus applications were completed.

3.1.3 Human Rights

The government of Sierra Leone continued to make significant efforts to fulfill its regional and international obligations and ensure tangible actions to promote, protect and fulfil human rights in the country. As a UN Member State, Sierra Leone is legally bound by the UN Charter which affirms the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, upholding these human rights principles as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world. Also, Sierra Leone has ratified key human rights conventions including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In addition to its global commitments, Sierra Leone is a party to several regional and subregional treaties including the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights and the Maputo Protocol, which guarantees women social and political rights and equality with men. The country is also party to human rights instruments of the Economic Community of West African States.

On 26 April 2022, the Parliament adopted the Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling Act. The establishment and operationalization in 2022 of the National Reporting Mechanism to Treaty Bodies (NRM) was adopted by the cabinet in October 2021. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC) has been working with the UN to strengthen the capacity of this mechanism for better coordination among government stakeholders and to ensure regular reporting to Treaty Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review.

In April 2022, the UN supported the government in developing and launching the National Implementation Plan and Reporting Matrix for the Recommendations of the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. Sierra Leone committed to fully implement 216 accepted recommendations out of the 274 it received from various countries. The plan will continue to serve as a roadmap to implement the recommendations it accepted following the third UPR cycle and the preparation for the 4th review of the country.

Despite these positive developments recorded in 2022, much remains to be done to ensure effective promotion and protection of human rights in the country, especially in the context of upcoming elections in June 2023.

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has concrete impacts on the enjoyment of human rights of the population of Sierra Leone. For instance, the 10 August events described above were triggered *inter alia* by the dire socio-economic situation in the country, due to disruption of the supply chains for key commodities, economic spillover effects and price transmissions which have led to domestic price surges. This eroded households' purchasing power in towns and remote villages as well, where many people already live below the poverty line. This situation, combined with the steady depreciation of the national currency despite the launch of a new redenominated currency (New Leones) in 2022, has a potentially explosive effect on social stability, especially in the context of the upcoming elections in June 2023.

According to the authorities, 27 civilians and 6 police officers were killed, and many others injured during demonstrations in Freetown and in at least four other towns. According to the police, 506 civilians were arrested and detained and among them, 133 were released by the end of August, including 24 minors who were handed over to the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs following engagement of the authorities by UNICEF. Many other civilians arrested have been sentenced, and others were awaiting trial at the end of 2022.

A Special Investigation Committee (SIC) was set up by the President on 24 August to "examine both the immediate and underlying causes, sources of financing, execution, and consequences of the insurrection of 10 August, as well as the response of the security forces." The outcomes of the work of the SIC were not available as of the writing of this report.

Following the 10 August incidents, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association issued a press release and several tweets calling for the respect of the rights to freedom of assembly and association. These actions were positively received by the general population in Sierra Leone, as observed in various media coverage.

The UN continued to work with the national authorities to ensure humane and dignified detention conditions in correctional centers. Pursuant to a collaboration between the United Nations and management of the Sierra Leone Correctional Service (SLCS), 35 senior staff of the Sierra Leone Correctional Service, including 12 women, received a three-day capacity building training on detention conditions and human rights in Freetown in June 2022. A report was issued following the training and discussions took place for the implementation of key action-points including cascading the training to regional correction centers.

3.2 National Development Aspirations

Government commitment to Public Sector Reform has been promising, and measures bringing together diaspora experts, recruiting mid-level technical experts, and implementing performance management and performance contracting systems, have been introduced. In addition, improved local governance and local economic development practices have led to increased revenues at the Local Council level, and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has enhanced its function through the establishment of the National Association of Local Councils.

Despite these reforms there are still some local councils lagging in performance, and unless a performance monitoring system and a rigorous cadastral for mapping local income generation for the councils is fixed, challenges will remain to transfer them from reliance on the central government to independently functioning bodies.

Macroeconomic overview:

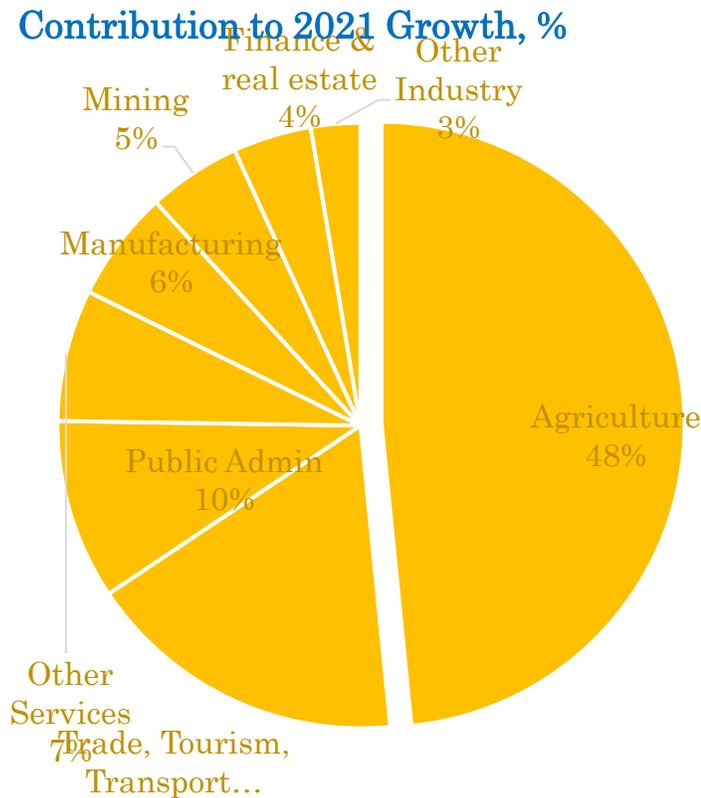
3.3.1 Recent Economic Development and Macroeconomic Impact of COVID-19 and the Ukraine-Russia War

Sierra Leone’s real GDP contracted by -2.16 percent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, after growing by 5.6 percent in 2019¹⁷. More recently, the surge in the prices of food and petroleum products, exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, intensified energy shortages in Sierra Leone, creating more hardship for local businesses and consumers, particularly the poorest and the most vulnerable. The decline in the economy during the pandemic was attributable to slow growth in agriculture and weak external demand for major exports during turbulent times, such as minerals, (something the country had disproportionately depended on for foreign exchange since independence), and decline in the general mining activities, transport, trade, and tourism sectors. Growth in 2022 has been revised downwards to an estimated 2.8 percent from an earlier forecast of 5.9 percent. 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 during the year.



Source: Source: StatSL and WB staff estimates

¹⁷ <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries-west-africa-sierra-leone/sierra-leone-economic-outlook>



Source: StatSL and WB staff estimates

The country was on track to fully recover economically from the effect of the pandemic¹⁸, but the medium-term outlook now is challenging as the increase in fuel prices and the recent global supply chain disruptions are constraining favorable growth prospects¹⁹ and causing negative impacts on households' purchasing power and business operations. These circumstances, in a country where two-thirds of the population are identified as multidimensionally poor, triggered the social unrest and anti-government protests of 10 August.

The government-mandated cost per liter of fuel increased by 50 percent on 17 March 2022 from an initial price of Leone 10 000 to 15 000. Prices were further adjusted to Leone 18 000 and all-time high at Leone 22 000 in June 2022, as a result of the continuous global price hike²⁰. The high fuel price and electricity tariff, as well as more frequent electricity blackouts, are influenced by several internal and external factors including cost of fuel importation, perceived risk of market disruptions, shipping cost, premium fees and other transactions costs. The increase in fuel prices has a pass-through effect on prices of other commodities via mainly transportation costs. Higher inflation has put pressure on the Leone, which has depreciated by over 40 percent since December 2021, further fueling inflation on imported goods²¹. Inflation will likely remain in double digits in

¹⁸ The onset of the pandemic contracted real GDP by 2.2 percent in 2020 from 5.4 percent growth in 2019

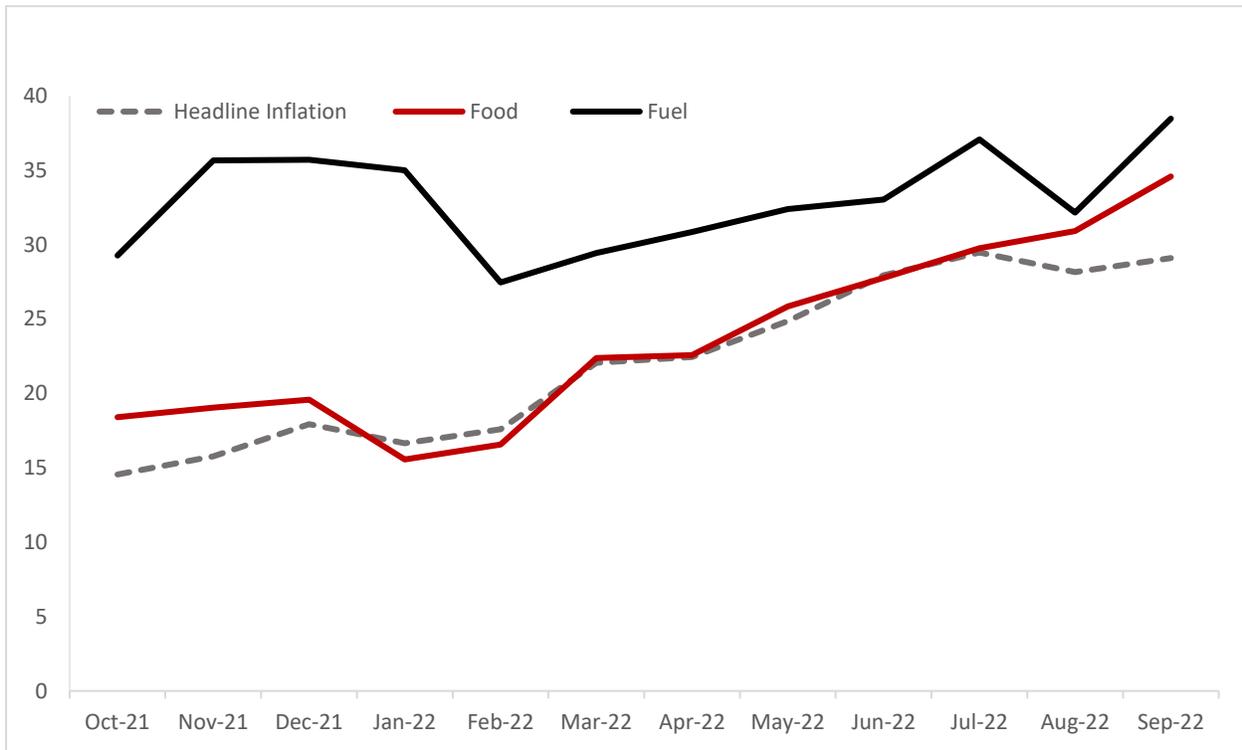
¹⁹ Sierra Leone's real growth was initially projected to average 4.4 % during 2022-24. Growth in 2022 has been revised downwards to an estimated 2.8 percent.

²⁰ The price of crude oil increased from 60 USD in 2019 to 122 USD in June 2022.

²¹ MPO -World Bank 2 oct 2022

the near future, given the current trend of global prices for key imported commodities. The latest official annual national Consumer Price inflation figure for December 2022 stood at 37.09%, (year on year). This is one of the highest inflation figures among African countries.

Figure 1: Inflation has accelerated to 32% due high food and fuel prices



Source: StatSL and World Bank Staff estimate

Although Sierra Leone does not trade significantly with Ukraine or Russia, instabilities in global commodity prices exposed the country to several vulnerabilities. The energy and food crisis could further threaten progress in SDGs implementation in the country should the conflict continue to escalate, without mitigating measures implemented at the local level. Disaffected youths from various localities demonstrated against the worsening economic hardship on 10 August 2022, mainly driven by the high cost of petroleum and food products.

3.3.2 Monetary Sector

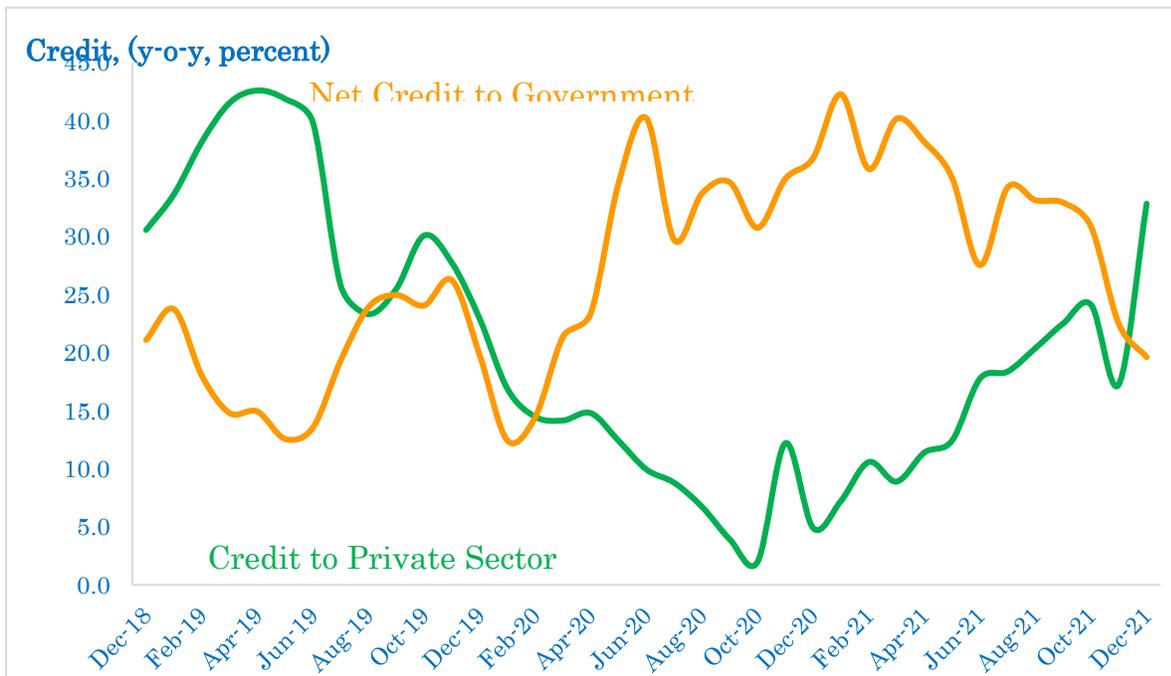
The Bank of Sierra Leone redenominated the national currency (the Leone) by removing three zeros from the old currency and introducing a higher denomination Leone note of 20. The ‘New Leone’ became a legal tender on 1st July 2022 and was supposed to be used side-by-side with the Old leones for a period of only three months, according to a Bank of Sierra Leone press release. However, after an acute shortage of bank notes in December 2023, the period for the Old Leones to continue as legal tender was extended for an additional five months.

Monetary policy has been based on the monetary targeting framework, using indirect instruments to achieve price stability. The Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) has been a key signal of the authorities’ monetary stance.

As discussed above, inflationary pressures were elevated throughout 2022. The Bank of Sierra Leone increased its standing lending facility rate and the standing deposit facility rate by 100 basis points each to 20% and 11% respectively,²² and raised the monetary policy rate (MPR) in April from 14¼ to 15 percent. More aggressive tightening was appropriate during the year because of persistent inflation. Hence, the MPR was increased by 125 basis points to 18.25 percent in December 2022. The overvalued real exchange rate also contributed to a tighter monetary policy²³.

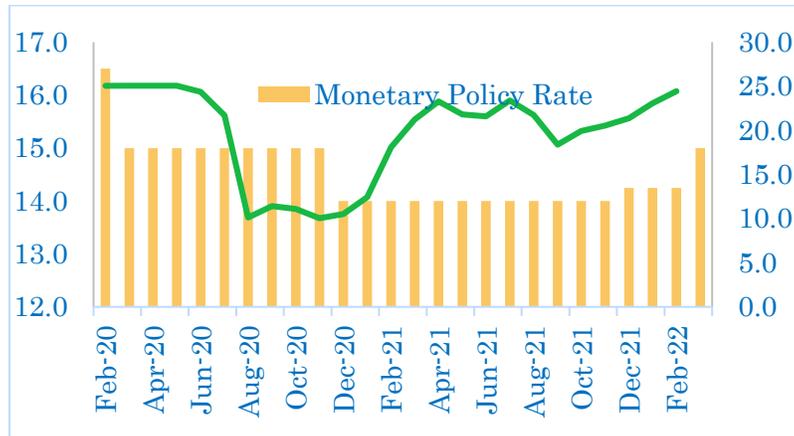
Monetary aggregates were expansionary during the third quarter, as evidenced by the growth in both Broad Money (M2) and Reserve Money (RM). Although credit issued to the private sector continued to improve, from 5.56 percent in the second quarter to 6.64 percent in the third quarter of 2022, it remained below the expected level. This is due, in part, to credit concentration in the government sector, as lending institutions seek high interest rates on government securities. Furthermore, the high lending rate offered by commercial banks continued to stifle private sector growth and development.

Monetary policy was responsive, but public sector continues to crowd credit



²² Ougna Camara-Bloomberg Oct 4 2022

²³ Sierra Leone’s monetary policy framework is de jure reserve money targeting. It also sets a policy rate and rates on standing facilities on a quarterly basis, but transmission to bank lending rates is weak. Assessing the monetary policy stance is difficult, given the hybrid framework, output gap uncertainty, and limited monetary policy effectiveness



After declining in real terms in 2020, private sector credit growth has rebounded (29 percent year-on-year in January 2022). Non-performing loans (NPLs) rose from 12.7 to 15.2 percent of gross loans between 2020Q4 and 2021Q4²⁴.

3.3.3 Fiscal Sector

Regarding public finance, the budget deficit increased to 5.9 percent of GDP in 2021, from 5.8 percent in 2020 and 3.1 percent in 2019, due to expected revenue shortfalls as the economy weakened and expenditures became higher. State revenues dropped in 2020 to 13.8 percent of GDP from 14.6 percent in 2019, reflecting the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (MoPED, 2022). However, domestic revenue collection improved in 2021, thanks to the overall post-pandemic economic recovery, ongoing tax reforms and a one-off mining investment revenue.²⁵

The government's actions to cushion the pandemic impacts and stabilize prices also have financial implications, thereby reducing the already narrow fiscal space, and potentially increasing the cost of borrowing in the country, as the government seeks alternatives to finance additional public spending in the long term. Sierra Leone is at high risk of debt distress with a public debt stock-to-GDP ratio reaching 79.8 % at the end of July 2022.

During the launch of the country's redenominated currency notes²⁶ in 2022, the President reiterated the government's commitment to support oil marketing companies and the private sector for the importation of fuel. From March to end of June 2022, the Government provided foreign exchange in excess of over 80 million USD to oil marketing companies and over Le 593 billion was allocated to pump price subsidies. The redenomination is expected to increase the velocity of money and transactions, reduce the risk of carrying large volume of funds, and improve the management of payments and ATMs. However, the implementation has caused a few transactional challenges. Some consumers and businesses in the informal sector are struggling with the change in nominal

²⁴ July 2022

²⁵ The resolution of a mining royalty payment dispute between SL Mining Company (Marampa mines) and the government resulted in a \$20 million (0.5 percent of GDP) out-of-court settlement.

²⁶ Sierra Leone redenominated the nominal value of its currency by removing three zeros (real value is unchanged).

value for buying and selling of goods and services whilst businesses in the formal sector are adjusting their operating systems to reflect the change in currency, incurring additional administrative costs in the transition period. Intensified price control measures are crucial to reduce potential price adjustments and contain additional inflationary pressure.

SELECTED BUDGET EXPENDITURE ALLOCATION (2020-2022)

Budget Item Description	2020 Allocation (old leones)	2021 Allocation (old leones)	2022 Allocation (old leones)	MTNDP Cluster	UNSDCF Cluster
Education	1.4 trillion	1.54 trillion	1.7 trillion (22%)	Cluster 1	Outcome 3
Health	674 billion	794.2 billion	896.7Billion 433.2 B-Salaries	Cluster 1	Outcome 3
Social Protection	44.5 billion	96.3 billion	28Billion (plus 149.8 billion from Dev partners) 16.66B-Salaries	Cluster 1	Outcome 4
Agriculture	348.8 billion	422.6 billion	278 billion 17.9B- Salaries	Cluster 2	Outcome 1
Fisheries	12.6 billion	30.5 billion (100 billion from China)	29.5 billion 2.5- Salaries	Cluster 2	Outcome 1
Tourism	7.7 billion	21.7 billion	23.4 billion 9.3Billion-Salaries	Cluster 2	Outcome 1
Governance	-	519 billion	341.3 billion 112.4 – Logistics and operations	Cluster 4	Outcome 2
Infrastructure and Economic Competitiveness	-	810.1Billion (324.7 B from Dev Partners)	339.8 billion (plus 155.5billion from Dev Partners)	Cluster 3	Outcome 2
Energy			169.5 billion 5.9 billion-Salaries	Cluster 3	Outcome 2
Addressing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience (Ministry of environment)			16.7 billion	Cluster 6	Outcome 2

The budgetary allocations for 2022 were aligned with the priorities of the Government as articulated in the National Development Plan (2019-2023) which is also anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals. The composition of expenditures reflects the strategies laid out to consolidate economic recovery, promote climate resilience, increase agricultural productivity to curb food insecurity, create jobs and promote human capital development in 2022.

All the main clusters of the NDP received expenditure allocations with the lion share going to Human Capital Development (Le 1.54 trillion for Education, Le 794.2 billion to health and Le 96.3 billion to social protection).

Implications for the United Nations in Sierra Leone

As a key national partner to the Government of Sierra Leone, the UN System could support the execution of the 2022 budget through the following:

- The UN should continue to support the national COVID-19 response in areas of mitigation against the occurrence of a fourth wave of the pandemic, whilst ensuring continuous provision of other essential health services in all health facilities across the country.
- Given that the amount allocated to Social Protection in the budget has decreased, the UN should accelerate its support to the Government and national institutions in delivering social protection that matter to the most vulnerable (including women, children, youth and people living with disabilities).
- The UN should support micro, small and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs) to recover from the shocks of Government's restriction measures (lockdowns, curfews, border closures etc.) to curtail the virus. Supporting MSMEs will help to protect jobs; especially in the private sector which is largely informal in Sierra Leone.
- Provide institutional support to the Government in the area of policy reforms that will drive the economy towards the growth sectors (agriculture, industry, services, etc.) which will boost and accelerate GDP growth.
- As the Country approaches general elections in 2023, the UN needs to continue to support the Government and civil society organizations to launch programmes that promote community inclusive initiatives and political dialogue amongst actors to reduce tensions and possible incidence of conflict, which could adversely affect the implementation of the budget, UNSDCF and the achievement of SDGs in Sierra Leone. Achieving the 20% domestic revenue to GDP by 2023 remains a challenge for the National Revenue Authority.

3.3.4 External Sector

The slower rise of exports over imports caused the current account deficit to widen to 13.7 percent of GDP in 2021, from 7 percent in 2020 and 15.3 in 2019. Despite the recovery in exports, following the resumption of iron ore mining, higher imports of fuel, food, machinery, and transport equipment resulted in a widening of the trade deficit to US\$235.41 million in the second quarter of 2022 from US\$166.4 million in the first quarter of 2022²⁷, and further widened to US\$327.07 million in the third quarter of the same year. The value of export of goods increased by 12.1 percent accounting for US\$ 298.0 million in the second quarter of 2022, driven mainly by a surge in iron ore exports. Total imports increased by 16.8 percent, amounting to US\$504.8 million in the second

²⁷ 2022 budget speech

quarter of 2022 due to higher imports of food, petroleum products, machinery and transport equipment²⁸. Gross international reserves of the Bank of Sierra Leone declined from US\$860.42 million in the first quarter of 2022 to US\$729.84 million in the second quarter, and further to

US\$599.51 million in the third quarter²⁹. As of 27th December 2022, the gross international reserves of the Bank of Sierra Leone stood at US\$588 million, supported by a World Bank disbursement of budgetary support to the tune of US\$103 million on December 21, 2022³⁰.

The current account deficit, including official grants, is projected to decline from 10.3 percent in 2022 to 8.0 percent of GDP in 2023, and further to 5.1 percent of GDP in 2025 (WB, 2022). The rise in oil and related commodities prices is also expected to impact the current account balance (net international transactions) and increase exchange rate pressure, especially given the difference of inflation rates between the country and its main country trading partners.

3.3.5 General Outlook of the Economy

The medium-term outlook for the economy is challenging in the wake of the overlapping crises. Fiscal stability slippages, the war in Ukraine, prolonged effect of COVID 19, and concerns about global growth are now posing renewed challenges to sustained growth.

GDP growth was projected at 2.8 percent during 2022, down from 5 percent projected at the end of 2021³¹. This modest growth will be supported by: (i) resumption of iron-ore mining at Marampa and Tonkolili, for the first time since Ebola; and (ii) a gradual recovery in consumption demand. However, supply chain disruptions and inflationary pressures will dampen investments and slow the recovery in private consumption. Over the medium-term, GDP growth is projected to average 4 percent, but remain below the long-term average of 4.3 percent, reflecting economic scarring from repeated shocks. Current projections indicate that growth will not return to the pre-pandemic levels until 2025, with it projected to increase by only 3.1 percent in 2023 (see Table 1 below).

Inflation will remain elevated, at 37.09 % in December 2022, and is expected to gradually decrease by 2024, in line with global projections for more steady commodity prices and also a pick-up in domestic food production. The overall fiscal deficit is projected at 5.0 percent of GDP in 2022, 1.2 percentage points higher than the original budget. However, it is expected to decline to about 3 percent of GDP by 2024, as the authorities strengthen expenditure controls and improve revenue mobilization through the development of a medium-term revenue generation strategy. The current account deficit is expected to narrow to 12.7 percent of GDP by 2024 as the recovery in the mining sector boosts exports.

Import growth is expected to remain high, driven by supply limitations and persistent high food and fuel prices, and a gradual rebound in aggregate demand (including from public investments). The deficit is expected to be financed over the medium-term by FDI in mining and agriculture and

²⁸ 2022 budget speech

²⁹ BSL monetary policy statement, 3rd January 2023

³⁰ BSL monetary policy statement, 3rd January 2023

³¹ 2022 budget speech

by the country's continued access to concessional financing from multilateral financial institutions. The poverty rate (based on a poverty threshold of PPP US\$2.15/day) is expected to decline moderately given the pick-up in economic growth, driven largely by the mining sector. Reducing poverty and food insecurity would require raising agricultural productivity, which employs a large percentage of the working population, and creating jobs outside agriculture for low-skilled workers. Besides commodity price fluctuations, the main risks to the economic outlook stem from rising public discontent, and uncertainties associated with the upcoming general elections. Any aggravation of the negative terms-of-trade situation could aggravate inflation and cause further public expenditure overruns. Higher food inflation would hurt the poor disproportionately. Rising inflation can further spur public discontent and rioting, which could hamper the authorities' reform appetite ahead of general elections in mid-2023, opting instead for populist policies³².

Table 1: Selected Macroeconomic Indicators

	2019	2020	2021	2022f	2023f	2024f
Real GDP Growth at constant market prices	5.3	-2.0	4.1	3.7	3.7	4.4
Inflation (Consumer Price Index)	14.8	13.5	11.9	21.9	21.0	18.0
Current Account Bal (% GDP)	-15.3	-7.0	-14.5	-14.9	-13.9	-12.7
Net foreign Direct Investment Inflow (% of GDP)	7.9	3.4	8.7	8.4	6.4	5.5
Fiscal Bal (% of GDP)	-3.1	-5.8	-6.6	-5.0	-4.5	-3.0
Debt (% of GDP)	70.9	76.3	78.8	81.0	80.7	78.1

(f-forecast)

Source: World Bank, Poverty & Equity and Macroeconomics 2022 (f

3.3.6 Poverty Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Both income poverty and multidimensional poverty are high in the country. The multidimensional poverty rate is higher than the monetary poverty rate and reveals that individuals in Sierra Leone, while they might have income above the poverty threshold, are still deprived in other dimensions, such as health and education. Sierra Leone has shown a minor improvement in the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) score with an increase of 0.025 over one year. Sierra Leone's HDI value for 2021 is 0.477, which puts the country in the low human development category and keeps it ranked 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%.

³² World Bank macro poverty outlook 2022

Sierra Leone's current international comparative poverty rate is aligned to its GDP per capita. Agriculture plays a critical role in livelihoods as eighty percent of the rural population relies on agriculture for their livelihood and agriculture is the main source of income for the poor. Poverty is increasingly concentrated in rural areas, where 57% of the population lives. High food and fuel inflation, and lower than normal agricultural yields, had significant social impacts. The poverty rate is estimated to have increased during the pandemic in early 2020. However, since 2021, poverty is estimated to have declined, albeit slowly, because GDP growth occurred mostly in the capital-intensive mining sector³³.

Agriculture will play a critical role in poverty reduction as about 80% of the rural population relies on agriculture³⁴. According to the World Food Programme weekly hunger map 2.2 million Sierra Leoneans suffer chronic hunger³⁵, whilst 1.6 million people experience acute hunger³⁶. The number of people that experience insufficient food consumption increased from 4.1million in December 2022 to 4.6 million in March 2023³⁷. Accordingly, 73 percent of Sierra Leoneans are food insecure³⁸.

Many of the country's poor (73% of the population) thus reside in rural areas. Urban poverty decreased to 35%, while rural poverty remained stagnant at 74%³⁹. Poverty reduction slowed down in the last decade, as income growth among poor households was barely positive. The moderate reduction in poverty was mostly due to declining urban poverty, which took place in the context of high urbanization and rural-urban migration rates. A growing youth population implies lower dependency ratio on public services (an opportunity) but also requires more and better jobs. The impact of economic growth on poverty has been declining and Sierra Leone needs to grow much faster to significantly reduce poverty. Poverty remains high in rural areas since farming is not as productive as it could be due to limited use of fertilizers, herbicides, tools, and machines⁴⁰. According to the World Bank poverty Assessment on Sierra Leone (Dec 15, 2022) 6 of 10 persons live in poverty, which makes Sierra Leone among the poorest in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3.4 Environment and climate change

3.4.1 Development and Implementation of Environmental Policies

Sierra Leone recognizes the importance and urgency of combating climate change and is strongly committed to contribute to the global response in the context of the country's sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, in the light of its national circumstances.

³³ World Bank macro poverty study-Oct 2022

³⁴ World Bank macro poverty study-Oct 2022

³⁵ SOFI Report, (2022)

³⁶ H, Jun 2022 - Aug 2022)

³⁷ WFP Hunger Map, 10 March 2023

³⁸ WFP 2020

³⁹ SLIHS 2011 and 2018

⁴⁰ Sierra Leone Poverty & Equity Team

The World Bank
December 15, 2022

As a least developed, very low emitting but also very vulnerable country, Sierra Leone’s vision against climate change in the context of its revised NDC is based on fairness, putting a strong emphasis on adaptation in order to protect its people, culture, and environment, while striving to contribute to the mitigation of global emissions.

Sierra Leone’s vision for adaptation is drawn from the Initial National Adaptation Plan (iNAP), with the objective to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability by half by 2030 through increased risk awareness, improvements in rule compliance, increased institutional capacity, and an integrated approach to adaptation in development policy and programs across sectors and scales. The above vision is reflected in the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), which was revised in early 2021. As a way of implementing the policy, a National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan was reviewed and updated and the following activities have been implemented;

- Conducted nationwide awareness campaigns to increase the knowledge of all on how to mitigate and adapt to the impact of Climate Change.
- Facilitated the leveraging of Environment and Climate Funds from GEF, GCF, MLF, etc.
- strengthened the Sierra Leone Metrological Agency to enhance their capacity to produce and deliver Weather, Climate predications and forecast.
- Continuous engagement with Civil Society organization (CSOs) to ensure wider understanding on climate issues and participation

The policy also expands on the goals set for adaptation in the iNAP, which include increasing resilience capacity at all scales, supporting an integrative approach to climate change adaptation programming and policymaking; allocating 10% of annual national budgets to climate change adaptation across sectors; harmonizing climate-relevant policies and regulations to improve coordination and cross-sector linkages; mainstreaming adaptation into local development plans by 2025; institutionalizing NAP implementation through laws, policies, and regulations; establishing a National Trust Fund for channeling funds for adaptation support across sectors; and securing 40% of international development funds to support adaptation priorities across different sectors.

In this way, the country continued to make efforts in institutional and policy reforms and in 2021 and 2022, some policies were revised and new ones drafted as follows:

Year	Description
2021	Updated the Nationally Determined Contributions
	Review of the draft Coastal and Marine Regulations

	Integrated Climate Change Adaptation Plan into District Development Plans in four districts (Western Area, Moyamba district, Port Loko district and Bonthe district).
	National Environment Policy – 2021
	State of the Environment Report – 2021
	National Environmental Communication Strategy - 2021
2022	EPA Act 2022
	National Protected Area Authority and Conservation Trust Fund Act 2022
	Forestry Act – 2022
	Sierra Leone Metrological Agency – 2022
	5-year Gender Sensitive Strategic Plan – 2022 – 2026
	5-year Gender Responsive Environmental Quality Control Policy and Standard – 2022 – 2026
	Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection Act 2022

3.4.2 Disasters

The frequency of natural disasters and the scale of the associated human and material loss have significantly increased around the globe. Sierra Leone is vulnerable to the increasing severity of droughts, floods, and severe storms and their impacts on sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, as well as infrastructure and hydroelectric power production. Urban and rural seasonal flooding, recurrent flash flooding, and coastal flooding are the most observed, leading to seasonal flooding of agricultural fields and low-lying areas, flooding along the coast areas and flood waters overflowing into roads and into residents’ homes.

Vulnerable areas include Western Area, Eastern, Southern and Northern regions. More specifically, the most affected areas in the recent past include: Kroo Bay, Susan’s Bay, Granville Brook, Lumley area in Western Area, Port Loko and Kambia Districts, the Newton catchment area, Pujehun and Bo areas, Kenema and Moyamba Districts, and coastal beaches of the Western Area Peninsula (Government of Sierra Leone 2018). There are transboundary issues, as heavy rainfall in neighboring countries may cause floods in Sierra Leone due to the overflowing of three rivers: Great Scarcies and Little Scarcies rivers from Guinea and Mano from Liberia (World Bank 2017). There are also related impacts from flooding. Many communities in Sierra Leone, especially those where the rural poor live, depend on streams and swamps, which dry up during severe droughts. Floods overwhelm existing systems, thereby contaminating drinking water and creating sewage overflows, with related health consequences.

Considering how seriously disasters are affecting communities, the UN has supported efforts on the decentralization of disaster risk management down to chiefdoms. So far, a total of 32 chiefdom disaster management committees have been established in Kambia and Pujehun districts.

In addition, a Climate Information, Disaster Management and Early Warning System (CIDMEWS) has been established to generate knowledge for strengthening the early warning system for the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) in partnership with Environment Protection Agency (EPA-SL) and SLMet. This platform will facilitate effective disaster response with real-time climate data, covering 46 parameters, including precipitation, temperature, and humidity, with forecasts covering 6 hours and 10-day periods, for the entire country.

To ensure that meteorological and hydrological data are integrated into existing CIDMEWS, the GEF project procured and installed five marine weather stations and funded the development of a cloud web-based system as a functional network for the publication of timely marine information for Early Warning System messages. The refurbished and equipped server house located at Tower Hill is where the marine weather forecast will be generated and disseminated.

Disaster prevention can be further by schools, which can play an important role in the formation of values among school children and teachers to establish a culture of prevention. The need to increase awareness among children is vital to disaster prevention and management. Accordingly, the government, with UN support, commenced the incorporation of environmental education into the primary and secondary school education curricula in 2022.

3.4.3 Blue Economy

Recognizing the crucial role of the blue economy in “planetary survival and human well-being”, many nations and international development institutions are now taking proactive actions to transition toward a sustainable blue economy future through the development of inclusive and sustainable blue economy strategic frameworks and policies. Among the existing frameworks and tools are the African Union Blue Economy Strategy, the Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy, the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Sierra Leone’s oceanic and water resources have an abundant endowment of fish and fishery products, with about 25% of the population involved in fishing activities. Fish and fishery products serve as the major source of protein for over 90% of the population with more than 200 species identified within the country’s Special Economic Zone. Fishery export has been growing over the years and has the potential of contributing over \$30 million annually (excluding value addition), and employing more than one million people. Also, with its large natural harbors, the ports and shipping sub-sector can accommodate large cargo and container ships and provides more than 500 direct jobs. Sierra Leone’s premier locations for ecotourism, coupled with its extensive beautiful, unspoiled white sandy beaches, make the tourism sector a major thrust to the national economic transformation drive. Also, guided by recent study reports on the prospect of oil in Sierra Leonean waters, the national development plan identified the oil and gas sector to play an essential role in transforming the country and driving economic development.

While the aforementioned analyses clearly demonstrate Sierra Leone’s huge prospect for the Blue Economy, the country has traditionally not employed an integrated and sustainable approach to exploiting and managing its marine resources for socio-economic growth. Underpinning this gap are significant institutional and governance challenges.

The Sierra Leonean government, with support from the UNDP, developed a blue economy strategy to guide the country's action plan and place it at par with other coastal African countries in the quest to diversify the national economy and develop the potential of her blue economy. The strategy has been developed within the framework of the Africa Blue Economy Strategy and the global 2030 agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the optimal exploitation and management of the blue economic resources. It is basically a medium-term strategy aimed at supporting sustainable and equitable economic growth through ocean-related sectors and activities.

Also, in the 2021 climate NDC, the blue economy was identified as a priority for climate change mitigation. The blue economy in Sierra Leone incorporates traditional maritime industries such as fisheries, tourism, mining, boat building, aquaculture systems, and carbon stored in mangrove and seagrass ecosystems.

3.4.4 Energy

In Sierra Leone, only 2.5 percent of the rural population have access to electricity. The current fuel option is creating huge amounts of CO² emissions through the consumption of fossil fuel-based energy for household lighting and cooking. In addition, poor access to electricity is recognized as a binding constraint to long-term economic growth in the country. Only 26% of Sierra Leone's population have access to electricity. 50% of urban population and 5% of rural population have access to electricity⁴¹. Policy makers, donors, and international development organizations have made universal access to electricity a priority in Sierra Leone. The Government's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023 (MTNDP) outlines key policies to address these issues, namely plans to increase investment in low-cost renewable energy (solar, hydro, wind, and biomass) production and distribution.

The UNOPS-implemented project 'Rural Renewable Energy Project (RREP)' started in 2016 with financial support from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has to-date, installed 87 clean energy mini-grids handed over to the Ministry of Energy (MoE) for sustainable management, operations and maintenance, with leases subsequently issued for private sector management. So far, notable development progress has been made in the 82 rural communities that benefited from the grids, in terms of providing access to clean energy-based electricity for homes, public buildings, and businesses.

3.4.5 Water

Water quality and availability are highly vulnerable to climate impacts. Shifting rainfall patterns have led to decreasing access to water and reduced flow of rivers and streams. In addition, sea level rise is causing saltwater intrusion and reduced fresh groundwater reserves. Coastal erosion is a significant challenge in the country, with areas such as Yaliboya^[1], Konakridee, Lakka, Hamilton and Plantain Island already witnessing coastline shifting of about 4-6 meters per year^[2]. It is estimated that 26.4km² will be lost to the sea if no action is taken and that by 2050, 1881 buildings

⁴¹ Ministry of Energy Development presentation at Partnership Committee (DEPAC) meeting, June 2021

will be affected by sea level rise with costs amounting to US\$46.8 million⁴³. Increased risks of flooding will lead to damaged water infrastructure and increased health risks such as in increased propagation of water-borne diseases.

3.4.6 Food and Nutrition Security

Food insecurity and malnutrition is a critical challenge in Sierra Leone exacerbated by climate vulnerabilities, market distortion, pandemics, and lately the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, all contributing to the persistence of food insecurity. The Ukrainian crisis has triggered an upward huge effect on petroleum price (from SLE 10/liter in January 2022 to SLE 21/liter in December 2022). This has further affected food commodity prices, due to high transportation and transaction costs. In October 2022, the price of rice had increased by 35%, and cassava by 33% compared to the same month in 2021. During this same period, the local currency (SLE) depreciated by 41% against the USD. This trend affects poor households' capability to purchase food, resulting in a downward effect on consumption and nutrition. According to Market Bulletin⁴², the purchase of a kilogram of imported and local rice by unskilled laborers reduced from 2.4 & 1.8 to 1.7 & 1.3 respectively from June 2021 to June 2022. This means a loss of purchasing power of respectively 29% and 27% (almost one-third) within a year for the main staple food.

The Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2021 released in February 2022 revealed that overall prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) among children under-five was at 5.2 per cent -- similar to the level in 2017.⁴³ The survey reported an *increase* in GAM rates in 6 districts⁴⁴ and an increase in severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rates in 8 districts⁴⁵ when compared to the 2017 survey results, reflecting effects of the destabilizing economic shocks discussed above on the nutrition security of vulnerable populations, especially under-five children. In 2022, 259,067 children aged 6–59 months were reported to be suffering from acute malnutrition, of which 195,705 are moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) cases and 63,362⁴⁶ are SAM cases.

The August 2022 lean season Food Security Monitoring System analysis found that, partly due to the impacts of the Ukraine conflict, overall food insecurity reached unprecedented levels in Sierra Leone, with 81 percent of households classified as *food insecure* and 14.9 percent as *extremely food insecure*⁴⁷.

According to the provisional 'Cadre Harmonise' analysis of October 2022, cereal production decreased by 8.14% from 1,504,191Mt in 2021 to 1,381,720 Mt in 2022. Another Assessment report also indicated that crop production difficulties were reported by 87% of households interviewed, with prevalence across the entire country.⁴⁸ Much of the difficulties reported were related to low quality seeds, limited access to agricultural inputs, constrained access to labour, and prevalence of pest attacks and diseases. The report also revealed that many livestock producers

⁴² June 2022: Terms of Trade (ToT) of daily labour wages of unskilled workers to the main Sierra Leonean staple food (rice):

⁴³ Ministry of Health and Sanitation. 2021. Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2021. Freetown: UNICEF.

⁴⁴ Western Area Urban, Bonthe, Western Area Rural, Pujehun, Kenema and Kailahun

⁴⁵ Western Area Urban, Kenema, Koinadugu, Western Area Rural, Kailahun, Bombali, Kono, and Moyamba

⁴⁶ The combined severe acute malnutrition (cSAM) rate among children under-five years of age is 1.4% (Source: Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2021). cSAM is an aggregated indicator defined as all cases of GAM by WHZ <-2, MUAC <125 mm, and/or bilateral pitting oedema.

⁴⁷ WFP Country brief, October 2022, Sierra Leone

⁴⁸ Data In Emergencies Monitoring Brief – round 5 & 6, April 2022 Sierra Leone

had difficulties producing (86% of respondents) and selling livestock (57%). The main production constraints reported were lack of or limited availability of pasture lands (61%), limited access to veterinary services (56%), and livestock death or disease (50%).⁴⁹ Fish production came to a standstill during the one-month lockdown of fishing activities from the high seas in April 2022 which happens to be the breeding period for fish. Livelihoods of households depending on the production and sale of fish and its products were most severely affected. During this period, supply was limited, negatively impacting on nutritional status of households for which fish is the main source of animal protein.

3.5 Social exclusion analysis:

3.5.1 Education

Education Attainment

In 2018, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) launched the Free Quality School Education Programme (FQSE) to help ensure access to education for all children in Sierra Leone. Total school enrolment is 3,131,440, according to 2021 annual school census. Of this total 49% male pupils and 51% female pupils enrolled⁵⁰. Under this national programme, the government provides subsidies to individual schools based on enrolment so that school fees are no longer levied. Under the FQSE programme, the government also supports the provision of teaching and learning materials, examination fees, and a school feeding programme, with plans for teacher incentives in rural areas, school construction and rehabilitation, and teacher training. However, these goals are not yet fully implemented, and one factor that contributes to poor learning outcomes is a pupil-to-teacher ratio of 61:1 in government primary schools⁵¹.

According to the 2021 School Census Report, enrolment of girls is slightly higher than boys across the education subsectors except at senior secondary level, where there are important disparities to the disadvantage of girls. The 2021 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) survey report data showed that students were 37.4 per cent males as compared to 62.6 per cent females in technical, vocational, education and training institutions. At the primary school level, while the country has made considerable progress in terms of enrolment, retention rate remains equally low for both girls (40 per cent) and boys (40 per cent).

Girls' education is shrouded in challenges related to early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and unwillingness of parents to support girls in their educational pursuits. Another challenge is long distances required to access schools and associated risks particular to girls while walking to school. Needing to live with relatives in another town to facilitate school attendance has also been cited as a reason that girls drop out of school. Those who are sent to school in neighbouring chiefdoms or communities are generally at greater risk of experiencing GBV and teenage pregnancy.

As part of the FQSE programme, the government strengthened the mechanisms for decentralized education representation through use of Ward Education Committees. These localized structures

⁴⁹ *Data In Emergencies Monitoring Brief – round 5 & 6, April 2022 Sierra Leone*

⁵⁰ 2021 Annual School Census report

⁵¹ 2021 Annual School Census, MBSSE

are responsible for monitoring of education programmes and reporting information throughout the year.

The advent of the Free Quality School Education re-ignited the need for more sustained and equitable provision of school-related services. At the top of this agenda is school health services, which are viewed as a pre-requisite for quality education. The GoSL has always acknowledged that health and education are the two cornerstones of human capital development, recognizing the need to provide each child with the tools required to be the best that they can be physically, socially, and mentally⁵².

The overall situation of children (especially girls) and their educational limitations are cause for concern. The 2020 Human Capital Index⁵³ data showed that a child born in Sierra Leone today will be 36 percent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health. This is lower than the average for the Sub-Saharan Africa region and for low-income countries overall. While a Sierra Leonean girl is expected to spend 9.7 years in school (9.5 years for boys), she only acquires 4.9 years (4.8 years for boys) worth of learning which is equivalent to 4.8 years of learning loss due to the limitations of the education system discussed above.

Findings from the 2022 UNICEF research on School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV), as well as the 2021 Out-of-School Children (OOSC) study, highlight teenage pregnancy, child marriage, poverty, and violence in and around schools as some of the main barriers to adolescent girls' access to and retention in school.

The goal of the National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools 2021 (a complement to the FQSE) is to guarantee that all boys and girls, especially those who are normally marginalized or excluded, have access to and inclusion in schools throughout Sierra Leone. The inclusion of traditionally underrepresented populations, such as pregnant girls and parent-learners, boys and girls with disabilities, boys and girls from rural and underserved areas, and boys and girls from low-income households, is a specific focus of the policy.

Policies obviously have limitations, and one key shortcoming of an inclusion policy is that, despite its best efforts, it does not provide for all children in Sierra Leone who experience exclusion and marginalization. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary (MBSSE) is simply unable to satisfy the learning needs of all marginalized students at present due to resource and other capacity limitations.

3.5.2 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

The Sierra Leone Country 'Situational Analysis Report' prepared for the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2021 found that the socioeconomic situation is difficult for many persons with disabilities in a nation where about 70% of people live below the national

⁵² *School Health Policy, GoSL, pg. i*

⁵³ *Sierra Leone (worldbank.org)*

poverty line. Many rely on begging and are homeless, while some live in collective shelters created and maintained by people with disabilities. Some communities of persons with disabilities (both residential and non-residential) have set up skill training facilities, but most persons with disabilities find it difficult to get a steady source of income. They face discrimination on a daily basis, and many from rural areas move to the capital, Freetown, to escape struggles they experience in their communities.

Many of the Persons with Disability Act of 2011's key provisions have not been implemented⁵⁴, and the majority of these gaps are related to a lack of resources. The provision of assistive devices and rehabilitation services, frequently cited as necessary to access other essential services such as education, WASH, health, and transportation, is most important from the perspective of persons with disabilities when considering preconditions for disability inclusion. Other significant gaps include the absence of accurate statistical information on persons with disabilities and their living circumstances, a routinely updated data management system, and a standardized method for the evaluation, identification, registration, and certification of people with disabilities in order to direct benefits to eligible recipients.

4.0 Compliance with international human rights, norms, and standards

Sierra Leone is a party to key international and regional human rights treaties and has committed to enact human rights-related legislations consistent with the obligation to domesticate international and regional treaties. The GEWE Act 2022 illustrates a remarkable achievement in the quest for the advancement of women's rights and elimination of persistent discrimination which disproportionately impacts on women's rights.

Some national legislations are still to align with the country's international and regional human rights obligations, while others need to be domesticated to address the gap between them and international obligations. A few examples relate to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women including harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence. This requires criminalizing female genital mutilation (FGM), clarifying and harmonizing various national legislations on the issue of minimum age for marriage, as well as addressing provisions contained in the criminal code that contradict the country's international human rights obligations. It is just as important that Sierra Leone takes necessary steps to ratify international legal instruments on human rights which it has not yet ratified, including the Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

In September 2022, Sierra Leone enacted two new land management-related laws, "The Customary Land Rights Act 2022" and "The National Land Commission Act 2022". These address deep inequalities and discrimination in the ownership and control of land in the provinces by giving rights to all Sierra Leoneans to own land anywhere, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, and

⁵⁴ perspective of persons with disabilities, provision of assistive devices and rehabilitation services that are often required to access other essential services such as education, WASH, health, and transportation has not been met. The People with disability Act (PwDA) prescribes many special rights for persons with disabilities, however it leaves the question of identification of beneficiaries unresolved. Section 7 mentions a Medical Board "set up by the ministry responsible for health to issue Permanent Disability Certificates," however, such a board has never been established and operationalized by MOHS and there is no wide-scale system in place to issue such certificates.

other identities. In addition, it prohibits harmful activities in protected, conserved, and ecologically sensitive areas and safeguards against environmental degradation. The laws give rural landowners more rights to control their land as concerns large-scale mining and agricultural businesses and provide for adequate compensation of landowners for utilization of their land for such purposes, allowing for informed negotiation over pricing.

Parliament enacted the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act 2022, which increased the penalties for trafficking and other forms of forced labour. On 28th February 2022, the Government and partners held the first national conference on human trafficking, convened on the theme “Strengthening National Frameworks and Stakeholders Network to Stop Modern Slavery”. The conference sought to mobilise relevant stakeholders to support the operationalization of a ‘Trafficking-in-Persons’ hotline and put together a framework for an anti-human trafficking strategy for the next five years.⁵⁵

The country’s reporting record to treaty bodies on international agreements shows that it is overdue with respect to most of its initial and periodic reports, including an initial report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, long overdue since 1998. On the positive side, Sierra Leone continues to participate in the Universal Periodic Review Process (UPR) and the recommendations from that mechanism are mainstreamed into the development programmes of State institutions.

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) continued to expand its activities with the creation of new directorates. Also in 2022, the HRCSL organized eight meetings of the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) co-chaired by the Senior Human Rights Advisor. The HRWG dialogue platform fosters human rights-related engagement among state and non-state actors, as well as synergies aimed at articulating critical human rights concerns in the country. The Commission continued to collaborate with Government Ministries, the Police, the judiciary, and other entities and received technical and financial support from the United Nations. The commission retained its ‘A’ status following the October 2022 session of the GANHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation⁵⁶. However, the HRCSL remains not adequately funded to effectively deliver on its mandate.

The Commission has presence only at regional headquarter towns and relies heavily on the support from the District Human Rights Committees (DHRC) and the joint UNDP-Irish Aid funding to implement activities within its strategic plan. The Sierra Leone Police lack the requisite capacity to respond to peaceful protests and to perform effective crowd management. Police responses have often resulted in violence and infringement on citizen’s right to peaceful assembly, association and life. Overcrowding in correctional centres beyond the capacity of facilities and prolonged detention continue to characterize the country’s detention facilities. The prolonged delay in passing the Criminal Procedure Bill into law will continue to affect human rights of accused persons, leading to further congestion of correctional centres and delayed trials. The current use of the remand system also contributes to overcrowding in the correctional centres. For example, as of 2nd

⁵⁵ *Sierra Leone hold first National Conference on Trafficking in Persons*, <https://rodakar.iom.int/news/sierra-leone-holds-first-national-conference-trafficking-persons>.

⁵⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/nhri/global-alliance-national-human-rights-institutions-ganhri/session-reports-and-recommendations-sub-committee-accreditation>

November 2022, the Pademba Male facility that was constructed to host 324 inmates had over 1,750 inmates. This has serious implications for human rights of persons deprived of their liberty.

5. National vision with links to regional and global frameworks/goals

Sierra Leone has worked to ensure the integration of the SDGs at all levels of national, sectoral, and sub-national policy, as well as in the implementation of programmes where monitoring of the interaction between the three dimensions (economic, social, and environmental) in service delivery is needed. The establishment of the Sierra Leone Ministry of Environment in 2019, in addition to the existence of the Environmental Protection Agency, was due to an increased understanding of the need to strengthen the balance of these three dimensions in the country's development.

The country's Medium Term National Development Plan 2019-2023 (MTNDP) is well aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063. The clusters in the MTNDP are to a significant extent anchored in the SDGs and the Agenda 2063. The following issues are highly prioritized by the Government in the plan:

- Human Capital Development
- Gender, Environment, and Climate Change
- Decentralisation
- Science, Technology and Innovation
- Disability Issues

To further demonstrate its commitment to the 2030 Agenda and 2063 Africa Union frameworks, the Government has established a National Monitoring and Evaluation Department which collaborates with the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development to continuously monitor progress made in the achievement of targets in these frameworks.

6.0 Progress towards 2030 Agenda and SDGs in the Country

Sierra Leone's SDG implementation efforts have been largely impacted by various global factors, which include the Russia/Ukraine conflict, the COVID 19 pandemic and climate- change related disasters that have hit the country over the past several years. Sierra Leone sustained her principal focus on the country's accelerator SDGs projected to the UN in 2019: SDG4 (on inclusive education) and SDG16 (peace, justice and inclusive societies, emphasising building strong institutions). The two goals remain leading dimensions to the transformational agenda of the state.

On SDG 16, The government has done tremendously well in this area on a number of fronts. The state had perennially suffered from acute unavailability of magistrate courts and state defense counsels especially in the rural areas, thereby engendering increase caseload of people in remand

without indictment and trial. Accordingly, GoSL recently appointed 15 more High Court Judges and 11 more magistrates across the country with a special focus on rural access to justice. Also, a total of more than 400,000 including foreign nationals have benefitted from legal aid interventions since the Legal Aid Board of Sierra Leone was established in May 2015. The Board focused its interventions on promoting access to justice for the underprivileged providing them with free legal representation, legal advice, and related services across the board, including persons in pre-trial detention and prisons. According to the rapid impact assessment conducted during the 2021 VNR process, a total of 73 (88.0 percent) said feeding came regularly, against 10 (12.0 percent) responding to the negative. In terms of timeliness of supply of support, 63 (75.9 percent) said the support came timely, against 20 (24.1 percent) who said it did not. When asked as to which classes (from 1 to 6) in the schools were covered in the support, they indicated that all classes benefited from the feeding programme; with a total of 30,440 pupils reported to have benefited since 2018 in the 83 schools interviewed.

When it comes to tracking progress, training on the development of SDG indicators and metadata has been conducted for various Ministries, Departments and Agencies. This is giant step towards the planned establishment of an ‘SDG Monitoring Platform’ that would serve as a one-stop data repository/hub/portal that would be incredibly useful for monitoring the National Development Plan and ensuring localized SDGs monitoring.

The country’s regular production of a Voluntary National Review (VNRs) is instrumental to raising and sustaining SDG awareness. The process of consultation and data collection has involved public sensitization on the SDGs and their key principles, including balancing the three dimensions.

Goals 1 Poverty

The country has made more gains in urban poverty reduction, currently estimating 34.8 percent (on 2018 survey calculation), compared to 46.9 in 2003/04; against rural poverty at 73.9 percent, compared to 78.7 percent in 2003/04—suggesting poverty remains a rural phenomenon in the country. Which is depicted in the multidimensional poverty index, the urban sector figure is currently estimated to be 37.6 percent (on 2017 survey calculation), compared to 44.8 percent in 2015. This index jumped up from 78.9 percent to 86.3 percent for rural areas during 2015-2017. National level poverty measures 56.8 percent currently (on upward adjusted poverty line) or 47.3 percent on the same poverty line, compared to 52.9 percent in 2011 and 66.4 percent in 2003/04; multidimensional poverty overall dropping from 88.2 percent in 2003, to 68.3 percent in 2015 and 64.8 percent currently. Extreme poverty (a major measure of hunger reduction performance) follows the trend.

The poverty rate is estimated to have increased during the pandemic in early 2020. However, since 2021, poverty is estimated to have declined, albeit slowly, because GDP growth occurred mostly in the capital-intensive mining sector. These estimates are based on real per capita GDP growth and don’t consider the additional distributional impact of food and energy inflation, which have a proportionately higher effect on the poorer segments of the population.

The poverty rate (at PPP US\$2.15/day) is expected to decline moderately given the pick-up in economic growth, driven largely by the mining sector. Reducing poverty and food insecurity

would require raising agricultural productivity, which employs nearly 80 percent of the population, and creating jobs outside agriculture for low-skilled workers⁵⁷.

Goal 3: Health

According to the Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, under-five mortality rate in Sierra Leone fell from 141 per 1,000 live births in 2015 to 109 in 2020 and to 105 in 2021, reflecting notable progress on this issue. Infant and neonatal mortalities also show a declining trend. Even with these gains, a recent analysis shows that Sierra Leone is one of the 54 countries requiring urgent acceleration of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target 3.2 on child mortality. Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance (CHAMPS) data show that malnutrition is in the causal pathway of 49 per cent of post-neonatal under-five deaths.

The deteriorating the food security situation in the country discussed above is rapidly becoming a nutritional crisis affecting child survival and requires mitigation measures to address the immediate and basic needs of vulnerable households. Despite nutrition screening coverage at below 25 per cent, a 2-percentage point increase was observed in the number of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admissions to the integrated management of acute malnutrition (IMAM) programme over the year. (See also Section 3.4.6).

The Ministry of Health and Sanitation has carried out activities towards the attainment of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The Ministry organised the first ever National Health Summit in April 2022 bringing together over 600 participants leading to the signing of aide memoire between MOHS and its Development Partners. One of the key outputs of this aide memoire is the development of an 18-month workplan from July 2022 to December 2023.

Accelerator- Goal 4: Inclusive Education

According to the Sierra Leone 2021 Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report, more than 90 per cent of 249 pupils, 252 parents, and 83 school administrators interviewed said they were generally satisfied with the Free Quality School Education Programme (FQSEP) in the 7 provincial districts visited. The Government of Sierra Leone launched the Free Quality School Education programme that covers: a) school feeding support; b) free tuition; and c) provision of core teaching and learning materials. The 2021 VNR report further revealed that parents having children in primary schools supported by the government could save about NLe800 (about US\$80) per pupil per year, funds which can be invested, for example, in a small business in rural communities or used in meeting basic health needs for a family, thereby positively impacting realization of other SDGs, such as SDG1 (reducing poverty), SDG2 (ending hunger), and SDG3 (health).

As a result of the Free Quality School Education programme, for which the Government increased the budget allocation to Le1.7 trillion (about 22 per cent increase) in 2022, school enrolment was 3,131,440 in 2021, and gender parity at primary level was maintained, with the ratio of girl to boy enrolment estimated at 1.0 in 2020/21, compared to 1.03 in 2019/20 and 2018/19⁵⁸. Among the

⁵⁷ World Bank Macro Poverty Study, October 2022

⁵⁸ 2021 VNR report

several challenges to overcome in the education sector are the limited number of qualified and motivated teachers to match school enrolment, inadequate school supervision, and relative delay in payment of teachers' salaries and disbursement of subsidies to schools.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Progress has been made on key indicators for gender, such as the share of women out of the total number employed in non-agricultural activities, which currently stands at 45 per cent, compared with 41 per cent in 2013. Estimates of the proportion of women experiencing sexual violence declined from 11 per cent in 2013 to 7.0 percent in 2019. However, some indicators show deterioration, such as the percentage of women who have experienced physical violence since age 15, increasing from 56 per cent in 2013 to 61 per cent in 2019. The share of female members of parliament remains low at 13.6 per cent against the 30 per cent threshold now in the GEWE Act, although it is higher than the 12 per cent recorded in 2018/19⁵⁹. The share of female local councillors stands at 18.7 per cent against a 50/50 target. Among the challenges to overcome are limited awareness of gender equality topics, persisting gender stereotypes, and a low literacy rate among women.

Goal 6: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is a human rights issue. It is essential for improvements in health, nutrition, education, gender equality, and sustainable economic growth and development.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (2017) and WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2021) on national water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) service access indicate that in Sierra Leone, only 5.1 million people have access to a basic level of water supply⁴¹. This means the remaining 2.9 million people do not have access to an improved source of water. Related to this, an estimated six million people do not have access to basic sanitation. Of these, approximately 1.3 million (25 percent of rural population and 5 percent of urban population) practice open defecation. Sixty-four percent (5.1 million people) do not have hand washing facilities on their premises. Significant disparities and inequities exist between urban and rural communities; access to safe water sources stands at 75 per cent in urban areas compared to 47 per cent in rural areas. Only one in five schools in Sierra Leone provides accessible basic sanitation services for children, and 11 percent of the health care facilities do not have toilets.

The WASH services portfolio in Sierra Leone is fragmented across various ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), namely Ministry of Water Resources (water supply), Ministry of Health and Sanitation through the Directorate of Health and Environmental Sanitation (hygiene, sanitation and WASH in health care facilities), Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (WASH in Schools) and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (management of decentralized WASH services at district/community levels).

Others actors include utilities that are established by acts of Parliament, such as the Guma Valley Water Company (GVWC), which is responsible for urban water supply in Freetown; and Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO), covering rural WASH services including small towns, Freetown (Western Area Rural) and other major cities (Bo, Kenema, Makeni). Furthermore, the

⁵⁹ 2019 DHS report

provision of WASH services in rural communities is a devolved function of central government to the District Councils across the country.

Goal 8: Decent Work

According to the 2021 VNR report, special attention has been paid to protecting against child labour, ensuring a motivated work force, and fostering that is consistent with environmental sustainability. The percentage of children engaged in child labour declined from 44.4 per cent in 2013 to 29.3 percent in 2017⁶⁰. The minimum wage was increased by 20 per cent from Le 500,000 to Le 600,000 in 2022 for workers both in the private and public sectors. The legislative and policy environment around work is generally improving. There is an existence of Comprehensive Decent Work Programme, for instance, leading to the development of the Labour Market Information System and the National HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy, and work towards facilitating domestication of the International Convention on the Elimination of Child Labour. Challenges to overcome include limited public sensitization on the consequences of child labour, weak enforcement of related legislations and policies, and limited finance to support child development⁶¹.

Goals 12: Responsible Production and Consumption and Goal 13: Climate Action

A strategic step in this domain was the establishment of the Ministry of Environment in 2019 to increase governmental investment in environmental management and sustainability. Also significant was the establishment of the National Disaster Management Agency as a standalone institution from the Office of National Security, to scale up national preparedness and response for natural disasters. According to the 2021 VNR report, the Government in 2019-2020, conducted coastal vulnerability assessments at Municipal and Chiefdom levels at six pilot sites and determined the key climate-sensitive sectors and hazards in these communities. It also assessed the vulnerability of specific economic sectors under different climate change scenarios through the years 2025, 2050, and 2100; all revealing that the coastal vulnerability ranking for the pilot communities was at the medium level. Sustained technical and financial support is required for key regulatory and technical institutions in the environmental sector and elsewhere to drive climate action.

Accelerator Goal 16: Peace and Justice

The government's legal aid assistance programme has been expanded to all 16 districts of Sierra Leone⁶². According to the 2021 VNR report, more than 70 per cent of the beneficiaries of the scheme said they were satisfied with the legal assistance rendered to them, ranging from free legal representation to general legal advice and application of alternative dispute resolution remedies. The report also revealed that 98 of the 99 low-income beneficiaries interviewed said that they received the assistance free-of-cost.

More than 400,000 persons (many of them extremely poor and freed from long-served prison remand without having had trial and indictment) have benefitted from legal assistance since the

⁶⁰ 2021 VNR report

⁶¹ 2021 VNR report

⁶² 2021 VNR report

National Legal Aid Board was established in 2015⁶³. As of 2021, more Magistrates and Judges have been deployed in rural districts since the last country VNR Report in 2019, aimed to reinforce access to justice in remote communities⁶⁴. A key challenge to SDG 17 recorded in the 2021 VNR report is the need to increase financial support to the justice sector.

Goal 17 Means of Implementation and Global Partnerships for Development

While the country was not entirely spared the extraordinary fiscal and socio-economic challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, it generally remained resilient in the face of this scourge, managing to continue financing for key programmes. This was in large part due to the sustained cooperation it maintained with its development partners, a number of whom scaled up and/or repurposed assistance during this period to keep the economy afloat. Nonetheless, domestic revenues dipped at the peak of the pandemic in 2020, affecting not only the delivery of the country's accelerator SDGs relating to education and justice, but also the delivery of all other SDGs through the implementation of the National Development Plan⁶⁵.

7.0 Leave no one behind (LNOB)

7.1 Women and girls

Sierra Leone endeavours to ensure the principle of LNOB (leave no one behind) is captured in all government efforts. Sierra Leone has an estimated population of 8,141,343, with more women (51%) than men (49%) and a population growth rate of 2.1% annually⁶⁶. The behaviours of the population are heavily influenced by cultural and religious norms. Key gender-related indices of the country include female life expectancy, estimated at 57 years⁶⁷, maternal mortality ratio, currently at 717 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, child marriage (before age 18) at 30%, gender-based violence prevalence at 52% and female genital mutilation (FGM) prevalence at 83% (one of the highest globally)⁶⁸.

In August, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women reacted to the death of a 21-year-old student in the Bonthe district following an act of female genital mutilation by issuing a public statement calling for stronger measures to prevent and penalise female genital mutilation in Sierra Leone. Government representatives, community leaders and CSOs positively reacted to this public release and condemned FGM practices.

There remain systematic GBV and discriminatory practices in school environments and communities that hinder girls' access to free quality education. These include early marriage, rape, harassment, sex for grades and stereotypical ideas. Within higher institutions of learning including the tertiary and university, there remain stereotypical ideas which discourage girls and women from doing certain courses.

⁶³ 2021 VNR report

⁶⁴ 2021 VNR report

⁶⁵ 2021 VNR report

⁶⁶ 2021 World Bank Estimation 2021. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

⁶⁷ SWOP 2020

⁶⁸ Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, 2019

Access for women to good-paying jobs remains a challenge. They are not given equal opportunity in the formal sector⁶⁹.

On November 15, 2022, the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) Bill 2022 was enacted by the Parliament of Sierra Leone. The GEWE Act (2022) is considered to be progressive and inclusive, and includes the following provisions:

- At least 30% of all government positions for women
- At least 30% of all positions for women in private sector companies with 25 or more employees
- Financial inclusion for women
- Gender mainstreaming for all sectoral policies and legal frameworks
- Gender-responsive budgeting by government
- Creation of a gender unit in all MDAs
- In the selection of cabinet and other Presidential appointments, the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone may appoint women to at least 30% of the positions.

7.1.1 Information Management Systems

To further strengthen multisectoral capacity and coordination of child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) response in the country, the Government of Sierra Leone is currently developing a Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) to harmonize documentation and reporting on GBV case management nationally, whilst also upgrading its Child Protection Information Management System (PRIMERO). The GBVIMS is implemented in tandem with the newly developed Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for GBV survivor response and the National Gender-Based Violence Referral Protocol (2022) to enhance the timely provision of services. PRIMERO is an open-source software platform that helps social services, humanitarian and development workers manage protection-related data, with tools that facilitate case management, incident monitoring and family tracing and reunification.

7.2.1 Child Rights and Social Work Bills (2022)

The review of Sierra Leone's Child Rights Act (2007) has been finalized and a new bill is ready for approval by Parliament. The bill recommends abolishment of corporal punishment and FGM for children under the age of 18. It states the minimum age of marriage as 18 years and repeals outdated child justice laws. A Social Work Bill (2022) that will provide a legal framework for the practice of social work in the country, ensuring licensing of social workers and adherence to a national code of ethics for social workers and para social workers, is also being developed. Meanwhile, a draft policy on the Diversion and Alternative to Detention for child offenders is available.

7.2.2 Positive parenting

In a bid to reduce widespread, culturally acceptable corporal punishment of children in Sierra Leone, a national curriculum is now available to strengthen the ability of parents/caregivers to

⁶⁹ GEWE Policy-2022

provide a protective environment and ensure the physical and psychological well-being of their children. A pool of 47 facilitators from five districts can now deliver training on positive parenting techniques for raising children of different age groups, (0–5, 6–10, and 11–17 years), geared towards: reducing harsh or abusive parenting; improving positive and responsive parenting; and better decision-making processes within families for the protection of children. So far, a total of 3,158 parents and caregivers (Male - 1,154, Female - 2,004) have been trained.

7.2.3 Teenage pregnancy and child marriage

The National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy (NSRTP) is in the process of assessing its five-year strategic plan that expired in December 2022 to determine next steps and priorities. The newly developed Standard Operating Procedures for establishment of Safe Spaces (2021), continued to guide safe space operation nationally, with the active monitoring by the National Secretariat to ensure adherence to prescribed guidelines. Safe spaces are meant to equip adolescent boys and girls with life skills to be able to make healthy lifestyle choices including learning about how to prioritize their safety and well-being, sexual and reproductive health, how to identify and report GBV, and ways to challenge existing social norms and traditions. So far more than 36,000 adolescents have gone through this programme. Likewise, 30 communities in Bonthe, Pujehun and Tonkolili Districts have developed and implemented action plans with local authorities aimed at reducing child marriage and teenage pregnancy. These community actions have promoted open dialogue around children’s issues and fostered some behaviour change in communities.

7.2.4 Religious leaders

Religious leaders remain pivotal in Sierra Leone’s development landscape, and they have been fully engaged with partners to promote healthy family behaviours including birth registration and avoidance of harmful practices like child marriage, FGM and violent discipline in their communities. Using their newly developed *faith-based message booklet*, the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRC-SL) successfully engaged 223,406 people nationwide, including 10,221 young people, in intergenerational dialogues to support the rights of adolescent girls and boys.

7.2.5 Birth Registration

The National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) has begun the roll out of its digital birth and death notification mobile application through Community Health Workers in 11 hospitals in the Western Area, resulting in real-time registration of births with the Government’s newly introduced National Identification Number (NIN) directly generated from the NCRA database. This effort has led to an increase in the issuance of securitized birth certificates to children at birth (for both in- and out-of-hospital deliveries) within 90 days, contributing to closing the gap between birth registration and certification in the Western Area. This shortened turnaround time between registration and certification (actual receipt of birth certificates) has seen more willingness by parents to register the births of their children. Plus, the integration of the Birth and Death Registration Policy (2021) and the National Community Health Workers (CHW) Policy (2021) aims at overcoming persistent systemic and end-user bottlenecks that have in the past undermined

birth registration in the country. So far, a total of 4,691 newly recruited CHWs (1,536 female; 3,155 male) from eight districts (Bonthe, Falaba, Karene, Koinadugu, Moyamba, Pujehun and Tonkolili) have been trained on birth and death registration.

7.2.6 Child Protection

Government's capacity for prevention and response to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children and women continues to increase, with a total of 55,270 children, (30,887 female; 24,383 male) having accessed case management, psychosocial support, family tracing and alternative care, legal aid, and child-friendly police services from January to June 2022. Enabling factors for this gain include linkages established between the formal child protection system and community mechanisms, leading to increased awareness about prevention and referral protocols; the institutionalization of social work education within five higher learning institutions including the Civil Service Training College; and, the implementation of the Social Workforce Human Resource Strategy that resulted in the recruitment and deployment of 110 social workers countrywide.

Continued investment in Social Workforce strengthening has seen an improvement in prevention and response mechanisms nationally, enabling children to access timely and essential services for their recovery and rehabilitation. The Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police was able to respond to 2,839 child survivors (1,883 girls; 956 boys) of violence. A total of 1,192 of the 1,883 girls were victims of sexual violence and 460 were victims of domestic violence. Also, 525 children (91 girls; 434 boys) in conflict with the law were supported by the FSU. From January to June 2022, the Government's Legal Aid Board provided legal education and legal representation to 47,970 children (27,040 girls; 20,930 boys) and facilitated the discharge, acquittal and/or bail of 867 children (727 boys; 140 girls) in the justice system.

7.2.7 Social Protection

In 2022, both the National Social Protection Strategy and the National Social Protection Bill were validated. Validation of the bill represents a step towards formalization of the right to social protection of children and their families, as well as strengthened coordination in the sector. The strategy sets out a roadmap towards reaching the ambitious policy goal of universal social protection by 2040, as laid down in the 2020 National Social Protection Policy. The social protection strategy adopts a life-cycle approach, recognising the age-specific risks and vulnerabilities people are faced with throughout their lives. It introduces the programme option of child grants, and places emphasis on continued implementation of school meals and piloting social protection approaches to enhance school attendance. In 2022, efforts continued to expand the COVID-era Social Safety Net (SSN) programme to more households, along with continuation of COVID-19 Emergency Cash Transfers (ECT) and planning for a similar ECT programme in response to the current economic crisis. In total, 57,724 households with an estimated 166,245 children, received a cash transfer in 2022 under either the SSN or ECT programmes. Although there is a specific focus on reaching households with a person with disability in the SSN programme, there is still no available data on the number of children with disability reached with the social protection programme.

7.3 Youth

The context of high unemployment and pervasive poverty across the country constitutes the largest underlying root causes of youth left behind⁷⁰. The insufficient number of vocational and educational programmes which cater to youth represents another risk factor for youth left behind.

7.3.1 Youth Empowerment through Employment and Entrepreneurship.

Government takes youth employment as a priority given that the 2021 National Statistics Report indicated that the youth unemployment rate in Sierra Leone increased by 0.3 percentage points since 2020. At 10.77 percent, the youth unemployment rate thereby reached its highest value in 2020. According to Statistics Sierra Leone, about 55.7 percent of youth participate in the formal labour force, deriving labour income mainly from self-employment. It is with this background that the National Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Programme has been initiated through the Office of the Vice President, in partnership with the Ministries of Labour and Social Security, Technical and Higher Education, Trade and Industry, and Youth Affairs. An estimated 100,000 youths will benefit from the National Youth Empowerment Fund (NYEF) that has been established and was approved by the Government on 30th August 2022. The Fund aims to provide affordable and appropriate financial services, business development services (BDS), and strategic partnerships to beneficiaries, according to the Minister of Youth Affairs.

The NYEF will comprise contributions from the national treasury, statutory bodies, development partners, and international organizations to support young people across the country. The NYEF will create a revolving fund of SLL250 billion for the access to finance component; provide financial services and BDS to youth-owned and youth-focused enterprises; provide entrepreneurship, technical, and life training skills to youths; and facilitate the marketing of products and services of youth-owned enterprises in both domestic and international markets.

7.3.2 Persons with disabilities

Currently persons with disabilities (PwDs) face a range of problems accessing a disability certification which is required to access services to which they are entitled, causing issues for students to access free higher education and persons to access free health care. Efforts are underway with UN support to design a revised system for disability assessment and certification, which would be accessible to every PwD closer to their communities. However, funding to introduce this program nationwide is not yet secured. Related to this, there are limited provisions for early detection of disability in children and support through early intervention/community-based rehabilitation.

8. Cross-boundary, regional and sub-regional perspectives

There is a high flow of returned migrants to Sierra Leone, which falls within the top-5 of West African countries based on IOM data for Assisted Voluntary Program and Reintegration (AVRR) operations. The national context is characterized by significant irregular migration patterns, mostly comprised of male youth seeking to enhance their socioeconomic livelihoods abroad. While qualitative and quantitative data are scarce, (which has led the United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM) to identify data as a critical issue to be tackled), anecdotal evidence and programme-specific analyses indicate challenges at different levels. Firstly, the level of

⁷⁰ joint assessment mission on youth at risk in Sierra Leone- 2019

Trafficking in Persons (TiP) is concerning, with widespread practices of child trafficking within the country itself, as well as trends of forced labor trafficking of Sierra Leoneans nationals, largely towards the West Africa, Middle East, and Gulf regions.

The porous nature of the borders raises challenges for border management operations, especially considering widespread lack of resources for border control operations. Migrant flows are also impacted by regional and global phenomena such as climate change. Sierra Leone is among the most fragile countries in terms of capacity to withstand climate change-related shocks, including slow-onset and sudden disasters. Forced displacement is therefore a risk, due to potential flooding or landslides, erosion of coastlines including inhabited islands, as well as seasonal rain patterns affecting agricultural outputs. Similarly, with regard to transhumance of livestock, cross-border conflicts between herders and farmers have increased, resulting in tensions and conflicts that are potentially conducive to displacement.

Regional perspectives and key migration issues are regularly discussed within the context of the UNNM in Sierra Leone, which was established in 2021 and fully activated in 2022. The government of Sierra Leone submitted a report in the context of the global UNNM, which aims to assess progress made against the 23 objectives of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM). The UNNM will continue supporting the voluntary review process for the upcoming 2023 report and related activities.

Regional cooperation, involving processes and institutions such as the Mano River Union (MRU) intergovernmental organization, are key to advancing on issues of mutual interest among concerned countries including, but not limited to, TiP and border management.

The government of Sierra Leone has demonstrated its commitment and leadership for migration solutions in different ways, namely through the adoption of the National Policy on Migration in January 2022. Furthermore, in April 2022, the government passed the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migration Smuggling Act 2022, providing support for the national anti-trafficking task force. Challenges remain to translate policy prescriptions into operational and actionable realities due to the widespread lack of resources and technical capacities for effective public administration.

9. Financing landscape and opportunities

There have been interesting developments in the financial services sector in Sierra Leone over the past year. Sierra Leone re-denominated its currency (Leone), knocking off three zeroes, in a move to increase confidence in the currency and the entire financial system. This also necessitated financial service providers to re-calibrate their platforms to accommodate the change. With the launch of the second National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (2022-2026), digital financial services (DFS) continue to be a priority intervention area. Most banks have introduced either online banking or a mobile application, and offer integration with mobile money (e.g., wallet-to-bank and bank-to-wallet transfers). In addition, banks are embracing new “branch-less” or “branch-lite” alternatives to broaden their geographic reach and expand financial services to rural communities. Approximately half of the commercial banks surveyed have either already started rolling out *agent networks* or are piloting / have a plan to deploy agents.

Internet penetration in Sierra Leone is approximately 30%, according to a Digital Data Portal Report (2022). There are concentrated efforts of government, including private-public

partnerships, to catalyse investments towards having a more reliable network across the country. These could include having more telecommunication towers and use of fibre optic technology.

Approximately four banks have point-of-sale (POS) terminals deployed at strategic business and service points, such as supermarkets and hotels. Mobile money operators are also bringing on more merchants to allow for mobile money transactions at hotels, supermarkets, pharmacies, and other retail outlets. New merchant solutions such as QR scan codes are also being introduced into the market, although by just a few service providers. The introduction of the national switch (which will allow seamless interbank settlement) will prove to be a significant catalyst for digital finance in the country.

At this time when the risk of debt distress is high in Sierra Leone, the government has made domestic revenue mobilisation a priority through key policy reforms, including measures to strengthen the country's tax administration and remove costly tax exemptions. Despite some progress, challenges remain, and the government and development partners are deeply committed to addressing in the context of the Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP). Inflation remains high (42.71% in February 2023) in the mist of bottled-up economic growth, rapidly depreciating domestic currency which has lost almost 40% of its value between July and December 2022, and high energy prices, which combined effect further threatens progress in SDGs implementation. The COVID-19 shock disrupted the fiscal consolidation momentum of previous years and prompted the authorities to provide support through fiscal stimulus, including social transfers. The economic situation has been further worsened by the supply chain disruptions caused by the Ukraine-Russia crisis.

The Sierra Leone Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) was finalized in 2020 to boost development finance in Sierra Leone. Following the launch of the INFF in 2021, a 2-year Joint SDG Fund Project on 'Domestic Resource Mobilization' was developed to support the operationalization of the INFF in Sierra Leone. It supports actions to increase stakeholder engagement in revenue mobilization and to intensify financial literacy and digitization in Sierra Leone. Within the SDGs Fund Project and the INFF framework, UNDP has supported the National Revenue Authority (NRA) and the Fiscal Decentralization Unit of the Ministry of Finance improve tax compliance and revenue generation through

- Public-private dialogue on generation of local tax resources and formalizing the informal sector, aimed at enhancing tax compliance and reforms
- Hands-on training in revenue and expenditure management for fiduciary staff of local councils. In total, 22 local councils have received capacity building training.
- Operational support to the pilot Block Management System/ a neighborhood tax collection system in Waterloo and roll out of additional BMS in the Western Area. Since its establishment, the Waterloo Block office has made some gains. A Total of 1,131 potential taxpayers were covered and 157 informal businesses were integrated into the tax base through the pilot Waterloo BMS, 28 were run by female.

Another key development in expanding the financial landscape is a new Diaspora Finance initiative being explored for projects at the national level, with plans to eventually expand to the local level. The significant contribution of remittances in Sierra Leone (4.5% GDP in 2021)⁷¹ shows the huge potential to leverage further the overseas diaspora finance in catalyzing national development. It is important to mobilize diaspora capital and other innovative financing instruments to contribute to national, sub-national and municipal government efforts to finance development interventions. The diaspora plays a critical role in supporting sustainable development by transferring resources, knowledge and ideas, and integrating their countries of origin into the global economy. Financial flows from migrants and their descendants are at the heart of the relationship between migration and development. Raising more revenue and setting up innovative instruments to attract financing is one of the highest priorities for the Government of Sierra Leone. This work on Diaspora Finance is supported by UNDP, UNDCF and UN RCO within the INFF framework.

A Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Investor map was initiated with the UNDP support to provide market intelligence, help unlock private capital, facilitate the alignment of private investment for the SDGs and fill policy vacuum. The map is planned to be launched in 2023 and will be an investor guide for SDG investments in Sierra Leone. It will identify concrete, investable solutions to pressing needs in Sierra Leone.

Domestic resource mobilization in Sierra Leone is lower than the average in West Africa with the Revenue to GDP ratio of 17.61 percent in 2021, against 18.67 for the average ratio in West Africa and 21.53 on the continent (UNDP, 2022)⁷².

Women continue to face financial exclusion. According to the findings from the newly released UNDP report on *Barriers and Enablers of Women's Participation in Revenue Generation in Sierra Leone* (2023) some of the main constraints of women's participation domestic resource mobilization are : limited access to sustainable finance for business start-up and investments, lack of transparency and accountability in the use of tax revenue, limited tax information for rural communities, both for the public and businesses and lack of tax and loan resolution centres for rural communities, lack of legal frameworks to replace discriminatory laws and harmful practices against women in the country, disproportionate amount of time that women spend on unpaid work etc. The recent enactment of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act will create an enabling environment in promoting women's economic rights and thus participation in development finance.

In Sierra Leone, women account for a disproportionate share of the unbanked, with a 9.41 percentage point discrepancy between men (24.77 percent) and women in account ownership (Findex, 2018). Even though no legal restrictions prevent women from owning bank accounts, in 2017 in Sierra Leone, only about 15.36 percent of women (aged 15 years and older) owned an account at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider (according to 2018 Findex data). This results in women's economic exclusion as they do not have access to credit beyond informal money lenders and personal networks. The Sierra Leone government and partners

⁷¹ World Bank Data on Sierra Leone Remittance Inflows
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TR.F.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=SL>

⁷² UNDP Sierra Leone (2022). Assessing the potential impacts of the Ukraine-Russia conflict in Sierra Leone: A CGE analysis

have made some progress in their support to women, including those in rural areas and in borderlands, through the introduction of Monafa funds and other financial initiatives. However, support remains limited and critical gaps remain in providing the requisite tools, the enabling financial regulations and the capabilities required for women’s small- and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas to transition from the informal economy to the formal economy and scale up their business and contribute to increasing fiscal capacities in their districts and in the country (UNDP, 2023)⁷³.

Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) inflows were severely affected by the Ebola epidemic outbreak in 2014 (lowest FDI stock and inward flows since 2010). Since then, the Government has made strides to attract foreign investments but is still facing many challenges related to the succession of global crises. UNDP supports the work of the Government on Specialized Economic Zones (SEZs) which offer a potentially valuable tool to overcome existing constraints to attracting foreign direct investments (FDI) and growing exports. In collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, UNDP produced an evidence-based analysis to inform SEZ location selection and identify conditions required to set up efficient SEZs in the country that can facilitate new production and marketing networks, create linkages among domestic and foreign firms and investors, and hence increase firms’ abilities to expand their business into new markets and tap into opportunities offered by the AfCFTA.

10. Multidimensional SDG risk analysis

This section outlines key risks that have the potential to constrain the country’s SDG realization, organized by Risk Area.

SDG	Risk Area	Description	Scope	Risk factors
SDG 16, 17	Political Stability	Risk of increased political polarization as the country starts a new electoral cycle	Electoral management bodies display weak capacity to manage the electoral cycle and do not enjoy the trust of citizens.	Electoral process perceived as not credible; sporadic social unrests and disruption of the election preparation process; lack of acceptance of elections results and sporadic violence.
			Relevant institutions, such as the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), and CSOs play a critical role in	Lack of agreement between political parties to maintain peace in the country, while resorting to the Judiciary to

⁷³ UNDP Sierra Leone (2023). Barriers and Enablers of Women’s Participation in Revenue Generation in Sierra Leone

SDG	Risk Area	Description	Scope	Risk factors
			mitigating divergences between political parties	address divergences on electoral process.
			Increased inter-party tensions with lack of dialogue and disruption of the electoral preparation process	Widespread violence, particularly with involvement of young people.
	Democratic Space	Risks of budget constraints for inclusive electoral and institution building process and weak performance of democratic and human rights institutions.	Limited institutional capacity to perform effectively and respond to citizens' demands	Growing citizens' perception of discrimination and marginalization
			State institutions display weak performance and lack of independence	Progressive decrease of respect of citizens' democratic rights and freedoms and citizens' mistrust in government institutions
			Enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act 2022	Increased participation of women in democratic institutions and decision-making processes is unrealized
	Justice and Rule of Law	Risk to the fair, effective and comprehensive implementation, and application of the principles of justice, the rule of law and accountability	Justice institutions display weak performance and lack of independence	Women and girls and other vulnerable groups' access to justice hampered by social norms and lack of economic power
			Security forces lack capacity and tools to ensure use of international standards in crowd control techniques	Increased violent confrontations between young people and security forces
			Interference by authorities and heavy workload on magistrates and judges	Lack of access to justice for most vulnerable groups such as low-

SDG	Risk Area	Description	Scope	Risk factors
			causing delay in passing judgments	income groups and rural communities.
SDG 1,5,10, 17	Social cohesion, gender equality and non-discrimination	Risks to social harmony resulting from perceived regional and ethnic discrimination; increased social and gender inequalities and marginalization of youth.	Citizens' perception of discriminatory practices based on ethnic and regional biases	Increased grievances, social divisions and political unrests
			Gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse and breakdown in social and economic activities and national cohesion	Increased violence and discrimination against women and girls.
			Increased rural-urban divide and irregular migration, particularly of young people	Unmanaged urbanisation and increased number of slums in marginal urban areas, affecting the major towns' carrying capacities
SDG 4,6,7,9, 11, 17	Infrastructure and access to social services	Risks to the population resulting from a lack of and limitation on access to physical infrastructure, and/or basic social services.	Government's spending on social sectors and adequate provision of basic services remains low due to fiscal constraints of low domestic revenues and declining external support	Further marginalization and exclusion of the most vulnerable sub-populations (slum dwellers, women, children, people with disability, borderland communities, etc.)
			Human Capital Development programme remains the most important pillar of government's development strategy and receives government and donors' funds	Continuity of Free quality education to primary and secondary students undermined by financing gaps
			Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 coupled with impact of Ukraine-Russia war	Increased food insecurity and poverty rate.

SDG	Risk Area	Description	Scope	Risk factors
			deepens financial and economic crisis	
SDG 3, 17	Public Health	Risk to the population, the economy and stability of the country resulting from prolonged COVID-19 pandemic and resurgence of other diseases	Increase in preventable or treatable health issues.	Increased threat to health of the population
			Government maintains commitments to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates, childhood stunting, and teenage pregnancy	Consolidated efforts to improve the delivery of health care services to the most vulnerable population groups are not sustained
SDG 2, 17	Food security, agriculture and land	Risk to people resulting from increased food insecurity, low level of production, and insecurity of land tenure.	Food insecurity continues to worsen, combined with price increases and loss of livelihoods, especially in the informal sector	Increased health and social instability risks
			Competing priorities between diversification of agriculture to increase population's food security and extensive agriculture projects, e.g., palm oil, etc.	Increased rural-urban migration, expansion of informal sector, and unsustainable forms of livelihoods (illegal logging, sand mining, irregular mining, etc.)
			Approval of the new Land Bill and Land Commission.	Increased access to land, particularly for women remains unrealized
SDG 12, 13,14,1, 17	Environment and climate	Risks to the ecology of the country, its ecosystem and its people resulting from climate change and overexploitation of natural resources.	Increased risk of damaging impact to life and livelihoods of natural hazards and climate change	Internal migration, competition over resources, social unrest
			Over-exploitation of natural resources (timber, over-fishing, land, mineral, sand, etc.)	Depletion of resources and increased poverty level of the population, increased conflicts over access to resources
				Increased conflicts over access to land and natural resources

11. Stakeholder/ Partnership Analysis

This section outlines key stakeholders for advancing on the SDGs in Sierra Leone.

11.1 Executive Branch

Government ministries, departments and agencies each contribute to the SDGs in different ways, based on their specific mandate and their role in implementing the country's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023), which is rooted in the SDGs. This Plan contains eight policy clusters as follows:

- Policy Cluster 1 – Human capital development.
- Policy Cluster 2 – Diversifying the economy and promoting growth.
- Policy Cluster 3 – Infrastructure and economic competitiveness.
- Policy Cluster 4 – Governance and accountability for results.
- Policy Cluster 5 – Empowering women, children, adolescents, and persons with disability.
- Policy Cluster 6 – Youth employment, sports, and migration.
- Policy Cluster 7 – Addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience.
- Policy Cluster 8 – Means of implementation.

A key SDG partner is the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, which is the primary UN partner for the UNSDCF. Among other things, the Ministry led the development of the 2021 VNR, which entailed consultations with a range of stakeholders, including the House of Parliament, Civil Society Organizations, Audit Service Sierra Leone and the Anti-Corruption Commission. The Ministry is developing an SDG Monitoring Platform based in its 'Statistics Sierra Leone' unit and has requested technical support from UNCT.

It is important to note that the role of executive branch entities can be very different between the urban and rural areas. While those MDAs operating at the central/national level often play a leading role in policy and strategy development, there are also Local Councils and Chiefdom governance structures (see section below). Increasingly, Local Councils are assuming responsibility for local revenue collection and spending, which means that their role in driving SDG realization at the community level will need to be strengthened over time.

11.1.2 Legislative Branch

The Sierra Leone Parliament legislates on many issues central to the SDGs. They have established an SDG Unit which houses a technical adviser for the SDGs. The Parliament is among the first in the ECOWAS region to have mainstreamed the SDGs in its work and is working on streamlining domesticated SDG indicators in the work of parliamentary oversight committees.

Parliament is instrumental to the legal environment around crucial SDG topics such as human rights, gender equality and disability rights, and has recently demonstrated commitment to these issues through engagement in knowledge building activities organized by the UNCT and passage of legislation in line with SDG aspirations for these topics.

11.1.3 Judicial Branch

The judiciary works to promote peace and justice in the country, in line with SDG 16, which is one of two SDG goals identified by the country as an SDG accelerator (the other being SDG 4). Recent efforts along these lines have included piloting of a special court to address cases of SGBV, providing more support for survivors and witnesses and making the location and timing of court proceedings more accessible, as well as efforts to accelerate access to justice and to decongest correctional facilities across the country.

11.2 Regional Organizations: Mano River Union, ECOWAS, and African Union

The Mano River Union (MRU) is an intergovernmental organization based in Freetown, Sierra Leone with member states Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. MRU's mission is to design and implement programs that improve the well-being and living standards for the peoples of the sub-region while maintaining peace and stability. MRU has been instrumental to transitioning the sub-region from an unstable area to a zone of relative peace and security. Its program is organized around pillars as follows that align with the SDGs:

- Economic Development and Regional Integration
- Peace, Security and Democratic Governance
- Health and Social Development

The MRU is important for sub-regional coordination on the above issues. ECOWAS and the African Union also influence the SDGs in Sierra Leone, to the extent that the country participates in regional programs and agreements originating from these organizations.

11.3 District and Local Governments

Sierra Leone is divided into five regions, which are further divided into sixteen districts. There are district level government staff of several ministries, such as the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Security. District-level staff are key counterparts for many SDG programs, including those on economic development, agriculture, and COVID-19 prevention. Local Councils have new authority for tax collection and expenditures and are being trained by UNDP to manage this activity in support of sustainable development.

Below, the district level, there are 190 Chiefdom-level authorities who are key to community-level development. They focus on initiatives related to local economic development and cooperation with district- and national-level authorities, particularly in areas such as education, health care, and social services. They are partners for local energy development projects, specifically solar micro-grid installations, and play a key role in maintaining peace and local social cohesion.

The country's November 2020 Decentralization Policy, produced through a consultative and participatory process, provides legal clarity on many points and enhances the role of the 22 local councils. It reflects learning since promulgation of the Local Government Act in 2004 and the public's overwhelming support for the need to further strengthen devolution.

While administrative functions have been devolved, efforts to build capacity for councils to take ownership of implementation have been limited. MDAs resist the complete devolution of functions, partly because the current legislation and associated enabling instruments remain unclear. Local technical capacity continues to improve in the area of integrated public financial management systems, budget development, and accounting, with support from a Joint SDG Fund programme, however local councils face significant limitations to their revenue mobilization, both in terms of inter-governmental fiscal transfers, own-revenue generation, and tax-sharing with chiefdoms in their jurisdiction.

Local councils are challenged in ensuring social inclusion at all levels of decision-making, however UN programmes, including one funded by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, are successfully supporting communities to develop inclusive decision-making platforms and the GEWE law will mandate a certain percentage of roles for women in formal decision-making bodies.

Another of the identified gaps in the decentralization process to-date has been the limited investment in undertaking Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning and the use of evidence-based data analysis. Initiatives are underway, led by MoPED to build M&E capacity at local government level and to expand avenues for local input to SDG monitoring efforts, including for the VNR.

11.4 Civil Society - including Local Non-Governmental Organizations

Multiple local CSOs and NGOs have programmes that are aligned with the SDGs, and several are in formal partnerships with UN agencies. Issues that they work on include labour rights, disability inclusion, support for survivors of SGBV, and financial literacy training for women. There are increased efforts by MDAs to work with NGO partners, notably the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, which meets regularly with local NGOs focussed on gender issues and addressing SGBV.

CSOs and the government have worked together closely on several activities thanks to direct communication and improved access, according to the 2021 USAID report referenced in Section 3.1. A government-CSO dialogue on decentralized service delivery took place in 2021 and there was an increase in joint policy initiatives involving CSOs, the administration, and the parliament, including for the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bill, now passed into law, and for revision of the 2011 Persons with Disabilities Act.

Of note regarding the SDGs, is local NGO, VIONet (Volunteer Organization Network), that works with a network of civil society organizations to popularize and monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals across communities in Sierra Leone. The organization was instrumental in the preparation of Sierra Leone's 2021 VNR. Their *People's Scorecard*, which assessed the SDG implementation process in Sierra Leone, fed into the 2021 VNR report.

11.4.1 International Non-Governmental Organizations

A range of international NGOs are active in Sierra Leone, working on issues such as education, democracy, economic development, health care, and gender equality, based on the mandate of the organizations. Most are based in countries with active bi-lateral assistance programs in Sierra Leone, including the UK, Germany, Japan, and Canada. Major international humanitarian organizations are present, as well as some international faith-based organizations.

11.5 Religious, Traditional, and Cultural Groups

Religious leaders, traditional healers, and leaders of cultural groups and societies have enormous influence over community norms, especially as relates to social issues. The advancement of socially related SDGs, such as SDG 5 on gender and SDG 16 on peace and justice, can be accelerated with support from these leaders as they wield considerable influence over their followers. The largest religious group is Muslim at 77 percent, followed by Christian at 22 percent.

11.6 Academia

Education, research, and innovation are essential in sustainable development, making universities key contributors to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Higher-level learning institutions and researchers in Sierra Leone have a role to play in advancing the SDGs in Sierra Leone by producing country-specific scientific data to guide policies and helping to apply innovative technologies and approaches to the national context. One can think of many sectors where this is valuable including, but not limited to, health, trade, education, agricultural production, and climate action. Most universities in Sierra Leone are public.

11.7 The Media

Traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and TV are significant in Sierra Leone and their reporting, including the extent to which this is balanced and fact-based, can have an enormous influence on public opinion. It can sway public confidence in key institutions, such as the courts, the tax authority, and the health system which are vital for SDG advancement. The media can help to publicize cases of corruption to promote transparency, if done in a balanced and informed way. It can also highlight issues and role models to advance social issues, such as gender equality, labour rights, and social support for the elderly. Social media, which is popular among the large youth population, has this same potential, but is more likely than traditional media to also be a source of misinformation. If users are not provided with the knowledge and tools to accurately assess the veracity of social media posts, they can be misled on issues such as COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness, human smuggling scams posted by traffickers, and incomplete/inaccurate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

11.8 Private Sector

The private sector is underdeveloped in Sierra Leone, even when compared to other countries in Africa. The potential contribution of the private sector to the SDGs can be significant in areas such as industrial growth, clean energy, and agricultural value-chain development. The UNCT is

in contact with the Chamber of Commerce, including the branch focussed on agriculture, and seeks opportunities to engage them in SDG programs. The UNCT also supports banking sector reforms aimed at providing more capital for private sector growth and has recently collaborated with Invest Salone, a UK-supported group, on initiatives to advance Sustainable Finance in Sierra Leone.

11.9 Development Partners – bilateral and multi-lateral

Various bi-lateral and multi-lateral development partners are active in Sierra Leone, as outlined in the following table.

Partner	Profile / Focus Areas
Resident in Sierra Leone	
World Bank Group	Energy, Human Development (education, health, etc.), Agriculture, Financial Sector Reform
International Finance Corporation	Private sector focus through financial resources, technical expertise, global experience, and innovation / Agribusiness, Energy, Mining
International Development Association	Human Capital, Agriculture, Agri-processing, Energy, Extractive Sector: strengthening the regulatory and institutional capacity
Islamic Development Bank	Health System Strengthening; Performance-based Financing for the Health Sector
African Development Bank	Infrastructure Development (WASH, transport), Inclusive Growth, Agriculture
European Union	Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries; Modern and Renewable Energy; Environmental Protection; Education; Democratic, Social & Economic Governance
United Kingdom	Human Development, Economic Growth, Governance, Social Development
United States	Maternal and Child Health, COVID-19 Response, President’s Malaria Initiative, Food for Peace, Agriculture, Democracy & Governance.
Germany	Health, Jobs Promotion, Technical Cooperation, Transparency, Alternative Energy, Agriculture, Education
Ireland	Education, Nutrition, Governance and Gender as a cross-cutting theme
Japan	Human Security, Clean Energy, Health, Youth Employment, Private Sector
Egypt	Enhanced Trade and Investment; select training programmes
Turkey	Enhanced Trade and Investment, Humanitarian Support, Energy Supply
China	Infrastructure, Education, Health, Agriculture

India	Agriculture, Energy, Water
Ghana	Government Capacity Building; TVET Trainers; Specialized Consultants
Non-Resident	
Brazil	Maternal Health, Agriculture, Banking, Smallholder Farming, Ecotourism
The Netherlands	Private Sector Development, Logistics for Trade; interest in WASH and Agriculture
Norway	Sustainable Fisheries; interest in Hydropower
Canada	Nutrition, Education, Micro-Agriculture, Health

12. Gaps and challenges towards achieving the 2030 Agenda

In the post-conflict period, Sierra Leone has made visible progress in establishing vital institutions capable of driving forward its development aspirations. The country’s development agenda was largely on track, as evident by its pre-Ebola epidemic growth records. It was among the fastest growing economies in Africa before the twin shocks of Ebola and drop in iron prices hit the country around 2014 to 2016. Then, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this trajectory and, more recently, the Russia/Ukraine conflict adversely affected gains initially recorded after the twin shocks.

Global supply chain distortions, coupled with structural bottlenecks in government, have triggered the following gaps and challenges.

1. Whilst the country has recorded relative progress in governance, transparency, and accountability, there is ongoing political tension that requires consideration. The August 10th, 2023, protest that led to loss of lives signals that the current political landscape has the potential to reverse gains made in peace and cohesion in the country. It is therefore important that the government and development partners give priority to addressing the root causes of political tensions.
2. Economic growth in 2022 has been revised downwards to an estimated 2.8 percent from an earlier forecast of 5.9 percent. The sharp rise in global food and fuel prices and the pass-through effects on domestic prices, combined with the depreciation of the national currency (the Leone), resulted in high inflation during the year. Inflation rose from the low level of 8.9 percent achieved in March 2021 to 32.98 percent in October 2022, with food inflation rising to 40.14⁷⁴ percent. The Leone has depreciated by over 50 percent since December 2021, further contributing to domestic inflation.

The high level of debt has been one of the greatest challenges in fiscal management in recent years. Debt service payments, including amortization, represented 37 percent of domestic revenue and 20 percent of total government expenditures at the end of June 2022.

⁷⁴ October 2022 SSL CPI figures

Fiscal pressures and the uncertainty of debt sustainability have intensified due to additional government expenditures required to mitigate the impact of high inflation on the most vulnerable citizens and to meet revenue shortfalls.

3. Sierra Leone continues to be among the countries most prone to climate change effects and environmental disasters. In August 2022, the capital of Freetown suffered a landslide that cost the lives of six people. Climate change also impacts food security via agriculture, which generates over 50% of GDP and gives jobs to about two-thirds of the adult population, and has been increasingly affected by changes in rainfall, heat, and risk of wildfires. Limited alternative livelihood opportunities have pushed a vast majority of Sierra Leoneans to embark on activities that cause deforestation and undermine the stability of the environment.
4. There has been considerable progress in drafting policies, legislations, and programmes across national institutions. However, there is still much to be done to ensure ‘on the ground’ impact and a real increase in benefits to the population from these new policies and legislations. Many national institutions lack resources and capacity to realize specific actions that could alleviate the structural challenges and ensure a more sustainable and positive improvement in the country. Policies and programmes are often not coherent across sectors and sometimes lack mechanisms for improved inter-government coordination, and for coordination between government and stakeholders to ensure effective implementation. This lack of coherence has affected service delivery and limited participation of citizens at all levels in development.
5. The country’s reporting record indicates that it is overdue with respect to most of its initial and periodic reports to human rights treaty bodies, including the initial report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is overdue since 1998. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone is not adequately funded to effectively deliver on its mandate across all districts. The Commission has presence only at regional headquarter towns. The law enforcement agencies lack the requisite capacity to respond to peaceful protests and undertake crowd management. Disproportionate response of the police to public protests has resulted in human rights abuses and even loss of lives.
6. Sierra Leone’s financial landscape is still not conducive to adequate financing of sustainable development. The situation has been worsened by the unprecedented global shocks that have further decreased available funding sources, including the level of support from key international development partners. Secondary effects of the war in Ukraine have impacted the lives of the most vulnerable, and the cost-of-living crisis and fiscal situation are putting the achievement of the SDGs at risk. Both public and private domestic revenue spaces have been shrinking. This is in addition to the lingering adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the domestic economy, which impacted businesses, especially in the service sector, in a significant way.
7. Sierra Leone presented her third Voluntary National Report (VNR) in 2021, which outlined the country’s progress in the implementation of the SDGs. While this is admirable, the country’s lack of a dedicated national data platform to continually report

on SDGs implementation progress is a serious gap that needs to be addressed with urgency. Such a platform would provide valuable information to government and development partners for channeling programs to the sectors, regions, and populations where SDG progress is most lacking. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, in collaboration with Statistics Sierra Leone and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, has made efforts to establish an SDGs monitoring platform, but a few institutional capacity issues have impeded its full realization.

Annexes

i. UN's support to human rights

In September 2022, the UN provided policy and technical support during an in-situ capacity building activity on monitoring of the Universal Periodic Review for ministries' focal points, co-organized by MFAIC with support from UPR Info, a Geneva based NGO.

The UN, through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (UN RC), has supported the implementation of the Governmental Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by providing a series of technical and policy workshops and capacity building assistance. The UN Network on Migration (UNNM) in Sierra Leone was also established in 2022 to coordinate the efforts of the UN and the support provided to government counterparts.

Following a workshop on the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) for the members of the UN Country Team in October 2022, the UN RC communicated the policy and relevant materials to key government entities including the army, the police, and the Office of National Security (ONS). The UN RC received positive feedback from the Chief of Defense Staff of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, and there were discussions to set up a focal point within the Sierra Leone Armed Forces in 2023. The ONS Coordinator also confirmed the importance of protecting human rights in the context of their activities.

The UN continued to support the efforts of government institutions and the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone mainly through the work of the UN SHRA and various projects implemented by UN agencies, funds, and programmes. In 2022, the UN conducted human rights capacity-building activities for various stakeholders including governmental entities, the HRCSL, and non-governmental actors and provided technical advice and facilitation for the country's engagement with UN human rights bodies. Monthly meetings of the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), where government entities, human rights defenders, CSOs, UN, and embassies' representatives meet to discuss the human rights situation and propose courses of action, were re-instituted in 2022.

The UN is supporting the government in the revision of the 2011 "*Persons with Disabilities Act*". In November, UNDP organized a capacity building workshop for parliament on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

On 2 December 2022, the UN SHRA led a team composed of staff from RCO, UN Women and UNFPA, and a representative of the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs that conducted a series of activities in the context of the 16-Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence at the Freetown Female Correctional Center. Discussions took place on the rights of women, complaint mechanisms on GBV and other forms of abuse against inmates and protection/safety

nets for survivors and whistle blowers of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. The UN team distributed to the detained women 150 dignity kits composed of clothing, hygiene and security essentials donated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

During the commemoration of Human Rights Day in December 2022, the UN Resident Coordinator emphasized the fact that we all must ensure that no one is left behind in this journey and that we all have to stand up for human rights. This was echoed by the head of the EU delegation in Sierra Leone who stated that human rights are at the heart of work of the EU and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation who noted the importance of human rights and highlighted steps taken by the Government to fulfil human rights obligations.

ii. UNCT's support for implementation of the Persons for Disabilities Act.

With funding from the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UNCT is supporting the strengthening of structural systems for Persons with Disabilities with several activities, including building capacity of key stakeholders, revising the 2011 'Persons with Disabilities Act', building capacity of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, piloting an assessment and certification system, and advancing disability inclusion in SDG monitoring.