



UNITED NATIONS
SIERRA LEONE



COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS

2021 UPDATE

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United Nations Country Team in Sierra Leone

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1. Introduction

The United Nations conducts an independent, collective, integrated, forward-looking, and evidence-based analysis of the country context on a periodic basis to inform its programme of work. The new generation of the Common Country Analysis (CCA) responds to the urgency of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by delivering integrated, forward-looking, and evidence-based joint analysis of the context for sustainable development in a country.

The CCA is a signature function of a United Nations Country Team that generates tailored analytical products at the country level. It is part of a strategic pivot of the United Nations towards becoming the top source for independent, trusted analysis and policy advisory support on sustainable development in the twenty-first century. The analysis becomes the foundation for the design and implementation of the United Nations programmatic response through its multi-year United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). At the same time, the analysis can inform decision-making by the Government and other stakeholders.

In 2020, the United Nations in Sierra Leone updated the 2018 CCA that was initially prepared to inform the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020-2023, involving a wide range of consultations among UN agencies, Government, development partners, and civil society and a segment of the vulnerable population. The 2021 CCA has been anchored on the most recent data, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging issues that have shaped the development landscape of Sierra Leone. The UNCT launched the update of the 2021 CCA update in November 2021, to reflect the new developments that have occurred since the last update in 2020.

Under the strategic leadership of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Country Team, the 2021 CCA Update was developed by the internal thematic working organs within the UNCT. Key among these organs is the UNSDCF Result Groups, which provided analytical inputs through data collection, consultations, and analyses on their respective thematic areas. National counterparts, including the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, civil society organisations, vulnerable groups, including people with disability and non-governmental organisations also provided insights into the 2021 CCA update.



2. Executive Summary

Sierra Leone's macroeconomic situation remains challenging despite the implementation of bold policy measures since 2018. The economy remains vulnerable to shocks that worsen the economic wellbeing of the country. The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the Sierra Leone economy, impeding inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. Growth contracted to -2 per cent in 2020, mainly due to slow down in the tertiary and service sectors (tourism, and trade including supply chain disruptions of impeding imports) and dampening manufacturing and construction due to the suspension of international flights. Government's COVID-19 containment measures further affecting agricultural production, local and regional trade and mineral production and exports. Economic growth rebounded by 2.9 per cent in 2021 reflecting the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and government fiscal response to the pandemic. Growth is expected to remain strong at 5 per cent in 2022 supported the recovery in agriculture and services.

The country has made several strides in developing several policies and legal reforms aimed at enhancing institutional capacity for service delivery in sectors relating to justice, security, human rights, and democratic governance. However, the effective administration of justice at national and local levels continues to be challenged by limited institutional capacity and logistics while the appointment and security of judges' tenure may challenge the independence of the judiciary.

Sierra Leone's vision on climate mitigation and adaptation is supported by the proposals in the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), which was revised in early 2021. This comes at a time when Sierra Leone's vulnerability to climate change risks remains high, despite the meagre contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. Prominent factors that contribute to climate change risks include deforestation, which is rapidly accelerating in Sierra Leone, intense and frequent storms, as well as flash floods, which affected more than 220,000 people along the coast of Freetown. Moreover, an increasing population in the coastal communities have had an adverse impact on the coastal environment. These include uncontrolled construction of shelter and the unsustainable exploitation of coastal and marine resources, such as sand, aggregates, fisheries resources, mangroves etc.

Food insecurity in the country is very high, including among rural people and farmers who mobilize a significant portion of their income for food expenditures. The percentage of households spending more than 75 per cent of their income on food is about 74.1 per cent. Despite the continuous prioritization of rice in all the national development plans, Sierra Leone continues to be a net importer of the staple.



After the severe deterioration in 2020, Sierra Leone's fiscal position is projected to improve this year on the back of expenditure rationalization and improved tax collections. In a bid to improve access to finance and deepen financial inclusion, plans are at an advanced stage for the installation of a National Payments Switch. This will promote the use of electronic payments and digital platforms by Government and businesses to pay for goods and services.



3. Country Context

3.1 Political and Institutional Analysis

3.1.1 Governance, Transparency, and Accountability

Progress has been reflected in several policies and legal reforms aimed at enhancing institutional capacity for service delivery in sectors relating to justice, security, human rights, and democratic governance, for instance during the period under review, the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) 1965 was reviewed and a new CPA enacted.¹ It is anticipated that the passage of the Bill would bring procedural fairness with the criminal Bill 2021 drafted justice chain as well as imposing additional obligation to uphold the rights of suspects and accused persons during investigation and prosecution respectively. In October 2021, the law relating to the abolition of the death penalty was enacted.² This development reflects a fulfilment of the Government of Sierra Leone's voluntary commitment made during the Third Cycle UPR Review Process.

Since the establishment of the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA) and the enactment of the 2016 National Civil Registration Act, new proposed legislation and regulations have become increasingly comprehensive, subsequently strengthening

the potential for compliance to the provisions of the Legislation and Regulations when enacted. In 2021, Sierra Leone ranked 54th out of 163 countries on the Global Peace Index (GPI).

The Government's roadmap "Walking out of fragility (2019)" indicates the Peacebuilding and State-building (PSG) Goal 1 "Legitimate Politics - Foster inclusive political settlement and conflict resolution" as an area that requires further improvement, after it dropped from a score of 3.4 in 2016 to 3.2 in 2019³ in the four dimensions of political settlement, political processes and institutions, and societal relationships. Another key result was the passing of the Act 2020⁴ and setting up of the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion.

³ In 2011, the New Deal for Engagement in the Fragile States was adopted at the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan. A key tool of the New Deal is a Fragility Assessment, based on 5 Peacebuilding and State building Goals (PSGs) to determine a country's level of fragility. The Fragility Assessment uses a fragility spectrum against which various aspects of development tied to the 5 PSGs are plotted on a scale from 1 (more fragile) to 5 (less fragile). The following are the five-peacebuilding and state-building goals: PSG 1: Legitimate Politics - Foster inclusive political settlement and conflict resolution; PSG 2: Security- Establish and strengthen people's security; PSG 3: Justice- Address injustice and increase people's access to justice; PSG 4: Economic Foundation- Generate employment and improve livelihoods; PSG 5: Revenue and Services- Manage revenue and build capacity for accountable and fair service delivery.

⁴ <https://www.thesierraleone Telegraph.com/sierra-leone-peace-and-national-cohesion-commission-bill-will-soon-become-law/>

¹ Source: Review of Criminal Procedure Act 1965 <https://www.facebook.com/shahid.korjie/posts/10165579407105858?>

² <https://statehouse.gov.sl/sierra-leones-president-julius-maada-bio-signs-the-abolition-of-death-penalty-constitutes-families-living-with-pain-of-judicial-execution/>

Sierra Leone governance space has seen significant changes from 2020 to date. Key among these include the launch of the Electoral Commission's Annual report and Strategic Plan 2020-2024 that details key development targets for the operations of the commission and the plan serves a blueprint for the implementation of the Commissions priorities. In response to the recommendations from the 2018 electoral cycle, a major shift was the establishment of the National Electoral Sustainability Trust Fund (NEST Fund), which includes the provision of sustained funding for Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) to improve efficiency in mandate delivery. Other recommendations pertaining to Electoral Legal reforms were discussed in a national conference in August 2021.

As part of the electoral legal reforms, the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) concluded consultations and validated the proposals by Political Parties, CSOs and MDAs in reviewing the PPRC Act of 2002. The change in nomenclature of the PPRC to The Political Parties Registration and Regulatory Commission may enhance its regulatory and oversight functions.

Sierra Leone became eligible for the Millennial Corporation Challenge (MCC) in 2020 having. It passed 11 out of 20 indicators. Improvements in governance indicators such as control of corruption may have contributed to this achievement. Out of a total of twenty policy areas assessed by the MCC, the government passed eleven: Promoting Political Rights – 92 per cent; Promoting Civil Liberties – 88 per cent; Controlling Corruption – 79 per cent; Putting Good Trade Policy in Place – 70 per cent; Promoting Rule of Law – 58 per cent; Promoting Freedom of Information – 85 per cent; Promoting Gender in the economy – 61 per cent; Spending on Healthcare – 68 per cent; Promoting Business Start-Ups – 85 per cent; Girls Primary Education Completion Rate – 68 per cent to mention a few.⁵ The MCC approval for the implementation of US\$44 million targeting water and electricity provision was confirmed in March 2021.

In December 2020, Sierra Leone launched the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Policy, a landmark achievement for providing a roadmap to equality for women. In October 2021, the Gender Empowerment Bill 2021 was tabled in Parliament; the [5 https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/sierra-leone-scores-high-on-the-2020-mcc-scorecard-but-more-needs-to-be-done-fast/](https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/sierra-leone-scores-high-on-the-2020-mcc-scorecard-but-more-needs-to-be-done-fast/)



bill calls for 30 per cent quota for women in decision making positions (including parliament and cabinet positions), access to finance, capacity building, and equal pay.

3.1.2 Access to Justice

The effective administration of justice at national and local levels continues to be challenged by limited institutional capacity and logistics. The appointment and security of judges' tenure remain an impediment to the independence of the judiciary.⁶ Moreover, anecdotal evidence suggests women continue to be adversely affected which inhibit their ability to access justice. Physical access to the courts, imposition of excessive fines and non-compliance with the Bail Regulations continues to be a major concern for people in remote chiefdoms, where people must rely on the local/traditional court systems that serve an estimated 80 per cent of the population. Lack of resources to secure legal services and/or representation, a situation, which disproportionately affects women, girls, persons with disability and other vulnerable groups.

Seven new judges were appointed for the districts of Kailahun, Freetown, Kenema, Port Loko, Moyamba to demonstrate Government commitment to address the challenge of limited judges and magistrates. In addition, ten (10) magistrates have been appointed for the following geographic locations; Makeni, Bonthe, Pujehun, Kenema, two in Freetown, Kono, Karene and Bo. The total caseload of the Model Sexual Offences Courts (MSOC), the District Resident Courts (DRC) and the District Circuit Courts (DCC) for the period under review is 761 with a case disposal rate of 35 per cent. The MSOC had a caseload of 315 with 22 per cent disposal rate, the District Resident Courts recorded 372 cases with a disposal rate of 38 per cent and the District Circuit Courts had 74 cases with 65 per cent disposal rate. The statistics relating

to the MSOC demonstrate Government's continued commitment to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence, which is often perpetrated against women and girls. The MSOC continues to provide victim and witness support services to reduce trauma, eliminate secondary victimization, increase victim's cooperation and attendance at the trial and ensure a timely completion of matters leading to more convictions for perpetrators.⁷

The process to review the Criminal Procedure Act of 1965 has been completed with the support of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) by a committee which included representatives from key criminal justice institutions and civil society. The report has been forwarded to Cabinet for review and onward enactment of the legislation by Parliament. If approved, this legislation will provide procedural fairness within the criminal justice chain practice as well as impose additional obligations on professionals within the security and justice sector to uphold the right of suspects and accused persons during investigations and prosecution. The Bill for the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) was passed in February 2021. Consequently, a governing Board with a membership of nine (including three women) has been appointed and currently working to operationalize the Commission. It is expected that the Commission's work will strengthen initiatives toward sustaining peace by improving on strides to bring divided communities together.

⁶ Sierra Leone: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report | Freedom House

⁷ Sierra Leone Judiciary Report 2021



3.2 National Development Aspiration

The Sierra Leone Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019-2023 themed Education for Development aims to promote a new direction for improving People's Lives through Education, Inclusive Growth, and Building a Resilient and diversified economy.⁸ It further seeks to create a society that is peaceful, cohesive, secure, and just. Accordingly, the government established the National Peace Commission in 2021 as a permanent peace infrastructure.

In addition to prioritizing Human Capital Development as the first policy cluster in the new plan, the MTNDP identifies specific and critical results like economic diversification, governance and accountability for results, infrastructure, and economic competitiveness.

Government's aspirations towards an integrated spatial approach to the multisectoral urban development challenges facing the country, including integrated urban planning, own-source revenue enhancement, infrastructure upgrading, solid waste

management, and disaster preparedness and management, with the aim to support and advance liveable, well-planned, financially sustainable, and productive urban centres received US\$50 million grant from the International Development Association (IDA/ World Bank) for the Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project. This will address the needs of the capital Freetown as the economic engine of Sierra Leone, while catering to the unique opportunities and challenges in the district capitals: Bo, Makeni, Kenema, Koidu, Port Loko and Bonthe.⁹

To ensure effective development accountability and reporting at local level, the District Development Coordination Committee (DDCC) initiative has been created to address the problems of duplication, service delivery overlap and uncoordinated development interventions in the districts.¹⁰

⁹ World Bank \$50m grant supports Urban Development in Sierra Leone - Highways Today: <https://highways.today/2021/07/06/world-bank-urban-sierra-leone/>

¹⁰ <https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/district-development-coordination-committees-will-ensure-local-development-accountability-says-minister-kai-kai/>

⁸ Government of Sierra Leone MTNDP (2019-2023), pg. vi.

3.3 Macroeconomic Overview

3.3.1 Recent Economic Development and Macroeconomic Impact of COVID-19

Sierra Leone's economy remain vulnerable to shocks that worsen the economic wellbeing of the country. The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the Sierra Leone economy, impeding inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. The pandemic has impacted the economy with growth contracting to -2 per cent in 2020 mainly due to slow down in the tertiary and service sectors (tourism, and trade including supply chain disruptions of impeding imports) and dampening manufacturing and construction due to the suspension of international flights including Government's COVID-19 containment measures further affecting agricultural production, local and regional trade and mineral production and exports. Economic growth rebounded by 2.9 per cent in 2021 reflecting the easing of COVID-19 restrictions and government fiscal response to the pandemic. Although the country experienced the third wave and is continuing to battle with the fourth wave, growth is expected to remain strong at 5 per cent in 2022 supported by the recovery in agriculture and services.

Sierra Leone's macroeconomic situation remains challenging despite the implementation of bold and courageous policy measures since 2018. Recent fiscal consolidation efforts which have focused on boosting revenue mobilization, and prioritization of expenditure have helped narrow the overall deficit from 5.6 per cent of GDP in 2018 to 3.1 per cent of GDP in 2019. However, with limited fiscal space and the need to spend to respond to the pandemic, overall deficit position worsened in 2020 to 5.8 per cent of GDP. With the pickup of revenue in 2021 including the gains from reform efforts at the National Revenue Authority and the resumption of economic activities, overall deficit contracted to 3.8 per cent of GDP.

The external sectors in 2020 weakened because of disruptions to mining, agriculture and weaker global demand. The improved performance was because of weaker imports, larger remittances and larger external financing that averted serious pressure on the current account, gross reserves, and exchange rates. The current account deficits narrowed to 11.3 per cent of GDP in 2020 compared to 16.3 per cent of GDP in 2019. However, the deficit increased to 17.3 per cent of GDP in 2021 as imports outpaced exports.

Despite COVID-19 causing supply disruptions, headline inflation declined in 2020 to 10.4 per cent, lower than pre-crisis level (13.9 per cent in 2019), mainly because of the sharp fall in non-food items and Bank of Sierra Leone's Special Credit Facility of US\$50 million to facilitate the importation of essential commodities. Inflation increased to 14.9 per cent in 2021 reflecting sharp increase in food prices due to pandemic-related supply chain disruptions.

In response to the pandemic, the Government passed a Supplementary Budget of US\$138 million which was largely going to be funded by domestic revenue, to support the economy and response to the health crisis. This enabled the Government to implement the US\$136 million Quick Action Economic Recovery Program (QAERP) aimed at maintaining adequate stock of essential commodities; providing support to hardest hit businesses; expanding social safety nets to vulnerable groups; supporting labour-intensive public works; and providing assistance for local production and processing. The implementation of both the QAERP and COVID-19 Health Response as well as depressed revenues are expected to increase the overall expenditure and public debt, with the country already at high risk of debt distress prior to the pandemic. Total public debt was at 76.3 per cent of GDP in 2020 (up from 72.6 per cent of GDP in 2019), reflecting larger fiscal deficit. However, public debt declined slightly to 75.6 per cent of GDP in 2021 driven by the

gradual reduction in primary deficits. The latest debt sustainability analysis (July 2021) of Sierra Leone indicates high risk of debt distress, same as in 2020. The implementation of the QAERP cushioned the impact of the pandemic on households and business and kept the economy from plummeting further, but restrictions put in place to contain the spread of the virus and the global economic downturn led to small increase in poverty and worsened food security.

3.3.2 Real Sector

Sierra Leone's economy contracted by 2 per cent in 2020 due to a sharp tightening in the services sector, impacted by suspension of international flights, closure of land borders and lumas (weekly open-air markets in rural areas). Growth in agriculture sector slowed with disruptions in labour supply and delivery of key inputs such as seeds and fertilizers. Growth rebounded to 2.9 per cent in 2021 as Government eased restrictions, but the third and fourth wave of the pandemic continue to pose significant risk to the economy. The COVID-19 Impact Monitoring Survey in Sierra Leone (CIMS) conducted in July 2020 found that nearly two-thirds of rural households reported planting less rice this farming season, indicating increased food insecurity among the population. Gains previously made

on poverty reduction has also dwindled during the pandemic period. A survey by World Bank indicated that poverty increased from 56.8 per cent in 2018 to 58.9 per cent in 2021.

High Frequency indicators show a moderate increase in mining and non-mining activities during 2021, with the resumption of iron ore production. The recovery has been broad-based on the supply side, with all sectors contributing to growth, and driven by domestic private consumption and investment on the demand side. Real GDP per capita increase by 2.1 per cent in 2021 leading to a modest decline in the poverty rate. Public and private consumption remained strong with increased spending on health, support to vulnerable household and businesses and demand for essential commodities, including food.

Headline inflation fell to 8.9 per cent in March 2021, before increasing sharply to 15.6 percent by end-November, reflecting an increase in food and fuel prices. Indeed, food inflation reached 18.8 per cent in November, well above its pre-pandemic level of 9.9 per cent (reflecting an increase in the price of key food staples due to food supply difficulties). Non-food inflation increased from 6.9 per cent in December 2020 to 13.3 per cent in November 2021, reflecting subdued demand for non-food items.

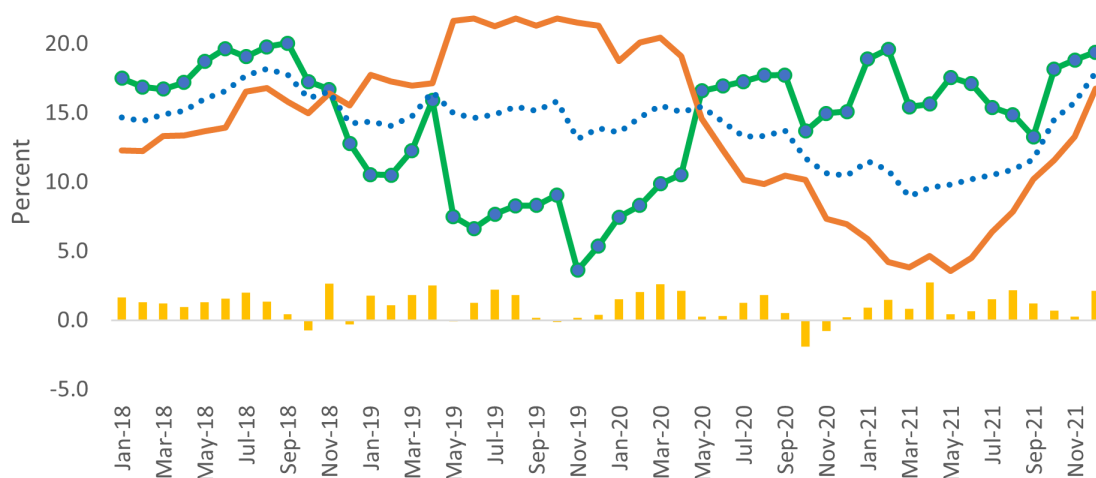
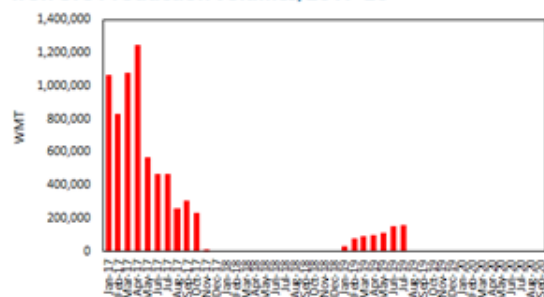
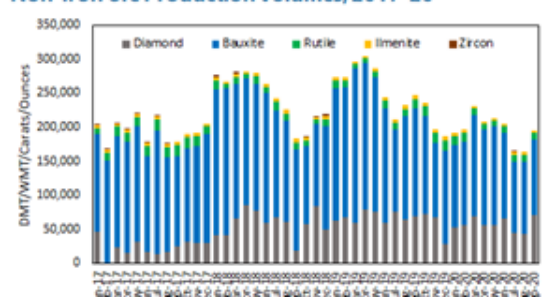


Figure 1: Consumer Price Inflation

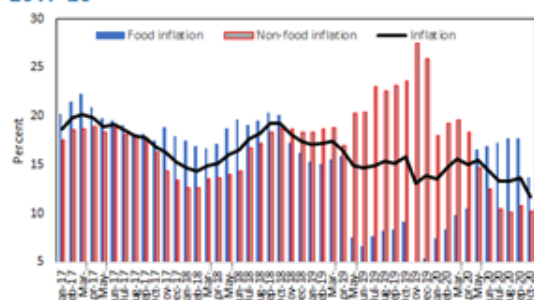
Iron Ore Production Volumes, 2017-20



Non-iron ore Production Volumes, 2017-20



Consumer Price Inflation (y-o-y, in percent), 2017-20



Electricity Generation (Kilowatts) 2017-20

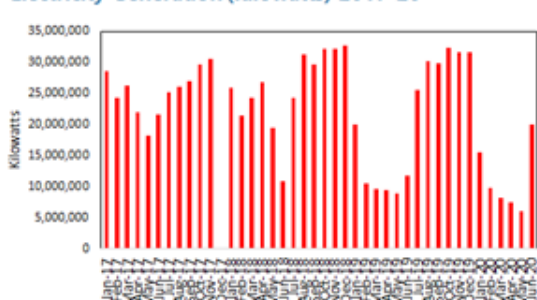


Figure 2

Source: Sierra Leone authorities and Fund staff estimates

3.3.3 Monetary Sector

Given the price pressure and expected economic rebound, the Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL) kept the monetary policy rate unchanged at 14 per cent in 2021. The Monetary Policy Committee’s (MPC) posture was influenced by the increase in global uncertainties including the potential impact of disruption of global supply chains on domestic demand. Both the standing deposits and lending facilities were also kept unchanged at 8 percent and 17 percent, respectively.

However, interbank and one year T-bill rates increased and trended higher than the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) while maximum lending rate and 12-month savings rate declined but the spread between the two remained large. Following the disruption in supply chains and increased global uncertainties, the MPC endorsed the launch of the second round of BSL’s Le500 billion (US\$50 million) special credit facility which finances production, procurement, and

distribution of essential goods. As T-bill rate climbed above than the MPR, banks were encouraged to hold high interest treasury assets rather extend credit. Money market liquidity was squeezed with the interbank rate trending above the MPR, since May 2021. Also, the spread between the lending and deposit rates remains large indicating high lending risks and underscoring the need for reforms to de-risk the financial system.

Consequently, Broad money (M3) grew by 19.1 per cent (yoy) in 2021 compared to 38.2 per cent in 2020. The deceleration in broad money reflected a decline in net foreign assets (NFA). Net domestic assets (NDA) grew by 19 per cent, down from 34.4 per cent in 2020. NFA expanded by 2 per cent in 2021 compared to a growth rate of 49.4 per cent in the previous year reflecting the increase in foreign liabilities including IMF SDR allocations. The growth rate of net credit to government decelerated to 20 per cent in 2021 from 36.8 per cent reflecting the reduction in government’s borrowing needs. Private sector credit grew by 26.7 per cent (up from 4.9 percent in 2021) helped by

the recovery of economic activities and the creation of a Le500 billion Special Credit Facility by the BSL. Private sector credit is expected to continue to improve with removal of COVID-related restrictions and the launch of second round of Special Credit Facility.

The Banking system remained relatively stable in 2021 with all banks recording profit. The ratio of nonperforming loans (NPLs) to gross loans increased slightly from 12.6 per cent to 13.7 per cent reflecting a slight increase in loan defaults.

Capital adequacy ratio of 40.9 per cent for the banking system was above prudential limit of 15 per cent which showed the loss absorption capacity of the banks was strong. The liquid to total assets ratio remained large at 73.4 per cent because commercial banks prefer short-term securities, such as T-bills, over long-term investments which have higher lending risks. The ratio of foreign currency to total deposits fell slightly to 26.2 per cent in 2021 from 27 in 2020 reflecting the easing forex restrictions imposed by the BSL during 2021.

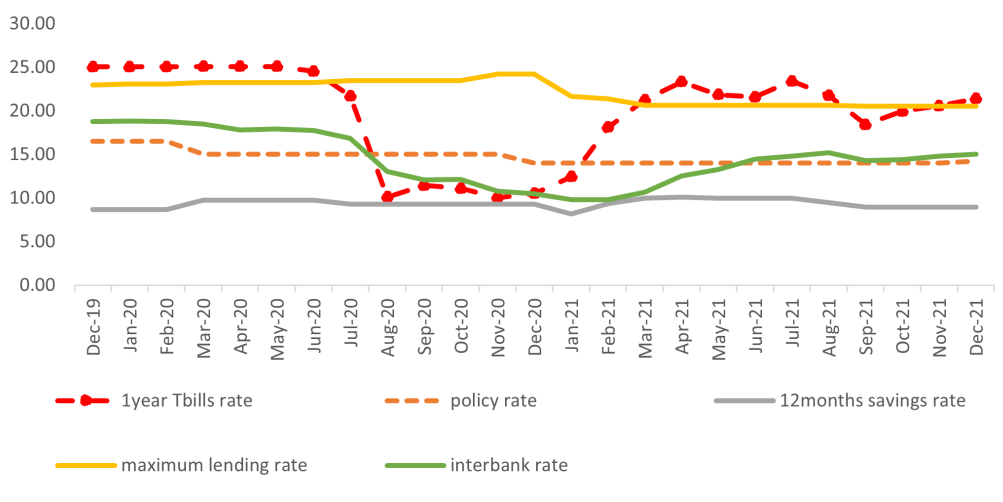


Figure 3: Interest Rate Trends

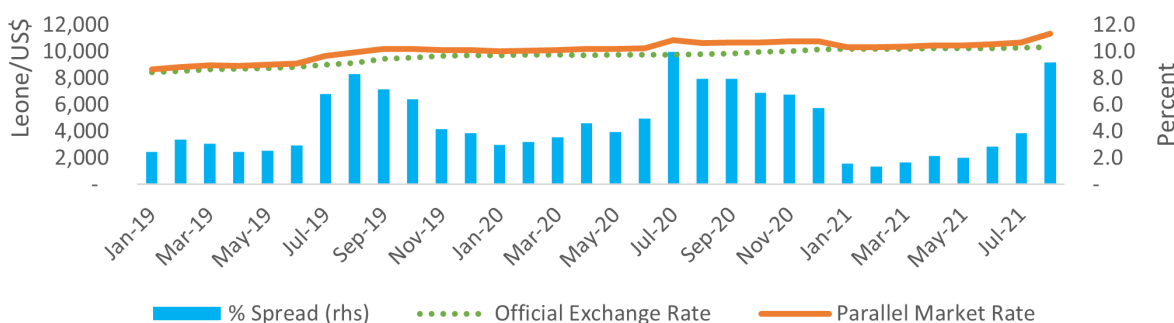


Figure 4: Official versus Parallel Market Exchange Rate

Sources: Sierra Leone authorities and Fund staff estimates

3.3.4 Fiscal Sector

Sierra Leone's fiscal position relatively worsened in 2020 compared to pre-pandemic period, eroding gains made especially on fiscal consolidation effort. The country was faced with what is described as a fiscal trilemma with weak revenue base, high spending needs and high debt level. The overall fiscal balance widened to 5.8 per cent of non-iron ore GDP in 2020, reflecting the pandemic and associated policy responses. Weaker business activity and compliance challenges due to lockdowns and social distancing measures undermined domestic revenues. The 2021 fiscal situation remains tight amidst unexpected overruns in wages, goods and services and domestic capital, despite better-than-expected revenue performance. However, revenue performance is expected to pick up in 2021 with increase economic activities from 13.8 per cent of GDP in 2020 to 15.3 per cent in 2021 and the expected resumption of tax administration and other revenue reforms to further improve

domestic revenue mobilization. Reforms to mobilize more domestic revenue include the establishment of a Treasury Single Account (TSA) and reduction of tax evasion and exemptions.

Despite huge spending needs, government plans to continue to rationalize and reprioritize expenditure. The authorities have also implemented several reforms to rationalize and control public expenditure the freeze public sector recruitments. Expenditure increased to 25.7 per cent of GDP in 2020 from 20.6 percent of GDP in 2019 with increased spending to implement public health measures and mitigate the impact of the crisis on households and businesses. Public spending is expected to remain relatively high at 2020 levels (24.7 per cent in 2021) amidst the tight fiscal space. Total public debt increased to 76.3 per cent of GDP and the country remained at a high overall risk of debt distress. However, net domestic debt has moderated especially with the increased budgetary grant support to finance the deficit.

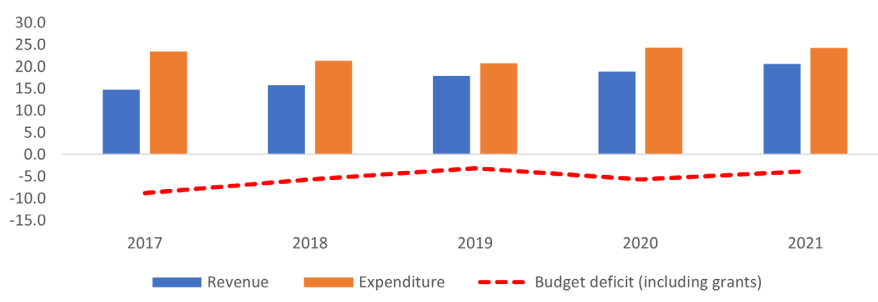


Figure 5: Fiscal Outturns

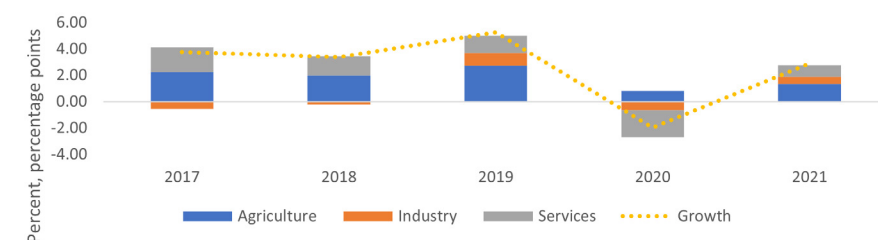


Figure 6: Real GDP Growth Composition

Sources: Sierra Leone authorities and Fund staff estimates

3.3.5 External Sector

Sierra Leone's external sector performance improved as imports declined and official transfers increased. The current account deficit (CAD) that was expected to widen to 15.8 per cent of GDP in 2020 narrowed to 6.8 per cent in 2020 from 14.4 per cent in 2019. The terms of trade showed significant improvement as the country recorded a surplus of 20.4 per cent in 2020 as imports were weaker and exports underperformed. Exports weakened significantly in 2020, with disruptions to mining and lower global demand. However, weaker imports, larger remittances, and larger external financing helped avert serious pressures on the current account, gross reserves, and the exchange rate.

Support from development partners to help the country deal with the pandemic increased official transfers and improved gross reserves in 2020 to US\$677 million, which is high by historical standards and covers 5 months of imports reflecting two Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) disbursements, Extended Credit Facility (ECF) disbursement, budget support grants, and debt relief/deferment under the Catastrophic Containment Relief Trust (CCRT) and Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI). Gross reserves are expected to improve in 2021 US\$936 million reflecting IMF's Special Drawing Right (SDR) allocation of US\$283 million, of which 86 per cent will be held at the Bank of Sierra Leone to cushion gross external

reserves, reduce exchange rate variability, and safeguard external sector stability. The Leone in 2020 was relatively stable against the US dollar, depreciating by 4.4 per cent (year-on-year) compared to 15.3 per cent in 2019.

3.3.6 General Outlook of the Economy

Growth is projected to rebound to 2.9 per cent in 2021 and 5 per cent in 2022 as markets reopen for Sierra Leone's export, and activities in the service sector, agriculture, and mining recover. The huge investment in agriculture increases the prospect for increase food production while the resumption of iron ore mining at both the Tonkolili and Lunsar will further enhance a quick rebound from the pandemic. Inflation is projected to moderate to 13.3 per cent by 2022 from 14.8 per cent in 2021 as supply constraints lessen and domestic food production improves given a strong recovery in agriculture and fisheries. Fiscal consolidation efforts through revenue system reforms and implementation of Integrated Tax Administration System (ITAS) and the electronic cash register and eventual expansion of the tax base are expected to reduce the budget deficit to 3.9 per cent of GDP by 2022 reflecting prudent expenditure management and control and vigorous revenue mobilization. The current account deficit is projected to narrow to 13.9 per cent of GDP in 2022 from 14.3 per cent in 2021 driven The agricultural sector has remained the dominant sector of Sierra Leone's economy, in terms of output and employment.

		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Selected Macroeconomic Indicators	GDP at constant prices	3.8	3.5	5.3	-2.0	2.9	5.0
	Inflation	15.3	14.2	13.9	10.4	14.-85	13.3
Financing	Public Debt	69.1	69.1	72.6	76.3	75.6	77.0
	Domestic Financing	28	27.9	27.9	26.6	25.1	22.4
External Sector	Current account balance	-21.1	-12.4	-14.4	-6.8	-14.3	-13.9
Fiscal Sector	Overall balance/deficit	-8.8	-5.6	-3.1	-5.8	-4.0	-3.9

Source: IMF-Staff Visit, September 2021

3.3.7 Structure of the Economy

In 2021, agriculture accounted for about 52 percent of GDP while contribution of industry has been minimal (at about 9.0 percent of GDP). The services sector contributes 35 percent of GDP. Sierra Leone's GDP per capita at Purchasing Power Parity was US\$1,794 in 2019, among bottom 25 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries. It is also far below the SSA median per capita GDP of US\$3,545 and average of 6,072 dollars. In 2018, agriculture employed 58.8 percent of the labor force, services 35.2 percent, and industry 5.7 percent. However, labor productivity in agriculture has historically been lower than in industry and services (Figure 2). This suggests a misallocation of resources given that agriculture with most workers is the least productive sector, implying that the economy is operating below its potential with limited structural transformation. Generally, there is a strong opportunity for structural transformation in Sierra Leone, through promotion of value addition in agriculture, boost manufacturing production and modernize the service sector to create more and high-quality jobs and increase income per capita.

3.3.8 Budget Allocation

Building Resilience for Inclusive and Green Recovery is the theme of 2022 Budget. The 2022 Budget seeks to maintain macroeconomic stability through accelerated implementation of budget efficiency to create fiscal space to address critical challenges such as food insecurity, climate change adaptation and response, and natural disasters.

Domestic revenue is projected to increase to Le 7.64 trillion, excluding grants representing 15.1 per cent of GDP in 2022. Total domestic revenue, including grants is projected at Le 9.94 trillion in 2022. The main revenue components include:

- Income Taxes, Le2.7 trillion;

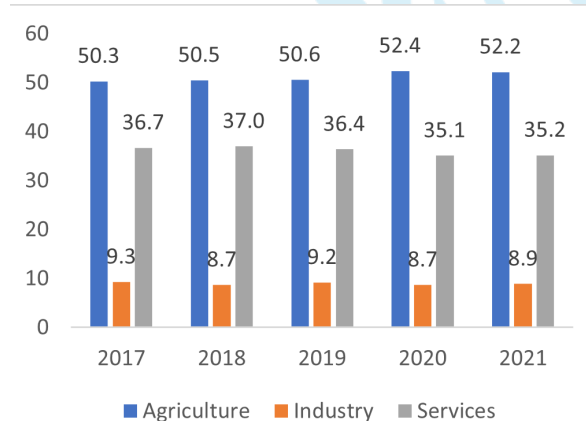


Figure 7: Sectoral Composition of GDP

Source: Statistics Sierra Leone

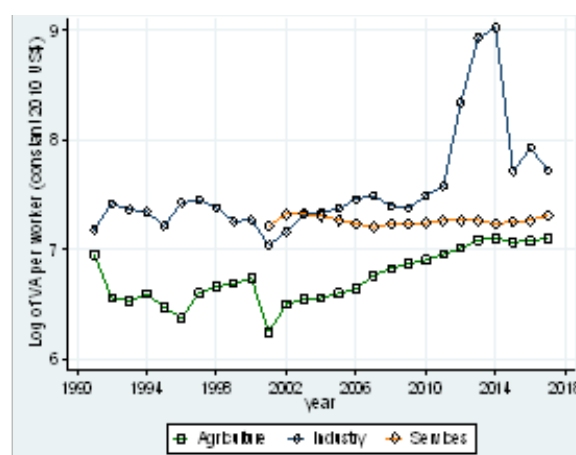


Figure 8: Labour Productivity by Sector (1990-2018)

Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys; Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Study (2020)

- Goods and Services Tax (GST), Le1.46 trillion;
- Customs and Excise Duties, Le1.7 trillion;
- Mining revenue, Le316 billion;
- Royalties and Licenses on fisheries, Le142.0 billion;
- Parastatals' dividends, Le125.4 billion;
- Revenues from Treasury Single Account (TSA) agencies, Le413.1 billion; and
- Other MDAs, Le144.8 billion
- Road User Charges and Vehicle Licenses, Le226.0 billion

Total Expenditure and Net Lending¹¹ for 2022 will amount to Le11.81 trillion (23.3 percent

¹¹ The difference between net acquisition of financial assets and net incurrent of liabilities (receivables-payables)

of GDP) compared to the estimated Le10.97 trillion for 2021.

Key expenditure components include:

- i. Recurrent expenditure, Le8.17 trillion (16.1 percent of GDP) including:
 - Wage bill, Le3.9 trillion (7.7percent of GDP);
 - Goods, Services and Transfers, Le 1.2 trillion (2.4 percent of GDP);
 - Total interest payments will amount to Le1.44 trillion (2.8percent of GDP);
 - Domestic interest payments will amount to Le1.2 trillion (2.4 percent of GDP)
 - Foreign interest payment will amount to Le1.26 trillion
- ii. Capital expenditure and net lending, Le3.64 trillion (7.2 percent of GDP) including:
 - Foreign-financed capital expenditures, Le2.45 trillion
 - Domestic funded capital expenditures at Le1.19 trillion

The budgetary allocations for 2022 were aligned with the priorities of the Government as articulated in the Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 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 MTNDP 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). However, given that the amount allocated to Social Protection in the budget decreased from its 2021 allocations, this could affect the efforts of Leave No One Behind, especially in providing social services to the most vulnerable people in the society.

3.3.9 Poverty Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The restrictions put in place to contain the spread of the disease, as well as the downturn in the global economy have led to a small increase in poverty, reversing the previous trend of poverty reduction. Using data from a large household survey conducted by the World Food Programme in November/December 2020, and a model of household welfare constructed using the 2018 Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, poverty is imputed to have increased from 56.8 per cent in 2018 to 58.9 per cent in 2020. Although this increase is not actually statistically significant, in the absence of COVID-19, poverty was expected to continue to decline. Estimates of the change in poverty based solely on GDP growth projections predict an even smaller increase in poverty, to 57.7 per cent.

Urban areas, particularly the capital Freetown, have seen the largest increase in poverty. Poverty in Freetown is estimated to have increased from 17.7 per cent in 2018 to 29.1 per cent in 2020.¹² According the 2021 World Bank Economic update, in other urban areas, the increase was much smaller, from 45.2 per cent to 46.3 per cent. In rural areas there was essentially no change as poverty is estimated to have declined from 71.5 per cent to 71 per cent. By province, the increase in poverty was largest in Western Area (which is dominated by Freetown and the surrounding urban area), followed by the Northwest where poverty increased from 62.3 per cent to 67.1 per cent. This province includes the area around the international airport, the main overland trade route to Conakry, and the location of the iron mine closed by the dispute with SL Mining.

The decrease in welfare has been greatest for those in the top third of the distribution, resulting in an overall decrease in inequality. Household consumption for the top 30 per cent is estimated to have declined at 5 per cent per year, compared to 1.3 per cent for the

¹² World bank 2021 economic update

bottom 70 per cent.¹³ Across many dimensions – household size, access to agricultural land, education level, share of economically active adults – the types of households that were less poor before the pandemic have seen the largest increase in poverty. Moreover, direct reports confirm that households have seen a decrease in incomes, particularly from self-employment and jobs in the private sector.

3.3.10 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

In Sierra Leone, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) employ up to 87 per cent¹⁴ of the population, particularly in the agriculture and tourism sectors. However, MSMEs have been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the government level, there is the aim to develop the private sector by providing the enabling business environment to enhance business growth and provide increased access to finance for MSMEs through loan opportunities. The Private Sector Development Strategy Programme is the main plan guiding the development of the private sector in Sierra Leone¹⁵. In addition, there are the SMEDA Policy (National MSME Policy 2019) and the MSME National Development Strategy, this last one developed by the (MTI). These aim to (i) increase the number of small businesses in the country and (ii) support growth and progression of informal MSMEs into formal MSMEs and large-scale enterprises in Sierra Leone through improvement of the business enabling environment, promotion of business links, connection to financial markets and capacity strengthening.

MSMEs have a key role on climate change, as they are the bedrock of the rural economy serving as engines for job creation, innovation, and entrepreneurship and most of the population rely on them for their livelihoods,

¹³ World bank 2021 economic update

¹⁴ SMEDA website: <https://smeda.gov.sl/munafa-is-a-reality-and-not-a-political-statement-his-excellency-the-president-rtd-brig-dr-julius-maada-bio-on-the-12th-february-2021-officially-launched-the-government-of-sierra-leone-microcredit/>

¹⁵ National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (2017- 2020), <https://www.bsl.gov.sl/SL%20FI%20Strategy%202017%20-%202020.pdf>

making them critical partners in the adaptation effort. In Sierra Leone where the agriculture sector represents 54 per cent of the GDP (2019), the MSMEs are the only source of employment, income, and market access for the poor and most vulnerable and they are the basis of sustenance of most communities. MSMEs located in poor and vulnerable areas, are particularly exposed to climate risks due to their dependence on the natural environment, operate in sectors highly vulnerable to climate change (such as agriculture, fisheries, livestock, and forestry), and are part of the countries global supply chain. Thus, MSMEs will be impacted by changes in the resources and activities in the referred sectors. On one hand, MSMEs are agile and innovative, on the other, climate change adaptation efforts may also present an opportunity for MSMEs, as the demand for new products and services will increase, and new markets will emerge.



3.4 Environment and Climate Change

3.4.1 Environment

Environment ecosystems will be severely impacted by climate change and existing development stressors. With increased storm surges, flash floods, and high winds, these conditions will be exacerbated by pollution, landslides, coastal erosion, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and invasive species which will further stress ecosystems.

Climate change is one of the key factors that stand in the way of Sierra Leone's environmental sustainability¹⁶. While the country's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is low, it remains vulnerable to risks associated with climate change. Prominent

16 Sierra Leone's Third National Communication to the UNFCCC https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/FinalThird_per cent20Nat_per cent20Com_per cent20document_per cent20111.pdf

among these factors is deforestation, which is rapidly accelerating in Sierra Leone. The desire by subsequent governments to raise revenue plunged the nation to institute logging of its precious forest resources for export since 2007.¹⁷

In the last fifteen years, intense and frequent storms, as well as flash floods, have affected more than 220,000 people along the coast of Freetown (World Bank 2017). Floods account for 85 per cent of disaster-related mortality in the country, followed by landslides, storms and fire accidents.

Mining is a major economic activity with an average GDP contribution of 4-10 per cent per annum, in addition to being pivotal to employment and local investment opportunities. Unregulated Extraction of minerals is also a big challenge in the sustainability of Sierra Leonean environment.

Over the years, the coastal environment of Sierra Leone has suffered continued negative impacts resulting from human activities and the lack of mechanism to manage its resources. The increasing population in the coastal communities is having adverse impacts to the coastal environment. These include uncontrolled construction of shelter and the unsustainable exploitation of coastal and marine resources, such as sand, aggregates, fisheries resources, mangroves etc. This situation has a potential consequence on the biological productivity of the marine environment as most spawning and nursery grounds have been destroyed. Sierra Leone's total fisheries production amounted to 202,100 in 2018.¹⁸

Water quality and availability are highly vulnerable to climate impacts. Shifting rainfall patterns has led to decreasing access to water and reduced stream flow of rivers and

17 Cite complete source: published in an article on "Who Killed Our Forests" in 2020

18 World Bank data bank



streams. In addition, sea level rise is causing saltwater intrusion and reduced freshwater groundwater reserves. Coastal erosion is already a significant challenge in the country, with areas such as Yaliboya¹⁹, Konakridee, Lakka, Hamilton and Plantain Island already witnessing coastline shifting about 4-6 meters per year²⁰. It is estimated that 26.4km² will be lost to the sea if no action is taken and that by 2050, 1881 buildings will be affected by sea level rise with costs amounting to US\$46.8 million.²¹ Increased risks of flooding will lead to damaged water infrastructure and increased health risks such as in increased propagation of water-borne diseases.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 6 (2017) and WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) (2020) on national water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services indicated that in Sierra Leone, over three million people do not have access to safe drinking water, while an estimated six million people do not have access to basic sanitation. Of these, approximately 1.3 million (25 per cent rural, 5 per cent urban) people practice open defecation. Sixty-four per cent or 5.1 million people do not have hand washing facilities on the premises. In addition, 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 in one in five schools in Sierra Leone provides accessible basic sanitation services for children, while 11 percent of the health care facilities do not have toilets.

3.4.2 Climate Change

Climate change is a transversal issue to all sectors and climate adaptation needs to be tackled throughout all economic activities. Sierra Leone's vision on climate mitigation and adaptation²² is supported by the proposals in the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP),

¹⁹ EPA Report 2021

²⁰ Government of Sierra Leone, National Adaptation Plan, May 2021

²¹ *ibid*

²² GoSL, Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) July 2021

which revised in early 2021 and is aligned with the MTNDP, the African Union Vision and the SDGs. For the mitigation, the vision is to earn forest carbon credits through the implementation of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) programmes. For adaptation, the vision is to 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 programmes across sectors and scales.

Sierra Leone's 2021 National Determined Commitments (NDCs) responds to Article 4, paragraph 2 of the Paris Accord, which requires parties to the UNFCCC to prepare communicate and maintain successive NDCs that they intend to achieve. Accordingly, the 2021 updated NDC envisions to achieve long-term goals for mitigation: a reduction in CO₂ emission levels to 5 per cent by 2025, 10 per cent by 2030, and 25 per cent by 2050 with a transformational shift toward a low-emission development pathway by targeting priority sectors implementing Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) as well as promoting innovation and technology transfer for sustainable breakthroughs in energy, waste management, etc.

The Nationally Determined Commitments (updated NDC) issued in July 2021 expands the goals set forward on the initial National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for adaptation,²³ including:

- Increasing resilience capacity at all scales;
- Supporting an integrative approach to climate change programming and policymaking;
- Allocating 10 percent 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

²³ GoSL, Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) July 2021

development plans by 2025;

- Institutionalize NAP implementation through laws, policies, and regulation;
- Establishing a National Trust Fund for channelling adaptation support across sectors; and
- Securing 40 per cent of international development funding to support adaptation priorities across different sectors.

These goals contribute to the achievement of the overall adaptation goal through the integration of adaptation considerations into all relevant plans, policies, and strategies and by prioritizing and plan for adaptation.

3.4.3 Institutional Arrangements and Mitigation Measures

Institutional structures have been created to combat the impact of climate change. The establishment of the Environment Protection Agency, charged with the responsibility of coordinating all climate change issues in the country, including the development of climate change mitigation and adaption plans to mitigate the impact climate change, is a crucial step in fighting climate change.

Moreover, Sierra Leone has made tremendous efforts in institutional and policy reforms to address climate change and environmental challenges. Few of these include on the table.

One of the key challenges in mitigating climate change effects is the fragmentation and weak implementation of policies. The Government of Sierra Leone established the Meteorological Agency in 2017 through a Parliamentary Act. The Agency has a clearly defined mandate as presented in the Act establishing it. It is required to advise the Government on all aspects of meteorology, climatology, climate change and other climate related issues; develop related policies; issue weather information and forecasts; promote the use of meteorology in agriculture, food monitoring and in the monitoring of flood, drought, desertification and other related

2018	Development of a contingency plan for drought management
	Development of a Coastal Climate Change Adaptation Plan
2019	Establishment of an Environment Ministry
2020	Establishment of a National Disaster Management Agency
	Development of a National Framework for climate services
	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action
	Off-Grid Solar Energy Strategy
2021	Establishment of a Renewable Energy Directorate in the Ministry of Energy
	Review of the Disaster Management Policy
	Development of a capacity development plan for disaster management
	Development and validation of an initial National Adaptation Plan (NAP)
	Development of a national document for Land Degradation Neutrality target setting
	Revision of National Climate Change Policy and a climate change communications strategy
	Development of new acts for forestry, wetlands management, and conservation of wildlife
National Climate Change Policy	

activities; and collect, process, store and disseminate meteorological and climatological information both nationally and internationally, among other responsibilities. However, the Agency lacks the capacity to fully deliver on its mandate, including processing and analysing meteorological data to provide meteorological services to those who need it.

In recognition of the forest management benefits amidst the existing challenges, the Sierra Leonean Government, through its Ministry of Environment, has commenced a countrywide National Tree Planting initiative. Details from the Government indicate the initiative is aimed at planting 5 million trees in approximately 14,706 hectares of degraded lands and coastal areas in the entire country. Sierra Leone's biodiversity, natural ecosystems and habitats play a crucial role in its national development. They are pivotal in the sustenance of its water resources, agricultural

productivity, and tourism, among others. Aware of these benefits to the country, the Government revised its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2017-2026.

3.4.4 Climate Change Impact on Agriculture and Food Security

Sierra Leone has been ranked as the third most vulnerable nation after Bangladesh and Guinea Bissau to the adverse effects of climate change. It is also ranked as one of the least able countries to adapt to climate change²⁴ 157 out of 181 in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index in terms of vulnerability to climate change with high vulnerability and low readiness.²⁵ This has serious implications for the country's vulnerable population, who depends on rain-fed agriculture and natural resource-based livelihoods but have low capacity to adapt to climate change.

In Sierra Leone, agriculture is an important livelihood, primary food source and large component of the economy. Current climatic conditions are ideal to produce the primary crops: rice, sugar cane, banana, coconut, citrus, cocoa, pineapple, yam, and cassava. However, with regional climate modelling projections demonstrating increased temperatures (approx. +1.7 °C for RCP4.5 and 2.3°C for RCP8.5) and rainfall changes from -5 per cent to 5 per cent with high variability, this is likely to change agriculture practices and production. For instance, rice being the staple food crop in Sierra Leone and being grown mainly in smallholder farming under rain-fed conditions, agriculture and farmers' livelihoods are especially vulnerable to changes in precipitation. This is compounded by the persistent rural poverty and farmers without insurance or the resources to invest in irrigation and other agricultural technologies compound it. These climate impacts are also likely to increase water requirements for crops, competition for water resources, as well as incidence of pest and disease outbreaks.

²⁴ Government of SL, Updated Nationally Determined Contribution, July 2021

²⁵ Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index, ranking of 2019

Agriculture and food security are prioritized for adaptation because climate change is already having a toll on agricultural food systems. Continued climate unpredictability and the projected change in rainfall intensity will certainly affect damage to crops, flood fields and streams, as well as water can strip soils of their nutrients or the soil mass itself. With the expected increase of extreme rainfall events, which will potentially lead to flooding and drought due to the variability of the precipitation and the increase in temperatures, rain fed agriculture is at risk of crop and livestock losses. Since most part of the population is dependent on agriculture, this could significantly affect food security (food shortages, hunger, and malnutrition). In addition, water shortages can also lead to loss in food production and increase the needs to import and/or experience food shortages. These impacts are even more pronounced for the vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and the disabled, particularly the ones living in rural areas.

3.4.5 Food Production and Food Security

Sierra Leone diversity in agro-ecological conditions and significant natural resource base, including land, represents a solid asset on which a vibrant and diverse food system could expand. With a rainfall gradient ranging from 1900 mm to over 4000 mm, and altitudes varying from 0 to 1945 m, production systems, food and cash crops, and livestock are diverse. Rainfall is highest along the coastal strip and declines toward the northeast (which is dominated by woody savannah vegetation rather than tropical forest). Uplands represent about 80 per cent of the cultivated land, essentially using slash and burn cropping systems with variable fallow periods. Diverse production systems (dominated by rice cultivation) are practiced in the lowland ecologies that are still poorly developed, namely inland valley swamps (690,000 ha), naturally grassy drainage depressions (bolilands, 145,000 ha), riparian grassland (130,000 ha) and mangrove swamps (20,000

Figure 9: Trend in households' food expenditure share (2018-2021)

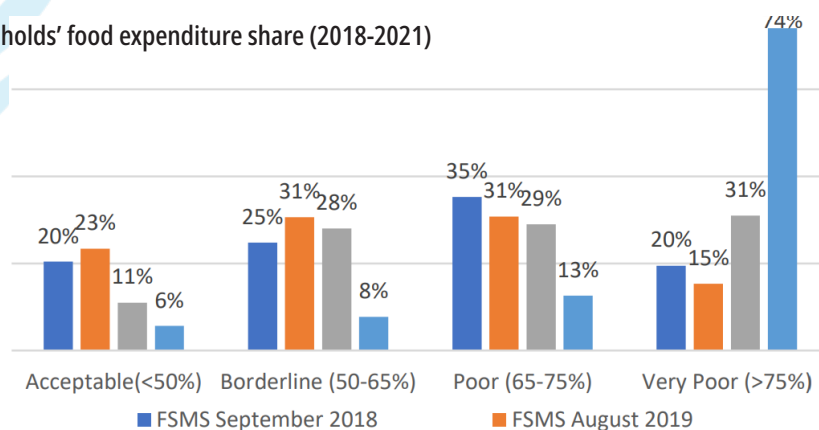
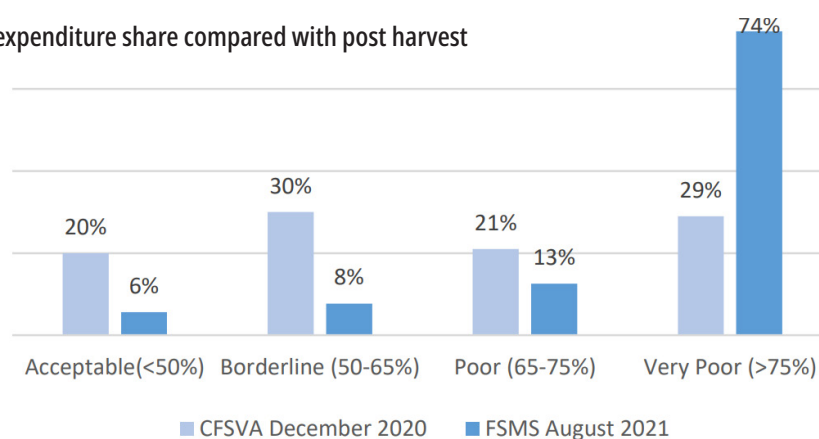


Figure 10: Lean season expenditure share compared with post harvest



Source: Sierra Leone Food Security System Monitoring Report, August 2021

ha). Rice can be considered the common denominator of the agricultural production systems in Sierra Leone (upland and lowlands) and constitutes the main staple food. Ensuring rice self-sufficiency has consistently been an important part of Sierra Leone's agricultural policy narratives.²⁶

Past national development strategies and policies had prioritized rice as one of the key crops for investment. In the 2018 plan, the government aimed at promoting food security and job creation by increasing investment in the production of rice and other food crops like cassava and potato. Moreover, in the current national development the government aimed at improving rice production under cluster 2.1. Despite the continuous prioritization of rice in all of the national development plans, Sierra Leone continues to be a net importer of rice. The value of rice imports in 2016 alone, amounted to US\$95.9 million.²⁷ The average

area under rice cultivation is 1.06 ha per farmer.

Production is essentially oriented towards food crops, a large part of which (especially for vegetable production, rice, cassava, maize, millet, sorghum, sweet potato, and groundnut) is self-consumed. Livestock production is more often commercialized, as well as certain cash crops (cocoa, coffee) or destined for local or international processing chains (palm oil, rubber). More than 85 per cent of farmers produce rice, with cassava coming in second place among staple foods. As it is focused on self-consumption, Sierra Leonean agriculture is unable to meet national demand. This is true for staple foods such as rice, but also for less accessible foods such as meat products, for which demand especially urban demand is on the rise.

In a survey conducted by FAO in October 2021 about 94.1 per cent of households reported crop production difficulties (i.e., plant diseases, low

²⁶ Agricultural sector review, 2021.

²⁷ Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019 - 2023

seed quality, and crop loss and damage during planting season). Livestock disease (64.3 per cent) and access to veterinary services (55.5 per cent) were the main difficulties faced by livestock farmers. Despite these production difficulties, 42.1 per cent of farming households are expecting lot more or more harvest. This can be related to the development support received by vulnerable and farming households during planting season (implementation of development project by partners, and the Government policy shift support). Through the government policy shift, farmers were supported with seeds, fertilizers, and machineries for ploughing.

Food insecurity is very high, including among rural people and farmers who mobilize a significant portion of their income for food expenditures. According to the June 2021 FSMS survey, the percentage of households spending more than 75 per cent of their income on food is about 74.1 per cent.²⁸ When the level of income reduces or when prices increase, the share of food expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure also increases and for poor households this forces them to reduce spending on essential non-food items and services, such as education and health. The share of expenditures devoted to food categorises the households into four groups.²⁹

FAO survey conducted in October 2021 also highlighted various shocks faced by households which may be a factor affecting their consumption pattern. According to the survey, 28.1 per cent of households reported much higher than usual food prices, 17.8 per cent much higher than usual fuel price, while 28.6 per cent reported sickness or death of household member.

Food insecurity situation continue to worsen with 1.5 million people estimated to need food assistance from March to May 2020, with this number expected to increase during the lean

period from June to August 2021 to 1.7 million. Result from the recent Cadre Harmonize October 2021 shows some improvement in the number of population that are food insecure (1 million people are in food need between October to December 2021. The number is estimated to increase during the lean season of 2022 to 1.5 million.³⁰ The main drivers of the food insecurity are the effects of adverse weather events (flooding), fall armyworm attacks on maize in some localized areas, high inflation rate, weakening local currency and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the value chain³¹. The timely onset of rains in late March, average to above average rainfall supporting the development of crops is a contributing factor increase harvest and reduction in the number of food insecure population.

The Regular Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) in August 2021 showed a continued and steady deteriorating trend in the Food Consumption Score (FCS) when compared to previous rounds of the FSMS. The proportion of households categorised as having "poor" FCS has increased in each round of the FSMS since September 2018, and most recently from 34 per cent in June 2020 to 37 per cent in August 2021. The proportion of households with "poor" FCS doubled between September 2018 and August 2021. Conversely, the share of households with "acceptable" FCS has declined, albeit more significantly from 29 per cent in June 2020 to just 21 per cent in August 2021. Similarly, those households with "borderline" FCS, who are vulnerable to fall into the "poor" category given further food price increases or a shock, also increased from 37 per cent in June 2020 to 42 per cent in August 2021. Consistent deteriorations in FCS most likely reflect the impact of continuously increasing food and fuel prices given that Sierra Leone is a net importer of food. However, the long-term deterioration in FCS also implies longer term economic stagnation. With most households in Sierra Leone engaged in farming, a worsening FCS may also indicate

28 Food Security Monitoring System June 2021

29 1. Very poor (those who spend more than 75.0 percent of their budget on food); 2. Poor (65.0 and 75.0 percent of their budget on food); 3. Borderline (50.0 and 65.0 percent of their budget on food); and 4. Acceptable (less than 50.0 percent of their budget on food).

30 Cadre Harmonize, October 2021.

31 GIEWS, April 2021.

challenges in terms of agricultural production, such as declining yields due to lack of access to improved seeds and inputs, and an increasingly unpredictable climate which has negatively impacted farming activities. With the production difficulties and shocks face by households, food consumption will continue to worsen if immediate action is not taken.

3.4.6 Energy

Sierra Leone's current installed power generation capacity stands at 184MW of which IPPs account for 50MW. This is far below its estimated countrywide electricity needs of 300-500 megawatts. These ensuing slits make biomass as a key alternative source of energy for household cooking and lighting, with most of it being in the form of wood fuel that includes firewood and charcoal. Estimates show more than 85 per cent of the country's population rely on wood fuel as the primary source of energy.³²

The sector is also linked to climate variability and change as, in one hand global energy

32 UNEP (2019). Review of Wood fuel Biomass Production and Utilization in Africa: A Desk Study. United Nations Environment Programme. <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/28515>

production is a strong contributor to climate change drivers (through GHG emissions) and, on the other hand, it is exposed to climate variability and change as climate change may impact energy supply (by, for example, damaging transmission and distribution infrastructure causing disruption on operations and distributions) and energy demand (growing population and evolving power needs).

Only 26 per cent of the Sierra Leoneans have access to electricity (one of the lowest electricity access rates in the world) and that percentage is reduced to 6 per cent in rural areas³³ with hydropower supplies 60-70 per cent of the country's energy needs. The significant variability and recent less predictability of precipitation levels is making hydropower energy generation more difficult to manage. Furthermore, the increased number of extreme events and its increased severity can affect energy generation and transmission infrastructure, as it may lead to its destruction, causing blackouts and loss of energy access on a country with already poor infrastructure coverage.

33 <https://www.seforall.org/news/sierra-leone-closing-the-energy-access-gap-with-mini-grids>



In Sierra Leone, only 6 per cent of the rural population have access to electricity, which is subsequently creating a substantial amount of CO2 emissions mainly through the consumptions of fossil fuel-based energy for household lighting and cooking. In addition to that, poor access to electricity is recognised as a binding constraint to long-term economic growth in the country. Policy makers, donors, and international development organisations have made universal access to electricity a priority in Sierra Leone as a result. The Government's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023 (MTNDP) also outlines its key policies for the next four years to address these issues. By 2023, the Government of Sierra Leone plans to increase investment in low-cost renewable energy (solar, hydro, wind, and biomass) production and distribution.



3.5 Social Exclusion

3.5.1 Women and Girls

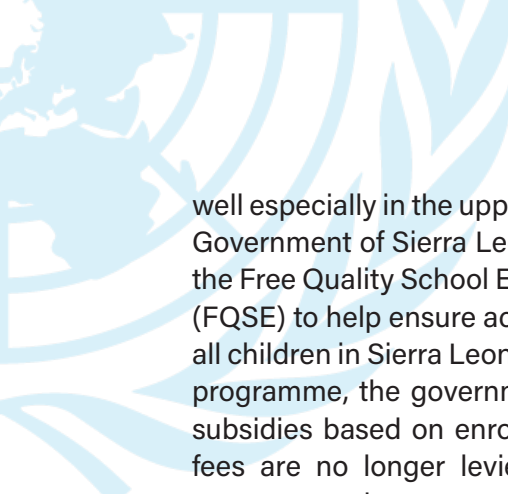
Gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls in Sierra Leone is a cause of social exclusion. Sierra Leone has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.644, ranking it 153 out of 162 countries in the 2018 index³⁴. Women and girls in Sierra Leone face a range of barriers to social inclusion, including education, health services, legal rights and public participation and representation, and stereotypical gendered social norms that position women and girls as wives and caretakers while men and boys are breadwinners and decision makers. This means that boys' rights – whether to education, health care or adequate nutrition are prioritized over those of girls from an early age. Many women and girls find it difficult to access vital and basic services. In December 2020, the Government launched the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Policy which serves as a reference point for addressing gender inequalities by all stakeholders at national and community levels.

³⁴ Human Development Reports 2019 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>)

Female headed households were already more vulnerable prior to COVID-19 and the pandemic has increased their vulnerability. Study cited in an IGC report found that female headed households were less likely to be informed about the disease and had higher rates of food insecurity compared to male-headed households. The IGC report also cites studies on the incidence of gender-based violence and child abuse which some households have reported has increased during the pandemic.

3.5.2 Completion Rates Between Boys and Girls

There are clear disparities in education between women and men, and between girls and boys. According to the 2015 Census Report enrolment of girls is slightly higher than boys. The 2015 Census data showed that 55.9 per cent males as compared to 44.1 per cent females were enrolled in vocational, technical, and nursing training institutions. The disparities occur in completion rates as



well especially in the upper grades. 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. Under this national programme, the government provides school subsidies 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, exam fees, a school feeding programme with plans for teacher incentives in rural areas, school construction and rehabilitation and teacher training. Another factor that contributes to poor learning outcomes is a pupil to government teacher ratio of 94:1 in primary schools.³⁵

As part of the FQSE programme, the government strengthened decentralized education representation through Ward Education Committees. These localized structures were responsible for ensuring monitoring of education programmes and providing information throughout the year.

Additionally, the advent of Free Quality School Education re-ignited the need for more sustained and equitable provision of school related services. Top of this agenda is school health which is a pre-requisite to quality education. The GoSL has always acknowledged that health and education are the two cornerstones of human development. This policy, therefore, seeks to give credence to the need to provide the child with the tools required to be the best that they can be physically, socially, and mentally.³⁶

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 distance to schools and associated risks of getting to school and living with relatives in another town has been cited as a reason that girls drop out of school. The few who are sent to school in neighbouring chiefdoms or

communities are at risk of teenage pregnancy.

The situation of children (especially girls) and their access to education in a COVID-19 environment are equally cause for concern. Data show children eating less, and the proportion following distance education relative to normal classes are low.³⁷ Closing of schools has created large disruption to teaching and learning for approximately 2.6 million children, including with far greater impact on girls from the most vulnerable and marginalized background such as in rural households. Local media reports and reports from other African countries reveal an increase in the dropout rate among girls as a result of closure of schools as a measure to contain the spread of the virus.

The World Bank 2020 Economic Update highlights girls' education in Sierra Leone and emphasizes that similar to the 2014 Ebola crisis, COVID-19 is likely to affect adolescent girls' education prospects and their human capital potentials. Evidence shows that teenage girls are especially at risk when they are out of school as the risks of being married or having a child too early are magnified. In turn, child marriage and early childbearing make it hard for girls to later return to school, leading to long-lasting negative impacts. The report identifies the need to prioritize investments in girls and to support students and families to cope with the crisis and ensure that learning continues while they stay at home.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) rates in Sierra Leone remain high with 83 per cent of women 15-49 years in the country having experienced it³⁸. Young women and girls can face social exclusion in especially rural communities if they have not gone through the traditional rites. The National COVID-19 Response Secretariat has put a ban on all traditional practices including FGM.

In 2021, the 48th Session Universal Periodic Review outcome report for Sierra Leone

³⁷ The International Growth Centre (2020). Tracking the economic consequences and response to COVID-19

³⁸ Demographic Health Survey 2019.

³⁵ 2019 Annual School Census, MBSSE

³⁶ School Health Policy, GoSL, pg.i



contained 43 recommendations pertaining to eliminating FGM in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone did not accept any recommendations related to the criminalisation of female genital mutilation, stating that they are highly aspirational or ask to achieve ideals or outcomes that conflict with our national laws and cultural values.

Despite a vocal women's movement, only 17 women out of 146 parliamentarians are women. At present, there are 16 female MPs forming 11.6 per cent of legislators.³⁹ At the local level after the 2018 elections, 17.7 per cent (97/549) councillors were women, a reduction from 19.1 per cent following the 2012 elections. The number of women council chairpersons/mayors increased by one to 13.6 per cent (3/22) in 2018 from 10.5 per cent (2/19) in 2012.⁴⁰ To address this disparity in political representation, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, with the support of the UN, is advocating for the adoption of a 'Gender Empowerment Bill,' which would mandate a minimum of 30 per cent women in political positions as well as improved access to finance and gender mainstreaming.

³⁹ National Electoral Commission Sierra Leone, 2018
⁴⁰ *ibid.*

3.5.3 Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone face a range of attitudinal, environmental, and institutional social exclusion. According to the Sierra Leone Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019, multidimensional poverty based on disability stood at 68.1 per cent with functional disabilities being poorer than those without functional disabilities. The Persons with Disabilities Act 2011 marks an important advance to inclusivity of disabled persons into the Sierra Leonean community. During COVID-19, persons with disabilities have face social exclusion as some of them cannot access hand washing stations because of physical inaccessibility, difficulty in social distancing because of additional support needed and barriers to access public health information. The 2015 National Census indicates that boys and girls with disabilities were 7 per cent points and 10 per cent points less likely to be in school than their nondisabled peers. The proportion of adults who were illiterate was also higher among people with disabilities. Thus, a study in Sierra Leone reported that 46.5 per cent of people with disabilities had never been to school and 63.9 per cent were illiterate compared to 34.3 per cent and 50.7 per cent for people without disabilities respectively.⁴¹

3.5.4 Youth

Sierra Leone's young population has a high unemployment rate. According to the UN, in 2019, the unemployment rate is higher among youth than among older people (defined as people aged 36–64) at 5.9 per cent versus 2.2 per cent, respectively. High rates of unemployment and poverty are a barrier to social inclusion among the youth. A high number of youths are involved in drug abuse and misuse, have limited access to vocational and educational programmes, and are an easy bait for politicians to use to perpetuate political violence.⁴² Young women in Sierra Leone also face a range of barriers to social

⁴¹ Pilleron S. Access to services for people with disabilities. Lyon: Handicap International; 2011

⁴² Report of the joint assessment mission on youth at risk in Sierra Leone

inclusion as a result of teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

According to the 2019 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) fertility rate is high and estimated at 102 per 1,000 for the 15–19 age group. Rural teenagers tend to start childbearing earlier than urban teenagers (29 per cent versus 14 per cent). The high rate of pregnancy among adolescents may be attributed to limited knowledge, minimal use of contraceptives and other sexual and reproductive health services, among others. The National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018–2022 details the Government’s commitment to address this challenge of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage. The COVID-19 pandemic and its mitigation measures, the incidences of teenage pregnancy may have increased. Nevertheless, the Government of Sierra Leone has lifted the discriminatory ban that prohibits pregnant schoolgirls from attending school. The lifting of this ban is critical for inclusive access to education for young girls. The UN is supporting the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education to develop and implement a ‘Radical Inclusion Strategy’, which will create an enabling environment to retain pregnant girls and return teenage mothers into the school system.

3.5.5 Sexual Minorities

There is a good body of literature on the sexual behaviour of sex workers and men who have sex with men (MSM) in relation to HIV prevention, treatment, and care, but less attention has been paid to social and economic deprivation, exclusion and marginalization because of sexual orientation or sexual behaviour. In Sierra Leone, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI) populations, may face legal charges under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861. An attempt to replace this law with one that could give right to LGBTQI population was thwarted in 2018. Sex workers face a range of barriers to inclusion in society, including difficulties gaining social acceptance in the society; exclusion from the right to marry and have a family; exclusion from health care institutions; exclusion from formal workplaces and informal working arrangements; and exclusion from the institutions that maintain justice in society. When they try to access services, they experience stigma, discrimination, harassment, and abuse. This means that many LGBTQI people and sex workers avoid the institutions and services, which leads to the reinforcement of their exclusion, poverty, and disadvantage. Several recommendations were made in the



earlier mentioned Universal Periodic Review on improving the human rights situation as it pertains to LGBTQI populations. In its response, Sierra Leone 'noted' all recommendations pertaining to sexual minorities and indicated that the recommendations conflicted with national laws and cultural values.

3.5.6 People Living with HIV/AIDS

Prevalence rates for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA) is estimated at 1.7 per cent among adults ages 15-49 with 2.2 and 1.1 percent in women and men, respectively.⁴³ HIV prevalence in urban areas is twice than in rural areas, at 2.3 per cent in urban areas compared with 1.2 percent in rural areas. People Living with HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone face discrimination from families and communities. There is limited access to HIV and AIDS services, particularly vulnerable populations such as sex workers. In October 2020, the National Aids Secretariat launched the Consolidated Guidelines on HIV Prevention, Diagnosis, Treatment, and Care in Sierra Leone which provide new opportunities, as well as new imperatives for strengthening HIV prevention and care efforts, increasing access to Antiretroviral Treatment (ART) for people in need and treatment monitoring for people on antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. The guideline was launched at a critical time during COVID-19 as PLWA need access to Antiretroviral therapy to strengthen their immune system. It was also critical that all people living with HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone should have access to health-care providers to ensure that they have adequate stocks of essential medicines. The disruption of health services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people living with communicable diseases such as HIV as there has been delays in accessing medical assistance which has in turn increased deaths in most communities.⁴⁴

⁴³ Demographic Health Survey 2019.

⁴⁴ United Nations COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan for Sierra Leone- UN 2020

3.5.7 Older Persons

There are no established institutional structures in place to reduce the increasing vulnerability of older persons. There are more (about 52 per cent) women amongst persons above 65 years old. Of the older persons population, older women are more likely to be vulnerable and exposed to social exclusion. Due to the patriarchal power relations underpinning Sierra Leonean institutions, structures and communities, widowed women may face greater social exclusion than those who are married. This may include being dispossessed of property after their husband's death and ill-treatment from in-laws and communities. The Devolution of Estates Act (2007) provides that men and women have the same inheritance rights in the event of the death of a spouse or a parent, but implementation of this law remains a challenge. Over 70 per cent⁴⁵ of the economically active older persons are engaged in subsistence farming, which is predominant in rural settings. Due to reduction in farming activities as a result of inadequate inputs and COVID-19 curtailment measures, most of these older persons could not continue farming, a main source of their livelihood and nutrition. This stands to further undermine their resilience to the pandemic and its impact.



⁴⁵ Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census Thematic Report on Elderly Population



4. Compliance with International Human Rights, Norms, and Standards

Sierra Leone has ratified key international human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.⁴⁶ The country has also ratified regional treaties related to human rights, chiefly the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Maputo Protocol, which focuses on important issues related to women rights including female genital mutilation (FGM), violence against women and girls, child marriage and women’s economic, social, and political empowerment.

As part of its international obligations, Sierra Leone has been working hard to strengthen its national reporting mechanisms. The country has been submitting reports to some treaty bodies and for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In March 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation organized a consultative meeting with national stakeholders that led to the adoption of a

⁴⁶ For more information related to the ratification statute of Sierra Leone, please visit https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=156&Lang=EN

revamped Sierra Leone National Reporting Mechanism to Treaty Bodies (NRM), which was adopted by Cabinet and entered into force in October 2021. This achievement is critical as it will ensure there is a functioning national reporting system that fosters effective integration and coordination of preparation and submission of regular reporting to human rights treaty bodies and clearing of backlogs on the same. It is important that the Government continues with the practice of submitting its report regularly. On December 2021, a simulation exercise was organized in Freetown consisting of a review carried out between the reporting cycles at the national level and designed to discuss how countries implement specific recommendations issued by UN Treaty Bodies. This workshop allowed the Sierra Leone NRM to receive further guidance on the implementation of the recommendations issued by various Treaty Bodies.

In January 2022, the Government of Sierra Leone released a long-awaited White Paper on the review of the country’s Constitution, five years after the report on the last review process was submitted. The document was officially presented at a ceremony presided over by President Julius Maada Bio during which he stated that his government had already

accepted some of the recommendations, as part of ongoing process reforms. However, the revival of the constitutional review process by the Government has been marred with secrecy with little information being provided as to the composition of the committee, and details on the scope of work. The committee has been tasked with the responsibility of reviewing the previous White Paper submitted by the previous administration and make additional recommendations as would be deemed necessary to move the process forward. It is worth noting that the White Paper as presented by the previous administration was highly criticized across the board nationally for falling short of expectations as recorded in the final report of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC). Following the release of the White Paper in January 2022, serious criticisms on Government position on key issues were made by several high-profile politicians including the President of the National Assembly, as well as prominent members of the civil society organizations. The report on the review of the 2017 Government White Paper on the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No 6 1991) that was published in December 2021, recognizes, and protects fundamental human rights and freedom of the individual (see Chapter V related mainly to civil and political rights) and economical social and cultural rights (see Chapter IV). In its review, the Government accepts this recommendation of renaming Chapter III of the 1991 Constitution to read "The Recognition, Protection, and Promotion of Human Rights and Freedoms of the Individual" and states that this is "in line with its international obligations in safeguarding and promoting human rights of its citizenry".

The abolition of the death penalty in October 2021 following the July 2021 Sierra Leone Parliament vote constitutes an important achievement. In line with this major change in legislation, courts in the country stopped pronouncing death sentences. Some inmates on the death row had their sentences commuted to prison sentences. On January 2022, the Residual Special Court for Sierra

Leone in collaboration with the Centre for International Law and Policy in Africa (CILPA)- a Freetown-based think tank, commemorated the 20th anniversary of the formal end of Sierra Leone's civil war. Human rights, impunity and peace issues were debated. Impunity for the past crimes must be addressed to ensure there is justice for the victims for a prosperous future and long-lasting peace in the country and the subregion.

The adoption by the UN Human Rights Council of Sierra Leone's 3rd cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the commitment of the country to fully implement all the 216 accepted recommendations (out of 274 that Sierra Leone received) as stated by the country's Attorney General during the 48th regular session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva in October 2021, is encouraging. However, Sierra Leone noted 58 recommendations including recommendations pertaining to the elimination of FGM and improving human rights for the LGBTQI. During the same UPR process, Sierra Leone made voluntary pledges of reviewing the Sexual Offenses Act of 2019 and bring it in line with international standards on child rights as well as to finalize the constitutional review process. While having in place the Gender Equality Policy and Bill is a good step, it is regrettable that Sierra Leone did not accept the recommendations to prohibit and eliminate female genital mutilation even though the practice remains common across the villages and towns of the country.⁴⁷ There is hope that Sierra Leone has committed to engage in wide ranging national consultations to forge consensus on this issue.

Another improvement is related to the fact that the Government of Sierra Leone has started the implementation of its Labor Migration Policy to improve the response to the vulnerability of migrants to trafficking in Sierra Leone and abroad. In addition, the country plans to develop a new national migration

⁴⁷ According to the 2019 Demographic Health Survey, 83 percent of girls and women aged 15-49 have undergone female genital mutilation, a decrease from 90 percent in 2013. The issue affects more girls with 71 percent of them having FGM before their 15th birthday. See <https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/en/topics/female-genital-mutilation-4#:~:text=In%20Sierra%20Leone%2C%20according,before%20the%20age%20of%2015.>

policy to be adopted in 2022 as well as the development of a new Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling Act to prevent and punish the trafficking of migrants. The UN and members of the international community should stand ready to assist the country technically and financially for these key engagements. These commitments followed the finalization of the ratification process of eight International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions and one protocol August 2021. Even though the Government has shown commitment to improving labor rights, efforts must be taken to revise Sierra Leone's labor laws in accordance with internationally recognized standards and put in place measures to effectively protect the worker including domestic and migrant workers.

The Bill related to the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) was passed in February 2021. It put in place a governing Board with a membership of nine (including three women) that has been mandated to operationalize the Commission. It is hoped that the Commission's work will strengthen initiatives toward sustaining peace by improving on strides to bring divided communities together. In July 2020, President Bio launched the establishment of the Sierra Leone sexual offences courts. These Sexual

Offences Model Courts (SOMC) have started working since then and conducted several hearing sessions through 2021 aiming at tackling impunity for Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) and ensure justice for the survivors.

In July 2020, the Sierra Leone Parliament unanimously repealed Part V of the 1965 Public Order Act (POA), which criminalized libel, making way for improved freedom of speech in Sierra Leone. While this has significantly contributed to the promotion of individual liberties and an expanded democratic space, misinformation, hate speech including in political discourses and dis-information including through social media platforms remain a major challenge. The discussion and subsequent introduction of the Cyber Crime legislation has been received with mixed feelings with fear of the legislation being used to target media practitioners in their work.

Despite these positive developments recorded in 2021 and in the previous year, Sierra Leone continues to face important human rights challenges that need to be addressed. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates an already complex human rights situation in the country with negative impact on the economy especially the tourism, transport,





and informal economy sectors. Serious human rights violations continued to be reported across the country. These include cases of unlawful killings, ritual killings, harsh and life-threatening detention conditions in prisons, and police detention facilities due to overcrowding, lack of food, medical care, and clean drinking water; arbitrary arrests and detention; abusive treatment by the police and the military including in custody. The rights to the freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association as well as attacks on actual or perceived political opponents were also reported. Gender-based violence including female genital mutilation (FGM) affecting mostly young girls, forced and early marriage and domestic violence are committed in almost total impunity. Forced labour, child labour especially in the artisanal diamond and gold mining sector and child trafficking, are other issues of concern. The rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons are not protected, and the same-sex sexual conduct is still criminalized. If not fully and comprehensively addressed, these issues may lead to spirals of violent conflicts in the communities across the country and in the subregion, especially in the context of the upcoming elections in 2023.

Sierra Leone is a member of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). APRM

is an African regional instrument that was established in July 2002 as an instrument voluntarily acceded to by AU member States as an African self-monitoring mechanism. The APRM is often described as “Africa’s unique and innovative approach to governance” with the objective of improving governance dynamics at the local, national and continental levels. The mandate of the APRM is to ensure that policies and practices of participating Member States conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards contained in the African Union Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. In its drive to implement the APRM process in Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Government appointed the Minister of Political and Public Affairs as APRM National Focal Point who reports directly to the Head of State or Government.

The passing of the Right to Access Information Law in 2013 offers the right to its citizens and interested persons free access to information primarily in the hands of government and non-state actors. With the passing of this law, access to information and open data offers its citizenry the opportunity to critically evaluate authorities appointed and elected to account for their stewardship.



5. Development- Humanitarian- Peace Linkages

To articulate the humanitarian – development nexus, the UN in Sierra Leone has provided technical support to the recently established National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA). This has included the secondment of specialized Disaster Risk Management and logistics specialists to NDMA who have provided technical backstopping in incident management, coordination and strengthening of the logistics cluster. The UN in Sierra Leone, as co-lead in several sectors / areas of Responsibility, supported the activation of sectoral pillars, with the relevant ministries as lead. The UN in Sierra Leone also built NDMA capacities in early warning through implementing simulation exercises, trainings in Sexual and Reproductive Health during emergencies, psychosocial support, and protection. To strengthen local capacities to respond to disasters, Chiefdom Disaster Management Committees were established and trained.

During 2021, the global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to exacerbate the socio-economic situation of vulnerable populations in Sierra Leone. To reduce vulnerabilities, the UN has continued to provide medical supplies and equipment, water supply and IPC materials, trainings in health facilities and schools, risk communication (including for the education sector) in support of NACOVERC’s operations. Furthermore, the UN in Sierra Leone provided life-saving food assistance to approximately 160,000 severely food insecure Sierra Leoneans, including as a Cash Transfer to stimulate the recovery of rural economies. Food assistance has also been provided through the MOHS to reinforce COVID-19 quarantine measurements. Capacity strengthening support to enhance COVID-19 surveillance and testing at air and land borders has been provided, whilst the ability of NACOVERC to coordinate and respond has been augmented.



6. National Vision with Links to Regional/Global Frameworks and Goals

Sierra Leone has prioritized continues to uphold the alignment between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the country's national development frameworks at different delivery levels, as described in its previous VNR reports of 2016, 2019 and 2021. The first major step undertaken by the country to domestically adapt the SDGs was the effective integration of the goals into the national, sectoral, and local development plans.

Sierra Leone has ensured the integration of the SDGs at all levels of national, sectoral, and sub-national policy synthesis, as well as in the implementation of programmes where monitoring of the interaction between the three dimensions in service delivery is constantly 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 dimensions—later sections, especially under the leaving no one behind and progress on SDGs 12 and 13, will highlight some tangible results achieved in this direction. The country's regular participation in the Voluntary National Review (VNRs), itself, is very instrumental to raising and sustaining the awareness about this need as the process of consultation and data pulling on progress has always involved

public sensitization on the SDGs and their key principles including balancing the three dimensions.

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 large extent anchored in the SDGs and the Agenda 2063. The following issues are highly prioritized by the Government:

- Human Capital Development
- Gender and Environment and climate changes
- 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 the National Monitoring and Evaluation Department which collaborates with the Monitoring and evaluation Directorate of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development to continuously monitor and keep track of progress made in the achievement of targets in these frameworks.



7. Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goals in the Country

Sierra Leone has been able to prepare its third Voluntary National Review (VNR) report which was presented at the 2021 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the SDGs. Sierra Leone is among countries with the highest number of progress reports on Sustainable Development Goals presented to the HLPF, demonstrating the Government's sustained commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) continues to follow a strategic approach to sustainable development. It has accordingly sustained its principal focus on the country's accelerator SDGs: SDG4 (on inclusive education) and SDG16 (peace, justice, and inclusive societies, emphasizing building strong institutions). The two goals remain leading dimensions to the transformational agenda of the Government, while attention is being paid to the rest of the other goals—basic analysis suggests that SDGs 4 and 16 relatively have greater effects on those other goals.

Plans are underway to establish an SDGs monitoring platform that would serve as a one-stop-shop data repository/hub/portal/ that will be very effective in monitoring the National Development Plan which could lead to a localized SDGs monitoring.

7.1 Accelerator Goal 4



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 government Free Quality School Education Programme (FQSEP) across the 7 provincial districts visited. The Government of Sierra Leone had launched the Free Quality School Education programme that covers a) school feeding support; b) tuition fee grant by the government; 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 Le800,000 (about US\$80) per pupil per year from this support, which can be invested in a small business in rural communities or used in meeting basic health expenditure thereby impacting on other SDGs, such as 1 (reducing poverty), 2 (ending hunger), and 3 (health).

As a result of the Free Quality School Education, school enrolment has increased and gender parity at primary level remains achieved, with the ratio of girl to boy enrolment estimated at

1.0 in 2020/21, compared to 1.03 in 2019/20 and 2018/19.⁴⁸ A challenge to overcome, among others, is continued deployment of more qualified and motivated teachers to match school enrolment, coupled with the need for constant school supervision. As a demonstration to its commitment in advancing the achievement of SDG4, the Government of Sierra Leone allocated Le1.7 trillion, which 22 per cent of the 2022 budget to education.

The major challenge affecting SDG4 is the untimely payment of teachers' salaries under the Free Quality Education Programme , as well as delays in disbursement of subsidy (SDG4)

7.2 Accelerator Goal 16



The government's legal aid assistance has been expanded to all 16 districts of Sierra Leone . According the 2021 VNR report, more than 70 per cent of the beneficiary of the scheme said they were satisfied with the legal assistance rendered 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 poor beneficiaries interviewed said that they received assistance free of cost.

More than 400,000 persons (a lot of them very poor and freed from long-served prison remand without trial and indictment) have benefitted from legal assistance since the National Legal Aid Board was established in 2015 . As of 2021, more Magistrates and Judges have been deployed in rural districts since the last country VNR Report in 2019 to reinforce access to justice in remote communities . A key challenge recorded in the 2021 VNR report is the need to overcome among others is the need to increase support to the justice sector.



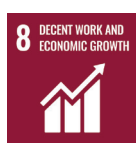
Goal 3 Health. Over the period 2013-2019/20 the country decreased under-five mortality rate from 156 deaths in 2013 to

122 deaths in 2019/20 per 1,000 births; infant mortality dropping from 92 to 75 deaths per 1,000 births during the same period; as well as neonatal mortality rate, from 39 to 31 deaths per 1,000 live births . Maternal mortality rate also dropped from 1165 in 2013 to 717 deaths per 100,000 live births during the period . This can be associated with a reduction in stunting children from 38 to 30 per cent; wasted children from 9 to 5 per cent; and underweight from 16 to 9.9 per cent, during 2013-2019/20. However, HIV prevalence somehow increased from 1.5 to 1.7 percent among adults aged 15-49 during 2013-2019 (women 2.2 per cent in 2019 compared to 1.7 per cent in 2013; men 1.3 per cent in 2019 compared to 1.1 per cent in 2013). The challenges to overcome include accessibility issues regarding hard-to-reach areas due to poor terrain causing delays in delivering healthcare services on time; as well as traditional beliefs and values that limit in-take of healthcare information, coupled with inadequate skill birth attendants . When COVID 19 stuck in 2020, the government developed a health plan that ensured that other non-communicable diseases are well catered for and established the National COVID-19 Emergency Response Center (NaCOVERC). NaCOVERC was established to coordinate, monitor, and mitigate the spread of the Virus in the country.



Goal 5 Gender. Some progress has been made on key indicators for gender, such as on the share of women employed for cash in total number employed in non-agricultural activities, which currently stands at 45 per cent, compared with 41 per cent in 2013. The proportion of them experiencing sexual violence declined from 11 per cent in 2013 to 7.0 percent in 2019. However, some indicators show some deterioration, such as on 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 30 per cent threshold, although is above the 12 per cent recorded in 2018/19.⁴⁹ The share of female local councillors estimates 18.7 per cent against the 50/50 target. Among the challenges to overcome include limited awareness raising, continued gender stereotypes and limited financial and general capacity constraints facing, and low literacy rate among women.



Goal 8 Decent Work: According to the 2021 VNR report, special attention has been paid to protecting the child against labour and ensuring a motivated work force, and work that is consistent with environmental sustainability. The percentage of children engaged in child labour reduced from 44.4 per cent in 2013 to 29.3 percent in 2017 , providing the current estimate. The minimum wage was increased by 20 per cent from Le500,000 to Le 600,000 to improve the lives of workers both in the private and public sectors. The legislative and policy environmental 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, while facilitating domestication of International Conventions on the Elimination of Child Labour. Challenges to overcome include limited public sensitization on the consequences of child labour and enforcement of related legislations and policies, and limited financing to support child development .



Goals 12 Responsible Production and Consumption and Goal 13 Climate Change. A strategic institutional progress in this domain was the establishment of the Ministry of Environment in 2019 to increase the political investment in environmental management and sustainability. Along these efforts is also 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 relating to natural disasters for which constant follow-up on climate change related issues is critical. According to the 2021 VNR report, the Government in 2019-2020, conducted coastal vulnerability assessments at Municipal and Chiefdom levels in six pilot sites and determined the key climate-sensitive sectors and hazards in these communities. It also assessed the vulnerability of specific economic sectors to predict climate change scenarios for the years 2025, 2050, 2100; all revealing that the coastal vulnerability ranking for the pilot communities was at the medium level. Sustained technical and financial support is required going forward with government determination in this area.



Goal 17 Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Development. While the country was not spared in the extraordinary fiscal and general challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it generally remained resilient in the face of this scourge, managing to continue with financing of its programmes; thanks 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. Domestic revenues dipped at the peak of the pandemic in 2020, affecting not only the delivery of the country's accelerator SDGs relating to access to education and justice, but also the delivery of all other SDGs through the implementation of the National Development Plan .

49 2019 Demographic Health Survey (DHS)



8. Leave No One Behind

8.1 Women and Girls

Across a range of indicators, females continue to face more challenges than their male counterparts. More women than men are unemployed, illiterate, poor and excluded in decision making platforms. Although HIV prevalence among the general population remains low at 1.7 per cent, the epidemic in the country is feminized. For women aged 15 years and above (2.2 per cent) is double the rate among men of the same age (1.1 per cent). Similarly, young girls 15-24 years are three times more likely to be infected at 1.5 per cent compared to boys of the same age (0.5 per cent); due to underlining gender inequalities. In parliament, women account for only 12.32 per cent of the parliamentary seats; 15 per cent in local councils; and 6.6 per cent among paramount chiefs.[1]. These conditions have been exacerbated by their poor conditions resulting from low levels of education and structural barriers impeding equal access to resources and attainment of their rights.

More female headed households than male households are reported to be poor. Additionally, men earn three times more than women in wage employment, 2.5 times more in self-employment, and twice more in Agriculture. Statistics have shown that only 17 per cent of women in Sierra Leone are gainfully employed. Less than 4 per cent of these are skilled and they account for only 10 per cent in construction, 33 per cent in the mining, and 43 per cent in the manufacturing. More women than men are unemployed, while 92 per cent of

women falls within the category of vulnerable employed youth and 59.4 per cent of women never attended school.

These gender differentials undermine women and girls' health and wellbeing. Lack of control over resources, gender-based violence, the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, longer working hours and unhealthy work conditions all impede on women's ability to lead healthy lives. Gender norms and biases shape how women's health needs are perceived by themselves and by others.

The 2019 DHS indicates that violence against women and girls remains rampant: 62 per cent of women aged 15-49 years had experienced some form of violence (i.e., sexual and/or physical) in their lifetime, and 42.8 per cent had experienced physical violence in the last 12 months. Nearly half (49.8 per cent) of ever-married women had experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence by their current or most recent husband/partner in the last 12 months. However, only 40.1 per cent of these women had sought help. Lack of trust in the system by women and girls who are sexually or physically abused prevents them to report Gender Based Violence incidences.

While the prevalence of child marriage has seen a slight decrease over the years, the practice remains widespread with 29.6 and 8.6 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 years first married or in union before age 18 and 15 years, respectively. The rates of adolescent pregnancy are also high with 21 per cent of girls



aged 15-19 years having begun childbearing . A larger proportion of teenage pregnancies occur in rural areas – 29 per cent compared to 14 per cent in urban areas.

Lack of training of women as well as Community and structural barriers also affect women and girls affects women to take leadership positions in society.

Though the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence against women and girls is still highly uncertain in Sierra Leone, a survey on socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 conducted revealed that the population's knowledge on availability of protection services, including how to reach them, is still limited, especially in the rural areas. The national toll-free hotline '116' that was established for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in 2020 referred a total of 140 cases from January to September 2021. Six government one-stop centres and five Rainbo Centres are operating nationwide, to provide comprehensive and multi-sectoral care for survivors of gender-based violence as well as referrals to other long term supports. From January to August 2021, 2,515 survivors of GBV were provided with response services in the one-stop and Rainbo Centres.

There are ongoing Awareness Consultations on the Gender Empowerment Bill in all 16 Districts to ensure that Women's and girls' awareness is raised and that their voices are reflected based on the principle of Leave No

One Behind. Multi-stakeholders including civil society, women's groups, youth groups, NGOs, media etc have led the sensitisation at both community and national levels.

COVID-19 regulations and restrictions have worsened the conditions women's economic condition as they had to rely on their capital to feed their families. The Government of Sierra Leone's Quick Action Economic Response Programme (QAERP) 2020 indicated a rise in household expenditure ranging from 58.5 per cent to 60 per cent. Additionally, weekly income generated by their businesses dropped significantly as surveys of informal sector indicated 68 per cent drop of weekly income of the informal sector. This has contributed to 30 per cent increment in the number of households that have reduced their meals.

8.2 Children

The Sierra Leone Child Rights Act (2007) provides a foundation for both preventing and responding to abuse and exploitation of children. It is rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), highlighting that "every child has the right to life and to survival and development to the maximum extent possible" ⁵⁰. The CRA is currently under review, as recommended

⁵⁰ Sierra Leone Child Rights Act, 2007, page 10



in paragraph 6 of the 2016 CRC Concluding Observations, which has potential to meaningfully update the legal framework for a wide range of child rights issues. While there are various policies that builds on the CRA that promote supporting and strengthening families and local communities to protect children (Child Welfare Policy (2013), Alternative Care Policy (2014) and National Child Justice Strategy for Sierra Leone (2014-2018)), children in Sierra Leone continue to suffer from ill-treatment, abuse and neglect, domestic violence, used for begging in the street, children from the village sent to the city for education but are used for child labor, initiated into FGM and sexual abuse.

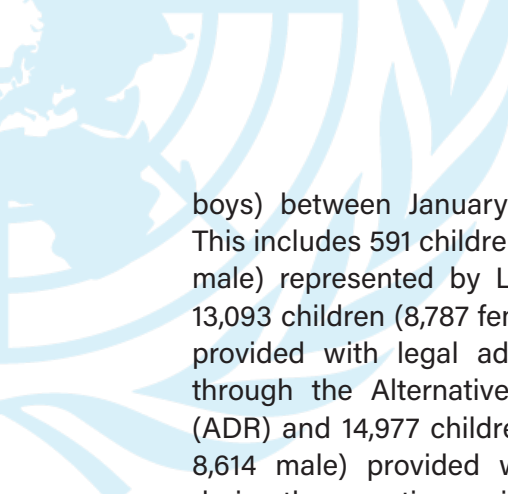
The 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2017) showed that 86.5 per cent of children aged 1 to 14 years (86 per cent female, 87 per cent male) in Sierra Leone had experienced some form of violent discipline in the household, with nearly a quarter of all children (25.5 per cent: 24.6 per cent female, 26.4 per cent male) reporting to have experienced severe physical punishment. Parents and communities view violent discipline as appropriate to address their children's perceived misbehaviours, reflected by 47.4 per cent of caretakers (47.5 per cent

female, 45.6 per cent male) believed that physical punishment is a necessary part of child-rearing. In 2019, child mortality rate for Sierra Leone was 109.2 deaths per 1,000 live births. Child mortality rate of Sierra Leone fell gradually from 332.9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1970 to 109.2 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019.⁵¹

The Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), mandated to investigate, and refer crimes such as domestic and sexual violence, child abuse and cases relating to child offenders, is key in facilitating access to justice for women and children. Between January to September 2021, FSUs provided services to 4,268 children (2,943 girls; 1,325 boys) in contact with the law: 3,453 victims (2,818 girls; 635 boys) and 815 offenders (690 boys, 125 girls). The number of cases of sexual offence rank highest with 2,380 children (2,029 survivors and 359 offenders) coming in contact with the law, which accounts for 55 per cent of all cases of violence involving children. Donors and UN agencies have contributed to building the capacity of FSU staff to deal with cases, but operational support is lacking.

The Legal Aid Board (LAB) provided legal aid services to 28,661 children (15,266 girls; 13,395

⁵¹ 2019 Demographic Health Survey (DHS)



boys) between January to November 2021. This includes 591 children (116 female and 475 male) represented by LAB's legal counsels, 13,093 children (8,787 female and 4,306 male) provided with legal advice and assistance through the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and 14,977 children (6,363 female and 8,614 male) provided with legal education during the reporting period.

There is also an increase of children in conflict with the law in detention under deplorable conditions (poor beddings, inadequate food, lack of water supply). Some have been there between 1 to 3 or more years with a charge. There are currently 76 children (46 in remands homes, 19 in the approved school and 11 in adult correctional centres), all being boys apart from two girls.

There is a need to further advocate for the judiciary to fast track cases and release children in detention to their families or in alternative placement – for the adoption of child friendly approaches such as diversion and alternative to detention in handling child offenders. The Justice Sector Coordination Office, together with technical and financial support from UNICEF, finalized a new Child Justice Diversion Framework Policy in 2021.

In 2021, Primero, the Child Protection Information Management System, was strengthened in all 16 districts where 120 Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) staff and 360 additional personnel from CSOs and other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) were trained on case management, provision of psychosocial support and child protection concepts. It has become a key source of data to inform child protection partners on child protection cases and needs: 1,311 children (534 boys; 777 girls) were registered and documented in the system in 2021.

The Government launched a Comprehensive Country Assessment of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) and Identity Management Systems in August 2019, together with a Costed Strategic Plan now

under implementation by the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA). According to the MICS 2017, 81.1 per cent of children had their births registered with civil authorities, but out of these number, 28.2 per cent do not have birth certificates.

Children continue to be affected by high levels of poverty, hampering their chances to reach their full potential. Poverty in childhood can have lifelong and irreversible consequences, because of children's age specific needs. As many as 66 per cent of children were affected by multidimensional poverty in 2017, with more children at risk of falling into poverty as a result of COVID affecting families' livelihood. The national social protection system seeks to mitigate the impact of poverty, with around 35,000 households having received a cash transfer under the National Social Safety Net programme in 2021. Only in one in five schools in Sierra Leone provides accessible basic sanitation services for children, while 11 percent of the health care facilities do not have toilets.⁵²

The last national Child Labour survey report indicated that 45.9 per cent of children in Sierra Leone are engaged in child labour while 22 per cent are engaged in hazardous jobs.⁵³ In Sierra Leone many children are working and mostly working in family businesses as petty vendors or on family subsistence farms. Several challenges remain in the fight to eliminate child labour in Sierra Leone. These challenges range from mapping the nature and scope of child labour in the country, legislative reforms to reflect present realities to creating the necessary political will to effect real commitment and change and social actions to create awareness and energize stakeholders to take actions in their activities to tackle child labour. In achieving the SDG 8.7, the Government of Sierra Leone, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security revised and validated the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour in November 2021.

⁵² The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 6 (2017) and WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) (2020)

⁵³ Statistics Sierra Leone. 2011.

8.3 Youth

Sierra Leone's population currently estimates at about 8.2 million, with close to 80 per cent of it covering 34-year-olds or less; 41.6 per cent 14-year-olds or less; and 74.1 percent 24-year-olds or less.⁵⁴ The population census report shows that eight out of every ten persons in the country are aged 35 years and below, while those age 24 years and below make up 62.3 per cent of the population.⁵⁵ This makes the current population of the country extremely youthful.

The youth bulge, if properly harnessed, can present an opportunity. To attain this however, there is need to address challenges which young people disproportionately face including, high unemployment; inadequate competitive technical skills for the labour market; limited access to productive assets; lack of technologies and financial resources; and stigmatization and discrimination of youth with disabilities and youth- at- risk, who may be associated with cliques and gang. COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation of young people who are among those most affected.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs status analysis 2020, prioritized the follow areas for the period 2020-2025.

- Increase Access to Livelihood Opportunities through Education and Training Opportunities, Scale up Interest in Sporting Activities and Entrepreneurship with Emphasis in Agriculture and Fisheries.
- Review the Legal Framework and Address Continued Marginalization and Infantilization of Youth, Multiple Gendered Violence and Discrimination Against Female Youth, Harmful Migration, Substance Abuse and Other Youth Related Violence.
- Increase Youth Participation in Policy Discussions and Development with Intent to Build Trust and Confidence in the Socio-Economic and Political System and

⁵⁴ Statistics Sierra Leone. 2015 Housing and Population Census.
⁵⁵ *ibid.*

Restore Family and Community Values and Norms.

Government in collaboration with youth, development partners and other stakeholders intends to address the lack of education and skills training among youths through the following interventions:

- Support the improvement of training programmes in universities and technical and vocational centers aiming to give youth cognitive, technical and socioemotional skills relevant to gaining employment;
- Support and expand the National Youth Service to include most university graduates and also graduates of technical vocational institutions. Expanding the scope of service deployment areas to include districts, local governments and chiefdoms and to specifically plug the gap in critical education, health and other social sectors;
- Build partnerships with the private sector to enhance placements/ youth employment;
- Build partnerships with development partners to support improving youth cognitive, technical, socio-emotional skills in order to better facilitate the school-to-workforce transition.
- Expand the Graduate Internship Programme to include more equitable representation youth across the country.

8.4 IDPS, Migrants, and Urban Slum Dwellers

As part of its efforts to promote the rights of migrant workers and their family member, the Government of Sierra Leone ratified the six ILO conventions in August 2021, with four conventions on the protection of migrant workers. These are, Migration for Employment Convention (No.97), Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention (No. 143), Private Employment Agencies Convention (No. 181), and Domestic Workers Convention (No.189). However, the national labour Law needs to be reviewed to address



the issue of protecting the migrant workers including domestic workers.

Notwithstanding the apparent dangers surrounding irregular migration, young people are still willing to embark on irregular migration. There is a nexus between human trafficking and irregular migration which is perceived as an outlet for youth to overcome the challenges of unemployment and a lack of economic opportunities at home. Recent estimates suggest that between 9,000 and 10,000 young people embark on irregular migration journey annually with over a quarter of that number being trafficked out of Sierra Leone for different reasons every year. Sierra Leone remains a source, transit, and destination country for children and women being trafficked for the purposes of forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation. The decline in the economy, lack of opportunities especially for the youth has given rise to the attendant rise of irregular migration trafficking of women (mainly to the Middle East as commercial sex workers and domestic servants) and children (to neighbouring countries as farm laborers and street beggars) as a coping mechanism.

Besides poverty, rural-urban migration also contributes, in no small measure, to the

phenomenon of transnational human trafficking in Sierra Leone as large concentrations of unemployed youth and women become a ready pool of willing candidates for traffickers. This rise in rural-urban migration, in recent years, has had a ripple effect on infrastructure and essential services (housing, schools, jobs, water, electricity, sanitation etc.) delivery in major urban centres such as Freetown, Bo, Kenema and Kono. Areas which coincidentally represent the major hub of human trafficking and irregular migration (popularly known as "Temple Run") in Sierra Leone.

The increasing rate of irregular migration among the youth coupled with the issues of human rights situation of migrants in the Sahel and north Africa region and in the Middle East has necessitated increased Government interventions to preserve the dignity of migrants. In the course of 2021 alone, the Government in collaboration with IOM repatriated over 2,149 of its citizens who were stranded in countries such as Libya, Niger, Algeria and Kuwait, Oman, and Lebanon. About 83 per cent of the repatriated migrants are men, while 17 per cent are women and 89 per cent of them are between the age of 16 and 29.

8.5 Persons with Disabilities

According to the 2015 Population and Housing Census, the number of PWDs around 93,000 individuals to 1.3 per cent of the population. However, the 2018 Integrated Household Survey puts it to be 4.3 per cent of the population. The gap between the two values clearly indicates that disability-related data is not reliable. Uncertainties concerning accuracy reflect shortcomings in the statistical data recording methods used, as well as lack of clarity in the definition of 'disability' included in questions used for the surveys.

In a country where almost 70 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line, the socio-economic situation is challenging for many persons with disabilities (PWDs). Many PWDs live on begging and are homeless, while some reside in collective shelters established and maintained by other PWDs. Although some PWDs are employed through established skill training centres, ensuring a stable livelihood remains a common struggle. Discrimination is a daily experience for them and many in rural areas migrate to the capital of Freetown to escape the hardship experienced in their communities.



The country has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), with the passing of the Persons with Disability Act (PwDA) 2011. However, key provisions of the PwDA have not been implemented largely due gaps related to resource scarcity. These affect all preconditions, but most importantly, the provision of assistive devices and rehabilitation services that are often required to access other essential services such as education, WASH, health, and transportation.

The country's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023 (MTNDP) seek to addresses challenges affecting persons with disabilities under sections on education, health and hygiene, livelihood, and participation. However, challenges persist. For example, there is a Free Health Care programme, but is challenged by insufficient and unreliable distribution of essential drugs. Inclusive and quality education is supported by the Government's flagship Free and Quality Education and the new Radical Inclusion policies. However, lack of resources, especially that of properly trained staff is slowing down implementation. Human resources are critically scarce for special education teachers, rehabilitation service providers, and specialists in mental health and rehabilitation for intellectual disabilities.

Another significant gap is the lack of reliable statistical data on persons with disabilities and their living situations. This inhibits evidence-based planning and programming for vulnerable groups such as persons with multiple disabilities, those with intellectual disabilities, the elderly, women, children, the homeless, and those living in remote areas.

When pandemics breakout, people living and affected by HIV/AIDS are worst affected. The limited available services are disrupted in many cases physical access to the services become a serious and hence more often challenge and there is often a rise in stigma and discrimination. The scarce skilled service providers more often refocus their attention to addressing the new pandemic.

8.5 People Living with HIV/AIDS

Lessons from HIV/AIDS response show that successful responses to disasters, disease outbreaks and epidemics, are always grounded in a respect for human rights and community leadership. Marginalization, stigma, and discrimination have resulted in a disproportionately high HIV prevalence among key and vulnerable populations groups with prevalence ranging from 6.8 per cent among sex workers to 15 per cent among transgenders.

The country's progress at achieving Fast Track 90:90:90 target, has been slow with current achievement at 50:47:68 by end of 2020 owing to the following challenges, which clearly highlight the inequality that has continued to worsen access to health and HIV services particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- High rates of SGBV, child marriage, gender inequalities increasing women and girls' vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.
- Limited scale, scope, speed, and quality of key populations programming coupled with limited differentiation of services.
- Limited capacity and uncoordinated community led response, monitoring and advocacy.
- Intermittent shortages and stock-out of commodities.
- Limited HIV sensitive social protection programming
- High rates of stigma and discrimination

The country has made steady progress in promoting Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and reducing the impact of HIV, by adopting approaches that empower PLHIV and KP communities to access HIV prevention and treatment services in an environment free of stigma and discrimination.





9. Cross-boundary, Regional and Sub-Regional Perspectives

Border Management solutions are key to addressing cross border challenges in Sierra Leone, with the view to protect the most vulnerable, support orderly and dignified migration. Among those challenges, trafficking, forced labour, transhumance and irregular migration need to be tackled through coordinated responses on all sides of the concerned border areas. Within the regional context affected by growing insecurity and banditism, it is also important to consider security risks, including the risk of radicalization of the youth and disenfranchised. Tensions linked to transhumance are of particular concern in the Parrot Beak area of Sierra Leone and have generally increased in the West Africa region.

Regular migration pathways and technical modalities to travel internationally, including access to and cost of travel documents, impact the ability of Sierra Leonean to use legal pathways as they seek to travel outside

Sierra Leone. This regional phenomenon remains concerning in 2021 as the youth often resort to use irregular paths, informal agencies that might abuse them or have recourse to document forgery. COVID-19 specific requirements have also not been conducive to facilitate regional mobility due to the additional tests often required to cross international borders.

In February 2021, Guinea and Sierra Leone have renewed their border collaboration, following a period of diplomatic tension between the two countries. To boost the renewed cooperation, the UNCTs of SL and GN decided to support both governments to minimize elements of conflicts at their borders, focusing on herders and farmers' conflicts. With the instrumental support of the Peacebuilding Fund, a project has been established at the border between Falaba district in Sierra Leone and Faranah Prefecture in Guinea.



10. Financing Landscape and Opportunities



The Sierra Leonean economy is recovering from the contraction in 2020. Preliminary data for the first three quarters of the year indicate that the economy is recovering from the contraction in 2020. Increased agricultural activities following the implementation of the policy shift in agriculture that saw greater private sector participation in the input market contributed largely to the recovery of the economy.

COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a major threat to the macroeconomic and financial sector stability. In this respect, monetary policy implementation in 2021 focused mainly on ensuring low and stable inflation, bearing in mind the subdued domestic economic activity and uncertainties in the global economy due to COVID-19. Accordingly, the Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL) kept the Monetary Policy Rate unchanged at 14 per cent throughout the year. The BSL also reactivated the COVID-19 Special Credit Facility to facilitate the availability of critical imports in the country.

With a push from domestic demand, Sierra Leone's economy is projected to recover from the COVID-19 contraction but grow more slowly than before COVID-19. Real GDP is expected to rebound by 3 per cent in 2021,

an upward revision of 0.8 percentage point (pp) relative of the 2020 spring forecast. This growth upgrade reflects the easing of COVID-related restrictions and the government fiscal response to the pandemic. With external demand subdued, aggregate growth primarily reflects stronger domestic demand.

Despite rebounding growth, the losses in output and income per capita have been substantial. With gaps of 4 per cent of potential output in 2020 and 1.7 per cent in 2021, Sierra Leone's economy is operating far below capacity. The cumulative output lost in 2020–21 amounts to Le 1.5 trillion (US\$146.5 million). The output lost is approximated by the difference in real GDP at factor cost of World Bank projections between the 2019 Annual Meetings and the 2021 Spring Meetings. The economic contraction was particularly large in services, with containment measures severely affecting contact-intensive activities.

After the severe deterioration in 2020, Sierra Leone's fiscal position is projected to improve this year on the back of expenditure rationalization and higher tax collections. The fiscal balance is projected to improve by 1.2 pp to -4.2 per cent of GDP in 2021.



Despite COVID-related spending pressures, the ratio of total spending to GDP is expected to decline from 26.9 to 26.5 per cent in 2021. The economic cycle has also been a driver of the primary deficit. The cyclically adjusted primary balance will be in surplus by 0.5 per cent of GDP in 2021.

Bank of Sierra Leone announced in August 2021 the planned redenomination of the Leone. This policy, which will be implemented in 2022 is expected to reduce transactions costs, restore confidence in the Leone and simplify arithmetic, accounting, and statistical computations.

In a bid to improve access to finance and deepen financial inclusion, plans are at an advanced stage for the installation of a National Payments Switch. This will promote the use of electronic payments and digital platforms by Government and businesses to pay for goods and services. To facilitate this, the Government has reviewed the Payment Systems Act to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework for digital financial services.

The Deposit Protection Fund draft Bill has been submitted to Parliament for enactment. This bill is intended to protect small depositors in the event of bank failure by ensuring that some proportion of their savings can be recovered.

11. Multi-dimensional SDG Risks

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 level of preparedness to manage the electoral cycle	Electoral process perceived as no credible. Sporadic social unrest and disruption of the election preparation process
			Relevant institutions, such as the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), play a critical role in mitigating divergences between political parties	Agreement between political parties to continue to sustain peace in the country.
			Inter-party increased tension with lack of dialogue and disruption of the electoral preparation process	Young people mobilised to promote violence
	Democratic Space	Risks of budget constraints for and political interference in the functioning of democratic and human rights institutions.	Limited institutional capacity to perform effectively and respond to citizens' demands	Lack of meaningful participation or representation of citizens
			State institutions display weak performance and lack of independence	Limited participation of women in democratic institutions and decision-making system
	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	Budget constraints might hamper Judiciary and security institutions' performance	Progressive decrease of respect of citizens' democratic rights and freedoms
			Security forces lack capacity and tools to ensure use of international standards in crowd control techniques	Women and girls and other vulnerable groups' access to justice hampered by social norms and lack of economic power
			Interference by authorities and heavy workload on magistrates and judges causing delay in passing judgments	Increased violent confrontations between young people and security forces

SDG	RISK AREA	DESCRIPTION	SCOPE	RISK FACTORS
SDG 1,5, 10, 17	Social cohesion, gender equality and non-discrimination	Risks to social unity 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 division and political unrest
			Gender policies approved at Government Level.	Gender empowerment bill not approved by Parliament.
			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 main town's carrying capacity
SDG 4,6, 7, 9, 17	Infrastructure and access to social services	Risks to society and the population resulting from a lack of availability 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 sectors of the population (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	Free quality education continues to be provided to the primary and secondary students
			Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 deepen	Disruption of markets, supply chain and loss of livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups.
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.	Increase threat to health of the population
			Government maintains commitments to further reducing infant and maternal mortality rates, stunting and teenage pregnancy	Consolidated efforts to improve the delivery of health care services and outcomes
			Persistence of COVID-19 vaccine resistance	Increased population's mistrust on vaccines

SDG	RISK AREA	DESCRIPTION	SCOPE	RISK FACTORS
SDG 2, 17	Food security, agriculture and land	Risk to people resulting from increased food insecurity, low level of production, 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, eg. palm oil, etc.	Increased rural-urban migration, expansion of informal sector, and unsustainable forms of livelihoods (illegal logging, sand mining, irregular mining, etc.)
			Constraints on access to land, particularly for women	Increase in land related conflicts, including between cattle herders and farmers and businesses and communities
SDG 12, 13, 14, 15, 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



12. Stakeholder/ Partnerships Analysis

12.1 Government of Sierra Leone

Executive Branch

Government ministries, departments, and agencies each contribute to the SDGs in different way, 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 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 'Statistic Sierra Leone' unit.

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 be strengthened over time.

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 region to have mainstreamed the SDGs in its work and are working on streamlining domesticated SDGs indicators in the work of parliamentary oversight committees.

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 better address cases of SGBV, providing more support for survivors and witnesses and making the location and timing of court proceedings more accessible.

District and Local-Level Governments

Sierra Leone is divided into five regions, which are further divided into 16 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.



12.2 Development Partners

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
	• 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	Interest in 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

12.3 Regional Organizations

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 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 are 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.

12.4 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, and some international NGOs faith-based organizations.

12.5 Civil Society

Multiple local CSOs and NGOs have missions 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 ministries 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.

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 is assessing the SDG implementation process in Sierra Leone, fed into the 2021 VNR report.

12.6 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 around industrial growth, clean energy, and agricultural value-chain development. UNCT is in contact with the Chamber of Commerce, including the branch focussed on agriculture, and seeks opportunities to engage them in SDG programs. UNCT also supports banking sector reforms aimed at providing more capital for private sector growth.

12.7 Religious, Traditional, and Cultural Groups

Religious leaders, traditional healers, and leaders of cultural groups and societies have large 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 it has influence over their followers.

12.8 Academia

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 new technologies and approaches to the national context. One can think of sectors where this is valuable including, but not limited to, health, trade, education, agricultural production, and climate action.

12.9 The Media

Traditional media, such as newspaper, radio, and TV, are very significant in Sierra Leone and their reporting, including the extent to which it is balanced and fact-based, can have a large 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 of great popularity 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 at 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.



13. Gaps and Challenges

The Republic of Sierra Leone has made tremendous progress in building state institutions since attaining democratic governance in 1996. The country has established and developed state institutions that have helped to shape and advance the nation's political and socioeconomic aspirations. The country's quest to attain middle income level country status by 2035 was on track until it was hit by the Ebola outbreak and the fall in global iron ore prices in 2014-2016. Though actual economic recovery started after these twin shocks, the country's socioeconomic situation was exacerbated by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The evolving nature of this pandemic and its related consequences coupled with structural bottlenecks in the operations of state institutions have resulted to gaps and challenges in the various thematic sections highlighted as follows.

1 Sierra Leone has made considerable progress in Governance, transparency, and accountability. However, recent development in the political landscape has the potential to reverse gains already made in the sector. In 2021 for example, Sierra Leone was ranked 54th out of 163 countries on the Global Peace Index (GPI), compared to 40th in 2018. Addressing the root causes of political turmoil, the country has witnessed over the past two years during by-elections will ensure that the democratic gains made over the past

decades are not eroded.

2 The macroeconomic outlook for Sierra Leone has been projected to be encouraging. The economy is expected to grow by 5 per cent in 2022 and by an average of 4.7 per cent in 2023 and 2024. Other macroeconomic variables have all been projected to be sound in the medium term. However, the macroeconomic situation remains challenging despite the implementation of bold and courageous policy measures such as fiscal consolidation, which have focused on boosting revenue mobilization, and prioritization of expenditure. The continued mutation of COVID-19 has resulted to a fourth wave of the pandemic globally and in Sierra Leone. This will likely exacerbate the bottlenecks of the global supply chain, which will have direct effect on the economy, given that the Sierra Leone is an import-driven country. Disruption in global supply chain will also have negative multiplier effect on the macroeconomic outlook, which could be revised downwards. Whilst the budgetary allocations for 2022 were aligned with the priorities of the Government as articulated in the Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP), it was observed that the allocation to social protection was decreased, which could pose a challenge to support those at risk of being left behind.

3 Despite the efforts to combat environmental and climate hazards in the country, Sierra

Leone remains one of the most vulnerable to climate effects. Human activities and the lack of mechanism to manage its resources has had negative impact on the coastal environment of the country. Ensuring rice self-sufficiency has consistently been an important part of Sierra Leone's agricultural policy narrative yet the average area under rice cultivation is 1.06 ha per farmer. Consequently, food insecurity is very high, including among rural people and farmers mobilize a significant portion of their income for food expenditures.

4 Analyses on the various sectors show that there has been significant progress in drafting policies, legislations, and programmes across national institutions. However, there is still much to be done across sectors to ensure a significant increase in benefits derived from these policies and legislations. National institutions lack specific actions that could alleviate the structural challenges and ensure a sustainable and positive improvement in the country. Policies and programmes are not coherent across sectors and sometimes lack the mechanisms for improved coordination across Government, and between government and all stakeholders to ensure effective implementation. This lack of coherence has affected service delivery and participation of citizens at all levels.

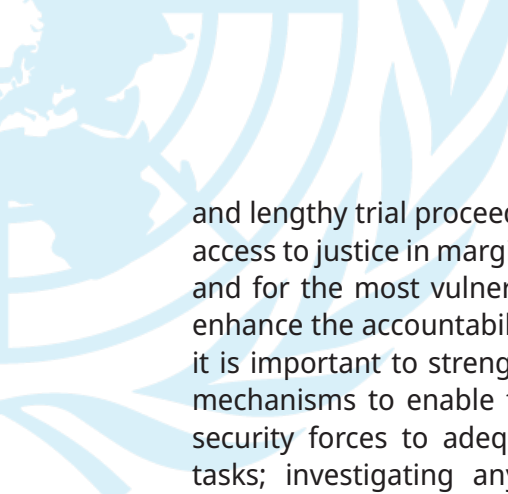
5 Sierra Leone is making significant efforts to align with international human rights standards and ensure there is tangible actions to promote and protect human rights in the country. Particular attention should be paid to the enjoyment of the human rights of its citizen during the electoral period (before, during and in the aftermath of the elections) in 2023. Sierra Leone should develop and implement its national action plans on human rights in close consultation and cooperation with all stakeholders, and all civil society organizations and, where necessary, with the support of international organizations.

6 Key human rights principles of inclusion, participation, equality, non-discrimination,

and accountability guide the socioeconomic recovery process related to the COVID-19 crisis to leave no one behind. Sierra Leone should put in place policies and mechanisms to prohibit and eliminate female genital mutilation (FGM) including by carrying out awareness-raising campaigns and increase national debate on the harmful effects of this practice on girls and women. Improvement is needed to the access of persons with disabilities to education, health care and economic empowerment and ensuring that the quota for persons with disabilities in schools is met, that all children with disabilities are able to access education, that households with children with disabilities benefit from dedicated social safety net programmes, and that social protections and programmes for persons with disabilities are strengthened.

7 The country should ratify international human rights instruments to which is not yet a party including the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure. The creation of a national reporting mechanism is a positive development that will ensure that there is a comprehensive reporting and follow-up process to recommendations received from all international and regional human rights mechanisms and to treaty obligations, linking them to the Sustainable Development Goals.

8 Sierra Leone should make efforts to address the persistent challenges of the justice system, including the low public confidence



and lengthy trial proceedings, and increasing access to justice in marginalized communities and for the most vulnerable populations. To enhance the accountability of security forces, it is important to strengthen the monitoring mechanisms to enable the police and other security forces to adequately conduct their tasks; investigating any case of excessive use of force and bringing perpetrators to justice; and providing regular training to the police and other security forces on the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. It is also important to improve prison conditions and ensure that they are aligned with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules); providing adequate resources for the implementation of the Correctional Service Act, the operation of Prison Courts and the implementation of the Bail Regulations and bail guidelines; monitoring the Bail and Sentencing Committee; and considering passing the criminal procedure bill into law in order to reduce overcrowding in correctional centres. Sierra Leone must promptly enact legislation for the protection of human rights defenders and ensuring that citizens, including those who hold opposing views to government actions, are allowed to exercise the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, openly and without fear of reprisal.

9 The Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) set an ambitious plan of action for a sustainable development path of every country. As the Sierra Leone looks ahead to the achievement of the SDGs in the next eight years, the country is faced with challenges in mobilizing finance to fund the necessary investments and service delivery to achieve the goals. The current context is one in which public finance and development assistance continue to dominate and in which private finance remains small. Though there are opportunities to grow public resources, mobilize new private investments, deepen the engagement of the diaspora, and enhance

collaboration with new and emerging development partners, the authorities are yet to exploit these opportunities towards the achievement of the SDGs in 2030, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

10 The need for better statistical data, disaggregated by gender, social status, economic status etc, to build effective policy responses to the complex development problems has become even more acute in the face of the pandemic, which has affected the development agenda of the country for the past two years. Irrespective of the efforts being made to capacitate national institutions, especially the Government central statistics agency, access to reliable data remains a challenge in Sierra Leone. Reliable data on the vulnerable population, especially those that have been left behind or at risk of being left behind still pose a challenge. This gap in data availability was manifested during COVID-19 response when the Government's social protection agency encountered challenges in identifying and thus supporting some vulnerable groups. The multi-sector impact assessment of gender dimensions of the Ebola virus in Sierra Leone (2016) revealed that women are often excluded from the flow of information, both essential and strategic information.





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