**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**SIERRA LEONE**

**sustainability and local economic DEVELOPMENT (SLED) CLUSTER**

**STRATEGIC NOTE (2020-2023)**

***Hawa, winner of the Social Good Summit 2018, promoting Sustainability and Local Economic Development.***



**CONTENTS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **Overview…………………………………………………………………………………….…** | | | **2** |
| **2** | **The Development Context…………………………………………….………….……….** | | | **2** |
| **3** | **UNDP, SLED & THE IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH……………………………………………………………….………** | | | **3** |
| **4** | **PRIORITY AREAS & ACTIONS………………………………………………………….……….** | | | **4** |
|  | **4.1** | **Local Economic Development…………………………………………………….………** | | **4** |
|  | **4.2** | **Environmental Protection, Conservation & Climate Change Adaptation…………….** | | **5** |
|  | **4.3** | **Disaster Risk Management and Resilience……………………………………….………** | | **6** |
| **5** | **GOVERNANCE…………………………………………………………………………….………**  **KEY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION………………………………………………………………………** | | | **7** |
| **6** | **Performance Monitoring & Accountability ………………………………………………….** | | | **8** |
| **7** | **PROGRAMME SUSTAINABILITY…………………………………………………………….….** | | | **8** |
| **8** | **RISKS AND RISK MANGEMENT………………………………………………………………….** | | | **8** |
| **9** | **BUDGET………………………………………………………………………………………….** | | | **9** |
|  |  | |  |  |
|  |  | |  |  |
|  | | | |  |
|  |  | |  |  |

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# OVERVIEW

UNDP’s overall vision is to assist countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion. In Sierra Leone, like in many other countries, UNDP’s Sustainability and Local Economic Development Cluster aims to strengthen national capacities to manage the environment in a sustainable manner and to promote local economic development in order to advance poverty reduction.

This strategic note contributes to UNDP Sierra Leone’s Country Programme Document (CPD) 2020-2023 and the overarching goal is to support Sierra Leone accelerate sustainable growth, with a focus on poverty reduction, job creation and environmental sustainability, in line with the principal objectives set out in the Sierra Leone Medium Term National Development Plan (2019-2023), which aims to eradicate extreme poverty.

The Sustainability and Local Economic Development (SLED) cluster primarily contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 1 – (No Poverty), Goal 2 – (Zero Hunger), Goal 5 – (Gender Equality), Goal 8 – (Decent Work and Economic growth) and Goal 10 – (Reduced inequality). It also conforms to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2020-2023) Outcome 1 which addresses increased resilience to climate change and other shocks and Outcome 4, which addresses protection and empowerment of the most vulnerable.

# THE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

In Sierra Leone, poverty and inequality are attributable to a number of factors. The economy remains less diversified and hence vulnerable to both internal and external shocks as evidenced during the Ebola and iron ore crises in 2014/2015. It is heavily dependent on unproductive agriculture which employs more than 60% of the population in rural areas. The mining sector, which has been on a temporary lull following the collapse of the iron ore prices in 2014, is likely to remain a key sector in the CPD period 2020 to 2023. Although this sector generates government revenue and contributes to foreign exchange, it is characterized by limited decent job opportunities and inadequate linkages with the rest of the economy, where most of the populace live and earn their livelihoods, including the poor and the vulnerable.

Due to the difficult business operating environment in Sierra Leone, the private sector remains weak and unable to generate significant number of decent job opportunities to match the increasing youthful population. Among the challenges are limited sources and unreliable electricity supply, difficult business registration procedures, limited financial access, lack of skilled manpower and high levels of informalities in the sector. Financial exclusion at 89% means that majority of population have limited access to financial services and the outreach of financial services in the rural areas remains limited, despite the growth in the number of community banks, financial services associations, and commercial bank branches. The bulk of financial institutions and services are concentrated in the capital, Freetown and district headquarter towns, thereby restricting financial inclusion to mainly the urban population. This limits the size of savings mobilized to stimulate growth and develop the economy. Consequently, the country ranks 163 out of 190 on the Ease of Doing Business index for 2019[[1]](#footnote-1). As a result of the high informality, undiversified economy, the weak private sector and financial exclusion, majority of the youths are underemployed and engaged in vulnerable and insecure jobs[[2]](#footnote-2). This state of affairs contributes to high poverty and inequality, especially among the youths with multidimensional poverty being higher for youth below 18 years (69.6%) and people above 40 years (66%) compared to people between 18 to 40 years (56.6%)[[3]](#footnote-3).

The country remains vulnerable to several environmental and climate change-related shocks due to its geographic location, extreme weather conditions and weak enforcement of environmental protection laws. One of such shocks is frequent flooding due to the clogging of drainages with plastics and other wastes. Massive deforestation and coastal erosion is amongst serious challenges facing the country, thereby placing it among the top ten most affected countries in the 2017 Global Climate Risk Index[[4]](#footnote-4). The massive rural-urban migration puts pressure on the available land resources for human settlement, leading to intensive deforestation of the Western area causing water and sanitation stresses, land degradation and exposure to disaster risks.

Disaster is currently managed by the Disaster Management Department (DMD) which is under the Office of National Security. The existing department is security-biased and does not address multi-hazard shocks to which the country is regularly exposed. Against that backdrop, UNDP is actively supporting government to transform the department into an agency that will acquire the status of having its own budget, which will contribute to enhancing its capacity to respond to the needs of the Country’s disaster risks.

# UNDP, SLED & THE IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The UNDP Sustainability and Local Economic Development Cluster strategy for the delivery of 2020-2024 CPD will be based on a theory of change which argues that, improving economic policy frameworks, diversifying the economy and strengthening the capacities of institutions, enterprises and individuals, will minimize economic exclusion and marginalization of the poor. Its vision is to support natural/environmental governance for all Sierra Leoneans to participate and benefit from economic growth while preserving its national capital for long-term development. The cluster will thus contribute to reinforcing the linkages between poverty reduction, environmental management and local economic development. The cluster interventions will adequately capture gender responsive dimensions in its implementation from planning, budgeting and advocacy.

As an entry point to successfully deliver its implementation, the cluster will work collaboratively with local councils at the district level and ensure national capacities are strengthened.

During the last CPD UNDP Sierra Leone supported the Country’s development endeavors at various levels both financially and technically with downstream and upstream work including policy and planning frameworks, local economic development, renewable energy, environmental conservation, youth employment and empowerment, disaster risk management and capacity development for investment contract negotiation. Key lessons learnt from these interventions include the importance of addressing challenges in a holistic manner rather than in silo’s which have in the past not given us the desired results. Additionally, the need for aggressive resource mobilization efforts cannot be over emphasized to enable the cluster deliver on the Programmes effectively.

The new approach includes the following key principles:

* More **integrated and area-based** approach with strong programmatic linkages to the other UNDP practice areas -- democratic governance and environmental/climate change for more cohesive and comprehensive actions. To maximise the impact of the interventions, the new strategy has an increased focus on selected sectors, geographical areas and specific target groups, namely, rural women and youth. The cluster will prioritize the use of national UNV’s to implement projects within the cluster. This will create employment for young people while at the same time promote volunteerism.
* More **people-centred** with strong linkages between upstream and downstream interventions, where research and pilots will inform planning and policy making and enhanced institutional capacities will contribute to improved implementation of plans and policies on the ground. This includes development of clear scaling up strategies and a strong focus on sustainability and national ownership, for example, through increased government cost-sharing and public private partnerships.
* Innovative **south-south and triangular ccooperation.** UNDP will use its global networks and institutional infrastructure to facilitate global north-south, south-south and triangular cooperation.

# 4. PRIORITY AREAS & ACTIONS

Based on the above programme approach, the Sustainability and Local Economic Development Cluster will deliver its interventions within two portfolios, namely: The Local Economic Development (LED) portfolio and the Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Resilience. Under the LED portfolio, the following projects will be implemented; Jobs, Entrepreneurship and Capacity Building for Youth; Disability, Social Inclusion and South-South Cooperation; Financial Inclusion, Access to Finance, Public Private Partnerships and the Blue Economy.

Under the Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Resilience portfolio, projects implemented are as follows: Environmental Protection and Conservation; Disaster Risk Reduction & Strengthening Environmental Governance.

* 1. **Local Economic Development**

***Unisa Bangura, 28, Lifelong dream became a reality, thanks to our YEEP Project.***

This portfolio will support the capacity of national and local institutions to enhance local economic development. The portfolio will further address issues of youth employment and empowerment, through skills acquisition with a focus on business development services, agribusiness, career advisory and guidance counselling. Youth and women entrepreneurs will be empowered through capacity in financial literacy skills to manage their finances prudently and link them with financial service providers at an affordable interest rates to enable them start new businesses and undertake productive initiatives. Efforts will be made to document available job markets which will be used by career advisory services to guide university entrants in making the correct career choices. Building on the successes of its business development services across the country, the cluster will expand the scheme to build entrepreneurial skills development among urban and rural youths, women and PWDs. The portfolio will engage the private sector on best practice PPP arrangements for increased private sector investments and job creation. The PPP Unit, under the Office of the President will be supported through technical and financial assistance, to engage in economic policy analysis, conduct market intelligence and assessments on jobs and corporate social responsibilities.

The Cluster will continue to deliver its agribusiness initiative through partners in Kambia, Pujehun, Bonthe, Koinadugu Kailahun and three others identified as the poorest districts in the Multidimensional Poverty Index Report 2019, with the main aim of achieving value addition to agricultural products and services. The portfolio will pursue the following specific objectives:

* Increase provision of appropriate Skills to match the job market.
* Strengthen the lending policy environment to increase access to affordable financial Services and MSME’s.
* Increase inclusive VSLA scheme and community banking services.
* Enhance tripartite engagement amongst the employers and the Universities access to labour Market Information
* Increase access to Market information and promote value addition and agro-processing
* Increase capacity in entrepreneurial Skills in business development through training, mentorship, apprenticeship and coaching.
* Scaled up innovations by establishing innovation centers across the country.
* Reform private sector policy to reflect a comprehensive approach to improve the climate of doing business.
* Revitalized cooperatives to be effective
  1. **Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Disaster Resilience:**



This portfolio will promote the nexus between reducing environmental vulnerability and building disaster resilience. On reducing environmental vulnerability, UNDP will support the land reform policy implementation in partnership with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Bank to improve access to land for women and persons with disabilities; rehabilitate and protect mangrove ecosystems, reduce deforestation and land degradation and manage these resources for sustainable livelihoods. The cluster will seek to expand eco-tourism for job creation; and foster partnerships with the private sector for the development of renewable, affordable and efficient energy solutions. Current partnership will be strengthened with the GEF, GCF, and new partnerships created with World Agroforestry Centre, Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers, and the World Health Organization (WHO) to improve UNDP’s research and thought leadership role. The portfolio will focus on achieving the following:

* Support the review and formulation of policies, laws and regulations that are related to land and natural resources.
* Strength coordination, enforcement and compliance of natural resource management laws.
* Build and strengthen institutional capacities in terms of human resource and equipment’s in the relevant sector.
* Increase public awareness and education on NRM.
* Promote the VGGT implementation.
* Enhance the digitalization of the land records for the establishment land information.
* Facilitate the establishment of the land commission and the review of the relevant land laws.
  + Enhance co-management of natural resources.
  + Increase sector coordination amongst relevant stakeholders.
  + Enhance the information management systems for natural resources management.
* Facilitate the rehabilitation and restoration of water catchment areas.
* Enhanced the implementation of the National Adaptation Plan of Action.
* Promote the establishment of sustainable woodlots in selected districts.
* Promote sustainable land management (land reclamation).
* Enhance the efficiency of cooking energy from charcoal.
* Promote the use of low carbon and renewable energy resources and the application of clean technologies,
* Enhance the setting of targets for Land degradation neutrality and programs established; and
* Improve the implementation of Multilateral environmental agreements and regional trans-boundary initiatives and programmes on the environment promoted.

**4.3**

In light of the disasters experienced by Sierra Leone every year due to floods, storms, fire and the 2017 mudslide, this portfolio seeks to address these challenges through institutional reforms, awareness raising and capacity strengthening of the relevant stakeholders. The portfolio will continue to support the Office of National security (ONS) and the Disaster Management Department (DMD) in their disaster risk management functions. Currently, the draft National Disaster risk management policy, Disaster Management Agency Act and the draft National Preparedness Plan are been formulated, UNDP will support the ONS to ensure that these documents are endorsed by the Government of Sierra Leone. The portfolio will further support the Government of Sierra Leone to have an institutionalized and risk-informed development planning, programming and investment for resilience building. The cluster will work closely with district disaster management committees as well as seek to further decentralize them to chiefdom and ward levels as a key measure to reaching and gathering information at the smallest unit of the communities. In the Western area, these committees are quite decentralized and have been trained during the previous work programme. Their capacities will be further strengthened to monitor and respond in times of disasters.The portfolio will focus on achieving the following:

* Support the operationalization of early warning systems in the Country.
  + Increased public awareness and education on DRR.
* Support the establishment and operationalization of the Disaster Risk Management Agency;
* Promote the aadaptation and mitigation measures for climate change and environmental risks institutionalised;
  + - 1. **GOVERNANCE**

The cluster’s delivery of the programme implementation will be solely governed by a cluster steering committee, which will serve as the overall oversight body, for the purposes of quality assurance, compliance and accountability. Each portfolio within the cluster will further have a functional board, specific to the projects managed under those portfolios. A cluster steering committee will be functional, comprising of senior government officials from MDAs, donor partners and senior colleagues from CSO in the country. Each portfolio will in turn establish a project board, also comprising of key stakeholders in the MDAs and other relevant bodies. These technical committees will meet at least 2-3 times a year for strategic purposes and emergency meetings could be entertained where necessary, for the common good of UNDP and the efficient implementation of its programme

The cluster is headed by a Team Leader who provides strategic and thought leadership services to both senior management and the cluster. The Team Leader represents the cluster in public fora and leads resource mobilization for the cluster. The cluster is deputized by a Programme Specialist, who is also key in providing management advisory services, co-leads resource mobilization, ensures quality assurance and compliance in the delivery of the cluster’s portfolios.

Each portfolio will be headed by a portfolio manager, with full responsibility to successfully deliver planned annual outputs. Each project under the designated portfolios will be headed by a project manager who runs the day-to-day implementation of the project

The cluster’s team composition is balanced with equal number of male and female personnel, possessing diverse academic backgrounds. Almost all of its personnel hold a post graduate degree and have several years of professional experience., which ensures the timely, coherent and mutually accepted implementation strategy of the programme, .

**Figure 1: Schematic Representation of the SLED Cluster Programme Logic**

# 6. KEY PARTNERSHIPS & RESOURCE MOBILZATION

The Sustainability and Local economic Development Cluster will focus on sectors such as agriculture, industry, trade, Country Planning, environmental protection and management of Water Resources. The successful implementation of the strategy will require support from various partners including government, development partners, philanthropic organisations, the private sector and civil society. The government partners at national and local level will continue to play a key role in the implementation and monitoring of projects whilst strengthening their capacity for planning and policy making.

Partnerships will also be sought with the private sector, such as banks, in order to improve the socioeconomic wellbeing of poor Sierra Leonean women and youths. New partnerships with the private sector also include initiatives to promote environmental protection and conservation through the mandated ministries. Partnerships with research institutions will be explored to ensure high quality data/evidence for programming, planning and policy making. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) will continue to play a key role in the implementation of downstream interventions and will be actively engaged in consultations on development issues and will ensure enhanced participation and involvement of beneficiaries in project implementation. Donors and foundations will play a key role in the successful implementation of the strategy in terms of providing financial as well as technical support. In the spirit of Delivering as One, joint interventions will be explored with other UN Agencies such as FAO, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIDO and UNOPS. Building on the existing cordial relationships with the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, we will strengthen and expand these partnerships to support country level work going forward. Given UNDP’s role as an integrator, service provider and implementing partners and as an operational backbone, the SLED cluster will collaborate with UNICEF and UNFPA in the implementation of the UN common chapter. The SLED cluster will endeavor to strategically make use of its regular core resources but at the same time accelerate implementation of the UNDP cost recovery policy and direct project cost (DPC).

# 7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The programme monitoring and evaluation will be within the broad framework of UNDP’s policies and procedures. The annual work plans (AWPs) of various projects will define baselines, indicators and targets and these will form the basis for monitoring and tracking project progress through quarterly progress reviews and annual programme portfolio reviews and reports. Mid-term and final evaluations will focus on assessment of impact of the various thematic projects and identify key lessons from implementation.

The progress toward achievement of planned targets will be routinely monitored and assessed in order to track and record achievements and concurrently address identified risks and emerging challenges that may impact negatively on programme results. Joint monitoring missions will be encouraged and carried out with relevant stakeholder. The cluster will organize capacity building trainings for partners, in order to make them qualified to implement UNDP projects. The role of Project Boards will be critical to provide strategic direction to project implementation and fostering accountability for the achievement of planned results. All project activities will be closely monitored and supervised by the UNDP quality assurance unit and Senior Management, and routine joint monitoring visit involving the implementing partners and donors will be conducted.

# 8. SUSTAINABILITY AND EXIT STRATEGY

The Sustainability and Local Economic Development Cluster will work with national implementing partners (IPs) and responsible parties (RPs) in the implementation of selected projects, using the National Implementation Modality (NIM) – this is to ensure national ownership and thus sustainability of the outputs, after the project comes to an end. The Cluster will also ensure productive capacities of IPs/RPs and beneficiaries are built, so that they effectively mainstream project activities in national plans, budgets and regular functions. UNDP will strengthen existing structures within Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs), instead of creating parallel structures.

# 9. RISKS & MITIGATION STRATEGY

In as much as it is hoped that the various portfolio’s will be implemented in its entirety, they are likely to face the following risks: a) government’s inability to compliment the delivery of the projects; b). difficulty in mobilizing resources, considering the shrinking donor landscape; c). major natural disasters including disease outbreak might impede the smooth implementation and d) political unrest and e) fiduciary risks

To mitigate the highlighted risks above, the cluster will employ the following measures:

* Comprehensive project documents will be developed, and vigorous efforts made to mobilize resources.
* Capacitate the Sierra Leone Meteorological Agency and the Disaster Management Agency to provide real time early warnings on weather as well disasters in order to save lives and properties.
* Project specific risk logs will be regularly monitored by the cluster M&E Officer and quality assured by The Programme Specialist and Team Leader.
* Government institutions that lack financial management capacity will be HACT assessed, prior to entrusting funds to them for implementation.

Overall, the cluster will continue to implement the policy of quarterly reporting and transfers upon liquidation of previous expenditures up to the approved 80% threshold. It will provide continuous capacity building to implementing partners on both financial and narrative reporting to mitigate risks and enhance accountability and transparency in the management of resources.

# 10. BUDGET

The indicative budget required to implement the strategy is USD 42 million over four years. This figure is calculated based on the previous CPD’s resource requirement plus 10% increase due to inflation. UNDP will work with the government and partners to mobilise the required financial resources.

1. Doing-Business-2019-Training-for-Reform-Sierra-Leone http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/826431541164583595/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Labor Force Survey 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202019_2.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)