

**UNITED NATIONS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2019 VNR REPORT ON SDGs IN SIERRA LEONE

FINAL DRAFT



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

JUNE 2019

Foreword

The people of Sierra Leone have stayed the course of implementing the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. The country has remained steadfast in its commitment to delivering the SDGs since the inception of the global agenda in 2015. This commitment comes on the back of a strong conviction by the people that Sierra Leone's socioeconomic transformation will be accelerated very fast if the country is focused on effective implementation of the SDGs.

The principle of 'Leaving No One Behind' stands front and centre in Sierra Leone's drive to bring the fruits of development to every child, woman, and man throughout the country. This 2019 Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs implementation highlights a number of success stories that bring the vulnerable and marginalised of society into the fold of prosperity.

Our Government's current vision for national transformation and development has been articulated in the country's recently launched Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) (2019-2023) entitled "Education for Development". A plan that is highly aligned with the SDGs, the Africa Union Agenda 2063, and the New Deal Peace-building and Statebuilding Goals. The accountability framework of the MTNDP aligns national objectives clearly with international targets to ensure coherence in the delivery of both national and international commitments.

We have followed a clear and strategic direction in the implementation of the SDGs through the national plan. We have prioritised education (Goal 4) and access to justice (Goal 16) in the MTNDP, and hence in the 2019 VNR reporting. The two goals are perceived by us as most crucial towards permanently staying out of fragility, while recognising the immense significance of all other SDGs in the process. Under Goal 4 (education), we have commenced the implementation of a Free Quality School Education programme, as an educated population is the cornerstone for delivering sustainable development. Furthermore, Goal 16 (justice) is critical to the country, demonstrated by the fact that Sierra Leone is a Co-chair of the Global Task Force on Justice and Chair of the g7+ group of countries leading the global agenda to address the problems faced by countries in fragile and conflict related contexts.

Thus, our 2019 VNR presents to the UN progress made on SDGs 4 and 16, as well as 8, 10, 13 and 17 amongst leading goals to be reviewed at this year's HLPF, while providing a summary progress update on the rest of the SDGs.

At this point, let me take the opportunity to thank all those that have participated in the preparation of our report, including our esteemed development partners, civil society organisations, the private sector, universities, local councils and communities, and central government institutions. We are grateful that the concerted efforts of these institutions made it possible to produce this report within a short period.

Finally, I would like to extend a special invitation to all those that will participate at the forum meetings in New York to attend Sierra Leone's Side Event on "Walking out of Fragility: Education and Justice for All" on 15th July 2019. Details of the Event can be obtained from our Mission to the UN in New York.



Hon. Dr. Francis M. Kaikai
Minister of Planning & Economic Development

Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development would like to express its profound thanks and appreciation to all organisations that participated in the preparation of Sierra Leone's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) report for the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York. The report could not have been comprehensively completed within such a short period if it had not been for the concerted and sustained efforts by relevant government institutions (especially the planning, foreign affairs, finance, justice, education, labour and the lands sectors), working in close collaboration with a wide range of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), local councils, universities, the private sector, and development partners. The CSOs deserve special recognition for taking the lead in data collection and holding consultations across the 16 districts of Sierra Leone. While there are too many to mention and we would not want to risk leaving any one out, the *CSO Integrated Platform for the SDGs in Sierra Leone* has particularly contributed immensely to the success of this VNR process. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) deserve special recognition for providing not only technical input as other development partners did, such as the European Union, International Organisation for Migration, and UN Volunteers, but also provided financial resources to enable the production of the report in a timely manner. We recognise all those who we could have mistakenly missed in this acknowledgement.

Acronyms

ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
CfP	Catalyst for Peace
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DFA	Development Finance Assessment
DSTI	Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FT-SL	Fambul Tok Sierra Leone
FBO	Farmer Based Organization
GST	Goods and Services Tax
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
IDC	Inclusive District Committee
IPAM	Institute of Public Administration and Management
INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
LDC	Least-Developed Country
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
LGFD	Local Government Finance Department
MGoS	Major Groups and other Stakeholders
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MDAs	Ministries Departments and Agencies
MFAIC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MLHE	Ministry of Lands, Housing and the Environment
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoPED	Ministry of Planning and Economic Development
MTNDP	Medium-Term National Development Plan
MWR	Ministry of Water Resources
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MCPR	Multidimensional Child Poverty Report
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MPPN	Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action
NPAA	National Protected Area Authority
NRA	National Revenue Authority
NASSIT	National Social and Insurance Trust
NSA	Non-State Actors
NGO	Non-Government Organisation

ODA	Official Development Assistance
PWDs	Persons Living with Disabilities
PPP	People's Planning Process
PFM	Public Financial Management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLIHS	Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey
SSL	Statistics Sierra Leone
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VIO	Volunteer Involving Organization
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examination

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Key Highlights of the Report

Sierra Leone has accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It recently launched a new Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) (2019-2023) titled “Education for Development”. The people centred plan is aligned to the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, to strategically guide the delivery of services and ensure that no one is left behind in the country. Consequently, the country’s Voluntary National Review (VNR) report 2019 has been prepared in the context of progress made in implementing previous SDGs-integrated national plans, and its current MTNDP going forward with the 2030 Agenda.

A. The review process

The review process was highly participatory. Civil society played a leading role in data collection and coordinating the process across the country, as well as in report writing. Government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) played related role: they provided sector progress reports on the implementation of the goals; participated in updating the SDG Results Framework; and took part in report writing. District/local councils, traditional leaders and the grassroots provided testimonies on SDG progress in their communities. United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and other development partners were all active in the review process: provided data and participated in consultations and report writing. The UNDP played a leading role amongst partners, facilitating provision of technical and financial support to the process. There were also high-level meetings with government ministers, permanent secretaries and heads of UN agencies and other partners on the review process, all of whom made significant input. Finally, complementary data was obtained from media groups, the private sector and various studies, surveys and general reports.

B. Status of SDG progress

We have presented progress on SDG targets on two levels: a) progress on the main focus SDGs for 2019 VNR, which are goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17; and b) summary progress on the rest of the goals, presented in the main body of the report. Amongst all the goals, Sierra Leone has identified SDG4 (*education*) and SDG16 (*justice*) as accelerators for pursuing its developmental

agenda, based on estimations that both goals are particularly central in the country’s transformational aspirations.

Goal 4

Our performance remains high on ensuring gender parity in school between girls and boys. In fact, there have been more girls in primary school than boys in the last couple of years, with a ratio of 1.03 in 2018 compared to 1.05 in 2015. It estimates 0.99 in 2018 compared to 0.93 in 2015 for junior secondary; and 0.91 in 2018 compared to 0.75 in 2015 for senior secondary.

School completion for girls and boys has also been encouraging, estimated for primary at 90 percent in 2018 compared to 65.4 percent in 2015, for girls; and 92 percent compared to 66.6 percent, for boys. For junior secondary, the estimates are 67 percent in 2018 compared to 48.7 percent in 2015, for girls; and 68 percent compared to 53.6 percent, for boys.

Goal 16

One of the major successes of the Government on goal 16 is its expanded support for providing access to justice through the Legal Aid Board, especially serving the indigents in rural communities. Since May 2015, when the Board was established, about 215,000 less privileged and vulnerable persons have benefited from legal representation, advice and education: 25,000 during May 2015-December 2016; 83,000 in 2017; and 107,000 in 2018. About 14 percent of these were females and 19 percent children. Females and children accounted for most of the beneficiaries of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism through mediation, at 80 percent. Persons on remand without indictment also benefited significantly, their proportion in the capital city of Freetown reduced from 51.0 percent in 2016 to 35.6 percent by March 2019.

Goal 8

Decent work has also received ample attention from government. The comprehensive Decent Work Country Programme is now in place and has led to the development of the Labour Market Information System and the National HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy. The programme has also facilitated the domestication of International Conventions on the Elimination of Child Labour.

During 2013-2017, the frequency of children (aged 5-11 years) engaged in child labour meaningfully dropped from 44.4 to 29.3 percent; suggesting that fewer children are on the streets doing petty trading to provide for their families, and more children are spending time in schools focusing on learning. With increased focus on economic diversification in the Sierra Leone's medium term plan, decent work is expected to multiply and shared prosperity to increase, with fewer children in labour.

Goal 10

With regard to reducing inequality, the focus has been on empowering the girl child, from a long term investment perspective. Government has been providing special funding for girls' education, with a substantial share of focus on those offering in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. It has also supported the First Lady's "Hands-Off Our Girls" campaign to end child marriage and reduce teenage pregnancy. In addition, the Government is promoting inclusive and special education needs to enable boys and girls with disabilities to access quality education.

Goal 13

On climate change, Sierra Leone has increased enforcement of environmental protection compliance, through monitoring and other strategies, such as the integration of climate change messages into school and university curricula.

Goal 17

We have recently undertaken a Development Finance Assessment that highlights potential public and private financing sources for the SDGs, while scaling up existing strategies for mobilising domestic and international financing. Strengthening development cooperation with a strategic shift towards supporting capacities for mobilizing domestic resources has been a leading priority. We have robustly pursued domestic revenue mobilization and expenditure rationalization with strong political will, revenue-

GDP increased from about 12 percent in 2017 to about 14 percent in 2018. Effective public financial management is in force, amongst other structural interventions. E-governance has been deepened; supported by the establishment of the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation in the Office of the Presidency. Data and statistical systems have been scaled up, as well as monitoring and evaluation and public sector performance management.

C. Integrated and indivisible nature of the SDGs and leaving no one behind

Given the integrated, yet indivisible nature of the SDGs, Government has decided to prioritise certain goals believed to have high impact on other objectives. It has currently identified 4 and 16 as lead accelerator SDGs, in this regard. It has responded to the principle of leaving no one behind by identifying broad indicators measuring risks of leaving certain segments of society furthest behind if nothing special was done; and then monitoring progress of these indicators over time, as reported below.

D. Among good practices and lessons

Government is currently replicating an inclusive local governance model entitled "The People's Planning Process," piloted by a local NGO in collaboration with an international partner. This process puts chieftdom and village level planning at the centre of formulating and implementing all development plans. We have enforced a national cleaning exercise, the first Saturday of every month instituted by the Government. This has improved urban resilience and environment sanitation, with potential to reduce child mortality risks.

E. Challenges to the SDGs

A serious constraint is limited fiscal space, with domestic revenue-to-GDP ratio still standing at less than 15 percent. Consequently, innovative financing, clamping down on illicit financial flows, and strengthening public financial management have been prioritised for the SDGs. Transforming the informal sector, which accounts

for about 70 percent of economic activities, is extremely critical in this direction.

1. Introduction

Sierra Leone is presenting a Voluntary National Review (VNR) report on the SDGs for the second time. It was among the only 22 countries reviewed at the first High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2016 in New York. The main objective of the 2016 review was for member states to showcase critical steps that they had taken to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This included indication of plans to address the *leaving no one behind* principle, as well as efforts to balance and integrate into national planning processes the three dimensions of sustainable development: *economic, social* and *environmental*. Finally, countries presented the institutional preparedness of their respective country to implement the new agenda.

1.1 Early efforts at implementing the SDGs

Sierra Leone wasted no time to integrate the global goals into national development planning processes after launching the new agenda in September 2015. All key national stakeholders were immediately engaged and a simplified version of the agenda was produced. The goals were aligned to the national budget and the results framework of existing national, sectoral and district development plans. A comprehensive SDGs results framework was formulated for the country that led to the preparation of 14 SDGs related sector policy papers.

These papers (that have been updated in this second VNR process) highlighted sector policy and programme readiness for implementing the SDGs in the country. We now have identified clear needs and investment costs to guide financing of the goals. We completed a Development Finance Assessment (DFA) that has

provided an indicative roadmap of strategic financing sources for the goals, broadly divided into public, private and development cooperation financing.¹

Stakeholders agreed on a definition of what is meant by ‘leaving no one behind (LNOB),’ and debated and agreed on a set of broad LNOB indicators to report to the UN in the country’s 2016 VNR. These indicators have served as baseline for monitoring progress in leaving no one behind going forward.

The Government nationally discussed the three dimensions (economic, social and environmental dimensions) of sustainable development, as to how they can be linked together and integrated into plans at national, regional and district levels.

In preparing the current VNR (2019) report, we noted with appreciation key observations made in “an assessment of the voluntary national review reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2017,” capturing VNR reports of 2016, by a consortium of global civil society organisations (CSOs). In particular, we appreciate the comment on the need for technical support to increase the understanding of member countries of the concept of balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development and their integration into national plans. The consortium notes the following:

“Though a larger proportion of countries reported [in 2016 and 2017] on how they integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development...it appears that countries require further guidance on this section. Often the narrative presented in VNR reports repeats how the SDGs are incorporated into national frameworks, rather than articulating the processes that have been put in place to ensure alignment with the more integrated and holistic

¹ All relevant support documents to this VNR report, including SDGs policy papers and DFA reports can be

obtained from the Google Drive:
<https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

approach that the principles of the 2030 Agenda espouse.”²

As discussed below, our 2019 VNR has presented an improved picture of integration of the three dimensions into our national planning processes.

Furthermore, the Sierra Leone 2016 VNR report presented a clear institutional arrangement for implementing the SDGs, describing different roles played by different stakeholders in the process, including those at the level of office of the presidency, ministries of planning and finance, line ministries, local government/communities, CSOs, the private sector, research institutions, the university/schools, statistical offices, and international development agencies.

In sum, Sierra Leone started on a good footing with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. There is greater appreciation and application of the global framework in recent times throughout the country. The Government launched a new Medium-Term National Development Plan in February 2019, spanning 2019-2023; aligned to the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, and guided by the principle of the New Deal aimed at supporting Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) to exit fragility—an area where Sierra Leone has made laudable made strides. The country remains strategic in pursuing the SDGs through implementation of its national development plan to ensure maximum delivery of services, so that no one is left behind. We identify SDG4 (education) and SDG16 (justice) as accelerators for pursuing Sierra Leone’s developmental agenda, based on estimations that both goals are centrally crucial to pursuing the transformational aspirations of the nation.

1.2 Objective of the 2019 VNR report

² See page 50 of the consortium’s report access on: <http://www.partners-for-review.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Progressing-national-SDG-implementation-2nd-Edition.pdf>. The report can also be obtained from the Policy, Planning and Research Department of the Ministry

The objective of this report is to communicate to the international community progress Sierra Leone has made in implementing the SDGs since the goals were launched in 2015, particularly since our first VNR (2016). Special attention is paid to reporting progress on the SDGs of main focus for the 2019 HLPF (goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17) in the overall context of 2019 marking the first quadrennial reporting since the agenda was passed in 2015.

1.3 Organization of the Report

Section 2 of the report discusses the methodology and process for preparing the 2019 VNR; followed by an assessment of the policy and enabling environment underpinning the implementation of the SDGs in the country, in Section 3. Section 4 presents a summary of progress made in achieving all 17 SDGs and targets, but more especially the six goals of main focus for the 2019 VNR. Section 5 highlights the means of implementation undertaken to accelerate the achievement of goals and targets, including mobilization of domestic and international public and private financing, status of statistical and data system, public sector capacity, and deployment of technology for enhancing service delivery. Section 6 concludes the report, presenting next steps for continuing implementation of the global agenda in the country.

2. Methodology and process for preparation of the review

This section summarizes the consultation and data collection process, coordination of these processes, and limitations.

of Planning and Economic Development in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

2.1 Consultations and data collection

The methodology strongly followed the UN guidelines for preparing VNR reports. The process of preparing this year's report commenced with the conduct of three training sessions on the roles of parliament, CSOs/NGOs/VIOs and supreme audit service in the implementation of the SDGs. A strategic



Provincial consultation on the VNR process

outcome that immediately emerged out of these sessions was the establishment of an *integrated SDGs platform for CSOs*³ in Sierra Leone, that parliament and audit service will participate in. This platform is making it easier for government and institutions outside of the country such as international Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) to relate to domestic non-state and external actors in the implementation and reporting on the SDGs.

Next, a two-day national technical session was held on the VNR preparation process in Freetown, on 21st and 22nd March 2019, bringing together central and local government MDAs and district councils, CSOs/NGOs/VIOs, trade unions and the private sector, research institutions and development partners. Among leading agenda items at these sessions was the discussion of the reporting methodology and approach for the 2019 VNR; debating the adaptability of the guidelines provided by the UN to writing Sierra Leone's

³ Organizations for welfare of women, children, the aged and disabled persons are part of this integrated platform.

report. Types of data collected were agreed, including instruments and sharing of data collection responsibilities, as well as an outline and format for presenting data in the report. **Box 1** summarises key elements of our report outline, strongly drawn from the UN guidelines.

The agreed data collection instruments were focused on the following broad areas:

- Assessing the *policy and enabling*

Box 1: Summary of Sierra Leone's 2019 Report Outline Guided by UN Guidelines

- Opening statement
- Highlights of report
- Introduction
- Methodology for preparation of the review
- Policy and enabling environment
 - Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals
 - Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks
 - Integration of the three dimensions
 - Leaving no one behind
 - Institutional mechanisms
 - Structural issues
- Progress on Goals and targets
- Means of implementation
- Next steps
- Conclusion

environment underpinning the achievement of the SDGs;

- Assessing means of implementation; and
- Conducting a short survey, "My World: United Nations Global Survey for a Better World," gauging people's perceptions as to which are the most important SDGs of the 17, and how those chosen SDGs have changed their lives in the last one year. (**Annexes 1 and 2** present the instruments for data collection.)

Special attention was paid to assessing progress towards 'leaving no one behind' within the

overall assessment of the ‘policy and enabling environment’ landscape. Here, we basically assessed progress made in delivering the 2016 agreed LNOB vulnerability indicators. We synthesized perceptions and documentation as to how much the welfare of certain risk-groups has improved since 2016—groups that would be left furthest behind if affirmative action/special attention was not paid to them. Box 2 summarises aspects of the data collection instrument in **Annex 1** that interrogated progress in this direction. High level government officials, heads of UN agencies, international financial institutions and bilateral agencies, and private sector institutions were also engaged to provide response to the VNR research instrument and provided invaluable inputs.

Box 2: Summary of aspects of data collection instrument in Annex 1 assessing progress in leaving no one behind

- Socioeconomic participation and inclusiveness
- Welfare of disabled and the stigmatized
- Welfare of persons on remand in prisons
- Effectiveness of justice system in general
- Food insecurity and extreme poverty
- Welfare of island and coastal communities
- Managing natural resources/justice for the future
- Data collection and data disaggregation
- Women, girls, the aged and children
- Addressing related issues of leaving no one behind

Technical sessions were held (attended by state and non-state actors, including development partner agencies, and the private sector) to discuss and validate field data, covering national and district level responses. The civil society led town and radio consultations with grassroots communities, across the 16 districts of Sierra Leone, to discuss the progress made in the implementation of the SDGs in their communities.

All stakeholder groups provided write-ups to the process. A small team drawn from government,

civil society and UNCT consolidated all write-ups and inputs into the final draft report that was validated at a nationwide technical session in Freetown. **Annex 3** presents a calendar of all



Validation of the VNR Report

VNR related meetings held during the process, while **Annex 4** provides details of major groups that were involved in the process.

2.2 Coordination of the VNR process

The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) coordinates implementation of the SDGs at the national level; thus, it led the preparation of the 2019 VNR report, working closely with relevant government ministries and agencies, CSOs and development partners. The UNDP has been particularly central amongst partners, coordinating UNCT technical input, including the IMF, the World Bank and Africa Development Bank. It facilitated and provided financial support from the UN to the process. Other organisations, such as the EU, DfID and USAID, provided substantial input at high-level discussions.

The Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture was instrumental in coordinating private sector input, while the national statistical agency, Central Bank of Sierra Leone, the university and research institutions all played a critical validating role to the data and report.

2.3 Limitation of the process

This report was not able to capture progress made in achieving all targets planned in the country's SDGs Results Framework due to lack of survey data. However, we have been able to discuss general policy efforts and process output leading to the achievement of those targets. At the same time, because of the relatively short time that the VNR report preparation took, effectively March-June 2019, as the country was preoccupied with the preparation of its new Medium Term National Development Plan in previous months, we have not been able to document success SDG stories to a certain extent. Nonetheless, the participation of civil society organisations and development partners in the process substantially reduced the time effects, as many of them had documented success stories over the last couple of years that have been captured in this report. We now turn to discussing results.

3. Policy and Enabling Environment

Here, we discuss a) creation of ownership of the SDGs at national, sectoral, district and community levels; b) incorporation of the goals in national and sub-national frameworks; c) the extent of integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into national development processes; d) how much we have deepened efforts at leaving no one behind; e) how much we have sustained or advanced institutional mechanisms for implementing the goals; and f) what structural issues have emerged in terms of good policy practices and reforms to facilitate implementation of the 2030 agenda in the country.

⁴ List of SDGs related studies and reports, including those undertaken by CSOs can be found in the Google Drive: <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

3.1 Creating ownership of the SDGs

Ownership of the SDGs has been sustained in the country. We ensured intensive nationwide sensitization to the goals and their integration at all levels in the first two years of the launch of the 2030 Agenda; and we have strongly followed up on implementation. All actors have participated in reporting on progress, including government, CSOs (women and youth groups, as well as persons with disabilities), trade unions and the private sectors, development partners and research institutions (see **Annex 4** for details of major SDG groups).

SDG billboards remain erected across the country; various civil society SDG groups have been working in various areas on the 2030 Agenda, a number of them undertaking studies and general assessments of implementation of the goals in the country. ⁴ Government, in



Sample Picture of SDG Billboards

collaboration with partners, has always provided the UN with annual progress updates on the goals, whether the country was specially reviewed or not.⁵

⁵ The Government participated in all annual HLPF sessions on the SDGs: voluntarily reviewed in 2016; and participated in the general debate at the 2017 and 2018

Parliament and the country's supreme audit service played a significant role in following up on implementation of the Agenda. Parliament maintains a parliamentary committee on the SDGs that constantly engages the executive, in particular the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on ensuring effective implementation of the SDGs.

On 12th February 2019, parliament was provided with training on the role of parliament in the implementation of the global agenda;⁶ followed by training sessions on the role of CSOs and audit service on 13th and 14th of the same month, respectively.⁷ In 2017, Audit Service Sierra Leone conducted a performance audit on Sierra Leone's preparedness for the implementation of the SDGs, which was updated in February and March 2019.⁸

The foregoing was an add-on to earlier nationwide training and sensitization conducted on the expected role and contribution of all actors to achieving the SDGs during 2015-16. Local government councils were heavily involved in these sessions, and in the general implementation of the global agenda.

As noted above, we have established an integrated SDG platform for CSOs' follow-up on the implementation of the goals in the country. This platform has made it easier for the government to coordinate with CSOs in the preparation of the 2019 VNR.⁹ There are clear concept and guiding principles for the platform's operations.¹⁰

VNRs for other countries, providing status update on country implementation sharing lessons with others.

⁶ See <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL> for list of reports.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Report not made public yet...has to go through parliament; see Audit Service Sierra Leone

⁹ See concept notes on the Integrated Platform for its conceptual framework on Google Drive:

<https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

Through this integrated platform, international Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) working on SDG-related interests can now easily and better cooperate with our CSOs for joint global reporting on the agenda.

Significant efforts were made to integrate the goals into university study programmes in the country. Typical of this is the University of Makeni, in the Northern Region, that runs a master's degree programme in Sustainable Development. Other higher learning institutions, such as the University of Sierra Leone's Institute of Public Administration and Management in the Western Region and the Njala University in the Southern Region also run master's degree programmes in development studies that integrate knowledge of SDGs into their course structure. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development is working out a partnership framework with these three institutions to strengthen their role in the implementation of the national development plan and the SDGs.¹¹ The strategic objective is to encourage and support students to undertake research on sustainable development and related areas. The university serves as an effective platform for nationwide dissemination and application of global and regional development frameworks to be domesticated in Sierra Leone through research involving engagement of all, including the rural communities.

MOPED is working with the UNICEF to establish school SDG clubs, focusing on climate change issues.¹² This will potentially inform a review of school curricula to capture the global agenda.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ There has been exchange of letter between UNIMAK and the Ministry, and concept note involving all three universities and the Ministry in this direction. These can be obtained from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

¹² Discussions on this joint-venture have passed a concept note stage into working modalities to move the initiative forward.

UNICEF supported the World's Largest Lesson within some schools on the theme of "Writing the Future. For Every Child, Every Right" to highlight the connection between children's rights and the SDGs. Coupled with this are ongoing efforts to re-introduce civic education in schools facilitated by the National Council on Civic Education and Development, which was established by the Government in 2018. The Council will ensure sustained integration of pertinent international and national development programmes into learning institutions, households and local communities.¹³

We have ensured that all national and sectoral programmes and financing are directly or indirectly linked to the SDGs. Indirectly, this takes place through alignment of all sectoral and sub-national programmes to the country's national development plan that is highly tied to the SDGs and AU Agenda 2063 (see details in the next section).

A major challenge is the existence of a broad landscape of actors with too many CSOs, partners, MDAs and local communities with keen interest in the SDGs, yet resources for coordination are limited, while functions are duplicated at the same time. Supporting integrated approaches to SDG implementation amongst CSOs, MDAs, local functionaries and all actors is critical.

3.2 Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks

The first major step undertaken by the state to domestically adapt the SDGs was the effective integration of the goals into the national development plan. This was done in the previous

national development plan, the Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018),¹⁴ and has been more laudably done in the successor Medium Term National Development Plan that was in February (see **Table 1** for linkage between the SDGs and Sierra Leone's MTNDP).

In Sierra Leone, the national development plan is the 2030 Agenda and SDGs on the ground, the implementation of the former constituting the implementation of the latter in the country. For this, we have ensured that the MTNDP operational (results) framework heavily integrates the SDGs results framework; to ensure that there is coherence, logic and effectiveness in the implementation of the global agenda through the national plan.¹⁵

Additionally, the general public, during the consultations leading to the formulation of the medium term plan (May-November 2018), advocated for the formulation of a long term national development plan that is legislated to ensure stable development focus; that is well linked to global and regional long term plans.¹⁶ Consequently, preliminary discussions on a long term plan for Sierra Leone have begun, and the process is expected to continue.

Furthermore, all SDGs were integrated into local council plans, facilitated by the Department of Local Government Finance in the Ministry of Finance. To strengthen this integration, MoPED has drafted a set of guidelines for national development planning and plan implementation, to provide for integration of relevant international frameworks into public sector plans at all levels.¹⁷ Parliament monitors this policy coherence through the parliamentary committees on SDGs

¹³ The Council has developed draft curriculum content for primary and junior secondary school for civic education.

¹⁴ See page 13 of the Sierra Leone 2016 VNR Report

¹⁵ See <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL> for the country's MTNDP (2019), its Results Framework and that of the SDGs Results.

¹⁶ See pages i, vi, 7 and 191 of Sierra Leone's Medium Term National Development Plan (2019-2013).

¹⁷ The guidelines are available at the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development in Freetown

and the public accounts that the Audit Service Sierra Leone’s reports to.

*A major **challenge** is limited and timely funding to support effective implementation and tracking of the SDGs. Sector MDAs are burdened by multiple data demands and reporting requirements on national development plans and global development agendas at the same time. A remedy is to increase knowledge of the interdependence between global plans and national development frameworks, so that integrated reporting can be encouraged and enhanced. There is limited funding to support regular and timely data collection and reporting. This can be overcome through increased investment in development coordination, data systems, monitoring and evaluation and reporting.*

3.3 Integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development

The three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental) are integrated 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 done. At policy formulation level, the current national development plan, and its predecessor, has clear economic, environmental and social policy dimensions (see **Table 1** above). In **Table 1**, economic dimension covers Policy Clusters 2 and 3; social dimension, 1 and 5; and environmental dimension, 4 and 7.

Furthermore, the Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did an environmental sensitivity analysis of the policy areas prioritised in the MTNDP and found out that all policy

The SDGs



Table 1: Linking Sierra Leone’s Medium Term National Development Plan with the SDGs

S/Leone MTND (2019-2023)	The SDGs
Human Capital Development	SDGs 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, 17
Diversify the Economy & Promote Economic Growth	SDGs 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17
Infrastructure & Economic Competitiveness	SDGs 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17
Governance & Accountability for Results	SDGs 16, 17
Women, Children and Persons with Disability	SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 17
Youth, Sports & Migration	SDGs 4, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17
Addressing Vulnerability & Building Resilience	SDGs 11, 13, 15, 16, 17
Means of Implementation	SDGs 11, 13, 15, 16, 17

clusters have been environmentally sensitive on 6 out of 10 point scale on average.¹⁸

The EPA has been enforcing environmental protection compliance from business operations through regular conduct, review and implementation of recommendations from environment impact assessments (EIAs). They undertook a total of 28 EIA reviews in 2017, exceeding a target of 20; and increased the number of environmental desks in key ministries, departments and agencies; as well as the number of district councils trained on environmental issues and supervised and monitored for environmental compliance. All 22 local councils in the country now have environment and social officers, working with district planning and monitoring and evaluation officers.

Communities have embraced the three dimensions of sustainable development and taken local ownership of the SDGs. Citizens have organized themselves into Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) to improve their economic returns in the agricultural sector. Young members of communities are forming social clubs that engage on a variety of social activities (i.e. football clubs). Community leaders are taking decisive action to protect the environment by levying fines for bush burning, random garbage disposals, and burning of charcoal. These community efforts often come about from regular public engagement.

Education and the media have played a central role in engaging the public on the consequences and benefits relating to the treatment and management of the environment. EPA, the Ministry of Lands, Housing & Environment and CSOs work closely in this area, utilizing radio, TV and general outreach programmes with support from partners. Also, the government and

local businesses explored innovative and affordable housing financing methods together, through utilization of waste plastics and wood in the construction of buildings to limit the impact on the environment. The initiative of establishing school clubs on climate change related issues, jointly pursued by UNICEF and MoPED, is a step in the right direction to ensuring sustainable linkage of the three dimensions and integration into national development processes, as well as at household and community level in the long run. The re-introduction of civic education will potentially strengthen these efforts.

3.4 Leaving No One Behind

Here, we will present progress in the welfare of high-risk groups and general effectiveness of policies promoting Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principles. The specific focus on LNOB reframes the values that shape how we do and measure development. Testimonies on success stories and case studies are included. We will discuss in later sections the achievement of planned SDGs targets shedding further light on promoting the principle of LNOB.

Socioeconomic participation and inclusiveness

Sierra Leone remains a democratic country that has conducted four successful general elections and two peaceful transfers of power from one political party rule to another since the civil war ended in 2002—the latest transfer took place in April 2018. These outcomes illustrate sustainability of active participation of major civil groups in political decisions; including the civil society and the country's bulging youth population (close to 80 percent of the population is below age 35). This increases chances of economic participation by all persons, irrespective of religion and region and district of

¹⁸ The sensitivity analysis report is available in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development in Freetown.

origin, thereby promoting shared prosperity and fostering peace and stability.

The existence of specialized Government Commissions to coordinate issues of human rights and inclusion are critical to the sustainability of efforts in this direction. These Commissions, all of which have been recently rationalized to ensure effective service delivery, include Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission; Commission on Persons with Disability; National Commission on Children; and the National Youth Commissions. The Sierra Leone Labour Congress facilitates the social and economic interests of many trade unions and their workers; as well as the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) that coordinates a range of social protection and economic empowerment programmes for those at risks of exclusion (NaCSA's strategic role is discussed in detail below).

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the vital role of volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organizations (VIOs) in SDGs implementation. The CSO integrated platform in Sierra Leone has raised the voice of volunteers, as critical partners for achieving the SDGs. Volunteers are able to reach distant communities and contribute to data collection, validation and consultation processes in local communities.

The role of CSOs/NGOs is worthy of special mention in promoting social and economic inclusion, especially at community level. We will summarize here a case study of a NGO, Fambul Tok Sierra Leone (FT-SL), that has successfully piloted an inclusive local governance model in partnership with an American-based NGO, Catalyst for Peace (CfP). Today, this model is being highly discussed by the Government of Sierra Leone for replication across the country. Its features and results are summarised next.

¹⁹ For details on this case study, please refer to the scoping study (2019) on the relevance of the PPP (Wan Fambul Framework) model obtainable at Fambul Tok

An Inclusive Local Governance Model: A case study of inclusion in Sierra Leone ¹⁹

Fambul Tok Sierra Leone is a NGO that has successfully operated in Sierra Leone since 2008. The organisation implemented a three-year pilot project entitled 'People's Planning Process (PPP) model' in three districts in Sierra Leone during 2015-18: Koinadugu, Moyamba and Kailahun. The model has enormous potential to accelerate the transformation of Sierra Leone's economy if scaled-up across the country. Indeed, the government is at an advanced stage of preparation to scale-up the model having developed a national policy framework based on the results from pilot in collaboration with FT-SL and partners.

The PPP model (also referred to as the Wan Fambul Framework—Wan Fambul means One Family in English) is an inclusive planning and local governance model introduced and tried in the country. It was piloted in eight chiefdoms in the aforementioned districts. The pilot was informed by the long-term experience that FT-SL, with support from CfP, has acquired from implementing post-war, grassroots-based, peace and reconciliation interventions in Sierra Leone.

The inclusive local development model has demonstrated efficacy in four critical ways in building local communities: a) its strength for social mobilization: it possesses power to move people into self-induced, managed and sustained development action, dialogue and consensus building; b) its strength for healing grievances and promoting and enhancing local peace and co-existence; c) its potential to unlock energy and productive imagination in local people, driving them into undertaking sustainable economic action and livelihood production; and d) its capability to support national development

Organization, 31 Regent Road, Hill Station, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

planning processes, systems, cohesion, and hence macroeconomic stability and sustainable development.

The model is built around four broad inclusive local governance structures: a) the establishment of the Peace Mother Groups; b) the Community Welfare and Mediation Committees; c) the Chiefdom Inclusive Committees; and d) the Inclusive District Committees (IDC). These are organs through which the PPP model has been piloted for delivery of social, economic and leadership services generated and managed by and within local communities with facilitative support from FT-SL and partners. These are the planning and consensus building structures of the model, used for mediating and resolving conflicts and generating economic and livelihood ideas.

Some results from the pilot

During 2016-17, a total of 547 villages were mobilized and trained on the PPP model across the pilot areas. Related meetings were attended by massive amounts of village/community members, while hundreds of mediators from Community Welfare and Mediation Committees and Peace Mothers Groups were identified, trained and equipped with mediation and entrepreneurial skills.²⁰ Training covered community planning, leadership skills, financial management, conflict prevention and resolution, and women's participation in local governance and development.

These processes have produced village peace and development activity plans, which were combined to produce section plans that were in turn combined to produce chiefdom plans, facilitated through the IDCs. Validated village, section and chiefdom plans were presented to the Development Planning Units of the District Councils covered in the pilot districts for incorporation into annual District Development Plans.

²⁰ Ibid.

Today, all of the pilot project beneficiaries are leading their own community development projects and enjoying the fruits of their governance innovations enhanced by FT-SL and partners. For example, in 2016, a Peace Mother Group in one of the pilot districts cultivated a three-acre farm of Cassava, Corn & Okra; in one year, the group realized proceeds from the harvest and sales of these crops to the tune of Le 35 million (US\$ 5,000). Another Peace Mother Group in another district pooled resources together to run a small soap making business and in one year, realized proceeds from sales of soap to the tune of Le 30 million (US\$ 4,000); part of which they invested in a Financial Services Association Bank in the district, while provided soft loans to Group members and families with the remaining amount. That is, if thousands of these groups can be formed across the country, the local and macroeconomic development value it generates for the state will be tremendous.

Furthermore, these structures succeeded in mobilizing communities to provide financial and labour contributions towards local projects, such as infrastructural development undertaken with small but numerous savings, with and without assistance from external donors. At the section and chiefdom level, they constructed, for example, peripheral health units; roads and bridges; and community court buildings with funds they raised primarily themselves. At the district level these inclusive structures have facilitated cooperation between traditional leaders and local government councils in mobilizing local revenue, agreeing on clear formula for distribution of revenue without mediation from central government or reference to statutes that sometimes produce confusing interpretation of fiscal responsibilities at the local levels between chiefdoms and district councils. All of the section and chiefdom structures privilege women's participation, so the process serves to embed, strengthen and support women's

leadership in local development and governance.
Inclusion and empowerment of children, women and girls

To ensure increased participation and inclusion for all, from a long term perspective, government has pursued education and development of the girl child as leading priorities. Since August 2018, the Government has allocated 21 percent of the National Budget to education to ensure that all children have access to basic and senior secondary school education.²¹ Now, all pupils, even those in remote communities, have access to textbooks for core subjects, as well as other learning materials and improved services, free of charge. This initiative has benefited 2.14 million boys and girls in Government-Owned and Government-Assisted Schools, saving poor parents an appreciable amount of money to start small scale business. Between the national school census conducted in 2017 and that conducted in 2018, enrolment in schools increased by approximately 90,000 at the Primary level and 10,000 at Junior Secondary level. Enrolment in Primary and Secondary Schools by children with disabilities also increased from 25,022 pupils in 2017 to at least 30,000 in 2018.

Additionally, Government has been running a Business Incubator for African Women Entrepreneurship in Sierra Leone, in collaboration with ECOWAS, “targeting the most vulnerable women particularly [those] in agro-business.”²² It also established a Women's Development Fund for female entrepreneurs to which was allocated the sum of Le 2 billion in capital budget for the 2019 Financial Year; aimed at providing “seed capital for female traders and entrepreneurs.”

A Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy is in draft form awaiting Cabinet approval; expected to inform establishment of the National

Gender Affairs Commission and achievement of the minimum 30 percent women representation in governance.

Moreover, with the rising spate of rape incidents in recent years, Government has renewed its commitment to stemming this tide. It has increased budgetary resources for implementation of the Sexual Offences Act of 2012; a public emergency was declared on rape and sexual violence currently in force in light of the increased reported cases of Sexual Penetration from “2,549 in 2017 to 2,726 in 2018 and Rape from 103 in 2017 to 205 in 2018.”²³ Revision to the Sexual Offences Act 2012 was recently approved by Cabinet to more robustly address rape and sexual violence cases in the country. A National Strategy on the Reduction of Adolescents Pregnancy and Child Marriage was launched, as well as Child Welfare and Alternative Policies.

Welfare of the disabled, the stigmatized and aged

As noted above, from a long term intervention front, government has been able to increase enrolment of children with disabilities in Primary and Secondary Schools from 25,022 Pupils in 2017 to at least 30,000 in 2018; hoped to increase more and more as the Free Quality Education Programme takes deeper roots. Short-term efforts include the expansion of Cash Transfer Social Safety Net Programme of NaCSA to cover persons with disabilities.

Internationally, the Government through the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, is finalizing “the first country report on the status of implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.” It has signed an MOU with the Government of Guinea on the advancement of the “socioeconomic and cultural

²¹ See Presidential Address by H.E Julius Maada Bio to Sierra Leone Parliament, May 2019.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

development of persons with disabilities in both countries.”

Special attention has been paid to disabled youngsters roaming and/or living in streets, the Government is currently pursuing a “Livelihood Programme for this category of vulnerable persons.” It plans to pilot the initiative with own budgetary resources to “provide basic skills and finance to Persons Living with Disabilities [PWDs].” It will be integrated to include provision of opportunities for teenagers that take PWDs around and to attend school. There will be special provision to make public facilities disabled friendly, providing special incentives for Teachers in Special Needs Institutions.

The unique challenges facing persons living with albinism came out strongly in the VNR consultation process. Some CSOs have been following up on the welfare of persons living with albinism and discovered that they have been seriously marginalized and stigmatized. There are mounting efforts to determine the size of the population of persons living with albinism and spatial distribution across the country to ensure proper planning for them. Fortunately, persons living with albinism have been considered as part of the disabled community that will be accorded support along with other categories of disabled persons.

Plans are underway not only to address concerns and welfare of women, children, and the disabled, but also the aged who also need special care, livelihood support and economic empowerment.

Disability and Education for All - “Nothing about us without us”: A case study

In 2011, Sierra Leone enshrined the Persons with Disabilities Act into law to ensure that persons with disabilities are entitled to equal access to services and opportunities and are treated with equal dignity. One of the key pieces of this

legislation is ‘education for all’. Members of the Education Network for Children with Disabilities supported the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education to develop the Inclusive Education Policy. Through this, the slogan of the disability movement “nothing about us without us” was coined to ensure that children with disabilities are not left out of the dialogue and participation in decisions which affect them.

Children with disabilities, particularly girls, are faced with huge challenges in accessing quality education in Sierra Leone. In most parts of the country, children with disabilities cannot go to school, and those who do face major logistical challenges such as lack of transport, risk of physical or sexual assault for girls walking long distances, or a lack of suitable furniture or equipment including inaccessibility of the learning environment. Teachers may lack adequate training and motivation and the children often suffer discrimination at the hands of their classmates. Parents themselves may not understand the importance of education for their children.

In response to these challenges and addressing the principle of LNOB, the ‘Education for All’ project supports 824 children with disabilities (406 boys; 418 girls) to enrol in 45 schools in the two districts. These students were supported with hygiene kits and teaching and learning materials, as well as individual accessibility support and school-based adaptation. Supporting children with disabilities is necessary to promote an inclusive learning environment that is free of discrimination.

Efforts at addressing food insecurity and extreme poverty in communities

Around the end of the civil war, in 2001, the government set up the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) as a special response mechanism to address increased food insecurity

and extreme poverty. It was the “main Government vehicle for resettling internally displaced persons and refugees, rehabilitation and reconstruction of socio-economic infrastructure, and remains the main delivery channel for social protection services.”

The institution is central to the achievement of the SDGs, especially goal 1 (ending poverty), 2 (ending hunger) and 10 (reducing inequality), fundamental to the leaving no one behind objective (see the next section on achievement of these goals’ targets). In view of its crucial importance for the SDGs, NaCSA’s tenure has been transformed from its 5-year renewable mandate (having been renewed at least 3 times since 2001) into “a permanent institution of Government to address vulnerabilities of communities and persons.” It was recently placed under the supervision of the Office of the Vice President to accord it the political attention and sustained impetus it deserves.

In the last one year, Government provided unconditional cash transfers to 28,538 beneficiary households in 10 of the 16 districts, each receiving Le 250,000. It paid Le 11.5 billion in financing towards the War Reparations Programme managed by NaCSA; and provided rehabilitation grants to 7,695 War Widows and Victims of Sexual Violence, each beneficiary receiving a grant of Le 1,200,000. Furthermore, a total of 35 war victims were provided with access to medical facilities for various critical ailments.

Also, the Community Driven Development Project Phase II managed by NaCSA saw the formation of “205 new Self Help Affinity Groups...comprising 4,089 vulnerable women and youth. With each beneficiary being a household head, 20,445 direct and indirect beneficiaries at an average of 5 members per household are benefiting from the intervention.

²⁴ Ibid.

These new groups received training in managing small enterprises, voluntary savings and records keeping.”²⁴

With a view to supporting rural farming communities, a total of 9 Primary and Junior Secondary Schools and 10 Community Health Posts were reconstructed in seven chiefdoms in four districts; and many feeder roads were rehabilitated in several others to enhance access to markets. A total of at least 5,000 youth are estimated to have gained employment through these interventions in the last one year.

Finally, mindful of the need to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental), Sierra Leone’s EPA has encouraged the practice of Climate Smart Agriculture in pursuit of food security and addressing extreme poverty. Another project led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with support from FAO, is tackling climate change and building resilience through livelihoods and food security support. These efforts have especially engaged women and youth groups as major actors in farming; efforts that will increase chances of increasing farm yields over time while preserving the environment.

Justice system and the welfare of the poor and the most vulnerable, including persons in prisons

The country has faced a serious challenge of having demand for justice services steeply outweighing supply of these services. This affected especially the poor and those living in the rural areas; causing increased caseload of persons on remand without indictment and trial. The congestion and quality of living in correctional centres remains a serious challenge, especially in the country’s only maximum security facility on Pademba Road. In this regard, substantial efforts

have been made by the government in the last couple of years to narrow demand-supply gap. The capacity of Legal Aid Board has been enhanced to provide legal services to low-income Sierra Leoneans. Several paralegals have been deployed across the 16 districts of the country, for whom “a Curriculum and Training Manual has been developed” to enhance their capacity. Finally, the government is on the verge of appointing several judges for the High Court, Appeals Court and Supreme Court.

Consequently, the number of less privileged persons with access to justice (rural inhabitants, all disadvantaged citizens, including those in pre-trial detention and prisons) has increased substantially from 25,000 in 2015, to more than 215,000 to date. The Legal Aid Board has been particularly instrumental in these efforts. They facilitated legal representation covering issues ranging from child protection and land disputes, to criminal cases, domestic violence, rape, defilement and juvenile offences.

The government’s response to justice issues transcends the border of Sierra Leone, pursuing the cause of human rights not only nationally but internationally. As a global pioneer of SDG16, Sierra Leone hosted the SDG16+ Forum Annual Showcase and the first technical consultation on this goal for Anglophone African countries in Freetown in November 2018. We are Co-chair of the Global Task Force on Justice, which launched the “Justice for All” Report in The Hague in April 2019; and Chair and Co-Chair of the g7+ and International Dialogue on Peace-building and State-building, respectively, to promote SDG16 in fragile and conflict-affected countries. We have recently (in May 2019) organized a national consultative conference on strengthening Democratic Governance and National Cohesion aimed at establishing a Peace and National Cohesion Commission.

Addressing concerns and welfare of island and coastal communities

Sierra Leone has over 500 km of coastline and a number of islands. These ecologies host a number of human communities demanding state attention so as not to be left behind, in light of global warming and climate change related hazards that they are exposed to—sea rise events, floods and so on. A coastal adaptation plan developed in 2018 is being implemented under the coordination of the National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), including a ‘resilient coastal adaptation project’ to increase resilience of coastal communities and resources from climate change impacts.

There is an existing National Adaptation Programme of Action coordinated by NPAA, which generally details several programmes that can be developed into bankable proposals for implementation by the Government in collaboration with partners, including CSOs.

Managing natural resources, ensuring justice for future generations

We have noted above, under the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, some of the key achievements made by the state in ensuring management of natural resources for the present and future generations. It has enforced compliance from businesses and communities to environmental protection protocols and guidelines. Additionally, the country has made significant strides in improving the management of mineral, water and land resources over the years with a view to ensuring responsible production and consumption of environment resources, consistent with SDG 12. The government undertook key reforms over the last three to four years, including review of the National Minerals Policy to strengthen its alignment with international best practice and

standards as contained in the Africa Mining vision and the ECOWAS Directives. The development of the Artisanal Mining Policy and the utilization of community development funds are notable successes. The state continued to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. Under its implementation of the Extractive Industry Technical Assistance Project, it was able to strengthen the capacity of EPA and Petroleum Directorate, and pave the way for undertaking an Airborne Geological Survey.

With a view to improving responsible, efficient and intergenerational use of water resources, reforms have been pursued in this area, including building the capacity of actors in the sector. Personnel of the Ministry of Water Resources were trained in Water Resources Management, as well as in Assessment, Monitoring and Management of Water Quality. On the management of land resources, a comprehensive National Land Policy was developed and is being implemented, as well as a National Spatial Development Framework. Various key stakeholders, including journalists and CSOs are involved in nationwide sensitization of the Land Policy provisions and compliance. Additionally, forestry is gaining increased attention. A National Reforestation Programme was recently developed, for which plans are at advanced stage for its implementation.

Information, data and data disaggregation

This area is being strengthened in the country. Major statistical surveys for measuring progress and informing policies are being regularized, including the conduct of the Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, Demographic and Health Surveys, and the Multiple Cluster Indicator Surveys. To ensure data disaggregation and in-depth understanding of service delivery challenges and effectiveness, Sierra Leone has joined other countries in the production of Multidimensional Poverty Index Reports; the first

was launched in May 2019. In 2018, the first Child Multidimensional Poverty Report was launched and the second report is being finalised. The country has become a member of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN). Moreover, there is now a gender desk in the national statistical office of Sierra Leone (Statistics Sierra Leone) to ensure mainstreaming of gender statistics and data disaggregation along gender. Cooperation is also being increased between Stats SL and data users to ensure demand-driven statistical production.²⁵

Summary of related success stories with the poverty of information and data in leaving no one behind

Indeed, a critical aspect of information, data and data disaggregation with regard to meeting the leaving no one behind objective is the power to identify population segments at highest risk, for whom without special specialised research efforts they will be permanent relegated to destitution. Let's see the following highlights:

- The work of the Media Reform Coordinating Group in Freetown on HIV/AIDs Population and Hepatitis

This media firm with support from donor agencies followed up on welfare status of hidden persons affected by HIV/AIDs and Hepatitis in 2018. The intervention of this Group helped to dig out the dire situation these persons were; reported it to authorities concern and relayed relevant footages and messages on TV and radio to attract immediate action to save segment of society from dying. The Group is currently working on climate change and water.

²⁵ The updated SDGs Results Framework showing indicator disaggregation in pursuit of leaving no one

behind can be can be obtained from the Google drive: <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

➤ Information gathering of OSIWA on Persons Living with Albinism in Sierra Leone

The Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) has also dug out a gamut of information on the status of the persons with albinism (PWA) in Sierra Leone. Without detailed information on this population, example of statistics shown below, their humanity would continue to be threatened.

Example of statistics on PWA in Sierra Leone according to an OSIWA Report (2018)—direct quotes from the report:

Attitude

Whilst 80.18% said they had been called derogatory names because of their albinism; 78.87% noted that PWA face stigma and discrimination in their communities.

What did they say about their situation?

- 62.83% had visited a Health Centre within the last two (2) months of the study;
- 48.67% were living in communities indifferent to their challenges;
- 53.77% had been ignored or shunned during conversations because of their albinism;
- 80.18% had been called derogatory names because of their albinism;
- 41.59% had never received any special support or attention from their communities;
- 57.29% school-going-age PWA had not received necessary support and accommodation to enable them access education on equal terms with other students;
- 34.95% school-going-age PWA had been excluded from physical activities in their schools;
- 22.73% had interacted with justice institutions within the last 12 months of the study;
- 40% of those were complainants;
- 43.75% were treated with dignity and respect.
- 26.79% were employed;
- 60.23% had never applied for a job;

Access to Services; What did the respondents say?

- 84.44% - PWA have equal access to justice services
- 78.35% - PWA have a fair and equal access to educational services
- 87.92% - PWA have special educational needs;
- 78.84% - PWA have a fair and equal access to health services;
- 86.1% agree that PWA should have the same rights as persons without albinism to contest for public office;
- 91.37% agree that PWA should be bona fide members of their communities;
- 50.41% are open to choosing PWA as life partners;
- 91.22% - government should enact legislation to protect the rights of PWA;
- 89.2% - are comfortable working with PWA in the same office;
- 88% would employ PWA if they were employers.

Recommendations

- Identifying PWA Champion to raise challenges of PWA and influence policy makers
- Support the establishment of a functional and unified network led by PWA, decentralized at regional and district levels.
- Institution of Special sessions for hearing, narration and documentation of human rights violation of PWA
- Designing public education campaigns and programmes to raise awareness, change mindsets and perceptions of communities and the public
- Enactment of a specific law protecting the rights and lives of PWA
- Engagement of National Commission for Persons with Disability to mainstream PWA issues in their programmes beyond the “International Albinism Awareness Day”
- Engagement of key Sectoral Ministries advocate for provision of free or subsidized social services such as Healthcare and Education for PWA, and
- Undertaking further research relating to everyday life challenges of PWA for society and policy makers to understand how to address their challenges

Detailed statistics on this population and what is required to ensure their active inclusion can be found in the OSIWA Report (2018), “Persons with Albinism (PWA): Challenges, Awareness, Perceptions and Recommendations”.²⁶

3.5 Institutional mechanisms

Generally, the SDGs have been implemented within the existing framework of implementing and reporting on national and subnational development plans to ensure coherent, harmonized and aligned national development efforts. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, re-established in May 2018, coordinates implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the national level, as it does for national development plans (see **Figure 1**). This function was undertaken by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development before it was separated into the Ministry of Planning and Economic and Development, and the Ministry of Finance. Since then, MoPED has ensured continued integration of the SDGs into the plans of MDAs and local councils. It also ensures progress reporting on the goals from these institutions.

Figure 1 presents the basic planning structure of the country through which all plans and international development frameworks are coordinated nationally by MoPED. The Ministry is at an advanced stage of resuscitating Regional Planning Offices to effectively coordinate district level activities undertaken by local councils. Local councils coordinate implementation of the SDGs at district level—the country is divided into regions, regions into districts, districts into chiefdoms, chiefdoms into sections, and sections into villages; while within chiefdoms there are ward committees that elect councillors for

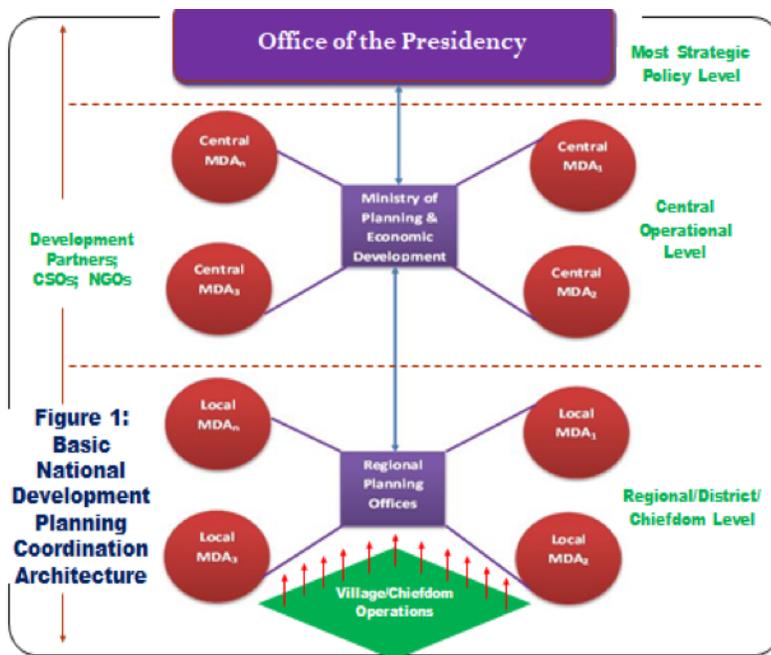


Figure 1. Planning Architecture of Sierra Leone

community representation at district level local councils.

These structures have been instrumental in the implementation of the SDGs at local level. Before the resuscitation of the Regional Planning Offices, MoPED has worked closely with the Ministry of Finance’s Local Government Finance Department and the Ministry of Local Government’s Decentralisation Secretariat to engage local councils in the implementation and reporting on the SDGs at district level. Implementation and follow-up at district level will be intensified when Regional Planning Offices of MoPED become fully operational, in collaboration with those aforementioned line departments.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation plays a central role on the diplomatic

²⁶ See: <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

front to facilitate foreign corridors and supply vital UN and general global information on the SDGs for Sierra Leone's contribution to and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It supports regular country progress reporting to the UN, and international and regional peer group learning, including south-south cooperation. Sierra Leone's Permanent Mission to the UN has been particularly pivotal in enabling country engagement with the UN System on the SDGs. In-country development partners, such as the UNCT and UNDP, have played a significant role in this direction. UNDP has not only participated in joint coordination of the SDGs with MoPED, but also provided technical and financial support.

Statistic Sierra Leone provides regular support relating to the management of the SDGs Results Framework. It coordinates vital national surveys for measuring SDG progress and supports production of reports such as the National and Child Multidimensional Poverty Reports.

Civil society, research institutions, the university and the private sector have all been key actors in the process. Some individual groups and consortiums, including media institutions have specialized and reported on individual SDGs, while others have followed-up on sets of SDGs. To maximise synergies for better results, as mentioned, a CSO integrated platform for SDGs was established to enhance coordination among them, and between them and the Government, Development Partners and the international community (see **Figure 1** above).

Parliament and Audit Service Sierra Leone play a significant role in enforcing accountability for the SDGs. The Parliamentary Committee on SDGs constantly engages with government through MoPED and CSOs. Audit Service also regularly follows up with government on progress. It has conducted a performance audit on Sierra Leone's preparedness for the global agenda.

At the Highest Political and Policy Level

As reported in the last VNR (2016), an existing platform for SDGs follow-up at national level is the Development Partners Committee Forum that periodically discusses general development issues of the state, bringing together government institutions and donor agencies. It is co-chaired by government ministers and development partners at the ministerial level and by the president at the presidential level.

Within the overall national development coordination structure pictured in **Figure 1**, MoPED regularly provides the Office of the President updates on SDGs, as well as Cabinet.

Preparation of annual and VNR reports

Besides the VNR, the country provides annual updates on the SDGs to the UN. Annual goal updates are derived from Annual Progress Reports on the implementation of the national development plan supported by sector MDAs and CSOs. The VNR process is far more intensive in terms of consultations with stakeholders, at national and subnational levels, coordinated by MoPED in collaboration with CSOs and development partners. The methodology section to this report presents a clear example of this process.

Furthermore, both government and CSOs participate in the presentation of the VNR at the HLPF at the UN within a coordinated delegation.

3.6 Structural issues

The main structural issues facing the state's effort at implementing the SDGs are macroeconomic challenges relating to continued weak domestic revenue positions, expenditure and debt management bottlenecks and building a capable and high performing public sector with requisite absorptive capacity. To this end, laudable reforms are underway backed by sustained political will and follow-up. The government has instituted various short- to medium-term revenue mobilization strategies aimed at modernizing,

automating and increasing tax and non-tax revenue collection and administration; and stringent expenditure management, instilling discipline in debt contracting by state-owned enterprises and management of contingency liabilities, among a range of reforms including prudent monitoring policy management.²⁷ Various accompanying sector reforms are underway, especially in the area of improving child development focusing on the girl children, public sector service delivery capacity and performance management, monitoring and evaluation of the public projection, advancing justice system and environmental protection.²⁸

4. Progress on Goals & Targets

We have seen key accomplishments in the SDGs implementation in Sierra Leone, as much as there are key challenges to overcome going forward. This section will examine the SDG targets and indicators for each goal, with emphasis on goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17 as the main focus SDGs for 2019 VNR. Outcomes of the other goals will be summarised thereafter. Summary status of achievements made on targets can be found on the Google Drive: <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

4.1 Progress on Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 15 and 17

Goal 4: Inclusive and quality education

The target on gender parity in primary school has been achieved and maintained since 2015. In fact, there have been more girls in primary school than boys in the last couple of years, with a ratio of 1.03 in 2018 compared to 1.05 in 2015. Parity is very close to full achievement in junior secondary, the ratio is estimated at 0.99 for 2018 compared to 0.93 in 2015. The senior secondary

ratio remains laudable, at 0.91 in 2018 compared to 0.75 in 2015.

School completion for girls and boys is encouraging. It is estimated at 90 percent for girls in primary in 2018 compared to 65.4 percent in 2015; and 92 percent and 66.6 percent over the same period, for boys. For junior secondary, the estimates are 67 percent in 2018 compared to 48.7 percent in 2015, for girls; and 68 percent and 53.6 percent over the same period, for boys.

The youth literacy rate (persons aged 15-24) for females improved from 61.8 percent in 2013 to 64.0 percent in 2017, while the rate for males declined from 76.2 percent to 71.9 percent. This development suggests that young women are catching up and narrowing the gender literacy gap. For the wider adult population (aged 15-49), literacy has improved for both women and men. The average adult literacy rate rose from 44.7 percent to 49.9 percent between 2013 and 2017, compared with 35.5 percent to 41.5 percent for women and 53.9 percent to 58.3 percent for men across the same time period.

Education is the cornerstone of the Government's development aspirations, as articulated in the Medium Term National Development Plan, 2019-2023, Education for Development. The flagship programme of the Government is Free Quality School Education, which seeks to increase enrolment and promote education through the payment of school and examination fees, provision of teaching and learning materials, targeted school feeding, among other interventions. With this level of prominence placed upon education, the Government appreciates the opportunity of the VNR to highlight SDG 4 in Sierra Leone.

While appreciable progress has been recorded, there remains much room for improvement in the

²⁷ See Sierra Leone MTNDP (2019, pp.27-35).

²⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

education sector, including the need to support school retention against dropping out, as pupils progress to higher grades, especially for the girl child and children with disabilities. Dropping out of school is a phenomenon that affects the rural communities where there are fewer school facilities, need to enhance conditions of service for teachers, and improve water and sanitation facilities in schools. Government is committed to bringing about the change needed through the flagship Free Quality School Education programme and other interventions.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Decent work has received ample attention from government. During 2013-2017, the frequency of children (aged 5-11 years) engaged in child labour meaningfully dropped from 44.4 percent to 29.3 percent. This suggests that fewer children are on the streets doing petty trading to provide for their families and more children are spending time in schools focusing on learning. In some communities, the paramount chiefs are working with parents to limit child labour. One of the ways to evaluate inclusivity in economic growth is through its effects on the labour force. The latest Labour Force Survey (2015) suggests a labour force participation rate of 65 percent, which means that there is significant room for growth through job creation. With increased focus on economic diversification in the Sierra Leone's medium term plan, decent work is expected to multiply and shared growth and prosperity to increase, with fewer children involved in labour.

The comprehensive Decent Work Country Programme is now in place and has led to the development of the Labour Market Information System and the National HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy. The programme has also facilitated the domestication of International Conventions on the Elimination of Child Labour.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequality

With regard to reducing inequality, a key focus is on empowering the girl child, from a long term investment perspective. Government is providing special funding for girls' education, with a substantial share of focus placed upon those offerings in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. It has also supported the First Lady's "Hands-Off Our Girls" campaign to end child marriage and reduce teenage pregnancy.

From an income perspective, inequality is generally assessed upon the Gini coefficient; a summary income inequality measure that varies from 0 (equality) to 100 (inequality). Typically, an unequal income distribution lies between 50 and 70, while a relatively equitable distribution ranges from 20 to 30. The change in the Gini value from 33.1 in 2011 to 37.4 in 2018 shows a rise in inequality. However,, both estimates are not far away from the equality range.

In fact, we have witnessed a gradual reduction in inequality when analysing the share of total real household income of the bottom 20 percent income earners. This shows the size of the pie controlled by the poorest 20 percent of the population. Since 2003, the bottom 20 percent share of income has risen from 6.6 percent to 7.9 percent in 2011 to 8.1 percent in 2018. This is a positive sign that the poorest in society are catching up.

The major challenge is the large poverty gap between urban and rural areas. Typically, service delivery and access to markets are far worse in rural areas throughout the country. Although the difference is not pronounced, we witnessed some increase in the ratio of rural to urban absolute poverty from 2.12 in 2011 to 2.31 in 2018. Thus, more targeted interventions for the rural area are needed.

Goal 13: Climate Action

The Government continues to note the huge challenges relating to the implications of climate change:

“Sierra Leone is presently ranked at the bottom of the Environmental Performance Index and is ranked as the third most vulnerable to climate change in the world or is one of the countries in the world with the least capacity to respond or adapt to environmental change. About 13% of the country's area and more than 35% of the population are at risk to disasters.”²⁹

The Government has therefore been pursuing a number of strategic fronts in response, including strengthening environmental governance and community outreach; enhancing the management of forest resources, promoting ecosystem conservation, increasing enforcement of environmental protection compliance through monitoring and integration of climate change messages into school and university curricula.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

As noted in some detail under the leaving no one behind section, one of the major successes of the Government on goal 16 is its expanded support for providing access to justice through the Legal Aid Board, especially serving the indigent and rural population. Since May 2015, as mentioned earlier, about 215,000 less privileged persons have benefited from legal representation, advice and education: 25,000 during May 2015 - December 2016; 83,000 in 2017; and 107,000 in 2018. About 14 percent of these were females and 19 percent children. Females and children accounted for most of the beneficiaries of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism through mediation, at 80 percent. Persons on remand without indictment also benefited significantly, their proportion in the capital city of

Freetown reduced from 51.0 percent in 2016 to 35.6 percent as of March 2019.

The introduction of a justice mobile application aided the tracking and management of cases by the judiciary. The piloting of Prison Courts assisted in identifying inmates on prolonged detention, which resulted in 425 new indictments drafted and served. This led to the release of over 100 persons with trials. Another positive development was the drafting of Bail Regulations through the judiciary and enactment by Parliament in August 2017 to sanitize and provide clarity on court processes and procedures to minimize procedural shortfalls and corrupt practices.

And indeed, Sierra Leonean citizens now have sufficient public knowledge and understanding about anti-corruption issues as well as the connection between corruption and underdevelopment. In recent times, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has recorded tangible results in tackling corrupt practices, as a result of change of leadership over the last 12 months, amendment of the Anti-Corruption Act to strengthen civil powers of the ACC, making the Assets Declaration Regime more manageable, efficient and effective, increase in the penalties for serious corruption offences, and establishment of a Special Court for corruption cases with Special Judges to try corruption offences speedily and efficiently. Consequently, there is now speedy prosecution of cases covering all spheres of public life with no room for impunity, with more than 98% conviction rate. The ACC has recovered over Le 12 Billion Leones (Over US \$1,500,000) of funds lost through corruption and corrupt practices. An estimated additional Le 6 Billion Leones to be recovered at the completion of cases in the next 6 months will be committed to the provision of social services. Further to this,

²⁹ See Presidential Address by H.E Julius Maada Bio to Sierra Leone Parliament, May 2019.

the government launched three Commissions of Inquiry which are presently investigating former officials of the previous administration in a bid to ensure democratic accountability.

Similarly, according to Afro Barometer Corruption Perception Survey of 2018, citizens' belief in government's effort in the fight against corruption jumped from an all-time low of 40 percent to over 66 percent in 2018. Generally, the citizens' confidence in the fight against corruption and the results being produced by the ACC is at an all-time high.

Additionally, the Government conducted a technical audit of four sectors in the last one year (telecommunications, roads, energy, and social security) to determine incidences of misappropriation and remedial measures. These efforts are gaining great traction to enhance accountability and reduce corruption across the country.

This gain can be seen in the improvement of the corruption perception index for the country, done by Transparency International, which has risen from a rating of 29 in 2015 to 30 in 2018. According to Afro Barometer Corruption Perception Survey of 2018, citizens' belief in government's effort in the fight against corruption jumped from an all-time low of 40 percent to over 66 percent in 2018. Generally, the citizens' confidence in the fight against corruption and the results being produced by the ACC is at an all-time high.

Summary of related success stories on just, peaceful and inclusive society

Providing citizens with a legal identity is essential to their full participation in society. The country, through the National Civil Registration Authority, is making great strides to ensure all people are counted throughout the entirety of the country. The proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered rose from 76.7

percent in 2013 to 81.1 percent in 2017. This progress is notable, even though efforts are required to reach the goal of counting all citizens.

Sierra Leone is ranked as the most peaceful country in West Africa, 3rd in Sub-Saharan Africa and 35th in the world. Sierra Leone is also among the 71 countries that were more peaceful in 2018 than in 2017. There has been a total decrease in overall crime rate across the country from 1.08 in 2017 to 0.80 in 2018. The Sierra Leone Police (SLP) continues to collaborate with other security and Intelligence agencies, stakeholders, including local communities, as there has been great improvement in the general security situation throughout the country. Through community policing and partnership, the government has also put under control certain public order offences like riots, violent disorder, and affray among others.

Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal

Goal 17 is similar to the discussion on the means of implementation in the next section. Thus, details are saved for that section. Indeed, the delivery of the SDGs is of utmost importance for the Government of Sierra Leone. To demonstrate this, the Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) placed a high degree of attention on action by creating a separate cluster for it, entitled *Means of Implementation* (Cluster 8). This cluster ties together the accountability framework, comprehensive costing of activities, partnerships and initiatives for revenue mobilisation, arrangements for monitoring and evaluating, among many other practical discussions to ensure delivery. The close alignment between the MTNDP and the SDGs means that progress in implementing one aides the other.

4.2 Summary progress on the rest of the Goals

Goals 1 and 2: Ending poverty and hunger

Generally, comparing Sierra Leone Integrated Household Surveys 2011 and 2018, income poverty headcount has remained largely the same, measuring 52.9 in 2011 and 53.8 percent in 2018; although the methodology of 2018 defers considerably from 2011, making the two indices not as comparable.³⁰ Rural poverty estimates at 67.8 percent in 2018 compared to 66.1 percent in 2011; urban poverty is estimated at 29.9 percent compared to 31.2 percent in 2018 and 2011, respectively.

Extreme poverty (the proportion of persons for whom if even you value all they have in monetary terms will still be below the food poverty line) remains about the same with estimates of 13.9 percent in 2018 compared to 13.5 percent in 2011.

The above poverty estimates are money based on income/expenditure levels of the household (the amount of goods consumed by its members), which does not explain the full situation of poverty in the country. There are other dimensions of poverty that necessitate the use of the multidimensional poverty methodology. It is for this reason that Sierra Leone introduced the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The Government launched the first MPI report, in May 2019, using the 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), analysing five dimensions: education, health, housing, living standards, and energy with 14 indicators.³¹ Overall, the incidence of multidimensional poverty is 64.8 percent (almost two-thirds) in 2019; this is an improvement from an MPI estimate on 68.3 percent in 2017 based on National Housing and Population Census Data 2015, noting however that the dimensions/indicators used in both MPIs

are not exactly the same for comparison.³² From a gender perspective, female-headed households have a higher multidimensional poverty rate (65.9 percent) compared to male-headed households (64.2 percent). And children younger than 14 years have the highest levels of multidimensional poverty (71.6 percent) compared to any other age group in 2019.

The country produced the first Multidimensional Child Poverty Report (MCPR) in 2016 based on MICS 2010 data that estimated the incidence of child poverty at 77.4 percent. A draft 2019 Report based on MICS 2017 data suggests that child poverty has reduced to 66 percent using the same methodology.

Hunger has been measured in terms of nutritional well-being of the population, especially children. We saw noticeable improvements between the 2013 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and MICS 2017. The proportion of children under-five who are moderately stunted (height for age) declined from 37.9 percent in 2013 to 26.4 percent in 2017, while severely stunted dropped from 18.0 percent to 9.7 percent over the same period. For underweight (weight for age) children, the proportion of moderately underweight decreased from 16.4 percent to 11.7 percent, while severely underweight dropped from 6.0 percent to 3.7 percent. For wasting (weight for height), the proportion of under-five children who are moderately wasted declined from 9.3 percent to 5.1 percent, while severely wasted dropped from 4.0 percent in 2013 to 1.7 percent in 2017. These improvements in childhood nutritional well-being are promising.

The national food poverty rate was 38 percent in 2018, compared with 48.5 percent in 2011 (SLIHS 2011 and 2018 compared).

³⁰ See summary report on Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (2018), obtainable from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development.

³¹ MPI Report (2019) is obtainable online: <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

³² Report on Poverty and Durable Assets (2017) is obtainable online: <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

Government remains committed to reducing poverty in all its forms. Given the centrality of agricultural productivity in addressing poverty, especially in the rural areas, it has increased the share of the national budget allocated to the agricultural sector from 2.1 percent in 2015 to 5.0 percent in 2019. Similarly, cereal yield (t/ha) increased from 1.70 in 2015 to 1.95 in 2017.

Goal 3: Good health and well-being

A key component of achieving Sierra Leone's development aspirations is a healthy population. The proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel rose from 59.7 percent in 2013 to 81.7 percent in 2017. Similarly, the proportion of births delivered in a health facility rose from 54.4 percent in 2013 to 76.7 percent in 2017. The under-five mortality rate fell from 156 in 2013 to 94 in 2017, as well as infant (under-one) mortality rate declined from 92 to 56 (per 1,000 live births) during the same period.

The breastfeeding rate rose from 96.9 percent of infants (aged 0-3 months) in 2013 to 98.7 percent in 2017. The proportion of households with at least one mosquito net rose from 65.2 percent in 2013 to 70.6 percent in 2017.

Efficient management of population growth is critical to achieving sustainable health outcomes. Thus, the country has pursued population management strategies, such as provision of family planning services in a context of rising demographic challenges, with a relatively high average annual population growth rate of 3.2 percent. Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for women of child bearing age (15-49 years) declined from 4.9 births per 1,000 women in that age group in 2013 to 4.1 in 2017. For adolescent women (aged 15-19 years), the birth rate dropped from 125 births per 1,000 women in that age group in 2013 to 101 births in 2017. The proportion of women of child bearing age that use modern family planning methods rose from 16.6 percent in 2013 to 22.5

percent in 2017 for married women; from 56.3 percent to 57.9 percent for unmarried and sexually active women, over the same period.

Goal 5: Gender equality

Discussions above on *leaving no one behind* and progress made in advancing education (Goal 4) and reducing inequality (Goal 10) have substantially captured progress towards achieving gender equality and women empowerment targets.

In addition to those discussions, proportion of women aged 20-45 married before/at age 18 dropped from 48 percent in 2011 (SLIHS2011) to 29.9 in 2017 (MICS2017). Girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting dropped from 89.6 percent in 2011 to 86.1 percent in 2019. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament increased from 12.4 percent to 12.9 percent, in 2012 and 2018; and proportion of women mayors and local councillors and chairpersons increased from 18.0 percent to 28.6 percent over the same period (National Electoral Commission Reports).

Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation

Proportion of the population with access to an improved drinking water source nationally increased from 51.8 percent in 2013 to 71.3 percent in 2017. Unfortunately, over 97 percent of water at household level was found to be contaminated in 2017; work is required to ensure a safe and secure water value chain.

Additionally, access to improved sanitation and hygiene increased from 22.7 percent to 43.6 percent over the same period. Much remains to be done in the area of sanitation. The Multidimensional Poverty Report 2019 highlighted that more than 80 percent of the population is deprived in sanitation. Indeed, the national cleaning exercise, which occurs on the

first Saturday of each is a step in the right direction for sanitation across the country.

Goals 7 and 9: Affordable and clean energy, and industry, infrastructure and innovation

Regarding energy, while the proportion of households using electricity for lighting purposes remains the same around 23 percent during 2013-2017, government is strongly pursuing a number of initiatives in this area, including:

- Increased investment in low-cost renewable energy (solar, hydro, wind, and biomass) production and distribution. Ensure rural electrification is carried out through engagement and involvement of key stakeholders, including the private sector
- Ensure expansion of the transmission grid nationwide by increasing the annual regular kilometric coverage
- Restoring electricity supply to all district headquarter towns and cities. Embark on increasing electricity generation, transmission, and distribution
- Improve on the policy and regulatory environment of the energy sector
- Improve governance at all levels of the sector

With regard to infrastructure, the proportion of excellent roads in the country increased from 8.6 percent in 2016 to 11.9 percent in 2017; proportion in good state increased from 29.4 percent to 41.4 percent, while those in fair condition increased from 22.2 percent to 23.6 percent over the same period, respectively.

The proportion of the population using the internet increased from 2.1 percent in 2013 to 8.9 percent in 2017. Government is pursuing a range of strategies in this sector, including a review of regulatory and legal framework for the ICT landscape; expanding ICT coverage in Sierra Leone, increasing current internet broadband penetration and raising mobile penetration especially for rural population; increasing

investment in transport infrastructure, and improving governance, oversight and coordination in the sector.

Goal 11, 12, 14, 15: Resilience towns/cities; responsible consumption and production; life under water; and life on land

Efforts pursued under goal 13 on climate change and goal 6 on water and sanitation largely apply to 11, 12, 15, and to some extent 15. These efforts include strengthening environmental governance and community outreach; enhancing the management of forest resources, promoting ecosystem conservation, increasing enforcement of environmental protection compliance through monitoring and integration of pertinent messages into school and university curricula; and sustaining national cleaning. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the EPA has encouraged the practice of Climate Smart Agriculture in pursuit of food security and addressing extreme poverty. Women and youth groups have been especially engaged as major actors in farming and nonfarm activities.

5. Feedback from children on SDG progress

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) administered a survey to gauge children's perception of SDG progress in the country with its U-Report technology. The Fund gauged perception of children aged 15-19 years as described in the following:

U-Report is a free social engagement tool for community participation designed to help address issues the population cares about. It is designed to strengthen community led development, citizen engagement and positive change. SMS polls and alerts are sent out to U-Reporters via SMS, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger channels with real-time response information is collected. U-

Report relies on volunteer community members serving as U-Reporters on a free entry, free exit basis to provide information on issues in their communities.

Questions on the progress of implementation of the SDGs were sent out to registered U-Reporters aged 15 years upwards. At the time of compiling this report, responses had been received from 12,547 out of 145,295 polled. The responses below have been extracted for children 15-19 years.

Their responses were documented on Goals 4, 8, 13, and 16.

SDG 4: Quality Education

About 64 percent of respondents aged 15-19 years felt that the Free Education had impacted them and their families positively, 16 percent negatively and 19 percent felt that nothing had changed. The reasons given for the positive impact included families not having to pay fees (48 percent), the children in the family were all going to school (26 percent), families were able to save money (12 percent) and families did not have to buy exercise or text books (5 percent). Other positive impacts include refund of the cost of application funds to university students, effective teaching because the teachers are now regularly monitored and some teachers were approved and now have PIN codes, savings on books used by some families to provide lunch for their children, less requests from children in the community and extended family members to assist with fees, school drop outs returning to school and West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) fees paid.

The reasons given for the negative impact included paying extra charges (24 percent), overcrowded classrooms (22 percent), and paying for exercise or text books (16 percent). Other negative impacts include giving the text books to the children and collecting them again, unapproved teachers and poor teaching standards.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth & related SDGs

About 29 percent of 15-19 years old respondents felt that the employment situation was improving, 25 percent felt that it was getting worse, 23 percent felt that it was the same as before, 11 percent felt that it was good, while another 11 percent felt it was bad.

About 68 percent of respondents felt they were being discriminated against or knew someone facing discrimination. 59 percent had to do domestic chores when others were playing and 23 percent felt they were treated differently because of disability.

In their opinion, challenges faced by children in Sierra Leone included hard labour (34 percent), sexual violence (25 percent), limited access to school (15 percent), physical violence (12 percent), and limited access to medical care (7 percent). Other challenges include drug and alcohol use, poor parenting, bullying, the effects of poverty such as hunger, and distractions such as social media and social activities.

SDG 13: Climate action

About 48 percent of 15-19 years olds felt that people should stop cutting down trees, 30 percent said that more trees should be planted and 19 percent said that houses should be built in safe areas. They also noted the need for financial support for families to build in safer areas.

SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions & related goals

About 59 percent of 15-19 years old respondents felt safe in their home and community. Among the 41 percent who did not feel safe, 60 percent were afraid of violent attacks, 21 percent of rape, and 8 percent of pickpockets. The respondents were also afraid of armed robbery, heavy rains and winds that would damage their homes, and political intolerance and intimidation.

About 42 percent of 15-19 years old respondents felt that the justice system was improving, 24 percent said that it was good, 16 percent felt it was the same, 6 percent that it was bad, and 12 percent that it was getting worse.

6. Results of My World Survey—United Nations Global Survey for a Better World

This survey (carrying one page questionnaire) mainly tracks two key phenomena of the SDGs:

- a. it asks individuals to vote the top six SDGs of preference out of the 17 goals; and
- b. it gauges perception of the public as to whether the chosen SDGs have made them better- or worse-off.

We tested this instrument on the first phenomenon (gauging the top six SDGs of preference) during our 2019 VNR process with 103 respondents that possessed knowledge of SDGs, including CSO members, public servants, development agency representatives and university professors and students, all hailing from different parts of the country (see **Annex 2** for the instrument). Each one of the 103 respondents were asked to vote six out of the 17 goals of preference, and to indicate whether had been better- or worse-off on the chosen six. The limitation of the results from the short survey presented below is that we were only able to have 29 female respondents against 74, which generally suggests that we need to do more to increase representation of women at workplaces and higher learning institutions in the country—the survey is self-administered. Nonetheless, the percentage responses are considerably

Table 2: My World Survey

SDGs	Total Sample		Male		Female	
	Votes	%	Votes	%	Votes	%
1	55	53%	46	62%	8	28%
2	48	47%	38	51%	10	34%
3	93	90%	65	88%	25	86%
4	76	74%	53	72%	22	76%
5	42	41%	21	28%	20	69%
6	77	75%	55	74%	19	66%
7	67	65%	53	72%	13	45%
8	28	27%	18	24%	10	34%
9	12	12%	8	11%	3	10%
10	20	19%	11	15%	8	28%
11	16	16%	9	12%	7	24%
12	13	13%	8	11%	3	10%
13	30	29%	21	28%	9	31%
14	4	4%	3	4%	1	3%
15	14	14%	12	16%	2	7%
16	52	50%	38	51%	13	45%
17	10	10%	4	5%	4	14%
No. of persons voting each SDG	103		74		29	

comparable between male and female respondents in the results presented as follows.

Results

Generally, Goals 3 (health), 4 (education) and 6 (water) appear to carry more preference and weight in Sierra Leone. The carries the highest vote at 90 percent of the 103 respondents, followed by water 75 percent and education 74 percent. Energy (goal 7) is 4th preferred at 65 percent, ending poverty (goal 1) 5th preferred, and then just, peaceful and inclusive societies (goal 16) 6th preferred.

Males: Goals 3 is preferred 1st at 88 percent votes, followed by goal 6 at 74 percent, and then goals 4 and 7 both polling 72 percent votes, meeting at 3rd position. The next two preferred are goals 1 at 62, and then 2 and 16 both polling 51 percent.

Females: Goal 3 is again preferred 1st at 86 percent; followed by goal 4 at 76 percent, goal 5 (gender) at 69 percent, and goal 6 at 66 percent. The next goals are 7 polling 45 percent of the votes, and then goal 16 at 34 percent.

The robustness of these results will be tested in the future by increasing the sample size across the country. It should also be noted that not having certain SDGs appearing amongst the first six in any case doesn't mean that they are not important. Rather, those chosen first (the first six goals) could be associated with more tangible benefits, yet they are highly dependent on goals not showing amongst the first six. For example, goal 17 (means of implementation) is a major goal for achieving all SDGs but is amongst the least voted.

7. Means of Implementation

The delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires participation from a wide-range of stakeholders and sufficient financing towards development activities. The Government of Sierra Leone made known its commitment to the goal implementation by creating a separate cluster in the Medium-term National Development Plan (MTNDP) for it, Cluster 8: Means of Implementation. This section presents some details of successes scored in implementing aspects of MTNDP Cluster 8 aimed at achieving the SDGs and goals set out in the national plan.

7.1 Mobilising resources

Domestic revenue performance

Domestic revenue collected in 2018 totalled Le 4.43 trillion and was above the Le 3.34 trillion

generated in 2017. As a percentage of GDP, domestic revenue reached 13.7 percent in 2018 representing a 1.5 percentage point increase over 2017, the highest recorded in recent years. Among the domestic revenue stream, tax revenue increased by 24.1 per cent to Le 3.8 trillion (11.8 percent of GDP) exceeding the revised target of Le 3.47 trillion by 0.63 percent. Tax revenue comprised of receipts from Income tax, Customs and Excise, and Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Collections from Customs and Excise Department rose by 10.9 percent to Le 1.00 billion (3.2 percent of GDP) and were 7.1 percent above the revised target of Le 941.89bn. The improved performance of Customs and Excise collections was largely driven by the 33.9 percent increase in import duties, which more than compensated for the decline in collection from excise duties on petroleum products. The increase in import duty was as a result of the implementation of ECOWAS CET in June 2018 and the restriction in granting of duty and tax waivers, along with strict enforcement of the customs laws.

Income tax amounted to Le 1.60 trillion (5.1 percent of GDP), representing 34.3 percent increase over the 2017 total of Le 1.19 billion, however it was 1.9 percent below the revised target of Le 1.63bn. The growth in income tax relative to the 2017 total was due to the tax audit of businesses informed by data matching exercises, field audit of mining companies, as well as enforcement actions on defaulters.

Goods and Services Tax edged up by 24.2 percent to Le 886.38 billion (2.9 percent of GDP), but was 1.5 percent below the IMF Revised Target of Le 900.23bn. Import related GST increased by 33.7 percent for reasons similarly for those mentioned for import duty. Domestic GST increased by 11.2 percent to Le 335.80 billion on account of the verification of GST non-filers and audit of GST credits.

Non-tax revenue expanded by 77.7 percent to Le 937.61 billion (3.0 percent of GDP) and was 4.6 percent higher than the revised target of Le 896.62 billion. Mines revenues increased by 49.5 percent to Le 222.8 billion due to increase in diamond and rutile exports. Receipts from Other Departments also increased by 178.0 percent to Le 660.64 billion due to the implementation of the Treasury Single Account, revamping of timber export, improved performance of the National Revenue Authority (NRA), and an upward adjustment of fisheries license fees.

7.2 External financing and Development cooperation

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT), including IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank continue to play a key role in the development of Sierra Leone, as well as bilateral agencies. In 2017, the total Official Development Assistance (ODA) by the top ten (10) donors in Sierra Leone amounted to US\$490.3 million. However, achieving the SDGs will require resources that go beyond anything that could be provided under the ODA. In this regard, Sierra Leone has completed the Development Finance Assessment (DFA) exercise (discussed below), which has paved the way for the development of the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) as set out in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financing the SDGs and the national development plan.

Expenditure management performance

The government has rolled out the Treasury Single Account, reduced duty waivers and exemptions, and strengthened the oversight of ministries, departments and agencies to restrain its expenditure. In addition, cash management was strengthened to aid budget execution and avoid the build-up of new arrears. Government implemented numerous measures to clean the wage bill, improve public procurement through the publication of price norms, and restraining the

use of the sole sourcing for procurement. These measures created the fiscal space that enabled Government to pay salaries of civil servants, pay monthly NASSIT (National Social and Insurance Trust) contributions, fund key components of the Free Quality School Education and provide resources to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) for the delivery of public services without external budgetary support.

Financing strategies going forward, including leveraging development cooperation

The Government of Sierra Leone, with support from the UNDP, undertook the Development Finance Assessment (DFA) exercise (October 2018 to February 2019) with the aim of assessing the available resources and identifying the possibilities of new flows to successfully implement the MTNDP and the SDGs. The DFA exercise has paved the way for the establishment of the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) as proposed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development. During the DFA exercise there was evidence of the existence of capacity constraints in mobilizing development financing among government agencies and private sector actors, as well as existence of opportunities to overcome these financial constraints.

The exercise identifies promising revenue generating activities. Private sector development represents one of the key opportunities for expanding the tax base, especially in growth-orientated sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. Financial sector strengthening is critical to attracting investment, so efforts must be made to increase access to long-term financing vehicles and limiting the public sector's borrowing to crowd out private sector debt. Expanding private sector performance is possible with the elimination of administrative bottlenecks, updating and reconciling laws and policies affecting private sector operations, and maintaining fiscal stability. To improve investor's confidence, the Government is seeking to

establish sovereign credit ratings for the country. In the area of public investments, the Government aims at expanding its use of public-private partnerships and the involvement of pension funds in key infrastructure projects.

Furthermore, the DFA speaks to the role of official development assistance (ODA) and south-south cooperation to raise development resources. It suggests the need to understand ODA in other developing countries and the success of their projects for replication of lessons learned in Sierra Leone. It highlights the need to explore development impact bonds that exchange results for payment, encompassing private sector financing. Another opportunity is diaspora financing through the removal of barriers to remittance flows and studying the establishment of a diaspora bond for commercial investment. The DFA suggests that over a three-year period these reforms have the potential to mobilise close to US\$500 million.

Turning these ideas for revenue mobilisation into action will be critical. The Government, with Partners' support, is building upon the DFA to develop an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) to serve as a roadmap for delivering the domestic revenue mobilisation agenda in Sierra Leone. Complementary to these revenue mobilisation efforts, the Government is working to control fiscal outlays and efficiently manage expenditure.

The DFA highlights the need to strengthen expenditure management going forward. As much as the Government is committed to expanding the quantity of available domestic resources, the quality of how these resources are utilised is imperative to delivering development outcomes. The implementation of the Public Financial Management (PFM) Act 2016 through the PFM Strategy 2018-2021 is fundamental to strengthening efficient, effective, and transparent management of the public purse. The strategy is

comprehensive across the entire PFM cycle with expenditure management as one of its fundamental pillars.

Other potential improvements include an outcome-based approach to national budgeting to ensure delivery before the release of future allocations and the establishment of systems to track gender and environment related spending to ensuring that cross-cutting issues are sufficiently monitored. To minimise the use of costly tax exemptions, a system of reporting fiscal implications of each tax waiver is recommended. These expenditure management recommendations rely on the MTNDP's implementation framework to ensure the articulation of objectives and targets across sectors.

The leading role of private sector in meeting the financing requirement for the SDGs cannot be overemphasised. Stimulating growth, especially in the sectors Government has identified to diversify the economy (agriculture, fisheries and tourism) will open up great opportunities for private investment. Thus, the Government is committed to opening up discussions with businesses through public-private dialogue. The recent re-establishment of the British Chamber of Commerce in Sierra Leone will generate new conversations and information flow between both sides.

Deepening of south-south cooperation is recommended, while the Government is working towards meeting the criteria to access funding from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The five-year grants offered by MCC's compact programme have the potential to advance the country's agenda for economic growth and poverty reduction. Another strategy identified is targeting untapped thematic funds, such as the Green Climate Fund or Climate Investment Funds.

7.3 Public sector capacity and e-governance

The delivery of public goods depends on the performance of the civil service and the adoption of technology to achieve Sierra Leone's development goals. The civil service must overcome the daunting challenges of weak human capacity and poor remuneration to deliver an ambitious national agenda. The Government is trying to address the issue of staff motivation by examining the disparities in wages, salaries, and compensation amongst public servants, through the recently established Wages and Compensation Commission. The Government is building human capacity and ensuring professionalism through the establishment of a National Civil Service Capacity Enhancement scheme and Performance Management.

Another component of the Government's drive towards efficient public service delivery is the elimination of corruption. Recent efforts have empowered the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) through amendments to the relevant Act of Parliament, additional powers to ACC, establishment of a special court for corruption, and improvements to the Assets Declaration Regime.

The Government sees technology as an important tool to improve the provision of public goods. The establishment of the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) in 2018 was a catalyst for taking bold action to address systematic issues, often through the implementation of technology-based solutions. DSTI is leading the transformation towards e-governance in Sierra Leone. It has developed and tested three web and mobile applications, as part of the Government's Digitization Initiative and developed a prototype for an integrated GIS mapping solution of government services and infrastructure in collaboration with several

ministries. It has enabled the creation of Sierra Leone's first school for computer coding, hosted at the innovation hub at the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM).

7.4 Statistical systems

Government is embarking on strengthening statistics in the country. Major statistical surveys for measuring progress and inform policies are being regularized, including the conduct of the Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, Demographic and Health Surveys, and the Multiple Cluster Indicator Surveys. To ensure data disaggregation and in-depth understanding of service delivery challenges and effectiveness, Sierra Leone has joined other countries in the production of Multidimensional Poverty Index Reports, which was launched in May 2019. In 2018, it launched its first Child Multidimensional Poverty Report and the second report is being finalised. The country is a member of the Global Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN). Moreover, there is now a gender desk in the national statistical office of Sierra Leone (Statistics Sierra Leone) to ensure mainstreaming of gender statistics and data disaggregation. Cooperation is being increased between Stats SL and data users to ensure demand-driven statistical production.³³

Development partners such as World Bank, UNFPA, UNICEF, EU, UNDP and others have supported the Government in strengthening the national statistical system, capital and production of vital statistics and reports. UNDP has been especially instrumental in facilitating SDGs-related capacity building for Stats SL.

7.5 Linking national budget processes to the SDGs

³³ See updated SDGs Results Framework on Google Drive: <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL> showing efforts at data

disaggregation as a fundamental dimension of the Leaving No One Behind cause

The national budget, including both the capital and recurrent portions, are highly-aligned with the MTNDP and the SDGs. Each item of the national budget line is aligned with a policy cluster of the MTNDP, linked by extension to the SDGs targets as clearly articulated in the SDG-integrated MTNDP Results Framework.³⁴

7.6 Civil society and local government

Civil society plays a very important role in SDGs implementation, as was seen in their extensive contributions to this national voluntary review process. The role of civil society was recently reaffirmed with the establishment of an Integrated CSO Platform, which brings together a variety of actors working on SDGs implementation under one single body. Some of these organisations include Non-State Actors (NSA), Coalition 2030, among others. Civil society serves an important role in engaging citizens on the importance of the SDGs and raising the voices of citizens to ensure accountability and transparency. The Government sees the work of civil society to be intrinsic to the success of the SDGs.

The national Government relies upon a healthy working relationship with Local Councils to deliver the SDGs. The Local Government Finance Department (LGFD) works closely with the Local Councils to ensure that they have sufficient resources and support to contribute to the country's development aspirations.

The Government is in the process of establishing a partnership framework with universities on SDGs. This framework seeks to integrate the SDGs into university curricula and create research opportunities for academics and students to contribute to the evidence base for implementing the SDGs.

³⁴ See <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

8. Conclusion and Next Step

8.1 Summary of the review process and SDG progress

Sierra Leone enjoys very high participation rate in the country's VNR process from all relevant stakeholders. In particular, the participation of CSOs has been phenomenal in the 2019 review process. They took the lead to collect review data at national level and across the 16 districts of the country, despite the challenges with some poor rural road condition in rainy season. Because of the limited available time for data and testimony collection, mobilization of local communities by CSOs have had to run up to midnight for consultations the following day.

The impression with the level of community participation has been encouraging, indeed, with school pupils participating in the consultation process providing testimonies on such issues as the effectiveness of Free Quality Education Programme of the Government.

Local communities are extremely desirous for constant engagement with them on national development issues; as demonstrated in the intense radio engagement undertaken with the people in each district, complementing the face-to-face consultations on SDG knowledge and progress in town/community halls.

A lot of local-driven initiatives on the SDGs were revealed during the review, coupled with state interventions. These initiatives need to be followed-up on and reported for replication across the country.

Indeed, substantial progress on the SDGs has been recorded in Sierra Leone. A lot has been achieved on goal 4 (education), children acknowledging this with the introduction of the Free Quality

Education. Justice, peace, security and inclusiveness is also taking roots (goal 16), more than 60 percent of children indicating prevailing of peace and security in homes. Much more needs to be done with promoting employment/decent work (goal 8) and climate change (goal 13); children, for instance recommending more supply of and fair distribution of socioeconomic opportunities, and need for more trees to be planted and building of homes in safe environment.

8.2 Summary of challenges

The following are a summary of key challenges to overcome going forward:

- a. Limited and untimely availability of resources to undertake effective development coordination in the country.
- b. Limited effective monitoring and evaluation, data collection and reporting.
- c. The role of CSOs in development is proving to be more critical for community mobilization in development processes, including follow-up and reporting, but they badly lack financial resources to increase their robustness and proactiveness in development.
- d. Limited private sector activities, illicit financial flows and issues with financial accountability and enforcement of laws and regulations restrict state responsiveness to development needs.
- e. Still recording revenue-GDP ratio of less 15 percent reflects the challenge of domestic revenue.
- f. Much room for improvement in the area of coordination across the public sector, CSOs and amongst all actors.
- g. Community empowerment and development communication leaves room for improvement.
- h. Limited mobile network coverage in rural areas and financial inclusion remains a critical challenge.

8.3 Among key lessons learned

- a. It will yield better results if the review process (data collection and engagement) could start early.
- b. People's desire to own the SDGs, national plans and processes, including progress reporting is immense, suggesting need to strengthen work of the CSOs.
- c. Effective social and community mobilization for development can save the government huge resources, as this will galvanize them into conceiving and implementing self-initiative.
- d. We have seen the massive benefits of Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism at community level saving the state huge resources, as well as the pilot local inclusive governance (people's planning model) of Fambul Tok NGO.
- e. National cleaning is another form of community mobilization using volunteers that improves health and sanitation.
- f. Inducing the right attitudes, behaviour, and responsible citizenship could be the most required resource in development.
- g. Planning and implementing with children and schools is fundamental to achieving success.
- h. Having readily and timely resources for conducting national processes is extremely critical to the quality of the process end product.
- i. Indeed, quality data collection is very expensive; limited resources seriously constrains community participation in providing information, as their mobilization is extremely challenged.

- j. Qualitative data (supply of testimonies and narrative) is fundamental to understanding status of policy effectiveness, and must be invested in.

8.4 Recommendations

Among the key recommendations are the following:

- a. Government to increase its effectiveness in domestic revenue mobilization.
- b. This implies increased effort to mobilize private investment; ensuring that the economy is de-risked, property rights and good institutions and rule of law are scaled-up; and pursuing peace and national cohesion.
- c. Operationalise the recommendations of the Development Finance Assessment through formulation and implementation /monitoring of a robust Integration National Financing Framework.
- d. Increase fight against corruption and illicit financial flows.
- e. Strategic shift in development cooperation is critical, guiding external support towards building domestic capacity for revenue mobilization, including fighting corruption and illicit financial flows.
- f. Improve monitoring and evaluation, the statistical system, and public sector capacity and performance.
- g. Increase collaboration with CSOs and development partners and support capacity building of CSOs.
- h. Scale up people's planning process and community mechanisms such as an Alternative Dispute Resolution across the country and increase social and community mobilization through effective development communication.
- i. Constant public engagement on citizen's responsibilities, good attitude and

behaviour is critical for achievement of results.

- j. Increase understanding of the SDGs, such as the appreciation of the three dimensions of sustainable development; how the integration of this into local processes can be enhanced.
- k. Improve e-governance, mobile network coverage to increase rural capture in broadband, necessary for enhance of financial inclusion, promoting of community innovation and enhance supply of and fair distribution of socioeconomic opportunities.

8.5 Next Steps

Next steps going forward with SDG implementation include the following:

- a. Strengthening implementation of Sierra Leone's Medium Term National Development Plan, 2019-2023, Education for Development
- b. Formulating and implementing an Integrated National Financing Framework, promoting an environment for good private investors.
- c. Sustain community engagement on the SDGs, ensuring that CSOs are particularly empowered in this direction.
- d. Scale up implementation of the people's planning process model and Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism across the country.
- e. Revitalise technical working groups on various development policy areas, bringing together government MDAs, CSOs and development partners at national and district/community levels; to facilitate and sustain joint/ regular follow-up, monitoring and reporting on SDG/MTNDP progress.

- f. In general, formulate an implementation matrix of action to respond to the challenges highlighted above.

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Documents can be found on Google Drive here: <https://tinyurl.com/VNR2019SL>

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Annex 1: Data Collection Instrument

Questionnaire for VNR to Gather Responses from Stakeholders in the Report Preparation Process: MDAs, Local Councils, DPs/NGOs, the Private Sector, Research Institutions, 25/3/19

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS FOR PREPARATION OF THE REVIEW

- This section may discuss the methodology that was adopted for the review, including its scope, depth and limitations and how the principles on follow-up and review from the 2030 Agenda, including paragraph 74, were used.
- Information on the process for preparation of the national review may be presented, including, for example, how different levels and sectors of Government contributed to the review and whether and how the whole-of-Government approach was used;
- Whether parliaments were engaged;
- Whether national evaluation/oversight institutions contributed; what mechanisms have been used to engage stakeholders from civil society, academia and the business sector and, where applicable, whether the UN Country Teams were engaged.
- The section could describe how the national report to the HLPF was discussed at the national level and who was engaged in the discussions.

POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

(a)Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals.

- To what extent have key stakeholders, such as national and local governments, legislative bodies, the public, civil societies and the private sector, have been informed of and involved in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, including goals and targets?
- How groups, such women, young and disabled have been engaged?
- How direct citizen engagement has been facilitated?

(b)Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks.

- What critical initiatives that the country has undertaken to adapt the Sustainable Development Goals and targets to its national circumstances, and to advance their implementation including examining policy coherence and inter-linkages (it may describe national efforts made to integrate the Goals into the country's legislation, policies, plans and programmes, including the sustainable development strategy, if there is one)
- What main challenges and difficulties experienced in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals as a whole?
- What are the causes of challenges faced in implementing the SDGs in the country?
- What progress and challenges encountered in respect of the role of local authorities and, non-State actors, science-policy interface and partnership in implementing the Goals in the country?

(c)Integration of the three dimensions.

How have the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) been integrated into local development planning processes, and how sustainable development policies are being designed and implemented to reflect such integration?

(d)Leaving no one behind

How has Sierra Leone progressed in the following areas of LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND? (Please copy the matrix below, preferably on landscape in Word Document, and fill in your responses—we would appreciate pictures, quotes/testimonies and other supporting information in providing responses)

No.	Leaving no one behind question areas	Progress	Challenges
1	What progress has been made in ensuring effective socioeconomic participation and inclusiveness of every citizen?		
2	What special efforts have been made to increase the welfare of the disabled and address stigmatization in the country?		
3	What efforts have been made to ensure that persons on remand in prisons are given fair and timely trials and indictment?		
4	Efforts to increase the effectiveness of the justice system in general?		
5	How much efforts have been done to address food insecurity and extreme poverty in the country?		
6	To what extent have concerns and welfare of island and coastal communities been addressed in Sierra Leone?		
7	How effective has the state been in the management of natural resource and in ensuring justice for future generations?		
8	What efforts have the state made in ensuring effective data collection and disaggregation data?		
9	What special efforts have been made to empower women and girls, the aged and children?		
10	Generally, what efforts have been made to address the issues of leaving no one behind?		

(e) Institutional mechanisms

- How has the country/state adjusted its local institutional framework to capture the implementation of the SDGs?
- To what extent have different ministries, agencies, local government and non-governmental stakeholders integrated the SDGs into the institutional arrangement for managing and coordinating programme implementation?
- How has the country been conducting review of progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals?
- How has it planned to conduct national reviews that take into account the presentation of the voluntary national review at the HLPF?

(f) Structural issues

- What critical policies (economic, revenue, social, political and environmental) undertaken by the state/government to achieving the SDGs
- What challenges are encountered in the process and plans to overcome them?

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

What specific efforts have been made in **mobilizing resources** for the SDGs and what constraints have been encountered in the process?

How effective has state **expenditure management** been, and what are the constraints faced in the process?

What has been done to **promote private sector in the economy**, what results have been yielded in this direction. How much has the private sector contributed to domestic resource mobilization; what constraints encountered in the process?

What has been the role of **development cooperation** in supporting the implementation of the SDGs in Sierra Leone—provision of technical support, financial support, technology transfers, coordination of international engagement on behalf of the country, supporting local resource mobilization, south-south cooperation, etc.? What constraints exist?

What has been done in promoting **capacity of the public sector to deliver** better results; what are the existing constraints; what role does **technology** play in increasing efficiency of the public sector.

What efforts have been made to boost the **statistical capacity** of the state, data system and disaggregation?

To what extent have **financial systems and resource allocations been aligned** to support the realization of the 2030 Agenda?

What is the role of the **civil society** and **other actors in development**, including Local Councils, the University and Research Institutions, multi-stakeholder partnerships in general?

Annex 3: Major Sessions/Consultations

Sierra Leone Voluntarily National Review Engagements

No.	Meetings	Dates
1	One-Day Training and Sensitization Workshop on the Role of Parliament in the SDGs Implementation	12 th February 2019
2	One-Day Training and Sensitization Workshop on Role of CSOs/NGOs in SDGs Implementation	13 th February 2019
3	One-Day Training and Sensitization Workshop on the Role of Supreme Audit Institution in the SDGs Implementation	14 th February 2019
4	Engagement with MDAs to kick-start the VNR preparation Process for the 2019 HLPF in New York	22 th February 2019
5	Two-Day Technical Workshop on Preparation of the 2019 VNR Report: Approach and Methodological Issues	21 st –22 nd March 2019
6	National Technical Workshop on Discussion and Validation of VNR/SDGs Data Collected by CSOs	31 st May 2019
7	Validation of Sierra Leone's Voluntarily National Review (VNR) Report on SDGs Implementation	12 th June 2019

Annex 4: List of CSO Groups Working on SDGs in Sierra Leone Involved in the 2019 VNR Process

No	Name	Acronym
1	CSOs Integrated Platform for SDGs in Sierra Leone	CIPS
2	Non-State Actors	
2	Consortium for the SDGs	
3	Volunteers Involving Organisations Network	VIONET
5	Action for Youth and Children's Network	AYCN
6	Network Movement for Justice and Development	NMJD
7	Climate Change, Environment & Forest Conservation Consortium	CEf-CON
8	Fambul Tok	
9	Youth and Children in Support of SDGs	
10	Action Aid	
11	Caritas Sierra Leone	CSL
12	Sight Saver	SS
13	Campaign for Good Governance	CGG
14	Conservation Society –Sierra Leone	CSSL
15	Handicap International	HI
16	Civil Society Movement	CSM – SL
17	DADA SL / New Deal	DADA SL
18	Action Aid Sierra Leone	AASL
19	Trocaire	
20	Leonard Cheshire International	LCI
21	Sierra Leone Young Christian Students	SLYCS
22	Council of Churches Sierra Leone	CCSL
23	Environmental Forum for Africa	ENFORAC

Annex 5: CSO Position Paper on SDG Implementation

Walk the talk: Demanding social Accountability and clear strategies for inclusiveness in SDG implementation



We, the representatives of a cross section of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Sierra Leone; APPLAUD the courage and commitment of the Government of Sierra Leone in offering themselves for the Voluntary National Review (VNR) to present their national SDG implementation plan during the 2016 HLPF, in New York in line with General Assembly Resolution 67/290 and the 2030 Agenda under the auspices of the ECOSOC.

RECOGNIZE commitment of CSOs in Sierra Leone in achieving Agenda 2030, notably through participation in various consultations at the National, Regional and Global levels; and making valuable submissions to various Government and United Nations (UN) led technical teams at different levels and COGNISANT of the spaces provided for CSOs input within the VNR (sections 2.1.5, 3.1.5, 3.1.6);

ACKNOWLEDGE the various Initiatives by the UN as well as global, regional and thematic consultations on Agenda 2030. This includes efforts of the United Nations General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

NOTE the scale and ambition of the SDG and acknowledge that pursuance of the main theme of the HLPF "Leave no one behind" will not only require the participation of all but also mobilizing all available resources for effective implementation of the Agenda.

ADD our voice to the HLPF by calling the attention of the Government of Sierra Leone and other UN Member states to the following;

1. Apply the principle of "Leave no one behind" in all relevant policies and programmes

As the main theme of the 2016 HLPF is 'Leave no one behind', Government should develop detailed national engagement strategies that consider carefully who to reach, why they are important to communicate with as to mobilize communities around the SDGs. It is also the view of CSO's that the engagement process should be very widespread, cutting across regional and political divide and concerns. We recommend that the Government as a first step undertake in-depth analyses of the structural, financial, political and social drivers of inequality and exclusion that exist in the country. Additionally, conscious efforts should be made to include the views of all vulnerable and minority groups (Persons with Disabilities and any others). To increase meaningful participation and inclusion we recommend the use of various participatory formats such as group discussions, interviews, radiophone in, television and panel interviews, specific groups and expert group meetings. This will ensure the review has input from a broad representation and is validated.

2. Environmental sustainability, natural resources and disaster risk management must be implemented in a balanced and integrated manner.

'In care of our common home' we are concerned that the exploitation of our natural resources and biodiversity is neither respecting ecological boundaries nor is it fully translating into; value-adding activities, adequate employment opportunities, and enhanced economic and environmental returns for the country. We are concerned about the challenges posed by climate change, desertification and land degradation, natural disasters such as floods, loss of biodiversity, management of waste and air

pollution. In this regard we are determined to work with the government of Sierra Leone in addressing the potential adverse effects of these challenges. Mindful of the importance of ensuring the availability of safe water supply, proper hygiene and sanitation for all segments of the Sierra Leonean society, we call on the government of Sierra Leone to foster sustained development cooperation and investment in environmental protection and natural resource management including;

- Attitudinal and behavioral change in consumption and production patterns
- Clean energy programme
- Technology transfer
- ICT

3. Increase resilience to economic fragility from external shocks

The Agenda 2030 indeed recognizes that millions of vulnerable children, youth, women and older persons are caught in the devastating effects of fragile contexts and conflict. As a signatory of the New Deal for International Engagement in Fragile States the government has committed to reflecting on the New Deal's Peace and State building Goals (PSGs) in domesticating the SDGs and ensuring that localization of the SDGs is (i) consistent with political inclusiveness; (ii) gives adequate focus on security and justice. We therefore urge government to institutionalize early warning signs of conflict, health and environmental shocks within the framework of SDG implementation. Further we recommend stronger commitment by government in creating national cohesion as well as building neutral and professional state institutions consistent with SDG16.

4. Challenges in the implementation of the post 2015 development Agenda

As noted by the government of Sierra Leone, we do agree that implementation of the SDGs falls within national development plans. In view of these plans, we urge the government of Sierra Leone to deepen community engagement and suggest that government outlines its key outreach priorities in more detail, especially how civil society will be included in implementation and monitoring. Strong reference to this will demonstrate the commitment of the Government of Sierra Leone to work in multi-stakeholder partnerships. We also suggest that the report highlights the need to conduct sustained public sensitization to improve awareness on SDGs in grassroots communities by working closely with civil society through a) the Creation of a calendar of engagement, and (b) Having thematic round-tables. Consequent of the above we recommend that the Government of Sierra Leone's includes its commitment to supporting new and innovative approaches for data disaggregation for all development initiatives.

List of organizations participating in the Sierra Leone 2030 Coalition

No	Name	Acronym
1	Caritas Sierra Leone	CSL
2	Sight Saver	SS
3	Campaign for Good Governance	CGG
4	Conservation Society –Sierra Leone	CSSL
5	Handicap International	HI
6	Civil Society Movement	CSM – SL
7	DADA SL / New Deal	DADA SL
8	Action Aid Sierra Leone	AASL
9	Trocaire	
10	Leonard Cheshire International	LCI
11	Sierra Leone Young Christian Students	SLYCS
12	Council of Churches Sierra Leone	CCSL
13	Environmental Forum for Africa	ENFORAC