

Sierra Leone 2024 VNR Key Messages

Sierra Leone is fully committed to implementing the UN 2030 Agenda and has been consistent in the SDG review and reporting processes. The country has undertaken three previous VNRs and produced an SDG Acceleration Roadmap in September 2023. The roadmap prioritised **goals one, two, and ten** and has outlined national investment commitments for sustained poverty reduction and socioeconomic transformation of the country. As part of the SDGs localisation process, three Local Reviews were conducted in 2022 and 2023 in three administrative districts, each assessing progress on local indicators and targets.

The leading SDG Acceleration commitments and the rest of the 2030 agenda are relentlessly pursued within the framework of the New Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024-2030, framed around the Government's Big Five Game Changers. Three of these Game Changers—**Feed Salone, Human Capital Development, and Youth Employment Scheme**—align with our SDG Acceleration commitments and SDG14. Feed Salone is the Government's flagship programme for attaining food security, boosting economic growth, and reducing poverty—poverty remains a key challenge. National budgetary allocation to agriculture has increased from 2.1% in 2023 to 7% in 2024.

The Government continues to prioritise Human Capital Development for long-term socioeconomic transformation. The education sector receives 22% of the national budget, in addition to the government's radical inclusion programme, all leading to a 69% increase in school enrolment and gender parity maintained. On SDG3, implementation of the Free Health Care Initiative is strengthened, national budgetary allocation to the health sector increased from 6% to 11.6% during 2019-2023, recruited more healthcare workers, and established four dialysis stations. These policy efforts have positively impacted health indicators, particularly maternal mortality, which decreased from 717 deaths in 2019 to 443 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020, and life expectancy increased from 53 to 61 during 2017-2023. The country continues to experience a youth bulge, mainly due to a high fertility rate of 4.2 births per female and a decrease in infant mortality rate. To respond to the youthful population and its attendant challenges, the Government has launched its **Youth Employment Scheme** to create at least 500,000 jobs by 2030.

On SDG16, Sierra Leone is doing a commendable job, securing a UN Security Council Non-Permanent Seat, providing leadership to the G7+, and participating in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building. The Justice sector's continued reforms are fundamental for promoting sustainable peace and development, guaranteeing and protecting citizens' human rights. The Sierra Leone Legal Aid Board continues to provide access to justice for underprivileged persons, embracing the Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism for speedy out-of-court settlement of cases. The constitutional review process has been advanced, a new Government White Paper launched, and the death penalty abolished.

The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion was established in 2021 and has since promoted political parties' dialogue and led reconciliation efforts. Following the 2023 general elections, the commission played a pivotal role in addressing post-election disagreements, mediating peace between major political parties, and supporting the implementation of the tripartite agreement on electoral reforms and management.

The 2022 Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Act is among the critical milestones in gender mainstreaming, followed by dramatic increases in female representation in ministerial cabinet positions to over 30 percent and 28.2 percent in parliament.

The Government considers access to information essential for good governance and a critical enabler of the SDGs. A marked increase in FOI requests and proactive disclosure of information was recorded, with a score of 98% on FOI in the 2022 MCC Global Scorecard. The recent launch of the Digital Access to Information Platform will significantly improve public access to information.

Sierra Leone has scaled up efforts to harness its blue economy potential and developed a Blue Economy Strategy. This is also crucial in advancing the Government's climate resilience, energy transition, and sustainable food systems agenda.

Like many other underdeveloped countries, Sierra Leone faces data gaps and funding constraints in implementing the SDGs, mainly due to multiple global crises since 2020. To address these challenges in the new national development plan, which has an estimated ***financing gap of US\$2.56 billion***, the government will explore innovative financing instruments, including the Sierra Leone INFF, and strengthen development cooperation.