

Key National Message on the SDGs for Sierra Leone

There has been increased appreciation of the SDGs in Sierra Leone. The country recently launched the 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 SDG’s, to strategically guide the delivery of services and ensure that no one is left behind in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone has identified SDG4 (*education*) and SDG16 (*justice*) as accelerators for pursuing its developmental agenda, based on estimations that both goals are central in its transformational trajectory.

Currently, basic, inclusive and quality education stands out as the premier development necessity for Sierra Leone. Since August 2018, the Government has allocated 21 percent of the National Budget to the Free Quality School Education programme, to ensure that all children have access to basic and senior school education. Currently all Pupils, even those in remote communities, have access to textbooks for core subjects, other learning materials and improved services, free of cost. The 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. Since August 2018 enrolment has increased by approximately 90,000 for Primary and 10,000 for Junior Secondary School. Enrolment in Primary Schools for children with disabilities also increased from 26.6 percent in 2017 to 78.7 percent in 2018.

As a global pioneer of SDG16, Sierra Leone hosted the 16+ Forum Annual Showcase and the first technical consultation on SDG16+ for Anglophone African countries in Freetown in November 2018; Co-chairs the Global Task Force on Justice, which launched the “Justice for All” Report in The Hague in April 2019; Chairs and Co-Chairs the g7+ and International Dialogue on Peace-building and State-building, respectively, to promote SDG16 in fragile and conflict-affected countries; and is setting up a Peace and National Cohesion Commission.

The capacity of Legal Aid Board has been enhanced to provide legal services to low-income Sierra Leoneans. The Board provides legal advice and representation, especially for the rural and disadvantaged citizens, including those in pre-trial detention and prisons. The number of less privileged persons with access to justice has increased substantially from 25,000 in 2015, to more than 215,000 to date. Issues covered range from child protection and land disputes, to criminal cases, domestic violence, rape, defilement and juvenile offences.

Goal 8 on *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 program has also facilitated the domestication of International Conventions on the Elimination of Child Labour.

For SDG10 on *inequality*, Government is funding STEM education for girls and supported the launch of the First Lady's "**Hands-Off Our Girls**" campaign to end child marriage and reduce teenage pregnancy.

For SDG13 on *climate change*, Sierra Leone is enforcing environmental protection compliance, through monitoring and other strategies, such as the integration of climate change messages into school and university curricula.

On the implementation of SDGs at sub-national level, Sierra Leone has scaled up the "People's Planning Process" model by putting chiefdom and village level planning at the centre of the formulation and implementation of all development plans.

On partnership for the goals (SDG17), financing for development is significant for effective development cooperation. Sierra Leone recently undertook a Development Finance Assessment (DFA) that highlights potential public and private financing for the SDGs and the MTNDP. The DFA exercise will pave the way for the development of an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF).

Challenges remain in delivering the SDGs in the country, especially limited fiscal space with domestic tax-revenue-to-GDP ratio standing at less than 15 percent. However, it is encouraging to note that Government remains relentless in pursuing domestic revenue mobilization and rationalization of expenditure. Efficient public financial management is in force, amongst a range of other structural interventions.

Sierra Leone's participation in the 2016 VNR process communicated the country's determination and commitment to minimize poverty, reduce inequality and increase prosperity for all Sierra Leoneans. Sierra Leone continues to work towards this and renews its obligations at this year's VNR.