

Labour Market Profile Sierra Leone – 2023/2024



This profile provides a comprehensive overview of the labour market's structure, development, and challenges.

Danish Trade Union
Development Agency



ULANDSSEKRETARIATET – DTDA
DANISH TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

PREFACE

The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) is the development organisation of the Danish trade union movement. This agency was established in 1987 by the two largest Danish confederations – the Danish Federation of Trade Unions (Danish acronym: LO) and the Danish Confederation of Professionals (Danish acronym: FTF). These confederations merged to become the Danish Trade Union Confederation (Danish acronym: FH) in January 2019, and DTDA replaced LO/FTF Council as the name of the development agency.

The work of DTDA is in line with the global Decent Work Agenda (DWA) based on its pillars: creating decent jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, and promoting social dialogue. The overall development objective is to eradicate poverty and support the development of just and democratic societies by promoting the DWA.

DTDA collaborates with trade union organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The programmes' immediate objective is to assist the partner organisations in becoming change agents in their own national and regional labour market context, capable of achieving tangible improvements in the national DWA conditions and the labour-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Labour Market Profile (LMP) format provides a comprehensive overview of the labour market's structure, development, and challenges. In the framework of DWA and SDGs, LMPs follow several central indicators addressing labour market development aspects, especially the unionism evolution, social dialogue and bi-/tri-partite mechanisms, policy development, and legal reforms status vis-à-vis ILO conventions and labour standards, among others.

Primary sources of data and information for LMPs are:

- As part of programme implementation and monitoring, national partner organisations provide annual narrative progress reports, including information on labour market developments. Furthermore, specific data and information relating to central indicators are collected using a unique data collection tool.
- National statistical institutions and international databanks are used as a source for the collection of general (statistical) data and information, such as ILOSTAT and NATLEX, World Bank Open Data, ITUC Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, the U.S. Department of State, and other internationally recognised labour-related global indexes.
- Academia and media sources (e.g., Labour Start, national news, among others) are used in research on labour market issues.

The profile is regularly updated; the current version covers 2023 to 2024. Labour Market Profiles for more than 20 countries are available on DTDA's website:

<https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/>.

DTDA prepared the Labour Market Profile in close collaboration with the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC). If any comments arise to the profile, please contact Mr. Kasper Andersen (kan@dtdda.dk) from DTDA.

The front-page photo illustrates business activities in Freetown and photographed by Koefoed.

Address:

Ulandssekretariatet
Islands Brygge 32D
DK-2300 Copenhagen S
Denmark

Telefon: +45 33 73 74 40

<http://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sierra Leone's economic growth rebounded after the Covid-19 pandemic but escalating inflation hollow-out workers' incomes losing the fight against poverty. Labour productivity did not recover after the Ebola outbreak in 2014-2015. Although the government began to integrate climate change adaptation measures, it is challenging to implement just transition initiatives due to the widespread informal economy.

New labour-related laws emerged in 2022 and 2023 to bring the legal framework up to date, supported by tripartite social dialogue, not to mention the landmark law on women's rights. The high child labour rate at 25% and gender gaps in labour indicators have signalled the weaknesses of applying the labour regulations and policies in practice. Regional trade agreements' labour clauses have not provided pro-labour-condition effects. The country scores better than the Western African average at national compliance with labour rights.

Although social dialogue and central tripartite institutions are functioning, including national forums to address the status of informal workers, systematic violations of workers' rights are registered. Applying collective bargaining agreements had a high coverage among employees at around 58% in 2022, representing a small group of the total employment dominated by informal micro or small enterprises. The formal mediation and arbitration structures side-line informal workers. The use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is increasing to settle disputes.

Due to economic ruptures, the trade union movement lost many members in 2020-2022, mainly from organised workers from the informal economy. The trade union density of employment remains higher than in the neighbouring countries, reaching around 13% in 2022. Employers raised concerns about cost-of-living, high inflation, climate events, and digital inequality.

The fast-growing young population with rising life expectancy pushes mounting pressure on urbanisation, decent job creation, education, and social protection systems. The country struggles with a "brain drain" emigration of skilled workers, and the inflow of personnel remittances accelerated at the beginning of the 2020s, even superseding foreign direct investments. The official low unemployment rate of 3.2% is blindsided by high underutilisation and subsistence farming's "disguised unemployment." The NEET rate (those not in employment, education, or training) was 9%, remarkably lower than the neighbouring countries linked to the meagre social protection coverage.

Although the education system has brought the youth literacy rate on the rise, many still need to reach the expected education levels. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a low public interest; many courses are not in sync with the labour market's demands, and only 2% hold official certificates. A recent new TVET policy aims to improve the system. Other initiatives intend to tackle the Fourth Industrial Revolution, but the information and communication technology (ICT) status lags behind other African countries.

Sierra Leone developed a national system of social protection schemes, with the involvement of social partners in its governance, but they still deal with limited implementation and low coverage. For example, in 2020, 4.4% of persons were covered by at least one social protection benefit, and 7.7% received a retirement pension. The National Health Insurance Scheme was launched in 2018 to ensure universal health coverage, and Universal Health Service coverage is on the rise. Sierra Leonean unemployed lack access to regular unemployment benefits via insurance schemes, leading to the evolution of the informal economy. Although maternity leave improved to 14 weeks in 2023, data are scarce on its coverage; paternity leave is voided from the regulations.

Status of key labour market indicators in the framework of the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) in Sierra Leone

Creating decent jobs	
Policy reforms addressing creation of decent employment	Sierra Leone has a broad labour-related policy framework. The latest improvements concern: i) the National Migration Policy of 2022 that sets a comprehensive basis to manage migration of Sierra Leoneans; ii) the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy from 2021, linked to the Medium-Term National Development Plan; iii) the revised National Youth Policy (2020–2025) outlines the government's commitments, principles, and concrete actions; iv) the Medium-term National Development Plan for 2019–2023 aims to expand social assistance; v) a comprehensive five-year National Action Plan for Health Security for 2018-2022 in compliance with International Health Regulations.
ILO standard setting on improvement of the status of workers from the informal economy	There is no functioning specific Tripartite National Informal Economy Forum. Instead, other national forums address the status of informal economy workers, including the Traders National Council is a National Forum. Policies focus on informal economy are adopted.
Guaranteeing rights at work	
Growth in partner trade union members (SLLC) (%)	-27% from 2019 to 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of high inflation in consumer prices.
Violations of trade union rights	Ranked 4 out of 5+ (5 is worst) on the Global Rights Index 2022. *
New labour legislation is improved according to ILO's standards	The Employment Act, the Work Permit Act, and the Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers' Act were approved in March 2023. The Arbitration Act of 2022 provides a modern arbitration framework, including third-party funding and provides a legislative basis for establishing the International Arbitration Centre. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022 sets a minimum 30% quota for women in leadership and enshrines equal pay, women's access to finance, 14-week maternity leave, and equal access to training. Sierra Leone ratified four ILO conventions in 2021 and three in 2022.
Partner organisations with minimum 30% women representation in decision-making bodies	Women represent around 13% of leadership positions and decision-making bodies in Sierra Leone Labour Congress, and youth below 30 years old in these positions are scarce, below 10%.
Extending social protection	
Health social security coverage as % of total population	Reached around 3.0% of population age 15-49 in practice in 2019.
Workers from the informal economy have access to national social security schemes	About 0.2% are covered by national security schemes.
Promoting social dialogue	
Trade union density of total employment (%)	About 13% of total employment in 2022.
Cooperation in labour-employer relations	Ranking 125 out of 140 countries (1 is best). **
Number of Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs)	41 CBAs were registered in 2022; six were signed during 2020-2022.
The ratio of Collective Bargaining Agreements coverage to unionised employees	Approximately, 187,000 employees were covered, equating about 58% of total employees in 2022; one was covering 1,000 informal workers from the Motor Drivers & General Transport Workers Union.
Bi-/tri- partite agreements concluded	SLLC and SLEF crafted a bipartite Memorandum of Understanding in April 2020, pledged to work together, and draw the government's attention to the urgent measures to curb the crisis challenging the business environment and jobs. Sierra Leone officially appointed focal points for the promotion of the Tripartite Declaration of Principles on Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) and the application of its principles.

* Listed as "systematic violations of rights:" the government and/or companies are engaged in serious efforts to crush the voice of workers putting fundamental rights under threat.

** Based on survey data for employers' view.

Source: DTDA's Data collection tool: Sierra Leone, 2021; SLLC; ITUC's Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019; Global Rights Index, 2022; World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report 2018, 8th pillar: Labour market efficiency.

COUNTRY MAP



Source: Nations Online Project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	i
Executive Summary	ii
Status of key labour market indicators in the framework of the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) in Sierra Leone	iii
Country Map	iv
Economic Performance	1
Just Transition.....	2
Special Export Zones.....	3
National Labour Legislation	3
Observations on labour legislation	4
Ratified ILO Conventions	5
Trade Agreements	5
Social Partners	6
Government.....	6
Trade Unions	7
Employers’ Organisations.....	8
Social Dialogue	9
Central Tripartite Institutions.....	10
Labour Dispute Settlement System	10
Trade Union Rights Violations	11
Working Conditions	11
Workforce	12
Unemployment and underemployment.....	14
Migration	15
Informal Economy	16
Child Labour.....	17
Gender.....	19
Youth	20
Education	21
Vocational training	23
Social Protection	25
Appendix: Additional Data	29
Table 13: Status of key Sustainable Development Goals in labour market related issues in Sierra Leone	29
Table 14: Status of SLLC’s trade union declared members, 2022	30
Table 15: List of approved labour-related legislation in Sierra Leone, 2014-2023	31
Table 16: Ratified ILO Conventions in Sierra Leone, December 2022	32
Table 17: Ease of Doing Business in Sierra Leone, 2020	33
Table 18: Sierra Leone’s current Education Policies, 2021-2025.....	33
Table 19: Sierra Leone’s key economic data, projections, 2019-2024.....	33
Reference	34

Tables

Table 1: Level of national compliance with labour rights among Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries, 2020	5
Table 2: Status of trade unions in Sierra Leone, 2022	7
Table 3: Labour market efficiency in Sierra Leone, 2018	8
Table 4: Status of monthly salary and minimum wage in Sierra Leone.....	12
Table 5: Key labour market indicators in Sierra Leone, 2018.....	13
Table 6: Status of unemployment in Sierra Leone, 2018	14
Table 7: Status of Sierra Leone’s informal economy	17
Table 8: Status of child labour in Sierra Leone and sub-Saharan Africa	18
Table 9: Key indicators for labour gender gaps in Sierra Leone, 2018	20
Table 10: Employment by education in Sierra Leone, %, 2018	22
Table 11: Proportion of population covered by social protection in Sierra Leone, %, 2020	26
Table 12: Status of expenditure on health and social contribution in Kenya and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), 2010-2019 average.....	27
Table 13: Status of key Sustainable Development Goals in labour market related issues in Sierra Leone	29
Table 14: Status of SLLC’s trade union declared members, 2022	30
Table 15: List of approved labour-related legislation in Sierra Leone, 2014-2023	31
Table 16: Ratified ILO Conventions in Sierra Leone, December 2022	32
Table 17: Ease of Doing Business in Sierra Leone, 2020	33
Table 18: Sierra Leone’s current Education Policies, 2021-2025.....	33
Table 19: Sierra Leone’s key economic data, projections, 2019-2024.....	33

Figures

Figure 1: Gross domestic product, inflation, and current account balance trends in Sierra Leone, %, 2010-2024	1
Figure 2: Aggregate sectoral economic changes, value added in Sierra Leone and sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income), % of GDP, 2010-2021	2
Figure 3: Sierra Leone’s nominal minimum wage per month, Leone (old) and US\$, 1974-2022	12
Figure 4: Population pyramid based on Age-Sex structure of the population in Sierra Leone, 2022	13
Figure 5: Output per worker trend for Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries, 2010-2021	14
Figure 6: Sierra Leone’s net migration and personal remittances trends, 2010-2021	16
Figure 7: Number of Sierra Leone refugees and refugees in host country, 2010-2021	16
Figure 8: Status of women participation in top management and ownership in Sierra Leone and regional averages, %, 2017	20
Figure 9: Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training in Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries, %, latest data	21
Figure 10: Net enrolment at the primary and secondary school levels, Sierra Leone and sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income) (SSA), %, 2010-2019	23
Figure 11: Individuals using the Internet (% of population) and mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) in Sierra Leone and sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income), 2000-2020	25
Figure 12: Out-of-pocket expenditure on health in Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries, % of current health expenditure, 2000-2019	27

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

Sierra Leone's government has been keen to rebrand it from its war-torn image to a country ready for investment. They launched the Medium-term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2019–2023, founded on a strong political commitment to deliver development results to improve the population's welfare. The plan aims to achieve middle-income status by 2039 through sustainable, inclusive growth that leaves no one behind. For the current five years, the Free Quality School Education Programme has been the government's flagship programme to provide a solid base to enhance human capital development and to facilitate the transformation of the economy (see more in the Education section). MTNDP received broad commendations, principally for its people-focused strategy.

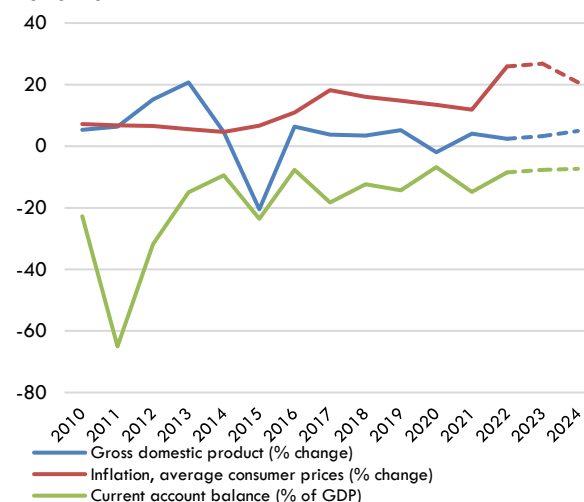
The economy depends on mineral exploitation (iron ore, diamonds, and rutile), and most products are exported illegally. Previous development plans neglected large-scale agriculture.

The economic growth track record reflects its vulnerable situation. For instance, the skyrocketing growth at the beginning of the 2010s plummeted due to the 2014-2015 Western Africa Ebola Crisis and falling global commodities prices. It rebounded afterwards until the global Covid-19 pandemic affected the economy, disrupting international trade and transport, tourism, and urban services activity. Although the agricultural sector stood resilient, helping to tame the GDP downturn, the pandemic led to a fall of 4.0% in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita from 2019 to 2020. In 2021, the economy recovered, costing national savings and a government expenditure and debt hike. The Russian war against Ukraine in 2022 has also negatively affected business in Sierra Leone, manifesting in high costs of imports like fuel, wheat, and fertiliser. GDP growth was projected at 3.3% in 2023, with contributions from mining and agriculture, a partial recovery in tourism, and still relatively small manufacturing.

Consumer price inflation has been alarming since the end of the 2010s. It even shot up at the

beginning of the 2020s, which has thwarted the workers' income purchasing power (see more details in Figure 1 and Appendix Table 19).

Figure 1: Gross domestic product, inflation, and current account balance trends in Sierra Leone, %, 2010-2024



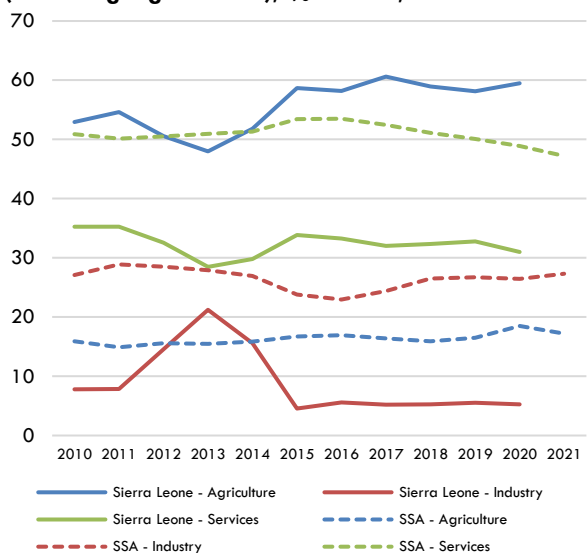
Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2022.

The economy has been haunted by high youth unemployment, corruption, and weak governance. International organisations like the World Bank argue that the country continues to face the daunting challenge of enhancing transparency in managing its natural resources and creating fiscal space for development. Difficulties of poor infrastructure and widespread rural and urban impoverishment persist despite remarkable strides and reforms.¹

Agriculture is the economic backbone at around 43% of GDP, with a remarkably high value-added compared to the regional average benefiting rich soil and plentiful rainfall. Both the industry and service sector value added need to be developed, significantly superseded by the regional averages, not to mention a stalled development (Figure 2). Notably, the industry sector was hit by the Ebola crisis. It triggered deleterious effects on households and the labour market, including an upsurge in unemployment, lost incomes, lower schooling, and less food consumption.² By the same token, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the fiscal consolidation momentum, reflected in mounting government expenditure and debt to provide

support through fiscal stimulus, including social transfers (Appendix Table 19).

Figure 2: Aggregate sectoral economic changes, value added in Sierra Leone and sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income), % of GDP, 2010-2021



Note: Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs.

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Inequality in the distribution of Sierra Leones' family income dropped from 40 in 2003 to 34 in 2011 but rebounded to 36 in 2018 (Gini-index 0 represents perfect equality, while 100 represents high inequality). It stood in line with Liberia (35) but higher than Guinea (30).³ The Human Development Index (HDI) ranked Sierra Leone as low human development, at 181 of 191 countries (1 is best) in 2021, with one step ahead in the HDI ranking from 2015 to 2021.

Until the onset of the Covid-19 crisis in 2020, the country's economy achieved some pro-poor economic growth. The poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines was 57% of the population in 2018. The poverty reduction has not benefitted from real minimum wage hikes in the 2010s but is more due to an upsurge in remittances and improved social protection coverage. The economic rupture in 2020, including drops in the real minimum wage, negatively affected poverty reduction, linked with food insecurities and a lack of health supplies and services (see more in the Working Conditions and Social Protection sections).

The informal economy is widespread, and the investment environment is marred by endemic corruption. On the other hand, Sierra Leone benefitted from a high inflow of foreign direct investments at 11% of GDP on average in the 2010s, significantly higher than sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income) at 2.2%. However, the rate fell to 3.3% in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic impact. The country ranked low on the Doing Business Index at 163 out of 190 countries (1st is best) in 2020. Out of the ten indicators, the country scores low on dealing with construction permits (181), getting electricity (181), and registering property (169). The best rankings are starting a business (58) and paying taxes (93) (see more details in Appendix Table 17).

Just Transition

Sierra Leone is recognised as highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, ranked 155 out of 181 countries in the latest 2019 ND-GAIN Index. It has a great need for investment and innovations to improve readiness and a great urgency for action. Sierra Leone is the 19th most vulnerable country and the 144th most ready country.⁴

The government has begun to integrate climate change adaptation measures into national development processes, strategies, climate-smart policies, programmes, and budgeting. It includes the implementation of the 2021 National Adaption Plan (ADP) that covers five priority sectors: i) agriculture and food security; ii) water resources and energy; iii) coastal zone management; iv) environment, disaster management, and two identified cross-cutting priorities of gender equality and social inclusion; v) hard and soft infrastructure.⁵

Just transition to a climate-resilient economy remains challenged due to the widespread informal economy and low level of human development. The country approved the first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in November 2016. It presented the updated version of the National Adaptation Plan (iNAP) in 2021 that outlined its adaptation targets and identified climate-vulnerable sectors to guide climate actions. It

envisioning achieving mitigation goals of reducing CO₂ emissions by 5% before 2025, 10% before 2030, and 25% before 2050, and sets adaptation goals of reducing vulnerability by half by 2030. The mining sector, which contributes an important portion to fiscal and export revenues, has been considered with a need to adapt proactively to climate change.⁶

Special Export Zones

Sierra Leone is a latecomer to Special Export Zones (SEZs) development. In 2005, investors, especially Chinese private enterprises, initiated their interest in starting SEZs.⁷ In 2010, the first law was promulgated regarding SEZs. In 2011, First Step, an agency, established an Economic Opportunity Zone, also known as SEZ. This zone aims to provide potential private investors with facilities with guaranteed access to the logistic support and the utilities necessary to operate their business. It is also an element of a programme to transform the manufacturing sector to enhance competitiveness and industrialisation for job creation.⁸

The government developed a Special Economic Zone policy in 2013. It sets a roadmap for the development and management of SEZs. It outlines potential partnership arrangements and the sectors to which FTZ can be applied. In 2022, the Ministry of Trade and Industry initiated developing an industrial policy in which the re-establishment of SEZ is a key feature to attract and maintain foreign direct investments into the country.

SEZs still need a more stable governance structure in Sierra Leone adapting to the evolving context of global trade and investments, not to mention aligning with the emerging African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) strategy to better contribute to regional integration and stimulate trade. Under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol, exports by EPZ enterprises to other ECOWAS countries are not eligible for preferential treatment. They are subject to customs duties at applicable rates.⁹

In the SEZ, all investors can take accelerated depreciation of 40% for plants and equipment for the first year and 10-15% for most other items. It also offers a loss carry-forward of 50% of the previous tax year's taxable income.¹⁰ To encourage investment in timber and rice, a 10-year corporate tax holiday is granted to qualified investors. Export licenses are not required for locally produced goods. The government has committed to allowing investors in the SEZ to use international arbitration forums to resolve disputes that may occur between them and the government.

The SEZ encounters multi-activities at Newton near the main port of Freetown. The main activities are agricultural goods, apparel manufacturing, mineral resources, marine resources, and export processing. There needs to be data/information available on the number of workers in the SEZ and their work conditions.

The Coffee Mills trains farmers' agronomic practices within the EPZ and has over 4,000 registered farmers who are UTZ and Organic certified 2016.¹¹

NATIONAL LABOUR LEGISLATION

Several central laws regulating the labour market date back to the 1960s, a year before independence from the United Kingdom. Taking into consideration the evolving labour market, including regional integration, it places a significant part of the labour-related legal framework outdated and not in sync with modern employment rights standards or unclear, such as the laws on hiring and dismissal.¹²

Reform of labour-related laws was initiated back in 1996, but it stalled. It was restarted several times afterwards. On the positive side, tripartite social dialogue has finally completed the review of six national labour laws passing the Law Officers' Department and submitted to Cabinet for approval. It led to, so far, three enacted laws in March 2023: the Employment Act 2023, the Work Permit Act 2023, and the Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers' Act 2023. The two latter acts will provide the legal framework and guidance for non-citizens

working in Sierra Leone and Sierra Leoneans being employed to work outside the country (see more in the Migration sub-section). Three other laws are still in pending at legal drafting stage. Another important act is the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2023 that is considered an important advancement for gender equality in Sierra Leone. Besides, the country ratified ten ILO conventions in 2021 and 2022 (see more in the Ratified ILO Conventions sub-section).

The status of central labour legislation is summarised below.

Constitution

The constitution of Sierra Leone of 1991 protects the freedom of association, health and safety at work, fair working conditions, equal pay for equal work and fair compensation.

Reforming the fundamental framework during the 2010s was stalled by political hurdles. Still, the government's long-awaited White Paper reviewing the 1991 constitution was launched in January 2022. It is considered to bring significant changes to the country's governance structure.

Employment Act

Sierra Leone's employment laws over the years were outdated and not in line with the international minimum standards. The new Employment Act was scrutinised and debated via social dialogue. Finally, lawmakers unanimously moved for its enactment on March 7, 2023. It aims to consolidate and improve the law relating to labour and employment, to provide for the promotion of equal opportunity and elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation and to provide for other related matters. In addition, it repeals and consolidates other labour employment laws, including the Employer and the Employee's Act of 1962, the Industrial Relation Act of 1974, the Trade Unions Act of 1960, and the Regulations of Wages and Industrial Relations Act of 1971.

Some improvements deal with a database of workers; address the issue of working contracts; leave entitlement including paternity and maternity; new ways to manage labour dispute resolution.

Insurance Act

The Insurance Act of 2016 sets the Sierra Leone Insurance Commission to regulate the business of insurance in Sierra Leone; for example, employer's liability insurance (i.e., an employer who employs more than five persons shall take out employer's liability insurance in respect of the employees).

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2023 enshrines improvements to women's access to finance, employment opportunities, equal pay, maternity leave, and—critically—political representation. The act establishes a 30% quota for women's participation in government for both appointed positions, including cabinet, ministry, and ambassador roles, and elected positions, such as parliamentary and local council seats. Currently, women represent just 12% of parliamentary seats and four of 32 cabinet positions. The GEWE quota will go into effect ahead of Sierra Leone's upcoming presidential, parliamentary, mayoral, and local council elections on June 23, 2023.

Observations on labour legislation

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has several observations of legislation in comparison to the international standards on the right to organise, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike, among others:¹³

- The right to freedom of association is recognised by law but strictly regulated.
- Prior authorisation or approval by authorities is required to establish a union.
- Power to refuse official registration on arbitrary, unjustified, or ambiguous grounds.
- Absence of recourse to an independent body in the event of administrative refusal to register a trade union.
- Sanctions imposed for organising or joining an organisation not officially recognised.
- Excessively long prior notice/cooling-off period.
- Restrictions concerning the objective of a strike (e.g., industrial disputes, economic and social

issues, political, sympathy and solidarity reasons).

- Absence of specific protection for workers involved in lawful strike actions (e.g., against dismissal).
- Discretionary determination or an excessively long list of “essential services” in which the right to strike is prohibited or severely restricted.
- Absence of compensatory guarantees for categories of workers deprived of the right to strike.

On the positive side, reports argue that the government generally respected freedom of association and protected the right to bargain collectively. There were no reports of labour union members being arrested during 2021 for participating in industrial actions or other union activities.¹⁴

It is worth mentioning that the informal economy is widespread in Sierra Leone, visualising that most employed are not regulated by the labour-related legal framework in practice, often due to a lack of awareness or incentives.

Ratified ILO Conventions

International Labour Organization’s (ILO) conventions enumerate international principles and rights at work: Sierra Leone ratified 45 conventions. The country approved all Fundamental Conventions, including two in 2021; two out of four Governance Conventions; 33 of 176 Technical Conventions, of which ten are Up-To-Date and actively promoted, including four were ratified in 2021 and three in 2022, which were supported by the trade union movement in the negotiations leading to the country’s ratification (see details in Appendix Table 16).

The independent ILO body, known as the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), listed an exhaustive numerous list of observations and direct requests for conventions in reset years; for example, CEACR focused on 18 conventions in 2021. In 2019, CEACR had observations dealing with the Freedom of

Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C087) concerning with to amend the Regulations of Wages and Industrial Relations Act to recognise the right to establish and join unions for all workers, including public officers and persons above the level of supervisor or manager. Further, they awaited the review of the labour laws, including on matters of freedom of association; the committee requests the government to provide further information on developments in law and practice and encourages the government, in consultation with the social partners, to ensure full compliance with the convention. The same year, the committee also had other observations concerning the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (C098), regarding the need to adopt specific provisions accompanied by sufficiently effective and dissuasive sanctions for the protection of workers and workers’ organisations against acts of anti-union discrimination and acts of interference.

The Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 8.8.2 measures compliance with fundamental labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining (FACB)). Based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, Sierra Leone ranked 0.75 in 2020 (0 out of 10; 0 is best). Compared to neighbouring countries, Sierra Leone’s ranking is significantly better than the Western Africa average (Table 1).

Table 1: Level of national compliance with labour rights among Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries, 2020

Country	Value
Western Africa	1.95
Guinea	0.67
Liberia	0.93
Sierra Leone	0.75

Note: The value has a range from 0 to 10, with 0 being the best possible score (indicating higher levels of compliance with FACB rights) and 10 the worst (indicating lower levels of compliance with FACB rights based on ILO textual sources and national legislation).

Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Trade Agreements

At the regional level, Sierra Leone is a founding member of the African Union (AU), the successor to

the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The AU aims to become an economic and political union in Africa. African economies further initiated an ambitious regional integration programme in the form of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), targeting to promote trade liberalisation in Africa. Sierra Leone ratified the agreement in 2018. The Tunis declaration from September 2022 by trade unions from 39 African countries stresses the inclusion of labour provisions in the AfCFTA agreement to ensure compliance with international labour standards and the decent work agenda.¹⁵

The country is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Its treaty contains labour provisions, including i) cooperation regarding harmonisation of labour law and social security; ii) promotion of women's, youth and professional organisations; iii) consultation of the social partners.¹⁶ The ECOWAS protocols establish the free movement of persons. In 2019, Sierra Leone became the first African country to announce visa-free entry for ECOWAS and a US\$25 fee for Africa Union citizens.¹⁷ The country is also a signatory to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the African Union Democracy and Good Governance Protocol, as well as a Mano River Union (MRU) member.

Studies argue that the measures of labour conditions (i.e., mean real monthly earnings, mean weekly work hours per employee, fatal occupational injury rate, and the number of the ILO's Fundamental Conventions ratified) find no evidence for possible pro-labour-condition effects of Regional Trade Agreements (RTA) labour clauses overall.¹⁸ It is further supported by the previously mentioned limited new labour-related law approvals in recent years in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone is eligible for the European Union's (EU) "Everything But Arms Initiative", which provides Least Developed Countries (LDCs) with non-reciprocal, duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market. Sierra Leone is participating in negotiating an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU through the ECOWAS group. The EU is among Sierra Leone's major trading partners.

Since 2002, Sierra Leone has benefitted from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a Generalised System of Preferences (GPS) in the United States. It qualifies for textile and apparel benefits. Sierra Leone also has signed bilateral agreements with Angola, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa. These agreements are primarily on trade cooperation matters.¹⁹

SOCIAL PARTNERS

Social partners are central to promoting the realisation of core labour rights and social justice for workers by protecting freedom of association and collective bargaining in bi- and tripartite functions. These partners usually represent government institutions, trade unions, and employers' organisations.

Government

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) develops and administers labour and social security regulations and policies. It further promotes cordial industrial relations among operatives in the labour market, ensures Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) in workplaces, and provide Social Security. The ministry carries out activities under several headings:

- Employment promotion.
- Labour inspection.
- Employment and labour market policies.
- Labour market information.
- Workers' compensation.
- Support the operations of the industrial court.
- Elimination of child labour.
- Occupational Safety and Health Inspection.
- Human resource development for middle-level manpower.
- Strengthening capacity for labour administration.
- Social protection and safety net for the vulnerable.
- Labour migration management.

Several other ministries are involved in labour-related issues, including the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender & Children's Affairs, the Minister of Works, Housing and Infrastructural Development, the Ministry of Trade & Industry, the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security & Forestry, the Ministry of Youth Affairs, and the Ministry of Political and Public Affairs.

Trade Unions

Sierra Leone has one of the oldest trade union movements in Africa. Their earliest strikes were recorded in 1874.²⁰ The trade union movement had around 150,000 declared members before the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991–2002). As an aftermath of the conflict, the number of members plummeted; approximately 42,000 members were registered by Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) in 2007. Based on an innovative and effective campaigning strategy, the number of members rebounded and increased dramatically. An upsurge of organised workers from the informal economy drove it.

At the beginning of the 2010s, the total trade union membership rate peaked. The growth was negatively affected in 2014/2015 as an impact of the regional outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).²¹ Several workplaces were affected, causing the fold-up or scaling-down of enterprise operations and the segment of formal employees to plunge.²² It was caught in a downturn in the membership rate of -6% from 2014 to 2016, primarily from organised workers from the informal economy. In contrast, the registration of organised workers in the formal sector rose by 6%. Since 2016, enrolment in trade unions has increased, including among organised informal workers. But, then again, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic led to many places either temporarily or permanently closed, which caused job losses or pay cuts, especially in the private sector, not to mention the accelerated consumer price inflation negatively affecting the workers' income purchasing power and enterprises operations. Consequently, it has a

cost decreases in union membership of about 27% from 2019 to 2022, mainly organised workers from the informal economy, reaching nearly 355,000 organised workers (Table 2 and Appendix Table 14).

Table 2: Status of trade unions in Sierra Leone, 2022

Indicators	Values
Number of trade unions	34
Total members	354,747
Formal sector workers	72,408
Informal economy workers	282,339

Source: Sierra Leone Labour Congress.

The trade union density of employees (deducting organised workers from the informal economy) reached about 23% in 2022. It is worth mentioning that the employees' share covered approximately 20% of the total employment. Bringing organised workers from the information economy into the equation, the trade union density of employment reached 13%, which was significantly higher than in other Western African countries, e.g., 6.0% in Ghana, 5.2% in Niger, and 11% in Benin.²³ In comparison, OECD countries have an average trade union density of 16%, which equals two percentage point gap compared to Sierra Leone's trade union density.

The government respects workers' freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. However, the trade union movement has argued that they continue to be political interference in the administration of trade unions by government officials supporting illegal change of leadership in trade unions.²⁴ By the same token, there is an increase in the practice of casual work and temporary employment, stymieing the unionism practices.

There are differences in the membership structure among formal and informal organised workers, reflected at different paying scales: dues per person/month were US\$0.09 for formal workers while it was down to US\$0.01 for organised workers from the informal economy.

There is one central trade union centre, and its status is outlined below.

Sierra Leone Labour Congress

The Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) was founded in 1976. It is the central umbrella organisation of trade unions in Sierra Leone. It affiliates 34 unions, of which 12 associate workers from the informal economy. Women represent around 13% of leadership positions and decision-making bodies in the organisation, and youth below 30 years old in these positions are scarce, below 10%. SLLC is affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). SLLC has been appointed to sit in several tripartite institutions, including the National Social Security and Insurance Trust Board and the Electricity and Water Resources Commission.

Appendix Table 14 shows details on SLLC's affiliated organisations' status. The largest trade union with members from the formal sector is the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU), with about 36,000 members. SLTU's members account for approximately half of the organised workers from the formal sector. It is difficult to give the exact membership number for SLTU since teachers often join and leave the profession.²⁵ Besides, 'ghost teachers' in the education system, who are registered as working in schools and getting salaries despite never attending school. The unions with organised workers from the informal economy range from the Sierra Leone Artisanal Fishermen Union of 235,000 to the Indigenous Photographers Union of 500.

SLLC faces several challenges. Inadequate organisational capacity is a central issue related to limited facilities such as computers and cars and insufficient national communication infrastructure. Given the diverging dues scales, it is challenging to represent both formal and informal workers within the union. SLLC officials are concerned about the unfair use of legal-bureaucratic measures by the state to control the labour movement, not to mention collective bargaining unit lacks resources.²⁶ By the same token, there is an increase in the practice of casual work and temporary employment, stymieing the unionism practices.

Some of the central topics that SLLC currently prioritises deal with migration issues, the transition from informal to formal via social protection, wages, and collective bargaining. Promotes Just Transition, Green Jobs, and environmental protection are other themes emerging in the agenda.

Employers' Organisations

Employers were estimated to make up around 2.7% of the total employment in Sierra Leone in 2020, similarly with the Western Africa average at 2.6%. The Global Competitiveness Index provides the employers' view on several aspects, including pillar eight, dealing with the labour market's efficiency. Information is based on surveys among employers and other statistical data. The latest available measurements from 2018 show that Sierra Leone's employers considered the labour market low effective, ranking the country as 132 out of 140 countries (1 is the best). Out of the 12 labour market efficiency indicators, the highest scorings are in the labour tax rate (37), ease of hiring foreign labour (65), and active labour policies (77). Sierra Leone's lowest score is the redundancy costs (137), internal labour mobility (128), and cooperation in labour-employer relations (125), indicating a weak social dialogue in Sierra Leone (see Table 3).

Table 3: Labour market efficiency in Sierra Leone, 2018

Labour market indicators	Rank *
Labour market efficiency	132
Redundancy costs (weeks of salary)	137
Hiring and firing practice	100
Cooperation in labour-employer relations	125
Flexibility of wage determination	113
Active labour policies	77
Workers' rights	80
Ease of hiring foreign labour	65
Internal labour mobility	128
Reliance on professional management	118
Pay and productivity	116
Ratio of wage and salaried female workers to male workers	121
Labour tax rate	37

* Rank from 1 to 140 (1 is best).

Source: World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2018*, 8th pillar: Labour market efficiency.

Based on the list of 35 risks listed by the Global Risks Report 2023 identified by the Executive Opinion Survey, the five risks that are the most likely to pose the biggest threat to Sierra Leone in the next two years are cost-of-living, rapid or sustained inflation, debt, natural disaster and extreme weather events, state collapse, employment and livelihood, and digital inequality crises.²⁷

The status of the leading employers' organisation is summarised below.

Sierra Leone Employers Federation

The Sierra Leone Employers Federation (SLEF) was established in 1966. It is a non-profit business association and the leading employers' organisation in Sierra Leone. Data are scarce, but SLEF appears to have a relatively small membership base. It has collaborated with ILO for institutional development, SLLC, and the National HIV and AIDS Secretariat on other occasions. In addition, SLEF has a representation on the National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT) board. A pending issue concerns that most employers do not pay NASSIT contributions to their employees, a violation of the NASSIT Act from 2001. SLEF aided and guided employers in discharging their obligations set in the NASSIT Act. Further, they support an engagement to create awareness and to brief employers and employees on their responsibilities as propagated in the social protection regulations in progress.

In 2022, SLEF stated that many members needed to pay their annual subscription of 2,000 new Leones (US\$150) in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Sierra Leone has ratified the Tripartite Consultation Convention (C144) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (C098) (revisit Appendix Table 16). The Regulation of Wages and Industrial Relations Act from 1971 provides for collective bargaining that must take place in trade group negotiating councils, each of which had an

equal number of employer and worker representatives. As previously mentioned, the law has flaws in collective bargaining to international standards.

In recent years, some of the central issues followed in the social dialogue deal with the wage bill reform measures. Currently, they are working on establishing a Wages and Salaries Commission to tackle the disparities in pay and remuneration among the various public sector payroll categories. Harmonisation of multiple pension laws is also in progress to create opportunities for specific types of pensioners to receive several pension payments funded from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (see more in the Social Protection section). It includes the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), the MLSS, SLEF and SLLC have ended a 'people-centric' and comprehensive regional consultative workshop to develop the National Social Protection bill in September 2022.²⁸

Tripartite meetings were held dealing with how the labour-related social partners could collaborate in minimising the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy, employers, workers, and society at large. For instance, SLLC and SLEF crafted a bipartite Memorandum of Understanding in April 2020, pledged to work together, and draw the government's attention to the urgent measures to curb the crisis challenging the business environment and jobs. They called on the government to set up a national-level committee to deal with the economic and social fallout, as well as called for the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.²⁹

Reports found that the government generally protected the right to bargain collectively. Collective bargaining is widespread in the formal sector, and most enterprises are covered by collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) on wages and working conditions.³⁰

In 2022, 41 CBAs were registered, covering around 187,000 employees, equalling approximately 58% of the employees. On the other hand, most workers in the private sector operate in the informal economy in micro and small enterprises that are

often challenged by a lack of awareness or incentives for business and labour regulation. On the positive side, the Motor Drivers and General Transport Workers Union, representing informal workers, reached a CBA with a coverage of about 1,000 workers.

One of the characteristics of some CBAs deals with clauses facilitating negotiation and time-bound adaptability of agreements according to predetermined criteria (e.g., financial difficulties) in sectoral collective agreements. At the enterprise level, agreements often reduce working time to respond to the fall in demand and partial closures and, at the same time, preserve employment. For example, bargaining parties in the tourism industry negotiated an agreement that guaranteed work every second week on a rotating basis to manage the drop-in activity and prevent unemployment.³¹

Central Tripartite Institutions

Numerous consultation bodies are set to promote social dialogue among social partners in Sierra Leone, and the leading institutions are presented below:

Joint Consultative Committee

The tripartite Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) functions and has played a role during the review of Labour Law in recent years. The institution has furthermore addressed minimum wage adjustment to the challenges faced by employees in the country.

Joint National Negotiation Board

The tripartite Joint National Negotiation Board (JNNB) sets the minimum wages in Sierra Leone every second year. The board comprises nine members with representation from the employers' organisation SLEF, employees represented by SLLC and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.³² The board has the mandate to review the minimum wage (see more in the Working Condition section).

National Social Security and Insurance Trust

The National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT) is a Statutory Public Trust set up by the

National Social Security and Insurance Trust Act No. 5 of 2001 that administrates the National Pension Scheme. At least five tripartite meetings are held yearly.

Other bi/tripartite organs

- Trade Group Negotiating Council.
- Joint Consultative Committee.
- Regulating Committee on Fuel and Transport Fares.
- National Budgetary Committee.
- Sierra Leone Business Forum.
- National Commission for Social Action.

At the regional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Tripartite Social Dialogue Forum was established in 2011 to implement the labour and employment policy, including its strategic action plan.

Labour Dispute Settlement System

Sierra Leone's 1991 constitution provides for commissions of inquiry, arbitration committees, and Labour Industrial Dispute bodies. The Arbitration Act of 1960 was replaced by the Arbitration Act of 2022. The new act aims to provide a modern arbitration framework for the country, including third-party funding and provides a legislative basis for establishing the International Arbitration Centre.

Large commercial disputes are settled through civil litigation and the majority of these through the court system. The mediation and arbitration structures function in the formal sector but side-line workers operating in the informal economy. Employees win over 80% of industrial complaints filed to MLSS. It is a result of most employers failing to provide supporting documents or records to support their statements or actions against their employees. According to the Employers and Employed Act, the responsibility to keep or deliver employment records rests mainly with the employer.³³ Most industrial actions were taken against the government, primarily to protest unpaid salaries and reduced benefit packages.³⁴

The use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is increasing to settle large commercial disputes. Litigants can choose which of the two dispute settlement modes they prefer, either litigation or ADR. Where a contract term includes ADR as a means of dispute resolution, parties generally adhere to it. However, it was haunted by outdated ADR legislation relying on the Arbitration Act of 1960. One significant development in local commercial justice since 2010 is the Fast Track Commercial Court, the in-built ADR system for disposing of commercial disputes.

TRADE UNION RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Sierra Leone ranked 4 out of 5+ (5 is worst) on the Global Rights Index from 2020 to 2022, characterised by “systematic violations of rights”: the government and/or companies are engaged in serious efforts to crush the voice of workers putting fundamental rights under threat.³⁵ International Trade Union Confederation’s latest registered case of trade union rights violation was from 2017 dealing with Salpost management refuses to hear workers’ demands.³⁶

Other reports detected that labour rights violations were in the mining industry. In 2019, communities affected by diamond mining won the right to sue OCTÉA Group companies over alleged human rights abuses, including displacement, property damage, soil and water contamination, loss of income from farming, deaths, and injuries after violent repressions of demonstrators.³⁷

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) and the Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA) launched a joint press statement, expressing deep concerns about reports of several casualties and fatalities that occurred in Sierra Leone’s capital, Freetown and other towns following the people’s anti-inflation protests in August 2022.³⁸

The 1991 constitution prohibits all forms of forced and compulsory labour, including child labour. Under traditional law, individual chiefs may impose

forced labour (compulsory cultivation) as punishment. Chiefs can also require villagers to contribute to the improvement of common areas. Reports noted that the government did not enforce the law against forced or compulsory labour but did improve enforcement of the Anti-trafficking Act. A new Anti-Trafficking Bill passed Sierra Leone Parliament in May 2022.

Additionally, the country ranked 70 out of 167 countries (1 is best) in the latest Global Slavery Index from 2018. This index measures modern slavery, i.e., slavery-like practices (such as debt bondage, forced marriage and sale or exploitation of children), human trafficking and forced labour. Around 36,000 people are living in modern slavery in Sierra Leone. Thus, the country faces challenges in modern slavery, making it more difficult to reach the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Decent Work (see more in Appendix Table 13, Indicator 8.7.1).

WORKING CONDITIONS

Sierra Leone has a government-mandated minimum wage. No worker in Sierra Leone can be paid less than this mandatory minimum rate of pay. A proposed Wages and Compensation Commission is yet to be established, having completed its validation process.

The first minimum wage was launched in 1974 in Sierra Leone, but not until 2015 was it adjusted from Leone 21,000 (US\$3.7) to Leone 500,000 (US\$63). The country’s nominal minimum wage was basically in line with other countries in Western Africa at the end of the 2010s. The National Minimum Wage hike of 20% was introduced in 2020 and again in 2023 by 33%, reaching Leone 800,000 (US\$40) and principally applies to all workers, including those in the informal economy. The minimum wage is not indexed to inflation and is outpaced by the increasing cost of living (Table 4). Studies found that the minimum wage family can only feed itself for about seven days if all the pay was spent on one basic meal a day in 2022.³⁹

Table 4: Status of monthly salary and minimum wage in Sierra Leone

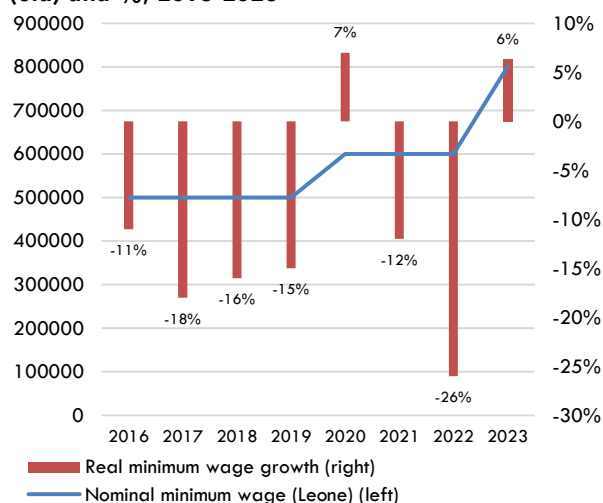
	Current Leone (old)	Current US\$
Most typical salary (2022)	5,700,000	426
Minimum wage (2023-current)	800,000	40
Average yearly real minimum wage growth (2020-2023)	-6.2% *	

* The real minimum wage is based on deducting inflation from the nominal minimum wage.

Source: SalaryExplorer.org; WageIndicator.org, Minimum Wage – Sierra Leone; own estimations of real minimum wage growth.

Figure 3 visualises the scope of the real minimum wage growth (deducted inflation in consumer prices) significantly deteriorated in recent years. Workers' income purchasing power particularly plummeted in 2022 and only saved in 2023 due to the minimum wage hike. By the same token, the depreciation of the Leone currency against the U.S. dollar adversely contributed to rising food prices. Overall, the minimum wage does not meet the basic cost of living, and employers often do not respect it.

Figure 3: Sierra Leones nominal minimum wage per month and yearly real minimum wage growth, Leone (old) and %, 2016-2023



Source: WageIndicators.org.

The most typical 'career' wage was around Leone 5.7 million (US\$426) in 2022 per month, including housing, transport, and other benefits. It suggests that the minimum-to-median wage ratio is 89%. Besides, the application of formal wages, including minimum wage, are not applied in the informal economy shadowing close to nine out of ten workers.

According to labour regulations, employers who fail to pay the minimum wage may be subject to punishment. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security embarked on a nationwide inspection and sensitisation of various employers to ensure compliance at the end of the 2010s. A lack of resources reduced its monitoring function, though. The ministry operated with 29 labour inspectors in 2021.⁴⁰ It suggested a ratio of one inspector per 11,000 employees (and one per 93,000 in employment). ILO's technical advice is one inspector for every 40,000 workers in the least developed economies. Inspectors have the authority to make unannounced inspections and initiate sanctions. The number of checks was reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic.⁴¹

The occupational safety and health (OSH) regulations are outdated and remain under review by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The government needed to enforce these standards effectively. The responsibility for identifying unsafe situations remains with an OSH expert, not the worker, but this still needs to be implemented. The report registered that wage, overtime, and OSH standards violations were common among street vendors, market-stall workers, rock crushers, and day labourers. Victims often did not know where to turn for recourse, and as a result, their complaints went unresolved.⁴²

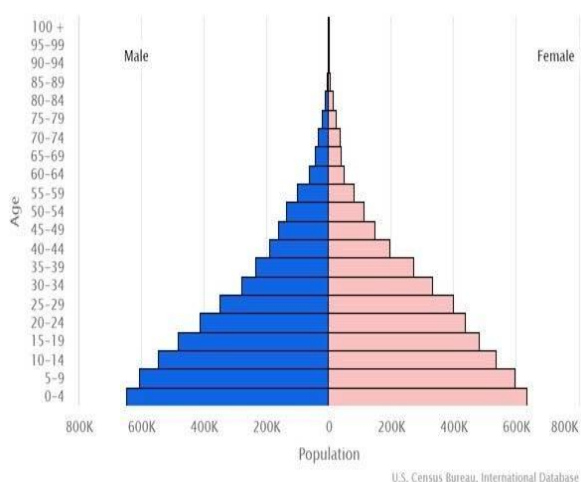
WORKFORCE

Sierra Leone's population growth demonstrated a minor decline from 2.5% in the 1980s to 2.2% on average in the 2010s, which was 0.5 percentage points lower than sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income) average at 2.7%. The population reached 8.5 million people in 2023 and among the youngest populations in the world. The fertility rate fell from 6.7 in 1980 to 4.1 births per woman in 2020. The life expectancy rate increased from 40 years to 55.

Figure 4 visualises the population pyramid, illustrating a mounting youth bulge. However, other data from the 2015 Population and Housing Census found a deviation from the expected pattern; there

was a relatively lower proportion of the population in the 0-4 years age group than in the 5-9 years age group for both sexes. This shift could be due to high infant mortality and low fertility levels because of the Ebola 2014-2015 outbreak.⁴³

Figure 4: Population pyramid based on Age-Sex structure of the population in Sierra Leone, 2022



Source: CIA, *The World Factbook*, Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone's population growth challenges the creation of decent jobs, access to social services, arable land, and natural resources. Around 60% of the population is below 25 years old; 55% are of working age (15-64); 3.7% are 65 years and over.

According to the latest 2018 Integrated Household Survey, Sierra Leone's population (15-64 years) was at least 7.5 million, with a working-age population of 3.3 million. Concerning the economically active there were more women than men, representing 54% vs 47%, repressively, which was in the aftermath of the Civil War (1991-2002). Table 5 shows that just 6.2% were regular employees, with a stark gender gap dominated by men (see also the Gender sub-section). Based on other national surveys suggest that the employee group is slowly rising. Still, the major groups were slightly more than one out of two (53%) self-employed without employees, and one out of three (33%) helped without pay in their household. Another perspective was that the public sector (government) engages about 39% of the employed population, while 58% are in the private sector and 86% operate in the informal economy.

Table 5: Key labour market indicators in Sierra Leone, 2018

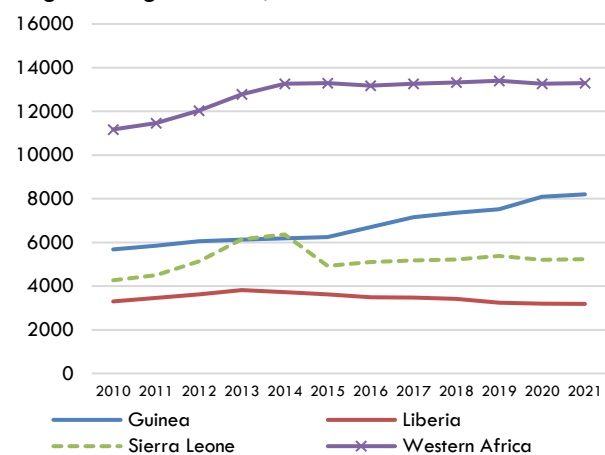
Types	%
Labour force participation rate	73%
Employment rate	88%
Employee regular	6.3%
Employment casual	3.2%
Self-employed with employees	3.9%
Self-employed without employees	53%
Public sector	39%
Private sector	58%
Help without pay in the household	33%
Paid apprentices	0.7%

Source: *Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) Report 2018*.

Jobs in the agricultural sector's share of total employment fell from 68% in 2004 to 59% in 2017; it also fell in the margin from 6.5% to 5.6% in the industry sector. Instead, the service sector rose from 25% to 35%. This situation is reflected by the rising urbanisation rate (see more in the Migration sub-section). Sierra Leone's manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment has been very low but rising from 0.5% in 2004 to 4.1% in 2018.

Figure 5 shows that the labour productivity in Sierra Leone was rising at the beginning of the 2010s and even started to supersede Guinea. It plummeted in 2014-2015, though, as an impact of the Ebola crisis. An upsurge did not rebound afterwards, not to mention it stayed significantly lower than the Western Africa average. The practices challenging to develop of labour productivity further relate to cumbersome business regulations that discourage investments in doing business. The weak manufacturing sector and widespread informal economy exemplify it.

Figure 5: Output per worker trend for Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries, 2010-2021



Note: Output per worker is based on GDP constant 2017 international \$ at PPP.

Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Sierra Leone’s national income labour share was stable during the 2010s at 42%, six percentage points lower than the world’s lower-middle-income countries average at 48%. This situation suggests the country did not progress in the labour share of national income, which complicates reaching SDG to achieve better equality (see more in Appendix Table 13, Indicators 10.4.1). It raised concerns about slowing income growth, inequality, and loss of consumer purchasing power. The change involves the rising power of new technology, globalisation, the widespread informal economy, and the hollowing of collective bargaining agreements.

Another aspect of Sierra Leone’s labour market landscape is that the micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) sector provides livelihoods to approximately 70% of the population and represents over 90% of the private sector. Most operate in the informal economy, and around 10% are registered. Studies revealed that MSMEs struggle to grow.⁴⁴ Some business environment constraints are access to finance and land, unreliable electricity, high tax rates, and customs and trade regulations. On the positive side, the Sierra Leone Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency is a government entity established under the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDA) Act No. 11 of 2016 that coordinates MSMEs’ activities.

Unemployment and underemployment

Sierra Leone’s latest 2018 Integrated Household Survey registered the unemployment rate at 3.0% based on ILO’s statistically ‘strict’ definition (Table 6). Generally, in lower-middle-income countries, many people have little choice but to engage in economic activities without social protection.

Table 6: Status of unemployment in Sierra Leone, 2018

Type	Sex	Per cent
Unemployment (15+)	Total	3.2%
	Men	4.3%
	Women	2.2%
Youth Unemployment (15-24 years)	Total	3.6%
	Men	4.9%
	Women	2.6%
Underutilisation *	Total	18%
	Youth	28%

* Underutilisation represents the share of the extended labour force that are in unemployment, time-related underemployment, or the potential workforce.

Source: Sierra Leone 2018 Integrated Household Survey.

Unemployment is mainly a phenomenon for youth. Subsistence farming is occupied during planting and harvesting but not engaged full-time during the entire year, creating some “disguised unemployment.” Besides, unemployment is statistically a part of the employed group, excluding economically inactive persons, representing around 27% of Sierra Leone’s working-age population. It further created a massive amount of hidden unemployment in the economy and an acute undersupply of employment opportunities. The broader underutilisation rate (i.e., aggregating time-related underemployment, unemployment, and potential workforce) was 18% in 2018, with a deep gender gap (see more in the Gender sub-section).

Since the formal sector is not providing sufficient new jobs, weak social protection coverage, including a lack of unemployment insurance schemes, pushes most workers to generate some income through causal informal activities, often by lower hours, to survive.

Migration

Sierra Leone has ratified international conventions dealing with international standards and the fulfilment of migrants' rights, including the ILO's Migration for Employment Convention (C097) and the Migrant Workers Convention (C143), both endorsed in 2021. The country is a member of the Migration Dialogue for Western Africa (MIDWA), a regional consultative process to discuss common migration issues.

The country has established a legal framework regarding migration:

- Refugees Protection Act of 2007.
- General Law (Business Start-Up) Act, amended in 2007, regulates the application and issuance of work permits to foreign workers.
- Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2005.
- Sierra Leone Citizenship Act of 1973 as amended in 2006.
- Extradition Act of 1974.
- The Work Permit Act of 2023 provides for the regulation of Non-citizens in Sierra Leone.
- The Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Act of 2023 provides for the regulation of overseas employment and for the protection of the rights and welfare of migrant workers and members of their families.

At the policy level, since 2018, the government has developed the Labour Migration Policy and the National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons (2020-2023). Also, the National Migration Policy for Sierra Leone of 2022 was the first attempt at setting a comprehensive basis to manage the migration of Sierra Leoneans internally and externally to tackle the modern challenges of migration in the interest of national development. The policy outlines the institutional migration governance structures, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Security plans manpower and human resource development by maintaining a database on vacancies and available manpower resources within the country and issues work permits to foreigners in Sierra Leone.⁴⁵ Overall, the institutional framework's coordination continues

being a challenge, but the government has initiated the inter-ministerial Committee in Migration.⁴⁶

The Sierra Leone 2018 Integrated Household Survey listed that one out of four (26%) of the total population was migrants; women slightly less migrated than men. The migration trend shows that the Western region remains the highest receiver of in-migration (persons born outside their current residence) with a share of 47%, followed by the Southern region at 23%. These moves deal with the availability of decent job opportunities and access to facilities like electricity, water supply, and recreation facilities. This voluntary internal migration leads to challenges emanating. Other factors of the migration flow are that younger people are moving more than older people, and many are for marriage and family reunions or schooling and training. In the past, men tended to migrate more than women as they were required to stay home and care for children. However, in recent years, many women have been moving as independent migrants; commercial migrants (migrating for trading) are dominated by women.

Sierra Leone's urbanisation rate increased from about 39% in 2011 to 43% in 2021, standing higher than Guinea (37%) but significantly lower than Liberia (53%).

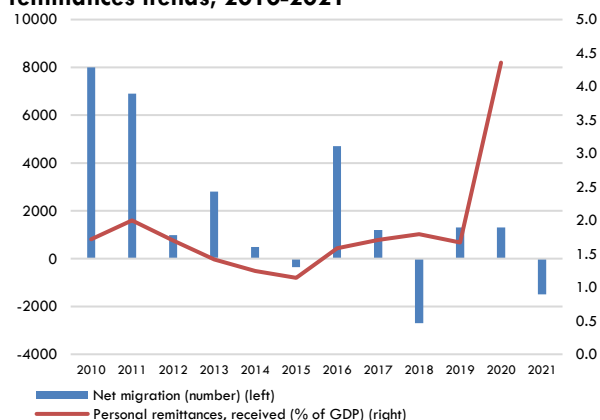
Internal displacement associated with disasters is from wet mass movements, floods, storms, and wildfires in Sierra Leone, and almost 26,000 persons were registered in 2021. Displacement associated with conflicts and violence reached around 5,500 in 2018-2019.⁴⁷ The mentioned new National Migration Policy of 2022 provides strategies to deal with these internally displaced people (IDP) and the dislocation of human settlements. The Office of National Security (ONS) has designed a policy on internal displacement that enhances the capacity of state agencies and institutions to enforce environmental laws needed to prevent disasters that cause internal displacement. Central drivers of emigration link to access to employment and education opportunities. Top destinations have been Canada, Gambia, Germany, Italy, Liberia, the Netherlands, Nigeria,

Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Sierra Leone does not have any formal bilateral agreements relating to migration, but it has signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) related to migration with the United Kingdom, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana.⁴⁸

At least 500,000 Sierra Leoneans live in the United States and the United Kingdom. Skilled emigration accounts for 41% of total emigration, bringing a 'brain drain' of medical doctors, nurses, accountants, engineers, and teachers. Sierra Leone's diaspora has delivered an influx of personal remittances, reaching 1.6% of GDP on average in the 2010s, lower than sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income) at 2.4%. It suggested that these remittances were not an integral part of the economy, not to mention considerably lower than foreign direct investments (FDI); for instance, almost a ten-percentage point gap in the 2010s, with FDI at 11% of GDP on average. Nevertheless, personal remittances skyrocketed in 2020, reaching around 4.6% of GDP, triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the last decade, more entered than left Sierra Leone, except the net migration turned significantly negative in 2018 and 2021. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 somewhat slowed down the migration flows, but emigration rebounded in 2021 (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Sierra Leone's net migration and personal remittances trends, 2010-2021

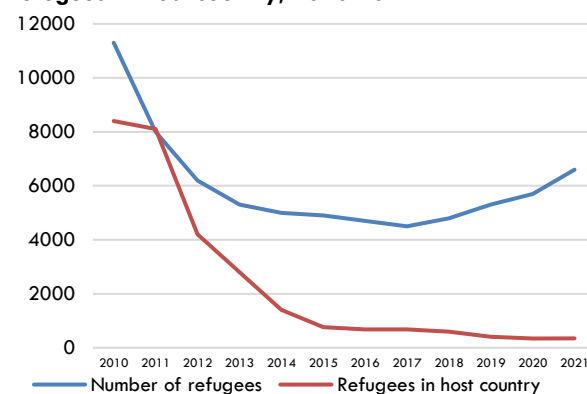


Note: Net migration is the total number of immigrants minus the annual number of emigrants, including both citizens and noncitizens.

Source: Migrant Data Portal, Migration statistics; The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Refugees from Sierra Leone experienced a declining trend during the 2010s but slightly bounce back since the end of the 2010s, reaching 6,600 in 2021 (Figure 7). Sierra Leone also hosts former refugees from Liberia following the application of the Cessation Clause of 2012 that sets refugees who opted for local integration and have therefore benefited from several protections in various settlements around the country. Although the Refugees Protection Act of 2007 provides for the recognition and protection of refugees, the government needed a coherent policy to address the refugee issues. Further, there is enough evidence that some categories of refugees and their children are at risk of being stateless, but there is little data on these people and the challenges they face in accessing basic services.⁴⁹

Figure 7: Number of Sierra Leone refugees and refugees in host country, 2010-2021



Source: Migrant Data Portal, Migration statistics.

Informal Economy

A widespread informal economy shadows Sierra Leone's labour market. Firstly, the workforce is dominated by casual and unregulated activities, who often lack specialised skills. Statistically, informal workers represented about 88% of total employment (non-agriculture) in 2018. Secondly, a study from the International Monetary Fund estimated the country's size and development of the informal economy steadily declined during the last two decades, reaching 42% on average from 1991 to 2015. This level was in line with Liberia (43%) but slightly higher than Guinea (40%).⁵⁰ Table 7 below summarises the status of Sierra Leone's informal economy.

Table 7: Status of Sierra Leone’s informal economy

Indicator	Per cent
Proportion of informal employment in total employment (2018)	93%
Proportion of informal employment in total employment (non-agriculture) (2018)	88%
Informal employment covered by national social security scheme (2021)	0.2%
Size of the informal economy (2015)	34%

Sources: International Labour Organization; The World Bank; International Monetary Fund; DTDA, Sierra Leone: Data-collection tool, 2021.

A central problem in Sierra Leone is that the economy is not creating decent formal jobs. The well-knitted labour and business regulations do not trickle down to workers and enterprises, often due to a lack of awareness or incentives.

Informal workers operate in vulnerable working conditions side-lined for pension insurance. For instance, national social security schemes cover around 0.2% of informal workers. On the positive side, the government of Sierra Leone, through the National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT), representatives of employers’ and workers’ organisations have kickstarted a new initiative to extend social protection to the informal sector in 2022 (see more in the Social Protection section). This adverse environment further challenges industrial relations, organising workers, performing collective bargaining through social dialogue, and weakened labour rights coverage.

Informal employment (excluding those working in small-scale farming and pastoralist activities) is concentrated in wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants; manufacturing; community, social and personal services. Informal small-scale activities are stuck to simple technologies, often in micro or small enterprises. The ease of entry and exit into this segment, coupled with the use of low-level or no technology, makes it an easy avenue for employment creation but with low labour productivity.

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented impact on the economy, especially the informal economy. For instance, informal

enterprises were less able to access formal lines of credit or Covid-19-related government support: only 5% of firms reported having received national or local support; the primary reason for not receiving support is that the firms were unaware of available support measures. More than 90% of firms in Sierra Leone reported facing a decrease in cash flow.⁵¹ Relief measures were less likely to reach those in need, and inequities within countries worsened. Smaller businesses experienced more significant declines in employment and working hours than larger ones.⁵²

Sierra Leone’s trade union movement has developed a relatively high affiliation of organised workers from the informal economy, representing about 85% of the total trade union membership rate in 2021 (revisit Table 2). Elaborating upon CBAs with the informal workers is only at its early stage. There is no functioning specific Tripartite National Informal Economy Forum. Instead, other national forums address the status of informal economy workers, including the Traders National Council is a national forum. Policies focus on informal economy are adopted but stakeholders have detected an inadequate legal framework to protect informal workers, a cumbersome registration process; lack of strategies for removing the business barriers, including revision of the legal framework to make the scheme mandatory, simplify administrative procedures, consolidate tax collection system.⁵³

There is a series of challenges of taxing enterprises in the informal economy, dealing with mistrust and weak structural dialogue between the informal economy and government, as well as tax evasion and corruption as the usual way of doing business.

Child Labour

Around 41% of Sierra Leone’s population is 0-14 years old. The country has endorsed most international treaties and conventions on children and child labour, including ILO’s Conventions on Minimum Age of Employment (C138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour (C182) (see Appendix Table 16).

Several national laws and regulations address child labour and all forms of violence against children:

- Child Rights Act (Act No. 7) of 2007.
- Employers and Employed Act of 2016.
- Mines and Minerals Act of 1994.
- Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2005.
- National Drugs Control Act of 2008.
- Education Act of 2004.

This legal framework has flaws; for instance, it does not prohibit or criminalise all the worst forms of child labour. There is no law banning a child's use, procurement, or offering for illicit activities, such as the production and trafficking of drugs. The law limits child labour, allowing light work at age 13 under conditions not adequately defined by the law, full-time non-hazardous work at 15, and hazardous work at 18. The legal support is unimplemented since the government did not effectively enforce child labour laws in practice, haunted by the widespread informal economy. Reports found that training was insufficient, and the number of labour inspectors was inadequate, especially in areas where child labour was prevalent in rural areas or urban informal economy.⁵⁴

At the policy level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security pledged a National Action Plan (NAP) in 2021 to address the worst forms of child labour. It has led to social dialogue among the central social partners.⁵⁵ This plan identified four key policy areas to be considered in addressing the worst forms of child labour in Sierra Leone:

- Advocating for adequate legislation and law enforcement.
- Promoting access to affordable, relevant and quality education.
- Ensuring effective social protection strategies and actions to address the most vulnerable households.
- Promoting the involvement of key stakeholders in supporting the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

Sierra Leone and a few other African countries have explicitly banned girls who became pregnant or are mothers from their schools as government policy. In December 2019, the Court of Justice of ECOWAS ruled that the ban was discriminatory and ordered the Sierra Leone government to revoke it. The court also found that alternative schools for pregnant students, a largely donor-funded government programme, were discriminatory. Besides, teenage pregnancy is endemic in the country: 36% of all pregnancies in the country occur among adolescent girls; just 38% of girls are enrolled in secondary schools (see more in the Gender sub-section and the Education section).⁵⁶

The root of child labour is linked with poverty. According to the Sierra Leone 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, around one out of four (25%) children are engaged in child labour. It was in line with the sub-Saharan Africa average, at 24% (Table 8). Child labour is visible in rural areas but also present in urban zones. Many boys are sent out to herd livestock or harvest, while girls are married early or engaged in domestic work. Most Sierra Leone child labourers operate in family agriculture plots, mining, as domestic servants, fishery, vendors, or scavengers in the cities.

Table 8: Status of child labour in Sierra Leone and sub-Saharan Africa

Country/ Region	Type	Rate
Sierra Leone (2017)	Child labour	25%
	Hazardous work	-
Sub-Saharan Africa (2020)	Child labour	24%
	Hazardous work	11%

Note: Child labour – work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling. Hazardous work – children in dangerous and unhealthy conditions that can lead to a child being killed, injured, or made ill because of poor safety and health standards or employment conditions.

Sources: UNICEF, Sierra Leone: Prevention of Child Labour; ILO and UNICEF, Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward, 2021.

An impact of the Covid-19 pandemic cost many families to lose their jobs and close schools, suggesting that many families could resort to sending their children to work.

Gender

Sierra Leone has ratified the central international conventions dealing with gender rights, including the Domestic Workers Convention (C189) in 2021. They further formed a legal framework aimed at improving respect for women's rights, including:

- Domestic Violence Act of 2007 criminalising domestic violence.
- Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorce Act of 2007 sets the legal age for marriage at 18.
- Devolution of Estate Act of 2007 requires a property to be equally distributed between the deceased's spouse and children. It criminalises the expulsion of widows from their homes after the husband's death.
- Child Rights Act of 2007.
- Sexual Offences Act of 2012.
- Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 1973, amendments in 2006 and 2017, brings the country among the first countries to end gender discrimination in nationality laws.
- Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022 sets, among others, a minimum 30% quota for women in leadership and enshrines equal pay, women's access to finance, 14-week maternity leave, and equal access to training. It criminalizes gender discrimination and requires all private employers with more than 25 employees to meet the 30% quota.

About 30% of girls in Sierra Leone are married before the age of 18. In 2020, a ban on pregnant young women attending school was overturned, though social stigma often remains a barrier.

Although the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs has the mandate to protect women's rights, it does not have sufficient recourses or support from other ministries to handle its assigned responsibility's scope.

At the national policy level, Sierra Leone promotes the implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy from 2021, which is linked to the Medium-Term National Development Plan. This policy is interlinked with the National

Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence of 2012 and the National Gender Strategic Plan 2019-2023. It builds on and reinforces existing legal and strategic frameworks for addressing the complexity of political and socio-economic challenges to women's empowerment, including the launch and operationalisation of the new Women's Empowerment Act.

The National Committee Against Gender-based Violence (NACGBV) and the Human Rights Commission (HRC) are institutions dealing with gender equality issues.

Sierra Leone's laws and regulations around the life cycle of a working woman score at 73 out of 100 (100 is best), slightly higher than the sub-Saharan African average (71). Still, it has a weak position for parenthood, e.g., no paid leave of at least 14 weeks available to mothers (until 2022); the government does not administer 100% of maternity leave benefits; there is no dismissal of pregnant workers prohibited.⁵⁷ Still, gender discrimination occurs in access to credit, equal pay for similar work, and the ownership and management of a business.

Overall, for centuries the country has been entrenched in a patriarchal system depriving woman in the social, legal, political, religious, and economic spheres.⁵⁸ It has led to women do not have equal access to education, economic opportunities, health facilities, or social freedoms. In rural areas, women performed much of the subsistence farming, costing the opportunity for formal education.

On a broader gender equality view, the Global Gender Gap Index 2022 from the World Economic Forum – gender-based gaps along specific dimensions (health, education, economy, and politics) – ranks Sierra Leone 109 out of 146 countries (1 is best). The best scoring was in economic participation and opportunities (56), while health and survival (103), political empowerment (131), and educational attainment (124) grades were low. Similarly, the Gender Inequality Index from the United Nations Development Programme – focuses on maternal mortality, adolescent birth, the

share of seats in parliament, population with at least some secondary education, and workforce participation – placing the country 162 out of 170 countries (1 is best) in 2021. These low rankings suggest that Sierra Leone needs to take significant strides to improve gender equality.

Women and adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to poverty, especially in the household and community, exacerbated by gender-based violence, harmful cultural attitudes and beliefs around gender roles, norms, and female empowerment. Limited control over benefits from land and other resources constrains women’s successful participation in the economy, particularly as producers and market actors. Women’s unpaid childcare and domestic work limit women’s contribution to and benefit from productive activities, constrain their mobility and limit their access to market resources and information while participating in the economy.

Key labour-related indicators’ gender gaps remain stark in the country. Data from Sierra Leone 2018 Integrated Household Survey illustrates that more women than men are employed. However, women are more prominent among self-employed (informal) and with a small group of employees; in contrast, men have a lower self-employment segment while significantly higher among employees (see more in Table 9).

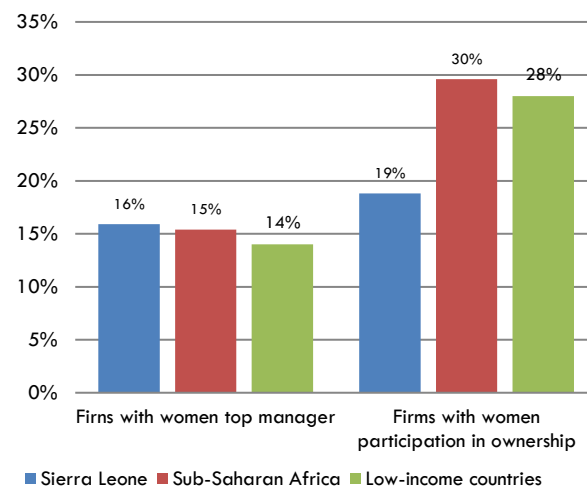
Table 9: Key indicators for labour gender gaps in Sierra Leone, 2018

	Men	Women
Employment share	48%	52%
Unemployment rate	4.3%	2.2%
Employees rate	25%	5.7%
Self-employed workers rate	72%	94%

Source: Sierra Leone 2018 Integrated Household Survey.

Sierra Leone’s latest Enterprise Survey 2017 reported that relatively few firms have women participation in ownership haunted by the cultural and previously weak legal framework. On the other hand, firms with female managers stood more in line with the regional rates (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Status of women participation in top management and ownership in Sierra Leone and regional averages, %, 2017



Source: The World Bank, Enterprise Surveys, Sierra Leone 2017: Country Profile.

Youth

Sierra Leone’s youth (15-24 years old) represent 19% of the population and around 19% of the total employment, signalling a nation with a youth bulge (revisit Figure 4). Just a few of them successfully get formal jobs due to harsh competition.

Several laws promote youth development in the country. The National Youth Commission Act of 2009 enabled to empower the youth to develop their potential creativity and skills for national progress. Also, the National Youth Service Act of 2016 sets the National Youth Service; for example, any service corps that becomes a member of any trade union shall have their name automatically struck off from the service register, as well as employers and employees shall not apply to service corps.

Despite some modest gains made for two previous National Youth Policy, the revised National Youth Policy (2020–2025) outlines the government’s commitments, principles, and concrete actions, not to mention ambitiously aims at empowering youth to lead the national development of a new Sierra Leone. The policy’s main priorities are:

- Increase access to livelihood opportunities through education and training opportunities; scale up interest in sporting activities and entrepreneurship with an emphasis on agriculture and fisheries.
- Review the legal framework and address continued marginalisation and infantilisation of youth; multiple gendered violence and discrimination against female youth; harmful migration; substance abuse; and other youth-related violence.
- Increase youth participation in policy discussions and development to build trust and confidence in the socio-economic and political system and restore family and community values and norms.
- Assure sustained funding of the youth sector via a basket Youth Empowerment Fund for innovative mobilisation and coordination of investments to implement the youth policy.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs promotes the youth as drivers of innovation in Sierra Leone. The National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) was established in 2009, and it corporate to empower the youth to develop their potential, creativity, and skills for national development.

The country's latest ranking on the Global Youth Development Index was 138 out of 181 countries (1 is best) in 2020, a significantly better position than the neighbouring countries like Guinea (168) and Liberia (145).

Most Sierra Leonean youth confront poverty, poor access to decent jobs and high underemployment with vulnerable working conditions. These factors continue to undermine their relationship with and confidence in the state. Development of the youth has been haunted by the patriarchal culture and tradition that continued to deny them a sense of identity and a voice in their communities; by the same token, the post-civil war impact trapped the socialisation of youth with violence.

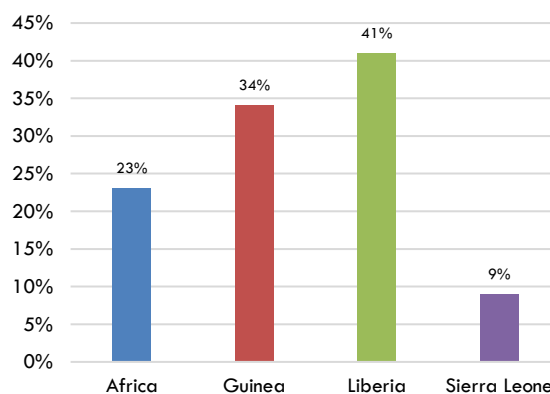
Due to social distancing policies, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the youth in various aspects, such as health and well-being, education,

employment, and civic activities. For example, youth are the most vulnerable to job layoffs.

It is not easy starting a business which could discourage many young entrepreneurs from formalising their business (see Appendix Table 17).

Sierra Leone's NEET rate (i.e., those not in employment, education, or training) was 9% in 2018, remarkably lower than the neighbouring countries (Figure 9). The country's NEET rate has only a minor gender gap. Young people from lower-income families are usually more present in the NEET rate. The economic downturn in 2020 caused by the Covid-19 pandemic will most likely create an upsurge in the NEET rate.

Figure 9: Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training in Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries, %, latest data



Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market.

A national youth service scheme was launched in 2018 to reduce youth unemployment.⁵⁹ It promotes youth participation in governance and provides newly qualified graduates with opportunities to obtain practical job experience in the public and private sectors of the economy.

EDUCATION

Sierra Leone has ratified most international and regional treaties that protect the right to education. At the national level, the 1991 constitution does not recognise education as a human right but as a fundamental state policy principle. The 2007 Child Act acknowledges the right to education for every

child, and the Education Act of 2004 states that nine years of basic education shall be free and compulsory.

The country adopted several new policies and plans for the education section covering 2021 to 2025 (Appendix Table 18). For example, the National Policy on Radical Inclusion is considered the first in Sierra Leone. This policy aims at removing the infrastructural and systemic practices that limit the learning of children, particularly those who have been historically marginalised or excluded: girls, especially girls who are pregnant or have been pregnant and are parent learners; children with disabilities; children in rural and underserved areas; and children from low-income families.

The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) manage the abovementioned policies. The ministry focuses on improving access, equity, and completion, enhancing education quality and relevance, and strengthening education service delivery. Also, the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education aims to build the capacity of individuals with the relevant knowledge and skills to meet the social and economic needs of families, communities, and society.

Parents who neglect to send their children to school are announced to be convicted by the Education Act of 2004. Despite the government's initiative, substantial barriers remain, including a lack of schools, teachers, lack of school transportation, and sexual abuse by teachers.

The government has prioritised free education as one of its flagship programmes. The government expenditure in the education sector increased significantly during the 2010s: from 2.6% in 2010 to 7.9% of GDP in 2019. It was remarkably higher than the closest neighbouring countries staying below 3% of GDP, not to mention reaching by far the international Education 2030 Framework for Action as a key benchmark for government financing of education, allocating at least 4% to 6% of its GDP.

The investment in education has increased Sierra Leone's literacy rate for the population aged 15-

24 years from 48% in 2004 to 67% in 2018. It is still significantly lower than the sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high-income) average at 76%. This upsurge benefitted an increased net enrolment at the primary school level after it became compulsory and free in 2003.

Concerning the workforce by education, around three out of five (61%) of Sierra Leoneans had less than basic education, while one out of four (25%) had basic education. Even if students complete at the primary school level, a smaller group enter further education: At the intermedia and advanced levels were 13% and 1.8%, respectively, not to mention showing significant gender gaps favouring males (see more details in Table 10).

Table 10: Employment by education in Sierra Leone, %, 2018

	Less than basic	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Total	61%	25%	13%	1.8%
Men	51%	28%	18%	2.8%
Women	69%	22%	7.7%	0.9%

Source: Sierra Leone 2018 Integrated Household Survey.

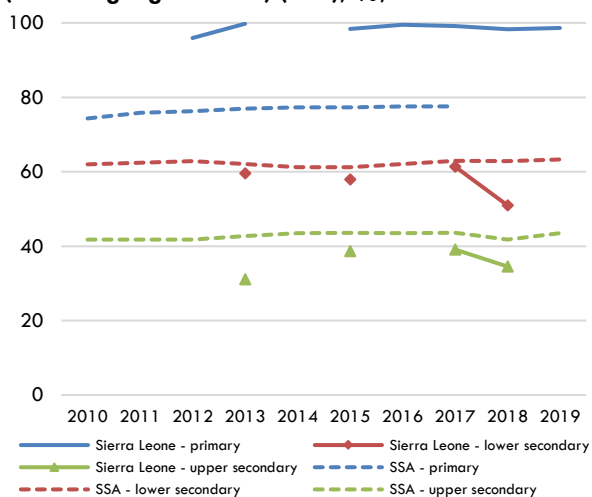
Sierra Leone's pupil completion rate at the primary education level rose from 29% in 2004 to 67% in 2013 but fell to 64% in 2017 in the aftermath of the West African Ebola Crisis. It most likely dropped again in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The completion rate of lower secondary education steadily increased from 10% in 2004 to 44% in 2017.

More than half a million children were out of school. The most common reason given by parents for not sending their children to school is that they need to see its relevance and usefulness.

Figure 10 below shows the school enrolment rate at all levels (excluding the tertiary level due to lack of data). Net enrolment in primary education is high, staying considerably higher than the sub-Saharan Africa average. Net enrolment at the lower and upper secondary education level has been slightly lower than the regional average, even entering a declining trend at the end of the 2010s. The broader gross enrolment in secondary school

showed an upsurge instead. Despite the high school enrolment in basic education, many did not achieve the expected levels of numeracy and literacy: The percentage of candidates who failed the Basic Education Certificate Examination 2019 was 69% in math, 58% in science, and 51% in English. It is often due to weak school infrastructure, overcrowded schools, and internal regional enrolment disparities still constrained fully and quality free primary education in practice. The system relies heavily on non-government paid teachers in government and government-assisted schools.⁶⁰ Access to national data are scarce for enrolment in tertiary education. Still, some suggest a steep upward trend in recent years but remain very low.

Figure 10: Net enrolment at the primary and secondary school levels, Sierra Leone and sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income) (SSA), %, 2010-2019



Note: Updated data were not available at the tertiary education level.
Source: The World Bank, DataBank, Education Indicators.

In Sierra Leone, around 2.6 million children were out of school in the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Radio was used extensively to keep children's education at home during the Ebola outbreak, and they took a similar approach to respond to the impact of Covid-19 on learning.⁶¹

Vocational training

The legal framework of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Sierra Leone covers several acts, but they are from the beginning of the 2000s, thus, somewhat outdated.

These acts broadly recognised the private sector initiative's role in financial contributions, skills training, and employment creation.

In the 2010s, the National TVET Policy Framework was elaborated upon and launched in 2019. This policy aims to develop a coordinated and harmonised system that delivers high-quality market demand training and skills development programmes.

Several government ministries, departments and agencies are involved in TVET programmes. However, central players like the Ministry of Labour and Social Security have become less active in providing public employment services. Public vacancy placements, guidance, and cancelling systems to help youth find their way into the labour markets must be established and visible. Many of the institutions lack reliable internet connections, which is problematic for training providers, as online digital technologies are part of daily life.⁶² By the same token, the absence of a vibrant manufacturing and private sector base has deflated the demand side of the labour market.⁶³

There is a generally low public interest in TVET; many consider it uses outdated equipment and poor funding. The latest Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS) Report 2018 found that less than 2% of Sierra Leoneans with first or higher degrees are holders of certificates from technical and vocational institutions. Around 14% completed vocational training as the highest level of education. Similarly, the 2014 Labour Force Survey registered that only 5% of youth had participated in vocational training, and 6% had served apprenticeships. Among youth who had undertaken vocational training, the average number of years spent in training was 2.1 years.⁶⁴

Official data on government expenditure on vocational education in Sierra Leone are scarce. Still, the National TVET Policy Framework argues that the TVET sector needs to be better financed by the government and adequately address its stated objectives. Media listed that the government invested US\$22 million in 2019 to develop TVET,

with recognition of the area being neglected for a long time.⁶⁵

The Covid-19 pandemic turned industries' apprenticeships abruptly closed. Generally, the TVET sector suffered since the education models have relied heavily on face-to-face learning using equipment and other experiential learning strategies. These learning standards do not lend themselves easily to online interventions and, as such, are affected by school closures.

The government aims to improve the quality of tertiary education with the focus shifting to TVET to enhance youth employability. A recent Sierra Leone Education Sector Analysis found that there is still an urgent need to modify curricula to meet current labour market demands regarding skills. Only 40% of TVET institutes offer programmes that are relevant to economic demands.⁶⁶

TVET in Sierra Leone covers formal and non-formal programmes. The formal system delivered by different providers at various qualification levels needs to be more cohesive and coordinated. In non-formal TVET programmes, public institutions, NGOs, and private schools offer employment-oriented TVET programmes to different target groups, such as school leavers, employed people, and school dropouts. These programmes have yet to be systematically delivered. Informal (on-the-job) training is typical but needs a recognised systematic assessment and certification system. Traditional apprenticeships in the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sector are also a player, but the information needs to be more transparent on this training environment's scope and quality.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has registered 380 TVET institutions, and the total enrolment of TVET students was 27,055. Of these, 9,848 (36%) were males, and 17,207 (64%) were females. Besides, there are 1,718 teachers, of which 611 (36%) were males and 1,107 (64%) were females. The western area has the highest enrolment and the number of institutions, whilst the northern region has the least.⁶⁷ Additionally, about one hundred or more institutions were not registered

and outside the scope of ministerial regulation and quality control.⁶⁸

Sierra Leone's firms offering formal training programmes were 22% of their permanent, full-time employees in 2017, in line with Liberia (23%) and hovering above Guinea (16%). Formal firms continue being a small group compared to the widespread informal micro and small enterprises.

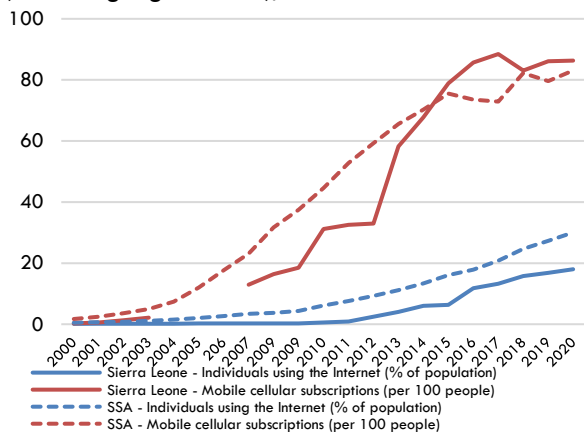
The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) introduces disruptions in the labour market: job losses due to digitisation are becoming more urgent, just as upskilling and retooling are putting pressure on the TVET system. The Ministry of Information and Communications is responsible for the Information Technology, Telecommunications, Broadcasting, media, and postal sectors in Sierra Leone. The ministry envisions within the context of the New Direction programme that aims at Sierra Leone will become a digitally inclusive society with information and communications technology (ICT) by 2028 as the means to unleash the innate potential of every citizen to leapfrog the country's socio-economic development. To achieve the above strategic vision, the sector requires critical interventions to enhance its central role as the enabler of economic growth and social progress.⁶⁹

Sierra Leone's ICT status lags behind other African countries; for example, most schools need a proper ICT infrastructure and ICT access, a challenging learning environment, and teacher qualification and motivation. Other limiting factors for ICT are rudimentary power networks and the internet, attitude, and poor ICT knowledge and skills. The country has a shortage of young ICT specialists and a labour shortage of young graduates with specific technical and soft skills required within the ICT industry. These circumstances have stalled the evolution of the business process outsourcing (BPO) market in Sierra Leone, contrasting with Ghana's fast-growing BPO market.

Although the underdeveloped ICT education system, Sierra Leone's population has experienced a growing application for ICTs aspects during the last two decades. For example, individuals using the

internet increased from 0.6% in 2010 to 18% of the population in 2020, scoring below the sub-Saharan African (excluding high-income) average (30%) even in the closest neighbouring countries. The country's mobile cellular subscription demand soared from 13 in 2007 to 86 per 100 people in 2020, superseding the sub-Saharan African average (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Individuals using the Internet (% of population) and mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) in Sierra Leone and sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income), 2000-2020



Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Sierra Leone steps ahead in developing and expanding the national social protection system. The country has ratified some international conventions, including one out of fifteen up-to-date ILO Social Security conventions, i.e., the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (C102), signed in 2022. They further endorsed two fundamental conventions concerning occupational safety and health in 2021 (see Appendix Table 16).

Sierra Leone's social protection legal framework links to social assistance and insurance that benefit the formal sector. The country needs a broader comprehensive legal framework for the social protection floor, including healthcare. The main social protection legal context is summaries below:

- Sierra Leone's 1991 constitution contains vague provisions for social protection, mainly

protecting the rights of older persons and persons with disabilities in care, welfare, and educational opportunities.

- The National Social Security and Insurance Trust of 2001 made it compulsory for every worker to contribute to the scheme.
- Persons with Disability Act of 2011 sets social protection programmes for persons with disabilities, and the promotion and protection of their rights have improved considerably with the act's enactment.
- Child Rights Act of 2012 and three gender acts protect the rights of children and women.
- The Health Insurance Act of 2016 provides schemes to ensure universal health coverage.

It was not until 2011 the government approved its first-ever National Social Protection Policy (NSPP), followed by the Agenda for Prosperity (A4P) 2012–2018, which pledged to provide a social safety net for vulnerable citizens and linked to the national budget. The NSPP was revised in 2017 to align with disaster-response strategies. This policy framework promotes labour market interventions, social insurance, and assistance for parents of new-borns, those injured at work, and surviving relatives to deceased breadwinners, retired, unemployed, disabled, and sick persons. The initiatives have been ad-hoc and fragmented. For instance, numerous labour regulations seek to balance job creation and social protection, but they remain weakly enforced and with meagre coverage.

The Medium-term National Development Plan for 2019–2023 aims to expand social assistance to cover 30% of the vulnerable population and promote the revised NSPP to reflect new vulnerabilities. The government announced plans for enshrining social protection into law, supported by a national strategy and action plan. In addition, Sierra Leone officially appointed in July 2019 focal points for promoting the Tripartite Declaration of Principles on Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) and applying its principles, including representation from SLLC and SLEF.

The leading social security institution in the country is the National Social Security Insurance Trust (NASSIT). The Board of Trustees comprises 15 persons, including representatives from the SLLC, the Sierra Leone Teachers Union, and the SLEF. Generally, trade unions have been involved in the advocacy and governance of social protection. NASSIT needs to harmonise the multiple pension laws since the current framework creates opportunities for specific categories of pensioners to receive several pension payments from the same Consolidated Revenue Fund. Another urgent issue is to extend social protection to the informal economy. The government, through NASSIT, representatives of employers' and workers' organisations kickstarted a new initiative in 2022 to improve this stance.⁷⁰

Sierra Leone spends less than 1% of its GDP on social assistance. It is lower than the regional average (1.5%), but the spending on programmes has expanded in the last few years.⁷¹

The central social protection schemes operate in Sierra Leone are summarised below:

- NASSIT is the mandatory occupational social insurance scheme. It is funded by contributions of workers and employers, covering three main contingencies: old age, invalidity, and death. Its membership rate is low, with around 8.5% of the total employment (74% of employees). The low coverage echoes the widespread informal economy. The NASSIT scheme's enrolment is geared toward formal workers costing 15% of their monthly earnings. Still, not in synch with the informal workers' incentives.⁷²
- The Social Safety Net (SSN) scheme provided income support for extremely poor households. Its coverage is limited to around 12% of the poor in 2022.
- The National Health Insurance Scheme was launched in 2018 to ensure universal health coverage. The scheme initially covers primary health care, including cholera and malaria. It would later extend to secondary health care. It substitutes the current cash-and-carry regime, which requires patients to pay for their healthcare directly.

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered an expansion of social protection programmes in Sierra Leone to tackle the shock. The National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) provided cash and in-kind support to extremely poor persons with disabilities (PWDs) in two tranches to coincide with the three-day lockdowns. The government subsequently introduced two emergency cash transfer programmes to support other vulnerable households. These initiatives' coverage was low. Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic cut the progress towards extending social security coverage in both the formal and informal sectors. For instance, NASSIT's legal framework side-lines informal workers, except as voluntary members, and this group lost their incentive to continue contributing during the pandemic. NaCSA also held sessions during 2022 to engage stakeholders in developing a draft Social Protection Bill.

Generally, the social protection coverage of Sierra Leone is meagre. For instance, just 4.4% of the population was covered by at least one social protection benefit in 2020, almost nine percentage points lower than the Western Africa average (see more details of the social protection scopes in Table 11). The country's SDG target of implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all continues to be a major challenge (see Appendix Table 13, Indicator 1.3.1).

Table 11: Proportion of population covered by social protection in Sierra Leone, %, 2020

Group	Coverage
Persons covered by at least one social protection benefit	4.4%
Persons above retirement age receiving a pension	7.0%
Unemployed receiving unemployment benefits	0.0%
Employed covered in the event of work injury	6.1% *
Children and households receiving child and family cash benefits	0.8%
Vulnerable persons covered by social assistance	1.4%

* Year: 2019.

Source: International Labour Organization, SDG labour market indicators.

Sierra Leone’s health expenditure has been very high compared to the neighbouring countries, reaching 13% of GDP on average during the 2010s (even skyrocketing to 20% in 2014/2015 due to the Ebola pandemic). Also, current health expenditure per capita rose from US\$32 in the 2000s to US\$73 on average in the 2010s. In 2019, it was significantly higher than the closest neighbouring countries but lower than the sub-Saharan African average. The growing health expenditure per capita in Sierra Leone supported some considerable health improvements: the under-five mortality rate dropped from 225 to 108 per 1,000 live births from 2000 to 2020; it stood higher than the neighbouring countries; by the same token, the Universal Health Service coverage increased from 30 in 2010 to 39 index on 2019 (Table 12).

Table 12: Status of expenditure on health and social contribution in Kenya and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), 2010-2019 average

Service	Sierra Leone	SSA
Total health expenditure, % of GDP	13%	5.2%
Current health expenditure per capita	US\$ 73	US\$ 89
Universal Health Service coverage index (2019)	39 *	-

* Coverage index for essential health services (based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, noncommunicable diseases and service capacity and access). It is presented on a scale of 0 to 100.

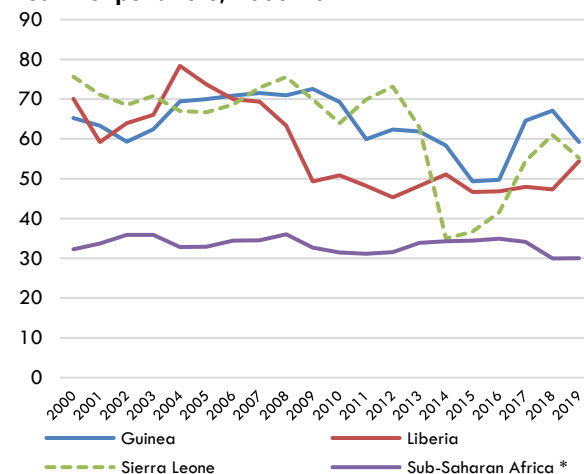
Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Sierra Leone had no comprehensive social protection for healthcare. According to the Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019, 97% of the population aged 15-49 do not have health insurance coverage. Those insured are mainly those with more than secondary education. Instead, non-contributory health services functions turned the most significant component of government expenditures on social assistance since 2015, driven by the rapid expansion of the Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI). Other health initiatives following the 2014-2015 Ebola crisis include a universal free malaria treatment scheme. The National Action Plan for Health Security 2018-2022 and the Road Map for Universal Health Coverage outline activities to accelerate the attainment of Health Security in the country and significantly contribute to the regional

and global health security standards. At the beginning of the 2020s, the share of non-contributory health services decreased gradually while that of programmes to support education increased.⁷³

Figure 12 depicts Sierra Leone’s healthcare expenditure financed by private households’ out-of-pocket payments fell at the beginning of the 2010s, but it rebounded in the aftermath of the 2014-2016 Ebola pandemic. Currently, it is in with the closest neighbouring countries.

Figure 12: Out-of-pocket expenditure on health in Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries, % of current health expenditure, 2000-2019



* Excluding high income.

Note: Out of pocket expenditure is any direct outlay by households, including gratuities and in-kind payments, to health practitioners and suppliers of pharmaceuticals, therapeutic appliances, and other goods and services whose primary intent is to contribute to the restoration or enhancement of the health status of individuals or population groups. It is a part of private health expenditure.

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

The legal framework has been weak for women’s work after having children in Sierra Leone. However, based on recommendations, women employees entitled to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave were extended to 14 weeks in January 2023. The new regulations apply to all companies in the private sector that employ 25 or more people. It also includes civil service positions and Cabinet appointments. It does not include smaller businesses and those who are self-employed. Data are scarce for this regulation’s coverage. There is no paternity leave.

Sierra Leonean unemployed needs to receive regular unemployment benefits via insurance schemes. Other projects promote skills training for unemployed youth, coach youth with a skillset that advances their employability, and grant to youth business owners to preserve businesses from closing. These projects have relatively low coverage.

Sierra Leone's government implemented measures to counter the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and labour market. Studies found that

the government's response, especially since the State of Emergency was declared in 2020, was characterised by broad instances of rights violations. The prevention measures had significant implications for livelihood issues, including the impact of lockdowns on jobs and access to health care, food, water, education, as well as other social services.⁷⁴

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA

Table 13: Status of key Sustainable Development Goals in labour market related issues in Sierra Leone

Indicators	Value	Year	SDG Targets
1.1.1: Working poverty rate (percentage of employed living below US\$1.9 PPP).	43%	2021	By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than US\$1.9 a day.
1.3.1: The population effectively covered by a social protection system, including social protection floors.	4.4% *	2020	Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
5.5.2: Proportion of women in senior and middle management positions	22%	2018	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.
5.5.2: Proportion of women in managerial positions	36%	2018	
8.2.1: Annual growth rate of output per worker (GDP constant 2017 international \$ at PPP).	0.7%	2021	Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.
8.3.1: Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment.	88%	2018	Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, through access to financial services.
8.3.1: Women	94%	2018	
8.3.1: Men	81%	2018	
8.5.1: Average hourly earnings of employees (Local currency).	16,116 leone	2018	By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
8.5.2: Unemployment rate (Total, 15+)	3.2%	2018	
8.5.2: Unemployment rate (15-24 years)	3.6%	2018	
8.6.1: Proportion of youth (15-24 years) not in education, employment, or training).	8.9%	2018	By 2030, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training.
8.7.1: Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in economic activity (Total).	21%	2017	Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025, end child labour in all its forms.
8.1.1: Non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers	-	-	Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
8.8.1: Fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers.	-	-	
8.8.2: Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining)	0.74 **	2020	The exact measurement method and scoring for this indicator needs to be developed.
9.2.2: Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment.	4.1%	2018	Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries.
10.4.1: Labour income share as a percent of GDP.	42%	2019	Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

* Population covered by at least one social protection benefit (see more in Table 11). ** The value has a range from 0 to 10, with 0 being the best possible score (indicating higher levels of compliance with FACB rights) and 10 the worst (indicating lower levels of compliance with FACB rights based on ILO textual sources and national legislation).

Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Table 14: Status of SLLC's trade union declared members, 2022

No.	Trade unions	Number of members	Number of effective CBAs	Approximate number of workers covered by effective CBAs
Formal				
1	Artisans Public Works of Services Employees Union	2,600	6	12,000
2	Clerical Banking Insurance Accounting Petroleum Union	3,010	7	15,000
3	Construction Workers Union	2,500	1	8,000
4	Electricity Employees Union	2,200	1	20,000
5	Hotel Food Drinks Tobacco Entertainment Workers Unions	580	2	14,000
6	Union of Mass Media, Financial Institutions, Chemical Industries & General Workers	1,500	2	13,000
7	Maritime & Waterfront Workers Union	1,500	1	4,500
8	Municipal & General Government Employees Union	1,000	2	3,000
9	National Union of Civil Servants	1,500	1	8,000
10	National Union of Forestry & Agricultural Workers	1,500	3	8,000
11	Sierra Leone Fishermen's Union	1,600	1	3,000
12	Sierra Leone Dockworkers Union	1,500	1	4,000
13	Sierra Leone Health Services Union	4,000	1	16,000
14	Sierra Leone National Seamen's Union	1,550	1	1,500
15	Sierra Leone Teachers' Union	36,000	1	40,000
16	Sierra Leone Union of Postal & Tel. Employees Union	1,054	1	2,500
17	Sierra Leone Reporter Union	450	-	-
18	Sierra Leone Union of Security, Watchmen & Gen. Workers	3,200	2	5,000
19	Skilled & Manual Productive Workers Union	810	4	1,300
20	United Mine Workers Union,	1,602	1	6,000
21	Union of Railway Plantation, Minerals, Industry & Construction	300	1	1,000
22	Sierra Leone Port Authority Senior Staff Association	82	-	-
Informal				
23	Indigenous Petty Traders Association	55,000	-	-
24	Indigenous Photographers' Union	1,000	-	-
25	Sierra Leone Artisanal Fishermen's Union	17,106	-	-
26	Sierra Leone Traders Union	105,000	-	-
27	Sierra Leone Musicians Union	500	-	-
28	Sierra Leone Bike Riders Union	120,000	-	-
29	Motor Drivers & General Transport Workers Union	50,000	1	1,000
30	Union of Timber Factory Owners & Workers	1,237	-	-
31	Sierra Leone Commercial Tricycle Riders Union	700	-	-
32	Sierra Leone Technicians Union	700	-	-
33	Home and General Workers Union	1,500	-	-
34	Omolankay Whellbarrow & Porters Union	1,000	-	-
Total		423,781	41	185,800

Source: Sierra Leone Labour Congress.

Table 15: List of approved labour-related legislation in Sierra Leone, 2014-2023

Type of legislation	Legislation
2014	
General provisions	Sierra Leone Correctional Service Act, 2014 (No. 5 of 2014).
	Companies (Amendment) Act, 2014 (No. 9 of 2014).
Education, vocational guidance and training	Polytechnics (Amendment) Act, 2014 (No. 7 of 2014).
	Universities (Amendment) Act, 2014 (No. 6 of 2014).
Specific categories of workers	Petroleum Regulatory Act, 2014 (No. 3 of 2014).
	Petroleum (Exploration and Production) (Amendment) Act, 2014 (No. 2 of 2014).
2015	
General provisions	National Commission for Social Action (Amendment) Act, 2015 (No. 3 of 2015).
Equality of opportunity and treatment	Sierra Leone National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2016-2020.
2016	
General provisions	National Civil Registration Act, 2016 (No. 14 of 2016).
	Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2016 (No. 11 of 2016).
	Constitution of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, 2016 (No. 10 of 2016).
	Sierra Leone Small and Medium Development Agency Act 2016 (No. 2 of 2016).
Elimination of child labour, protection of children and young persons	National Youth Service Act 2016 (No. 4 of 2016).
Social security (general standards)	National Social Security and Insurance Trust (Amendment) Act, 2016 (No. 7 of 2016).
2017	
General provisions	Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2017 (No. 2 of 2017).
2018	
-	-
2019	
General provisions	Anti-Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2019.
	Anti-Money Laundering and Combating of Financing of terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2019 (No. 3 of 2019).
2020	
General provisions	The Public Procurement Regulations, 2020 (S.I. No. 5 of 2020).
Equality of opportunity and treatment	Stratégie régionale pour le VIH, la Tuberculose, les Hépatites B et C et les Droits de santé sexuels et reproductifs des populations clés de la CEDEAO.
2021	
-	-
2022	
General provisions	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act of 2022
2023	
General provisions	Employment Act 2023.
General provisions	Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers' Act 2023.
General provisions	Work Permit Act 2023.

Source: International Labour Organization, NATLEX, Sierra Leone; Sierra Leone Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

Table 16: Ratified ILO Conventions in Sierra Leone, December 2022

Convention		Ratification date
Fundamental Conventions		
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948 C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949	1961 1961
Elimination of all forms of forced labour	C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957	1961 1961
Effective abolition of child labour	C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	2011 2011
Elimination of discrimination in employment	C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	1968 1966
Occupational safety and health	C155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 C187 - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006	2021 2021
Governance Conventions		
Labour inspection	C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969	1961 Not ratified
Employment policy	C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964	Not ratified
Tripartism	C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	1985
Technical Conventions (Up-to-date)		
Wages	C094 - Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention, 1949 C095 - Protection of Wages Convention, 1949	1961 1961
Migration	C097 - Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 C143 - Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975	2021 2021
Social security	C102 - Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952	2022 *
Tripartite consultation	C150 - Labour Administration Convention, 1978	2021
Labour administration and inspection	C160 - Labour Statistics Convention, 1985	2022 *
Employment policy and promotion	C181 - Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997	2021
Seafares	MLC, 2006 - Maritime Labour Convention, 2006	2022 *
Specific categories of workers	C189 - Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)	2021

* The convention will enter into force on March 29, 2023.

Note: Fundamental Conventions are the eight most important ILO conventions that cover four fundamental principles and rights at work. Equivalent to basic human rights at work. Governance Conventions represent four instruments that are designated as important to building national institutions and capacities that serve to promote employment. In addition, there are 83 conventions, which ILO considers "up-to-date" and actively promotes.

Source: ILO, NORMLEX, Country Profiles: Sierra Leone.

Table 17: Ease of Doing Business in Sierra Leone, 2020

Topics	2020
Overall	163
Starting a Business	58
Dealing with Construction Permits	181
Getting Electricity	181
Registering Property	169
Getting Credit	165
Protecting Minority Investors	128
Paying Taxes	93
Trading Across Borders	165
Enforcing Contracts	108
Resolving Insolvency	162

Note: Doing Business 2020 indicators are ranking from 1 (top) to 190 (bottom) among other countries. The rankings talk much about the business environment, but do not measure all aspects of the business surroundings that matter to firms and investors that affect the competitiveness of the economy. Still, a high ranking does mean that the government has created a regulatory environment conducive to operating a business.

Source: The World Bank & IFC, Ease of Doing Business 2020 in Sierra Leone.

Table 18: Sierra Leone's current Education Policies, 2021-2025

Policies
• School Health Policy.
• National Policy on Radical Inclusion.
• Sierra Leone Code of Conduct for Teachers.
• National Teachers Policy for Sierra Leone.
• Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy.
• School Infrastructure and Catchment Area Policy.
• National School Feeding Policy.
• Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education Policy E-Book V.1.
• National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy

Source: Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education.

Table 19: Sierra Leone's key economic data, projections, 2019-2024

Values	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP (current, billion, US\$)	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.0%	4.2%
GDP per capita (PPP, 2017 international dollar)	1,705	1,637	1,670	1,676	1,696	1,744
Total investment (% of GDP)	12.5%	12.1%	11.2%	10.6%	11.0%	12%
Gross national savings (% of GDP)	-1.8%	5.3%	-3.7%	2.1%	3.3%	4.2%
General government expenditure (% of GDP)	21.3%	25.7%	28.3%	24.3%	22.5%	23.1%
Government gross debt (% of GDP)	72.5%	76.3%	79.3%	81.8%	78.1%	72%

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2022.

REFERENCE

- ¹ The World Bank, The World Bank in Sierra Leone, Overview, October 27, 2021.
- ² The World Bank, 2014-2015 West Africa Ebola Crisis: Impact Update.
- ³ The World Bank, World Development Indicators, GINI Index.
- ⁴ University of Notre Dame, ND-GAIN Index, Notre Dame Global Adoption Initiative.
- ⁵ Government of Sierra Leone, 2021 National Adaption Plan.
- ⁶ International Monetary Fund, Sierra Leone: Selected Issues, July 29, 2022.
- ⁷ Business Today, ICD, Sierra Leone sign MoU to develop Special Economic Zones Initiatives, July 4, 2014.
- ⁸ World Trade Organisation, Trade Policy Review: Sierra Leone, WT/TPR/G/303/Rev.1, January 10, 2017.
- ⁹ World Trade Organization, Trade policy review, 2017.
- ¹⁰ SLIEPA, Fiscal and financial incentive and special zones.
- ¹¹ Sierra Coffee Mills and WTO, Trade Policy Review, Sierra Leone, Minutes of the Meeting, WT/TPR/M/303/Add.1, May 16, 2017.
- ¹² SLIEBA, Sierra Leone: An Investor's Guide, 2019.
- ¹³ International Trade Union Confederation, Survey of violations of trade union rights, Sierra Leone, December 2022.
- ¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 2021.
- ¹⁵ IndustryAll, Tunis declaration calls for inclusion of labour provisions in the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, September 29, 2022.
- ¹⁶ ECOWAS, Treaty of the ECOWAS.
- ¹⁷ Africanews, Sierra Leone starts visa-free entry for ECOWAS, \$25 fee for AU citizens, 2019.
- ¹⁸ Isao Kamata, Labor Clauses in Regional Trade Agreements and Effects on Labor Conditions: An Empirical Analysis, IDE Discussion Paper No. 609, July 2016.
- ¹⁹ WTO, Trade Policy Review, Sierra Leone, WT/TPR/S/303/Rev.1, January 10, 2017.
- ²⁰ Mariama Jalloh, Country Report on Trade Unions and Social Security System in Sierra Leone.
- ²¹ ITUC-Africa, Sierra Leone Labour Congress Update On the Ebola Disease on Workers in Sierra Leone, 2014.
- ²² International Growth Center, The economic costs of the Ebola crisis are falling most heavily on the informal sector in Sierra Leone, January 2015.
- ²³ DTDA, Labour Market Profiles.
- ²⁴ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 2021
- ²⁵ Universidade do Porto, International Journal of African Studies, Strengths and weaknesses of African trade unions in the neoliberal period with a Sierra Leone case study, 2017.
- ²⁶ Universidade do Porto, International Journal of African Studies, Strengths and weaknesses of African trade unions in the neoliberal period with a Sierra Leone case study, 2017.
- ²⁷ World Economic Forum, Global Risks Report 2023, Global Risks Perception Survey 2022-2023.
- ²⁸ National Commission for Social Action, NaCSA and MLSS Ends Regional Consultation on the Development of the National Social Protection Bill, September 16, 2022.
- ²⁹ Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa, Responding to the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 in West Africa: A Trade Union Perspective, February 2021.
- ³⁰ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 2021.
- ³¹ International Labour Organization, Social Dialogue Report 2022: Collective Bargaining for an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient recovery, 2022.
- ³² Danish Trade Union Development Agency, Sierra Leone fordobler minimumsløn for lavest lønnede, 2015.
- ³³ ILO, Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises in Sierra Leone, 2019.
- ³⁴ U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018: Sierra Leone.
- ³⁵ International Trade Union Confederation, Global Rights Index 2022.
- ³⁶ International Trade Union Confederation, Survey of violations of Trade Union Rights: Sierra Leone, In practice, November 2022.
- ³⁷ Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, Sierra Leone: Communities affected by diamond mining

win right to sue OCTÉA Group companies over alleged human rights abuses, 2019.

³⁸ Nigerian Tribune, ITUC-Africa, OTUWA Express Concern Over Sierra Leone Crisis, Says Dialogue Only Path to Peace, August 23, 2022.

³⁹ Sierra Leone Telegraph, NGC calls for living wage not minimum wage for struggling teachers in Sierra Leone, April 26, 2022.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, Findings on the worst forms of child labor, Sierra Leone, 2021.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 2021.

⁴² U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 2021.

⁴³ Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census, Summary of Final Results: Planning a better future.

⁴⁴ The World Bank, Sierra Leone Economic Update: Leveraging SME Financing and Digitization for Inclusive Growth, June 2022.

⁴⁵ The Republic of Sierra Leone, National Migration Policy for Sierra Leone of 2022, Sierra Leone Immigration Department.

⁴⁶ Sierra Leone Government, National GCM Review Report 2022, Note Verbale, Ref: UN/IOM/101/DIRP.

⁴⁷ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Country Profile: Sierra Leone, December 2022.

⁴⁸ Migration Data Portal, Migration Governance Profile: Republic of Sierra Leone, December 2022.

⁴⁹ The Republic of Sierra Leone, National Migration Policy for Sierra Leone of 2022, Sierra Leone Immigration Department.

⁵⁰ International Monetary Fund, Shadow Economies Around the World: What Did We Learn Over the Last 20 Years?, IMF Working Paper, January 2018.

⁵¹ The World Bank, Quantifying the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic in Sierra Leone: Report on the First Wave of the Business Pulse Survey, 2021.

⁵² Ministry of Finance's Research and Delivery Division, The Impact of Covid-19 on Businesses in Sierra Leone: A Synthesis of various Surveys, Policy Brief, No. 1, September 2020.

⁵³ International Labour Organization, The Government of Sierra Leone Through NASSIT in collaboration with the ILO trains members of the technical and steering committee on the extension of

coverage to the informal economy, September 5, 2022.

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 2021.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Review of the national action Plan against the worst forms of child labour including child trafficking in Sierra Leone, 2021.

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child Review of Sierra Leone, 90th Pre-Session, July 2, 2021.

⁵⁷ World Bank Group, Women, Business, and the Law 2021: Sierra Leone.

⁵⁸ UN Women, Sierra Leone steps it up for gender equality, 2017.

⁵⁹ UNFPA, National youth service – Strategy and roadmap for implementation, 2018.

⁶⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Republic of Sierra Leone: Education sector analysis: assessing the enabling environment for gender equality: in brief, 2021.

⁶¹ The World Bank, School Hits the Airwaves: Sierra Leone Turns to Education Radio as a Response to COVID-19, May 13, 2021.

⁶² GIZ, Diagnostic study of the TVET sector in Sierra Leone, 2018.

⁶³ Ministry of Technical and Higher Education, National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy for Sierra Leone, September 2019.

⁶⁴ Sierra Leone Statistics, Sierra Leone 2014 Labor Force Survey Report, 2015.

⁶⁵ All Africa, Sierra Leone: 22 million dollars to strengthen technical, vocational education, 2019.

⁶⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Republic of Sierra Leone: Education sector analysis: assessing the enabling environment for gender equality: in brief, 2021.

⁶⁷ Ministry of Technical and Higher Education, National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy for Sierra Leone, September 2019.

⁶⁸ The World Bank, Sierra Leone Skills Development Project, 2018.

⁶⁹ Ministry of Information and Communications, About us, Background of the ministry, December 2022.

⁷⁰ International Labour Organization, The Government of Sierra Leone Through NASSIT in collaboration with the ILO trains members of the technical and steering committee on the extension of coverage to the informal economy, September 5, 2022.

⁷¹ Macroeconomics Trade and Investment Global Practice, World Bank Group, Sierra Leone Programmatic Public Expenditure Reviews 2021: Social Assistance Programs, 2021.

⁷² DTDA, Mapping of Danish Trade Union Development Agency's partners' support to and influence on Social Protection schemes, 2022.

⁷³ Macroeconomics Trade and Investment Global Practice, World Bank Group, Sierra Leone Programmatic Public Expenditure Reviews 2021: Social Assistance Programs, 2021.

⁷⁴ Irish Aid, Sierra Leone's Response To Covid-19: Implications for Human Rights, Livelihood and Governance, 2021.