

Review of the Sierra Leone National Youth Policy

Client

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Integrated
Projects Administration Unit/Youth Employment Support Project
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and National Youth Commission and the World Bank

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examinations
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DYCs	District Youth Councils
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPs	International Cooperation Partners
ICT	Information Communication Technology
MAFFS	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MM	Ministry of Mines
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Childhood Affairs
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSE	Micro Small Enterprises
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MYES	Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports
NYEAP	National Youth Employment Action Plan
NYPSC	National Youth Policy Steering Committee
PPPs	Public Private Partnerships
RDCs	Rural District Councils
SC	Steering Committee
SCP	Smallholder Commercialisation Programme
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TVET	Technical Vocational Education Training
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examinations

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Defining the Youth in Sierra Leone

The National Youth Policy and the National Youth Commission Act 2010 define youth as those between 15 and 35 years of age. The group constitutes about 34 percent of Sierra Leoneans or around 2 million of the estimated 5.9 million people¹. The total number of the population below the age of 35 years is about 73 percent, the majority of which are under 15 years.

The Youth² may be categorized as follows (*classifications to be reviewed*):

- i. Rural and Urban
- ii. Formally employed and informally employed (for example, *ghetto youth, bike riders*);
- iii. Organized and Unorganized
- iv. Educated and Uneducated, more affluent and less affluent
- v. In-School and Out-of-School, (including drop-outs)
- vi. Skilled, Semi-skilled and Unskilled
- vii. Male and Female (ages 15 – 19; 20 – 29; 30 – 35); (*Adolescents under 15 years are classified under children*);
- viii. Physically challenged (disabled) and able-bodied

1.2 Challenges Facing the Youth – Across Sectors

The major challenges facing young people that the National Youth Policy seeks to address are:

- i. Unemployment and under-employment resulting from inadequate and inappropriate training for the job market; (mismatches between demand and supply of labour);
- ii. Lack of access to quality education for the youth in the educational sector with attendant inadequate or inappropriate preparation and training for the formal job market;

¹ GoSL/Statistics Sierra Leone, Population Projections, 2012.

² Youth in Sierra Leone are legally defined as young women and men aged 15 – 35 years; the United Nations considers as youth those in the age bracket 15 – 24 years.

- iii. Low investment in technical vocational education (TVET), resulting in high mismatch with labour market demands. Lack of policy coherence on TVET is also an aggravating factor;
- iv. A large proportion of youth is in crowded cities, like Freetown, which also has a huge informal sector, largely survivalist and marked by low returns. A large percentage of youth is engaged in petty trading;
- v. High incidence of drug and substance abuse amongst youth; and
- vi. Failure to address gender issues amongst the youth, for example, sexual and reproductive issues facing young girls and women. Key issues that are specific to female youth are as follows:
 - a. Teenage pregnancies: With 68 percent of girls have their first pregnancy between the ages of 12-20 for girls, teenage pregnancy is a major national challenge;
 - b. High level of transactional sex amongst young girls, partly as a coping strategy against poverty;
 - c. Growing risk of contracting HIV and AIDS by youth, in particular young girls, and;
 - d. High vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections (STIs/STDs), in particular, risk of contracting the HIV virus.

1.3 Youth Participation in National Development

Key issues linked to youth participation in development include the following:

- i. Weak structures to support youth participation in development. Heavy investment required in terms of training, resource mobilisation to build capacities of youth serving decentralised structures.
- ii. Growing incidence of youth involved in violent conflicts (politically instigated)
- iii. Largely due to rural-urban migration accelerated during the war, increasing poverty and attendant socio-economic challenges, there has been an erosion of traditional social support systems for youth with weakened role of the family leading to moral decay, reduced integrity and low self-esteem.
- iv. Inadequate recreational, sporting and counselling facilities
- v. Inadequate opportunities to nurture diverse youth talent from tender age, from primary, junior and senior secondary, through to higher education institutions.
- vi. Inadequate mentoring opportunities which lead to weak moral, social, cultural and religious values in the youth.

2. THE YOUTH POLICY VISION

The Vision of the National Youth Policy is:

Nationally conscious and patriotic youth empowered to contribute positively to the development of Sierra Leone.

2.1 Goal

The main goal of the Youth Policy is to contribute to creating a more conducive environment in which youth development and empowerment interventions can sustainably achieve their desired objectives and realise its long term outcomes.

In pursuit of the goal:

- The GoSL and development partners recognise that a vibrant youth sector is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable social, economic and political security amongst all the categories of the Sierra Leonean people.
- To that effect, the GoSL and stakeholders shall support the integration of youth into the mainstream of national, regional and international development initiatives.
- The GoSL and development partners shall maintain a level playing field for youth, where feasible breaking all barriers that have kept youth historically marginalised. The aim will be to develop and maintain an environment in which sustainable youth programmes can thrive and be engineered to enable the youth realise their full potential.

To realize the vision the following objectives will be pursued:

- i. Empower and actively involve the Sierra Leonean youth in a variety of re-designed or re-organised productive activities, in both rural and urban areas;
- ii. Enable Sierra Leonean youth of all categories develop their full potential and self-esteem through approaches that enhance innovation and youth talent;
- iii. Institutionalize youth participation at all levels of the decision making process, from central to decentralised level, to ensure the nurturing of democratic and productive culture;
- iv. Enable the youth share, acquire and transfer knowledge, expertise, and experience through national, regional and international networks and peer-learning as well as through improved use of information communication technology (ICT);

- v. Nurture the development of a new breed of youth, which is ready to serve through volunteerism, through to community level; and
- vi. Inculcate in the youth a new identity based on self-reliance, patriotism, nationalism.

3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 Principles and Values

3.1.1 The key principles of the National Youth Policy are as follows:

BROAD BASED YOUTH EMPOWERMENT *	The GoSL and development partners will promote youth-centred broad-based development, including equal access to resources and opportunities, regardless of ethnic, political, religious, social, economic, cultural background and gender.
VOLUNTEERISM *	Cultivating the spirit and practice of volunteerism amongst the youth
INNOVATION or CREATIVITY *	Promote innovation amongst the youth to take up new opportunities in all sectors, while building on existing options
DIVERSITY	Promote diversity of youth talent and potential for different categories of youth and at different levels, regardless of their status.
NON-VIOLENCE AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE	The youth will endeavour to work in a non-violent manner, promote peaceful co-existence, even amongst people with divergent backgrounds or views
PATRIOTISM	Love for country should be inculcated as a core value in the youth, commitment to nation-building.
SELF RELIANCE	As future leaders, the youth should be imbued with the spirit of self-reliance to harness their potentials, creativity and initiative.
HONESTY AND INTEGRITY	Honesty and Integrity are imperative for the youth in their personal and national development.
PARTICIPATION	The views of the youth and their participation in national development will be sought. The Government and other stakeholders will consciously and consistently involve young people in

	decision making at every level.
LEADERSHIP	The youth must be challenged with opportunities to actively lead in matters that affect them, their communities, and the nation.
GOOD GOVERNANCE	The Government and other stakeholders will demonstrate principles of good governance such as accountability, transparency, and integrity.
GENDER MAINSTREAMING	The Government and other stakeholders will actively promote gender mainstreaming in the implementation of all policies and programmes.
DISABILITY AND MARGINALISATION*	<i>The Government and other stakeholders recognises the existence of different categories of youth, including the disabled, out-of-school, employed, under- employed and unemployed, both rural and urban</i>
NETWORKING FOR DEVELOPMENT*	Government and other stakeholders will promote the building of strong networks for youth development at local, national, regional and international levels
COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT*	<i>The Government and other stakeholders shall consciously and consistently pursue partnerships with the youth, targeting them in programmes of MDAs, national and international cooperating partners, ensuring synergy in strategy and programme development and social cohesion</i>

4. KEY STRATEGIES AND AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Guided by the National Development Plan, An Agenda for Prosperity, Vision 2020, Sector Development Plans (to be reviewed), consultations with stakeholders, the Youth Policy addresses a number of critical areas for comprehensive youth empowerment.

4.1 Sierra Leone Youth Policy Review – Intervention Areas

1. Decent Youth Employment – generation of decent jobs in both formal and Informal sector, including self-employment.
2. Youth Sensitive Policies, Enabling Legal and Regulatory Environment.
3. Enabling Micro and Small Enterprises Development Policy.
4. Youth in the Agricultural Sector/Agri-business Value Chains.
5. Education and Skills Training
 - a. Primary, Junior Secondary, Senior Secondary education
 - b. Informal education and training
 - c. Higher Education Institutions, Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges
 - d. Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET)
6. Science, Technology and Innovation (National System of Innovation)
7. Entrepreneurship Development
8. Building new entrepreneurial culture amongst the youth.
9. Information, Communication Technology (ICT)
10. Gender Mainstreaming
11. Youth and Management of the Environment
12. Health Promotion
 - a. HIV and AIDS
 - b. Drugs and Substance Abuse
 - c. Sexual and Reproductive Health
 - d. Young people with disability
13. Youth Participation in Development – Governance, Democracy and Leadership
14. National Youth Service/Volunteerism
15. Networks and Partnerships for Development

4.1.1 Generating Decent Employment for the Youth

Observing that stabilization of macro-economic indicators by itself is insufficient to promote and address the growing challenge of youth unemployment, the GoSL will put in place other practical measures to boost the creation of decent employment for young women and men.

As part of broader employment generation plan, priority will be given towards implementation of the National Employment Policy and National Youth Employment Action Plan (NYEAP), already developed. As a follow-up to the development of the National Employment Policy and the NYEAP, the GoSL and other stakeholders will support formulation of comprehensive, inclusive and engendered pro-employment job-rich growth targets for the country.

The GoSL and development partners will provide practical forms of support to the Sierra Leone National Youth Employment Action Plan, ensuring that youth employment issues are mainstreamed in all key sectors.

In this regard, the GoSL will also promote the deepening of establishment of public-private partnerships, ensuring that adequate measures are taken to implement the NYEAP.

4.1.2 Design and Adoption of Youth Sensitive Policies

Youth sensitive policies will be designed and implemented at sector and sub-sector levels, including an enabling legal and regulatory environment. The GoSL and development partners will support review of existing sector, sub-sector and national policies and strategies, as well as development of new sector policies with a view to enabling youth issues to become adequately mainstreamed within the sector plans and national development plans. Innovative public private partnerships (PPPs), backed up by a substantial resource mobilization strategy, will be formed in support of this priority national agenda. There shall be regular review of labour market realities and the legislative environment of the country as these affect employment of young women and men in both the formal and informal sector.

4.1.3 Enabling Micro and Small Enterprises Development Policy

Support to designing and implementation of a youth-oriented micro, small enterprises (MSE) policy: As part of a broad based strategy to support youth empowerment, the GoSL and development partners will support the development of a youth focused MSE policy, targeted at strengthening the capabilities of micro, small enterprises, in both the informal and formal sectors. Through new forms of public private partners, mechanisms of fast-tracking transition of large numbers of young women, men and children, from informal sector based survivalist low remunerating activities, which include, petty trading, and *other welfarist activities*, to higher return and more viable activities. The approach will also involve establishment of new entry points for youth to access viable business opportunities within various

sectors, and on the basis of priorities set in the NYEAP and the National Employment Policy. The GoSL and development partners will, in the process, endeavour to strengthen the technological capabilities³ of micro and small businesses in the country, in particular where large numbers of youth are engaged.

4.1.4 Support to the Agricultural Sector/Agri-business Value Chains

The agricultural sector has been identified in the National Action Plan on Youth Employment and the National Development Plan as a high potential area. Agro-based value chains are pivotal to economic empowerment of the Sierra Leonean youth, in terms of ability of the sector to absorb large numbers of young people, especially in rural areas.

The agricultural sector is an engine for growth of employment in Sierra Leone, providing the main source of employment and income for approximately 65 percent of the population in Sierra Leone. It contributes 46 percent of GDP. The performance of the agricultural sector is pivotal to the rate of socio-economic development and poverty reduction. Given the large numbers of Sierra Leoneans depending on agriculture, a variety of investment opportunities exist in downstream agro-based activities in agribusiness and processing of food and livestock products. Strategies that seek to increase productivity and returns to labour in agriculture are central to increasing productive employment for young people.

Being the main driver of poverty reduction in the short and medium term, the agricultural sector and agro-business sector has the potential to absorb large numbers of unskilled and semi skilled youth. In order to fully take advantage of and utilise that youth potential, the GoSL will take practical measures to promote youth involvement in agro-based value chains as these relate to available opportunities within various sub-sectors. This will be done in collaboration with the GoSL supported Smallholder Commercialisation Programme (SCP) currently being implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), with the support of various development partners.

4.2. Education Sector Development and Youth Empowerment

4.2.1 Addressing the challenge of out-school youth

With poverty identified as one of the major underlying causes of children dropping out-of-school, the GoSL and development partners will provide transparent, equitable, efficient and accountable resource allocation systems to address the issue. National and international development partners will be mobilised to provide material, technical and financial support to education programmes for vulnerable

³ Technological capabilities (TCs) are defined as the knowledge, skills and efforts required for firms to bring about an indigenous process of technological development. This can occur by increasing efficiency in the management of the enterprise value chain and improving the innovation capabilities of MSEs.

children and support national programmes set out by Government. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and other stakeholders working in education, child protection and social protection will be facilitated to develop joint criteria and guidelines, for the identification of out-of-school children and the provision of holistic programmes addressing the out-of-school challenge. To address the issue of youth dropping out of school, a two-pronged intervention that provides short, medium and long-term assistance in supporting marginalised families to improve their socio-economic status to ensure that their children continue with school would be adopted. A holistic approach that involves various sectors and key stakeholders will be employed to tackle the complex and overlapping issues of out-of-school children. Basic education programmes will be repositioned to target improving access to schools by the disadvantaged out-of-school children, including dealing with challenges of over- aged children.

In view of large numbers of children completing primary education remaining unable to access Junior Secondary School, the GoSL will give priority to construction of more Secondary Schools, training and recruitment of qualified teachers, as well finding ways of improving the quality of education generally and at all levels. Increasing the number of appropriately qualified teachers and the provision of textbooks and other teaching learning materials for increased access at Junior Secondary School level will be a priority for government.

In view of high failure rates for the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) and the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) being repeated in recent years, the GoSL will focus on measures to designed to improve performance in the BECE and WSSCE, ensuring that a mechanism established to monitor the extent to which the recommendations of the Education Commission are being implemented fully.

4.2.2 Effort to tackle high illiteracy levels

The GoSL and development partners will develop programmes to strengthen literacy levels of young people, taking note issues of gender, marginalisation factors and socio-economic status of different groups of youth. Practical support will be given to youth from basic education and training, primary and secondary education, through to more advanced training, such as higher education learning, universities, TVET and apprenticeship training.

4.2.3 Gender mainstreaming in adult literacy and access to education

Particular attention will be made towards ensuring a level playing field for the illiterate young women and men, strengthening programmes designed to meet the needs of marginalised young women and men, for example, in the area of vocational education and training and raising literacy levels generally.

Renewed effort to support improvement in pass rates for both girls and boys at both junior and senior secondary schools will be sustained, together with other qualitative aspects of education for girls, including entry into higher learning institutions such as universities. Ensuing improved enrolment for both girls and boys at JSS and SSS levels will continue to be a priority for government and its development partners in the education sector.

4.2.4 Higher/tertiary education

Governance structures and laws governing Higher Education Institutions will be reviewed to assess how they hinder or facilitate the institutions to perform their missions and objectives; ensure that appropriate legislation is put in place to encourage innovation and improvement of quality of higher education learning.

Financing education sector development: Government must continue to prioritise Education and Health sectors, in addition to forging strategic innovative public and private partnerships and other sustainable approaches: Given the low public financial base from which the GoSL draws its budget for the education sector and the limited number of development partners involved in education, a new strategy needs to be employed. Relating to Higher/Tertiary Education Institutions, the GoSL is encouraged to consider other innovative avenues of complementing the government's student grant scheme.

Stronger public and private partnerships will be nurtured, mobilising large mining and other private companies to invest a significant share of their profits in developing Higher/Tertiary Education Institutions and other priority areas within Education, Science, Technology and Innovation sectors. This could be deemed as part of the acknowledged community obligations of companies benefiting from the country's national resources, for example, access to agricultural land and mining rights.

Equal opportunities for all; gender mainstreaming and disability mainstreaming: The GoSL will ensure equity in access to higher education through its affirmative gender policy on female students in the sciences and engineering disciplines and continue to support entry into HEIs by students with disabilities.

4.2.5 Technical vocation education training (TVET) and the youth in Sierra Leone

- i. The GoSL will facilitate the redesign of TVET to ensure a new development approach for Sierra Leone which balances investment in infrastructure and relevant projects, with more significant investment in human resources development and upgrading. A two-pronged approach which focuses on deepening the national technological capabilities, including human resources, both in terms of quality and quantity, organizational and management skills will be adopted. The GoSI will have a strategic shift, with emphasis on developing a dynamic TVET system capable of meeting the challenges of a country in transition, to transformation and a more self-sustaining development phase. TVET development priorities would be in the following:

- ii. Finalisation of the TVET policy, with **implementation in place**, accompanied by a comprehensive resources mobilization strategy to support prioritised interventions.

- iii. **Focus on a Youth focused National Human Resources Development Plan**, on the basis of a new TVET Policy, and within the framework of the Education Sector Strategic Plan, incorporating development of a new-look TVET system and labour market-oriented education, skills and capacity development system. **Human resources development support networks**, focusing on effective public and private partnerships **and forging of stronger linkages between TVET demand and supply in the labour market**. A framework could be developed to establish a way in which private companies can invest in certain training programmes, focusing on areas for which there is definite demand, and where there is mutual benefits. Examples include, mining technology, technicians, engineers, middle level management programmes, business and marketing capacity development.

4.2.6 Science, technology and innovation - National system of innovation (NSI)

In the national youth policy framework, a strong proposal is made to place youth in the forefront of innovation⁴. Every country has a national system of innovation (NSI), which is the sum total of activities that contribute to innovations of any kind, whether as improved practices or as new products. When a deliberate, concerted and sustained effort is made to enhance the effectiveness and efficacy of the system through focused support and improvements in system design, based on the acceleration made possible in learning organisation mode, the system becomes a national system of innovation. The explicit intention of the National Youth Policy is to improve the lives of the country's youth. Innovation is perceived to achieve this in two ways: through progressively increasing youth-involving economic growth and enhancing participation of the youth in the economy.

Innovation, and the national innovation system that nurtures it, will be pivotal in realising the overall aim and policy objectives of the National Youth Policy. Within the framework youth national youth development and empowerment, the GoSL will ensure that the national system of innovation adequately supports a transition from strong reliance on a resource-and commodity-based economy to one that is characterised by value-adding and knowledge-intensive activities.

The GoSL will support the strengthening of PPPs in building the National System of Innovation (NSI), at all levels, with particular focus on micro and small firms, in which

⁴Innovation is the capacity to generate, acquire and apply knowledge to advance economic and social purposes. It includes both the search for frontier technologies driven by research and development (R&D), as well as the forms of learning and adaptation that might be market led or socially driven. Innovation is fundamentally uncertain, highly contextual and path dependent, but it is at the heart of moving the country from its present mix of resource- and efficiency-driven economic activity to one that is driven by the generation and application of knowledge. It is about doing new things in new ways.

large numbers of youth operate; with more opportunities available for more young people to be involved.

The GoSL and development partners will create an environment to make the NSI contribute more to wider inclusion of the youth in the mainstream economy and also with a view to reducing poverty levels, which also characterise youth nationally. In particular, new international development partnerships will be sought to promote the development of a strong national system of innovation⁵.

{Particular attention will be paid to adoption of innovative approaches to human resources and skills development for the youth; including those that gear them to access opportunities with higher levels of sophistication}.

4.3 Managing the Health of Sierra Leonean Youth

4.3.1 HIV and AIDS

Given that the youth in Sierra Leone are a high risk group and vulnerable to increased HIV rate of infection, the GoSL and development partners will scale up education and awareness programmes across all groups of the population, paying particular attention to addressing gender issues; tackling challenges relating to young women who are noted to be more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS than male counterparts. HIV and AIDS programmes will be mobilised to reach out to groups found to be least knowledgeable of the risk such as rural areas, where awareness campaigns have been less visible to date.

4.3.2 Sexual and reproductive health, teenage pregnancies

In view of teenage pregnancies being noted to be a major challenge amongst Sierra Leonean young girls/women, the consequences for young girls dropping out of school early and reducing their educational opportunities, substantial programmes will be developed to improve awareness and availability of contraceptives to ensure that young women are better able to manage their sexual reproductive health.

The GoSL and development partners will also support awareness and education interventions designed to eliminate the practice and remove the negative effects of FGM in affected communities and regions.

4.3.4 Substance and drug abuse

In view of the growing challenge of drug and substance abuse amongst young people in the country, the GoSL and other partners will monitor closely developments in substance and drug abuse, put in place mechanisms of exploring

⁵ The development of a strong national system of innovation, involving deepening the establishment of science technology and innovation capabilities of the country is critical if the country is to move forward to sustainably empower its youth from survivalist, informal sector activities to more dynamic regional and internationally competitive development path. A sound national system of innovation will contribute to the much needed transformation required for broad based empowerment of the young women and men of the country and lead to a more sustained development path marked with growth and national prosperity.

cost effective ways of tackling the challenge amongst youth, together with dissemination of relevant and accurate information on abused substances in Sierra Leone, with a view to taking timely and appropriate action.

4.3.5 Young people with disability

The GoSL and development partners will develop and promote practical interventions targeted at supporting the livelihood system and general welfare of disabled persons. The Disability Act (2012) will be backed up by sustained strategies of financial resource mobilization, capacity building and training, to support the key entry points for scaling up opportunities for disabled young people to have more decent livelihoods and lifestyle.

4.4 Youth Participation in Development

4.4.1 Search for innovative options

A variety of opportunities for youth participation in development on the basis of development best practice have been identified. They include establishment of functional management and organisational structures, effective strategies of managing youth-oriented sexual reproductive health issues through use of peer-to-peer educators, tackling the growing challenge of teenage pregnancies, laying adequate foundation to prepare youth for the world of work through structured internship schemes, use of youth as volunteers for community development work and as shall be determined through programmes supported by the yet to be finalised national youth service.

The GoSL and development partners will prioritise the establishment of broad-based partnerships centred on youth development. This will be undertaken with the view that successful interventions designed to tackle youth development challenges, in particular those related to the key issue of creation of decent employment for young women and men is dependent upon building substantial partnerships and alliances on a local, national, regional and global level. The National Youth Employment Action Plan, with its various intervention areas, will be used as instrument for the conversion of youth employment priorities into concrete action and to strengthen the coordination of youth relevant interventions, in particular productive activities.

The effective PPPs, the GoSL and development partners will scale up support for the capacity building of the National Youth Commission and all key decentralised youth structures at grassroots level. Examples include the District Youth Advisory Committees, District Youth Councils (DYCs) and Chiefdom/Zonal Youth Councils.

The GoSL and development partners will endeavour to learn from other countries involved in youth empowerment and in similar context, taking measures to scale up development best practice.

Strengthening of youth participation: Youth participation will be broadened through advocacy, awareness raising, sensitising youth on various issues, focusing on mind-set/attitudinal change, finding new ways of unleashing youth potential, and

involvement in non-traditional areas, including areas with higher levels of sophistication and where youth are generally not found or only scarcely involved. An example is Information Communication Technologies (ICT), where youth could lead in the development of the country to higher levels of sophistication, through targeted capacity building and training in areas with identified market need. Another area is in agro-based value chain development, where youth could be in the forefront of the transformation of the agricultural sector from its uncompetitive status to a globally competitive level.

Use of youth role models: Through NAYCOM and other institutional mechanisms, the GoSL and development partners will make use of youth role models to mobilise youth to become more interested in agriculture, creating an environment for the youth to move into higher value agro-based productive enterprises. A new-look agricultural sector will be established which offers diverse opportunities for the youth population.

4.4.2 National youth service - volunteerism

The GoSL and stakeholders will support the implementation of a National Youth Service⁶, which would focus on delivery in a number of key outcome areas as follows:

- i. Building and strengthening a culture of innovation amongst youth, designed to foster development of a new generation of youth with a new mind-set and capable of contributing more substantially to national transformation;
- ii. Holistic development of the youth, focusing on inculcating core values of discipline, integrity, honour, stature, patriotism, selflessness, among the young people and preparing youth to be more productive citizens; and
- iii. preparing young people for the world of work by strengthening their skills and enabling them generate new knowledge; promoting a culture of volunteerism that facilitate youth acquire first hand work experience

5. IDENTIFIABLE GROUPS UNDER THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

5.1 Broader perspective

In addressing the priority issues of the youth, special attention shall be paid to identifiable youth groups. In each of the target areas, government, stakeholders and other youth organisations will pay attention and emphasis to youth groups specified: Attention will be paid to priorities of various youth age groups, for examples, male or female youth from ages 15 – 19; 20 – 29; 30 – 35). The needs of adolescents under 15 years are classified under children, and would be referred to institutional mechanisms that handle issues pertaining to that group.

⁶ The process of finalizing a National Youth Service was at an advanced stage at the time of preparation of the new National Youth Policy.

5.2 Rural and urban youth

Facilitate equal access to employment opportunities by both rural and urban youth, ensuring balance of resource allocation by region.

5.3 Informally and formally employed, including self-employed youth

Ensure formation of stakeholder partnership to support, including business development services, for youth operating in the informal sector, such as ghetto youth, bike riders and rural youth involved in agro-based activities, youth in urban farming and marketing of commodities.

5.4 Skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled

Facilitate appropriate deployment of skilled and semi-skilled youth, opening up new opportunities through the National Youth Service and volunteerism activities, taking note of gender differences.

5.5 Youth with special talents

Provide mechanism to identify and nurture youth talent from an early age, opportunities of harnessing and utilizing the creative potentials of young persons who are gifted and talented with a view to enabling better use in national development.

5.6 Post-basic and secondary school drop-outs (junior/senior high schools)

Facilitate equal access to relevant skills and quality educational opportunities.

5.7 Youth in higher education and tertiary institutions

Prepare youth for gainful employment to become productive citizens, focusing upon strengthening linkages with social, political, and economic development partners.

5.8 Out-of-school, unemployed, under-employed, idle youth

Develop and implement interventions that will benefit this under-privileged category of youth, by identifying opportunities for self-employment and generation of decent work. Explore options for continuing education by this category of youth in non-formal environment and learning practical skills that open new opportunities that make the vulnerable youth to become productive.

5.9 Female youth

Advocate the elimination of all forms of discrimination and enhance protection from sexual harassment, physical violence and abuse, labour exploitation, as well as all other negative attitudes and cultural practices. The policy will protect and advance the interests and aspirations of female youth and provide them with dignity and motivation to work as equal partners promoting the national development agenda.

Ensure that young mothers are well catered for and a framework followed to encourage completion of at least secondary education.

5.10 Youth involved in drugs and substance abuse

Provide comprehensive counselling services for affected and vulnerable youth, including tackling the root causes, enabling them to adopt values that make youth better citizens.

5.11 Youth with disability

Uphold society's responsibility towards youth with disability and difficult health conditions.

6. RIGHTS OF THE YOUTH

6.1 The Rights of Sierra Leonean youth are enshrined in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991) and any treaty/convention related to the youth to which Sierra Leone is signatory, shall be respected and upheld by all stakeholders. In exercising these rights, the youth will be oriented to position themselves to assume the responsibilities that are expected of them.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 The State/Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports

The GoSL has provided a starting point to carry forward the youth empowerment agenda: The GoSL has made a start in tackling youth development issues in the country through the 2003 Youth Policy and the current policy review. The GoSL recognises the existence of formidable challenges within key sectors and MDAs where youth development issues need to be mainstreamed. The constraints include inherent organisational capacity, human and financial issues which negate the effectiveness, achievement of outcomes and sustainability of many interventions. The GoSL, in collaboration with its development partners will endeavour to address key issues which are known to hinder progress at both central and decentralised levels.

7.1.1 In this policy, the role of the state is to be the following:

- i. Ensure that the youth enjoy their fundamental rights enshrined in the 1991 Constitution.
- ii. Ensure that a comprehensive youth development framework is understood, implemented and used as a basis for all programming effort, ensuring proper coordination and synergy for all youth programmes and projects;

- iii. Create an environment in which financial, material and human resources are mobilised and allocated to youth development priorities in a transparent manner;
- iv. Ensure that an adequate monitoring and evaluation system is developed and implemented, accompanied by a sound tracking system to monitor achievement of desirable results or outcomes; *{Consideration will be made to ensure that alignment with the national monitoring and evaluation framework, where feasible, for example, in implementation of National Development Plan}*.
- v. Create an environment where effective PPPs are developed, with clear roles and responsibilities defined for each category of stakeholders; with roles of more significant players properly defined for synergy, cohesion and better integration; and
- vi. Provide exemplary leadership and a conducive environment for good governance, including in managing available national resources.

7.2 Parents/Guardians

7.2.1 Families need to create an environment that upholds cultural values, provide adequate guidance to enable the youth to have proper direction, equipping the youth for proper growth and development which makes them in a better position to contribute to their communities in tangible ways. The obligations of parents, in the policy, are to:

- i. Lay solid foundation for the youth to become productive citizens through responsible parenthood;
- ii. Provision of the physical and psychological needs of the youth, from more tender stages;
- iii. Provision of educational growth and development needs of the youth;
- iv. Provision of guidance and counselling for the youth;
- v. Training young people to make decisions and to understand the implications of choices made;
- vi. Training youth to have financial plans that will enable them to eventually become financially independent;
- vii. Treating the youth with dignity and respect; and
- viii. Open space for the youth to contribute towards their communities and eventually to national development, by encouraging participation in local community projects.

7.3 The Youth

7.3.1 The upholding of moral upbringing and making youth law abiding citizenship is deemed necessary. In this policy, the Sierra Leonean youth is expected to demonstrate:

- i. Uphold the country's traditional and cultural norms, including responsible behaviour towards peers, respect for adults, courtesy to disabled persons and those with health challenges;
- ii. Respect for and protection of public property;
- iii. Willingness to be involved in volunteerism service, assistance of people in need, without expecting payment always;
- iv. Respect for the rights and dignity of female youth;
- v. Non-participation in acts of violence, crime, exploitation, and in the oppression of vulnerable groups;
- vi. Participation in activities that protect and safeguard the environment; focus on both rural and urban areas;
- vii. Promotion of good Sierra Leonean culture and practices; and
- viii. Willingness to take up new opportunities and challenges, with an orientation towards innovation, doing things differently.

7.4 The Private Sector

7.41 The policy recognises the growing role of the private sector in national development. The private sector is expected to support the youth in the following manner:

- i. Be sensitive to the needs of youth, in particular inexperienced graduates, from universities and colleges; creating new opportunities for gainful employment;
- ii. On-the-job training and apprenticeship and/or internship opportunities, in particular in areas where there is clear demand, not excluding management training;
- iii. Enter into PPPs to advance programmes for the youth, in particular contributing financially and/or materially to support youth oriented micro and small businesses, in both rural and urban areas;
- iv. Support capacity building for umbrella associations for micro and small businesses for the youth, including sector based associations; and
- v. Support platforms that offer youth entrepreneurs business development services, targeted at up-scaling youth entrepreneurship.

7.5 Civil Society Organizations

7.5.1 The policy recognizes the role of CSOs, in particular youth serving organisations in providing training and capacity building to the youth through internships and other associations, assisting youth prepare to become more productive citizens. Within a broader perspective, the policy expects CSOs to provide the youth with the following services:

- i. Opening up new entry points for the youth to develop capacities in various areas priority areas to national development, through more diversified internships;

- ii. Facilitate resource mobilisation with international cooperation partners to support a more coordinated and systemic approach to youth empowerment, with a stronger results orientation;
- iii. Create opportunities for the youth to take part in leadership roles in society;
- iv. Through PPPs, strengthen decentralised youth structures to generate the skills required to establish sustainable youth organisations at community level;
- v. Ensure the establishment of safety nets for vulnerable youth at local community level; and
- vi. Contribute to creation of an environment in which youth empowerment programmes and projects can operate sustainably and be up-scaled to achieve up better results.

7.6 Religious Organizations and Traditional Authorities

7.6.1 The youth need to grow within a proper cultural context. The youth need to be guided to have the right moral compass that enables them to live responsibly as youth and in their adult-hood.

The policy envisages that Religious Organizations and Traditional Authorities, and associated structures will give their input providing moral guidance to the youth through the following ways:

- i. Provide religious and moral upbringing to the youth in the best traditions that are acceptable in Sierra Leonean culture and norms;
- ii. Through practical forms of support, the youth would be assisted to understand, appreciate and adopt acceptable national values and embrace the country's cultural heritage;
- iii. Strengthen understanding of the sanctity of the family unit through the strengthening of both the nuclear and extended families; and
- iv. Supporting the youth to implement the various "plans of action for youth empowerment" prepared by the international organizations.

7.7 International Cooperation Partners (ICPs)

7.7.1 This policy acknowledges the critical role that international cooperation partners have in national development and specifically with respect to youth empowerment programmes. The following roles and responsibilities are envisaged to be assumed by ICPs, as part of their contribution to successful implementation of the youth policy:

- i. Participate in a coordinated resource mobilisation and financing strategy for comprehensive youth development programmes, taking cognisance that ICPs have different thrusts, are differently structured and organised⁷;
- ii. Support interventions designed to unlock the potential of the youth, enabling better nurturing of youth talent, through investment in innovative programmes with high transformational possibilities;
- iii. Through different forms of technical assistance, support capacity building and training of decentralised youth structures, providing more visible and open platforms for consulting, communicating and interacting with the youth;
- iv. Provide platforms for sharing experiences on youth empowerment and development best practice, based on lessons learned internationally.

8. IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS

The GoSL will initiate a comprehensive resource mobilisation strategy for youth development interventions and empowerment, nationally. Innovative ways of resource mobilisation and doing business for sustaining youth development programmes in Sierra Leone will be adopted. The Youth Policy advocates for the establishment of a variety of practical interventions designed to uplift the wellbeing of the youth and to meet the needs of different youth groups.

The Ministry responsible for youth affairs shall facilitate and institute the establishment of a National Youth Policy Steering Committee (NYPSC), chaired by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and the NAYCOM Commissioner as Co-Chairperson.

Through a coherent advocacy plan, the NYPSC will ensure that the Youth Policy is well understood and mainstreamed in all key sectors, policies and programmes of MDAs. The NYPSC will comprise a wide variety of stakeholders, namely, key MDAs, such as MAFFS, Office of the Vice President, MTI, MEST, MoFED, MLSS, MoH, Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs (MSWGCA), CSOs and representative youth associations and youth-serving agencies. One or two ICPs may also be engaged, with observer status at the NYPSC level⁸.

8.1 The policy provides a framework for collective action, implementation coordination, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements for youth development among MDAs, youth organisations, CSOs and international cooperation partners and other stakeholders for youth empowerment.

⁷ It is envisaged that all youth development and empowerment interventions implemented through support of ICPs will be aligned to the National Youth Policy.

⁸ For sustainability, the Youth Policy stresses local ownership in its implementation and coordination arrangements.

8.2 The Ministry responsible for youth affairs will oversee the coordination, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and review of the National Youth Policy.

8.3 This shall be done in collaboration with NAYCOM but with the active participation of the youth and in collaboration with relevant MDAs, CSOs and other stakeholders;

8.4 The National Youth Commission shall carry out its core function including the under-listed:

- i. Mobilize and organize the youth for participation in a range of youth empowerment programmes and projects as shall be priorities in the National Action Plans;
- ii. Take leadership on resource mobilisation, ensure that decentralised youth structures are adequately resourced and capacitated;
- iii. In collaboration with the Ministry responsible for youth affairs, take leadership in the design of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system for youth empowerment and development activities.
- iv. Provide a platform for sharing of lessons learned on youth development activities, packaging the lessons to inform the youth and other stakeholders as necessary.

8.5 Youth Associations, including District Youth Committees (DYCs), Zonal Youth Committees and their associates, shall play a central role at national, regional district and local levels in the implementation of this National Youth Policy.

- i. They shall position themselves to work closely with NAYCOM and other stakeholders, including CSOs, ensuring that policy makers are kept informed on the views and aspirations of the youth, as well as emerging challenges confronting them.

8.6 Civil society organizations or non-governmental organizations, including community-based organizations (CBOs) play a central role in youth empowerment. CSOs are expected to do the following:

- i. Align all their programmes and project plans to new priorities set in the new National Youth Policy;
- ii. Review existing CSO interventions, ensuring stronger partnerships are forged in youth development planning, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation as envisaged in the policy;
- iii. Support resource mobilisation to compliment the effort of the NYPSC technical and financial support to projects, including training and capacity building of identified youth groups;

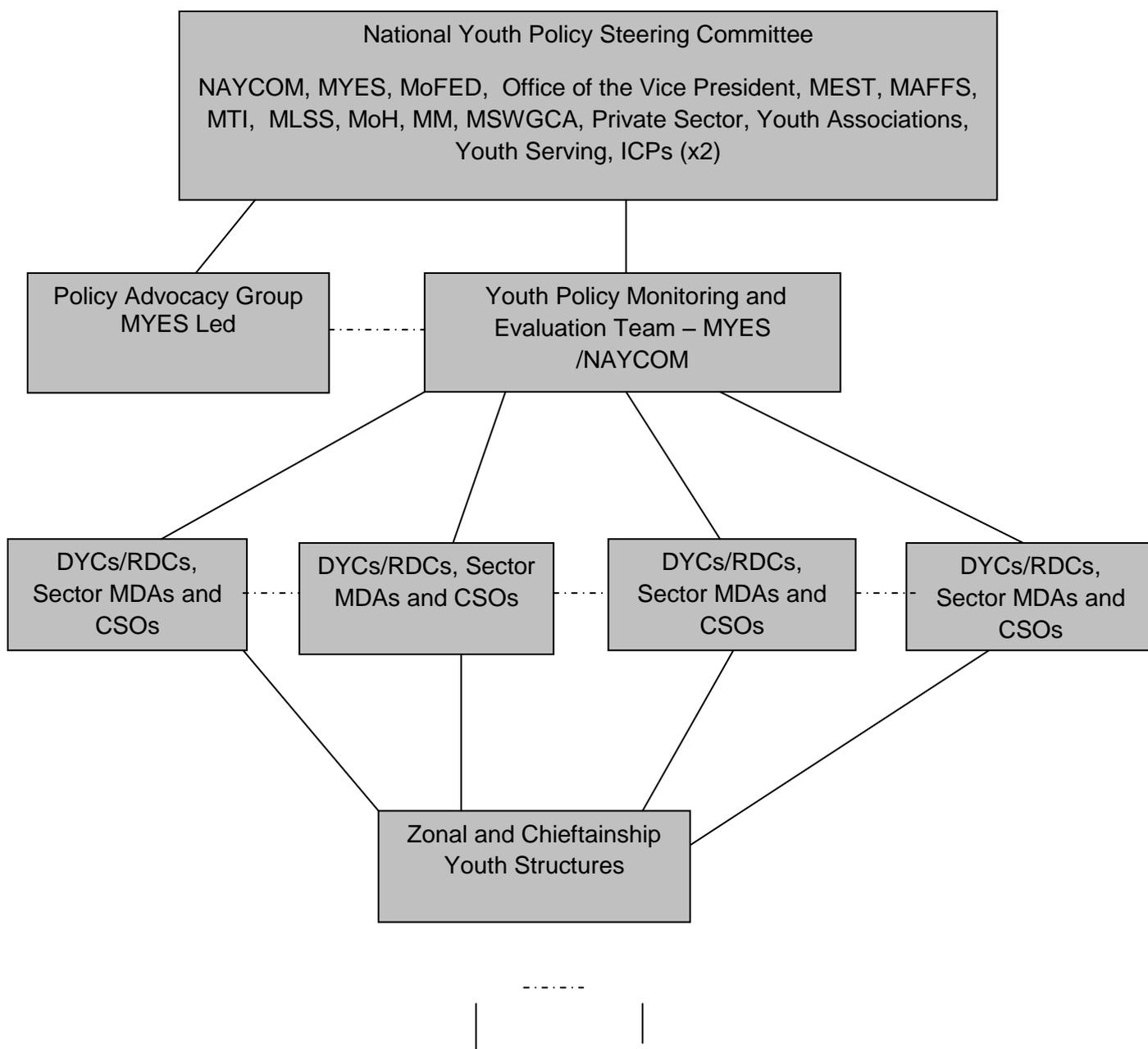
- iv. Promote programmes targeted at nurturing a new innovative or entrepreneurship culture for the youth, including mentorship programmes; and
- v. Provide regular reports of progress made to the NYPSC, highlighting achievement of results and challenges encountered; including making available to the NYPSC, independent external evaluations of projects.

8.7 This policy further recognizes the important complementary role of ICPs in national development and specifically in youth empowerment, notably in recent years. The policy, therefore, anticipates that ICPs will be assume the following roles:

- i. Providing technical and financial support to prioritised youth development sectors and programmes;
- ii. Promoting youth empowerment networks, including support to youth volunteerism and internships schemes; and
- iii. Promotion of youth development best practice, learnership schemes and exchange programmes.

The following is a draft organigramme designed to give an overview of the implementation and coordination arrangements for the National Youth Policy.

Diagram 1 : National Youth Policy Implementation Organigramme



Important Note

The implementation and coordination of the Youth Policy involves a package of intervention areas which are critical for youth empowerment and development. Cross-sectoral linkages will be taken into account with a view to achieving higher level impact.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

9.1 The Ministry responsible for youth issues, in collaboration with the National Youth Commission, shall monitor the implementation of the National Youth Policy to ensure that it fully responds to the development needs and aspirations of the youth, enabling improvement in the contribution by the youth to the broader development agenda.

9.1.1 The Ministry shall lead the process of reviewing the policy, as necessary (but at least once in every five years) and in line with policies of the GoSL. During the period of review, the prevailing policy shall be the policy of the country.

9.2 Action Plan

9.2.1 The National Youth Policy will be implemented largely through a mainstreaming approach⁹ and through the National Youth Employment Action Plan and other Action Plans that shall be developed to complement existing ones. The plans outline comprehensive strategies, projects and activities, time frames with respect to immediate, short, medium and long term that will need to achieve desired objectives.

9.2.2 The National Youth Commission in collaboration with relevant stakeholders has developed the National Youth Employment Action Plan for the implementation of this policy and will be reviewed as and when necessary. Additional dimensions are expected to be added to the Action Plan, to cover broader perspective and more youth development priorities.

10. CONCLUSIONS

Through this policy and other measures, Sierra Leonean youth will be encouraged to arise and become more self-determined, work harder, be a great deal more creative and entrepreneurial minded, unlock their potential and become more productive and focused citizens. Government and development partners will continue to support the capacity building of decentralised youth-led organisations and structures, at district and local levels, in particular those run by the youth themselves. This will enable them to link up with local economic development initiatives and local government authorities and the work of like-minded CSOs and CBOs.

⁹ The mainstreaming approach involves different MDAs carrying out the youth empowerment agenda by ensuring that a distinct budget and resource allocation is made to support youth development. An example involves the MAFFS, with its Smallholder Commercialisation Programme, which is envisaged to benefit significant proportion of emerging young farmers. The same applies with the MEST programmes and several other interventions. A clear monitoring and tracking system, which is enforceable through NAYCOM and the NYPSC can be adopted, in addition to other measures, at higher national level.

10.1 Having realised that the Youth are a key resource for the country, which can be nurtured in terms of potential and capability to become better positioned to support national transformation in a more impactful way, some in-roads have been made in the direction of youth empowerment in past 5 years. Whilst some encouraging successes have been recorded, for example, in the establishment of decentralised youth structures affiliated to the National Youth Commission, the battle to carry forward the youth development agenda to enable transition of large numbers of youth from the present lowly state to levels of desirable excellence remains a formidable challenge.

10.2 The National Youth Policy is grounded in the reality facing the Sierra Leonean youth and will guide and direct systemic youth empowerment interventions, enabling synergies to be forged through the combined effort of a wide variety of stakeholders. This is central to achievement of impact which has been elusive in many of our national programmes. The policy document captures the major issues, challenges and opportunities, accompanied by new ways of organising and working that are pivotal to youth development. Whilst the policy by itself is not a panacea to youth empowerment, because of the many challenges that need to be tackled first, it provides a fresh direction for all stakeholders involved in youth empowerment in the country.

10.3 In this Policy, Government declares the importance of results-oriented youth involvement in national development and emphasizes the complementary role of MDAs, CSOs and international cooperating partners, as well as other stakeholders, in unequivocal pursuit of youth development in Sierra Leone. Government therefore calls upon all development stakeholders to cooperate and establish sustainable networks of supporting the youth that will make the results that the Policy seeks to achieve become reality.

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