

ADAPTING THE SDGs TO SIERRA LEONE'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESSES: LESSONS FOR OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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SYNOPSIS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were launched by the United Nations (UN) on 25th September 2015 to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended on the 31st of December 2015. The UN is staging the first High Level Political Forum to review progress that has been made in the implementation of the new Agenda taking place in New York, in July 2016. The Forum will assess initial steps undertaken by member countries to integrate the SDGs into national development processes. Sierra Leone is among the 21 UN Member States that have acceded to the July review so far. The main purpose of this paper is to share lessons with other African countries as to the initial steps Sierra Leone has taken to integrate the SDGs into its national development processes. The country has submitted to the UN a draft SDGs adaptation report that this paper has extensively reviewed, among other sources of information utilized to address its objective.

Introduction

Background

The SDGs have been strongly endorsed by the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL). The SDGs convey a renewed and expanded commitment by the UN to ending poverty and increasing prosperity for all, as the MDGs were coming to an end. The experiences of Sierra Leone in the last two and a half decades provide immense justification for upholding the SDGs for countries in fragile situation in particular, and global stability in general.

Sierra Leone made significant strides towards achieving the MDGs, albeit its weak start at the beginning of the Millennium, emerging from a devastating decade long civil war¹ at the time. Unfortunately, while the GoSL was industriously pursuing the MDGs, the nation was plunged into yet another crisis: the outbreak of the Ebola disease in

May 2014 that killed more than 3,500 out of more than 8,000 infected persons.² The epidemic substantially reversed progress made towards achieving the MDGs targets.

Prior to the Ebola outbreak, the country had generally recorded encouraging achievements in the implementation of the MDGs in a range of development areas. For instance, poverty headcount declined from 70 percent in 2003, to 52.9 percent in 2013; school completion rate recorded at 76 percent in 2013; and the ratio of girls to boys in primary school was getting to 100 percent.³ At the same time, nonetheless, serious challenges remained in a number of other areas,

² Government of Sierra Leone (2015), Sierra Leone National Ebola Recovery Strategy; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone; p.6.

³ Government of Sierra Leone (2016), The Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2015; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone; Draft Report, pp.9-13.

¹ The country fought a devastating civil war during 1991-2001.

especially in reducing maternal and child mortality: in 2013, maternal mortality ratio still recorded 1,165 deaths per 100,000 live births; under-five and infant mortality rates recorded 156 and 92 deaths per 1,000 births, respectively.⁴

Lessons learned from the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic towards the end of the MDGs programme have compelled Sierra Leone to uphold the SDGs as a timely opportunity to overcome mounting national and global challenges, such as persistence of epidemics and poverty. Others include negative consequences of climate change; rising cross-border organized crimes; illicit financial flows; and governance crises and conflicts in many parts of the world. Sierra Leone has taken critical initial steps to integrate the new global Agenda into national development processes, taking advantage of the commitment by the international community to assist fragile states and least developed countries (LDCs) to overcome developmental problems.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to generate lessons that could be learned from Sierra Leone's adaptation and mainstreaming of the SDGs into its national development planning processes.

Of the 21 countries that have voluntarily acceded to be reviewed at the UN High Level Political Forum in New York, in July 2016, only five are from Africa: Sierra Leone; Morocco; Togo; Uganda; and Madagascar.⁵ Among these, Sierra Leone is highly recognized to have produced a comprehensive draft of the SDGs adaptation report within a short period of time. Given that only a few African countries have apparently taken key steps to domesticate the SDGs, it is crucial to share with the other African states, experiences of those that have already made significant efforts to integrate the new global

development agenda in their local development processes. Sierra Leone could provide these vital lessons to aid other Africa countries' efforts. The piece will also help the African Community of Practice (AfCoP), African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and partners in guiding their participation in the implementation of the SDGs in Africa.

Methods

Data was drawn from secondary sources, including literature review. The SDGs Agenda Document, "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," was reviewed, with particular reference to (i) development issues pertaining to LDCs and the African Region, and (ii) responsibilities of member countries to domesticate and implement the SDGs.

A comprehensive review was undertaken of the existing national documents and reports on the domestication of the SDGs in Sierra Leone. The GoSL's SDGs adaptation report was particularly reviewed. There was use of outcomes of various meetings and workshops relating to the implementation of the SDGs in Sierra Leone, including the national conference on transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs held in Makeni City. This enables the paper to slate some lessons for the benefit of countries that are yet to undertake significant efforts to adapt the SDGs locally.

Review of the New Global Development Agenda 2030: the SDGs

The Idea of the SDGs

In 2000, Member States of the UN enacted the MDGs (Box 1). These were aimed at drastically reducing global poverty by 2015, as well as massively increasing gender parity in education, improving healthcare, and ensuring environmental sustainability, among a range of other targets. Significant strides were made in achieving the goals across the developing and least developed

⁴ Government of Sierra Leone (2016), The Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2015; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone; Draft Report, pp.9-13

⁵ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>.

countries, although enormous challenges remained. Chief among the challenges was the top down nature of the MDGs.

Box 1: The Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015

Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equity and Empower Women

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, Malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Goal 8: Develop Global Partnership for Development

Source: The United Nations (2000):

<http://www.unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/mdgs.html>

The global MDGs reports suggest that people living in extreme poverty declined from 47 percent in 1990, to 14 percent in 2015; the undernourished declined from 23.3 percent to 12.9 percent and primary school net enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) increased from 52 percent in 1990, to 80 percent in 2015.⁶ Implementation was weakest in areas affected by conflict, violence and other forms of fragility.⁷ Against this background, the UN had moved in time to formulate a successor global development initiative (the SDGs) to succeed, build on and address the unfinished business of the MDGs that ended in 2015.⁸

⁶The Guardian. (2015). *What have the millennium development goals achieved?*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/datablog/2015/jul/06/what-millennium-development-goals-achieved-mdgs>

⁷ The World Bank Group. (2013). *Twenty Fragile States Make Progress on Millennium Development Goals*. Retrieved from https://www.umuc.edu/library/libhow/apa_examples.cfm#websites

⁸ See *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the United Nations

Challenges, Thrust and Vision Underpinning the SDGs

Despite the tremendous achievements of the MDGs, millions of people are still trapped in endemic poverty. Inequality continues to deepen between and within nations. Acute disparities of opportunities, wealth and power remain a grave concern for social stability and sustainable development. Health and environmental threats and disasters have become a constant global feature more than ever before. Evidence of the negative effects of climate change is increasingly manifesting itself in rising sea levels; massive and frequent floods; and loss of coastal ecosystems and various biodiversity dimensions. Civil and international conflicts remain common, alongside widespread threats and impact of terrorism, piracy, and drugs and human trafficking. As global financial crises are taking high toll on the world economy, illicit financial flows continue to take roots, and badly undermine the economies of least developed countries. And as bad governance, persecutions, repressions, and hence poverty and civil wars have continued to take precedence in many parts of the world, millions of populations have continued to be displaced; forced to flee their homeland to seek refuge in other countries. Human traffickers and smugglers, as well as drugs and terrorist organizations, have thrived under these circumstances and undermined the stability of the world. These undermine efforts by weak states such as Sierra Leone from emerging out of fragility.⁹

The persistence of these problems justifies the renewed commitment expressed in the SDGs, one of UN's most comprehensive development plans formulated since 1945, to achieve the goal that everyone will live in a world without poverty and hunger; have access to health and education; and be provided with adequate space and choice of means to utilize his or her potential for the benefit of all. The new agenda aims at ensuring that human

⁹ See *The United Nations. 2015. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The United Nations.

rights, peace, justice, social stability, and environmental preservation and efficient use of natural resources are the common features in all societies. It is determined to see a world where democracy and rule of law are upheld at the highest level; gender balance and transformation of disabilities into abilities are the main features of socio-economic, administrative and political processes and engagements; and migration is undertaken only voluntarily.¹⁰

Comprising 17 interrelated development goals (Box 2) and 169 targets,¹¹ the SDGs in the nutshell aim at making everyone on earth live a better, fairer, safer and longer life. They seek to ensure optimal management of three differentiated but interrelated dimensions of sustainable development: the *economic, social* and *environmental* aspects of welfare advancement that are underpinned by five interrelated pillars: (i) people-centred and sustained poverty reduction development; (ii) planet-preserved development; (iii) prosperity-for-all development; (iv) peaceful, just and inclusive development; and (v) partnership-driven development that utilizes the potential of all, including the weak; the strong; and public, private and nongovernmental efforts.

Box 1: The Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive & equitable quality education & promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive & sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment & decent work for all

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive & sustainable industrialization & foster innovation

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Source: The United Nation (2015): http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/08/120815_outcome-document-of-Summit-for-adoption-of-the-post-2015-development-agenda.pdf.

These 17 goals and their interrelatedness constitute the *sustainable development system* that the world aspires to see the by end of 2030 (Figure 1). The Goals present equitable focus on and responsibilities to both developed and developing nations to ensure that these aims are achieved by 2030, with stronger emphases on environmental sustainability as a guide for all anthropogenic activities.

¹⁰ See The United Nations. 2015. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations.

¹¹ See The United Nations. 2015. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations.

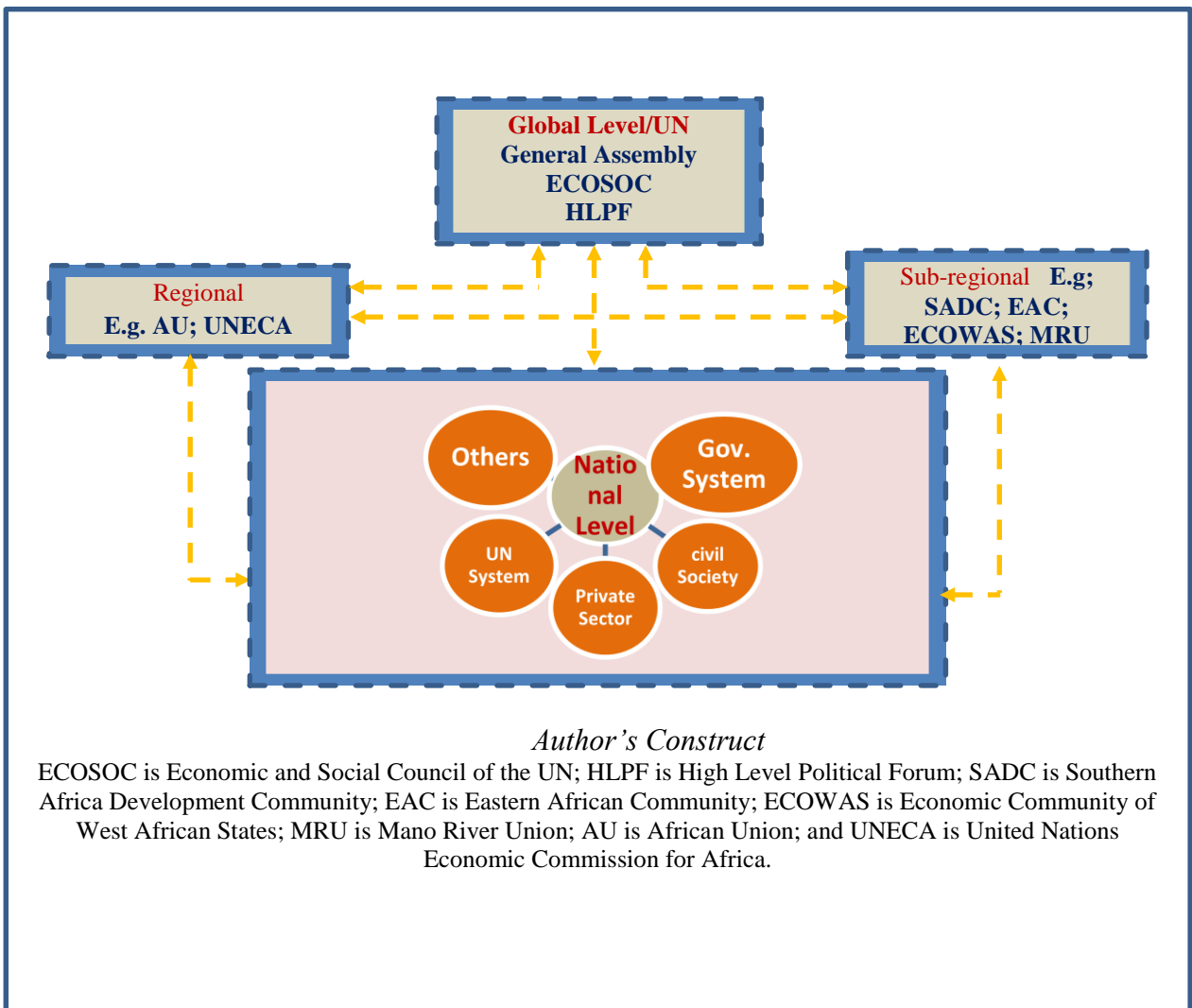


Figure 1: An Aspired Sustainable Development System

Source: Author's Construct

Implementation and Tracking Performance of the SDGs

The guiding principles and attributes of the SDGs are that there is no reinvention of the wheel. The SDGs draw from existing global development commitments enshrined in various international agreements to deliver adequate and equitable services to the global citizenry, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Millennium Declaration; and various summits and conferences on Sustainable Development. Implementation of the goals will involve actors at global, regional, sub-regional and national levels; developed and developing nations; public, private, academic and nongovernmental entities; the abled and disabled; men and women; young and old; rich and poor; and so on. They will be implemented in



the 193 Member States of the UN. National, sub-regional and regional plans will become the operationalizing instruments of the new Agenda. It takes into account differences in national realities, capacities and levels of development; respects national policies and priorities, while it implores national governments to harmonize their local strategic with the new goals.¹²

The institutional framework for implementing and tracking progress (Figure 2) is a conceptual framework illustrating the arrangement for coordinating implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, linking *global, regional, sub-regional* and *country* level responsibilities in the process. Draft indicators have been developed at the global level to guide universal tracking of progress. National governments have the primary responsibility for tracking, reviewing and reporting on progress in the field, for global attention. Governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, the UN system, and other entities will involve in the coordination of the implementation.

A High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is established to have global responsibility to oversee the overall implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs, under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, and its Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The HLPF will coordinate with regional, sub-regional and national level institutions (Figure 2).

Summary of Section

It is clear from the above why all nations should subscribe to the SDGs. The Goals present a comprehensive definition of the problems affecting everyone on earth, thus necessitate actions by all to integrate the new Agenda into national development processes. The realization is mounting that our aspiration to live tomorrow and beyond is

¹² See Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations

only guaranteed if there is efficient management of the complex and interrelated socioeconomic, environmental and political processes and dynamics that underpin the achievement of the transformational changes we collectively desire as one world. We shall turn next to reviewing efforts made by Sierra Leone to domesticate the SDGs.

Domesticating the SDGs in Sierra Leone: Lessons for other African Countries

Sierra Leone is among countries that have acceded to the first UN High Level Political Forum Review of progress made by member countries to integrate the SDGs into national development plans. The UN had requested member states wishing to participate in this review, scheduled for July 2016 in New York, to forward progress report to ECOSOC in advance of the review. Sierra Leone prepared and submitted draft report in December 2015.

Timeliness and Opportunity of the SDGs for Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is still designated as a fragile state. It survived a brutal civil war that killed more 70,000 people during 1991-2001, and caused untold devastation to the economic and social infrastructure of the country.¹³ As the country was emerging from the post-conflict phase, with strong economic growth towards the end of the MDGs programme in 2015, the worst ever recorded Ebola virus disease hit the nation and its neighbours, Guinea and Liberia. This happened despite more than one decade of post-conflict reforms. This crisis (a natural calamity this time) claimed more than 3,500 out of more than 8,000 infected persons.¹⁴ The epidemic speaks volumes of enormous

¹³ Government of Sierra Leone. 2004. "Truth & Reconciliation Commission Report." Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Freetown.

¹⁴ Government of Sierra Leone (2015), Sierra Leone National Ebola Recovery Strategy; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone; p.6.

unfinished, underlying structural challenges that persisted after the civil war; manifesting themselves much later, despite the series of development programmes implemented since 2001 in the form of poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), alongside global initiatives such as the MDGs.¹⁵

Consequently, Sierra Leone, as a continued fragile state, has seen SDGs as timely opportunity to overcome remaining national and global problems; a proportion of these problems have their roots and accommodation in countries in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Poverty, vulnerability and inequality continue to remain persistent. In Sierra Leone, these have been exacerbated by the one and a half years of devastation of the Ebola virus disease. The country was hit by a twin crisis during 2014-2015, as the MDGs were wrapping up: besides the raging disease, the international price of the country's leading export commodity, iron ore, coincidentally crashed, leading to suspension of operations of the two leading mining companies of the mineral. The twin crisis saw the economy dwindling; GDP growth plummeting from 15.2 percent in 2012, and 20.1 percent in 2013, to about 7 percent in 2014; with a projected decline of minus 23.5 percent in 2015.¹⁶ Prices skyrocketed owing to over-dependence on international market for local consumption and production, as both air and sea transport were extremely disrupted during the epidemic.

A key lesson from the twin crisis for sustainable development is that, Sierra Leone cannot (and indeed no fragile state can) grow and develop sustainably without meaningfully diversifying its economy. Other threats hoped to be effectively addressed by the SDGs pertain to civil conflicts across the world. These phenomena continue to remain widespread, alongside increased currency of terrorism, piracy, and drugs and human trafficking.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Government of Sierra Leone. 2015. Sierra Leone's SDGs Adaptation Report. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

As these become constant features on earth, Sierra Leone remains one of the enlisted fragile states in the world that are prone to these circumstances.

Furthermore, the world has witnessed sustained effects of global financial crises, coupled with increased illicit financial flows. The attendant socioeconomic losses resulting from this for least developed countries like Sierra Leone are phenomenal. Moreover, while fragile states like Sierra Leone have been recording desired ratings in good governance, they particularly remain vulnerable to effects of poor governance, conflicts and terrorism in other countries. As wars continue to rage in various parts of the globe, millions of people continue to be displaced, leading to growing refugee and illegal migrant crises that affect countries beyond borders; a cause for concern for all countries.¹⁷

Natural disasters—such as health and environmental calamities—continue to occur at alarming proportion in the world, Sierra Leone not an exception, with the recent cases of (i) Ebola epidemic, and (ii) flood disaster that decimated homes and scores of lives in the capital of Freetown in the last half of 2015, just as the country was struggling to get out of the Ebola epidemic. These are all constituents of structural violence that weaken political foundations of fragile states, serving as recipes for violent conflicts, instability and reinforced fragility in weak states.¹⁸

In addition to the above vulnerabilities, there is evidence of the negative effects of climate change, which is increasingly becoming clear: sea levels are rising; massive floods are becoming more frequent; and we are fast losing life in our surrounding environment including plants and animals that are extremely important for our survival. Sierra Leone, together with Bangladesh and Guinea-Bissau, all

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

poor nations, are reported to be the most vulnerable countries to effects of climate change.¹⁹

Therefore, the Government of Sierra Leone wasted no time to start integrating the SDGs into local development processes against the arguments that: (i) the SDGs are ambitious, but immensely realistic; they encapsulate all the problems that pose threats to the existence of not only future generations, but even the present humankind, with fragile states such as Sierra Leone at the epicenter of risks; and (ii) the chances are very high that a huge chunk of global problems—such as poverty, diseases, illiteracy, crimes and conflicts, which are all characteristics of fragile nations—will have tremendously been stabilized and contained by 2030, if all hands were on deck to implement the SDGs globally, regionally and locally.²⁰

Integrating the SDGs into Sierra Leone's National Development Processes

Mindful of Process Management Challenges

Government recognizes certain management challenges at domesticating the SDGs. Particularly noted here is the task of implementing three national development plans simultaneously: (i) Sierra Leone's third generation PRSP, dubbed the Agenda for Prosperity (A4P), 2013-2018; (ii) the National Ebola Recovery Strategy (NERS), 2015-2017; and (iii) the SDGs, 2016-2030. The PRSPs have been the overall national development framework implemented since the end of the civil war in 2002. The A4P, setting out the baseline for achieving Sierra Leone's Vision 2035, was being implemented when the Ebola virus broke out in 2014. The extensive socio economic devastation of the disease necessitated the formulation of the NERS, with the objective of (i) ending and sustaining zero Ebola infections; (ii) restoring socio economic services; and (iii) returning the economy back on the track of sustainable development with effective implementation of the A4P. The SDGs, a new global agenda to be implemented by all UN member

states, where launched on 25th September 2015, when the World Health Organization was declaring the end of the disease on 7th November 2015.²¹

The implementation of the three documents is a challenge, but a must; both are crucial to the country's sustainable development, while recognizing that, coherence and alignment between the three must be ensured to achieve their respective but interrelated value added.

Initial Steps Undertaken to Integrate the SDGs Locally

- ***Publication of Simplified Version of the Goals***

The first and immediate step undertaken by government was to embark on public sensitization on the SDGs. It published a simplified version of the new Agenda aimed at making the SDGs easily understood and supported by the public. It captures (i) the transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs; (ii) the reasons for embarking on the SDGs and their preparation process; (iii) global challenges to address; (iv) link between the SDGs and Sierra Leone's development plans; and (v) implementation arrangement of the SDGs at global, regional and national level.²²

- ***Sensitizing Civil Society Organizations***

On 29th October 2015, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development of Sierra Leone engaged a cross-section of civil society organizations (CSOs) on the SDGs. The meeting highlighted the mounting challenges facing the world despite progress made by the MDGs, and the opportunities presented by the SDGs to overcome these challenges. The CSOs were reminded of their expected role in the implementation of the new Agenda, who raised some concerns as to the feasibility of achieving the SDGs in Sierra Leone. They particularly noted an uphill task in pursuing Goal 1 of ending poverty in

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² See the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone

all its forms everywhere, and 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. These concerns were allayed with optimism; that the new Goals can be achieved once there was strong commitment and cooperation among all relevant actors at global, regional, and national level, including CSOs themselves.²³ The civil society proposed the following actions to ensure successful implementation of the SDGs in Sierra Leone:

- a) Enhance discipline, quality assurance and probity in the public sector and use of public resources
- b) Reflect on the successes of the MDGs and their gaps as a starting point of the implementation of the SDGs
- a) Draw public sector performance contracts from the national budget plan, to which the SDGs are firmly linked
- b) Strengthen domestic revenue mobilization with a greater focus on taxes to increase economic resilience of the state
- c) Improve public project implementation capacity
- d) Strengthen the operations and management of non-governmental organizations, especially noting that the sector handles a great proportion of national development resources
- e) Set-up and implement effective national monitoring and evaluation systems to effectively track and report on development progress
- f) Map out all relevant public institutions and other stakeholders in relation to their roles and responsibilities to follow up and report on SDGs progress

Table 1: Linking Sierra Leone’s Agenda for Prosperity with the SDGs

The 17 SDGs Regrouped	Sierra Leone’s Agenda for Prosperity
1) Reducing general poverty prevalence— Goals 1,2&10	Pillar 1: Diversified economic growth— directly related to SDGs 7,8&9
2) Human development— Goals 3,4&6	Pillar 2: Managing natural resources— directly related to SDGs 12,13,14&15
3) Gender parity— Goal 5	Pillar 3: Accelerating human development— directly related to SDGs 3,4&6
4) Employment, economic growth and competitiveness— Goals 7,8&9	Pillar 4: International competitiveness— directly related to SDGs 7,8&9
5) Human settlement, housing and population infrastructure— Goal 11	Pillar 5: Labour and employment— directly related to SDGs 7,8&9
6) Environmental sustainability— Goals 12,13,14&15	Pillar 6: Social protection— directly related to SDGs 1,2&10
7) Governance, peace and security— Goal 16	Pillar 7: Governance & public sector reform— directly related to SDG 16
8) Means of implementing Goals 1 to 16— Goal 17	Pillar 8: Gender & women’s empowerment— directly related to SDG 4&5

Source: GoSL, (2015, p.4).

- g) Restructure and strengthen academic, technical and vocational institutions, introducing specialized courses to meet employers’ skills demand and international development competition.

²³ Report of this meeting is available at the Desk of the National Coordinator of Non-State Actors in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

- h) Pay great attention to public education in the implementation of the SDGs, especially those (such as Goals 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) that are directly related to the environment and climate change, targeting behavioural change
- i) Determine the financial and institutional investment needs of the SDGs
- j) CSOs to identify themselves with SDGs falling under their respective programme areas to enhance participation and follow up during implementation.

- ***Sierra Leone's 2016 National Budget, the A4P and the SDGs***

The SDGs constitute a major policy thrust in Sierra Leone's National Budget for 2016 Fiscal Year presented to parliament on 7th November 2015. The Goals are aligned to each spending category of the Budget to illustrate follow-up and reporting responsibilities on the new global Agenda among government institutions competing for state resources. An annex showing the link between the 17 SDGs and 169 targets and the Eight Pillars of Sierra Leone's Agenda for Prosperity, with a map of government institutions was included in the 2016 Budget Statement.²⁴ A summary of this alignment is shown in Table 1, linking the 17 SDGs and the A4P.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the SDGs in Sierra Leone

The government has undertaken some steps to develop a framework for monitoring the SDGs, which is to be integrated into the existing framework for monitoring the Agenda for Prosperity, to which the Ebola Recovery Strategy is also aligned. A two-day technical workshop was organized last December for this purpose and two key deliverables were produced:

- a) A draft *integrated results framework*, aligning the SDGs and the NERS to the

monitoring and evaluation framework of the Agenda for Prosperity; and

- b) A draft set of 91 *Sierra Leone specific SDGs indicators* formulated based on the 17 SDGs and 169 targets, available at the time, taking into consideration the realities on the ground.²⁵ These indicators are being rationalized, and revised drawing from the recently launched UN indicators for monitoring the SDGs.²⁶

Organizational Arrangement for Implementing the SDGs

Actors in Implementation

In Sierra Leone, the institutional framework for implementing the SDGs will fall within the national plans' implementation framework. It will draw actors from the public sector; civil society and the media; research institutions and academia; donor community, including local UN system; and local councils and communities. Government recognizes regional and global dimensions to the country's sustainable development, against the backdrop that development actions outside its borders affect local development. Thus, local plans will be effectively linked to regional and global implementation of the Agenda. Lessons are drawn from the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease; which started in neighbouring Guinea but spread to Sierra Leone to kill more than 3,500 out of more than 8000 infected persons.²⁷

Reporting Mechanism on the SDGs

National reviews will be done within the existing platform for reviewing implementation of national development programmes, such as the Agenda for Prosperity. This is to ensure coherent, harmonized and aligned national development efforts. At the

²⁴ Government of Sierra Leone. 2015. Sierra Leone's SDGs Adaptation Report. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

²⁵ Government of Sierra Leone. 2015. Sierra Leone's SDGs Adaptation Report. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ *Ibid*

highest, policy and political level, the government has regularly met with development partners to discuss progress on national development issues. Below this level are technical working groups on different sectoral and national development thematic areas. For instance, Pillar Working Groups have been developed around the Eight Pillars of the Agenda for Prosperity. Participants in these technical discussions are drawn from government institutions, local councils, civil society organisations, research institutions, donor agencies and other stakeholders to discuss status of plan implementation. Outcomes of technical discussions have informed meetings at policy and political level, referred to as Development Partners Committee (DEPAC) meetings, co-chaired by government and development partners. These platforms shall be used in the follow up and reporting on the SDGs at the local level.

Adherence to International Aid Effectiveness

Principles

Sierra Leone is a signatory to the New Deal for International Engagement in Fragile States. It is currently a chair of the G7+ in this direction. Thus, it is strongly committed to ensuring that international support uses country systems and follows Mutual Accountability Frameworks in the implementation and reporting of progress of the SDGs.²⁸

Engagement on the SDGs across the Country

Nationwide engagement on the SDGs has commenced. On 4th March 2016, a national conference on the SDGs on the theme “Transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs: Opportunities and Challenges for Sierra Leone” was organized at the University of Makeni, in Makeni City, with the objective of highlighting the opportunities and challenges associated with the new international agenda. Various presentations were made, linking the SDGs to the Government’s Agenda for Prosperity. The Conference was opened with a keynote address from a representative of the

President of Sierra Leone, detailing: (i) achievements by the MDGs and their challenges; and (ii) the opportunities presented by the SDGs to address the MDGs challenges and to inform the transformative plans of the Government, noting what was required to make the new goals successful nationally, regionally and globally.²⁹

Summary of Section

Sierra Leone has undertaken significant steps in a short period to adapt the UN SDGs. The SDGs are not a reinvention of the wheel; they reflect challenges that have been captured in existing national development plans across African countries and beyond. A fundamental value addition of the goals is the exhaustive presentation of cross-border dimension of challenges, requiring commitment and cooperation from all nations to ensure national and international socio economic and political stability. The experiences witnessed in Sierra Leone in the last two and half decades, including the latest calamity seen in the outbreak of the Ebola disease, has propelled the nation to be among the countries the UN is slating as pioneers of the SDGs for the speed with which it has taken steps to integrate the goals locally. Fragile states in Africa like Sierra Leone are particularly encouraged to emulate these steps.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Key finding and lessons for other countries

The launch of the SDGs is a continued realization that all national development problems have regional and global dimension; a problem in one country could always have potential to affect the other directly or indirectly. Thus, there is need for

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ See Sesay, Joseph S. 2016. Keynote Address on Transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs: Opportunities and Challenges for Sierra Leone; University of Makeni, Makeni City/State House, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

sustained international commitment and cooperation in overcoming any development problems, no matter where they are located; whether they happen locally, nationally, regionally or globally.

The SDGs have articulated different problems that could hardly be new to Africa, and countries have indeed responded to such problems earlier. However, the mounting intensity of these problems and concerns make them worth the narrative they have gained in the new global Agenda to remind nations about the need to increase commitment to pursuing them, without which sustainable prosperity could hardly come by in the world.

The speed with which Sierra Leone has taken steps to integrate these SDGs speaks to this realization. Thus, other African countries, especially those classified as fragile states like Sierra Leone, are called upon to draw lessons from the steps undertaken by Sierra Leone in domesticating the SDGs. There is no reinvention of the wheel as these Goals can easily be situated in the existing national development programmes of nations, including their implementation arrangement.

General recommendations for Africa

- Encourage debate on various themes relating to the SDGs — themes such as “what does it mean to leave no one behind” are worth debating to inform meaningful actions in Africa.
- Integrating SDGs into national plans; and ensuring that Regional Economic Communities immediately come up with SDGs implementation agendas, indicating regional linkage of Goals to global and national implementation arrangements.
- Encourage research to determine chances of achieving the various goals in the region, and the investment resources (financial,

technical and institutional) required to achieve the SDGs.

- Strengthen national and regional planning, statistical system, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Promote effective engagement with local and national governments, civil society organizations, research and results advocacy groups, donor agencies on the SDGs.
- Increase capacity for domestic resource mobilization and efficient utilization of public finance towards implementing the SDGs, ensuring that there is effective follow up on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

Specific Recommendations for AfCoP, ACBF and Partners

- Prepare work plan on the SDGs in AfCoP, ACBF and partner results advocacy organizations, indicating their support role in the implementation of the Goals at country, regional and global level.
- A first step of AfCoP could be to map the SDGs against its MfDR Pillars to pinpoint actors responsible for follow up and reporting on progress relating to the implementation of the SDGs.
- Advocacy is central to achieving the SDGs; a critical value adding area of AfCoP, ACBF to support regional implementation of the Goals through engagement of governments, regional bodies and other actors in the implementation process.
- Facilitate exchange of country experiences in the implementation of the SDGs in Africa.

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