GOVERNING DOCUMENT | POLICY BLUEPRINT | PUBLIC PUBLICATION

A Sierra Leone 2035 Development Blueprint

From extraction to production. From patronage to performance. From slogans to measurable national renewal.

This is not a campaign pamphlet. It is a governing blueprint. It states what must be done, who must do it, how it will be financed, and how citizens will measure results.

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For citizens, institutions, investors, reformers, and development partners seeking serious solutions for Sierra Leone.

Executive summary

This blueprint is built on one core argument: Sierra Leone will not be transformed by slogans, patronage, or fragmented projects. It will be transformed by a disciplined state that restores macroeconomic credibility, raises productivity, powers the economy, protects human capital, decentralizes delivery, and measures results in public.

The country already has a recent official development framework, the MTNDP 2024-2030, oriented around food security, human capital, jobs, and enabling reforms. But official plans will not become history-changing documents unless they are paired with sharper prioritization, transparent execution, and a governing culture that rewards performance over noise. (Government of Sierra Leone, 2024)

This document therefore proposes a 2035 horizon with ten policy pillars, a 1,000-day delivery sequence, a financing logic, and a public accountability standard. It is intentionally concrete. It speaks not only to voters, but also to ministries, councils, the private sector, development partners, and the diaspora. Its purpose is to make seriousness visible.

2035 outcome targets

These are proposed national targets. They are not slogans; they are measurable commitments that can be reviewed every year in Parliament and by citizens.

Area	2035 target	Baseline / note
Poverty and inclusion	Cut extreme poverty from the recent peak of 51.6% in 2024 to below 35% by 2035	World Bank, 2025 baseline
Electricity	Raise household electricity access above 80%, with reliable power for every district hospital and district headquarter	World Bank/ESMAP, 2024 baseline
Food systems	Achieve national rice self-sufficiency in normal rainfall years and double domestic agro-processing capacity	Policy target
Jobs	Reduce youth NEET from about 1 in 4 to below 12%	UNFPA, 2024 baseline

Area	2035 target	Baseline / note
Education	Cut learning poverty from the 2020 baseline of 80% to below 40%	World Bank, 2022 baseline
Health	Reduce maternal mortality below 200 per 100,000 live births	UNFPA, 2024 baseline
Revenue	Lift domestic revenue well above the recent single-digit share of GDP and sustain a path toward 20% of GDP	MoF, 2025 / policy target
Governance	Publish 100% of major contracts, beneficial ownership, and project dashboards for capital spending	Policy target

I. The national diagnosis

Sierra Leone does not suffer from a shortage of speeches. It suffers from a shortage of disciplined execution. The country has reform language, donor projects, mineral wealth, fertile land, and a young population; yet those assets have not been converted into reliable power, mass jobs, productive farms, competitive firms, clean public finance, and visible service delivery. This blueprint begins from a simple principle: *the crisis is systemic, so the response must also be systemic.*

The evidence is sobering. The World Bank reports that extreme poverty rose from 38.2% in 2019 to a peak of 51.6% in 2024, while reserves fell to roughly 1.2 months of imports by July 2025 and debt-service pressures surged sharply. The IMF likewise notes that Sierra Leone remains at high risk of debt distress even after inflation came down and borrowing costs eased. (World Bank, 2025; IMF, 2026)

Energy remains a foundational bottleneck. The World Bank energy access diagnostic found that only 21.1% of households had access through the grid or mini-grids, with another 14.7% using off-grid solutions. In practical terms, most firms, farms, clinics, and schools are still operating below their potential because power is either absent, too costly, or too unreliable. (World Bank/ESMAP, 2024)

The youth challenge is not merely unemployment; it is underemployment, disconnection, and waste of human potential. UNFPA notes that about one in four Sierra Leoneans aged 15-24 are not in education, employment, or training, while rural poverty remains far higher than urban poverty. (UNFPA, 2024)

Human development gains exist, but they remain too fragile. Maternal mortality fell to 443 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2020, yet that level is still far too high. The World

Bank education profile set a learning-poverty baseline of 80% in 2020, a warning that school access without learning cannot deliver a demographic dividend. (UNFPA, 2024; World Bank, 2022)

The governing conclusion: Sierra Leone does not need another politics of distribution without production. It needs a politics of state capability, value creation, service delivery, and measurable results.

What this blueprint rejects

- A politics that confuses announcements with outcomes.
- A development model that exports raw materials and imports prosperity myths.
- A public finance culture that spends first and explains later.
- A youth policy that talks empowerment but does not finance skills, enterprise, apprenticeships, and first jobs.
- A decentralization system that assigns responsibility without adequate power, money, data, and accountability.

What this blueprint proposes

- A productive-state model: government clears bottlenecks, disciplines systems, crowds in investment, and protects the national interest.
- A district delivery model: every national promise must have a district map, funding line, implementation owner, and dashboard.
- A public-results contract: ministries, agencies, utilities, councils, and state-owned enterprises are judged by output and service quality, not ceremony.
- A citizen compact: the people are owed visible service improvements in exchange for tax compliance, civic trust, and policy patience.

II. The ten policy pillars

1. Restore macroeconomic credibility and clean public finance

First principle: a weak treasury eventually weakens every ministry, hospital, school, and road project.

Actions: adopt binding cash-management rules; publish quarterly arrears, guarantees, and subsidy exposure; enforce a credible medium-term fiscal anchor; roll out e-procurement for all major contracts; require costed sector strategies before budget approval; and implement performance agreements for finance, revenue, procurement, and spending agencies.

Political test: no ministry should receive capital allocations without a public delivery plan and a measurable output schedule.

2. Move from food insecurity to agro-industrial transformation

First principle: food policy must stop at neither handouts nor subsistence. It must create productivity, storage, logistics, processing, and market power.

Actions: expand irrigation and small-scale water control; reform extension around yields and market access; scale seed systems; support warehouse receipt finance; establish district agro-processing zones; use school feeding and public institutions to source locally; and build an agricultural development finance window that rewards performance, not patronage.

Outcome by 2035: rice self-sufficiency in normal years, stronger cassava, cocoa, fisheries, livestock, palm oil, and horticulture value chains, and far more income retained inside Sierra Leone.

3. Power the economy

First principle: there is no industrial policy without an energy policy.

Actions: pursue least-cost generation and transmission expansion; prioritize loss reduction and utility reform; guarantee 24/7 power to hospitals, water systems, universities, industrial parks, and digital hubs; scale mini-grids in underserved chiefdoms; and establish a reliability scorecard published every quarter.

Outcome by 2035: energy access above 80%, lower cost of doing business, and productive use of electricity in farms, clinics, schools, and small industry.

4. Build a jobs-and-enterprise economy

First principle: growth is not serious if it does not hire people.

Actions: create a Youth Apprenticeship and First Job Programme; use public procurement to open space for credible local firms; launch district enterprise funds with professional fund management; deepen collateral registry use; support export-ready SMEs; and target high-employment sectors such as construction materials, agro-processing, logistics, light manufacturing, creative industries, and tourism.

Outcome by 2035: a lower NEET rate, deeper local supply chains, and more firms graduating from survival mode to scale.

5. Deliver an education-and-skills turnaround

First principle: enrolment without learning is a fiscal expense, not a national investment.

Actions: declare foundational literacy and numeracy a national emergency; introduce school-level reading targets; strengthen teacher management and attendance monitoring; expand TVET tied to actual labour demand; embed digital and financial skills in secondary education; and link tertiary funding to employability outcomes and research relevance.

Outcome by 2035: learning poverty cut dramatically, stronger female secondary progression, and a skilled pipeline for agriculture, technology, health, trades, and industry.

6. Protect life, women, and family resilience

First principle: a state that cannot protect mothers, children, and basic health security cannot claim developmental seriousness.

Actions: guarantee emergency obstetric referral transport; power all district hospitals; recruit and retain critical health workers in underserved areas; digitize stock visibility for essential medicines; expand nutrition and adolescent health services; and build an integrated response to drug addiction and mental-health stress among young people.

Outcome by 2035: maternal deaths sharply reduced, stronger primary care, and healthier, more productive families.

7. Make natural resources serve national transformation

First principle: mineral wealth is not development until it is converted into infrastructure, capabilities, local value addition, and sovereign resilience.

Actions: publish contracts and beneficial ownership; enforce community-development obligations; link mining corridors to shared infrastructure; strengthen geological data and licensing discipline; negotiate for downstream processing where commercially viable; and ring-fence a share of windfall revenues for infrastructure and human-capital investment.

Outcome by 2035: fewer enclave gains and stronger national spillovers from resource extraction.

8. Build modern infrastructure, water systems, and resilient cities

First principle: national productivity is spatial. Roads, ports, drainage, land systems, and water networks determine whether economic opportunity is real or rhetorical.

Actions: prioritize feeder roads and market access, improve port efficiency, modernize urban drainage and flood management, expand water supply in the Western Area and secondary cities, and establish enforceable land-use and building control systems.

Outcome by 2035: lower logistics costs, healthier cities, and stronger links between farms, towns, and export corridors.

9. Decentralize delivery, not confusion

First principle: districts cannot deliver national transformation if authority, data, and financing remain trapped at the centre.

Actions: introduce performance-based district grants; publish district scorecards; clarify the working relationship among ministries, councils, chiefdoms, and agencies; digitize local revenue systems; and create district delivery rooms focused on agriculture, schools, clinics, roads, and social protection.

Outcome by 2035: citizens feel the state where they live, not only where it is announced.

10. Rebuild trust through justice, accountability, and civic order

First principle: investors, citizens, and reformers all flee environments where rules are selective and accountability is theatrical.

Actions: accelerate commercial dispute resolution, strengthen anti-corruption enforcement, protect whistleblowers, professionalize police-community relations, and adopt a public-health plus law-enforcement strategy against kush and hard-drug networks.

Outcome by 2035: greater trust in the state, stronger social order, and a more investable national environment.

III. How this blueprint will be implemented

A serious blueprint must survive contact with the state. That requires a delivery architecture, not just policy language.

A. A 1,000-day governing sequence

- **Days 1-100:** launch an executive delivery and accountability package: procurement transparency order, expenditure control directive, utility performance review, payroll and ghost-worker clean-up, mining-contract transparency schedule, district service dashboard design, and a public register of flagship projects.
- **Months 4-12:** stabilize finance and power: arrears strategy, revenue measures, loss-reduction plan for electricity, emergency feeder-road package for farm belts, district hospital power backup, and apprenticeship rollout in every district.
- **Year 2:** move from emergency repair to structural change: agro-processing zones, district enterprise funds, TVET reform compacts, mini-grid scale-up, water and drainage packages, and the first annual national performance review laid before Parliament.
- **Year 3 onward:** scale what works, terminate what fails, and reallocate funding on evidence rather than patronage.

B. Delivery institutions

- **Presidential Delivery Unit:** small, technically strong, data-driven, and focused on cross-ministry bottlenecks.
- **Cabinet Performance Review:** quarterly reviews tied to targets, with published scorecards.
- **District Delivery Rooms:** coordinating local execution across councils, line ministries, utilities, and chiefdom actors.
- **Parliamentary Results Session:** an annual session dedicated to service-delivery outcomes, not only budget speeches.
- **Citizen Dashboard:** a public portal and district noticeboard system tracking roads, schools, health facilities, electricity, water, jobs programmes, and procurement.

C. Financing principles

Sierra Leone cannot borrow its way into transformation without stronger domestic capacity. The financing strategy therefore has five layers:

- protect macro stability and stop leakages before searching for new money;
- raise domestic revenue through enforcement, digital systems, property and excise modernization, and a broader formal base;
- restructure subsidies and losses that drain the treasury without producing national productivity;
- crowd in concessional, climate, and blended finance for power, water, transport, and resilience;
- use public-private partnerships selectively and transparently, only where the state can negotiate and monitor them competently.

D. The accountability standard

Every flagship programme should answer six public questions: What problem is it solving? What is the target? Who is in charge? What is the budget? What are the milestones? What happens if it fails? If government cannot answer those questions, the programme is not ready for launch.

IV. The difference between old politics and governing politics

Old politics	Governing politics
Promise everything to everyone	Prioritize ruthlessly and sequence reforms
Celebrate inflows and announcements	Measure outputs, quality, and citizen impact
Treat youth as an audience	Treat youth as producers, workers, and founders
Use mining for short-term comfort	Use natural wealth to build long-term capabilities
Centralize blame and decentralize confusion	Decentralize delivery with clear accountability
Hide weak execution behind rhetoric	Publish dashboards and confront failure early

V. Strategic risks and how to manage them

- **Macroeconomic slippage:** counter with a hard expenditure-control regime, realistic budgeting, and transparent debt management.
- **Elite resistance:** counter with law, transparency, and public communication that explains why reforms matter to ordinary citizens.
- **Weak implementation capacity:** counter with targeted technical teams, delivery rooms, and fewer but better-managed priorities.
- **Climate shocks:** counter with irrigation, resilient roads, drainage, disaster finance, and weather-smart agriculture.
- **Election-cycle spending temptation:** counter with pre-announced fiscal rules and public monitoring of deviations.

VI. Final proposition to the nation

Sierra Leone does not need to choose between hope and realism. It needs a governing philosophy that makes hope measurable. This blueprint therefore rejects both cynicism and empty optimism. It insists that the country can change, but only if policy is sharper, institutions are cleaner, execution is harder, and accountability becomes public rather than ceremonial.

For citizens, this document is an invitation to demand measurable results. For civil servants, it is a demand for performance. For investors, it is a signal that Sierra Leone can become more predictable, productive, and investable. For development partners, it is a framework for aligning support with national capability rather than fragmenting it. For political leadership, it is a test: govern by clarity, or continue to manage decline with rhetoric.

The political choke point is this: once policy becomes clearer than propaganda, institutions and citizens begin to distinguish seriousness from noise.

This blueprint is designed to force that distinction.

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