THE SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE & CAPABILITY DOCTRINE

A Policy Framework for Knowledge Sovereignty, Productive Capability, Strategic Partnership and National Resilience

Implementation Horizon: 2027–2035

First Implementation Cycle: 2027–2030

Policy Paper – Draft for National Consultation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sierra Leone's development challenge cannot be understood solely as a shortage of capital, infrastructure, employment or natural-resource transformation.

There is another deficit beneath them: **the insufficient accumulation, organisation, mobilisation and institutional retention of national knowledge and productive capability.**

For decades, Sierra Leone has imported capital, consultants, contractors, technologies, development programmes and technical expertise. Many of these partnerships have been necessary and some have made important contributions.

The strategic question, however, is not whether Sierra Leone should engage foreign expertise. It must. The question is: **Does every major investment, contract and international partnership leave Sierra Leone more capable than it was before?**

This Doctrine proposes that national development policy should henceforth evaluate major projects through three simultaneous outcomes:

Every strategic national investment should leave Sierra Leone with three assets:

1. A physical or economic asset.

2. Stronger Sierra Leonean human and productive capability.

3. Institutional knowledge that remains permanently available to the country.

A project that leaves only the first asset should be regarded as developmentally incomplete.

The proposed **Sierra Leone National Knowledge & Capability Doctrine – SLNKCD** therefore establishes a national framework for:

- identifying the knowledge and skills Sierra Leone already possesses;
- mapping critical capabilities the country currently lacks;
- mobilising expertise at home and across the diaspora;
- strengthening the connection between universities, technical institutions, government and industry;
- transforming local-content requirements from employment counting into genuine technological and managerial transfer;
- introducing capability-transfer requirements into strategic procurement;
- reducing dangerous single-source technological and geopolitical dependencies;
- ensuring national ownership of strategically important data and institutional memory;
- establishing district-level knowledge and capability systems across all 16 districts;
- strengthening emergency and disaster-response capability;
- and measuring development partly through what Sierra Leone progressively becomes capable of doing for itself.

This Doctrine does not propose economic isolation. It proposes **intelligent interdependence**. Sierra Leone should remain open to international capital, technology, expertise and cooperation while deliberately increasing its ability to understand, negotiate, operate, maintain, reproduce and eventually improve the systems upon which national life depends.

The Doctrine complements rather than replaces Sierra Leone's existing development architecture. The current Medium-Term National Development Plan prioritises food security, human-capital development, youth employment, technology and infrastructure, and public-sector transformation. Current government policy also emphasises better data, development coordination, private-sector growth and accountability.

The Local Content Agency already has a statutory mandate encompassing workforce development, national skills, local procurement and participation in major economic sectors. Sierra Leone's public-procurement system is simultaneously undergoing reforms involving electronic procurement and review of the Public Procurement Act. The Doctrine therefore does not begin from

institutional zero. **Its purpose is to connect existing pieces into a national system for capability accumulation.**

1. THE DOCTRINE

1.1 Definition

For the purpose of this policy: **National Knowledge Sovereignty** means the capacity of Sierra Leone to identify, generate, preserve, evaluate, mobilise and apply the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions concerning its economy, population, territory, institutions and strategic interests.

Knowledge sovereignty does **not** imply intellectual isolation or rejection of foreign knowledge. It means possessing sufficient national competence to know:

what to import, why it is needed, how it works, how it should be negotiated, how it will be maintained, what risks it creates and how Sierra Leone can progressively master it.

National Capability means the demonstrable ability of Sierra Leonean institutions, professionals, enterprises and communities to perform a strategically important function to an appropriate standard. Capability therefore differs from qualification. A country may possess graduates without possessing capability. Capability requires the combination of:

people + institutions + equipment + finance + data + procedures + experience + authority + supply chains.

Epistemic Dependency means excessive dependence upon external actors not merely for finance or technology but for the identification of problems, generation of evidence, interpretation of national conditions, formulation of solutions and evaluation of results.

Knowledge Transfer shall mean demonstrable transfer of technical, operational, managerial, scientific or institutional competence from one organisation or professional group to another. Attendance at workshops alone shall not constitute knowledge transfer.

The test shall be: **Can the recipient subsequently perform the relevant function?**

2. THE NATIONAL PRINCIPLE

The central national principle of the Doctrine shall be: **NO STRATEGIC INVESTMENT WITHOUT CAPABILITY ACCUMULATION.**

Where Sierra Leone invests public resources, provides major concessions, grants significant incentives, contracts strategically important services or authorises major foreign investment, the arrangement should, wherever practically and legally appropriate, generate measurable Sierra Leonean capability.

This principle applies particularly to:

- *infrastructure;*
- *energy;*
- *mining and minerals;*
- *agriculture;*
- *fisheries;*
- *telecommunications;*
- *digital systems;*
- *healthcare;*
- *water;*
- *transport;*
- *construction;*
- *public administration;*
- *financial infrastructure;*
- *strategic consultancy;*
- *security-related technologies;*
- *education;*
- *waste systems;*
- *industrial production;*
- *tourism infrastructure;*
- *and major public-private partnerships.*

3. THE SEVEN DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES

Principle I – Capability Before Dependency

Foreign expertise shall be used where necessary. But every major use of external expertise should contain a pathway toward stronger national competence.

Principle II – Partnership Without Intellectual Subordination

Sierra Leone shall seek partnerships with multiple countries, institutions and companies. No international relationship should require the country to suspend independent national analysis.

Principle III – Knowledge Must Remain

Technical documentation, operational procedures, relevant datasets, research findings, manuals, training materials and institutional lessons financed substantially by the Sierra Leonean state should normally become part of Sierra Leone's

institutional memory, subject to legitimate intellectual-property, commercial and national-security protections.

Principle IV – Local Content Must Become Capability Content

Employment is important. Procurement is important. But the ultimate objective of local content should be the progressive transfer of Sierra Leoneans into:

- *engineering;*
- *technical operations;*
- *scientific functions;*
- *management;*
- *finance;*
- *procurement;*
- *research;*
- *technology;*
- *maintenance;*
- *environmental management;*
- *and strategic decision-making.*

The Local Content Agency already identifies skills development, employment, local procurement and local enterprise development as core functions. The Doctrine would deepen that framework by measuring the quality and permanence of capability acquired.

Principle V – Every District Produces Knowledge

Knowledge policy shall not become another Freetown-centred system. Agricultural knowledge, ecological knowledge, medicinal knowledge, engineering experience, entrepreneurial capacity, social knowledge, craft knowledge, geological understanding and community problem-solving exist throughout the country. The National Knowledge Architecture must therefore operate in **all 16 districts**.

Principle VI – Brain Drain Must Become Brain Circulation

Sierra Leoneans abroad shall not be viewed merely as sources of remittances.

They represent an international network of: **skills, professional relationships, market access, finance, institutional experience and knowledge.**

Permanent return shall not be the only model of diaspora contribution.

Principle VII – National Capability Must Be Measured

What is not measured is easily forgotten. Sierra Leone shall therefore progressively measure not only GDP, investment, employment and infrastructure, but also **capabilities acquired, dependencies reduced and knowledge retained**.

4. A NATIONAL CAPABILITY SCALE

Every strategic sector shall be assessed using a six-level National Capability Maturity Scale.

Level	Capability Condition	Meaning
0	Absent	Sierra Leone possesses no meaningful operational capability.
1	Externally Dependent	Function is performed almost entirely through foreign expertise, systems or suppliers.
2	Assisted National Capability	Sierra Leoneans participate but substantial external supervision remains necessary.
3	Operational National Capability	Sierra Leoneans can independently operate the function to accepted standards.
4	Advanced National Capability	Sierra Leone can design, manage, maintain, adapt and improve the relevant system.
5	Exportable Capability	Sierra Leonean institutions or companies can provide the capability competitively to other countries.

The objective is not Level 5 in every field. That would be economically irrational. The objective is to decide **strategically** which capabilities Sierra Leone must own, which it should share with partners, and which can safely remain externally sourced.

5. THE NATIONAL CAPABILITY AUDIT

Within the first implementation cycle, Sierra Leone should conduct a **National Capability Audit**.

The audit shall answer ten questions in each strategic sector:

1. What functions are indispensable to national wellbeing and economic activity?
2. Which can currently be performed by Sierra Leoneans?
3. Which depend substantially upon foreign expertise?
4. Which technologies and systems are controlled externally?
5. Where are the relevant Sierra Leonean professionals located?

6. What domestic firms could perform the function with additional support?
7. What training and infrastructure are missing?
8. Who owns or controls the relevant data?
9. What would happen if foreign support suddenly disappeared?
10. What capability level should Sierra Leone reasonably achieve within three, five and ten years?

6. SECTOR CAPABILITY AUDITS

The first National Capability Audit should cover at least twelve systems.

A. Agriculture and Food Systems

Audit:

- *agronomy;*
- *irrigation;*
- *soil science;*
- *seed systems;*
- *veterinary services;*
- *mechanisation;*
- *storage;*
- *food processing;*
- *cold chains;*
- *agricultural finance;*
- *laboratories;*
- *agricultural data;*
- *food-safety capability;*
- *machinery maintenance;*
- *logistics.*

The objective must extend beyond producing crops. **Sierra Leone must progressively master complete food value chains.**

B. Health and Biomedical Capability

Audit:

- *doctors and specialist distribution;*
- *nurses and allied professionals;*
- *laboratories;*
- *epidemiology;*
- *biomedical engineering;*
- *pharmaceutical logistics;*

- *emergency medicine;*
- *public-health intelligence;*
- *mental health;*
- *rehabilitation;*
- *medicinal-plant research;*
- *health informatics;*
- *medical equipment maintenance;*
- *district emergency capacity.*

The question should not simply be how many hospitals exist. It should include: **How much of a hospital can Sierra Leone operate, maintain and sustain without prolonged external dependency?**

C. Education, Research and Scientific Capability

Audit:

- universities;
- TVET institutions;
- research centres;
- laboratories;
- scientific equipment;
- research funding;
- academic publication;
- patents;
- professional accreditation;
- research-industry partnerships;
- digital libraries;
- national research priorities.

D. Energy Capability

Audit:

- *generation;*
- *transmission;*
- *distribution;*
- *mini-grids;*
- *solar;*
- *hydro;*
- *energy planning;*
- *electrical engineering;*
- *metering;*
- *maintenance;*
- *grid software;*
- *spare parts;*
- *regulatory capability;*

- *energy financing.*

E. Mining, Geology and Mineral Transformation

Audit:

- *geology;*
- *exploration;*
- *mining engineering;*
- *environmental science;*
- *metallurgy;*
- *mineral valuation;*
- *contract negotiation;*
- *mine finance;*
- *rehabilitation;*
- *laboratory capability;*
- *beneficiation;*
- *supply-chain opportunities.*

The long-term objective must be to increase the proportion of mining knowledge and economic value that remains within Sierra Leone.

F. Engineering, Infrastructure and Housing

Audit:

- *civil engineering;*
- *architecture;*
- *surveying;*
- *geotechnical engineering;*
- *transport engineering;*
- *bridge engineering;*
- *urban planning;*
- *housing technology;*
- *water engineering;*
- *sanitation;*
- *construction materials;*
- *building standards;*
- *asset maintenance.*

G. Digital, Data, Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Capability

Audit:

- *government data systems;*
- *cloud dependence;*
- *national databases;*
- *cybersecurity;*

- *software development;*
- *digital identity;*
- *telecommunications;*
- *AI capability;*
- *critical digital infrastructure;*
- *data centres;*
- *interoperability;*
- *source-code ownership;*
- *vendor dependence.*

Where a critical national system cannot function without a single foreign vendor, this should be recognised as a **strategic dependency**.

H. Manufacturing, Trade and Logistics

Audit:

- *industrial production;*
- *packaging;*
- *machinery;*
- *maintenance;*
- *ports;*
- *warehousing;*
- *trucking;*
- *customs technology;*
- *shipping services;*
- *standards certification;*
- *export logistics;*
- *regional trade capability.*

I. Finance and Investment Capability

Audit:

- *project finance;*
- *public-private partnerships;*
- *investment appraisal;*
- *sovereign-risk analysis;*
- *capital markets;*
- *insurance;*
- *pensions;*
- *venture finance;*
- *development finance;*
- *financial technology;*
- *international contract negotiation.*

J. Justice, Regulation and Public Administration

Audit:

- *legislative drafting;*
- *commercial law;*
- *treaty analysis;*
- *arbitration;*
- *procurement;*
- *public administration;*
- *economic regulation;*
- *forensic capability;*
- *digital justice;*
- *regulatory economics.*

K. Emergency, Security and National Resilience

Audit:

- *disaster command;*
- *fire and rescue;*
- *search and rescue;*
- *emergency medicine;*
- *hazardous-material response;*
- *disease outbreaks;*
- *emergency logistics;*
- *communications;*
- *military support to civil authorities;*
- *policing;*
- *cybersecurity;*
- *national crisis communication.*

Sierra Leone already has a National Disaster Management Agency with a mandate extending to national, regional, district and chiefdom disaster structures. The Doctrine therefore proposes capability strengthening around this existing architecture rather than creation of a parallel emergency authority.

L. Blue Economy, Environment and Tourism

Audit:

- *fisheries science;*
- *marine surveillance;*
- *coastal management;*
- *biodiversity;*
- *environmental laboratories;*
- *fisheries processing;*
- *maritime logistics;*
- *hospitality management;*

- *cultural industries;*
- *heritage management;*
- *gastronomy;*
- *tourism product development.*

7. PROCUREMENT AS A NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT

Public procurement should not merely answer: **Who can deliver this project at an acceptable price?** For strategically important contracts it should also ask: **What economic and technical capability will Sierra Leone acquire through this expenditure?**

Sierra Leone already operates under the Public Procurement Act 2016 and Procurement Regulations, while the NPPA is pursuing procurement modernisation and electronic government procurement and has been reviewing the existing procurement legislation. This creates an opportunity to integrate capability accumulation into procurement reform.

8. THE STRATEGIC CAPABILITY CONTRACT

A new category should be created: **Strategic Capability Contract – SCC**

A procurement or investment should qualify for SCC treatment where it involves:

- critical infrastructure;
- national security;
- strategic natural resources;
- nationally important technology;
- large-scale infrastructure;
- high-value technical consultancy;
- major public digital systems;
- substantial public subsidy or concession;
- critical public services;
- or technology with long-term vendor dependency.

Value thresholds may be prescribed periodically by regulation rather than permanently fixed in legislation.

9. SEVEN MANDATORY COMPONENTS OF STRATEGIC CONTRACTS

Every SCC should include, where relevant:

1. Capability Transfer Plan

The contractor must specify:

- *competencies to be transferred;*
- *Sierra Leonean recipients;*
- *training mechanisms;*
- *implementation timetable;*
- *measurable outcomes.*

2. Sierra Leonean Counterpart Requirement

Critical foreign specialists should, wherever feasible, work alongside designated Sierra Leonean counterparts. The purpose is not symbolic shadowing. It is eventual functional competence.

3. Technical Documentation Handover

Relevant manuals, maintenance procedures, technical specifications, system architecture, operational protocols and documentation should be transferred at completion where contractual and intellectual-property arrangements permit.

4. Maintenance Sovereignty Plan

Before procurement approval, government should know:

- *who will maintain the asset;*
- *where spare parts originate;*
- *expected lifecycle costs;*
- *required tools;*
- *software licences;*
- *dependency on foreign technicians;*
- *training required for domestic maintenance.*

5. Supplier Development Plan

Large contractors should identify categories that Sierra Leonean enterprises could reasonably supply and specify measures needed for qualification.

6. Sierra Leonean Succession Plan

For specialised functions initially occupied by expatriates, major projects should define realistic pathways toward qualified Sierra Leonean participation and, where feasible, succession.

7. Knowledge Completion Certificate

A project should not be regarded as fully closed until agreed capability-transfer obligations have been independently assessed.

10. PROCUREMENT SCORING REFORM

For designated Strategic Capability Contracts, procurement evaluation should incorporate capability formation as a material criterion.

A model structure could include:

Dimension	Indicative Weight
Technical quality and performance	30–40%
Whole-life cost/value for money	25–35%
National capability transfer	15–20%
Sierra Leonean supplier development	5–10%
Maintenance and lifecycle sovereignty	5–10%
Sustainability/resilience	5–10%

Exact weighting should differ by sector. Lowest initial price should not automatically equal lowest national cost. A cheap asset requiring twenty years of externally controlled maintenance may ultimately be more expensive than an alternative that initially costs slightly more but develops local operational capacity.

11. CAPABILITY RETENTION MECHANISM

For designated projects, regulations should permit a proportion of final contractual payment to depend upon verified completion of agreed capability-transfer obligations.

This could take the form of a:

Capability Retention Payment

released only after:

- *training completion;*
- *competency verification;*
- *documentation transfer;*
- *maintenance readiness;*
- *relevant data transfer;*

- *and fulfilment of agreed succession commitments.*

This transforms knowledge transfer from goodwill into a contractual deliverable.

12. NO TOKEN LOCAL CONTENT

The Doctrine should explicitly distinguish between: **Numerical Local Content**

"How many Sierra Leoneans were employed?"

and: **Transformational Local Content**

"What functions did Sierra Leoneans learn to perform?"

A project employing hundreds of nationals exclusively in low-skilled functions while retaining all engineering, finance, technical management and decision-making externally should not receive the same capability rating as a project deliberately transferring advanced functions.

13. THE SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL EXPERTISE REGISTER

Sierra Leone should establish a verified digital:

National Expertise & Capability Register

covering Sierra Leoneans residing:

- *within Sierra Leone;*
- *across Africa;*
- *Europe;*
- *North America;*
- *Asia;*
- *the Middle East;*
- *and elsewhere.*

Fields should include:

- *professional discipline;*
- *qualifications;*
- *professional licences;*
- *experience;*
- *languages;*
- *specialisations;*
- *industry history;*
- *current country;*
- *availability;*
- *willingness to mentor;*
- *willingness to undertake short missions;*

- *investment interest;*
- *research interests;*
- *district connections where voluntarily provided.*

Registration should never automatically confer government appointments or contracts. Selection must remain merit-based and subject to normal procurement, professional and conflict-of-interest safeguards.

14. THE DIASPORA KNOWLEDGE COMPACT

The national diaspora strategy should move beyond remittances. Sierra Leone should create a: **Diaspora Knowledge Compact** through which professionals may participate through multiple pathways.

A. 30–90 Day National Missions

Specialists may undertake fixed-term assignments to:

- hospitals;
- universities;
- laboratories;
- ministries;
- engineering projects;
- public agencies;
- district institutions.

B. Virtual National Service

Professionals unable to relocate may contribute through:

- technical panels;
- mentorship;
- research supervision;
- procurement review;
- specialist case conferences;
- project appraisal;
- online teaching.

C. Diaspora Chairs

Universities and technical institutions may establish rotating: **Diaspora Visiting Chairs** allowing senior specialists abroad to teach, supervise research and build departments without permanent relocation.

D. Expert Reserve Corps

A vetted **Sierra Leone Global Expert Reserve** should contain specialists who can be activated for:

- disease outbreaks;
- infrastructure failures;
- cybersecurity incidents;
- major negotiations;
- international litigation;
- financial crises;
- disaster response;
- specialised investment negotiations.

E. Diaspora Enterprise Bridge

Sierra Leonean entrepreneurs abroad should receive transparent access to information on:

- procurement;
- joint ventures;
- industrial opportunities;
- investment projects;
- agricultural opportunities;
- innovation programmes.

They should not receive contracts merely because they are Sierra Leonean. They should receive **fair access to compete**.

15. BRAIN CIRCULATION, NOT BRAIN PRIVILEGE

The diaspora must complement—not displace—professionals who remained and built careers inside Sierra Leone. The Doctrine should therefore reject two extremes: **the assumption that foreign residence automatically signifies superior competence;** and **the assumption that diaspora expertise has no special contribution to make.** Competence should be verified. Contribution should be measurable. Opportunity should be transparent.

16. THE NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE REPOSITORY

Sierra Leone repeatedly generates valuable information through:

- feasibility studies;
- donor projects;
- consultancies;

- surveys;
- engineering projects;
- pilot programmes;
- contracts;
- academic research;
- audits;
- commissions;
- evaluations.

Much of this knowledge risks fragmentation across institutions.

A: **Sierra Leone National Knowledge Repository** should therefore preserve appropriately classified:

- *government-funded studies;*
- *project evaluations;*
- *engineering documentation;*
- *national datasets;*
- *policy research;*
- *sector studies;*
- *geological information;*
- *feasibility studies;*
- *lessons-learned reports;*
- *public contracts where disclosure is lawful;*
- *technical manuals;*
- *programme evaluations.*

The objective is simple: **Sierra Leone should not repeatedly pay to rediscover what Sierra Leone already knows.** Sensitive security information, commercially protected data and personal information would remain subject to appropriate restrictions.

17. KNOWLEDGE OWNERSHIP IN CONSULTANCY CONTRACTS

Every major public consultancy should clearly establish:

- *ownership of data;*
- *access to models;*
- *ownership of research instruments;*
- *ownership or licence rights relating to software developed;*
- *access to source files;*
- *methodology transfer;*
- *national counterpart participation;*
- *storage requirements;*
- *handover conditions.*

A PDF report alone should no longer be considered sufficient institutional transfer where underlying datasets, models or methodologies are necessary to reproduce the analysis.

18. THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC DEPENDENCY REGISTER

Geopolitical sovereignty requires visibility over dependency. Sierra Leone should maintain a confidential:

Strategic Dependency Register

identifying critical systems where the country depends excessively upon:

- *a single foreign company;*
- *a single country;*
- *proprietary software;*
- *foreign maintenance;*
- *imported spare parts;*
- *external laboratories;*
- *overseas data hosting;*
- *individual consultants;*
- *external financing;*
- *single commodity markets.*

Dependence itself is not necessarily problematic.

Unknown dependence is.

The Register would allow government to distinguish:

- acceptable dependency;
- manageable dependency;
- strategic vulnerability;
- unacceptable single-point failure.

19. GEOPOLITICAL DIVERSIFICATION

The Doctrine does not prescribe alignment with any geopolitical bloc. Sierra Leone should preserve the ability to work constructively with: *African partners, China, the United States, the United Kingdom, European states and institutions, India, Türkiye, Gulf states, Morocco and other partners according to national interests and applicable international obligations.*

Strategic diversification should seek to avoid situations in which one partner controls simultaneously: **finance + technology + maintenance + data + supply chain + market access.**

Where practical, interoperability, open technical standards and diversified supply chains should be encouraged. This is not anti-partner policy. It is elementary risk management.

20. THE 16-DISTRICT KNOWLEDGE ARCHITECTURE

National capability cannot remain concentrated in Freetown. The Doctrine therefore proposes:

16 District Knowledge & Capability Cells – DKCCs

covering:

- Bo
- Bombali
- Bonthe
- Falaba
- Kailahun
- Kambia
- Karene
- Kenema
- Koinadugu
- Kono
- Moyamba
- Port Loko
- Pujehun
- Tonkolili
- Western Area Rural
- Western Area Urban

Sierra Leone's statistical and administrative architecture recognises 16 districts, making the district a practical basic unit for national capability mapping.

21. PURPOSE OF EACH DISTRICT CAPABILITY CELL

Every district shall maintain: **District Skills Map** Who can do what?

District Enterprise Map

What businesses and productive capacities exist?

District Knowledge Map

What technical, scientific, agricultural, ecological, cultural, medicinal and community knowledge exists?

District Infrastructure Capability Map

What systems can the district maintain locally?

District Emergency Expertise Register

Who can be mobilised during floods, fires, disease outbreaks, building collapse and other emergencies?

District Opportunity Map

What capabilities could reasonably become economic specialisations?

District Capability Gap Register

Which essential services depend excessively upon expertise from Freetown or overseas?

22. FIVE REGIONAL COORDINATION HUBS

To prevent duplication, the 16 district cells should be connected through five regional coordination hubs corresponding broadly to the country's principal regional architecture:

Eastern Hub

Kailahun, Kenema, Kono

Northern Hub

Bombali, Falaba, Koinadugu, Tonkolili

North-Western Hub

Kambia, Karene, Port Loko

Southern Hub

Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba, Pujehun

Western Hub

Western Area Rural and Western Area Urban The hubs should aggregate district information while implementation remains locally grounded.

23. DISTRICT CAPABILITY CONTRACTS

Each district should establish a rolling **three-year District Capability Compact** identifying no more than three priority capability gaps at any one time.

For example, a district might prioritise:

- agricultural processing;
- emergency medicine;
- road maintenance;

while another might prioritise:

- fisheries;
- tourism;
- marine logistics.

These priorities should emerge from local evidence rather than being imposed uniformly from Freetown.

24. UNIVERSITIES AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTIONS AS NATIONAL CAPABILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Universities should not function only as institutions producing certificates. They should become components of national productive infrastructure. Government, industry and academic institutions should establish:

Capability Partnerships

linking major investment projects with:

- student placements;
- research programmes;
- laboratories;
- apprenticeships;
- faculty participation;
- engineering problems;
- agricultural research;
- industrial design;
- public-health research.

Where foreign companies receive substantial concessions or major public contracts, opportunities should be explored for relevant Sierra Leonean students and institutions to participate in knowledge creation.

25. FROM CURRICULUM TO ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Education planning should become more closely linked to the pipeline of national investment.

If Sierra Leone plans major expansion in:

- energy;
- agriculture;
- mining;
- healthcare;
- construction;
- telecommunications;
- training institutions should know years in advance.

This enables Sierra Leone to prepare: **the technicians, scientists, administrators, engineers and entrepreneurs who will eventually occupy those economic spaces.**

26. NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP OBLIGATION

Large strategic projects should, where feasible, maintain structured places for:

- apprentices;
- technical trainees;
- graduate engineers;
- researchers;
- finance trainees;
- procurement trainees;
- management trainees.

Participation must involve supervised competence development rather than ceremonial attachment.

27. THE NATIONAL CAPABILITY SCORECARD

A new **National Capability Scorecard** should accompany conventional development statistics.

It would not replace GDP or existing indicators.

It would reveal what those indicators often cannot.

28. CORE NATIONAL INDICATORS

Indicator 1 — Strategic Contract Knowledge Transfer Coverage

Measure: Percentage of designated strategic contracts containing approved capability-transfer plans.

Proposed target:
Year 1: baseline
Year 3: 80%
Year 5: 100%

Indicator 2 — Capability Transfer Completion

Percentage of contracted capability commitments independently verified as completed.

Target: ≥85% by Year 5.

Indicator 3 — National Technical Leadership

Percentage of identified strategic technical and managerial functions occupied by appropriately qualified Sierra Leoneans.

Measured sector by sector.

Indicator 4 — Maintenance Autonomy

Percentage of designated public strategic assets for which routine and intermediate maintenance can be performed domestically.

Target: ≥75% by 2032 for assets where domestic maintenance is technically and economically rational.

Indicator 5 — Institutional Knowledge Retention

Percentage of major publicly financed projects whose datasets, documentation and lessons are deposited within authorised national repositories.

Target: 100% of eligible projects by Year 5.

Indicator 6 – Diaspora Skills Mobilisation

Measured through:

- verified experts registered;
- missions completed;
- mentoring hours;
- university teaching;
- technical assignments;
- businesses created;
- investments facilitated.

Initial operational target: **3,000 verified professionals within three years**, subject to validation after establishment of the baseline.

Indicator 7 – Sierra Leonean Supplier Advancement

Rather than simply measuring local procurement expenditure, monitor the number of Sierra Leonean companies moving from:

basic supply → technical supply → specialised contracting → prime contracting → export capability.

Indicator 8 – District Capability Coverage

Target: all 16 districts operating annual capability registers and three-year capability compacts within 24 months of national rollout.

Indicator 9 – Strategic Dependency Reduction

Number of critical single-source dependencies:

- identified;
- risk-rated;
- mitigated;
- diversified.

Indicator 10 – National Emergency Readiness

Measured through:

- response times;
- trained personnel;
- district coverage;
- simulation performance;
- emergency stockpile readiness;
- hospital surge capability;
- interoperable communications;
- critical infrastructure contingency planning.

29. THE SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL CAPABILITY INDEX

These indicators should ultimately contribute to a composite: **Sierra Leone National Capability Index – SLNCI**

The Index may contain eight domains:

Domain	Illustrative Weight
Human technical capability	20%
Productive/private-sector capability	15%
Technology & maintenance sovereignty	15%
Institutional knowledge & data	10%
Local supply-chain depth	10%
Diaspora mobilisation	10%
Emergency resilience	10%
District capability diffusion	10%

Methodology should be independently reviewed before formal adoption. The purpose is not international ranking. It is to measure Sierra Leone against **its own capability trajectory**.

30. GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

The Doctrine should avoid creating an expensive new bureaucracy. Instead, it should connect institutions that already exist.

A. National Knowledge & Capability Council

A Cabinet-level inter-institutional council should provide strategic oversight.

Representation should include relevant institutions responsible for:

- planning;
- finance;
- trade;
- education;
- technical education;
- labour;
- foreign affairs;
- local government;
- science/technology;
- agriculture;
- health;
- mining;
- infrastructure;
- disaster management;
- procurement;
- local content;
- statistics.

Representatives of:

- universities;
- professional associations;
- private sector;
- labour;
- diaspora;
- civil society;

could participate through advisory structures.

B. National Capability Secretariat

A small technical secretariat should coordinate implementation.

It would preferably be located within or attached to an existing national planning architecture rather than becoming another large autonomous institution.

Its tasks would include:

- capability audits;
- national scorecard;
- district coordination;
- diaspora register;
- procurement capability standards;
- strategic dependency monitoring;
- knowledge repository coordination.

C. Statistics Sierra Leone

Stats SL should provide methodological oversight for measurable indicators and support integration with national statistical systems.

D. Local Content Agency

The Local Content Agency should remain central to:

- supplier development;
- employment monitoring;
- skills transfer;
- investor compliance;
- enterprise databases.

Its existing compliance and scorecard functions provide a foundation for moving from numerical local content toward capability measurement.

E. National Public Procurement Authority

NPPA would integrate capability-transfer requirements into:

- procurement guidance;
- standard bidding documents;
- electronic procurement;
- contract evaluation;
- compliance.

The Authority already maintains standard bidding documents and is expanding procurement digitalisation, providing an operational route through which capability clauses could eventually be mainstreamed.

F. NDMA

NDMA should lead the National Emergency Capability dimension.

G. Local Councils

District councils should host or jointly coordinate District Knowledge & Capability Cells rather than creating parallel local-government systems.

31. ACCOUNTABILITY

An **Annual National Capability Statement** should be presented publicly.

It should report:

- capabilities gained;
- critical dependencies;
- knowledge-transfer compliance;
- diaspora mobilisation;
- district results;
- local supplier progression;
- emergency readiness;
- major capability gaps.

Parliament should be able to scrutinise the report. Audit institutions should examine expenditure and compliance. Where legally appropriate, non-sensitive scorecard information should be publicly accessible.

32. ANTI-PATRONAGE SAFEGUARDS

A national expertise policy can easily become another network of favouritism unless protected. The following safeguards are therefore essential:

- *No expert appointment solely through political referral.*
- *Professional credentials must be independently verifiable.*
- *Procurement remains subject to competitive rules.*
- *Diaspora status creates no automatic entitlement.*
- *Conflict-of-interest declarations shall be required.*
- *Beneficial ownership should be disclosed where legally required.*
- *Capability performance should be independently auditable.*

Knowledge sovereignty without meritocracy would merely replace foreign dependency with domestic patronage. That would defeat the Doctrine.

33. FINANCING THE DOCTRINE

Sierra Leone currently faces significant fiscal constraints. The IMF continues to assess the country as being at high risk of external and overall debt distress, despite public debt remaining assessed as sustainable under the programme baseline. This makes a large new debt-financed bureaucracy inappropriate.

The Doctrine should therefore be **fiscally disciplined**. Its financing model should prioritise:

1. Reorientation of Existing Project Budgets

Major projects already contain:

- consultancy;
- training;
- technical assistance;
- monitoring;
- project-management expenditures.

A portion should be systematically redirected toward measurable capability transfer.

2. Embedded Capability Budgets

Strategic projects should normally allocate a defined share of project expenditure to:

- apprenticeship;
- training;
- knowledge transfer;
- documentation;
- supplier upgrading;
- research collaboration.

This should be part of project cost, not necessarily a new tax.

3. Development-Partner Alignment

Technical assistance should increasingly be evaluated according to what national institutions can perform after assistance concludes.

4. Private-Sector Co-financing

Companies benefiting from large concessions or strategic investments may co-finance workforce and supplier capability programmes pursuant to applicable law and contractual agreements.

5. Competitive Research Funds

Universities and technical institutions should compete for applied research assignments tied to national capability gaps.

34. WHY THIS IS AN ECONOMIC POLICY

This Doctrine is not primarily an educational programme. It is an economic strategy. A country retains more wealth when its own enterprises perform higher-value functions. It imports fewer technical services when its own professionals can provide them. It reduces foreign-exchange leakage when more maintenance, professional services and production occur domestically.

It becomes more attractive to sophisticated investors when local supply chains and technical talent improve. It creates better employment when citizens move from low-productivity activities toward specialised functions. It negotiates better when government has access to strong technical expertise.

And it becomes more resilient when critical systems are not entirely dependent upon external actors. The employment imperative is substantial. World Bank analysis has estimated that Sierra Leone needs approximately 75,000 new jobs annually simply to maintain the current employment-to-population ratio; a June 2026 World Bank project statement noted current annual job creation of roughly 41,000 against that estimated need.

The issue is therefore not merely job creation. It is **capability-intensive job creation**.

35. IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

PHASE I – FIRST 100 DAYS AFTER ADOPTION

1. Establish National Knowledge & Capability Task Force.
2. Conduct institutional mapping.
3. Agree definition of Strategic Capability Contracts.
4. Design National Capability Audit methodology.
5. Develop National Expertise Register architecture.
6. Begin legal review of procurement and local-content requirements.
7. Establish baseline capability indicators.

8. Map existing government knowledge repositories.
9. Identify major strategic dependencies requiring immediate review.
10. Select initial sector audits.

36. PHASE II – MONTHS 4–12

Launch audits in:

- agriculture;
- health;
- energy;
- mining;
- digital infrastructure;
- engineering;
- emergency capability.

Establish pilot regional coordination hubs. Launch National Expertise Register. Introduce pilot capability clauses into selected strategic procurements where legally permissible. Create first National Capability Baseline.

37. PHASE III – YEAR 2

Establish all: **16 District Knowledge & Capability Cells**

Create district skills and enterprise maps. Launch Diaspora Expert Reserve. Introduce capability requirements into standard strategic procurement documentation following necessary legal and regulatory processes. Establish National Knowledge Repository. Publish first Annual National Capability Statement.

38. PHASE IV – YEARS 3–5

- Evaluate sector movement across Capability Levels 0–5.
- Expand domestic maintenance programmes.
- Deepen university-industry partnerships.
- Accelerate succession in strategic sectors.
- Develop advanced Sierra Leonean suppliers.
- Begin identifying capabilities with export potential.
- Measure reductions in strategic external dependency.

39. PHASE V – 2030–2035

The objective should move from: **Local participation**

to: **National mastery** and, where competitive advantages emerge:

Capability export.

By 2035, Sierra Leone should seek to develop selected areas in which national companies, experts and institutions can provide services beyond Sierra Leone. Knowledge sovereignty ultimately becomes economically powerful when knowledge itself becomes exportable.

40. FIVE TESTS FOR EVERY MAJOR NATIONAL PROJECT

Before approving a major project, five questions should become standard:

1. VALUE

What physical, economic or social value will Sierra Leone receive?

2. CAPABILITY

What will Sierra Leoneans learn to do?

3. OWNERSHIP

What knowledge, data, infrastructure or intellectual assets will remain accessible nationally?

4. DEPENDENCY

What new external dependencies will the project create?

5. SUCCESSION

Who will operate, maintain, regulate and improve the system after external specialists depart?

If these questions cannot be answered, the project is not yet strategically complete.

41. THE NATIONAL CONTRACT TEST

At the end of every major foreign-supported programme Sierra Leone should be able to ask: **What can we now do ourselves that we could not do before this partnership began?** If the answer is: **nothing**, then Sierra Leone received a service. It did not acquire a capability. If the answer is: **we can now operate it**, Sierra Leone acquired competence.

If: **we can maintain it**, Sierra Leone acquired resilience. If: **we can reproduce and adapt it**, Sierra Leone acquired technological capability.

And if: **we can sell that expertise to others**, Sierra Leone transformed imported knowledge into national economic power.

42. THE DOCTRINE AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

This Doctrine should not be presented internationally as a withdrawal from cooperation. It should be presented as an invitation to **higher-quality partnership**.

Sierra Leone should tell prospective partners:

- We welcome your capital.
- We welcome your technology.
- We welcome your scientists.
- We welcome your companies.
- We welcome your universities.
- We welcome your investment.

But partnership with Sierra Leone should help build Sierra Leonean capability.

Responsible investors should have little to fear from such a principle. Stronger local suppliers reduce costs. Competent local technicians reduce downtime. Better institutions reduce investment risk. Improved infrastructure expands markets. Skilled workers increase productivity. Transparent procurement improves competition. National capacity therefore benefits both Sierra Leone and serious long-term investors.

43. A NEW DEVELOPMENT EQUATION

The Doctrine proposes replacing a development equation based largely upon:

FINANCE → PROJECT → COMPLETION with: **FINANCE → PROJECT → KNOWLEDGE → CAPABILITY → PRODUCTIVITY → SOVEREIGNTY**

Completion of infrastructure is not the end of development. It is one stage.

44. THE NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE COMPACT

Government, private sector, universities, communities, traditional knowledge holders and the diaspora should ultimately operate within a common National Knowledge Compact:

- *Government must identify national capability needs.*
- *Universities must help produce and investigate knowledge.*
- *Industry must create pathways into productive competence.*
- *Investors must contribute to capability formation where appropriate.*
- *Professionals must transmit knowledge.*
- *Diaspora communities must be connected to national opportunities.*
- *Districts must identify knowledge existing outside Freetown.*
- *Young people must gain pathways from learning into competence.*
- *Institutions must preserve national memory.*
- *The state must protect strategic knowledge without imprisoning innovation.*

45. WHAT THIS DOCTRINE REJECTS

It rejects the belief that every foreign solution is automatically superior.

It equally rejects the belief that every domestic solution is automatically sufficient.

It rejects romantic nationalism.

It rejects intellectual dependency.

It rejects symbolic localisation.

It rejects patronage disguised as local content.

It rejects training without competence.

It rejects infrastructure without maintenance capability.

It rejects consultancy without institutional memory.

It rejects investment that creates no meaningful domestic economic linkages.

And it rejects the false choice between international cooperation and national sovereignty.

46. WHAT THIS DOCTRINE AFFIRMS

It affirms: **competence; merit; learning; evidence; institutional memory; productive enterprise; strategic openness; technological absorption; national confidence; and measurable capability.**

CONCLUSION

Sierra Leone's future cannot depend solely upon what lies beneath its soil. Nor can it depend solely upon how much foreign capital enters the country. The decisive national resource will increasingly be: **what Sierra Leone knows, what Sierra Leone can do, and how rapidly Sierra Leone can learn what it does not yet know.** Natural resources can be exhausted. Loans must be repaid. Infrastructure deteriorates. Political administrations change. Development programmes terminate. Consultants leave. Investors restructure. Global powers change priorities.

But knowledge embedded within people, institutions, enterprises and national systems can compound across generations. That is the deeper meaning of national capability. The objective is not to build a Sierra Leone that needs nobody. Such a country does not exist.

The objective is to build a Sierra Leone sufficiently knowledgeable and capable to decide:

- *when it needs assistance,*
- *what assistance it needs,*
- *from whom,*
- *under what conditions,*
- *for how long,*
- *at what cost,*
- *and what Sierra Leone must know when that assistance ends.*

This is the difference between dependence and partnership. Between participation and ownership. Between receiving development and acquiring the capacity to produce it. Sierra Leone must remain open to the world. But openness must no longer mean intellectual surrender.

Partnership must no longer mean permanent dependence. Local content must no longer mean merely counting workers. Education must no longer terminate at certification. Procurement must no longer terminate at delivery. Diaspora policy must no longer terminate at remittances. Investment policy must no longer terminate at capital inflows. And development must no longer be measured solely by what has been built.

We must also measure:

- *Who understands it?*
- *Who can operate it?*
- *Who can repair it?*
- *Who can reproduce it?*
- *Who owns the knowledge?*
- *Who controls the data?*
- *Who can improve it?*
- *And who will still know how it works twenty years from now?*

These questions lead toward a different conception of national reconstruction. One based not upon isolation, but competence. Not upon suspicion of outsiders, but stronger negotiation with them.

Not upon slogans of self-reliance, but the measurable construction of the capability required to make self-reliance possible where it matters. And not upon the assumption that Sierra Leone lacks knowledge.

But upon the determination finally to **find it, organise it, connect it, finance it, protect it, transmit it and use it.**

That is the purpose of the: **SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE & CAPABILITY DOCTRINE**

A nation should never emerge from a major investment knowing no more than it knew before the investment arrived.

Every project must build something. Every partnership must leave something. Every generation must know more and be capable of doing more than the generation before it. That is how knowledge becomes capability.

That is how capability becomes economic power. And that is how political independence acquires the substance of national sovereignty.

Dr Alpha Grace, PhD