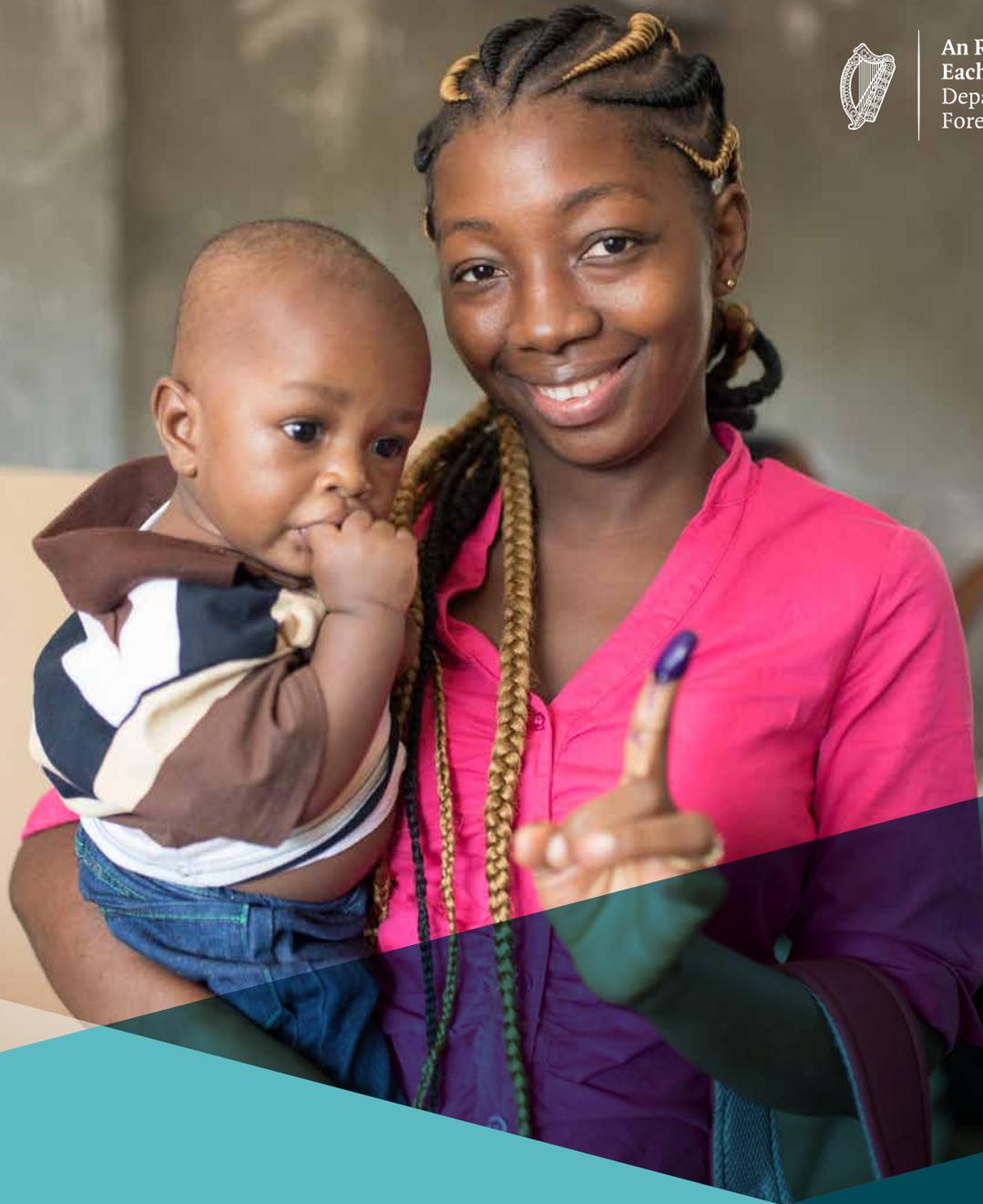




An Roinn Gnóthaí
Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of
Foreign Affairs and Trade



Ireland in Sierra Leone

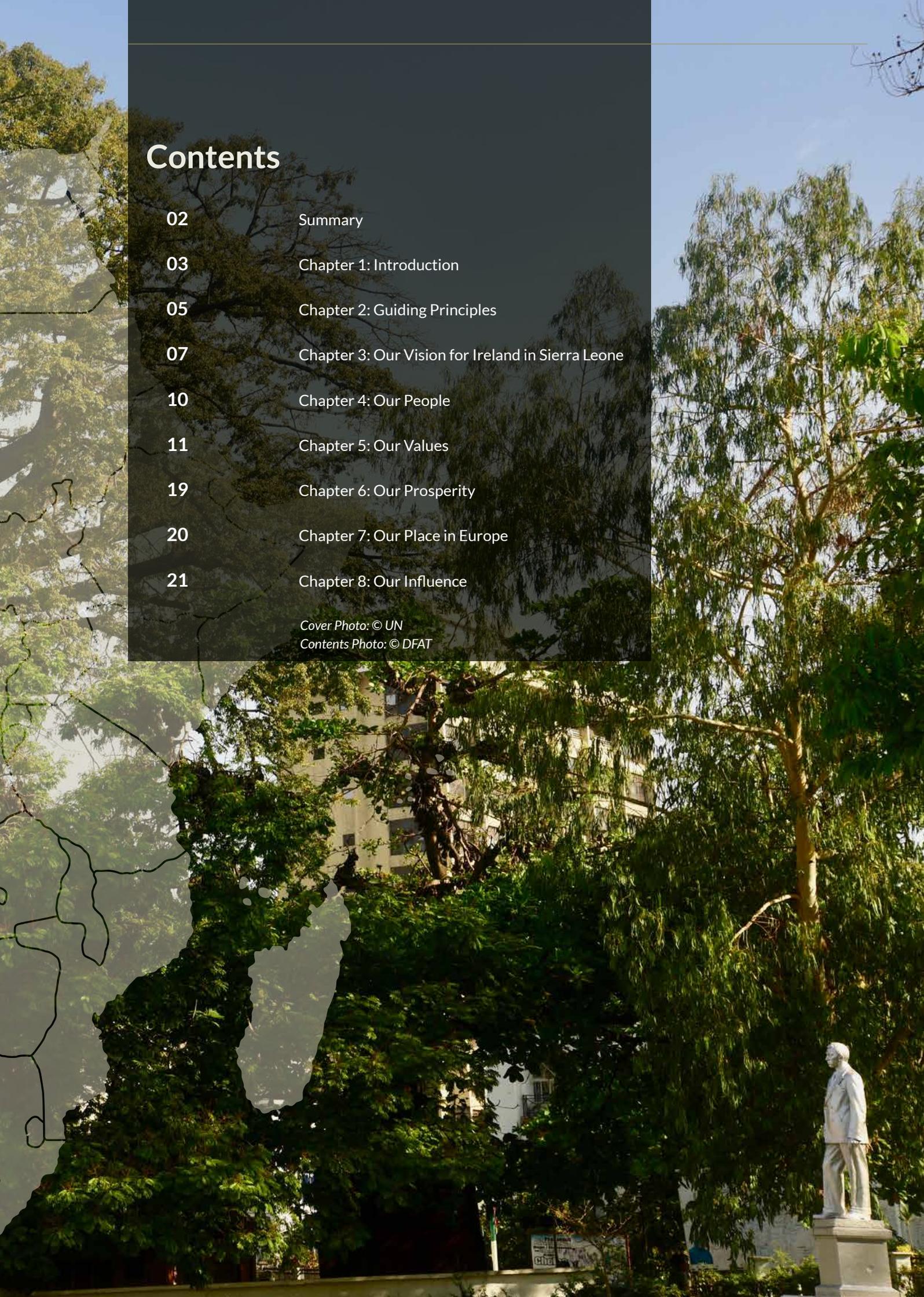
Mission Strategy
2019-2023

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Cover Photo: © UN

Contents Photo: © DFAT





School for the Hearing Impaired in Makeni, Bombali District, which is managed under the leadership of Sr. Mary Sweeney from Co. Donegal. Photo: © Phil Behan / DFAT

Summary



Women from Joi Village in Kenema District, Sierra Leone, meet as part of a women in governance group supported by SEND Sierra Leone as part of Ireland's programme of support for women to become active in public life. Photo: © Noel Molony

Our ambition is to promote Ireland's values and interests in Sierra Leone, with a focus on the empowerment of women and girls

This five-year strategy sets out Ireland's ambition to deepen bilateral, political, economic and cultural cooperation between Ireland and Sierra Leone. With a budget of approximately €67 million over the period 2019 – 2023, the strategy will be managed by Ireland's Embassy in Freetown, which is also accredited to neighbouring Guinea.

The peaceful and democratic transition of power in Sierra Leone in 2018 presents an opportunity to renew Ireland's commitment to support Sierra Leone's efforts in consolidating development gains and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets by 2030.

The strategy builds on over a decade of Ireland's experience in Sierra Leone. It also identifies new opportunities to move beyond our traditional focus on development cooperation to strengthen and build new

partnerships in Sierra Leone and the region, thereby contributing to a strengthened presence in West Africa as set out in the Government's commitments in *Global Ireland - Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025*.

The strategy reflects our priorities across the five pillars of the *Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World* – Our People, Our Values, Our Prosperity, Our Place in Europe, and Our Influence - contributing to the overarching goal of **promoting Ireland's values and interests in Sierra Leone, with a focus on the empowerment of women and girls**.

In delivering on this goal, the Embassy will enhance Ireland's profile as a strong and constructive bilateral partner in Sierra Leone. We will continue to focus on our well established development cooperation programme whilst also seeking opportunities to deepen political, economic and cultural ties.

Support for the achievement of the SDGs and reducing inequality remains at the core of our work at the Embassy. Gender equality, nutrition, food security and the promotion and protection of human rights will continue to be a strong focus within this strategy, building upon our considerable experience and strong partnerships in Sierra Leone.

Over time, Ireland will strengthen its bilateral relationship with Guinea as our footprint in West Africa expands.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The strategy takes account of the changing context in Sierra Leone and builds on Ireland’s experience to date.



CONTEXT

The election of Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) leader, Julius Maada Bio, as President of Sierra Leone in March 2018 marked a peaceful transition of power from the 10 year term of the All People’s Congress (APC). The ambition of this new government is to see Sierra Leone moving to a new phase of development, where long term objectives of building human capital, fighting poverty and promoting economic growth are prioritised, as well as continued consolidation of democracy and a focus on national cohesion and accountability.

Priority areas for the government include job creation; access to quality education; empowerment of youth, women and those living with disability; combating corruption and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency. The government decision to introduce a new Free Quality Education programme in September 2018 is of particular interest to Ireland and will be supported through this strategy.

Despite progress, the achievement of the SDG targets in Sierra Leone will require concerted effort. The Ebola outbreak of 2014–2016 eroded a decade of development gains. The economy, which contracted severely as a result of twin shocks of the Ebola epidemic and the global collapse in iron ore prices, is seeing some recovery.

Approximately 3.3 of 7.1 million citizens live below the national poverty line and experience high levels of vulnerability. Women and girls bear the biggest burden of poverty - experiencing high rates of gender based violence and teenage pregnancy as well as low access to education and resources. Sierra Leone has one of the highest maternal and under-five mortality rates globally while almost half of the population is food insecure. Sierra Leone ranks 184 of 189 countries on the *United Nations Human Development Index 2018*, reflecting poor access to quality health, education and other basic services.

IRELAND’S ENGAGEMENT TO DATE

Ireland began working in Sierra Leone in 2005 in response to the enormous needs facing the country following almost 11 years of civil war. Since then, Ireland has invested over €180 million in development initiatives in Sierra Leone through programmes funded directly by the Embassy and through partnerships with Irish and international NGOs and UN agencies. These have been long-term, high-impact initiatives centred around our core values of combatting poverty and addressing inequality and vulnerability, governance and rule of law, rights and services for women and girls, education, health and nutrition, and food security.

Ireland has established a reputation in Sierra Leone as a strong advocate for women and girls, civil society, vulnerable citizens, and the promotion and protection of human rights. Furthermore, Ireland’s leadership and



Children in St Joseph's Compound, a school that educates and teaches hearing impaired children in Makeni, Sierra Leone 2019. Photo: © Phil Behan / DFAT

coordination role during the Ebola crisis from 2014-2016 is well recognised in Sierra Leone.

Ireland's presence in Freetown was upgraded to an Embassy in 2014, with oversight for bilateral engagement in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The development cooperation office in Liberia was upgraded to an Embassy by Government decision in 2018. The Ambassador in Sierra Leone is concurrently accredited to Liberia.

Partnerships with Irish NGOs

Ireland provides funding to Irish civil society organisations for development and humanitarian work in Sierra Leone including Concern Worldwide, Goal, Irish League of Credit Unions, Mísean Cara, Sightsavers Ireland, Trócaire, Christian Aid Ireland, World Vision Ireland.

Ireland and Sierra Leone at a Glance*		
	Ireland	Sierra Leone
Population (million)	4.8	7.6
Human Development Index ranking	4/189	184/189
Gross national income (GNI) per capita (2011 PPP €)	47,118	1,087
Life Expectancy (years)	81.6	52.2
Expected years of schooling	19.6	9.8
Maternal Mortality per 100,000 live births	8	1,360
Infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births	3	83.3

*Source: UN Human Development Report 2018

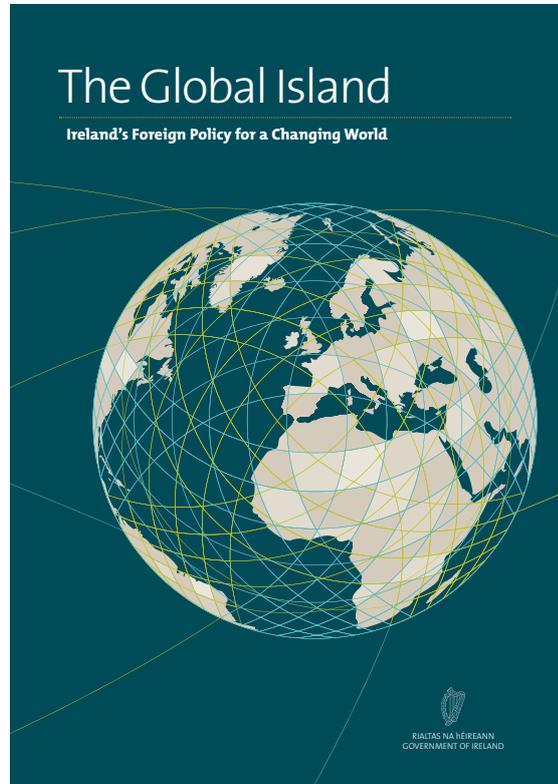
Chapter 2: Guiding Principles

Ireland's priorities in Sierra Leone are guided by national and international foreign policy objectives and commitments.

The development of this strategy has been guided by a range of governmental and departmental policies and strategies as well as Ireland's commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Global Ireland: Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025 affirms Ireland's aspirations for a better world and its commitment to the global fight against poverty and hunger and the promotion of equality, justice and sustainable development. In Sub-Saharan Africa, it sets out a range of further measures, including the establishment of a full Embassy in Liberia, which is of direct relevance to the work of the Embassy in Sierra Leone.

- » Reaffirming our commitment to reaching 0.7% of GNI for development assistance by 2030.
- » Strengthening our presence in West Africa, moving beyond our traditional focus on aid to building new multi-faceted partnerships and the announcement of an Embassy in Liberia.
- » Promoting Ireland's values of peace, humanitarianism, equality and justice, including through our campaign for election to the UN Security Council.
- » Contributing to issues of strategic importance for the European Union in the region.



The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World is the frame of reference for the operation of our Embassy network in key areas of international engagement including the promotion of peace, security and economic prosperity. These priorities are strongly articulated in our work in Sierra Leone.



To serve our people at home and abroad



To work for a fairer, more just, secure and sustainable world



To advance Ireland's prosperity by promoting our economic interests internationally

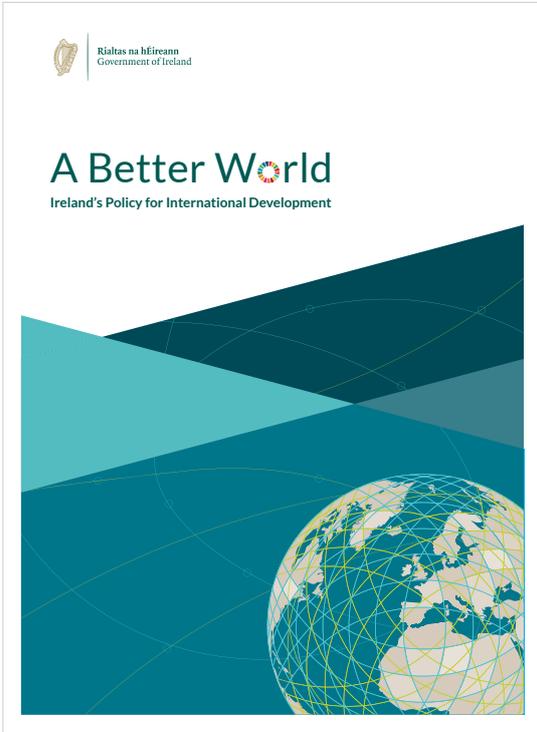


To protect and advance Ireland's values and interests in Europe



To strengthen our influence and our capacity to deliver our goals

Ireland's new International Development Policy, **A Better World**, outlines four clear policy priorities – (i) achieving gender equality; (ii) reducing humanitarian need; (iii) mobilising climate action and; (iv) strengthening governance.



In addition to these priorities, Ireland will channel its work to reach the “*Furthest Behind First*” through three clusters of interventions in which Ireland has proven expertise: people, protection and food.

Building on our national experience, this policy will guide Ireland’s international development programme as it expands in line with our commitment to reach the target of allocating 0.7% of GNI to official development assistance (ODA).



Chapter 3: Our Vision for Ireland in Sierra Leone

The Strategy sets out a framework for Ireland’s bilateral relations with Sierra Leone over the next five year period 2019-2023.

Sierra Leone is an important partner for Ireland in Africa. We will actively seek opportunities to deepen political, economic and cultural ties.

The country remains one of the poorest, most vulnerable countries in the world, where a strong focus on the fight against poverty and inequality, in particular gender equality, is a priority.

The recent transition of power in Sierra Leone presents an opportunity to renew Ireland’s commitment to support the country’s efforts to consolidate democratic and development gains to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

The goal of the strategy, *Promoting Ireland’s values and interests in Sierra Leone with a focus on the empowerment of women and girls*, is articulated around Ireland’s values and interests.

In delivering on the strategy, the Embassy will adopt a holistic approach, building synergies across its political, development, trade, cultural promotion and consular work.

In doing so we will work in close partnership with the Government of Sierra Leone to intensify our political engagement around areas of mutual concern.

We will provide support for initiatives that reduce vulnerability and inequality and key governance and democratic processes, including elections and the promotion of human rights, especially women’s rights.



Vegetable garden, Moyamba.
Photo: © Lewis Joly

AT A GLANCE: IRELAND'S PRIORITIES IN SIERRA LEONE

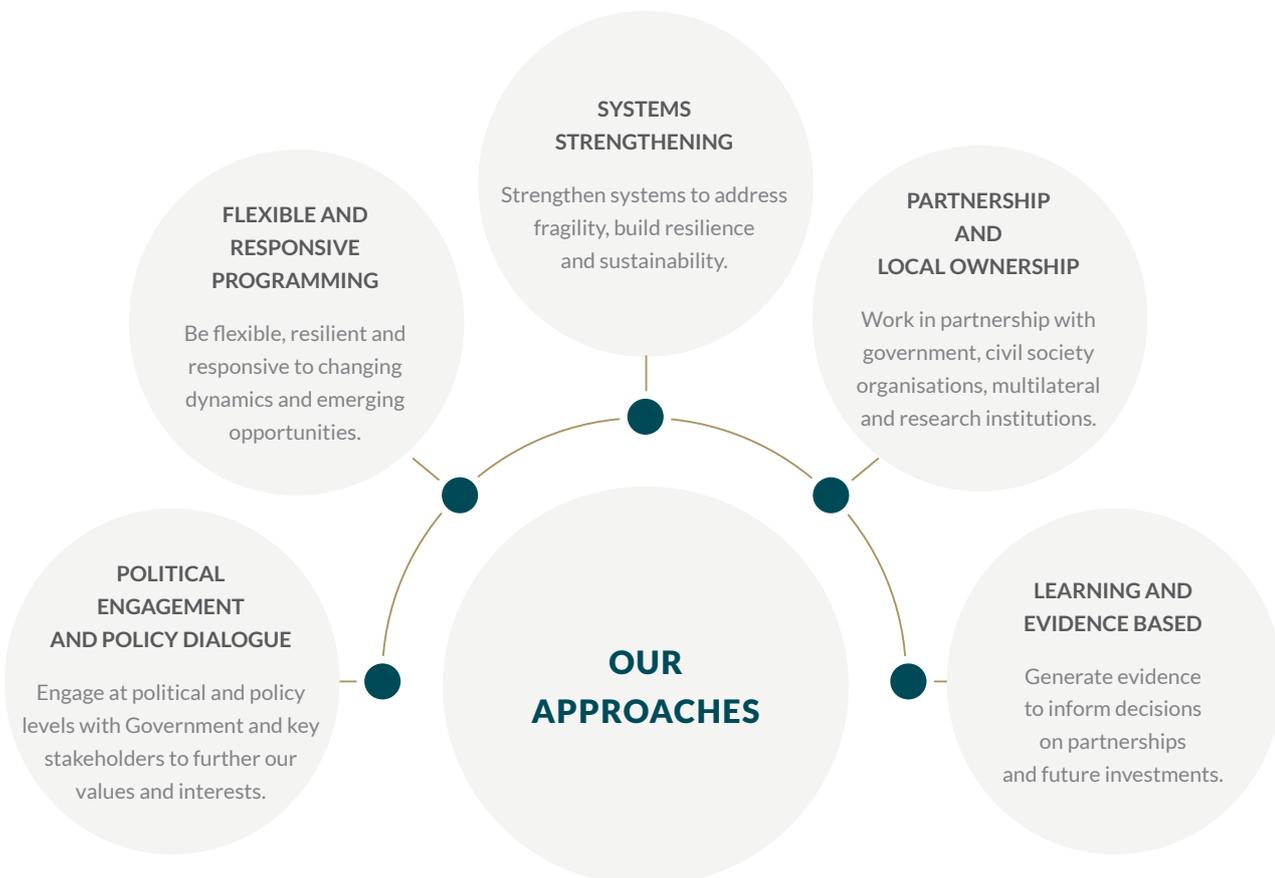
OUR PEOPLE 	OUR VALUES 	OUR PROSPERITY 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Deliver effective consular assistance and services to Irish citizens in Sierra Leone and Guinea and actively monitor security and disaster risks to inform crisis preparedness plans. » Maintain and capitalise on our connections with our Global Irish family, in particular Irish missionaries, NGOs, development and humanitarian workers. » Seek opportunities to raise awareness of Ireland and Irish culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Prioritise the promotion and protection of women's rights. » Work to ensure that women, girls and children in Sierra Leone are safer, better nourished and more empowered. » Support processes that facilitate citizens to be more engaged in political processes and elections. » Seek support for Ireland's campaign for election to the UN Security Council in 2021-2022. » Expand multilateral regional relationships with the Mano River Union and ECOWAS and the office of the SRSG for West Africa and the Sahel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Build people to people and institutional linkages and share expertise in areas of mutual interest. » Make strategic use of fellowships for study in Irish higher education institutions. » Seek opportunities to improve trade and economic links. » Support Irish businesses to invest in Sierra Leone as the operating environment for the private sector improves.
OUR PLACE IN EUROPE 	OUR INFLUENCE 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Maintain close and constructive cooperation with the EU delegation. » Advance shared EU values: peace, stability and development. » Use our voice and influence to shape EU policies and engagement on Sierra Leone. » Provide consular assistance to unrepresented EU citizens as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Invest in the capacity of our workforce to deliver our strategy to a high standard. » Strengthen our public diplomacy with key stakeholders. » Ensure appropriate management structures are in place. » Ensure accountability and transparency through robust oversight of expenditure. » A new communication strategy will ensure the results of the programme are clearly communicated to our partners and the public in Ireland. 	



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

While there have been significant development gains in Sierra Leone in the past decade, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal targets still requires concerted international support. This work remains at the core of the work of Ireland in Sierra Leone. This is complemented by a range of strategic actions supporting Ireland’s political, public and economic diplomacy efforts.

OUR APPROACHES



Chapter 4: Our People



We support Irish citizens travelling, living and working in Sierra Leone and Guinea and promote awareness of Irish culture.

SERVING THE IRISH COMMUNITY

Ireland's link with Sierra Leone stretches back over 150 years through the presence of the many Irish missionaries who contributed enormously to the country's development. Today these links continue through the small but active Irish community, many of whom are involved in development and humanitarian assistance.

What we will do?

- » Provide high quality consular services to Irish citizens.
- » Facilitate visa requests for travel to Ireland.
- » Maintain and nurture relationships with Irish citizens and the Global Irish.
- » Invest in crisis preparedness and response capacities particularly during periods of increased risk, in close collaboration with our Embassies in Monrovia and Abuja.

PROMOTING IRISH CULTURE

The promotion of Irish culture forms an important part of our public diplomacy work to raise awareness of Ireland and our work in the country and across the region.

What we will do?

- » Identify opportunities to expand the impact and reach of events such as St. Patrick's Day to promote Irish culture.
- » Establish a 'greening event' in cooperation with the Freetown City Council for St Patrick's Day.
- » Expand our cultural programme through participation in EU week events.
- » Develop a strategic approach to external communications aimed at increasing our profile.
- » Share Ireland's experience on the development of the National Diaspora Policy.

Chapter 5: Our Values



We promote our values in support of a fairer, more just, more secure and more sustainable Sierra Leone.

In promoting Ireland's values in Sierra Leone, the context calls on us to put transformative change for women and girls at the centre of our strategy and for empowerment and gender equality to cut across all of our outcomes. Development opportunities and life choices for women and girls are highly constrained by discrimination, gender-based violence, early marriage and high rates of female genital mutilation (FGM).



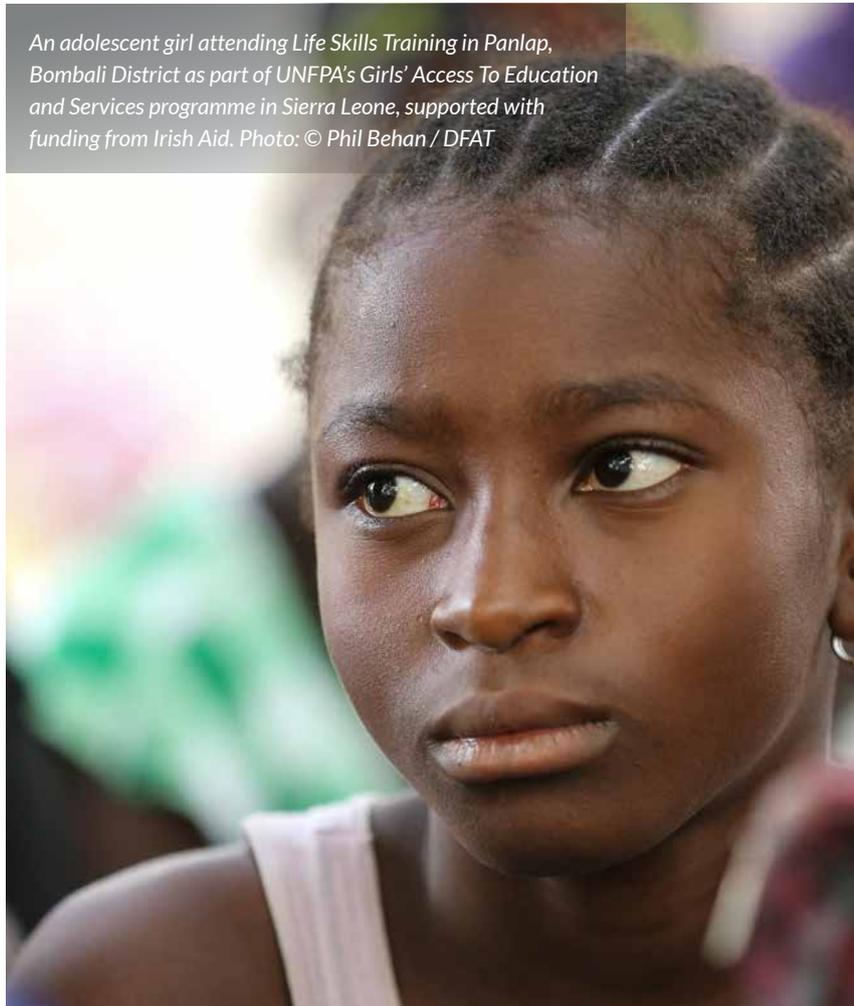
Janet Lavally from Moyamba district engaging in gari (cassava) processing as a form of income generating activity supported by Action Against Hunger through Embassy Freetown's food security and nutrition programme in Sierra Leone. Photo: © J. V. Sankoh / Action Against Hunger

Our long term ambition is that, through political and policy engagement and development cooperation, *women and girls living in poverty will contribute to and benefit from a more inclusive, resilient and equitable Sierra Leone.*

Our development cooperation programme is designed to deliver four interlinked outcome and ten specific outputs which have been identified on the basis of the needs and priorities of Sierra Leone and Ireland's experience and capacity;

- » Women and children have improved nutritional status;
- » Women and girls are empowered to realise their potential and rights;
- » Girls access and benefit from quality education;
- » Citizens, especially women, are more empowered to engage with inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes.

An adolescent girl attending Life Skills Training in Panlap, Bombali District as part of UNFPA's Girls' Access To Education and Services programme in Sierra Leone, supported with funding from Irish Aid. Photo: © Phil Behan / DFAT



Improved nutritional status, in particular a reduction in child stunting, and increased food security will contribute to better outcomes for women and children across a number of spheres including health, education and economic empowerment. Through changing social norms, increasing protection, and educating and empowering adolescent girls, they will be able to make more informed choices, reduce their vulnerability and increase opportunities to fulfil their potential. Increased participation by citizens, especially women, in decision-making processes at all levels will enable them to contribute to and benefit from a more inclusive, resilient and equitable Sierra Leone.

Ireland is committed to supporting national systems and the strengthening of human rights in order to achieve these outcomes.



A mother feeding her child Vitamin A rich Orange Flesh Sweet Potato under supervision of the lead mother in her mother support group, a community-level initiative led by Helen Keller International as part of Ireland's work to improve the nutritional status of women and children in Sierra Leone. Photo: © Helen Keller International

Outcome 1: Women and children have improved nutritional status

In Sierra Leone, malnutrition is a key factor contributing to high rates of child and maternal mortality. This is further complicated by high rates of teenage pregnancy with early motherhood impacting on adolescent girls' own health and their ability to care for their infants, who are often underweight. Addressing adolescent nutrition is necessary in order to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition through improved access to information

and services. Integrated and climate sensitive approaches to increasing food production can provide solutions to addressing food insecurity. However lesson learning on these approaches is sparse and is not, as of yet, influencing policy at a national level or being replicated at scale. Effective national coordination is key to finding workable solutions across these areas and in ensuring that nutrition is addressed across all sectors.

OUTPUTS

1. Adolescent girls and women access improved nutrition services at facility and community level
2. Evidence of effective and climate smart approaches for food nutrition and food security generated and informing national policy
3. Improved national coordination for nutrition

WHAT WE WILL DO

- » Support Ministry of Health and Sanitation and partners to scale up the integration of nutrition and family planning into routine health centre and community level services.
- » Support Ministry of Health and Sanitation and partners to adapt services to be more adolescent-friendly.
- » Closely contribute to and learn from Ireland's work on adolescent nutrition, with HQ and other missions.
- » Support programming and evidence generation on effective approaches which support women in securing good nutrition and food security.
- » Strengthen analysis of the impact of climate shocks on vulnerable populations and support our partners to incorporate climate adaptation within food security programmes.
- » Work closely with the EU, and other partners, working on agriculture and food security to influence policies to be more climate and nutrition sensitive.

- » Work with partners to strengthen and protect women’s rights and access to land.
- » Support the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement, acting as donor convenor, and provide technical advice for national nutrition planning.
- » Seek to ensure high-level political commitment for nutrition investment and legislation, working with the parliamentary network on nutrition and inter-ministerial working groups.
- » Advocate for coherent policies and regulations affecting food and nutrition.
- » Generate and disseminate evidence of climate smart approaches for nutrition and food security with the aim of informing national policies.
- » Ensure lessons from Sierra Leone inform Ireland’s engagement with global partnerships with the SUN movement and UN REACH.



Young mothers in Freetown studying tailoring as part of a skills-training initiative with Save the Children’s “Fambul Welbodi (Family Health)” project supported through the Embassy’s gender equality and women’s empowerment work. Photo: © Noel Molony / DFAT

Outcome 2: Women and girls are empowered to realise their potential and rights

Adolescent girls and women are amongst the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in Sierra Leone. Cultural norms and traditions, poverty, weak access to information and services, and a lack of protection contribute to high levels of discrimination and exclusion. This is compounded by women's lack of decision-making power over critical decisions affecting their lives. Changes are required at various levels to address drivers of vulnerability and to create an enabling environment for adolescent girls to reach their potential. This includes addressing the drivers that contribute to high levels

of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), including female genital mutilation (FGM), and supporting initiatives which make information, services and development opportunities more accessible.

Effective Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), in school and out-of-school settings, and increasing access to information and building life skills, can help to reduce vulnerability. While there is growing knowledge on the drivers of vulnerability of teenage girls in Sierra Leone, less is known on 'what works'.

OUTPUTS

1. More enabling environment for adolescent girls to realize their full potential
2. Improved prevention of sexual and gender based violence and access to services for survivors, particularly adolescent girls
3. Adolescent girls and boys have information, knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions

WHAT WE WILL DO

- » Support programming aimed at addressing the range of drivers and underlying causes which contribute to adolescent girls' vulnerability.
- » Support action research addressing the drivers of teenage pregnancy in close collaboration with Irish Aid research partners.
- » Support the rolling out of the National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage (2018-2022).
- » Advocate for the harmonisation of national legislation aimed at protecting the girl child.
- » Support initiatives, including learning and research, aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating female genital mutilation (FGM).
- » Provide support for improved access to services for survivors of SGBV while advocating for integration of essential services in government services, where feasible.
- » Strengthen the Community of Practice, a broad coalition of actors working on SGBV in Sierra Leone.
- » Strengthen linkages between the Irish Working Group on GBV in Sierra Leone and the Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence.
- » Support a range of initiatives which aim to provide adolescents, especially girls, in formal and informal education settings with information and opportunities to develop essential life-skills including leadership skills and confidence building.
- » Support the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education in the development and roll-out of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in the school curriculum and scale up teacher training in close cooperation with Irish Aid funded partners UNESCO and UNFPA.

Outcome 3: Girls access and benefit from quality education

Sierra Leone has achieved gender parity at primary level but girls' enrolment reduces sharply at secondary level. Less than 9% of the most disadvantaged girls enter secondary school, and of all girls who enter secondary school only 25% remain enrolled by their final year. This severely limits their participation in education during their formative teenage years and reduces their

options for careers and formal employment. The recent decision by government to introduce a Free Quality Education Programme provides a significant opportunity to increase girls' access to education. Ireland in Sierra Leone will build on earlier work in education to scale up its engagement with a clear focus on improving access to quality education for girls.

OUTPUTS

1. Increased participation of poorer girls in quality education

WHAT WE WILL DO

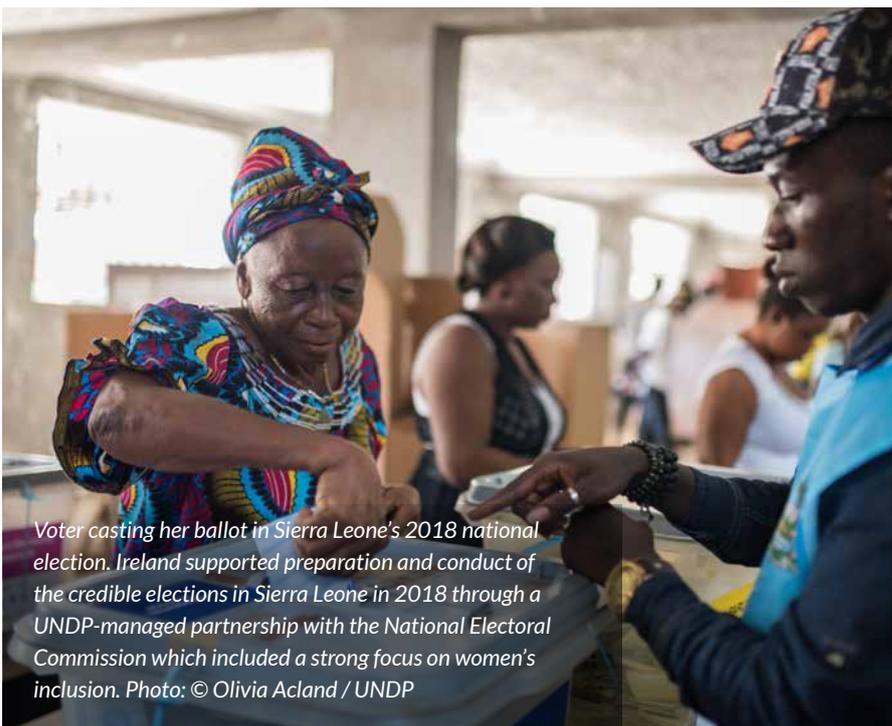
- » Explore opportunities to support the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education and to work with Development Partners in the design and roll-out of the Free Quality Education Programme through direct support by the Embassy and through engagement with the HQ-funded Global Partnership for Education.
- » Advocate for better access to education for marginalised groups, particularly poor adolescent girls and children with disabilities.
- » Advocate for a better enabling environment for girls' participation, including the lifting of the ban on pregnant adolescent girls attending state schools and sitting state exams.
- » Explore opportunities to improve the quality of education, including the possibility of establishing links with relevant Irish education institutions.



Young girl at Firestone Community Primary school in Freetown, Sierra Leone 2019. Photo: © Phil Behan / DFAT



Bernie Moran from Roscommon Credit Union working with her counterpart Elizabeth Hallie, Manager of Kissitongi Credit Union in Sierra Leone. Bernie travelled to Sierra Leone to provide capacity building support under the Irish League of Credit Unions Foundation project in Sierra Leone which is supported by Irish Aid. Photo: © Barry Treacy / ILCUF



Voter casting her ballot in Sierra Leone's 2018 national election. Ireland supported preparation and conduct of the credible elections in Sierra Leone in 2018 through a UNDP-managed partnership with the National Electoral Commission which included a strong focus on women's inclusion. Photo: © Olivia Acland / UNDP

Outcome 4: Citizens, especially women, are more empowered to engage with inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes;

Sierra Leone faces ongoing challenges in relation to national cohesion and political tensions post-election. The government has committed to working towards a more peaceful and cohesive Sierra Leone, fighting corruption and improving accountability and respect for human rights. Delivering on these commitments will require functioning, inclusive and accountable democratic institutions, including elections, and the active participation of citizens, particularly women. This will require the concerted efforts of a range of stakeholders – domestic civil society organisations, women’s organisations, human rights organisations and the international community.

Despite the critical role that women in Sierra Leone play at the community and national level, they continue to face challenges in participating in politics and elections. While the civil society landscape in Sierra Leone is vibrant, with a long history of activism, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) require support to enable them to participate fully in the development of Sierra Leone.

The recent election process illustrated the effectiveness of support to national election management bodies in delivering an open, transparent and inclusive election process. This effort needs to be built on to ensure sustained national capacity is in place for the longer term.

OUTPUTS

1. Citizens, especially women, are more empowered to influence political decision-making and social cohesion and hold decision-makers to account
2. The role of civil society in promoting accountability, human rights and social cohesion is strengthened
3. National systems for delivering credible and inclusive elections and guaranteeing human rights are strengthened

WHAT WE WILL DO

- » Strengthen women’s role in promoting local-level accountability and social cohesion.
- » Increase citizen access to information and awareness on political and development processes.
- » Promote women’s political participation through political education, networking, advocacy and economic empowerment initiatives.
- » Work with selected national and community structures to promote national cohesion, accountability, good governance and human rights in Sierra Leone.
- » Strengthen the capacity of organisations working to promote local-level accountability and social cohesion, in particular through women-led processes.
- » Build the capacity of domestic human rights organisations to inform and empower citizens to realise their rights, while supporting the implementation and monitoring of human rights commitments.
- » Work with and strengthen national human rights institutions and networks to protect and promote human rights in Sierra Leone.
- » Work in coordination with the donor community to support strengthening of national electoral institutions.
- » Support national institutions and civil society organisations throughout the electoral cycle with a view to delivering credible and inclusive elections in 2023.

Women and girls, living in poverty, contribute to and benefit from a more inclusive, resilient and equitable Sierra Leone.

GOALS

OUTCOMES

OUTPUTS

CROSS-CUTTING

APPROACHES

Women and children have improved nutritional status.

1. Adolescent girls and women access improved nutrition services at facility and community level.
2. Evidence of effective and climate smart approaches for nutrition and food security generated and informing national policy.
3. Improved national coordination for nutrition.

Women and girls are empowered to realise their potential and rights.

4. More enabling environment for adolescent girls to realise their full potential.
5. Improved prevention of sexual and gender based violence and access to services for survivors particularly adolescent girls.
6. Adolescent girls and boys have information, knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions.

More girls access and benefit from quality education.

7. Increased participation of poorer girls in quality education.

Citizens, especially women, are more empowered to engage with inclusive and accountable democratic institutions and processes.

8. Citizens, especially women, are more empowered to influence political decision-making and social cohesion and hold decision-makers to account.
9. The role of civil society in promoting accountability, human rights and social cohesion is strengthened.
10. National systems for delivering credible and inclusive elections and guaranteeing human rights are strengthened.

HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER, RESILIENCE



Political Engagement & Policy Dialogue

Partnership & Local Ownership

Systems Strengthening

Flexible & Adaptable Programming

Learning & Evidence Based

Chapter 6: Our Prosperity



We will enhance Ireland's prosperity through people-to-people, business and institutional links with Sierra Leone.

The Embassy will seek opportunities to build on and strengthen existing institutional linkages, including sharing experiences and expertise in areas of mutual interest thereby putting in place the building blocks for a future relationship beyond development cooperation.

Building relationships with government will allow us to diversify our relationships as well as our public profile, supported by strong public diplomacy and strategic communications.

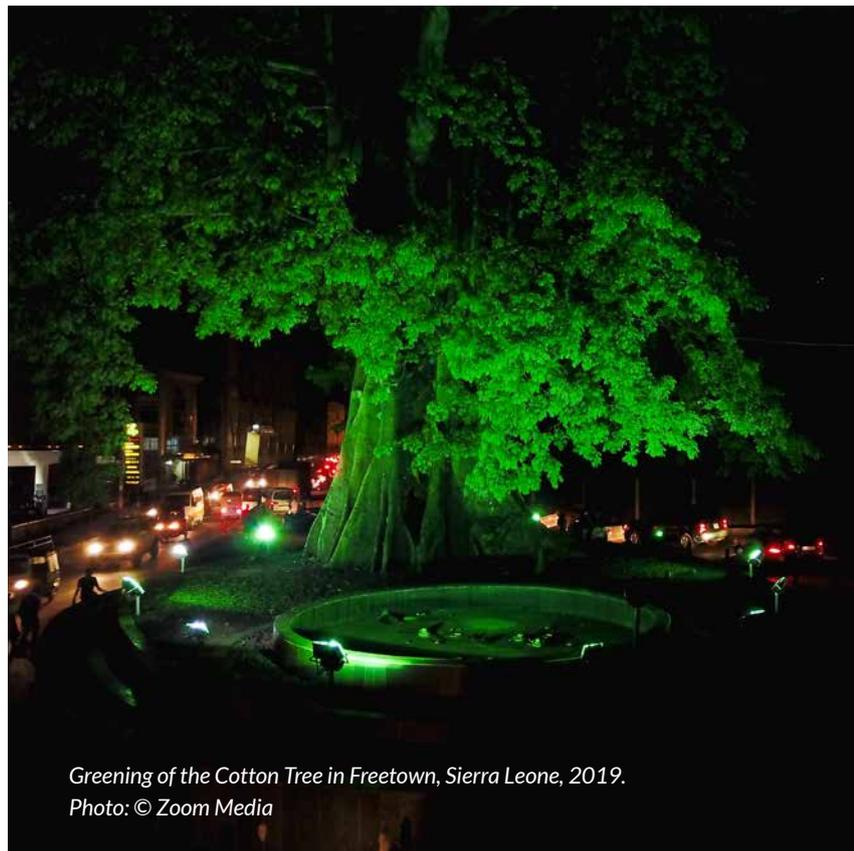
Strategic use of our Fellowship Training Programme and engagement with returning alumni will continue. To date, seven Fellows have pursued postgraduate master's studies in Irish higher education institutions.

A small number of Irish businesses are operating in Sierra Leone. The Embassy will continue to offer a range of services including provision of business information and utilising its access to decision-makers and to organise introductions as appropriate. We will continue to liaise with DFAT and state agencies in Ireland to encourage institutional linkages and ensure relevant information and support is available to prospective businesses.

While the Embassy recognises that opportunities for investment by the Irish private sector are currently limited due to the challenging operating environment, we will continue to monitor emerging opportunities. A number of potential sectors have been identified where Irish businesses could bring added value. These include Agri-food and Agri-business; energy; extractives; construction and infrastructure; port operations; Information and Communications Technologies (ICT).

WHAT WILL WE DO?

- » **Share expertise and build collaboration** between institutions in Sierra Leone and Ireland in areas of mutual interest.
- » **Maximise opportunities** to improve trade and economic links.
- » **Support Irish businesses** with relevant economic intelligence and information.
- » **Increase the number of Fellows** and build a strong alumni network.



*Greening of the Cotton Tree in Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2019.
Photo: © Zoom Media*

Chapter 7: Our Place in Europe



We engage with the European Union to promote Ireland's values and interests in Sierra Leone.

The European Union (EU) is one of Sierra Leone's most important partners. Bilateral EU funding for the period 2014–2020 amounts to approximately €376 million - a significant increase as compared to previous years, with a focus on three sectors: government and civil society, education, and agriculture and food security. The programme also provides for specific interventions in the transport sector.

Our EU membership provides an important platform for delivering on Ireland's values and interests in Sierra Leone. Ireland is uniquely placed to both contribute to and shape EU policies in Sierra Leone. Post-Brexit, we will be one of only two EU member states resident in Freetown, along with Germany, and will be an important voice for Sierra Leone within the EU.

We will maintain close links with the EU Delegation to advance our shared priorities around youth, peace and security, migration and elections. We will contribute to the development of EU strategies for human rights, gender equality and civil society in Sierra Leone. In particular, we will work closely with the EU, as the main partner working on agriculture and food security, to influence policies to be more climate and nutrition sensitive.

The Embassy will also input into wider EU policy discussions, project design and funding decisions in close collaboration with DFAT and Brussels. We will continue to take an active role in the EU's political engagement with Sierra Leone.

Recognising our unique and close partnership with the UK, we will maintain constructive collaboration with the UK post-Brexit.

WHAT WILL WE DO?

- » **Maintain close and constructive cooperation** with the EU Delegation in Freetown.
- » **Provide consular assistance** to unrepresented EU citizens as required.



Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney, meets Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone, Dr. Alie Kabba, in Iveagh House. Photo: © Phil Behan / DFAT

Chapter 8: Our Influence



We will mobilise our resources to enhance Ireland’s profile and maximise opportunities to advance our values and interests.

We will strengthen the team at the Embassy to ensure we are equipped with the relevant skills and capacity to manage a broader programme role, regional and political representation, anticipated increase in consular responsibilities and the increase in budget. Staff recruitment and training will be a priority.

The strategy envisages a budget of €67 million for the five year period of the strategy (with incremental annual increases from €9m in 2019 to €17m in 2023). This increased investment reflects the ambition of the strategy and the needs of the country.

The Embassy has identified a clear set of results for the period of the strategy. This will be captured in a performance measurement framework. The Embassy will report against annual business plans.

We aim to be flexible and responsive to changing dynamics and emerging opportunities and adjust plans as needs arise. Our strong commitment to evidence generation and lesson learning will be key to identifying what works. A midterm review will provide opportunities to make adjustments as required with a final evaluation informing future interventions.

As part of this strategy, the Embassy will develop a public diplomacy and communications strategy to increase visibility of our work and to ensure accountability to both the Irish public and the people of Sierra Leone.

We will channel funding through a range of partners with a strong track record for delivery including civil society organisations and UN agencies. Over time we will explore opportunities for direct funding to government, in particular for health and education initiatives. Systems strengthening is a critical building block in addressing fragility, building resilience and contributing to long-term impact and sustainability. However, careful assessment of capacity will be undertaken in advance of decisions to fund.

Partners are identified on the basis of their ability to deliver on the agreed results and on the overall objectives of the strategy. In doing so, the Embassy will ensure the highest standards of due diligence and compliance. We will resource the Embassy to ensure that strong financial management systems are maintained.

The strategy takes into account the high risk environment, including the need to mitigate against fraud and corruption. The Embassy will scale up capacity for oversight and monitoring. As part of a range of risk mitigation measures, regular monitoring by staff will be undertaken, including annual review meetings with partners and visits to projects.

WHAT WILL WE DO?

- » **Invest in the capacity of our workforce** to deliver our strategy.
- » **Ensure robust oversight** of ODA expenditure.
- » **Demonstrate openness and accountability** to the public about our work.

SUMMARY OF INDICATIVE BUDGET FOR EMBASSY FREETOWN 2019-2023*

Outcome Area	2019 (€000's)	2020 (€000's)	2021 (€000's)	2022 (€000's)	2023 (€000's)
Women and children have improved nutritional status;	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,500	3,500
Women and girls are empowered to realise their potential and rights;	2,300	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Citizens, especially women, are more empowered to engage with inclusive and accountable democratic institutions;	1,800	2,200	3,200	4,000	3,000
Girls access and benefit from quality education;	550	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,500
Programme Quality and Support Costs	550	767	1,064	1,499	2,132
Administration	1,102	1,248	1,399	1,627	1,921
TOTAL	9,302	11,715	13,663	16,126	17,053

Outer year budget figures are indicative only



Female Councillors elected in Kenema District, Sierra Leone during 2018 elections gather to express their gratitude for the support they received from Ireland through partnership with SEND Sierra Leone to prepare for and participate in their local elections. Photo: © SEND Sierra Leone



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