

JOINT RESPONSE TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN SIERRA LEONE



Introduction.....	iii
1. The Youth Situation.....	1

Introduction

Sierra Leone has recently emerged from a long and protracted civil war that destroyed most of the country's social, economic, and physical structure. At the core of the conflict lay a class of marginalized young people, especially from rural areas, lacking education and access to livelihood opportunities. The country has experienced substantial economic growth in recent years, although poverty and unemployment remain major challenges. Despite some progress, Sierra Leone's recovery remains fragile and the country continues to rank among the least advantaged of countries in various measures. While some milestones have been achieved and post-conflict recovery appears to be gathering pace in the country, major challenges remain whose tackling are also vital for peace consolidation and the march towards development. Among them is the alarmingly high level of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, especially among the youth, women and other vulnerable groups. The economic recovery so far has not been associated with upward trends in the quantity and quality of employment nor a reduction in poverty. Recent months have also witnessed a surge in food and fuel prices which could worsen poverty levels, especially among the unemployed/underemployed and

1. The Youth Situation

The youth population in Sierra Leone is substantial and makes up one third of the total population (Approximately 1 500 000 young women and men). Of this group, 70% are underemployed or unemployed and 50% illiterate and unskilled. There is visible unemployment, particularly among young men, who can be found in the streets of Sierra Leone's capital Freetown and other urban centres. M

Leone Investment and Export Promoting Agency (SLIEPA) who are carrying-out a huge drive to develop the labour intensive agricultural industries of sugar cane and palm oil.²

The more longer-term interventions will focus on providing technical assistance to develop a National Youth Strategy, National Employment Strategy; and institutional capacity to plan, coordinate and monitor the youth strategy. This will be done through the National Youth Commission and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Ministry of Employment and Social Services; Ministry of Agriculture; and the Ministry of Public Works.

Most of the interventions previously carried out in the youth sector in Sierra Leone have been supply oriented, focusing on training and enterprise start-ups without actually creating any demand for the jobs the youth have been trained in. While it is of great importance to increase the employability of the youth, skills training and education do not in themselves create or guarantee jobs.

Hence, the new sector strategy on employment in Sierra Leone to focus on stimulating economic development – including private sector development and local economic development – as a catalyst to creating the demand for real jobs. The focus is on creating employment first, and then matching the types of skills training provided to the types of jobs demanded.



Figure 1 shows how the strategy focuses on both the supply and demand sides of employment, and how it brings them together in the matching mechanism that relates training to the demand for jobs.

² The Announcement of SLIEPA’s programme in sugar cane and palm oil, at Mamba Point, Freetown, 10th February 20210.

Given the fact that many among the youth population

3. Programme Components

3.1. *Component 1: Labour Intensive Public Works*

The training strategy will draw heavily on the expe

3.2. Component 2: Private Sector & Agro-Business Jobs

The economy in Sierra Leone is currently flat, economic growth measured by the IMF at 5.5 percent in 2008 and 5.9 percent in 2009, which will not be enough for Sierra Leone to succeed in reducing poverty.³ A small but active formal private sector is dominated by a few large businesses concentrated in a few sectors (industrial mining; finance; telecommunications; wholesale and retail imports). These are the main contributors to economic growth, but only provide jobs for 9 percent of the workforce. There is also a larger, but still relatively small, number of SMEs that are engaged in low productivity sectors such as agriculture, small-scale artisanal mining, artisanal fisheries, and services (wholesale/retail/hotels/catering). They are either partially or completely informal and employ informally over 90 percent of the work force.⁴

The private sector has struggled to develop over the years due to a combination of government failures (corruption, property rights, administrative barriers, labour regulations etc.) and pervasive market failures of uneven access to information and poor coordination of economic activities.

In response to these issues, the Government of Sierra Leone has developed the Strategy for Private Sector Development in Sierra Leone to address the constraints which restrict the development and competitiveness of the private sector in Sierra Leone.⁵ The Strategy has identified five main pillars as key to enabling private sector development: 1 Promoting and supporting entrepreneurship; 2 Reducing the cost and risk of Doing Business; 3 Increasing access to affordable finance; 4. Making markets work better;

GTZ is also working on Cocoa and promoting the production value chain in Kailahun and Kono. GTZ is also developing the value chain for livestock in Koinadugu.

The World Bank programme will provide business development around agriculture and any other economically viable activity, to be demonstrated by market demand.

The UN through WFP is conducting cash-for-works programmes in agriculture for youth in Pujehun, Kono, Kenema, Kailahun and Port Loko districts. These will create up to 24 000 jobs. (However, these are temporary jobs that will be tied into long-term jobs through training). The UN will also support the up-scaling of an additional 100 youth farmer groups to develop agro-businesses through market driven agro-business information and business development training as well as support to fruit-processing businesses and local product branding.

iii) Public-Private-Partnerships

Partnerships will be developed with the private sector to develop particular business areas that have potential for job creation and to address skill gaps in these areas.

iv) Business Association Strengthening

The Joint Response will build on existing work with the Business Membership Organisations network (including the Sierra Leone Indigenous Business Association, the Market Women's Association and the Petty Traders Association). These business associations will continue to be strengthened to provide commercially useful information and advice to their members and to promote their interests effectively in markets and in dialogue with policy makers.

3.3. Component 3: Skills Development and Employment Support

One of the main issues and challenges regarding youth finding employment in Sierra Leone's formal and informal economies is the lack of quality training and the recognition of certified skills acquired. An additional challenge with regards to apprenticeships is that training is either only theoretical and lacks practical hands-on guidance and experience;

Expected Outcome:

Youth skills developed through informal and formal training, have gained valuable work experience and have the opportunity to find employment in government departments, the private sector and NGOs through placements, internships and apprenticeships.

Component strategy

The Joint Response will test approaches to support young individuals and youth groups who either have established businesses or are interested in pursuing business/employment opportunities through a package of technical assistance which will consist of literacy/numeracy, other life skills, apprenticeship, business development support and coaching. The component will provide training support and business development around agriculture and any other economically viable activity (to be demonstrated by market demand).

This component will also link skills training to the job skills demanded in the labour market. The component will be carried out in the formal settings of universities and technical Vocational Training Centres (TVET) as well as through informal apprenticeships with master-craftsmen. Private sector involvement in qualification programmes, especially the TVET sector will be sought in all steps – design of curricula, training delivery and job placement. This component will build partnerships with the private sector industries including local business communities, line ministries and NGOs to facilitate the school to work transition.

Interventions to be Implemented

Formal Apprenticeships & Technical Vocational Training:

The UN through UNDP will use the nine TVET institutions it is supporting in the districts of Kono, Tonkolili, Bombali, Bo, Kenema and the Western Area, to train and place students in apprenticeships to gain experience. The UN will also conduct informal apprenticeships in the Bombali and Moyamba Districts with master-craftsperson. 1000 apprenticeships will be completed.

Both the formal and informal training curricula are to be based on the actual demand for particular skills in the labour market which will be informed by the annual district Opportunity Mapping Survey reports to be circulated to the TVET Centres. These will also be used to identify trends and see what types of jobs will be created.

In the GTZ project on Promoting the Development Capacity of Youth and Young Adults (Non-Formal Education), skills development and functional literacy are provided in order to enhance entrepreneurship. An apprenticeship scheme is also run with courses that last between one and one and a half years. The theoretical work is combined with practical training in collaborating artisan workshops. Trades include mechanics, metal working,

Leone and the Peace Building Commission have labelled youth a priority security risk

3.5. Component 5: Research on the Situation of Youth

There is a sheer lack of reliable information on youth in Sierra Leone and therefore the interventions on youth issues are not always based on reliable information about the situation of youth. There is a great need to conduct a series of studies to accrue information on youth in order to monitor the developments in this priority area.

Expected Outcome:

Availability of reliable qualitative data on the situation of youth in Sierra Leone. Research papers will be produced on the situation of youth to monitor developments in the area of youth over the next three years.

Interventions Implemented

Research Programme Established

The UN will established a youth-related research programme in the Peace and Conflict Studies Department at Forah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. Twelve thematic studies on the situation of youth to be carried out in the following four categories: Youth development and Employment; Youth and Political Violence; Youth and Illicit Drugs; and Rural-Urban Youth migration. Four studies conducted every year. The research will be both policy orientated so as to contribute to guiding the development of youth; and action orientated research that can be directly and practically used to implement the recommendations.

3.6. Component 6: Sector Planning and Coordination

In order to tie these programmes and the development partners together and achieve the desired results, sector coordination becomes of vital importance. The Joint Response will give technical assistance to the National Youth Commission to develop the key areas of strategic planning, policy development and coordination of national youth employment and empowerment interventions. It will provide technical support to the various line ministries including the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Employment and Social Services and the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport. Support will be given to Local Government and District Councils to support youth employment through local economic development.

The National Youth Commission has been established to focus on the advancement and empowerment of youth to develop their potential, creativity and skills for national development. Its main function will be to bring coherence to the fragmented youth sector by coordinating and promoting all youth interventions across line ministries and youth organisations and act as an interface between the GoSL, the development partners, NGOs and the private sector for an increase impact on all youth issues.

Expected Outcome:

National Youth Commission effectively playing a leading role in the strategic planning, policy development and coordination of national youth employment and empowerment interventions.

Component strategy

The Joint Response will work closely with the National Youth Commission to effectively coordinate its interventions on a national and district basis.

Interventions to be Implemented**a) Capacitating the National Youth Commission**

The UN will build the capacity of the various departments in the National Youth Commission by providing direct technical support to develop strategies and coordinate activities in specific technical areas. The UN will give support to identify competence gaps in the proposed structures and personnel; give technical assistance to fill these gaps

5. Mobilised Resources

The available funding is as follows:

- The World Bank has a \$20 million dollar funding programme (part credit 55%, part grant 45%). The World Bank also has an additional \$4 million (all grant).
- GTZ has funding through its Employment Promotion Programme of up to \$13 million.
- The UN has funding of up to \$9 million.