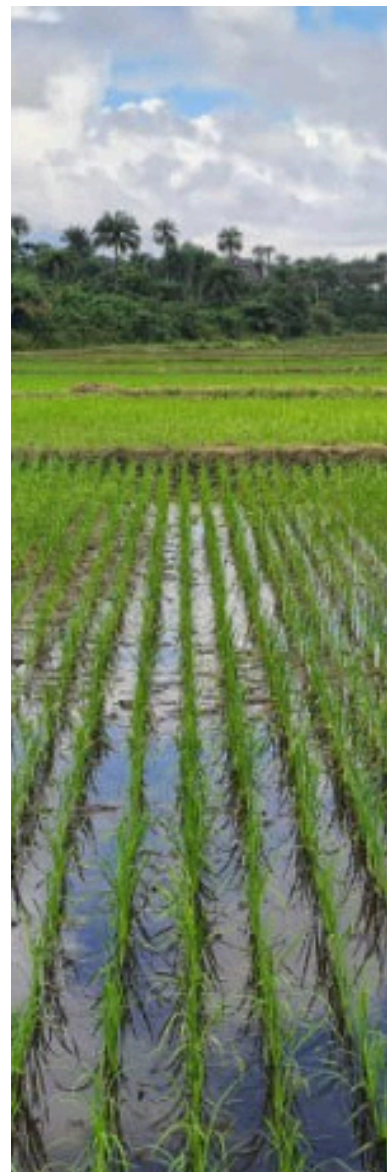
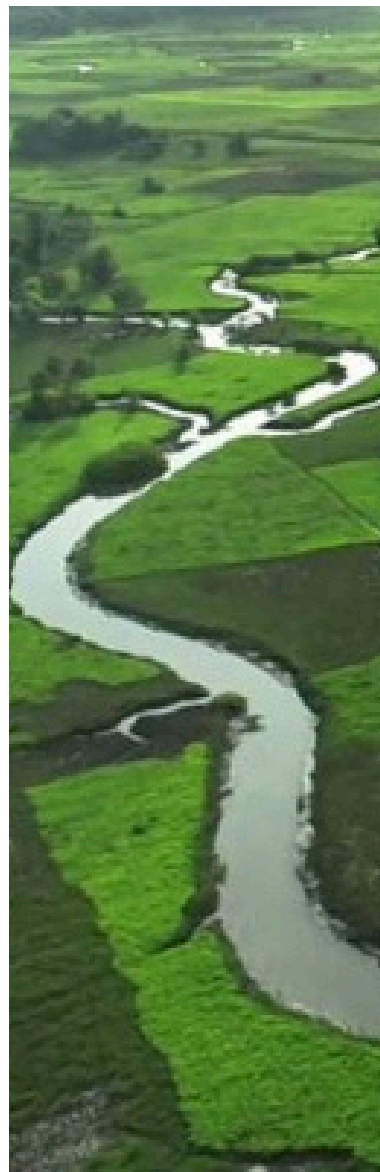




The Republic of Sierra Leone

Investment Opportunities



2025

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Foreword

Welcome to our investment brochure, which highlights a range of opportunities in Sierra Leone and sets out why this is such an exciting time to invest in our beautiful country.

Sierra Leone is a promising destination for investment. Roughly equidistant from Europe and North America, our country enjoys the advantages of location, geography and abundant mineral and blue resources. It hosts the third largest iron ore deposit and fifth largest rutile deposit in the world. Sierra Leone has one of the world's most productive marine ecosystems and one of the deepest natural harbours. With high levels of rainfall as well as fertile agricultural land, Sierra Leone is a prime opportunity for investment in agriculture, and our rich culture and splendid natural environment create numerous opportunities in the tourism sector.

Sierra Leone also offers a highly entrepreneurial society, with many micro businesses and SMEs which add huge value to our economy and enhance the local supplier base. Critical advances in gender equality support inclusive development, and our youthful population – 75 percent below the age of 35 – creates a powerful demographic dividend.



Under the leadership of His Excellency President Rtd. Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, the Government of Sierra Leone has prioritised private sector-led economic growth. A key component of this strategy has been to establish the National Investment Board (NIB), to serve as a one-stop shop for investors, providing support and information, and creating a more conducive environment for investment by streamlining and standardising processes to reduce bureaucracy and ensure transparency and predictability.

Other building blocks for growth and investment include a new international airport, which improves access to Sierra Leone and the wider region; a transformational approach to human capital development as a core driver of productivity; a plan to address key agricultural constraints such as finance, soil fertility, water management, mechanisation, quality seed input, and infrastructure; the deployment of technology and research to boost productivity; and a commitment to catalysing tech-driven growth.

This brochure presents some of the best investment projects we have available and includes a mixture of market ready and pipeline projects which will be regularly updated to reflect their status.

On behalf of Sierra Leone, the NIB looks forward to welcoming investors, developers and organisations who share our values and ambitions, and building sustainable partnerships for future growth and prosperity.

*Ing Dr. Edward
Hinga Sandy*

Executive Director,
National Investment Board

SIERRA LEONE

AT A GLANCE

Situated between Guinea and Liberia, with Africa's largest natural harbour, Sierra Leone has long played an important economic role in the region.



Economic growth¹

- GDP: ~\$8 billion
- GDP per capita: \$857
- GDP growth: 5.3% per annum
- Average inflation: 15.41%

Human resource potential²

- Total population: 8.82 million
- Median age: 19.7 years
- Population growth rate: 2.2%
- Urban: 45.5%
- Rural: 54.5%

Mineral resources

- Diamonds, iron ore, titanium, bauxite and gold
- World's third largest iron ore deposit
- World's fifth largest rutile deposit
- Top exports:
 - iron ore (\$490.9 million)
 - titanium ore (\$221 million)
 - diamonds (\$101 million)³

Political and social stability

- Six democratically elected governments since 1996 (the Second Republic)
- Non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2024 to 2025
- Known for its remarkable religious tolerance
 - Muslim – 77%
 - Christian – 22%

Agricultural potential

- Arable land: ~5.4 million hectares
- Abundant rainfall: 2,945.3 mm average annual rainfall
- Sunny climate: >1,500 hours average annual sunshine
- Temperate tropical climate: 26°C average annual temperature
- Nine major rivers with significant irrigation potential

Tourism potential

- 402km coastline and 350km of white sandy beaches
- Exceptional potential for ecotourism: 15 protected natural areas home to pygmy hippos, leopards, chimpanzees, many bird species and forest elephants
- Rich biodiversity: 2,090 known species of higher plants, 147 mammals, 626 birds, 67 reptiles, 35 amphibians

¹ Ministry of Finance - 2025 Budget Speech

² <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/sierra-leone-population>

³ <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/sle#economic-complexity-overview>

Trade agreements



Sierra Leone is a member of the Mano River Union (MRU), which includes Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire with a combined market size of ~40 million.



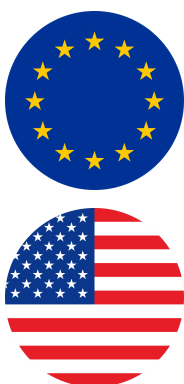
Sierra Leone is also a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which includes another 14 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. ECOWAS has a combined market size of ~ 400 million). ECOWAS is working towards the removal of trade barriers and harmonisation of trade policies for the establishment of a Free Trade Area, a Customs Union and a Common Market, with the aim of creating a Monetary and Economic Union in West Africa. ECOWAS is also working in three areas to promote investments and competition policies namely: creation of the ECOWAS Common Investment Market, investment climate promotion and financial market integration.



The UK's Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), which replaced the UK's Generalised Scheme of Preferences, cuts tariffs, removes conditions and simplifies trading rules for 65 developing countries, including Sierra Leone, in order to support their development.



Sierra Leone is also party to a multilateral agreement with the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), a trade agreement between 55 African Union member states to create a single market and a single currency union (with a market size of ~1.3 billion).



Sierra Leone has a preferential trade agreement with the European Union through the Everything but Arms (EBA) scheme and with the United States through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).



Agriculture sector overview

Richly endowed with the abundance of arable land, rainfall, and a youthful population, Agriculture forms a significant proportion of Sierra Leone's economy with the sector currently accounting for 30% of its rebased Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and approximately 10 percent of the total export earnings. Sierra Leone is an agrarian society and agriculture acts as a main source of livelihoods for over half of the population (World Bank, 2021). This figure is even higher in the rural areas where 86 % of the households are classified as agricultural households (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018). Additionally, women make up 70% of the agricultural labour force and play a critical role in food production and natural resource management (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018).

With 5.4 million hectares of fertile land, an impressive 3000mm of rainfall over half the year, and seven major rivers, there is significant potential for food production for both domestic consumption and export. Around 75% of its arable land remains under-cultivated. Opportunities to achieve profitable returns will arise from addressing low levels of productivity, low crop yields and high post-harvest losses, with labour productivity a third lower in the sector than the national average.

Sierra Leone lags behind its closest neighbours, Guinea and Liberia, with a productivity gap of 16% and 36% respectively (World Bank, 2020). The low level of productivity within the sector is linked to the absence of, or the underdeveloped nature of, the agricultural infrastructure required to enhance productivity, sub-optimal seed varieties, and the use of outdated farming methods. The irrigation infrastructure in Sierra Leone is among the lowest in world with an estimated average of around only 1% of the main crops cultivated under irrigation conditions in the country (African Development Bank, 2023). The low rate of mechanisation across the country further limits the size of land that farmers cultivate.

While the country is among the highest per capita consumers of rice globally, its average rice yield per hectare of 1.9 metric tons over the five years to 2022 remains below the Sub-Saharan African average of 3 tons per hectare (USDA, 2023). The inability to produce enough to respond to the local demand has led to the country turning to global markets for its food needs. Around \$500 million is expended on yearly food imports, with rice imports – the national staple – alone accounting for 38% of that total (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, 2023).

Government targets a yearly reduction of 25% on food imports for key value chains over the next five years.

The sector remains a key driver of economic growth and employment, but it is far from achieving its potential. Government has established an ambitious agricultural strategy, Feed Salone, in 2023. To achieve its strategy, it will look for private sector investment in the sector, supported by development finance and enabling government policies.

Rice is the staple food for Sierra Leoneans, and its cultivation employs most of the rural population. It is consumed daily by almost every household in Sierra Leone and is exported to neighbouring countries.

The land is also suitable for the cultivation of a wide range of other crops, including onion, cassava, maize, millet, cashew, rubber, ginger, vegetables, fruits, sugarcane, cocoa, coffee, and oil palm, as well as the rearing of livestock.

To accelerate sustainable development, the government has placed agriculture at the centre of Sierra Leone's Medium Term National Development Plan 2024-2030, with its Feed Salone initiative, which aims to reduce imports, increase export earnings, create jobs, and improve climate resilience.

Supported by enabling government policies, Feed Salone will focus on developing investment-ready projects, and further leverage the role of the private sector to improve service delivery and skills transfer, delivering post-investment support and improving the collection and provision of data.

Incentives

As a priority for the Government to promote large-scale private sector investments, there are incentives granted. These include:

- A foreign investor irrigating at least 500 hectares or cultivating least 2,500 hectares of land or investing at least US\$1 million in livestock and livestock products; or a domestic investor irrigating at least 100 hectares or cultivating least 500 hectares of land or investing at least US\$0.5 million in livestock and livestock products.
- exemption from corporate income tax plus, 50% exemption from withholding taxes on dividends paid by agribusiness companies
- Complete exemption from import duty on farm machinery, agro-processing equipment, agro-chemicals and other key inputs specifically for the project; 3-year exemption from import duty on any other plant and equipment; reduced rate of 3% import duty on any other raw materials
- 100% loss carry forward can be used in any year
- 125% tax deduction for expenses on Research & Development, training and export promotion
- 3-year income tax exemption for skilled expatriate staff, where bilateral treaties permit

Reasons to invest in Sierra Leone's agriculture sector



Investing in agriculture can help increase incomes, generate employment, and promote economic development.



Sierra Leone offers 5.4 million hectares of arable agricultural land, with average annual rainfall of 3,800mm per year, making it one of the most humid countries in Africa.



Africa's booming population is becoming more urban, which is increasing the demand for food.



Women make up over 70% of Sierra Leone's agri workforce. Private sector investment can help them improve their productivity and will promote equality and inclusion.



A reformed land tenure system allows land to be used in a more economically valuable way and lower labour costs encourage the production of labour-intensive farming products and services.



High technical and economic potential for increasing productivity.



Sierra Leone has duty-free access to ECOWAS and other markets.





Energy sector overview

Electricity is a crucial factor for growth. However, it remains a challenge due to the lack of affordable and reliable access. This affects households, businesses, and social institutions. The four main obstacles include an unreliable power supply, high electricity costs, limited access for productive use, and weaknesses in governance and institutional capacity within the power sector.

These challenges are rooted in insufficient and expensive generation sources, inadequate and vulnerable grid infrastructure, the need for technical capacity development in sector institutions, and the need for financial viability. Overcoming these obstacles is critical to fostering sustainable growth and attracting vital private-sector investment.

With a rapidly increasing demand for electricity and plans to increase household energy access to 80% of the population by 2030, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has demonstrated a strong commitment to expanding the energy sector and facilitating private sector investment.

Legislative reforms have set the stage for restructuring the sector. In 2014, the Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC) was created. In 2015, the former National Power Authority (NPA) was divided into the Electricity Generation and Transmission Company (EGTC) and the Electricity Distribution and Supply Authority (EDSA). Independent Power Producers (IPP) projects were also enabled as a result of these changes. The 2018 amendment further extended GoSL's commitment to sector reform and increased private sector participation.

The Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC) plays a pivotal role in overseeing the regulatory aspects of the energy sector and determining tariffs for both consumers and suppliers including EGTC) and IPPs. Meanwhile, the EGTC is dedicated to electricity generation and transmission. It is important to note that EDSA holds a monopoly as the sole provider to consumers.

In line with the 2018 amendments to the Electricity Act, EGTCs and IPPs now have the opportunity to forge supply contracts with eligible customers, including mining companies and other large-scale industrial and bulk energy consumers. The Ministry of Energy is committed to securing the long-term sustainability of the energy sector by refining the definition of eligible customers through further amendments to the Act, prescribing regulations, and offering clarity on who should supply to such customers.

A comprehensive investment strategy has given rise to the impactful Rural Renewable Energy Project (RREP). Through this initiative, three dynamic private sector companies oversee and maintain 95 mini grid systems, leveraging an impressive £10.8 million in private sector investment as part of a 2018 Public-Private Partnership (PPP) agreement with the government.

Sierra Leone's energy sector stands to gain from the establishment of the West African Power Pool (WAPP), which will spur the creation of a regional electricity market. This will integrate the national power systems of its 14 member countries, fostering a common operating standard, rules, and a transparent and reliable mechanism for the settlement of power trade transactions.

The TRANSCO- Côte d'Ivoire-Liberia-Sierra Leone-Guinea (CLSG) inter-connector - a landmark cross-border project involving the construction of a transmission line of over 1,300km, with the aim of interconnecting the CLSG countries' energy systems into the WAPP regional energy network, is in place to facilitate this trade.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) has played a crucial role in supporting Sierra Leone's efforts to expand its energy sector, including the recent signing of the MCC Compact which aims to bring in \$480M USD of grant funding to improve transmission and distribution networks.

Other private sector projects that are under development include Project NANT, a 108.4 MW LPG/LNG Fired Combined Cycle power generation plant financed by the United States International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), Ecowas Bank for Investment and Development (EBID), and other lenders; Bekongor III – a 120 MW run of river hydro, and Betmai – a 25 MW run of river hydro. In addition, a total of 130 MW of private sector-funded solar generation is either operational or under development.



Reasons to invest in Sierra Leone’s energy sector



Market demand

Access rate doubled from 16% in 2018 to 36% in 2023. The government’s target is 70%, indicating significantly unmet demand. As the country develops and becomes progressively more industrialised, the demand for energy in Sierra Leone will continue to increase at a dramatic rate.



Renewable energy

A target of 85% renewable electricity capacity by 2035, presents significant investment opportunities. There are numerous waterfalls for hydropower and abundant sunlight for solar power generation with an estimated hydro project potential of more than 1000 MW, while solar opportunities are above 240 MW. Wind power opportunities are being explored by UK power company – Octopus, which is working on Sierra Leone’s first windfarm on Sherbro Island.



Government commitment

GoSL is committed to enhancing economic growth and development by facilitating investment in renewable and clean sources of electricity and power.



Industrial power generation

The Government is promoting energy investment at the company level as well. For example, mining companies are encouraged to work with private investors to meet their increased energy demands. The Renewable Energy Association of Sierra Leone is in place to help facilitate these investments.



Infrastructure investment

Sierra Leone has unbundled power generation from transmission and distribution. Private sector partners are being invited to participate in generation and metering projects.



Impact

Increasing affordable and reliable electricity access means that social services such as healthcare facilities and schools will lead to better health and educational outcomes.



Water and sanitation sector overview

Sierra Leone has a tropical climate with a wet season that typically runs from May to October. The average annual rainfall ranges from 5,000 mm in coastal Freetown to 2,500 mm in the northeast. This climatic pattern results in extensive groundwater networks, including rivers, lakes, springs, and relatively shallow water tables in most areas. In 2004, the total renewable water resources per person were estimated at 30,960 m³ per year.⁴ However, like many other Sub-Saharan African countries, access to improved water and sanitation services is limited, with access rates of 42% for water and 16% for sanitation services⁵ in 2022.

The Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation (MWRS) is responsible for policy formulation and oversight of the sector. The Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC) handles economic regulation, while the National Water Resources Management Agency (NWRMA) oversees resource regulation. Service delivery is managed by the Guma Valley Water Company (GVWC) for the Western Area including Freetown, the Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO) for provincial cities and towns, and local district councils for rural areas. NGOs and small independent providers also offer some services.

⁴ Freetown Water Supply & Sanitation Master Plan and Medium-Term Investments Project: Economic and Financial Analysis Report by COBA, Engineering and Environmental Consultants, in association with SMEC International Ltd: June 2022

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/sierraleone/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

Freetown and its environs

Water supply

Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, is experiencing rapid population growth, with over 1.3 million residents and an expected doubling in size over the next 20 years. This growth has presented challenges for GVWC.

The existing Guma Dam and Water Treatment Plant, constructed in the 1950s-60s, is struggling to meet the current population's water needs. Currently, only 38% of urban households have access to piped indoor drinking water, and 28% rely on publicly used facilities with water management committees⁶. There is also a gender disparity, with women and children bearing the burden of water collection and often experiencing abuse in the process.

The water distribution network suffers from significant leakages due to ageing infrastructure and because the water pipes (many of which are exposed) are cut or tampered with by people attempting to access water, leading to leaking pipes and illegal connections. This results in an estimated 50% non-revenue water. Additionally, the current water catchment zones in the Western Area Protected Forest Reserve are under threat from erosion/degradation and inadequate land use management.

The Guma Dam and Treatment Plant, with a reservoir capacity of 23.6 billion litres, stores 95% of the total water volume available to Freetown year-round. Water is supplied through a gravity-based system, with a treatment plant design capacity of 86 million litres a day and an average production of 75 million litres a day.

Recognising the critical role of water security in driving social and economic progress, GVWC has formulated a robust water management strategy. This comprehensive approach aims to ensure a resilient water supply for Freetown and its surrounding areas. It encompasses the development of a water masterplan based on an integrated urban water management approach, specifically tailored to address the escalating service needs of the city.

Significant progress has already been made, thanks to a £48 million investment that has brought about transformative changes in the water system. This investment focused on rehabilitating key infrastructure such as the Guma dam, treatment plant, transmission, distribution, and pumping stations. Additionally, a \$10 million project focused on capacity building to improve service provision and enhance the commercial viability of the company. With the support of the African Development Bank and Ministry of Finance, GVWC is actively mobilising approximately \$204 million in funding for the Freetown WASH and Aquatic Environment Revamping Programme⁷ to finance water and sanitation, while ensuring the sustainability of the vital aquatic ecosystem in Freetown/Western Area.

Notably, 36% of this funding has been allocated to the implementation of the Angola Water Supply system, reservoir construction and rehabilitation works, expansion and rehabilitation of the Allentown Water treatment plant, refurbishment of booster pumping stations, a 45km extension of the distribution system, and the installation of 5,100 customer meters.

Efforts made to improve revenue collection are bearing fruit as shown in the figure below:

⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/sierraleone/stories/sierra-leone-launches-its-wash-national-outcome-routine-mapping-report>

⁷ <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/sierra-leone-project-freetown-wash-and-aquatic-environment-revamping-project-appraisal-report-106857>

Figure 1. Results of efforts made to improve revenue from the Guma Dam and Treatment Plant



Sanitation

Freetown faces significant sanitation challenges, but there are plans in place to address them. As well as uncontrolled urbanisation and a lack of urban planning, the city’s sewerage network is only about 4km long and in very poor condition. Limited resources to establish and manage waste management infrastructure and services, and the historic absence of a citywide integrated solid and liquid waste management system with supporting infrastructure, are additional obstacles.

Presently, 90% of households in the city use on-site sanitation, and 50% of households share facilities, leading to an average of four households per latrine. About 355,312 tons of solid waste and 80,000 cubic meters of raw faecal sludge, are produced annually at a per capita rate of 0.5kg for solid waste, but only 21% and 23% of solid and faecal sludge are collected and disposed of at the city’s two official disposal sites, King Tom and Kissy Granville Brook.

Regular flooding, landslides, combined with inadequate sanitation lead to related health problems such as malaria and cholera.

On-site sanitation works, Freetown and Western Area

To tackle these issues, a programme is being implemented to provide on-site sanitation, renew sewage pipes, and establish wastewater treatment plants, aiming to cover sanitation for over 160,000 households.

This project is the first phase of a larger plan to improve sanitation and stormwater management in Freetown and the Western Area.

Additionally, efforts are underway to address the limited resources for waste management infrastructure and services, and to establish a citywide integrated solid and liquid waste management system with supporting infrastructure.



Provincial cities

Water supply and sanitation

The Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO) has been a driving force since its establishment in 2001. Its mission is to provide essential water services to the four key regions of the country: North, North-West, East, and South, collectively serving around 80% of the population.

Currently, the company delivers piped water supply services to 12 key provincial towns: Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Lungi, Kambia, Lunsar, Magburaka, Mile 91 & Yonibana, Port Loko, Kabala, Pujehun, and Kailahun.

While access to basic water supply in areas outside Freetown and in rural communities currently stands at 53%, and access to basic sanitation is around 10%, SALWACO is committed to expanding and improving these vital services, to ensure a healthier and cleaner environment for all.

Reasons to invest in Sierra Leone's water and sanitation sector



The Government of Sierra Leone recognises and is addressing the need for a stronger enabling environment for water-related investment.



Investment in water security generates substantial economic returns, advances gender equality and inclusion, saves lives, improves public health and increases productivity.



People and commercial enterprises in Sierra Leone are generally willing to pay for water services at levels even above the present tariff rates, provided the reliability of the services improves.



Sierra Leone is among the top 10 per cent of countries that are most vulnerable to the adverse consequences of climate change. Investing in water management and infrastructure can help reduce that vulnerability.



Businesses and livelihoods rely on the water sector, which presents opportunities for innovations that deliver smarter water management.



Acting early provides the opportunity for greater impact and greater returns, because of the sector's size and relatively few investors.



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