



THE NEW DIRECTION

POLICIES TO ADDRESS THE CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES IN SIERRA LEONE

**PRESENTED AT
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FREETOWN**

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By

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Mr. Chairman

Members of the Diplomatic Community
Members of the NGO community
Advocacy Civil Society Groups
The Press

As promised in my Acceptance Speech on October 15, 2017, I am here this morning to elaborate on the five priorities I highlighted. These priorities are aligned with the Global Strategy of Sustainable Development Goals and consistent with Cooperation Agreements with donors and NGOs.

1. Context

Sierra Leone is an unequal and divided society with a few rich and powerful governing elites who have vast social, economic, political and development opportunities and control the state's political and economic processes. On the other hand, two-thirds of the 7 million population live on less than US \$1.25 a day, 3 out every 5 adults cannot read or write, life expectancy is 50 years compared to 53 in neighbouring Liberia and 59 in Guinea. Most of the population either lack or has limited or no guaranteed access to basic services including education, healthcare and social protection. Half of the population cannot afford adequate food to maintain and live a healthy life. Youth (persons 15-35 years) constituting one-third of the population and 70% of these are unemployed, underemployed, unemployable, unskilled and lacking social mobility opportunities. Justice is not accessible to the majority of the poor and dispossessed in Sierra Leone today. These depressing socio-development indicators will not guarantee peace, security and stability in the country.

2. Political Ideology

The New Direction is based on the political ideology of **Social Democracy** and its fundamental commitment to peace, freedom, security, justice, equality, unity and solidarity. The New Direction promotes and guarantees political, social, economic and cultural rights of all Sierra Leoneans through entitlement and access to basic necessities of life. The New Direction Social Democracy political ideology aspires to create a more just and equal society in Sierra Leone as the only insurance to avoid another war and recurrent political instability. Though the New Direction is based on free market neo-liberal economic development principles, we will depart from the traditional principle whereby only the market economy determines individual performance and reward. The Social Democracy foundation of the New Direction is based on inclusive politics, inclusive development and inclusive economic growth whereby the benefits of economic growth are re-distributed to all Sierra Leoneans through the provision of affordable housing, public health services and free education. The New direction Social Democracy gives every Sierra Leonean a voice, ownership and a stake in the country and its future.

3. Development Model

The New Direction Social Democracy believes that a Democratic Developmental State model will effectively deliver the primary goals and aspirations of the SLPP. A Democratic Developmental State is one that not only embodies the principles of electoral democracy, but also ensures that all citizens participate in the decisions that affects their lives as well as the development and

governance of the country. The Democratic Developmental State puts economic development and the redistribution of the benefits of economic growth as the top priority of the SLPP government policy. The New Direction SLPP Democratic Developmental State will create positive and competitive business environment to encourage and drive efficiency, affordable prices, high quality service delivery and meaningful employment for all Sierra Leoneans. The New Direction Social Democracy and Democratic Development State are firmly based on our conviction of 'One Country One People' and that it is only by giving ALL Sierra Leoneans a sense of ownership and inclusive belonging that peace, stability, security and development can prevail in Sierra Leone.

4. Vision

As you would recall, my vision for this country is a ***"United, peaceful, progressive and happy nation where the people have access to jobs, food, education and health services and there is justice and equal opportunity for all"***. To this end, our priorities shall cover revamping the economy, with special focus on the developing the private sector, human development, improving governance and developing the infrastructure

5. Revamping the Economy

Revamping the economy through sound economic management is not an end but a means of developing the human capital and infrastructure as well as promoting governance. Despite our huge resource potentials, we have failed as a nation to prudently utilize proceeds from this natural wealth for development. Consequently, the bulk of our people are stuck in grinding poverty amidst the growing affluence of a few. Our strategy of revitalizing the economy entails improving the macro-economy, developing the private sector, improving the management of mineral and petroleum resources and developing the productive sectors, notably agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

1. Improving the Macro-economy

The main challenges in the macro-economy are low economic growth as a result of slowdown in activities in the real sectors, low domestic revenue mobilisation and burgeoning expenditure, high inflation, depreciating exchange rate, growing domestic and external debts and growing unemployment

The economy of Sierra Leone is shrinking. Economic growth rate is expected to slow down from 6.3% in 2016 to 5.6% in 2017 mainly on account of reduced activities in the non-mining sector. Despite the usual propaganda by the National Revenue Authority, domestic revenue was only 10.1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2015 compared to 18% and 17% in Liberia and Guinea respectively that was equally affected by Ebola. Also, domestic-revenue GDP is far less than the 20% revenue threshold required for a state to finance its expenditure. The domestic revenue remain grossly inadequate to finance the growing expenditure estimated at about 20.1% in 2015. It is this low revenue and huge public spending compared to target that is responsible for widening deficit currently estimated at 21.5% of GDP. To finance this huge deficit, the Government has resorted to the ugly practice of bank lending with its associated inflationary implications. At present, inflation is estimated at about 18%.

Between 2007 and 2017, economic conditions have worsened and there is growing hardship for a large segment of the population. Prices of essential goods have risen. For instance the cost of 50Kg of rice rose from Le 60,000 in 2007 to Le 220,000 in 2017. Households that required Le 15,000 to provide a single meal for a family of 6 members in 2007, now require at least Le 50,000 for the same family size representing 150% increase in cost of food basket.

Some of the factors for the low domestic revenue collection and huge leakages include unlimited tax and duty waivers to individual or entities, high concessions to mining companies beyond what is provided for by the law; under invoicing of value of merchandise and goods; miscalculation of duties and taxes; narrow tax base and weak tax administration. The recent IMF mission in Sierra Leone in October 2017 estimated revenue of Le 200 billion below target and expenditure of Le 100 billion above target. As at now, unpaid checks (arrears) stand at over Le 3 trillion.

Consequent of the debt relief in 2006, the SLPP government reduced the external debt stock from US\$1.6 billion to US\$250 million in 2007 through debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). As at June 2016, total external debt rose to about US\$1.5 billion representing nearly an increase of 400%. Domestic debt as at June 2017 was over Le4 trillion. Total interest payments was Le174.57 billion and expected to increase to Le 233.12 billion in 2016.

The exchange rate depreciated from Le 2,900 to 1 US\$ in 2007 to US\$7,500 to 1US\$ representing over 150% depreciation of the Leone. The unprecedented depreciation is largely as a result of low exports and high import bills causing persistent trade deficit, the poor management of our exchange rate as well as the persistent dollarization of government transactions.

In the New Direction, the SLPP shall effectively and efficiently manage the economy with a view to promoting economic growth, creating jobs, increasing household income and reducing poverty. The policies will aim at improving the macro-economic environment through increased production from real sectors, vibrant private sector, reduced budget deficits, low and stable inflation, and a low, stable and competitive exchange rate that will promote exports. The specific policy actions will include

(a) Revenue Mobilisation

In the New Direction, the focus will be to increase the domestic revenue GDP ratio from about 10% to 20%. Some key policy actions are (i) review all laws and policies relating to tax administration and implement robust reforms that will improve on tax revenue collection (ii) establish a single window for clearing of goods in 24 hours and (iii) review of laws for granting tax exemptions and (ii) broaden the tax base.

(b) Public Expenditure Management.

Some specific policy actions that will be pursued to manage public spending in an efficient and effective manner are as follows (i) review and implement reforms in public expenditure management (ii) strengthen Public Expenditure Tracking (PET), Audit Service Commission and the involvement of Non-State Actors in monitoring public spending (iii) develop a National Development Monitoring and Evaluation System that will generate real time information on inputs, outputs and outcome of all development projects implemented by government and

donors (iv) reduce spending on purchase and maintenance of government vehicle as well as on fuel by introducing a vehicle pool and movement tracking system (vi) harmonise the wage structure in the public sector to keep the wage bill sustainable (vii) implement the Treasury Single Account system that will pool all revenues from Government into a single account.

(c) Exchange Rate Management

The objective in the New Direction is to maintain low, stable and competitive exchange rate through increasing exports and reducing imports of consumer goods. In the short run, my administration will improve on foreign exchange management to ensure the banking sector provides foreign exchange to the business community at official rates

(d) Public Debt Management.

Overall, my administration will seek both concessional loans and grants to avoid debt distress and ensure debt sustainability. Specific actions will entail (i) introducing the concept of annual debt ceiling beyond which Government cannot borrow (ii) limit external financing of social services to grants and secure loans for productive sector and infrastructural development.

(e) Diversification of the Economy

The major challenge in our economy is over reliance on the mining sector for our source of foreign exchange. The recent setbacks in the global mineral markets should be factored in financial planning by any responsible government. Thus, diversification of our economy will be a topmost priority in the New Direction. In this vein, in addition to promoting growth in traditional food (rice and cassava) and cash crops (coffee, cocoa and oil palm), in the New Direction, we shall (i) support production and value additions of and non-traditional food crops (maize, sorghum...) and cash crop (such as cashew nuts and cotton) (ii) increase production of marine products and (iii) promote tourism

(2) Improving the Management of Mineral and Petroleum Resources

Managing of our mineral and petroleum resources for the benefit of the nation constitutes one of our development challenges. Mining transactions are not transparent. The agreements for mineral exploration and production are at times inconsistent with the laid down laws and policies. To date, the public does not know how much was raised from sale of oil blocks and how the resources were used. Reporting of revenues and other contributions from the mining companies has come under scrutiny by the public. Environmental Impact Assessment (EPA) and Resettlement Plans for displaced persons have not been enforced, and our people in mined-out areas continue to wallow in poverty. Overall, corruption has plagued the sector. Reports on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives (EITI) indicate that the government could not account for a significant amount of revenue from the mining sector.

In the New Direction, the next SLPP administration shall improve on the management in the sector. In particular, some key policy measures will include (i) reviewing the Mines and Minerals Act as well as mining agreements in accordance with international best practices and with a view to attracting investment and increasing national and community benefits (ii) reviewing the relevant law to allow for the establishment of a natural resources account for all revenue generated from extractives (iii) ensuring full transparency in the sector through complying with the EITI standards, make all contracts public, and provide updated and

validated information on tax and other contributions from the mining sector to the government (iv) put in place policies and mechanisms to support value additions to our mineral resources with a view to generating jobs and additional income to Sierra Leoneans (v) enforcing the implementation of acceptable environmental mitigation and resettlement plans and programmes by mining operations

2. Developing agriculture

Although, the sector is important and large, it is characterised by small scale subsistence farming. The sector faces challenges that continue to limit food production and the achievement of food self-sufficiency. Sierra Leone continues to be a net importer of rice. Recent estimate put total import of rice at US\$150 million out of US\$540 million representing 27.7% of total import bills. According to the 2015 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis study conducted by World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), 49.8% of households were food insecure in 2015 compared to 45% in 2010. That is, they consume limited or insufficient food to maintain a healthy and active life.

The major problems in the agricultural sector and the fight against hunger include the absence of a robust food security policy, limited access to finance to enable farmers acquire farm inputs such as improved seeds and technology, poor management of agricultural land, limited value addition to farm products, poor roads, limited market information, limited capacity, inadequate research, low investment in agriculture and recently, the use of land for biofuel instead of food production.

In the New Direction, the overall goal of our agricultural policy is sustainable production of food, including crops and animals on a scale sufficient enough to feed the growing population as well as providing gainful employment while maintaining the natural resource base. Specifically, in the New Direction, the SLPP Government will (i) increase local and foreign investment for both food and cash crop production as well as increase in livestock production (ii) improve on land and forest management (iii) improve governance in agriculture and promoting research (iv) developing critical infrastructure needed to boost agriculture

3. Improving on the Management of Marine Resources

Sierra Leone's fisheries are worth over 100 million dollars annually. It provides direct employment to some 200,000 persons and indirect employment to some 600,000 persons (almost 10 percent of the population) along coastlines in Freetown, Kambia, Port Loko, Moyamba and Pujehun.

Some major challenges in the sector are illegal fishing by foreign trawlers estimated at U\$29m each year, absence of critical infrastructure such as fishing harbor and standard bureau that would improve on standards compatible with European requirement, poor governance and leadership in the sector and corruption.

The overall policy objective of the fishery sector is to create a profitable fisheries sector contributing significantly to socio-economic development through sustainable management and utilization of fisheries resources while conserving the environment. To this end, the SLPP government will focus on (i) promoting good governance in the sector (ii) reducing illegal fishing (iii) improved handling of fish and fisheries products (v) improving on marine

infrastructure including establishing fish harbor, landing sites and cold chains as well as standard laboratory services

4. Promoting Tourism

Sierra Leone is endowed with rich natural features conducive for tourism. Some of these include over 350 km of unused white sand beaches. It has 18 national heritage sites linked to Sierra Leone's rich past in the slave trade and as home for returning slaves. Location wise, Sierra Leone is only 3 hours to Nigeria, Africa's most populous city, 8 hours from the US and 6 hours from Europe. Sierra Leone has 31 protected areas with unique wildlife including pygmy hypos, chimpanzees, jungle elephants and different species of birds. The gains made to develop the tourism industry were all erased during the rebel war. Despite the fact that the war ended in 2002, the country is yet to recover to the pre-war level.

The critical challenges in the sector include poor infrastructure and public services, perception of Sierra Leone as a conflict zone and disease-prone area, poor and expensive accommodation facilities and the lack of political will to develop the tourism sector.

In the New Direction, the next SLPP Government will (i) review and upgrade all tourism related laws, regulations and policies to ensure ongoing consistency with global best practices (ii) develop a Master Plan for the Tourism Sector (iii) rehabilitate historical and cultural sites geared towards domestic and international tourist and business travelers (iv) develop the capacity of actors involved in the management of tourism (v) develop tourist resorts and infrastructure

5. Developing the Private Sector

A vibrant private sector is critical to economic growth, income generation, employment and ultimately poverty reduction. A competitive, fast growing and liberal economy led by the private sector is envisaged. The private sector can substantially assist in building the capacity and capability of Sierra Leoneans.

Overall, the Sierra Leonean private sector is characterised by foreign dominance, high cost and risk of doing business, limited access to finance, poor infrastructure, weak legal and regulatory frameworks, poor macroeconomic environment and corruption. The problematic factors for doing business identified by the Global Competitiveness Report are accessing financing, corruption, inadequate supply of infrastructure, inflation, tax rates and foreign currency regulations, crime and theft, poor work ethic in national labour force, inadequately educated labour force, poor public health, inefficient government bureaucracy, insufficient capacity to innovate, policy instability, tax regulations, restrictive labour regulations and government instability.

Evidence from both the World Bank Doing Business Report and the Global Competitiveness Report, Sierra Leone is relatively uncompetitive. According to World Bank Doing Business Report, Sierra Leone dropped in ranking for ease of doing business from 140 out of 185 in 2012 to 145 out of 190 in 2016 and further to 148 out of 190 in 2017. The Global Competitiveness

Report ranked Sierra Leone 133 out of 134 countries surveyed in 2012. Its ranking did not change substantially. It was ranked 132 out of 138 countries surveyed.

In the New Direction, the SLPP policies and actions in the private sector will include (i) increasing access to finance (ii) reducing the cost and risk of doing business through establishment of one-stop-shop for all business registration, among others (ii) promoting local entrepreneurship (iii) capacity building and (iv) developing the Infrastructure

I. Human Development

1. Education

Investing in quality education - primary, secondary, and post-secondary (including technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and university) will help turn Sierra Leone's natural and mineral resources into sustainable development. Education helps lift people out of poverty, and creates vast new opportunities to reduce unfair income distribution and increase choices. It creates awareness and helps to sustain democracy and peace.

Overall, only 2 out every 5 adult Sierra Leonean can read or write English. Access to education is low and quality is poor. Only 13.7% of children between 3 and 5 years are enrolled in pre-primary level. According to the Annual School Census 2016, gross enrolment at the primary level is 130.2%. This indicates that 30.2% of children in primary school are over aged (exceed 11 years old). At the Junior Secondary School, gross enrolment is 65.5% meaning 34.5% of children between 12 and 14 years do not attend school. At the secondary school, it was 29.5% meaning 70.5% of children between 15 and 18 are not enrolled in secondary school. Most of the children who are enrolled at the various levels do not complete the required years of schooling. About a quarter of children who enroll in primary school do not attain Class 6 while 35.5% that enroll in Junior Secondary School (JSS) do not attain JSS 3 and 27.6% of those who enroll in Senior Secondary School (SSS) do not attain SSS 3. School performance at public examinations have not been impressive.

This poor performance in the sector can be ascribed to the low priority accorded by this Government sector as reflected in the low budgetary allocation and disbursement. In 2016, only 16.1% of total budget was allocated to education which was less than the Education for All (EFA) target of 20%. Due to the economic challenges, actual disbursements are usually less than the allocated amounts. This low budgetary allocation and disbursement are manifested in the forms of poor infrastructure including physical facilities and furniture, limited learning and teaching materials, poor school management and supervision, low morale and productivity of teachers, limited focus on early childhood education and limited number of qualified teachers. There are limited number of qualified teachers at all levels. Only 55% of teachers at pre-school level, 42% at primary level, 35% at JSS level and 49% at SSS level are qualified to teach. Number of pupils for any qualified teacher varied from 35 at JSS level, 44 at SSS, 48 at pre-primary and 69 at the primary level.

Perhaps the most appalling situation of our educational system is the almost total neglect for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Government is yet to finalise the National TVET Policy and there is no clarity on which institution actually leads TVET in the country. The curriculum for TVET is not standardised and the National Council for Technical

Vocational and other Academic Awards (NCTVA) is faced with serious challenges notably funding, irregularity in the conduct of examinations and the poor perception by students. The few Government funded TVET institutions are very few and restricted to provincial capitals. Most districts lack permanent institutions pursuing TVET programmes. In the few instances, TVET is provided by private sectors and short-term vocational training by NGOs.

University education is in dire strait. It is characterised by poor condition of service for lecturers leading to frequent strikes, inadequate and poor infrastructure, inadequate facilities for research, unproductive structural organisations, accountability and increasing politicisation of employment, promotion, recruitment and provision of grants to students.

The change in the education system from 6-3-3-4 to 6-3-4-4 is challenging. The existing classroom blocks and teachers are inadequate to meet the needs for pupils for additional year of schooling. The 6-3-4-4 has negatively impacted on teenage pregnancy and school drop-outs among girls who consider the number of years of schooling to be too much.

The current educational system remains unsuitable to the development demands of the country in the 21st century. The current education system continues to produce more and more graduates who are unemployed, cannot find relevant jobs, not able to integrate themselves into the labour market and the emerging knowledge-based economy. Sierra Leone needs a new education model that priorities free education from primary to senior secondary school levels, science and technology education, skills training and development and social enterprise.

The primary objective of the new direction is to increase Sierra Leoneans access to quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical and vocational education and training as well as university education that will enable them engage in meaningful productive economic activity. The focus will be on education financing, human resource management, teaching, school management and supervision, TVET and university education.

Accordingly, in the New Direction, the SLPP will abandon the 6-3-4-4 and revert to the 6-3-3-4 system of education with focus on improving learning and teaching and providing for those who cannot pursue university education. Specifically, our policies will focus on

(a) Education Financing and Management

Specific policy action shall include (i) increasing budgetary allocation to the sector (ii) improving coordination and management of resources and (iii) a new policy and legal framework to attract additional donor and private sector investment in education

(b) Increasing the number of Qualified Teachers

In the New Direction, the SLPP will raise the morale and productivity of our teachers. To this end, a Presidential Initiative for teachers will be launched. The Initiative will ensure that matters relating to teachers are treated with utmost importance. Specific actions shall include (i) reviewing and implementing the laws and policies for teacher recruitment, promotions, postings and transfers (ii) putting in place a new incentive scheme for teachers (iii) training

(c) Increasing Access to Quality Education

In the New Direction, some of the specific policies and programmes geared towards increasing access of Sierra Leoneans to education will include (i) promoting Early Childhood Education and Care (ii) introducing free quality education from pre-school to senior secondary school (iii)

introducing free university for students pursuing science and technology courses as well medical disciplines (iv) provide sponsorship to students to access higher education through the effective management of the Grants-in-Aid policy and introduce Students Loan Scheme (v) promoting Inclusive Education through improving facilities and free education for the physically challenged (vi) establishing High Schools of Excellence for Science and Technology education in all four (4) regions (vii) commence a national literacy programme that would provide functional education to adults who cannot read or write

(d) Technical and Vocational Education

Some of the specific policy actions shall include (i) establishing in every district capital a modern polytechnic that will be fully equipped with modern tools and equipment for technical and vocational training in areas with high potential for job creation (ii) establishing technical and vocational centres in all chiefdoms that would provide training in areas relevant for the rural sector such as hand-pump repairs, bicycle, motorcycle (okada) and vehicle repairs, fabrication and maintenance of agricultural tools and equipment (iii) reviewing and standardising the curriculum and certification for TVET for government and private service providers (iv) developing a national apprenticeship scheme which will provide internship for trainees of TVET institutes and at the same time provide direct training to youth

(e) Higher Education

Some of the specific actions shall include (i) establishing a separate Ministry of Higher Education (covering technical and vocational education, teacher training, and the universities) (ii) establishing a university system that employs its own leadership as chancellors with distinguished and proven records of higher education leadership, significant international clout and contacts (funding and research networks), and who are reform-minded. In the New Direction, the President will not be the Chancellor of the University (iii) upgrading curriculum of tertiary education to match skills acquired to job requirement (iv) developing Research and Development in the University and provide incentive schemes to encourage Sierra Leoneans writers and (v) introducing entrepreneurial education in the University that will develop and nurture the entrepreneurial mindset to create jobs for themselves and for others even before they complete their university studies.

(f) Education Governance

Some specific policy actions shall include (i) enhancing the capacity for education planning, management, monitoring and coordination (ii) developing a new National Education Policy and Action Plan to translate the New Direction into concrete programmes (iii) developing a robust policy and legal framework for Public-Private-Partnership in the education sector (iv) developing a new NGO/donor coordination policy that would make them more accountable and integrated into the public education programmes (v) strengthening Education Management and Information System (EMIS) to support informed strategic decision-making, programme development, management and evaluation by providing quality data at all levels and at all times (vi) developing the capacity of School Inspectorate and School Management Committees for effective school monitoring and supervision

2. Health

The health situation in Sierra Leone is awful. This was clearly evidenced by the fast spread of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) across all districts in the country in less than six months in 2014 which affected over 10,000 people and caused over 3,000 deaths including 300 health workers

and 12 medical doctors. World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated life expectancy in 2015 at 50 years compared to 53 in neighbouring Liberia and 59 in Guinea. According to the Demographic and Health Survey (2008), infant mortality rate increased from 89 per 1,000 in 2008 to 92 per 1,000 in 2013 and under-five mortality rose from 140 per 1,000 in 2008 to 156 in 2013. Maternal mortality was 1,165 per 100,000 live birth in 2013 compared to 857 in 2008. WHO even estimated maternal mortality at 1,360 per 100,000 live births and put Sierra Leone last on the child survival league table. Two (2) out of every five (5) maternal deaths is due to teenage pregnancy.

This poor state of the health status can be partly blamed on the low public investment in the sector. In 2015, WHO also put per capita government expenditure on health at US\$14 compared to US\$25 in Guinea and US\$16 in Liberia. Government's current expenditure on health as a percentage of total expenditure has been below the 15% threshold under the Abuja Declaration. It was 11.4% in 2015 and less than 10% in 2016. There are currently 1,190 health facilities and less than 200 physicians providing health care for the 7 million population.

The New Direction particularly notes the rise in teenage pregnancy and its calamitous implication for maternal mortality and the development of our female population. About 15% of our girls have sexual intercourse before 15 years; adolescent pregnancies is among the top 10 countries in the world and about 28% of adolescent women age 15-19 years are already mothers or pregnant and 44% of girls are married before 18 years. About 44% of pregnancies below 20 are lost after 7 months of gestation or babies die within 7 days of life. Teenage pregnancy accounts for 40% of maternal deaths.

Despite the much trumpeted health strengthening efforts under the Post Ebola Recovery Strategy, the health condition remains poor. The health sector continues to be plagued by limited public investment and untimely disbursement, weak human resource base, weaknesses in disease prevention, control and surveillance, poor service delivery and poor governance.

At least 25% of the population do not have access to a health facility within 5 mile radius. The few health facilities are ill equipped, lack adequate drugs and medical supplies and often a time do not have adequate health workers. The trained and qualified health workers are unequally distributed in favour of Freetown. Due to the poor conditions of service, the trained health workers are not retained in the clinics. Many seek other jobs in the private sector or travel overseas for greener pastures. Laboratory and diagnostic facilities such as scanning or dialysis machine in our hospitals and clinics are very poor. Huge amount is spent on treatment of public officials oversea. Financing health care services and procurement and distribution of drugs are other challenges in the health sector.

The thrust of the New Direction is increasing access of the population (particularly mothers and children) to quality health services in an equitable and efficient manner. The focus will be on health financing, human resource, disease prevention and control, service delivery and governance in the health sector. Accordingly, the next SLPP Government in the New Direction will pursue the undermentioned specific policies and programmes

(a) Health Financing

Specific policies shall include (i) increasing budgetary allocation to health and sanitation from its current level of less than 10% to 15% as required by the Abuja Declaration and ensure timely

disbursement of allocated resources (ii) expanding coverage for free health care to cover not only children under five years, pregnant women and lactating mothers but to include all school going children (iii) reviewing and implementing the National Health Insurance Scheme to provide universal access to health care and (iv) improving on management and coordination of all resources allocated to the health sector

(b) Human Resource Management

Main policy actions shall include (i) strengthening human resource management through making functional the Health Service Commission and developing a comprehensive Human Development Plan that would ensure the immediate absorption of trained health workers in the public service (ii) improving on the conditions of health workers for all categories to attract and retain them including special incentive scheme for trained medical doctors and those working in remote areas

(c) Disease Prevention, Control and Surveillance

The specific policy actions our Government will pursue include (i) improving waste management in growing urban communities through measures such as re-introduction of special cleaning days, and re-introducing sanitary inspectors under the supervision of the local councils (ii) intensifying campaigns against diseases and promote hygienic practices (iii) scaling up the interventions for the prevention and management of both communicable and non-communicable diseases (iv) developing diagnostic and treatment facilities that can provide quality health care service at affordable cost and save the much needed foreign exchange usually spent on people for treatment overseas through (v) equipping laboratory facilities in all district hospitals with modern equipment and materials for testing and x-ray facilities and (vi) providing modern equipment including scanning and dialysis machines, CD4 count machines in all regional hospitals that will diagnose illness we usually pay for overseas

(d) Service Delivery

The priority policy actions shall cover (i) developing the health physical infrastructure (ii) upgrading the health training facilities (iii) introducing a National Ambulance Service through public-private arrangements (iv) establishing blood transfusion units in all district hospitals and ensure regular and adequate supply of blood in health facilities, particularly during birth (v) initiating a flagship programme for sexual and reproductive health for adolescents to reduce teenage pregnancy and the alarming maternal mortality

(e) Health Governance

The focus on health governance shall cover (i) enhancing the capacity for health planning, management, monitoring and coordination (ii) reviewing existing laws and policies and developing a new framework for health care planning and management including Public-Private-Partnership in the health sector and (iii) strengthening Health Management and Information System (HMIS) to support informed strategic decision-making, programme development, management and evaluation by providing quality data at all levels at all times

3. Empowering our Youth

Sierra Leone's population is mostly youthful. Youth (persons 15-35 years) account for about 33% of the country's population and represent about 63% of the economically active

population of which 67% are unemployed. Our youth are untrained and lack the skills required in the job market. Overcoming youth unemployment shall be at the centre of our fight against poverty and our efforts at consolidating peace. Despite the loud pronouncements by the President on youth, empowerment has been a mere tokenism. The APC has reduced youth empowerment to the establishment of National Youth Commission and appointments of a few youth in public places. Instead of enhancing youth capability for employment, the APC has made them garbage collectors in Freetown and other urban towns.

In the New Direction, the youth problem will not only receive topmost priority, it will be viewed as a human development and security challenge. It is also our view that stimulating job creation requires a holistic approach, not the lip service or partial and piecemeal strategies we now witness. Our approach will be integrated and coherent. The priority will be in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), National Youth Scheme, economic empowerment, sports, music and performing arts, public works and agriculture. The SLPP will not only enhance the capability of youth through training for employment, but increase access of youth to establish and expand on small businesses or enterprises through (i) establishing a special Youth Empowerment Fund to finance support to youth engaged in small and medium scale entrepreneurial ventures (ii) promoting youth engagement in agriculture through the provision of direct support in the form of finance, market information, technology and technical advice to youth (including agricultural graduates) to engage in commercial agriculture and agro-processing activities.

4. Empowering our Women

Women account for about 51% of the population. The challenges of women include (a) gender-based violence, (b) barriers to women's economic empowerment, especially in terms of access to markets, training, finance, infrastructure, technology, education, counseling and entrepreneurship development, (c) exploitative or hazardous forms of the livelihood of poor, unskilled women and girls, especially commercial sex workers, (d) inadequate sensitisation and education on gender and development issues and (e) low political participation as a result of socio-cultural factors, education, the legal and policy environment, and economic factors.

The last SLPP government made efforts to enact laws and develop policies for the empowerment and development of women. Some of these were the Domestic Violence Act, (2005); the Devolution of Estate Act, (2007) and the Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, (2007). In addition, two gender policies: the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the Policy for the Advancement of Women were developed. Little has been achieved in terms of the implementation of these laws and policies. The current Government lacks the political will to support their effective implementation.

Despite several promises made by the current President to grant a 30% quota to women in elective and appointment positions, this government has failed to pass into law the 30% Quota Bill which would have created the framework for increased female participation in politics.

In the New Direction, we will promote gender equality, equity, empowerment, and the protection of the rights of women either as mainstreamed interventions, or as stand-alone initiatives. Our specific actions will focus on (i) free education for women pursuing sciences, engineering and medical disciplines in university (ii) Women's Development Fund to support female entrepreneurs and (iii) promote women in agriculture (iv) working with political parties to increase the participation of women in politics (v) reviewing and implementing existing gender laws and policies

5. Protecting our Children

The SLPP Government recognises that childhood is a one-time opportunity for physical, mental, emotional and social development. Investing in children is therefore a priority and not a choice. Some of the critical child protection issues are sexual based violence, teenage pregnancy, early and forced marriage, child trafficking, child labour and female genital cutting.

Data from the Family Support Unit (FSU) of Sierra Leone Police shows that the rate of reported cases of sexual penetration of children increased from 2,124 in 2014 to 2,398. UNFPA estimates that 1 out of every 3 adolescent girl is pregnant. It is estimated that 18% of girls are married before the age of 15 and 48% before the age of 18. Child labour, including trafficking and forced labour, are among common child abuse practices. About 50% of children aged 5-14 years are subjected to child labour. Currently, children continue to be trafficked internally, particularly from rural to urban areas, as well as outside of Sierra Leone, mostly to the Middle-East. Many children, as young as 10 and below, are often seen selling cold water and other items on the street during school hours and at night, which is completely absurd.

Nationally, 22% of children are not living with their biological parents, and 13% of children have at least one deceased parent. In the absence of separate child detention centres in 12 out of 14 districts and with limited alternative measures to deal with children in conflict with the law, both the police and prisons usually detain children together with adults, in clear violation of international standards.

In the New Direction, the next SLPP Government will ensure a Child-First approach for the survival, protection and development of children, including disabled and vulnerable children. Specifically, the next SLPP administration will implement the policy actions and programmes

(i) reviewing and implementing laws and policies relating to child protection (ii) building capacities of Family Support Units of the Sierra Leone Police and support the referral pathways of gender-based violence (iii) scale up and expand on interventions to prevent teenage pregnancy and (iv) supporting children's education and health

6. Protecting Persons Living with Disability and our Aged

The most disadvantaged group in Sierra Leone is the physically challenged. About 1.1% of the population is physically challenged or live with disability. This includes mainly the blind, deaf, polio persons and amputees. The major challenges the physically challenged persons face include limited access to food, shelter, clothing, jobs, education and health care. They also face the problem of negative public attitude towards them in many instances. Their

coping strategies include begging to earn income and sleeping in public places. They are also marginalised in public life.

The aged are another disadvantaged group. In Sierra Leone, where social security is weak, the aged are generally cared for by the children. With a drop in real income and growing hardship, very little is provided for them. They too can be seen on the streets begging for basic survival.

The APC has failed to address the plights of physically challenged persons. Although the last Parliament enacted the Disability Bill, no concrete action was taken by this Government to provide basic services to persons living with disability or even implement the provisions of the Act. To date, the basic structures for implementing the Act are weak. Conditions in major institutions such as the School for the Blind have worsened. In 2007, the APC inherited from the last SLPP administration, a Social Safety Programme that provided cash assistance to the vulnerable aged. The APC misappropriated the residual funds, politicized the management and abandoned the Programme.

In the New Direction, the SLPP will (i) review and implement policies and laws relating to disability (ii) free education for the physically challenged at all levels (pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary level) (iii) provide free health care for the physically challenged and the aged (iv) increase access of persons living with disability and aged to public housing (v) provide welfare assistance to persons living with disability and the aged (vi) Provide livelihood support to persons living with disability

V. Protecting and Empowering our Workers

The most valuable asset of any nation is its workforce. A nation needs a workforce that is well motivated for the transformation of the natural resources to wealth. Over 65% of Sierra Leone's working population representing nearly 2 million people participates in the labour market and women participate almost as men.

Employment laws and regulations are not only weak but their implementation is also undermined. The institutional framework for the issuing of work permits exposes our potential workforce to unhealthy competition from other nationals who are usually put on better terms and conditions. The enforcement of our labour laws is weak. Core labour standards comprising the series of rules and principles regarding the minimum standards recognised internationally for treating workers have been violated. These labour standards are fundamental principles that protect basic human rights of the workforce. Despite the enactment of the Sierra Leone Local Content Act which provides the legal framework for Sierra Leonean-first in employment and contract award, nationals still remain disadvantaged.

The pension scheme, National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT) which the last SLPP administration set up is facing serious threats. The misuse of the pension fund, non-payment of contributions by both government and private employers, wrong investment decisions of the pension fund, non-reporting of dividends (if any) from investment of the pension fund and the politicisation and poor leadership of the Trust are now the norm.

In the new Direction, the next SLPP Government will (i) implement the Local Content Act (ii) review existing mechanisms issuing and enforcing work permits (iii) review all laws, regulations

and agreements to ensure that apart from statutory social security benefits, employers have in place medical and insurance policies consistent with international best practice (iv) train Sierra Leoneans either by way of a buddy system, having them as counterparts or other alternatives that ensure that skills transfer is enhanced (v) domesticate (where necessary) and enforce core labour standards adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (vi) establish a Minimum Wage Board comprising Government agencies and private agencies with the primary responsibility of setting minimum wage at regular intervals (vii) capacitate the Ministry of Labour to enable it monitor and enforce the labour laws, policies and regulations effectively (viii) review the NASSIT Act and restructure the institution

III. Improving Governance

Immediately after the end of the war, SLPP embarked on governance reforms to resuscitate State institutions and create an environment for democratic governance to thrive. Since 2007, there has been substantial reversal of the reform processes with a major threat being the undermining of the hitherto national cohesion in the country.

Efforts in this area will include promoting national cohesion, revamping and de-politicizing national democratic institutions, strengthening the role of parliament, promoting justice and the rule of law, curbing corruption and ensuring state security, promoting the fourth estate and improving foreign relations

1. Building and Promoting National Cohesion

National unity and the promotion of inclusion and participation are critical to the existence of a stable and progressive state. In the case of Sierra Leone, despite coming out of a brutal civil war, the APC has deliberately chosen to institutionalise regionalism, tribalism, divisiveness, exclusion, the weakening of state institutions and extreme partisanship that have attained the dimensions of a national security risk. It is imperative that the next SLPP administration pays immediate attention to reversing this trend and make each and every Sierra Leonean feel and believe that they are a part of Sierra Leone irrespective of political belief, region or tribe.

Most of the victims of dismissals, demotions, transfers to second rated departments from the civil service, public enterprises and institutions, military, police and even universities and colleges are competent Sierra Leoneans whose only crime is their perceived support for the SLPP or their regional origin. There is a constant state of fear of dismissal and a feeling of segregation among persons who are non APC. This mood has gripped many government institutions, sent the public sector into total chaos, and undermined the productivity and morale of a large part of the workforce. Even the awarding of scholarships to students for overseas and in country studies which present the greatest opportunity for building human capital has been abused. Family members and APC party activists are usually the beneficiaries of such awards. Also, the special Diaspora Office and other offices in State House have been converted into a compensation scheme for APC operatives abroad. Generally, political cronies of the APC have been the principal beneficiaries of Government contracts.

Promoting inclusion and equal opportunities shall be the cornerstone of the New Direction. To this end, in the New Direction, the next SLPP administration will launch a presidential initiative on national cohesion and organise a national conference on diversity management and building national cohesion.

2. Fighting Corruption and Improving Accountability

Corruption was one of the major causes of the Country's civil conflict and is a key threat to national security. Corrupt offences manifest themselves in the inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks; examination malpractices; corporate fraud; tax evasion; falsification of accounts in the public services; taking of bribes, and the perversion of justice among the police, the judiciary and other organs in the justice system; falsification of certificates; printing of fake currency; and stealing of public funds, to name a few.

Despite the anti-corruption efforts in the past including the enactment of the Anti-corruption Act and establishment of Anti-Corruption Commission in 2002 and its amendment in 2008, there is substantial evidence of corruption in every facet of our society.

In the New Direction, the SLPP government shall consider corruption as a National Security issue. Corruption becomes a serious threat to national security in so far as it undermines the safety and welfare of the people and the ability of the government to protect the sovereignty of the nation.

In the New Direction, some key policy actions shall include (i) developing our value system and implement a robust merit and reward system in public and private life (ii) strengthening anti-corruption institutions, notably Anti-Corruption Commission, Audit Service Commission and the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament (iii) preparing and monitoring implementation plan of recommendations of annual audits of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (v) reviewing within the first 100 days the Anti-Corruption Act to include the publication of all assets declaration forms of all public officials including the President, Members of Parliament, Ministers, Judges and senior civil servants before they take office and upon leaving office (vi) set up a system for planning, monitoring and reporting on Development Results referred to as Results-Based Management (RBM) wherein development targets will be set at the start of each year and senior managers will be accountable for delivering on these results (vii) improving social accountability in which public officials and non-state actors will give account of their stewardship

(3) Revamping Democratic Institutions

Almost all democratic institutions including the National Commission for Human Rights, the Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC), the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) which was later transformed to NEC, the Independent Media Commission (IMC), the National Commission for Democracy (NCD) were established either by the NPRC or by the then SLPP following the end of the war to help build the culture of democracy and respect for the rule of law. These institutions have been starved of human and financial resources and have been politicised to the extent that they have lost their operational independence.

The next SLPP administration will ensure that all national democratic institutions are put back on track as a matter of urgency by restoring their autonomy, creating the necessary operating environment to execute their statutory mandate, and serve the people of Sierra Leone. Specifically, the SLPP will (i) review laws and policies guiding the functioning of democratic institutions with a view to restoring their autonomy and independence (ii) increase the role of non-state actors in the management of democratic institutions (iii) make more transparent the operations of democratic institutions and (iv) develop the capacities of democratic institutions through adequate funding, qualified and competent human resources as well efficient and effective systems and procedures.

3. Building an Effective Parliament

The size of the House of Parliament or the Legislature has increased from 112 to 132. The main responsibilities cover law making, oversight and representation. There are a myriad of issues, ranging from the weak capacities of a good number of MPs to poor investment into this critical arm of government, which in Sierra Leone is almost dwarfed by the dominance of the executive. There have been a number of lost opportunities in ensuring that good laws are passed, due to the excessive display of partisanship which holds more sway than working in the national public interest. In recent months, we have witnessed unwarranted invitations of state institutions such as the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and non-state institutions because of their critique of either the executive or parliament. These were attempts to intimidate these institutions and force them to succumb to the whims and caprices of the government.

In the New Direction, the SLPP will (i) establish a Parliamentary Academy and train MPs in all areas of legislative scrutiny in collaboration with international Parliamentary development institutions (ii) strengthen Committees of Parliament, particularly the Public Accounts Committee to bolster the work of the ACC and take prompt action on audit reports (iii) discourage the use of "certificate of urgency" and if required, use it only in cases of national emergency or extreme urgency (iv) introduce a target setting and performance review mechanism for serving MPs in order to be effective in Parliament and ensure that they focus on results and impacts (v) introduce a housing scheme in Freetown for serving Parliamentarians

4. Strengthening Local Councils and the Chieftaincy Institution

The local councils have proved quite capable to manage the expectations of the People of Sierra Leone. In the first three years (2004-2007), the then SLPP administration succeeded in ensuring that 19 new Local Councils were established (City and District councils) and the legal and administrative mechanisms put in place to support Human Resources, budgetary and other financial management systems for the functioning of the councils. The political will at the highest level of State (Presidency) ensured that the most difficult part of decentralisation – functional and fiscal devolution from central to local government – was done in Sierra Leone for the three big critical service and Human Development sectors of Health (primary health care), Education(Pre-primary to Basic education) and Agriculture (Agricultural extension).

Since 2007, the APC has manifested little or no interest in decentralization. Human resources management has been politicized with unwarranted transfers of staff who are deemed to be

non- APC supporters and the manipulation of the grants distribution arrangement (that was based on equity) left behind by the last SLPP administration undermining the technical assistance role of the facilitating agency by recruiting on tribal and ethnic grounds. Between 2004 and 2007, whilst the capacities of the local councils were developed, the then SLPP administration devolved 40 out of 72 functions. Between 2007 and 2017, only 18 additional functions have been devolved leaving a balance of 14 functions. The APC failed to complete the devolution of functions and instead re-introduced the district offices running side by side with the local council.

In the New Direction, the SLPP will (i) review the National Decentralization Policy and amend the Local Government Act 2004 (ii) devolve all remaining functions within 100 days (iii) review the local government grant making mechanism with a view to ensuring that the initial principles underpinning it (equity, need, lack of capacity to raise adequate own/local resources and even development across the country) forms the basis of computation, allocation and distribution of all grants irrespective of location and partisan composition (iv) restore the dignity of paramount chiefs by defining a new condition of service for Paramount Chiefs and most essential chieftain staff and provide them logistical capacity for chiefs to facilitate outreach.

5. Strengthening and Repositioning the Civil Service

Our once prided civil service has now been reduced to a mere extension of the APC Secretariat. There has been increased politicisation of the Public service in transfers, dismissals and promotions. Appointments to the Public service institutions have been done with no proper scrutiny of the professional background of the appointees.

There is need for a well-structured and efficient Civil Service that works on the basis of modern rules, regulations and procedures that will be institutionalised and fully respected. Second, we should have a Civil Service that is free of political interference. Third, we want a Civil Service that allows for uninterrupted career paths, where staff and personnel are well remunerated and their welfare and that of their dependants is given the priority that it deserves. Fourth, our Civil service should be provided with adequate resources and the requisite equipment and essential working tools that support effectiveness and productivity.

In the New Direction, the principal objective will be to restore the efficiency of the Civil service. Among other things, specifically, the SLPP will (i) reinforce political commitment and provide strong leadership in the reform agenda (ii) rationalise the structure of the public service with a view to having a clear political leadership and direction (iii) develop a new architecture of State governance and a national civil service organogram (iv) introduce a new scheme for civil servants including reintroducing a 'hire purchase scheme' and housing scheme for serving members of the Civil and related services to enable them acquire capital items (with values consistent with their official emoluments).

6. Providing a Secure Environment for All

The security sector comprising the military, police, immigration and fire force is facing major challenges especially in terms of meeting minimum professional standards of management and operations making it increasingly lose the confidence and respect of the civil populace.

There is also lack of modern tools to support the work of national security agencies, autonomy in the execution of its responsibilities with speed that such an agency requires in a contemporary world. The remuneration scheme like for the entire Public sector is abysmally poor and staff morale is low. Above all, the security sector has been politicised as manifested in the patterns of recruitment, promotions and transfers.

The new SLPP government will (i) improve the conditions of service including better housing conditions for serving military and police officers (ii) de-politicise the military and police (iii) re-introduce community screening of recruits into RSLAF and SLP (v) modernise the equipment of the entire RSLAF consistent with modern trends (vi) strengthen the engineering and agricultural units of the military (viii) upgrade the military hospital to a very high standard equipped with modern diagnostic facilities and staffed with senior practitioners comparable to other military hospitals in the sub-region (ix) provide free education for all military and police officers intending to pursue higher education

7. Advancing Human Rights, Rule of Law and the Judiciary

Sierra Leone's Judiciary has suffered serious national and external condemnation for several years. The continued merger of the positions of Attorney-General and Minister of Justice which effectively creates a fusion between the political and technical/ professional areas of the country's justice system has raised questions. The dearth of professional staff to support the government's judicial responsibilities across the country limiting such services mostly to the regional and to a lesser extent the district headquarters towns is an issue. The huge delays in the courts has often culminated in several years of case backlogs, leading to rights abuses as suspects are kept in remand for protracted periods of time. The detention and custodial facilities for all categories of inmates (men, women and juveniles) are inadequate. The huge accusations of corruption and collusion in the justice system reinforces citizens absolute lack of trust and confidence in it to service their needs. The weak infrastructural facilities to house the judicial offices as well as the lack of access to modern machines and equipment that are supportive of the management of modern and efficient courts have been frowned upon.

The New Direction government will seek as a matter of critical emergency to facilitate the revival of the Judiciary so as to be truly tri-equal to the executive and legislature as well as ensure it meets both national and international recognition and standards. Specifically, the next SLPP government will (i) facilitate a National dialogue on 'A ***new Justice and Rule of law system for 21st Sierra Leone*** (ii) prepare a comprehensive Capacity Building Plan for the justice sector (iii) make the Judiciary fully independent and ensure that the court system is free from all forms of executive manipulation (iv) make the Judicial Service Commission fully functional to manage an independent justice system (v) increase citizens access to affordable justice

8. Promoting Press Freedom and Developing the Fourth Estate

The fourth estate has been very useful in informing and educating the public on governance issues. Since 2002, there has been a proliferation of press houses and radio stations. The Independent Media Commission (IMC) was established with the responsibility to enforce professional ethics in journalism. Yet, the major challenges of the fourth estate are the continued existence of the seditious libel law, the weak capacity of the Right to Access Information Commission (RAIC), limited capacity of journalists and uninformed and unethical reporting.

In the New Direction, the SLPP administration will reform the fourth estate through the following: (i) repeal the seditious libel law and replace it with another law that would hold journalists accountable, protect the rights of citizens and make investment in journalism attractive to the private sector (ii) develop and implement a capacity building plan for journalists and (iii) provide from the budget a yearly subvention to SLAJ.

9. Foreign Relations

In the New Direction, the next SLPP government will place the highest premium on economic diplomacy. Our representatives abroad must be more than arm-chair diplomats. To this end, new Embassies/Missions will be opened where it is in the best interest of the country to do so.

II. Infrastructure

Improving infrastructure is an imperative for any meaningful development and poverty reduction. Development of infrastructure facilitates growth and promotes human development. Investments require regular and reliable electricity. Access to safe drinking water promotes good health and reduces mortality rates.

(a) Increasing access to affordable electricity and water supply

Less than 15% of households have access to electricity. Currently, electricity generation nationwide is estimated to be less than 100 MW, falls drastically short of the estimated power requirements, which range from 400-500 MW for the country and far below the 1,000 MW target by 2018 in the Agenda for Prosperity. Dilapidated transmission and distribution system result in high line losses estimated at 40% of units generated in the Western Area.

Existing energy supplies, especially electricity, are delivered at very high cost. There is a lack of adequate investment and insignificant private participation in the sector. Between 2007 and 2012, the APC spent huge resources exceeding over US\$300 million on electricity. The APC government has however made little effort to implement the Energy Policy. Not enough attention is paid to other forms of energy apart from electricity provision by thermal power.

This notwithstanding, the sector is still facing serious challenges. First, there has been little transparency in the operations and management contract for the Bumbuna hydroelectric project causing high electricity costs. Second, the electricity contracts including pre-paid meter contract have been subject of persistent scandal. To date, houses continue to face challenges with the meters. Third, the poor transmission and distribution network causing huge wastage compounded by low and irregular voltage continue to characterise the sector. Fourth, this Government had largely relied on Independent Power Providers (IPP) for the supply of electricity using thermal plants at over bloated costs. Fifth, power stations in most of Sierra Leone are not functional. Contracts for restoring provincial stations have been fraught with difficulties. Finally, most the solar street lights installed in district capitals are off because of low quality of the solar lights or lack of clear policy on maintenance. Overall, the entire sector is ridden with corruption. There are persistent reports of poor procurement practices. Contracts have often gone to Government cronies who have limited capacity and knowledge.

In the New Direction, the SLPP Government will (i) restore electricity to all district capitals (ii) initiate a rural electrification programme that will supply electricity to households and not towns with population exceeding 20,000 (iii) institute a Rural Electricity Board and a Rural Electricity Fund to promote electrification of rural areas and (iv) review and strengthen regulatory Agency for the water and electricity sectors

(b) Increasing access to Water Supply

Most of the Sierra Leone population do not have access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation. Barely half of the population (86% in urban areas and 26% in rural areas) have access to safe drinking water and 13% have access to improved sanitation (24% in urban areas and 6% in rural areas). Pipe borne water supply is largely limited to Freetown. The Guma dam, which supplies water to Freetown was intended to supply a population of about 500,000 but the influx of people from rural areas, returning refugees and high population growth have resulted in a city and its environs of about 1.5 million inhabitants. Deforestation has created further problems in the dam region by allowing mudslides, which fill in the lake and reduce the available supply.

The newly restored water supply facilities in provincial capitals of Bo, Kenema and Makeni are not effective. Most households and communities in those townships are yet to either access water from those facilities or the supply is irregular or inadequate. Contrary to what was promised, pipe borne water facilities in all other district capitals are not functional. Most rural communities access water from hand-pump wells and a few from gravity system. A substantial percentage of people still access water from unprotected sources including uncovered wells and polluted rivers and lakes.

The management of both garbage and sewage in urban towns, particularly Freetown is poor. To date, the institutional arrangements for city cleaning are weak. Dumpsites in West and East of Freetown are surrounded by communities creating serious health hazards. Most shacks in Freetown do not have access to latrine facility and the conditions of the sewage pipes are deteriorating. Rural sanitation challenges comprise disposing garbage in backyards and limited access to latrine facilities causing the bad practice of open defecation.

In Freetown, the major challenge of water supply is inadequate water dam facilities and poor and limited distribution networks. Only one dam is currently operational and is far inadequate to meet the growing demands. The distribution network is not only poor causing massive wastage of the limited water supply but can at best cover half of the city. There is hardly a community now that have access to 24 hours water supply. This ugly situation force children and adolescents including females to fetch water from far distances at odd hours. There is increasing evidence that teenage girls become vulnerable to rape or sexual abuse during these periods. Also, time spent to fetch is often at the expense of study time.

In the new Direction, a comprehensive water and sanitation strategic plan will be reviewed/developed to guide investment in the sector and public sector investment will be increased to a minimum of 10% from its current level of less than 3%. Some of the specific policy actions for improve water supply shall include (i) construct a new water reservoir for Freetown and its immediate environs (ii) rehabilitate water distribution network in Freetown and construct stand pipes in deprived communities (iii) restore pipe-borne water facilities in all district capitals and large towns with current population exceeding 20,000 (iv) separate water generation from water distribution and supply responsibilities as was the case with electricity (v) construct boreholes, gravity water systems and solar water pumping schemes in all

communities in all villages (vi) develop the capacity of Local Councils to effectively handle water supply issues in provincial areas

In the area of sanitation, my administration will (i) re-introduce special cleaning day (last Saturday in a month) (ii) strengthen and expand coverage of public-private partnership in garbage collection (iii) re-introduce sanitary inspectors under the supervision of the local councils

(2) Improving Transport (Roads, Air, Rail and Sea)

Transport services are essential for the domestic and international movement of persons, promoting trade, agriculture, tourism, generating growth and development and even promoting human development. The means of transportation in Sierra Leone include road, sea and air. Road and sea transportation are the main means of internal transportation while air and sea transports link Sierra Leone to the rest of the world.

It is estimated that Sierra Leone has about 11,300 Km of roads of which less than 10% is paved. Despite the much emphasis by this Government, the conditions of the roads are very deplorable. Roads connecting district capitals in the South and East are not paved. There is no equity in the pavement of township roads. Different Kilometres have been paved for different towns depending on political connection. Most feeder roads in Freetown are in bad condition.

Government has failed to implement some critical road projects inherited from the last SLPP administration and even those it identified in the Agenda for Prosperity. The cost of roads solely funded by Government are far more expensive than those funded by donors and the quality of road projects funded by Government are poor. Additionally, the Road Maintenance Fund Administration established in 2008 to provide resources to SLRA for maintenance is now a slush fund for APC activities.

In the New Direction, the specific policy actions will cover (i) paving all roads leading to district capital towns (ii) devolving maintenance of township roads and feeder roads to local councils (iii) de-politicising the management of the Road Fund (iii) constructing fly overs and over-passes in city to ease the unpleasant traffic congestion. Additionally, my Government will explore the possibility of re-introducing the railway, develop and revamp the international airport and the sea port.

(3) Improving Information, Communications and Technology (ICT)

An efficient ICT network improves human life and accelerates economic development. This includes telephones and computing, equipment, satellite equipment, right down to a regular television and radio service. Statistics all round the World have proved that countries that take ICT seriously develop faster than others.

Landline telecommunications infrastructure is in a state of deterioration and is a constraint for the operation of projects. Although SIERRATEL was recapitalised using external funds, there has not been any marked improvement in the services provided. Again, because of political

meddling into the affairs of NATCOM, the independence of this regulatory body is threatened. NATCOM now carries out its regulatory functions inefficiently. There are also concerns about the non-transparent management of the international telecommunications gateway. There has been little improvement in the use of ICT in the country, and no concerted plans are apparent for this sector.

In the New Direction, the SLPP administration will (i) de-politicise NATCOM to enable this regulatory agency to carry out its functions efficiently (ii) improve on regulation and providing the enabling business environment to spur the sector forward (iii) establish an Electronic Governance system whereby government business will be managed electronically (iv) increase population access to fast, reliable and affordable internet services.

(4) Improving Lands, Housing and Country Planning

Access to land is an important consideration for the citizenry of any country. Although Sierra Leone's land mass is fairly large for its population, rapid urbanisation has placed severe constraints on land in urban areas. Wasteful land use practices have also placed constraints on the use of land for alternative purposes. With most of the rural population engaged in subsistence agriculture using traditional methods of allowing the land to fallow, the increasing population imposes constraints to farming in some areas. There is need for more careful planning of land, especially in urban areas, where houses and other infrastructural facilities need to be incorporated into limited spaces

Land planning is poor and there is general indiscipline in the land market. There is a paucity of affordable housing and enforcement of laws is generally very poor. Planning is almost absent and the relevant MDAs are grossly incapacitated. The government deliberately does not enforce regulations related to country planning and building. Consequently illegal buildings and structures abound in many areas. The government condones these practices mainly for political reasons. Poor planning has also led to severe sanitation problems in many communities.

In the area of land management, the SLPP government will pursue the following measures (i) implement the National Lands Policy (ii) improve the management of state lands with a view to ensuring fair distribution (iii) develop the capacity of Ministry of Lands and Country Planning (iv) set up a Lands court to help speed up land cases (v) create land banks to ensure available, affordable serviced plots (vi) discourage the unauthorised construction by vigorously enforcing building rules and (vii) land use planning.

In the area of housing, my administration will (i) encourage large-scale local production of building materials (ii) provide fair and affordable access to decent housing to the citizenry either through public or private investments (iii) Improve the distribution and access to imported and locally produced materials (iv) enhance building skills through improved technical education and professional bodies (v) facilitate access to credit for building and mortgage (vi) develop a bi-partisan housing programme that will provide 10,000 housing units.

(5) The Environment

The environment permeates all facets of national life and is a cross cutting issue. Waste disposal, firewood use, climate change, soil nutrient depletion, land degradation, deforestation are all issues that affect our day to day lives. There is also need to regulate the operation of industries to ensure that they comply with good environmental practices. In the rural areas, the major environmental challenge is caused by deforestation as a result of logging, fuel wood production and environmental pollution caused by mining activities and companies engaged in biofuel production. In urban areas, particularly Freetown, the key environmental challenges include deforestation of hillsides mainly for housing construction and fuel wood production leading to erosion, and poor sanitation as a result of poor waste management.

Sierra Leone runs the risk of being affected by more frequent rainfalls, floods, mudslides, forest fires, deforestation, and poor land usage. Sierra Leone has been listed in the Maplecroft report and Climate Change Vulnerability Map as one of the ten countries most at risk to climate change. Climate change tends to undermine or reverse progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. A change in climate affects people, plants, animals, food production, availability and use of water, and health status. Climate change can increase the frequency and intensity of natural hazards. Climate change affects poor men and women, especially in the fishing and farming communities because they depend on climate sensitive natural resources. Women are more likely to be vulnerable to the effects of climate change in their multiple roles as food producers, providers, and economic actors. In some places, floods and/or drought could become more frequent and severely impact on agricultural livelihoods, human life, especially those living in urban slums and flood plains.

The Environmental Protection Agency has done a fairly good job of meeting its mandate as prescribed in its governing Acts. However there is a lack of support from major MDAs which flout environmental regulations in many instances. Environment is a cross cutting issue and many MDAs carry out their functions with a lackadaisical attitude towards the environment. This includes Ministries such as Mines and Mineral Resources and Lands, Country Planning and the Environment.

In the New Direction, the SLPP will (i) ensure that all major mining companies and industrial establishments carry out Environmental Impact Assessments and take mitigating measures for damage caused by their operations as required by law (ii) monitor closely industrial establishments for environmental compliance (iii) develop a National Programme for the regeneration of forest cover (iv) establish a separate Disaster Management Agency effectively detect and prevent disaster, prepare to manage disaster and mitigate the impacts of disaster.

V. Financing the New Direction

The obvious question is how we intend to finance this ambitious plan. Whilst we shall continue to look forward to external support, it is imperative that we rely primarily on domestic revenue. In the medium term, we shall reduce the persistent budget deficit and even generate surplus through our revenue mobilisation strategy and expenditure control measures. In addition to budgetary resources and external aid (loans and grants) through traditional sources, we will finance our programmes from public-private-partnership, Diaspora bonds, carbon trading and

south-south cooperation. In the detailed Manifesto, we will present the cost and source of financing our flagship programmes.