INTEGRATED SDG INSIGHTS

SIERRA LEONE

This initiative supports the articulation of national commitments to SDG transformation, towards accelerated SDG action in the second half of the 2030 Agenda.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

Integrated SDG Insights provides an overview of a country's economic growth trajectory, highlighting potential conflicts between growth, environmental concerns, and societal well-being (referred to as the **SDG Moment**).

It builds from the foundation of national SDG progress through the lens of the 5Ps and uses machine learning to analyse national development ambition with an SDG lens (**SDG Trends & Priorities**).

Combined, these insights are mapped against SDG interlinkages to define policy choices the accelerate SDG progress, tailored to national context (**SDG Interlinkages**).

These policy choices are made against fiscal constraints and opportunities for stimulus to ensure choices translate to development impact and leave no one behind (**Finance & Stimulus**).

SDG MOMENT: SIERRA LEONE

While economic growth is a key element in achieving the SDGs, many countries are intent on moving beyond growth as a yardstick for progress. In the short run, growth enables the SDGs; but in the long run, the SDGs aim to transform the pattern of growth itself.

Sierra Leone's economy shows moderate growth in 2023, but is expected to transition into acceleration mode by 2024-2025.[1] This pace of growth is characterized by being 46% higher, on average, than that of the world, and projected to surpass the country's growth trajectory forecast before the pandemic. Accordingly, Sierra Leone is committed to achieving the SDGs by transforming the country from a fragile state into a stable and prosperous democracy.

This pace of economic growth is expected to exert a positive effect on reducing poverty at $2.15 and $3.65 a day, although challenges remain given the long periods of internal conflict, military interventions, disease outbreaks and natural disasters. The economic expansion, on the other hand, would be increasingly dependent on carbon emissions, as the country's carbon emissions intensity of GDP is expected to increase at an annual rate of 8.6% due to fossil fuel usage.[2]

[1] The economic cycle is determined by adjusting the country's current GDP growth forecasts (April 2023) by their gap relative to the forecasts made before the pandemic and subsequent crises (October 2019). If the adjusted rates (not shown) are below 2%, the economy is considered in mitigation; it is coping if the adjusted rates range between 2%-4%, and it is in acceleration if they are above 4%.

[2] CO2 emissions intensity of GDP is computed as tonnes of CO2 per $1,000 (2017 PPP).

SDG TRENDS

Understanding how Sierra Leone performs against the SDG targets provides a baseline landscape against which to to build integrated SDG pathways. SDG progress tracking follows UN Stats standards and methodology, and is aligned with country profiles.

Trends in detail:
https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SLE/sdg-trends

SDG PRIORITIES

Sierra Leone's national priorities are analysed using machine learning to reveal the most prominent SDGs referenced in national policy documents. This analysis uses a custom-built model for SDG classification. It considers 100k+ terms, including phrases and expressions.

Key documents for analysis:

1. Sierra Leone Medium-term National Development Plan 2019-2023

Priorities in detail:
https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SLE/current-priorities

SDG INTERLINKAGES

SDG Interlinkages reveal how actions directed towards one SDG can impact others. Uncovering and understanding these interactions can help Sierra Leone to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and navigate trade-offs.

Based on a global framework for interlinkages, Sierra Leone's SDG progress is colour-coded at the target level.

Building from national trends and priorities, the following integrated SDG pathways reflect policy choices with the most potential to accelerate the SDGs for Sierra Leone:

- Target 8.5: Full employment and decent work with equal pay
- Target 11.2: Affordable and sustainable transport systems
- Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions

ACCELERATION PATHWAYS

SYNERGIES

TRADE-OFFS

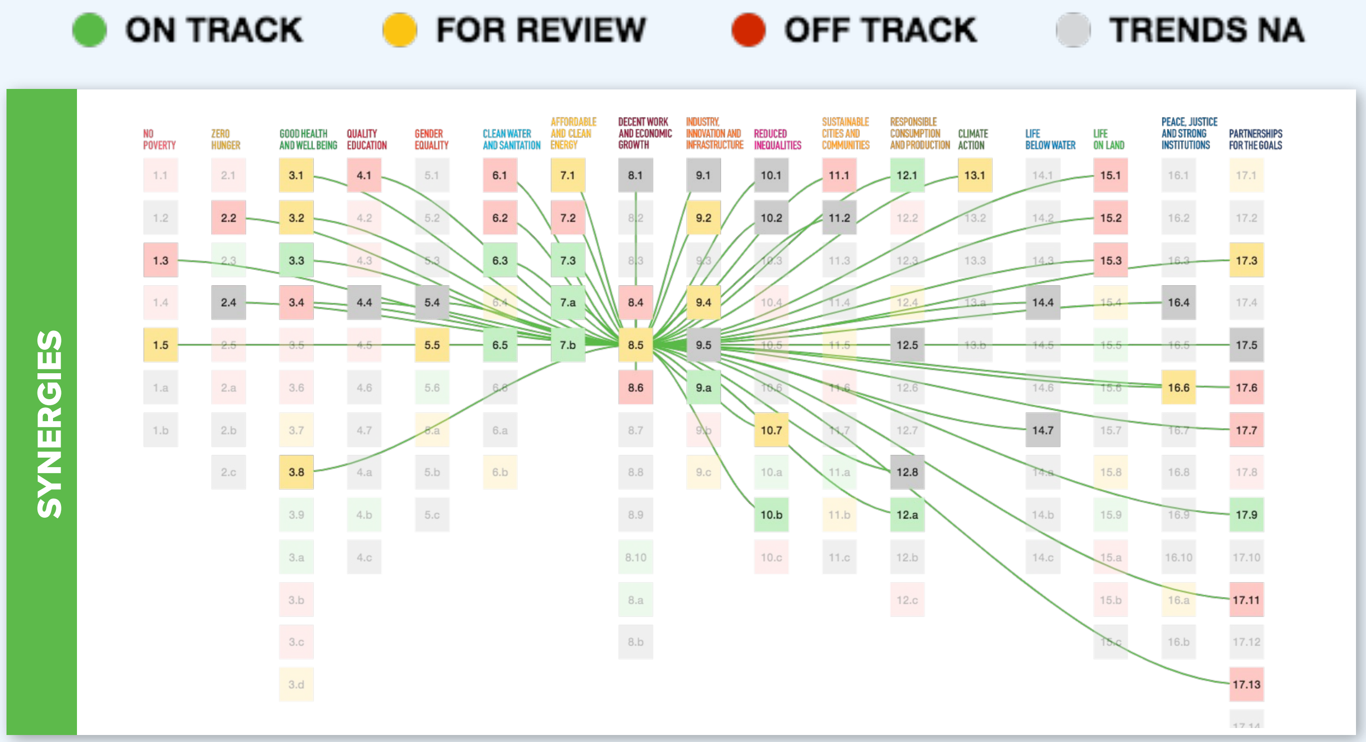
SDG INTERLINKAGES

8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

Youth under 35 years of age account for 75 percent of the population of Sierra Leone but about 70 percent of the youth are structurally underemployed. Sierra Leone's burgeoning youth population further compounds the jobs challenge while younger youth cohorts offer some opportunities. At current rates of population growth (2.2 percent), the economy will need to create 70,000 new jobs per year to maintain current employment rates and keep up with population growth.

The economy struggles to create jobs because it is undiversified and trapped in subsistence agriculture and subsistence household enterprises. The undiversified economy remains dependent on natural resources for revenue and on subsistence farming and petty trading for most employment. Informality with low productivity dominates both the agriculture and non-agriculture labour markets. The country not only has among the lowest productivity levels, but with few manufacturing and value-addition activities, poverty reduction requires increased agricultural productivity and the creation of good jobs outside agriculture for the low-skilled labour force.

By investing in SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), Sierra Leone can improve on current employment challenges and move the needle on key priorities around the eradication of poverty, zero hunger, improved health care and education. Progress on Target 8.5 will benefit from advancements in closing key infrastructure gaps, specifically in electricity, sustainable and safe road connectivity and ICT and also in promoting access to clean energy. These actions will progressively help to eradicate poverty in Sierra Leone.



Explore the interlinkages at:
https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SLE/synergies-and-tradeoffs

SDG INTERLINKAGES

11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

Sierra Leone's power sector faces four key challenges: low access and security of supply (16 percent; 100 MW); costly energy mix (US$0.18 per kWh), poor operational performance and financial viability.

Reliable and affordable broadband connectivity and associated enabling environment in digital infrastructure are the key challenges and are hindering Sierra Leone to take advantage of full-fledged opportunities of digital economy (3G coverage is low (60 percent; 74.8 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa), and 20 percent of the population do not have access to mobile networks). Mobile broadband subscriptions are growing but still low (21.5 percent).

Two thirds of the rural population do not have access to good roads, and deficient transport services are major constraints to farm and firm productivity. Poor urban mobility is a significant disincentive to private investment. Rural and urban access to markets (as well as to schools and clinics are severely constrained by the barriers to mobility.

Investing in improved electricity supply and access (especially from renewable sources), enhanced digital connectivity, and better access at lower cost to digital solutions by businesses and service delivery providers and improved road connectivity (SDG 11.2) could provide non-farm employment opportunities, which can lead to income diversification and higher productivity. Given that a large share of Sierra Leone's population depends on farming and that most of the poor are involved in it, these benefits hold promise for reducing poverty and achieving other SDGs

Explore the interlinkages at:
https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SLE/synergies-and-tradeoffs

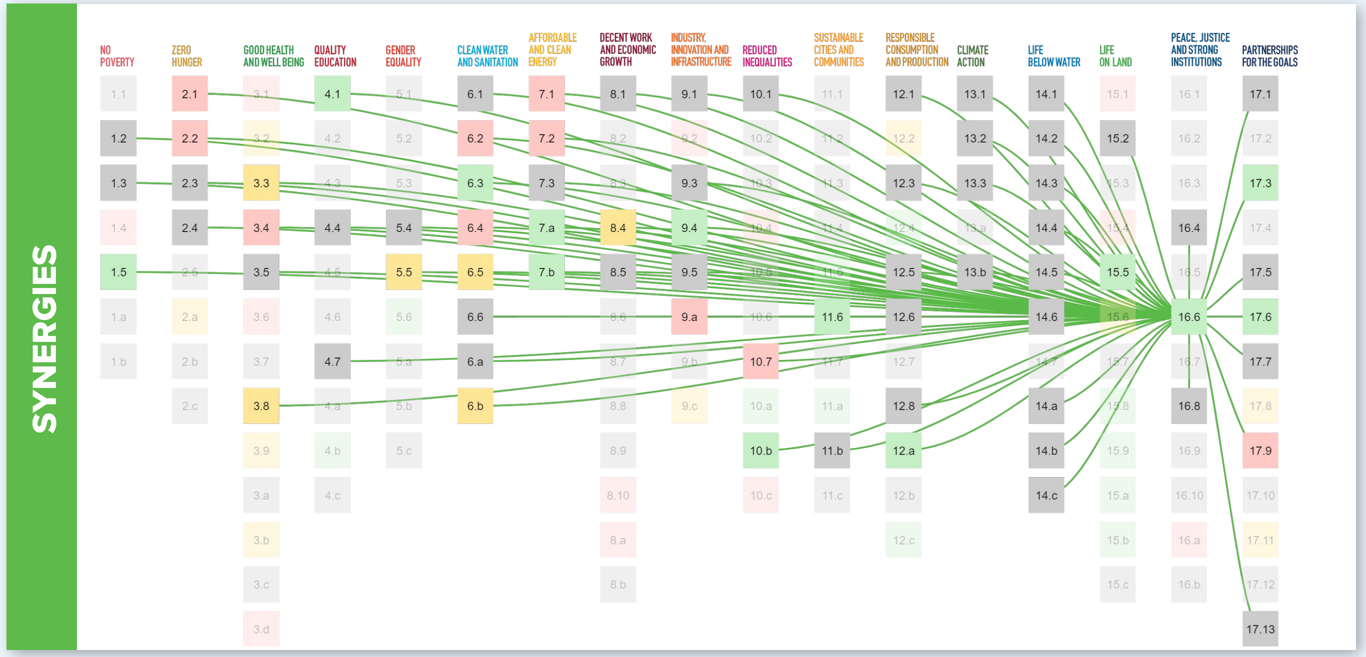
SDG INTERLINKAGES

16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

In Sierra Leone, 18 percent of the population are satisfied with the public service received. By focusing on SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and, in particular Target 16.6, measures can be a booster shot needed to reduce the cost of doing business, increase investor confidence, improve accountability for service delivery to citizens and address coordination failures across ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), and vertically with local administrative authorities that negatively affect private sector competitiveness and effectiveness of spending on social services.

Investing in SDG 16 will also inject the necessary momentum toward the ongoing governance and economic reforms. This means that Sierra Leone could set a higher target with for example the percent of the population satisfied with public services received, public participation and political stability. When this happens, it will have a positive multiplier effect on other SDGs, and address Sierra Leone's development priorities for reducing poverty, promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

ON TRACK FOR REVIEW OFF TRACK TRENDS NA



Explore the interlinkages at:
https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/SLE/synergies-and-tradeoffs

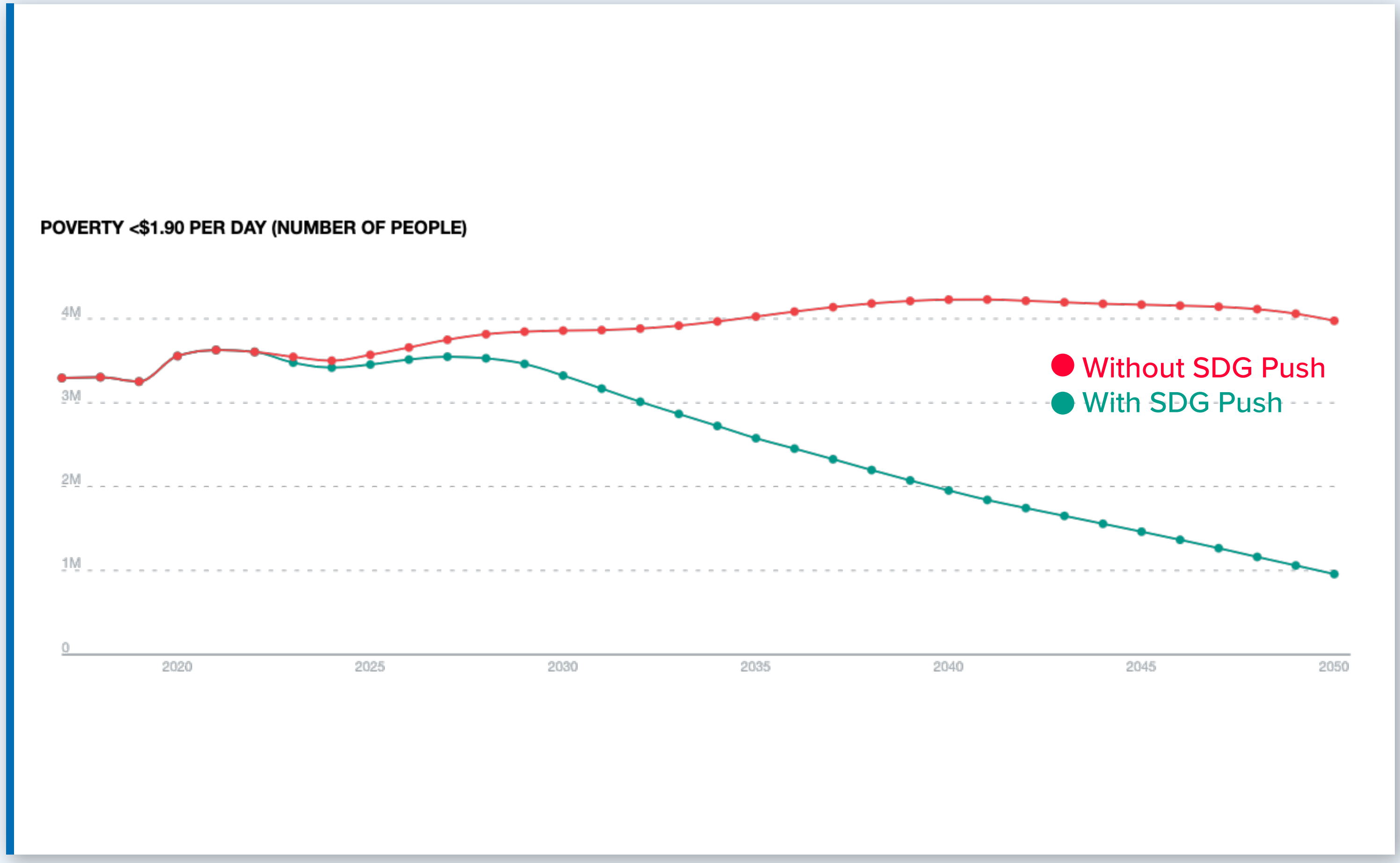
FUTURES SCENARIOS

Achieving the SDGs is possible.

The ‘SDG Push’ is a futures scenario based on 48 integrated accelerators in the areas of Governance, Social Protection, Green Economy and Digital Disruption. It uses national data to explore the impact on human development by 2030 and by 2050 across key SDG indicators.

Incorporating ‘SDG Push’ accelerators into development interventions in Sierra Leone can reduce the number of people living in poverty over time.

People living in poverty	By 2030	By 2050
Without the SDG Push	3,900 000	4,000 000
With the SDG Push	3,300 000	960.000



Explore SDG Futures Scenarios at:
https://data.undp.org/sdg-push-diagnostic/CPV/future-scenarios

FINANCE & STIMULUS

Many countries are facing reduced fiscal space, high debt levels, rising interest rates and downgrades on credit ratings. Fiscal and financial constraints tend to slow or even reverse SDG progress.

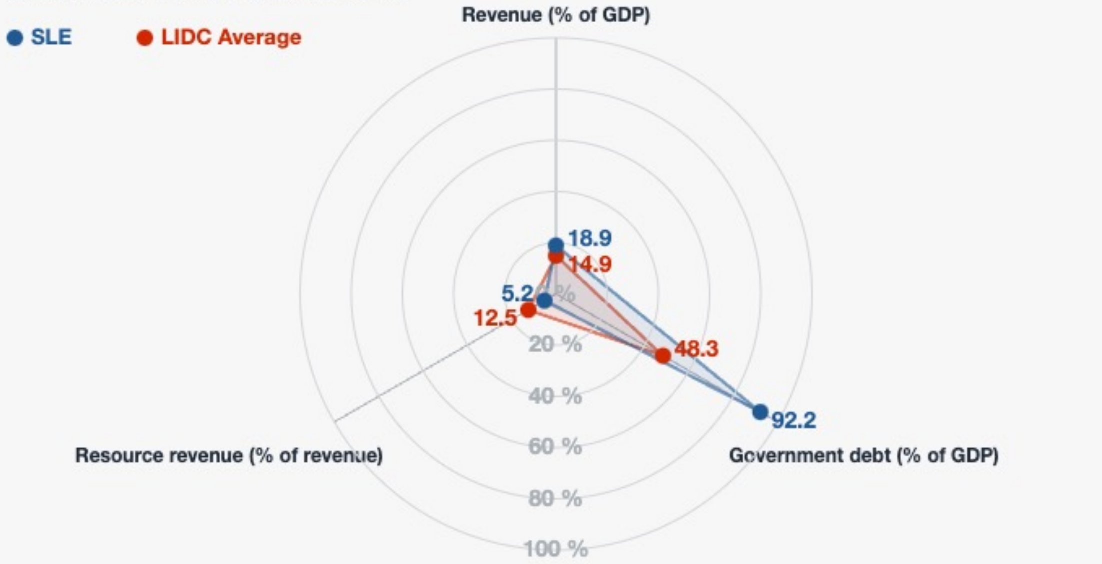
The radar diagram shows low frequency data points linked to government revenue and debt as a proportion of GDP as well as the natural resource share of total revenue. The financial indicator graphs show external debt servicing relative to revenue as well as the country's latest Debt Sustainability Assessment (DSA) risk rating.

Sierra Leone's gross government debt is expected at 92.2% of GDP in 2023, which is close to double the low-income developing countries (LIDC) average of 48.3%. The country is expected to collect 18.9% of GDP in revenue this year, thus 4 percentage points (pp) more than the LIDC average of 14.9%.

Sierra Leone's public external debt servicing this year is expected to reach 10.7% of revenue, which is 3.4 pp below the LIDC average of 14.1%. Due to tight fiscal space and Sierra Leone's reliance on reserves to service debt and import fuel and food, the latest World Bank and IMF DSA from July 2022 rated the country as 'in high risk of debt distress'.

Sierra Leone is using an Integrated National Financing Framework to address key fiscal and financial constraints and build a more sustainable financial architecture at the national level. Priority areas of action have been identified in the areas of domestic revenue mobilization and tax administration including boosting audit capacity for large taxpayers, revising levies and departmental charges, and publishing tax expenditure reports; private investment promotion, including promoting pension investments in infrastructure, and long-term lending to businesses; and remittances, reducing transfer costs for remittance inflows.

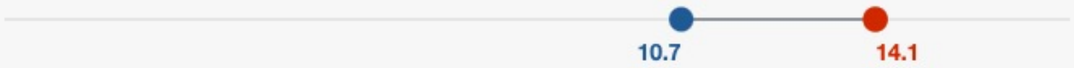
LOW-FREQUENCY INDICATORS



FINANCIAL INDICATORS

SLE LIDC Average

Total external debt servicing (% of revenue)



DSA Rating

HIGH

Notes: External debt covers public and publicly guaranteed debt. The LIDC average of resource revenue (% of revenue) only includes the 38 countries that reported data for that indicator.

Sources: UNU-WIDER GRD (resource revenue, data from 2021), IMF WEO April 2023 (debt and revenue, forecasts for 2023), IDS (external debt, data from 2023), IMF/World Bank (DSA Rating as of 31 May 2023).

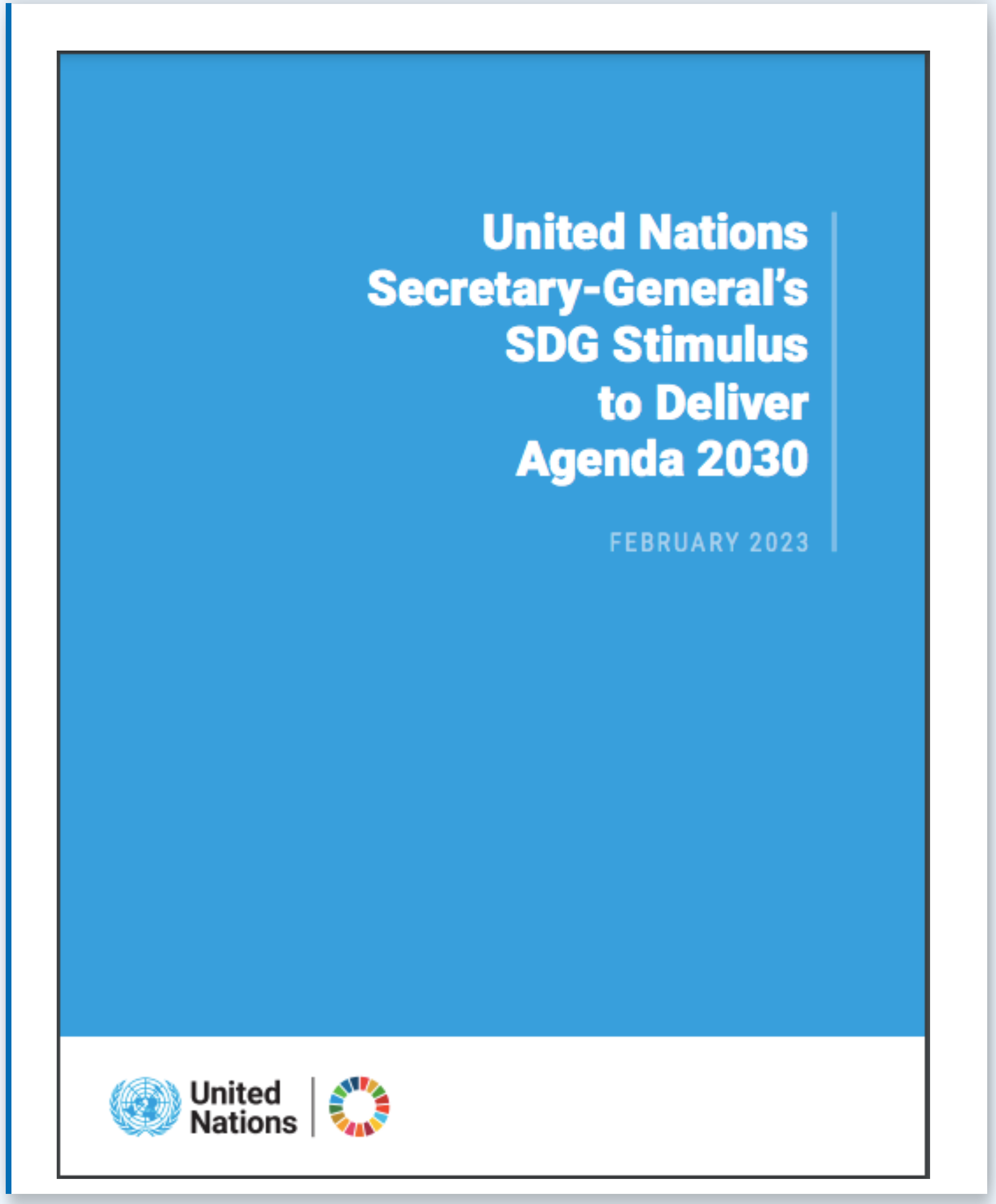
SDG STIMULUS

The UN Secretary General's SDG Stimulus Plan lays out a blueprint for action within the existing financial architecture. It includes:

- Providing liquidity to support recovery in the near term
- Enhancing debt relief for vulnerable countries
- Expanding development financing by MDBs
- Aligning financial flows with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, according to country-level priorities and needs, for example through the roll-out of the UN Integrated National Financing Framework (INFFs).

Given the projected fiscal and financial constraints faced by Sierra Leone possible funding options for the investments derived from the identified interlinkages are as follows:

- Tax and revenue reform
- Debt for SDGs
- Climate finance
- Blended and public-private finance
- SDG-aligned business environment and investment
- Accessing financial markets and insurance
- Remittances, philanthropy and faith-based financing



METHODOLOGY

Click here to view the Methodological Note for the Integrated SDG Insights

SDG MOMENT

Methodology
Assesses challenges and opportunities in national growth trajectories with insights on environmental sustainability and inclusiveness.

Data Sources
Future trajectories to 2025 are based on IMF-WEO GDP projections, distributions of per capita income or consumption from the World Bank, and CO_2 emissions from the Global Carbon Budget 2022 and EDGAR (JRC and IEA).

TRENDS & PRIORITIES

Methodology
SDG trends tracks progress from 2015 to date for the 231 indicators. National priorities are analysed
using machine learning to reveal the most prominent SDGs referenced in national policy documents.

Data Source
Trends utilizes official UN statistics to assess SDG progress, supplemented with national data when available. Priorities uses a custom-built model for SDG classification. The policy documents analyses are provided by Governments.

INTERLINKAGES

Methodology
Global target-level interlinkages are drawn from the KnowSDGs Platform by European Commission. SDG interlinkages were retrieved through a structured literature review in Scopus and Google Scholar to tap both grey literature and peer-reviewed publications as a source of information.

Data Source
The exercise globally considered a total of 454 documents published from 2015 to August 2022. (Miola et al., 2019 updated in 2021-2022)

FINANCE & STIMULUS

Methodology
Provides insight into indicators of fiscal and financial stress with options (INFF) for stimulus and other means to accelerate progress.

Data Source
Most recent resource data from UNU-WIDER GRD (between 2018 and 2021), debt and revenue from IMF WEO (between 2020 and forecasts for 2023), external debt from IDS (2023), yields from Haver Analytics (8 June 2023), credit ratings from S&P, Moodys and FITCH (2023), and DSA ratings from World Bank/IMF (31 May 2023).