



PRESENTED BY  
YEAMA THOMPSON  
INFORMATION COMMISSIONER- SOUTHERN SIERRA LEONE  
RIGHT TO ACCESS INFORMATION COMMISSION

# THE SIERRA LEONE EXPERIENCE

# THE SIERRA LEONE EXPERIENCE

---

- Background
- Open Data in Sierra Leone
- Opportunities
- Success stories
- Lessons Learnt

# The Journey to FOI and Open Data

---

- Peace and stability since 2002 notwithstanding the recent Ebola scourge and Sierra Leone has worked diligently to move out of the post conflict framework to a burgeoning democratic, stable and developing state.
- This transformation has been gradual and responsive to the demands of citizens who have been essential in the dialogue with Government especially around aspirations encapsulated in the Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018) (PRSP III) (<http://www.sierra-leone.org/Agenda%204%20Prosperity.pdf>).
- For over 10 years civil society groups and relevant stakeholders led by the FOI Civil Society Coalition advocated and lobbied for the passing of the Right to Access Information Law.

❑ In 2013, the Right to Access Information bill was passed into Law. (<http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2013-02.pdf>) which is one of the requirements for membership in the OGP.

---

❑ As part of its strides towards establishing the structural and legal foundations for accountability, transparency and good governance, Sierra Leone signed up for the Open Government Partnership in 2013.

❑ In 2014, the OGP National Action plan included commitments towards the enactment of the Freedom of Information law and Open Data.

# OGP First National Action Plan Commitments

---

## □ Commitment Two:

□ *Pass a robust and proactive Archives and Records Management Act to support the implementation of the Right to Access Information Act in a bid to improve public transparency*

## □ Commitment Ten:

□ *Implementation of the Right to Access Information Law*

## □ Commitment Eleven:

□ *Establish an open data portal to improve transparency in fiscal and extractive transactions.*

# Fostering Open Data

---

- ❑ In line with the proactive disclosure of information in Sections 8 to 11 of the Act, the Commission has facilitated the establishment of a multi stakeholder Open Data Council bringing in stakeholders in the open data communities of practice to roll out an Open Data Initiative.
  - ❑ *Section 8 (4) In adopting a publication scheme, a public authority shall have regard to the public interest– (a) in allowing access to the information it holds; and (b) in making information available proactively so as to minimise the need for individuals to make requests for information.*
- ❑ An Open Data Portal has been established.
- ❑ An Open Data Readiness Assessment completed.

- ❑ **Sierra Leone commemorated the first International Open Data Day this year facilitated by the RAIC, Ministry of Information and Communications and the Open Data Council with support from the World Bank.**
- ❑ **15 Ministries, Departments and Agencies have signed up to be part of the pilot scheme for the Open Data Initiative and subscription to the Portal.**
- ❑ **47 Public Information Officers, Archivists and Records Management officials in the MDAs have been trained to upload data to the Open Data Portal.**
- ❑ **Hosting of an Open Data Festival in April 2016**

# Opportunities

---

- ❑ Sierra Leone has been a central focus worldwide for a number of issues including the recent Ebola crisis, its extractive industries, its youthful population etc that puts it in a unique position to be a pilot in many open data initiatives (I may be bias, I think similarly of Kenya also).
- ❑ In addition, it illustrates possibilities even in conflicts and fragile states, lending hope to other such countries,
- ❑ With 45% of our GDP being contributed to Agriculture, opportunities abound for Open Data on Agriculture, and Sierra Leone has thus signed up with the Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition
- ❑ Membership of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (Thanks to Larry and Paul who made this valuable connection)

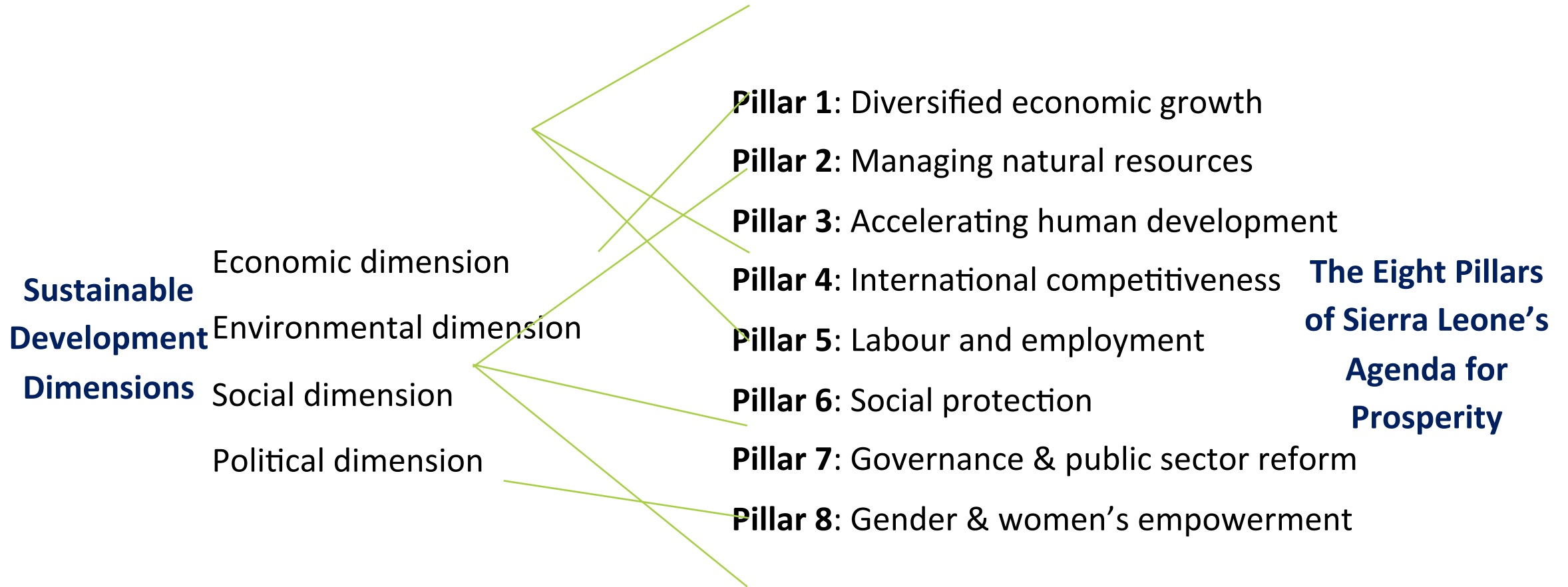


# Early Successes

---

- ❑ In Sierra Leone, among the first things we have done with regard to the new global development agenda and data roadmap for this agenda is to deeply reflect on the key challenges we face as a nation as relate to the *leaving no one behind (LNOB)*.
- ❑ Inspired by the Bogota meeting and significant progress made by the Columbians, Sierra Leone made a decision to be amongst the first countries to work on the SDG data revolution roadmap process.
- ❑ within a very short period of time after joining the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, we have recently held the first multi-stakeholder national workshop in West Africa (and amongst one of the first countries in the world to do so) on the 'Data Revolution Roadmap for Sustainable Development Data. For the data revolution to be successful, government has taken a multi-stakeholder approach consulting with the masses through civil society, private sector players, academia etc.

**Figure 1: Dimensions of the Sustainable Development and the Sierra Leone's Agenda**



## Table 1: Linking Sierra Leone's Agenda for Prosperity with the SDGs

- ❑ **Pillar 1:** Diversified economic growth—**directly related to SDGs 7,8&9**
- ❑ **Pillar 2:** Managing natural resources—**directly related to SDGs 12,13,14&15**
- ❑ **Pillar 3:** Accelerating human development—**directly related to SDGs 3,4&6**
- ❑ **Pillar 4:** International competitiveness—**directly related to SDGs 7,8&9**
- ❑ **Pillar 5:** Labour and employment—**directly related to SDGs 7,8&9**
- ❑ **Pillar 6:** Social protection—**directly related to SDGs 1,2&10**
- ❑ **Pillar 7:** Governance & public sector reform—**directly related to SDG 16**
- ❑ **Pillar 8:** Gender & women's empowerment—**directly related to SDG 4&5**

*Source:* Simplified Version of the SDGs prepared by GoSL (2015)

# Lessons Learnt

---

- ❑ We have identified that SDG implementation in country will require a whole of government and multi-stakeholder approaches to gaining success at the local, regional and national levels. We also note that as we map SDGs to national priorities we must be mindful of the impact on other goals and national priorities. It has been identified that those we choose to work on may have an impact on other goals.
- ❑ We also note that for success to be attained, we must create an environment conducive to citizens' engagement and participation. This approach meets the notion of "leaving no one behind" as has been called for by the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs.
- ❑ There are many players in the process, thus effective coordination and pooling of resources is required
- ❑ Participation of all stakeholders, although costly, remains a key instrument to successful plans and achievement of desired results
- ❑ Political will and investment in the process is always critical

# Lessons Learnt Cont.

---

- ❑ **The institutionalisation and sustainability of the Open Data process is significantly challenged by:**
  - ❑ Limited human and fiscal resources,
  - ❑ Insufficient knowledge of the implementation of Open Data.
  - ❑ Poor ICT infrastructure and digital systems,
  - ❑ Limited data and ICT literacy,
  - ❑ A critical lack of records and archives management.
  - ❑ Resistant to change by public officials.

## Most critical

Institutional arrangements around the operations of the roadmap process from the data revolution to the implementation, through monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Political-economy challenges: “including a lack of stable funding for national statistical systems, minimal checks and balances to ensure that the data are accurate and timely.

AND the dominance of donor data priorities over national priorities.”

---

**Tenki!**

