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Executive summary

Demand for higher education in Sierra Leone is on the rise, underpinned by population growth and accelerated economic expansion in the past ten years. As Sierra Leone recovers from the 1991-2002 civil war, it has attractive economic prospects on the back of mining, agriculture and tourism. The country's youthful population has expanded at 2.9% annually,¹ increasing demand for higher education; at the same time, supply of higher education is growing, especially as private and foreign institutions set up in Sierra Leone.

Access to higher education for Sierra Leone's poor and rural population remains a serious concern. Female enrolment has risen in the past decade, but women still make up only 36% of the student body in public institutions.² Furthermore, the country's infrastructure constraints are holding back the expansion of geographical coverage, the advancement of online education and the improvement of service delivery.

Currently, Sierra Leone's higher education environment is not sufficiently producing the skills that are needed to underpin the country's growth in areas such as mining, agriculture and tourism. There appears to be significant scope for improving budgetary efficiency in the public higher education sector and for developing a strategy to boost research activity across institutions.

Although Sierra Leone lacks a comprehensive policy for higher education, the government has started to set out quality-driven education strategies, placing stronger emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. There are a number of examples of collaboration between the private sector, higher education institutions and government departments aimed at further developing the practical skills of graduates and increasing their employability.



Higher education environment overview

Social, demographic and economic background

The consequences of long years of neglect and of the 1991–2002 civil war continue to be apparent in Sierra Leone’s higher education sector.³ At the height of the civil war, higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country were looted and vandalised, worsening the fabric of higher education. Although the physical infrastructure of these HEIs has been restored, some continue to operate in poor physical conditions.

Since the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone has made significant progress. Considerable efforts have been made to reform the public sector, with the government building institutions of democracy and public-sector management in the hope of promoting investment in economic growth. The peace dividend and democratic transition have paved the way for improved delivery of public services, more active citizen participation in governance and rosier economic growth prospects.

Sierra Leone today is characterised by a young population, with nearly 70% falling within the age bracket of 0–30 years, and 40% within the school-going age of 3–17 years.⁴ The country’s total population of around 6.1m in 2013 reflects a strong rise from the 4.3m recorded in 2001, growth that is equivalent to an annual average of 2.9%.⁵ This continuing population growth is expected to increase demand for primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Against this background, the country is also seeing strong economic growth. In the decade to 2014, Sierra Leone reported average annual GDP growth of 6.9% in 2003–12, with growth reaching an estimated 19.7% in 2013,⁶ owing mainly to growth in mining.⁷ The country remains poor, however, and is ranked 177th out of 187 countries in the UN Human Development Index (HDI) for 2012;⁸ GDP per head of US\$635⁹ was significantly below the Sub-Saharan African average of US\$1,647.¹⁰ 52.9% of the population lived below poverty line in 2011.¹¹ About 60% of the population depends on agriculture;¹² this sector accounts for some 57% of GDP.

Mining sector activities, particularly iron ore production, will continue to be the main driver of economic growth in 2014–15. Investment in the non-iron ore mining sector, including in rutile and diamond production, will also support growth. Oil exploration activities will pick up following the announcement of offshore discoveries in recent years. Growth in agricultural production will be robust, owing to new foreign-financed commercial projects and the government’s efforts to boost rice production and improve farmers’ access to inputs and credit. Activity in these sectors is expected to stimulate job creation in the coming years.

Institutions, policy and governance

The state enacted five pieces of legislation between 2001 and 2007 that laid the foundations for the higher education environment that exists today. The 2004 Education Act that forms the basis of Sierra



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Leone's education sector enshrined the right to state-funded universal basic education and free primary education. And the 2005 Universities Act allowed private universities for the first time. The 2001 Polytechnics Act provided for the establishment of polytechnic institutions and of the National Polytechnic Council to supervise them. Although these are all relevant laws, the government does not appear to have a coherent plan to develop higher education in line with changing demographic and economic dynamics, and overall national development aspirations.

The 2001 Tertiary Education Commission Act created the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) whose purpose is to develop, manage and supervise the quality of tertiary education. The 2006 Tertiary Education Commission Regulation granted the TEC similar authority over private universities. The National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards Act (2001) created a semi-autonomous body whose key function is to examine and validate programmes in HEIs that are below degree-awarding status.

Moreover, the 2004 Education Act gives overall authority to the MEST in the governance of education.¹³ At central government level, the education minister plays a supervisory role and in some instances decides on matters relating to higher education, including the appointment of vice-chancellors and principals in the country's two public universities.¹⁴ This arrangement raises the issue of political interference in the management of Sierra Leone's HEIs.

The education minister is assisted by the chief education officer, a professional functionary within the ministry, and by a host of directorates. The ministry's duties in respect of the management and supervision of higher education are performed by numerous agencies inside and outside the ministry.

Since 2001 two semi-autonomous public bodies have been primarily responsible for carrying out quality assurance and regulation of the higher education sector: The TEC and the National, Council for Technical Vocational and Other Academic Awards (NCTVA). The TEC has overall authority to assess and register HEIs, while the NCTVA is tasked with examining courses in polytechnics, teacher training colleges and technical vocational institutions.

Despite supervision and regulation of higher education by the TEC and the NCTVA, doubts remains over the capacity and effectiveness of each body. Existing quality-assurance frameworks appear to lack the resources to be effective. In this context, it is worth noting that a number of private HEIs operate in Sierra Leone without registration, accreditation or proper supervision.¹⁵

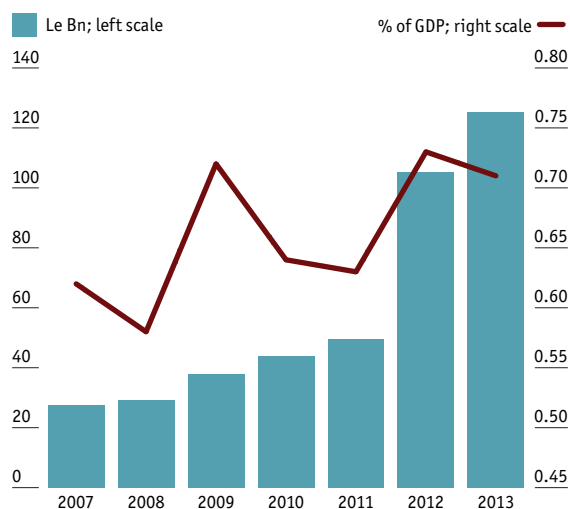
Allocation of resources

In the 2013-18 Agenda for Prosperity development strategy, the government of Sierra Leone prioritises improvements in the quality of and access to higher education through increased national funding, supervision and research. The state provides the bulk of funding for public HEIs in Sierra Leone. In absolute terms, public spending on higher education has risen markedly in recent years, consistent with the government's commitment to promote higher education in the country. The particularly sharp rise in funding in 2012 reflects a pay rise deal for staff in public HEIs following a spate of industrial action.



Allocation of funds is not based on a formula or other quantitative assessments of individual institutions. Instead, in allocating public funds to HEIs, the government takes into consideration its budget, national priorities and historical allocation. Funding is not linked to development objectives,

Public expenditure on higher education



Source: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Sierra Leone.

institution performance or efficiency incentives, giving public HEIs little motivation to improve.¹⁶ Aside from public funds, HEIs also generate their own income streams; according to World Bank data, tuition fees account for the bulk of this income at most HEIs.

However, question-marks remain over public funding. While the 2012 increase in funding demonstrates government commitment to financing public higher education, the finance and economic development minister, Kaifala Marah, has said that the higher education sector's dependence on government funds and its narrow focus have become untenable against a background of limited economic resources and competing development priorities in Sierra Leone.¹⁷

Indeed, the government and HEIs agree that the higher education environment in Sierra Leone is becoming less and less sustainable in terms of its funding and relevance to society.¹⁸ HEIs across the country appear to understand the need to reduce their dependence on government funding by developing their own revenue streams, for example by strengthening collaboration with the private sector through training and research. These measures, in turn, could foster an environment of innovation and continuous improvement in higher education.

The higher education landscape

Before the outbreak of the civil war, higher education in Sierra Leone was dominated by the Fourah Bay College and Njala University College campuses of the country's sole university, the University of Sierra Leone. By 2006 the higher education landscape included two public universities—the University of Sierra Leone and Njala University—and the country's first private university, the University of Makeni (UNIMAK). The latest TEC data indicate that the number of public HEIs has grown to eight and the number of private HEIs has expanded to 24.¹⁹ The TEC anticipates continued growth in the number of private institutions.

Public universities are the largest among Sierra Leone's HEIs. The University of Sierra Leone—incorporating Fourah Bay College, the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences and the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM)—is the country's largest institution with a total



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enrolment of 9,408 in 2011/12, followed by Njala University with 6,154 registered students and the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology (MM CET) with 4,329.²⁰

The country's distance learning and online education facilities remain limited, owing in large part to low Internet penetration and poor Internet connectivity. The Universities Act (2005) provides for the creation of an Open University and refers to distance learning as a cost-effective education policy.²¹ Yet Sierra Leone's universities have yet to start offering distance learning or online programmes. IPAM offers programmes that are examined and certified by external bodies such as the Association of Business Executives and provides online tutorials and course content material.²²

International HEIs set up in Sierra Leone

A number of new higher education institutions (HEIs) have recently established a presence in Sierra Leone, a signal of innovation in the sector. Among the new institutions are the following:

The African Peace University, which opened its doors in Sierra Leone in September 2013. The public-private partnership university focuses on social enterprise and youth skills development.²³ The UK's University of Bradford supported its establishment under the university twinning arrangement co-

ordinated by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) University Twinning and Networking Programme.²⁴

Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, an international private education provider headquartered in Malaysia, has recently set up a campus in Sierra Leone. The institution offers training in areas such as advertising and marketing, architecture and interior, arts and design, broadcasting and journalism, business and management, computing and IT, multimedia and animation, sound and music, sports and events and tourism and hospitality.²⁵



The education function

Education offering

In assessing the higher education offering in the country, Mannah and Ngadi Gibril (2013) note shortfalls in emerging fields such as mining and petroleum engineering; where courses are offered in these topics, syllabuses are outdated. Such courses require significant investment in faculty staff and facilities, making them unattractive to many HEIs. Furthermore, poor performance in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects at secondary school level provides little impetus for HEIs to shift their focus from arts and humanities, social sciences, business, banking and economics.

Of the 100 or so learning programmes offered by eight leading HEIs across the country, the most in demand are social sciences and law (with 22 different courses available), agriculture (17), and construction and manufacturing (13).²⁶ In the wider context, fields of study in higher education in Sierra Leone are becoming more diverse, with various levels of qualification on offer, from certificate to degree level. Fourah Bay College, Njala University and IPAM offer courses for undergraduate degrees, as well as Masters and PhD programmes.

There is a significant degree of differentiation among HEIs in Sierra Leone. For instance, Fourah Bay College is currently the only institution awarding degrees in civil engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, and mechanical engineering. Meanwhile, Njala University is the leading institution in agriculture and environmental sciences; MMCET is the leading HEI dedicated to hotel and tourism management; and UNIMAK stands out as the sole institution with a stated mission to promote the teachings of the Catholic Church.

In the hope of addressing shortfalls in mining, petroleum engineering and other fields that look set to drive economic growth, the government aims to strengthen teacher training in STEM-related disciplines. Distance learning has the potential to make a contribution here.²⁷ In many schools, especially outside the main cities of Freetown, Bo, Kenema and Makeni, qualified teachers in these disciplines are in short supply.²⁸ This scarcity is reflected in pass rates for exams in mathematics and science-related subjects at secondary education level that are currently just about 10%.²⁹

Enrolment

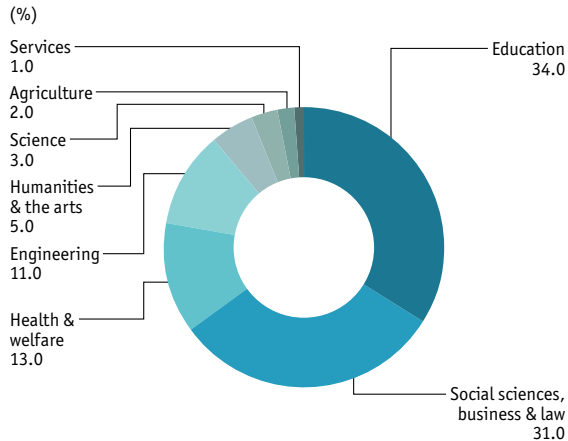
Enrolment in higher education increased from 8,913 in 2000/01 to 31,103 in 2011/12. In parallel, female enrolment rose from 29% to 36% between 2000 and 2011.³⁰ An estimated 3,758 students (about 15% of the total) were enrolled in the country's private HEIs in 2009.³¹ Enrolment in higher education is likely to continue rising owing in part to post-conflict population growth and the 2002/03 official abolition of school fees, factors that drove primary and secondary school enrolment to nearly triple between 2001 and 2012.³²



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Enrolment by field of study across public higher education institutions in 2011-12



Source: World Bank, "Republic of Sierra Leone: Higher and Tertiary Education Sector Policy Note", 2013; based on data from various education institutions.

Although the number of students seeking admission to HEIs has risen sharply, the World Bank points out that the increase in enrolment has mostly been in subjects such as social science, business and law, which are perceived as more "job-orientated" and are easier to provide. While training in education has declined, it remains the area with the highest enrolment (34%).³³ Areas like agriculture, seen as a growing sector of the economy, are attracting fewer students. Demand for humanities and arts has also declined in the past decade. Areas like engineering, manufacturing and construction are increasingly in demand, but admission to these courses is often

restricted by the stipulation that students must have a good pass in subjects such as mathematics, chemistry and physics.

How students choose their higher education path

Few verifiable indicators of the performance of higher education institutions (HEIs) are available in Sierra Leone. In the absence of performance benchmarks, students indicate that the main factors they consider when choosing an institution include reputation, financial considerations and location. Public perception in Sierra Leone—including

among academics—is that the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), Njala University and the University of Makeni (UNIMAK) are making solid progress in their courses and research, leaving some other institutions behind.³⁴

Specific future employment opportunities may not be a major consideration among students, in part because the higher education sector does not provide sufficient information on the subsequent career paths of the graduates.³⁵

Equity of access

Equity of access to higher education in Sierra Leone remains a challenge. While over 70% of HEIs are located in the capital, Freetown, and while at least one public HEI is located in each of the country's four regions, no HEIs are located in districts including Kono, Kambia, Tonkolili, Koinadugu, Kailahun, Pujehun and the Western Area Rural District.³⁶ In fact, HEIs are absent from half of the country's 14 districts, including rural areas far from the capital. As a consequence, the country's rural population has limited access to tertiary education. Inadequate road infrastructure and poor provision of power and water are partly to blame.

Furthermore, low income per head puts higher education beyond the reach of many households. Just 0.4% of the poorest population segment and 1% of the rural population are in higher education in



Sierra Leone (for the 18-25 age group). By contrast, 13.4% of the richest segment and 9.9% of urban dwellers are in tertiary education.³⁷

In the past, higher education in Sierra Leone has been more open to men than to women owing to prevailing cultural norms and attitudes; today, these norms and attitudes appear to be shifting. Enrolment figures show relatively stronger growth in enrolment rates for women between 2000/01 and 2011/12 than for men; yet male students still account for over 64% of total enrolment in public institutions.³⁸ Relatively fewer women sign up for subjects such as engineering, mining and the physical and natural sciences.

To address disparities in Sierra Leone's higher education sector, the government is supporting a number of measures. Most notable is the financial assistance offered by the state through its Grant-In-Aid (GIA) programme, which covers tuition and related charges, but not living costs. Priority is given to students of STEM-related disciplines, to female students, to the disabled and to the poor.³⁹ The number of grants and the volume of total assistance have tended to grow since 2007/08. In 2011/12 around 7% of new students received financial assistance via the GIA programme.⁴⁰

However, there may be scope to improve the effectiveness of the GIA programme. Grant application procedures take place at district level in the first instance, with each district allotted a quota of students to nominate for funding.⁴¹ Yet subsequent decisions on the award of grants are made in Freetown—with the education minister giving final approval. In all, there may be room for more transparency and efficiency in the grant award process.

The role of infrastructure and ICT

Physical infrastructure places considerable constraints on Sierra Leone's tertiary education environment. Strong growth in student numbers in recent years has not been matched by an expansion of capacity. Students report overcrowding in lecture rooms, while faculty staff lack office space. IPAM and UNIMAK are among institutions constructing new facilities, but improved management may enable HEIs to make better use of existing facilities.⁴² For instance, some institutions lack standardised teaching timetables, preventing efficient allocation of classroom space.

A further physical constraint is Sierra Leone's energy supply. With less than 10% of the country's population having regular access to power,⁴³ many HEIs depend on generators for electricity.

Availability of information and communications technology (ICT) resources among HEIs in Sierra Leone is limited. Not least, ICT skills are limited, apparently even among HEIs that teach them. Students and staff of many HEIs in Sierra Leone lack basic technologies and communication networks such as institutional e-mail and internal networks. More than two years ago, for example, the UN donated 15 desktop computers to Fourah Bay College, although until now the college has lacked the resources to install and network the computers.⁴⁴

Moreover, Sierra Leone's poor Internet connectivity is a further burden on the higher education sector. Internet penetration is around 1.3% according to International Telecommunication Union estimates, well below the average of 6.2% for low-income countries. Internet bandwidth is just 1,994



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bps per Internet user, compared with an average of 9,141 bps for all low-income countries.⁴⁵ Although UNIMAK has a steady Internet connection—at least for its staff—this is provided via a costly satellite link. With limited energy provision, rudimentary ICT facilities and limited connectivity, technologies such as online learning platforms are not taking hold among Sierra Leone’s HEIs.



Higher education outputs

Research

Research and consulting activities remain an insignificant component of most HEIs' academic output in Sierra Leone—especially those below degree-awarding status. However, a number of notable research initiatives exist. Njala University, for example, is associated with the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute, a government agency, and collaborates with flagship agriculture projects—the Smallholder Commercialisation Programme and the West African Agriculture Productivity Programme—that receive significant funding from international donors such as the World Bank and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation.

At the University of Sierra Leone, Fourah Bay College's University Research and Development Service (URDS) is staffed by a director and one support worker with no access to a computer. With no formal research budget, the URDS undertakes little in the way of co-ordinated research or consultancy activities. Although Njala University reported over Le75m⁴⁶ (US\$17,245 at the 2011 average exchange rate) of income from research and consultancy work in 2011, this amounted to no more than 3% of its internally generated income. And although IPAM's Short Course and Consultancy Unit generates revenue for the college, and UNIMAK is in the process of developing a strategic plan for research and publication, few HEIs deliver academic research and consultancy work of note.

The private sector is a source of demand for research activity among Sierra Leone's HEIs, with growth in commercial agriculture and mining driving demand for research and consultancy work funded by those sectors. For example, as a requirement of the Environment Protection Agency Act (2008), agricultural and mining companies are required to conduct environmental and social impact assessments of their projects.

Aside from the private sector, funding for research activity may be provided by HEIs themselves, either from government funds they receive or from their own revenue streams. Although the two public universities in the past envisaged research as a core component of their activities, this does not appear to have transpired. However, both Njala University and the University of Sierra Leone now say that they are aiming to allocate more funding to research.⁴⁷

Financing is also directly available from external public sources, for example the government of Sierra Leone itself. The government's recent focus on food security and agricultural development has led to agriculture-related research being commissioned as part of projects such as the World Bank-funded West African Agricultural Productivity Programme. UN agencies, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other international aid and donor organisations also commission or fund research.

One obstacle that stands in the way of greater research and consultancy activity among the country's HEIs is the lack of experienced academic staff. The civil war led many senior faculty members



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to flee Sierra Leone, with few returning. Furthermore, because research and publication are central components for career development among faculty members in Sierra Leone's universities, the lack of research is hampering career progression among academics.⁴⁸ Of a total of 1,779 academic staff in ten key HEIs in 2009/10, just 20 were professors and nine were associate professors, representing just 2% of full-time staff.⁴⁹

A further bottleneck is inadequate organisation and co-ordination of research activity. The state of Sierra Leone has no central research body—such as the UK's Economic and Social Research Council—dedicated to promoting and funding national research programmes. Moreover, there is no functional peer review journal in the two public universities; of articles published by academics in Sierra Leone, few make it into respected journals. Publication levels among faculty members of HEIs in peer reviewed journals are at their lowest since the beginning of civil war in 1991—an issue acknowledged by academics in the country.⁵⁰

Workforce

In an assessment of higher education outcomes in Sierra Leone, an International Labour Organisation-commissioned survey on employment trends in Sierra Leone⁵¹ notes that accurate employment-related statistics in the country are in short supply. There is little labour market research aimed at understanding the skills and qualifications that employers expect from higher education graduates.⁵² As a starting point, the TEC is in the process of compiling compressive data on graduates from HEIs accredited by the TEC.⁵³

For now, estimates indicate that 60–65% of students complete their studies and graduate.⁵⁴ A Career and Advisory Placement Service survey organised between 2010 and 2012 to assess the employment status of recent University of Sierra Leone graduates indicates that 55% of recent graduates were searching for jobs, 16% were in paid employment, 16% were pursuing further studies, 5% were self-employed and 7% were otherwise inactive.⁵⁵ High graduate unemployment points to possible mismatches between labour market requirements and graduate skills for specific sectors and to a general lack of formal employment opportunities (wage employment represents less than 10% of total employment).⁵⁶

Indeed, significant mismatches exist between the supply of graduates and the demand of the labour market. This is evident in the private sector: Mannah and Ngadi Gibril (2013) find few graduates equipped for work in agriculture, mining, tourism and financial services. One mining executive says that “institutions of higher education in Sierra Leone are producing 19th-century graduates for 21st-century jobs”. ICT skills are inadequate, too, with a senior banking executive noting that “graduates apply [for jobs] with degrees that are colourfully painted and titled, but [they] cannot write a simple memo nor use a computer”. In the absence of industrial attachments or internships, graduates lack soft skills such as critical thinking, personal initiative and communication skills.⁵⁷ Employers are obliged to invest in graduate training.

These mismatches between the supply of and the demand for graduate skills are also evident in the public sector, the biggest single employer of higher education graduates in Sierra Leone. A 2011



human resources needs assessment by the government's Human Resource Management Office (HRMO) indicates that just 7,619 of 13,225 civil service positions are occupied, leaving over 5,500 posts vacant. Among the vacancies, 40% are in health, 28% in social sciences, business or humanities, 13% in agriculture, and 9% in engineering-related fields.⁵⁸ The HRMO is keen to fill the vacancies, but does not appear to co-ordinate effectively with the higher education sector to ensure that it produces the graduates that are equipped to meet the public sector's needs.

A clear situation of mismatch is seen in the education sector—one of the biggest employers. Although high numbers of teachers are produced, many are trained in areas that are in low demand. At the same time, shortages of qualified teachers are reported in areas such as maths, the sciences and languages.⁵⁹ Many schools operate without trained and qualified teachers, and those that are currently teaching, are neither approved nor paid by the government.



Policy levers—interventions

Cases of structural reform or transformation

Besides the five pieces of legislation enacted between 2001 and 2007 that laid the foundations for Sierra Leone's higher education sector, the government does not appear to have a coherent plan to develop higher education in line with changing demographic and economic dynamics and overall national development aspirations. Nevertheless, it insists that education remains central to its national development priorities: "The absence of a comprehensive higher education policy does not suggest that government does not prioritise higher education," argues a senior MEST official.

More reform may be on the way. As part of efforts to improve quality among Sierra Leone's HEIs, the TEC has submitted a funding proposal to MEST for the development of a Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) that stipulates minimum requirements for faculty staff and facilities. The government has demonstrated willingness to fund the MAS, and discussions have started with the country's two main public universities about possible collaboration with the TEC in developing the MAS concept.⁶⁰

The government has taken steps to improve overall education outcomes. For example, it established the Gbamanja Commission of Enquiry in May 2009 following consistently poor performance of primary and secondary students in state examinations.⁶¹ Plans are afoot to implement recommendations by the Commission, including the establishment of a National Institute of Education, Training and Research in place of the NCTVA. The Commission also recommends that one year be added to the current three years of senior secondary education, in order to strengthen the ability of students to pass state exams and improve their readiness for higher education.

Furthermore, in 2012, the Ministry of Trade and Industry developed a Local Content Policy (LCP) to foster linkages between the local economy and foreign businesses. One key component is the promotion of linkages between the private sector and HEIs in Sierra Leone. In the LCP, the government commits to "support tertiary and technical institutions to provide training according to the skills needed in the economy" and "coordinate with the private sector, foreign investors and development partners to develop the necessary skills through specialized training provided in universities and other technical institutions."⁶²

Private-sector involvement

Skills gaps in the labour market can partly be attributed to an absence of interaction between higher education institutions and the private sector. However, there are recent examples of the higher education sector actively engaging with private enterprise to drive improvements in tertiary education outcomes by focusing on the employability of graduates and on improving curricular development. Examples of initiatives involving the private sector include the following:



- **IPAM employer market survey.** In 2010/11 IPAM commissioned an employer perception survey to gain an understanding of the quality of IPAM graduates in their various employment sectors. Based on the feedback received from employers, IPAM is reviewing its programmes across its college departments with the active participation and involvement of the private sector.
- **Joint NATCOM/UNDP and London Mining Company internship programme.** The National Youth Commission (NATCOM), the UNDP and the London Mining Company (LMC) launched a joint internship programme in 2012. The initiative seeks to provide useful practical skills and experience for young people—especially graduates—through a six-month industrial placement in various LMC departments.
- **LMC and GIZ partnership.** LMC and the German Society for International Co-operation (GIZ) are collaborating to help St Joseph Vocational Training Institute in Lunsar to become a private-sector-oriented skills training centre. The aim is to provide technical and material support to the institute to provide the teaching needed in the mining and technical industries. The first batch of trainees started in September 2013.⁶³
- **African Minerals Limited and government partnership.** African Minerals Limited (AML), MEST, the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources and the University of Sierra Leone are collaborating to enhance training and research in education through a national talent development programme. Starting in 2015, AML will support the establishment of a Faculty of Mines and Technology within the university to educate mining engineers and other professionals.
- **LMC and Ministry of Trade and Industry localisation policy.** To increase the number of Sierra Leoneans in middle and top-level management positions within LMC, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is collaborating with the firm to identify and train local employees to take up positions in the company that are currently held by expatriates. A number of promising local staff have now been assigned to work with expatriates whose jobs will ultimately be taken over by locals.⁶⁴



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Conclusion

Post-war Sierra Leone is characterised by its young population and good economic prospects based on mining, commercial agriculture and tourism. However, the country's small labour market still offers limited opportunities for graduates. The transformation of the education sector, so it is more responsive to the needs of the economy, should be established as a priority of the national development agenda. As such, the country would be well advised to take the following steps.

- Develop a comprehensive higher education strategy aimed at developing skills in areas that are critical for economic growth and national development—including STEM-related disciplines—at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Such a strategy should be underpinned by measurable targets, solid funding and improved budgeting mechanisms.
- Promote effective linkages between government, the education sector and private enterprise aimed at improving the relevance and quality of the skills of graduates, and strengthen co-ordinated action in research, which could become a revenue stream for higher education institutes and boost innovation and quality.
- Lower barriers of entry to tertiary education for women, the rural population and poorer households. This could be achievable through improved targeting of financial assistance mechanisms (such as the GIA programme) and the devising of new provision strategies for full geographical coverage.



Endnotes

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¹⁸Ibid.

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³⁰ Enrolment refers to public institutions only. World Bank. (July 2013): "Republic of Sierra Leone: Higher and Tertiary Education Sector Policy Note". URL:<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16787/ACS43930PNTOP10x0379833B00PUBLIC00.pdf?sequence=1>

³¹ Ibid.

³² According to UNESCO, primary education enrolment increased to 1.3m in 2012 from 554,000 in 2001. In the same period, lower secondary enrolment grew from about 84,000 to 276,000. URL:<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

³³ World Bank. (July 2013): "Republic of Sierra Leone: Higher and Tertiary Education Sector Policy Note". URL:<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16787/ACS43930PNTOP10x0379833B00PUBLIC00.pdf?sequence=1>

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³⁵ Based on interviews with students of selected HEIs in Sierra Leone.

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³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Based on comments from a senior MEST staff

⁴⁰ Calculation based on TEC and MEST data.

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⁵³ Based on comments from a senior TEC official.

⁵⁴ Based on comments from two senior officials at Fourah Bay College and IPAM.

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⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Comments from a senior official of the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce.

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⁵⁹ Ibid.

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