



Sierra Leone
Ministry of Trade and Industry

National Trade Strategy

**Repositioning trade for the African Continental
Free Trade Area**



National Trade Strategy

Repositioning trade for the African Continental Free Trade Area

**Freetown
January 2021**



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



International
Trade
Centre

Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations	iv
Foreword	v
Acknowledgements	vii
I. Introduction	1
II. Vision and objectives	4
A. Vision	4
B. Objectives.....	4
1. Short-term objectives.....	4
2. Medium-to-long term objectives	5
C. Scope.....	5
III. Macroeconomic framework and COVID-19 impact.....	7
A. Macroeconomic forecast with COVID-19	7
B. COVID-19 trade implications	10
C. COVID-19 immediate trade priorities.....	12
D. Using trade to “build back better”: how trade can tackle the challenges caused by COVID-19 and contribute to economic recovery and resilience.....	13
IV. Situational analysis	15
A. African Continental Free Trade Area	15
1. Overview of the African Continental Free Trade Area negotiations and Agreement.....	15
2. Protocol on Trade in Goods.....	18
3. Protocol on Trade in Services.....	21
4. Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes	26
5. Phase II: Protocol on Investment	27
6. Phase II: Protocol on competition policy.....	29
7. Phase II: Protocol on intellectual property rights	30
8. Phase III: Protocol on digital trade and e-commerce	34
9. Flexibilities, safeguards, exceptions and technical assistance	35
10. Sierra Leone – implementing institutions under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area	37
B. Trade support.....	38
1. Market segmented export opportunities	38
2. European Union – “Everything but Arms” market.....	41
3. United States – African Growth Opportunity Act market	41
4. China – duty-free quota-free for least developed country scheme	42
5. Economic Community of West African States – trade liberalization scheme	42
6. Rest of Africa – African Continental Free Trade Area.....	42
7. Market diversification.....	43
8. Non-tariff barriers.....	44
9. Trade-related infrastructure	45
10. Quality and standards	47
11. Trade in services.....	49
12. Small-scale cross-border trade.....	50
13. Trade and climate change	52
14. Gender and youth considerations.....	53

15.	Government COVID-19 trade-related mitigating interventions	56
16.	Concerns for Sierra Leone and its participation in preferential trade area agreements	56
C.	Industrial and quality infrastructure development	57
1.	Industrial production and exports	57
2.	Industrial policy formulation	59
3.	Industrial policy environment and quality infrastructure.....	60
4.	Special economic zones policy	61
D.	Institutional capacities for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring	62
1.	Capacities to formulate and implement trade policy	62
2.	Ministry of Trade and Industry professional capacity	65
3.	Policy coordination capacities	66
4.	Donor collaboration capacities	67
5.	Capacity of private sector business associations	68
6.	Trade statistics	69
7.	Capacity on trade and gender policy.....	70
8.	Previous institutional capacity-building initiatives.....	71
V.	Strategic approach	72
A.	Strategic pillar I: African Continental Free Trade Area	72
B.	Strategic pillar II: Trade support	73
C.	Strategic pillar III: Industrial and quality infrastructure development	76
D.	Strategic pillar IV: Institutional capacities for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring	78
VI.	Activities action plan.....	82
VII.	Implementation framework.....	103
	Monitoring and approach	103
1.	Progress monitoring	103
2.	Evaluating the National Trade Strategy	104
VIII.	Communications strategy	107
A.	Introduction	107
B.	Pillars of the African Continental Free Trade Area communications strategy	107
C.	Target audience	107
D.	Channels of communication	108

Tables

Table 1.	Trade balances and key exports, 2012–2018
Table 2.	Sierra Leone export price impacts from COVID-19
Table 3.	General and specific objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area
Table 4.	Protocols of the African Continental Free Trade Area and their status by negotiating phase, as of May 2020
Table 5.	Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: operative obligations
Table 6.	Protocol on Trade in Goods: operative obligations and rights
Table 7.	Format of schedules of commitments
Table 8.	Sierra Leone: schedule of specific General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments
Table 9.	Services liberalization priorities identified by stakeholder interviews
Table 10.	Protocol on Trade in Services: operative obligations and rights
Table 11.	Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes: operative obligations and rights

Table 12.	Schematic overview of African Continental Free Trade Area digital trade and e-commerce protocol options
Table 13.	Rights to flexibilities, safeguards, exceptions and technical assistance under the African Continental Free Trade Area
Table 14.	Functions of the National African Continental Free Trade Area Committee
Table 15.	Functions of the national monitoring committees and national focal points for non-tariff barriers
Table 16.	Unmet export potential: preference margins for priority products in target markets
Table 17.	Export diversification: preference margins for priority products in target markets
Table 18.	Top export challenges identified by agricultural producers and exporters
Table 19.	Cross-border trade challenges
Table 20.	Challenges and possible mitigating measures reported by women entrepreneurs to ensure benefits from the African Continental Free Trade Area
Table 21.	Very severe and major obstacles to manufacturing firms in Sierra Leone
Table 22.	Key constraints for doing business identified by Sierra Leon Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture
Table 23.	Special economic zone industrial constraints
Table 24.	Institutional capacity constraints
Table 25.	Status of Ministry of Trade and Industry agencies, units and programmes
Table 26.	Status of professional staffing
Table 27.	Trade-related organization representing local businesses
Table 28.	Trade-related organizations representing foreign businesses
Table 29.	Activities action plan
Table 30.	Progress and evaluation of the National Trade Strategy
Table 31.	Communications strategy

Figures

Figure I.	Macroeconomic indicators for Sierra Leone, 2000–2020
Figure II.	Schematic overview of African Continental Free Trade Area investment protocol options
Figure III.	Schematic overview of the African Continental Free Trade Area competition protocol options
Figure IV.	Current exports, by destination
Figure V.	Unmet export potential, by destination
Figure VI.	SheTrades outlook scores for Sierra Leone
Figure VII.	Sierra Leone gross domestic product by economic activities, 2013–2017
Figure VIII.	Aid for trade disbursements on “technical assistance for trade policy and regulations” as a share of total aid for trade, Sierra Leone and comparators

Boxes

Box 1.	Options for regional economic integration in intellectual property rights.
Box 2.	Suggested legislation and protocols

Acronyms and abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
ARIPO	African Regional Intellectual Property Organization
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COVID-19	coronavirus disease
DFQF	duty-free quota-free
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ETLS	ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GDP	gross domestic product
IP	intellectual property
ITC	International Trade Centre
MDAs	ministries, departments and agencies
MRU	Mano River Union
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MTNDP	Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023)
NCCT	National Coordinating Committee on Trade
NTB	non-tariff barrier
OARG	Office of Administrator and Registrar General
SLSB	Sierra Leone Standards Bureau
WTO	World Trade Organization

Foreword

As Sierra Leone continues to make progress towards achieving national development, the aspiration to attain a middle-income level by 2035 remains paramount and trade is a key driver in reaching this milestone. However, noting the existential barriers to trade – typical of a developing economy – coupled with the challenges posed by global trade competitions, a breakthrough can only be achieved by crafting a deliberate strategy that will re-engineer the business environment through key policy reforms, harness subregional and regional trade integration opportunities, and attract investment in trade and industry.

The key message emerging from all levels of the discourse is the need to have a holistic approach to dealing with trade-related strategies and investment with a view to making Sierra Leone relevant in the international trading arena.

It is not sufficient for Sierra Leone to be merely open to international trade. There is every need for Sierra Leone trade policymaking to be well defined, calculated, contemplative and deliberative to ensure that trade serves as an effective engine for inclusive growth and economic development. Trade policies should be well-designed to tackle issues such as diversification, infrastructure development, economic growth, and the enhancement of international economic competitiveness. In addition, it should be able to create jobs, wealth and better living conditions for Sierra Leoneans.

This is exactly what the Sierra Leone National Trade Strategy has as its intended purpose. The theme of the strategy is “Repositioning Trade for the African Continental Free Trade Area”. Its approach underpins institutional reforms, infrastructure development and capacity-building. The strategy lays the basis for Sierra Leone to have greater participation in the following initiatives: the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the World Trade Organization (WTO) multilateral negotiations; preferential trade arrangements with the United States of America – African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA); the European Union – “Everything but Arms” initiative; and China – Duty-Free Quota-Free (DFQF) scheme for least developed countries. In addition, it provides a clear road map for engagement at the subregional level in the Mano River Union (MRU) and in the wider context and framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The National Trade Strategy makes mention of the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023 (MTNDP) by providing an opportunity for Sierra Leone to readdress the role that trade plays in its national development. While this macroeconomic target is set in the Development Plan, it leaves the responsibility of leveraging trade to the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) for its execution. With that in mind, the strategy contains a roadmap for carrying out the activities necessary to diversify the country’s economy, promote inclusivity and gender equality, create jobs and generate foreign exchange.

In addition, the National Trade Strategy provides a framework for Sierra Leone to take advantage of AfCFTA, the world’s largest free trade area since the formation of WTO in 1994. Sierra Leone cannot afford to miss this opportunity – therefore, the strategy provides an outline as to exactly what Sierra Leone should do to implement and effectively utilize AfCFTA.

While I thank the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and all stakeholders that supported the completion of this project, I urge all to support its full implementation.

The consideration and support of all is highly solicited.

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Acknowledgements

The National Trade Strategy of Sierra Leone was initiated by a 2018 Ministry of Trade and Industry Concept Note. It is the product of a multi-stakeholder effort led by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Edward Hinga Sandy; and the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Alfred Sesay-Jones; together with the support of the previous and current Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry, Abdul Rahman Fofanah, Reginald Thomas and Augustine Sheku, respectively; the Chief Director, Charles Mereweather-Thompson; and the Director of Projects and Programmes, Abdul Kamara.

The National Trade Strategy formulation process benefited from the technical support provided by ECA, the African Union Commission, the International Growth Centre, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the International Trade Centre (ITC). Financial support to these efforts was provided by the European Union; the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office via ODI; and Global Affairs Canada via the African Trade Policy Centre of ECA.

The Government of Sierra Leone is particularly grateful to the Executive Secretary of ECA, Vera Songwe, for her support throughout the various stages of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and on developing strategies such as the National Trade Strategy. In addition, Sierra Leone wishes to express gratitude to the African Trade Policy Centre – David Luke, Jamie Alexander MacLeod, Nadia Hasham, Komi Tsowou and Senait Afework; African Union Commission – Beatrice Chaytor; ITC – Aissatou Diallo, Judith Fessehaie, Anahita Vasudevan, Richard Adu-Gyamfi, Qasim Chaudry, Raimund Moser, Fatou Mbenga Jallow, Anton Said and Mehdi Mehamha; International Growth Centre – Herbert M'cleod and Abou Bakarr Kamara; and Shiaka Kawa and Dennis Matanda for their valued consulting contributions to the strategy.

I. Introduction

Trade is a foundational catalyst for development. Countries that are open in international trade tend to grow faster, be more innovative, attract more investment, and create formal, well-paying employment opportunities for their citizens. In the history of development, few countries have reached middle-income levels without effectively utilizing trade.

It is not sufficient for Sierra Leone to be merely open to international trade: trade policymaking must be calculated, contemplative and deliberative to ensure that trade serves as an effective engine for inclusive growth and development. Well-crafted trade policies can diversify economic growth, support inclusiveness and enhance economic competitiveness.

In the past decade, Sierra Leone has pursued an international trade agenda, raising its participation in the WTO multilateral negotiations and preferential trade arrangements with the United States – AGOA, the European Union – Everything but Arms initiative, and China – DFQF scheme. At a subregional level, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are all members of MRU, which was founded in 1973 and revived in 2007 after having become moribund during the prevailing conflict situation in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. The regional trading arrangements of Sierra Leone have mostly been covered by the wider context and framework of ECOWAS, which was established in 1975 to promote regional economic integration and trade. The ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) first came into existence in 1979 to ensure the free trade of eligible goods in the region without the payment of customs duties and taxes.

Sierra Leone has been unable to take advantage of the opportunities available through its participation in these trading agreements and arrangements. During the past 10 years, 70 per cent of Sierra Leone exports have remained concentrated in raw and unprocessed metals and precious stones, leaving the economy undiversified and dependent on the vicissitudes of international commodity prices. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis provides one demonstration, with the international price of titanium ore, the country's largest export in 2019, falling 61 per cent from December 2019 to May 2020. In another example, the price of iron ore, which accounted for 71 per cent of exports in 2014, crashed by 70 per cent through the course of 2015.

The 2015 Diagnostic Trade Integration Study for Sierra Leone contained recommendations for a national trade strategy for Sierra Leone to enhance both its national trade capacity and to target a niche in the global trading system. The 2017 WTO second Trade Policy Review for Sierra Leone further underscored the need for a comprehensive strategy, directing a trading and investment position that is aligned with WTO, ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union, AGOA and multilateral trade and investment arrangements.

Nevertheless, the role of trade remains lacking in the country's broader national development planning. The country's poverty reduction strategy papers, the National Recovery Programme (2005–2007), the Agenda for Change (2008–2012) and the Agenda for Prosperity (2013–2018) were all focused on food security, job creation and good governance, with little focus on the role of trade. The Government of Sierra Leone recently launched MTNDP, a development plan comprising seven policy clusters covering the period 2019–2023, though again with little explicit reference to trade, despite its clear contribution to the goals and targets of the plan.

The National Trade Strategy is an opportunity for Sierra Leone to readdress the role that trade plays in its national development. Policy clusters 2 and 3 of the MTNDP 2019–2023 target the diversification and promotion of economic growth and infrastructure and economic competitiveness, respectively. In addition, the development plan includes the macroeconomic objective of reducing the current account deficit from 14 per cent to 11.5 per cent through export promotion and diversification.

While this macroeconomic target is set out in MTNDP, it leaves MTI with the responsibility of leveraging trade for its execution. The National Trade Strategy provides the road map for exactly this, by charting the activities that will enable Sierra Leone to diversify its economy, promote inclusivity and gender equality, create jobs and generate foreign exchange.

The theme of the strategy is “Repositioning trade for the African Continental Free Trade Area”. Sierra Leone signed the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on 2 July 2018 and deposited its instrument of ratification with the African Union Commission on 29 April 2019. In consolidating a market of 1.3 billion people worth \$2.5 trillion, the Agreement establishes the world’s largest free trade area since the formation of WTO in 1994, in terms of participating countries. It is not an opportunity that Sierra Leone should miss, and in that regard, the first strategic pillar of the National Trade Strategy provides a plan of what Sierra Leone should do to implement and effectively utilize AfCFTA.

In addition, consideration is given to the country’s current (and underutilized) preferential market access to the European Union – Everything but Arms, the United States – AGOA, China – DFQF, and MRU and ECOWAS countries (ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme). Key opportunities for export growth and diversification have been identified and compared across each of these preferential market access schemes.

On the immediate horizon, Sierra Leone faces the daunting challenge that COVID-19 poses to its trade and economic development. At the time of writing the present strategy, early estimates were for the country’s GDP growth to fall 7.3 percentage points from its rate in 2019 to an overall contraction of 2.3 per cent in 2020. COVID-19 has had a considerable impact on trade – the cessation of flights reduces both tourism revenue and airfreight, which is often carried in the hold of passenger aircraft, thereby constraining the country’s exports of perishable and time-sensitive products. The volume of maritime shipping has already fallen, adding costs in addition to route disruption and new port health screening processes and restrictions. Movement restrictions designed to curtail the spread of COVID-19 have put pressure on internal trade and regional trade with the Mano River Union neighbours of Sierra Leone. The Government’s COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme contains immediate priorities to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on trade as well as a means to build back better in the country’s recovery, both of which are incorporated into the strategy.

Sierra Leone recognizes that trade must be inclusive for the benefits of trade to be maximized and widely distributed. Accordingly, considerable attention is given to the means through which gender equality can be mainstreamed into the strategy (actions and activities). In recognizing that gender- and age-based discrimination leads to overall economic losses and limits gains from trade, the ability of the institutional environment to support the participation of women and young people in trade is addressed. In addition, small-scale cross-border trade, for which 68 per cent of those engaged in this activity are women, is accorded significant consideration. The strategy provides a forward view to the intermediate horizon and the challenge of climate change, emphasizing investment to meet the environmental quality

standards increasingly demanded by purchasers and the importance of cross-border trade for climate resilience in food security crops.

Lastly, due recognition is given to the challenge of implementation. In the past 10 years, good trade policies and strategies have been designed in Sierra Leone, but these have been persistently hamstrung by lack of implementation. Institutional capacity for policy formulation and implementation and monitoring (which is in many ways the most important) is provided in the final strategic pillar of the strategy. It focuses on upgrading the professional cadre of MTI, while strengthening coordination across the Government and with the private sector. The aim is to foster the collaborations needed to support exports in the areas of agriculture and fisheries through the private sector as the driver of economic diversification, while building the foundations for both implementation and improved trade policymaking for the future.

II. Vision and objectives

A. Vision

Sierra Leone, as envisaged in MTNDP 2019–2023, will be a middle-income country by 2039, with a diversified and resilient green economy. The country aspires to achieve this through the transformation of its economy, promotion of diversification, stimulation of growth opportunities and investment in critical infrastructure to facilitate private sector expansion.

The National Trade Strategy contributes to MTNDP by providing a means through which trade can diversify economic growth, support inclusive trade and women's economic empowerment, and improve infrastructure and economic competitiveness – which are policy clusters 2 and 3 of MTNDP. It further identifies immediate steps in which trade can be used to fight the challenges of COVID-19 and build back better.

Pursuant to MTNDP 2019–2023, the National Trade Strategy is driven by the following vision:

Diversifying the economy of Sierra Leone, promoting inclusivity, creating jobs, and generating foreign exchange by repositioning trade to take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area and address the challenges to trade resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. Objectives

1. Short-term objectives

To build the policy and coordination foundations for MTI and trade stakeholders to more effectively articulate and deliver trade policies that contribute to the vision, including the implementation of AfCFTA and tackling the trade implications of COVID-19. The following areas are specific objectives:

- **AfCFTA implementation:**

To fulfil the legal obligations required of Sierra Leone by its ratification of the AfCFTA Agreement, and put in place the means to take advantage of its rights under the Agreement to the benefit of all, including small and medium-sized enterprises, women and young people;

- **COVID-19 mitigation:**

To tackle and mitigate the immediate challenges posed by COVID-19 on Sierra Leone trade;

- **Institutional capacity development:**

To develop the capacity of MTI and its agencies to formulate and design inclusive trade policies, participate effectively in regional and international trade negotiations, and implement inclusive policies and trade obligations;

- **Government coordination:**

To create effective channels of coordination between government ministries and agencies involved in the various stages of facilitating and promoting trade;

- **Private sector collaboration:**

To establish effective and transparent mechanisms for trade consultation between the private sector and the Government – with consideration to the inclusion of women and young entrepreneurs.

2. Medium-to-long term objectives

To design and reinvigorate policy areas of MTI and deliver upon an achievable portfolio of priority trade-related policy initiatives that can diversify growth, create jobs and generate foreign exchange. The following areas are specific objectives:

- **Build back better from COVID-19:**

To favourably restructure trade in Sierra Leone for more conducive future growth and development;

- **Nurture exporters:**

To support indigenous businesses to expand and connect their production with export opportunities in new and existing markets;

- **Attract anchor businesses:**

To attract business investment in frontier priority sectors as a “proof of concept” for the feasibility of Sierra Leonean exports;

- **Reduce overall cost of trade:**

To bolster the effectiveness of trade policy and reduce the administrative burden of regulation;

- **Enhance overall quality of trade-related infrastructure:** to coordinate with ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and the private sector to prioritize investment in trade-related infrastructure, including quality standards, and support the growth of high-potential export sectors of Sierra Leone.

C. Scope

To deliver on these objectives, the National Trade Strategy provides an overarching framework for trade development (see chapter V) across the following four strategic pillars:

- Strategic pillar I: African Continental Free Trade Area
- Strategic pillar II: Trade support
- Strategic pillar III: Industrial and quality infrastructure development
- Strategic pillar IV: Institutional capacities for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring

The topical scope of the National Trade Strategy is delineated by the mandate of MTI within the broader Sierra Leonean policy architecture. The purpose of the strategy is to deliver on the commitments and rights of Sierra Leone under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area as a catalyst for repositioning the country’s trade. This is oriented around the private sector as the driver of economic diversification and accounts for the new

challenges imposed by COVID-19 to trade. In production, the strategy covers industry and manufacturing, and coordinating with other sectoral ministries to support exports in the areas of agriculture and fisheries. Across each of these areas, current topical policies, strategies and initiatives are deliberately incorporated into the strategy. In addition to this, it provides new initiatives in underserved strategic areas.¹

¹ Policies, strategies and initiatives incorporated into the National Trade Strategy include: 2010 Sierra Leone Trade Policy; 2011 National Industrial Policy; Sierra Leone AGOA Response strategy 2019 – 2025; 2019 National Trade Facilitation strategy; 2013 Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Development strategy; 2019 Doing Business Reforms Roadmap; Draft 2013 Special Economic Zone Policy in Sierra Leone; and the 2013 Capacity Development Actions for Trade-Related Organization in Sierra Leone.

III. Macroeconomic framework and COVID-19 impact

A. Macroeconomic forecast with COVID-19

The Sierra Leone economy is small, open and largely undiversified. Agriculture contributes 50 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), while mining accounts for between roughly 70 per cent and 90 per cent of merchandise exports, depending on the year. In addition, the country has a significant fishing sector, a small but growing tourism industry, and promising oil and gas reserves. The agriculture and mining sectors provide a variety of resource-based activities that constitute many opportunities for trade.

Generally, the country's GDP growth has been fairly stable until the recent iron ore boom and bust cycle, which was exacerbated and deepened further by the Ebola crisis. The spike in growth during the period 2001–2002 was due to the return to peace after 10 years of civil war. Immediately after the war, the agricultural sector was the main driver of GDP growth, before being driven by the mining sector from 2010 to 2014 with the start of iron ore mining.

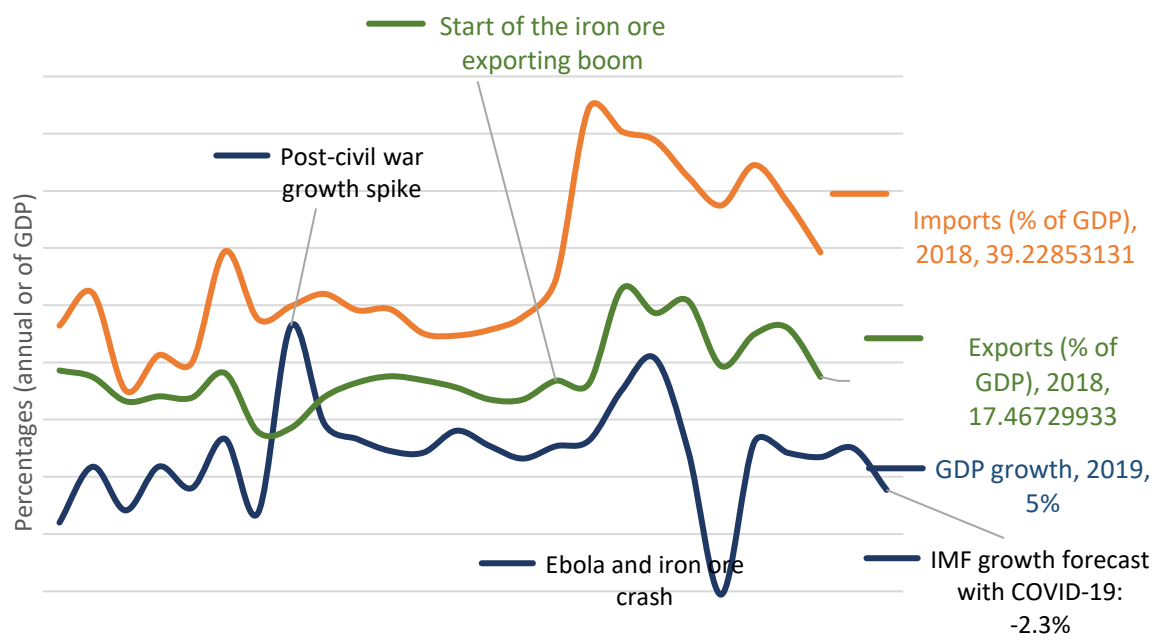
Between 2014 and 2015, the economy was affected by the twin shocks of the Ebola outbreak and fall in commodity prices, which led to considerable negative growth in 2015 of -20.6 per cent. However, the country's economy recovered in 2016 and positive growth of 6 per cent was recorded, slowing down to 3.8 per cent in 2017, and 3.5 per cent in 2018 before rising to 5 per cent in 2019 (see figure I). This growth rate remained substantially higher than the sub-Saharan Africa average of 2.3 per cent. Recent growth has been driven mostly by the agricultural and services sectors.

Increased production of key agricultural goods (rice, cassava, maize and oil palm) contributed 2 per cent to GDP growth,² followed by services with a contribution of 1.8 per cent.

Estimates by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as of 14 April 2020, forecast GDP growth to plummet 7.3 percentage points in 2020 from 2019, with an overall decline of 2.3 per cent in GDP expected in 2020.

² World Bank, *Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment Global Practice, Sierra Leone Economic Update*, Second edition (Washington, D.C., June 2019).

Figure I
Macroeconomic indicators for Sierra Leone, 2000–2020



Source: World Bank Database and 14 April IMF growth forecast.

Abbreviations: GDP, gross domestic product; IMF, International Monetary Fund.

The country's heavy reliance on mining and the low level of other exports are major impediments to sustained inclusive growth and poverty reduction. Sierra Leone has vast arable land that could be utilized for the cultivation of a variety of crops, yet production and productivity are far below their potential. Cocoa is the country's most valuable agricultural export commodity and mostly exported to Europe. However, exports have seldom surpassed 10,000 metric tonnes. While official cross-border trade with Mano River Union neighbouring countries and the region is relatively low, results from a recent study by the International Growth Centre suggested that processed cassava ("Gari") is the main export from Sierra Leone to neighbouring countries, probably exceeding cocoa exports in volume if not in value.³

Similarly, notwithstanding a significant potential in the fishery sector, very little is exported officially. Illegal fishing deprives the country of the proceeds of its fishery stocks, while legal transshipment creates little value-added for the country (see table 1). To date, the country cannot export to the European Union, mainly because of its inability to satisfy phytosanitary standards.

³ International Growth Centre, *Realities of cross border trade between Sierra Leone and its neighbours* (London, United Kingdom, 2018).

Table 1

Trade balances and key exports, 2012–2018 (millions of United States dollars)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Balance on goods and services	-1 048	-732	-1 098	-1 107	-488	-810	-720
Goods balance	-914	-28	-339	-724	-266	-542	-411
Goods exports of which:	734	1 404	1 112	385	654	652	657
Diamonds	162	186	213	160	163	113	115
Rutile/titanium	179	135	103	96	110	209	273
Iron ore	357	1 064	742	78	142	176	235
Bauxite	17	14	39	43	51	41	45
Cocoa	23	9	26	19	18	61	64
Coffee	4	0	1	4	5	6	7
Fish and shrimp	18	3	3	1	3	5	6
Services exports							
Personal travel	22	27	14	11	27	28	29
Business travel	25	31	20	16	31	32	34

Source: Bank of Sierra Leone (2020).

Service exports are few and concentrated primarily in tourism. Personal travel, which includes the spending by leisure tourists and those visiting family and friends, has been comparable to cocoa earnings in some years (see table 1 above). Business tourism has generated slightly larger revenue. Both types of travel had suffered during the Ebola crisis, and now with COVID-19 restrictions, both are expected to fall precipitously throughout the course of the pandemic.

Generally, Sierra Leonean exports as a percentage of GDP have fluctuated over the past decades, mainly because of fluctuations in mineral prices. The fall in iron ore prices in 2014 resulted in a dramatic reduction in export earnings and government revenue, which contributed to negative GDP growth in 2015. Additionally, in 2018, the contribution of the mining sector to GDP was negative largely due to the closure of the main iron ore company. China has been the country's major iron ore purchaser, and with Chinese GDP growth at an estimated 44-year low because of the COVID-19 crisis, it is unlikely that iron ore exports will feature as an export revenue earner in the recovery of Sierra Leone.⁴

In addition, the inflow of foreign direct investment has fluctuated, given its close links with the mineral sector. Foreign direct investment as a percentage of GDP had increased to more than 30 per cent in 2011, mainly due to large investment in the mining sector, which subsequently fell to less than 10 per cent in 2016 as a result of the fall in commodity prices and the Ebola virus disease outbreak. Foreign direct investment is expected to fall considerably because of COVID-19, with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimating global foreign direct investment to fall 40 per cent in the period 2020–2021.⁵ In addition, this delays technology and skills transfer.

Conversely, imports have generally increased and have exceeded exports, creating a negative trade balance. Key imports are food (including rice – the staple), along with fuel and lubricants, machinery and inputs for agricultural production (e.g., fertilizers), which are mainly from the European Union and China.

⁴ Reuters, "China's 2020 GDP growth set to sink to 44-year low as coronavirus cripples economy: Reuters poll", 13 April 2020.

⁵ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Coronavirus could cut global investment by 40%, new estimates show", *Global Investment Trend Monitor*, No. 35, 26 March 2020.

Sierra Leone has one of the highest inflation rates in the region – hovering around 18 per cent in 2018, falling briefly to roughly 14.1 per cent in February 2019 and increasing again to 14.8 per cent in August 2019. The fiscal deficit grew to 8.8 per cent of GDP in 2017, pushing debt to GDP up to roughly 60 per cent by 2018. Government spending has recently been reduced by two percentage points to 21.5 per cent of GDP. Revenue raised steadily from 12.1 per cent of GDP in 2016 to 13.7 per cent in 2018 due to a reduction in tax exemptions and the establishment of the Treasury Single Account.⁶

A sound macroeconomic framework will be reassuring to private investors, as it will help to reduce the rate of inflation, enable a more stable exchange rate, and lower the risk of unexpected changes in tax policy. However, this implies that government investment will be constrained, and that private investment will become especially important in the coming years.

B. COVID-19 trade implications

The following nine core impact channels are identified as the effects of COVID-19 on Sierra Leonean trade:

(a) **Reduced cross-border trade:** As with Ebola, movement restrictions designed to curtail the spread of COVID-19 will put pressure on the country's cross-border trade in goods and services with Guinea and Liberia, especially affecting the many women who engage in cross-border trade. Sierra Leone announced a one-month border closure on 27 March 2020 with ongoing curfews and movement restrictions. The country's previous experience during the Ebola outbreak may contribute to its ability to facilitate cross-border trade with restrictions on mobility. As in other parts of the world and Africa, efforts will more than likely be made to improve safe cross-border trade during the medium term;

(b) **Reduced tourism and air transport:** Tourism and air transport have collapsed in the short term, with Brussels Airlines, Air Maroc and Air France all cancelling flights and the Government of Sierra Leone suspending all further flights until at least 22 June 2020.⁷ As well as reducing tourism and foreign travel tax revenue, this affects airfreight, which is often carried in the hold of passenger aircraft. Exports of fresh, perishable, or time-sensitive products will become more challenging during the short-to-medium term;

(c) **Reduced maritime transport:** The volume of shipping through the Sierra Leone port is expected to more than halve because of the disruptions and delays imposed by additional port screening processes and restrictions at foreign ports.⁸ Shipping costs directly relate to volumes, which means that freight-shipping costs will also rise for both imports and exports;

(d) **Reduced commodity prices:** As table 2 shows, all of Sierra Leonean exports are being adversely affected by the COVID-19 epidemic. The negative impact it is having on food and agricultural prices is, however, less than that for metals and minerals, apart from gold. Unless the Chinese economy – the main destination for Sierra Leonean metals – recovers from its own COVID-19 crisis and muted global demand more quickly than expected, metal exports are likely to remain depressed during the medium term;

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Government of Sierra Leone, *COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme*. Available at www.statistics.sl/images/2020/Documents/GoSL_COVID_19_Quick-Action-Economic-Response-Programme.pdf.

⁸ Ibid.

(e) **Reduced trade-related employment:** The dependence on labour-intensive sectors for export-led growth means jobs are lost with disruptions to trade. Generally, these labour-intensive sectors have higher rates of women's employment, exacerbating gender inequalities and gains from trade. Bargaining power for women in these types of vulnerable jobs tends to be low, resulting in lower job security. Employment-related interventions should focus on supporting and maintaining women's participation in the labour force in export sectors, including entrepreneurship, taking into account women having unequal access to assets and inputs;

(f) **Increased digitalization:** COVID-19 is causing the acceleration of supply chain digitalization and consumer path digitalization in both developed and developing markets. This could offer new opportunities for Sierra Leonean workers to integrate into new digital services, for example, through platform work – involving mostly low-capacity tasks such as data cleaning and labelling. Highly educated segments of workers could supply the more advanced work, ranging from web development and marketing to software development; however, this is limited in Sierra Leone. Exporters may opt to utilize new digital services provided by shipping companies to arrange for goods for export and pay associated costs. In addition, it may move countries towards more cooperation in the area of electronic cross-border payments. Dedicated attention should be given to facilitating women's access to digital solutions;

(g) **Increased medical supplies and services demand:** Demand for COVID-19-related medical supplies is likely to remain strong during the medium term. Some Sierra Leonean producers may have the scope to repurpose productive capacity for the domestic market and markets of the country's Mano River Union neighbours in some personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer and disinfectant, and possibly basic swab testing kits. Business and Professional Women Freetown report innovations by women entrepreneurs in the fashion industry redirecting production towards fabric facemasks. Though Sierra Leonean health expertise and health-educational services could find demand in regional markets, especially with the lessons learned from the Ebola epidemic, the low rate of health professionals to population makes the country dependent on foreign medical expertise. It will be important to maintain the movement of essential personnel and imports of routine medical supplies for areas of high disease burden, such as malaria prevention and treatment, vaccinations, maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence services;

(h) **Emergence of safe trade:** Port operations have already changed to incorporate increased safety checks and COVID-19 preventive measures. Though this may initially slow port clearance, it can also provide an opportunity to “nudge” Sierra Leonean formal and informal traders to better take up electronic options for customs and ports clearance, which – in addition to reducing physical contact – reportedly leaves less scope for corruption;

(i) **Supply chain re-rationalization:** Multinational businesses are restructuring their global supply chains to build resilience against ongoing COVID-19 disruptions and such future crises, in the following two ways: reshoring – production is being brought back closer to consumer markets; and diversification – production is being spread across a broader range of suppliers to reduce the impact should any one producer be adversely affected. At present, Sierra Leone has little involvement in complex global value chains, and so has less to lose than some countries, but it could benefit the country if certain agricultural businesses are restructured across more diversified supply chains or if mining activities are diversified, as was seen during the Ebola crisis. In addition, it is possible that agricultural commodities produced near border areas and exported to Mano River Union neighbouring countries could be redirected to fulfil the domestic supply in other areas of the country.

Table 2
Sierra Leone export price impacts from COVID-19

<i>Export product</i>	<i>Export value (3-year average) (millions of United States dollars)</i>	<i>Estimated price impact December 2019–May 2020 (percentage)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Titanium ores	68	-61	Spot price
Wood (rough or processed)	52	-17	Lumber spot price
Aluminium / bauxite ores	29	-19	Spot price
Frozen fish	28	-9	FAO Food Price Index
Diamonds	24	Negative	Prices vary
Cocoa beans	24	-7	Monthly average, ICO
Zirconium ores	12	-16	Metals price index, IMF
Iron ore	7*	-3	Spot price
Palm oil	5	-33	December price spike / current prices are equal to September
Textiles	3	-16	Cotton price index as proxy
Other foods	38	-9	FAO Food Price Index
Other metals / minerals	25	-16	Metals price index
Other	34		

Sources: Authors' calculations based on data taken from IMF commodity indexes, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Food Price Index, International Cocoa Organization (ICO), IndexMundi, Markets Insider and International Trade Centre (ITC) Trade Map. Export value estimates may differ by source.

Notes: * Iron ore exports for 2020 were forecasted to reach as much as \$70 million, but are now expected to fall to nil.

C. COVID-19 immediate trade priorities

These include:

(a) **Create “green lanes” for fast customs clearance of medical supplies:** As employed in the COVID-19 response of both China and the European Union, among others;⁹

(b) **Urgently and temporarily, suspend tariffs on essential COVID-19 imports and other essential medical supplies:** The ECOWAS Common External Tariffs can be high on some important imports for fighting COVID-19 and for common medical needs, including soap, protective garments (which come under textile and apparel tariff lines), drugs and vaccines;

(c) **Leverage the standards and guidelines for medical supplies, masks, disinfectants and protective equipment that have been made freely available:** These standards and guidelines include those of the African Standardization Community free-of-charge standards and guidelines for the manufacture, testing and certification of COVID-19 preventive measures and products; International Organization for Standardization; European Committee for Standardization; European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization; International Electrotechnical Commission; American Society for Testing and Materials International; and ECOWAS COVID-19-related freely available standards. These can be shared with promising domestic producers;

(d) **Coordinate diplomacy against the imposition of export limits on essential medical supplies and staple foods:** At least 80 countries have now imposed restrictions on the exportation of COVID-19-related medical supplies, such as ventilators or personal protective equipment. Important exporters of rice (including Myanmar and Viet Nam) and wheat exporters (such as the Russian Federation), have introduced bans, limitations or restrictions on food exports. In coordination with

⁹ European Commission, “Guidelines for border management measures to protect health and ensure the availability of goods and essential services”, 16 March 2020.

ECOWAS and the Africa Union, Sierra Leone should engage in diplomatic efforts to resist damaging trade restrictions in the responses of other countries to COVID-19;

(e) **Ensure access to imported inputs and spare parts:** Agricultural harvests between late 2020 and 2021 will be affected by the lack of access to imported inputs, such as fertilizers, that could dampen the efficacy of the Quick Action Economic Response Programme objective 5: “Providing assistance for the local production and processing of staple food items”. Manufacturing, construction and mining activity could be further suppressed if access to imported spare parts and inputs is not possible;

(f) **Ensure safe fishing trade:** Health procedures can be established to enable the continuation of fish landing and exporting to support marine royalty and foreign exchange revenue. Care must be ensured throughout the testing and monitoring of international and cross-border fishing vessels;

(g) **Facilitate safe land-border trade:** Cross-border trade, though often unrecorded, accounts for a considerable proportion of Sierra Leonean trade. It must be supported by introducing the frequent sanitization of border crossings and facilities, handwashing stations, protective wear for border authorities and the presence of medical and quarantine officers, as is the case in Sierra Leone.¹⁰ Other measures include encouraging cross-border fee payments with mobile money by working with telecommunications companies to promote mobile transactions. Global positioning system (GPS) technology should not only be employed to trace the movement of drivers (such as the Electronic Cargo Tracking System employed by Uganda), but by informal traders as well, many of whom now have smart phones with built-in GPS. This may help to limit the use of dangerous routes for informal trading and help to maintain economic activity for cross-border traders, many of whom are women;

(h) **Limit the impact of lockdown restrictions on important export earners:** Gold mining employs many women and enables rural households to smooth consumption during crises. With gold prices up 10 per cent in December 2019, efforts should be made to not inhibit gold mining and exports as a likely bulwark against otherwise falling commodity prices. Similar efforts can be made to assist important agricultural and timber exports. Trade accounts for 30 per cent of tax revenue for Sierra Leone and accordingly must be continued to the extent possible for fiscal stability;¹¹

(i) **Coordinate trade and transport measures within ECOWAS:** Regional efforts are already underway, including the advanced development of the ECOWAS guidelines for the Harmonization and Facilitation of Cross-Border Trade and Transport in the ECOWAS region on the COVID-19 Pandemic and Related Post-Recovery Actions.

D. Using trade to “build back better”: how trade can tackle the challenges caused by COVID-19 and contribute to economic recovery and resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic, and restrictions imposed to tackle it, are putting extreme pressure on foreign exchange earnings, by reducing commodity prices, remittances, foreign investment, tourism and cross-border trade. Trade needs to be restructured to account for these challenges and generate needed foreign exchange revenue. The following steps can be taken to tackle COVID-19 trade-related challenges while favourably restructuring trade in Sierra Leone for the future:

(a) **Diversify exports:** For the short-to-medium term, agricultural and food exports are likely to face less of a price shock than highly cyclical goods like metals or manufactures with complex value chains. However, reduced air transport may make trade in perishables outside

¹⁰See, for example, TradeMark East Africa, *Safe Trade Emergency Facility*. Available at www.trademarka.com/safetrade/.

¹¹ Government of Sierra Leone. 2020. *COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme (QAERP)*. Available at www.statistics.sl/images/2020/Documents/GoSL_COVID_19_Quick-Action-Economic-Response-Programme.pdf.

the continent more difficult. Sierra Leone could prioritize exports of less-perishable agricultural goods, such as frozen fish, dried goods and tinned goods, and focus on cross-border trade with Mano River Union neighbours for more perishable goods. This would improve the resilience of Sierra Leonean exports to future economic shocks;

(b) Consider regional imports: Restrictions on international mobility may make imports from African countries more cost-effective, especially with ETLS and preparations for AfCFTA implementation. This may provide more timely and price-competitive inputs in production, supply the domestic market with better quality of preferred versions of products, forge or strengthen economic and political partnerships with African countries (including new markets for Sierra Leonean exports), and may provide inputs that are more conducive to local value addition;

(c) Enable cross-border and regional trade: With global trade falling, Sierra Leone must continue to enable its regional trade to flow better, by ensuring safe cross-border flows with investment in border health screenings and contact tracing for transport providers. Regional markets enabled by AfCFTA and ETLS could compensate for lower global demand for basic commodities;

(d) Sustain cross-border innovations and cooperation beyond COVID-19: Crisis collaborations on cross-border movement of traders can be leveraged to permanently improve the processes of cross-border trade. For example, innovations in cross-border trade, production, trade facilitation and resource pooling of women traders can be sustained;

(e) Take advantage of a lower exchange rate: With a revised balance of payments estimated at a deficit of \$566.3 million in 2020, the value of the rate is expected to fall. This will make Sierra Leonean exports cheaper in international markets;

(f) Take advantage of e-commerce: Increased demand for e-commerce is already occurring. With recurrent electricity issues and somewhat expensive Internet costs relative to income, taking advantage of this opportunity may be difficult in Sierra Leone. However, improving education standards, raising awareness of digital opportunities, enhancing information and communications technology infrastructure, and increasing the use of mobile money transfers could all form the foundation for a good start;

(g) Ensure that the “labour-based public works programme” rehabilitates roads that facilitate trade: Transport infrastructure has often prioritized supporting trade in extractives, though the recent improvement in roads to border areas has facilitated cross-border trade. The Quick Action Economic Response Programme includes a labour-based public works programme involving the rehabilitation of 1,000 km of unpaved trunk and feeder roads and minor repairs on 200 km of township roads. A portion of these roads can be prioritized for facilitating agricultural exports from high-potential rural regions.

IV. Situational analysis

A. African Continental Free Trade Area

1. Overview of the African Continental Free Trade Area negotiations and Agreement

Sierra Leone signed the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area at the thirty-first ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Nouakchott on 2 July 2018, and deposited its instrument of ratification on 29 April 2019. Having surpassed the threshold number of 22 ratifications, the Agreement entered into force on 30 May 2019, meaning that the legal rights, provisions and obligations of the Agreement now apply to Sierra Leone and the other States parties that have ratified.

The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area defines eight general objectives and seven specific objectives (see table 3). These aspire towards the deepening of economic integration in Africa and ultimately the economic diversification and competitiveness of the continent. The objectives notably derive from and contribute to the economic integration ambitions of the African Union, in particular the 2012 Boosting Intra-African Trade Action Plan and the 1991 Abuja Treaty.

Table 3

General and specific objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area

<i>General objectives</i>	
1.	Create a single market for goods and services, facilitated by movement of persons, in order to deepen economic integration
2.	Create a liberalized market for goods and services through successive rounds of negotiations
3.	Contribute to the movement of capital and natural persons, and facilitate investment building on the initiatives and developments in the States parties and regional economic communities
4.	Lay the foundation for the establishment of a continental customs union at a later stage
5.	Promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development, gender equality and structural transformation of States parties
6.	Enhance competitiveness of the economies of States parties within the continent
7.	Promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security
8.	Resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping membership and expedite the regional and continental integration process
<i>Specific objectives</i>	
1.	Progressively eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods

2.	Progressively liberalize trade in services
3.	Cooperate on investment, intellectual property (IP) rights and competition policy
4.	Cooperate on all trade-related policies
5.	Cooperate on customs matters and the implementation of trade facilitation measures
6.	Establish a mechanism for the settlement of disputes concerning rights and obligations
7.	Establish and maintain an institutional framework for the implementation and administration of AfCFTA

Sources: *Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area*, article 3, “General Objectives” and article 4, “Specific Objectives” (Addis Ababa, African Union, 2018).

AfCFTA progressively eliminates tariffs on intra-African trade, making it easier for African countries to trade within the continent. By number of participating countries, it is the world’s largest free trade area since the formation of WTO, covering a market of 1.2 billion people with a GDP of \$2.5 trillion across all 55 member States of the African Union.

The objectives of AfCFTA are achieved through an overarching framework Agreement and seven Protocols spread across three phases of negotiations (see table 4).

Table 4
Protocols of the African Continental Free Trade Area and their status by negotiating phase, as of May 2020

Phase I		
	<i>Framework agreement</i>	<i>Complete</i>
1.	Protocol on Trade in Goods	Advanced (outstanding schedules of concessions for some countries and some rules of origin)
2.	Protocol on Trade in Services	Advanced (outstanding schedules of specific commitments for some countries)
3.	Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes	Complete
Phase II		
4.	Protocol on Investment	Scheduled for June 2021
5.	Protocol on Competition Policy	Scheduled for June 2021
6.	Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights	Scheduled for June 2021
Phase II		
7.	Protocol on Digital Trade and E-Commerce	Schedule forthcoming

Source: African Trade Policy Centre, updated as of April 2020.

Note: At the time of writing, scheduling was liable to change following COVID-19 disruptions, but gives an indicative framing over which to anticipate upcoming phases of negotiations.

Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area defines, in general terms, the purposes and intentions of the Agreement, establishes the primary definitions, and outlines the scope of the Agreement. In addition, it creates the institutional framework for the implementation of AfCFTA and outlines procedural steps for its administration. Other functions of the Agreement are to provide overarching guidelines pertaining to the principles of transparency, and the relationship of the Agreement with other relevant international and regional instruments.

The key obligations required of Sierra Leone by the Agreement involve the country's active participation in the continent-level institutions needed to implement AfCFTA, such as the AfCFTA Council of Ministers.

Table 5 lists the outstanding preparatory steps required for Sierra Leone to satisfy its obligations under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Table 5

Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement: operative obligations

<i>Provision</i>	<i>Obligation/right</i>	<i>Preparatory steps required</i>
Article 7: Phase II Negotiations	Enter into Phase II negotiations in IP rights, investment and competition policy	Obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Identify national-level public and private sector stakeholders in each phase II topic; (b) Coordinate with national-level stakeholders to identify defensive and offensive negotiating interests; (c) Actively engage in phase II negotiations and review progress with national-level stakeholders.
Article 11: The Composition and Functions of the Council of Ministers	Prepare for biannual ministerial-level participation in AfCFTA Council of Ministers meetings, as well as appropriate-level participation in committees thereafter established by the Council of Ministers	Obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Ensure ministerial-level participation is budgeted and planned for in trade ministry annual planning; (b) Designate and budget for, as required, Sierra Leonean representation in committees and subcommittees established by the Council of Ministers, including those on goods and services
Article 12: Committee of Senior Trade Officials	Prepare for the biannual participation of the Permanent Secretary in the AfCFTA Committee of Senior Trade Officials meetings	Obligation: Ensure participation of the Chief Director in the Committee of Senior Trade Officials meetings is budgeted and planned for in trade ministry annual planning
Article 17: Notification	Trade agreements, commitments and proposed trade measures to be notified to the AfCFTA secretariat	Obligation: Any future trade agreements, commitments and proposed trade measures to be notified to the AfCFTA secretariat
Article 26: Registration and Notification	WTO notification	Obligation: Notify ratification of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area to WTO through the WTO representative of Sierra Leone in Geneva
Article 28: Review	Review of AfCFTA in 2024	Obligation: Identify issues concerning the effectiveness of AfCFTA in preparation for the five-year review in 2024

Sources: Authors' analysis based on the review of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and corresponding stakeholder interviews.

Note: For simplification, this list does not consider non-binding, best-endeavour or passive obligations or rights other than when they comprise core elements of the AfCFTA Agreement.

2. Protocol on Trade in Goods

The Protocol on Trade in Goods has as its principal objective the boosting of intra-African trade through the progressive elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers (NTBs), and enhanced efficiencies in customs procedures, trade facilitation and transit, among others. A secondary objective is the harmonizing of African trade arrangements and institutions.

The most pressing and immediate obligation of Sierra Leone under the Protocol on Trade in Goods is to work with the ECOWAS Commission to submit the ECOWAS common schedule of tariff concessions. In line with the modalities for trade in goods, this specifies the gradual elimination of 90 per cent of ECOWAS tariff lines over a 5-year period (10-year period for least developed countries). In addition, it schedules a further 7 per cent of goods that are to be liberalized over a longer 10-year period (13-year period for least developed countries), while

the remaining 3 per cent of goods are allowed to be excluded from liberalization, but subject to a review every five years.

The ECOWAS offer is based on the ECOWAS common external tariff, and reportedly provides a list of 191 tariff lines, including rice, that are designated as sensitive or excluded products. The reduction of tariffs, as provided by the ECOWAS schedule of tariff concessions, was set to begin in July 2020, but at the time of writing is likely to be postponed until January 2021 due to disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Further preparations to take advantage of Sierra Leonean market opportunities under AfCFTA involve building awareness of and supporting businesses to use the specific trade-boosting provisions of AfCFTA. However, it is critical that such awareness be buttressed by the broader production and trade-supporting activities identified in Pillars II to IV of the National Trade Strategy to improve the Sierra Leonean trade-enabling environment.

Table 6 lists the outstanding preparatory steps required for Sierra Leone to satisfy its obligations and seize its rights under the Protocol on Trade in Goods, including eight of its nine annexes.

Table 6
Protocol on Trade in Goods: operative obligations and rights

<i>Provision</i>	<i>Preparatory steps required</i>	<i>Obligation / Right</i>
Protocol Part II: Non-discrimination	Provide most-favoured nation treatment (subject to reciprocity), national treatment, and special and differential treatment.	Obligation: General obligations requiring no immediate preparatory steps unless otherwise requested by AfCFTA partner States.
Protocol Part III: Liberalization of Trade	Reduce import tariffs in accordance with agreed schedules of tariff concessions and determine eligibility for AfCFTA preferences in accordance with annex 2 on Rules of Origin. Refrain from imposing quantitative import and export restrictions.	Obligations: (a) Direct Customs to modify tariff books in accordance with the joint ECOWAS tariff schedule for AfCFTA; (b) Direct Customs to recognize AfCFTA Rules of Origin; (c) Provide training, when necessary, to customs officers on AfCFTA Rules of Origin provisions. Rights: (a) Raise awareness of AfCFTA market opportunities, prioritizing businesses and investors in identified high-potential products; (b) Support businesses in satisfying rules of origin and other preferential market access requirements.
Annex 1: Schedules of Tariff Concessions	Submit Sierra Leone schedule of concession as part of ECOWAS submission.	Obligation: Ensure ECOWAS schedule of tariff concessions is submitted on behalf of Sierra Leone
Annex 2: Rules of Origin, Article 34. Notification	Exchange addresses and specimens of the stamps and signatures to be used by Customs (or alternatively designated authority) for the issuance of certificates of origin.	Obligations: (a) Determine authority to be charged with the issuance of AfCFTA rules of origin; (b) Direct such authority to share its addresses, stamp specimens and signature with the AfCFTA secretariat.

Annex 3: Customs Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance	Ensure customs tariff nomenclatures are consistent with the applicable version of the Harmonized System, ensure non-discrimination and transparency in the valuing of goods for customs purposes, cooperate in customs offences investigations, and exchange information on changes in customs law.	<p>Obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Designate a customs contact point for cooperating in the prevention and investigation of customs offences and the exchange of customs information, and inform other States parties of that contact point; (b) Ensure consistency of application of AfCFTA Harmonized System codes and tariffs; (c) Promptly publish electronically AfCFTA Customs codes and tariffs. <p>Rights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Continue to liaise with exporters to identify customs and other trading challenges in partner countries; (b) Request the application of partner-country obligations on customs cooperation.
Annex 4: Trade Facilitation	Provide for a trade facilitation enquiry point and establish and maintain a National Committee on Trade Facilitation, and ensure customs transparency, advanced rulings, pre-arrival processing, electronic payments, release of goods, post-clearance audits, authorized operators, expedited shipments, uniform documentation and provision for review and appeal of customs administrative decisions.	<p>Obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Nominate a trade facilitation “enquiry point” for traders, and notify the AfCFTA secretariat of their contact information; (b) Establish and maintain the National Trade Facilitation Committee; (c) Ensure that export, import and transit procedures, practical steps, laws, regulations, relevant applied duties, fees and charges, and contact information are available online; (d) In accordance with annex 4 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods, ensure that advanced ruling, pre-arrival processing, expedited shipments, uniform documentation, and electronic payment of duties and fees are available for importers as well as providing for procedures for the release of goods prior to the final determination of duties and fees; (e) Ensure that post-clearance audits are in place for customs; (f) Ensure that Authorized Operators measures are available. <p>Right:</p> <p>Sensitize and train private-sector businesses, traders and associations on how to use the AfCFTA Non-Tariff Barrier mechanism to report and eliminate barriers to trade.</p>
Annex 5: Non-tariff barriers	Provide for the national Non-Tariff Barrier institutions as required for the operation of the AfCFTA Non-Tariff Barrier Mechanism and ensure they are trained to undertake their functions as directed by this annex.	<p>Obligation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Nominate a National Focal Point on Non-Tariff Barriers; (b) Establish a National Monitoring Committee for identifying, resolving and monitoring non-tariff barriers; (c) Ensure that the National Focal Point and Monitoring Committee for Non-Tariff Barriers have been trained on their functions under annex 5 of the AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Goods, and in particular appendix 2 to that annex.

Annex 6: Technical barriers to trade	Provide for a standards liaison focal/enquiry point and cooperation in standards.	Obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Designate a standards liaison focal point at the Sierra Leone Standards Bureau; (b) Promote cooperation between the Sierra Leone standards body and those of other State Parties in the development and harmonization of standards, conformity assessment, accreditation and metrology, as well as transparency in technical standards.
Annex 7: Sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS)	Provide a National Focal Point for SPS notifications, ensure appropriate SPS protections and recognize as equivalent the SPS measures of AfCFTA exporting countries.	Obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Designate a National Focal Point for fulfilling the SPS notification requirements of the AfCFTA; Ensure appropriate SPS protections; (b) Recognize the SPS measures of the exporting AfCFTA countries as equivalent, subject to demonstration of validity; (c) Cooperate over the development and harmonization of SPS measures.
Annex 8: Transit	Provide transit traffic freedoms.	Obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Authorize a Transitor to prepare AfCFTA transit documents for those wishing to transit goods under AfCFTA to neighbouring countries; (b) Ensure that customs officials are trained to acknowledge and respect AfCFTA transit documents. Rights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Continue to liaise with exporters to identify customs and other trading challenges in partner countries; (b) Request the application of partner-country obligations on trade transit.

Sources: Authors' analysis based on the review of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and corresponding stakeholder interviews.

Note: For simplification, this list does not consider non-binding, best-endeavour or passive obligations or rights other than when they comprise core elements of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

3. Protocol on Trade in Services

The principal objective of the Protocol on Trade in Services is, among other things, to create a single liberalized market for trade in services. The scope of the Protocol on Trade in Services corresponds with that of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). It includes measures taken at all levels of government that affect trade in services and does not include public services, air services and government procurement.

To date, five sectors have been identified as priority sectors for liberalization under AfCFTA: business services (including professional services), communication, financial, tourism and transport services. However, there is the prospect to expand the prioritized sectors and the opportunity to negotiate beyond the prioritized service sectors.

The most immediate and pressing obligation required of Sierra Leone under the Protocol on Trade in Services is to submit its "Schedule of Specific Commitments" (see table 7). This

contains the terms, limitations and conditions on market access, together with conditions and qualifications on national treatment.

Table 7
Format of schedules of commitments

<i>Sector or subsector</i>	<i>Limitations on market access</i>	<i>Limitations on national treatment</i>	<i>Additional commitments</i>
A. Hotels and restaurants (including catering)	(1) Unbound	(1) Unbound	
B. Travel agencies and tour operator services	(2) None	(2) None	
C. Tourist guide services	(3) Commercial presence is allowed only in the form of a juridical person – foreign capital is limited to 40 per cent	(3) None	
D. Other	(4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments (see table 8)	(4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments (see table 8)	

Source: Taken from the International Trade Centre, *A business guide to the African continental free trade area agreement*, p. 37 (2018).

As of April 2020, Sierra Leone and several ECOWAS member States had not yet submitted their national inputs and schedules to the ECOWAS Commission for consolidation, though Sierra Leone has completed a regulatory framework assessment. The country will make a preliminary submission to ECOWAS using a GATS-plus approach to the negotiations covering the sectors and potential subsector commitments (see table 8) submitted to WTO under GATS.

Table 8
Sierra Leone schedule of specific General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments

Mode of supply: (1) Cross Border Supply, (2) Consumption Abroad, (3) Commercial Presence, (4) Presence of Natural Persons

<i>Sector or subsector</i>	<i>Limitations on market access</i>	<i>Limitations on national treatment</i>
I. Horizontal commitments		
All sectors included in this schedule	<p>Mode (3) Commercial Presence requires that foreign service providers incorporate or establish the business locally in accordance with the relevant provisions of Sierra Leone laws and, where applicable, regulations particularly with respect to land and building acquisition, lease, rental, etc. Foreign enterprises with investment in Sierra Leone could transfer abroad their profits in accordance with the existing regulations.</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound, except for senior management personnel and technical experts not available in the local labour market. Prior to a natural person working in Sierra Leone, a work permit must be obtained.</p>	Mode (4) None, with respect to categories of persons indicated in market access. Unbound for all other categories of persons.

<i>Sector or subsector</i>	<i>Limitations on market access</i>	<i>Limitations on national treatment</i>
II. Sector-specific commitments		
1. BUSINESS SERVICES	Modes (1) and (2) None	Modes (1) to (3) None
A. Professional Services (Subsectors a–k)	Mode (3) None, other than commercial presence must take the form of partnership. The foreign ventures shall have to be competitive and registered institutions in their own countries. Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
B. Computer-related Services (Subsectors a–e)	Modes (1) to (3) None Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Modes (1) to (3) None Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
F. Other Business Services	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3), Foreign service providers are permitted to establish service companies or institutions with Sierra Leonean partners in the form of joint ventures. Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Modes (1) to (3) None Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
2. COMMUNICATION SERVICES	Modes (1) to (3) None	Modes (1) to (3) None
B. Courier Services (Central Product Classification–CPC 7512)	Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
3. CONSTRUCTION AND RELATED ENGINEERING SERVICES (CPC 511-518)	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3) Unbound Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3) Unbound Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
4. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES (CPC 921-929)	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3) Unbound Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments. Approval shall be obtained from the Ministry of Education.	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3) Unbound Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments. Qualifications are as follows: possession of a Bachelor degree or above, and an appropriate professional title (e.g., Professor, senior engineer or lecturer or above).
5. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES (Subsectors A–D)	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3) Unbound Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3) Unbound Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
6. FINANCIAL SERVICES	Modes (1) and (2) Unbound	Modes (1) and (2) Unbound. Mode (3) Requirement of reinsurance: a foreign insurance institution shall make its own arrangements.
A. All insurance and insurance-related services (CPC 812-8140)	Mode (3) Qualifications for establishing a foreign insurance institution are as follows: – The investor shall be a foreign insurance company with more than 10 years of establishment;	

<i>Sector or subsector</i>	<i>Limitations on market access</i>	<i>Limitations on national treatment</i>
	<p>– Foreign insurance companies seeking entry into Sierra Leone are required to hold minimum assigned capital at a level twice that of minimum paid-up capital prescribed for locally incorporated insurance companies. A “letter of comfort” from the parent supervising authority may be requested to the effect that any shortfalls in solvency or liquidity of the foreign insurance company operating in Sierra Leone would be restored by remittances of funds from the home country if called upon to do so.</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>	<p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>
B. Banking and other financial services (excluding insurance)	<p>Modes (1) and (2) None</p> <p>Mode (3) None, other than foreign banks must incorporate subsidiaries in Sierra Leone to undertake the business of banking. Branches of foreign incorporated banks seeking entry into Sierra Leone are required to hold a minimum assigned capital at a level twice that of minimum paid-up capital prescribed for locally incorporated banks. “Letters of comfort” may be requested from the parent supervisory authority to the effect that any shortfalls in solvency or liquidity of the branch/subsidiary in Sierra Leone would be restored by remittances of funds from the home country if called upon to do so.</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>	<p>Modes (1) and (2) None</p> <p>Mode (3) None other than assurance from the parent supervisory authority of reciprocal treatment of request for establishment of a branch or subsidiary in that country by a Sierra Leonean bank in future.</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>
7. HEALTH-RELATED AND SOCIAL SERVICES (Subsectors A–D)	<p>Modes (1) and (2) None</p> <p>Mode (3) None, other than foreign service providers must be registered practitioners in the appropriate disciplines.</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>	<p>Modes (1) and (2) None</p> <p>Mode (3) None, other than qualifications shall be examined and recognized by the Ministry of Health.</p> <p>Mode (4) Qualifications required from appropriate educational establishments and minimum of two years experience in the relevant field.</p>
8. TOURISM AND TRAVEL-RELATED SERVICES (Subsectors A–D)	<p>Modes (1) to (3) None</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>	<p>Modes (1) to (3) None</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>
9. RECREATIONAL, CULTURAL AND SPORTING SERVICES (other than audio visual services) (Subsectors B, C and D)	<p>Modes (1) to (3) None</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>	<p>Modes (1) to (3) None</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>
10. TRANSPORT SERVICES A. Maritime Transport Services (CPC 7211-745)	<p>Modes (1) and (2) None</p> <p>Mode (3) None, other than compliance by ship-owners’ representatives with the relevant laws of establishing business in Sierra Leone.</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>	<p>Modes (1) to (3) None</p> <p>Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.</p>
B. Internal Waterways Transport (CPC 7221-745)	<p>Modes (1) and (2) None</p>	<p>Modes (1) to (3) None</p>

<i>Sector or subsector</i>	<i>Limitations on market access</i>	<i>Limitations on national treatment</i>
	Mode (3) None, other than in the form of joint venture with Sierra Leoneans. Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
C. Air Transport Services (CPC 731-746)	Modes (1) to (3) None Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Modes (1) to (3) None Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
E. RAIL TRANSPORT SERVICES (CPC 7111-743)	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3) None, other than either in the form of joint venture with the Government or Sierra Leone. Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Modes (1) to (3) None Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.
H. SERVICES AUXILIARY TO ALL MODES OF TRANSPORT (CPC 741-749)	Modes (1) and (2) None Mode (3) None, other than either in the form of joint venture with the Government or Sierra Leone. Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.	Modes (1) to (3) None Mode (4) Unbound except as indicated in Horizontal Commitments.

Sources: Authors' adaptation of the *Communication from Sierra Leone. General Agreement on Trade in Services – schedule of specific commitments* (Geneva, World Trade Organization, 1995).

Sierra Leone already has very liberal GATS commitments (table 8), and so will be unlikely to need to make significant services market openings as part of the ECOWAS offer. Nevertheless, stakeholders, through consultations undertaken in preparing the present strategy, identified potential areas (see table 9) in which Sierra Leone could offer to go further in liberalizing under AfCFTA.

Table 9
Services liberalization priorities identified by stakeholder interviews

<i>Potential sectors for further concessions</i>	<i>Potential sectors for offensive negotiating interests</i>
Other business services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical testing and analysis services (8676) Services incidental to agriculture, hunting and forestry (881) Services incidental to fishing (882) Related scientific and technical consulting services (8675) Packaging services (876) Services incidental to mining (883 and 5115) Services incidental to manufacturing (884 and 885) Services incidental to energy distribution (887) Convention services (87909) <p>Such concessions could take the form of lower restrictions for investment in these sectors [mode 3] or improved access to work permits [mode 4].</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maritime transport services, especially in the Mano River Union (MRU) target market: passenger transportation (7211), freight transportation (7212), rental of vessels with crew (7213), maintenance and repair of vessels (8868) and supporting services for maritime transport (745) Road transport services, especially in MRU target market: freight transportation (7123) and rental of commercial vehicles with operator (7124) Service auxiliary to all modes of transport, especially in MRU target market: cargo handling services (741), storage and warehouse services (742), freight transport agency services (748) Accounting, auditing and bookkeeping services (862) Educational services (921–929) Health-related and social services (9211–933)

Note: As the MRU partner countries of Sierra Leone are part of the same ECOWAS offer (as is Sierra Leone), Sierra Leone can look to directly shape this contents of the ECOWAS offer for services export interests. Comparing the country's MRU neighbours, Liberia has made the highest number of commitments to GATS (102), compared with Sierra Leone (85) and Guinea (9) in the transport services sector, while Liberia and

Sierra Leone have made significant commitments to maritime transport services and services auxiliary to all modes of transport, Guinea has not made any commitments. Both Guinea and Liberia have made commitments to road transport services with Liberia having more commitments, while Sierra Leone has made no commitment to this sector. Only Sierra Leone has made commitments to air transport services.

The Draft Consolidated ECOWAS Member States' Schedule of Specific Commitments on Trade in Services, which is still a work in progress and subjected to amendments, will be used as the basis for national consultations and for the commencement of negotiations on specific commitments on trade in services at the AfCFTA level.

Table 10 lists the outstanding preparatory steps required for Sierra Leone to satisfy its obligations and seize its rights under the Protocol on Trade in Services (provisions on flexibilities, exceptions and capacity-building are treated separately below). A major challenge faced in the services negotiations is the general low level of awareness on the importance of the services sector to the economy and the services protocol of AfCFTA in Sierra Leone at both business and government levels. There is no recognizable services coalition to develop a position for Sierra Leone in the current round of services negotiations.

Table 10
Protocol on Trade in Services: operative obligations and rights

<i>Provision</i>	<i>Preparatory steps required right</i>	<i>Obligation and</i>
Part IV: General obligations and disciplines	Provide most-favoured nation treatment (subject to reciprocity), transparency, special and differential treatment, and general exceptions.	Obligation: General obligations requiring no immediate preparatory measures.
Part V: Progressive liberalization	Set out schedules of specific commitments through successive rounds of services negotiations beginning with the five priority sectors to improve services market access.	Obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Identify and consult with private- and public-sector services stakeholders to inform negotiating objectives; (b) Consult services sector stakeholders on specific commitments proposed in the Draft Consolidated ECOWAS Members States' Schedule of Specific Commitments; (c) Validate identified commitments with national stakeholders; (d) Evaluate and adjust negotiating positions through negotiations with AfCFTA partner countries; (e) Implement commitments of finalized services offer through Sierra Leonean regulatory agencies for respective services sectors. Rights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Collaborate with private- and public-sector stakeholders to identify offensive trade in service negotiating opportunities; (b) Negotiate to achieve offensive trade in services negotiating interests; (c) Raise awareness among potential service sector exporters of opportunities once partner countries have submitted schedules of concessions.

Sources: Authors' analysis based on a review of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and corresponding stakeholder interviews.

Note: For simplification, this list does not consider non-binding, best-endeavour or passive obligations or rights other than when they comprise core elements of the Agreement.

4. Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes

The Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes establishes and provides for the administration of a Dispute Settlement Mechanism that would govern any formal disputes under AfCFTA.

The Dispute Settlement Mechanism is State-to-State, meaning that States such as Sierra Leone must launch cases on behalf of their citizens or businesses. To effectively utilize the mechanism, Sierra Leone must liaise closely with its trading enterprises to identify any issues they may face that would be worthy of a dispute and be prepared to engage in a dispute if called upon to do so.

In practice, African countries tend to opt for an amicable resolution of disputes before resorting to official resolution mechanisms (this is acknowledged in article 6 of the Protocol). Consultative and collaborative approaches have a high success rate and formal dispute settlement can usually be avoided.¹² Accordingly, Sierra Leone must prepare to leverage its African diplomatic corps to articulate its interests prior to formal disputes.

Table 11 presents the Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes, which comprises operative provisions within the Protocol and three annexes: annex 1 – working procedures of the panel; annex 2 – expert review; and annex 3 – code of conduct for arbitrators and panellists.

Table 11

Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes – operative obligations and rights

<i>Provision</i>	<i>Preparatory steps required</i>	<i>Obligation and right</i>
Articles 6–8: Procedures for formal disputes and alternative reconciliation methods	Call for amicable resolution solutions and procedures for official dispute settlement.	<p>Obligation/rights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Liaise closely with Sierra Leonean traders to identify any compliance issues with AfCFTA trading partners; (b) Prepare a Sierra Leonean African diplomatic corps so that they are aware of AfCFTA and ready to react to support amicable resolution methods prior to a formal dispute; (c) Prepare to engage in formal disputes if necessary.

Sources: Authors' analysis based on a review of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and corresponding stakeholder interviews.

Note: For simplification, this list does not consider non-binding, best-endeavour or passive obligations or rights other than when they comprise core elements of the Agreement.

5. Phase II: Protocol on Investment

A Protocol on Investment is to form part of the phase II negotiations – a draft legal text should be concluded and ready for adoption by January 2021, after which the Protocol on Investment will become an integral part of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and enter into force 30 days after deposition of the twenty-second instrument of ratification. Sierra Leone will negotiate under the framework of ECOWAS, which in 2008

¹² ECA, and others, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa IX: Next Steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area* (Addis Ababa, 2019).

enacted the ECOWAS Supplementary Act which adopts Community Rules on Investments and the modalities for implementation.

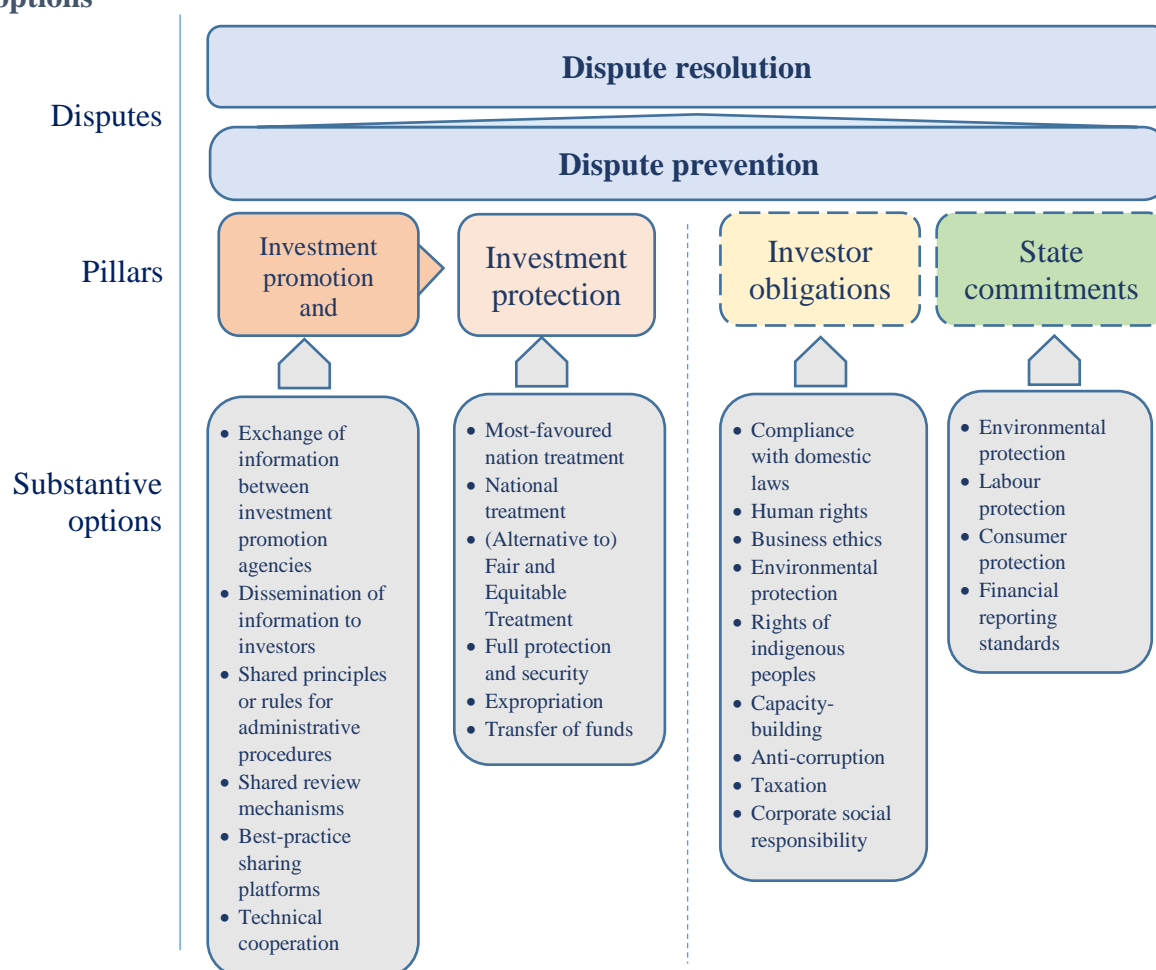
The shape and content of the Protocol on Investment, in drawing from best practices in Africa and beyond, is likely to comprise some of the components outlined in the schematic overview in figure II.

Important decisions will be required as to the extent and weight of obligations on investors (which can exclude “bad” investors from the protections of the Protocol), whether to include commitments on States (designed to protect against “race to the bottom” regulatory scenarios), and whether the Protocol will allow investor-State arbitration.

Preliminary negotiating interests for Sierra Leone include:

- (a) Convergence of its current investment facilitation measures in existing International Investment Agreements, intraregional Bilateral Investment Treaties and the ECOWAS Supplementary Act;
- (b) Capacity support on the resolution of disputes;
- (c) A conducive balance of investor obligations to, among others, preclude from investment protection firms that have engaged in impropriety, environmental degradation, or corruption;
- (d) State commitments to protect against “race to the bottom” regulation.

Figure II
Schematic overview of African Continental Free Trade Area investment protocol options



Sources: *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa IX: Next Steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area* (Addis Ababa, ECA, and others, 2019).

6. Phase II: Protocol on competition policy

A protocol on competition policy is scheduled to be negotiated by June 2021 (although this timeline may shift due to COVID-19 disruptions).

The operative provisions of regional competition protocols are relatively uncontroversial (although decisions will need to be made as to whether or not consumer protection should be covered). The weight of the negotiations is instead likely to occur through the following three aspects:

(a) Scope of application of the protocol, in particular boundaries of jurisdiction in which national or other regional competition bodies are present (importantly, including the ECOWAS Competition Authority established in May 2019);

(b) Balancing between outright “exceptions” to the protocol and practices that may, upon application, be granted “exemption”, including businesses or sectors identified as crucial for national security (or important political) reasons;

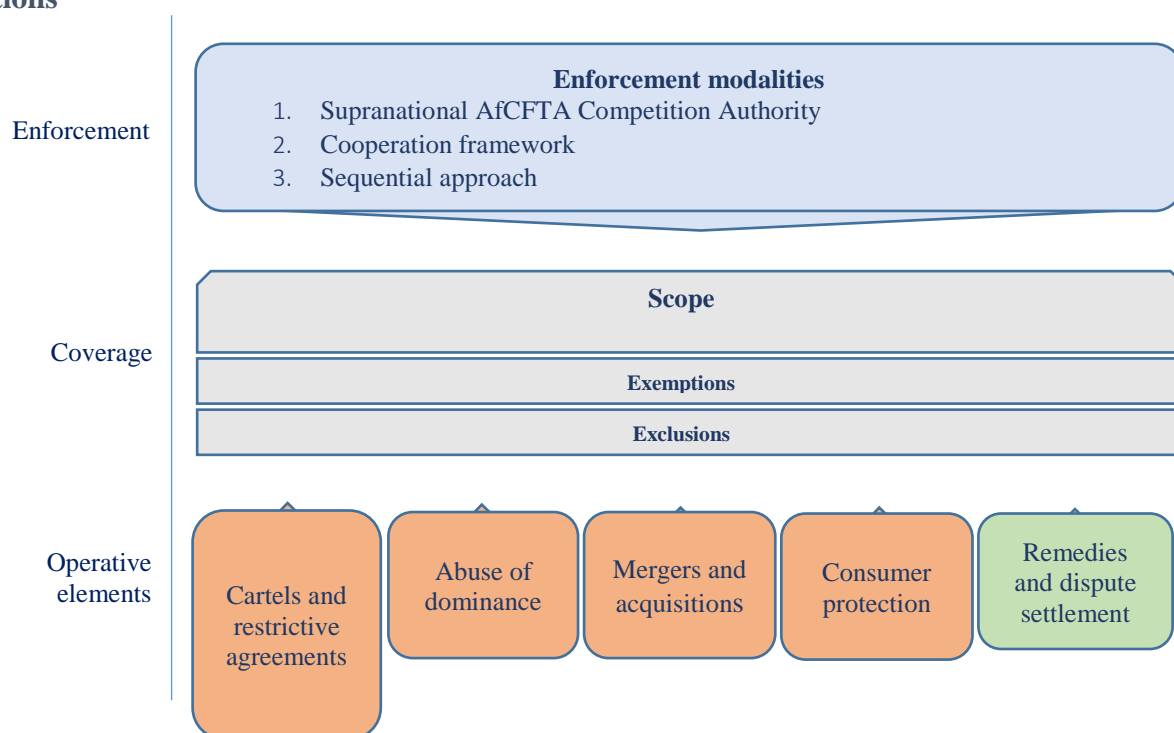
(c) Enforcement of the protocol, in particular whether a supranational AfCFTA competition authority (see figure III) is to be created – similar to the ECOWAS, East African Community and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) models; or a less intrusive competition framework (similar to the Southern African Development Community model); or a blend of the two approaches (similar to the European Union Competition Commission model).

Preliminary negotiating interests for Sierra Leone include: ensuring complementarities with the ECOWAS Competition Authority; supporting national level anti-competitive investigations and enforcement, given that enforcement capacities are currently non-existent and likely to remain as such for the immediate future unless a budgetary space is identified; and aligning the current draft-form of the country’s competition policy with Consumer Protection Law.

The competition policy priorities for Sierra Leone are likely to remain the protection of small traders and small and medium-sized enterprises from unfair import competition. In practice, investigations of import and domestic anticompetitive practices are similar, and Sierra Leone could look to pool ECOWAS resources to support both import and domestic competition issues.

Figure III

Schematic overview of the African Continental Free Trade Area competition protocol options



Sources: *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa IX: Next Steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area* (ECA, and others 2019).

7. Phase II: Protocol on intellectual property rights

The Protocol on intellectual property (IP) rights will form part of Phase II negotiations. Box 1 outlines the three options identified for regional economic integration in IP rights.

Box 1. Options for regional economic integration in intellectual property rights	
<i>Options for regional economic integration in intellectual property rights</i>	<i>Relevance for Sierra Leone</i>
Arrangements for regional cooperation and sharing of experiences on IP rights in general	Deals with relevant administrative and enforcement issues while preserving policy space, but may not be comprehensive
Regional filing systems, usually for patents, but also for trademarks and industrial designs – for example, the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO)	Less beneficial to least developed countries and would likely be in favour of larger economies attracting foreign investors; technology transfer depends on embedding IP regimes in national systems
Development of one substantial law or unification of laws for members of a regional organization – such as, the African Intellectual Property Organization	Countries with low negotiating capacity can be overshadowed; harmonization can affect the flexibilities of lower-income States, that Sierra Leone may need

Box 2 identifies some suggested legislation and protocols to enact in order to prepare for IP negotiations under AfCFTA.

Box 2. Suggested legislation and protocols
Provide the minimum requirement for the protection of traditional knowledge, genetic resources and cultural expressions, but with sufficient flexibility for domestic law and multilateral negotiations on these issues.
Ratify the Marrakech Treaty, with the additional commitment to adhere to any other multilateral agreement that promotes access to work for persons with disabilities.
Ratify the protocol amending the 2005 Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement in order to benefit from the facilitated production and exportation of pharmaceuticals for a regional trade agreement in which 50 per cent of the members are least developed countries.

Source: Adapted from *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa IX: Next Steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area* (ECA, and others, 2019), and authors' analysis based on consultations.

Sierra Leone had ratified 7 out of 26 international treaties on IP, with 7.7 per cent of the total in force in 2017.¹³ By 2019, that number had increased to 7 treaties ratified out of 34, with 20.6 per cent in force. The country is a member of ARIPO and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); implementing the TRIPS Agreement was mostly based on international pressure rather than incentives on how the protocols may be beneficial.

IP is not specifically mentioned in the Sierra Leone Constitution, and administration of IP rights is carried out under the Office of the Administrator and Registrar General (OARG), which also coordinates the country's membership of both WIPO and ARIPO. At present, there are three IP-related pieces of legislation – the Copyright Act (2011), the Trademarks Act (2014), and the Patents and Industrial Designs Act (2014) – all without accompanying regulations, which makes operationalization a challenge. Regulations for the three pieces of legislation have been drafted and are ready to be tabled in Parliament. They call for the creation of an Intellectual Property Agency under OARG, with specific powers and functions to administer IP rights and having a transitional period of five years before becoming independent of OARG.

There are not many specialists in IP in the public sector; encouragingly, OARG has been empowering its office with graduates of the recently offered master's programme on IP. Many trade agreements require countries to establish bodies and agencies that perform IP-related functions – such as registration, investigation and adjudication – domestically; however, as with many smaller countries and least developed countries, capacity is a concern. Issues relating to IP tend to arise across borders, which poses a further challenge for enforcement in low-capacity environments. Opportunities for leveraging regional capacity are welcome and require further investigation.

Certain large enterprises, that base their product reputation on quality, or have easily copied packaging, are concerned about IP issues when trading, especially with regard to cross-border trade. There is, however, a general sense that applying for legal protection (such as patents) is not productive as enforcement can be lengthy, costly and ineffective (even through fast-track courts), with few (if any) legal professionals having knowledge of the subject. There is no dedicated dispute resolution for IP issues, nor harmonization or communication between relevant agencies on how to manage IP issues. Creators and innovators are not aware that they can protect their products, especially as it concerns the results of traditional knowledge such as music, designs and consumables, which are especially prevalent in Sierra Leone.

A number of suggested strategies include: improving dispute resolution mechanisms through a newly constituted tribunal for copyrights under the proposed IP agency of OARG; registering patents with regional authorities; training customs officers to identify IP infringement at the borders; and enhancing anti-dumping measures. Given that IP is a controversial topic of negotiation, the importance of transparency is emphasized. In addition, there is a call for major interventions on awareness-raising in the general public and among various government bodies involved in enforcement (for example, the justice department, police, customs, and the National Revenue Authority) on the legal protections of IP and the penalties for infringement. Civil society groups of creators and innovators can come together to represent the interests of those who can benefit from IP regulations.

¹³ ECA, and others, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa: Next Steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area* (Addis Ababa, 2019).

The following list provides some key preparatory steps for AfCFTA negotiations on IP rights:

- (a) Coordinating with OARG throughout AfCFTA negotiations on IP;
- (b) Passing key pending legislation, determining a timeline for the establishment of the required committees and national bodies;
- (c) Securing the financial commitment necessary for fast-tracking the Intellectual Property Development Plan and the establishment of the proposed intellectual property agency;
- (d) Establishing an intellectual property tribunal to adjudicate on cases relating to the violation of IP rights;
- (e) Identifying preferences for guidelines on procedures for the enforcement of IP rights, in particular with regard to the consequences of the three options (see box 1 above), informed by recommendations of the OARG review of current laws and regulations on copyrights, trademarks, patents, and industrial designs;
- (f) Collaborating with creative industries to establish the Collecting Society of Sierra Leone and its associated bodies to coordinate IP issues in the entertainment and other creative sectors;
- (g) Developing a communications plan on IP to ensure transparency and to highlight its benefits, including broad public consultations and debates emphasizing the benefits of registering IP and having regulations that accounts for traditional knowledge; capacity-building for key stakeholders, including women, young people and those with disabilities; and training to ensure negotiators are properly equipped and aware of available policy options;
- (h) Continuing engagement with ARIPO and WIPO to ensure national interests are represented, determine suggestions for joint filing capacity and enforcement options at the regional level, and address the ratification of relevant treaties, through OARG;
- (i) Leveraging capacity-building and technical assistance provided by ARIPO, WIPO, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and others, to ensure that negotiators are prepared and that relevant stakeholders from the Judiciary, Police, Standards Bureau, and the National Revenue Authority Customs involved in enforcement, are all aware of IP-related regulations.

Preliminary AfCFTA negotiating interests for Sierra Leone include the following areas:

- (a) Possibilities for enforcement support and harmonization regionally;
- (b) Potential for tapping into collective capacity in the region: for example, on dispute resolution, especially in the short-to-medium term until domestic structures are established;
- (c) Ensure ARIPO is given observer status in AfCFTA protocols on IP and encourage the development of its capacity to take on a stronger role at the regional level so that countries with lower capacity can pool resources.

8. Phase III: Protocol on digital trade and e-commerce

E-commerce was first included as a topic in a trade agreement in 2001; since then, the number of trade agreements that deal with e-commerce has been increasing, now representing 30 per cent of all notified trade agreements with WTO. At the thirty-third ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union on 12 February 2020, the African Union Commissioner for Trade and Industry announced that a third phase of AfCFTA negotiations would be scheduled on digital trade and e-commerce.

Traditionally, e-commerce articles (and even chapters) in trade agreements have tended to involve relatively uncontroversial provisions governing topics, such as ensuring that laws recognize electronic signatures or encouraging paperless trading and digital trade facilitation. More recently, proposals – especially by the United States and Japan – have contained new issues around cross-border data flow, while the European Union has been more involved in data protection and security, and China in measures to facilitate parcel deliveries (or the sort purchased through Alibaba). These countries have put considerable pressure on African, and other, countries to join WTO negotiations on these new issues, as well as a separate plurilateral agreement of at least 76 countries (including, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya and Nigeria).

The AfCFTA Protocol on Digital Trade and E-commerce will provide Sierra Leone and Africa with the opportunity to collectively establish common positions on e-commerce, harmonize digital economy regulations and leverage the benefits of e-commerce (see table 12).

The following list provides some key preparatory steps for AfCFTA e-commerce negotiations:

- (a) Establishing and improving public-sector coordination. This includes a working group involving the Ministry of Information (which bears responsibility for legislation on e-commerce); a focal point from the Bank of Sierra Leone (to cover e-payments and mobile money); the Director of Science, Technology and Innovation (who have undertaken a mapping of the digital entrepreneurship ecosystem in Sierra Leone); and MTI;

- (b) Improving coordination of the digital private sector in Sierra Leone.

Preliminary AfCFTA e-commerce negotiating interests for Sierra Leone include the following areas:

- (a) Harmonization of data regulations to better assist small digital businesses in Sierra Leone in gaining access to other African markets;

- (b) Support with enforcement, given the limited enforcement capacity of Sierra Leone on topics such as data security, data protection, cybercrime and digital consumer protection.

Table 12

Schematic overview of African Continental Free Trade Area digital trade and e-commerce protocol options

Area	Types of provisions
Market access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customs duties Services
Enabling digital trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law – Model Law Electronic/signatures Paperless trading
Protection of users of electronic commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumer protection Protection of personal information Unsolicited electronic messages
Other cutting-edge issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-border information flows Data localization Treatment of source code and other IP provisions

Source: Adapted from the *Digital trade-related provisions in regional trade agreements: existing models and lessons for the multilateral trade system* (Wu, Mark, 2017); see <https://e15initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/RTA-Exchange-Digital-Trade-Mark-Wu-Final-2.pdf>.

9. Flexibilities, safeguards, exceptions and technical assistance

Sierra Leone has clear trade opportunities under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, but risks including unanticipated and damaging import competition to vulnerable sectors or threats to fiscal revenue. AfCFTA includes protection and support that can be used in the case of risks or threats posed by the Agreement. These AfCFTA protections can be categorized into four types: flexibilities, safeguards, exceptions and technical assistance.

Preparatory steps must be taken to monitor the need for the application of AfCFTA flexibilities, safeguards, exceptions and technical assistance (see table 13), and to ensure that Sierra Leone is prepared to use them when necessary.

Table 13

Rights to flexibilities, safeguards, exceptions and technical assistance under the African Continental Free Trade Area

Flexibilities		
Provision	Right	Preparatory steps required
Art. 15 Waiver of Obligations	Legal basis for a State Party to request a waiver from any obligations held to under the Agreement and the conditions under which such a waiver will be considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the National AfCFTA Committee is aware of the legal basis for the waiver of obligations
Protocol on Trade in Goods, art. 11 Modification of Schedules of Tariff Concessions	Flexibility for State Parties in “exceptional circumstances” to request modifications to their tariff liberalization concessions and the detailed procedures to be followed therein.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the impact of AfCFTA imports through consultations with private sector business associations and evaluation of customs data

Protocol on Trade in Goods, art. 24 Infant Industries	Legal basis for taking “measures for protecting” infant industries deemed as having “strategic importance at the national level”. Guidelines are to be adopted for the implementation of this article.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with State parties to AfCFTA through the secretariat to conclude guidelines for infant industries Monitor any strategically sensitive sectors
Protocol on Trade in Services, art. 23 Modification of Schedules of Specific Commitments	Flexibility for State Parties to request modifications to their services liberalization concessions and the detailed procedures to be followed therein, including for the provision of compensatory adjustments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the impact of AfCFTA services imports through consultations with private sector business associations
Safeguards		
<i>Provision</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Preparatory steps required</i>
Art. 17 Anti-dumping and countervailing measures	Cognizant of the capacity constraints faced by many African countries in the use of such measures, guidelines are provided for the implementation of trade remedies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the technical capacity to lodge trade defence cases (both under AfCFTA and WTO) In the interim, coordinate with ECOWAS to pool technical resources for trade defence investigations and monitor sectors for instances of damaging import surges, or the threat thereof
Exceptions		
<i>Provision</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Preparatory steps required</i>
Protocol on Trade in Goods, art. 26 General Exceptions and Protocol on Trade in Services, Art. 15 General Exceptions	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)-inspired general exceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the National Coordinating Committee on Trade (NCCT) is aware of exceptions (which are applicable both under AfCFTA and WTO)
Protocol on Trade in Goods, art. 27 Security Exceptions and Protocol on Trade in Services, 16 Security Exceptions	GATT-inspired security exceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure NCCT is aware of exceptions (which are applicable both under AfCFTA and WTO)
Protocol on Trade in Goods, art. 28 Balance of Payments and Protocol on Trade in Services; art. 14 Restrictions to Safeguard the Balance of Payments	Flexibility for States parties in, or under imminent threat of, critical balance of payments difficulties to take restrictive measures, including on payments or transfers, to remedy such circumstances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure NCCT is aware of exceptions (which are applicable both under AfCFTA and WTO)
Capacity-building		
<i>Provision</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Preparatory steps required</i>
Protocol on Trade in Goods, art. 29 Technical Assistance, Capacity-Building and Cooperation	Calls for technical assistance and capacity-building to be delivered by the AfCFTA secretariat for the purposes of implementation of the Trade in Goods Protocol.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor implementation of the Protocol on Trade in Goods and lodge technical assistance and capacity-building requests with the AfCFTA secretariat if necessary
Protocol on Trade in Services, art. 27 Technical Assistance, Capacity-Building and Cooperation	Calls for technical assistance and capacity-building to be delivered in coordination with the AfCFTA secretariat, States parties, regional economic communities and development partners for strengthening capacity of States parties in the supply of services and facilitating the implementation of the Trade in Services Protocol.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the implementation of the Protocol on Trade in Services and lodge technical assistance and capacity-building requests with the AfCFTA secretariat if necessary

Source: Authors’ analysis based on a review of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and corresponding stakeholder interviews.

Note: For simplification, this list does not consider non-binding, best-endeavour or passive obligations or rights other than when they comprise core elements of the Agreement.

10. Sierra Leone – implementing institutions under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

Sierra Leone is legally obligated under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area to designate or establish several national-level institutions for the purpose of undertaking the implementation of the Agreement and liaising with other country counterparts.

The principle institution is the National AfCFTA Committee (see table 14) and the designation of contact and focal points for the substantive requirements of the Agreement, such as those on non-tariff barriers, trade facilitation or customs cooperation (see table 15). These contact and focal points in turn drive the fulfilment of the substantive commitments of the Agreement, including reporting on compliance with those commitments, and reporting up to the National AfCFTA Committee.

To avoid the proliferation of institutions, the recommendation is that Sierra Leone National Coordinating Committee on Trade (NCCT) be re-established and granted the responsibility of the Sierra Leone National AfCFTA Committee alongside other related responsibilities, including for the AGOA trade arrangement. Subcommittees, for example on non-tariff barriers, can operate under and report to the National AfCFTA Committee.

Notwithstanding its direct responsibilities under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, NCCT can bear responsibility for the utilization and involvement of Sierra Leone in the AfCFTA complementary tools, including providing trade data to the African Trade Observatory.

Table 14

Functions of the National African Continental Free Trade Area Committee

<i>National African Continental Free Trade Area Committee functions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Undertaking negotiations and deliberations▪ Mainstreaming gender and youth issues into the National Trade Strategy implementation▪ Leveraging political will to ensure the Government of Sierra Leone follows through on trade, export and investment measures relating to the expansion of Sierra Leonean trade and investment engagement with Africa▪ Implementing the AfCFTA annexes▪ Managing AfCFTA communications and AfCFTA national awareness-raising campaigns▪ Ensuring stakeholder buy-in▪ Monitoring and evaluation▪ Mobilizing internal and external financing for National Trade Strategy implementation

Table 15

Functions of the national monitoring committees and national focal points for non-tariff barriers

<i>Non-tariff barrier national monitoring committee</i> <i>Functions^a</i>	<i>Non-tariff barrier national focal points</i> <i>Functions^b</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify, resolve and monitor NTBs 2. Define process of elimination 3. Confirm deadlines for action 4. Agree on recourse due to non-action 5. Define mandate and responsibilities for NTB institutional structures 6. Provide clear guidelines to the business community for the resolution of identified NTBs 7. Any other related activities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate implementation of the AfCFTA mechanism for the elimination of NTBs 2. Provide secretariat services to the national monitoring committee 3. Facilitate the removal of NTBs and reporting on their elimination 4. Track and monitor NTBs through utilization of the reporting tools 5. Provide clear guidelines to the business community on the areas identified as NTBs 6. Sensitize stakeholders on the monitoring and evaluation mechanism and NTBs reporting tools 7. Submit reports to the secretariat on identified and resolved NTBs for record purposes 8. Provide assistance to the facilitator in the process of resolving NTBs as necessary 9. Any other related activities

Sources: ^aArticle 8, annex 5; and ^barticle 9, annex 5 of the Protocol on Trade in Goods of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

B. Trade support

1. Market segmented export opportunities

The export opportunities for Sierra Leone are identified through the following three-step methodology:

Priority products identification: The ITC Export Potential Map – employed to identify unmet export potential and opportunities for Sierra Leonean export diversification. This methodology is based on a decomposition of the country's potential exports of products to given markets. It uses the following two indicators: an export potential indicator that identifies products in which Sierra Leone already has proven international competitiveness and prospects for expansion; and a product diversification indicator that identifies new products not exported but which could be feasible, given the current export basket of Sierra Leone and the export baskets of similar countries. These identified products were complemented with feedback from stakeholder interviews and the priority products identified through the Sierra Leone AGOA response strategy.

Preference margin analysis: The margin of preference that Sierra Leonean exports enjoy relative to world exporters is calculated for each market for which priority products are identified to have potential in step 1. Preferences are identified relative to most-favoured nation rates according to the following schemes: AGOA, the European

Union Everything but Arms, China-DFQF scheme, ETLS and AfCFTA. These markets accounted for 93 per cent of Sierra Leonean exports during the period 2016–2018.

COVID-19 impact marker: A green-amber-red score is calculated for the approximate impact of COVID-19 on the demand, transportation and supply chains of each product. This incorporates calculated product price changes between December 2019 and May 2020, adverse transportation has an impact on fresh and perishable items, and causes disruption to the access of inputs for complex supply chains (for more information see chapter 3 section 2).

Table 16 shows the unmet export potential for priority products in target markets. It is clear that considerable potential exists for expanding exports to benefit from sizeable preference margins in the AfCFTA market. Preference margins in AfCFTA countries are often considerably larger than the traditional markets of Sierra Leone.

In the short term, exports of fresh products and light manufacturing goods with complex value chains may be disrupted by COVID-19 related restrictions. Regional trade, in particular to Mano River Union countries and ECOWAS, will be an important outlet for trade as commodity prices, global shipping and airfreight routes struggle due to COVID-19. Sustaining improvements to regional trade can help to build a more diversified export base far beyond the pandemic.

Table 16
Unmet export potential: preference margins for priority products in target markets (percentage)

	COVID-19 impact marker	United States- AGOA	European Union- EBA	China- DFQF scheme	ECOWAS- ETLS	AfCFTA	AfCFTA target markets
Cashew ^a		0	0				Egypt (20), Morocco (25)
Coffee ^b		0	8			30	Algeria (30), Morocco (30)
Cocoa		0	0				
Cassava “gari”		5	4		20		
Palm oil		0	6		25	30	Cameroon (30)
Lime					20		
Ginger		0.3	0		20		
Fresh fish		0.2	8		10	30	Algeria (30), Angola (22), Cameroon (20), Morocco (10), Tunisia (28), Zambia (25)
Frozen fish		0	10		15	30	South Africa (12)
Frozen crustaceans (crabs, lobsters, shrimps, prawns)		0	10	6	19	30	Cameroon (30)
Soft drinks					20	36	Algeria (30), Cameroon (30), Egypt (30), Kenya (25), Morocco (40), Tunisia (36), United Republic of Tanzania (25)
Alcoholic beverages					20	49	Cameroon (30), Kenya (25), Morocco (49), United Republic of Tanzania (25)
Apparel		10.8	12		20		
Mattresses					20		
Metals				0-3			
Gold							

Sources: ITC TradeMap, ITC Export Potential Map, ITC Export Diversification Map, ITC Market Access Map, Sierra Leone AGOA Response Strategy, stakeholder interviews.

Abbreviations: AGOA, African Growth Opportunity Act; China-DFQF, China – Duty-Free Quota-Free for Least Developed Country scheme; EBA, Everything but Arms initiative; ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States; ETLS, ECOWAS-Trade Liberalization Scheme.

Notes: AfCFTA target markets are identified on the bases of high margins of preference and export potential identified in the ITC Export Potential Map and Export Diversification Map. The COVID-19 impact marker is scored on the basis of product price changes between December 2019 and May 2020, adverse transportation impacts on fresh and perishable items, and disruption to the access of inputs for complex supply chains. Displayed margins represent averages across ranges of products, such as different types of frozen fish, as reported by ITC Market Access Map.

^{a, b} These products notably benefit from dedicated sectoral policies: Sierra Leone Cashew Policy (2019) and Sierra Leone Coffee Policy (2020).

Table 17 highlights the opportunities for export diversification into new products. These represent frontier priority sectors for products that Sierra Leone does not export (or for which volumes are extremely low) but which could be feasible given the country's current export basket and the export baskets of similar countries. If exports can be developed across some of these opportunities, it would help to diversify Sierra Leonean exports and better place the country for future economic crises. Again, the AfCFTA markets provide some of the highest preference margins for attracting new anchor investment and exports.

In the ECOWAS market, COVID-19 demand may create opportunities for Sierra Leonean exports, including in traditionally female-dominated sectors, of simple textile face masks, chemical or alcohol-based disinfectants and sanitizers, and palm oil-based soaps. Ventures into new fresh product exports, such as pineapples, mangos and fruit juice, may be more difficult in the short term, though the latter in particular would benefit from extremely high preference margins in some promising AfCFTA markets.

Table 17

Export diversification: preference margins for priority products in target markets (percentage)

	COVID-19 impact marker	United States-AGOA	European Union-EBA	China-DFQF scheme	ECOWAS-ETLS	AfCFTA	AfCFTA target markets
Coconut oil		0	6			8	Madagascar (7.5)
Groundnut oil			4			30	Angola (10), Cameroon (30)
Cocoa paste		0	10				
Sesamum seeds				5			
Natural honey		0.5	17				
Bovine meats						30	Algeria (30)
Pineapples and mangos			4	12	13		
Fruit juice			28		15	60	Cameroon (30), Egypt (60), Morocco (7.5)
Soap					26		
Chemical or alcohol disinfectants and sanitizers					20		
Cosmetics					20		
Pigments and preparations containing titanium dioxide (colouring, sunscreen or paint)			7			15	Algeria (15), Cameroon (10), Morocco (2.5), South Africa (5)

Wooden furniture		0	0	19	60	Algeria (30), Cameroon (30), Egypt (60), Kenya (35), Morocco (30)
Textile face mask				20		

Sources: ITC TradeMap, ITC Export Potential Map, ITC Export Diversification Map, ITC Market Access Map, Sierra Leone AGOA Response Strategy, stakeholder interviews.

Abbreviations: AGOA, African Growth Opportunity Act; China-DFQF, China – Duty-Free Quota-Free for Least Developed Country scheme; EBA, Everything but Arms initiative; ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States; ETLs, ECOWAS-Trade Liberalization Scheme.

Notes: AfCFTA target markets are identified on the bases of high margins of preference and export potential identified in the ITC Export Potential Map and Export Diversification Map. The COVID-19 impact marker is scored on the basis of product price changes between December 2019 and May 2020, adverse transportation impacts on fresh and perishable items, and disruption to the access of inputs for complex supply chains. Displayed margins represent averages across ranges of products, such as different types of frozen fish, as reported by ITC Market Access Map.

2. European Union – “Everything but Arms” market

The Everything but Arms initiative provides complete duty-free access into the European Union market for Sierra Leone and other least developed countries.

The European Union remains the most important export market for Sierra Leone, in particular for traditional exports like cocoa beans. Scope remains for expanding fishery exports (once sanitary and phytosanitary certification issues have been dealt with – although these have persisted now for at least 15 years), alongside textiles and apparel, palm oil and coffee.

3. United States – African Growth Opportunity Act market

The AGOA initiative provides duty-free access into the United States market for 6,900 products from Sierra Leone and 38 other qualifying African countries until 2025. Through AGOA, Sierra Leonean exporters can gain exemption from duties applied under the usual United States import regime, including 6 per cent tariffs on frozen fish, a 1.9 cents/kg tariff on honey, and various tariffs on vegetable and fruit products. Nevertheless, as the above analysis shows, the preference margins accorded by the United States on priority products for Sierra Leone are often much smaller than those available in the European market, and especially ECOWAS and AfCFTA markets.

Sierra Leone has notable unmet export potential to the United States market in basic agricultural products, including cocoa beans and coffee. Fishery products provide scope for export diversification in this market. Beyond these, the Sierra Leone National AGOA Response strategy 2019–2025 further identifies the following priority products:

- Agriculture and agroprocessing:
 - Cashew
 - Cocoa
 - Processed cassava – “Gari”
 - Ginger
 - Palm oil
- Fish and fishery products
- Natural honey
- Textile

As required of African countries in the renewed AGOA, Sierra Leone launched a National AGOA Response strategy in 2019, with the aim of providing a structured framework

to respond more effectively to the market access opportunity provided by the United States. However, to date, Sierra Leonean exports to the United States under the Act remain quite low.

4. China – duty-free quota-free for least developed country scheme

The China-DFQF scheme provides duty-free quota-free market access to exporters from countries that are least developed and maintain diplomatic relations with China. Although most Sierra Leonean exports to China are metals (especially titanium, aluminium and bauxite, and iron ore) there is potential for exports of sesamum seeds, pineapples, mangos, and frozen crustaceans.

5. Economic Community of West African States – trade liberalization scheme

The ECOWAS scheme – ETLS – provides for duty-free trade in primary goods and, through approved factories, duty-free processed and manufactured goods in the ECOWAS region. Average tariff rates of protection in ECOWAS are higher than in the European Union or United States, allowing for a greater degree of tariff preference for Sierra Leonean exporters in this region.

The Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture is responsible for receiving and supporting businesses with ETLS applications. Applications are reviewed by a committee hosted by MTI; however, the committee for reviewing ETLS applications meets only infrequently and the Ministry of Fisheries is not present on the committee, despite the presence and potential of fishery exports in the ECOWAS region. Beyond fishery exports to ECOWAS (many of which are subsequently re-exported elsewhere), there is potential for Sierra Leone to satisfy demand for palm oil, soap and processed wood.

Even with roughly 22 Sierra Leonean producers being approved for ETLS exports of processed or manufactured goods, stakeholders suggested that only 5 actively export, and only 2 at a meaningful scale (in palm and vegetable cooking oils). Several exporters explained that approvals for ETLS applications can take two years to obtain and ETLS documentation are frequently ignored or rejected by Guinean, Nigerian or other customs officials at ports and borders.

6. Rest of Africa – African Continental Free Trade Area

As one of the founding signatories of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, Sierra Leonean exporters are eligible to benefit from preferential access to the markets of other African countries that have ratified the Agreement. Tariffs on trade under the Agreement are set to be progressively reduced from the start of trading in July 2020 (though owing to COVID-19 disruptions, this timeline is likely to shift until 2021).

Sierra Leone has notable export potential in all African subregions. Demand exists for Sierra Leonean exports of palm oil, fishery products, processed wood and furniture, and textiles in East Africa and Central Africa. Similarly, coffee has potential in Southern Africa and oil seeds, and oleaginous fruit and bovine meats have potential in North Africa.

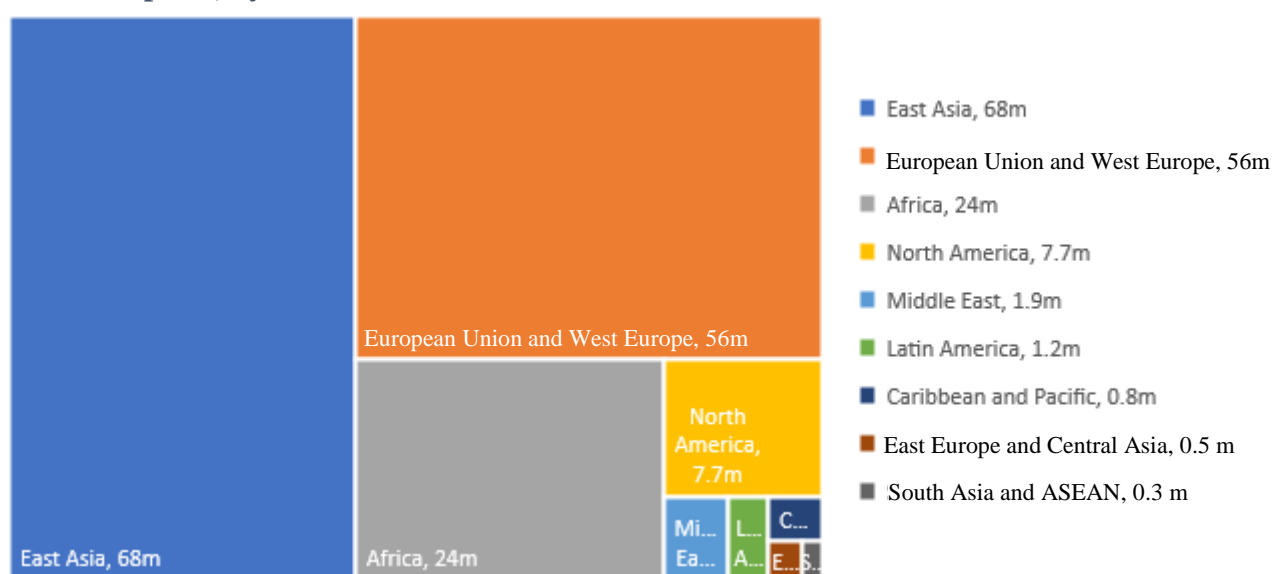
Considerable preference margins are available to Sierra Leonean exports in these markets. For example, fruit juices and wooden furniture preference margins can reach as high as 60 per cent in Egypt. Preference margins on products such as fish and coffee are much higher in several of these markets than in the European Union or the United States. Preferences on

soft drinks, which have in the past been exported from Sierra Leone to Mano River Union markets, are likewise higher in several AfCFTA markets.

7. Market diversification

Market diversification is important to develop the resilience of exports against slowdowns in isolated markets and to reduce reliance on mineral exports and volatile commodity prices. New markets can open up new options for diversifying exported products. At present, Sierra Leonean exports are dominated by the East Asian (in particular Chinese) and European markets, followed by the (mostly West) African and North American markets (see figure IV).

Figure IV
Current exports, by destination



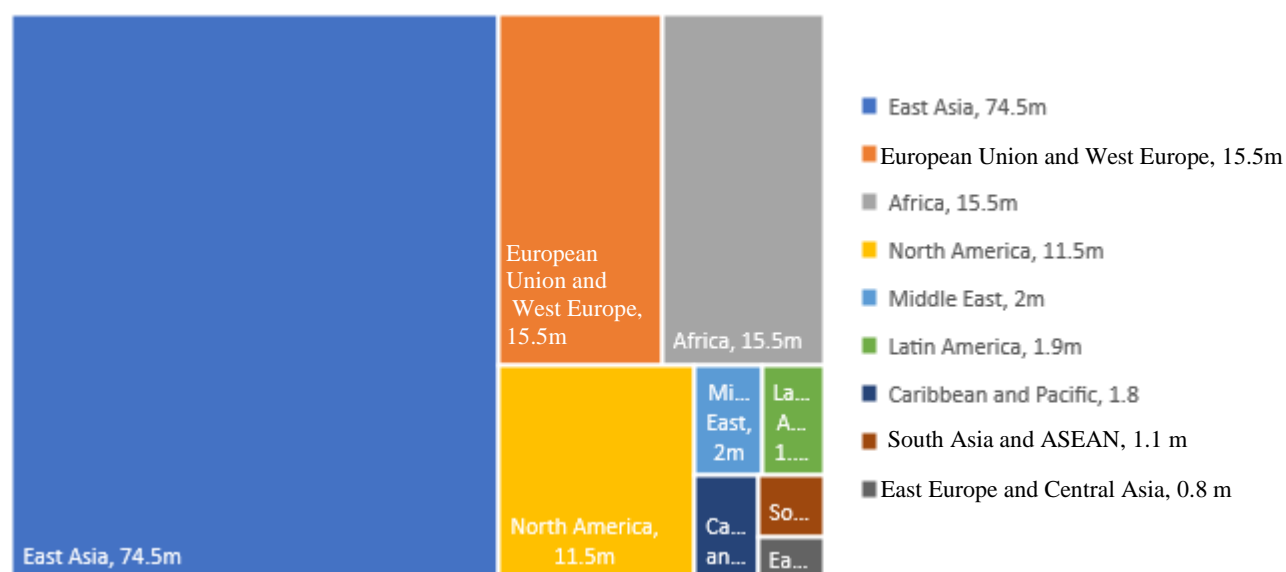
Source: ITC TradeMap (2020).

Note: Certain mineral exports in the Central Bank of Sierra Leone trade data appear to be excluded from the customs records sourced for the above data set, but do not detract from the broader implications.

Figure V shows the additional unmet export potential estimated in Sierra Leonean export markets using the ITC Export Trade Potential Map methodology. Considerably more export potential exists in the East Asian market (much of this amounting to timber exports to China, and fish). Much export potential exists in the European, African, and North American markets.

A smaller amount of potential is also identified in the Middle East and Latin American markets. Products with identified potential include cocoa, fish, wood, furniture and precious metals. In addition to the implementation of the National Trade Strategy, the country's policy coordinating institutions may look to such future trading options.

Figure V
Unmet export potential, by destination



Source: ITC Export Potential Map (2020).

8. Non-tariff barriers

Many of the key constraints to exporting in Sierra Leone concern foundational infrastructural and supply-side constraints. For the manufacturing sector, attaining access to finance, land and electricity are among the greatest challenges. In agriculture, inadequate feeder roads increase transport costs, limited access to electricity constrains agribusiness, the absence of storage facilities results in post-harvest losses, and finance is expensive, while access to land is a challenge for large-scale commercial investors (see table 18). Women entrepreneurs and traders face additional barriers of access to inputs and finance, and generally depend on less reliable modes of transport.

The most frequently cited business constraint in stakeholder interviews was the unpredictable and heavy tax regime. This, alongside the high costs of business registration and certification from the Environmental Protection Agency, provides an incentive for informal business activity. Informality in turn limits the ability of these entrepreneurs and traders, many of them women, to make use of trade provisions and other formal structures such as government benefits, legal protections and insurance. In addition, it leads to the payment of informal fees and increased harassment along cross-border trade routes; while this poses an additional burden on businesses, often the unpredictability of governance poses a greater risk.

Beyond these foundational and broad issues, exporters face challenges with export procedures and market compliance. There is a lack of clear information on export processes and procedures (including compliance with rules, levies and concessions), the multitude of agencies involved adds financial and temporal costs, and the Sierra Leone Standards Bureau (SLSB) and Ministry of Health, when appropriate, lack the capacity to certify internationally recognized standards. The Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development highlights the cost and time of export procedures as being a particularly burdensome constraint to trading.

Table 18
Top export challenges identified by agricultural producers and exporters

1.	Unavailability of drying floors and facilities (poor infrastructure)
2.	Poor road network
3.	Poor transport facilities
4.	Volatile export market in Sierra Leone
5.	Produce Monitoring Board contracted to do quality checks for a fee of 2.5 per cent of free on board
6.	Standards Bureau checks standards (moisture content, mould and level of defects) for a fee of \$200/shipment (for beans)
7.	Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture receives \$66.67/shipment as a service fee for certificates of origin
8.	Port documentation takes one week

Source: Export and Import Challenges. Presentation by the Executive Secretary of Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development, Ahmed Nanoh, 2019.

As proposed solutions, the Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development suggests setting fixed time frames for each step in the customs and port-clearing procedure, reviewing and simplifying approval processes, resolving inconsistencies or conflicting interpretations of procedures, allowing 15 days for product clearing at Freetown terminal before costs are incurred, and establishing a one-stop-shop for all agri-input duty free and export products. Another solution requested by the Commercial Agricultural Producers and Processors Association is for the creation of online one-stop-shop platforms for the processing of importing and exporting documentation.

In addition, businesses report that tariffs and taxes associated with imports that are inputs in production contribute to the high cost of doing business. In particular, tariffs on equipment limit technology transfer and therefore more competitive products, quality improvements, and skill enhancements. However, the case of the solar industry, in which professional associations worked with government counterparts to waive import duties on certified solar products, shows how MTI and its partners can meet this challenge. The removal of tariffs on imports under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area can encourage sourcing of inputs in production from the region.

Reducing the cost and risk of doing business is a current priority of the Ministry within its five-year work plan. As part of a World Bank initiative, with support from MTI, a Doing Business Reform Roadmap was produced in May 2019, detailing recommended regulatory and administrative reform options. The 64 recommendations require costing, the identification of resources and considerable coordination across the government with leadership from MTI to produce tangible results. Gender can be mainstreamed into the Roadmap to inform gender-sensitive budgeting and roll-out.

9. Trade-related infrastructure

Port infrastructure

Interviewees of the private sector reported being generally pleased with the quality of trade-related infrastructure in Sierra Leone. The Queen Elizabeth II port run by Bolloré was described as “almost like a miracle” in one interview, though charges and fees were considered to be relatively high. They found road access to the port congested, though traffic within the

port was reported to have considerably improved with expedited cleaning of goods. The main constraint to maritime trade was identified as shipping costs, which are high, due to the relatively small volumes of freight being exported from Sierra Leone and convoluted transit routes (for example, Sierra Leonean exports reportedly often pass through Europe before reaching Nigeria). As a result, most traders considered road transport to be preferable in targeting regional markets. However, shipping companies interviewed showed a willingness to open intra-African routes if evidence of sufficient trade volumes emerges.

Road infrastructure

Stakeholder interviewees considered the roads in Sierra Leone to outrival those of neighbouring countries. Exports to Liberia are constrained during rainy seasons as the road is not fully tarred, but is expected to improve once construction on the Sierra Leone-Liberia road is concluded, making the opportunities for trade through this route considerable. Stakeholders cited feeder roads as an impediment to improving agricultural trade with large agricultural producers, including Socfin and Dole, reporting to invest in local road infrastructure. Recently installed weighbridges can provide a method of assessment and much-needed data of the value and volume of goods traded by road and can support the enforcement of transport standards; the Transport Infrastructure Development Unit recommends encouraging the installation of additional weighbridges along critical trade routes.

Airfreight infrastructure

Airfreight is used to connect to more distant regional markets, such as Nigeria, for high value products. Stakeholders reported a lack of appropriate cold chain facilities at Lungi airport as a constraint to high-value fresh vegetable or fruit exports.

Priorities for trade-related infrastructure

Stakeholders identified the following areas as priorities for improving trade-related infrastructure in Sierra Leone:

- (a) Strengthening the national quality infrastructure (testing, metrology, inspection, certification standards and accreditation) to attain international recognition for facilitation of trade;
- (b) Coordination between agencies to implement an electronic single window for trade documentation: there reportedly was a tender for this under the previous Government, which would simply need to be reviewed and re-advertised;
- (c) Fish processing infrastructure to meet European Union and other international quality standards;
- (d) Patrol boats for illegal unregulated and unrecorded fishing;
- (e) Cold storage facilities at Lungi airport;
- (f) Formal markets with banking, storage, and child day-care facility areas to reduce road congestion, for example, at Lumley and Wellington;
- (g) Completion of the paving of Liberia road;

- (h) Coordination with Freetown City Council to reduce port road congestion;
- (i) Calibrated and accredited weighbridges to support evaluation of volume and value of traded goods.

In addition, the Government developed a set of 22 catalytic infrastructure proposals. The first cluster of these proposals includes the Lungi-Freetown bridge, a new airport terminal, Freetown waterfront, connecting coastal road and special economic zone. The centrepiece of this proposal is the Lungi-Freetown Bridge, designed to shift industrial development to the Lungi area. A second cluster involves a deep-sea port near Bonthe combined with a free trade zone, logistics hub, refinery and power station, and a rail link to Guinea and Mali. A third cluster concerns real estate development. Feasibility studies were conducted on several aspects of these clusters.

10. Quality and standards

To effectively trade under any international trade agreement and participate in global value chains, the capacity to comply with quality standards, technical regulations and market requirements has become essential, especially in the agribusiness and agrifood sectors.

Sierra Leone is a signatory to both the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization. Both agreements have provisions on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade, which are quality-related measures developed to ensure that goods traded from one country to another meet acceptable quality standards, country requirements and present no threat to health, safety and the environment.

The legislative, regulatory and administrative framework for food, animal, and plant health and agricultural products is fragmented. Legislation is generally outdated and not robust enough to meet international standards for agriculture and food exports. Their inadequacies may result in either non-competitive exports in international markets or the subjection of exports to non-tariff barriers in destination countries.

National Quality Infrastructure consists of SLSB, the Produce Monitoring Board, Crop Protection Services, Animal Health and Livestock Divisions of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Environmental Health Division and Pharmacy Board of Sierra Leone of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the National Water Quality Laboratory and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. Conformity Assessment – including inspection, testing and certification activities, ensuring that specified requirements relating to a product, process, body or person – are fulfilled and its facilitation is quite a challenge for the country's National Quality Infrastructure.

SLSB, established by an Act of Parliament, is a Conformity Assessment Body and has the legal mandate for the development and enforcement of standards nationally in conformity with regional and international standards. Its mandate includes activities in relation to metrology, standards development, testing, certification, implementation of standards in trade and industry, inspection of import and local products and training and education in Metrology, Standards, Testing and Quality assurance. SLSB is a member of international and regional

standards organizations,¹⁴ with which it works to develop national standards. It has developed a National Quality Policy which has not been implemented. As a Conformity Assessment and Standards Body, SLSB cannot adequately perform the tasks under its core mandate for the following reasons:

- (a) Inadequate physical and human resources: insufficiently trained staff, equipment and finances from the Government to cover its full scope of services;
- (b) Unaccredited laboratories: analysis, test results and certificates are not recognized in export markets;
- (c) Lack of coordination and unclear mandates between other regulators and line ministries.

To ensure that Sierra Leonean products remain competitive and comply with both standards and requirements of domestic and international markets, it needs to facilitate robust Conformity Assessment and Compliance measures to standards and market access requirements of its trading partners, especially for its agriculture and food commodities. This will require one or more Conformity Assessment bodies operating in the country and duly accredited by an independent Accreditation Body. In the absence of a functional independent Accreditation Body in the country, Sierra Leone can utilize the services of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization-supported Regional Accreditation body in Nigeria in the short term, before establishing its own in the medium-to-long term.

The Food Safety and Animal Feed legislation, which was enacted by the Parliament of Sierra Leone, deals with food safety and quality along the whole food chain consistent with the food control rules in CODEX and the WTO sanitary and phytosanitary agreements. In addition, it deals with the establishment of the National Food and Animal Safety Authority, which is the Competent Authority for sanitary and phytosanitary-related matters in Sierra Leone but is yet to be operationalized by the Government. While there are clearly defined roles for SLSB, the complementary roles of other MDAs involved in aspects of quality regulation are not clearly understood, which often results in duplication of functions.

Compliance to private standards such as Organic, Fair Trade, UTZ, and Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in Sierra Leone is becoming increasingly important in the cocoa, coffee and oil palm value chains, which are predominantly export-oriented. International supply chains often require these private standards, which enable the producers and farmers to earn premium prices. Capacity within the country for training, inspection and certification for these standards is still at a rudimentary stage and is quite expensive. The Welthungerhilfe Project under the European Union supported thousands of farmers and traders towards their certification and several exporters of cocoa to the European Union are supporting farmers and small holders for certification as part of supply chain arrangements.

At present, there is a low level of awareness around standards and quality issues in the country, especially in the light manufacturing sector and export value chains. Businesses report that there is little incentive to produce to standards as SLSB lacks the capacity to adequately check standards and the local market is undiscerning. Sierra Leone needs to tackle two key

¹⁴ Regional standards organizations such as: African Organization for Standardization (ARSO); International Organization for Standardization (ISO); CODEX, Intra-Africa Metrology System (AFRIMETS); International Organization for Legal Metrology (OIML); and International Electro-technical Commission (IEC) (affiliate).

issues concurrently in the Standards and Quality sectors – the legislative and regulatory frameworks, and National Quality Infrastructure.

11. Trade in services

Like many other African countries, the services sector plays an important role in the Sierra Leonean economy. The share of services in GDP increased from 25.1 per cent in 2003 to 35 per cent in 2011. The sector accounted for 5–15 per cent of total employment. Trade and tourism, transport and communication, banking and finance, and government services were the leading services activities in Sierra Leone in 2010. In the same decade, exports of commercial services represented 21.9 per cent of total exports of goods and non-factor services, and 26.8 per cent of total imports of goods and non-factor services. Tourism was a major export prior to the onset of civil war in 1991, which if resuscitated, has the potential to become a major foreign exchange earner. Estimates indicated that the annual contribution of tourism to GDP was around \$25 million in 2007, growing to around \$37 million in 2011.

Sierra Leone does not have a comprehensive policy on trade in services. Its current trade policy (2010) has a section on trade in services, which recognizes the importance of the services sector to the national economy and highlights the following two key objectives in this regard:

- (a) Provision of access to foreign services not readily available in Sierra Leone;
- (b) Support for the development of the services sector in Sierra Leone.

The section further highlights the Government's commitment to engage in WTO negotiations to improve access to specific services in which it has comparative advantages, and to liberalize specific markets with the regulatory and legal provisions necessary to protect consumers and develop the sectors. As part of the African Union-sponsored preparations for the AfCFTA services negotiations, a services regulatory assessment was undertaken in Sierra Leone, which could serve as a valuable resource for defining a services trade policy.

Notwithstanding the gaps in its Trade in Services framework, Sierra Leone has participated in services trade negotiations under the Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization, the European Union Economic Partnership Agreement and quite recently, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Sierra Leone made commitments covering more than 60 specific services under WTO GATS (see table 8 above with regard to GATS modes). Specifically, there are no limitations for all sectors on market access and national treatments for mode 1 (Cross-Border Supply) and mode 2 (Consumption Abroad). For mode 3 (Commercial Presence), foreign suppliers are in some cases required to form partnerships with local suppliers or register as a subsidiary in Sierra Leone. For mode 4 (Temporary Movement of Natural Persons), there are no commitments.

At the subregional level, ECOWAS developed a blueprint of an ECOWAS Services Market (ESM) linked directly to the trade objectives in the Revised ECOWAS Treaty and the ECOWAS Vision 2020, which highlights trade in services as a priority for the attainment of regional integration. Implementation of the ESM Blueprint should contribute to the realization of the objectives set under the Boosting Intra-Africa Trade initiative and the implementation of the AfCFTA Services Protocol. ESM is built around the following five interrelated and mutually reinforcing pillars:

- Development of sector-specific commitments, strategies and policies
- Enhanced regulatory frameworks for service sectors

- Improved capacity-building and technical assistance for services sector stakeholders
- Improvement in private sector development and engagement
- Full integration of ECOWAS into the continental and global services economy

As Sierra Leone negotiates the AfCFTA Services Protocol under the aegis of ECOWAS, it could draw support from this regional strategic initiative to develop its services sector and to prepare for further negotiations.

12. Small-scale cross-border trade

As is typical in many African countries, there is significant cross-border trade between Sierra Leone and its Mano River Union neighbours, Guinea and Liberia, and by extension with *their* neighbours who have larger markets (for example, Côte d'Ivoire as the fourth member of the Mano River Union, Mali and Senegal). Women mostly use this type of trade to engage in low-volume trading activities in agricultural commodities (including rice, palm oil and textiles), mainly to sustain livelihoods. There are two major land border crossings, *Gbalamuya* on the Guinea side and *Gendema* on the Liberia border, in addition to several informal border-crossing points. The formal border-crossing points have customs, immigration, health and phytosanitary officials.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of these traders are faced with numerous challenges, including sexual harassment faced by the women, complex documentation and processes, and unjustified charges by officials at these border crossings. Many of the traders who travel to Guinea to buy lower-priced goods in bulk complain of having to pay customs duty at *Gbalamuya*. At the same time, some formal businesses anecdotally rely on women to move goods across the border, as they may not be charged with as many informal fees as would male traders.

The International Growth Centre, in its Cross-Border Trade study published in 2018, found that that 65 per cent of those engaged in trade across formal borders were women and 66 per cent of all traders were over 35 years of age. The educational levels of traders were generally low, with a high percentage without the attainment of education beyond primary schooling. Traders were dissatisfied with the lack of health, sanitation and water facilities at border posts and road networks connecting the post, though many reported satisfaction with banking facilities. In addition, results from the study highlighted the issue of weak trade facilitation processes, such as unjustified charges by border officials, deliberate misinformation by “Chartermen” and traders’ agents to border officials resulting in additional charges, multiple checkpoints (in which informal fees can be charged), and increased costs of doing business.¹⁵ While high taxes and export bans are reported to drive informality, very few traders view informal trade as easy (see table 19).

Official statistics on cross-border trade are not comprehensive or reliable. Many customs posts do not collect data on imports and exports, and those that do often keep manual records. In addition, given that much cross-border trade is informal, it is not accounted for in formal trade statistics.

¹⁵ International Growth Centre, *Realities of cross border trade between Sierra Leone and its neighbours* (London, 2018).

Table 19
Cross-border trade challenges

<i>Constraint</i>	<i>Situational report</i>
Weak trade facilitation at border crossings	Many of the traders involved in the cross-border trade are either illiterate or semi-illiterate; they cannot understand complex border procedures and often fall prey to unscrupulous officials. Women face safety and security issues, especially when overnight stays at the border are required due to processing delays. Private sector associations are not sufficiently involved in provisions for their members at the border; facilities for women may be an area of focus for business associations.
Policy on cross-border trade	There are no policy discussions to support cross-border traders, who will be fundamental in any regional integration agenda. The National Revenue Authority has reported the commencement of simplified trader regimes, but there has not been any consultation with the private sector on this, and it should be backed by regulation.
Market information	Cross-border traders report inadequate information on markets, opportunities and business procedures in the neighbouring countries, undue harassment, fraud and arbitrary detentions.
Inadequate border infrastructure	Small cross-border traders complain about the lack of storage facilities, accommodation and sanitation facilities at the border crossing points.
Challenges of informality and lack of incentives to formalize	Informal traders and unregistered businesses have no access to provisions under regional trade agreements, and no legal protection. There is, however, limited incentive to formalize this, given that informal fees are often charged at border posts and in neighbouring countries regardless of formal registration. Large private sector players prefer trading through official channels in order to reclaim goods and service taxes, but some could see avoiding these taxes as an incentive for informality. For formal businesses, especially with international investors, it is difficult to account for informal fees.
Lack of regular statistics on cross-border trade	There is trade at informal border crossings along porous borders and incorrect reporting or underreporting to avoid fees or distort formal trade statistics and therefore the ability of the Government to plan and for potential investors to understand market opportunities and costs. Formal statistics are also not sex-disaggregated; this, along with informality and capacity constraints, contributes to the lack of gender-disaggregated data and appropriate measures on the involvement of women in trade.
Smuggling and dumping	Smuggling, dumping and underreporting undercut prices and prevents the ability of border officials to enforce and monitor standards. Looking at changes in exports in neighbouring countries may help to detect smuggling of legal goods. This may be dealt with through a tax stamp for locally produced goods.

Source: Authors.

Lack of infrastructure and respect for trade agreements and documentation in neighbouring countries can negatively affect the ability and therefore willingness of companies to engage in cross-border trade. On the other hand, poor infrastructure connecting border areas with capitals in Mano River Union countries may encourage trading across borders rather than within countries.

To facilitate formal cross-border trade for small traders, both COMESA and the East African Community have adopted Simplified Trader Regimes – instruments designed to make cross-border trading activities for small traders simplified and simple – which are now widely used along their common borders. They cover certain types of commodities in which small traders utilize a simplified customs document and a simplified certificate of origin, whereby goods originating from member countries and whose value does not exceed \$1,000 (COMESA) or \$2,000 (East African Community) per consignment qualify automatically for duty-free entry into the respective markets. Certificates are issued at the border crossings to ensure that traders in remote areas can benefit from the simplified traders regime.

Simplified Trader Regimes work well in the Southern African Development Community region, as there are provisions in the community's treaty relating to informal cross-border trade. Unfortunately, both ECOWAS and MRU treaties do not have such provisions, of which Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are all members. Formal small cross-border trade in the ECOWAS bloc has the potential to ensure the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement in the region making it easier for small traders to enter into formal trading channels and participate in regional value chains.

13. Trade and climate change

Climate change is very likely to have an overall negative effect on yields of major cereal crops throughout Sierra Leone, including rice.¹⁶ The country's food production systems are among the most vulnerable in the world due to the following reasons:

- Extensive reliance on rain-fed crop production
- High intraseasonal and interseasonal climate variability
- Recurrent floods that affect both crops and livestock
- Persistent poverty that limits the capacity to adapt

In addition, climate change may negatively affect human security and foment conflict. This is because climate change makes current concerns, such as water scarcity and food insecurity, more complex and intractable, thereby raising the potential for conflict and violence between groups.

Trade can mitigate the severity of climate volatility. Adverse supply shocks in isolated places can be met by supply surpluses in other unaffected places, through trade. Regional trade in particular can be an important source of improved food security. Improving infrastructure, facilitating cross-border trade and reducing transport costs are crucial in order to facilitate this.

Climate change is changing global demand patterns for goods and services. Demand has increased for certain rare earth mineral inputs in photovoltaic cells and batteries but has fallen in fossil fuels, with the risk of "stranded assets". Sierra Leone may see rising demand through the medium term for metals such as titanium, which can be used in both solar panels and hybrid lithium batteries.

An awareness of climate change and environmental degradation as global issues has increased demand for the following climate and environment-conscious standards and regulations:

(a) Voluntary environmental standards and regulations, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (for palm oil), are becoming increasingly important among purchasing preferences in destination markets;

(b) A carbon border tax is under proposal in the European Union, which could see high emission imports into the bloc facing additional taxes. Though some way off, such a proposal could indirectly have an impact on Sierra Leonean exports of iron to China.

¹⁶ United States Agency for International Development, *Climate Change Risk Profile: Sierra Leone* (Washington, D.C., 2016).

14. Gender and youth considerations

Research suggests that women may be limited from gains in agriculture due to the gender gap in access to finance, productive resources and assets.¹⁷ Similarly, if attention is not paid to minimizing negative impacts of trade on women and ensuring inclusive gains from trade, women may end up in lower paid and lower quality manufacturing and service sector jobs.

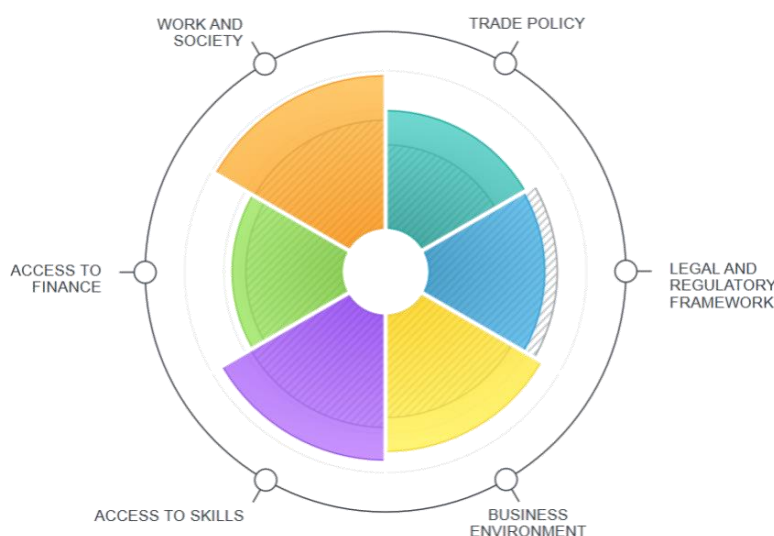
Anecdotal evidence and results from the International Growth Centre study on cross-border trade (2018) suggest that mostly women conducted cross-border trade and that many were involved in informal cross-border trade. At the same time, many formal companies preferred to employ women as they were more honest, trustworthy and hardworking. In addition, formal companies noticed that women were better able to navigate goods across land borders and at times, better able to avoid paying informal fees. However, business associations noted instances of women facing security issues when trading by road, especially when forced to stay overnight at border posts due to delays.

While many entrepreneurs report challenges in gaining access to credit, women face particular credit constraints and as a result have developed their own solutions within households. For example, farmers' wives use agriculture as collateral, and women then sell these goods during the harvest. Gender-based discrimination leads to overall economic losses and limits gains from trade. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women were able to diversify their livelihood portfolios during the Ebola crisis, especially engaging in activities such as artisanal gold mining that support household consumption smoothing, helping families to better withstand economic shocks. In contrast, men were involved in riskier activities such as diamond mining with irregular payments. Encouraging women entrepreneurship and supporting female traders, supports livelihoods and expands the country's gains from trade, contributing to economic growth.

The International Trade Centre "SheTrades Outlook" which was finalized in 2020, is an evidence-based tool to enable policymakers to assess, monitor and improve the extent to which the institutional ecosystem supports women's participation in trade. It encompasses 84 indicators across 6 pillars. Figure VI shows a summary of the main findings of SheTrades Outlook for Sierra Leone on women's participation in trade.

¹⁷ Nadira Bayat, "A 'business unusual' approach for gender equality under the AfCFTA". *ECDPM Great Insights Magazine*, vol. 9, Issue 1 (2020).

Figure VI
SheTrades outlook scores for Sierra Leone



Source: *SheTrades Outlook, Sierra Leone* (International Trade Centre, 2020); see www.shetrades.com/outlook/country-profiles/25/compare-to/1.

Under the trade policy pillar, the following areas have been identified, among others, as areas for possible intervention to support women's economic empowerment and participation in trade:

- (a) Incorporating gender-related concerns (including the key issues outlined in the present strategy, and identification of emerging challenges) into policies and agreements (including gender provisions in trade agreements and mainstreaming gender into trade agreements and action plans);
- (b) Enhancing the participation of women's associations in trade consultation processes and in strategic roles;
- (c) Providing capacity-building on gender issues (including training for ministry staff on issues such as gender analysis, gender budgeting, gender planning and monitoring);
- (d) Collecting sex-disaggregated data.

Cluster five of MTNDP focuses on empowering women, children and persons with disability. Gender equality and women's empowerment are featured as core objectives in the Plan, including the following goals:

- (a) To strengthen the implementation and enforcement of existing laws and policies to promote women's empowerment and gender equality through specific funding allocations, implementation plans and targets, and monitoring plans at national and local levels;
- (b) To strengthen policy, legal and institutional capacities and political will across government sectors in order to enhance an enabling environment for the empowerment of women.

These targets are aligned with the strategic objectives of the National Gender Strategic Plan 2019–2023 with its second strategic objective on promoting women’s economic empowerment. Its implementation principally includes the proposed establishment of a Women’s Empowerment Fund for female entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone. The Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs advances these objectives through its research and programmes targeting women’s economic empowerment, including through advancing local content. The Ministry maintains a database of women-owned businesses and their growth opportunities, which can provide a good foundation for evidence-based decisions made on trade policy through collaboration with MTI.

Similarly, while the Ministry of Youth and the National Youth Commission support programmes relating to entrepreneurship for young people, especially those at risk, their relationship to trade is not well documented. During the Ebola crisis, while seasonal migrant labour and informal employment were affected and trade restrictions affected the mining industry, young people in rural areas diversified their livelihoods portfolios, engaging in other activities, most notably agriculture.¹⁸ This indicates that the agility and mobility of young people can contribute to economic diversification, especially in the recovery from COVID-19 and the commodity price decline.

All ministries acknowledge the benefits of including gender and youth experts and policymakers in trade policy development. While the Ministry of Gender and Children’s Affairs maintains a focal point with various other ministries, coordination between these ministries in advancing the economic empowerment of women and young people, and ministries responsible for trade and economic development, can be improved.

Lastly, the role of capacity-building for members of women’s business associations on the provisions of trade agreements and advocacy around inclusive national policies to support their implementation is recognized and supported by ECA, ITC and partners. Some women’s business associations provide business development services and can support their members on understanding the opportunities created by trade agreements, specifically on value chain development and use of e-commerce. In assessing opportunities of trade agreements, women’s business associations have identified the primary challenges faced by their members, such as occupational segregation, gender-related non-tariff barriers, and mitigating measures (see table 20). In addition, they have identified three key areas in which AfCFTA could have an impact on women involved in trade: the informal sector (including the importance of informal cross-border trade), the micro level, and small and medium-sized enterprises.

¹⁸ Gavin Hilson and Roy Maconachie, “Opening the door to formalization? Small-scale diamond mining and rural economic development in post-Ebola Sierra Leone”, International Growth Centre, Policy Brief 39305 (London, November 2016).

Table 20

Challenges and possible mitigating measures reported by women entrepreneurs to ensure benefits from the African Continental Free Trade Area

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Mitigating measures</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weak infrastructure ▪ Poor quality of education ▪ Poor business skills ▪ Absence of suitable mentors ▪ Low gross domestic product per capita ▪ Perception of young people as a disadvantage ▪ Risk aversion ▪ Less start-up and investment capital ▪ Little or no collateral security ▪ Limited access to loans and credits ▪ Exclusion from certain sectors ▪ Sociocultural and structural inequalities ▪ High inflation and interest rates ▪ Special gender-related challenges of formal and informal cross-border trader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create networks and regional clusters ▪ Revise or expand national employment fund and tax incentives for women entrepreneurs ▪ Raise awareness of and access to existing opportunities ▪ Learn lessons from high-growth female entrepreneurs to inform national policies ▪ Leverage information and communications technology training and workshops provided by national government and other stakeholders ▪ Remove non-tariff barriers ▪ Develop national and subregional value chains ▪ Improve access to and cost of business infrastructure such as Internet services

Source: Business and Professional Women Freetown (2020).

15. Government COVID-19 trade-related mitigating interventions

The implementation of COVID-19 containment measures has had adverse consequences on economic activities, especially in the trading, tourism, transportation, agriculture, fisheries and manufacturing sectors. To support livelihoods, the Government and its development partners have implemented social safety net programmes. Targeting mainly the informal trading sector, these programmes have provided support to small and medium-sized enterprises and hardest-hit businesses to enable them to continue operations, avert employee layoffs, and reduce non-performing loans through dedicated credit facility and microcredit schemes. In addition, the Government and the Central Bank have made available – through the commercial banking system – foreign currency to support essential imports of rice, fuel and flour.

16. Concerns for Sierra Leone and its participation in preferential trade area agreements

Sierra Leone has signed up to a number of free Trade area agreements, including the European Union – Everything but Arms, the Economic Partnership Agreement, the European Union – Generalized System of Preferences, AGOA, China–DFQF, ETLs and now AfCFTA. Genuine concerns have been raised about the effective utilization of these agreements, benefits derived to the country, and their mode of implementation. These concerns provide the motivation for the strong focus of the Sierra Leone National Trade Strategy on ensuring that opportunities for AfCFTA are identified and effectively implemented.

Possible factors affecting the utilization of the above schemes could be the lack of capacity to deal adequately with sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade and rules of origin issues by both the Government and the private sector. In addition, lack of information, weak manufacturing and productive sectors and a weak private sector,

especially for the AGOA and China–DFQF schemes, could play a part. In general, fewer challenges are perceived to arise in utilizing the Everything but Arms arrangement.

Strong criticisms have been levied on ETLS, especially with frequent non-reciprocity of obligations under the scheme by ECOWAS member countries, challenges with certificates of origin, and excessive bureaucracy over applications and approval processes at both MTI and the ECOWAS secretariat. There are concerns that these perennial issues around ETLS and sanitary and phytosanitary measures will also spill over into the implementation of AfCFTA by Sierra Leone.

C. Industrial and quality infrastructure development

1. Industrial production and exports

Industry accounts for less than 5 per cent of GDP for Sierra Leone (see figure VII). Of this, almost 38 per cent is light manufacturing and handicrafts, 39 per cent mining and quarrying and the remaining 21 per cent utilities and construction.¹⁹ A key target for the country (MTNDP) is to diversify the economy by “increas[ing] the contribution of manufacturing to GDP from 2 per cent to 5 per cent”, by 2023.

Though starting from a low base, manufacturing has shown promise in Sierra Leone. The economic value of the sector had increased by 55 per cent between 2013 and 2017. The International Labour Organization estimated that the sector had created 10,000 jobs during that period.²⁰

While much of the Sierra Leonean manufacturing activity is domestically oriented (brewing, milling, canning, carpentry and basic agroprocessing), consultations with the private sector suggest that manufacturing exports are beginning to emerge, in particular light manufactures to regional and cross-border markets. A small number of large-scale foreign direct investment exist in commercial agroprocessing export goods to European and United States markets.

It is expected that COVID-19 will have a significantly negative impact on both industrial mining and manufacturing exports. The price of titanium ore, the main mining export of Sierra Leone for the past three years, has fallen 61 per cent since December 2020, while the price of aluminium/bauxite, the country’s second largest mining export, has fallen 21 per cent in this time. Manufacturing firms rely on various supply chains – both domestic and international – for production inputs. However, because of COVID-19, these firms may be unable to have access to inputs due to the cessation of export activities in affected countries and disruptions in air and sea transport.²¹

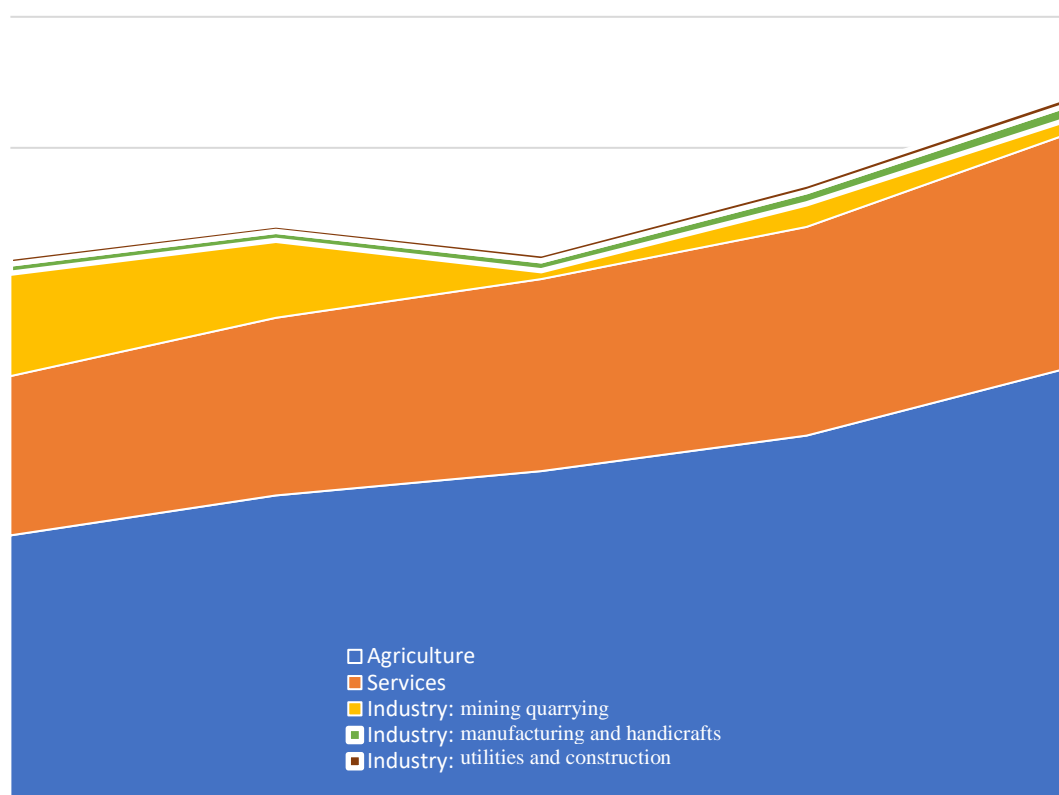
¹⁹ Statistics Sierra Leone, *Report on the 2016 and 2017 Real Gross Domestic Product Figures at 2006 Prices*, (Freetown, 2018).

²⁰ International Labour Organization, ILO modelled estimates, 2019.

²¹ Statistics Sierra Leone, *Quick Action Economic Response Programme*, (Freetown, 2020).

Figure VII

Sierra Leonean gross domestic product by economic activities, 2013–2017 (trillions of leones)



Source: *Report on the 2016 and 2017 Real Gross Domestic Product Figures at 2006 Prices* (Freetown, Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018).

The most frequently cited major obstacles identified by manufacturing firms in Sierra Leone as constraining their business are lack of access to finance, land and electricity.²² Women-owned manufacturing businesses reported a broadly similar ranking of constraints, but with transport and access to finance identified as less of an obstacle, and telecommunications, tax rates and tax administration as more of an obstacle. The relatively small number of exporting manufacturing firms surveyed in the World Bank Enterprise Survey attached greater priority to the challenges of electricity; crime, theft and disorder; and customs and trade regulations (see table 21).

Most of the major obstacles to manufacturing firms are difficult to tackle, requiring cross-government actions and considerable resources (see table 22). MTI has a role to play in prioritizing and coordinating the resolution of these obstacles in national development planning. In addition, it has a more direct role to play in formulating policies and strategies for the improvement of customs and trade regulations, which are identified as a very severe or major obstacle to 50 per cent of exporting manufacturing firms.

²² Author's analysis based on the *Enterprise Surveys 2017, Sierra Leone* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).

Table 21

Very severe and major obstacles to manufacturing firms in Sierra Leone (percentage)

	<i>All (79)</i>	<i>Women-owned (12)</i>	<i>Exporting (8)</i>
Access to finance	61	42	25
Access to land	44	33	50
Electricity	43	42	88
Practices of competitors in informal sector	42	33	50
Corruption	35	33	0
Transport	29	17	50
Tax rates	29	42	38
Tax administrations	25	33	38
Labour regulations	25	33	50
Customs and trade regulations	22	8	50
Courts	19	8	0
Crime, theft and disorder	16	17	63
Telecommunications	15	25	38
Inadequately educated workforce	14	0	13
Business licensing and permits	14	8	25
Political instability	10	8	13

Source: Author's analysis based on the *Enterprise Surveys 2017, Sierra Leone* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2018).

Table 22

Key constraints for doing business identified by the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of dialogue, consultation and understanding of the private sector's needs to government decision-taking ▪ Lack of predictability and stability of the regulatory framework ▪ Lack of confidence and trust towards the private sector ▪ Non-compliance of agreements made with previous administrations ▪ Cumbersome and complex export processes that creates space for corruption ▪ High port costs and high costs for customs clearing processes that creates space for corruption ▪ Weak banking and financial sector ▪ Unstable macroeconomic context and unreliable access to forex ▪ Cumbersome transactions: underdeveloped electronic banking and outgrown bank note system ▪ Complex tax regime and deficient tax collection system, numerous levies and charges that undermine competitiveness ▪ High cost of renewing annual environmental licenses ▪ Gaps in locally available skills including soft skills ▪ Weak justice system and rule of law ▪ Complex land acquisition for large scale farming
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Source: *Key constraints for doing business mentioned by private sector* (Freetown, Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, 2019).

2. Industrial policy formulation

The MTI Directorate of Domestic Commerce and Industry bears responsibility for identifying opportunities, strategies and action plans for industrial development. However, having the combined responsibility for monitoring and supporting domestic commerce, interviews with the Directorate suggest that only around 20 per cent of their activities and efforts are in accord with industrial development. The Directorate faces additional challenges with understaffing, training and inadequate office and logistical equipment. Industrial development is consequentially underdeveloped as a policy area of MTI, notwithstanding its potential for economic diversification.

3. Industrial policy environment and quality infrastructure

A 2011 Industrial Policy provides direction to industrial development strategies and initiatives undertaken by MTI. While setting out overall objectives and priorities, the Policy lacked a robust institutional framework or implementation mechanisms, and its prescriptions have mostly been unimplemented (although several of them, such as special economic zones, energy development, agricultural sector development and tourism development, have been reaffirmed in subsequent national planning directions, including MTNDP).

MTNDP provides seven identified policy actions for developing manufacturing in Sierra Leone. Several of these speak to the broader enabling business environment beyond the direct mandate of MTI, including infrastructure development, financial intermediation, technical education, and macroeconomic stability. To deliver on the Development Plan, MTI has a central role to play in actions targeting, which includes the following goals:

- (a) Improving the business regulatory environment;
- (b) Establishing industrial, special economic zones and export processing zones;
- (c) Producing quality goods and services for the global market through strengthening the national quality infrastructure.

ECOWAS (2010) adopted the West African Common Industrial Policy, which covers four thematic areas – Agro-industry, Pharmaceuticals, Automotive and Textiles, and Garments – and contains the following aims:

- (a) Increase the transformation rate of local raw materials 15–20 per cent to an average of 30 per cent by 2030;
- (b) Increase the contribution of the industrial sector to regional GDP from a current average of 6–7 per cent to more than 20 per cent by 2030;
- (c) Increase intracommunity trade in West Africa from less than 12 per cent to 40 per cent by 2030;
- (d) Increase the volume of exports of industrial products from West Africa to the global market from 0.1 per cent to 1 per cent by 2030.

An operational quality infrastructure will help towards achieving these objectives and similarly, towards overcoming technical barriers to trade. A credible quality infrastructure that complies with international standards involves having effective institutions operating in the fields of standards, metrology, accreditation, conformity assessment, technical regulation and quality promotion. Derived from its common industrial policy, ECOWAS adopted the ECOWAS Quality Policy in 2015, which focuses on the development of quality infrastructure in member States to promote common standards and adequate quality control systems.

In Sierra Leone, both the current National Quality Infrastructure and regulatory framework have developed in an organic manner in the absence of any clear policy framework. To realize the industrial objectives outlined in MTNDP and the ECOWAS Investment Policy objectives, the need for a national quality policy and a credible quality infrastructure that complies with international standards is compelling.

Since 2016, SLSB (with assistance from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization) has developed a draft National Quality Policy, which includes the following proposed measures:

- (a) Design and establish an efficient national quality infrastructure covering the areas of metrology, standardization, accreditation, inspection, testing and certification that will comply with international standards;
- (b) Establish a technical and legislative framework for conformity assessment service providers in both public and private sectors that meets regional and international requirements;
- (c) Raise national quality consciousness and awareness.

The development of a national quality infrastructure in Sierra Leone will require a review and overhaul of the current legal, regulatory and technical frameworks, and will support not only the industrial sector but also the agriculture, fisheries and food sectors.

4. Special economic zones policy

A special economic zone exists six miles from Waterloo, severely underutilized with only a single tenant, and lacks water, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure. Manufacturing firms identified these issues as among their biggest obstacles to business in Sierra Leone, as it substantially undermines the effectiveness of a zone. The special economic zone reportedly does not provide any other incentives, with the exception of a small amount of land availability. The creation of these zones has led to better wage levels for women in Madagascar, yet below average earnings for women in Mauritius; it is important to consider the gender wage gap in order to ensure that special economic zones lead to quality jobs and working conditions.²³

Sierra Leone has had a draft special economic zones policy since 2013, aimed at providing a number of business incentives within two types of zones: export-processing zones, established for processing or manufacturing mainly for export; and free trade zones, which would allow for commercial, industrial and service activities for both local and export markets. Given the changes in the Sierra Leonean regulatory environment since 2013, a review of the special economic zone policy would be required before it is ready for submission to the cabinet.

Several large-scale infrastructural development proposals of the Presidential Advisor on Infrastructure involve combined special economic zone schemes. The lack of special economic zone policy provides a lack of coherence or guidance for such proposals (see table 23).

²³ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Virtual Institute Teaching Material on Trade and Gender, vol. 1: *Unfolding the Links* (New York and Geneva, 2014).

Table 23
Special economic zone industrial constraints

<i>Constraint</i>	<i>Situational report</i>
Industrial policy framework	In 2010, ECOWAS adopted the West African Common Industrial Policy, which is intended to diversify and broaden the region's industrial production base by raising the local content of such products progressively to an average of 30 per cent by 2030 through support for the creation of new industrial production capacities and the development and upgrading of the current ones. The four thematic areas of the ECOWAS Investment Policy are: agro-industry, pharmaceuticals, automotive, and textiles and garments. Presently, many ECOWAS States, including Sierra Leone, have been facing challenges with the implementation of the ECOWAS Investment Policy.
National quality infrastructure	Implementation of the ECOWAS Quality Policy has been slow, as there is no national quality framework in place. The National Quality Infrastructure that should support industrial development is weak. The Standards Bureau lacks the resources and accreditation of its laboratories.
Special economic zone operational framework	There is no regulatory framework governing the operations of special economic zones in Sierra Leone in line with best practices, especially relating to the roles of zone owner, developer, operator and regulator, and a special economic zone law.

D. Institutional capacities for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring

1. Capacities to formulate and implement trade policy

MTI has the mandate to “develop policies and programmes to stimulate local and export trade, as well as enhance private sector investment and economic growth”. It bears the responsibility for formulating laws, policies and strategies, overseeing their implementation and participation in international and regional trade negotiations. However, MTI lacks well-defined processes and instruments to formulate the trade policy, including a services trade policy and trade defence mechanisms, which constrain its ability to meaningfully articulate offensive and defensive positions and interests in trade negotiations (see table 24).

The Ministry faces acute and long-standing capacity challenges in delivering on this mandate, and given the cross-cutting nature of trade, it has an important coordinating role with other MDAs, especially those in the growth sector.

Table 24
Institutional capacity constraints

<i>Constraint</i>	<i>Situational report</i>
Limited mainstreaming of trade into national development and sectoral plans	Broader capacity challenges mean that trade and industry have been insufficiently mainstreamed into MTNDP or sectoral policies and strategies in other economic ministries, such as those responsible for agriculture, fisheries, energy, roads authority, and public works and assets.
Inadequate financial resources	Allocations of funding from the national budget accorded to MTI payroll are lower as a share of ministries in charge of agriculture than in comparator countries, indicating a relatively low prioritization of trade and industry in Sierra Leone. ^a Allocations of non-salary, recurrent expenditures (of the sort used for implementing activities) amounted to only 0.7 per cent of the 2019 national budget, equivalent to a third of the amount allocated to fisheries, or 43 per cent of that allocated to tourism. In 2019, less than 30 per cent of the national budget allocated to MTI was actually disbursed while that disbursed was received irregularly, making planning difficult. ^b
Leadership and management	The capacity of managers is stretched with technical work and “fire-fighting”, limiting the time available for them to focus on leadership, strategic direction and institutional capacity development. Despite this, and in recognition of the severe capacity constraints in the Ministry, a Change Management retreat involving MTI and its departments and agencies was held in August 2019 to review the strategic plan, key activities and deliverables of MTI and its agencies, and propose

	solutions including structural reorganization of the Ministry's directorates, agencies and departments. As of November 2019, restructuring has yet to progress from the retreat.
Undersized professional staff cadre	Recurrent understaffing, high staff turnover and a three-year moratorium on public sector recruitment have resulted in an inadequately filled Ministry organogram, with most directorates of the professional wing lacking any permanent technical staff under the level of director, or at best acting, deputy director. Although 174 staff are registered as on the MTI payroll, 94 of them are trade monitors (engaged in basic market information collection), 73 are administrative (including drivers, cleaners and messengers) leaving only the Chief Director and 8 technical staff in an overwhelmed professional wing.
Staff retention	A reward system or opportunities for professional growth for high performers is lacking – with high-performing professional staff lost to more remunerative local or international organizations and overseas opportunities.
Weak public sector coordination	Coordination, collaboration and even policy communication with other Ministries and government bodies are limited and ad hoc. A 2013 Framework for Joint Collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture was formalized in a memorandum of understanding but never acted upon. MTI lacks the staff complement and competences to execute secretariat functions in coordinating national and economic policies with other ministries. MTI annual plans are developed without input from partner economic ministries.
Underdeveloped donor collaboration	Notwithstanding notable projects in the past, collaboration between donors and MTI has been severely limited in recent years. Several donors – including the World Bank, the European Union and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – are reported to be approached on an ad hoc basis for funding requests. Donor projects relating to the mandate of MTI are sometimes undertaken with little involvement of MTI.
Limited public-private dialogue	Private sector organizations report an almost complete lack of policy dialogue or information on regulatory changes relating to trade, as well as different parts of the Government involved in the business environment. Large businesses use their clout to interact informally through ad hoc arrangements and engagements with the Government, while smaller businesses have limited platforms for dialogue. Private sector dialogue with MTI most frequently takes place irregularly through donor-sponsored workshops on specific topics and infrequently on issues self-identified by the private sector. The foundations of a private sector organization are weak: those, such as the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, the Sierra Leone Association of Manufacturers and the Sierra Leone Chamber of Agribusiness Development, need to be strengthened if they are to adequately hold the Government to account over the “doing business” environment and sectoral policies. The Sierra Leone Business Forum has been effectively inactive for six years.
Availability and quality of trade data for policy analysis	Development partners and investors highlight the unavailability of consistent and comprehensive Sierra Leonean trade data in national and international databases (IMF, World Bank, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, ECOWAS), and of packaged trade and market information, and a robust trade information architecture for investors, domestic market and development partners. Though it is Statistics Sierra Leone that has the legal mandate to provide trade data, the MTI mandate to develop and coordinate trade policy and enter into trade negotiations or policy discussions and support the investment framework is seriously constrained.
Limited mainstreaming of trade and gender	National development planning has targeted gender interventions towards reducing gender-based violence, tackling the issue of female genital mutilation, and women's rights without giving direction on gender-based economic empowerment or specific objectives on trade-related gender issues.

^a The payroll budget for MTI was 47 per cent of that for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security according to annex 5b of the 2018 budget, while the equivalent share in the lower-middle-income comparator country, Ghana, was 82 per cent, according to the Ghana Budget Statement and Economic Policy, 2018.

^b A presentation was delivered by MTI, under the theme, “Budget Discussions FY2020” on 2 October 2019.

These institutional capacity constraints unsurprisingly hinder the ability of MTI to formulate, plan and implement trade and industry policy and strategy, or effectively engage in trade negotiations. Strategy formulation, such as the 2019 AGOA strategy, has instead often been outsourced and donor funded as a matter of necessity, with MTI and its agencies coordinating consultation and validation processes. Trade is not mainstreamed into MTNDP or sectoral policies and strategies of other economic growth MDAs, and policies that are formulated are often disconnected from sustainable resource allocations.

MTI agencies and units take measures to implement MTI policies, strategies and initiatives (see table 25). While some of these are fully functional, others lack staffing and financial resources. For the medium-to-long term, additional agencies and units will be needed to deliver on the mandate of MTI, including that of a competition bureau, a consumer protection commission and an intellectual property unit. Several programmatic interventions are implemented with donor funds outside the structures and functions of the Ministry, and while delivering valued results, operate only for the duration of donor funding while failing to transfer sustainable capacity to MTI. Domestic resources provide the long-term route to capacity sustainability, and while there is scope for increasing the relatively small share of the national budget belonging to MTI, planning and policy delivery could be considerably improved just by improving the disbursement of approved budgetary allocations, which stood at less than 30 per cent in 2019.²⁴

Table 25
Status of Ministry of Trade and Industry agencies, units and programmes

<i>Agencies, units and programmes</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>2019 budget recurrent non-wage allocation (millions of Le)^a</i>
Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered as a limited liability company The Government is the only shareholder at present (51 per cent) as the private sector has not taken up share offers Undercapitalized but carries the assets of the previous state commodity board Proposals to merge with the Project Monitoring Board currently faces cash-flow challenges 	518.4
Petroleum Regulatory Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully operational 	3 857.1
Project Monitoring Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional Formed by an Act of Parliament Regulator of produce sector (cocoa, coffee, palm oil, palm kernel oil, cashew, palm kernel cake) Responsible for collection of 2.5 per cent levy on above-mentioned products Proposals to merge Project Monitoring Board with the Standards Bureau Responsible for Conformity Assessments in the produce sector 	(nothing in budget)
Department of Co-operatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates under an obsolete cooperative legislation Not fully functional Proposals to merge with Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) 	1 563.5
Sierra Leone Local Content Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional Formed by an Act of Parliament Transformed from a unit within MTI to a full-fledged agency Seriously underfunded Proposals to merge with SMEDA 	718.9
Corporate Affairs Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for company registration and regulation Charges fees for services Moved to the office of the President 	434.5
Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional Seriously underfunded Staff size has increased in the past six months as new regional offices have been opened 100 per cent dependent on government and donor funding with no income-generating activities Proposals to be relocated under the National Investment Board that is being set up under the Presidency 	4 280.5

²⁴ Presentation delivered by MTI under the theme, “Budget Discussions FY2020” on 2 October 2019.

SMEDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional Formed by an Act of Parliament Proposed merger with the Local Content Agency Seriously underfunded 	2 027.3 (plus salaries 4 109)
Sierra Leone Business Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board has not met for at least six years Two staff members remain in posts Started very well when funded by the Department for International Development and International Finance Corporation 	655.0
Sierra Leone Standards Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional Formed by an Act of Parliament Responsible for standards and quality Infrastructure Serious funding challenges 	3 444.7
Coordination of doing business reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully functional Sits within the Ministry Department of Policy Research 	505.6
Industrial planning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financing envelope used for ministry activities 	622.1

Note: Le is the currency symbol for Sierra Leone.

^a Disbursement of approved budgetary allocations are reported to be infrequent and considerably less than allocated.

2. Ministry of Trade and Industry professional capacity

The Ministry organogram is only partially fulfilled. Though qualified and capable directors exist in several positions, they are limited in number and usually have no filled professional posts under the ranking of deputy director in the professional wing. In the past, directorates reportedly had four or five technical officers below deputy director level. High-calibre staff is frequently lost to more remunerative local or international organizations and overseas opportunities. Lost or transferred professional staff often result in considerable institutional memory loss as there is no mechanism in place to share and impart capacities, such as mentorship programmes for junior staff. Available professional staff do not always match the evolving needs of MTI (see table 26).

Table 26
Status of professional staffing

<i>Professional wing directorates (and officers)</i>	<i>Staff capacity</i>
Policy, planning and research (two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director position and a single policy analyst (plus one attached staff from Statistics Sierra Leone)
Foreign trade (two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director and one deputy director position. Both are “acting” in those positions, following the absence of formally appointed staff to these positions One is a recently reallocated staff from another MDA
Domestic commerce and industry (three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director and deputy director with one trade officer (plus basic assistance from three trade monitors) A further 94 trade monitors collect basic market data from businesses, factories and markets in the field
Programme management (one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director position only

Source: Authors’ compilation based on the Human Resource Management Office interview.

3. Policy coordination capacities

As a result of understaffing, coordination between MTI and other economic MDAs (such as those of agriculture, finance and fisheries), National Revenue Authority and Central Bank is weak and the demarcation of responsibilities between these uncertain. Several formal coordination mechanisms have been established in the past, including a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Agriculture and MTI in 2013 and the Cocoa Coffee Cashew Platform, which periodically serves as a private-public dialogue platform for value chain actors in these sectors. The Cocoa Coffee Cashew Platform has been supported by *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), Solidaridad and Welthungerhilfe (WHH).

NCCT was mandated by the cabinet to provide the basis of intergovernmental coordination on trade, but became defunct in 2008 due to lack of funding. The Enhanced Integrated Framework project temporarily reinstituted the functions of NCCT with a National Steering Committee, which operated from 2009 up to 2015 when funding expired. Other thematic trade committees exist, such as the National Trade Facilitation Committee and the National AGOA Steering Committee. While creating a National AfCFTA Committee would help MTI to meet its commitments and take advantage of opportunities under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, there is scope for the resurrection of an apex committee such as NCCT to provide overarching policy coordination, consolidate activities, and delegate technical work to possible subcommittees such as the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

While NCCT coordinates actors on a technical level to implement trade-related policies and strategies, coherence between trade policies, foreign policy, fiscal and monetary policies, and national development objectives are also critical. At present, trade is considered a complementary issue rather than a critical driver of inclusive national economic growth and development. These gaps in trade governance infrastructure can be dealt with through effective interministerial coordination and collaboration on trade led by MTI. High-level consultations with the Ministry of Finance and the National Revenue Authority customs will be necessary, especially for trade negotiations involving tariff concessions and the implementation of trade agreements involving tariffs and customs waivers.

The workplans of relevant agencies under MTI and those of other MDAs relating to foreign affairs and national economic development should be aligned with the implementation of National Trade Strategy, including with AfCFTA implementation, which must be reported to the AfCFTA secretariat in Accra. As the National Trade Strategy and MTI are motivated by an agenda of contributions by all population segments to trade – as well as inclusive distributions on the benefits of trade – ministries and national committees on gender, young people, and small and medium-sized enterprises should be engaged on strategic planning and implementation as part of interministerial coordination through the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trade. In addition, in order to ensure appropriate linkages with MTNDP, economic ministries such as those dedicated to agriculture and fisheries should be included in the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trade.

Interministerial coordination includes effective resource mobilization and allocation between MTI agencies and trade-related MDAs through the Ministry of Finance. While the Ministry of Finance approves MDA budgets and resource allocations, coordination meetings on resource mobilization for trade should prioritize allocating funding for more than one year, especially for AfCFTA implementation, to ensure sustainability and that the country is able to

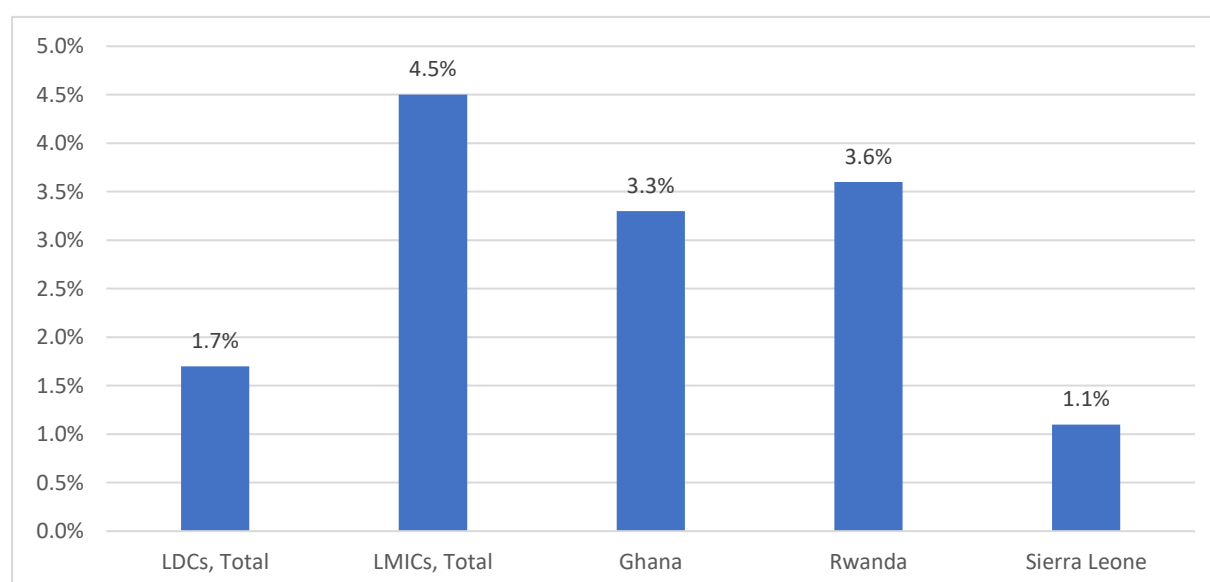
meet its longer-term trade-related commitments and obligations. Evidence on cost-effective activities should be taken into account as part of the coordination for resource allocation. Capacity-building activities of desk officers, both at MTI and at MDAs on trade-related matters, may support this coordination.

4. Donor collaboration capacities

Collaboration between MTI and donors is underdeveloped. This can mostly be attributed to capacity issues at MTI, weak MDA cooperation and the fact that trade is not adequately mainstreamed into poverty reduction strategy paper documents, the National Development Plan and other developmental processes. It is likely that there is greater scope for donor support than is being realized: Sierra Leone receives a smaller share of the Aid for Trade as “technical assistance for trade policy and regulations” than does the least development country average or comparator countries in Africa (see figure VIII).

Figure VIII

Aid for trade disbursements on “technical assistance for trade policy and regulations” as a share of total aid for trade, Sierra Leone and comparator countries



Source: OECS CRS (2019).

Engagement with donors and other development partners on trade-related matters appears to be ad-hoc and there is no evidence of their involvement in consultative processes leading to the development of trade policies or strategic directions. MTI needs to be actively engaged in regularly coordinating donors in the area of trade support, especially bilateral donors and specialized international agencies.

Each donor has its own strategic initiatives for a country and cannot provide the full range of trade support needed. As several donors are engaged in the provision of trade support, it is necessary to ensure that their interventions are synchronized, do not overlap or duplicate, and are based on national priorities. Trade support for Sierra Leone can be greatly enhanced through a Trade-Related Development Cooperation Framework implemented by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development and MTI in collaboration with key donors and development partners.

5. Capacity of private sector business associations

A number of organizations represent private sector business interests in Sierra Leone. These are both local and foreign business organizations (see table 27 and table 28). The local business organizations are generally underdeveloped, not adequately funded, and have overlapping functions, with scope for organizational restructuring and capacity development. The European Union is intending to establish a European Union Chamber of Commerce in Sierra Leone, for which viability assessment studies have been undertaken.

Public-private coordination mechanisms have been established in the past. The International Finance Corporation and the Removing Administrative Barriers to Investment programme sponsored the establishment of the Sierra Leone Business Forum in 2007. In addition, the World Bank Competitive Agro Processing Project (under implementation) has a component to develop a public-private dialogue platform. However, such donor-funded platforms have tended to disintegrate upon donor project completion. The Sierra Leone Business Forum transitioned from a donor-led platform to a locally owned and managed institution, before becoming a limited company in 2009. When the International Finance Corporation's most recent 2010–2012 grant funding for the Forum ended in March 2012, its secretariat lacked the funds to continue to run effectively – resulting in the loss of all of its seven staff, with the exception of the Deputy Director and a messenger. Despite being adopted as a unit of MTI in 2014, the Forum has reportedly been inactive for six years.

According to several private sector bodies, donor-funded public-private dialogues have tended to displace rather than strengthen private sector-sponsored representative organizations. As a result, public-private dialogue is now entirely ad hoc, occurring either through individual consultations or through specific donor-sponsored workshops on dedicated issues. Women are often underrepresented in business associations and public-private dialogues, leading to reduced bargaining power.

Table 27

Trade-related organizations representing local businesses

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Details</i>
Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture	Traditionally the umbrella organization for the formal private sector. Issues country of origin certification and supports ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme applications
Sierra Leone Manufactures Association	Umbrella organization for manufacturing industries
Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development	Umbrella organization for agribusiness industries
Sierra Leone Importer's Association	Representatives of private sector importation concerns
Commercial Agricultural Producers and Processors Association	Initiated in 2016 to represent especially the views of large foreign direct investment investors in the agribusiness sector
Sierra Leone Industrial Fishing Association	Representing the interests of the industrial fisheries sector
Indian Mercantile Association	Representing Indian business interests
Lebanese Community	Representing Lebanese business interests
Fullah Community	Representing Fullah business interests
Sierra Leone Indigenous and Commercial Petty Traders Association	Informal sector membership
Traders Council	Informal sector membership
Sierra Leone Traders Union	Informal sector membership
Sierra Leone Market Women Association	Informal sector membership

Source: Authors' compilation.

Table 28
Trade-related organizations representing foreign businesses

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Details</i>
British Chamber of Commerce in Sierra Leone	Representing British business interests
American Business Council	Representing American business interests
Sierra Leone Netherlands Business and Cultural Council	Representing Dutch business interests
French Companies Business Club	Representing French business interests
Chinese Chamber of Commerce	Representing Chinese business interests

Source: Authors' compilation.

Consequently, there is limited policy ownership and the chronic “non-implementation” of strategic trade initiatives. The long list of largely unimplemented policies includes the 2010 Sierra Leone Trade Policy, the Sierra Leone National Export Strategy (2010–2015), the 2011 Sierra Leone Industrial Policy, and the 2013 Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Development strategy, alongside mixed performances by MTI affiliated agencies. At this point, the private sector is disenchanted as to the capacity of MTI to improve their business and trading environment, notwithstanding the considerable challenges they face in this environment and the prioritization given to “diversifying economic growth” in MTNDP.

6. Trade statistics

Responsibilities for collecting trade-related data are distributed across various ministries and departments. The Ports Authority collates data on imports and exports by sea to inform their activities and companies that operate at the ports, and customs authorities hold data on declared goods. The Sierra Leone Roads Authority collects data on the weight of goods using transport infrastructure, though they note the current number and locations of weighbridges to be insufficient; infrastructure development in this area could improve the quality of trade data and help to resolve underreporting. The Transport Infrastructure Development Unit intends to develop a transport sector database in order to collect data from all implementing agencies under the Roads Authority.

The Bank of Sierra Leone gathers data relating to macroeconomic trends. Statistics Sierra Leone collates and stores trade data from various government entities and has recently improved the quality of its collated dataset. In addition, they have increased their capacity and have offered to support MTI with data analysis. There is no current institutionalized process to automatically share data between these entities, and most data sharing occurs through ad-hoc requests.

MTI has an interest in building in-house capacity to collate, analyse, visualize and apply evidence from various trade data sources to decision-making. While they do not have the capacity to do so at present, they intend to organize human resources accordingly. This is meant to generate trends and projections to support trade dialogue with other government partners, including updates to the Cabinet, and to feed into the Global Trade Data Observatory. Improved data and analysis capacity can specifically support MTI in the following priority areas:

- Monitoring prices of essential commodities
- Developing a pricing formula for rice in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance
- Monitoring price shocks as a result of domestic or global events
- Verifying trade at land borders

- Reconciling data from various government sources, including the Bank of Sierra Leone, Statistics Sierra Leone, ports and customs
- Building MTI capacity to analyse data and set up systems for data collation and management
- Providing evidence-based cabinet updates
- Monitoring and visualizing trends of key commodities in real-time
- Guiding policy development

Comprehensive data on the volume and value of trade are lacking due to informal trade, underreporting and inaccuracies in manual reporting. The effectiveness and accuracy of trade monitors are unclear. Investors often conduct their own data collection activities on the basis of which they make investment decisions. In addition, intra-African trade statistics are distorted as goods are often shipped to Europe first before being sent back to the destination country on the continent, which is then recorded as trade with Europe; Morocco additionally functions as a transit port for Sierra Leonean imports and exports. E-commerce and online end-to-end solutions for shipping that are gaining traction in the country, can improve statistics on intra-African trade.

7. Capacity on trade and gender policy

National development planning and donor assistance have targeted gender interventions towards reducing gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and women's rights, without giving direction on gender-based economic empowerment or specific objectives on trade-related gender issues. The draft 2014 Sierra Leone Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (updated in 2020) includes a priority area on gender, trade and employment and economic empowerment of women. Apart from general policy recommendations relating to capacity and skills building of women, it prescribes for the active involvement of women in the formulation of trade and economic policies to meet their special needs and aspirations; and the review and analysis of key economic policies and trade laws and their effect on attaining gender equality and empowerment of women. In addition, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy provides recommendations for the creation of Gender Focal Point positions in all MDAs of government.

There are no formal or informal policy initiatives in the private sector that mainstream gender into trade issues; however, there are several women economic empowerment programmes which target women entrepreneurs. Several business support organizations from both public and private sectors have facilitated capacity-building initiatives targeting women mainly in entrepreneurship development but not specifically relating to trade. Some programmes relating to sharing of experiences of women entrepreneurs have been organized by these initiatives: for example, the "She Did That" programme, which provides women entrepreneurs with information and research on how to enter markets. Women's business associations should be included in NCCT and can act as an avenue for dissemination of information on AfCFTA to their members. Targeted awareness-raising and communication campaigns can support female traders in the formal and informal economy to leverage opportunities under the AfCFTA Agreement and to effectively participate in public-private dialogue.

MTI lacks the capacity and skill set to promote the mainstreaming of gender-based trade-related policies into national development planning or to develop and implement its own such initiatives. At present, customs administrations do not use the World Customs Organization Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool. However, improvement in data capacity at

Statistics Sierra Leone suggests a possibility to be able to collect and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data. Strategic partnerships with both international and domestic institutions promoting trade and gender issues, alongside trade and gender capacity-building and skills training (such as gender-responsiveness, gender mainstreaming, and gender-sensitive budgeting training) are critical to advancing interventions that harness the economic potential of women in Sierra Leone as powerful drivers of development. Additionally, the collection of sex-disaggregated data on participation of women entrepreneurs in trade and disaggregating trade statistics by gender can enable gender analysis by sector and improve policymaking. This provides an opportunity to assess differential impacts that the proposed trade agreement may have on women and men, and can equip policymakers for future rounds of negotiations to minimize negative impacts on women and ensure inclusive gains from trade. In addition, the analysis may help to leverage available resources and ensure that funding is directed appropriately so that gains from trade are evenly distributed.

8. Previous institutional capacity-building initiatives

During the past years, MTI has recognized and has strived to tackle foundational capacity constraints through a number of initiatives. These include the Commonwealth Hubs and Spokes Project (2005–2009), the Department for International Development Trade Advocacy Fund, and an Enhanced Integrated Framework fund programme. In particular the Enhanced Integrated Framework programme was intended to find sustainable solutions for MTI capacity through a 2014 Capacity Development Actions for Trade-Related Organizations in Sierra Leone, though these were never implemented. Donor programmes that provided plans for improving MTI capacities have frequently failed to be implemented, while programmes directly involved in improving MTI capacities have suffered from the deterioration of capacities following project conclusion. The lesson is that while donor assistance can play a vital role in revitalizing or energizing capacity, careful attention must be given to the sustainability of institutional capacities.

V. Strategic approach

A. Strategic pillar I: African Continental Free Trade Area

Adhering to the legal obligations of Sierra Leone and effectively taking advantage of the opportunities under AfCFTA will require specific actions and overall coordination by MTI. Strategic pillar I comprises a series of actions to satisfy and utilize the commitments and opportunities of Sierra Leone.

Strategy 1.1. Implement the obligations of Sierra Leone under the African Continental Free Trade Area

The establishment of a National AfCFTA Committee is the foundational step required to drive AfCFTA implementation. To streamline the work of trade institutions in Sierra Leone, NCCT has been re-established with a stronger mandate as the overarching committee on trade, with current bodies as subcommittees under the group and with particular consideration given to the involvement of the private sector and women's business associations. It is accorded with the mandate and functions of the National AfCFTA Committee.

Immediate activities:

- 1.1.1. Re-establish NCCT

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 1.1.2. Consolidate National AfCFTA committee functions and other trade oversight responsibilities under NCCT
- 1.1.3. Mobilize resources for AfCFTA implementation activities*
- 1.1.4. Undertake preparatory steps of the AfCFTA Active Obligations and Rights Checklists (section 4.1 of the situational analysis)*
- 1.1.5. Build services trade capacity for AfCFTA Phase I implementation*
- 1.1.6. Prepare for AfCFTA Phase II and Phase III negotiations

**Recurrent*

Strategy 1.2. Take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area

There is a general lack of awareness of AfCFTA in Sierra Leone. Strategy 1.2 is intended to build awareness and take steps to utilize the opportunities and rights accorded to Sierra Leone by AfCFTA. Section 4.1 of the situational analysis complements these activities with a series of preparatory steps to be followed by NCCT in utilizing its legal market access and safeguarding rights under AfCFTA. Recommendations on how to help women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses in Sierra Leone to benefit from AfCFTA are included.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 1.2.1. Implement the AfCFTA communications strategy

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 1.2.2. Provide training to trade-relevant business organizations on the use of the AfCFTA non-tariff barriers mechanism, AfCFTA rules of origin, and quality standards for priority African markets
- 1.2.3. Hold AfCFTA import and export seminar(s), with particular attention to potential exporters of the priority products identified for the AfCFTA market

Strategy 1.3. Review African Continental Free Trade Area implementation

Strategy 1.3 offers a platform to review AfCFTA implementation in Sierra Leone two and four years into its operationalization at the national level, identify gaps or constraints to its implementation, and make proposals to realize the full potential of AfCFTA. The second of these reviews aligns with the first five-year review of the AfCFTA exclusion lists and the effectiveness of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, in accordance with article 28 of the Agreement.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 1.3.1. Monitor strategy implementation, and generate and apply lessons learned*

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 1.3.2. Commission a research study to review the economic impact of AfCFTA and identify constraints to implementation improvement
- 1.3.3. Host a public-private AfCFTA Experts Group Review Meeting, including a review of studies conducted over the implementation period

**Recurrent*

B. Strategic pillar II: Trade support

Immediate steps must be taken to mitigate the impact that COVID-19 has had on trade in Sierra Leone and, thereafter, restructure trade to “build back better”, supporting economic recovery and resilience. Many opportunities exist for expanding and diversifying Sierra Leonean exports in terms of products and markets. While many of the supply-side bottlenecks can be dealt with by sectoral or infrastructural ministries, MTI has a role in focusing its resources on connecting the Sierra Leonean private sector to identified export opportunities and preferential trade arrangements, at the same time, improving export compliance procedures, including through a streamlined electronic single window.

Strategy 2.1. COVID-19 mitigation

Several immediate actions must be taken to improve access to essential COVID-19 medical supplies, protect Sierra Leonean trade and foreign exchange earnings from the adverse impacts of COVID-19 restrictions, and ensure safe trade going forward.

Immediate activities:

- 2.1.1. Create “green lanes” for fast customs clearance of medical supplies
- 2.1.2. Urgently suspend tariffs on essential COVID-19 imports and other essential medical supplies
- 2.1.3. Leverage the standards and guidelines for medical supplies, masks, disinfectants and protective equipment that have been made freely available

- 2.1.4. Coordinate diplomacy against the imposition of export limits on essential medical supplies and staple foods
- 2.1.5. Ensure safe access to imported inputs and spare parts
- 2.1.6. Ensure safe fishing trade
- 2.1.7. Facilitate safe land border trade
- 2.1.8. Limit the impact of lockdown restrictions on important export earners
- 2.1.9. Coordinate trade and transport measures within ECOWAS

Strategy 2.2. Connect producers to export opportunities

Most producers in Sierra Leone are unaware of export trade opportunities, including those created by the country's participation in international trade agreements. As section 4.2 of the National Trade Strategy demonstrates, Sierra Leonean exporters can already benefit from the considerable preference margins for certain priority products in the United States, European Union, Chinese, MRU and ECOWAS markets. Strategy 2.2 connects producers to these opportunities by first building an awareness of them, and second by supporting businesses to take advantage of them through export seminars. As export compliance procedures and market opportunities vary by preferential trade agreement, the present strategy adopts a segmented market approach targeted at a small number of selected, high-potential businesses.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 2.2.1. Support the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and other trade associations and unions with a trade opportunities communication and visibility campaign targeting export diversification to build back better from the COVID-19 crisis
- 2.2.2. United States export seminar and trade mission (AGOA)

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 2.2.3. European Union export seminar and trade mission (EBA)
- 2.2.4. MRU and ECOWAS ETLs seminar and trade missions to support regional value chains

Strategy 2.3. Implement the national trade facilitation strategy

The World Bank prepared a trade facilitation strategy for Sierra Leone (2019–2024) to facilitate meeting its obligations under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. These obligations are closely linked to those of Sierra Leone under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, and can be tackled in tandem. As a key initiative of strategic pillar II, strategy 2.3 is aimed at ensuring its effective implementation by providing capacity-building training for the members of its oversight committee and attracting resources towards its operationalization.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 2.3.1. Provide capacity training for National Trade Facilitation Committee members on AfCFTA-related trade facilitation provisions*
- 2.3.2. Host a donor round table to mobilize resources for actions of the National Trade Facilitation strategy

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 2.3.3. Encourage the National Revenue Authority customs administration to adopt the World Customs Organization Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool

**Recurrent*

Strategy 2.4. Enhance the business and trading environment

MTI has a role to play in coordinating with other sectoral and infrastructural ministries to prioritize investment that support trade. In addition, it can leverage political relationships with subregional partners to enhance cooperation for trade facilitation across borders.

Immediate activities:

- 2.4.1. Ensure that the “labour-based public works programme” of the COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme rehabilitates roads that facilitate trade

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 2.4.2. Implement an electronic single window for trade documentation*
- 2.4.3. Engage politically with subregional partners to raise and resolve cross-border trade facilitation issues faced by Sierra Leonean traders

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 2.4.4. Advocate for the establishment of small claims dispute settlement procedures and processes under the Fast Track Commercial Court
- 2.4.5. Prioritize trade-related infrastructure investment, including storage and sanitization facilities for small-scale cross-border traders

**Recurrent*

Strategy 2.5. Support small-scale cross-border trade

Several activities can be undertaken to support small-scale traders in the expansion and formalization of their businesses. Small-scale trade in the MRU and ECOWAS regions is of particular importance to offset lower commodity prices and reduced international trade as a result of COVID-19, and it helps to build resilience against climate-induced agricultural supply shocks to food security goods.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 2.5.1. Provide small trader business information

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 2.5.2. Develop and enforce measures to make it safer for women to trade across borders, drawing on lessons learned from the experience of other regions
- 2.5.3. Provide information, training, and capacity-building for informal cross-border traders on their rights, customs processes and trade negotiations

- 2.5.4. Identify a simplified pathway to formalization for small-scale cross-border traders
- 2.5.5. Develop and implement a Simplified Trade Regime for small-scale cross-border traders

Strategy 2.6. Develop regulatory standards for trade

Businesses in Sierra Leone need to be able to prove to foreign buyers that they can satisfy international standards, while knowing that investment in standards adherence will be recognized domestically. Voluntary environmental standards and regulations, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, are becoming increasingly important among purchasing preferences in destination markets. Adoption of voluntary and mandatory standards will significantly reduce technical barriers to trade and improve access to African, European, United States and global markets.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 2.6.1. Collaborate with the private sector to supplement capacity for standards testing

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 2.6.2. Review and harmonize the regulatory framework on quality, standards, and conformity assessment for priority sectors in line with regional standards
- 2.6.3. Strengthen SLSB and other conformity assessment bodies to perform their functions, promote the use of private, technical, environmental and social standards, and raise awareness on the importance of standards
- 2.6.4. Disseminate information regarding standards through business associations, cooperatives and trade support institutions, and work with them to encourage and facilitate standards certification for members

C. Strategic pillar III: Industrial and quality infrastructure development

Industrialization, especially through initial developments in light manufacturing, offers a pathway for economic diversification and job creation in Sierra Leone. Pillar III is intended to use trade policy to support the development of industry in line with the policy actions of MTNDP.

Strategy 3.1. Review and revision of the 2011 industrial policy

Industrial policy provides the foundational backbone and policy direction for industrial development. Strategy 3.1 is intended to review the appropriateness of the 2011 Industrial Policy of Sierra Leone and propose revisions, when necessary, to sharpen its focus and reflect new developments. A renewed industrial policy can in turn establish a framework for informing national planning and galvanizing industrial development in Sierra Leone. The renewed policy should reflect priorities of the COVID-19 recovery, threats owing to climate change, regional trade opportunities created by AfCFTA, as well as specific opportunities for women-owned businesses.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 3.1.1. Review and, when necessary, update and align the 2011 Industrial Policy with the ECOWAS Investment Policy and mainstream gender into the Industrial Policy using gender analysis by sector

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 3.1.2. Use the Industrial Policy to inform national planning

Strategy 3.2. Develop a national quality infrastructure

The industrial development envisaged in MTNDP will require the adoption of high-level industrial standards and the guarantee of acceptable product quality that is reinforced by a robust national quality infrastructure covering standardization, quality assurance, accreditation and metrology.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 3.2.1. Review, update and adopt the draft National Quality Policy

Medium-term activities (years 2-5):

- 3.2.2. Use the National Quality Policy to inform national planning
- 3.2.3. Set up a National Accreditation Body
- 3.2.4. Strengthen the National Quality Infrastructure

Strategy 3.3. Improve the business regulatory environment

Manufacturing firms cite a number of major obstacles to their operations. Improving the businesses regulatory environment is a policy action of MTNDP. Action in these areas requires cross-government coordination and resources and can help to support manufacturing and industrial development with positive spillovers for other sectors. Strategy 3.3 targets the development of manufacturing exports through coordinating improvements made to the business environment and the implementation of the 2019 Doing Business Reform Roadmap for Sierra Leone.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 3.3.1. Finalize an implementation plan for the Doing Business Reform Roadmap and mainstream gender into the plan when possible

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 3.3.2. Prioritize the resolution of major business obstacles in national development planning and mainstream gender when possible

Strategy 3.4. Develop special economic zones for Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone has had a draft special economic zone policy since 2013. Strategy 3.4 provides updates for finalizing the Policy with inputs from stakeholders using it as the basis of attracting export-oriented manufacturing capacity and jobs to Sierra Leone.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 3.4.1. Review, update and finalize the 2013 special economic zone policy and design corresponding strategies, including an evidence-based methodology to selecting locations for special economic zones

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 3.4.2. Facilitate the establishment of special economic zones, including provisions to prevent the widening of the gender wage gap*

**Recurrent*

D. Strategic pillar IV: Institutional capacities for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring

No trade strategy can be implemented without delivery capacity. Having hindered Sierra Leone in past endeavours, and being an explicit priority of stakeholders interviewed, this is the backbone of the strategy. The purpose of pillar IV is to strengthen the national processes and institutions to lead the formulation, implementation and coordination of the trade agenda in both public and private sectors.

Strategy 4.1. Create the missing professional staff cadre

MTI lacks fundamental evidence-based policy formulation and delivery capacity. Strategy 4.1 is aimed at concluding and building on change management interventions identified by MTI to restructure and capacitate the professional wing, while ensuring that current capacities are retained.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 4.1.1. Conclude structural reorganization and change management
- 4.1.2. Source temporary capacity*
- 4.1.3. Consolidate professional staff cadre*
- 4.1.4. Increase professional staff cadre, prioritizing inclusiveness and competence*

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 4.1.5. Retain capacity*

**Recurrent*

Strategy 4.2. Upskill professional staff cadre

Staff highlighted several areas in which skills could be developed. Strategy 4.2 is aimed at improving the capabilities of MTI through structuring regularized, ad hoc, preparatory, and induction training.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 4.2.1. Develop a results-based framework for the National Trade Strategy*
- 4.2.2. Create an annual general skills development programme with educational institutions*

- 4.2.3. Build trade and gender capacity, including the provision of gender-responsiveness and gender mainstreaming training for MTI staff and desk officers of trade-related agencies*
- 4.2.4. Build trade statistics capacity through partnerships with Statistics Sierra Leone, educational institutions and international institutions*
- 4.2.5. Build technical capacity on provisions in trade agreements*

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 4.2.6. Develop an MTI induction training programme
- 4.2.7. Design a training programme for customs and immigration officials at border crossings on AfCFTA provisions to be introduced, in collaboration with relevant MDAs, including considerations relating to small-scale cross-border trade, gender, and identifying IP infringement

**Recurrent*

Strategy 4.3. Cultivate relationships with policy research institutions

In the short-to-medium term, even under optimal projections, MTI will lack policy formulation capacity. Strategy 4.3 is intended to sustainably outsource policy research functions when appropriate, while striving to better insert Sierra Leonean trade research priorities (for example, those relating to WTO fisheries negotiations) within international trade policy think tanks, research institutes and forums.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 4.3.1. Foster sustainable policy research outsourcing*
- 4.3.2. Encourage Sierra Leonean trade research priorities within international trade policy think tanks and forums and foster strategic partnerships at WTO with nations committed to sustainable fishery outcomes*

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 4.3.3. Develop a mechanism for utilizing the results of research and recommendations in policy improvement

**Recurrent*

Strategy 4.4. Improve policy coordination

A key hindrance in effective policy delivery has been deficient policy coordination in the Government. Strategy 4.4 is aimed at building on the re-establishment of the NCCT official coordinating mechanism, as envisaged in strategy 1.1, to improve policy coordination by inviting other agencies and departments focused on economic development, economic inclusion, fiscal and monetary policies, and foreign policy to participate in the MTI annual planning through the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trade. Effective implementation of strategy 4.4 is dependent on improving MTI staff resources to allow the Ministry to better function as an economic policy secretariat. For the longer term, strategy 4.4 is aimed at helping

to better mainstream trade and the implementation of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements into national development planning.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 4.4.1. Develop an interministerial plan for trade and borders during crises to ensure limited disruption to flows of essential goods and persons in the event of partial or full border closures or disruptions, drawing on lessons learned from the Ebola and COVID-19 crises
- 4.4.2. Coordinate interministerial annual planning and include economic development, economic inclusion, fiscal and monetary policies, and foreign affairs MDAs in the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trade
- 4.4.3. Host biannual planning coordination meetings with trade-relevant donors*

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 4.4.4. Mainstream trade into national development planning*

**Recurrent*

Strategy 4.5. Strengthen private sector cooperation

Broad stakeholder consultations are required to legitimize trade policy and negotiations development and implementation processes. The involvement of the private sector in deliberations on trade related-policies and issues are ad hoc and limited in scope. A re-established NCCT and trade mainstreaming would require effective participation of the private sector through their business associations. Business associations in Sierra Leone are characterized by a generally underdeveloped capacity – lack of advocacy skills, expertise and information – with women entrepreneurs having lower levels of participation and access to networks. Strategy 4.5 is aimed at improving the private sector’s participation in trade policy coordination, development and dissemination processes by strengthening their capacities, including through strategic partnerships. This will ensure that the private sector contributes effectively to mainstreaming trade into the national development agenda.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 4.5.1. Establish an apex body for the coordination of a public-private dialogue and advocacy functions of all business associations and empower the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture to host a public-private dialogue platform

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 4.5.2. Improve the organizational effectiveness and capacities of business associations*
- 4.5.3. Revitalize the national public-private dialogue on trade-related issues*
- 4.5.4. Build strategic partnerships that promote support in the design of interventions for women’s full participation in trade and business empowerment*
- 4.5.5. Engage professional associations to participate in initiatives and investment in border facilities supporting cross-border traders, especially in dealing with the safety of women*

**Recurrent*

Strategy 4.6. Improve the availability of reliable trade and statistical data

The present strategy is intended to ensure that both domestic and foreign businesses, investors and development partners are able to have regular access to accurate gender-sensitive trade statistics and market information to make informed decisions on doing business in Sierra Leone. Apart from trade statistics, information covering market access requirements, commodity prices, national trade regulations and non-tariff barriers should be made available.

Short-term activities (year 1):

- 4.6.1. Review current trade database needs (including for sex-disaggregated data) and availability and collaborate with Statistics Sierra Leone to identify trade-related indicators, establish an inter-agency process to regularly collate figures from various sources, and establish integrated trade and market information systems to store and share data*

Medium-term activities (years 2–5):

- 4.6.2. Build MTI capacity (including trade monitors) to collate, analyse, visualize and apply evidence from various trade data sources to decision-making in MTI priority areas*
- 4.6.3. Engage in data and statistics partnerships (including with the private sector) for data and capacity improvement, including updating the Global Trade Data Observatory and African Trade Observatory and private sector collaborations for improved sector-specific shipping and transport data*

**Recurrent*

VI. Activities action plan

Table 29

Activities action plan

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
Pillar I. African Continental Free Trade Area				
<i>Strategy 1.1. Implement the obligations of Sierra Leone under the African Continental Free Trade Area</i>				
1.1.1. Re-establish National Coordinating Committee on Trade (NCCT).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Produce, discuss and negotiate terms of reference for the re-establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trade (IMCT); (ii) Identify and validate focal points in ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), the private sector and civil society invited to participate, including encouraging substantial participation of women's business associations; (iii) Identify seed financing and resource sustainability plans; (iv) Prepare yearly agenda and work plan for IMCT and established subcommittees; (v) Review and adapt the structure after one year of operation; Identify and prioritize capacity-building needs on specific technical topics, such as non-tariff barriers. 	Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) Minister, MTI Chief Director	Immediately	<p>Staff time and ministerial leadership, approximately \$4,000 annually for quarterly meetings costs. While donor resources could be used for seed financing, it will be important to institutionalize the expenses of NCCT within annual government budgeting for long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and International Trade Centre (ITC) support for NCCT capacity-building.</p>
1.1.2. Consolidate National AfCFTA Committee functions and other trade oversight responsibilities under NCCT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Grant NCCT responsibility to serve as a National African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Committee charged with coordinating the implementation of AfCFTA throughout the Government; (ii) Grant NCCT oversight responsibilities of the Trade Facilitation strategies National Trade Facilitation Committee and the National African Growth and Opportunity Act Steering Committee (e.g. as subcommittees of NCCT); (iii) Consolidate the current National Trade Facilitation Committee under NCCT and designate it the focal point for non-tariff barriers and trade facilitation under AfCFTA; (iv) Grant NCCT responsibility for implementing the National Trade strategy; (v) Build the capacity of the National AfCFTA Committee on AfCFTA provisions, especially those relating to notifications to the 	MTI Minister, MTI Chief Director	Year 1	Staff time, ministerial leadership, \$15,000 for AfCFTA coordination functions and capacity-building trainings.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
	<p>AfCFTA secretariat, schedules and specific commitments;</p> <p>(vi) Invite representatives of women's business associations and the informal sector to attend and actively participate in NCCT meetings.</p>			
1.1.3. Mobilize resources for AfCFTA implementation activities.	<p>(i) Identify key AfCFTA activities relating to awareness-raising, capacity-building, implementation, and domestic and regional meetings;</p> <p>(ii) Develop budgets for identified implementation activities;</p> <p>(iii) Factor costs into annual MTI budget and budgets of other relevant MDAs;</p> <p>(iv) Engage development partners for potential funding;</p> <p>(v) Allocate specific funding for women-led companies and traders.</p>	NCCT, MTI Programmes Management	Year 1 and recurrent	Government of Sierra Leone and development partner resources.
1.1.4. Take preparatory steps of the AfCFTA Active Obligations and Rights Checklists.	<p>(i) Review AfCFTA Active Obligations and Rights (see section 4.1 of the full National Trade strategy) in the situational analysis and, when necessary, make desired amendments;</p> <p>(ii) Follow the steps of the AfCFTA Active Obligations and Rights Checklists (see section 4.1 of situational analysis).</p>	NCCT	Years 1–5	Staff time and ministerial leadership.
1.1.5. Build services trade capacity for AfCFTA Phase I implementation.	<p>(i) Identify MTI services trade focal point;</p> <p>(ii) Establish public-private services trade working groups for the five AfCFTA priority sectors (business services, financial services, telecommunications services, tourism services, and transport services);</p> <p>(iii) Nominate services trade focal point and working group partners for upcoming African Union–ECA AfCFTA trade in services trainings;</p> <p>(iv) Have services trade working groups identify AfCFTA trade in services offensive and defensive negotiating positions;</p> <p>(v) Use AfCFTA negotiations to solidify capacity for future services trade negotiations with other trade partners;</p> <p>(vi) Promote specific commitments in the service sectors that women are concentrated in (e.g. conference services, hotel and restaurant services, among others).</p>	MTI Programmes Management	Year 1 and recurrent	Staff time and African Union–ECA resources on services trade training, between \$3,500 and \$35,000 for a series of working group meetings.
1.1.6. Prepare for AfCFTA Phase II and	<p>(i) Identify MTI or broader government focal points for AfCFTA Phase II negotiations on</p>	MTI Foreign Trade	Year 1	Staff time plus African Union–ECA resources

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
Phase III negotiations.	<p>competition policy, investment and intellectual property (IP) rights;</p> <p>(ii) Have MTI focal points identify liaison partners on Phase II topics in the private sector and broader government, when relevant;</p> <p>(iii) Nominate MTI focal points for African Union–ECA organized capacity-building on Phase II topics and share training mission findings with liaison partners.</p> <p>Intellectual property rights:</p> <p>(i) Support Office of Administrator and Registrar General (OARG) to raise awareness among various government bodies involved in enforcement (justice department, police, customs and the National Revenue Authority) on the legal protections of IP and the penalties for infringement;</p> <p>(ii) Fast-track the implementation of the Intellectual Property Development Plan;</p> <p>(iii) Encourage passing of key IP legislation and establishing of IP agency under OARG with political and financial commitments and timelines;</p> <p>(iv) Establish an Intellectual Property Tribunal to adjudicate on IP-related cases;</p> <p>(v) Engage with the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization and World Intellectual Property Organization to investigate options for joint subregional capacity on filing, investigation, enforcement and dispute resolution;</p> <p>(vi) Prepare country position for Phase II AfCFTA negotiations on IP;</p> <p>(vii) Support the establishment of relevant professional associations of creators and innovators to exercise IP provisions under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area; and build staff capacity of OARG, Judiciary, Sierra Leone Bar Association, Police, National Revenue Authority Customs and Standards Bureau on IP matters.</p> <p>Investment:</p> <p>(i) Develop Sierra Leone negotiating positions in collaboration with Sierra Leone Import Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA) and other relevant investment promotion organizations;</p> <p>(ii) Review and evaluate the current bilateral investment treaties for</p>			on capacity-building workshops.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
	<p>Sierra Leone and ensure alignment with the AfCFTA Protocol;</p> <p>(iii) Identify national level capacity for legal action in any disputes arising from current or future AfCFTA investment cases.</p> <p>Competition policy:</p> <p>(i) Ensure AfCFTA negotiations take account of and complement the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) competition authority;</p> <p>(ii) Use the AfCFTA Protocol to create support for national level anti-competitive investigations and enforcement;</p> <p>(iii) Align outcomes of the AfCFTA Protocol with the reviewed draft form of the Sierra Leone Competition and Consumer Protection Law.</p> <p>E-commerce and digital trade:</p> <p>(i) Establish a working group involving the Ministry of Information, a focal point from the Bank of Sierra Leone, the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) and interested private sector representatives;</p> <p>(ii) Look for options to use AfCFTA negotiations to support Sierra Leone with enforcement capacity on issues such as data security, data protection, cybercrime and digital consumer protection.</p>			
<i>Strategy 1.2. Take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement</i>				
1.2.1. Implement the AfCFTA communications strategy.	Assign responsibilities within MTI and NCCT for leading and managing the AfCFTA Communication strategy (see section 8 of the full National Trade strategy).	MTI Chief Director, online material to be the responsibility of information technology staff support to NCCT	Year 1	Preparation and dissemination of communication materials at \$15,000; Outreach at \$35,000; Consultancy for web design and linkage at \$5,000.
1.2.2. Provide training to trade-relevant business organizations on the use of AfCFTA non-tariff barrier mechanism, AfCFTA Rules of Origin, and Quality Standards for priority African markets.	<p>(i) Coordinate with business associations to identify interested private sector participants and prioritize potential exporters of the priority products identified (see section 4.2 of the full National Trade Strategy);</p> <p>(ii) Contact African Union and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to request hosting of non-tariff barriers mechanism, rules of origin, and quality standards training;</p>	MTI Programme Management	Year 2	Staff time (likely resources from UNCTAD or the African Union or from both).

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
	(iii) Invite trade-relevant MDAs and private sector business associations and traders to training; (iv) Create tailored capacity-building for women entrepreneurs on non-tariff barriers, non-tariff measures and trade facilitation under AfCFTA (including how to identify and take advantage of niche markets).			
1.2.3. Hold AfCFTA import and export seminar(s)	(i) Design AfCFTA import and export seminars, involving trade facilitating MDAs, along with exemplar businesses that already export to and source inputs from African markets, and with specific tailoring for women entrepreneurs; (ii) Work with Sierra Leone Local Content Agency (SLCCIA) and its affiliates to collaboratively identify focal businesses with export potential in the priority AfCFTA sectors identified in the present strategy; (iii) Invite focal businesses to apply to attend seminars; (iv) Deal with information barriers and facilitate creation of linkages with buyers or sellers in other countries; (v) Follow up with invited businesses after six months to assess the success of the seminar and the lessons learned. Provisional topics to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The application and use of AfCFTA rules of origin ▪ Quality standards for exporting under the AfCFTA ▪ Use of the AfCFTA MTB mechanism ▪ Protecting IP while trading 	MTI Chief Director	Year 3	One-week seminar at \$10,000.
<i>Strategy 1.3. Review African Continental Free Trade Area implementation</i>				
1.3.1. Monitor strategy implementation, and generate and apply lessons learned.	(i) Design monitoring and evaluation plan, including gender-responsive indicators, and identify and agree on targets and timelines endorsed by MTI and Ministry of Finance; (ii) Commission a research study on the economic baseline prior to trading under AfCFTA; (iii) Monitor progress on indicators against targets regularly; (iv) Investigate and incorporate lessons learned from other countries; (v) Apply evidence from academic research to make improvements in implementation.	MTI Programme Management	Years 1–5 (quarterly, biannual, annual)	Staff time, resources and support from research partners.
1.3.2. Commission a research study to review the economic impact of AfCFTA and identify constraints to	(i) Develop terms of reference for an economic and implementation review of the impact of AfCFTA in Sierra Leone; (ii) Tender and commission study;	MTI Programme Management	Year 4	Review of economic study at \$10,000.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
implementation improvement.	(iii) Review study with key government and private sector stakeholders, and use the validated study in activity 1.3.3.			
1.3.3. Host a Public-Private AfCFTA Experts Group Review Meeting.	(i) Identify and invite trade-relevant MDAs, and private sector representatives, and organizations representing interests of women entrepreneurs; (ii) Organize and host a Public-Private AfCFTA Experts Group Review Meeting; (iii) Produce an Expert Group Meeting report identifying constraints to improved implementation, challenges to private sector AfCFTA utilization and a roadmap for better implementation as appropriate.	MTI	Years 2 and 4 (to coincide with AfCFTA five year review in 2024 pursuant to Agreement Art. 24)	Workshop facilities and resource persons at \$15,000.
Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
Pillar II. Trade support				
<i>Strategy 2.1. COVID-19 mitigation</i>				
2.1.1. Create “green lanes” for fast customs clearance of medical supplies.	Coordinate with customs to introduce the temporary expedited screening of imported medical supplies using a green lane system from imports from trusted sources and an “orange lane” for faster, but rigorous, checking from new sources.	MTI or Customs	Immediately	Staff time.
2.1.2. Urgently suspend tariffs on essential COVID-19 imports and other essential medical supplies.	Coordinate with customs to immediately and temporarily suspend tariffs on essential COVID-19 imports, including protective garments, drugs, disinfectants and soap.	MTI, Customs or Ministry of Health	Immediately	Staff time.
2.1.3. Leverage the standards and guidelines for medical supplies, masks, disinfectants and protective equipment that have been made freely available.	Coordinate with the African Standardization Community to access free-of-charge standards and guidelines for the manufacture, testing and certification of COVID-19 preventive measures and products.	Sierra Leone Standards Bureau (SLSB) or Ministry of Health	Immediately	Staff time.
2.1.4. Coordinate diplomacy against the imposition of export limits on essential medical supplies and staple foods.	Engage the diplomatic corps of Sierra Leone at the World Trade Organization in Geneva and in capitals to urgently resist and lobby against the imposition of export restrictions on COVID-19 medical supplies and staple foods.	MTI Chief Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of Health	Immediately	Staff time.
2.1.5. Ensure safe access to imported inputs and spare parts.	Working jointly with key industry players, business associations, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Mining to identify likely shortages in agricultural, industry, and mining inputs and spare parts and coordinate access through trade routes.	MTI, Customs, Ministry of Agriculture or Ministry of Mining	Immediately	Staff time.
2.1.6. Ensure safe fishing trade.	Coordinate with Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to develop guidelines, testing and	MIT, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine	Immediately	Staff time.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
	monitoring procedures to enable safe fishing trade.	Resources or Ministry of Health		
2.1.7. Facilitate safe land border trade.	Develop working procedures for safe border trade, including testing, contact tracing, monitoring, improved sanitation and methods to reduce congestion.	MTI, Customs, Immigration or Ministry of Health	Immediately	Staff time.
2.1.8. Limit the impact of lockdown restrictions on important export earners.	Engage with important export earning businesses to ensure that lockdown restrictions can be eased and replaced with sufficient preventive measures.	MTI or Ministry of Health	Immediately	Staff time.
2.1.9. Coordinate trade and transport measures within ECOWAS.	Contribute to and implement the ECOWAS guidelines for the Harmonization and Facilitation of Cross-Border Trade and Transport in the ECOWAS Region on the COVID-19 Pandemic and Related Post-Recovery Actions.	MTI, Customs, Immigration and Ministry of Health	Immediately	Staff time.
<i>Strategy 2.2. Connect producers to export opportunities</i>				
2.2.1. Support SLCCIA and other trade associations or unions with a trade opportunities communication and visibility campaign targeting the export diversification to build back better from the COVID-19 crisis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Coordinate with SLCCIA to produce trade opportunity marketing materials targeting export diversification opportunities in preferential markets; (ii) Coordinate with SLCCIA to distribute trade opportunity materials to boost awareness of export possibilities, including ensuring distribution of materials to businesses owned by women. 	MTI or SLCCIA	Year 1	Consultancy to develop and produce trade opportunity market materials at \$15,000.
2.2.2. United States export seminar and trade mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Design the United States export seminar, involving trade-facilitating MDAs, along with exemplar businesses that already export to the United States, the United States Embassy and United States trade support institutions; (ii) Work with SLCCIA and its affiliates to collaboratively identify focal businesses with export potential in the priority sectors identified above; (iii) Invite focal businesses to apply to attend the United States export seminar – MTI to invite and support local businesses to attend seminars; (iv) Follow up with invited businesses after six months to assess the success of the seminar; (v) Organize inward and outward trade missions in collaboration with the Commercial Section and the United States Embassy in Freetown. 	MTI Chief Director	Year 1	<p>One-week seminar at \$10,000;</p> <p>One outward trade mission at \$75,000;</p> <p>One inward trade mission at \$25,000 (donors).</p>
2.2.3. European Union export	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Design European Union Export Seminar, involving trade-facilitating MDAs, 	MTI Chief Director	Year 2	One-week seminar at \$10,000;

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
seminar and trade mission.	<p>along with exemplar businesses that already export to the European Union, the European Union embassies and the European Union trade support institutions;</p> <p>(ii) Work with SLCCIA and its affiliates to collaboratively identify focal businesses with export potential in the priority sectors identified above;</p> <p>(iii) Invite focal businesses to apply to attend the European Union export seminar;</p> <p>(iv) Follow up with invited businesses after six months to assess the seminar's success;</p> <p>(v) Organize inward and outward trade missions in collaboration with the European Union Delegation in Freetown and Trade Attaches of European Union country missions to Sierra Leone.</p>			<p>One trade mission at \$45,000;</p> <p>One inward trade mission at \$25,000 (donors).</p>
2.2.4. Manu River Union and ECOWAS–Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) seminar and trade missions to support regional value chains.	<p>(i) Design ECOWAS ETLS trade seminar, involving trade-facilitating MDAs, along with exemplar businesses that already export to ECOWAS via the ETLS and ECOWAS country embassies;</p> <p>(ii) Work with SLCCIA and its affiliates to collaboratively identify focal businesses with export potential in the priority sectors identified above;</p> <p>(iii) Invite focal businesses to apply to attend ETLS trade seminar;</p> <p>(iv) Follow up with invited businesses after six months to assess the success of the seminar;</p> <p>(v) Organize inward and outward trade missions in collaboration with ECOWAS and Manu River Union secretariats, SLCCIA and Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development.</p>	MTI Chief Director	Year 3	<p>One-week seminar at \$10,000;</p> <p>One Trade Mission at \$35,000;</p> <p>One inward Trade Mission at \$25,000 (donors).</p>
<i>Strategy 2.3. Implement the national trade facilitation strategy</i>				
2.3.1. Provide capacity training for National Trade Facilitation Committee members on AFCFTA-related trade facilitation provisions.	<p>(i) In coordination with National Trade Facilitation Committee, map areas of capacity weakness for trainings around AFCFTA-related trade facilitation provisions (and carry out trainings in accordance with identified areas);</p> <p>(ii) Encourage strong representation of women in the National Trade Facilitation Committee.</p>	MTI Programmes Management	Recurrent	Staff time and between \$10,000 and \$20,000, depending on trainings required.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
2.3.2. Host a Donor Roundtable to mobilize resources for actions of the National Trade Facilitation strategy.	(i) Identify a list of donors with potential interest in supporting Sierra Leonean trade facilitation; (ii) Package and prioritize actions of Trade Facilitation strategy; (iii) Host Donor Roundtable to review and solicit resources towards actions of the National Trade Facilitation strategy; (iv) Develop a plan for export processing facilities.	MTI Programmes Management	Year 1	Staff time.
2.3.3. Encourage National Revenue Authority Customs administrations to adopt the World Customs Organization Gender Equality Organizational Assessment Tool.	National Revenue Authority Customs to adopt the World Customs Organization Gender Equality Organizational Assessment tool.	Customs	Year 3	Staff time.
<i>Strategy 2.4. Enhance the business and trading environment</i>				
2.4.1. Ensure that the “labour-based public works programme” of the COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme rehabilitates roads that facilitate trade.	Coordinate with the Ministry of Finance to prioritize the rehabilitation of agricultural feeder roads and important transit routes within the COVID-19 Quick Action Economic Response Programme.	MTI Policy, Planning and Research, Ministry of Finance	Immediately	Staff time.
2.4.2. Implement an electronic single window for trade documentation.	(i) Develop and issue a tender for the operation of the electronic single window in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Customs for trade-related documentation, including licenses and export permits and approvals from various MDAs involved in relevant sectors, taking into account the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises in addition to those of large firms; (ii) Regularly review the effectiveness of the electronic single window through NCCT and bring identified implementation challenges to the attention of heads of agencies.	MTI Chief Director, Ministry of Finance, Customs, NCCT Sector-specific MDAs	Year 1 and recurrent	Approximately >\$100,000 potentially to be resourced from improved customs tax collection.
2.4.3. Engage politically with subregional partners to raise and resolve cross-border trade facilitation issues faced by Sierra Leonean traders.	Engage in diplomacy to meet the challenges faced by Sierra Leonean traders, especially the lack of acceptance of customs documentation in neighbouring countries as an important constraint in the utilization of ETLs.	MTI Chief Director	Year 1	Staff time, ministerial leadership.
2.4.4. Advocate for the establishment of	(i) Develop an issue paper outlining the merits and	MTI Chief Director,	Year 2	Staff time.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
small claims dispute settlement procedures and processes under the Fast Track Commercial Court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reasons justifying small claims dispute settlement procedures and processes under the Fast Track Commercial Court; (ii) Include an awareness-raising component in the issue paper. 	SLCCIA, Ministry of Information		
2.4.5. Prioritize trade-related infrastructure investment, including storage and sanitization facilities for small-scale cross-border traders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Map binding infrastructural constraints to exporting in coordination with business associations, building on the suggestions of the situational analysis (cold chain infrastructure, port access roads, feeder roads, storage and sanitization for small-scale cross-border traders, among others); (ii) Use mapping to inform national development planning and coordination with ministries responsible for infrastructural development. 	MTI Policy, Planning and Research	Year 5	Staff time.
<i>Strategy 2.5. Support small-scale cross-border trade</i>				
2.5.1. Provide small trader business information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Establish small trader help desk at border crossings; (ii) Prepare and publish at border crossings simplified business and trade regulations of Mano River Union countries; (iii) Raise awareness of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) and small trader help desk countrywide; (iv) Investigate options for cross-border facilities, including storage, sanitation and women's safety, together with business associations. 	MTI Chief Director, SLCCIA, Sierra Leone Market Women's Association	Year 1	Staff time.
2.5.2. Develop and enforce measures to make it safer for women to trade across borders, drawing on lessons learned from the experience of other regions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Liaise with border officials to develop and implement safer border trade procedures and appoint a gender champion at border crossings; (ii) Establish gender desks at border police stations; (iii) Implement simple, low-cost trade facilitation measures such as solar lighting to allow for greater security with longer trading hours and gender-separated bathrooms. 	MTI Chief Director, Sierra Leone Police	Year 2	Staff time.
2.5.3. Provide information, training and capacity-building for informal cross-border traders on their rights, customs processes, and trade negotiations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Identify border post venues for information distribution and trainings, and identify participants; (ii) Develop outreach and training materials, including specific training for women informal cross-border traders; (iii) Deliver trainings in partnership with local business associations, traders unions and women's organizations. 	MTI Chief Director, SLCCIA, Sierra Leone Market Women's Association	Year 2	Training at \$10,000.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
2.5.4. Identify a simplified pathway to formalization for small-scale cross-border traders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Identify and implement process for conducting business registration and issuance of licenses for movement of goods and people involved in cross-border trade closer to cross-border areas and digitally, including simplification of taxes and fees for Corporation Business Tax; (ii) Improve processes for inspection at border crossings for small-scale traders, for example, dedicated lines. 	MTI, National Revenue Authority, Customs, OARG, Corporate Affairs Commission, Border officials (customs and immigration)	Year 3	Consultancy at \$15,000.
2.5.5. Develop and implement a Simplified Trade Regime for small-scale cross border traders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop and implement a Simplified Trade Regime under the framework of the Mano River Union; (ii) Disseminate information and make forms accessible to small businesses and women entrepreneurs. 	Ministry of Finance, National Revenue Authority, Customs, MTI Chief Director, National Investment Bank	Year 4	Consultancy at \$15,000.
<i>Strategy 2.6. Develop regulatory standards for trade</i>				
2.6.1. Collaborate with the private sector to supplement capacity for standards testing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Identify and map private sector laboratories and testing capacities; (ii) Negotiate with private sector operators for testing services and establish memoranda of understanding for services access. 	SLSB	Year 1	Staff time.
2.6.2. Review and harmonize the regulatory framework on quality, standards, and conformity assessment for priority sectors in line with regional standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Review and harmonize the regulatory framework on quality, standards, and conformity assessment for priority sectors, including agriculture, food, textiles and handicrafts in line with regional standards; (ii) Promote the use of private standards in the agriculture, food, textiles, agroprocessing, textiles and handicrafts sectors; (iii) Raise awareness on the importance of standards. 	SLSB	Year 2	Staff time.
2.6.3. Strengthen SLSB and other conformity assessment bodies to perform their functions, promote the use of private, technical, environmental and social standards, and raise awareness on the importance of standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Strengthen SLSB and other conformity assessment bodies to perform their functions; (ii) Collaborate with regional bodies to supplement capacity for standards testing; (iii) Collaborate with private and voluntary standards organizations and business associations to disseminate information on standards, to help businesses to understand requirements and certification processes, to share best practices from those who have successfully obtained certification, and to facilitate 	SLSB	Year 2	Staff time.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
	businesses to obtain standards certifications to the standards required for export; (iv) Include information on standards in the communications strategy to educate consumers.			
2.6.4. Disseminate information regarding standards through business associations, cooperatives trade support institutions, and work with them to encourage and facilitate standards certification for members.	(i) Develop quality services marketing information materials; (ii) Use trade promotion organizations and business associations as vectors for disseminating standards information.	SLSB	Year 2	Staff time.
Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
Pillar III. Industrial and quality infrastructure development				
<i>Strategy 3.1. Review and revision of the 2011 industrial policy</i>				
3.1.1. Review and, when necessary, update and align the 2011 Industrial Policy with the ECOWAS Investment Policy and mainstream gender into the Industrial Policy using gender analysis by sector.	(i) Review appropriateness of the 2011 Industrial Policy in the light of the changes in Sierra Leonean economy and global manufacturing, and alignment with the Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023) and ECOWAS Investment Policy; (ii) When appropriate, propose amendments to the 2011 Industrial Policy; (iii) Host validation workshop on Industrial Policy review and amendments; (iv) Submit any revisions to cabinet for review and approval.	MTI Domestic Commerce and Industry	Year 1	Consultancy, between \$10,000 and \$15,000.
3.1.2. Use the Industrial Policy to inform national planning.	(i) Reference reviewed and revised Industrial Policy to mainstream industrialization into national development planning; (ii) Consider gender mainstreaming in updating of the Industrial Policy.	MTI Chief Director	Year 3	Staff time.
<i>Strategy 3.2. Develop a national quality infrastructure</i>				
3.2.1. Review, update and adopt the draft National Quality Policy.	(i) Review the National Quality Policy draft in the light of the changes in Sierra Leonean economy and global manufacturing, and alignment with the Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023) and ECOWAS Quality and Regional Policy; (ii) When appropriate, propose amendments to the draft National Quality Policy; (iii) Host validation workshop on National Quality Policy review and amendments;	MTI, SLSB	Year 1	\$100,000.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) Submit any revisions to cabinet for review and approval; (v) Raise awareness among stakeholders on National Quality Policy. 			
3.2.2. Use National Quality Policy to inform national planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reference reviewed and revised National Quality Policy to mainstream quality issues into national development planning and sectorial policies; (ii) Facilitate the implementation of the National Quality Policy; Promote a National Quality Award to incentivise quality awareness. 	MTI, SLSB	Years 2–3	\$250,000.
3.2.3. Set up a National Accreditation Body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Establish a National Accreditation Body to facilitate accreditation of conformity assessment institutions; (ii) Set up of legal framework for the National Accreditation Body; (iii) Support the National Accreditation Body; (iv) Develop and implement a National Accreditation strategy. 	MTI, Development Partners	Years 2–5	\$1,000,000.
3.2.4. Strengthen the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Review the institutional and legal framework for NQI; (ii) Submit proposals to cabinet for review and approval; (iii) Facilitate legislative reforms for the implementation of NQI; (iv) Establish an NQI coordination mechanism; (v) Facilitate technical assistance for the development of top level institutions and centres of excellence in NQI; (vi) Promote public-private partnerships for NQI. 	MTI, SLSB, Development Partners	Years 2–5	\$2,500,000.
<i>Strategy 3.3. Improve the business regulatory environment</i>				
3.3.1. Finalize an implementation plan for the Doing Business Reform Roadmap and mainstream gender when possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Identify cost and resources for Doing Business Reform recommendations throughout agencies; (ii) Mainstream gender into the implementation plan for Doing Business Reform Roadmap. 	MTI Policy, Planning and Research	Year 1	World Bank resources.
3.3.2. Prioritize the resolution of major business obstacles in national development planning and mainstream gender when possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Identify with business associations priority business obstacles such as electricity, access to finance, and access to land through NCCT; (ii) Coordinate with relevant MDAs (including through IMCT) to tackle priority business obstacles in national development planning and resulting legal reforms. 	MTI Policy, Planning and Research, NCCT, IMCT including SLSB, CPA, Environmental Protection Agency, Ministries of Health and Sanitation, among others	Year 3	Staff time and ministerial leadership.
<i>Strategy 3.4. Develop special economic zones for Sierra Leone</i>				
3.4.1. Review, update and finalize the 2013 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Review the appropriateness of the 2013 draft SEZ Policy, including provisions to prevent widening of 	MTI Domestic Commerce and Industry	Year 1	Consultancy at \$15,000 (can be combined and aligned with activity

and design corresponding strategies, including an evidence-based methodology to selecting locations for SEZs.	gender pay gap and ensure good working conditions; (ii) Submit draft policy to government MDAs and private sector stakeholders for comments; (iii) Submit finalized SEZ Policy to cabinet for review and approval; (iv) Commission studies to identify or inform evidence-based selection of SEZ locations.			3.1.1 Review 2011 Industrial Policy).
3.4.2. Facilitate the establishment of SEZs, including provisions to prevent the widening of the gender wage gap.	(i) Develop SEZ Law for Sierra Leone highlighting responsibilities of government, developer, operator and regulator; (ii) Establish SEZ or regulatory body; demarcate areas for industrial and SEZ development; (iii) Monitor compensation and working conditions, especially with respect to the needs of women.	MTI Domestic Commerce and Industry, National Investment Bank, SLIEPA	Years 2–5	Staff time.
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Detailed actions</i>	<i>Focal point</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Resources</i>
Pillar IV. Institutional capacities for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring				
<i>Strategy 4.1. Create the missing professional staff cadre</i>				
4.1.1. Conclude structural reorganization and change management.	(i) Identify focal point at Directorate level for the change-management process; (ii) Step up follow-up on the key actions recommended at the MTI restructuring workshop; (iii) Agree with consultants on the scope and details of the change-management process; (iv) Finalize preparation of MTI Strategic Plan in collaboration with affiliated MDAs; (v) Implementation of change-management process.	MTI Chief Director	Years 1–2	Staff time and ministerial leadership.
4.1.2. Source temporary capacity.	(i) Contact Oxford Policy Management for the placement of a law fellow to support legislative development in pandemic preparedness and response; (ii) Contact the Overseas Development institute for the placement of an economist; (iii) Support two junior professional staff members on Performance Management and Development through an Enhanced Integrated Framework programme; (iv) Promote promising Trade Monitors to temporary analyst posts and prioritize their training; (v) Investigate opportunities for seconding staff from other economic ministries, especially those with complementary areas of focus such as agriculture and fisheries.	MTI Programme Management or MTI Chief Director	Years 1–2	Staff time to set-up with subsequent temporary staff financing provided by partners (Overseas Development Institute, Oxford Policy Management and Department for International Development).
4.1.3. Consolidate professional staff cadre.	(i) Subsume or merge MTI agencies with overlapping or defunct functions to consolidate staff and funding within priority agencies; (ii) Relocate defunct positions to MTI Directorates;	MTI Permanent Secretary or MTI Chief Director	Years 1–2	Staff time and ministerial leadership.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
	(iii) Facilitate the transition of qualified administrative staff to professional posts.			
4.1.4. Increase professional staff cadre, prioritizing inclusiveness and competence.	(i) Produce a staff capacity and inclusiveness review; (ii) Use staff capacity review as an evidence-base for negotiating new professional staff positions with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP); (iii) Partner with Statistics Sierra Leone, educational institutions, and international partners to support capacity-building initiatives.	MTI Human Resource Management Office (HRMO)	Years 1–2	Staff time and ministerial leadership
4.1.5. Retain capacity.	(i) Produce a capacity retention plan investigating options for top-up schemes reportedly used by other ministries (such as health, finance, foreign affairs) and non-financial incentives, including participation in international training programmes and improved office equipment; (ii) Review capacity retention plan with staff for inputs and suggestions; (iii) Use capacity retention plan in financial negotiations with MoFEP.	MTI Permanent Secretary, MTI Chief Director or MTI HRMO	Year 2	Staff time to build capacity retention plan, possible donor support on top-ups, ministerial leadership to push for increased MoFEP staff contributes.
<i>Strategy 4.2. Upskill professional staff cadre</i>				
4.2.1. Develop a results-based framework for the National Trade strategy.	(i) Identify internal capacity gaps in results-based management; (ii) Develop technical partnerships and build technical capacity for results-based management and monitoring of National Trade strategy; (iii) Develop results-based management monitoring tool for the National Trade strategy in alignment with annual MTI work plans and Ministry of Finance budget monitoring.	MTI Permanent Secretary, capacity-building partners (ECA, ITC)	Annual	Training, between \$2,000 and \$3,000 (if necessary), experts provided by partners (ITC, ECA), and staff time.
4.2.2. Create an annual general skills development programme with educational institutions.	(i) Identify one training topic (yearly) based on staff prioritization; (ii) Identify participants; (iii) Evaluate training and collect feedback from staff; (iv) Collaborate with education institutions on training content.	MTI HRMO or MTI Programmes Management	Annual	Each training, between \$2,000 and \$15,000.
4.2.3. Build trade and gender capacity, including the provision of gender-responsiveness and gender mainstreaming training for MTI staff and desk officers of trade-related agencies.	(i) Identify MTI trade and gender focal point; (ii) Nominate trade and gender focal points in MTI and related agencies for upcoming ECA trade and gender capacity-building training (include gender-responsiveness and gender mainstreaming training); (iii) Nominate additional staff annually for supplementary African Institute for Economic Development and Planning	MTI Programme Management	Year 1 and recurrent	ECA resources on trade and gender training, \$3,000 annually for supplementary African Institute for Economic Development and Planning Gender, Trade and Development training.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
	<p>Gender, Trade and Development course;</p> <p>(iv) Gender-trained officers to share training findings with broader ministry staff, intergovernmental partners, and business associations and mainstream into policy formulation;</p> <p>(v) Revitalize the national Public-Private Dialogues (PPD) on Trade-Related Gender Issues and include in the NCCT work plan;</p> <p>(vi) Build strategic partnerships with institutions that promote trade-related gender activities.</p>			
4.2.4. Build trade statistics capacity through partnerships with Statistics Sierra Leone, educational institutions and international institutions.	<p>(i) Identify MTI trade statistics focal points;</p> <p>(ii) Nominate MTI trade statistics focal points for ECA training on trade statistics;</p> <p>(iii) Request support from partners (e.g. with UNCTAD) for access to statistics capacity-building initiatives;</p> <p>(iv) Trade statistics focal points to incorporate lessons learned into MTI policy development.</p>	MTI Programmes Management	Year 1 and recurrent	ECA resources on trade statistics training.
4.2.5 Build technical capacity on provisions in trade agreements.	<p>(i) Design training programme for MTI staff, desk officers of relevant MDAs, and law enforcement, customs and immigration officials at border crossings on provisions in current trade agreements and AfCFTA provisions to be introduced, in collaboration with relevant MDAs and agencies, including considerations relating to small-scale cross-border trade, gender, and identifying IP infringement;</p> <p>(ii) Leverage partnerships with, and training programmes provided by ECA and ITC to train staff;</p> <p>(iii) Advocate for subregional neighbours to train border, customs, and law enforcement officials in the subregion, including on gender awareness;</p> <p>(iv) Ensure inputs from trained staff are included in preparation for future rounds of AfCFTA negotiations.</p>	MTI	Year 1	ECA and ITC support.
4.2.6. Develop MTI induction training programme.	<p>(i) Plan with HRMO the participation of newly recruited staff to public service training in advance of recruitment;</p> <p>(ii) Provide an on-the-job coaching system to facilitate skills acquisition by newcomers with the assignment of one mentor for the first year of service (light mentoring scheme);</p> <p>(iii) Support student internships at MTI.</p>	MTI HRMO	Year 2	Mentoring to be provided by senior MTI staff.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
4.2.7. Design training programme for customs and immigration officials at border crossings on AfCFTA provisions to be introduced, in collaboration with relevant MDAs and agencies, including considerations relating to small-scale cross-border trade, gender, and identifying IP infringement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Coordinate with customs to develop training materials on AfCFTA provisions, including considerations relating to small-scale cross-border trade, gender and identifying IP infringement; (ii) Deliver trainings at customs points and centrally; (iii) Leverage capacity-building opportunities provided by partners to achieve training objectives and to prepare for future trade negotiations. 	MTI HRMO, Chief Director	Year 3	Customs and immigration training programme materials and delivery at \$20,000.
<i>Strategy 4.3. Cultivate relationships with policy research institutions</i>				
4.3.1. Foster sustainable policy research outsourcings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Maintain a local researcher or policy think tank preferred list; (ii) Encourage development partner projects towards using Sierra Leonean think tanks, consultants and research institutions to cultivate and utilize local institutional policy knowledge. 	MTI Programme Management	Not time-specific	–
4.3.2. Encourage Sierra Leonean trade research priorities within international trade policy think tanks and forums and foster strategic partnerships at the World Trade Organization with nations committed to sustainable fishery outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Map trade policy research areas where current MTI knowledge requires strengthening; corroborate MTI trade research priorities with other economic ministries, including Agriculture and Fisheries; liaise with Sierra Leone Geneva Mission to push Geneva-based trade think tanks, such as South Centre and UNCTAD, towards Sierra Leone research priorities, including World Trade Organization fisheries negotiations; (ii) Ensure that Geneva Mission develop partnerships with nations committed to sustainable fishery and from whom capacity development for sanitary and phytosanitary measures standards and processing can be sought; (iii) Articulate Sierra Leone research priorities to ECOWAS, African Union and ECA; (iv) Develop a mechanism for use of research findings and recommendations in policy improvement; (v) Annually review and re-map policy research priorities. 	MTI Policy, Planning and Research	Annually	Staff time (intention is to outsource research priorities to places if resources exist).
4.3.3. Develop a mechanism for utilizing the results of research and recommendations in policy improvement.	Ensure that researchers have the opportunity to present findings to key MTI staff and are available to respond to further related queries and questions as policies are developed.	MTI Chief Director	Year 4	Staff time
<i>Strategy 4.4. Improve policy coordination</i>				
4.4.1. Develop an interministerial plan for trade during crises to ensure limited disruption to flows of	Convene work stream of IMCT and NCCT to develop an interministerial plan for trade at borders during crises, focusing on cross-border trade to ensure limited disruption to flows of	MTI, IMCT, NCCT (including ports and roads authorities),	Year 1	Staff time

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
essential goods and persons in the event of partial or full border closures or disruptions, drawing on lessons learned from the Ebola and COVID-19 crises.	essential goods and persons in the event of partial or full border closures or disruptions, drawing on lessons from the Ebola and COVID-19 crises.	Ministries of Health and Sanitation, Emergency Operations Centre		
4.4.2. Coordinate interministerial annual planning and include economic development, economic inclusion, fiscal and monetary policies, and foreign affairs MDAs in the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trade.	Invite foreign affairs and economic ministries, including agriculture and fisheries, in addition to those working on economic inclusion (including gender, young people and small and medium-sized enterprises) to participate in MTI annual work plan development through IMCT, to share planning priorities, identify synergies, align work plans, and allocate resources for trade-related activities more effectively and efficiently.	MTI Chief Director	Recurrent activity	Staff time
4.4.3. Host biannual planning coordination meetings with trade-relevant donors.	(i) Identify donor focal points relevant to trade, including from diversified non-traditional donors, such as China, India, Gulf countries, and the Islamic Development Bank; (ii) Plan and host biannual planning coordination meetings with NCCT.	MTI Performance Management and Development	Recurrent activity	Two annual meetings at \$7,000.
4.4.4. Mainstream trade into national development planning.	(i) Proactively integrate trade and implementation of trade agreements into the coming cycle of national development planning through active participation in planning process; (ii) Facilitate knowledge transfer on trade to desk officers in relevant MDAs.	MTI Policy, Planning and Research	Year 5	Staff time and ministerial leadership.
<i>Strategy 4.5. Strengthen private sector cooperation</i>				
4.5.1. Establish an apex body for coordination of PPD and advocacy functions of all business associations and empower SLCCIA to host the PPD platform.	(i) Produce, discuss and negotiate terms of reference for the revitalization of an apex body for PPD and empower SLCCIA to host the PPD platform; (ii) Identify seed funding and resource sustainability plans; (iii) Host a validation workshop in collaboration with SLCCIA with participation from the private sector to review and revise terms of reference; (iv) Support SLCCIA to prepare yearly agenda and work plan for the apex body; (v) Support SLCCIA to review and adapt the structure after one year of operation.	MTI, Business Associations	Years 1–2	Ministerial leadership, between \$5,000 and \$8,000 for validation workshop, and \$150,000 for seed funding.
4.5.2. Improve the organizational effectiveness and capacities of business associations.	(i) Provide training to business associations and the private sector on lobbying the Government for necessary regulatory reforms; (ii) Provide training on trade and gender in collaboration with Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs;	MTI, SLIEPA, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs	Years 2–5	Three training workshops annually, \$30,000.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iii) Develop position papers reflecting views and needs; (iv) Promote successes of PPD to business community to incentivize membership and participation in dialogue; (v) Support the establishment of professional associations of creators and innovators to exercise IP provisions under AfCFTA; (vi) Disseminate information on provisions in trade agreements that can be leveraged by the private sector through business associations; (vii) Ensure that business associations have the capacity to enforce rules of origin. 			
4.5.3. Revitalize the national PPD on trade-related issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Organize PPDs to build consensus on trade policy reforms, regulations and negotiations; (ii) Provision of advisories to the public sector on the feasibility and desirability of policies on the business environment; (iii) Incorporate recommendations from PPD into annual planning. 	MTI, SLCCIA	Years 2–5	Quarterly public-private dialogue conferencing facilities, \$20,000 annually.
4.5.4. Build strategic partnerships that promote support in the design of interventions for women's full participation in trade and business empowerment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Collaborate with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs to register women entrepreneurs in cooperatives and business associations; (ii) Engage with women's business associations and key stakeholders to facilitate women's access to export training, markets and market information, and mentorship, buyer and business network opportunities; (iii) Encourage and ensure participation of women's business associations and inclusive companies in PPD and ensure PPD deals with issues of inclusive gains from trade. 	MTI, SLCCIA, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs	Years 2–5	Staff time.
4.5.5. Engage professional associations to participate in initiatives and investment in border facilities supporting cross-border traders, especially dealing with the safety of women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Identify representative associations of small-scale cross-border traders, including those specifically targeting women traders; (ii) Invite identified associations to a series of PPD meetings focused on prioritizing initiatives and investment in border facilities. 	MTI, SLCCIA	Years 2–5	Staff time.
<i>Strategy 4.6. Improve the availability of reliable trade and statistical data</i>				
4.6.1. Review current trade database needs (including for sex-disaggregated data) and availability and collaborate with Statistics Sierra Leone to identify trade-related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Undertake an assessment of trade information needs and an inventory of current trade and market data, data sources and gaps, in collaboration with Statistics Sierra Leone; 	MTI, SLIEPA, SLCCIA, Statistics Sierra Leone	Years 1–2	ITC, ECOWAS and UNCTAD may provide support.

Activity	Detailed actions	Focal point	Timeline	Resources
indicators, establish an inter-agency process to regularly collate figures from various sources, and establish integrated trade and market information systems to store and share data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Assess availability of sex-disaggregated data on participation of women entrepreneurs in trade and capacity to collect and utilize gender-sensitive statistics to facilitate policymaking; (iii) Assess effectiveness of and quality of data collected by trade monitors. 			
4.6.2. Build MTI capacity (including trade monitors) to collate, analyse, visualize and apply evidence from various trade data sources to decision-making in MTI priority areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) On the basis of trade database needs identified in activity 4.6.1, establish an inter-agency process to regularly collate figures from various sources, ensuring data are sex-disaggregated when possible, including ports and roads authorities, customs, Transport Infrastructure Development Unit and the Bank of Sierra Leone; (ii) Set up electronic platform for integration, storage, and sharing trade and market information at national and regional levels; (iii) Collaborate with Statistics Sierra Leone to analyse trade statistics collected from the Bank of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Trade; (iv) Develop a mechanism to use data and evidence to inform policies and strategies; (v) Update the Global Trade Data Observatory; (vi) Generate trends and projections to support trade dialogue with government partners, including Cabinet updates; (vii) Support the design of electronic solutions for the collection of trade-related data, including integrated electronic data collection systems at border points, e-commerce, data from shipping companies, and installation of more weighbridges to easily collect and verify data from transport-related trade. 	MTI, SLIEPA, SLCCIA, Statistics Sierra Leone	Years 1–4	DSTI, ITC, ECOWAS, TIDU.
4.6.3. Engage in data and statistics partnerships (including with the private sector) for data and capacity improvement, including updating the Global Trade Data Observatory and African Trade Observatory and private sector collaborations for improved sector-specific, shipping and transport data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Partner with Statistics Sierra Leone to train key staff in data collection, collation, storage, processing, analysis, visualization and dissemination to support evidence-based policy design and respond to ad hoc requests in MTI priority areas, with a focus on trends analysis and informed projections when possible; (ii) Design a plan to improve capacity and effectiveness of trade monitors with support from other government partners (Secure Sockets Layer, DSTI); 	MTI	Years 1–4	MTI staff time, ,Secure Sockets Layer, DSTI, ECA, UNCTAD support.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Detailed actions</i>	<i>Focal point</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Resources</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iii) Leverage government expertise in information management (DSTI); (iv) Advocate for and leverage global partnerships to improve capacity for collection and use of sex-disaggregated data for decision-making; (v) Engage with private sector on trade statistics to encourage sector-specific investment and to encourage shipping and transport companies to support increased intra-African trade. 			

Abbreviations: AfCFTA, African Continental Free Trade Area; DSTI, Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States; ETLs, ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme; HRMO, Human Resource Management Office; IMCT, Inter-Ministerial Committee on Trade; IP, intellectual property; ITC, International Trade Centre; MDAs, ministries, departments and agencies; NCCT, National Coordinating Committee on Trade; OARG, Office of Administrator and Registrar General; PPD, public-private dialogues; SEZs, Special Economic Zones; SLCCIA, Sierra Leone Local Content Agency; SLIEPA, Sierra Leone Import Export Promotion Agency; SLSB, Sierra Leone Standards Bureau; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

VII. Implementation framework

Monitoring and approach

Successful strategy implementation is about realizing the vision and objectives through the implementation of the activities action plan; however, policymaking must be adaptive. While the activities listed herein provide an envisaged approach, an annual review and revision of activities are required to take stock of what is working, what is not, and what is therefore feasible given the available resources and capacity constraints. NCCT shall undertake the overall leadership and management of the monitoring and evaluation of the National Trade Strategy, which will include the following activities:

- **Quarterly activity monitoring:** monitoring progress on the implementation of activities
- **Biannual progress report:** reporting progress on the achievement of outputs biannually (every six months) against timelines and targets
- **Annual review:** monitoring improvement against outcomes annually and conducting process evaluation to identify good practices and lessons learned
- **Impact evaluation:** evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy in achieving its vision

Outputs and outcomes with associated measurable indicators defined will include links to objectives and associated benchmarks in MTNDP and will ensure consistency with the industrial policy, including its gender analysis and with gender-sensitive budget reporting. Both routinely collected data and discrete data collection exercises will be used to support measurement, and will be sex- and age-disaggregated when possible. Local data partners, including Statistics Sierra Leone and research partners, will be engaged to ensure the comprehensiveness of data and the rigorous design of monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and to build the capacity of assigned MTI staff. A process to incorporate evidence gathered from Sierra Leone and other countries into implementation and policy design will be planned at the outset.

1. Progress monitoring

Monitoring the National Trade Strategy begins with the development of a monitoring framework and shall include quarterly activity monitoring, biannual progress report, and annual review.

Quarterly activity monitoring ensures that data are collated regularly and reflects progress on the implementation of activities. Reporting on outputs will be done in line with the national work plan monitoring template, and will include measurable indicators along with targets and milestones for the activities under each strategic pillar of the National Trade Strategy. Progress on the achievement of outputs against targets and milestones will be reported to MTI senior leadership and NCCT biannually.

The annual review will include outcome monitoring and process evaluation to provide evidence and inform recommendations for improvement to the implementation of the strategy

with a view to achieving the stated outcomes. Short-, medium- and long-term outcomes are defined in the strategy under the following categories:

- **Short-term outcomes:** AfCFTA implementation, COVID-19 mitigation, institutional capacity development, government coordination and private sector collaboration;
- **Medium- and long-term outcomes:** build back better from COVID-19, nurture exporters, attract anchor businesses, reduce overall cost of trade and enhance overall quality of trade-related infrastructure.

The indicators created will measure the progress made towards the achievement of these outcomes. Monitoring activities may measure, for example, hours saved, increases in the volume of goods traded across land borders, and increases in the number of female and male cross-border traders due to the implementation of an electronic single window for trade documentation or a simplified trading regime for cross-border trade. Good practices and lessons learned will be documented and recommendations will be reviewed by MTI senior leadership and NCCT, and then incorporated into implementation and budgeting. This monitoring will encourage reporting on progress made towards the implementation of AfCFTA and contributions given to the Africa Trade Observatory in order to fulfil the obligations of Sierra Leone under the AfCFTA Agreement.

2. Evaluating the National Trade Strategy

Ongoing or completed interventions, policies and the resulting impacts will be subjected to evaluations at mid-term or interim points (through the process evaluation at annual reviews) and at the end of the strategy period as an impact evaluation, or at intervals predetermined by NCCT, or both (see table 30). The effectiveness of the strategy will be measured by the progress made towards achieving the country's ultimate goal as stated in its vision (see chapter 2. section 1).

Diversifying Sierra Leone's economy, promoting inclusivity, creating jobs, and generating foreign exchange by repositioning trade to take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area and address the challenges to trade resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Partnerships will be leveraged for designing the evaluation, constructing a baseline against which to measure progress, conducting any follow-up large-scale data collection required, managing and analysing the resulting data and conducting cost-benefit exercises. This may include evaluated pilots on specific intervention options, at the request of NCCT. In addition, partnerships will ensure a rigorous design and independent recommendations. The evidence generated by evaluation exercises will inform policy and strategy design.

Table 30

Progress and evaluation of the National Trade Strategy

<i>Progress monitoring</i>				
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Detailed actions</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Resources</i>
Design a results-based management framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify capacity gaps in results-based measurement, develop technical partnerships, and build technical capacity for developing a results-based framework for the National Trade Strategy Identify short-, medium- and long-term outcomes based on short-term and medium- and long-term objectives of the strategy Identify outputs under each pillar based on the activities action plan Define measurable sex- and age-disaggregated indicators against which to assess progress Set targets and biannual milestones for outputs and outcomes under each strategic pillar in line with the national work plan monitoring template Link to objectives and associated benchmarks in MTNDP and to industrial policy, including planned gender analysis Integrate with gender-sensitive budget reporting to Ministry of Finance Partner with Statistics Sierra Leone to ensure that relevant official data streams are available Assign staff to activities and ensure they are equipped by leveraging partnerships when necessary Review of the result-based management framework by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development 	MTI data team with support of partners	Year 1	Staff time and ministerial leadership ECA, European Union, ITC
Monitor activities quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect sex- and age-disaggregated data on activities implementation Establish data sharing and data collation systems when possible to ensure automated and digital collection 	MTI data team with partner support	Years 1–5 (quarterly)	Staff time, possible additional cost for data systems
Assess and report on progress biannually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess progress on achievement of outputs Report progress against targets and milestones for outputs in line with national work plan monitoring template Develop visualization tools such as an automated dashboard to provide a simple, near real-time view of progress 	MTI data team, possible partner support	Years 1–5 (biannually)	Staff time, possible partner support for developing visualization tools
Conduct annual implementation review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct assessment of current processes and progress made towards the achievement of outcomes Provide recommendations based on findings, including possible changes to implementation in order to more effectively achieve outcomes Ensure implementation is compliant with trade agreements Document good practices and lessons learned 	MTI	Years 1–5 (annually)	Staff time
Use evidence to improve implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a process to use lessons learned from monitoring to improve implementation 	MTI, NCCT	Years 2–5 (annually)	Staff time and ministerial leadership

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present recommendations from annual review to MTI senior leadership and NCCT for validation Adjust strategy implementation based on recommendations Advocate for budget allocations, based on evidence from monitoring and evaluation 			
<i>Evaluating the National Trade Strategy</i>				
Develop partnerships for evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and build partnerships with research organizations and universities (University of Sierra Leone, International Growth Centre, Overseas Development Institute, among others) to support the designing, conducting and financing of an impact evaluation and any pilot interventions recommended by NCCT Partner with Statistics Sierra Leone to ensure that relevant official data streams are available Build partnerships to support the development of newly identified data-related capacity at MTI and utilize digital solutions when possible 	MTI	Year 1	Staff time and ministerial leadership
Design evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create evaluation framework to measure the impact of the National Trade Strategy towards achieving its stated vision Ensure buy-in for evaluation design among NCCT members 	MTI with partner support, NCCT	Year 1	Staff time
Collect data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct a baseline by collating routinely collected data and conducting any discrete data collection exercises necessary, digitally when possible Collate and collect necessary data at predetermined intervals Clean and store data centrally 	MTI in partnership with Statistics Sierra Leone, Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry, and research partners	Year 1 year 3 and year 5	Staff time, partner resources
Evaluate effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse data and report findings and policy implications Conduct basic cost-benefit analysis when possible to compare current and available policy options Conduct mid-term evaluation if required 	MTI with partner support	Year 3, year 5	Staff time, partner resources
Use evidence to improve strategy design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a process to incorporate evidence into policy and strategy design Collate lessons learned from other countries Validate findings with MTI senior leadership and NCCT Adjust strategy design and trade-related policies based on lessons learned from Sierra Leone and other countries 	MTI, NCCT	Years 4 and 5	Staff time and ministerial leadership

Abbreviations: ITC, International Trade Centre; MTI, Ministry of Trade and Industry; MTNDP, Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019–2023); NCCT, National Coordinating Committee on Trade.

VIII. Communications strategy

A. Introduction

Awareness of AfCFTA is limited throughout all sectors in Sierra Leone. Improved knowledge can aid in its effective and prompt implementation by the public sector, utilization by the private sector and monitoring and evaluation by civil society, academia and the media.

The AfCFTA communications strategy is intended to build awareness around AfCFTA, regularly disseminate information on key developments at national and regional levels, and support stakeholders to utilize the opportunities and rights accorded to Sierra Leone under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. The strategy contains the following objectives:

- (a) Increase understanding and awareness of the Agreement;
- (b) Facilitate consultations with all stakeholders to promote effective implementation of AfCFTA;
- (c) Provide the required information for the private sector to take advantage of the financial and investment opportunities created by AfCFTA.

B. Pillars of the African Continental Free Trade Area communications strategy

The communications strategy (see table 31), is built around two mutually reinforcing pillars:

- Communications and visibility
- Outreach and advocacy

C. Target audience

The target audience comprises the following six groups:

- (a) MTI and its affiliate agencies;
- (b) Policymakers – the executive, the legislative and key MDAs, including the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ministry of Gender Affairs, National Revenue Authority and the Bank of Sierra Leone;
- (c) Private sector – trade promotion organizations, women and youth business associations, women entrepreneurs, business membership organizations, transport and logistics companies, and manufacturing and agricultural businesses in target sectors;
- (d) Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations;
- (e) Development and donor partners;

(f) Academia – faculty and students in economics, entrepreneurship development and development studies from Fourah Bay College, Institute of Public Administration and Management, University of Makeni and Njala University.

D. Channels of communication

The target audience will be reached with appropriate messages, depending on the type of audience, using the following communication channels:

(a) Social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube will be used to effectively disseminate AfCFTA activities and messages;

(b) MTI website webpage – The MTI website will host a dedicated webpage on AfCFTA that will be constantly updated to convey key and strategic messages and reflect all the current issues and activities on AfCFTA. It will be linked to the websites of trade promotion organizations and other strategic stakeholders;

(c) Newspapers and magazines – Both local and international newspapers and magazines will be used to disseminate AfCFTA messages, press releases, news updates and events;

(d) Radio and television – Both radio and television have wide and diverse audiences and coverage in Sierra Leone and will be used to provide coverage on AfCFTA-related town hall meetings and group discussions in addition to specific events.

Table 31

Communications strategy

Pillar 1: Communications and visibility				
Activity	Detailed actions	Responsibility	Timeline	Resources
Coordination of national and regional AfCFTA communications campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate national and regional communication activities with those of the AfCFTA secretariat, ECOWAS and other strategic partners Engage the AfCFTA secretariat and development partners for advice and specialized support Coordinate branding of communications materials and tools with the AfCFTA secretariat and ECOWAS 	NCCT	Years 1–2	Staff time
Develop communication tools and materials in English and Krio languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop documentation and other communication tools using AfCFTA branding, such as: brochures, flyers, videos and documentary, billboards, banners, pens and memory sticks Facilitate linkage of MTI website with dedicated AfCFTA web page as the principal source of information on AfCFTA Adapt different types of AfCFTA communication materials and products for specific audiences Work with trade promotion organizations to assist with the design of their own AfCFTA promotion materials 	NCCT	Year 1	Staff time \$15,000 for communications materials \$5,000 consultancy for web design and linkage
Increase AfCFTA visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate high-level presidential and cabinet engagement Facilitate high-level parliamentary engagement 	MTI, CD, NCCT	Year 2	Staff time and ministerial leadership

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate high-level public sector engagement (Central Bank, NIB, National Revenue Authority, ministries, departments and agencies) Facilitate high-level private sector engagement Facilitate high-level development and donor partner engagement Identify a high-level AfCFTA champion in both public and private sectors 			
Regular dissemination of AfCFTA information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate AfCFTA advocacy materials and knowledge products through different media channels such as website, SMS (text messaging), social media, newsletters and newspapers Prepare short briefs and press releases on significant AfCFTA events for dissemination 	NCCT	Years 2–3	Staff time
Effective media engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop AfCFTA media contacts Issues press releases and media kits for AfCFTA-related meetings, workshops and conferences Organize interviews and press conferences around key AfCFTA milestones, including the start of trading 	NCCT	Years 2–3	Staff time
Pillar 2: Outreach and advocacy				
Coordination of national and regional advocacy campaigns with those of the AfCFTA secretariat and ECOWAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with the AfCFTA secretariat, ECOWAS, African Development Bank, ECA and other strategic partners to identify implementation issues for advocacy Continuously update and prioritize the trade obstacles list based on emerging information and issues raised by NCCT and other stakeholders 	MTI, NCCT	Year 1	Staff time
Develop an advocacy approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify specific focal persons in target audience: key influences, media persons, interested civil society organizations, among others Identify allies and opponents to help craft appropriate advocacy messages and arguments Decide on advocacy approach: lobbying and dialogue, petitions or negotiation 	MTI, NCCT	Year 2	Staff time and ministerial leadership
Launch outreach activities to raise awareness, AfCFTA progress and achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare outreach messages and briefs, leaflets, notes, publications on the issues and possible solutions. Messages are to be updated continuously in the course of dialogue and negotiation and in the light of the progress being achieved Select medium of engagement: town hall meetings, workshops, radio and television discussions, bilateral meetings with national, regional and traditional authorities Select audiences and appropriate messages Build partnerships and coalitions with stakeholders 	MTI, NCCT	Year 2	Staff time and ministerial leadership \$35,000 for outreach activities

Abbreviations: ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States; MTI, Ministry of Trade and Industry; NCCT, National Coordinating Committee on Trade.