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JOB DEMAND & EMPLOYMENT MARKET ANALYSIS SIERRA LEONE



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BRAC and FHI 360 collaborated to lead this research and analysis.

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Acronyms

ABYM	Adolescent Boys and Young Men
AGYW	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
AGOA	Africa Growth and Opportunity Act
AfDB	African Development Bank
ABC	Agriculture Business Centers
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CWD	Child Welfare Department
CEC	Community Education Center
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DTDA	Danish Trade Union Development Agency
ELA	Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EBA	Everything but Arms
FSU	Family Support Unit
FtF	Feed the Future
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GAFFSP	Global Agriculture & Food Security Program
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GOSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GCR	Gross Completion Rate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IVS	Inland Valley Swamps
ILO	International Labour Organization
JDEMA	Job Demand and Employment Market Analysis
JSS	Junior Secondary School
KII	Key Informant Interview

LCs	Local Councils
MiSL	Made in Sierra Leone
MAFFS	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Security
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, & Child Affairs
NYC	National Youth Commission
NU	Njala University
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RCA	Revealed Comparative Advantage
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SSS	Senior Secondary School
LLCA	Sierra Leone Local Content Agency
SOBA	Sierra Leone Opportunities for Business Action
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLeWoFF	Sierra Leone Women of Farmers Forum
SDF	Skills Development Fund
SCP	Smallholder Commercialization Program
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
VC	Value Chain
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
VTC	Vocational Trade Centers
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examination
WIAN	Women in Agriculture and Nutrition
WTTC	World Travel & Tourism Council
YEEP	Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment
YS	Youth Secretariat

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Sierra Leone has faced numerous critical challenges over the last two decades that have undermined its economic position as well as the capacity of its human resources, particularly its youth; these include military coups d'état, civil wars, and the Ebola crisis. Yet the country also has experienced some positive changes in democratic processes, macroeconomic growth, and investment that should improve its situation. BRAC's Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents (ELA) program in Sierra Leone has run since 2012, although it is temporarily paused to allow for a review and analysis of livelihoods-oriented activities. FHI 360 was contracted by BRAC USA to support a review of Sierra Leone's context, to better understand the economic opportunities and challenges for adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in the country. Building on the program's previous accomplishments, the programmatic modifications suggested by this review could be implemented during the next phase of the ELA program.

This report presents information and ideas to inform AGYW livelihood development and identify programming opportunities that can be used widely to support programming goals for this population, as well as help adolescent boys and young men (ABYM), families, and communities to thrive.

This report identifies employment opportunities and challenges facing AGYW in Sierra Leone and will inform BRAC ELA's economic empowerment strategy. The report provides an overview of BRAC ELA participants, the education and training contexts they engage in, the economic context in which they operate, and programming opportunities that could be leveraged to improve their employment and/or entrepreneurial outcomes. Moreover, this report is intended to benefit all development practitioners and actors in Sierra Leone concerned with improving programming for AGYW and empower them to access better and more stable employment.

METHODOLOGY

Given the scarcity of data, this report has taken a unique approach pioneered by FHI 360 to bridge this gap by building on contextual knowledge; observed best practices and challenges in key sectors and; integration of knowledge about identified areas where there are economic opportunities.

This analysis was developed through a mix of desk research and qualitative data collection with both key informants and AGYW focus group discussions. This research was conducted by a mixed team of international and local Sierra Leonean researchers and experts between 26 December 2018 and 9 May 2019. Data was collected from 27 key informant interviews (KIIs) with government officials, private sector employers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educators, and AGYW parents. Eighteen focus group discussions (FGDs) in Freetown and both urban and rural districts of Kambia, Bo, Moyamba, and Port Loko were held with approximately 16 AGYW per group, ranging from 13 to 17 years.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Sierra Leone's population skews young and slightly rural and is starting to show the beginnings of a youth "bulge," which, depending on the response to the situation, offers potential positive effects for the country. Without a strong response, the challenges faced by AGYW in Sierra Leone will be exacerbated as they encounter gender-related health and cultural obstacles that significantly constrain their opportunities to gain livelihoods and contribute to the country's economy and political development, as well as to their communities and families. These include traumatizing experiences, such as gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, and rape (the last of which is now deemed a national emergency). Early marriage and teenage pregnancy are commonplace, especially in rural areas, and young mothers often do not have the knowledge or skills to ensure proper nutrition, brain development, hygiene, etc. Youth with disabilities in Sierra Leone are a particularly vulnerable group and have faced discrimination and poor access to livelihoods, education, and healthcare. Generally, rural AGYW face greater challenges in the above areas than urban AGYW. A number of policies address the wellbeing of adolescents, in particular of AGYW; the main challenge is not an absence of relevant laws and policies, but weak implementation and enforcement.

Some trends emerged from the analysis of the FGDs with BRAC ELA participants. More than two-thirds were in school. Those who were working were largely engaged in farming (in rural areas) or petty trade, in addition to mining-related activities and services, such as hairdressing, catering, teaching, or healthcare. Participants use the money they earn to support their families' basic needs. Their most common occupational aspirations included nurse, along with professions requiring some level of higher education, such as lawyer, businessperson, teacher, counselor, minister, and president. The most appealing opportunities were in nursing and healthcare, including pharmacy; banking and working for BRAC (including in financial management, as a loan officer); law; teaching; food sales or catering; and petty trade. Agriculture and construction jobs are considered appealing by some. The interest in trades that BRAC is now focused on include gara tie dye, hairdressing, tailoring, and soap-making. Skilled trades such as carpentry and mechanics, as well as weaving, were also mentioned.

Participants also identified other economic opportunities in a number of areas outside the focus of BRAC ELA. These include petty trade (charging mobile phones and selling top-up cards); agriculture; education/teaching; motorbike transport; healthcare; fetching and selling wood; and carpentry. Perceived mining-related opportunities included rock breaking, motorbike transport for diamond mines, and sand mining.

Participants' reasons for being interested in these jobs included self-reliance and independence from men, the respect that their salary would confer, and learning to or being able to drive. Some mentioned helping others through teaching, police work, health work, etc.

The most common reason participants gave for not working in these jobs was ongoing schooling; they are either too young or too busy to get involved in these types of work. Also, importantly, they believe they lack the training, certification, start-up capital, or connections to do the work they are interested in. A common refrain in the FGDs was that it is difficult to find work, especially in the small communities most live in. AGYW reported that one finds work through family or connections. In terms of keeping a job, transportation costs are a barrier. And in terms of access to credit, participants were aware of lending institutions; most have not borrowed money, but those that have, mostly borrow from family, savings groups, or BRAC.

These adolescent girls and young women, and others like them, live in a context where, among the total working age population, 56.7% cannot read or write, including 66% of all females. However, youth are significantly more literate, especially in urban areas. Female youth have on average 7 fewer months of

education than males, and the percentage of the rural population that has never attended school (32.7%) is almost three times higher than that of the urban population (11.5%).

Employers see challenges stemming from the education system and its ability to prepare youth for work, as many schools teach a largely theoretical, rather than practical, curriculum. For many employers, however, it is the hands-on applied learning of skills that has shown the greatest success in preparing young people for work. Many AGYW drop out of school, as cost is a barrier. The low rate of enrollment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a direct result of the low secondary graduation rate, and women have a lower enrollment rate than men. Although this is changing, TVET has long been seen as the last resort for school dropouts or those with poor academic ability. As a result, the TVET system has remained under-resourced both in terms of funding and in terms of lower-quality teaching staff, many of whom only have a high school diploma. Cost and physical distance are also barriers to TVET attendance by youth; furthermore, AGYW focus group participants had little knowledge of TVET options and opportunities in their communities, most likely because few exist. Additionally, because of challenges around poor quality tools and equipment, poorly qualified trainers, courses that emphasize theory over on-the-job training, and a lack of input from employers in the design and delivery phase, many employers have a mixed relationship with education and training institutions.

ECONOMIC SECTOR ANALYSIS

Sierra Leone has extraordinary natural resources and has shown impressive economic growth in the last decade, but this has been dependent on extractive mining, especially of iron ore; fluctuating prices have added significant instability to the country's economy. Other industries also play a role in the country's economy, yet luckily have a higher potential to generate employment or livelihoods for AGYW. For example, agriculture employs 80% of Sierra Leoneans, and represents approximately 60% of the GDP. The second largest share of the economy is in 'other services', which makes up approximately 10% of GDP. Tourism represents the third largest contributor, followed by wholesale and retail trade.

Following steady growth until 2012, foreign direct investment (FDI) was severely impacted by the Ebola outbreak from 2014 to 2015, with a low of \$138 million in 2016. In 2017, there was a dramatic turnaround with FDI increasing to \$560 million likely due to the effects of post Ebola recovery finally being felt on the investment environment. Today, Sierra Leone has major FDI potential in agribusiness, fisheries, ecotourism, and manufacturing. Trade has been a major factor in supporting Sierra Leone's economy, but remains underdeveloped in terms of opportunity generation for many Sierra Leoneans. The shortage of skilled labor, inadequate infrastructure, uncertain legal system, and high level of corruption are among the obstacles investors face. And while opportunities are growing, Sierra Leone remains a challenging environment for small and medium enterprises to navigate, particularly around access to finance, investment, skills, and market information. Ebola also had a major negative impact on GDP and employment, which have begun to recover. Additionally, the country is experiencing extensive rural-urban migration.

Ultimately, Sierra Leone is growing and has a potential for investment and economic expansion despite the challenges it has faced. There are few large-scale formal employers, so this report looks at the formal and informal sector and the role it can play in improving economic prospects for AGYW. Opportunities lie in extractive industries as well as an assortment of other export products (plastic lids, rough wood, coffee, fresh fruit, and textiles). There are potentially promising opportunities in agriculture and food production, woodwork, transportation and tourism services, and trades, among others. A broad message coming out of key informant interviews, however, was a general need for higher-quality skills, regardless of industry or sector.

Meanwhile, AGYW- and youth-run micro-and small enterprises have numerous obstacles that hinder their entrepreneurial activity, including: negative perceptions of the country's stability due to the civil war and Ebola epidemic; lack of adequate access to finance in terms of size, interest rate, and duration of loans appropriate for micro-enterprises; unreliable electricity access; lack of reliable transportation to both reach jobs and bring goods to markets; and employer perspectives that young people often do not have adequate skills to fulfill job requirements.

PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES

The final section of the report details areas where actors in the space – including BRAC through its ELA programming approach – can either directly support new opportunities and growth in AGYW livelihoods or improve the enabling environment for such opportunities. These include:

- Supporting group business loans
- Identifying opportunities in the tourism sector and building relevant skills
- Layering with and leveraging existing programs
- Helping AGYW or youth businesses take advantage of relevant policies and laws
- Deepening technical training for agriculture

Introduction

Sierra Leone has faced numerous critical challenges over the last two decades that have undermined its economic position as well as the capacity of its human resources, particularly its youth. The country has suffered from repeated military coups d'état, a civil war (1991-2002), a devastating Ebola health crisis, environmental degradation leading to increased flooding and mudslides, a rate of urbanization that has exceeded the capacity of the capital city's reservoir to provide potable water, poor infrastructure, and rapid population growth that has led to high levels of underemployment and, in particular, growing numbers of idle urban youth.

Yet the country also has experienced some positive changes showing potential for improvement. In March 2018, for the second time, Sierra Leone held a successful democratic election with a change of governing parties and is now ranked 39 out of 163 countries on the 2017 Global Peace Index, a positive development for macroeconomic growth and investment, and for citizens seeking improved livelihoods in a more secure environment.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRAC ELA IN SIERRA LEONE

BRAC's ELA program has been implemented in Sierra Leone since 2012. The original pilot launched ten clubs in partnership with UNICEF. Since then, the program has operated at scale, each year reaching upwards of 4,500 youth through 150-200 clubs. The safe spaces model provides participants ages 10-20 with holistic support focused on three core areas: life skills, education, and livelihoods training. It also seeks to create an enabling environment for change by engaging the community around each club.

Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents

ELA enables adolescent girls to reach their full potential and break the cycle of poverty.

ELA at a Glance:

Social Empowerment Sale Spaces Life Skills SRH Education	Education School Support Literacy & Numeracy Alternative learning program
Economic Empowerment Financial Literacy Livelihoods Training Microfinance	Community Engagement Community & Parent Meetings Men & Boys' Engagement Local Advocacy & Campaigns

An ELA Community meeting in Sierra Leone ▶



Building on the previous work of the BRAC's Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents (ELA) program in Sierra Leone that has run since 2012, BRAC has currently paused the project for a few months to allow for review and analysis of livelihoods-oriented activities, so that programmatic modifications could be implemented during the next phase of the project.

BRAC saw an opportunity to review Sierra Leone's context, to better understand the economic opportunities and challenges for the AGYW who are the main participants in its ELA program. This opportunity to pause and review will lead to improved programming of livelihoods opportunities for AGYW. FHI 360, which has developed a labor market assessment toolkit that supports the analysis of a country's unique economic context, was contracted by BRAC USA to support in this review.

At its core, this report presents information and ideas to inform AGYW livelihood development and identify programming opportunities that can be used widely to support programming goals for this population, as well as help adolescent boys and young men (ABYM), families, and communities to thrive. However, given the near impossibility of accessing reliable data on microenterprises, informal sector companies, and specific town- and district-level industry economic demand, this report has taken a unique approach pioneered by FHI 360 to bridge this gap by building on contextual knowledge, observed best practices and challenges in key sectors, and integration of knowledge about identified areas where there are economic opportunities. To achieve this, the analysis:

- Provides an overview of the country context by mapping key economic, demographic and human capital trends in Sierra Leone, with a particular focus on the areas of operation for BRAC ELA programs.
- Provides an understanding of labor market supply and demand in Sierra Leone, including sectors of greatest economic growth and opportunity.
- Provides an understanding of opportunities and constraints to formal and informal self-employment.
- Maps training and workforce development programs available for AGYW in Sierra Leone.
- Identifies possible bilateral partners, NGOs, facilitating organizations and private sector players that may benefit from this labor market assessment or could act as implementing partners.
- Offers recommendations to actors engaging in the youth employment challenge in Sierra Leone.

METHODOLOGY

This economic livelihood analysis was developed through a mix of desk research and qualitative data collection with both key informants and AGYW focus group discussions. This research was conducted by a mixed team of international and local Sierra Leonean researchers and experts between 26 December 2018 and 9 May 2019.

Data was collected from 27 key informant interviews (KIIs) with government officials, private sector employers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educators, and AGYW parents. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with approximately 16 AGYW per group, ranging from 13 to 17 years. Two focus groups were held with BRAC ELA participants in each of the following areas: Freetown, and both urban and rural districts of Kambia, Bo, Moyamba, and Port Loko. The FGDs followed prescriptions that would empower young participants to engage only voluntarily, feel secure in answering questions in the group, retain anonymity and, if desired, provide feedback and request further information.

It is also important to note that, as stated above, regarding the geographic zones targeted in this study, the BRAC ELA target zones include about 47% of the country's total population, including the two largest cities (Freetown and Bo). This matters from a demographic perspective since, as detailed in Table 1, the rural/urban population ratio in the BRAC target area is almost the reverse of the national figure. For example, the largest

populations of urban dwellers are in Freetown and Western Rural. In fact, the name “Western Rural” is now a misnomer, since over 90% of the district is now urban and part of the Freetown metropolitan area, which is referred to as the Western Area, the term used in this analysis.

Table 1: Population by Target Districts (2015)

	Total	Urban	Percentage Urban
Bo	575,478	195,081	33.9%
Kambia	345,474	100,844	29.2%
Moyamba	318,588	22,697	07.1%
Port Loko	615,374	160,217	26.0%
Western Rural	444,270	400,632	90.2%
Freetown	1,055,964	1,055,964	100%
Total	3,355,148	1,935,435	57.7%

*Drawn from Tables 1.1 and 1.2, 2015 Sierra Leone Population and Household Census, pp. 29-30.

3

The Context and Landscape Analysis for Engagement with AGYW

This section provides an overview of the Sierra Leonean beneficiary population of vulnerable AGYW – with a focus on the BRAC ELA participants specifically engaged during this research – who face significant challenges in developing and maintaining livelihoods. The report begins with a demographic overview, detailing high level factors that undermine AGYW opportunities, particularly the bulge in youth population; the report then examines who AGYW are in Sierra Leone, and lay out some of the issues and challenges they face generally as well as specific experiences of rural and urban dwellers.

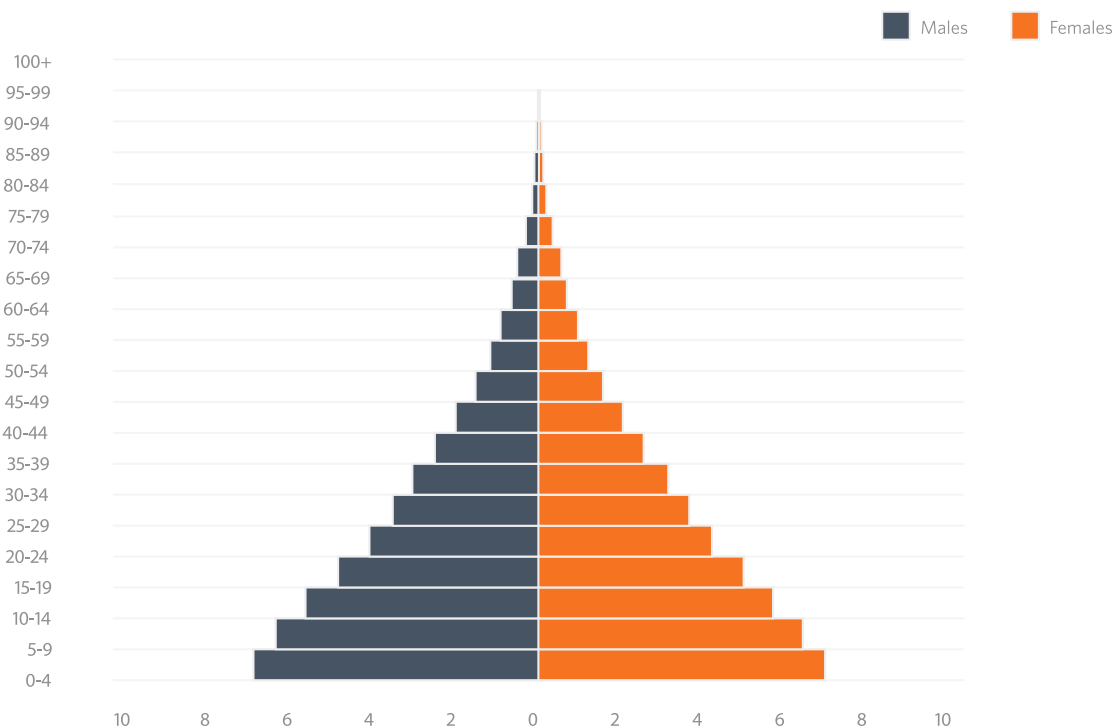
OVERVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

According to the latest census¹, Sierra Leone’s average annual population growth rate was 3.2% in 2015. In December 2018, the population estimate was 7.8 million, and is expected to rise above 8 million in 2019. The population is not evenly distributed, however, with 59% in rural areas in 2015. Sierra Leone is also young, with an estimated 42% of the population below age 15, and approximately 100,000 new labor market entrants per year.

1 Statistics Sierra Leone. (2015). *Population and Household Census*, p.13.

The 2017 census (Figure 1) showed for the first time the possible start of a youth 'bulge', with the number of those aged 0-4 being fewer (13.3%) than those aged 5-9 (15.7%). While the census notes that this decline could be caused by higher death and lower fertility rates during the year prior because of the Ebola crisis, it could also reflect, in part, the combined and long-anticipated impact of urbanization, education and training of AGYW and family planning efforts.

Figure 1: Sierra Leone's Population Pyramid 2017



Source : Sierra Leone Population Pyramid 2017 - PopulatyionPyramid.net²

This is crucial as a 'bulge' may offer potential positive or negative effects for a country, depending on the response. Specifically, a youth population equipped with the appropriate skills, and engaged in employment or self-driven livelihoods, can prove to be a major sustained driver for economic growth. At the same time, youth who are unable to find and engage in opportunities, can create new challenges or exacerbate existing ones.³

WHO ARE THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN THE BRAC ELA PROGRAM?

This section explores the profiles of adolescent girls and young women who work and seek livelihoods opportunities in Sierra Leone. Understanding who these AGYW are, across the different contexts in which they live, can help to better inform creation of an effective and tailored program aimed at strengthening livelihoods and employment in their own contexts. This section examines factors of economic trends, educational attainment for youth, and a broad range of health and gender issues that affect AGYW.

2 "Population Pyramid 2017" Accessed at: <https://www.populationpyramid.net/sierra-leone/2017/>

3 Lin, Justin Yifu. "Youth Bulge: A Demographic Dividend or a Demographic Bomb in Developing Countries?" *World Bank*, 5 Jan. 2012, blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/youth-bulge-a-demographic-dividend-or-a-demographic-bomb-in-developing-countries.

HEALTH, CULTURE AND GENDER

The 2018 UN Gender Inequality Index ranked Sierra Leone 150 out of 162 countries.⁴ With adolescent girls and young women overrepresented among Sierra Leone's youth population, the gender-related health and cultural challenges they face significantly constrain their opportunities to gain livelihoods and contribute to the country's economy and political development, as well as their communities and families. To address some of these challenges, Sierra Leone has developed progressive gender legislation that is taking aim at issues of childhood pregnancy, early marriage, and supporting young mothers to better care for children. Such policies are having a positive effect: the estimated 2015 total fertility rate fell to 5.2 children per woman, compared to 6.1 in 2004, and only 4.0 children per woman in the Western Area. However, despite progressive gender legislation, implementation of gender-sensitive policies remains a challenge in several areas:

Access to care:

- In 2016, Sierra Leone had just 156 doctors for over 7 million people
- Of the 156 doctors, 70% lived and worked in urban areas
- 75% of the total health workforce was distributed over just ten percent of the nation's health facilities,⁵ with profound implications for rural AGYW⁶

Gender based violence (GBV):

- 60% of females reported being kicked or punched
- 80% of males admitted to using or threatening to use a weapon against a female partner and 48% admitted to using physical violence
- In all but one target district, 54-65% of AGYW aged 15-24 said they thought forms of gender-based violence could be justified, while in Moyamba District the rate was lower at 43-54%⁷

Female genital mutilation (FGM):

- Still widespread with 90% of women over 24 and 60% of younger women undergoing the procedure, usually at puberty⁸

The 2014-2015 Ebola crisis also affected AGYW from both urban and rural areas, increasing the numbers of orphans and further impoverishing and destabilizing family units.

RAPE AS A NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Sierra Leone has also faced a growing challenge around sexual assault of minors, culminating in a recent declaration on February 8, 2019, by the President of Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio, that rape has reached the status of a national emergency. This issue has unfortunately been worsening for over a decade and is finally gaining attention.

4 The Gender Inequality Index measures inequality between men and women in three areas: reproductive health (maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rate), empowerment (share of parliamentary seats held by women and the share of the female population with at least some secondary education) and labor force participation rate. Statistics above are taken from the 2016 UNDP Human Development Report.

7 UNFPA. (2018). *Sierra Leone Adolescent and Youth Dashboard*.

8 UNICEF. (2015). *Sierra Leone Statistics at a Glance*.

In 2003, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs and Family Support (MSWGCA) started a Family Support Unit (FSU) that would co-locate social workers with police units. The goal was that social workers would handle issues of psychosocial support, interviewing victims, and providing them with care and treatment, while police dealt with the criminal aspects of the assault. This initiative was key in improving awareness around the pervasiveness of assault. It also led to the creation of a referral protocol, where cases of domestic violence or gender-based violence could be reported to the ministry and police.

This crisis of sexual assault and transactional sex further deteriorated during the Ebola crisis. At that time, schools were closed, and young people were kept home. During this time, nearly 14,000 girls became pregnant, with many others suffering sexual assault. At the time, according to a KII respondent, the Ministry of Welfare worked with the Ministry of Education to try and get the young and expectant mothers back to school once schools re-opened and gave pregnant teens separate classes to enroll in until they gave birth. In addition, through funding from international development agencies such as Irish Aid, UNFPA and the Ministry of Health, girls were provided sexual reproductive health information, and pregnant girls received medical care as well as assistance returning to formal education.⁹

Many local organizations, such as Rainbo Initiatives, along with the MSWGCA, have been working hard to support victims and develop policy options that would stem the increase in assaults. Unfortunately, increases in assaults since the Ebola crisis have spurred frustration with the slow pace of policy implementation. Particularly, high profile cases have driven more open protests. For example, in 2015 a woman was raped and murdered on a beach, prompting hundreds of women to gather and protest the assault. Similar protests surged again in 2018 after a five-year-old was raped by a relative and left paralyzed.¹⁰ An estimated 8,500 cases were reported last year, however thousands more are believed to go unreported, according to activists, including the First Lady of Sierra Leone, Fatima Maada Bio.

Efforts to improve support and legislation for victims, and prevent further assaults, have included an initiative to change laws on how sexual assault offenses are categorized, and ensure harsher punishments of sexual assault, such as prison for life. A review of the Sexual Offences Act is underway. According to the key informant interviews, the law is now with the cabinet and has yet to be passed. In addition, the MSWGCA is working on setting up a series of safe homes so that victims of assault do not have to go back to the setting, often a home, in which they were assaulted.

As key informants noted, punishment is not enough to deal with this emergency. More work must and is being done to focus on prevention, including the formation of a working group, and improving policies around how parents care for children, and how to quickly intervene in instances where alternative care is needed for youth if they have been assaulted or appear to be at risk of assault. This includes needed awareness-raising of best practices in caring for children and, according to the 2014 Alternative Care Policy, deepening implementation of a formal system by which children can receive alternative care, such as through the Child Welfare Department (CWD) and Local Councils (LCs).

9 Denney, Lisa; Gordon, Rachel; and Ibrahim, Aisha (December 2015). *Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium*. "Teenage Pregnancy after Ebola in Sierra Leone: Mapping responses, gaps and ongoing challenges." Accessed on 4 September 2019 at: <https://www.unfpa.org/news/one-year-after-ebolas-end-sierra-leones-midwives-help-mend-health-system>

10 National Public Radio. (2019). "Sierra Leone's President Declared Rape A National Emergency. What Happens Now?" Accessed at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2019/02/15/694846069/sierra-leones-president-declared-rape-a-national-emergency-what-happens-now>

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

In addition to sexual assault, Sierra Leone faces challenges around early marriage and teenage pregnancy. Sierra Leone has the highest overall prevalence of child marriage globally,¹¹ with 38.9% of 20- to 24-year-old women having married before the age of 18.¹² Child marriage is typically more common in rural areas because of greater observance of traditional norms, a narrower range of life options, stronger community networks, lower educational opportunities and higher levels of poverty. Girls from the poorest households or those living in rural areas face twice the risk of being married before age 18, as compared to girls from the richest households or those living in urban areas.¹³ In response to these national issues, the government has developed the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018-2022. The table below (Table 2) shows supportive policies that address the well-being of adolescents. The main challenge is not an absence of relevant laws and policies, but weak enforcement of such laws and implementation of relevant policies.¹⁴

TABLE 2: Policies Addressing the Wellbeing of Adolescents in Sierra Leone

SECTOR	POLICY/STRATEGY NAME	DESCRIPTION
Health	Free Healthcare Initiative (2010)	This initiative was introduced to provide free healthcare to pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under five. This initiative also supports adolescent mothers and their children.
	National Standards for Adolescent and Young People Friendly Health Services (2011)	This document laid out the standards for provision of adolescent and young people friendly (AYPF) health services in the country.
	Sierra Leone Basic Package Of Essential Health Services (2015-2020) July 2015	School and Adolescent Health. Services, and prevention, response and mitigation of Teenage Pregnancy are highlighted as key component of the package of services.
	National Community Health Workers Policy 2016-2020	Selected services to adolescents are highlighted as one of the key duties of CHWs.
Education	The Education Act (2004)	This policy states that basic education is the right of every citizen and makes basic education compulsory.
Social Welfare	The Child Welfare Policy (2014)	This policy aims to strengthen the child welfare systems by articulating the government's commitment to enhancing the welfare and protection of all children, including the most vulnerable and marginalized.

Source: National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage 2018-2022

11 UNICEF. (2017). *State of the World's Children*.

12 Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) and ICF International, "Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2013"

13 IBID

14 GOSL. (2018). *National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage (2018-2022)*

MATERNAL AND CHILD WELFARE TRENDS

Maternal and child welfare is problematic for many young mothers as they don't have the necessary resources or access to knowledge of ideal development of babies and children. As a key informant noted, in one town hall meeting held by the MSWGCA, a woman was requesting training on how to care for her child, as she had no idea how to do so. Oftentimes this lack of understanding leads to neglect of children, with parents leaving to go to work without ensuring their safety, leaving them at home with relatives who may also lack the knowledge needed for infant and child care and this situation also leaves children vulnerable to sexual assault and malnutrition through poor nutrition management.

New maternal and child welfare policy aims to address legal issues around the care of children, such as where they go if parents are deceased, and child care in general in a more holistic and strategy-based approach, rather than services by outdated often siloed categories. In addition, the MSWGCA is also working on a plan for two additional policies on Maternal and Child Welfare that will strengthen best practices, though these have yet to be implemented due to the finalization of the cost structure.

YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

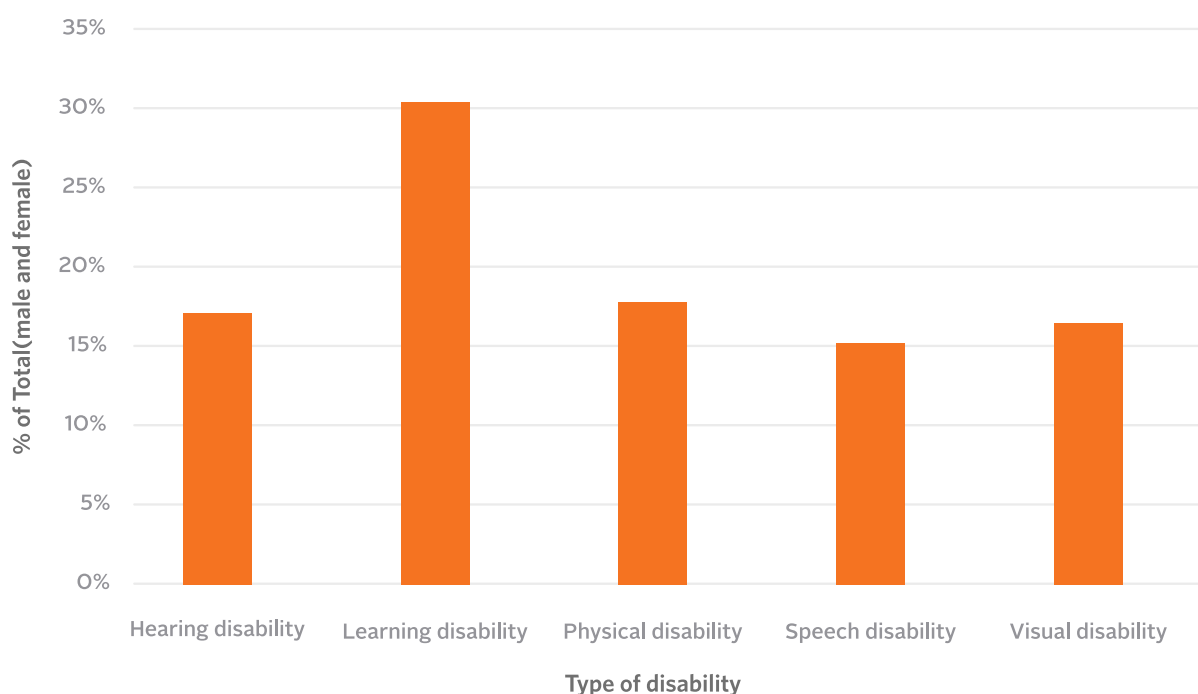
Youth with disabilities in Sierra Leone face discrimination and poor access to livelihoods and healthcare. In Sierra Leone, 67% of persons with disabilities are in rural areas, though data did not indicate if this is because they grew up in rural communities or were moved there by family.¹⁵ In 2011, the government of Sierra Leone enacted the Persons with Disability Act, inspired by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), to ensure equal opportunities for this group. In addition, there were several other activities implemented to encourage the full participation of persons with disabilities which include: the incorporation of persons with disabilities in the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) force; the development of the draft education policy which further enhances the current provision of free education to persons with disabilities; bringing together relevant stakeholders to develop programs and activities that will improve the lives of person with disabilities; the inclusion of disability-related questions in the 2015 Population and Housing Census, which provided the government an insight on the disability data; the appointment of a visually impaired person to champion the activities of the MSWGCA in the largest region of the country; the inclusion of the views of persons with disabilities in the Constitutional Review process; the ongoing development to set up a medical board to ensure that children are screened for early detection of disability and adults are correctly and quickly diagnosed with impairments; the provision of free healthcare services to all person with disabilities; and many other developments.¹⁶

For many children with disabilities, access to education remains a challenge, with some giving their disability as a reason for being out of school. In the draft 2015 Annual School Census Report, 25,339 out of a total of 1,841,252 students (i.e. 1.4%) enrolled at all levels of schooling reported some form of disability¹⁷

15 Sierra Leone Statistics. Sierra Leone 2015: Population and Housing Census. *Thematic Report on Disability*. <https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Disability%20Report.pdf>

16 The Sierra Leone Telegraph. 2017. Sierra Leone has made huge strides protecting the rights and wellbeing of persons with disability - says minister Blyden <https://www.thesierraleonetelegraph.com/sierra-leone-has-made-huge-strides-protecting-the-rights-and-wellbeing-of-persons-with-disability-says-minister-blyden/>

17 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. *Education Sector Plan 2018-2020* <http://www.education.gov.sl/PDF/Slider/ESP-2018-2020-V6-ONLINE.pdf>

Figure 2: Enrollment of Students with Disability by Type of Disability

Source: Government of Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Education Sector Plan 2018-2020

RURAL ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN (AGYW)

Rural AGYW have less access to healthcare, higher levels of teen pregnancy, higher rates of child marriage, higher maternal mortality rates, less education, fewer training opportunities and generally face more rigid patriarchal social norms that prescribe livelihood opportunities. Gender-based violence (GBV) occurs in both rural and urban areas, but rural communities are more likely to accept GBV as the cultural norm, and female genital mutilation (FGM) is almost universal in rural areas. Migration of AGYW from rural areas to Freetown is driven mostly by the illusion of improved prospects for income in the capital, but also by these push factors.

According to the research conducted for this analysis, NGOs that work in rural areas to support AGYW have focused on the potential for improved livelihoods in agriculture, including poultry, livestock, forestry and fishing. While this is not comprehensive, it gives a sample of options available for rural youth. These are discussed further in the sections below on growth potential and pathways to employment. However, one important note is that while rural AGYW have a different profile from their urban counterparts, the biggest difference in terms of livelihoods is the opportunity to engage in agriculture. While experiences and circumstances differ, the types of non-farm activities in rural and urban areas do not vary significantly between each setting, though volume for such opportunities is often greater in more urban areas. Furthermore, as noted above, the overall percentage of AGYW with vocational training is much lower than in urban areas.

URBAN AGYW

The overwhelming majority of urban AGYW (and most of the population targeted by BRAC) live in Freetown and its immediate suburbs in the Western Area and in Bo, Sierra Leone's second-largest city. The district headquarters towns of Kambia, Port Loko and Moyamba are growing but remain modest in size.

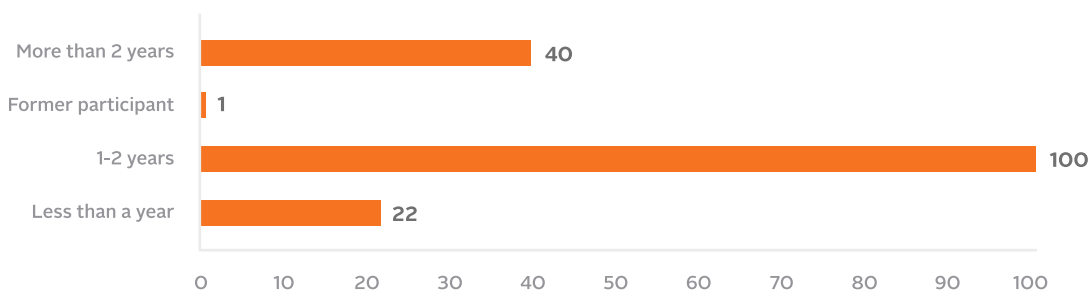
Urban AGYW on average are better educated than their rural peers, have greater physical and social mobility, are more likely to have access to a cell phone and the internet, are less likely to get pregnant in their teen years, and will have on average fewer children during their lifetimes than rural females. The Sierra Leone civil war (1991-2002) affected everyone. However, particularly in urban settings older female youth now above age 21, still part of the AGYW population, were directly affected by the conflict and many still carry the scars of war, including the effects of acute childhood malnutrition, family disruption (women are nine times more likely to be widows than men are to be widowers) and trauma. This psycho-social and recent historical context needs to be acknowledged when trying to understand the motivations and perspectives of AGYW towards livelihoods options and risk taking.

For AGYW, the informal trading sector is saturated with intense competition among mobile street sellers, in market stalls and along roadsides everywhere. The sale of charcoal, soap, packaged goods, toys, tools, etc. is ubiquitous, with vendors selling both goods they own and those on consignment from nearby shops that offer small commissions for youth to peddle goods through the windows of cars stopped in traffic and in pedestrian areas. Many sales items are sold predominantly by one gender. For example, most vegetable and fruit sellers are female, while most hardware store commission sales are done by adolescent boys. Many AGYW already are engaged in petty trading on their own or through their families.

BRAC ELA PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

The average age of the 164 BRAC ELA participants who participated in the FGDs was 17 years (ranging between 14 to 23 years). Almost a quarter (40) had been part of the BRAC ELA for over two years (24.4%), 100 had been in the program for one to two years (61.3%), and 22 for less than a year (3.5%). Only one participant reported to be a former participant now out of the program.

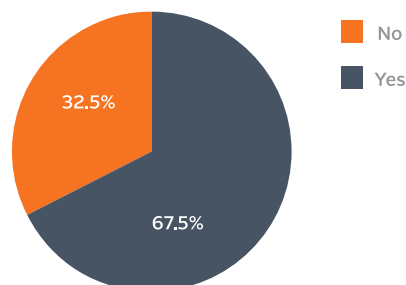
Figure 3: Enrollment in BRAC ELA Program



MARRIAGE AND CHILDBEARING

Around a third (49) of participants reported being parents, while two-thirds (114) had no children. Of those who reported being parents, 39 had only one child, 8 had two children, and only 2 are mothers to three children. Only 6 participants with children reported to be married. At the same time, the Sierra Leonian BRAC ELA participants interviewed reported for the most part that they were still in school, while about one third are out of school.

Figure 4: BRAC ELA Participant School Enrollment

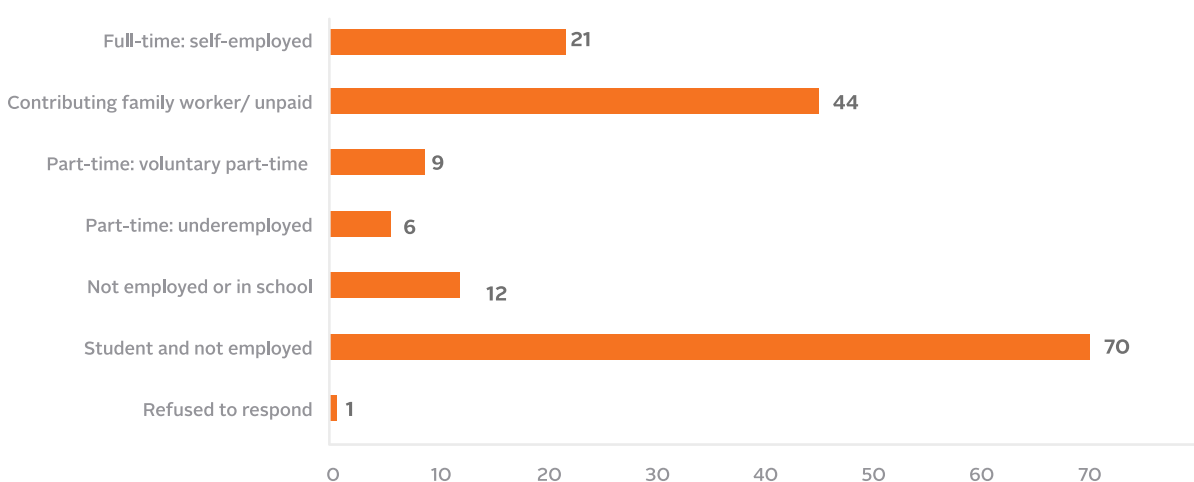


EMPLOYMENT

BRAC ELA participants mostly reported being unemployed. Digging into the data further indicates there may have been some confusion about how to answer this question that was not apparent during the testing of the survey. While 67.5% reported being in school (Figure 4), which is approximately 111 respondents, only 70 answered they were students and not employed (Figure 5). This would appear to mean that 41 participants were in fact in school and working in some form, possibly for a family business as unpaid labor or some type of part time work.

However, despite this confusion, it is apparent that only a portion are regularly employed with a source of income. Twice as many reports contributing to a family income or work as unpaid labor for the family as those who are fully self-employed. Small percentages were volunteering (5.5%), reported to be underemployed (3.7%), or neither in school nor employed (7.4%).

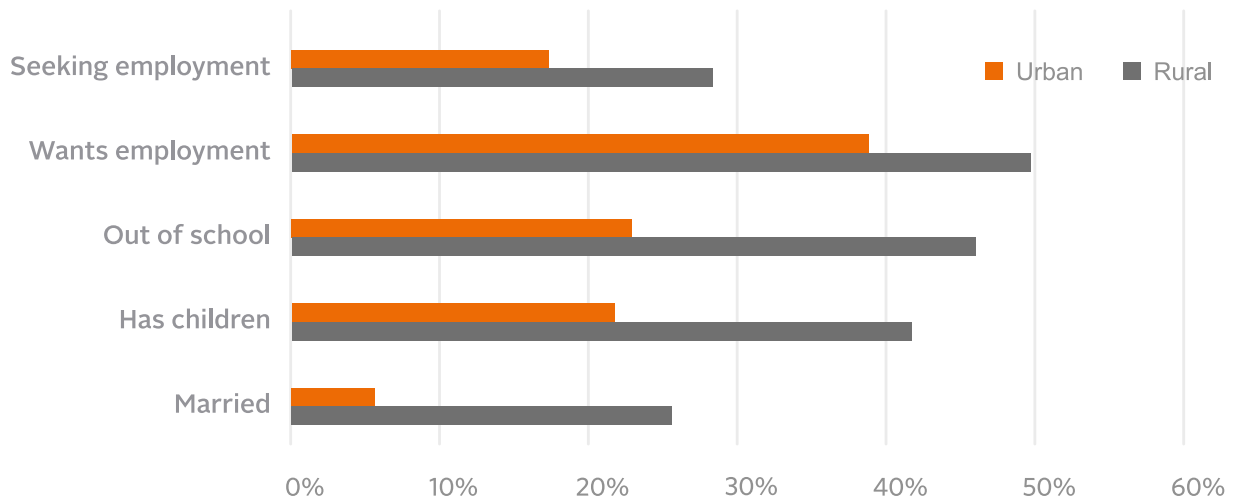
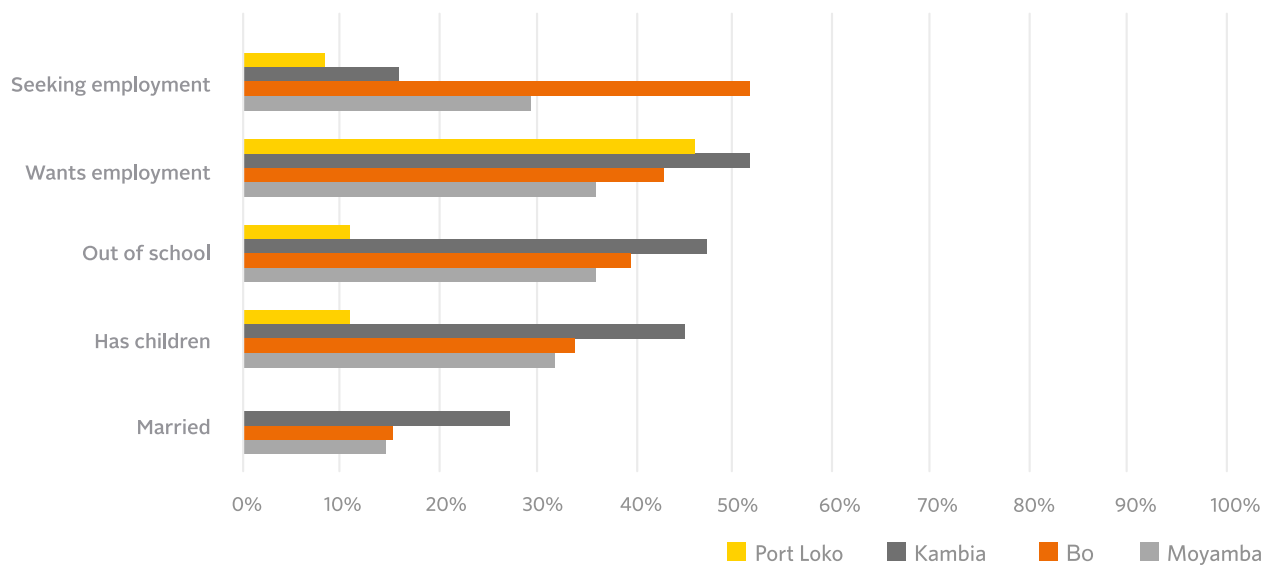
Figure 5: BRAC ELA Participant Employment Status



URBAN V. RURAL AND COUNTY-LEVEL COMPARISONS

There are some significant differences between rural and urban participants. Rural participants are much more likely to be married (25.3% vs. 5.7%) and have children (41.3%) than urban counterparts (21.6%). They are also more likely to both want and actively seek employment. 17.3% of rural participants are full-time self-employed workers, compared to only 9.1% of urban participants. On the other hand, urban participants are more likely to be unpaid family workers (31.8% compared to 21.3%) and unemployed students (47.7% vs. 37.3%). Additionally, urban participants are much more likely to be in school (45.3%) than rural participants (22.7%)

At the district level, some additional comparisons can be made: Kambia (46.7%) has the highest rate of participants out of school and Port Loko (10.8%) has the lowest. Kambia also has the highest rates of married participants and participants with children, while Port Loko reports the lowest rates. Bo and Moyamba report similar rates of marriage, child-bearing, and school attendance, but participants in Bo appear slightly more likely to want and seek employment. No participants in Port Loko are full-time self-employed, but 15-18% are in the other districts. The majority in Port Loko are unpaid family workers (56.8%), compared to only 6.3% in Moyamba. Port Loko participants were only half as likely as Moyamba to be unemployed students.

Figure 6: BRAC's ELA Participant Characteristics by Rural and Urban Settings**Figure 7: BRAC's ELA Participant Characteristics by Counties****AGYW EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES**

To better understand the specific livelihoods experiences of the BRAC ELA participants, the research team conducted focus group discussions. The following information about employment activities is based on responses during these focus group discussions which detailed several AGYW aspirations. The most commonly mentioned profession was nurse (all of the rural Bo participants, as well as urban participants in Bo and Moyamba).¹⁸ Most other professions mentioned required some level of higher education (lawyer, businesswoman, teacher, counselor, minister, president), with tailoring also mentioned in one of the urban Bo FGDs. In urban Port Loko groups, some AGYW said they didn't want to be married or have kids until they had jobs. Several also mentioned their desires to finish high school and go to college.

Employment and unemployment

Most BRAC ELA AGYW interviewed during focus group discussions who are working are involved in farming or petty trade (selling wood, charcoal, fish, prepared food, produce, soap, palm oil, and water), in addition to a wide variety of income-generating activities, usually supporting other family members, but sometimes as a form of self-employment. Mining-related labor included rock breaking at the quarry and sand mining (rural Bo). A few are working in catering, hair dressing (Port Loko), or as mentors for BRAC earning a small amount (approximately \$8 per month). Others mentioned working as a teacher (in urban Port Loko) and at a hospital (rural Port Loko).

AGYW respondents also noted, however, that they would not consider some activities actual employment. For example, even if they were engaged in petty trade, most participants did not consider this to be “employment.” While not a challenge, it provides some insight indicating that relying on standard definitions of employment may undercut how AGYW may identify opportunities for livelihoods.

Only two participants mentioned having previous jobs (Bo urban and Kambia urban), but were now unemployed. One worked in a garage as an auto mechanic but left because it was hazardous. The other left her job because her boss was sexually harassing her. This suggests that even if people can get formal jobs, they are not necessarily high quality, and workers are not protected from hazards or harassment.

Non-work activities

Almost all participants described spending time outside of school or work doing domestic duties, including cleaning, cooking, collecting water, and laundry. Several participants also mentioned studying. Recreational activities included sleeping, playing games, visiting with friends and family.

Self-Employment

Most self-employed participants are working part time, usually in petty trade or farming. Only one mentioned starting a business using her BRAC ELA training (soap-making), which she does in addition to tie-dye and farming (Bo rural). A few mentioned hair-braiding at very low levels of profit: one said she earns about 25 cents, another said she often does it for free. Petty trade was mentioned frequently (Bo urban, Kambia rural, Port Loko rural), as was selling food products (Bo rural, Kambia urban, Moyamba urban, Port Loko urban). Farming was mentioned in the rural areas and teaching and nannying in urban areas.

Participants use the money to support the basic needs of their families and themselves. Several mentioned paying for lunch for themselves or their children, and self-reliance (avoiding dependence on men) was also mentioned a few times in Bo.

Unfortunately, illicit activities were also mentioned as livelihood strategies. In rural Kambia, participants mentioned that some of their peers are engaged in stealing or sex work because “they do not have what [they need] to eat.”

18 Nursing as a profession requires a bachelors degree, a diploma or certification as a State Enrolled Community Health Nurse (SECHN). This may not be a complete list of accreditations acknowledged by the Government of Sierra Leone, however, the research team was told there are risks of false accreditation or low-quality teaching given the growth in this field after the Ebola crisis. More information on Accreditation from the Ministry of Health can be found at: <https://mohs2017.files.wordpress.com/2017/05/standards-for-accreditation-of-basic-nursing-and-midwifery-educational-institutions-and-programs.pdf>

Access to credit

Local institutions providing credit that FGD participants mentioned include microfinance banks such as LAPO,¹⁹ BRAC, and ASA,²⁰ community banks; and informal savings groups, such as susu²¹ or Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups. These seem to be widely available across the districts. Most participants have not borrowed money, but those that have borrowed mostly did so from family, savings groups, or BRAC. In one of the rural Bo groups, five participants mentioned having borrowed from a VSLA. Participants that had not borrowed explained that interest rates were too high (Kambia rural, Port Loko rural), or that they would not be eligible to borrow because they are still in school (Port Loko urban). A Kambia rural participant mentioned that she had to pay for another group member that didn't pay and who then quit, and described some members running away with the money.

VIEWS ON WORK OPPORTUNITIES

The following are perspectives from BRAC ELA participants briefly detailing where there are perceived economic opportunities, what would be the most appealing work opportunities, and finding work.

Perceived economic activities

AGYW were able to identify several opportunities outside those normally offered by BRAC ELA. Participants see economic opportunities most frequently in petty trade (including charging mobile phones and selling top-up cards) and agriculture. They also cited education/teaching and motorbike transport, as well as tailoring, hair dressing, and health work. Perceived mining-related opportunities included rock breaking, motorbike transport for diamond mines, and sand mining. Participants also mentioned fetching and selling wood and carpentry.

Unfortunately, however, regular incomes created by employment may not be seen as enough and sustainable. Sierra Leone's challenges around corruption were revealed in conversations with participants. For example, in urban Port Loko, participants discussed how people with formal jobs supplement their income with bribes. Nurses get tips, while police, lawyers, teachers and bank managers take bribes.

Most appealing work opportunities

As noted earlier in the section on aspirations, there was a lot of interest on the part of FGD participants in nursing and healthcare, including pharmacy. Also banking, working for BRAC (including in financial management, as a loan officer), law, teaching, food sales/catering, and petty trade. The interest in trades that BRAC ELA is focused on include gara tie dye, hairdressing, tailoring, and soap-making. Because these may only require basic training it allows for greater participation of AGYW. However, a sudden influx of AGYW into these trades could effectively flood the market, cutting all incomes down to the point that they are unsustainable as an individual AGYWs livelihood. In contrast, skilled trades such as carpentry and mechanics, as well as weaving, were also mentioned. These more skilled trades could have greater resilience in the face of an influx of new entrants as they typically have greater market demand, based on interviews conducted for this report.

19 Lift Above Poverty Organization (LAPO) launched its African Regional Initiative (ARI) in 2007. In March 2008, it began its operations in Sierra Leone with the primary aim of assisting a number of honest-hearted less privileged ones in the country break out of the grip of poverty, as well as expanding its operations to other African nations

20 Microfinance bank

21 Type of informal savings group

Two groups in Moyamba mentioned interest in agriculture, i.e. in-land valley swamp and peanut production; livestock rearing was also mentioned. Construction-related jobs came up several times: in Moyamba, two groups mentioned interest in being flag controller for a road construction company. In Bo rural, there is a construction company called Salcost that AGYW are interested in.

Reasons for being interested in these jobs included wanting to be self-reliant and independent of men, the respect that their salary would confer, and learning to or being able to drive. Some mentioned helping others (through teaching, police work, health work, etc.).

Most girls see or know people involved in these jobs in their community, and that is how they learn about them. Some cited BRAC as their source of information, others mentioned radio or other media, and some mentioned community leaders.

Participants said that the most common reason they are not working in these jobs is that they are still in school and are therefore too young or too busy to get involved in these types of work. Also, importantly, they believe they lack the training, certification, start-up capital, or connections to do the work they are interested in.

Finding Work

A common refrain in the FGDs was that it is difficult to find work, especially in the small communities most live in. AGYW reported that one finds work through family or connections. Even with BRAC training, there is limited demand for these skills (tie dye, hair dressing, soap making, etc.) in rural communities. Trained AGYW either practice in big towns or are engaged in other income-generating activities.

It is considered easy to get a job if one is educated, meets job requirements, or can offer a bribe. And in some cases, short-term volunteering is also seen as a way to get a job, which provides youth valuable experience and on-the-job training.

In terms of keeping a job, transportation costs are a barrier. AGYW reported that common reasons for losing a job included being accused of “dishonesty”, “laziness”, refusing or rejecting sexual harassment, and lack of punctuality.

NATIONAL LEVEL TRENDS IN AGYW SUPPLY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

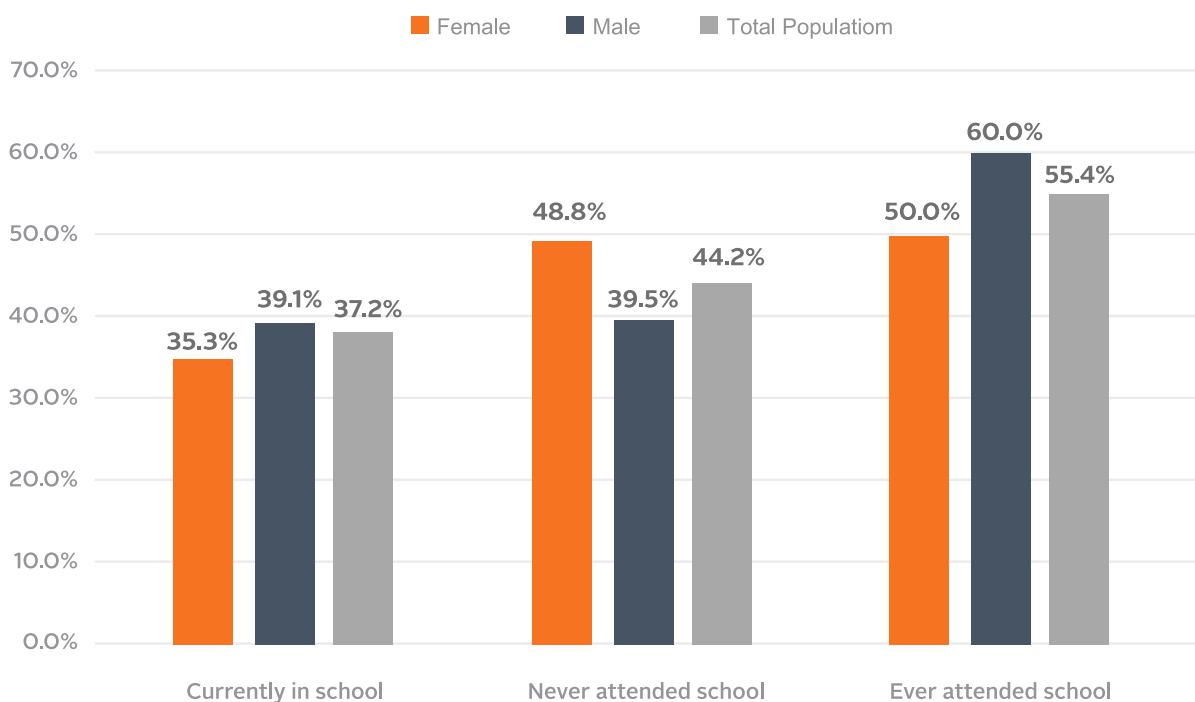
The Ebola crisis of 2014 shut schools for nine months, leaving the education system in a severe shock. Now, more than three years later, it has recovered; but the education system was seriously affected by the shutdown, and the GOSL’s education goals were set back. A new Education Sector Plan for 2018-2020 was approved by development partners, and it led to increased donor funding for the sector, particularly through the World Bank-managed Global Partnership for Education.²² The Education Sector Plan is designed to address several challenges, including improving access, equity and completion rates; ensuring safety and quality education; catalyzing systems change to the quality of education; and effective implementation of the education policy.

These goals must be realized in a national context where, among the total working age population, 56.7% cannot read or write, including 66% of all females. Among those self-employed in agriculture, 80% are illiterate. However, youth are significantly more literate, especially in urban areas. The percentages of males

22 GoSL. (2018). *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology*. “Sierra Leone Education Sector Plans 2018 – 2020.” <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2018-10-sierra-leone-esp.pdf>

in school (39.1%) and those who ever attended school (60.0%) are higher than their female counterparts (35.3% and 50.9% respectively), and female youth have on average 7 fewer months of education than males. The percentage of the rural population that has never attended school (32.7%) is almost three times higher than that of the urban population (11.5%).²³

Figure 8: School Attendance for Population 3 Years and Above



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census

Sierra Leone still “prohibits pregnant adolescent girls from attending secondary school or taking secondary or post-secondary entrance exams.”²⁴ According to a 2016 GOSL/UNICEF Assessment of the Situation of Out-Of-School Children, 28.6% of them are excluded from education as a result of teenage pregnancy.

Employers also see challenges stemming from the education system and its ability to prepare youth for work. Highest on this list noted by several FGD respondents is the challenge that many schools teach a largely theoretical, rather than practical, curriculum. For many employers, however, it is the hands-on applied learning of skills (typically technical, but this can include soft) that has shown the greatest success in preparing young people for work.

Additionally, employers, particularly in urban settings, report that there are sometimes mismatched expectations around work. Youth coming out of the education system often consider their goal to be an office job, which is perceived as desirable as it confers a higher status. Unfortunately, because of the mismatch with the education they are provided, this is often not likely. Other employers indicated a lack of ‘willingness to work’ by young people, saying that those who join as apprentices are unwilling to stay on and work full time.

²⁴ US Department of Labor, (2017). Bureau of International Affairs *Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports*, p. 1.

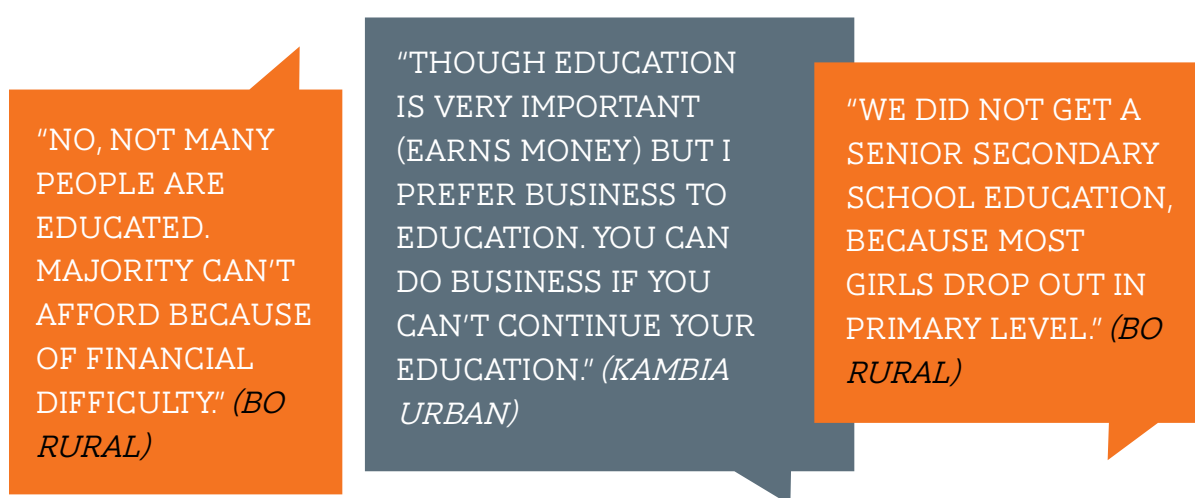
There are many factors that affect both employers' perceptions of youth attitudes, and the drivers of AGYW and youths' perceptions of work. For the latter, factors include the security of a young person, how able they are to meet basic nutrition needs, and the salary offered in contrast to other sources of income.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION

Participants recognize that basic skills like math and writing can help support business activities. They see science skills as foundational for medical careers, and "commercial" science as helpful for business. Several mentioned that home economics helps in preparing students for catering jobs.

However, some participants stated they have gotten no skills from education because they dropped out.

Overall, cost is a barrier for participants, and many have dropped out of school due to this. There was strong agreement that education is not affordable:



"NO, NOT MANY PEOPLE ARE EDUCATED. MAJORITY CAN'T AFFORD BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY." (BO RURAL)

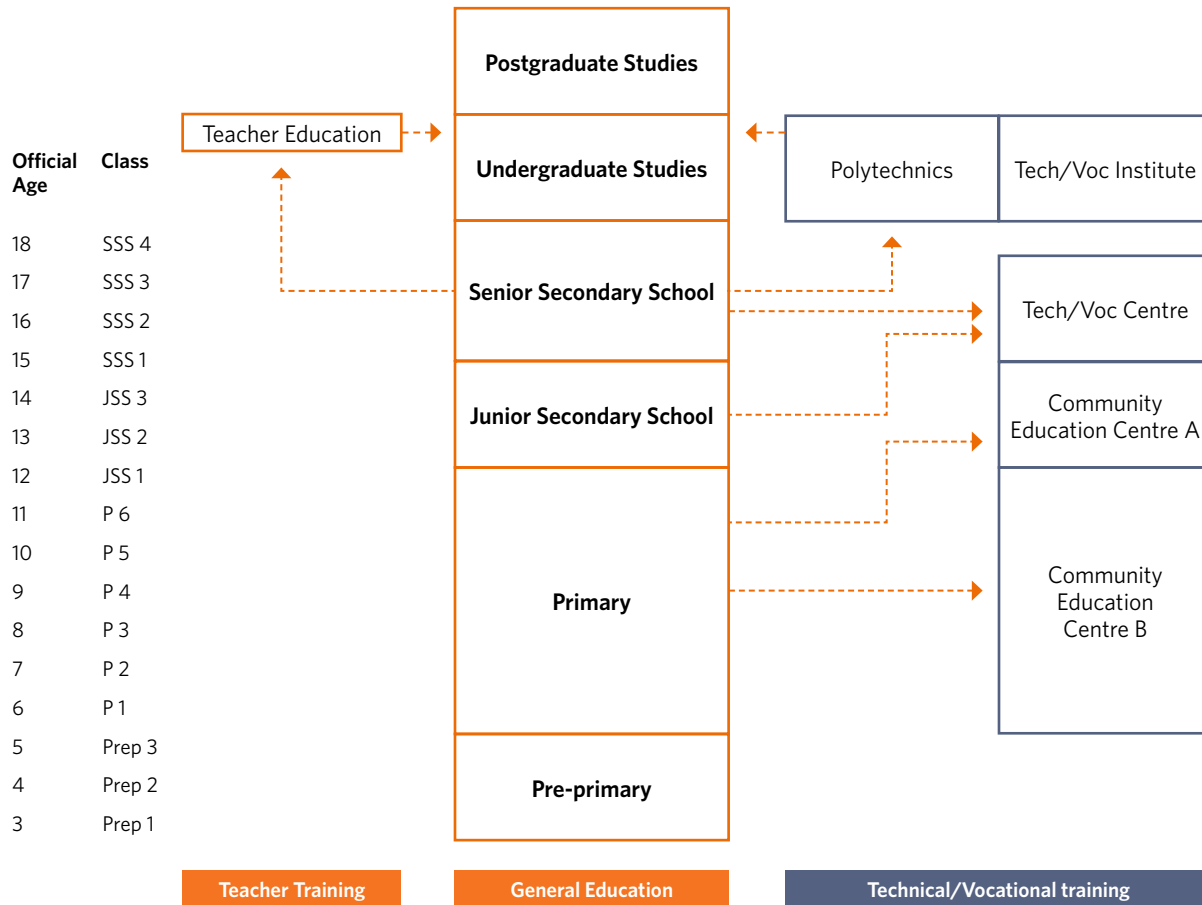
"THOUGH EDUCATION IS VERY IMPORTANT (EARNS MONEY) BUT I PREFER BUSINESS TO EDUCATION. YOU CAN DO BUSINESS IF YOU CAN'T CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION." (KAMBIA URBAN)

"WE DID NOT GET A SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION, BECAUSE MOST GIRLS DROP OUT IN PRIMARY LEVEL." (BO RURAL)

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Sierra Leone's technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions are complex and heavily supply-driven. At the national level, TVET as a system is coordinated by the Directorate of Higher Education, Science, and Technology and supported by the Deputy Director of TVET.²⁵ The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) monitors and inspects both public and private TVET institutions, while the National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards Act (NCTVA), established in 2001, is responsible for the accreditation and certification of TVET institutions. TVET institutions offer a mix of programs and certificates catering to a wide range of candidates, from those with no formal education, where they are directed to community education centers (CEC), to students having completed senior secondary education. For example, Figure 9 below demonstrates the possibility for an individual who has left school at the primary school level to proceed to Community Education Centre B, and Table 5 shows the wide range of learning sites that offer TVET type courses, even if not fully established as official TVET institutions.

25 GIZ. (2018). *Diagnostic Study of the TVET Sector in Sierra Leone*, page 28

Figure 9: Overview of Education System in Sierra Leone

Source: GIZ. (2018). Diagnostic Study of the TVET Sector in Sierra Leone - GIZ noted Official school ages apply to general education only.

Table 4: Level of Education Covered by the Different Types of TVET Institutions***TVET Institutions Level**

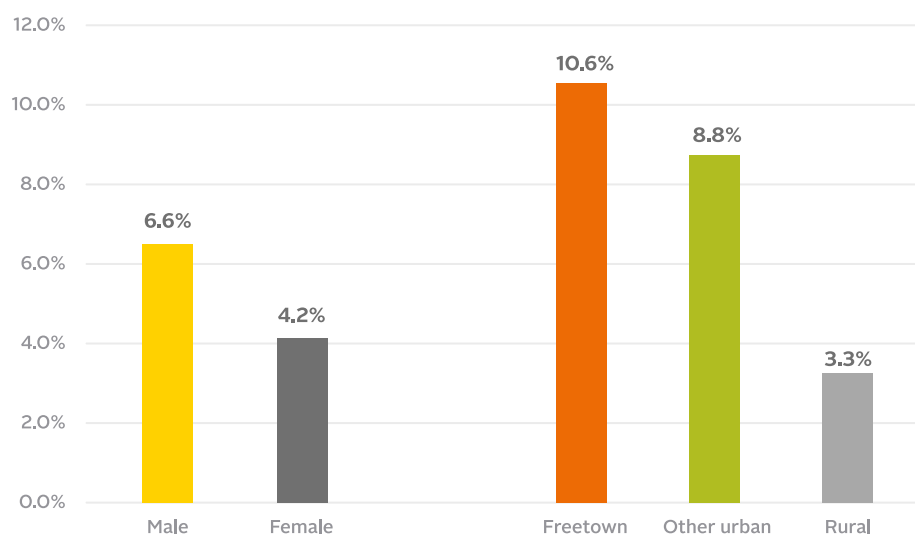
Community Education Centre - B (CEC-B)	Non-formal/Primary
Community Education Centre - A (CEC-A)	Primary to Junior Secondary School (JSS)
Vocational Trade Centre (VTC)	JSS to early Senior Secondary School (SSS)
Tech/Voc Centre (TVC)	JSS to SSS
Tech/Voc Institutions (TVI)	SSS to post SSS below Tertiary
Polytechnics	Post SSS to Tertiary

* Derived from - Situation Analysis Study of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Sierra Leone as shown in the Education Sector Plan 2018-2020, p. 18.

Because vocational training spans almost all levels of education, there is significant engagement in TVET processes, but not necessarily through traditional TVET institutions. For example, a conventional secondary school may offer woodworking skills. As a result, enrollment in TVET institutions is less than overall enrollment in TVET programs as some classes alone are offered in primary and secondary schools. Unfortunately, further analysis is difficult as the GOSL as of 2018 did not have recent data on the number of TVET institutions and the number of students, and refers to a 2008 TVET survey that showed 370 TVET institutions (more than 100 were unregistered), while the number of TVET students at the time was cited as 27,055.²⁶ A partial review in 2015 of TVETs below the polytechnic level in four districts identified 126 institutions with 15,131 students, so the GOSL surmises from this that the total number of enrollees is now higher than 2008.²⁷ As another illustration of this expansion, a recent GIZ study found registered TVET providers have exploded from 33 in 2009 to 380 in 2018.²⁸

While TVETs traditionally have been designed as the next step for students leaving secondary school and looking for some sort of skilled trade, the low rate of enrollment in TVETs is a direct result of the low secondary graduation rate. Only 5.5% of the working age population has received formal vocational training, they are also disproportionately urban, with 12.6% of that group based in Freetown and 3.3% in rural areas.²⁹ This low enrollment is in contrast to the growth in TVET institutions. Indeed, many are for-profit, and have grown out of a perceived demand by employers for technical and vocational skills instead of those from traditional education institutions. Moreover, more men (6.6%) than women (4.2%) go through vocational training. Yet, one reason why these numbers may not represent the broader technical potential of young people is because many youth have undergone traditional vocational skills training informally with family or local NGOs, or have become handy in a trade through practice.

Figure 10: Percent of Youth who received vocational training by location and gender



Source: 2014 Labor Force Survey

26 GOSL. *Education Sector Plan 2018-2020*, p. 17.

27 GOSL. *Education Sector Plan 2018-2020*, p. 18

28 GIZ. (2018). *Diagnostic Study of the TVET Sector in Sierra Leone*, P17

29 World Bank. (2014) "Findings from the Labor Market Survey", op. cit., p. 43. Accessed at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/806541468178774794/pdf/104269-PUB-PUBLIC.pdf>

The average duration of vocational training programs (centers and institutions combined) is 2.2 years. Among trainees, 25% never attended school, while 15% never completed primary school. The remaining 60% switched from secondary to vocational education, as many may have realized that their academic performance was unlikely to enable them to pass the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), a regional exam that certifies students as equivalent to a secondary school certificates in the United Kingdom. TVET is also selected by young Sierra Leonians as it is a potential reliable pathway to work. Many see other youth who continue in secondary education fail the WASSCE and end up without jobs.

CHALLENGES IN TVET

Sierra Leone's TVET programs are seen as the last resort for school leavers or those with poor academic ability. As a result, the TVET system has remained under-resourced both in terms of funding and in terms of lower-quality teaching staff, many of whom only have a high school diploma. The Government budget allocation to TVET in 2017 was less than 1% of the entire education budget,³⁰ exclusively used for the salaries of teachers, trainers, and other staff members, without any allocated fund for the infrastructure of TVET institutes, equipment, and maintenance. This has resulted in deteriorating and run-down TVET physical infrastructure and poorly equipped TVET institutions without modern teaching and learning tools and equipment.³¹

According to a study by the World Bank, other main challenges confronting Sierra Leone's skills development system include: low cognitive scores driven by underperforming general education; limited access to training programs, especially for AGYW and rural populations; an approach heavily focused on supply that has little input or information from employers about training, curricula and delivery; and inadequate resource provision, creating poor quality in and limited relevance of TVET programs. This also leads to course duplication, outdated curricula and equipment, inadequate faculty and instructors, and, broadly, poor information regarding how courses translate into employment.³²

Technical quality challenges, in turn, exacerbate overall low participation and graduation of youth. In a key informant interview, the Milton Margai Hotel and Tourism School confirmed a low rate of enrollment, with fewer than 100 students registered to take the national exam this year. However, the number of applicants has considerably increased because of government scholarships to high-ranking students and application waivers to encourage youth to participate. At the same time, TVET institutes still have to perform additional applicant vetting because they have minimal capacity to absorb a large number of students. TVETs are financially burdened, preventing them from enabling their students to undertake practical training, and from providing tools and equipment. In instances where youth want to undergo training at a TVET institute, there are several barriers. For example, entrance requirements at government training institutes can be challenging, such as a requirement for a minimum education level of WASSCE (Senior Secondary School) or BECE (Junior Secondary School), which is out of reach for those who were primary school age during or shortly after Sierra Leone's civil war.³³

30 World Bank. (2018). International Development Association Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit in the Amount of (SDR 14.4) Million (US\$20 Million Equivalent) to the Republic of Sierra Leone for a Sierra Leone Skills Development Project. Accessed at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/121121538105464838/pdf/Sierra-Leone-PAD-P163723-Sept-4-09062018.pdf>

31 GIZ. (2018). Diagnostic Study of the TVET Sector in Sierra Leone.

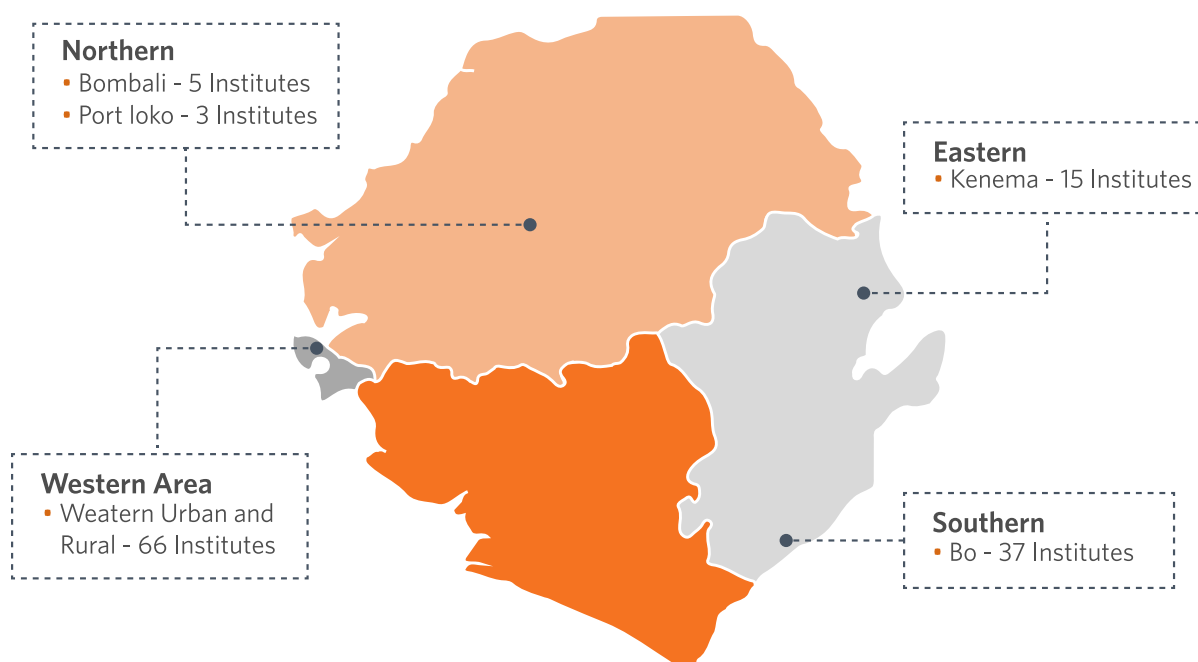
32 World Bank. (2018). Sierra Leone Skills Development Project <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/121121538105464838/pdf/Sierra-Leone-PAD-P163723-Sept-4-09062018.pdf>

33 McLaughlin, M., Bun Wai, A., Senesie, T., & Kamara, W. (2013). *Market and Economic Survey and Mapping of Training Providers and Supportive Structures in Sierra Leone*. <https://tvetcoalition.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/market-economic-survey-mapping-of-training-providers-supportive-structures-in-sierra-leone-2013.pdf>

Cost is another barrier for youth to participate in TVET trainings or attend TVET institutions. This can include tuition fees, extra charges for training materials, incidentals, and in some cases field trips. There are some government scholarships as well as NGO funding to low-income and vulnerable youth. For instance, the Government of Sierra Leone is providing tuition fee support for vulnerable youth training in carpentry, tailoring, hairdressing and motor mechanics in Wellington, Eastern Freetown and Mabella.³⁴ Another example is the “Abbako Private TVET” in Port Loko, offering free courses for high-ranking students in community development, ICT and agriculture.

Another barrier to participation can also be sheer physical distance between young people and a TVET institution. Unfortunately, TVET institutes are almost all clustered in the western and urban areas. The rural areas are not easily reachable, especially during the rainy season, which limits young people from accessing training institutes. Figure 9 below shows TVET institutions that use NCTVA-accredited curricula.

Figure 11: Distribution of Institutions by Region and District - 2015



Source: Derived from – Situation Analysis Study of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Sierra Leone

Key informants around Sierra Leone reinforced some of these challenges. Frequently discussed in interviews was the perception of TVET and how it has changed, from the realm of ‘drop outs’ to a sense that, even if it is not prestigious, it is seen as likely to provide opportunity. Respondents noted that young people are beginning to see that TVET trainings can increase the amount of money one can get, and the reliability with which one can be employed, due to the greater likelihood one will have the skills to do a job.

34 McLaughlin, M., Bun Wai, A., Senesie, T., & Kamara, W. (2013). *Market and Economic Survey and Mapping of Training Providers and Supportive Structures in Sierra Leone*.

Yet this view can and is frequently dampened by challenges to the capacity and resources of TVETs. Frequently when discussing TVET institutions, key informants noted that TVETs are under capacity, in terms of skills, as well as machinery or technical equipment needed to train students. As a result, core technical skills such as mechanical or plumbing skills are frequently taught directly on the job, bypassing the TVET institution. Currently, the Government of Sierra Leone is in the process of adapting a new National TVET policy to adapt a demand-driven training with private sector engagement.

FGD Perspective on TVETs

FGDs revealed that many AGYW participants had little knowledge of TVET options and opportunities in their communities, most likely because few exist, though also because many only encountered skills-related training under the specific auspices of BRAC ELA training. As a result, for many there was not a distinction between an NGO program's training and that of a TVET institution. However, it was clear from the focus group that the training institutions are based outside the rural communities. This indicated that in some instances BRAC ELA programming around skills building took the place of local TVET institutions, at least from the BRAC ELA AGYW perspective, despite the presence of such institutions. As participants had only engaged with BRAC ELA they could not compare on quality. However, across the BRAC ELA program, the training topics were the same: hairdressing, soap making, gara tie dye, and tailoring. In some communities, only BRAC was mentioned (Bo rural). Participants mentioned very few additional training institutions, e.g. Kambia Tec Voc, Moyamba Car Centre, Port Loko Teachers College, Abako College and Hospital, and Unimak. The Ministry of Agriculture has also carried out some short (3-day) trainings in Moyamba.

BRAC ELA FGD participants had critical feedback on existing training programs in soap-making. For example, in Bo rural, participants saw training as unnecessary because women learned the skills from peers. In another example, in BRAC's hairdressing training program, Bo urban participants were subjected to academically inappropriate punishments for tardiness, such as being asked to do the trainer's laundry and fetch water. They also complained they were not able to practice their skills from courses they had taken.³⁵

Private Sector Linkages

During key informant interviews, employers indicated they saw a growing demand for TVET-trained employees in the agricultural and tourism sectors, as well as more technically-oriented public and private industries. However, because of challenges around poor quality tools, poorly qualified trainers, courses that emphasize theory over on-the-job training, and a lack of input from employers in the design and delivery phase, many employers have a mixed relationship with education and training institutions. For example, during KIIs, employers noted that they prefer to hire someone who has even minimal on-the-job experience rather than TVET graduates because the latter lack vital practical skills. This was further noted in a recent World Bank higher education study, which concluded that the linkages between higher education institutions and employers were weak and often informal.³⁶ During the KIIs with the employers, specifically in the hospitality sector, they indicated that they rely heavily on 3-6 months of in-house training to address the skills gap.

35 BRAC Sierra Leone places the utmost importance on the safety of program participants. While BRAC Sierra Leone staff monitored the hairdresser trainings in Bo, it was not made aware of these allegations until this report was provided by FHI360. BRAC is committed to the well-being of Sierra Leoneans, and is taking action to address the disturbing reports. BRAC Sierra Leone will overhaul the process it uses to select and train program facilitators, adopting a successful approach used by BRAC in Bangladesh. It includes updated selection criteria, a modified orientation process, and introductions to the parents or caregivers of the program participants. Further, it has begun delivering safeguarding trainings to community members and program participants to align expectations about the program and encourage future reporting. To improve its monitoring, BRAC Sierra Leone will enhance its current framework through discussions with participants and trainers. Moving forward, the organization will also place a minimum of two participants with each trainer to ensure their safety and improve quality.

36 World Bank. (2017). System Assessment for Better Education Results (SABER) in Tertiary Education.

Changes in TVET Perception

The Government of Sierra Leone is taking serious measures to address the skills gap and change youth perception in TVET. The National Youth Commission (NYC) with the support of the African Development Bank (AfDB) is leading the Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment (YEEP) Project, to benefit over 2,000 young people in three key areas: skills development for employment, career guidance and job readiness, and a graduate entrepreneurship.³⁷ One of the YEEP components is the TVET Image Campaign, launched in February 2019, aimed at rebranding technical education to make it attractive to young people. The Milton Margai Hotel and Tourism School also indicated that the perception of youth and parents towards the tourism and hospitality industry used to be negative, but the mindset is slowly changing due job creation by the tourism sector.

TVET institutions also face challenges around gender inequality, though it appears to be based on which courses men and women enroll in. Men spend an average of nearly seven months more in training than women and rural trainees spend on average five more months in training compared to those in urban areas. People who never attended school or who obtained technical degrees or certificates spend the most time in vocational training. Because two-thirds of the rural working-age population has never attended school, the extra training among this group may be helping to compensate for a lack of formal education,³⁸ while the longer average training times of men versus women is primarily caused by occupational choice.

The clear gender difference across fields reflects the environment in which young people make their training decisions, as well as personal preferences and social expectations. This gender differentiation across training fields can widen the gender wage gap because men focus on areas with higher earnings. The KII with the Milton Margai College also confirmed that there are more females than males enrolled in the hospitality industry. Women are also severely underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related courses.

It is important to note that this is partially driven by existing gender bias about occupational roles. As more women and AGYW enter into industries that have been traditionally dominated by men, which are fed by TVET courses dominated by men, women's participation in TVET might also increase.

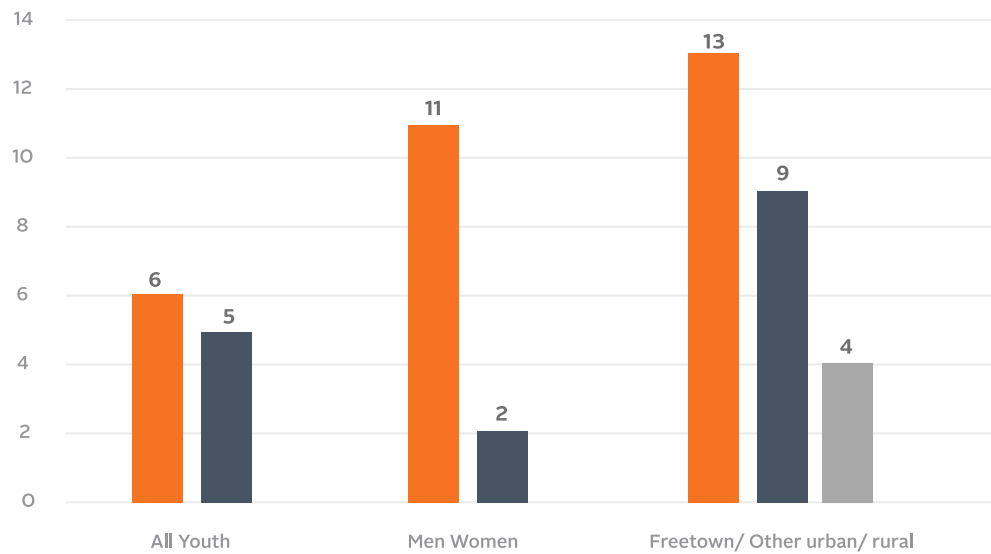
Apprenticeships

Data on apprenticeships also reflect differences in how AGYW and similarly aged men are able to access these opportunities. Among the working-age population, 6.4% have served as apprentices, but the percentage of males who have served as apprentices is nearly 4.5 times higher than the percentage of women (11.1% vs. 2.5%). Freetown has the highest percentage of those who have served as apprentices, which may be caused by more limited rural apprenticeship opportunities and other factors.³⁹

37 National Youth Commission. *TVET Image Campaign*. <http://www.nationalyouthcommission.sl/>

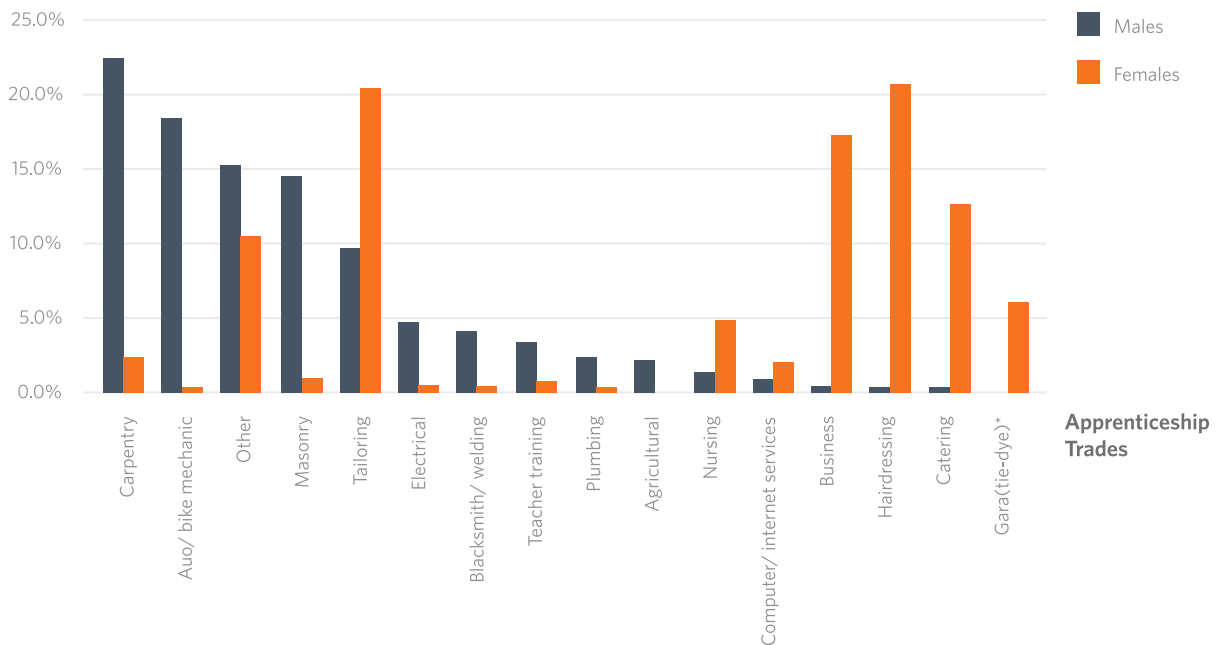
38 World Bank. (2016). *Findings from the 2014 Labor Force Survey in Sierra Leone*, p. 44.

39 World Bank. (2016). *Findings from the 2014 Labor Force Survey in Sierra Leone*, p. 78.

Figure 12: Working-age Population in Apprenticeships by Type (percent)

Source: Sierra Leone's 2014 Labor Force Survey

Similar to vocational training, men and women select different trades as apprentices. For example, carpentry, auto mechanics, and masonry are almost entirely male dominant, while women predominate in catering and hairdressing. As with vocational training, tailoring is popular among women (20.6%), but few men also select tailoring (9.7%). These gender differences reflect tradition, cultural norms and individual preferences.

Figure 13: Apprenticeship Trades by Gender

Source: Margolis, David & Rosas, Nina & Turay, Abubakarr & Turay, Samuel. (2016). Findings from the 2014 Labor Force Survey in Sierra Leone.

Vocational training, apprenticeships and livelihoods

When looking at the relationships between income, apprenticeships and vocational training, a Labor Market Survey found that in 2014 there was no income difference associated with serving as an apprentice, with median earnings remaining at about \$100 a month. For vocational training only, a slight income difference of 3% was found among those who did vocational training compared to those with no training in the same areas. However, the type of accreditation does seem to matter for income. Those who received a vocational training certificate had higher earnings, and those receiving certificates from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security yielded the greatest differential in incomes – around 50% higher – relative to teaching diplomas. Unfortunately, the survey data did not indicate differences in likelihood that a young person would find employment, nor did it provide a deeper perspective on distinctions between AGYW and ABYM.

Informal apprenticeships are also a way for unscrupulous employers or family members to obtain unremunerated labor. In some cases, youth end up doing large amounts of work for a few meals.⁴⁰ In contrast, vocational training, even from local NGOs and community-based organizations, is more likely to provide structured learning and a certificate upon completion, even if the certificate is not recognized by any accrediting entity. For instance, BRAC Bangladesh has successfully implemented a 6-month on-the-job apprenticeship model, Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR), by pairing apprentices with a trained business mentor to help youth get skills. The approach provides market demanded skills, and aligns to national certifications, while providing key soft, entrepreneurial, and technical skills.

SKILLS TRAININGS

In addition to traditional education programs and TVET institution offerings, AGYW often have access to project-based trainings that offer a wide range of shorter one-off courses. The sections below note perspectives on training specific to BRAC ELA.

Focus Group Participants' Perspective on Skills Training

During the FGDs, participants appreciated the role of life skills training and expressed interest in other trainings as well. AGYWs were asked a series of questions pertaining to training and self-employment. When asked what kind of skills they were interested in developing, most referenced the types of training opportunities already provided by ELA, including hair-dressing, tailoring, tie-dye, soap making, and others. This would indicate that without exposure to a broader segment of market needs, or what skills could be used for, they will self-select into industries or jobs that may have limited opportunities based on training.

A few also mentioned non-traditional skills, such as pottery making, driving and traffic controller or “flagger”; and formal training in teaching and nursing. Additionally, the AGYW noted their ambitious aspirations to become lawyers, doctors, nurses or politicians. Other trainings offer alternative courses on possible employment. For example, in Moyamba, a livelihood skills training institution run by Red Cross, called “Car Center,” offers 6-12 months courses and a range of skills trainings such as hairdressing, tailoring, catering, driving and soap making.

40 The Child Rights Act of 2007 sets a minimum age and skill requirement for apprenticeships both formally and informally, and does not require an apprentice to be paid a wage, only requires the apprenticeship provider to provide food, a safe and healthy work environment, and be held responsible for harm caused to the apprentice in the course of training. For more information the act can be accessed at: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2007-7p.pdf>

Most groups agreed that the training provided by BRAC ELA directly was the only training available in their communities. There are other training institutions offering similar types of trainings, but they are located outside their villages, so some AGYWs are discouraged to complete or even start the training because of the distance to the training intuitions and cost of transportation.

Parents View on Skills Training

Parents from Bo, Kambia, Moyamba and Port Loko were interviewed to better understand their perceptions of ELA and the livelihood trainings offered. Parents are supportive of the ELA program and see it as a benefit to their children as well as themselves. They noted the social benefits of the life skills training – especially around school retention and prevention of teen pregnancy – and felt that the livelihood activities offered by ELA have benefited them financially and will continue to do so in the future. One parent noted, “When you help a girl or any child, you have helped the whole nation.” Most of the parents interviewed, even if illiterate, recognize the value of an effective education for their children. They expressed their support and commitment to trainings and the BRAC ELA program, specifically referring to BRAC’s after-school program, which has helped their daughters get help on their school work. Parents were content with how BRAC approached them from the project inception, as BRAC is recognized as a community leader.

However, there did appear to be some confusion about aspects of BRAC ELA. In interviews, parents also raised their concern on the structure of the program, which they believed was geared toward only young girls who are still in school, though in fact it targets in and out of school youth. They recommend that all children – girls and boys as well as drop-outs – should benefit from the BRAC ELA program to function effectively in all aspects of their life.

4

Economic and Sector Context and Analysis

With a better understanding of Sierra Leone’s AGYW, and the system that provides them with skills for employment or self-employment, this section analyzes the potential for the country’s economy to absorb the capacity of new labor market entrants, by sectors and occupations. The analysis is informed by the use of secondary data in the form of trade data and reported economic growth, as well as primary data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The main focus is to understand economic opportunities that have the potential to be accessible to AGYW, and that also show indications of increasing in demand, and thus growth in employment or self-employment potential.

SIERRA LEONE’S ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Sierra Leone has extraordinary natural resources and has shown impressive economic growth in the last decade, but this has been dependent on extractive mining, especially of iron ore; fluctuating prices have added significant instability to the country’s economy. Moreover, Sierra Leone has faced continued challenges since

its civil wars, most recently with the Ebola crisis. While Sierra Leoneans have continued to show a strong ability to overcome these significant challenges, they do impact the economic environment, and the subsequent industries and jobs that present economic opportunities for youth and AGYW.

Since the discovery of iron ore in 2011, mining became the main driver of growth, with iron ore exports representing 98.2% of GDP growth in 2014, while agriculture contributed only 0.3%. Yet iron ore, the price of which is dependent on international markets, has been an inconsistent driver of economic growth, introducing volatility and uncertainty. For example, ore prices declined rapidly in 2015, which occurred in concurrence with the Ebola crisis, leading the economy to contract by 21.5%. Other industries also play a role in the country's economy, yet luckily have a higher potential to generate employment or livelihoods for AGYW. For example, agriculture employs 80% of Sierra Leoneans, and represents approximately 60% of the GDP. While data is not up to date, the second largest driver is 'other services,' which makes up approximately 10% of GDP.⁴¹ This is a broad category that excludes public work, and specifically can include "equipment and machinery repairing, promoting or administering religious activities, grantmaking, advocacy, and providing dry-cleaning and laundry services, personal care services, death care services...."⁴² Tourism represents the third largest contributor, followed by wholesale and retail trade.

Following steady growth until 2012, foreign direct investment (FDI) was severely impacted by the Ebola outbreak. Investment flows then hit their lowest level since 2010, declining to \$138 million in 2016. In 2017 (post-Ebola), there was a dramatic turnaround with FDI increasing to \$560 million.⁴³ The 2018 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report concluded that Sierra Leone has major FDI potential in agribusiness, fisheries, ecotourism, and manufacturing.

Trade has been a major factor in supporting Sierra Leone's economy, but one that remains underdeveloped in terms of opportunity generation for many Sierra Leoneans. Foreign manufacturers have duty-free access to the European and American markets under the Everything but Arms (EBA) Initiative and the US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA),⁴⁴ as well as China's zero tariff and India's Duty Free and Quota Free privileges. Yet in 2017, the non-iron ore economy grew by only 3.6%, slower than the 4.3% growth in 2016.⁴⁵ Moreover, the shortage of skilled labor, inadequate infrastructure, uncertain legal system, and high level of corruption are among the obstacles investors face.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FROM THE US AFRICA GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

Sierra Leone joined AGOA in 2003, which was recently extended until 2025. However, the country has not taken full advantage of duty-free exports due to lack of proper certification and documentation.⁴⁶ Sierra Leone has a comparative advantage given its vast arable land suitable for the cultivation of a variety of crops that could be useful to diversify the economy. As a regional market link, AGOA has the potential to develop small and medium enterprises (SMEs), create more jobs and increase foreign currency earnings for Sierra Leone, according to several KIIs.

41 African Development Bank, OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2009). [African Economic Outlook 2009: Country Notes: Volumes 1 and 2](#). OECD Publishing. pp. 561-562.

42 Bureau of Labor Statistics. Other services. <https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/jag81.htm>

43 UNCTAD. (2018). *World Investment Report* using global standard classifications.

44 AGOA was created in 2000 but as of late 2017 Sierra Leonean businesses had still not taken advantage of this free trade agreement due to problems of certification and documentation. The agreement is broad and allows duty free import to the U.S. of textiles, foodstuffs and a wide range of processed goods. (www.agoa.info, July 2017). In 2017 the US imported \$47 million of goods from Sierra Leone of which \$30 million was precious metals and stone, \$19 million of iron ore (\$8 million) and machinery and instruments (\$5 million) which are not manufactured goods of Sierra Leone origin.

45 African Development Bank. (2017). *Africa Economic Outlook and World Bank Sierra Leone Overview* (2018). <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/sierra-leone/sierra-leone>

46 AGOA. (2017). *Sierra Leone: Trade Opportunities Opened with the U.S.* <https://agoa.info/news/article/15261-sierra-leone-trade-opportunities-opened-with-the-us.html>.

According to the 2019 AGOA strategy report, Sierra Leone export volumes to the US and other AGOA countries are low. This is driven by several demand and supply-side challenges. As noted by Ayodele Wake Williams, AGOA Sierra Leone Coordinator, “Sierra Leone has a great potential; hence, SMEs need support with soft skills training, capacity building, agriculture tools and machineries, storage facilities and access to finance with low interest rate.”

Currently, most of the country’s exports are extractive – minerals, oils and gasses, and raw agricultural products. While they create value for Sierra Leone, they typically require few skills of Sierra Leonians. However, other products are created in Sierra Leone that find markets abroad. For example, the US represents only 4.83% of Sierra Leone’s export market. While China, Belgium, Romania, and the Netherlands are all higher at 37.83%, 18.40%, 9.49% and 5.2% respectively, mostly exporting iron ore to China, diamonds to Belgium, aluminum ore to Romania and cocoa beans to the Netherlands. The top goods exported to the US, beyond extractives, include an array of higher-complexity commodities, which are too niche to be specified under their own category (9.39%), honey (6.26%), metal clasps and buckles (5.96%), measurement instruments (5.13%), and medical instruments (4.40%). Unfortunately, given limited data collection in Sierra Leone, and challenges around tracking goods flow, the research team was unable to link which products came from which counties, and how those then passed onto global markets. Nevertheless, these are important to note, as a project implemented to target such goods could tap into an existing market Sierra Leone is known for.

Supply-side challenges exist that can make export of some of these goods difficult, including inadequate access to electricity, poor access to finance, limited or damaged road infrastructure, few storage facilities and access to land on which to develop goods.⁴⁷ Challenges in terms of understanding market demand include lack of information and knowledge on quality, standards, packaging, and labeling requirements, especially for those products exported to the U.S. During the KIIs, SMEs noted that they lack clear information on AGOA and the export process required. In order to promote AGOA and increase the export capacity, several trainings have been conducted, specifically focusing on quality, standards, labeling and requirements for the U.S. market. While one contact did note that information on AGOA could be made available via the US Embassy, this was not a process which many Sierra Leoneans would know to follow, or physically be able to, given the travel challenges rural communities and youth face.

CONTEXT FOR SMES

While opportunities are growing, Sierra Leone remains a challenging environment for SMEs to navigate, particularly around access to finance, investment, skills, and market information. In a 2017 survey, many agribusiness investors indicated⁴⁸ that they had to downsize, abandon planned operations, or totally withdraw their investments. The main investor concerns were the government’s annual Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) fees and import and export procedures. A 2017 agribusiness diagnostic⁴⁹ showed that agro-processing SMEs generally lack access to stable markets. The business development service providers that do serve them have basic business training materials but lack key information and experience with training offerings, rarely going beyond basic business plans and start-up advice. Highly unstable markets for agricultural commodities have also led to unpredictability for inputs for agro-processing SMEs.

47 AGOA. (2019). *Sierra Leone AGOA Response Strategy Paper*.

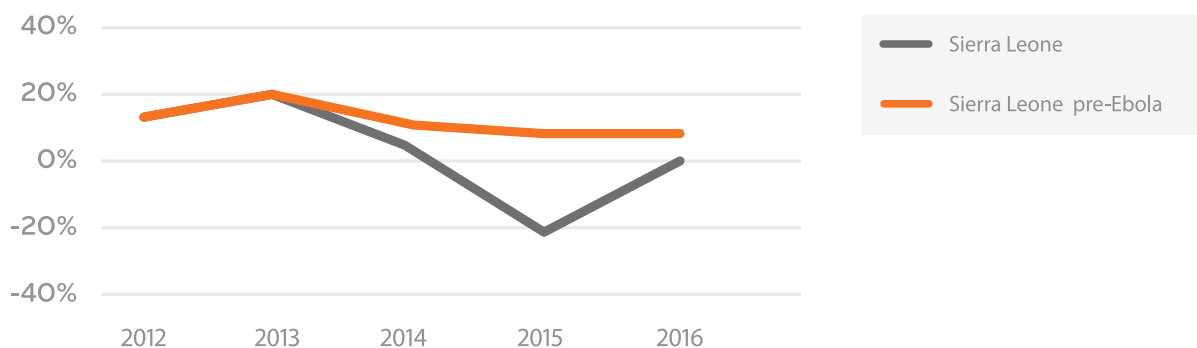
48 This finding is based on the Agribusiness Investors Forum, SLIEPA, May 2017 and a 2017 survey of 13 large foreign and domestic agribusiness investors and seven business intermediaries.

49 World Bank. (2017). *SLIEPA Capacity Needs Assessment for Aftercare in Agribusiness*.

Impact of Ebola on GDP

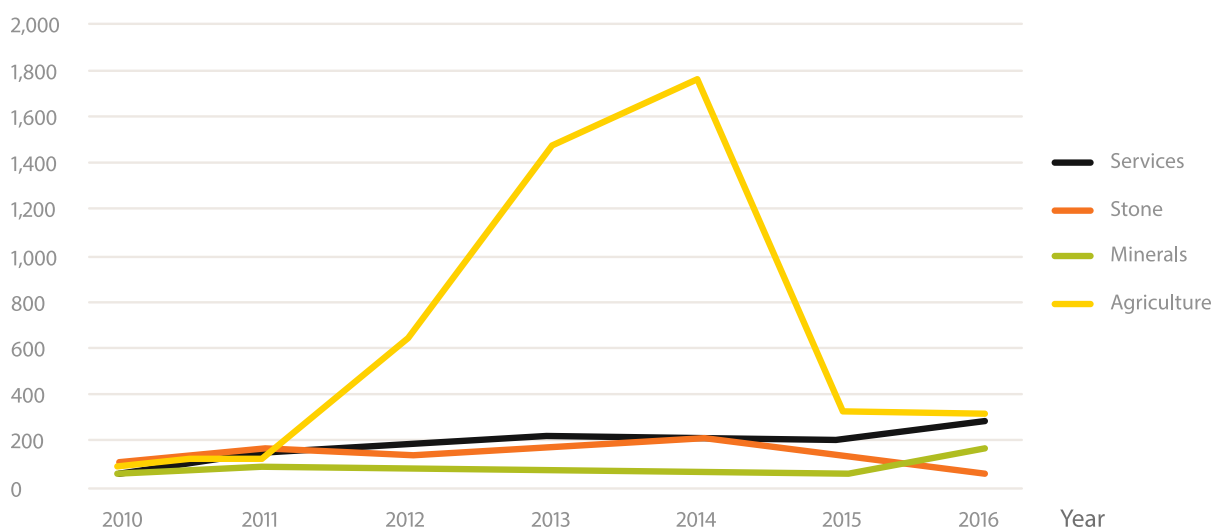
In spite of challenges, in 2014 Sierra Leone had been on its way to a post-civil war economic recovery. However, the crisis caused by the spread of Ebola and a dependence on iron ore dramatically undercut this growth. One commonly cited statistic is that Sierra Leone's GDP growth shrank by 21.5% in 2015. In reality, this was caused by Ebola as well as the collapse of the international Iron ore market.⁵⁰ As one World Bank study showed (in Figure 14 below, in red), in projections of preliminary 2014 data, the country's GDP was set to decrease only slightly, while remaining positive. In reality, GDP performance during this period was negative through 2016.

Figure 14: Sierra Leone Impact of Ebola on GDP (%)



Source: World Bank 2016

Figure 15: Top Four Sierra Leone Export Groups for 2010 - 2016 WITH Iron Ore⁵¹

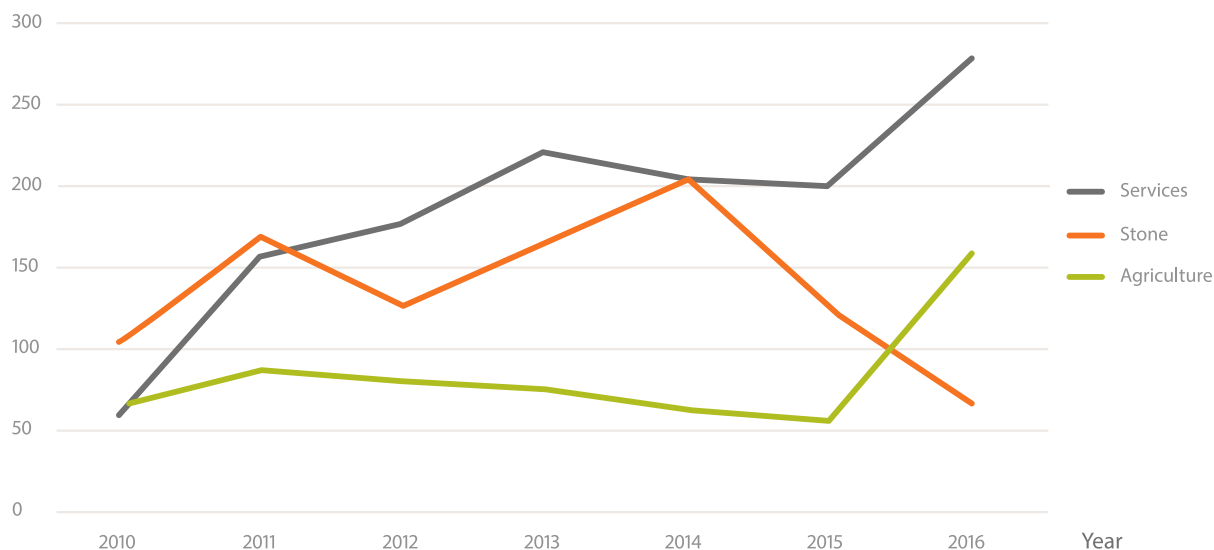


50 World Bank. (2016). "2014-2015 West Africa Ebola Crisis: Impact Update". Accessed at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/macroeconomics/publication/2014-2015-west-africa-ebola-crisis-impact-update>

51 Center for International Development at Harvard University. (2010). *The Atlas of Economic Complexity*. <http://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/explore/?country=196&partner=undefined&product=undefined&productClass=HS&startYear=undefined&target=Product&year=2010>

The figure on the previous page shows a drastic fall in minerals exports in 2015, an adverse impact of two severe shocks: the lingering effects of the Ebola epidemic and the collapse of iron ore prices in 2014. When looking at the impact of Ebola in terms of trade data, the outsized impact of the collapse of iron also became apparent. Below is the same graph, but without the influence of Iron Ore:

Figure 16: Top Three Sierra Leone Export Groups for 2010 - 2016 WITHOUT Iron Ore



Notes: Stone include Diamonds and precious metals; Minerals include iron ores; Services include travel and tourism; and Agriculture include cocoa beans, starches, whole fish, coffee (not roasted), pears

The above figure illustrates more clearly how other areas of export fell after the Ebola crisis. As the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) notes, "The impact of Ebola on Travel & Tourism was immediate for Sierra Leone with tourist arrivals down by 50% from 2013 to 2014. It is estimated that Sierra Leone 'lost' over \$67 million ... equal to 16% of total economy GDP."⁵²

Klls offered a more detailed view of the impact from Ebola. As one respondent noted, typical shop locations faced fewer sales, while areas with proximity to foreigners or where money was being spent to treat Ebola saw an uptick in business. Data backs up the view that spending by international aid did help recover some of the GDP growth lost due to Ebola - up to 10% in the case of Sierra Leone.⁵³ Nonetheless the impact on employed or self-employed people was significant: "9,000 wage workers and 170,000 self-employed workers outside of agriculture" were no longer working as a result.⁵⁴

With the Ebola crisis now behind it, Sierra Leone has seen an economic resurgence, particularly in the area of foreign direct investment, which now supersedes the amount just prior to the onset of the crisis, reaching a new high of \$560 million in 2017.⁵⁵ Moreover, as the effects of Ebola have subsided, more Sierra Leoneans have

52 World Travel and Tourism Council. (2018). *Impact of the Ebola Epidemic on Travel & Tourism*. <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/2018/impact-of-the-ebola-epidemic-on-travel-and-tourism.pdf>

53, 54 World Bank. 2016. "2014-2015 West Africa Ebola Crisis: Impact Update." <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/macroeconomics/publication/2014-2015-west-africa-ebola-crisis-impact-update>

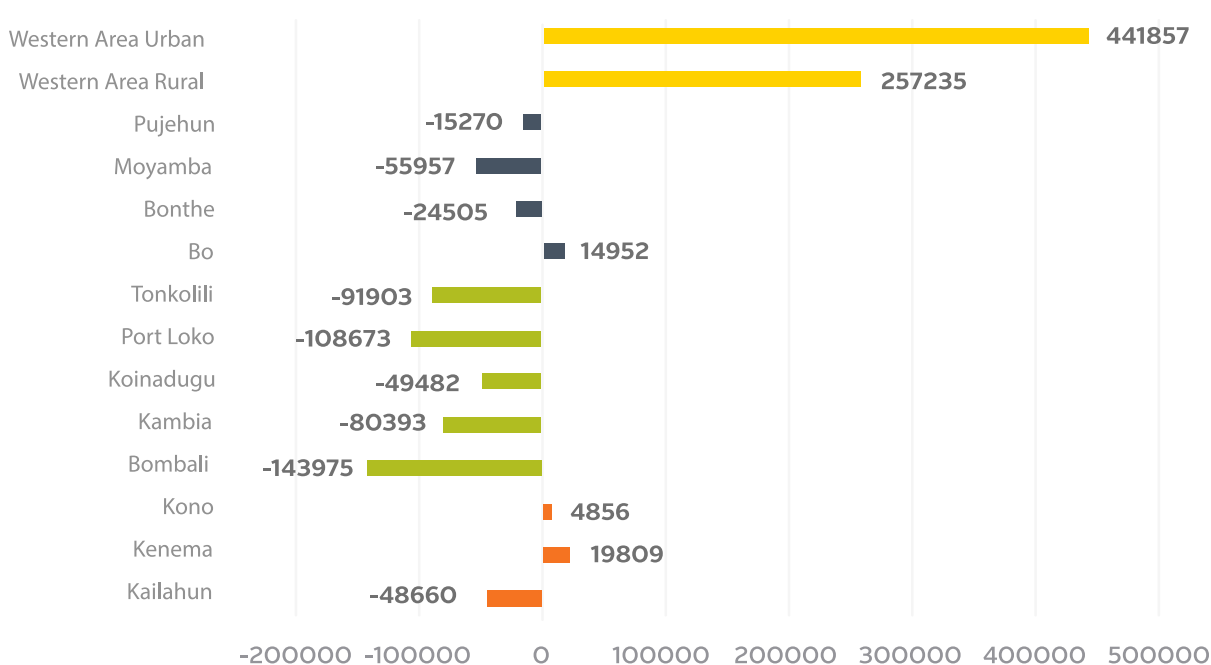
55 Santander Trade Portal "Sierra Leone: Foreign Investment". Accessed at: <https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/establish-overseas/sierra-leone/investing-3>

returned to work, and major commodities like iron have begun to recover as an export product. However, the transition to the new government has also affected some aspects of the economy. According to KIIs, changes in new government spending post-election have affected government payments and disbursements of funds due to a review and audit of all government mining contracts, ministry departments and government agencies.

Urban Migration

Another factor influencing the economic opportunities for AGYW has been the process of urbanization. Since the civil war and aftermath of Ebola, Sierra Leone has experienced extensive rural-urban migration, with an annual urban population growth rate of 3.11% and annual rural population growth rate stagnating to 1.55%.⁵⁶ Figure 17 below shows 2015 net migration by the district of residence. The western urban and rural areas show a migratory surplus, while all other districts had negative migratory balances, except in Bo, Kono, the largest diamond producer, and Kenema, the second largest city in Sierra Leone.⁵⁷

Figure 17: Net Migration by District of Residence (2015)



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015 Population and Housing Census

KIIs noted several reasons also contribute to the major factors driving rural-urban migration. These include extreme poverty, severe declines in agriculture, environmental changes (recurring natural disasters, particularly flooding, landslides and mudslides) and, most importantly, lack of adequate public services, such as access to education, healthcare, and electricity. The FGD in Bo, Kenema, Kono and Port Loko also stressed a lack of formal job opportunities and restricted access to training institutions in their community. A cross-cutting challenge, as identified by FGD participants as well as KIIs with employers and ministry officials, was a

56 Trading Economics. Sierra Leone Rural Population. <https://tradingeconomics.com/sierra-leone/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html>

57 Statistics Sierra Leone. (2017). Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census. *Thematic Report on Migration and Urbanization*. https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/Census/2015/sl_2015_phc_thematic_report_on_migration_and_urbanization.pdf

"THERE ARE NO TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN THIS COMMUNITY. PEOPLE WHO WANT TO LEARN A TRADE OR SKILL HAVE TO GO OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY TO ACCESS THE INSTITUTION. ... GRADUATES FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN THE NEIGHBORING COMMUNITY CAN EITHER SET UP THEIR BUSINESS OR SEEK A JOB IN THE CITY" - FGD PARTICIPANT IN GIEMA VILLAGE, BO DISTRICT

lack of job opportunities in the rural areas. For example, many note there is little extra (liquid) money in micro and small businesses in rural areas, meaning money won't be spent on hiring. One key informant referred to a recent study that 70% of Keke (three wheeled cart) drivers are not from Freetown – instead they come from rural areas and see Keke driving as a way to make quick money. Additionally, financial challenges that have led to the closure of mines and larger commercial agriculture firms has further cut down on possible jobs. With no middle class that might start businesses or hire in rural areas, people migrate to urban centers. Moreover, with inflation on the rise for basic goods, it is increasingly necessary for young people to find employment or some form of regular payment that is large enough to cover basic costs. According to the IMF, inflation has more than doubled since the Ebola crisis, to almost 20% in 2017.⁵⁸ Most companies have closed, leading to a higher rate of job loss. To secure a formal job in the rural areas, basic education, skills, and training are necessary; however, those basic services are inaccessible by rural AGYW. A KII noted, "Nothing is attractive for youth in the rural areas. It's hard for them to find food during the rainy season, as the roads are terrible, so they migrate to the city."

Many young people migrate to urban areas, leaving small farming communities, to engage in a less physically demanding economic activity such as selling food products on the streets or driving "Kekes."⁵⁹ Perceptions of agriculture as unattractive and unprofitable further contribute to this migration.

KIIs noted that agriculture and rural development have the potential to address the root causes of migration, including unemployment and food insecurity. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), scaling up the support to smallholder family members and creating alternative and sustainable livelihood options in rural areas, with a special focus on women and youth, is fundamental to addressing the root causes of rural distress migration.⁶⁰

WHERE ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES?

Sierra Leone is growing has a potential for investment and economic expansion despite the challenges it has faced. As part of the approach to understanding opportunities for AGYW, this report will now explore other factors that are generating the economic demand for employment and new enterprises. Grounding an examination of opportunities in Sierra Leone's demand means that there is a greater likelihood of sustainability and growth of employment or self-employment after the conclusion of a project or in the face of local disruptions or shocks to AGYW's lives.

58 EIU Digital Solutions. (2017) . "Sierra Leone." Inflation Emerges as Potential Drag on Growth, Accessed on 28 July 2017 at: [country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=285720812&Country=Sierra Leone&topic=Economy&subtopic=Forecast&subsubtopic=Inflation](http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=285720812&Country=Sierra%20Leone&topic=Economy&subtopic=Forecast&subsubtopic=Inflation).

59 'Kekes' are three wheeled motorized auto-rickshaws used for transporting people and goods, through negotiated fairs.

60 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Migration Agriculture and Rural Development*. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6064e.pdf>

TRADE SHARE MATRIX FOR SIERRA LEONE

While Sierra Leone faces economic challenges, including a substantial trade deficit, it is important to recognize the country's economic prospects. Data that stem from export or import flows, which are closely tracked, can shed some light on where individuals, often AGYW, can find work or create their own livelihood opportunities. This does not mean that AGYW will necessarily work directly in exports or import substituting industries, but that there is money flowing into industries which in turn create adjacent economic opportunities. Also, in data-poor environments like Sierra Leone, the relative availability of highly detailed sub-sectoral data regarding trade is an excellent indicator of overall economic dynamism or lack thereof.

TRADE BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

In considering growth potential, both the volume and performance of exports emerged as critical criteria in the sector selection evaluation. It is necessary to assess whether exports have grown only because the market size has grown or if market shares have indeed expanded. Therefore, it is important to combine the value of exports with patterns of market behavior.

One tool to analyze the dynamic behavior of recent trade is the trade share matrix.⁶¹ The matrix categorizes exports into two dimensions: (1) on the x-axis, the annual growth rate of the world market for a particular product during a given time period; and (2) on the y-axis, the annual growth rate of Sierra Leone's exports of the same product over the same time period. The size of each bubble indicates the US dollar value of exports in 2017.

Quadrant + + indicates that both the world market and the country's exports are growing faster than average; this corresponds to the **"stars"** quadrant in the "Boston Consulting Group" (BCG) Matrix.

Quadrant + - indicates that world markets are growing faster than average, but the country's exports are growing slower than average (or shrinking); this corresponds to the **"opportunities"** quadrant in the BCG Matrix.

Quadrant - - indicates that the world market and the country's exports are growing slower than average (or shrinking); this corresponds to the **"challenges"** quadrant in the BCG Matrix.

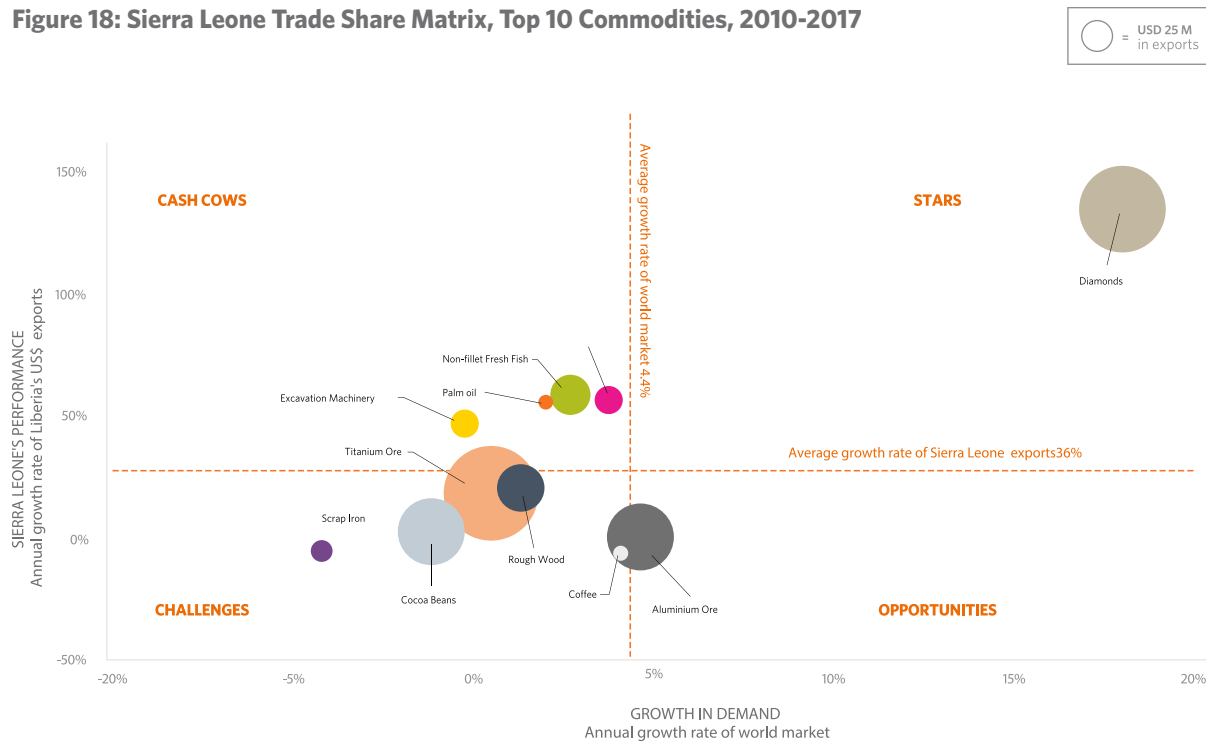
Quadrant - + indicates that the world market is growing slower than average (or shrinking), but the country's exports are growing faster than average; this corresponds to the **"cash cows"** quadrant in the BCG Matrix.

Trade Share Matrix



61 The trade share, or Bethesda, matrix is an adaptation of the venerable Boston matrix originally introduced by the Boston Consulting Group for the analysis of firm-level strategy. For a compact and accessible treatment of the strategic implications of the Boston matrix, see Koch, R., (2009). *The Financial Times Guide to Strategy. How to Create and Deliver a Useful Strategy*. 3rd edition. London. The trade share matrix has a similar strategic dimension but is used here primarily as a predictive device.

Figure 18: Sierra Leone Trade Share Matrix, Top 10 Commodities, 2010-2017



Source: FHI360 calculations based on export data from MIT Observatory of Economic Complexity & UN Comtrade.

The resulting Sierra Leone trade share matrix, which covers the top 12 export goods,⁶² outlines the dynamic behavior of trade in Sierra Leone relative to the world (see Figure 18), showing annualized (compounded annual) growth rates over the period 2010-2017, which is the most recent data available. In order to provide the “relative” context to optimize the four quadrant titles, a frame showing the average growth of Sierra Leone’s exports (parallel to the x-axis) and the average growth of the world market (parallel to the y-axis) has been added with red dotted lines. In essence, these red lines are the relevant frame to evaluate the dynamism of an export product. A product that happened to be located right at the center of the frame (4.4% growth in demand worldwide, and 36.1% growth in Sierra Leone’s exports) would be considered completely ‘unremarkable’ in the context of Sierra Leone’s exports.

- Sierra Leone’s ‘stars’ quadrant, where Sierra Leone’s growth is above average in markets that are also growing at an above average rate, includes only diamonds.
- The “cash cows” quadrant, indicating where Sierra Leone’s performance is strong in a relatively weak market, includes a rapidly fading market in excavation machinery, palm oil, non-fillet frozen, titanium ore, and sawn food. In particular, sawn wood and frozen fish are growing at an average rate and possibly represent export sectors that AGYW can be involved in.

62 These are the top 12 out of 462 products in the Harmonized System (HS) codes at the 4-digit level as reported by UN Comtrade and cleaned by [CEPII](#).

- The “opportunities” quadrant, where the global market is growing faster than average but Sierra Leone’s export growth rate is below average, contains aluminum ore.
- Finally, the products found in the “challenges” quadrant, where both the global market and Sierra Leone’s exports are both growing slower than average, includes cocoa beans, coffee, rough wood and scrap iron. Even though, they fall under the “challenges” quadrant, there’s still potential opportunity for AGYWs in these export sectors, since the niches where AGYWs participate may not be those which dominate the trade statistics for that entire product category.⁶³

In the final analysis, we have filtered out the sectors where we don’t see realistic possibilities for job generation for the target group, and we selected potential sectors out of the top 20 export products.

Table 5: Growth Rate of Sierra Leone’s Top 12 Exports in 2017*

Commodity	EXPORTS (Thousands of US \$)		Growth Rate
	2014	2017	CAGR
Iron Ore	5	211463	356%
Titanium Ore	27455	140907	26%
Diamonds	143	104397	156%
Cocoa Beans	40458	72587	9%
Aluminum Ore	46331	68679	6%
Rough Wood	5054	30873	30%
Non-fillet Frozen Fish	546	23880	72%
Excavation Machinery	527	13259	59%
Sawn Wood	334	13207	69%
Scrap Iron	9019	9112	0%
Coffee	5293	4681	-9%
Palm Oil	95	3623	140%

*Coffee and Palm oil are included in the top 12 exports to reflect potential growth sectors and opportunities for AGYW

Source: MIT Observatory of Economic Complexity & UN Comtrade.

63 For example, while the global coffee industry as a whole is growing slightly slower than the growth rate of all exports worldwide, and Sierra Leone’s exports haven’t grown at all during this period, the market for premium Arabica coffee is growing faster and represents an excellent opportunity.

PRODUCT SPACE

Another way of identifying areas of potential economic areas of growth is through the use of the product space map. This tool differs, in that it links how difficult it is to create products, or their complexity, with the revealed comparative advantage (RCA) a country like Sierra Leone has in producing such products. A country with that comparative advantage means that their efficiency in production is higher, and are more likely to find buyers, thus driving growth in the sector.

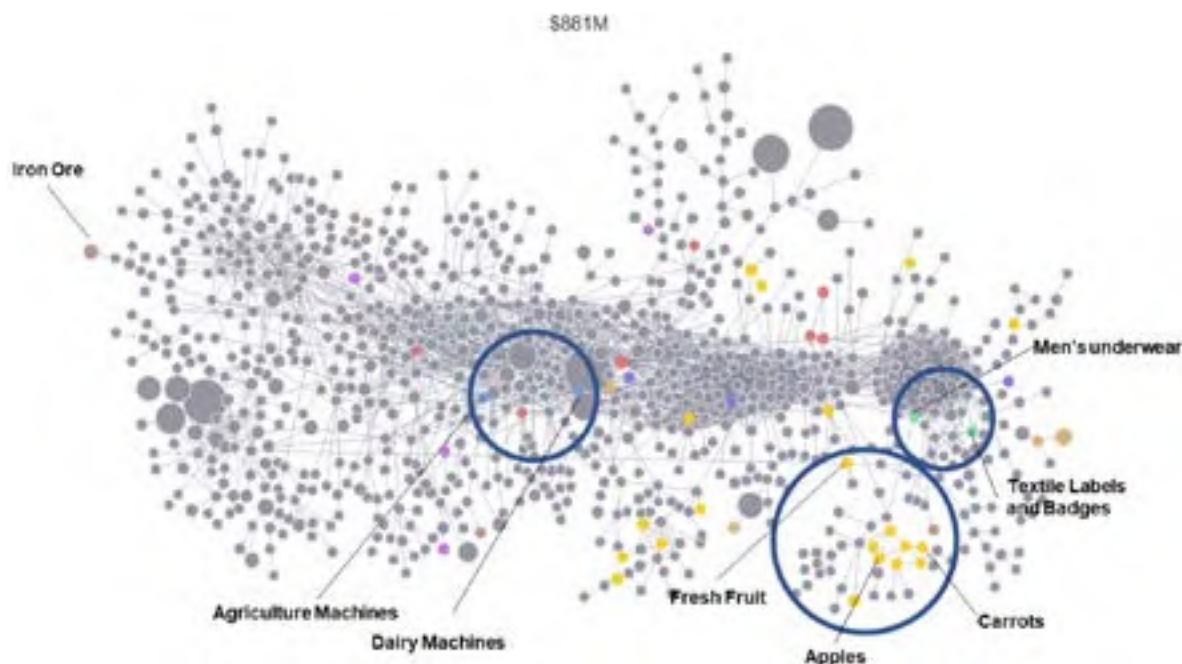
Goods that Sierra Leone exports are not only important for the currency they bring in and the economic growth they generate, but also for how those goods link back to skills requirements and abilities of people within the country. The following tool – the Product Space – is a visual way of representing the network that connects all traded goods in terms of the complexity of skill needed to make them. Specifically, this complexity indicates “a measure of the knowledge in a society that gets translated into the products it makes.”⁶⁴ Products towards the center of the web require more complex skills and abilities, while those on the periphery require less. Those with a color indicate a revealed comparative advantage for Sierra Leone, which means that the country currently exports more than its “fair share” of that product globally given the total value of Sierra Leone’s exports. Moreover, for those with a color, and closer to other products in the center, there is great potential to create spillovers in terms of skills and abilities, thus potentially driving opportunities for greater economic complexity and growth.

Understanding what goods Sierra Leone exports that have a high RCA matters as they essentially serve as a map of economic complexity at the national level. This can allow policymakers and implementers to look at the current export basket in the country and identify the products that, if it diversified into them, might send the country onto its optimal path of greater economic complexity and, therefore, GDP growth. They can then create programs to diversify industries to capitalize on potential linkages, or invest in already heavily linked sectors. For Sierra Leone, one can see that stronger clusters exist for certain agricultural goods. This can be expected given the role that agriculture plays in the country’s economy.

The Product Space for Sierra Leone also indicates there are no other major clusters. These would be areas where greater congregation of skills allows for easier entry of a product into production in Sierra Leone. This makes sense given the economic challenges Sierra Leone has faced, and its limited ability to produce more complex goods or those that require high skills. However, potential clusters appear to be taking root, as seen in agricultural goods such as fresh fruit. Textiles, which are more complex, and typically require higher skills, as well as skills that can be transferred to other sectors, also are beginning to exhibit potential for a cluster. In contrast, products that do well in terms of exports, seen on the far right, don’t contribute as much as in the past, and are far to the periphery of the figure. This means that production of these goods requires few skills from workers, and are uncomplex, meaning there is little likelihood participants in that industry would easily be able to contribute to others.

64 OECD. (2016). Economic Complexity, Institutions, and Income Inequality. <http://oecdinsights.org/2016/09/20/economic-complexity-institutions-and-income-inequality/>

Figure 19: Sierra Leone's Product Space Analysis



Source: Atlas of Economic Complexity, Harvard

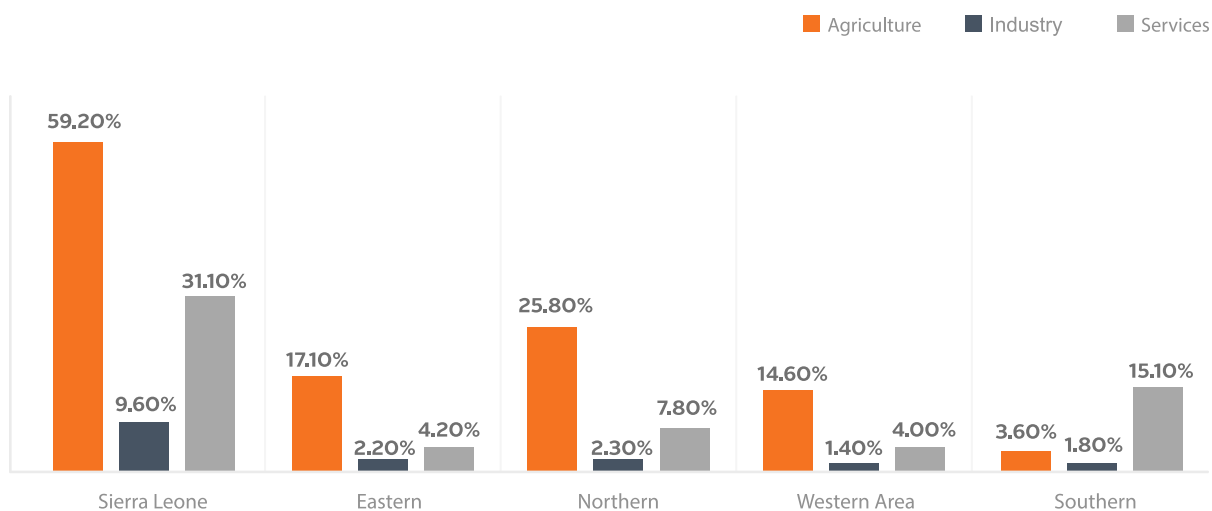
LABOR MARKET EMPLOYMENT CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES⁶⁵

While some major sectors can generate opportunities, most remain informal, meaning that productivity or growth prospects could remain low. Moreover, most workers are situated in the agricultural sector. 59% of the population is self-employed in agriculture (including forestry and fishing, animal production and crop farming). The highest employment rates are in rural areas where subsistence agriculture absorbs the most labor. As discussed in a later section on pathways to employment, this sector offers the greatest livelihoods growth opportunities. The best educated also have high employment rates, but they represent a tiny fraction of the total population.

As a result of the above situation, Sierra Leone possesses few large-scale formal employers. 31% of the population works in non-farm household enterprises that can act both as catalysts for new AGYW start-ups and as micro-businesses with the potential to grow and absorb AGYW into their enterprises. These enterprises provide the second largest source of jobs in the country after agriculture and a greater share of non-farm labor is female (63.8%). However, women-owned enterprises are less likely to hire outside labor (1.6% vs. 5.4%).⁶⁶ Female-owned enterprises hire an average of 0.08 workers vs. 0.34 workers in male-owned enterprises.

⁶⁵ The official ILO definition of "employment" is "all those of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit." Under-employment is defined by the ILO as "when the working time of persons in employment is insufficient in relation to alternative employment situations."

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Figure 20: Economic Activity by Sector and Region

It is important to emphasize the role that the informal sector can nonetheless play in improving economic prospects for AGYW. In a 2014 World Bank labor force survey, despite large earnings gaps between those with higher education and those with little or none, and between the genders, the World Bank labor market survey found that “employment is more closely associated with [reduced] income poverty than skills, job type, sector of activity or even earnings while employed.”⁶⁷ Put another way, having any job is the greatest contributor to reducing poverty.

In short, any income-generating activity helps reduce poverty even if disparities within and across households remain high. Of course, aligning those activities with market demand can spur income growth and make them more sustainable.

Table 6: Findings from World Bank Labor Force Survey, 2014

	Agricultural self-employment (%)	Non-agricultural self-employment (%)	Wage employment (%)
Overall	59.2	31.3	9.5
Youth	58.8	31.9	9.3
Men	59.7	24.8	15.5
Women	58.7	36.8	4.5
No school	69.8	27.7	2.5

67 Ibid, p. xvi.

	Agricultural self-employment (%)	Non-agricultural self-employment (%)	Wage employment (%)
Incomplete primary	52.4	40.4	7.2
Completed primary	47.8	41.5	10.7
Completed lower sec.	35.0	44.8	20.2
Completed upper sec.	21.8	36.9	41.4
Tech degrees + certify	9.0	17.0	74.1
Tertiary degree	0.0	10.3	89.7

*Findings from the Sierra Leone Labor Force Survey (World Bank: 2014), p. 12.

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS WITH POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT AGYW-OWNED MICRO AND SMALL ENTERPRISES

As noted in a previous section, policies and regulations can support the wellbeing and livelihoods of AGYW in Sierra Leone but are also the source of challenges as it impacts the labor market and AGYW broadly. The report also noted key considerations here, which can change policy environment expectations. During the data collection the team learned of at least one policy effort underway in Sierra Leone that may be of use to improving opportunities for AGYW.

The “Made in Sierra Leone” brand was launched in 2017 as an effort by the Ministries of Finance and Economic Development; Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Security; Fisheries and Marine Resources; and Tourism and Cultural Affairs.⁶⁸ The implementation of the brand has been part of a large effort to improve the business enabling environment for local Sierra Leonean firms. This strengthening effort came from the Sierra Leone Local Content Act of 2016⁶⁹ that created a similarly named agency – the Sierra Leone Local Content Agency (SLLCA). SLLCA in turn services a broader platform through which local Sierra Leonean businesses can respond to government tenders with goods or services made in Sierra Leone.

The policy and implementation are still relatively new, meaning there are several challenges that remain. First, the act does not lay out specific details of what constitutes a ‘Sierra Leonean’ product. Second, for many small businesses, information on the process one goes through to be able to mark goods with this brand is not widely circulated, and often requires a presence in Freetown in order to meet with relevant representatives.

68 Sierra Leone Investment & Export Promotion Agency: Improving Investment and Facilitating Export. (December 2017). “Ministry of Trade and Industry Champions launch of Made – In – Sierra Leone Brand.” Accessed on 6 June 2019 at: <http://sliempa.org/ministry-of-trade-and-industry-champions-launch-of-made-in-sierra-leone-brand/>

69 Government of Sierra Leone. (March 2016). “The Sierra Leone Local Content Agency Act.” Accessed on 6 June 2019 at: <http://localcontent.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Local-Content-Agency-Act-2016.pdf>

5

Opportunity Sectors for AGYW Employment

This following section will provide a brief overview of how other projects have addressed livelihood or employment opportunities for AGYW. This is in no way an exhaustive list, but provides some comparative examples of approaches that build on learning from other projects and have demonstrated success in creating opportunities for AGYW and, more broadly, Sierra Leonean youth.

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS GAP ANALYSIS

The research team encountered numerous projects in Sierra Leone that demonstrated areas of potential overlap with BRAC ELA programing goals or geographies. Five of these have been noted below in terms of geographic overlap and include a summary of programmatic details about each operation. Many of these programs are focused on promoting and/or developing SMEs and creating market linkages. While none was as focused as BRAC ELA on the livelihoods of AGYW, there are potential synergies and opportunities for a facilitated engagement that would allow for continued support of BRAC ELA participants.

Figure 21: Program Mapping

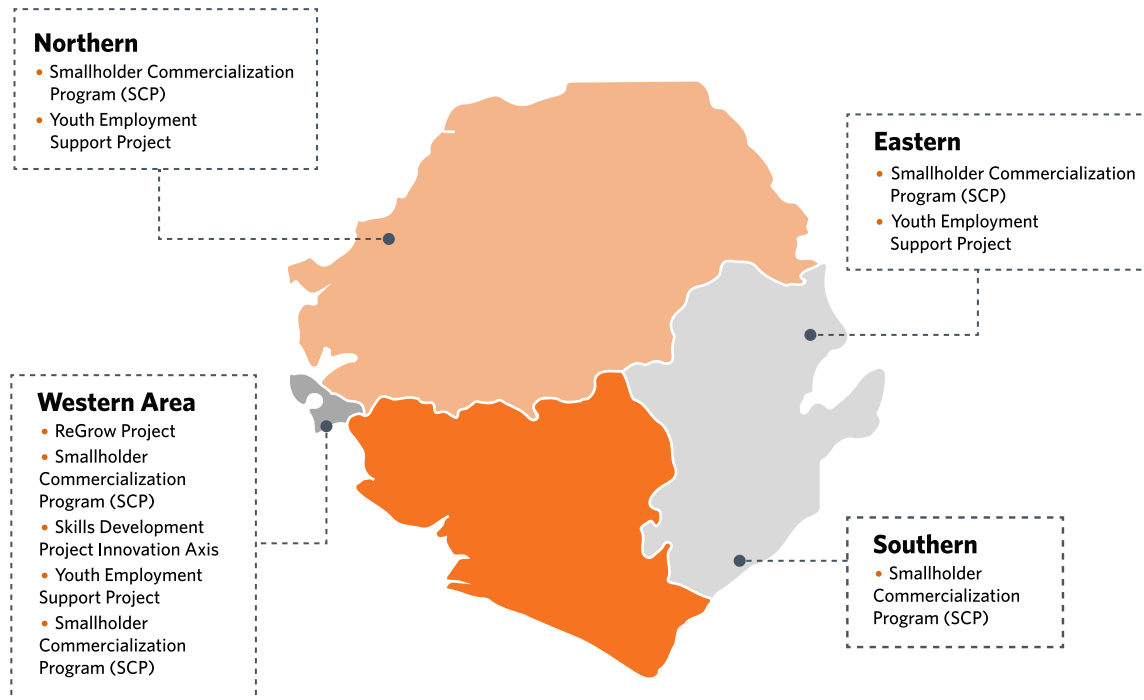


Table 7: GoSL and Donor Supported Programs in Sierra Leone Focusing on Youth and AGYW

Project	Duration	County	Project Description
<p>ReGrow West Africa in Sierra Leone</p> <p>Funder: USAID and Chevron</p> <p>Implementer: ReSolve</p>	2016 - 2018	Freetown	ReGrow West Africa was organized to promote post-Ebola economic recovery and long-term economic development in Sierra Leone. Through this program, thirty SMEs completed a one-year business development and training program. ReGrow West Africa supported impact enterprises with significant positive socio-economic or environmental impacts on their local communities.
<p>Smallholder Commercialisation Program (SCP)</p> <p>Supervising Entity: IFAD</p> <p>Implementer: Global Agriculture & Food Security Program (GAFSP)</p>	February 18, 2016 - November 30, 2021	Bo, Bombali, Koinadugu, Kono, Kenema, Kailahun, Moyamba, Pujehun, Bonthe, Port Loko Western Urban, Western Rural, Kambia, Tonkolili	The SCP is a flagship sector program aimed at empowering the rural poor to increase their food security and income on a sustainable basis, leading to long-term economic development and poverty reduction. It focused on the intensification, diversification, and commercialization of smallholder agriculture through improving value-addition and access to marketing. The project provides capacity building to extension workers and farmers utilizing Farmer Field Schools, strengthening Agro-business centers (ABCs) that serve the functions of bulking center, inputs and outputs marketing, equipment renting, communication and technical advisory services for production and processing. It also provides on-farm water management including the construction of carefully planned structures such as peripheral canals, inlet and outlet structures, etc. that contributes towards perennial Inland Valley Swamps (IVS) rehabilitation, as well as strengthening of IVS associations to ensure the maintenance of the rehabilitated structures, and the development of youth contractors to carry out IVS development services. Finally, the project also strengthens Financial Service Associations and Community Banks to increase access to affordable financial services.
<p>Skills Development Project</p> <p>Funder: World Bank</p> <p>Implementer: Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Technical and Higher Education</p>	September 25, 2018 - October 31, 2023	Freetown	The Development Objective of the Skills Development Project for Sierra Leone is to increase access to demand-led skills training and build the foundations for a demand-led skills development system in Sierra Leone. It has two components. First component, Skills Development Fund (SDF) aims to increase access to demand-led skills upgrading in Sierra Leone. The SDF supports skills demand and supply through two corresponding windows: (a) Window 1 targets selected training institutions that wish to improve the relevance and quality of their training programs and to introduce new short-term courses for out of school unemployed and underemployed youth, with a focus on girls; (b) Window 2 targets businesses in the productive sectors (agriculture/agro-processing, fisheries, mining/extractives, construction, and tourism) that need to address the skills gaps to expand their production and markets or to upgrade their production process to climb higher up the value chain. Skills upgrading initiatives to be supported by the SDF will be selected through a competitive process based on the merit and the labor market relevance of the initiative.

Project	Duration	County	Project Description
Innovation Axis Funder: Various funders	Active	Freetown	Innovation Axis is an incubator and accelerator combined with a co-working space and networking hub, to build a vibrant Entrepreneurial Ecosystem that will support disruptive, high-growth and value creating entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone With sister organizations GEN SL and Innovation SL, innovations Axis forms a community harnessing the creativity, talents and resources of diverse stakeholders to birth, incubate and scale up unlikely technological solutions to development issues with high impact.
Youth Employment Support Project Funder: World Bank Administered by Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) Implementer: Youth Secretariat (YS) and National Youth Commission (NYC)	June 30, 2010 - June 30, 2015	All 14 districts	The objective of the Youth Employment Support Project for Sierra Leone is to increase short term employment opportunities and to improve employability of targeted youth.

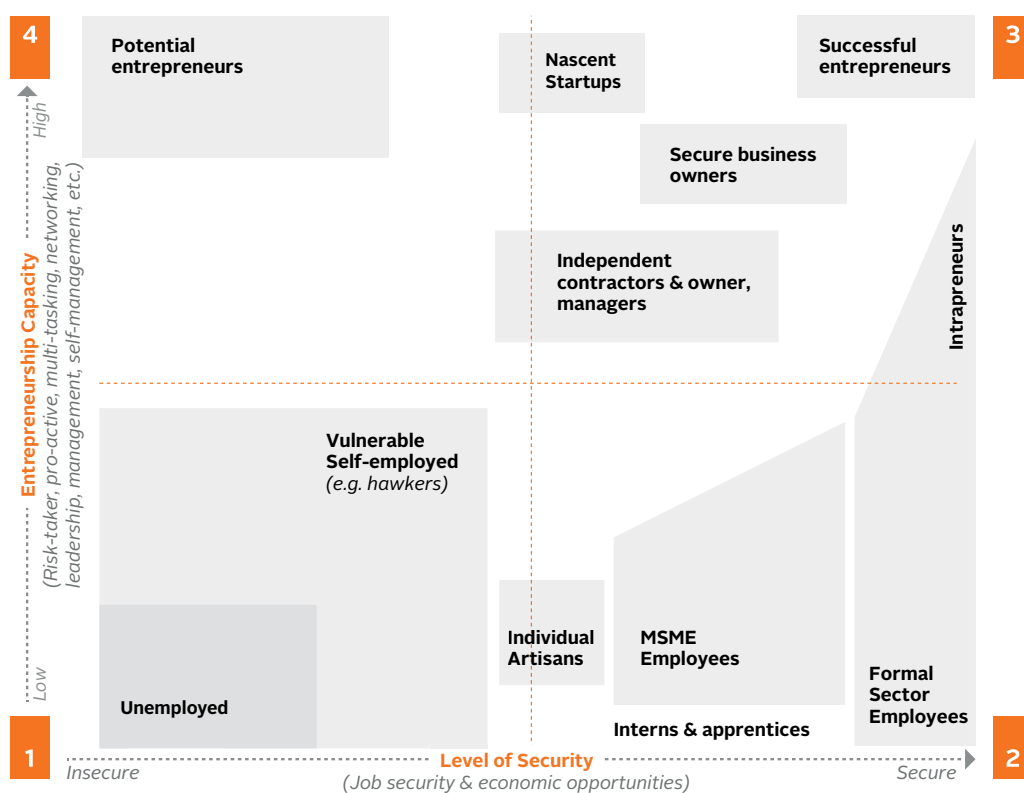
Source: all details provided directly through KIs or via secondary source data collection.

POCKETS OF GROWTH

Sierra Leone has large anchor industrial sectors that have traditionally dominated its GDP; large formal sector actors do not provide a major source of employment in Sierra Leone. In communities – at the village, town, or district level – small businesses exist, maintaining livelihoods for their owners and sometimes employees, or even growing when the opportunity arises. These small businesses exist because of the ability of entrepreneurs and self-employed individuals to identify opportunities at this local level, and also to engage with larger or more-developed firms. Because official data does not exist to track their existence, and many are informal anyway, identifying them and understanding their presence in a district does often require a more intensive study in the region. In these pocket areas, growth has occurred and has potential to enable AGYW-owned businesses to find a stable local market or offers opportunities for AGYW to find employment within a local community.

The pockets of growth concept are laid out in Figure 22 below, illustrating how individuals and firms can move up pathways in terms of their overall economic security and ability to perform entrepreneurially.

Figure 22: Sierra Leone Pathways to Employment



The boxes represent different groups of Sierra Leone AGYW along the pathway (size is intended to roughly illustrate population size but should not be interpreted as proportional, due to data limitations). For the sake of clarifying divisions, the green dotted lines demarcate four quadrants, numbered in the circles at the corner of each of the quadrants. The key groups can be summarized as follows:

- Most vulnerable AGYW belong to the lower-left quadrant (1) of the graphic, along with other groups of people who tend to be most vulnerable and unemployed. This quadrant represents much of the informal economy, and the majority of the population.

- The lower-right quadrant (2) includes employees in the formal sector who are the most secure, due to the consistency of having a salaried job, which provides regular payments more frequently than someone working less formally. One important facet of this is that some of these employees may be low-performers but cannot be fired due to labor laws that, while possibly well meaning, incidentally restrict the removal of such employees.
- At the upper-right corner (3) of this graphic are those who might be identified as true ‘opportunity entrepreneurs’. They benefit from high entrepreneurial capabilities and high economic security, such as founders of large, successful formal sector firms. While there are policy choices that could further benefit and potentially expand this group, it is outside the scope of this paper to elaborate, given the focus on opportunities for AGYW.
- The upper-left corner (4) consists of potential entrepreneurs who have entrepreneurial skills and abilities but remain relatively insecure in terms of job or income. This population, who have many skills already, may need more tangible support to connect to opportunities (e.g. mentorship, market information, access to a new market, pitch contest opportunities, access to finance, or other forms of more conventional business support).

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

Responses from key informants around Sierra Leone indicate there are opportunities for employment for AGYW across numerous sectors, as well as opportunities for self-employment. These employment opportunities typically fall into groups 1 and 2 in the Employment Pathways map above (Figure 22). These are not specified according to district, unless otherwise noted. Each potential area of opportunity should be ground-truthed in an area of Sierra Leone where a program might occur, through a study or labor market assessment, prior to targeting each sector (see programming opportunities recommendations for further detail).

Market Demand - Sectors and Products

Respondents noted the following sectors have the potential for employment and self-employment:

Table 9: Employment and Self-Employment Opportunities Based on Employer Demand

Employment or Self Employment

Agriculture	Poultry production
Electrician	Textiles and sewing (new styles)
Fish and fishery products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smoked/dried fish; ▪ Fresh fish 	Truck drivers
Food processing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mechanic ▪ Electrician ▪ Local sellers ▪ Quality control technicians, ▪ Food scientists 	Tourism (urban) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Front desk personnel ▪ Cleaners and housekeepers ▪ Food and Beverage assistant ▪ Accountant ▪ Sales Agent ▪ Marketing agent ▪ Chef <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Building maintenance staff/repair ▪ Cooks ▪ Videographer ▪ Social media manager ▪ Marketing manager ▪ Talent acquisition
Petty trade	Welders

Agriculture

Numerous respondents noted that agriculture remains one of the areas of highest potential country-wide. It offers both the chance to produce goods for a regional domestic market, as well as goods that are purchased for Freetown markets. In addition, these goods, if unique and of a standard quality, are also already being demanded by a global West African expatriate population. Moreover, certain products have the potential to improve nutrition within families and among AGYW.

Respondents noted that there is an expectation that the export of agricultural goods to African, European, and American markets could potentially further expand incomes for farmers in Sierra Leone. While rice remains a high-demand food staple, other products, such as plantains, cassava, and refined palm oil, have increased in demand both domestically and abroad. Other products that are less common have seen greater demand as well, such as cashews, lemongrass, or coffee. For the US, for example, the 2019 AGOA strategy report includes agriculture and agro-processing products such as cashews, cocoa, processed cassava (“gari”), ginger, palm oil, and natural honey, though considerations around how these would be harvested are important for the sustainability of the product.⁷⁰ While the country still exports a large amount of cocoa and coconut shells, these typically are grown at larger commercial plantations, lessening the potential for micro- and small farmers. Moreover, as noted in Table 9, these products are falling in terms of Sierra Leone’s trade share, indicating that the industry may face challenges in the future.

Another source of income for many, particularly in instances where AGYW do not own land, is the raising of poultry for meat or eggs. Chickens offer both a source of protein and income. One respondent noted that, in addition, there is a need for chicken feed production, as many chickens that are raised without a regular diet may be undernourished and less appealing to customers.

Finally, as one respondent noted, it is important to consider the perception of the region in terms of what goods are produced. A producer selling a certain good associated with the region is more likely to benefit from that association than one not producing that good. As was reported, Makeni district is known for garata; Bo and Moyamba are known for large scale gari production; and the western area in Tombo District is known for fish. At the same time, it is also important to keep in mind factors around the saturation of a market for certain forms of self-employment, and how if too many of one type of business exist, and there is not adequate demand, more will fail.

Manufacturing

Sierra Leone’s manufacturing sector is small and disparate. However, the ability to process and produce goods offers another opportunity for AGYW to engage in a sector with potential, particularly in urban settings, or for rural communities, in food processing.

Several sectors of manufacturing that respondents noted could hold promise in terms of jobs, or self-employment for AGYW, are wood furniture production, handicrafts, processing and packaging food, fruit juice production, and textiles and clothes. The 2019 AGOA Strategy also noted that textiles are in demand.

Firms already operating in the area offer chances for employment, and the creation of self-employment through engagement within the value chain. For example, Sierra Agra, a fruit juice firm owned and operated by Sierra Leoneans, employs Sierra Leoneans at the special economic zone (SEZ) in Newtown, 24 miles outside

70 AGOA. (2019). *Sierra Leone AGOA Response Strategy Paper*.

Freetown, and has engaged with up to 4,000 farmers to source fruit, in 120 communities. Another example is Bennimix, which produces a nutritious food supplement for babies and children using ingredients from Sierra Leone. While the company is still relatively small, it sources from farmers in Kabala, Kamia, Kono, and Bo. In addition to working in farming, transportation, processing, packaging roles, the company is working to establish a domestic sales effort, meaning farmers could also gain a side income by selling the supplement within more rural communities in Sierra Leone.

In multiple instances, projects focused on building up Sierra Leone's agro-processing and agro-export fields have needed local farm producers in contract farming efforts. This has meant that young farmers, or youth working in specific roles on farms, can link to markets that often are able to pay prices higher than what a local market might be able to provide.

Another key informant focused specifically on textiles and woodwork has begun to experiment on new products, such as hand-sewn reusable sanitary pads. The firm employs up to 50 people at a time, but mostly as project-specific contractors. The opportunity in such cases is that adding value can expand the market for a good, help differentiate it from other products, and increase the price at which it can be sold, and thus increase the income for an AGYW working as an artisan. One respondent noted that products and goods are evolving in Sierra Leone. Demand for products and certain jobs change and so expectations around which products or jobs to try and supply to the market also must evolve. New domestic markets are growing, with opportunities for new goods, even within communities that are often considered too poor to sustain a local business.

Tourism

In addition to agriculture, tourism was repeatedly cited as an industry with some of the greatest potential to create economic opportunities for AGYW as well as for all people. Part of this is grounded in the country's history of tourism, as Sierra Leone was seen as a growing destination prior to the civil war. Sierra Leone saw 81,000 international tourists at its peak in 2013, the year prior to the Ebola outbreak. While attendance numbers have yet to grow, investment into tourism indicates raised expectations that the country is expecting to expand its appeal. Efforts to raise Sierra Leone's profile as a tourist destination has had some success, though maintaining targeted marketing material will be key. Further creating a clear message of how Sierra Leone is differentiated is important since traditional sand and sea tourism is now widespread globally, as one KII noted.

Tourism offers numerous opportunities, as one KII noted, for those with PhDs all the way down to those with no education. As an industry, tourism is broad, including hotels, guest houses and hostels, restaurants, transportation services, guides, destinations, entertainment, and along with the numerous attendant sectors, such as agriculture and food processing to support hotels and restaurants, manufacturing or trade to supply hotels, gift shops, or other tourism-oriented business, among others.

While tracking data around tourism is difficult, and the research team was unable to locate specific numbers on employment in the sector in Sierra Leone, estimates (below) are revealing. Furthermore, other secondary sources corroborate the team's hypothesis that the sector is a major employer for Sierra Leoneans, including AGYW, because of the numerous actors that it contains. According to the Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation (DTDA), the sector employs an estimated 460,000 people across trade, restaurants and hotels.⁷¹ Two other estimates by KIIs give a more granular perspective. For example,

71 Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation (2017). "Labor Market Profile: Sierra Leone". Accessed at: http://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/sites/default/files/uploads/public/PDF/LMP/lmp_sierra_leone_2017_final.pdf

a hotel with 17 bedrooms, a smaller hotel, would hire approximately 15 to 16 people. A larger hotel, with over 50 bedrooms, might hire up to 60 or 70 employees. The sector also offers numerous opportunities for learning quickly, which is of value to AGYW and youth looking for employment. As one respondent noted, it's easier to train youth in the service/hospitality sector as often traditional education credentials are not hard requirements. Moreover, as the sector is growing, with more hotels being built, demand by large hotels means they're willing to test applicants on aptitude or potential ability more than relying only on a degree.

"[WE] NEED BETTER QUALIFIED AND RELIABLE WORKERS FOR SKILLED TASKS, E.G. COOK, VIDEOGRAPHER, SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER, MARKETING MANAGER, AND/OR A BETTER WAY OF FINDING THE TALENT THAT IS OUT THERE. CURRENTLY WE STRUGGLE TO SCALE BECAUSE WE CANNOT FIND THE STAFF TO HELP US EXPAND!"
- ADVENTURE TOURISM OPERATOR

However, it is important to keep in mind that a singular urban-based sun-and-sand approach is unlikely to spur broader economic prosperity, or enough opportunities for AGYW looking for more stable salaried jobs or opportunities to create their own income generating businesses. The expansion of adventure or eco-tourism was noted by several KIIs to specifically provide this broader base of opportunities. In such instances, only one enterprise was known to be directly expanding into this opportunity.

Employment in rural areas around eco-adventure or cultural tourism can create local employment, but the sector still needs key skills and an understanding of what such opportunities entail. As the sector grows, an increase in the visits of tourists will clarify what opportunities exist within rural communities for a broad range of jobs, from guides and drivers to cooks, artisans, and support staff. An understanding of what each entail and the basics of what comprise 'hospitality' work will be key to help the sector grow.

Security

Particularly in urban areas, or in rural areas where new construction is occurring, security was mentioned as an area that was growing. At its basic level this means a person watching a home or business to guard against theft. It was reported that, in some instances, groups of security staff operate out of a small enterprise, to be contracted out to local business.

Healthcare

Both KIIs and FGDs mentioned the opportunities for a growing need for healthcare staff. This could include local nurses, social workers, or other community-level medical staff. It is more than likely that recognition of this opportunity was driven by the recent Ebola crisis, and the subsequent demand for more skilled healthcare staff in communities.

Mining

Mining is indisputably one of the largest contributors to Sierra Leone's economy. The discovery of titanium and bauxite has allowed the country to shift away from diamonds and iron ore, ensuring that the industry will remain in country for decades to come. Yet traditional mining-specific jobs are dangerous, often occurring in unhealthy settings and, particularly for AGYW, feature potential exposure to sexual assault and other harm. Moreover, mining tends to produce relatively few direct jobs, as the largest international firms use largely mechanized methods.

In spite of these negatives, several KIIs indicate that there were still significant opportunities for young people to find work or develop a livelihood in a sector adjacent to mining. Given the large scale of mining operations, they often rely on a broad range of industries. Several examples include tailoring, sewing, and repair of uniforms; transportation of resources and people to and from mining locations; provision of catering or food to mine sites directly, or contracted through catering firms; farming of agricultural products from nearby farms or sold to contracts that provide local food to mines; and waste management, both trash removal and recycling.

Finally, there are additional technical jobs that mining facilities need. These can include trades learned at TVETs or through apprenticeship placements, such as plumbers, electricians, and basic construction.

Petty Trade

Petty trade is the economic practice of buying and selling goods, either from across regional borders, or from local wholesalers. Petty trade, particularly in Sierra Leone's urban centers, increasingly offers income opportunities to individuals; working as petty traders provides an opportunity for AGYW to make money with a relatively short turnaround. In Freetown, petty trade includes a wide array of goods, either purchased from a wholesaler or homemade. While the sector has many foreign traders, such as Lebanese-owned wholesalers or Nigerian importers, it offers a space in which Sierra Leoneans can also find a means to increase their income.

Skills needed

While the supply of skills is not a solution to most economic challenges, it does help overcome very specific constraints faced by sectors with the potential to grow, such as those noted above. For example, the 2019 AGOA Response Strategy paper notes, among challenges faced by small businesses producing artisanal goods for both trade and tourism, a lack of trained, qualified, and experienced textile and art designers.⁷² A frequent message from the KIIs was the general need for higher-quality skills, regardless of industry or sector. Frequently, KIIs noted that skills generated in TVET or educational institutions were theoretical, and lacked an applied foundation, making it necessary for each business to train AGYW in the skills required. Moreover, it was noted this is not a one-off process. Mismatched expectations around what a job entails, its workload, or salary expectations, can lead to high turnover. In addition, because of employees' limited foundation in applied learning, businesses must continuously build up the skill of its staff through repeated trainings. In urban settings, where larger formal firms operate, if roles are unable to be filled by Sierra Leone's talent pool, foreign staff are often brought in to fill key roles, and to train local staff in those skills if time allows.

HOW RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING WORKS

Understanding recruitment is crucial for AGYW who are looking for employment; employers who are looking for skilled employees; and programs looking to support young people in finding work opportunities. In Sierra Leone, recruitment happens through both informal and formal methods. The formal recruiting method is through newspaper ads, recruitment agencies, and social media; and the most common informal recruiting methods are through word of mouth and personal networks. KIIs with AGYW in the district noted that word of mouth and personal networks are still the only means of finding a job in the formal sector, which is certainly most disadvantaged youth.

Recruitment agencies like Careers SL and Job Search use various strategies such as posting jobs on their websites, posting on social media, and messaging via WhatsApp to recruit candidates. Additionally, Job Search provides short-term skills building training to applicants, to prepare them for the workforce and to find jobs.

72 AGOA. 2019. *Sierra Leone AGOA Response Strategy Paper*.

Most employers and the recruitment agencies conduct interviews, and for some key roles, conduct knowledge tests during the recruitment process to vet applicants. However, employers still encounter challenges filling key roles. There are several reasons behind the hiring challenges, but the main one identified during the KIIs with employers and recruitment agencies was that applicants lack technical, practical or soft skills. Employers also have difficulties filling senior and technical positions that require a minimum of a university degree or technical vocational certificate along with practical training. The Skills Network Analysis conducted by GIZ stated that 56% of employers said they trained staff to build up capacity to fill different occupation gaps, while 15% opted to hire internationally.⁷³ Thus, employers use multiple strategies to find the best-qualified applicants. Employers also compensate by providing in-house training themselves, since it is costly to hire expatriate staff. KIIs with employers and recruitment agencies noted that there is a significant disconnect between what is being taught in school and what is needed on the job – quality education combined with practical knowledge.

A small and thriving business is most highly impacted because of the cost of in-house training and retaining trained candidates; in many instances, the owner takes full responsibility for the training and other additional tasks to maintain the business. Overall, the skills gap poses challenges in recruitment.

Value Chains with Employment Opportunity Examples

Value chains with job mapping overlays can show employment opportunities for AGYW and youth. While value chains have been traditionally used to show how goods flow through an economy, they may also be used to show the different actors at the national level, or at a micro level in a more informal economy. By mapping value chains, one can gather information about how they interact in an economy, and specifically the types of jobs they can provide, or get a sense of where there may be more room for AGYW looking at self-employment to enter.⁷⁴ Data collected in Sierra Leone indicates that district level value chains, when supported properly, can stabilize or generate new opportunities for AGYW employment.

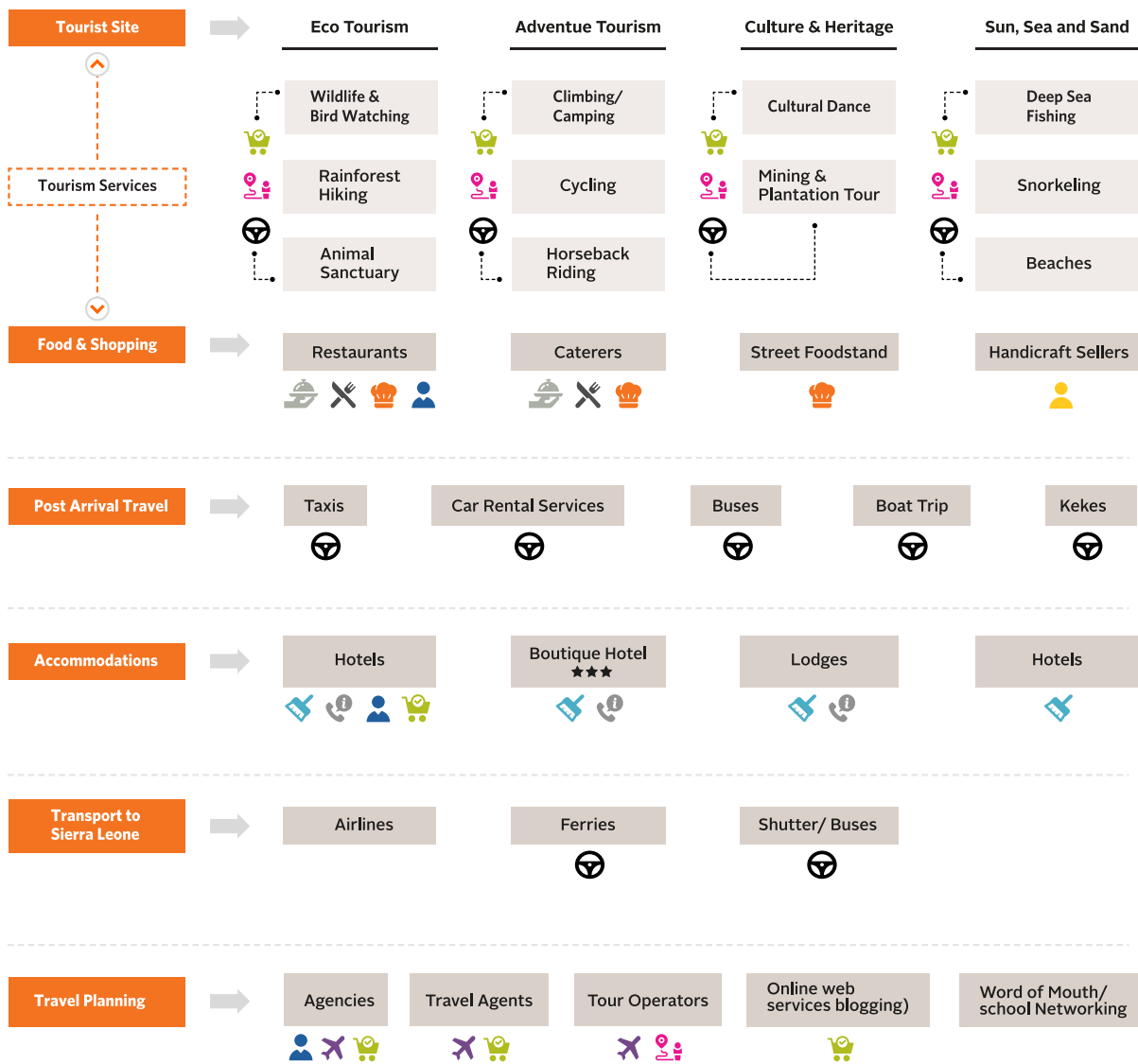
Here we provide two examples. One shows tourism in Sierra Leone as an industry. We also illustrate a smaller micro value chain in textiles, a sector BRAC has already engaged at a district level. While textile is an industry that has existed for a long time in Sierra Leone, with many traditional techniques such as tie-dye and country cloth widely recognized, this attempts to note that other opportunities may exist including different markets, creation of new products, or identifying jobs adjacent to the local textiles sector. The flow of goods is often restricted to a limited region, such as within a district or town, and typically only one or two actors are responsible for the channels of activity normally taken on by a larger population of market participants.

Having identified dynamic, informal micro-value chains at the local level, one can then take an approach to programming that is similar to working with larger value chains. Micro-value chain analysis can then help answer questions that can inform program design, such as “Are there opportunities within this limited value chain (e.g. textiles) that are accessible to AGYW?;” “What can be used to help enterprises in X city’s economic context?;” and “What opportunities exist to link to larger country-wide value chains or external markets?”

73 GIZ. 2018. *Skills Needs Assessment*

74 Eleanor Sohnen. (2017). “Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment”. *Workforce Connections*

Figure 23: Tourism Value Chain with Employment Opportunity Overlay



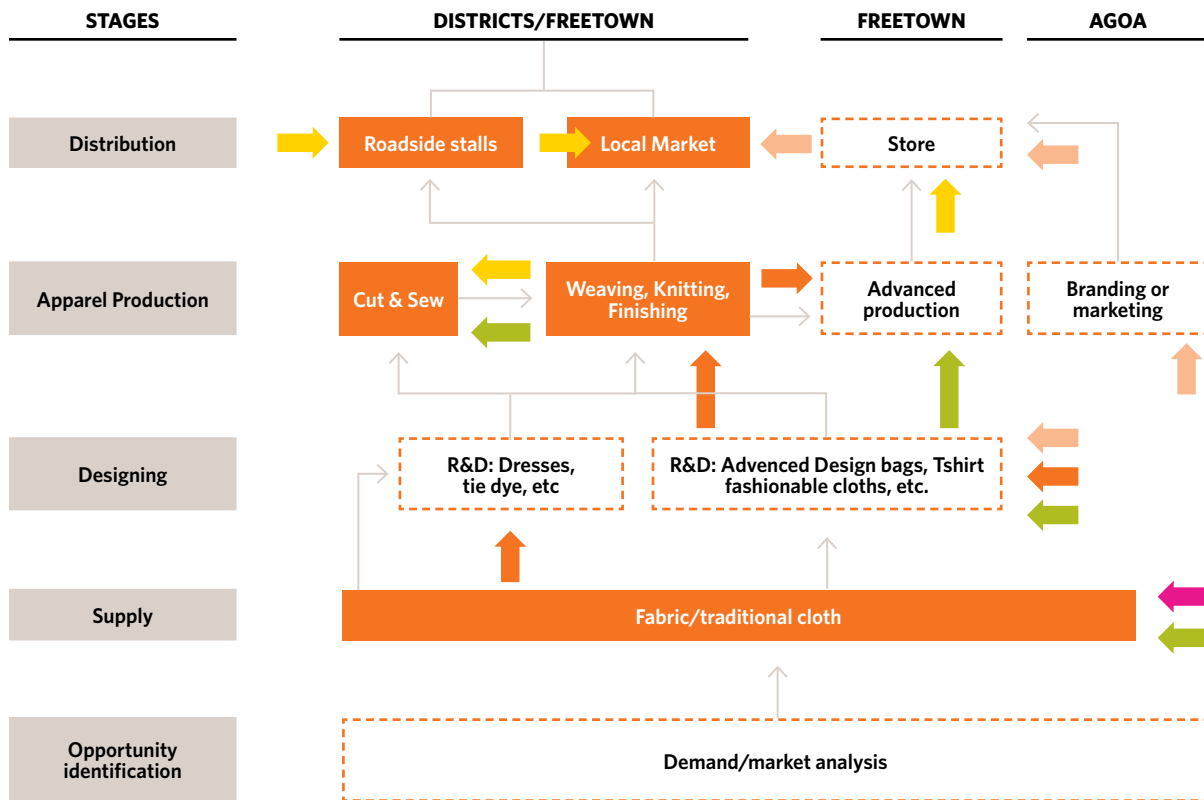
KEY

Hotel Services	Restaurant/Food Services	Other Services
Housekeeper	Food & Beverage Agent	Front Office Agent/Manager
Receptionist	Chef/Cook	Travel Agent
	Waiter	Tour Guide
		Drivers/Captains
		Artisans
		Sales & Marketing Professionals

This value chain map with employment overlay portrays a broader view of the tourism value chain, illustrating what opportunities may exist across the country. This list is illustrative, showing positions for some of the roles that were mentioned either as feasible for youth and AGYW entering a job market, or in high demand from the different tourist actors. In Figure 21, the value chain is read from the bottom up. In this instance, as tourism is a service industry, the value chain illustrates the process of guests moving through the chain to target activities. As one reads from the bottom of the figure, tourists move up the value chain to engage with different actors at each stage of the tourism process, as noted by the stage indicators on the left-hand side. The opportunities for AGYW and youth are illustrated by the job icons outside the tourism actor boxes in green. These roles are noted in the key below the value chain map.

Along the top in blue are the different channels of tourism, denoting several pathways along which a tourist might travel. In this instance, they are the reasons why a person might visit Sierra Leone. While delving into the deeper gap analysis of what actors exist in this space, KIIs did indicate that all sectors but sea and sand tourism are underdeveloped and are spaces for potential tourism growth.

Figure 24: Textile Micro-Value Chain with Employment Opportunity Overlay



The value chain map with employment overlay in Figure 24 illustrates the value chain and opportunities for young people in a cloth or textile industry in Sierra Leone. Here, too, the value chain is read from the bottom up. This value chain is portrayed more traditionally, in that it shows goods moving up the value chain, with some form of value add occurring at each stage. Stages are noted on the left-hand side by the colored arrows and the dotted lines, separating each stage. Boxes right of the stage arrows denote each actor at each stage of the value chain. Colored arrows among the boxes indicate jobs that AGYW or youth could fill in the apparel value chain, and link to the key below. Here, though, gaps or challenges at different stages of the value chain, where actors are limited or apparently absent, are noted in boxes with an exterior dotted line. These represent potential bottlenecks for growth in the sector and could be areas where greater support or intervention might unlock further opportunities in terms of creating new or better positions for AGYW.

CONSTRAINTS

According to conversations with KIIs and FGDs, AGYW- and youth-run micro- and small enterprises face constraints that are worth noting. While these are likely to fall outside of the capability of any one project or intervention to solve, they should be kept in mind as areas where projects will have to address in some form when working to identify and develop livelihoods opportunities.

International reputation

Unfortunately, the negative characterization generated by the civil war, the Ebola crisis, and movies like *Blood Diamond* have created a stigmatized perspective of Sierra Leone.⁷⁵ This has had a dampening effect on investment and tourism that continues to be felt throughout the country, according to several KIIs. The issue of perception is a difficult challenge in particular as it is often amorphous and requires time or other dramatic positive news to overcome. However, some KIIs note that this view is fading, and increased interest in investing in the region has been one indicator of this.

Electricity

Sierra Leone faces numerous challenges around electrical generation. Even in Freetown, especially during the dry season, electrical outages can be a daily occurrence. This is due in large part to Sierra Leone's dependence on hydroelectric power. In rural areas, many are frequently without regular electricity. This causes difficulties for some self-employed AGYW, as they're limited to whatever light they can generate, or must cease work at sundown. Alternatively, this can limit their ability to produce goods, when electrical drive machines cease working, or can lead to the loss of goods if refrigeration is required. In each instance, this increases the unpredictability of shocks and raises the risks for someone trying to make a living.

Financial services

Banking and access to finance is another major challenge for micro- and small businesses run by young women and youth. First and foremost, laws dictate that loans cannot be provided to people under 18, which means younger people looking to start up a business must likely borrow from informal sources or operate based on savings. Moreover, according to two financial business KIIs, women often face unequal lending practices because the culture views men as more appropriate recipients of loans. Moreover, as many women operate under traditional land tenure laws, they are not recognized as owning property and thus unable to leverage collateral. Furthermore, some businesses are less likely to receive funding, according to one KII. Businesses that engage in foods services, work in agriculture, or engage in agro-processing are less likely to receive loans

75 "VisitSierraLeone.org says 'Blood Diamond' movie is bad news for Sierra Leone" (2018). Accessed at: <https://www.visitsierraleone.org/visitsierraleoneorg-says-blood-diamond-movie-is-bad-news-for-sierra-leone/>

as repayment cycles for production typically fall outside normal loan repayment requirements, and are seen as carrying greater risk. In addition, banks often set interest rates of 20-30% that are seen as prohibitively high. According to one respondent, this is in fact not the result of required policy, but a choice made by banks out of an abundance of caution.

Employers' perceptions of youth

In multiple instances, KII employers described youth themselves as to blame for their own unemployment. In multiple instances, KIIs described youth as not having the right culture or education to want to work. They also described youth expectations as being unrealistic and lacking an understanding of what work and careers require. Another informant highlighted that efforts need to be made to clarify the value of work to youth in terms of medium- to longer-term benefits (beyond income and status).

6

Analysis of Programming Opportunities

Using KII and FGD data, and secondary sources gathered on Sierra Leone's context, this paper provides an overview of potential programming opportunities that may assist in the development and support of livelihoods and employment opportunities for AGYW. These are detailed below, briefly highlighting the rationale for each, and an opportunity example.

PROGRAMMATIC OPPORTUNITIES

This section details areas where BRAC might build on its ELA approach to either directly support new opportunities and growth in AGYW livelihoods or improve the enabling environment for such opportunities.

BUSINESS LOANS TO JUMPSTART GROUP BUSINESSES

Rationale

For many AGYW, starting a livelihood activity can be high-risk, with a range of responsibilities and requirements heaped on a person all at once. Obtaining a loan or financial support can make or break a young person's ability to be self-employed. In many instances, however, this can be problematic for young women, who face discrimination and bias, or for potential borrowers without collateral. Supporting young women to develop group businesses can overcome some challenges by providing a group structure through which financial resources and abilities financial and business management can be built. It can also help women share the burden of certain tasks and liabilities associated with a business, and thus lower their individual risk.

Opportunity

Once BRAC ELA participants have undergone financial literacy training under BRAC, an opportunity exists in which participants could 'graduate' in groups or clusters to engage with an instrument such as EcoBank's Group Solidarity Loan. In a KII, a representative noted that EcoBank is open to engagement with their model. If unavailable, BRAC's financing arm could offer a loan for a similar structure.

Under the solidarity loan, groups are trained how to run a business together. The group as a whole must first save up to 250,000 leones to illustrate group saving dynamics. Such groups are officially established after observation of the dynamic, and regular meetings to ensure such a group is a good fit. Then, each group member can be given one million leones, and each participant is responsible for the others to pay their loans back. Each participant bears the collateral responsibly for the other, thus ensuring a stake in the success of the group. During the loan period, the group is taught how to manage and run itself, including establishing a constitution that sets basic rules. Under the EcoBank model, there can be up to 15 participants, to ensure the groups are of a manageable size.

Figure 25: EcoBank's Group Solidarity Loan Model



TOURISM OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION AND SKILLS-BUILDING

Rationale

Global demand for tourism is growing rapidly. Many tourists are traveling from what were previously deemed 'developing' countries to their neighbors. This expansion into new destinations is expected to create a further increase in tourism employment, with 1 in 5 jobs globally in the last 10 years already created in the tourism sector.⁷⁶ In Sierra Leone, tourism is a diverse and multi-faceted sector that is already the second largest employer in the country. With the growing global demand for destinations, Sierra Leone can anticipate more visitors and a need for expanded tourism infrastructure and human resources. Yet for Sierra Leone to achieve this goal, it must enhance its unique tourism options that allow the country to stand out among other West African nations and prepare skilled workers and entrepreneurs to support the services offered.

Opportunity

Given the broad network of business types that comprise the tourism sector - hotels, guest houses, restaurants, entertainment, traders, artisans, transportation, services and support, etc. - a core opportunity lies with identifying which sectors are most likely to employ AGYW and have the potential to grow as tourism expands. This can be done in part by BRAC coordinating with relevant officials, tourism sector businesses

(hotels, tour guides, etc.), and members of the community in which they operate, to understand what areas might be growing now or have the potential to grow in the next year. With ideas around potential jobs in mind, BRAC can work to partner with local businesses, training institutions, or their own team to develop or deploy trainings relevant to key sectors in tourism. According to KIIs, core skills would include language proficiency (English, French, etc.), and soft skills that are often considered cross-cutting, such as teamwork, problem solving, accountability, and self-control, among other, which will help AGYW succeed across a range of jobs. Finally, BRAC can work to map and engage employers in opportunities to take on BRAC ELA participants as apprentices or interns. Such opportunities give young people in both rural and urban settings chances to apply skills learned, potentially earn an income or link to a full-time job and build understanding of a potential high growth industry.

Figure 26: Train AGYW in Tourism-Relevant Skills



LAYER WITH AND LEVERAGE OTHER PROJECTS

Rationale

Numerous programs in Sierra Leone target either parts of the economy that can affect AGYW, or target AGYW in BRAC's priority districts. Leveraging the work other projects have done or are doing can provide additional opportunities for AGYW to benefit in terms of improving technical ability, opening up new markets, or engaging with structures and institutions that can support their sustainable success. In particular, there is room for coordination around projects that support women in agriculture. One example could be engagement with the IFC and World Bank-supported projects with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Security (MAFFS). The "Women in Agriculture and Nutrition" (WIAN) unit was created within MAFFS in 2015 to promote inclusion of women in community agricultural extension systems.⁷⁷ Another, the Sierra Leone Women's Farmers Forum (SleWoFF), created in 2005, also seeks to aid women farmers, with over 500 active groups. Additionally, Njala University (NU) helped launch the Network for Gender and Nutrition Strengthening in Extension in 2016. The extension system has initiated projects to provide better extension services to female and male smallholder farmers, including training on value chains, and has developed agriculture business centers (ABCs) to promote an agribusiness culture in rural communities.⁷⁸

77 Agricultural extension systems are essentially the "delivery of information inputs" or tangible farm resources to farmers. Definition found at: <https://ag4impact.org/sid/socio-economic-intensification/building-human-capital/agricultural-extension/>

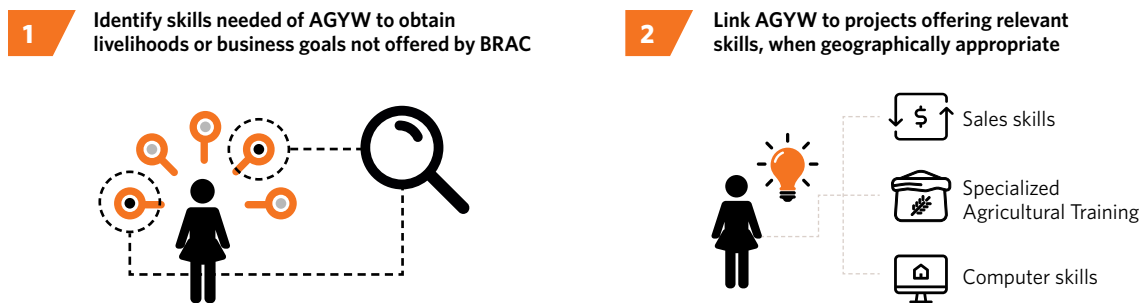
78 For a discussion on gender and extension, see USAID, Sierra Leone Landscape Analysis, 2017, pp 11-14.

Opportunity

Sierra Leone needs more women extension agents, as it is both an opportunity for employment because such agents could more easily engage with women farmers. Currently, most women farmers receive information from male extension officers if they receive any at all and has the potential to introduce discriminatory or imbalanced gender dynamics. The World Bank has supported the MAFFS to train extension staff at the district and sub-district levels to strengthen the creation, adoption and dissemination of agricultural technologies based on research from national research centers, especially for rice and cassava. Several donor-funded projects work with MAFFS to improve agricultural development by enhancing efficiency along the major VCs by linking farmers to private sector actors. Despite this progress, major constraints remain, including an insufficient number of qualified extension workers, inadequate transportation and communication facilities, negative perceptions of extension workers and, due to a poor feeder road network system, infrequent travel by extension workers to visit their targeted farmers.

In this context, a potential training innovation would be to help young women from BRAC ELA with agricultural knowledge and skills develop locally-based advisory services businesses, with BRAC facilitating their technical and business management training. To achieve this, BRAC could potentially work with local agricultural implementers and technical partners to leverage existing trainings that most interested and agriculturally talented AGYW could join. BRAC could also look to models of engagement in other countries, such as Guinea, where a similar approach has been taken.⁷⁹

Figure 27: Link Skills Gaps to Relevant Partner Projects



HELP AGYW OR YOUTH BUSINESSES TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RELEVANT POLICIES AND LAWS SUCH AS “MADE IN SIERRA LEONE”

Rationale

During field research, numerous respondents noted the presence of policies supporting “Made in Sierra Leone” branding. Such branding has the potential to link AGYW-owned businesses to markets with the support of retail partners and raise the profile of goods produced by BRAC ELA participants. Moreover, given the role that projects, or programs can play in providing technical support and structure, these policies have the ability

⁷⁹ Specifically, the Strengthening Agricultural Value Chains and Youth (SAVY) project seeks to create input/extension businesses where trained advisors develop a close connection with participating farmers and sign a performance contract with them whereby they are paid based upon the resulting increase in crop yield. This avoids poor farmers needing to front the cost for extension services and ensures that if proper advice results in increased yields and profits, then a percentage of the gain is paid to the extension consulting group. USAID Strengthening Agriculture Value Chains and Youth (SAVY) project (CNFA 2016)

to help AGYW leapfrog or form groups that can meet the requirements. As a body that represents large populations of young people, BRAC could provide valuable insight into the operation and challenges of helping micro enterprises and small business owners take advantage of such policies.

Opportunity

In 2017, an effort to create a “Made in Sierra Leone” brand logo was formed as part of a Sierra Leone Opportunities for Business Action (SOBA) project effort to improve productivity of MSMEs in the country. The brand was intended to improve “performance and attractiveness for goods and services made and offered in Sierra Leone in order to meet competitive pressures from imported goods.”⁸⁰ Since the Made in Sierra Leone (MiSL) brand effort has received support from government, MiSL food products can be found in some grocery stores, and MiSL handicrafts and textiles can be found in hotels or other shops aimed at tourists. Based on its programming, BRAC can work with the GoSL to understand what products are already branded under MiSL. Using this information, it can examine the training capacities of the local BRAC ELA program, and identify areas where minimal training or resources could be used to prepare products for MiSL branding. BRAC could then also facilitate market linkages to local stores in both rural and urban communities that would be interested in products branded with both BRAC and MiSL branding.

Figure 28: Identify Policies that could Support AGYW Businesses



DEEPEN TECHNICAL TRAINING FOR AGRICULTURE

Rationale

BRAC is already an important actor in Sierra Leone’s agriculture sector and applies best practices through its holistic approach. However, based on the apparent potential in the agricultural sector mentioned in KIIs, there is an opportunity to deepen the agricultural training offered to AGYW to improve the quantity and quality of what they produce. This could be done by scaling-up and deepening its activities, since training AGYW in rice production, seed production, livestock and fish production, how to develop a village savings and loan association, etc., are all proven paths to livelihood development.

The percentage of women engaged in smallholder agriculture has been increasing substantially⁸¹ and as mentioned in two KIIs, Sierra Leonean women dominate the jobs in the agricultural sector. In addition, rural to urban migration rates have been higher for males than females, so there has been growth in the share and numbers of AGYW active in agriculture.

80 SOBA. (2017). “Sierra Leone Prepares to Launch the Official Made in Sierra Leone Brand (MiSL)”. <http://sobasl.org/sierra-leone-prepares-to-launch-the-official-made-in-sierra-leone-brand-misl/>

81 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS). Agriculture Sector Review. <http://opendatasl.gov.sl/sites/default/files/MAFFS-SLAgricSectorReview.pdf>

Opportunity

The following are several areas where direct BRAC engagement on new, expanded, or deepened activities could improve opportunities for AGYW.

Skills to increase agricultural productivity (primarily for rural AGYW)

Practical training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs),⁸² including skills development for planting and cultivation techniques, optimal use of inputs such as improved seeds, appropriate technologies and equipment, and how to gain access to timely information to ensure success. For example, BRAC could support AGYW farmers in using simple, low-cost farming efficiency tools such as drip irrigation. Normally irrigating using traditional techniques can be labor-intensive and time-consuming. If AGYW are supported to implement drip irrigation, instead of spending time doing traditional irrigation, they will have time for other productive activities.

Skills to build input supplier capacities and services

Input suppliers provide improved seeds, organic and chemical fertilizers, pesticides, farm equipment and advice on how to use their products correctly. Sometimes supply companies train local input suppliers about their products, but the suppliers also need to improve their financial literacy, business management skills and knowledge of all products they sell. Many input suppliers are in urban areas as well, so both urban and rural AGYW are prospective trainees.

Skills to improve natural resource management

As was noted during at least one KII, changing environments and harmful natural resource management practices can and have degraded Sierra Leone's natural landscapes and its resources. BRAC can help improve AGYW farmers' adaptability and resilience to environmental shocks by improving their understanding of good farming resource management. Training in soil and water conservation and management (e.g., crop rotation, erosion control, small-scale irrigation, organic waste management) can help AGYW farmers prepare as climates change, and mitigate the degradation to their own land through the natural farming process.

Skills to diversify and improve agro-processing

Agro-processing is a segment that is often held out as a key growth area where both rural and urban AGYW can add value to produce and create better livelihoods. The World Bank has noted strong prospects for agro-processing, indicating that it could help drive economic growth more effectively than other sectors,⁸³ with investment opportunities concentrated in oil palm (mainly for exports), processed rice, and poultry for domestic and regional markets; some processors are also involved in niche commodities, such as fruit juices, lemongrass, and rubber for export. The Bank has observed that "a few medium-size formal firms and a vast number of small, low-productivity informal firms coexist with a small number of large domestic and international companies linked to foreign investments that operate modern processing plants that involve just a few commodities, such as oil palm, rice, and forestry products."

At the artisanal level, agro-processing skills for rice milling, fish smoking, groundnut paste-making, palm oil extraction, etc. are widely practiced, but skills need upgrading, and less well-known income-generating agro-processing skills could be introduced to more AGYW (e.g., making jam, solar fruit drying, processing of hot peppers and spices, snack foods, improved natural packaging from bamboo and reeds, etc.).

82 GAPs are defined by the FAO as a set of principles applied to on-farm production and post-production processes, resulting in safe and healthy food and non-food agricultural products. The training would comprise standardized modules about production, processing and handling.

83 World Bank. (2013). *Sierra Leone Growth Pole Diagnostic*.

Skills to build agribusiness acumen

As AGYW begin to see their agriculture-related activities as businesses and not just as subsistence cultivation or unstructured micro-income generation, they need basic training in business and farm management, improved marketing skills, improved management know-how for post-harvest handling and storage, how to borrow and repay loans, accounting, stronger social and communication skills, etc. While BRAC has been providing skills training in many of these areas, the challenge will be how to optimize the impact of such training through stronger women's farmer associations and larger women-owned businesses.

7

Conclusion

Sierra Leone is a country with much potential, and as its context continues to improve so as opportunities for its citizens. Sierra Leone's AGYW and youth are faced with numerous challenges, from limited opportunities for livelihoods, risk of sexual assault, early childhood marriage, exposure to HIV, and other health issues like poor nutrition. Yet they represent the country's inevitable next generation, and the support they get now from BRAC ELA and other programs, from their government, education and training institutions, and policies that are better adapted to their context and needs, will help support them in carrying Sierra Leone forward.

This report reviews Sierra Leone's context specifically with the aim of identifying opportunities for these AGYW. Building on an analysis of participants of the BRAC ELA program, it then reviews the education and training context to understand how AGYW engage with learning and building skills. From there, the report examines Sierra Leone's economic context and the potential for some industries to create greater opportunities for hiring or livelihoods creation for AGYW, particularly at the community level, through micro value chains. In this process, the report also examines skills broadly, as well as specific skills employers and youth alike noted as valuable for employment.

Finally, the report proposes programming opportunities that could help unlock ways to improve employment or livelihood generation for AGYW. Those are summarized below:

Opportunity	Potential Benefit
Group business loans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunity for women to save Lowers risk Increases potential to leverage into business
Tourism opportunity identification and skills-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism will continue to create new jobs Tourism is a broad industry with opportunities in many different types of work Skills required in tourism are also likely to equip many AGYW to work in other fields (soft skills)

Opportunity	Potential Benefit
Layer with and leverage other programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to leverage success in other projects could compound impact of the BRAC ELA program • Layering and leveraging ensures a stronger foundation of support to build from • Could support greater market linkages and orientation
Help AGYW or youth businesses take advantage of relevant policies and laws such as 'Made in Sierra Leone'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies offer a chance to link AGYW businesses to sustainable mechanisms for support • Could link AGYW to sustainable unique markets for selling goods in Sierra Leone
Deepen technical training for agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture is still a major employer and one with significant potential to expand quality food exports (per the product space map) • Increasing AGYW technical farming skills can open up numerous farming and farming-adjacent opportunities • Improved farming skills can also contribute to better nutrition

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