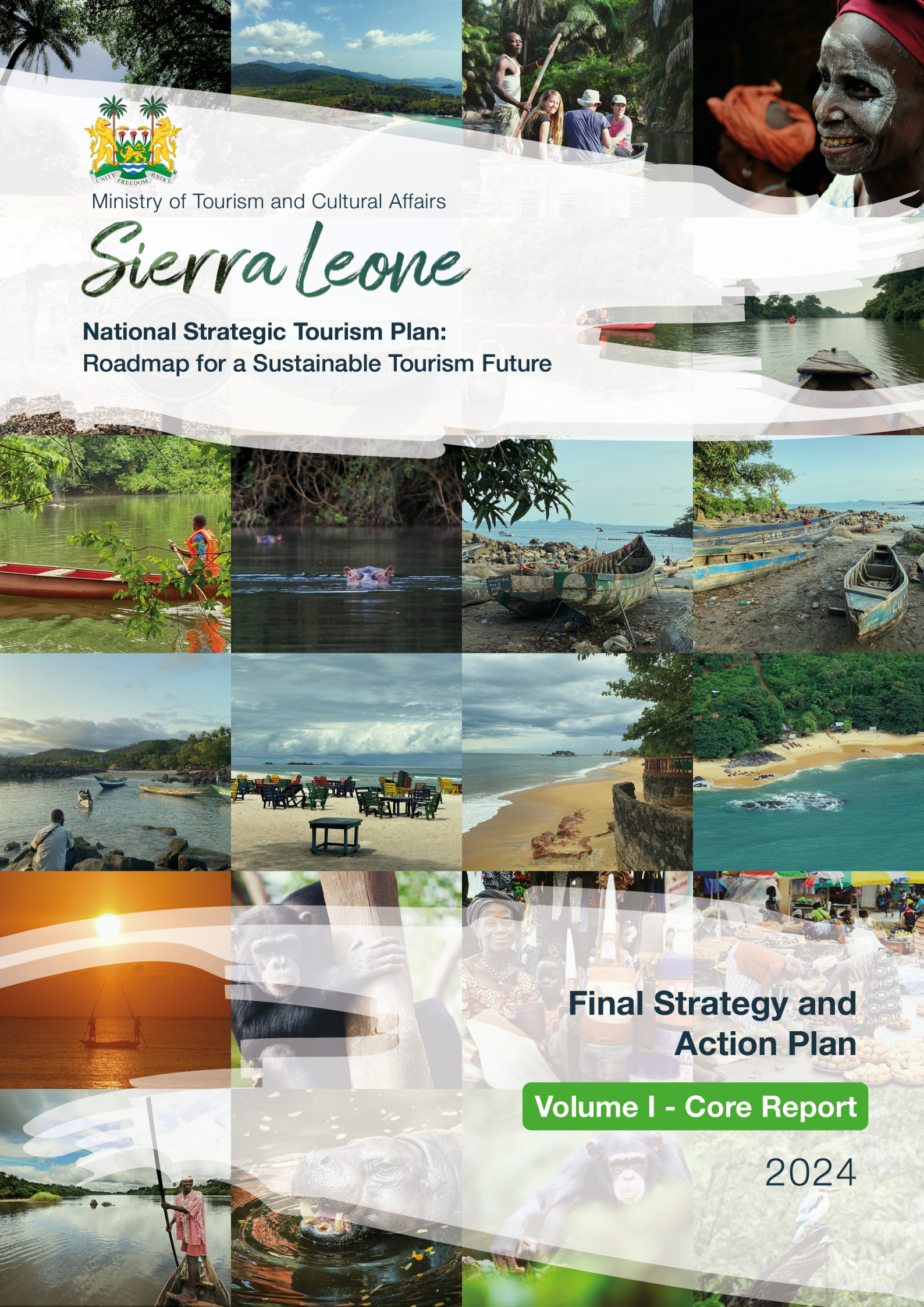

Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs

Sierra Leone

National Strategic Tourism Plan:
Roadmap for a Sustainable Tourism Future

Final Strategy and Action Plan

Volume I - Core Report

2024

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CBI	Centre for Promotion of Impacts
CBT	Community-based Tourism
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESIMP	Environmental Social Impact Management Plan
FPIC	Free Prior Informed Consent
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
ICRT	International Centre for Responsible Tourism
IIP	Inter-Institutional Platform
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITC	International Trade Centre
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LAAP	Local Area Action Plan
MDA	Ministry, Department or Agency
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoWPA	Ministry of Works and Public Assets
MoTA	Ministry of Transport and Aviation
MoTCA	Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs
MRC	Monuments and Relics Commission
MSME	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
NAYCOM	National Youth Commission
NATCOM	National Telecommunications Commission
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIB	National Investment Board
NRA	National Revenue Authority
NSTP	National Strategic Tourism Plan
NTB	National Tourist Board
OKNP	Outamba Kilimi National Park
PFP	Project Finance for Permanence
PPCP	Public-Private-Community Partnership
PPP	Public-Private-Partnership
PTC	Presidential Tourism Council
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAVE	Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Educational
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SECTT	Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism
SEIA	Social and Environmental Impact Assessment
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SI	Site of Interest
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SILNAP	Sierra Leone National Action Plan
SIMP	Social Impact Management Planning
SLAA	Sierra Leone Airports Authority
SLEDP	Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Project
SLEDP	Economic Diversification Project
SLHATA	Sierra Leone Hospitality and Tourism Association
SLMA	Sierra Leone Maritime Administration
SLPA	Sierra Leone Ports Authority
SLRA	Sierra Leone Road Authority
SLSTS	Sierra Leone System of Tourism Statistics
SUPP	Single Use Plastics Products
TCS	Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary
TDAs	Tourism Development Area
TDZs	Tourism Development Zones
TLC	Tourism Liaison Committee
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollars
USPs	Unique Selling Points
VAT	Value Added Tax
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

Foreword

The Tourism Industry has proven to be the backbone of economic growth in many developing countries across the world. This is why since 2019, my Government has prioritized tourism development as a critical pathway for achieving sustainable economic growth and development. In the current National Development Plan, we have recognized tourism as a critical enabler for achieving the Big Five Game Changers which include Feed Salone, Human Capital Development, Youth Employment Scheme, Revamping the Public Service Architecture and Technology and Infrastructure.

The National Strategic Tourism Plan reinforces our commitment as a Government to provide a clear vision, develop strategies and formulate a realistic roadmap for implementing actions for the development of the tourism sector over the next ten (10) years. It is my expectation that after the successful implementation of the Tourism Sector Plan, Sierra Leone's visitor cost competitiveness will be remarkably enhanced; our tourism products will be made more attractive and appealing; the general capacity of the industry will improve greatly; the country's foreign exchange earnings will increase and; the local economy will be transformed as a result of wider inclusion and participation of the local communities in the industry.

We are fully aware of the challenges ahead, that is why we have set for ourselves in this Action Plan 5 ambitious but realistic goals as follows:

- To improve tourism business conditions, costs and quality;
- To protect, preserve and sustainably develop tourism's natural, cultural and social resources;
- To improve visitor access to and availability of infrastructural services at tourism areas;
- To promote a sought-after tourism image and achieve continued growth in tourism demand; and
- To ensure efficient and effective organizational capacity and collaboration.

It is our expectation that these five goals and their concomitant strategies and actions will help transform the tourism sector into a productive economic hub for the country, and will also help address issues of environmental sustainability, as well as peace and national cohesion. I am delighted for these prospects, and I will ensure that my Government gives full support to the implementation of this Strategic Plan.

I wish to thank all those who contributed to the development of this well-researched and extensively consultative document. Let me also specifically express my deepest gratitude to the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Madam Nabeela Tunis for providing the requisite leadership and support to the Strategic Plan preparation process. My special gratitude also goes to our development partners and the private sector.

His Excellency Brig (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio

President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

Preface

Sierra Leone's tourism sector has encountered significant challenges over time. The decision by the Government to prioritize the sector in the previous National Development Plan 2019-2023 was a pivotal step towards addressing the impediments to the growth and development of tourism.

This 10 year National Tourism Plan, the first in the country's history, serves as a roadmap not only to overcome the sector's challenges but also to cultivate a profitable and sustainable industry that fosters economic growth and prosperity in Sierra Leone. It is the culmination of exhaustive research and extensive consultations.

Embracing a people-centered approach to governance and development, as advocated by His Excellency the President, all key stakeholders in the tourism sector were afforded the opportunity to contribute their insights on the trajectory they envision for the industry over the next decade.

Drawing from the outcomes of research, consultations, and the Tourism Sector Diagnostic Report, which meticulously detailed the industry's challenges and opportunities, this comprehensive strategic plan, along with its detailed implementation framework, has been crafted. The outlined goals, strategies, and targets are both realistic and attainable, and intricately linked to sector-specific success factors.

The responsibility now lies with all stakeholders - from government entities to community actors, the private sector, civil society groups, and all Sierra Leoneans - to collaborate for the successful execution of this National Document.

A noteworthy aspect of this plan is its alignment with the current Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024-2030, emphasizing the interplay between tourism transformation and sustainable national development objectives. This synergy underscores the pivotal role of tourism in Sierra Leone's broader developmental agenda.

I extend my deepest gratitude to His Excellency the President Dr Julius Maada Bio for his steadfast support throughout the Ministry's endeavors, including the preparation of this strategic plan. I also express sincere appreciation to all staff at the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, private sector partners, and development collaborators whose contributions were instrumental in shaping this plan.

Let us unite in harnessing tourism as a catalyst for Sierra Leone's sustainable development aspirations. Remember, Tourism in Sierra Leone is everyone's business.

Mrs. Nabeela Farida Tunis

Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs

Acknowledgement

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MTCA) is proud to launch Sierra Leone's first National Strategic Tourism Plan. The Ministry wishes to express its profound gratitude to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone Brigadier (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio for his unwavering support right through the process.

The Ministry also expresses its appreciation to Minister of Tourism and Cultural affairs Mrs Nabeela Farida Tunis for her dedication, vision, and guidance towards the development of this plan.

This National Strategic Tourism Plan is a result of the collaboration between several organisations and individuals whose dedication was instrumental in shaping a Plan that will undoubtedly pave the way for sustainable growth of the tourism sector in Sierra Leone.

In view of the foregoing, our heartfelt thanks go to key stakeholders including but not limited to:

- Mr. Mohamed Jalloh, Director of Tourism Travel and Exchange Programmes; Mr. Abdul Malik Kamara, Senior Tourist Officer; and Mr. Edward Kwame Yankson, Permanent Secretary MTCA.
- The Country Manager of the World Bank Dr. Abdul Muwonge and his team, Moses K Kibirige, Louise Twining-Ward and Alari Mahdi.
- The Project Coordinator of the Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Project Coordination Unit Mary Jalloh and the Tourism Advisor, Brian T. Mullis.
- Mike Fabricius and Raffaele Gorjux, consultants, 'The Journey and Keios'.
- The Former Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, Dr. Memunatu Pratt.

We also greatly appreciate the contributions of everyone who participated in meetings and workshops to inform the production of the Plan including government entities, private sector actors, the informal sector and civil society groups.

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Executive Summary

The Government of Sierra (GoSL) has officially prioritized tourism under its National Development Plan and has commissioned the formulation of this National Strategic Tourism Plan (NSTP), to provide an overarching vision, strategies and implementable actions for sustainable tourism development over the next 10-years. The document also includes a costed Implementation Action Plan, with priority actions that require implementation in the short term. It was formulated following a thorough investigative process, including the compilation of a diagnostic report[1] to take stock of current tourism opportunities and challenges based on a desk study of all available documents, observations made during a consultant field visit, individual stakeholder meetings and consultations and workshops in all the regions. The strategic framework document, which preceded this final report, was also consulted with stakeholders during an intensive consultative workshop in Freetown.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The diagnostic study identified the following critical success factors for sustainable tourism growth over the next five years:

- Containing and reducing visitor costs to improve Sierra Leone's cost competitiveness.
- Ensuring attractive and sustainable tourism products by protecting, enhancing and sustainably managing the most attractive natural and cultural tourism resources.
- Sustaining and further enhancing destination marketing efforts to build on the important gains already made in changing negative historical perceptions about Sierra Leone and raising awareness of the tourism opportunities offered.
- Strengthening the tourism institutional system and Tourism Act, including the powers, capacity and funding of Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MoTCA), the capacity of the private sector tourism organisations e.g. Sierra Leone Hospitality and Tourism Association (SLHATA) and others, partnerships and coordination mechanisms with related Ministry, Department or Agency (MDAs), local councils, communities and private businesses.
- Enhancing the incorporation of climate change and gender issues into tourism sector policies, strategies, plans and programs for sustainability and social inclusion.

Other success factors that require strategic interventions over the next 10 years are:

- Improving international and domestic visitor air, road and water access.
- Actively managing the (potential) social and cultural impacts of tourism.
- Enhancing the variety and quality of visitor experiences in Protected Areas.
- Improving the visitor experience at key beaches.
- Maximising the tourism potential of intangible and tangible cultural heritage.
- Ensuring that local communities are truly engaged in, support and benefit from tourism.
- Maximising opportunities for youth and women empowerment.
- Improving tourism business and investment conditions, including those for larger-scale investors (e.g. the development and strengthening of Public-Private-Partnerships) and MSMEs.

[1] *MoTCA, 2023 Sierra Leone National Strategic Tourism Plan, Diagnostic Volume I, Core Report.*

- Addressing gaps in infrastructural services in key tourism areas including potable water, electricity and sanitation.
- Reducing the use of Single-Use Plastics (SUP) and promoting collection, recycling and reuse of plastic material.
- Enhancing internet connectivity and opportunities for digital transformation.
- Enhancing skills and capacity of tourism stakeholders, especially at critical points in the visitor journey.
- Strengthening the focus on sustainability practices by the tourism industry.

FUTURE VISION AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTION

Looking ahead, the strategic framework acknowledges the importance of responding to global tourism trends including setting realistic growth objectives given that global tourism will remain in post-Covid recovery mode until 2024 and global economic conditions are tight. Other opportunities include capitalising on the fact that sustainable and outdoor travel is gaining ground internationally, treating domestic tourism as an important segment to offset global risks, ensuring authentic experiences that allow visitors to "get off the beaten track", responding to the needs of younger travellers (especially their requirements for online and mobile connectivity) and being able to manage and respond to health and safety crises given the premium that travellers place on travel safety.

The National Strategic Tourism Plan (NSTP) sets an ambitious vision i.e.:

By 2033 Sierra Leone is globally celebrated as a sustainably managed tourism destination, renowned for her natural beauty, cultural experiences and warm hospitality, while tourism growth consistently attains global benchmarks, contributes to economic prosperity and supports environmental and cultural conservation, with local communities actively partaking in the sector and benefitting from its proceeds.

As identified in the Sierra Leone Marketing and Branding Strategy[2] Sierra Leone's differentiated market positioning is based on the proposition that visitors are able to explore the true meaning of "Freedom" in all its facets in Sierra Leone, as manifested so boldly in the history, nature, cultural heritage, history and lifestyle of the people and the country.

This positioning requires MoTCA to adopt some important principles in developing a sustainable tourism sector. These include:

- Placing environmental, cultural and social sustainability at the heart of the tourism strategy and following a responsible and regenerative development approach to ensure tourism becomes a vehicle to improve the current situation and one that enables communities and the ecosystem to thrive.
- Aligning it with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to harness the potential of tourism to contribute to poverty reduction.
- Focusing on attracting experiential travellers, who want more out of a trip than only "looking" and who prefer to touch, taste and engage with the environment, the people and their traditions.
- Creating a suitable environment for experiential and business travel.
- Ensuring the safety and well-being of visitors.
- Addressing resilience to external shocks related to climate change, health pandemics, civil wars, terror attacks and other disruptive external events.

[2] *NTB (2022) Sierra Leone National Tourism Marketing and Branding Strategy and Implementation Plan.*

- Facilitating public-private-community partnerships, with tourism being government-led, private sector driven and community-based.
- Managing tourism as a vehicle for empowering marginalised societal groups like women and young people.
- Integrating gender and climate change action mainstreaming into all tourism policy, plans and projects.
- Promoting circular business operations that reduce waste and foster reuse of materials.
- Prioritising tourism training and capacity building and capitalise on digital communication technologies.
- Maximising linkages and opportunities in the tourism value chain for MSMEs and local producers.
- Striving to attract responsible tourists who are environmentally aware, culturally sensitive and who seek meaningful social encounters

The implications of three potential tourism growth scenarios are outlined *as potential outcomes for the sector, contingent upon whether the strategy's execution has been weak, moderate, or exceptionally robust. These are:*

- Scenario 1: "Strangled", the worst-case scenario.
- Scenario 2: "Plodding along", the mediocre scenario.
- Scenario 3: "Taking off", the high road scenario that the strategy aims to achieve.

A tourism growth model was applied to the three scenarios, which demonstrates that under the "Taking off" high-growth scenario (full implementation of the NSTP) the country could receive 38,500 more tourists per annum, US$40 million more in direct tourism receipts per annum and sustain 20,100 more jobs, compared to the "Plodding Along" scenario.

Based on Sierra Leone pursuing the high-road scenario, "Taking off", the following growth targets are set for this NSTP:

- Tourism Arrivals: Increase international tourist arrivals to Sierra Leone from 56,417 in 2022 to 147,930 in 2033, at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10.1% per annum.
- Tourism Receipts: Increase tourism receipts from US$40.3 million in 2022 to US$125 million in 2033, at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12% per annum.
- Tourism Jobs: Increase direct tourism jobs from 29,471 in 2022 to 77,274 in 2033, at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10% per annum.

The document describes the product preferences and opportunities of target market segments that were outlined in the Sierra Leone Marketing and Branding Strategy (2022), namely Domestic Breaks, Intrepid Adventurers, Eco and Outdoor Fanatics, Mature Adventurers, and International Beach Relaxers.

Specific concepts are identified for private sector accommodation investment, based on the target market preferences. These include well-designed eco-lodges, mobile safari camping, guest houses and homestays, boutique-style beach resorts and the potential transformation of redundant government buildings as domestic tourism accommodation.

Based on the market segment analysis, various public sector product investment priorities are also identified, including improvement of the tourism realm at beach and offshore island destinations; improvement of tourism facilities and infrastructure in Protected Areas that are on main tourism circuits; improvement and development of visitor experiences at cultural sites tied to Sierra Le-

one's cultural heritage; and development of a new landmark Freedom Museum and Cotton Tree Park.

Other public sector investment needs include improved access to the south of the country, including renovation of air strip(s); creating the conditions for a safe and pleasant sea travel; developing and packaging intangible cultural heritage and a range of CBT products and delivery models with communities; developing of iconic Freetown Big Markit as a tourist destination and focal point for urban regeneration and tourism visits; developing of a "blue circuit" to connect maritime and river experiences; and facilitating the development and piloting of new types of sustainable accommodation at key sites outside of Freetown and Western Peninsula.

RECOMMENDED GOALS AND STRATEGIES

A comprehensive set of **5 goals, 24 strategies and 102 actions** are presented for addressing the key success factors for sustainable tourism growth and achieving the vision and objectives for the next 10 years. The list below provides a summary of the Goals and Strategies. For each of the strategies listed below, a range of specific actions are also outlined.

Table 1 – Summary of recommended goals and strategies

Goal 1: To improve tourism business conditions, costs and quality
Strategy 1.1: Reduce and control visitor taxes, charges and other controllable costs.
Strategy 1.2: Promote and facilitate highly targeted public and private sector investment, especially in Tourism Development Zones.
Strategy 1.3: Facilitate tourism business growth with a focus on MSME development.
Strategy 1.4: Facilitate and strengthen backward and forward linkages among all actors in the tourism value chain.
Strategy 1.5: Improve systems, capacity and application of tourism quality, sustainability and safety standards.
Strategy 1.6: Develop tourism human resources, awareness and capacity at all levels
Goal 2: To protect, preserve and sustainably develop tourism's natural, cultural and social resources
Strategy 2.1: Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework.
Strategy 2.2: Adopt and apply sustainable tourism development guidelines.
Strategy 2.3: Ensure effective protection, preservation, and regeneration of tourism assets in declared Protected Areas and (tangible) Cultural Heritage Sites.
Strategy 2.4: Develop, promote and build capacity in contemporary cultural entertainment and interpretation for tourism purposes.
Strategy 2.5: Identify and address the main causes of waste and water pollution that affect tourism resources and sites.
Goal 3: To improve visitor access to and availability of infrastructural services at tourism areas
Strategy 3.1: Identify, plan and implement road access improvements along tourism routes and circuits.
Strategy 3.2: Pursue improved international and domestic air access.
Strategy 3.3: Expand ICT and communication networks in Tourism Corridors and TDZs.
Strategy 3.4: Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, especially tourist ferry and boat excursions.
Strategy 3.5: Promote and support the sustainable provision of visitor infrastructure and facilities in tourism areas.
Goal 4: To promote a sought-after tourism image and achieve continued growth in tourism demand
Strategy 4.1: Continue promoting and rolling-out the Explore Freedom brand.
Strategy 4.2: Continue implementing and refreshing the national tourism marketing strategy and action plan.

Goal 5: To ensure efficient and effective organizational capacity and collaboration

Strategy 5.1: Review the Tourism Act of 1990 to be in line with the Tourism Policy and the proposals contained in this NSTP.

Strategy 5.2: Restructure and staff public sector tourism institutions effectively and appropriately.

Strategy 5.3: Ensure effective inter-MDA and intra-MoTCA tourism collaboration.

Strategy 5.4: Establish and promote a strong tourism public-private partnership system.

Strategy 5.5: Apply a transparent, effective and measurable community-inclusive tourism approach.

Strategy 5.6: Mainstream gender and youth empowerment and climate change actions into public and private-sector tourism organizational structures, policies, plans and projects.

Strategy 5.7: Develop a robust system of national tourism statistics management and accounting.

The top 15 most critical strategies have been prioritised in Table 2, below.

SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (SDF)

The SDF conceptualises and maps out a framework of Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) i.e. larger areas of tourism potential, comprising more than one district, Tourism Corridors i.e. main roads that connect the TDAs, and Tourism Development Zones (TDZs) i.e. small, focused areas within TDAs that are set aside primarily for tourism development. The management of TDZs will be transferred to MoTCA, and MoTCA will be responsible for enforcing the sustainable development guidelines referred to below. The following TDAs, tourism corridors and TDZs are mapped out as per the map and table below.

Table 2 – Short summary of TDAs and TDZs

TDA	ANCHOR CITY/GATEWAY	TDZ
Western Peninsula	Freetown	– Big Markit Building and Surroundings – Leicester Peak – Freedom Museum & Cotton Tree Park – Bunce Island – Lungi Beach – Banana Islands (Dublin, Ricketts & Mes-Meheux) and Kent – Western Peninsula Beaches: Lumley, Bureh, Tokeh, River No 2 – York
Outamba-Kilimi	Kamakwie	– A designated Tourism Development Zone of 100 – 200 Ha, inside or at the entrance to the Outamba Kilimi NP
Kabala-Loma Mountains	Kabala	– A designated Tourism Development Zone covering key villages around the Loma Mountains NP, which could act as a tourism buffer zone for the NP
Mamunta-Mayoso	Makeni	– A designated Tourism Development Zone(s) of 50 – 100 Ha, inside or close to the entrance of the Mamunta Mayoso Forest Reserve
Gola-Moa	Kenema	– A designated Tourism Development Zone(s) of 100 – 200 Ha, inside or close to the entrance of the Gola Rainforest NP – Tiwai Island Sanctuary – Jaibui Island Sanctuary
Sulima	Sulima	– Sulima Beach Zone
Bonthe	Bonthe/Bo	– Turtle Islands (Baki, Chepo, Sei, Mut) – Turner's Peninsula

The identified TDAs are areas that present the best growth potential over the 10-year lifetime of the strategic plan. As these are area developed, other TDAs and TDZs could be added in a next planning cycle. These include, for instance Mount Sugar Loaf in Western Area, Mahera Beach in Port Loko, Tobanda in Southern Province, Camel Hill in Makeni, and various attractions in Kono District.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

A revised institutional architecture is recommended for implementing strategies and actions. **The Tourism Act should be urgently revised to ensure the effective** implementation of the NSTP and provide MoTCA with effective powers for ensuring sustainable management of tourism resources and sites. The following institutional coordinating mechanisms are proposed:

- **Establishing a Presidential Tourism Council, chaired by the President,** to bring all MDAs relevant to tourism under one umbrella at senior executive level; identify key aspects of the tourism strategy and instruct MDAs to implement these; identify and unblock obstacles that inhibit implementation and tourism growth; pursue sustainable tourism and "triple-bottom-line" growth; and monitor performance and progress with implementing the NSTP. This should include the formation of inter-MDA working groups to deal with key aspects such as tourism statistics, crisis management and others.
- **Establishing a public-private Tourism Liaison Committee (TLC)** to pursue a common vision by the government and private sector tourism sectors and facilitate participation of the private tourism sector in the development and implementation of the tourism development strategy.
- **Establishing an overarching Monitoring and Evaluation Unit**, to monitor, evaluate and facilitate implementation of the NSTP and other tourism plans.
- **Setting up and managing a Tourism-Culture Workgroup in MoTCA** to foster collaboration between tourism, cultural heritage institutions and the creative and entertainment industries.

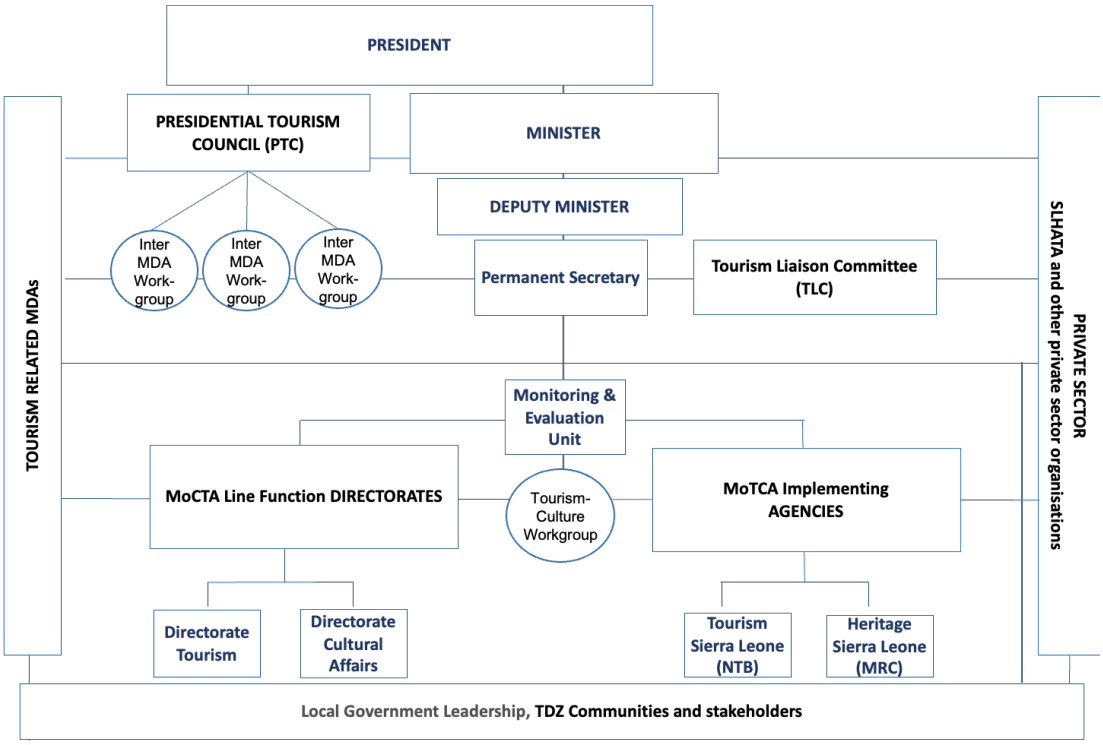


Figure 1 – Proposed tourism sector institutional framework

The document also sets out the specific destination management performance areas that are recommended for MoTCA and the National Tourism Board (NTB). The structure of MoTCA will be revised in accordance with the Management and Functional Review, conducted in 2024.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation priorities and phasing

The goals, strategies and actions proposed are extensive and, since Sierra Leone is in the early stages of the tourism destination life cycle, a three-phased approach is envisaged for implementing the recommendations and building up tourism over the next 10 years and beyond.

The phases are:

- Year 1-5: Phase 1, "Consolidation", where the focus will be on addressing the critical success factors for sustainable tourism growth as identified in the diagnostic study and by the key stakeholders. The aim is to ensure that sound foundations for sustainable tourism growth are laid. A detailed Action Plan is included for this phase.
- Year 6-10: Phase 2, "Stepping Up", where the focus will be on deepening the quality and positive impacts of tourism, while continuing improvements of Phase 1 initiatives.
- Year 11 onwards, Phase 3, "Sustainable Growth", where the focus will be on retaining and enhancing the growth achieved in Phases 1 and 2.

Strategies and actions that address the critical success factors identified in the diagnostic phase have been prioritised for implementation during Phase 1, "Consolidation".

The following strategies and supportive actions are prioritised for implementation during the first five years, Phase I.

Figure 2 – Implementation phasing of the NSTP

Table 3 – Priority strategies and actions for implementation in Phase 1, Years 1-5

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
GOAL 1: TO IMPROVE TOURISM BUSINESS CONDITIONS, COSTS AND QUALITY	
STRATEGY 1.1 Reduce and control visitor taxes, charges and other controllable costs.	– Establish a national workgroup on tourism cost competitiveness. – Conduct a detailed comparative evaluation of visitor and operator taxes, charges, airfares and other cost items. – Make and implement proposals for addressing cost disparities. – Track cost of travel to Sierra Leone and competitors over time.
STRATEGY 1.2 Promote and facilitate highly targeted public and private sector investment, especially in Tourism Development Zones.	– Conduct scoping and business potential studies of all priority tourism development zones in close collaboration with NIB and SLEIPA. – Promote and facilitate public and private sector investment in priority tourism areas, and introduce a suitable tourism investment incentive package. – Promote tourism investment opportunities emanating from the scoping studies. – Monitor and report on the nature and extent of tourism investment.
STRATEGY 1.3 Facilitate tourism business growth with a focus on MSME development	– Develop a coordinated tourism MSME support programme aimed at women and youth entrepreneurs.
STRATEGY 1.6 Develop tourism human resources, awareness and capacity at all levels	– Develop and fund a capacity building, licensing and formalisation programmes for tour guides, tour leaders, specialist guides, and local community guides.
GOAL 2: TO PROTECT, PRESERVE AND SUSTAINABLY DEVELOP TOURISM'S NATURAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES	
STRATEGY 2.1 Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework.	– Endorse and advocate at the governmental level the SDF as the primary spatial blueprint directing tourism development in the country. – Draft proposals to the Cabinet to officially designate the TDZs. – Craft detailed development blueprints for the most promising TDZs, in consultation with relevant MDAs.
STRATEGY 2.2 Adopt and apply sustainable tourism development guideline	– Provide capacity building and mentoring support for MoTCA and partners to operationalise the sustainability guidelines and integrate them into existing ways of working. – Provide support for the implementation of the Green Label for Hotels and Restaurants to promote circular business operations.
STRATEGY 2.3 Ensure effective protection, preservation and regeneration of tourism assets in declared Protected Areas and (tangible) Cultural Heritage Sites.	– Develop forest visitor infrastructure to improve wildlife viewing, recreation and conservation objectives. – Develop nature-based trails and circuits with focus on improved interpretation and locally unique themes. – Engage community members and MSMEs in providing additional nature and agritourism experiences. – Conduct a tourism stock-taking and market-readiness evaluation of current and potential cultural heritage sites and projects. – Launch a heritage tourism support programme. – Develop and create a Freedom museum/memorial and/or "Cotton Tree Park" as a new flagship cultural heritage project.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
GOAL 3: TO IMPROVE VISITOR ACCESS TO AND AVAILABILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURAL SERVICES AT TOURISM AREAS	
STRATEGY 3.1 Identify, plan and implement road access improvements along tourism routes and circuits.	– Conduct a comprehensive assessment and mapping of the current state of tourism corridors. – Set and enforce standards for tourism corridors. – Develop and maintain essential roadside amenities and emergency services along tourism corridors. – Collaborate with telecom providers to ensure consistent internet coverage along tourism corridors. – Implement clear and informative road signage. – Prioritize and launch a programme to upgrade “last mile” roads in coordination with the development of the TDZs they connect to. – Set up mechanisms to gather feedback from tourists and local communities about road conditions.
STRATEGY 3.4 Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, especially tourist ferry and boat excursions.	– Establish a Water-Based Tourism Transport Task Force to oversee the strategy's implementation. – Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study of water-based transport. – Improve the ferry terminals, passenger and baggage handling system for transfers between Lungi and Aberdeen.
GOAL 4: TO PROMOTE A SOUGHT-AFTER TOURISM IMAGE AND ACHIEVE CONTINUED GROWTH IN TOURISM DEMAND	
STRATEGY 4.2 Continue implementing and refreshing the national tourism marketing strategy and action plan	– Ensure adequate budget for sustaining, expanding and refreshing the international marketing strategy and drive beyond SLEDP funding based on market intelligence – Build on and expand the domestic marketing efforts already undertaken. – Engage private tourism businesses in marketing initiatives and activities.
GOAL 5: TO ENSURE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION	
STRATEGY 5.1 Review the Tourism Act of 1990 to be in line with the Tourism Policy and the proposals contained in this NSTP.	– Appoint a legislative review panel to undertake the redrafting process. – Clarify the roles and powers of MoTCA in collaboration and consultation with other MDAs. – Draw on Tourism Acts of successful destinations in drafting and promulgating the Act.
STRATEGY 5.2 Restructure and staff public sector tourism institutions effectively and appropriately.	– Undertake a professional work study and recommend restructuring of the tourism and cultural institutions. – Obtain Cabinet approval and engage in a suitable expansion and restructuring process.
STRATEGY 5.3 Ensure effective inter-MDA and intra-MoTCA tourism collaboration.	– Establish a Presidential Tourism Council (PTC). – Set up and manage a Tourism-Culture Workgroup in MoTCA.
STRATEGY 5.5 Apply a transparent, effective and measurable community-inclusive tourism approach	– Pilot and fund development of JV/PPP/PPCPs partnership models to improve CBT products and community tourism infrastructure. – Develop a “responsible tourism encounters” project to identify and implement practical responsible management strategies.
STRATEGY 5.7 Develop a robust system of national tourism statistics management and accounting.	– Establish a Tourism Statistics Committee. – Conduct training and mentorship to build capacity/awareness of tourism statistics. – Expand the existing Tourism Statistics Department. – Implement the SLSTS, including the required data collection procedures and surveys.

Priority tourism development areas and zones

The selection of spatial target areas for the 5-year action plan (Phase 1) is guided by strategic criteria aimed at maximizing the impact on Sierra Leone's tourism sector (→ see section 7.2.1). The selection and prioritization of TDAs and the corresponding TDZs within them have been meticulously undertaken, with reference to the strategic map provided. This process is rooted in a comprehensive set of criteria that align with the strategic objectives detailed in Section 4: Goals, Strategies, and Actions for Sustainable Growth. The analysis has identified the following TDAs for immediate action.

- **Western Peninsula**: With Freetown as the anchor city, this area includes five priority TDZs i.e. Kent and Banana Islands, Lumley Beach, Bureh Beach, Tokeh, and River No 2.
- **Outamba-Kilimi**: Based in Kamakwie, a designated TDZ of 100 – 200 Ha is planned within or near the Outamba Kilimi National Park.
- **Kabala-Loma Mountains**: A TDZ covering key villages around the Loma Mountains National Park is envisioned to serve as a tourism buffer zone.
- **Mamunta-Mayoso:** A designated TDZ(s) of 50 – 100 Ha is proposed in or near the Mamunta-Mayoso Forest Reserve.

Integrating the Sustainability Guidelines

The sustainability guidelines in Volume II (Appendix B) of the NSTP are designed to inform the sustainable planning, management, and operation of the tourism sector in Sierra Leone in line with the new spatial development framework (SDF).

Drawing on international best practices, there are 16 sustainability guidelines that provide practical guidance on key social, environmental, and spatial sustainability issues to be addressed in the tourism context for Sierra Leone. These have been integrated into the Five-year Action Plan column on 'applicable sustainable tourism guidelines' which indicates which of the 16 sustainability guidelines should be applied when implementing each specific action.

In addition, to support the application of the guidelines, 9 ways to integrate these sustainability guidelines into the tourism industry's existing ways of working in Sierra Leone are identified for consideration.

Five-year Action Plan

A detailed five-year action plan is included, which summarises the goals, strategies and actions that are to be carried out in the first five years (Phase 1).

The Action Plan includes pertinent information for guiding the practical implementation of the strategies and actions, including the priority allocated to each action (whether critical or high priority); indicative cost of implementation (where possible and appropriate); responsibility for implementation (lead and supporting parties); and output success indicators. Each action is further detailed in respect of the priority that should be allocated to it, the indicative costs of implementing it, the parties responsible for leading and supporting its implementation and output success indicators.

Performance measurement and monitoring statistics

Appendix A of Volume II of the NSTP sets out the scope and implementation guidelines for establishing a robust Sierra Leone System of Tourism Statistics (SLSTS). The SLSTS is an essential asset for measuring tourism performance and for structured and informed decision-making in the sector, in particular for planning, marketing, policy making and regulating tourism.

The proposed system is meant to measure and monitor the nature and extent of a wide range of performance (outcome and impact) indicators including inbound visitor arrivals, expenditure and trip characteristics, accommodation utilisation, related industries, domestic and outbound tourism, visitors to attractions, passenger transport usage, digital marketing performance and social and environmental impacts.

The National Strategic Tourism Plan (NSTP) will be subject to an annual review. The intention is to update this 'living' NSTP on an ongoing basis, as needed, based on input from the Ministry of Tourism & Cultural Affairs, sister Ministries, and other key stakeholders in the private, public, and civil sectors and to incorporate the latest progress, developments, learnings, data, and trends.

1. Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Government of Sierra (GoSL) has officially prioritized tourism under its National Development Plan. In addition, the National Ecotourism Policy sets the goal of receiving 20,000 international and 30,000 domestic ecotourism visits to sites by 2025 (GoSL, 2017).

As such, the GoSL and the World Bank (WB) are implementing an **Economic Diversification Project (SLEDP)**, taking an integrated destination approach to improving the performance of Sierra Leone's tourism sector. This will be achieved through a mix of institutional and policy reforms, market development and national re-branding as well as building business-to-business (B2B) linkages and strategically developing tourism products in selected areas.

Sierra Leone's tourism assets, particularly its natural heritage, have high potential compared to the sub-region, but the lack of facilities and services has inhibited the sector's growth (World Bank, 2018). Several issues have influenced the growth of tourism development in Sierra Leone. These include the lack of proper infrastructure such as electricity, water, last-mile roads, signage, toilets, solid waste and parking facilities which are poor or inexistent (World Bank, 2018).

Furthermore, key issues facing the recovery of the sector include a poorly developed enabling environment, critical capacity shortages, structural constraints such as limited and costly air access, the high cost of public and private services, an uncompetitive and unfocused product, an image that still suffers from historical perceptions, limited funding for tourism and poor market research and statistical monitoring.

To address the wide range of opportunities and challenges facing the sector in a holistic manner the Government of Sierra Leone, under SLEDP, has commissioned the formulation of this **10-year national National Strategic Tourism Plan (NSTP)**. The NSTP includes a **five-year implementation action plan** containing priority activities, time frames, realistic budgets and implementation responsibilities.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

This NSTP aims to provide an overarching vision for tourism development and includes clear goals, strategies and actions for achieving sustainable and regenerative tourism development with specific attention being paid to the empowerment of women through tourism. It draws on existing plans and policies, among others the National Tourism Policy, the Ecotourism Policy and Action Plan of 2017, and the Marketing and Rebranding Strategy of 2022.

The proposals contained here address challenges, opportunities and key success factors for tourism growth, as identified in the diagnostic report.

It should serve as an umbrella for other tourism-related polices, strategies and plans that are under development, such as the Finance Act, the revised Tourism Act, as well as studies that stem from SLEDP initiatives (e.g. the Sierra Leone Tourism Capacity Building Strategic Action Plan, Tourism Investment Strategic Action Plan, Site Management Business Plans, Investment Promotion project outputs, and the like).

The GoSL and stakeholders have made their commitment clear for the NSTP to **focus on ecotourism and sustainable tourism**, and the pursuit of related niche markets for the project duration.

1.3 STRATEGY FORMULATION PROCESS

A standard strategic planning approach is followed in devising the NSTP, consisting of the following stages:

Stage 1: Inception

Setting out and agreeing on the project scope, methodology, workplan, roles and logistics.

Stage 2: Diagnostic - where are we now?

Analysing all aspects of the tourism destination value chain and identifying the critical success factors (opportunities and challenges) for tourism growth.

Stage 3: Strategic framework formulation - where do we want to be in 2034?

Outlining a 10-year tourism vision, sustainable growth objectives, market and product priorities, development goals and strategic interventions and actions for achieving these, appropriate institutional arrangements and a Spatial Development Framework with priority Tourism Development Areas and Circuits.

Stage 4: Implementation plan - how do we get there – actions for in the next five years?

Detailing a five-year implementation action plan indicating prioritised actions, responsibilities, time frames, budgets, measurable output indicators.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This document was formulated following a thorough investigative process, including the following methods.

- During the diagnostic stage, as documented in the Diagnostic Study[3], the following analyses were undertaken:
- A desk study of all available and legislation, policies, plans and studies that are relevant to tourism development.
- Observations made during a consultant field visit to key tourism areas in the country.
- Evaluation of key sites and attractions visited. A structured evaluation sheet was used to record and evaluate each site/attraction visited.

[3] *MoTCA (2023) Development of a National Strategic Tourism Plan for Sierra Leone, Diagnostic, Volume I Core Report*

- The development of a national scale Geographic Information System (GIS) to support the development of various spatial analyses.
- Individual stakeholder meetings and consultations were held with a wide range of stakeholders, including related Ministries, private sector associations and NGOs, to extract their views on challenges and opportunities facing the sector.
- Regional workshops were held during the diagnostics phase in four regional centres of Makeni (Northern Region), Bo (Southern Region), Kenema (Eastern Region) and Freetown (Western region).
- A stakeholder validation meeting of the Diagnostic Study, was organised by MoTCA and attended by a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders.
- In formulating the strategy and action plan, various consultations were undertaken, including:
- A national validation workshop was held in Freetown, with participation of all relevant stakeholders.
- Various online engagements were conducted with the MoTCA and NTB management to discuss and agree on key aspects of the strategic framework.
- Additional stakeholder meetings were held in Freetown to validate specific aspects of the strategy.
- A dedicated visit and engagements were conducted to validate the proposed national system of tourism statistics, engaging experts from the various organisations dealing with tourism statistics.

2. Current situation

2.1 TOURISM PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVENESS

The tourism economy of Sierra Leone is in the early growth stages. Whilst limited reliable data is available that estimates tourism's contribution to the economy of Sierra Leone, the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) economic model estimates that the sector contributed **2.3% to GDP in 2022,** with an estimated contribution of 2.7% in 2023. The WTTC also estimates total employment in the tourism sector in Sierra Leone of 43,100 in 2022, growing to 47,300 in 2023.

2.1.1 Growth patterns

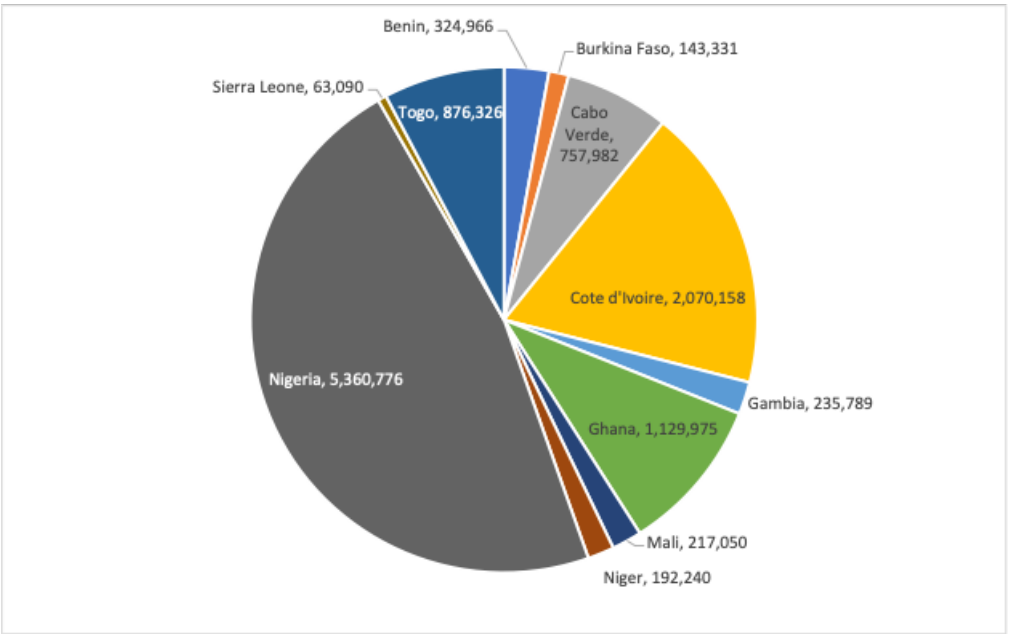


Figure 3 – Numbers ('000) and share of ECOWAS tourism arrivals, 2019

Source: UNWTO, 2023 and consultant estimates (Note: excludes Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Senegal)

Sierra Leone's tourism market should be seen within the context of West Africa's tourism economy. In 2019, the best year for benchmarking between countries as it was pre-COVID pandemic, there were almost 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals worldwide, with 69.1 million (4.7%) of these being in Africa. Of this 69.1 million only around 11.4 million are in ECOWAS countries, although there is no reporting for Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Senegal. The tourism industries of West African countries remain relatively under-developed compared with other countries and regions on the continent. ECOWAS countries attracted only 12.5% of foreign arrivals in Africa in 2019 and the region's share of tourism receipts is equally low[4].

There were almost 100,000 tourist (overnight visitor) air arrivals to Sierra Leone in 2022, representing a 40.3% growth on the previous year. Holiday visitors increased by 47.2%, whilst Conference visitors more than doubled (up 104.6%). At present, international inbound tourism is only measured from arrivals at Freetown International Airport, therefore all overnight visitors arriving by land and sea are excluded from the statistics.

[4] *UNWTO (2023) Tourism Barometer, May 2023*

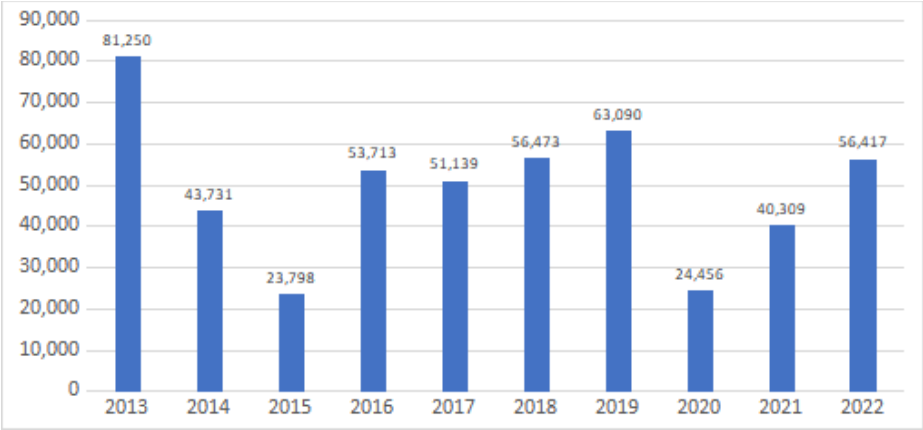


Figure 4 – Tourist Arrivals in Sierra Leone (excluding diaspora), 2013-2022

Source: NTB

Due to the disruption caused by the Ebola pandemic in 2014-2015 and Covid-19 in 2020-2021, there is no clear trend of tourism demand to Sierra Leone over the last 10 years, however there is obvious growth since 2020, and tourist arrivals are clearly heading back to pre-Covid pandemic levels seen in 2019. Note that Sierra Leone diaspora (those visitors living overseas but travelling to the country on a Sierra Leone passport) were only added to the tourist arrivals statistics in 2018, so for consistency, these are left out so that the trend of arrivals over the period 2013-2022 are apparent. However, in 2022 there were 43,443 diaspora arrivals – adding these to the 56,427 tourist arrivals would generate 99,850 arrivals in 2022. Note that these arrivals are largely visiting friends and relatives and whilst bona-fide tourists, they are generally not discretionary tourists who respond to tourism marketing and development initiatives.

According to the statistics, over the period 2013-2022 there has been **a notable shift towards holiday and visiting friends and relatives (VFR) travel.** In 2013, only 16% of all visitors travelled for holiday, and 14% for VFR. By 2022, 27% of all arrivals were travelling for holiday and 29% for VFR. This meant that proportional share of business visitors fell from 43% of all arrivals in 2013 to just 21% in 2022.

2.1.2 Tourism markets

Analysis by nationality shows that tourists from Europe accounted for 29% of all arrivals in 2022, followed by Africa with 28% and the Americas with 23%. Over the last year (2021-2022), arrivals from Africa have increased the most (69.8%) followed by those from Asia (62.4%), although these are from a much smaller base.

The distribution of arrivals across the various nationality groups has not changed much over the last 10 years, with Europe generating 32% in 2013 and 29% in 2022, and Africa generating 27% in 2013 and 28% in 2022. Other nationality groups have also shown only small changes.

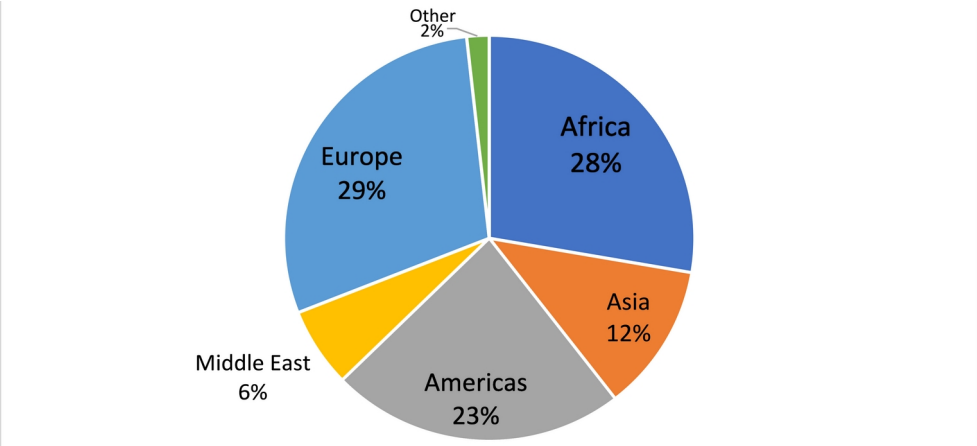


Figure 5 – Tourist Arrivals in Sierra Leone by Region or Origin, 2022
Source: NTB

The top **10 visitor nationalities** generate nearly two-thirds (63%) of all overnight visitor arrivals to Sierra Leone, with the USA being the largest (24%) in 2021, followed by the UK with almost 10%. Note that many of these visitors could be classified as diaspora, but are entering Sierra Leone using the passport of their newly adopted nationality.

Pre-Covid (2016-2019) saw significant growth in arrivals from the Middle East (in particular Lebanon and Egypt) and South Asia (in particular India and Pakistan). Growth was also relatively strong from the key markets of USA, Canada and Australia, with the smaller markets of Senegal, Gambia, Turkey, Spain and Ireland also expanding rapidly.

Once the Covid/post-Covid period is included (2016-2021) it is clear that **post-pandemic bounce-back** is evident, with Gambia and Senegal growing strongly, but still behind pre-pandemic levels, and Zimbabwe appearing as an emerging market. USA, Canada, Australia and Turkey are also growing strongly, with USA arrivals almost back to where they were in 2019 and arrivals from Turkey stimulated by new direct links on Turkish Airlines to Istanbul.

Overnight visitor expenditure was estimated to be US$ 40.3 million in 2022, an average of **only US$ 404 per trip** including diaspora travel; however this is estimated using a static model that has not been adjusted for several years, and assumes that all visitors stay for an average of seven nights and spend a fixed amount on accommodation and other items.

Seasonality of tourist arrivals across the year is not particularly significant, although there is a clear peak in arrivals during December. Non-diaspora and diaspora arrivals track each other closely across the year, although in September 2022, diaspora arrivals were greater than non-diaspora arrivals – the only month this happens.

Focussing specifically on **holiday/leisure tourism** shows that November and December are the peak months, and accounted for almost one-third (31%) of all holiday/leisure arrivals in 2022.

In addition to tourist (overnight visitor) arrivals to Sierra Leone, the country also receives a small number of day visitors. In 2021 these were estimated by NTB to be approximately 4,000, consisting of around 2,000 cruise visitors and 2,000 day visitors arriving overland.

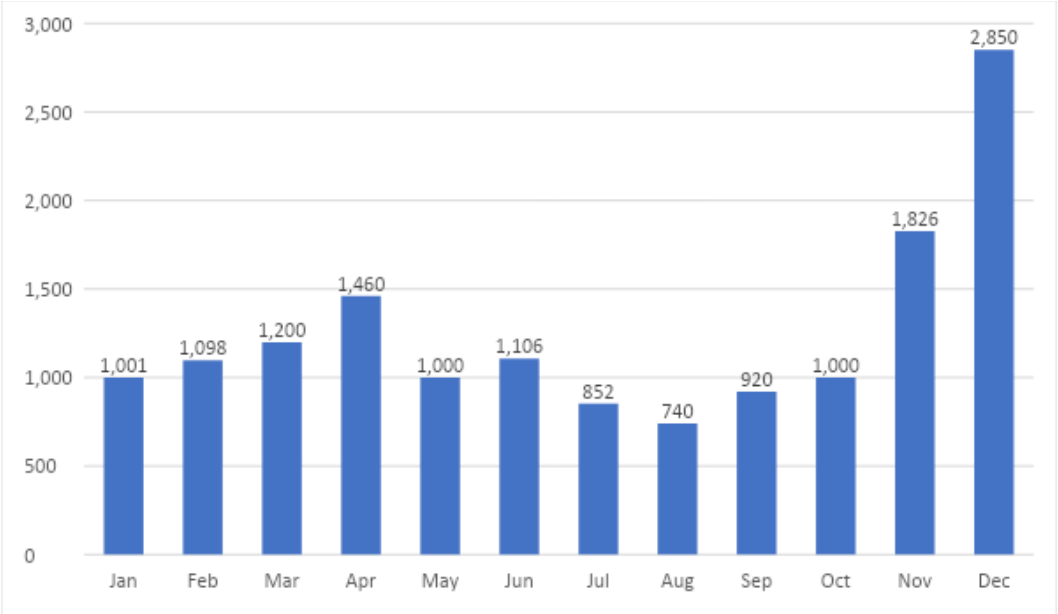


Figure 6 – Holiday Tourist Arrivals by Month, 2022

Source: NTB

Although **domestic tourism** has never been measured in Sierra Leone, it is likely to be characterised by trips to visit friends and relatives (VFR) and some business travel, and is expected to be relatively small by comparison with inbound tourism in terms of visitor expenditure.

However, during the past two decades global economic crises, health crises and pandemics (especially COVID-19 pandemic), wars and other security crises have had severe negative effects on international travel. As a result, the importance of a strong domestic tourism market for providing a sustainable demand base is increasingly being recognised, by destinations all over, as a critical requirement for sustainable tourism growth. While domestic tourism may not offer the same economic potential as international inbound travel does, it can play an important role in hedging the industry against the devastating effects of such crises. In addition, it is widely recognised that citizens are more receptive and understanding of foreign tourism, when they themselves have experienced the attractions offered in their country. Domestic travel also fosters national pride and encourages locals to promote their destinations on social media and by word of mouth. The strategy considers interventions aimed at promoting and improving domestic tourism.

2.1.3 Tourism competitiveness

The Marketing and Branding Strategy formulated in 2022 indicates that Sierra Leone's competitive advantage lies primarily in its coastal and marine resources, combined with its eco-tourism assets. However the lack of tourism development and public infrastructure, poor connectivity, limited skilled manpower, low community awareness of tourism and poor destination reputation has hampered the extent to which the country has been able to leverage these.

The findings of a **comprehensive benchmarking study** of various tourism aspects of five competitor destinations, namely The Gambia, Senegal, Rwanda, Uganda and Ghana demonstrate **just how much more expensive** an average trip to Sierra Leone is than to any of the competitors evaluated.

Figure 7 shows that an average trip to Sierra Leone is approximately US$780 (40%) more expensive than one to the next most expensive destination, Rwanda. It is more than US$1,700 (160%) more expensive than The Gambia and US$1,043 (60%) more expensive than Ghana. The proposed 2% tourism turnover tax will further aggravate the cost discrepancies. The main cost factors

that contribute to Sierra Leone being much more expensive than other destinations are mainly air access and arrival and departure costs (including visa cost).

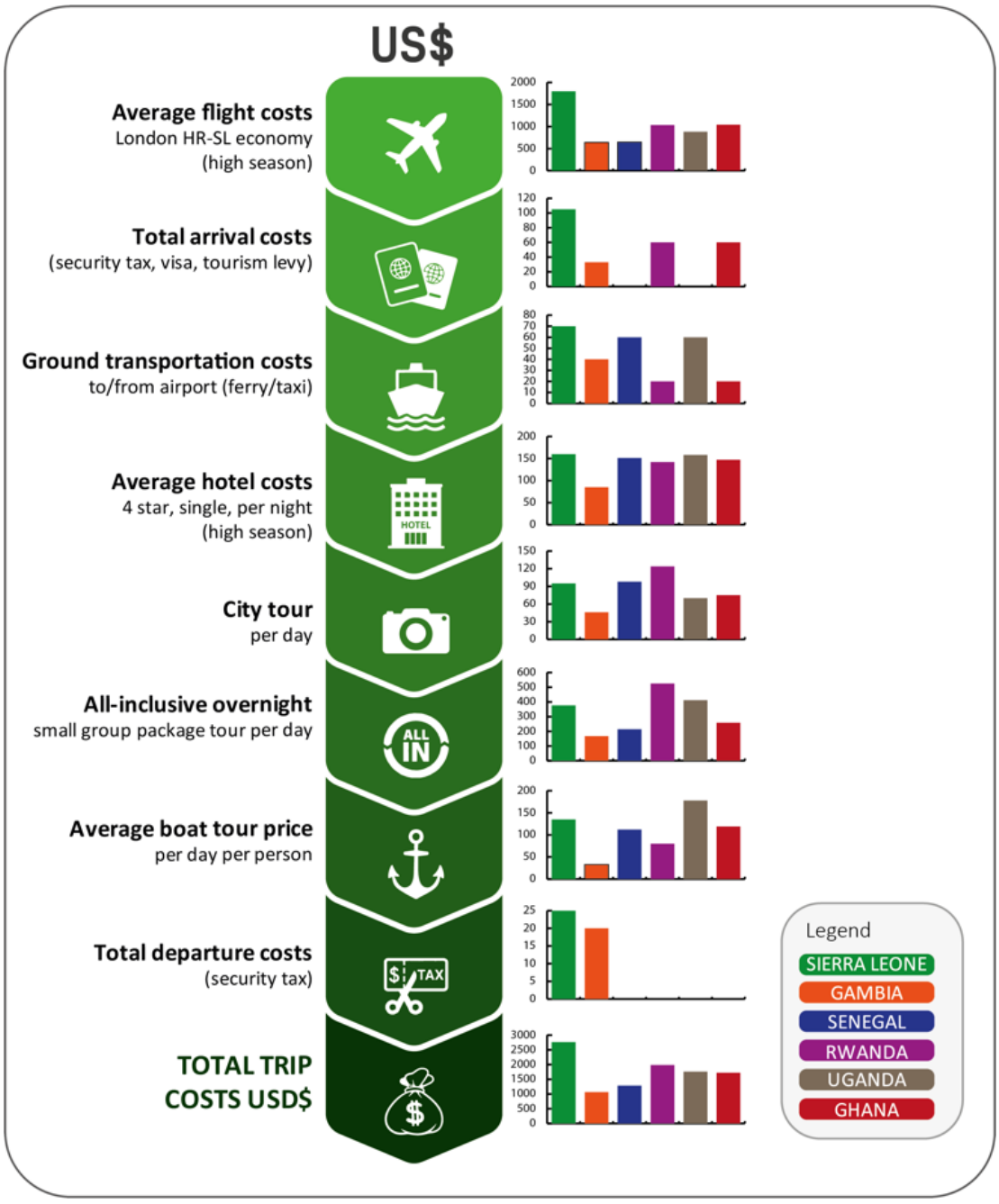


Figure 7 – Trip cost comparison, Sierra Leone and competitors

Source: Consultant research and calculations

The following key lessons have emerged from this benchmarking study:

– A **sustainable growth model, focusing on sustainable, value- rather than volume driven tourism** would suit Sierra Leone.

- Sierra Leone has a **comparative advantage with its coastal and marine resources** and the new Explore Freedom brand provides a **unique brand positioning** in comparison to competitor destinations.
- **Sierra Leone offers a "cluster of gems"** in terms of a rich diversity of cultural and natural products rather than a single "big diamond" like the gorillas in Rwanda.
- **Competitors have competitive advantages for ecotourism and cultural tourism** products due to their better tourism infrastructure, accessibility, and pricing.
- Flights to Sierra Leone **are comparatively more expensive during the tourist** season when the cost of flights to competitor destinations drops significantly.
- **Sierra Leone four-star (Booking.com) accommodation is** roughly the same price range as Rwanda, Uganda, and Senegal but much more expensive than the Gambia.
- Sierra Leone has a **limited offer for international cuisine** in comparison to competitors.
- **Competitor tourist trails and circuits** demonstrate how they can add value, connect the different experiences, and include communities in the value chain.
- Useful lessons can be learnt from **institutional arrangements of Ministries** in competitor destinations such as their inclusion of protected areas/conservation and different structures designed to effectively engage the private sector.
- **Legislation of sustainable tourism practices is** needed to give requirements in this area "teeth" versus just relying on voluntary engagement.

2.2 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT

An assessment of more than 20 acts and policy documents of MoTCA and related MDAs reveals that a) there is a need to revise the Tourism Act of 1990 and b) various policies and acts exist throughout the government that, if implemented and enforced, should secure a sustainable tourism future for Sierra Leone. Key findings are:

- The **National Tourism Policy of 2017** provides a good basis on which to build a responsible and sustainable tourism industry and to guide institutional structure, legal frameworks, strategies and action programmes of MoTCA and its tourism implementing agency NTB.
- The **Ecotourism Policy of 2017** is informative and contains many valid recommendations under its 64 objectives, however there is no evidence that a national ecotourism implementation plan was prepared following the formulation of the policy.
- The **Tourism Act of 1990** has been the cornerstone of tourism institutional arrangements and management of products and assets for the past 30 years. The Tourism Policy of 2017 introduced various new directions for tourism advancement, which has led to a draft **Review of the Tourism Act of 1990.** The review intends substantial policy and structural changes in the tourism industry and indeed sets out to provide the Ministry with additional implementation and ownership powers and capabilities to ensure sustainable tourism development.
- **Sustainable tourism** is generally mentioned and incorporated in tourism policy and legal guidelines, but there is unfortunately limited evidence of practical mechanisms, specific requirements and institutional capacity for ensuring sustainable tourism development.
- While much legal progress has been made in establishing a well-organised **land ownership system** in Sierra Leone, evidence on the ground suggests that land degradation, deforestation and land grabbing are rapidly escalating and are seemingly out of control in many areas of the country.

– The analysis of **tourism-related policies, strategies and acts** of other Ministries identifies a host of business and investment, land, cultural and environmental management mechanisms that are directly related to sustainable growth of the tourism sector. While all of these are important, policies and programmes related to environmental protection, land management and planning, and transport are of **critical importance** for tourism growth. While such mechanisms are meant to direct the programmes of the related MDAs in support of sustainable tourism growth, there is unfortunately **limited evidence of a specific, sustainable tourism focus** in most of the related policies studied. In addition, there is a l**ack of effective coordination** and collaboration between MoTCA and the related MDAs, in influencing the state of sustainable tourism development on the ground.

2.3 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The following issues need to be addressed to ensure sustainable tourism growth in Sierra Leone.

2.3.1 Natural and cultural resources

Rapid environmental degradation with deforestation, poaching, mining and encroachment from farming threaten the future of forests and wildlife in National Parks and beyond (See Fig.8 below).

Wildlife spotting of key species can be disappointing for tourists. Measures to increase sightings (e.g. camera traps, viewing platforms, fencing, butterfly feeding stations) are a win-win for tourism and conservation.

Marine environment and tourism beaches also seriously threatened by sand mining, plastic polution, beach erosion and the proposed fish plant/harbour at Black Johnson beach. This is compounded by rising sea levels and other multiple climate change impacts.

Current community-based tourism (CBT) ventures offering natural and cultural heritage experiences are all facing significant challenges. Community-inclusive approaches and processes are needed to facilitate the engagement of communities.

Tangible cultural heritage sites and monuments are in **poor condition**, in need of care and improvement.

Intangible cultural heritage is diverse and in a **vibrant** condition – but **largely undeveloped and** not "packaged" effectively for tourism.

Sustainable tourism development can both help address, and potentially worsen vulnerability of **women, youth, and children. Empowerment** and livelihood opportunities are required.

Ther is limited active management of the **potential negative social impacts** of tourism on these groups.

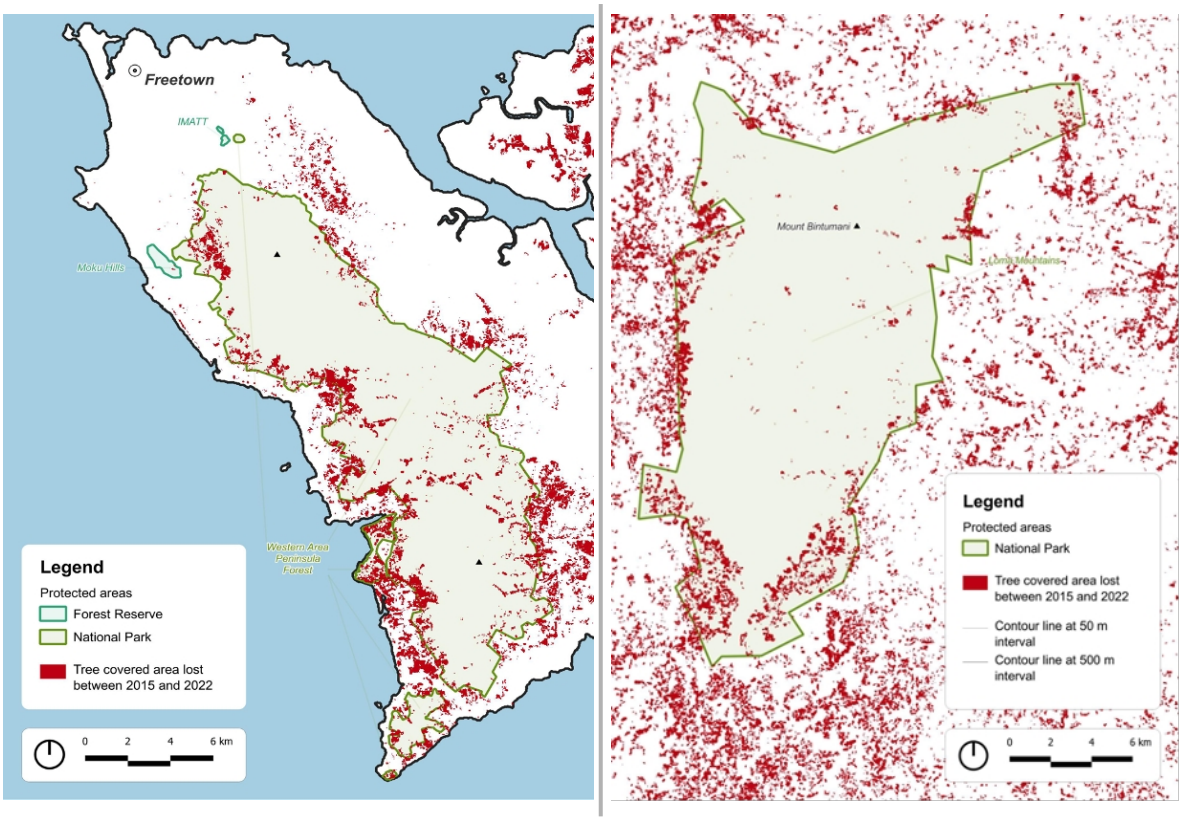


Figure 8 – Extent of tree cover area loss between 2015 and 2022: Western Peninsula NP and Loma Mountains NP

Source: Consultant GIS analysis based on Global Forest Watch data

2.3.2 Facilities and services

There is **insufficient quantity and quality of tourist accommodation**, especially outside Freetown and it will be important to make accommodation a **key element of the tourist experience** through **design and delivery of better (sustainable) accommodation** experiences in partnership with the private sector.

The overall experience and quality of the visitor journey need improvement. Visitor information, signage, toilet facilities, access to online banking and booking facilities require improvements, among others.

There are noticeable **inefficiencies in the quality of the urban public realm** (access, parking, lighting, aesthetics, universal access) especially at beaches of Western Peninsula. Tourism improvements could offer opportunities for access to new facilities, additional livelihoods and linkages with the value chain for women, youth, and MSMEs.

Guides and tour operators face several human resource and financial challenges. Targeted interventions are needed to build capacity and create a more enabling environment.

The current system of licensing and classification of tourism facilities is **outdated** and the new ECOWAS system provides a timely opportunity to address quality, including a new focus on sustainability issues.

Much of the existing tourist accommodation stock has **issues in relation to hygiene, security and safety standards**. Hospitality **services require significant improvements in minimum standard**s and many hospitality providers may need support and incentivizing in this regard. Currently the industry (public and private) has a l**imited focus on sustainability practices** and there is inadequate inclusion and guidance of sustainability in assessment and classification criteria.

2.3.3 Infrastructure

The poor condition of some important connecting main roads and last-mile roads to tourism destinations and **the absence of a functional network of secondary airports** hamper the expansion of tourism beyond Freetown.

Conditions at land border posts are also not on par, including inadequate visitor facilities and lack of protection for tourists.

Facilities and equipment for water transport infrastructure requires urgent improvement. Improvements are needed in the ferry passenger management system and facilities from Freetown International Airport to Freetown. Other improvements relate to boat berthing quality, visitor embarkation processes and safety standards.

From a visitor safety perspective, the **lack of regulations regarding boat quality and safety,** and absence of emergency response facilities requires urgent improvements.

There is much scope for improving the **quality of the public space at key sites** like the Western Peninsula beaches trough proper spatial planning, access and parking management, improved mix of shops and catering and ensuring that architectural styles speak to a sense of place.

Water pollution is a major threat at key beach areas, with discharge of untreated sewage and industrial waste into water bodies, poor sanitation, mining by-products and poor waste management practices affecting seawater quality and threatening pollution of potable water sources.

The lack of communication and **internet connectivity at main tourism points**, hinders marketing and emergency response calls.

The potential impact of climate change on infrastructure should be considered and mitigating and adaptation measures should be implemented.

Other infrastructural challenges include inadequate **electricity power capacity and finance impacts**, insufficient infrastructure and resources for both **solid and liquid waste management** and poor state of existing waste management infrastructure.

2.3.4 Business and investment conditions

Overall tourism business and investment competitiveness needs systematic improvement, especially counteracting the continued negative international perceptions about the country, limited access (including international air connections, in-country air connectivity and high costs of domestic transport), high operational costs, lack of access to finance and business support for local investors, especially MSMEs, excessive red-tape, regulations, taxation, business fees and inadequate investment promotion and facilitation.

Excessive taxes and visitor charges need to be addressed urgently, including aviation taxes and charges, industry and visitor taxes and various compulsory registrations, licenses and fees imposed by other ministries.

Security of **land tenure** and safeguarding of **natural and cultural resources** ate-tourism sites are critical preconditions for **attracting investors.**

Appropriate incentives are required for investment in **high quality, sustainably-managed accommodation.**

Suitable support programmes lack for nurturing tourism micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), including technical advice, ease of business administration, market access and access to affordable finance.

2.3.5 Marketing

Good progress been made with implementing the national marketing and branding strategy and various **lessons have been learnt through the NTB's exposure to the international travel trade**. This includes the realization of just how low international awareness is about Sierra Leone as tourism destination and the fact that potential visitors are mostly attracted by Sierra Leone's story of freedom and recovery from conflict.

Domestic tourism is an important component of the tourism economy. Initiatives to promote domestic tourism and create awareness of tourism among locals, should be continued and strengthened.

The private tourism sector is inadequately involved in international marketing initiatives and a closer public-private partnership in tourism product development and promotional initiatives should be encouraged.

Funding and human resource capacity need to be **sustained** - further strengthening and building on the momentum achieved.

Cost and investment barriers need to be addressed to ensure conversion of marketing investment to actual tourism demand.

2.3.6 Human resources development

Key public sector training **gaps** to fill through **local training include** development of ecotourism, management of new tourism facilities, entrepreneurship, tourism marketing and E-marketing, multi-lingual studies, frontline customer relations and others.

Gaps in the private sector skills are of a technical nature and knowledge is limited in respect of product development, service quality, interpersonal skills, leadership, and administrative, personnel and financial management for tourism business.

Greater engagement of the private sector is needed to ensure appropriate content of tourism curricula and providing opportunities for practical experience of hospitality trainees.

Good progress has been made and current programmes, such as the new tourism curriculum and the rehabilitation of the Hotel and Tourism Training Centre at Milton Margai College, are good foundations to build on.

2.3.7 Tourism monitoring and statistics

UNWTO TOURISM DATA DASHBOARD

The industry **needs a robust system of tourism statistics** that provides ongoing (monthly and annual) and regular tracking of the sector.

Inbound tourist arrivals by country of residence and purpose of visit should be **accurately measured**, rather than system of estimation as is presently the case. This will require **execution of a regular inbound visitor survey** to measure visitor and trip characteristics, in particular visitor expenditure.

A regular monthly and annual online tourism **statistics publication** should be introduced to communicate results transparently.

The volume and value of **domestic tourism requires better understanding**, through execution of an inaugural **domestic and outbound household visitor survey**, possibly linked to the Statistics Sierra Leone Household Income and Expenditure Survey.

Similarly, a regular monthly system **of data collection from a sample of accommodation establishments** in Sierra Leone is required to measure key performance indicators such as room occupancy rate, average length of stay and sustainability practices.

The development of a robust system of tourism statistics, could lay the foundations for **future compilation of a first experimental Tourism Satellite Account** and pilot sustainability indicators, linked to the SDGs.

2.3.8 Tourism institutional capacity

The Tourism Act should be urgently revised to ensure the effective implementation of the NSTP – an important requirement is that it should provide MoTCA with effective powers for ensuring sustainable management of tourism resources and sites.

The **Directorate: Tourism** should be appropriately structured and strengthened and **synergy and clarity of roles between the** tourism directorate and NTB as implementing agency, will be important as tourism expands.

There is an urgent need for a collective and coordinated vision and effective tourism implementation by the **MoTCA and all related MDAs**.

A strong public-private-partnership in sustainable destination development and promotion is a pre-requisite. The Sierra Leone Hospitality and Tourism Association (**SLHATA**) should be strengthened and supported, as collective mouthpiece and development partner on behalf of the private sector.

The government budget allocation of MoTCA and its agencies is extremely limited and will have to be substantially increased over time and will have to be substantially increased over time and complemented by MoTCA's and NTB's own resource mobilisation efforts. While the introduction of the 2% tourism turnover levy will provide more budget for marketing and improvement of services and the visitor experience, **tourism should not be treated as growing source of direct government revenue**, to the detriment of a competitive and business-driven tourism sector.

There are gaps in effective monitoring and evaluation of tourism project implementation and a need to strengthen and build such capacity to inform decision making and revisions to the methods being utilized.

2.4 SUMMARY OF KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GROWTH

Based on the findings of the diagnostic study, the following are key aspects that need to be addressed to ensure effective and sustainable tourism growth.

2.4.1 Critical short term success factors

Containing and reducing visitor costs is a key to Sierra Leone's competitiveness. The analysis clearly demonstrates that a trip to Sierra Leone is much more expensive than one to competitor destinations and that aviation, visitor taxes and other access costs such as visa fees and transfers are substantial contributors in this regard. The recent introduction of a 2% visitor levy to be charged on all good and services consumed in Sierra Leone will further add to trip costs. Fiscal decision makers should be convinced that given a liberalised business environment, tourism is a potentially powerful catalyst for economic growth, which will generate a growing tax income that will in turn provide much needed foreign exchange and livelihood opportunities for the community at large.

Ensuring attractive and sustainable tourism products by protecting, enhancing and sustainably managing the most attractive natural and cultural tourism resources. These include indigenous rainforests, river systems, mountain areas, beautiful beaches and unique sites associated with Sierra Leone's freedom history. Sierra Leone's market positioning and attractiveness is almost entirely based on its variety of natural and cultural sites and landscapes. Many of these are under **severe threat of deforestation, poaching, land grabbing, mining and sandmining, pollution and other illegal activities**, due to poor planning and enforcement as well **as poor collaboration among MDAs** in the interest of sustainable tourism. Should the quality of these resources deteriorate Sierra Leone will lose the very essence of its tourism industry. The approach taken by MoTCA and SLEDP to seek out and invest in **"low-hanging"** infrastructure and visitors services improvements that are less reliant on major infrastructure investments, should be further expanded.

Sustaining and further enhancing destination marketing efforts in implementing the tourism marketing and branding strategy, which has led to important gains in changing negative historical perceptions about Sierra Leone and raising awareness of the tourism opportunities offered. This will require sustained marketing funding and constant improvement of marketing skills and tactics. The importance of domestic tourism as a hedge against the potentially negative impacts of global

health, security, climatic and other crises is increasingly being realised, especially in the wake of the international market devastation caused by COVID-19.

Strengthening the tourism institutional system including the powers, capacity and funding of MoTCA, the capacity of the private sector tourism organisation SLHATA and coordination mechanisms with related MDAs and local councils, communities and private businesses. Updating and promulgating a new Tourism Act will be an urgent and important step towards setting in motion capacity and funding improvements. The proposals contained in the Draft Review of the Tourism Act of 1990 imply a major budget shift allocation in favour of the Directorate of Tourism. This will require substantial budget and staff adjustments, including a significant increase in the overall Ministerial budget allocation. Effective collection, allocation and application of the proposed 2% turnover levy and improved revenue collection would be important for achieving desired funding levels. Substantial refinement and clarification of the Draft Review of the Tourism Act of 1990 is required for turning it into a Tourism Bill.

Developing a robust system of tourism statistics, which is essential for the long term measurement of the tourism sector in Sierra Leone in order to make well informed decisions for planning, marketing, monitoring and regulating the sector. The current system of collecting and managing tourism statistics and calculating the impact and growth of tourism in the country is tenuous. Valid and reliable collection, analysis, publication and management of tourism statistics, including surveys and the development of a TSA are priorities in this regard.

Expanding hospitality (accommodation and catering) capacity, quality and value for money. With the investment in marketing and the international exposure generated, substantial market growth could be expected. Accommodation options and quality outside of Freetown are limited and accommodation aimed at the explorer market segments e.g. organised camping tourism and mobile safaris and ecotourism lodging is largely absent in protected areas. Attracting investment in low volume and highly sustainable eco accommodation set in beautiful forest and marine environment (for example at OKNP, Loma Mountains, Gola Rainforest and Turtle Islands) would be a major benefit. Similarly, improvement of quality and standards of existing hotels or new developments of high-quality facilities, especially in outlying cities and towns would add substantial value. This includes the gradual harmonisation of accommodation classification system to new 2023 ECOWAS standards, as well as measures and standards related to visitor safety and sustainable tourism development.

2.4.2 Other key success factors

Improving international and domestic visitor air, road and water access. Getting to Sierra Leone from most international markets is not only expensive, but also time consuming and proactive efforts are required to engage with and encourage airlines to extend flights to the country. Internally, access to some of the most attractive tourism areas like Gola Rainforest, Sulima, Bonthe/Turtle Islands, Outamba Kilimi, Loma Mountains and others is difficult, time consuming and expensive. Addressing the poor accessibility to many key sites, especially the lack of air connectivity to the South of the country, some main connecting roads and most last-mile roads leading to tourism attractions will be vital for extending tourism beyond the Western Peninsula. The lack of investment in road maintenance and upgrades has resulted in many roads leading to important tourism areas being in poor condition and very difficult to navigate with standard tourism vehicles. Similarly, passenger water transport infrastructure, facilities and equipment require substantial improvement. The current ferry and passenger boat systems urgently need refinements in respect of visitor comfort and safety.

Actively managing the (potential) social and cultural impacts of tourism. This should include popularization of the UNESCO's Cultural Conventions and introduction of a social impact management measures. Key socio-cultural issues that need to be sustainably managed are the com-

modification of culture, cultural change or damage in host communities, poor condition of tangible heritage sites, fair distribution of tourism benefits, child labour, and protection from SECTT and SGBV. It will be important to ensure responsible interaction between tourists and local hosts to avoid unintended negative social impacts.

Enhancing the variety and quality of visitor experiences in Protected Areas. Developing and enhancing tourism in PAs with a focus on birding, nature and adventure tourism could expand the country's tourism potential significantly and bring significant benefits to surrounding local communities and especially marginalised groups like women and youth. Improvements could include investment in suitable accommodation under special tourism concessions; development of camping areas and mobile safaris; improvements of nature trails (various grades and distances); guide training and site interpretation; and development of viewing platforms and hides, among others.

Improving the visitor experience at key beaches. The beaches are Sierra Leone's flagship resources, however most developments along these prime areas have developed haphazardly and without proper planning and controls. Prime beach areas like Lumley, River no 2, Bureh and others need formal and enforceable structure plans that designate spatial uses (e.g. retail, parking, sanitation, pedestrianizing, relaxation and others), provide clear design and sustainability guidelines and establish governance mechanisms for enforcing these.

Maximising the tourism potential of intangible and tangible cultural heritage. Developing, interpreting and "packaging" of new innovative and contemporary cultural products, itineraries and thematic routes with local tour operators and guides drawing on tangible and intangible cultural resources, will substantially enrich the tourism offer. This could include the development of a signature memorial site (e.g. a landmark Freedom museum or park) for remembrance and awareness-raising in respect of the civil war and slavery. Such improvements will require close collaboration between the Ministry and entertainment and creative industries, private tourism stakeholders and local communities.

Ensuring that local communities are truly engaged in, support and benefit from tourism. Local communities in and around tourism attraction areas have limited capacity, resources and experience in developing tourism products. To ensure local preservation and valuing of natural and cultural tourism resources and provide livelihood opportunities through sustainable ecotourism and community-based tourism, local communities should be appropriately empowered with governance, product development and advisory support. Existing CBT ventures are in major need of capacity building, governance interventions and guidance. Opportunities should be formalised for private sector to support CBT and ecotourism initiatives. The development and piloting of a CBT framework that can be customized and contextualized for tourism governance, development and management should be considered.

Maximising opportunities for youth and women empowerment. Current efforts to expand youth and women MSME ownership in the fields of agri-tourism, intangible cultural activities, nature-based tourist experiences, handicraft product development and environmental/conservation activities need further strengthening. This will require actively addressing some of the market and societal barriers facing women and youth.

Strengthening coordination, collaboration and partnerships in tourism. Inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral collaboration between the MoTCA and other MDAs and between MoTCA and the private sector, which is critical for creating a conducive environment for tourism growth and developing natural and cultural heritage is weak and uncoordinated. This also pertains to conservation partnerships to ensure species protection and nature-based and ecotourism activities, which are currently poorly formalised (e.g. with TCS and RSPB) and underdeveloped compared to other African countries (e.g. African Parks, Frankfurt Zoological Society and others).

Improving business and investment conditions. Current support for tourism investment and entrepreneurship is very limited and while the small business empowerment initiatives under SLEDP are welcome interventions, more formalised and longer-term tourism MSME growth mechanisms are needed, e.g. suitable loan financing, business advisory services, supply chain facilitation. Similarly, a suitable incentive package to attract larger scale hospitality investments is required. Difficulties in accessing land for tourism development due to a complex and poorly regulated land administration and governance system and no up-to-date, digitalised land register could lead to ownership disputes and make it difficult to secure land tenure for tourism investment. Similarly lack of access to information about land and investment opportunities can make it difficult for investors to identify potential sites for tourism development. Intentions expressed in the Draft Review of the Tourism Act of 1990, of identifying and declaring appropriate tourism priority development areas (TDAs) and establishing suitable management mechanisms for these, should be prioritised. Private stakeholders should be provided with business advisory and mentorship services.

Addressing gaps in infrastructural services in key tourism areas including potable water, electricity, sanitation and internet connectivity. While it may not be possible to solve the entire system in the short and medium term, focused improvements of infrastructure in priority tourism areas and incentivising investors to engage in sustainable resource uses such as renewable energy, water harvesting and other appropriate technologies should be pursued.

Enhancing internet connectivity and opportunities for digital transformation. Consistent internet access is crucial for tourists. Reliable connectivity enables real-time information access, enhances safety, and allows instant sharing on social media, amplifying the destination's appeal. However, gaps in internet coverage in TDAs can hinder the overall travel experience, potentially leading to missed opportunities and safety concerns. It also limits the potential for the tourism authorities and private sector to capitalise on the latest tools and software models (e.g. virtual reality, artificial intelligence, etc.) for planning, design and management of tourism. It is essential for the government to prioritize robust internet infrastructure in the target tourism development areas and tourist transport corridors to ensure a seamless and enriched visitor experience.

Enhancing skills and capacity of tourism stakeholders, especially at critical points in the visitor journey e.g. tour guiding, frontline service staff, immigration points, community representatives and others. The careers for tour guides and tour leaders, in particular, should be professionalised and incentivised through licensing, standards and advanced training. Achieving the desired capacity building objectives will require longer-term, ongoing training and support on the ground rather than ad hoc short workshops or courses. This is particularly the case for community tourism, tourism MSMEs and guiding where there are different options as to who could best provide such ongoing support. Introducing tourism and tourism-related concepts in primary and secondary school curricula would raise awareness of tourism from an early age. Finally, there is a need to carry out gender and climate change training needs assessments to further mainstream environmental considerations and women's opportunities into the delivery of the NSTP action plan.

Strengthening the focus on sustainability practices by the tourism industry. There is a high risk of cultural damage and a range of other social impacts if tourism is not managed responsibly. While the country has a suite of acts and regulations to conserve and protect natural resources, there are gaps in terms of enforcement and coordination between environment and other sector ministries. Little guidance is given to ministries, agencies, authorities and private businesses in supporting environmental and social impact management across the country. MoTCA needs to facilitate co-ordination and implementation of legal frameworks and sustainability guidelines by strengthening and reinforcing inter-governmental linkages, and also building partnerships with the private sector, development assistance agencies and NGOs in promoting sustainable and responsible tourism development. In addition, the private sector should be encouraged and incentivised to adopt sustainability practices at tourism facilities, accommodation and during activities.

3. Future growth direction

3.1 GLOBAL OUTLOOK

Expectations and opportunities for tourism growth in Sierra Leone are dependent upon conditions in the global environment and these were considered in preparing the strategic plan. The following recent growth trends inform the future growth vision and expectations of this strategic plan:

Tourism is in recovery mode. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 was the worst-ever disaster to hit the tourism industry. The pandemic has caused an estimated loss of USD 2.6 trillion in international tourism revenues since the outbreak in 2020[5]. The global tourism industry is in the recovery phase and looking ahead, the UNWTO panel of experts believe international tourism will return to 2019 levels by 2024.

Various economic and geopolitical conditions should be considered. According to experts, the economic environment continues to be the main factor weighing on the recovery of international tourism. Global inflation and energy prices remain high, resulting in higher transport and accommodation costs. This translates into a preference for value for money, a more cautious attitude towards spending, travel closer to home or shorter trips. The high cost of travel to Sierra Leone will have detrimental effect on growth, unless arrested and reduced as a matter of urgency.

Sustainable and outdoor travel is gaining ground: Segments with an important sustainability component such as nature, mountain, rural, gastronomy, adventure, ecotourism and health tourism are gaining preference among consumers. While Sierra Leone's tourism policies are heading in the right direction, conservation of natural and cultural resources and improvement of tourism experiences are required.

Domestic and regional tourism have important roles to play: While domestic tourism continues to support the recovery in an important number of destinations, (in particular in those with a large domestic market), it is contributing to the recovery only partially, which reflects the importance of international tourism in many destinations as well as the sustained recovery of international and regional demand.

Other key emerging travel trends that should be considered, as highlighted by UNWTO (*www.unwto.org*), Skift (*www.skift.com*)[6], Intrepid Travel (*www.intrepidtravel.com*)[7], and *www.Booking.com*[8] include:

- **Authenticity of the experience and opportunities to "get off the beaten track" are increasingly valued.** Sierra Leone is rated highly for its authentic and warm hospitality and its welcoming spirit and this should be further developed in a responsible manner.

[5] *UNWTO (2023) World Tourism Barometer. Vol. 21, Issues 2, May 2023*
[6] *https://skift.com/megatrends-2023*
[7] *https://www.intrepidtravel.com/adventures/travel-trends-2020*
[8] *https://www.sustainability.booking.com*

- **Millennial and Generation Z (youth) travel is growing throughout the world** and is fast emerging as a market force in tourism. Younger travellers are adventurous, prefer experiential and interactive travel and share their experiences online through a wide range of channels.
- **Online and mobile connectivity are indispensable elements of the visitor experience,** with visitors using mobile phones at all stages of the visitor journey for travel safety and directions, finding accommodation, restaurants and activities also for social media promotion.
- **Being able to manage and respond to health and safety crises is important**, given regular occurrences of such events, which also affect travel patterns. Preparing for potential crises, prevention of negative safety incidents and building a stronger domestic market are important factors.
- **Market tastes and interests continuously evolve** and markets are increasingly segmented by travel behaviour and preferences, rather than geographic or national differences. It is important to develop tourism to suit specific target market segments and to conduct regular market research to assess visitor growth patterns and satisfaction levels.

3.2 VISION

An ambitious vision is set, as the ideal for which the tourism sector will strive during the next 10 years:

By 2033 Sierra Leone is globally celebrated as a sustainably managed tourism destination, renowned for her natural beauty, cultural experiences and warm hospitality, while tourism growth consistently attains global benchmarks, contributes to economic prosperity and supports environmental and cultural conservation, with local communities actively partaking in the sector and benefiting from its proceeds.

3.3 COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

Sierra Leone is a largely undiscovered, multi-dimensional destination that offers a range of unique experiences. The country's Unique Selling Points (USPs) include:

Natural experiences, with emphasis on:

- The superb beaches and islands of the Sierra Leone coastline.
- Outdoor active opportunities such as hiking, trekking, mountain biking, surfing, sport fishing and other marine sports.
- The Upper-Guinea rainforest – its biodiversity, characteristics, mystique and solitude.
- Unique wildlife species – especially the chimpanzees, other primates in the wild, the pigmy hippo and the touching heritage of the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary.
- Exceptional birdlife – threatened species like the White-throated Bee-eater (national bird) and near endemic species of malimbes, hornbills, cuckoos, parrots, owls, trogons, honeyguides, woodpeckers, warblers, orioles, bush-shrikes, guineafowl, francolins and others.

Cultural experiences with emphasis on:

- The melting pot of indigenous cultures and social traditions.
- The European influences due to the country's history.
- Unique dishes such casava leaf and potato leaf stews, gari, superb seafood and others.

- Local traditional and contemporary music and associated instruments.
- Special handicraft traditions such as palm-leaf weaving (shuku-blai vessel), gara cloth and others.

People and local lifestyle experiences, with emphasis on:

- General upbeat spirit, « love of life », welcoming of visitors, resilience and a positive attitude irrespective of challenges.
- The vibrancy of Freetown and other cities.
- Rural village life, traditions and living in harmony with nature.
- Agricultural practices, especially tilling and planting methods.
- Fishing communities and fisherman culture.

History, with emphasis on:

- The slavery history and freedom of slaves and the various landmarks in this regard.
- The process towards peace and stability following times of turmoil.
- The amazing tolerance of various belief systems and religions living in harmony.

As identified in the Sierra Leone Marketing and Branding Strategy[9] and demonstrated in Figure 9 below, visitors are able to explore the true meaning of "Freedom" in all its facets in Sierra Leone, as manifested so boldly in the history, nature, cultural heritage, history and lifestyle of the people and the country.

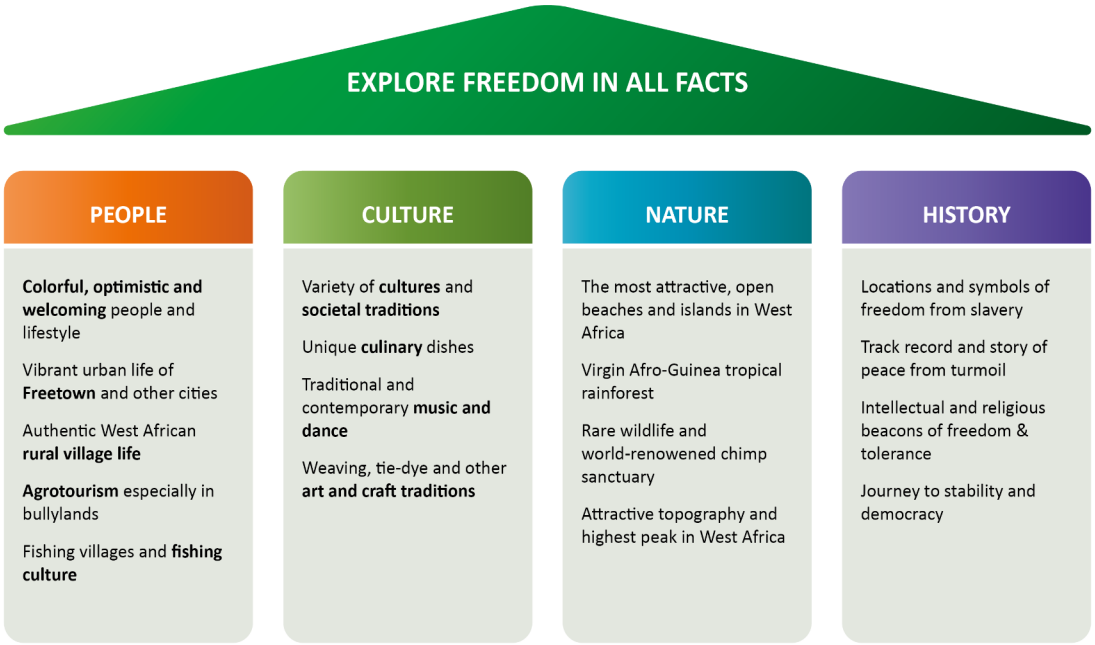


Figure 9 – Pillars of Sierra Leone's Differentiated Market Positioning

[9] *NTB (2022) Sierra Leone National Tourism Marketing and Branding Strategy and Implementation Plan.*

3.4 SUSTAINABLE GROWTH PRINCIPLES

The following principles will underpin Sierra Leone's growth vision and are considered and incorporated in all tourism strategies and activities.

- **Placing environmental, cultural and social sustainability at the heart of the tourism strategy** and following a responsible and regenerative development approach, to ensure tourism becomes a vehicle for addressing current challenges and one that enables communities and the ecosystem to thrive.
- Aligning it with the UN's **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), in particular with those where tourism has an active role to play[10], namely:
- Goal 8: promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 12: ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 14: conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- **Focusing on attracting** experiential travellers, who want more out of a trip than only "looking" and who prefer to touch, taste and engage with the environment, the people and their traditions. This approach allows for public-private-community partnerships, local provision of services and products and retaining visitor expenditure in the local tourism value chain. It also requires a dynamic public-private-community partnership.
- **Creating a suitable environment for experiential and business travel.** In its current development stage Sierra Leone is primarily an activity-oriented travel destination, rather than a holiday destination for relaxation. This has implications across the entire tourism value chain, especially for the provision of visitor facilities, safety and infrastructure, visitor interactions with nature and culture, conserving natural and cultural resources, community involvement and participation, etc. These aspects will be addressed holistically through implementation of this integrated NSTP.
- **Ensuring safety and well-being of visitors and locals by promoting tourism ethics** and providing adequate safety, health and emergency services to visitors.
- **Resilience to external shocks** related to natural disasters, climate change, health pandemics, civil wars, terror attacks and other disruptive external events.
- **Facilitating public-private-community tourism partnerships,** with tourism being:
- government led - i.e. the government setting and enforcing a sustainable and conducive environment for tourism growth;
- private sector driven - i.e. the private sector investing in and managing profitable tourism ventures; and
- community-inclusive – i.e. local communities taking ownership of local tourism resources, actively engaging in delivery and decision-making, and benefitting equitably from the tourism proceeds derived.
- **Promoting and empowering** women, the physically challenged and youth with tourism employment, business and capacity-building opportunities.

[10] *UNWTO (2023) Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through Tourism – Toolkit of Indicators for Projects (TIPs)*

- **Integrating gender and climate change main streaming** into all tourism policy, plans and projects aimed at achieving gender equality and environmental sustainability.
- **Prioritising tourism training and capacity building** and capitalise on digital communication technology to ensure continuous improvement in tourism quality and service levels,.
- **Prioritising linkages and opportunities in the tourism value chain for MSMEs** and local producers.
- **Promoting circular business operations** that reduce waste and foster reuse of materials.
- **Striving to attract responsible tourists** who are environmentally aware, culturally sensitive and who seek meaningful social encounters.

3.5 GROWTH SCENARIOS AND OBJECTIVES

Tourism is globally recognised as a potential catalyst for sustainable environmental, socio-cultural and economic development. Not only is it one of the world's largest industries, capable of injecting large amounts of foreign exchange into developing economies, but it is also mostly non-consumptive, job-intensive and provides an easy entry point for entrepreneurs and local communities to obtain a stake in the tourism value chain.

However, deriving such benefits requires proactive policies and actions by the Government, private sector and citizens, to ensure a well-oiled and high-quality tourism destination value chain. As such, the future of tourism is largely in their hands.

The following section sets out three tourism scenarios that could evolve in Sierra Leone over the next decade and longer, depending on the extent to which the success factors outlined in the situation analysis are addressed and managed.

3.5.1 Growth scenarios

The implications of three potential tourism growth scenarios are outlined below. These consider the key issues and critical success factors for sustainable tourism growth, outlined in the Diagnostic Report[11] and summarised in Section 2 above.

The determining factor in these scenarios is the degree of strategy implementation. It is important to note that these are not alternatives from which to select. Instead, they depict three potential outcomes for the national tourism industry, contingent upon whether the strategy's execution has been weak, moderate, or exceptionally robust.

The scenarios outlined are:

Scenario 1: Strangled. This scenario should be avoided at all costs. In this scenario tourism slowly grinds to a minimal level as the tourism value chain is increasingly obstructed by economic growth barriers and absent or poor sustainable management practices.

Scenario 2: Plodding along. This scenario points to failed and half-hearted attempts to implement the tourism strategy. In this scenario tourism grows at sub-optimal levels, as the tourism value chain remains constrained by unaddressed barriers and limited sustainable management of tourism impacts.

[11] *MoTCA, 2023 Sierra Leone National Strategic Tourism Plan, Diagnostic Volume I, Core Report.*

Scenario 3: Taking off. This is the scenario that the strategy aims to achieve. In this scenario sustainable tourism growth is achieved, as the tourism value chain increasingly expands, negative social and environmental factors are addressed with benefits shared equitably at local level.

CONDITIONS UNDERPINNING THE SCENARIOS

The potential conditions that underpin each of the three scenarios are summarised as follows:

Table 4 – Conditions underpinning the scenarios

SCENARIO 1: STRANGLED	SCENARIO 2: PLODDING ALONG	SCENARIO 3: TAKING OFF
Cost, quality and value for money		
– More taxes and charges making the country increasingly expensive – The quality and sustainability of accommodation, food and other visitor services fail to improve, resulting in constantly declining value for money, compared to competitors.	– Although costs stabilize, access and other costs remain higher than those of key competitors. – While pockets of excellence exist, quality, sustainability and service standards of accommodation, food and other visitor services generally remain below par, and overall value for money remains questionable.	– Cost of travel to Sierra Leone stabilises and declines significantly as visitor access charges and other tourism-related taxes are reduced and more airlines fly to the country. – The variety, quality, and sustainability of accommodation, food and other visitor services improve consistently, resulting in ever-improving value for money and an easier sell.
Access and infrastructure		
– International and domestic air access remain constrained. – Infrastructure in and around most tourism areas deteriorates, with road access deteriorating and no effective waste management, clean water, energy, etc. being provided in support of sustainable tourism. – Tourist safety deteriorates with safety incidents at sea and on land that impact on the country's image.	– International air access remains constricted and there is no domestic access. – Inability to unlock access to tourism resources and attractions outside of the Western Peninsula with deteriorating road conditions, poor and unsustainable supporting infrastructure and lack of domestic air access. – Quality of sea and land transport, facilities, tourism safety and services remain below par and only hardy travellers are prepared to visit and tour around.	– International flight routes and connections are substantially expanded. – Main tourism corridors to tourism attractions outside of the Western Peninsula are in good condition. – Connecting (last mile) roads are regularly maintained, allowing access by most types of tourism vehicles, and reducing the time required to reach tourism sites. – Domestic air access is available, especially to the South of the country. – Sea and land transport is safe and emergency services function well. Supporting tourism infrastructure is being developed sustainably.
Resources and sustainability		
– The main tourism resources of the Western Peninsula continuously deteriorate due to deforestation, urban sprawl, sand mining along beaches, pollution and continuous deterioration of the nature and cultural resource base. – Lack of sustainable management capacity further exacerbates these negative impacts.	– The current situation persists at the main tourism sites, with small improvements here and there. – There is little proper management of key tourism zones in respect of land management, investment expansion and incentives, MSME support, visitor services and other measures for ensuring sustainable tourism development. – Some progress has been made in	– Priority Tourism Development Zones are clearly designated, have approved structure plans that incorporate sustainability concerns and are constantly improved. – Dedicated capacity is in place to enforce land use regulations and development guidelines and to manage investment promotion, business facilitation, community empowerment and other requirements for sustainable tourism. – The main natural and cultural resources are

SCENARIO 1: STRANGLED	SCENARIO 2: PLODDING ALONG	SCENARIO 3: TAKING OFF
– Lack of conservation efforts and neglect lead to the irreparable loss of natural and cultural assets. – Due do unbridled development effects of climate change and other global shocks have a devastating effect on tourism sites, infrastructure and travel conditions. There are accelerated rates of coastal recession, erosion, and destruction of infrastructure as well as displacement of people in coastal communities.	mitigating the impacts of climate change and other global shocks, however these are inadequate and tourism sites, infrastructure and travel conditions remain severely disrupted by climatic, health, safety and other disasters. Mangrove and forest deforestation stabilises, but is not replenished. Coastal erosion continues at normal levels. Disease outbreaks continue at usual levels.	supported by strong conservation efforts; they are well-preserved and managed sustainably with a regenerative approach. – Effective crisis management and protective measures have been planned and implemented to mitigate the effects of climate change and other global shock. The tourism sector is increasingly resilient and able recover from such events at speed. Coastal mangrove forests are protected and expanded to surpass historical levels. Fish stocks are replenished in mangrove nurseries. Forest areas are regenerated and replanted in partnership with host communities, acting as carbon sinks and sources of non-timber-forest-product livelihood resources.
Community and social empowerment		
– Local communities are disillusioned with tourism and see no reason to protect and preserve tourism attractions. – Tourism benefits flow to only a few individuals and communities become antagonistic towards visitors. – Gender and youth inequalities are largely ignored in tourism policies, plans and industry practices and discrimination persists.	– Minority of local communities benefit from tourism and those that do continue to suffer from poor management, exclusion from decision-making and no transparent benefit sharing. – Community conflicts increase over tourism benefits and resources. – Tourism policies, projects and business practices acknowledge inequalities facing women and the youth but fail to address these actively.	– Communities in and around tourism attractions and designated tourism development areas benefit directly from and are engaged in sustainable tourism development and management, with women and young people gaining significant livelihood opportunities. – As a result their quality of life constantly improves, they warmly welcome guests and they care for and preserve the natural and cultural resources in their areas. – Tourism policies, projects and business practices are gender transformative, empower the youth and address the causes of gender- and youth-based inequalities, such as harmful gender and youth roles, norms and power relations.
Sector cohesion and capacity		
– The Ministry remains constrained by a lack of resources and powers to implement the strategic plan. – The management of key tourism resources remain in the hands of other MDAs, who pay lip service to Government's tourism ambitions. – There is little trust and no real partnership between the public and private sectors in tourism and the government acts with little consultation, treating tourism as a source of tax revenue rather than a longer-	– The Ministry's budget allocation, staff capacity and powers improve slowly, mainly through some support from international development partners. – Inter-governmental collaboration and coordination improves somewhat; however the management of key tourism resources remain firmly in the hands of other MDAs and tourism is not at the centre of their programmes. – Public and private sectors meet occasionally but with little effect.	– The Ministry's budget and staff capacity is significantly increased, to deal effectively with the implementation of the strategic plan. International development partners continue to show a strong commitment to supporting tourism. – The Ministry has jurisdiction of key tourism areas and processes, resulting in a marked improvement in the quality and sustainability of tourism areas, sites, facilities and services. – A cluster of tourism related MDAs fully support and participate in tourism implementation. – There is a strong public-private partnership with tourism being government-led, and

SCENARIO 1: STRANGLED	SCENARIO 2: PLODDING ALONG	SCENARIO 3: TAKING OFF
term sustainable economic growth sector.	– The government is giving tourism some standard tax relief but still regard tourism as a direct public revenue earner.	private business driven. – The government, at the highest level, is committed to implementing a competitive and incentivised tourism sector.

3.5.2 Scenario growth implications

A tourism growth model has been developed to project the growth implications of the three potential scenarios for the development of tourism in Sierra Leone over the period 2023 to 2033.

Growth rate assumptions for each of the scenarios over the period to 2033 are shown in Figures 10, 11 and 12 below. The model generates a direct link between the growth of inbound visitor arrivals and their expenditure, as well as the number of jobs generated due to tourism in tourism characteristic industries; these are the key outputs of the model.

Note that the projections exclude visitation by Sierra Leone Diaspora, given the fluctuating nature of this segment and its dependence on friendship and family relationships and events, rather than destination marketing and development interventions.

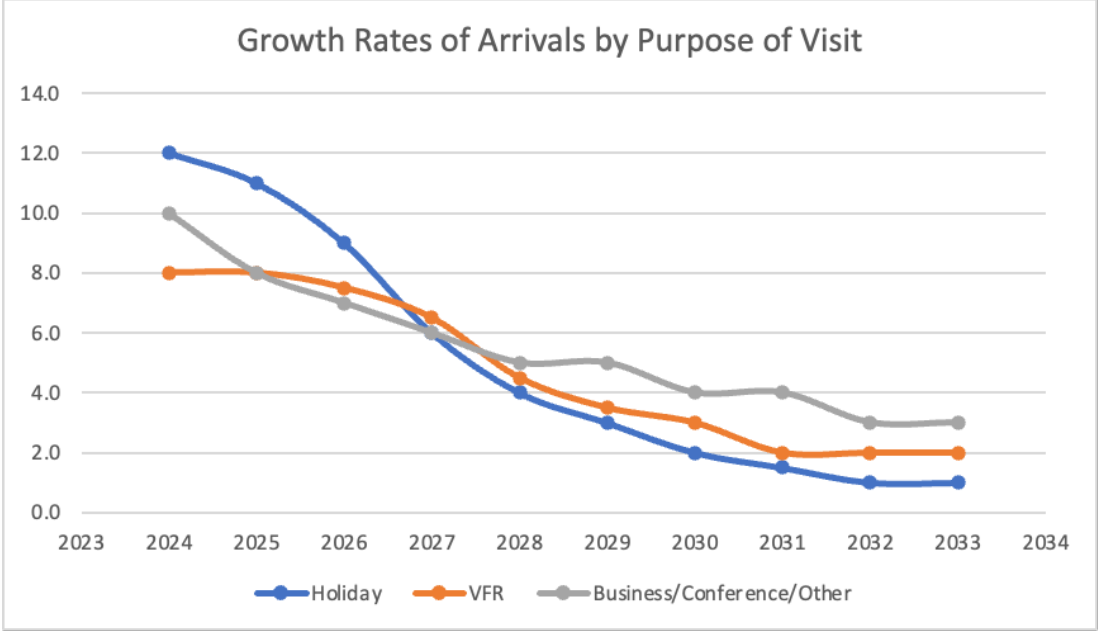


Figure 10 – Growth rates of international tourism arrivals for Scenario 1: Strangled

Source: consultants' estimates

Under scenario 1 tourism arrivals will retain buoyancy for a few years, but as tourism conditions deteriorate all segments will decline significantly within two to three years and holiday arrivals, in particular will grind to a virtual halt within six to seven years. Arrivals by VFR, diaspora and business visitors will probably decline at a slower pace, but due to Sierra Leone's negative international image visitation will be limited to only essential travel.

In addition to these growth rates for international inbound arrivals, it is assumed that the average spend per trip will not increase from that measured in 2022 (at today's prices).

Table 5 – Growth rates for Scenario 1: Strangled

GROWTH RATES	HOLIDAY	VFR	BUS/CON/OTHER
2024	12.0	8.0	10.0
2025	11.0	8.0	8.0
2026	9.0	7.5	7.0
2027	6.0	6.5	6.0
2028	4.0	4.5	5.0
2029	3.0	3.5	5.0
2030	2.0	3.0	4.0
2031	1.5	2.0	4.0
2032	1.0	2.0	3.0
2033	1.0	2.0	3.0

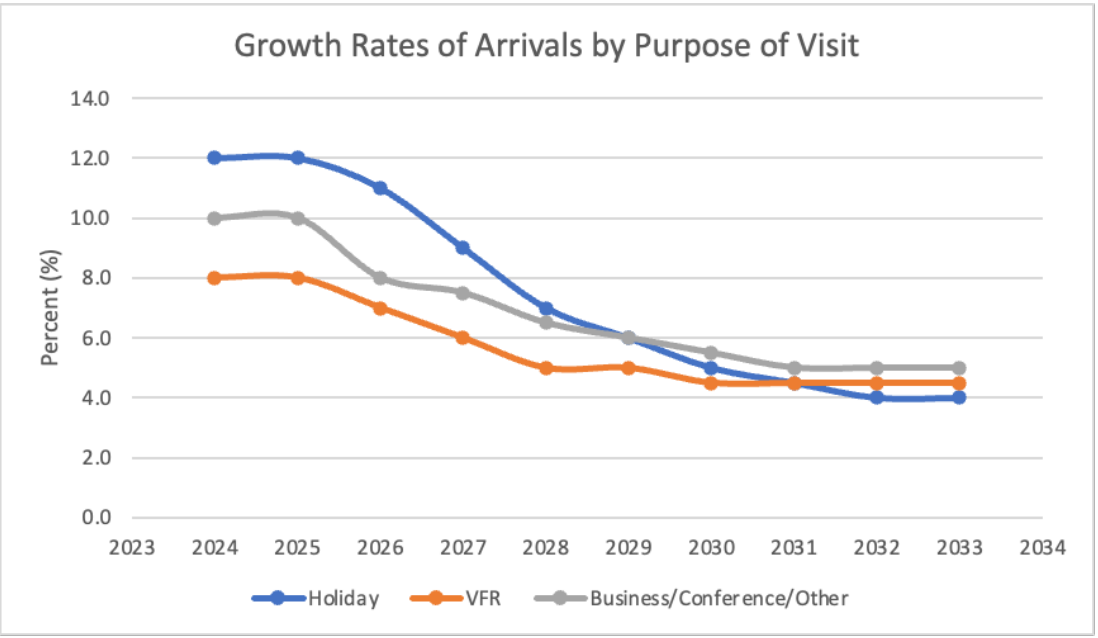


Figure 11 – Growth rates of international tourism arrivals for Scenario 2: Plodding Along

Source: consultants' estimates

Under Scenario 2 tourism arrivals will retain buoyancy for longer than in Scenario 1, but after a few years, once markets become aware of the ever-deteriorating state of tourism resources and the cost of travel continues to rise, growth of all segments will slow down and tourism will eventually perform at mediocre levels. Sierra Leone will be a travel option only for the hardiest of travellers.

In addition to these growth rates for international inbound arrivals, it is assumed that the average spend per trip will increase at 1.5% per annum from that measured in 2022 (at today's prices).

Table 6 – Growth rates for Scenario 2: Plodding along

GROWTH RATES	HOLIDAY	VFR	BUS/CON/OTHER
2024	12.0	8.0	10.0
2025	12.0	8.0	10.0
2026	11.0	7.0	8.0
2027	9.0	6.0	7.5
2028	7.0	5.0	6.5
2029	6.0	5.0	6.0
2030	5.0	4.5	5.5
2031	4.5	4.5	5.0
2032	4.0	4.5	5.0
2033	4.0	4.5	5.0

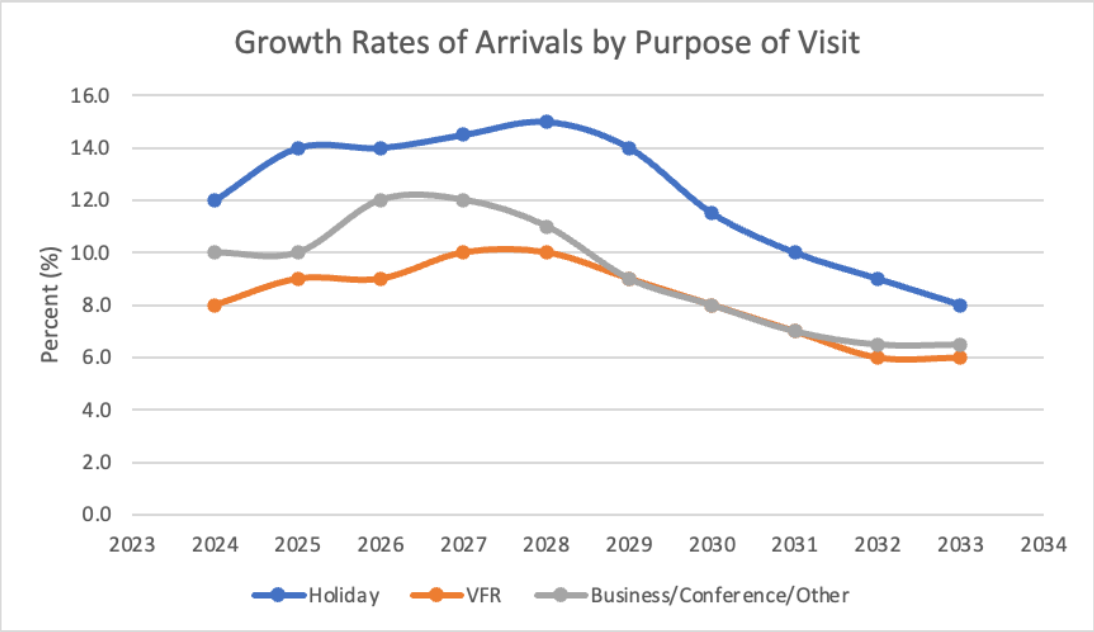


Figure 12 – Growth rates of international tourism arrivals for Scenario 3: Taking Off

Source: consultants' estimates

Scenario 3 is the one that Sierra Leone will be pursuing. Under this scenario tourism arrivals will surge for the next 6 years as marketing reaps benefits, investment in tourism booms and conditions improve, and will only then start tapering down slowly as the growth rates are based on a higher volume of travellers. Similarly VFR and diaspora travel will be bolstered as Sierra Leoneans elsewhere are keen to experience tourism successes in the country. Business visits will equally grow strongly due to tourism construction and expansion of supply lines.

In addition to these growth rates for international inbound arrivals, it is assumed that the average spend per trip will increase at 2.5% per annum from that measured in 2022 (at today's prices), as visitors are offered more opportunities of engagement and products to choose from.

Table 7 – Growth rates for Scenario 3: Taking Off

GROWTH RATES	HOLIDAY	VFR	BUS/CON/OTHER
2024	12.0	8.0	10.0
2025	14.0	9.0	10.0
2026	14.0	9.0	12.0
2027	14.5	10.0	12.0
2028	15.0	10.0	11.0
2029	14.0	9.0	9.0
2030	11.5	8.0	8.0
2031	10.0	7.0	7.0
2032	9.0	6.0	6.5
2033	8.0	6.0	6.5

Based on these growth scenarios, the number of inbound arrivals, their expenditure, and jobs created by tourism in the tourism characteristic industries (as defined by UNWTO) in 2033 are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 – Growth projections in 2033 by scenario (Excl. Diaspora)

MEASURE	SCENARIO 1 STRANGLED	SCENARIO 2 PLODDING ALONG	SCENARIO 3 TAKING OFF
Annual Inbound Arrivals	93,704	109,437	147,930
10-year CAGR Arrivals	5.1%	6.7%	10.1%
Annual Visitor Spend (US$ m)	63.4	85.2	125.0
10-year CAGR Expenditure	4.9%	8.1%	12.0%
EMPLOYMENT			
Hotels	7,086	8,276	11,187
Other Accommodation	3,676	4,294	5,804
Food and Drink	16,202	18,922	25,578
Transport	15,414	18,002	24,334
Tour Operator/Travel Agent	3,096	3,616	4,887
Recreation/Entertainment	3,474	4,057	5,484
TOTAL JOBS	**48,948**	**57,167**	**77,274**

Source: consultants' estimates

The expected actual growth of inbound arrivals, expenditure and jobs over the period 2023 to 2033 are shown in Figures13, 14 and 15 below.

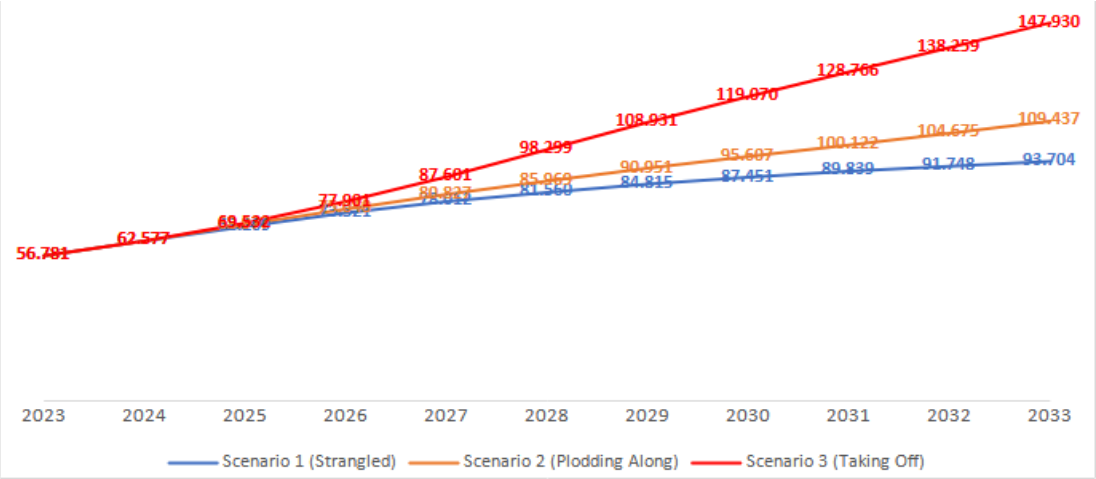


Figure 13 – Projected inbound arrivals by scenario (2023-2033)

Source: consultants' estimates

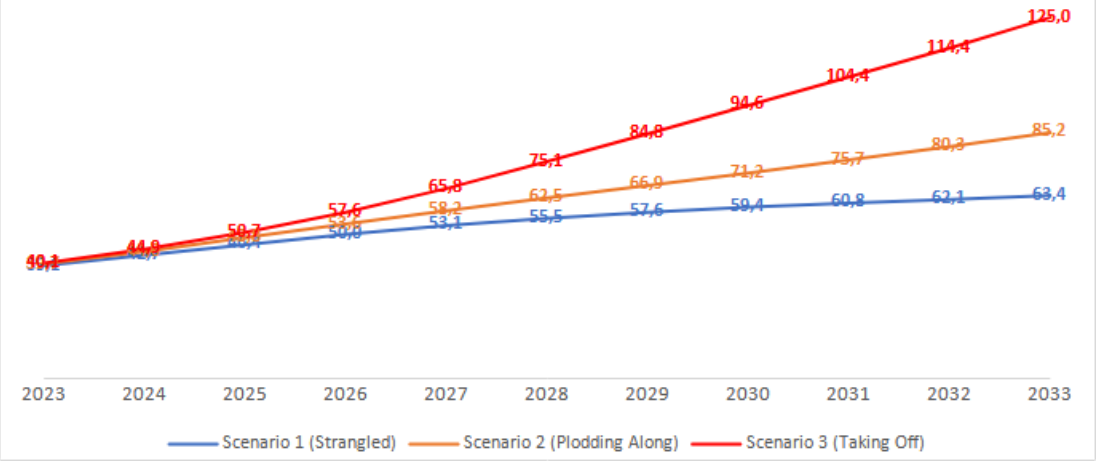


Figure 14 – Projected inbound spend by scenario (2023-2033)

Source: consultants' estimates

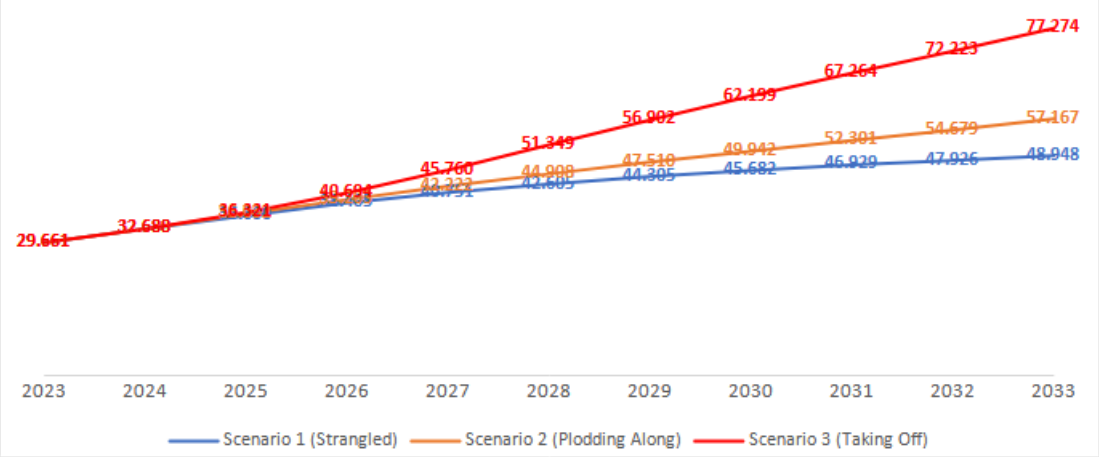


Figure 15 – Projected employment by scenario (2023-2033)

Source: consultants' estimates

As can be seen from the table and figures, there is a significant difference in the 10-year outcome (2033), depending on which scenario materialises.

In terms of tourism arrivals, under the "Taking Off" Scenario, Sierra Leone will receive in the order **of 38,500 more tourists per annum** by 2033, than under the "Plodding Along" scenario and in the order of 54,200 more than under the "Strangled" scenario.

In terms of direct tourism expenditure under the "Taking Off" Scenario, Sierra Leone's international **tourism receipts** will be in the order of **US$40 million more per annum** by 2033, than under the "Plodding Along" scenario and in the order of US$62.2 million more than under the "Strangled" scenario.

In terms of direct tourism employment, under the "Taking Off" Scenario, tourism will sustain in the order of **20,100 more jobs** by 2033, than under the "Plodding Along" scenario and in the order of 28,300 more jobs than under the "Strangled" scenario.

The growth model can be used to assess future demand for accommodation and the ability for Sierra Leone to satisfy demand under Scenario 3, based on current supply.

It is assumed that leisure and business visitors to the country mainly utilise Class 1 and 2 accommodation. At present there are 1,540 rooms in hotels of these two classes. Based on Scenario 3 growth rates of leisure and business arrivals, and assuming an average length of stay of 7 nights, and average number of guests per room of 1.5 for leisure visitors and 1.0 for business visitors, it is possible to estimate room occupancy rates in these accommodation over the period 2023 to 2033.

Table 9 clearly shows that **after 2029 there would not be sufficient supply** of Class 1 and 2 hotels to satisfy demand.

Table 9 – Room occupancy rates in Class 1 and 2 accommodation for Scenario 3 (2023-2033)

YEAR	ROOM OCCUPANCY RATE (%) IN CLASS 1 AND 2 HOTELS
2023	47.4
2024	52.5
2025	58.4
2026	65.8
2027	74.3
2028	83.5
2029	92.5
2030	101.1
2031	109.3
2032	117.5
2033	125.8

Source: consultants' estimates

It is assumed that investment in additional hotel capacity of Class 1 and 2 hotels will become feasible when average occupancy levels start exceeding 65%. According to the projections, under the "Taking off" scenario the **65% average occupancy could be reached as early as 2026**. In reality, due to seasonality of tourism (rather than arrivals being spread evenly across the year), problems due to lack of supply during high-season periods would be encountered as early as 2025.

3.5.3 Growth objectives

Based on Sierra Leone pursuing the high-road scenario, "Taking off", the following growth targets are set for this NSTP[12]:

- **Tourism Arrivals:** Increase international tourist arrivals to Sierra Leone from 56,417 in 2022 to 147,930 in 2033, at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10.1% per annum.
- **Tourism receipts:** Increase tourism receipts from US$40.3 million in 2022 to US$125 million in 2033, at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12% per annum.
- **Tourism Jobs:** Increase direct tourism jobs from 29,471 in 2022 to 77,274 in 2033, at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10% per annum.

3.6 PRODUCT EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES

Various target market segments were identified and profiled in the Sierra Leone Marketing and Branding Strategy. The following section sets out a strategic approach for ensuring complementarity between product development interventions and market segments targeted.

3.6.1 Product-market expansion model

Gardiner and Scott adapted and applied Ansoff's Product-Market Expansion Matrix[13] to tourism destinations and called it the Destination Innovation Matrix[14]. This matrix could be applied to scope out product development and marketing growth opportunities in Sierra Leone.

Figure 16 – Destination Innovation Matrix (Gardiner and Scott, 2018)

[12] *NOTE: while an ambitious growth rate is set for tourism arrivals, the main focus of the strategy will always be on increasing the yield (expenditure) per visitor.*

[13] *Ansoff, H.L. (1965) Corporate Strategy. McGraw-Hill, New York*

[14] *Gardiner, S., & Scott, N. (2018) Destination Innovation Matrix: A framework for new tourism experience and market development. Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 10, 122-131.*

Consolidation (Existing Experiences for Existing Market Segments)

This option is the simplest and least risky. Rather than trying to develop a new idea, new ways are found to make the existing product offer more appealing and successful within the current visitor market. The key focus is on attracting more visitors and yielding more value from market segments that already frequent the destinations, without major expansion and investment in completely new experiences, products and services.

Experience Innovation (New Experiences for Existing Market Segments)

This option is also called product or service expansion, i.e. adding new products and experiences for existing markets and segments to increase visitor revenue, length of stay and expenditure. The key focus is on attracting investment in new, innovative experiences, products and services that could yield more value from market segments that already frequent the region.

Market Innovation (Existing Experiences for New Market Segments)

This option includes promoting existing experiences and products in regions, to new growth source markets and segments. The key focus is on attracting visitors from markets and segments that do not yet frequent the destination, without major expansion and investment in new experiences, products or services.

Transformational Innovation (New Experiences for New Market Segments)

This option requires innovation through attracting investment in new experiences to attract new visitor markets and segments.

The four approaches were applied to Sierra Leone, as follows.

3.6.2 Market-product expansion opportunities

The sections below describe the product preferences of target market segments that were outlined in the marketing section and identifies potential opportunities for expanding existing products and experiences, as well as for developing new products and experiences.

Five target market segments and related product development opportunities are outlined in accordance with the product expansion model outlined above, including:

- **Existing market segments** that currently comprise the bulk of Sierra Leone's leisure travellers and could benefit from product consolidation and product innovation, namely:
- **Domestic and regional breaks**, i.e. Sierra Leoneans travelling in their own country, and regional travellers taking short breaks and business travel to Sierra Leone;
- **Intrepid adventurers**, i.e. mainly foreign tourists that are in search of new, challenging adventurous places to travel to and are prepared to sacrifice comforts and bear risks in doing so, including SAVE (Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Educational) travellers; and
- **Eco and outdoor fanatics**, i.e. a collective grouping of smaller (niche) segments, who travel to practice a specific interest, study or hobby, especially related to environmental, cultural or outdoor active experiences.
- **New market segments** that do not frequent Sierra Leone in substantial number and could potentially be targeted as the industry matures and could benefit from market and experience innovation, including:
- **Mature adventurers**, i.e. (mainly older) higher spending foreign travellers in search of new, less visited destinations where they are able to have unique culture and nature experiences, but with less of a risk appetite and preferring good facilities, services and food, but still; and
- **International beach relaxers**, i.e. travellers in search of sun, sea and sand in safe and well-serviced resorts that offer comfortable accommodation and a range of fun activities.

EXISTING MARKET SEGMENTS

Table 10 – Domestic Breaks

Current locations: Lumley, No 2 River, Bureh beaches, Bunce and Tasso Island, Banana Island

Future locations (in addition to the above): Various waterfalls, recreational sites around Freetown and other key cities such as Bush Garden Park and Sports Stadium at Bo.

	PRODUCT CONSOLIDATION	EXPERIENCE INNOVATION
 Mostly self-arranged and self-drive with some packaged holidays. Bonding and enjoyment with friends and relatives. Mainly ages 20-50. Significant focus on events and entertainment. When in nature tourism destinations, these travellers want a mix of nature, culture, and entertainment (guided) options. Price conscious, although prepared to spend on special occasions. Access mainly by road. Industrial tourism experiences, such as the mining museum and guided nature experiences may be of interest.	**Improve visitor facilities** like restrooms, picnic places, seating, parking, etc. in beaches and nature areas that are in proximity of cities. **Incentivise development of local guest houses /B&Bs/home stays** in local villages in and around domestic tourism sites. **Promote agrotourism experiences** among locals – visit and purchase local produce directly from villagers. **Expand access, picnic and resort facilities** at recreational locations like Mambo and Bumbuna Falls, Kambui and Kangari Hills, Lake Sonfon and other local recreational areas. Promote the "shoulder" season periods where international demand is lower and good prices can be offered to domestic travellers.	**Develop new experiences related to Sierra Leone's heritage of turmoil and Freedom.** This could possibly be part of an expansion project of the National Museum e.g. a landmark Freedom museum/memorial to replace the fallen landmark Cotton Tree, and reflects Sierra Leone's colonial & Civil War history, etc. **Development of Freetown Big Markit** to enhance cultural and leisure offer for the domestic and international adventure markets and improve market access for tourism MSMEs. **Develop bespoke forest infrastructure** such as canopy walkways (such as in Kakum NP, Ghana); safe viewing platforms, bird hides, boardwalks camera traps, butterfly feeding stations, and bridges to waterfalls viewpoints, etc.. **Support the development of regional museums** in the main cities (in particular Bo and Kenema) to reflect on industrial and cultural heritage, traditions and historical events that are particular to the area. **Develop industrial/mining tourism** at Kono and other areas, especially for educational tourism purposes. Incentivise and develop a programme of **local festivals and events** in key locations. e.g. sports events, couples weekends, Cacao Festival, live music at Bo. **Investigate transformation of redundant government facilities** e.g. hostels, hotels, army bases into inclusive domestic travel resorts (Butlins camps) **Establish government travel club**, whereby government officials can go on affordable organised bus tours and trips

Table 11 – Intrepid Adventurers

Current locations: Mainly Freetown, Western Peninsula beaches and islands, Tiwai Island, the outlying cities of Makeni and Bo, OKNP and a few selected locations like Rogbonko Village.

Future locations (in addition to the above): Loma Mountains and the areas to the north of it (e.g. Kabala), Bonthe and Turtle Islands, Gola Rainforest and the entire Upper Guinea Rainforest belt, linking up smaller, less known community and cultural experiences in circuits and routes, through expansion and improvement of access.

	PRODUCT CONSOLIDATION	EXPERIENCE INNOVATION
 Typically 20-45 years age group Confident "hard" exploration - looking for the "real" Africa, in search of extraordinary experiences and will be prepared to go the extra mile, go to less visited places and sacrifice comforts to do so. General adventurous touring and exploration by couples and small groups. While independently organised travel is popular, pre-arranged reception, guiding and ground arrangements will be important for many. Guidance by Sierra Leonian inbound operators and knowledgeable friends and relatives important. Prefer adrenaline activities, wildlife viewing, ocean activities, cultural, environmental interaction (in its broadest sense) and community-based experiences (food, attending local ceremonies, etc.). Although they are budget conscious stay longer and less time-bound than the mature market segments. Sustainable management of tourism experiences is very important. Includes SAVE (Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Education) travellers who travel to volunteer, contribute, learn and explore about cultural and natural heritage preservation and improvement of local communities.	**Focus on the experiential traveller and Improve ecotourism interpretation at key sites**, e.g. interpretation and information facilities to provide information on ecosystems, unique species, walking routes, best viewing times, community cultural traditions and interactions with nature etc. at locations such as Tacugama Chimpanzee sanctuary, Tiwai Island, Banana Island and over time at visitor-ready PAs such as OKNP, Loma, Gola and other areas. **Ensure maintenance and quality of available equipment and facilities** like restrooms, canoes, viewing platforms, campsites, etc. **Add activities, equipment and experiences at key sites** e.g. canopy walkways, ropeways, walking and kayak trails, and communication equipment e.g. radios, binoculars, telescopes for rent. **Work with local communities in improving their tourism offer** e.g. tracking endemic bird and animal species, indigenous canoe rides, cycling in the community, staying with a local community, exploring local food, etc. **Improve and expand exhibitions and interpretation at the National Museum** to incorporate more themes and modern technologies. **Improve quality and interpretation of important slavery sites** (e.g. slave steps, landmark at Cotton Tree site and others), Bunce Island interpretation centre.	**Develop new experiences related to Sierra Leone's heritage of turmoil and Freedom.** This could possibly be part of an expansion project of the National Museum e.g. a new landmark Freedom museum/memorial and Cotton Tree Park to replace the fallen landmark Cotton Tree, and reflects Sierra Leone's colonial & Civil War history, etc **Improve accommodation experience and camping facilities in PAs,** remote beach areas and offshore islands. **Provide characterful, safe and hygienic homestays and "glamping"** facilities/ camps in and/or around PAs and offshore islands. **Package and develop thematic circuits, itineraries and interpretation** including village accommodation, cultural interaction, eco-experiences, rest and stop-points, camping sites, signage, etc. **Improve additional activities** like night walks, cultural trails, snorkelling, river and ocean kayak experiences, etc. **Develop bespoke forest infrastructure** such as canopy walkways (such as in Kakum NP, Ghana; safe viewing platforms, bird hides, boardwalks and bridges to waterfalls viewpoints, etc.). **Support the development of unique agritourism & contemporary intangible heritage experiences**, farm stays and visits, visiting and dining with a local family, participating in agricultural practices, urban tours, etc. **Promote the development of community conservancies**, with communities pooling land and developing larger conserved tourism areas. **Package and promote adventurous cultural events**, e.g. nightlife in Bo, Kabala new year party, Chiefdom galas **Pilot new, adventurous river-based itineraries** and intrepid explorer packages

Table 12 – Eco and Outdoor Fanatics

Current locations: Protected areas: Western Peninsula NP, OKNP, Tiwai Island, Loma Mountains NP (hiking, wildlife photography, birding, ecology, human-nature interactions),

Coast and Islands: Bunce/Tasso/Banana Islands (birding, fishing, history, diving/snorkelling, community engagement)

Future locations (in addition to the above): Protected areas: Mamunta Mayoso NP, Lake Sonfon, Gola Rainforest and other rainforest destinations such as Jaibui Island.

Coast and Islands: Bonthe, Sherbro and Turtle Islands; Mape and Mbezi Lakes.

	PRODUCT CONSOLIDATION	EXPERIENCE INNOVATION
 Specific nature interests e.g. hiking, birding, sport fishing, high-level nature photography (professional and hobby), cultural specialization, archaeology, etc. Mostly aged 25 to 50 years. Prepared to travel the extra mile for unique experiences related to their interest. Both independent (self-drive) and packaged. Across price points, mostly mid-market.	**Improve accommodation and camping facilities** in PAs, remote beach areas and offshore islands. **Incentivise development of safe and hygienic homestays and "glamping"** facilities/camps in and/or around PAs and offshore islands. **Develop visitor facilities in areas patronised by niche markets** e.g. pathways, bird viewing platforms, hides, signage at key sites. Work with communities in developing camping, local lodging, guiding services in and around key ecotourism sites.	**Develop and implement an events strategy** to put Sierra Leone on the map as a destination for eco, outdoor and adventure enthusiasts e.g. sport fishing, hiking, birding, kayaking, extreme sports, etc. **Take a regenerative approach and work with local communities to develop unique agrotourism** experiences, farm stays, staying with a local family, participating in agricultural practices, etc **Work with local communities in mapping and layout adventure circuits** of varying difficulties including hiking, running, canoeing and mountain biking trails in high-potential adventure areas. Develop thematic ecotrails and ecotourism packages with tour operators e.g. Tacugama ecotrail sites **Develop bespoke forest infrastructure** such as canopy walkways (such as in Kakum NP, Ghana; safe viewing platforms, bird hides, boardwalks camera traps, butterfly feeding stations, and bridges to waterfalls viewpoints, etc.).

NEW MARKET SEGMENTS

Table 13 –Mature Adventurers

Current locations: Mainly Freetown, a few of the Western Peninsula beaches and islands and a few selected locations like Tiwai Island.

Future locations (in addition to the above): other Western Peninsula beaches, Banana Islands, OKNP, Warawara Mountains, Loma Mountains NP, Gola Rainforest, the rest of the Moa River belt, Turtle Islands.

	MARKET INNOVATION	TRANSFORMATIONAL INNOVATION
 Large potential growth segment. Cautious "soft" exploration – lured by mystique of Sierra Leone's variety of unique natural and cultural heritage. Well-travelled, environmentally and culturally conscious and always looking for new places to explore. Generally 45 years plus Fulfilling the explorer spirit; looking for somewhere different while considering risks– it's about sharing the story. Primary interests are the virgin beaches coupled with key national parks and wildlife highlights as "bucket list" experiences. Secondary interests are local culture, history and heritage and soft adventure (e.g. marine and trekking activities, helicopter flights, etc.), scenery.	**Improve the public realm at key beach and islands and beaches of Western Peninsula** – walkability, lighting, waste bins, public toilets, seating, etc. **Invest in development of excellent interpretation,** especially language and guiding capabilities. **Improve shopping markets** - experience and quality of local handicrafts, arts, etc. **Incentivise the development of mid-market**, architecturally designed ecolodges at unique sites in Protected Areas. **Develop bespoke forest infrastructure** such as canopy walkways (such as in Kakum NP, Ghana; safe viewing platforms, bird hides, boardwalks and bridges to waterfalls viewpoints, etc.) **Develop a wider range of bookable "soft adventure" activities** in tourism areas e.g. forest walks, cycling, canoe trips, village walks, night walking safaris, quad biking, etc.	**Develop and improve sites and experiences related to Sierra Leone's heritage of turmoil and Freedom**, e.g. a landmark Freedom Museum, reconciliation sites in key villages, improvement and interpretation at important slavery sites in Freetown (e.g. slave steps, landmark at Cotton Tree site and others), Bunce Island interpretation centre **Support the development of beach wellness:** manicures, pedicures, massage, etc. **Encourage and incentivise development of mobile safaris,** with well-equipped operators developing campsites on a concession basis in all key PAs and providing driving safaris with all services included, including accommodation (tented and/or semi-permanent), transport, meals, guided experiences, etc. Develop authentic and interactive contemporary cultural interaction linked to beach and nature experiences, Sierra Leone lifestyle, music, art, culinary experiences produced in association with tour operators to include these in packages.

Table 14 – International beach relaxers

Current locations: Mainly Freetown and Western Peninsula beaches.

Future locations (in addition to the above): Lungi coast, Sulima.

	MARKET INNOVATION	TRANSFORMATIONAL INNOVATION
 Desire to completely relax with all services provided, including some fun water and social activities. All age groups Excellent food choices, clean beaches, pool and spa are expected. Primary interests are the tropical beaches and soothing climate. Secondary interests are shopping, soft activities. Core markets domestic, US Diaspora, Europe.	**Improve public facilities at existing beach areas:** Plan and improve tourism infrastructure, aesthetics, parking, pedestrian spaces, play areas, public sanitation facilities, etc. at current beach areas such as Lumley beach, No 2 River, Bureh, Tokeh and other existing beaches to ensure maximum enjoyment and safe relaxation. **Improve shopping markets** - experience and quality of local handicrafts, arts, etc. **Stimulate redevelopment of neglected beaches:** Incentivise development of facilities and infrastructure and neglected beach areas like Kent, Tokeh, Lakka and other areas with neglected facilities and infrastructure.	**Plan and guide sustainable development, zoning and concessions at undeveloped beach zones** e.g. Lungi, Turtle Islands, Sulima and others. Identifying key sites and securing land tenure systems will be key. **Focus on attracting smaller, boutique style resort developments** with eco-sensitive designs, in line with the sustainable tourism value proposition. **Support the development of beach wellness:** manicures, pedicures, massage, etc. Development of a "blue circuit" to connect maritime, river and mangrove experiences and facilitate "island hopping".

3.6.3 Expansion and improvement of accommodation offer

Private-sector led expansion and improvement of Sierra Leone's tourism accommodation offer is needed to enable a shift beyond tourism accommodation as "just a place to stay" to wider recognition that it is a central element of the tourist experience, destination competitiveness and local benefits.

Improvements in tourist accommodation experience, design and construction, sustainability practices, and quality (including health, safety and hygiene, amenities, human resource management and customer service) need to be designed with the existing and new market segments in mind. Accommodation development needs to be supported by an enabling environment including government investment incentives, help with developing partnerships with local communities, and the requirement to adhere to sustainability and safety guidelines (outlined in Volume II, drawing on the GSTC criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators[15]) and gradual harmonisation to new ECOWAS quality standards.

Table 15 below outlines the proposed sustainable accommodation offer building on the existing offer and introducing new accommodation products/experiences as investment opportunities. In addition, Sections 7.2.3 to 7.2.7 elaborates further on the main investment opportunities for each of the proposed TDZs.

[15] *https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-industry-criteria/*

Table 15 – Sustainable accommodation investment opportunities

EXISTING MARKET SEGMENTS ACCOMMODATION PREFERENCES	PRODUCT CONSOLIDATION	EXPERIENCE INNOVATION
Domestic Breaks: Affordable self-catering Guesthouses/B&Bs/homestays	Promote development of higher quality & more **sustainable network of local guesthouses/B&Bs/home stays in local villages** in and around domestic tourism sites	**Investigate transformation of redundant government facilities** e.g. hostels, hotels, army bases into inclusive domestic travel resorts (Butlins-style camps)
Intrepid Adventurers: Typically Class 2-4 Quality & nature of hotels and catering not a particular priority, prepared to have a basic service if the experience is special. Expatriates in Sierra Leone are a major source. Hygiene & safety standards remain important	Promote refurbishment of existing guesthouses, eco-lodges, and community accommodation to **improve quality and sustainability practices of existing tourism accommodation in CBT communities and TDZs.** For example, Tiwai Heritage Trail.	**Improve accommodation experience and camping facilities** in PAs, remote beach areas and offshore islands. **Promote development of characterful, safe and hygienic homestays and "glamping" facilities/ mobile camps i**n and/or around CBT communities, PAs and offshore islands.
Eco and Outdoor Fanatics: Ranges from Class 1 to Class 3 Proximity to their preferred activities Outdoor & nature setting	Promote improvement of **existing accommodation and camping facilities** in PAs, remote beach areas and offshore islands. Work with communities in developing **local camping and lodging,** in and around key ecotourism sites.	**Promote development of characterful, safe and hygienic homestays and** "glamping" facilities/mobile camps in and/or around PAs and offshore islands **set in beautiful forest and marine environments.** For example, at OKNP, Loma Mountains, Gola Rainforest and Turtle Islands.
Mature Adventurers: Typically Class 1 and 2 accommodation. Small and medium-sized, mid-range, eco-sensitively designed hotels and lodges in and around National Parks and on sensitive island areas. Sustainable management is increasingly important. Value for money expected at hotels, with good food, catering, guiding, etc. important. Research on the internet; booking packages through tour operators and travel agents.	**Promote the development of mid-market,** architecturally designed ecolodges at unique sites in Protected Areas.	**Promote the development of mobile safaris,** with well-equipped operators developing campsites on a concession basis in all key PAs and providing driving safaris with all services included (i.e. tented and/or semi-permanent accommodation, transport, meals, guided experiences). For example, at Mamunta Mayoso Wildlife Sanctuary.
International Beach Relaxers: Price range from budget to mid to higher priced ($50 to US$150 per room night) – Sierra Leone will focus on smaller/medium volume and mid-to higher price ranges. Mainly Class 1 and 2 hotels. Value for money expected at hotels, with good food, catering, activities, etc. important.	Promote improvement of **new social and environmental sustainability practices**/ experiences of existing Class 1&2 accommodation in Freetown & Western Peninsula beach areas.	**Focus on attracting smaller, boutique style sustainable beach resort developments** with eco-sensitive designs, in line with the sustainable tourism value proposition.

3.6.4 Public sector product investment priorities

Based on the above analysis of market segments and matching product investment opportunities, the following highly targeted investment priorities have been identified in support of a place making approach i.e. creating quality spaces that both residents and visitors alike will want to visit, live, work, play and learn in.

CATALYTIC PUBLIC SECTOR INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

Improvement of ferry access between Freetown International Airport (Lungi) and Aberdeen: The current ferry operations serving passengers who enter Sierra Leone via Freetown International Airport leaves much to be desired. The passenger ferry terminals at Lungi are not only an eyesore in servicing the new, modern international airport, but boarding is also dangerous and uncomfortable. Waiting facilities at the terminals are uncomfortable and baggage handling and efficient baggage delivery should also be addressed. Development of a single, collective, modernised arrivals and departure ferry terminal with state of the art passenger and baggage handling facilities that are shared by the ferry companies could be well suited as a PPP project.

Improvement of currently visited beach and offshore island destinations: Planning, improvement and sustainable development of current main beach areas in Western Peninsula (Lumley, Bureh, No 2 River, Tokeh, Kent/Banana Island and others), to ensure high-quality beach experiences e.g. upgrading and expansion of accommodation options, visitor amenities, infrastructure and orderly development.

Improvement of tourism facilities and infrastructure in Protected Areas that are on main tourism circuits: Tourism planning, access improvement, investment promotion, amenities development and activity expansion in underdeveloped PAs that can easily be incorporated in current tourism circuits and itineraries i.e. Outamba-Kilimi, Mamunta Mayoso, and Loma Mountains National Parks as well as Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary. This should include improvement of visitor experience and wildlife viewing through construction of sustainable and high-quality visitor facilities, canopy walkways, safe viewing platforms, bird hides, boardwalks and bridges to viewpoints, camera traps etc.

Improvement and development of visitor experiences at cultural sites tied to Sierra Leone's freedom and other cultural heritage: Focus on maintenance, interpretation, visitor amenities and community capacity building (cultural performances, dance, music, etc.) at a selection of key slavery heritage sites around Freetown (Bunce Island, Cotton Tree) and reconciliation sites in villages along the main tourist routes. Tourists should be able to stop over at such locations and be part of celebrating Sierra Leoneans' exuberance and joyful spirit, cultural and community capacity building in cultural performances, food preparation and other skills.

Development of a new landmark Freedom Museum and Cotton Tree Park: to enhance the cultural offer and public green space for both domestic and international visitors. This could possibly be part of an expansion project of the National Museum e.g. a landmark Freedom site to replace the Cotton Tree, a museum that reflects Sierra Leone's colonial history, etc. The development should support the Explore Freedom branding; showcase a sustainable approach to construction, waste management and reforestation; and help fill the symbolic gap for a memorial site left by the fall of the historic Cotton Tree and Civil War.

OTHER INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Access improvements to the south of the country, including renovation of air strip(s) that can serve Bonthe/Sherbro/Turtle Islands and Gola Rainforest and improvement of road linkages to these areas.

Creating the conditions for a safe and pleasant sea travel all along the ocean façade of the Country, from Scarcies River to Sulima.

Development and packaging intangible cultural heritage and CBT products: package Sierra Leone's rich and vibrant intangible cultural heritage resources for target markets through creative, participatory and quality development of cultural circuits and tours, quality community-based tourism (CBT) experiences; interpretation planning and training for guides and communities; and development of thematic tour operator packages and itineraries. Key strategic sites for intangible heritage to include: Tiwai Heritage Trail, agritourism at Senekedugu, cultural tourism at Rogbonko, and contemporary culture in Bo/Freetown.

Development of iconic Freetown Big Markit as a tourist destination and focal point for urban regeneration and tourism visits: requiring refurbishment of this building to its former glory with contemporary provision of a range of outlets, restaurants, better ventilation and visitor facilities. A key objective being to improve both visitor experience and access to the tourism value chain for daily buying and selling of goods by small producers.

Development of a "blue circuit" to connect maritime and river experiences and facilitate "island hopping": to maximise the tourism potential of Sierra Leone's fantastic islands, maritime, river and mangrove natural resources. This would require addressing significant gaps in river transport and infrastructure and establishing a service port to assist with safety requirements, refueling, maintenance and repairs etc., which it is suggested be located at Bonthe.

Development and piloting of new types of sustainable accommodation at key sites outside of Freetown and Western Peninsula: to work in partnership with private sector and pilot sustainable, quality & improved accommodation experiences designed for main target markets (e.g. network of homestays/village accommodation on Tiwai Heritage Trail (Intrepid Explorers); mobile "glamping" natural safaris at Mamunta Mayoso (Eco & Outdoor Fanatics); mid-market, eco-lodges at OKNP/Gola Rainforest/Turtle Islands (Mid-Market Adventurers).

4. Goals, strategies and actions for sustainable growth

Based on the results of the diagnostic study[16] and the key success factors for sustainable tourism development and growth, the following section sets out 5 overarching goals, 24 supportive strategies and a range of specific, implementable actions that will be pursued for achieving the strategic vision, growth objectives and goals set in the previous chapter. The list below provides a summary of the Goals and Strategies that follow in this section. For each of the strategies listed below, a range of specific actions are outlined in the next sections.

Goal 1: To improve tourism business conditions, costs and quality

Strategy 1.1: Reduce and control visitor taxes, charges and other controllable costs.

Strategy 1.2: Promote and facilitate highly targeted public and private sector investment, especially in Tourism Development Zones.

Strategy 1.3: Facilitate tourism business growth with a focus on MSME development.

Strategy 1.4: Facilitate and strengthen backward and forward linkages among all actors in the tourism value chain.

Strategy 1.5: Improve systems, capacity and application of tourism quality, sustainability and safety standards.

Strategy 1.6: Develop tourism human resources, awareness and capacity at all levels

Goal 2: To protect, preserve and sustainably develop tourism's natural, cultural and social resources

Strategy 2.1: Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework.

Strategy 2.2: Adopt and apply sustainable tourism development guidelines.

Strategy 2.3: Ensure effective protection, preservation, and regeneration of tourism assets in declared Protected Areas and (tangible) Cultural Heritage Sites.

Strategy 2.4: Develop, promote and build capacity in contemporary cultural entertainment and interpretation for tourism purposes.

Strategy 2.5: Identify and address the main causes of waste and water pollution that affect tourism resources and sites.

Goal 3: To improve visitor access to and availability of infrastructural services at tourism areas

Strategy 3.1: Identify, plan and implement road access improvements along tourism routes and circuits.

Strategy 3.2: Pursue improved international and domestic air access.

Strategy 3.3: Expand ICT and communication networks in Tourism Corridors and TDZs.

Strategy 3.4: Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, especially tourist ferry and boat excursions.

Strategy 3.5: Promote and support the sustainable provision of visitor infrastructure and facilities in tourism areas.

Goal 4: To promote a sought-after tourism image and achieve continued growth in tourism demand

Strategy 4.1: Continue promoting and rolling-out the Explore Freedom brand.

Strategy 4.2: Continue implementing and refreshing the national tourism marketing strategy and action plan.

Goal 5: To ensure efficient and effective organizational capacity and collaboration

Strategy 5.1: Review the Tourism Act of 1990 to be in line with the Tourism Policy and the proposals contained in this NSTP.

Strategy 5.2: Restructure and staff public sector tourism institutions effectively and appropriately.

Strategy 5.3: Ensure effective inter-MDA and intra-MoTCA tourism collaboration.

Strategy 5.4: Establish and promote a strong tourism public-private partnership system.

Strategy 5.5: Apply a transparent, effective and measurable community-inclusive tourism approach.

Strategy 5.6: Mainstream gender and youth empowerment and climate change actions into public and private-sector tourism organizational structures, policies, plans and projects.

[16] *Keios Development Consulting and The Journey Tourism Consulting (2023) Development of a National Strategic Tourism Plan in Sierra Leone, Diagnostic Volume I, Core Report*

4.1 GOAL 1: TO IMPROVE TOURISM BUSINESS CONDITIONS, COSTS AND QUALITY

The goal addresses the key success factors related to uncompetitive access costs and charges, improvement of tourism investment and business conditions to ensure better quality and variety of sustainable tourism accommodation, facilities and activities as well as leveraging the entrepreneurial and job creation potential of the sector.

Table 16 –Goal (1): Summary of Strategies and Actions (Priority strategies and actions shaded in Blue)

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
Strategy 1.1 Reduce and control visitor taxes, charges and other controllable costs.	Establish a national workgroup on tourism cost competitiveness. Conduct a detailed comparative evaluation of visitor and operator taxes, charges, airfares and other cost items. Make and implement proposals for addressing cost disparities. Track cost of travel to Sierra Leone and competitors over time.
Strategy 1.2 Promote and facilitate highly targeted public and private sector investment, especially in Tourism Development Zones.	Conduct scoping and business potential studies of all priority tourism development zones in close collaboration with NIB and SLEIPA. Facilitate and strengthen public and private sector investment conditions, especially in priority tourism areas. Promote tourism investment opportunities emanating from the scoping studies. Monitor and report on the nature and extent of tourism investment.
Strategy 1.3 Facilitate and support tourism business growth with a focus on MSME development.	Develop a coordinated tourism MSME support programme aimed at women and youth entrepreneurs. Identify a pilot mentorship group of potential tourism entrepreneurs. Initiate a tourism MSME mentorship and training programme.
Strategy 1.4 Facilitate and strengthen backward and forward linkages among all actors in the tourism value chain.	Introduce a value-chain enhancement pilot project at Tiwai Island and Heritage Trail with a focus on youth empowerment. Review, formalise and expand the beach security monitors initiative. Improve the "Big Markit" area as a tourism destination.
Strategy 1.5 Improve systems, capacity and application of tourism quality, sustainability and safety standards.	Identify a practical and phased plan to revise and implement improved tourism regulations and standards. Provide capacity building, incentives and mentoring for accommodation providers, tour operators, guides, tourism attractions and catering businesses to improve their quality standards and sustainability practices. Address health, safety and emergency procedures in the tourism value chain. Develop and implement basic national guidelines/standards for community-based tourism enterprises and accommodation.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
Strategy 1.6 Develop tourism human resources, awareness and capacity at all levels	Invest in needs assessment and capacity building of tourism educational institutes. Launch a public sector sustainable tourism practitioners training and mentoring programme. Develop and fund a capacity building, licensing and formalisation programmes for tour guides, tour leaders, specialist guides, and local community guides. Set up a responsible/sustainable tourism platform for private sector to access a range of practical suggestions and measures for implementing sustainable tourism practices and develop appropriate partnerships. Design and pilot applied training, mentoring and grant funding scheme for public and private tourism stakeholders to apply the ILO guidelines on decent work and socially responsible tourism. Launch a national sustainable tourism awareness raising initiative.

4.1.1 Strategy 1.1: Reduce and control visitor taxes, charges and other controllable costs

The analysis of tourism taxes and fees has revealed that excessive airline, airport and tourism taxes and visitor fees contribute significantly to the high cost of a holiday to Sierra Leone. Air access is particularly expensive due to a range of exorbitant air taxes, when compared to competitors in the region and elsewhere. A focused effort and exceptional commitment will be required to improve Sierra Leone's tourism cost competitiveness.

ACTIONS

1.1.1 Establish a national workgroup on tourism cost competitiveness including MoF, NRA, MoTCA, private sector bodies and other relevant parties, with the task of evaluating and addressing cost and price competitiveness. The workgroup should comprise senior representatives of the relevant MDAs and should be mandated at the highest political level to raise awareness and make proposals for improving Sierra Leone's tourism cost competitiveness, especially with regard to uncompetitive taxes and visitor charges.

1.1.2 Conduct a detailed comparative evaluation of visitor and operator taxes, charges, airfares and other cost items that make up the price of an average trip from key source markets to Sierra Leone. This will require a comparative breakdown and assessment of all main aspects of the visitor journey, including mark-up and commissions of intermediaries, flight costs, taxes and fuel charges, visitor visa and other entry and exit charges, key elements of transport and accommodation prices and operating costs, import costs and duties, visitor taxes payable and other key items that affect the price of a trip. The evaluation should calculate the potential effect of reducing such costs under various scenarios (economic impact, revenue losses and potential economic gains, etc.).

1.1.3 Develop and implement proposals for addressing cost disparities that could significantly improve Sierra Leone's cots competitiveness, reach agreement in the national workgroup and sign-off by the Cabinet and implement proposed measures. The results of the evaluation will be debated and discussed in the national workgroup, to reach agreement on realistic measures that could be taken to improve Sierra Leone's tourism price competitiveness, actions to be taken to implement these, responsibilities for doing so and timeframes for phasing these in. Such proposals will be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration, discussion and agreement on actions to be taken.

1.1.4 Track cost of travel to Sierra Leone and competitors over time, using a basket of comparable cost elements and trip components, including return flights from key markets, visa and other entry costs, accommodation, transport and key meal elements.

4.1.2 Strategy 1.2: Promote, facilitate and strengthen public and private sector investment conditions, especially in priority tourism areas

Except for Freetown city, where there has been a substantial addition of accommodation in recent years, the potential tourism nodes in the Western Peninsula, along the rest of the coastline and further inland suffer from a limited scale and quality of visitor accommodation, amenities and activities. While the planned improvements in visitor facilities at Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, Leicester Peak and Bureh Beach are welcome improvements, accommodation and visitor facilities are lacking in most other areas. Increased destination marketing and the resultant tourism demand will require additional accommodation and other facilities in key tourism nodes and special incentives and conditions should be considered to catalyse such investments.

ACTIONS

1.2.1 Conduct scoping and business potential studies of all priority tourism development zones in close collaboration with NIB and SLEIPA, to determine the potential market demand, specific business opportunities, opportunities for tourism investment, land ownership and availability, infrastructure deficiencies and other investment factors and propose public, private sector, public-private-partnership (PPP) and Public-Private-Community Partnership (PPCP) investment opportunities and projects (see Strategy 5.5). Scoping should include evaluation and technical study of existing community-based tourism accommodation (particularly under government control) to make costed recommendations for improving quality, tourist experience, sustainability and governance.

1.2.2 Facilitate and strengthen public and private sector investment conditions in priority tourism areas, focusing on developing new, sustainable tourism accommodation, attractions, experiences, and infrastructure for target markets (see Product Expansion Opportunities in Section 3.6 and MoTCA Investment Action Plan). Increased destination marketing and the resultant tourism demand will require additional accommodation and other facilities in key tourism nodes. A stepwise approach is required to catalyse such investments:

- **Secure land.** Attractive plots of land have to be identified and secured within the TDZs and Tcs.
- **Improve the ease of doing business.** A more supportive business enabling environment needs to be established, which covers everything from starting a business, getting credit, registering property and paying taxes to dealing with construction permits, protecting investors and enforcing contracts.
- **Provide for concessions, to** allow for private operation on public land (see strategy 2.2.5 below).
- **Improve infrastructure.** Improved access from roads and ICT to water and energy utilities are basic requirements for many investors.
- **Create an investment portfolio**. Develop a specific targeted list of investment opportunities that are available in the TDZs and Tcs.
- **Offer incentives.** Although it is the least important aspect in this list, special incentives and conditions should be considered and provided to investors. This could include technical assistance with planning, applications and approvals, alleviation of regulatory (e.g. work permits, EIAs, etc.) requirements, suitable financial breaks (tax, access to capital etc), planning and other technical support measures. Eligibility for incentives would require adherence to selected sustainability guidelines and quality standards (such as new ECOWAS classification and other sustainability standards or certification for accommodation providers such as the new Green Label for Hotels scheme), and developments would need to fall within a desig-

nated TDZ and be aligned with this NSTP spatial development framework and sustainability guidelines. Investors who reach stringent sustainability and quality standards and benefit host communities can be rewarded with a "dark green" higher level of incentives. Local investors should be given preference in respect of development support.

1.2.3 Promote tourism investment opportunities emanating from the scoping studies. This should include development of a tourism investment portfolio brochure in printed and digital formats, outlining investment requirements, processes, incentives and specific investment opportunities in TDAs and TDZs; as well as an investment promotion plan and budget for marketing the investment opportunities at specific meetings, on digital platforms, directly to potential investors, through media coverage and any other means.

1.2.4 Monitor and report on the nature and extent of tourism investment. Work closely with MDAs, private sector and local government authorities to track the type and scale of investment in tourism, including refurbishment, investment in new facilities, equipment and community infrastructure; report on progress made on a regular basis and compare with growth in visitor arrivals, expenditure to evaluate the extent to which incentives and promotion initiatives bear fruit.

4.1.3 Strategy 1.3: Facilitate and support tourism business growth with a focus on on micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) development

The tourism sector is known for its relatively low barriers to entry in various components of the tourism value chain, with small and medium sized businesses engaged in accommodation, catering, tour guiding, tour operating and a host of personal services requiring basic skills and limited capital to enter the industry. While tourism could be a catalyst for entrepreneurship and job creation, red tape and bureaucratic business administration processes can seriously constrain business growth, and many potential micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) require access to finance and basic skills training to be able to enter the sector.

ACTIONS

1.3.1 Develop a coordinated tourism MSME support programme aimed at women and youth entrepreneurs. Conduct a benchmark study of tourism MSME programmes of successful developing tourism destinations and in other economic sectors of Sierra Leone to inform the design of a suitable tourism support programme (targeting SMEs led by women, youth and people with disabilities). This could include assistance with applications and approvals, alleviation of red tape, technical advice on how to add value to products/services, training and mentorship, affordable access to finance, market access and other support measures.

1.3.2 Identify a pilot mentorship of potential tourism entrepreneurs, which could be nurtured and supported to become sustainable and profitable business ventures. In identifying such a pilot group selection criteria will need to be applied, such as the level of initiative already taken and investment made by the entrepreneur to establish a business, knowledge and understanding of basis business practices, knowledge and understanding of tourism, proven ability to work with money and other factors. The pilot group should have a special focus on developing tour guides, tour operators and knowledgeable community leaders and the inclusion of women and youth entrepreneurs.

1.3.3 Initiate a tourism MSME mentorship and training programme for the pilot MSME group, including advisory support, business linkages with established tourism businesses, market access and marketing opportunities, access to finance and other support measures. Such a programme could be implemented in partnership with an international development partner organisation such as SMEDA, Invest Salone, International Trade Centre (ITC) or Centre for Promotion of Impacts (CBI) that specialise in entrepreneurship support.

4.1.4 Strategy 1.4: Facilitate and strengthen backward and forward linkages among all actors in the tourism value chain

For the economic power of tourism to be unleashed in Sierra Leone both forward and backward value-chains should be leveraged. This is particularly relevant where MSMEs (especially women led ones), are producing goods and services but struggling to gain access to their potential markets. Too often, backwards linkages are the ones addressed and are seen in the narrow perspective of 'direct' tourism product and services e.g. hospitality, handicrafts, guiding, guest houses and taxis, while 'indirect' backward (supply) linkages and forward (market access) linkages, such as relationships with the international travel trade, digital marketing and transaction systems, are not given appropriate attention. Specific institutional structures and systems should be created whereby opportunities for tourism linkages can be formally recognised at all policy levels in Government and these policies in turn to be informed by regular, formal, interaction and dialogue.

ACTIONS

1.4.1 Introduce a value-chain enhancement pilot project at Tiwai Island and Heritage Trail with a focus on youth empowerment, to serve as a demonstration project for enhancing the overall value opportunities for rural communities in line with Sustainability Guidelines (See Vol. II). Tiwai Island and the surrounding communities have been engaged in tourism for some years and the core Tiwai Island experience, coupled with the surrounding Tiwai Heritage Trail provides a good basis for a demonstration project. The pilot will focus on capacity upskilling in project and organisational governance, product quality, basic business principles, basic marketing and market access, access to micro-finance and village tourism guiding and communications, among others. It will also focus on indirect tourism linkages with market-garden produce, handicrafts and agritourism experiences, especially with a long-term view of creating youth development pathways in the tourism value-chain. Key lessons from the pilot project could be applied in other community-based tourism initiatives.

1.4.2 Review, formalise and expand the beach security monitors initiative, initially at Lumley Beach but to be expanded to other beaches. The number and structure of beach monitors has fluctuated over the past few years and there is a need to review the initiative in respect of its objectives, structure, funding, monitoring and control. For example, in addition to beach security and cleaning, a range of beach sports (e.g. beach soccer, beach volleyball), which can be offered to beach visitors could be organised and managed by the beach monitors. Through this mechanism awareness and involvement can be created for maintaining beach security and cleanliness - with appropriate 'soft' enforcement measures backed up by relevant signage along the esplanade.

1.4.3 Improve the "Big Markit" area as a tourism destination and focal point for urban regeneration. The Big Markit is already an iconic and popular focal point of tourism visits and could be further strengthened to improve access to the tourism value chain for daily buying and selling of goods by small producers. The Big Markit itself will need restoration to its former glory, re-designed and curated displays and vendors, toilet facilities. The market will be the core of an inclusive, multi-purpose, 'cluster' of outlets, with a number of the surrounding buildings re-purposed to form an integrated destination of e.g. fresh seafood outlets, fresh fruit and vegetable markets, fresh flowers markets, covered pedestrianised local 'street food' vendors; similar to the souks of Morocco, cafes, bars and restaurants. Additionally, it would have appropriate parking, toilet facilities, security and other visitor facilities.

4.1.5 Strategy 1.5: Improve systems, capacity and application of tourism quality, sustainability and safety standards

There are some major gaps in the current tourism quality systems that need to be addressed – including in relation to sustainability and safety standards. Improvements and capacity building is

needed to update the current classification system for tourism services and facilities, emergency planning and response infrastructure for tourism and sustainability practices and certification for tourism stakeholders.

ACTIONS

1.5.1 Identify a practical and phased plan to revise and implement improved tourism regulations and standards in line with the new (and more demanding) system of ECOWAS classification for tourism accommodation (which includes a focus on sustainability practices). Actions should include establishing and building capacity of MoTCA Tourism Standards and Regulations Unit and a division of License and Classification within NTB to implement an improved system in partnership with relevant private sector (e.g. SLHATA) and government stakeholders.

1.5.2 Provide capacity building, incentives and mentoring for accommodation providers, tour operators, guides, tourism attractions and catering businesses to improve their quality standards and sustainability practices. Support initiatives to improve quality standards in line with the new SLHATA plan and ECOWAS classification standards. Identify and facilitate their participation in industry entry-level sustainability certification schemes and initiatives such as the Problue Circular Economy project, new Green Label Scheme for Hotels and Restaurants, ECOWAS sustainability criteria, GTSC-recognized certification schemes for accommodation providers and tour operators and other schemes.

1.5.3 Address health, safety and emergency procedures in the tourism value chain, including air, road and sea transport, tour operating, accommodation, activities in Protected Area and other areas of risk, by carrying out a gap analysis and implementing required improvements with key stakeholders. These could include capacity building and support for private companies to develop risk management plans, training of tour guides in emergency response protocols and measures, carrying emergency medical supplies and equipment, etc.

1.5.4 Develop and implement basic national guidelines/standards for community-based tourism enterprises and accommodation, through a partnership between the private sector and MoTCA. This could draw on existing examples and practices in Sierra Leone such as community engagement in tourism and conservation through Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary and Tiwai Heritage Trail; and more widely in Africa such as national CBT guidelines and standards in Rwanda, Ghana and South Africa, as well as established CBT capacity building approaches and tools. Formalization and quality improvements of CBT should assist with the development of partnerships with private and public sector (See also Actions 5.5.1 and 5.5.2).

4.1.6 Strategy 1.6: Develop tourism human resources, awareness and capacity at all levels

Sustainable development of the tourism industry requires addressing existing human resources gaps in capacity, skills, awareness of all tourism stakeholders and training providers. Implementation of S*ierra Leone's Tourism Capacity Building Strategic Action Plan*[17] is needed which identifies many of the capacity building needs of the tourism and hospitality (private) sector, public sector, cultural tourism sector and entertainment sector. This NSTP, alongside various recent advances in tourism entrepreneurship empowerment and capacity building, provides solid foundations for mainstreaming gender and community empowerment, sustainability, and responsible product development.

ACTIONS

1.6.1 Invest in needs assessment and capacity building of tourism educational institutes to deliver the new curriculum for Tourism, Hotel and Hospitality Management and the Hotel and

[17] *MoTCA (2022) Sierra Leone Tourism Capacity Building Strategic Action Plan. An initiative of the Ministry of Tourism & Cultural Affairs in close collaboration with the National Tourist Board, Version. 1.3*

Tourism Training Centre at Milton Margai College, in line with industry needs identified in the Sierra Leone Capacity Building Strategic Action Plan.

1.6.2 Launch a public sector sustainable tourism practitioners training and mentoring programme in line with the Sierra Leone Capacity Building Strategic Action Plan. Participants to include: MoTCA, NTB, MRC and front line government departments in contact with tourism (e.g., SLID, NPPA). Programme to include training and study tours on: data management, project monitoring and evaluation, product development, sustainable tourism practices, sustainable cultural and natural heritage site management for tourism purposes, PPPs/Public-Private-Community Partnership (PPCPs), CBT development and participatory planning methods for working with communities. The programme should be delivered in partnership with local, regional, and international partners and mentors to maximise the potential for knowledge exchange and development of professional networks regarding sustainable tourism and other technical expertise.

1.6.3 Develop and fund a capacity building, licensing and formalisation programme for tour guides, tour leaders, specialist guides, and local community guides. Support to be provided using a range of methods and could draw on tour guide training systems and institutions elsewhere in Africa, e.g. South Africa. Training to include: product development, interpretation, sustainability, emergency response procedures and gender empowerment and mainstreaming. Practical support to include: funding for guides to engage with international guiding platforms and professional guiding associations, online booking platform, and a more formalised approach to the management and administration of a professional guiding association. Other activities to consider are incentivising tour guiding as a career for both men and women drawing on good practice in other destinations, for example Chobe Angel's female safari guiding team from Chobe National Park in Botswana.

1.6.4 Set up a sustainable tourism platform for private sector to access a range of practical suggestions and measures for implementing sustainable tourism practices and develop appropriate partnerships. For example, with conservation organisations, regional partnerships with the West Africa Ecotourism Network or Ecotourism Kenya, International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT) West Africa; or international partnerships with industry associations and certification programmes such as Green Destinations, Blue Flag (for beaches) and Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) accredited certification bodies for accommodation and tour operators. This platform could support the development of the Green Rewards system started through the Go Circular campaign; and encourage the addition of more sustainability practices and innovative technologies to green tourism operations. It could also link with the proposed public sector training and mentoring programme.

1.6.5 Design and pilot an applied training, mentoring and grant funding scheme for public and private tourism stakeholders to apply the ILO guidelines on decent work and socially responsible tourism[18] to their own policies, plans, projects and business operations and social responsibility activities.

1.6.6 Launch a national sustainable tourism awareness raising initiative, including sustainable travel guidelines, to encourage domestic and international tourists to learn about sustainable tourism, tourist and host cultures, and cultural and natural heritage sites, experiences and events. Activities could use a range of different media such as local radio, on-line applications, social media campaigns, educational resources for schools, and a domestic tourism scheme designed to motivate people to visit and "collect" the different cultural and natural heritage experiences Sierra Leone has to offer.

[18] *https://www.ilo.org/sector/activities/sectoral-meetings/WCMS_546337/lang--en/index.htm*

4.2 GOAL 2: TO PROTECT, PRESERVE AND SUSTAINABLY DEVELOP TOURISMS' NATURAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES

The goal addresses the sustainable development of Sierra Leone's unique natural and cultural resources for tourism purposes including improved interpretation, provision of exciting tourism activities, responsible community engagement, empowerment of women and young people, development of accommodation facilities and provision of other visitor amenities and facilities. It also addresses the importance of enforcing legislation, regulations and guidelines pertaining to sustainable tourism development and the capacity and resources to do so.

Table 17 – Goal (2): Summary of Strategies and Actions (Priority strategies and actions shaded in Blue)

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
STRATEGY 2.1 Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework.	Endorse and advocate at the governmental level the SDF as the primary spatial blueprint directing tourism development in the country.
	Undertake preliminary studies for all TDZs.
	Draft proposals to the Cabinet to officially designate the TDZs.
	Craft detailed development blueprints for the most promising TDZs, in consultation with relevant MDAs.
STRATEGY 2.2 Adopt and apply sustainable tourism development guidelines.	Adopt the Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria for destinations .
	Draw on the Blue Flag[19] criteria for improving beaches in TDZs.
	Provide support for the implementation of the Green Label for Hotels and Restaurants to promote circular business operations.
	Apply international best practice guidance to protected area TDZs.
	Establish tourism concessions in protected areas.
	Provide capacity building and mentoring support for MoTCA to apply the sustainability guidelines and integrate into existing ways of working in partnership with other MDAs.
	Commission community and visitor surveys to monitor impacts of tourism on communities.
	Integrate social impact assessment (SIA) into existing EIA process through improved ESIA process.
STRATEGY 2.3 Ensure effective protection, preservation and regeneration of tourism assets in declared Protected Areas and (tangible) Cultural Heritage Sites.	Develop forest infrastructure to improve wildlife viewing, recreation and conservation objectives.
	Develop nature-based trails and circuits with a focus on improved interpretation and locally unique themes.
	Engage community members and SMMEs in providing additional nature and agritourism experiences.
	Conduct a tourism stock-taking and market-readiness evaluation of current and potential cultural heritage sites and projects.
	Launch a heritage tourism support programme.
	Develop and create a Freedom Museum and "Cotton Tree Park" as a new flagship cultural heritage project.
STRATEGY 2.4 Develop, promote and build capacity in contemporary cultural entertainment and interpretation for tourism purposes.	Conduct a national inventory and needs assessment of intangible heritage.
	Provide technical support and start-up funding for guides, tour operators and CBT communities.
	Train up guides, tour operators, and CBT communities in innovative approaches to interpretation and cultural product development.
	Support and provide start-up funding for planning, piloting and promoting a programme of (two to three) local cultural events.

[19] *Blue Flag (2021) Blue Flag Beach criteria and explanatory notes 2021*

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
STRATEGY 2.5 Identify and address the main causes of waste and water pollution that affect tourism resources and sites.	Apply best practice guidance on SUPP management and the circular economy. Adopt and apply the Strategic Framework's environmental guidelines on waste management. Establish and enforce regulations to support waste management. Provide skills and capacity building.

4.2.1 Strategy 2.1: Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework

To sustainably manage the spatial dimension of tourism, the NSTP introduces a Spatial Development Framework (SDF) – see Section 5 below. It outlines a strategic approach aimed at guiding the orderly, economical, and sustainable use of infrastructure and land for tourism purposes. The SDF is anchored on two pivotal components: the spatial layout and the spatial development guidelines (See Volume II).

The guidelines offer a robust set of standards, ensuring that spatial development aligns with the core principles of the NSTP. On the other hand, the spatial layout provides an all-encompassing spatial blueprint, integrating vital elements for tourism expansion, such as tourism corridors, TDAs, and TDZs.

Tourism corridors are designated sections of the national transportation systems, purposefully chosen to link various TDAs. They play a crucial role in ensuring smooth tourist movement, allowing visitors to seamlessly access diverse tourism sites, stay longer and spend more money during their visits.

TDAs are distinct geographic regions pinpointed for their pronounced potential in boosting tourism. They hold strategic importance, laying the groundwork for the NSTP's execution.

Nested within TDAs, TDZs are specific land parcels earmarked for tourism-centric activities, falling directly under the MoTCA's purview. These zones are pivotal in transforming the broad objectives of the NSTP into tangible, actionable steps. Their establishment should be considered as a pre-requisite for private sector investment at the most environmentally sensible locations such as protected areas and undeveloped beach and island locations other than the Western Peninsula.

For an exhaustive elaboration on the Spatial Development Framework (SDF), refer to section 5.

ACTIONS

2.1.1 Endorse and advocate at the governmental level the SDF as the primary spatial blueprint directing tourism development in the country. MDAs should prioritize infrastructure investments in the highlighted tourism corridors. This includes amongst others enhancing road infrastructure, establishing roadside amenities, ensuring comprehensive mobile coverage, setting up signage, reinstating airstrips, developing maritime transport infrastructure along the coast, and bolstering security measures.

2.1.2 Undertake preliminary studies for all TDZs to gauge potential market demand, investment requisites and prospects, land tenure and availability, infrastructure gaps, discovery and assessment of new and existing sites and attractions, and other investment determinants.

2.1.3 Based on the results and once zoned and planned as such by the Ministry of Lands, **draft proposals to the Cabinet** in accordance with the provisions of the Tourism Act, **to officially designate the TDZs** and transition them under MoTCA's sole jurisdiction in a phased manner including the application of the spatial development guidelines presented in Volume II.

2.1.4 Craft detailed development blueprints for the most promising TDZs, in consultation with relevant MDAs. This should encompass a product development plan, a land utilization plan, a signage and interpretation plan, a combined Social and Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA), and a cost-benefit analysis.

4.2.2 Strategy 2.2: Adopt and apply sustainable tourism development guidelines

Sierra Leone's tangible natural and cultural heritage sites (and associated intangible heritage) are important assets for developing the potential of tourism. However, many of the valuable Protected Areas (PAs), beaches and forests are under severe threat of depletion and irreparable damage through poor maintenance, mining and sand mining, deforestation and other destructive practices. In addition, tourism can have negative impacts on these natural and cultural resources and needs to be sustainably managed by communities and the different stakeholders involved. Sierra Leone's tourism should be based on international best practices, including guidance from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the GSTC, UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the World Bank and leading global organisations. **The sustainable tourism guidelines included in this NSTP (Volume II, Appendix B) provide a solid framework** for applying these best practices in tourism planning, development and operation throughout the TDZs, and potentially to be further applied across the country. Sierra Leone will prioritize actions related to coastal and protected area planning for tourism, natural resource use, waste management, climate adaptation for tourism, community inclusiveness, gender and youth empowerment and recognition of indigenous knowledge, among others.

NOTE: This section should be read in conjunction with the comprehensive Sustainable Tourism Guidelines contained in Volume II: Appendices.

ACTIONS

2.2.1 Adopt the Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria for destinations,[20] and apply them in TDZs. Once the criteria are in place in a TDZ, apply for independent certification of the TDZ by a GSTC-accredited body. This requires a long-term, sustained approach.

2.2.2 Draw on the Blue Flag[21] **criteria for improving beaches in TDZs.** While it may not be possible for Sierra Leone's beaches to attain Blue Flag status in the short term, the Blue Flag criteria could serve as an excellent guide for beach improvements. In addition, a national sustainable beach policy could be developed to enhance and protect the use of beaches for tourism and support the implementation of Blue Flag criteria.

2.2.3 Provide support for the implementation of the Green Label for Hotels and Restaurants to promote circular business operations and Sierra Leone's own nationally recognised label/certification for SUP reduction pioneered by the tourism sector. Support should enable the scaling up and development of this Green Labelling approach and related capacity building, industry green rewards and competitions being implemented through the GO Circular program designed under the PROBLUE project. Such activity should support implementation of the National Plastics Policy; motivate and encourage tourism operators to invest in SUP reduction; and raise awareness among local communities and tourists about plastic pollution and the efforts of Sierra Leone's tourism stakeholders. A key activity could be the launching of an annual competition for "green" hotels, to encourage sign up to the Green Label

2.2.4 Apply **international best practice guidance to protected area TDAs,** in particular the IUCN Best Practice Guidelines on Sustainable Tourism and Visitation in Protected Areas[22] and following

[20] *https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-destination-criteria/*
[21] *Blue Flag (2021) Blue Flag Beach criteria and explanatory notes 2021*
[22] *Tourism and visitor management in protected areas: Guidelines for sustainability (2018); Sustainable tourism in protected*

a community-centric approach. This includes proactive planning for tourism and visitor management; ensuring protected area management plans include clear and appropriate objectives; providing environmental education for visitors and local communities; zoning protected areas for diverse recreational opportunities; establishing desired conditions across the protected areas, and activities to achieve them; reducing the biodiversity conservation finance gap by generating tourism revenue from visitors and the private sector; establishing fair opportunities for local investors, operators, and entrepreneurs in accessing concessions and licenses in protected areas; involving visitors and local people in 'citizen science' monitoring; and ensuring local and affected groups are engaged through Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

2.2.5 Establish tourism concessions in protected areas through amending (if required) the Public Private Partnership Act (2014) and regulations, the National Protected Area Authority Act and Conservation Trust Fund Act (no. 11 of 2012) and the Forestry Act (1988). Align the concessioning processes with best practice guidance from the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Development Program, and World Bank Group, in order to maximise local benefits while ensuring environmental sustainability and integrity.[23] This includes establishing a concessions and PPCP strategy, a procurement process (including Expressions of Interest, Requests for Proposals, draft contracts, community-benefit and environmental guidelines etc.), revenue sharing mechanisms and a good governance framework to ensure transparency and accountability in the process. The process should be cognisant of early partnerships (e.g. as with RSPB and the Forestry Division in Gola).

2.2.6 Provide capacity building and mentoring support for MoTCA to operationalise the sustainability guidelines and integrate them into existing ways of working in partnership with other MDAs and stakeholders. This could include capacity building of MoTCA staff and partners regarding development of the ESIA process, setting up new a CBT process and quality standards, conducting tourism value chain analysis for selected projects with SMEDA, gender mainstreaming planning, and application of Local Area Action Plans for TDZs.

2.2.7 Commission Community Based Tourism (CBT) surveys (including impacts, benefits, satisfaction, empowerment) **and visitor surveys** (including expenditure, satisfaction, experience/product) in selected TDZs to establish a baseline for monitoring community sustainability impacts of tourism. This should be carried out in partnership with community-based organisation like the Youth Council, Association of Certified Guides and local research organisations to maximise opportunities for local engagement in tourism.

2.2.8 Integrate a social impact assessment (SIA) into existing EIA process through improved ESIA process. Measures should include adherence to the NSTP sustainability guidelines, development of a social and environmental impact management plan (ESIMP), popularization of the UNESCO's Cultural Conventions, protection of intangible and tangible cultural heritage, action against child labour, and protection from SECTT and SGBV.

4.2.3 Strategy 2.3: Ensure effective protection, preservation and regeneration of tourism assets in declared Protected Areas and (tangible) Cultural Heritage Sites

Protected area and cultural heritage tourism play an important role in sustainable development, and they can support poverty alleviation, economic growth, biodiversity and heritage conservation. Their potential to create jobs and growth, while protecting wildlife, ecosystems, and heritage make

areas: Guidelines for planning and management (2002)

[23] *Tourism concessions in protected natural areas: Guidelines for managers (2014); An introduction to tourism concessioning: 14 Characteristics of successful programs (2016); Guidelines for tourism partnerships and concessions for protected areas (2017)*

them enticing prospects for Sierra Leone. However, the implementation and safeguarding of underlying natural and cultural assets depends on a diverse set of conditions and actions.

Similarly, whilst the natural beauty and resources of Protected Areas are key attractions for visitors these fragile environments face numerous threats, such as deforestation, pollution, mining and sand mining, slash-and-burn practices, etc. that need to be sensitively managed. Sustainable tourism has the potential to help raise much needed conservation funds, regenerate degraded ecosystems and create local livelihood opportunities.

NOTE: This section should be read in conjunction with the comprehensive Sustainable Tourism Guidelines contained in Volume II: Appendix B.

ACTIONS

Nature tourism sites and Protected Areas

2.3.1 Develop forest visitor infrastructure to improve wildlife viewing, recreation and conservation objectives. In line with protected area management plans, EIAs and business plans for PAs, establish visitor facilities (e.g. restrooms, picnic areas, seating, waste collection areas, parking), viewing platforms, canopy walkways and hides. Establish pricing systems for packages of experiences that are either included within entrance fees, or are provided at additional charge, ensuring they are market-related and contribute towards sustainable financing of the protected areas. Also enhance the quality of accommodation and camping facilities in protected areas, including through concessions and licenses with the private sector. These can be established in partnership with local community enterprises and could make use of conservation funding sources such as Project Finance for Permanence (PFP)[24].

2.3.2 Develop of nature-based trails and circuits with focus on improved interpretation and locally unique themes. Cognisant of protected area zoning in the management plans, establish interpretation areas and signage for use by self-guided and escorted visitors. Provide options for walking routes, 4x4 trails, quad bikes, mountain biking and other movement modes.

2.3.3 Engage community members and MSMEs in providing additional nature and agritourism experiences (including fishing, oyster collection etc.) and other tourism-related and conservation services/experiences in the value chain. Water sports options with modest capital investment include canoes, kayaks and Stand-Up Paddle boards. Snorkel trails, and mangrove boardwalks, provide opportunities for interpretation and community-guiding. Ensure that engagement is based on Free Prior and Informed Consent principles.

Cultural and historical tourism sites

2.3.4 Conduct a tourism stock-taking and market readiness evaluation of current and potential cultural heritage sites and projects. This would include compilation of a national inventory and needs assessment of tangible cultural heritage sites with tourism potential as well as an assessment of existing development plans/projects for key cultural heritage sites (such as Bunce Island, Old Fourah Bay College building and Bonthe), to better understand any implementation challenges and identify supportive practical action to address challenges, sustainability issues and tourism potential. This exercise should build on existing heritage site assessments carried out recently within the MoTCA in partnership with local and international partners (such as the project proposal for the 'Restoration, Safeguarding, Development and Management of Immovable Cultural Heritage Sites for Revenue Generation and Posterity').

2.3.5 Launch a heritage tourism support programme to develop current and potential cultural heritage sites, improve the quality of the visitor experience, increase visitors spend and interpret and market cultural and historical sites and thematic itineraries that connect these. Such a pro-

[24] *https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/07/climate-finance-pfp/*

gramme could focus on improvement of on-site interpretation, experience development and marketing training, planning support and product development grant funding for key cultural heritage site stakeholders (such as site managers and local communities, relevant staff from MoTCA, creative organisations, tourism MSMEs, tour operators, guides and CBT enterprises).

2.3.6 Develop and create a Freedom Museum and "Cotton Tree Park" as a new flagship cultural heritage project incorporating, for example, a national museum, memorial site (to the civil war and slavery) and public park with a forest of cotton (and other) trees following the recent loss of Sierra Leone's landmark Cotton Tree. This site (to be identified in consultation with key stakeholders) would be of interest to both local audiences and international visitors, provide a much-needed green space and cultural resource for local people, and contribute to reforestation that is needed to address landslides.

4.2.4 Strategy 2.4: Develop, promote and build capacity in using intangible and contemporary cultural entertainment and interpretation for tourism purposes

Intangible heritage and contemporary culture is generally not properly "packaged" for tourists, or actively managed as a (sustainable) tourism product. Harnessing the tourism potential of Sierra Leone's cultural heritage assets requires building the capacity of guides, tour operators, accommodation providers, MSMEs, CBT communities and relevant government ministries in sustainable (cultural) product and experience development and interpretation. This approach to capacity building should be medium to long-term and applied (for example through tourism MSME incubators, apprenticeships, and on-site mentoring) and designed to create empowerment and poverty-reduction opportunities for youth, women, and communities. It needs to be clearly informed by the active management of the (potential) social and cultural impacts of tourism (see Section 4.5.5).

ACTIONS

2.4.1 Conduct a national inventory and needs assessment of intangible heritage, including locally significant historical, spiritual and cultural traditions, and contemporary cultural and creative activities with tourism potential. This could include traditional beliefs and practices, contemporary arts and entertainment, public realm and unique "everyday life" traditional practices. The inventory should build on existing work such as the 'Needs Assessment to Strengthen Capacity to Safeguard Intangible Cultural Heritage in Sierra Leone' carried out in 2021 by MoTCA with support from UNESCO and ICH. However, it would require an enhanced focus on the tourism potential, sustainability issues and management of intangible cultural heritage assets in line with this NSTP.

2.4.2 Provide technical support and start-up funding for guides, tour operators and CBT communities to pilot thematic intangible cultural heritage and contemporary culture itineraries and tourist experiences, especially in and around TDZs. These should be designed to enhance the country's tourism offer for target market segments such as younger travellers, intrepid explorers, diaspora and domestic markets. For example, urban tourism experiences linked to the diamond and gold mining industries, film industry, local manufacturing, nightlife and music scene, fashion, beauty, local artists, youth culture, art, and performance arts could have potential. These could provide for some unique, sometimes "quirky" 'only found in Salone' products and guided itineraries.

2.4.3 Train up guides, tour operators, and CBT communities in innovative approaches to interpretation and cultural product development, in partnership with appropriate public and private sector and other organizational partners. Approaches could include the use of creative storytelling, guiding methods and design of new interactive experiences drawing on existing resources as appropriate. Link with other national capacity building strategies and deliver through a combination of on-site training, mentoring, exchange visits, and applied short courses. Local communities should decide which aspects of their heritage they are prepared to share with visitors and a Visitor

Code of Conduct should guide visitor behaviour. Support to be delivered in partnership with local, regional and international organisations and educational partners with appropriate technical and creative expertise.

2.4.4 Support and provide start-up funding for planning, piloting and promoting a programme of (two to three) local cultural events targeted at both domestic and international visitors. Events selected should include nurturing existing and contemporary events, and reviving popular traditional events such as the Cacao Show (agricultural and cultural fair). The events should ideally be managed on a PPP or PPCP basis, with the MoTCA providing leadership, coordination and financial support and the execution being conducted by private event organisers supported by local guides, tour operators and/or community entrepreneurs.

4.2.5 Strategy 2.5: Identify and address the main causes of waste and water pollution that affect tourism resources and sites

Poor waste management practices, in particular, widespread dumping of waste in water bodies and uncontrolled dump sites, exacerbate the problems of generally low sanitation levels across the country. Increasing plastic pollution threatens not only the public health or the local economy, but also the national tourism sector. The volume of plastic waste visible on beaches in the Western Area of Sierra Leone has made plastic pollution a significant problem. This has increased hotel costs, hampered transportation, and reduced the appeal of beaches. The World Bank has supported evaluations of Single Use Plastic Products (SUPPs) and the establishment of a National Plastics Policy[25], but much of the Integrated national Waste Management Strategy needs to be implemented[26]. As indicated in the sustainability guidelines accompanying this framework (Volume II, Appendix B), SUPPs need to be properly recycled within the country, and half of operators that do not have a plastic management system in place need support, as do communities that lack sustainable solid waste management practices.

ACTIONS

2.5.1 Apply best practice guidance on SUP management and the circular economy from the UN World Tourism Organization and World Bank, to reduce plastic pollution in Sierra Leone while encouraging innovative entrepreneurial opportunities based on waste.[27] The tourism sector should be a catalyst for solid waste management. Drawing from the National Plastics Policy, this includes[28]:

- Develop inventory of problematic and unnecessary plastics, and identify the prerequisites and conditions for phase-out. Gradually phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics, and incentivize alternatives to plastics.
- Support Local Councils to develop comprehensive waste management strategies to enhance waste collection, sorting, recycling and disposal. Achieve comprehensive waste collection coverage and disposal in urban areas. Establish comprehensive waste collection coverage and disposal in rural areas.
- Encourage composting among the population to reduce waste going to landfills.

[25] *World Bank Group (2023) op. cit.*
[26] *Government of Sierra Leone, Ministry of Health and Sanitation (2012) 'Integrated National Waste Management Strategy', October 2012*
[27] *Sierra Leone Plastic Materials Policy (2023), Tools and resources for circular economy in tourism (repository), Handbook 'Destination: A circular tourism economy (2019)*
[28] *World Bank Group (2023) op. cit.*

- Provide guidelines and information resources for plastics reduction, recycling, and alternatives across all sectors. Provide guidelines and information resources for plastic reduction, and recycling.
- Develop and implement a national anti-littering and community cleaning campaign.
- Promote plastic reduction and alternatives through pilot and demonstration programs for uptake across the plastic value chain.
- Establish targets and reporting system for plastic pollution reduction, recycling, and utilization of recyclables and alternatives. Develop and adopt standards, regulations, and directives in the plastic sector including through declaring Feb 20th a National Go Circular Day.
- Harmonize and ring-fence taxes and revenues to support plastic pollution reduction and a circular economy for plastics. Identify and reconcile inequities and unintended impacts of current taxes to ensure equitability among stakeholders.
- Support local government, MSMEs, and the informal sector to develop own source funding for plastic waste and solid waste management.
- Invest in waste transfer, disposal, and material recovery facilities. Develop and implement deposit-return system for readily recyclable plastics.
- Gradually phase-in extended producer responsibility.

2.5.2 Adopt and apply the Strategic Framework's environmental guidelines on waste management. Disseminate the guidelines to national and local government representatives, destination managers (including in protected areas), the tourism private sector, and integrate their elements into relevant standard operating procedures. Inter-ministerial collaboration will be crucial to ensure effective waste management.

2.5.3 Establish and enforce regulations to support waste management, including addressing pollution and littering and establishing appropriate penalization for transgressions. Local government should encourage proper waste management practices.

2.5.4 Provide skills, awareness raising and capacity building and associated infrastructure development to ensure effective waste management can take place in practice.

4.3 GOAL 3: TO IMPROVE VISITOR ACCESS TO AND AVAILABILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURAL SERVICES AT TOURISM AREAS

The goal addresses gaps in international and domestic air access, improvement of important road connections and the need for safe and efficient water-based transport. In addition it speaks to measures for ensuring visitor safety and addressing other infrastructural gaps relating to communication and internet connectivity, interpretive and directional signage as well as basic services such as energy provision, waste management and potable water provision. Addressing these gaps in sustainable tourism infrastructure should also benefit host communities.

Table 18 – Goal (3): Summary of Strategies and Actions (Priority strategies and actions shaded in Blue)

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
STRATEGY 3.1 Identify, plan and implement road access improvements along tourism routes and circuits.	Conduct a comprehensive assessment and mapping of the current state of tourism corridors. Set and enforce standards for tourism corridors. Develop and maintain essential roadside amenities and emergency services along tourism corridors. Collaborate with telecom providers to ensure consistent internet coverage along tourism corridors. Implement clear and informative road signage. Prioritize and launch a programme to upgrade "last mile" roads in coordination with the development of the TDZs they connect to. Set up mechanisms to gather feedback from tourists and local communities about road conditions.
STRATEGY 3.2 Pursue improved international and domestic air access.	Establish and execute a multi-disciplinary Air Access Initiative. Conduct and implement a feasibility study regarding domestic air access.
STRATEGY 3.3 Expand ICT and communication networks in Tourism Corridors and TDZs.	Map out existing ICT networks, to understand the current state of ICT. Engage with leading telecom providers to discuss, among others, potential partnerships or incentives. Prioritize the establishment of robust ICT infrastructure within TDZs. Organize digital marketing and management workshops and training sessions for local businesses and communities in TDZs. Set up dedicated emergency communication systems. Collaborate with service providers to monitor, regularly upkeep and potentially upgrade.
STRATEGY 3.4 Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, especially tourist ferry and boat excursions.	Establish a Water-Based Tourism Transport Task Force to oversee the strategy's implementation. Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study of water-based transport. Improve the ferry terminals, passenger and baggage handling system for transfers between Lungi and Aberdeen. Develop and promote scheduled water-based tourist routes. Review and update boat licensing and operating criteria. Incentivise the upgrading of the existing fleet of boats. Improve public and private sector capacity and systems to provide high quality water-based transport. Monitor and evaluate the strategy's implementation, making necessary adjustments based on feedback and changing needs.
STRATEGY 3.5 Promote and support the sustainable provision of visitor infrastructure and facilities in tourism areas.	– Adapt regulations, investment guidelines and project funding processes for TDZs. – Implement a tourist information project to improve tourist access to practical visitor information. – Improve directional and interpretive signage to and in main tourism areas and sites. – Work with local villages and communities to establish basic "stopping off points" (e.g. toilets, snacks and cold drinks) on main tourism circuits.

4.3.1 Strategy 3.1: Identify, plan and implement road access improvements of tourism corridors and last mile roads

The road movement of tourists hinges on two primary road categories: the tourism corridors and the "last mile" roads. Together, they form a network integral to the overall tourism experience and require strategic upgrades to meet the evolving demands.

Tourism corridors, being part of the national road network, form the backbone, connecting the TDAs. On the other hand, the "last mile" roads ensure that tourists can reach their final destina-

tions seamlessly. They are often unsurfaced and offer a more authentic travel experience. "Last mile" roads should not be necessarily tarred; a good unsurfaced and regularly maintained road is sufficient in most cases to ensure safety and comfort; and it will contribute to making the journey experience more "real", particularly when giving access to adventure tourism sites.

It should be noted that the focus of this strategy is not on constructing new roads but on **optimizing and enhancing the existing infrastructure** for the dual benefit of tourism development and the broader economic upliftment of the country.

ACTIONS

3.1.1 Conduct a comprehensive assessment and mapping of the current state of tourism corridors leading to priority TDZs, including the state of roads, wayside amenities, communication and emergency services, signage and other important tourism requirements and identify areas needing upgrades.

3.1.2 Set and enforce standards for tourism corridors in collaboration with SLRA, including minimum design speed, all-weather accessibility, roadside amenities, clear tourism signage, consistent internet coverage, and safety measures. An emergency call line should be introduced, in event of accidents, mechanical failures or other disasters.

3.1.3 Develop and maintain essential roadside amenities and emergency services along tourism corridors, including rest areas, food and beverage outlets, and emergency services and establish regular patrolling, emergency helplines, and quick response teams along tourism corridors to ensure the safety of travellers.

3.1.4 Collaborate with telecom providers to ensure consistent internet coverage along tourism corridors, enhancing the travel experience and ensuring tourists remain connected.

3.1.5 Implement clear and informative road signage and maps, compliant with UNWTO standards for tourist road signage (the "brown signs") along both tourism corridors and "last mile" roads, ensuring tourists can navigate easily. A series of good road maps should be produced to show the best routes to TDAs and TDZs.

3.1.6 Prioritize and launch a programme to upgrade "last mile" roads in coordination with the development of the TDZs they connect to. Ensure they are all-weather and accessible for 2×4 vehicles. While tarring isn't always necessary, the roads should be safe and comfortable for travellers. Encourage the use of resilient and sustainable materials and practices in road upgrades, ensuring minimal environmental impact and involve local communities in the maintenance and management of "last mile" roads, ensuring they benefit from tourism development and contribute to offering an authentic experience to tourists. Promote uniform gate access charges for entering public, private and community owned tourism attractions.

3.1.7 Set up mechanisms to gather feedback from tourists and local communities about road conditions and use this feedback for continuous improvement.

4.3.2 Strategy 3.2: Pursue improved international and domestic air access

International air access to Sierra Leone is currently limited and expensive. Connecting Sierra Leone directly with more destinations and ensuring healthy competition and pricing among airlines that serve the country, are important keys to tourism growth. While it is accepted that the feasibility of air routes is highly dependent on passenger demand, much can be done to establish good communication and partnerships with airlines and encourage them to consider the destination. In addition, the introduction of domestic air services will be a major boost for both tourism, business and governance of tourism areas given the poor state of access routes to some of the key tourism attractions and the time required to travel to these on land.

ACTIONS

3.2.1 Establish and execute a multi-disciplinary Air Access Initiative, piloted and executed by an Air Access Task Team consisting of MoTCA, the airports authority, private sector representatives and other relevant parties, with the aim of identifying and addressing factors that inhibit international and domestic air access and engaging airlines to launch or increase flights to Sierra Leone. The initiative could draw on other successful initiatives like the Cape Town Air Access Initiative[29].

3.2.2 Conduct and implement a feasibility study regarding domestic air access, including the potential for repairing deteriorated airstrips, opportunities and costs of establishing domestic air routes and links, potential for public-private partnerships in domestic air access and the roles that public and private air operators could play.

4.3.3 Strategy 3.3: Expand ICT and communication networks in Tourism Corridors and TDZs

In the digital age, seamless communication is not just a luxury but a necessity. For the tourism sector, the importance of robust ICT infrastructure cannot be overstated. Tourists expect and rely on consistent connectivity to enhance their travel experiences. Moreover, a strong ICT framework can significantly boost the operational efficiency of tourism service providers, from online bookings to real-time feedback. The NSTP recognizes this and aims to fortify the ICT and communication networks, especially along the tourism corridors and within the TDZs. This will not only improve the tourist experience but will also open up opportunities for local businesses to tap into the digital economy, be it through online marketing, e-commerce, or digital feedback mechanisms.

ACTIONS

3.3.1 Map out existing ICT networks, to understand the current state of ICT infrastructure in the targeted areas, identify gaps, and highlight the specific needs of each region.

3.3.2 Engage with leading telecom providers to discuss, among others, potential partnerships or incentives that can expedite the expansion of networks in the identified areas and the feasibility of satellite-based internet solutions to ensure connectivity in regions where traditional network expansion might be challenging.

3.3.3 Prioritize the establishment of robust ICT infrastructure within TDZs, ensuring that these zones are well-equipped to handle the digital demands of modern tourism. Consideration should be given to establishing free or low-cost Wi-Fi hotspots at key tourist attractions, ensuring that tourists can easily access the internet, share their experiences, and stay connected

3.3.4 Organize digital marketing and management workshops and training sessions for local businesses and communities in TDZs, empowering them to leverage the new ICT infrastructure for their benefit and encouraging local businesses to offer digital services (be it online bookings, virtual tours, or digital payment options, etc.), capitalizing on the enhanced ICT infrastructure.

3.3.5 Set up dedicated emergency communication systems, ensuring that tourists and locals can quickly reach out for help if needed.

3.3.6 Collaborate with service providers to monitor, regularly upkeep and potentially upgrade the ICT network infrastructure in TDZs.

[29] *https://www.wesgro.co.za/air-access/home*

4.3.4 Strategy 3.4: Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, especially tourist ferry and boat excursions

Passenger and staff safety is the paramount consideration in this strategy. This is important for both land and water-based transport. To harness the potential of water-based tourism transport in Sierra Leone, the NSTP recommends a comprehensive approach to elevate the quality, safety, and efficiency of tourist ferry and boat excursions. Recognizing the dual potential of water-based transport to both enhance the tourism experience and address the fundamental needs of host communities, this strategy emphasizes the importance of integrating tourism with community welfare.

Water-based transport has the potential to serve as an emergency response mechanism, not just for tourists but also for host communities, especially in health emergencies. This dual-purpose approach ensures that the tourism infrastructure also contributes to the broader well-being of local communities.

Implementation of this strategy will involve a joint effort by both the public and private sectors: the public sector could provide infrastructure, regulations and oversight, and the private sector could deploy the fleet of boats and run the services.

ACTIONS

3.4.1 Establish a Water-Based Tourism Transport Task Force to oversee the strategy's implementation.

3.4.2 Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study to assess the current state, and future potential of water-based tourism transport with an emphasis on prioritised tourism corridors, including organizing pilot trips along potential new routes to gather feedback and refine the offering and defining the roles and responsibilities that the public sector, boat operators, and tourism private sector (e.g., DMCs, tour operators) need to play to make the routes financially feasible.

3.4.3 Develop and promote scheduled water-based tourist routes, with a focus on unique and immersive experiences. Integrate community needs into the development and operation of water-based tourism transport, ensuring that both tourists and host communities benefit

3.4.4. Improve the ferry terminals, passenger and baggage handling system for transfers between Lungi and Aberdeen. The current ferry operations serving passengers who enter Sierra Leone via Freetown International Airport leaves much to be desired. Not only are the passenger ferry terminals at Lungi an eyesore in servicing the new, modern international airport, but boarding is also dangerous and uncomfortable. Waiting facilities at the terminals are uncomfortable. Baggage handling and efficient baggage delivery should also be addressed. Development of a single, collective, modernised arrivals and departure ferry terminal with state of the art passenger and baggage handling facilities that are shared by the ferry companies could be well suited as a PPP project.

3.4.5 Review and update boat licensing and operating criteria ensuring that both vessel, passenger and staff safety are paramount considerations. Ensure that:

- boats are equipped with First Aid kits and administering capability; i.e. that designated staff are trained in First Aid, that training is delivered to staff in the use of life jackets, life rafts and emergency procedures and that at least one 'First-Aider' is rostered and embarks each trip;
- separate baggage storage facilities are designed so emergency escape routes are not blocked;
- all boats are equipped with life jackets and life rafts for only the maximum passenger seated load and boats only carry that number of passengers – seated, NO standing passengers; and

- emergency response plans are in place and practised regularly and these are an integral component of annual license testing – such as:
- search and rescue procedures in the event of any emergency;
- rapid response plans in the case of a medical emergency and/or engine failure while at sea;
- all staff to have annual refresher training as a part of the annual license renewal; and
- all boats and boat equipment are required by law to comply with annual licensing inspections.

3.4.6 Incentivise the upgrading of the existing fleet of boats to ensure that they meet safety standards and are adapted to specific tourist needs. Incentives related to the renewal of the fleet could include reprieve from import taxes, VAT exemptions for spare parts and staged capital write-offs for upgrades.

3.4.7 Improve public and private sector capacity and systems to provide high quality water-based transport and infrastructure, including training and capacity-building programs for boat operators and other stakeholders and public sector officials to properly enforce quality and safety controls and sustainable operations (e.g. using environmentally friendly outboard motors).

3.4.8 Monitor and evaluate the strategy's implementation, making necessary adjustments based on feedback and changing needs.

4.3.5 Strategy 3.5: Promote and support the sustainable provision of visitor infrastructure and facilities in tourism areas

There are currently many gaps in tourism infrastructure such as visitor information, signage, toilet facilities, Internet access, online bookings, and quality tourist accommodation. Infrastructure needs to be sustainable and enhance the visitor experience (i.e. to move beyond accommodation as "just a place to sleep") for different target markets. A better enabling environment is required to support tour operators, guides, tourist attraction site managers, tourist accommodation and transport services providers to develop sustainable practices and increase their use of renewable energy, water conservation and sustainably harvested natural resources.

ACTIONS

3.5.1 Adapt regulations, investment guidelines and project funding processes for TDZs to require all new tourism infrastructure (e.g. resorts, hotels, facilities) to provide tangible infrastructural benefits that improve the quality of life for local people. In other words, "win-win" sustainable tourism infrastructure that both improves the tourism industry and provides communities with improved access, for example, to drinking water, solar energy, waste management, health facilities, transport and Internet access.

3.5.2 Implement a tourist information project to improve tourist access to practical visitor information e.g. regarding washroom facilities, currency exchange, local transport (including ferry and boat transport and excursions), local guides, accommodation, emergency contacts; online banking and bookings and personal communications. Consideration to be given about how best to use online information platforms to signpost visitors to in-person information points at main anchor towns (for example in Freetown, Bo, Makeni, Kenema, Kabala and Bonthe) and in TDZs that are integrated into existing tourism, government, or community facilities (as appropriate) to reduce costs, sensitise visitors to cultural and social traditions and provide market access opportunities to local people.

3.5.3 Improve directional and interpretive signage to and in main tourism areas and sites to improve the visitor experience, influence visitor behaviour, facilitate opportunities for market access and reinforce local and national branding. A complete signage and interpretation plan should be part of the TDZ plans foreseen under strategy 2.1. Signage must conform to the national branding manual.

3.5.4 Work with local villages and communities to establish basic "stopping off points" (e.g. toilets, snacks and cold drinks) on main tourism circuits to address key gaps in basic services, enhance the visitor experience and break up the long distances by road. These could include points of interest, for example cultural sites, handicraft production centres, traditional practices, and experiencing local cultural entertainment, i.e. creating opportunities to further engage local people in the tourism value chain.

4.4 GOAL 4: TO PROMOTE A SOUGHT-AFTER TOURISM IMAGE AND ACHIEVE CONTINUED GROWTH IN TOURISM DEMAND

Substantial progress has been made in recent years through proactive marketing efforts, to improve international perceptions and raise awareness of destination Salone. The goal sets out to intensify such efforts through forging a close public-private partnership, with private tourism operators working alongside NTB and local communities to put the country on the international tourism map. It also addresses the importance of domestic tourism as a key component of the national marketing strategy.

Table 19 – Goal (4): Summary of Strategies and Actions (Priority strategies and actions shaded in Blue)

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
STRATEGY 4.1 Continue promoting and rolling-out the Explore Freedom brand.	Launch a tourism brand adoption campaign. Establish a Tourism Crisis Management Committee. Launch the President's Explore Freedom Tourism Awards.
STRATEGY 4.2 Continue implementing and refreshing the national tourism marketing strategy and action plan	Ensure adequate budget for sustaining and expanding the international marketing drive beyond current SLEDP funding. Build on and expand the domestic marketing efforts already undertaken. Engage private tourism businesses in marketing initiatives and activities.

4.4.1 Strategy 4.1: Continue promoting and rolling-out the Explore Freedom brand

Much progress has already been made with promoting Sierra Leone's new Explore Freedom brand and restoring Sierra Leone's international tourism image. The brand should be further strengthened and rolled out in partnership with the private sector and all MDAs should adopt, support and promote the brand.

ACTIONS

4.1.1 Launch a tourism brand adoption campaign, to educate and raise awareness among all MDAs, foreign missions, private businesses, and communities regarding the Explore Freedom brand and encourage them to promote and use the brand wherever possible. Visual brand adoption could be conducted on a co-branded basis on digital media, letterheads, packaging materials, etc. Such campaign could entail a competition for most creative brand usage, a continuous media (digital and traditional media) campaign to communicate the brand value and meaning, and establishing a "pledge" mechanism where stakeholders could sign up as brand partners and pledge to support and promote the Explore Freedom brand. In return participants could be listed and featured on the national tourism website.

4.1.2 Establish a Tourism Crisis Management Committee, chaired by MoTCA and consisting of NTB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Health and Sanitation (National Emergency Medical Services), Police Services and other relevant MDAs, to draw up a tourism crisis management and communication plan, and establish a protocol for actioning the plan in event of a health, safety, security or other crisis.

4.1.3 Launch the President's Explore Freedom Tourism Awards, to reward tourism industry members for excellent service and commitment to tourism. The private sector, through SLHATA, could play a leading role in this initiative and could ensure financial viability of the event. Awards could include e.g. most sustainable tourism business; frontline service award for receptionists, immigration officials and other frontline staff; tourism guide of the year; highest rated accommodation establishment; nature tourism champion of the year; cultural tourism champion of the year; best community-based tourism project; and others. Entry could be through nominations and evaluation through a highly reputable panel of judges comprising credible tourism and non-tourism personalities. Winners could be canvassed to serve as mentors and role-models for upcoming entrepreneurs.

4.4.2 Strategy 4.2: Continue implementing and refreshing the national tourism marketing strategy and action plan

The implementation of the international and domestic marketing action plans and appointment of international marketing representatives have given much impetus to growing international tourism brand awareness of Sierra Leone as an ecotourism destination. Such momentum should be retained at all costs and the relationships that have been forged with the international travel trade need to be nurtured. The digital marketing profile and promotions should be further maintained, strengthened and the returns on marketing expenditure should be monitored. Marketing should also focus on stimulating domestic travel, to help hedge the industry against external events such as Covid-19 and others.

ACTIONS

4.2.1 Ensure adequate budget for sustaining, expanding and refreshing the international marketing strategy and drive beyond SLEDP funding. The current implementation drive of the national branding and marketing strategy has already reaped substantial fruits, with Sierra Leone featuring widely in international traditional media and with digital marketing platforms gaining momentum. Experience elsewhere has shown that such initial wins only gain momentum when they are sustained for a long period. With the tourism turnover levy being implemented and the many demands on funds raised through this mechanism, it will be important to provide for an adequate marketing "slice" to continue implementation of the marketing strategy. The strategy should be reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis, based on the latest international market trends and visitor surveys undertaken. A flexible approach should be adopted to shift resources between source markets and market segments, depending on growth prospects.

4.2.2 Build on and expand the domestic marketing efforts already undertaken. During recent years NTB has launched various interventions to raise domestic tourism awareness. Annual domestic marketing campaigns should be continued, with the objective of promoting affordable travel opportunities to Sierra Leoneans. Currently, many locals who have the means to travel are exploring neighbouring destinations like The Gambia and Ghana, and a special effort should be made to expose local travel opportunities to the domestic market and regional priority source markets. Establishing tourism school clubs should be considered to foster youth travel. This action could link to action 1.6.6, which aims to raise domestic awareness of sustainable tourism development.

4.2.3 Engage private tourism businesses in co-operative marketing initiatives and activities and provide them with access to a repository of marketing contents and imagery. While NTB is tasked with promoting brand Sierra Leone and creating awareness of the destination among the travel trade and consumers, marketing platforms such as B2B tourism fairs, roadshows and workshops are established to serve as sales opportunities for private products to engage with international tour operators and to negotiate commercial deals. As such, a close partnership is required between NTB and private tourism operators in attending such events. It is common practice for tourism boards to subsidise the attendance of private industry partners at such events, given the costs of participation. Similarly, public-private partnerships in digital marketing (social media sharing, website links, etc.) should be considered. NTB should consider measures to facilitate participation of private sector tourism suppliers in all marketing initiatives and to provide private sector partners with access to an online repository of supportive marketing contents and imagery.

4.5 GOAL 5: TO ENSURE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION

The goal addresses institutional aspects that require immediate attention including organising and strengthening the tourism capacity of MoTCA and NTB; ensuring synergies between the tourism and cultural divisions of MoTCA, and between MoTCA and NTB; improved coordination and practical collaboration with and between MoTCA and MDAs that affect tourism performance (e.g. those responsible for lands, nature conservation, environmental management, investment promotion, etc.); and strengthening collaboration and partnerships between the public and private sectors in tourism.

NOTE: The strategies and actions contained in this sections are further elaborated in Section 6: Tourism Institutional Arrangements below.

Table 20 – Goal (5): Summary of Strategies and Actions (Priority strategies and actions shaded in Blue)

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
STRATEGY 5.1 Review the Tourism Act of 1990 to be in line with the Tourism Policy and the proposals contained in this NSTP.	Appoint a legislative review panel to undertake the redrafting process. Clarify the roles and powers of MoTCA in collaboration and consultation with other MDAs. Draw on tourism Acts of successful destinations in drafting and promulgating the Act.
STRATEGY 5.2 Restructure and staff public sector tourism institutions effectively and appropriately.	Undertake a professional work study and recommend restructuring of the tourism and cultural institutions. Obtain Cabinet approval and engage in a suitable expansion and restructuring process.
STRATEGY 5.3 Ensure effective inter-MDA and intra-MoTCA tourism collaboration.	Establish a Presidential Tourism Council. Set up and manage a Tourism-Culture Workgroup in MoTCA.
STRATEGY 5.4 Establish and promote a strong tourism public-private partnership system.	Establish a public-private Tourism Liaison Committee (TLC).

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
STRATEGY 5.5: Apply a transparent, effective and measurable community-inclusive tourism approach.	Identify a clear process, support and resources needed and develop practical CBT guidelines and basic standards. Pilot and fund development of JV/PPP/PPCPs partnership models to improve CBT products and community tourism infrastructure. Develop a "responsible tourism encounters" project to facilitate positive tourist-host relationships.
STRATEGY 5.6 Mainstream gender and youth empowerment and climate change actions into public and private sector tourism organizational structures, policies, plans and projects.	Provide technical support to MoTCA for carrying out a gender and social analysis. Build capacity and awareness of MoTCA in gender equality and mainstreaming approach. Build capacity and awareness of private sector stakeholders in gender equality. Set up a Youth, Gender and Disability in Tourism Forum to support implementation of the strategic plan from the perspective of marginalised groups.
STRATEGY 5.7 Develop a robust system of national tourism statistics management and accounting.	Establish a Tourism Statistics Committee. Conduct training and mentorship to build capacity/awareness of tourism statistics. Expand the existing Tourism Statistics Department. Implement the SLSTS, including the required data collection procedures and surveys.

4.5.1 Strategy 5.1: Review the Tourism Act of 1990 to be in line with the Tourism Policy and the proposals contained in this NSTP

The Tourism Act of 1990 is outdated and is inadequate as a legislative framework for controlling and guiding sustainable tourism development. While it focuses heavily on the structure and powers of the National Tourism Board it does not do justice to defining the roles of the Ministry's tourism line function department, the effective declaration of tourism development and management of areas, application of effective tourism investment incentives, regulation of tour operating and guiding and other aspects. The Act is in need or urgent refreshment to ensure the effective implementation of the Tourism Policy and the National Strategic Tourism Plan.

ACTIONS

5.1.1 Appoint a legislative review panel to undertake the redrafting process. Such a panel could consist of a governmental legal expert, officials of the MoTCA and other suitable representatives from the private sector and local communities. The panel should scrutinise the existing Tourism Act (of 1990), draft Review of the Tourism Act that was done in 2022, the Tourism Policy and this NSTP, among others, and identify issues that should be addressed and updated in the new Tourism Act. The Tourism Acts of successful destinations could provide valuable guidance and insights. Care should be taken to clearly distinguish the scope of such an enabling Act (which should be able to remain relevant for many years), in relation to supportive Regulations (which can be changed and adapted more easily and regularly) and corporate administrative systems (such as post structures, job descriptions, etc.). The panel should regularly report to the Hon. Minister, who should lead the promulgation process.

5.1.2 Clarify the roles and powers of MoTCA in collaboration and consultation with other MDAs in a consultative drafting process, to ensure that the Tourism Act clearly defines the powers of the MoTCA, especially in respect of jurisdiction over sustainable tourism development in TDZs, to avoid conflicts and ensure synergies with other MDAs. Ideally agreement should be reached regarding the selection and declaration of TDZs before the Act is promulgated. This would include a list of MDAs that have direct tourism responsibilities or are indirectly linked to tourism, priority activities to be undertaken with them, and the lead and supporting agencies based on existing or new mandates.

5.1.3 Conduct a benchmark study of Tourism Acts of successful destinations in drafting and promulgating the Act. Successful destinations like Rwanda, Botswana, Namibia and others could offer good examples for ensconcing sustainable tourism development in tourism legislation and they could also inform other aspects like levies, institutional roles etc.

4.5.2 Strategy 5.2: Restructure and staff public sector tourism institutions effectively and appropriately

Good governance and organisational structuring should be based on the principle of "structure follows strategy", i.e. the tourism structure should be able to effectively implement the policies and plans of the Ministry. Implementation of this NSTP requires a substantial strengthening and restructuring of the national tourism institutions. Currently the Directorate of Tourism is not organised strategically to implement the Tourism Policy and the NSTP and there is a need to clarify the functions of the NTB and Directorate: Tourism.

ACTIONS

5.2.1 Undertake a professional work study and recommend restructuring of the tourism and cultural institutions (Directorates: Tourism/Culture, NTB, MRC, Dance Troop, National Museum) to establish roles, levels of output required, staff capacity required, KPAs, job descriptions, job levels, oversight and other aspects of structuring the MoTCA and NTB most efficiently to deal with the requirements of the Tourism Policy, NSTP, and the revised Tourism Act. It should also consider activities and additional associated opportunities for revenue generation.

5.2.2 Obtain Cabinet approval and engage in a suitable expansion and restructuring process, by creating suitable institutional structures where these do not exist, placing the existing staff component appropriately and creating and filling new posts where required.

4.5.3 Strategy 5.3: Ensure effective inter-MDA and intra-MoTCA tourism collaboration

Effective sustainable tourism development and the effective implementation of tourism plans are highly reliant on the participation and commitment of a wide range of MDAs, including land affairs, environmental management and protection, cultural development, transport and aviation, immigration, safety and security, trade and investment promotion, training and education, local and traditional government and various others. Currently such coordination and commitment is poorly developed, mainly due to the absence of a clear development strategy and action plan, and the lack of an appropriate institutional coordination mechanism that is mandated at the highest level. The need for improved collaboration also pertains to MoTCA and NTB internally, and between tourism, culture and creative entertainment industries in respect of the development of new cultural products and integration of the respective policies.

ACTIONS

5.3.1 Establish a Presidential Tourism Council (PTC), comprised of relevant Ministers and senior officials, Chaired by the President and co-managed by the Ministries of Planning and Economic Development and Tourism and Cultural Affairs to ensure the commitment and coordinated participation of all MDAs in implementing the NSTP, including but not limited to the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Country Planning. (See Section 6.3.1).

5.3.2 Set up and manage a Tourism-Culture Workgroup in MoTCA to foster collaboration between tourism, cultural heritage bodies and the creative and entertainment industries (See Section 6.3.4).

5.3.3 Establish a Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) in MoTCA. The PMU will serve as the Secretariat to the PTC and its role will be to to supervise the implementation of plans and projects contained within the NSTP on a day-to-day basis, evaluate and monitor implementation progress at both national and TDA level and ensure that the agreed schedules of activities are implemented (See Section 6.3.3).

4.5.4 Strategy 5.4 Establish and promote a strong tourism public-private partnership system

As outlined above, an important principle for achieving sustainable tourism development is that the tourism strategy should be led by the Government and driven by the Private Sector, i.e. the Government should create a fair and enabling business environment and the private sector should do the commercial business of tourism and generate economic returns, which will translate into public taxes, job creation and indirect and induced economic stimulation. This requires a partnership, regular communication and trust between the government and the private sector industry, something that is largely amiss in Sierra Leone. A suitable institutional mechanism and process for engendering a public-private tourism partnership is urgently required.

ACTIONS

5.4.1 Establish a public-private Tourism Liaison Committee (TLC). For the tourism strategy to be effective, there needs to be a strong network of stakeholders that all share a common vision and participate in the development and implementation of the tourism development strategy (See Section 6.3.2).

4.5.5 Strategy 5.5: Apply a transparent, effective and measurable community-inclusive tourism approach

Host communities are not sufficiently involved in tourism development and decision-making processes. A more community-inclusive approach by all tourism stakeholders is needed to engage them more effectively in all sectors of the tourism industry and increase local benefits. Current CBT ventures offer some promising and authentic tourism products and experiences. However, they are all facing significant challenges which affect the quality and sustainability of their product, commercial viability, and the extent of profits available to provide wider local benefits. Moving forward, a clear process and guidelines for stronger CBT partnership models, as suggested in the implementation of the Sustainability Guidelines (Volume II, Appendix B). should be mapped out to guide the development of CBT in Sierra Leone. In addition, the social (including cultural) impacts of tourism on communities need to be actively management.

ACTIONS

5.5.1 Identify clear processes, support and resources needed and develop practical CBT guidelines and basic standards drawing on examples from elsewhere in Africa. This would require awareness-raising to support MoTCA and other stakeholders to be clearer with the use of the term CBT in practice and to consider the merits of some other CBT models and guidelines, as part of a new implementation process or framework as outlined in the proposed Sustainability Guidelines (Volume II). These guidelines suggest a move away from traditional "community-owned, community led" models of CBT (where capacity is an issue) towards partnership models including joint venture and PPP/PPCP models. This will enable the formalisation, quality improvements and private sector investment that is needed, as well as facilitate the engagement of other NGOs and civil society and conservation organisations.

5.5.2 Pilot and fund development of JV/PPP/PPCPs partnership models to improve CBT products and community tourism infrastructure. Examples could include the responsible development of

the Tiwai Heritage Trail; a quality network of community accommodation/homestays (e.g. Village Ways model in India[30]); or a new mobile camping MSME. Identify safeguards to ensure the approach to these partnerships is ethical and has the desired benefits for local communities. Various CBT models are described in more detail in Volume II, Appendix B.

5.5.3 Develop a **"responsible tourism encounters" project to identify and implement practical responsible management strategies to facilitate positive tourist-host relationships** that deliver Sierra Leone's "people promise" USP and help manage the impacts of tourism. Strategies could include: co-creative experience design; interpretation and storytelling training for guides and communities; cultural awareness-training and information for local people and tourists; customer care; codes of conduct for tourists and hosts; responsible giving mechanisms; child protection measures and training and addressing tourist hassle by beach boys.

4.5.6 Strategy 5.6: Mainstream gender and youth empowerment and climate change actions into public and private-sector tourism organizational structures, policies, plans and projects.

Despite some progress, gender gaps, gender-based violence, and disadvantageous norms facing women and girls persists in Sierra Leone. From a gender perspective, most existing public and private sector tourism policies, plans and practices make limited use of tourism as a vehicle for women's economic, political and social empowerment. There is a need for gender analysis, planning and action in thematic areas to increase women's participation and benefits from tourism, including at managerial and leadership levels.

Youth and people with disabilities in Sierra Leone are also typically excluded from decision-making and face numerous challenges such as unemployment, skills and training gaps, migration, and limited career options. Meaningful consultation and engagement of people with disabilities and young people in sustainable tourism development and designing targeted opportunities and enterprises is needed.

ACTIONS

5.6.1 Provide technical support to MoTCA for carrying out a gender and social analysis of their activities and producing and implementing their GEWE action plan, in line with Sierra Leone's GEWE policy and with the new MoTCA gender unit working in partnership with MoGCA. This social analysis should also be used to identify measures to support engagement of youth and people with disabilities in the planning and delivery of the NSTP, in line with the Persons with Disability Act (2011) and National Youth Policy (2020).

5.6.2 Introduce gender-responsive budgeting and build capacity and awareness of MoTCA in gender equality and mainstreaming. Support practical application of UNWTO Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines for the Public Sector in Tourism into institutional, policy, programme and project implementation. This would identify specific actions to address six thematic areas of a gender mainstreaming approach: employment, entrepreneurship, leadership, policy and decision-making, education and training, community and civil society, and measurement.

5.6.3 Build capacity and awareness of private sector stakeholders in gender equality and support practical application of UNWTO Gender-Inclusive Strategy for Tourism Businesses across a pilot selection of tourism business operations (e.g. hotels, tour operators and MSMEs). This should include identification of measures to build capacity of women working in tourism at a managerial level such as mentoring, leadership and skills training, and confidence-building.

[30] *https://villageways.com/*

5.6.4 Set up a Youth, Gender and Disability in Tourism Forum to support implementation of the strategic plan from the perspective of these marginalised groups in partnership with Ministry of Youth, NAYCOM, Ministry of Gender, Youth Council and Commission for Persons with Disability. Membership of this forum can be extended to support design and delivery of a range of projects. This forum can, for example, support capacity building and paid opportunities for youth through collaboration between the tourism, sport, creative and entertainment sectors (and MDAs) and youth-powered enterprises. Initiatives could include enhanced natural and cultural tourism experiences, and new sports tourism events (including emerging activities such as surfing, hiking, kayaking, sports fishing, and disability sport).

4.5.7 Strategy 5.7: Develop a robust system of national tourism statistics management and accounting

NOTE: The detailed description of the proposed National System of Tourism Statistics is included in Volume II: Appendix A.

A system of national statistics forms the bedrock of any tourism development in a country. Without it, rational decision-making for planning, marketing, monitoring and policy making within the sector is not possible. As tourism is principally measured from the demand-side (i.e. the activities of the visitor) as opposed to the supply-side (i.e. the production of a good or service) which is the case for most industries, it is not always a straightforward process. The measurement of people often requires interacting with them and asking questions, which can be time consuming and costly; however, there are few alternatives to this process. Nevertheless, once a system of tourism statistics is established, given adequate funding and human resources, it can generate highly valuable information for the sector and provide an excellent tracking tool for measuring the impact of a wide range of activities from marketing and promotion, through to investment incentives and external factors such as transportation links and source market economies.

ACTIONS

5.7.1 Establish a Tourism Statistics Committee (often called and Inter-Institutional Platform – IIP) that will include key staff from at least, NTB, MoTCA, Statistics Sierra Leone, Bank of Sierra Leone, and Sierra Leone Immigration Department. The Committee should have a formal structure and mandate, meeting quarterly, with a minuted agenda. The aims and objectives of the Committee should be set out in an annual action plan, based on the recommendations in the Sierra Leone Tourism Strategic Plan.

5.7.2 Conduct training and mentorship to build capacity and awareness of tourism statistics, what needs to be collected, how it is collected, and how it is analysed and disseminated within the NTB, ensuring that the Tourism Statistics Committee is involved in this process.

5.7.3 Implement Sierra Leone System of Tourism Statistics (SLSTS) to ensure a comprehensive database and tracking system for measuring and monitoring tourism demand and supply performance.

5.7.4 Expand the existing Tourism Statistics Department within NTB to at least three staff, in preparation for establishing the SLSTS.

5. Spatial development framework

5.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The **Spatial Development Framework** (SDF) is a comprehensive and strategic approach designed to guide the fair, orderly, economic, and sustainable utilization of infrastructure and land for tourism development. At its core, this framework seeks to harmonize the diverse facets of tourism growth, ensuring that it benefits not only the industry but also the environment, local communities, and the broader economy. Its implementation is an essential component of the NSTP where it is framed under Goal 2 "To protect, preserve and sustainably develop tourisms' natural, cultural and social resources", Strategy 2.1 "Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework" (→ see section 4.2.1).

The SDF comprises two key components that synergistically shape the spatial landscape of tourism development:

- the spatial layout, and
- the spatial development guidelines.

The **Spatial Layout** component embodies a holistic spatial concept that encompasses various elements critical to tourism growth. These elements include national gateways, tourism corridors, TDAs and TDZs. National gateways serve as entry points, facilitating the arrival and departure of tourists. Tourism corridors connect various tourist destinations, enhancing accessibility and connectivity. TDAs represent regions primed for concentrated tourism development over the 10-year lifetime of the strategic plan, where diverse attractions, amenities, and facilities can flourish.

Nested within TDAs, TDZs are specific land parcels earmarked for tourism-centric activities, falling directly under the MoTCA's purview. These zones are pivotal in transforming the broad objectives of the NSTP into tangible, actionable steps. The spatial layout represents the spatial translation of the overarching tourism development strategy, taking into account assessments conducted at earlier stages of planning. These assessments consider the fundamental territorial structure and networks within the country.

The identified TDAs are areas that present the best growth potential over the 10-year lifetime of the strategic plan. As these are area developed, other TDAs and TDZs could be added in a next planning cycle. These include, for instance Mount Sugar Loaf in Western Area, Mahera Beach in Port Loko, Tobanda in Southern Province, Camel Hill in Makeni and various attractions in Kono District.

The **Guidelines for Spatial Development** (contained in Volume II, Appendix B) represent the second component of the SDF, providing a structured and informed approach to spatial development within the tourism sector. These guidelines are tailored to address different aspects of spatial development, ensuring that development aligns with sustainable tourism principles. Within this component, specific guidelines are established for different spatial entities, including the following.

- **Guidelines for tourism corridors.** Guidelines for tourism corridors cover essential elements such as service levels, average speeds, rest points, amenities, and signage. These factors are crucial for ensuring seamless and enjoyable travel experiences for tourists along designated corridors.
- **Development control guidelines for tourism zones.** These guidelines define the character and nature of each zone, specifying the types of tourism activities, infrastructure, and facilities suitable for each. They offer a tailored approach to different zone types, recognizing their unique potential.

- **Tourism sites and attractions guidelines.** These focus on ensuring easy access to tourism sites, reliable utilities, and efficient circulation, all aimed at enhancing safety and elevating the overall visitor experience.
- **Design guidelines for tourism facilities.** These guidelines emphasize the sustainability of tourism facilities, ensuring they harmoniously integrate with the environment and resonate with the national culture.

The complete guidelines are found in Volume II, Appendix B.

In essence, the SDF serves as a comprehensive blueprint for responsible and sustainable tourism growth. It takes into account the spatial intricacies of a country's landscape, guiding the development of tourism-related infrastructure and activities in a manner that benefits all stakeholders while preserving the environment and culture. By combining spatial layout strategies and detailed development guidelines, this framework aims to create a harmonious and enriching tourism experience for both visitors and host communities.

5.2 KEY SPATIAL ELEMENTS

5.2.1 Tourism corridors

Tourism corridors refer to specific segments or portions of the country's transportation network that are strategically designated to connect various TDAs. These corridors are essential for facilitating the movement of tourists within the country, ensuring they can easily access and explore different tourist attractions. These roads serve a dual purpose: they not only support the general circulation of people and goods throughout the country but also play a vital role in the development of the tourism sector. Also, it should be noted that the focus of this strategy is not on constructing new roads but on optimizing and enhancing the existing infrastructure for the dual benefit of tourism development and the broader economic upliftment of the country. Some key elements that characterise tourism corridors are listed below.

- **Connectivity.** Tourism corridors are designed to connect different TDAs that include anchor cities, landmarks, cultural sites, natural attractions, and more. The goal is to create a seamless and efficient transportation network that allows tourists to move between these destinations with ease.
- **Facilitating tourism.** Tourism corridors are not just about moving people from one place to another. They are specifically tailored to support the tourism industry. This means ensuring that tourists have access to the necessary infrastructure, such as rest stops, accommodations, and services, along these corridors.
- **Integration.** Tourism corridors are integrated into the broader transportation infrastructure of the country. They leverage the existing road network to ensure that tourists can travel conveniently and safely.
- **Economic impact.** These corridors have a significant economic impact. Not only do they facilitate the movement of tourists, which, in turn, boosts the local economies of the regions and communities along the corridor, but they are also key routes used for general circulation of people and goods. This stimulates economic activity, which in turn will lead to job creation and increased revenue.
- **Guidelines.** Tourism corridors are subject to specific guidelines (→ see volume II section B.3, 13). These guidelines define the standards and criteria that must be met to ensure the safety, quality, and sustainability of these corridors. They cover aspects like road maintenance, signage, safety measures, and environmental considerations.

5.2.2 Tourism development areas

Tourism Development Areas, or TDAs, represent broad geographical areas that have been identified as having substantial potential for tourism growth. These areas are strategically significant and serve as the foundation for the implementation of the NSTP. Key points of the TDA concept are as follows.

- **Potential for growth and regeneration of natural and cultural heritage assets**. TDAs are chosen because they are perceived as having the capacity for significant expansion within the tourism sector. They are broader areas where tourism can flourish and resources can be sustained and regenerated, contributing to the overall economic and social development of the region.
- **Strategic focus.** TDAs serve as strategic focal points for the comprehensive NSTP. The strategies set forth by the strategic plan will guide the development and management of these areas to ensure that tourism growth is sustainable and aligned with broader national objectives.
- **Anchor towns.** For each TDA, an anchor point has been identified. The anchor points, usually towns, are the places where key services and infrastructure are concentrated to support a flourishing tourism industry. They will provide fundamental services such as public administration, banking, health, security, professional services, manpower and others, thus contributing to create the enabling environment to support the private sector in tourism development. They can also represent attractions by themselves, based on cultural resources, shopping opportunities, handicraft, leisure facilities, local food, among others.
- **Clusters of attractions.** TDAs are envisioned as hubs of tourism activity, where clusters of tourism-related attractions, amenities, and facilities can be enhanced and developed. This concentration of resources aims to maximize the appeal and convenience for tourists.
- **Flexibility.** Unlike Tourism Development Zones (TDZs), TDAs are not subject to specific guidelines. This flexibility allows for adaptable and context-specific approaches to tourism development within them.

In essence, TDAs lay the groundwork for sustainable tourism development by identifying regions with inherent tourism potential. In connection with the network of tourism corridors presented above (→ see section 5.2.1), they serve as the canvas upon which strategies are drawn to cultivate tourism growth, develop and package tours and circuits, focusing on both economic and environmental considerations.

5.2.3 Tourism development zones

Tourism Development Zones are specific portions of land within TDAs that are strategically designated for tourism-related investment and use. These zones are instrumental in translating the overarching goals of the NSTP into practical actions.

The foundation for TDZ development is anchored in the NSTP Strategy 1.2 "Promote, facilitate and strengthen public and private sector investment, especially in priority tourism areas", under Goal 1 "To improve tourism business conditions, costs and quality".

The key elements that underpin the concept of TDZ are as follows.

- **Purposeful designation.** To qualify as a TDZ, a site must meet specific criteria. First and foremost, it must be situated within a broader TDA. TDAs are the larger, strategically identified regions primed for tourism growth. TDZs are designed to complement and enhance the potential of these areas.

- **Multifaceted significance.** TDZs often possess characteristics beyond their tourism potential. They might have historical or cultural significance, environmental importance, or potential for recreational and leisure facilities. This makes them valuable assets within a broader cultural and environmental context, which need careful consideration. Conservation concerns must be prioritized.
- **Ministry of Tourism oversight.** Once designated as a TDZ by the Ministry of Lands and Housing, the site comes under the purview of the Ministry of Tourism. This means that the land is reserved exclusively for tourism purposes, underscoring the commitment to developing these areas as tourism hubs.
- **Structured development.** TDZs must adhere to a well-considered Local Area Action Plan. These plans are subject to guidelines (→ see Volume II section B.2 and B.3) that ensure alignment with sustainable tourism practices. This structured approach ensures that TDZs are developed in a systematic and responsible manner.
- **Guideline adherence.** Only tourism-related uses specified in the guidelines are allowed within TDZs. This ensures that development aligns with the overarching sustainable tourism strategy and prevents unplanned or incompatible activities within these zones.

In summary, TDZs are the practical tools for implementing sustainable tourism within TDAs. They focus on specific areas with high tourism potential, ensure compliance with guidelines, and promote responsible development that respects the environment, culture, and overall sustainability objectives. The following maps and Table 21 summarize the TDZ that have been identified as priority development areas based on their existing or potential product development value.

5.3 OVERALL SPATIAL LAYOUT

The Spatial Development Framework for Sierra Leone is anchored by several key spatial elements that define its layout.

Freetown International Airport serves as the primary **gateway** to Sierra Leone, leading directly to the capital city, Freetown. Freetown stands as the national anchor point, a hub of activity and connectivity.

The **tourism corridors**, discussed in section 5.4, are marked in yellow on the map; they necessitate investments for enhancements like consistent mobile coverage, a unified signage system, adequate roadside amenities, and above all infrastructure upgrading. However, roads marked in green are already in reasonably good condition. These roads branch out from Freetown and connecting to Makeni and Kabala to the north-east, and to Bo and Kenema to the south-east; they require minimal upgrades. As such, TDAs connected by these corridors, specifically Mamunta-Mayoso, Kabala-Loma Mountains, and Gola-Moa River, should be prioritized for development.

A challenge lies along the **Atlantic Ocean façade**. While the stretch from Scarcies River Estuary to Banana Islands offers relatively safe navigation, the absence of intermediate harbours or mooring facilities further south poses navigational challenges. The spans from Kent to Bonthe (150 km) and Bonthe to Sulima (140 km) are particularly daunting. In unforeseen adverse conditions or mechanical failures, the availability of a safe harbour and immediate assistance becomes a significant concern. Addressing this, the NSTP has incorporated a strategy under goal 3, strategy 3.4 to enhance the quality, safety, and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, with an emphasis on tourist ferry and boat excursions. The successful execution of this strategy, that presents private investment opportunities. is pivotal to ensuring navigability along the entire Ocean façade, thereby bridging the existing gap in the national transport network.

SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

Legend

Important road to reach tourism destinations

- Road quality good
- Road quality average
- Road quality bad
- Road quality unknown

Road deemed not fundamental to reach tourism destinations

- Road quality unknown
- Important connections for the creation of corridors
- Navigational route
- Lungi International Airport
- Existing airstrip to be reinstated

Protected areas within or nearby TDA

- Forest Reserve (Designated)
- Game Sanctuary / Non-hunting Forest Reserve (Designated)
- National Park (Designated)
- Marine Protected Area (Designated)

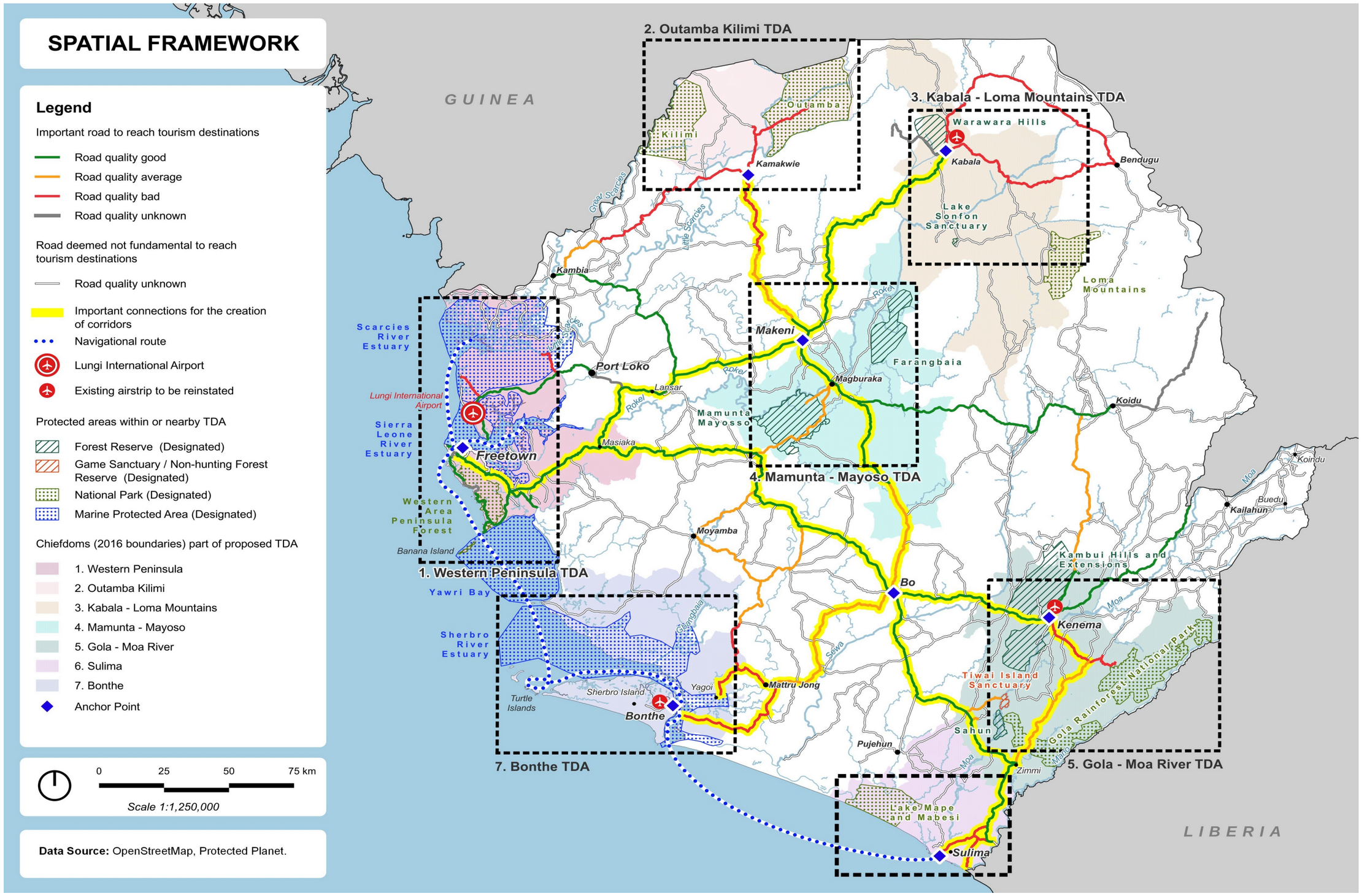
Chiefdoms (2016 boundaries) part of proposed TDA

- 1. Western Peninsula
- 2. Outamba Kilimi
- 3. Kabala - Loma Mountains
- 4. Mamunta - Mayoso
- 5. Gola - Moa River
- 6. Sulima
- 7. Bonthe
- Anchor Point

0 25 50 75 km

Scale 1:1,250,000

Data Source: OpenStreetMap, Protected Planet.



MAP 01 - Spatial framework

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Across the country, seven **Tourism Development Areas** have been delineated. These are discussed in more detail in section 5.5 .

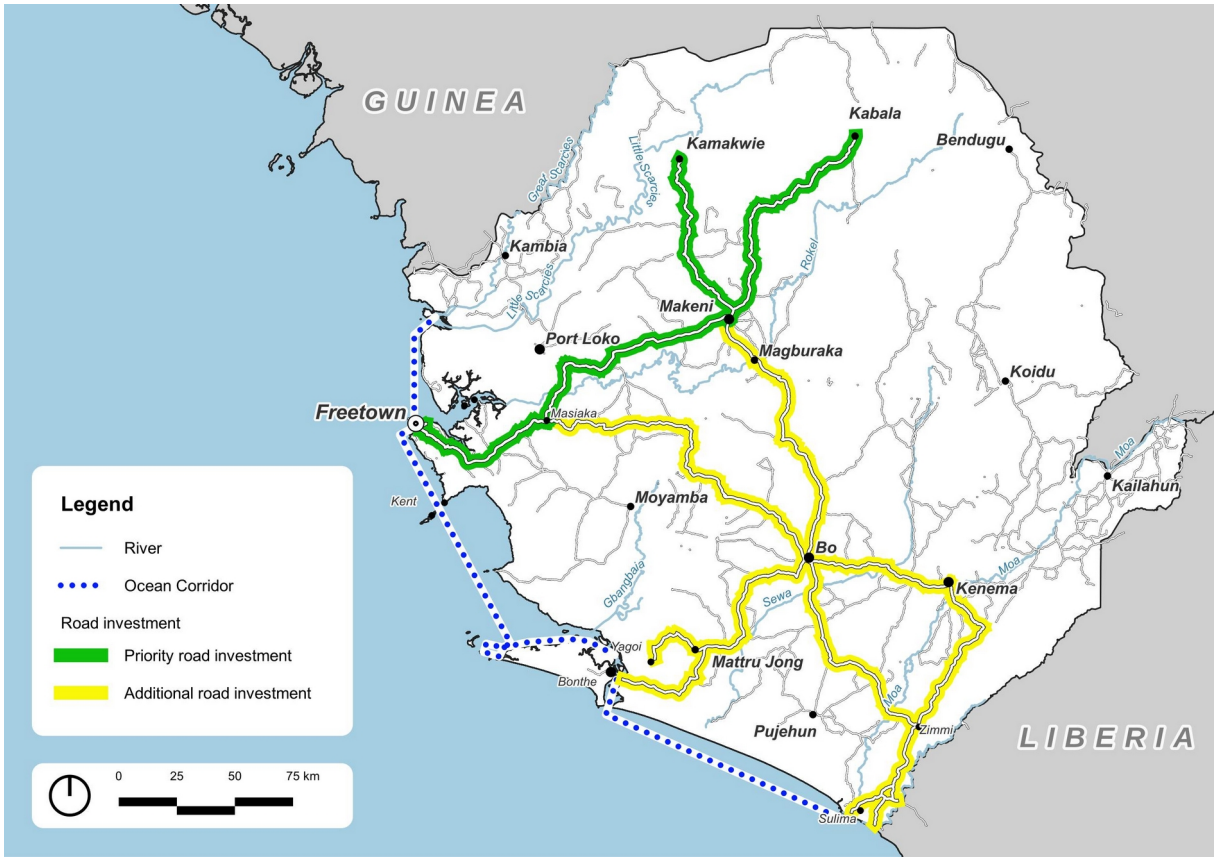
The Atlantic Ocean coast houses three of these TDAs. The Western **Peninsula TDA** area encompasses Freetown, which acts as its anchor point, and the Freetown International Airport; as the country's most populous region, it boasts a rich tapestry of both existing and potential attractions, and it is where the majority of the country's accommodation is found. **Bonthe TDA** is notable for its marine protected zones and the picturesque Turtle Islands archipelago. **Sulima TDA** is positioned at the southernmost tip near the Liberian border, and is the most remote TDA in terms of accessibility.

The mainland is home to four TDAs, namely **Outamba-Kilimi TDA, Kabala-LomaTDA, Mamunta-Mayoso TDA** and **Gola-Moa TDA,** identified around main National Parks and Forest Reserves. These areas are celebrated for their environmental assets, biodiversity and natural landscapes of forest, mountains and water bodies.

Within each TDA, several potential **Tourism Development Zones** and other **Sites of Interest** (SI) have been identified. While these SIs may not currently possess the conditions for immediate development as TDZs, they hold promise for future growth.

5.4 TOURISM CORRIDORS

The identified tourism corridors are presented in the Map 02 and listed in the table below. They constitute a network of roads that connect the different TDA allowing for the identification of different circuits.



MAP 02 - Tourism corridors

Table 21 – Tourism corridors

FROM	TO	TYPE	DISTANCE (KM)	DISTANCE (HH:MM)	INFRASTRUCTURE QUALITY
Freetown	Makeni	Road	186	3:00	Good
Makeni	Kabala	Road	120	2:00	Good
Makeni	Kamakwie	Road	92	2:00	Average/bad
Freetown	Bo	Road	204	3:40	Good
Makeni	Bo	Road	133	3:00	Good/average
Bo	Kenema	Road	68	1:00	Good
Bo	Yagoi[31] (Bonthe)	Road	113	2:00	Average/Bad
Bo	Sulima	Road	175	3:00	Good
Kenema	Sulima via Gola RNP	Road	162	3:10	Average/bad
Freetown	Scarcies River Estuary	Sea	44	1:20	
Freetown	Kent	Sea	48	1:30	
Kent	Bonthe	Sea	150	4:30	
Bonthe	Sulima	Sea	140	4:15	
Navigation times calculated considering an average speed of 18 knots					

Several roads, as previously discussed, are already in reasonably good condition, as shown by the assessment. These roads, which radiate from Freetown and connect to Makeni and Kabala in the north-east and Bo and Kenema in the south-east, demand only minor enhancements. Consequently, the TDAs linked by these corridors, notably Mamunta-Mayoso, Kabala-Loma Mountains, and Gola-Moa River, should be given development precedence. The total length of these roads is approximately 580 km.

A particular emphasis must be placed on **transportation along the Ocean façade**. As highlighted earlier, the southern nodes of the network, specifically Bonthe and Sulima, lack a direct coastal road connection. Instead, they are linked via lengthy detours, necessitating a journey inland to Bo before returning coastward to Yagoi (the ferry departure point for Bonthe) or Sulima. Both destinations require travel times exceeding seven hours.

The strategy 3.4 under goal 3, seeks to bolster the quality, safety, and efficiency of water-based tourism transport. Its successful implementation would render the Ocean corridor fully operational, thereby enhancing accessibility to the Bonthe and Sulima TDAs.

Key navigation anchor points along the Ocean façade include the Scarcies River Estuary at the northernmost end, Freetown, Kent, Bonthe, and the southernmost Sulima. The journey from Freetown to the Scarcies River Estuary spans 24 nautical miles, and from Freetown to Kent, it is 48 nautical miles. Both legs can be traversed in approximately 1.5 hours, with intermediate stops such as Lungi and York. However, the southern stretches, from Kent to Bonthe (around 80 nautical miles or 4.5 hours) and from Bonthe to Sulima (roughly 76 nautical miles or 4.25 hours), lack intermediary infrastructure. This absence poses safety concerns, especially in the face of mechanical issues or inclement weather. The full realization of strategy 3.4 is crucial to ensure the Freetown – Kent – Bonthe – Sulima route is both safe and comfortable for tourists and residents alike.

[31] *One can reach Yagoi by land. From here, there is a ferry that reaches Bonthe in about 1h30'.*

IN SUMMARY:

The Western Peninsula TDA already boasts excellent accessibility, and it acts as the country gateway because of the presence of the Freetown International Airport.

A strategic priority investment in the enhancement of approximately 580 km of roads would unlock access to the following TDAs:

- Mamunta-Mayoso TDA;
- Kabala-Loma Mountains TDA; and
- Gola-Moa River TDA.

To facilitate access to the remaining TDAs, an additional investment for a total of 380 km of tourism corridors is essential. It should be noted that this segment demands a higher investment per km compared to the initial group. This includes:

- Outamba-Kilimi TDA: 92 km of road from Makeni to Kamakwie requires upgrading;
- Bonthe TDA: an upgrade of 113 km of road from Bo to Yagoi is necessary; and
- Sulima TDA: 175 km of road from Bo to Sulima needs enhancement.

Upon these upgrades, all TDAs will be seamlessly connected by roads that meet the stipulated standards (see Volume II section B.3).

  - Further investments in the Makeni – Bo road (133 km) and the Kenema – Gola Rainforest – Sulima road (162 km) for a total of 295 km will foster additional inter-TDA connections, promoting the creation of diverse travel circuits.
- The full realization of strategy 3.4, focusing on water-based tourism transport, will culminate in a comprehensive and efficient tourism transport network.
- Reinstatement of some secondary airstrip to receive small charter flights should also be considered.

5.5 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND ZONES

The identified TDAs and TDZs are as summarized in the table below. They are described in further detail in the following sections.

Table 22 – Summary of Tourism Development Areas and Tourism Development Zones

TDA	ANCHOR TOWN	ACCESS	SITES OF INTEREST	PROPOSED TDZS
(1) WESTERN PENINSULA	Freetown	Access from Freetown International Airport	– Freetown – Three Marine Protected areas (Scarcies River Estuary, Estuary of the Sierra Leone River, Yawri Bay) – Western peninsula National park – Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary – Islands (Tasso, Bunce, Maroon, Banana Island), some of which still host the remains of colonial forts and other structures of historical importance. – The Western Peninsula beaches – Krio villages – Rotumba Slave Fort	– Big Markit Building and Surroundings – Leicester Peak – Freedom Museum & Cotton Tree Park – Bunce Island – Lungi Beach – Banana Islands (Dublin, Ricketts & Mes-Meheux) and Kent – Western Peninsula Beaches: – Lumley – North Side of Bureh Beach – Tokeh – River No 2 – Lakka – Levuma – York
(2) OUTAMBA-KILIMI	Kamakwie	From Freetown: access to Kamakwie is through a 5 hours long road trip passing through Makeni. The road from Makeni to Kamakwie is in poor condition, slowing down the trip.	– Outamba-Kilimi National Park	– A designated Tourism Development Zone of 100 – 200 Ha, inside or at the entrance to the Outamba Kilimi NP
(3) KABALA-LOMA MOUNTAINS	Kabala	From Freetown: access to Kabala is possible through a 5 hours long road trip passing through Makeni.	– Warawara Hills Forest Reserve – Loma Mountain Forest Reserve – Lake Sonfon – Village of Senekedugu	– A designated Tourism Development Zone covering key villages around the Loma Mountains NP, which could act as a tourism buffer zone for the NP

TDA	ANCHOR TOWN	ACCESS	SITES OF INTEREST	PROPOSED TDZS
(4) MAMUNTA-MAYOSO	Makeni	From Freetown: access to Makeni is possible through a 3 hours long road trip on a road in relatively good conditions.	– Mamunta Mayoso Forest Reserve – Farangabai Forest Reserve – Kangari Hills Forest Reserve – Bumbuna Waterfalls – Traditional villages (Mayoso and Rogbonko) – Makeni (nightlife, entertainment and leisure)	– A designated Tourism Development Zone(s) of 50 – 100 Ha, inside or close to the entrance of the Mamunta-Mayoso Forest Reserve
(5) GOLA-MOA	Kenema	From Freetown: access to the Kenema is possible through a 4.5-5 hours road trip passing through Bo.	– Kambui Hill Forest Reserve – Gola Rainforest National Park – River Moa (Jaibui and Tiwai islands) – Villages surrounding Tiwai island (heritage trail) – Kenema diamond mining industrial heritage	– A designated Tourism Development Zone(s) of 100 – 200 Ha, inside or close to the entrance of the Gola Rainforest NP – Tiwai Island Sanctuary – Jabui Island Sanctuary
(6) SULIMA	Sulima	From Freetown: access to Sulima is possible through a 6-7 hours road trip passing through Bo.	– Surfing and beach – Traditional boat making – Lake Mabesi – Lake Mape	– Sulima Beach Zone
(7) BONTHE	Bonthe	From Freetown: access to Bonthe is possible via a 4 to 5-hours boat journey, although there are safety concerns. An alternative route involves a 5 to 6-hour road trip to Yagoi, from where a ferry service to Bonthe is available with an overall duration of the trip of 7 to 8-hours.	– Bonthe Town – Turtle Islands – Marine Protected Area of the Sherbro River Estuary – Turner's Peninsula – Plantain Island – Shenge Beach	– Turtle Islands (Baki, Chepo, Sei, Yele, Bumpetuk, Hoong, Mut, and Nyangei) – Turner's Peninsula

5.5.1 Western Peninsula TDA

OVERVIEW

The Western Peninsula TDA serves as Sierra Leone's primary entry point for international travellers and is the initial destination for a significant number of both international and domestic tourists.

ACCESS

The capital, Freetown, is accessible from Freetown International Airport via boat. The coastal road network encircles the Western Peninsula, providing access to various attractions. Additionally, destinations like Banana Island, Tasso Island, Bunce Island, and the Scarcies River Estuary are reachable by boat.

KEY TOURISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

The Western Peninsula stands out due to its proximity to both Freetown and Freetown International Airport, combined with its diverse geographical and cultural offerings. It boasts the most attractions among all TDAs, catering to a wide range of tourist interests.

Freetown itself is a major draw, not just for its museums and historical sites overseen by the Monuments and Relics Commission, but also for its vibrant nightlife. Nature enthusiasts can explore three distinct Marine Protected Areas: the Scarcies River Estuary, the Sierra Leone River Estuary, and Yawri Bay, all of which feature mangrove forests and wetlands. Other natural attractions include Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, Sugar Loaf Mountain, Guma Dam and Trail, Charlotte Waterfall, Mambo Waterfalls, and Pickett Hill, primarily located within the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park.

The region is dotted with islands like Tasso Island, Bunce Island, Maroon Island, and Banana Island, some of which house remnants of colonial forts and other historically significant structures. The Western Peninsula and the Lungi area are also celebrated for their pristine beaches, including Lungi Beach, Aberdeen, Lumley, Levuma, River No.2, Tokeh, York John Obey, Bureh, Black Johnson, Mama, Kent, and Lakka Beach.

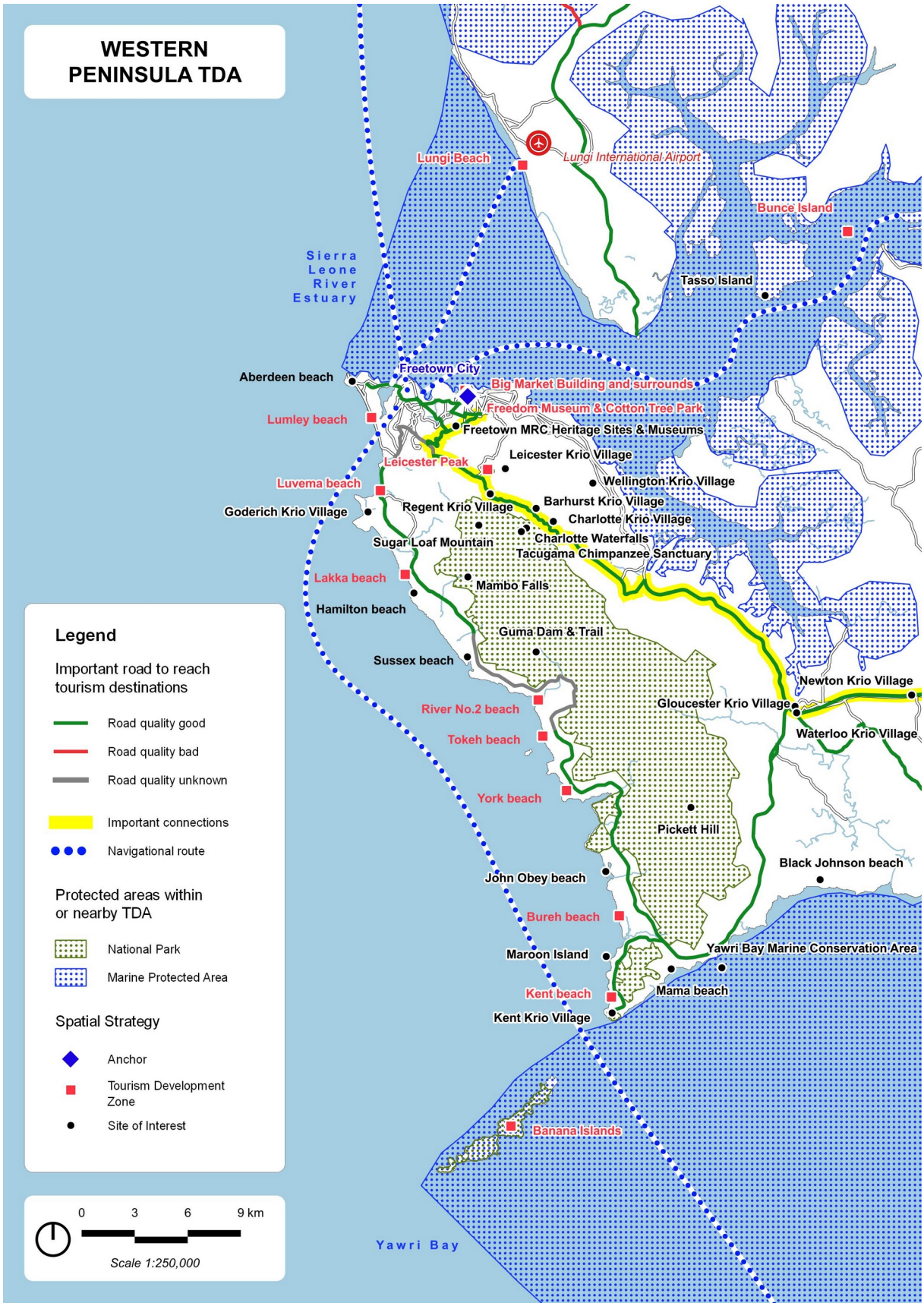
Culturally, the area is predominantly inhabited by the Krio community, known for its unique language, culture, and traditions. Visitors can immerse themselves in Krio culture by visiting villages like Regent, Wellington, Goderich, Charlotte, Bathurst, Newton, Kent, and Waterloo.

MAIN CITY/ANCHOR TOWN

Freetown, the nation's capital, is the obvious TDA's anchor point. It provides a comprehensive range of amenities vital for tourism development, such as accommodation, dining options, banking facilities, healthcare, security, and administrative services.

EXISTING ACCOMMODATION

The 2023 Census indicates that a significant portion of the country's accommodations is located in this region. The Lungi area boasts 17 hotels, Freetown has around 160, and an additional 34 are situated along the coastline.



MAP 03 - Western Peninsula TDA

CONNECTIVITY WITH OTHER TDAS

From Freetown, the Makeni TDA is easily accessible via a well-maintained road. There's also potential for a boat connection to the Bonthe TDA, departing from Freetown, Lungi, or other nearby ports, with possible stops at Banana Island and Plantain Island.

SUGGESTED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Airport access: enhance connections between Freetown International Airport and Freetown.

Docking facilities: upgrade docking facilities in Freetown, Lungi, Scarcies River Estuary, and Banana Island to bolster coastal navigation towards the north-west (Scarcies River Estuary) and south-east (Plantain Island and Bonthe).

Urban upgrading and placemaking projects: urban upgrading projects in areas within Freetown identified as TDZs, such as the Freedom Museum, Big Markit, and Cotton Tree Park.

Public realm: enhance public spaces at coastal ecotourism/leisure locations in the Western Peninsula.

Cultural heritage conservation: prioritize the conservation of cultural heritage sites, including Bunce Island and Krio villages (i.e. traditional architecture).

Ocean corridor: implement strategy 3.4 for water-based tourism transport, establishing the Scarcies – Freetown – Bonthe – Sulima boat route, thereby expanding access and circuit creation opportunities.

POTENTIAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ZONES

The TDZ identified in the Western peninsula TDA are listed below and presented in Map 02.

Big Markit Building and surroundings. Development of this site will provide domestic and international visitors from all target market segments with a cultural, culinary, and urban leisure experience. The Big Markit and surroundings can tell the stories of Freetown's colonial past, traditional practices and handicrafts, food producers and the wide range of vibrant contemporary culture that exists in Freetown. It also offers an opportunity for positive interaction between visitors, local people, producers, and SMEs.

Freedom Museum and Cotton Tree Park. The proposed Freedom Memorial Museum and Cotton Tree Park could offer a new flagship cultural heritage and outdoor leisure experience incorporating the national museum, memorial site (to the civil war and slavery) and public park with a forest of cotton (and other) trees. This unique development would be of interest to both local audiences and international visitors, helping to fill gaps left in understanding about Sierra Leone's past, and by the recent loss of Sierra Leone's landmark Cotton Tree. It will also provide a much-needed green space and cultural resource for local people, and contribute to the reforestation needed to address landslides.

Leicester Peak. The development of Leicester Peak is already under planning and will provide a new leisure, educational and orientational experience for residents and visitors to Freetown enhancing existing city tours. It will showcase the historical context, identify landmarks visible from the spectacular vantage point at the site, provide an enjoyable leisure space, and be "home" to a memorial for the mudslide tragedy at Sugar Loaf Mountain.

Bunce Island. Bunce Island is an iconic cultural heritage site of particular importance to diaspora, domestic visitors, Intrepid and Mature Adventurers on thematic heritage itineraries. High quality guiding, interpretation and visitor facilities would create a conducive environment for bringing to life the site's traumatic story as home to one of the most lucrative slave trading operations in West Africa connecting with the U.S. and the wider Atlantic world.

West Peninsula Beaches

Lumley Beach is in the heart of urban Freetown and enhances the stay of all target markets passing through the city through offering a clean, safe, and well-managed beach environment. It offers a high-quality leisure experience for local people and international visitors with a range of visitor facilities, bars, clubs and restaurants, beach activities, security, and opportunities to buy local crafts and produce. It adds value to the neighbouring accommodation offer and creates livelihood opportunities for local youth providing a range of tourism-related products and services. The area is in urgent need of organised development, parking provision, traffic management and general urban improvement and control.

North side of **Bureh Beach** offers a great surfing spot and place to relax. South side is a popular weekend day-out from Freetown for family and beach parties. Development of the site will create a "soft" water-based sports destination and position it as a potential 'player' in the regional (West African) surf circuit. It will particularly appeal to Surfers and other Outdoor Fanatics. Improvement of the wider tourism infrastructure and accommodation offer will attract International Beach Relaxers, further domestic breaks, and Intrepid and Mature Adventurers who will appreciate the involvement of Bureh Surf Club and other local people providing services and experiences.

Tokeh Beach offers high end tourist accommodation and a beautiful stretch of white sand and palm trees – famous for being the "beach paradise" setting of the Bounty advert. It is an ideal setting for International beach relaxers and domestic market.

River No.2 Beach is an attractive white sand beach set in a unique forested landscape where the river estuary meets the water from the ocean. Upgrading the site and enhancing activities and products on offer by local community who run the site will enhance the appeal to domestic day visitors, Intrepid Adventurers and (in the longer term) Mature Adventurers.

Lakka Beach is home to important mangrove and wetlands which have potential to be positioned as an important environmental education and conservation experience of interest to both international and domestic visitors. Sensitive development of the site in partnership with the local community would provide visitors with a chance to visit, spend time and enjoy a relatively pristine marine ecology that is extremely rare in a cityscape. New tourism facilities and infrastructure here will help create and fund a much-needed eco-zone for the preservation and conservation of the current environment which is under major threat from environmental degradation and coastal erosion. It will complement other ecotourism experiences such as Tacugama, Tiwai Island and Gola Rainforest.

Levuma Beach has potential as a family-oriented leisure and environmental education destination targeted at day visits by the domestic market and school groups. It will require providing access to the site, local food restaurants, a dune biology interpretation garden, leisure facilities and a beach boardwalk. Developing the site could be used as a catalyst to address pollution issues and will greatly enhance the space for the local community to enjoy and help manage their environment.

York offers both an attractive beach destination and cultural heritage experience with York Village being a Krio town settled by formerly enslaved people who returned to Africa after gaining their freedom. Their descendants are York's current inhabitants, still living in colourful clapboard houses, some of which are over a hundred years old and provide an interesting cultural site to visit as part of wider thematic historical itineraries and guided tours. The beach has good swimming and some new high-quality accommodation making it attractive to International Beach Relaxers and the domestic market for weekend breaks, and Mature Adventurers will also like the combination of quality beach and culture. Eco Fanatics will also be attracted to York during August-December when it is prime whale watching season and whale watching tours depart the beach daily.

Banana Islands and Kent. Banana Island offers a mix of cultural, eco and outdoor and beach experiences targeted at domestic, Intrepid and Mature Adventurers and International beach relaxers. They have a relaxed outdoor leisure vibe, range of budget to mid-range tourist accommodation, and are strategically placed to be a key stop on the island-hopping circuit along the Ocean Corridor. Kent village with the community's interesting Krio and fishing cultures, historic sites linked to slavery, and sandy beach provides a complementary experience and closest mainland point to catch a boat to Banana Islands. The privately owned third island, Mes-Meheux, has a lot of unique wildlife species and is open to primitive camping, making glamping a viable option.

5.5.2 Outamba-Kilimi TDA

OVERVIEW

The Outamba Kilimi TDA encompasses the pivotal town of Kamakwie and the two distinct forest sections that form the Outamba Kilimi National Park: Outamba and Kilimi.

ACCESS

Originating from Freetown, the nation's capital, one can reach Kamakwie via a road journey that spans approximately 5 hours, with the route passing through Makeni. However, the stretch from Makeni to Kamakwie is notably deteriorated, which prolongs the journey.

KEY TOURISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

The TDA is predominantly forested, with significant portions designated as protected areas. The Outamba Kilimi National Park stands out as the primary attraction, drawing numerous visitors to its rich biodiversity.

MAIN CITY/ANCHOR TOWN

Kamakwie, with a population nearing 16,000, serves as the TDA's central hub and the administrative heart of the encompassing district. It should offer essential services to the tourism industry, including public administration, banking, emergency services, and commercial amenities. However, the town seems to have a sparse offering in terms of accommodations and specific tourist services.

ACCOMMODATION

Options for lodging within the Outamba Kilimi TDA are scant. As per the 2023 Census, no official accommodations are recorded within the TDA, though Kamakwie might house some unlisted facilities. There are very basic huts and a few camping spaces inside the park, with poorly maintained washrooms.

CONNECTIVITY WITH OTHER TDAS

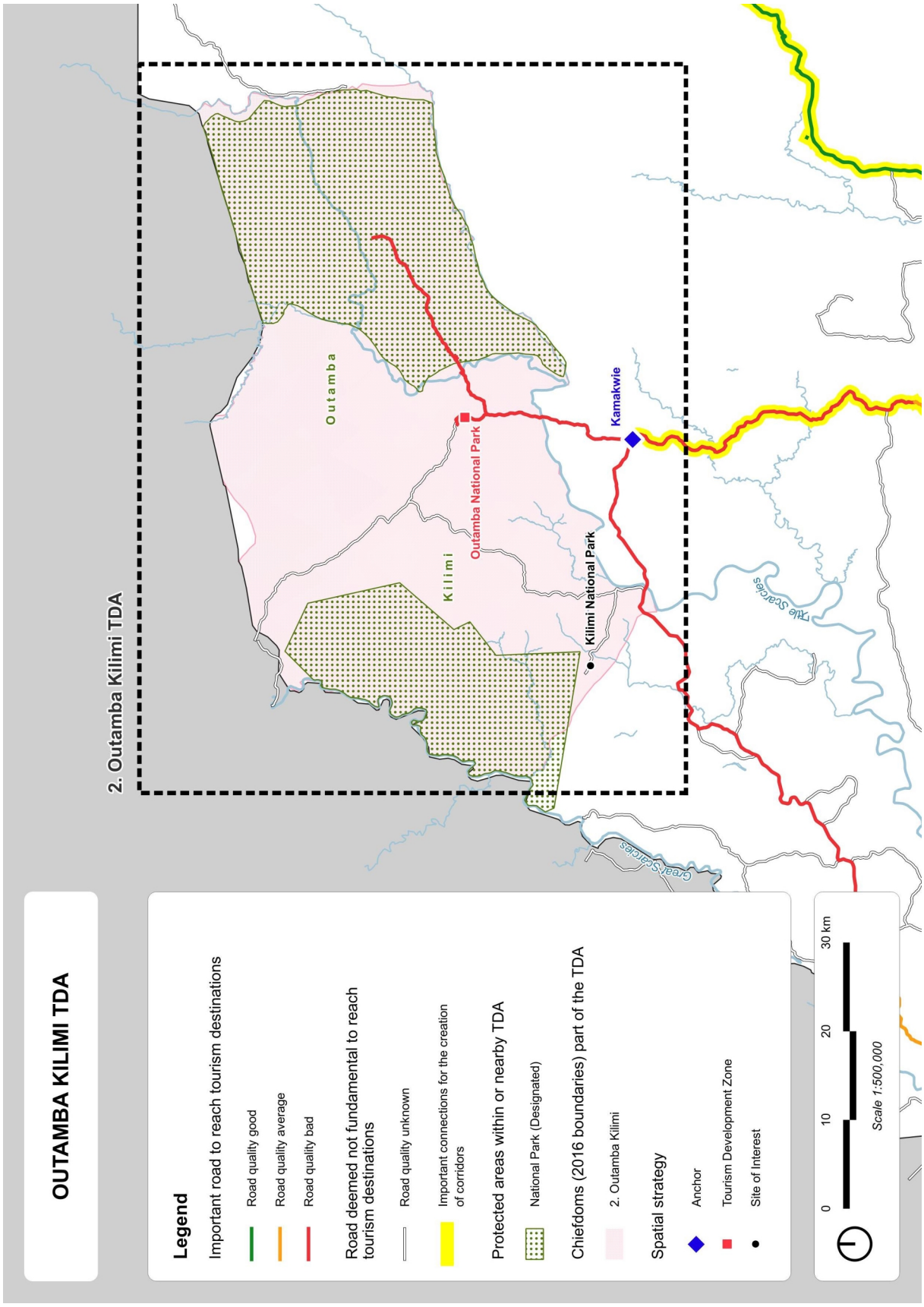
The Outamba Kilimi TDA shares potential linkages with the Kabala-Loma Mountain TDA, primarily because the principal route to Kamakwie traverses Makeni. To access other TDAs, one would typically need to route back through Makeni.

SUGGESTED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Tourism corridor: upgrade the Makeni-Kamakwie stretch (92 km) to enhance accessibility.

Supporting services: bolster the development of essential services and amenities in Kamakwie to cater to tourists.

Access roads: establish well-maintained roads connecting Kamakwie to the entrance of the Park.



MAP 04 - Outamba Kilimi TDA

POTENTIAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ZONES

The TDZ identified in the Outamba-Kilimi TDA is a designated portion inside or on the edge of the Outamba-Kilimi NP and presented in map 04. The main theme of this TDZ is adventure and nature (conservation and wildlife/adventure).

OKNP could be a primary attraction for Eco and Outdoor Fanatics, Intrepid and Mature Adventurers with improved accommodation and visitor/wildlife-viewing infrastructure. Its rich biodiversity, varied habitats (lowland forest, moist savannah woodland, grassland, closed woodland and gallery forest) and wildlife (including elephants, chimpanzees, plethora of birds and hippos) position it as an excellent ecotourism experience. The Kabba River could offer enhanced experiences through river-based ecolodge and mobile glamping accommodation, canoe trips and wildlife spotting. It is strategically placed to be incorporated into trans-frontier itineraries with Guinea and potentially in itineraries along the Little and Great Scarcies (in the long-term).

5.5.3 Kabala-Loma Mountains TDA

OVERVIEW

The Kabala-Loma Mountains TDA is anchored by the town of Kabala and encompasses several significant attractions: the Loma Mountains National Park, the Lake Sonfon Sanctuary Forest Reserve, the Warawara Hills Forest Reserve, and the culturally rich village of Senekedugu.

ACCESS

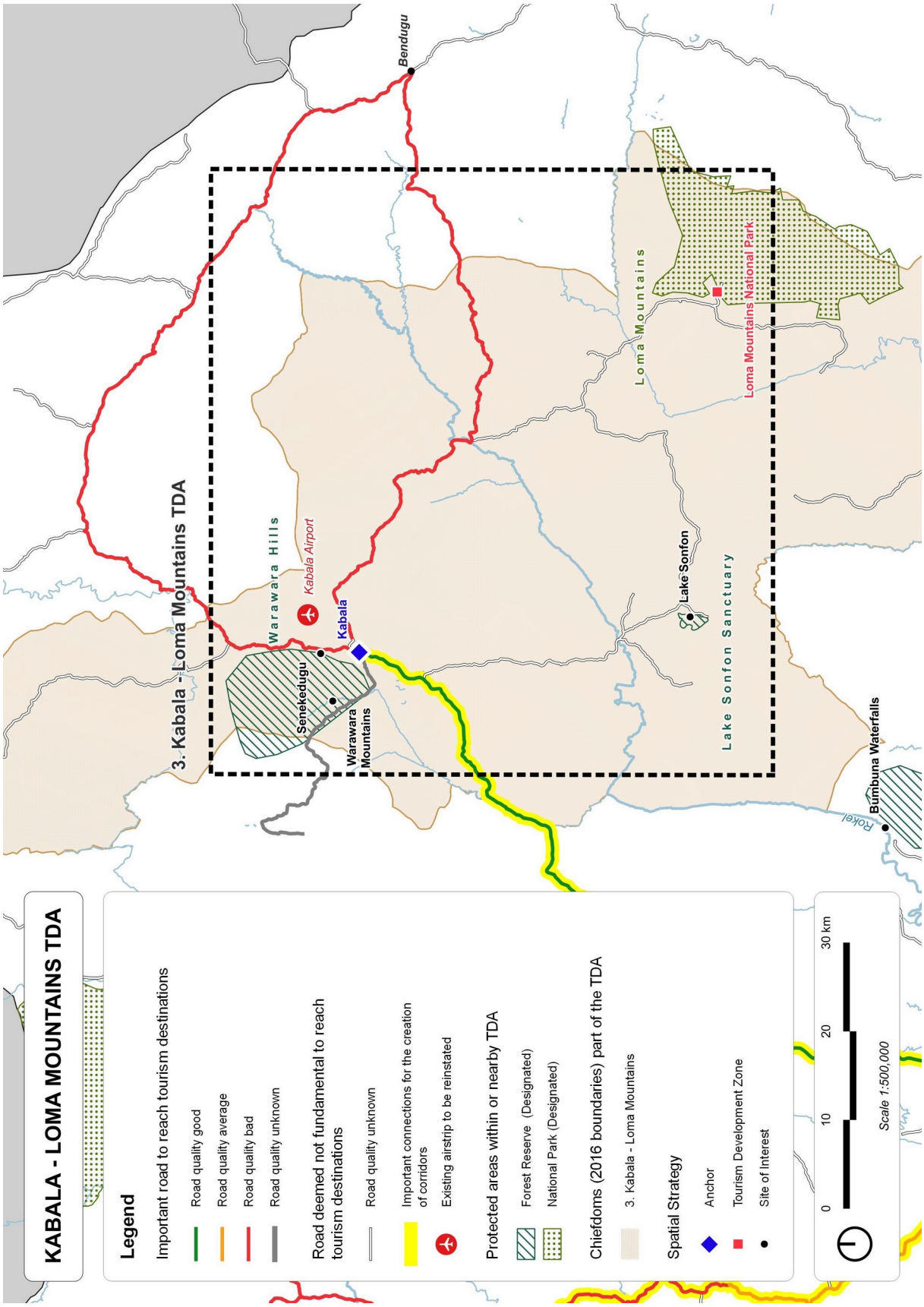
Kabala is accessible from Freetown, the capital, via a road journey of approximately 5 hours, which routes through Makeni. The Loma Mountains NP is only accessible by vehicle for about four to five months of the year due to deep water crossings during the rainy season.

KEY TOURISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

The TDA is predominantly characterized by its lush forests, many of which are designated as protected areas. Notably, the Warawara Hills Forest Reserve and the Loma Mountain NP stand out, with the latter being home to Mount Bintumani, the nation's highest peak at 1945 m above sea level. Lake Sonfon, encircled by its forest reserve, holds cultural, religious, and natural significance. Kabala is a pleasant town offering the chance to experience traditional practices and handicrafts. Additionally, the village of Senekedugu, nestled at the base of the Warawara Hills, offers a unique agritourism attraction for visitors.

MAIN CITY/ANCHOR TOWN

Kabala, with a population nearing 14,000, is the TDA's central hub and the administrative heart of the surrounding district. It should offer a range of services to tourists, including accommodation, leisure activities, health facilities, and security. Furthermore, it should support the tourism sector with essential services such as manpower, public administration, banking, and commercial offerings.



MAP 05 - Kabala – Loma Mountains TDA

ACCOMMODATION

Lodging options within the Kabala-Loma Mountains TDA are primarily centred in Kabala. As per the 2023 Census, there are 6 recorded accommodations in the TDA.

CONNECTIVITY WITH OTHER TDAS

The Kabala-Loma Mountains TDA shares potential linkages with the Makeni-Mayoso TDA, given that the primary route to Kabala traverses Makeni. To access other TDAs, one would typically need to route back through Makeni.

SUGGESTED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Tourism corridor: enhance the Freetown – Makeni – Kabala corridor (306 km), to improve accessibility. This investment is identified as a priority investment (→ see section 93).

Supporting services: support the development of essential services and amenities in Kabala to further bolster the tourism sector.

Access roads: improve and maintain roads connecting Kabala to the Lake Sonfon Sanctuary, the Loma Mountains, and Mount Bintumani.

Airport rehabilitation: consider the refurbishment of the Kabala airport for small charter flights to enhance air connectivity and convenience for tourists.

POTENTIAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ZONES

The TDZ identified in the Kabala - Loma Mountains is a designated section around the edge of the Loma Mountains NP. The main theme for this TDZ is nature (conservation and wildlife/ecotourism).

Loma Mountains National Park is the largest, most remote, and pristine remnant of Guinea mountain forest ecosystems in the country. Mount Bintumani is the highest peak in Africa, west of Mount Cameroon. It has a very strong USP as an adventurous hiking destination with rich bird fauna not found elsewhere in the country. Loma also has a large range of threatened species with higher chance of spotting due to population sizes. It will particularly appeal to Eco and Outdoor Fanatics and Intrepid Adventurers open to camping and local homestay accommodation experiences.

Some of the villages on the edge of the NP have already been engaged in a tourism and conservation initiative with TCS and are keen to expand their tourism involvement.

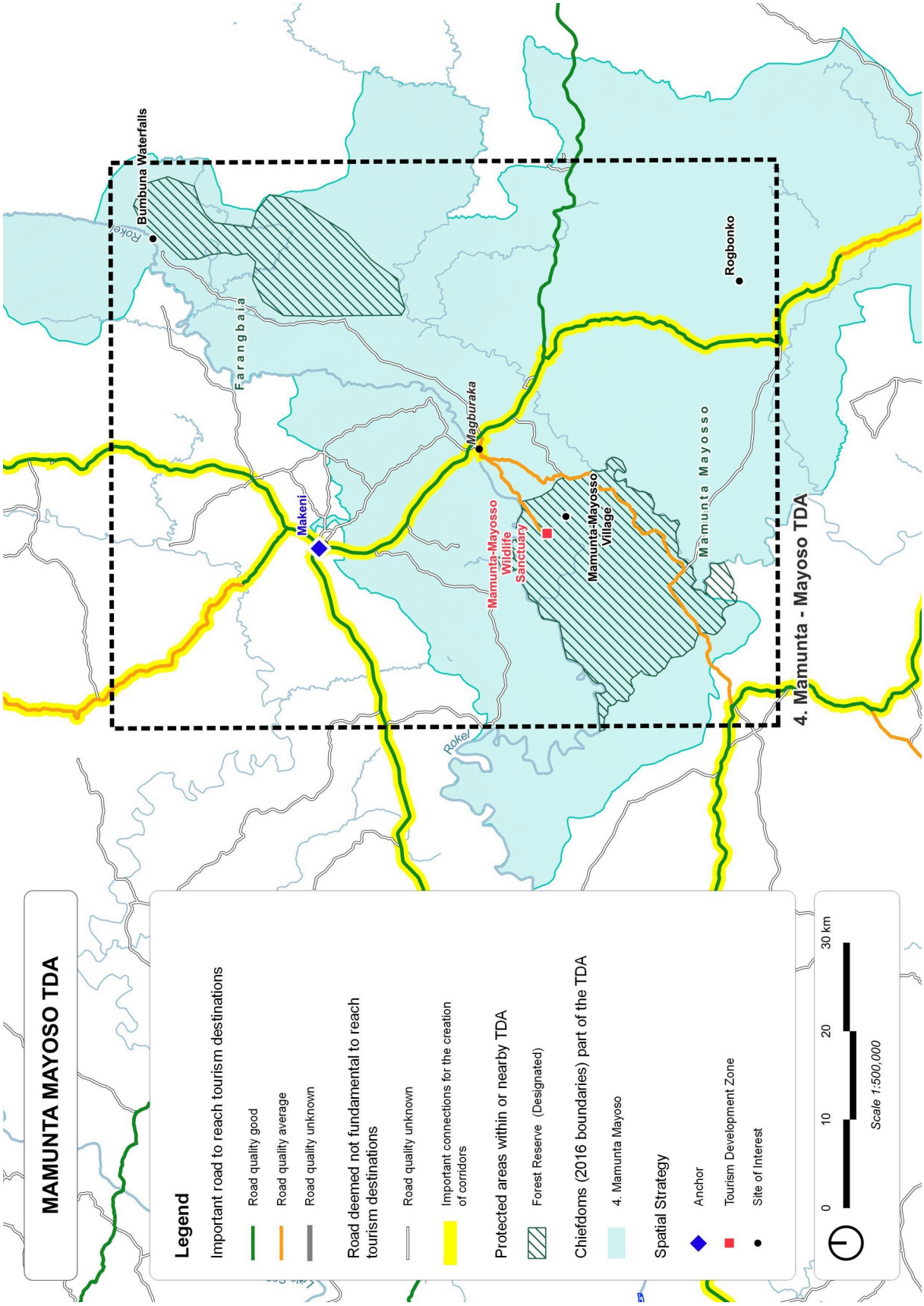
5.5.4 Mamunta-Mayoso TDA

OVERVIEW

The Mamunta-Mayoso TDA is anchored by the vibrant town of Makeni and encompasses several attractions: the Mamunta-Mayoso Forest Reserve, traditional villages like Mayoso and Rogbonko, and the captivating Bumbuna Waterfall nestled within the Farangabaia Forest Reserve.

ACCESS

Mayoso is accessible from Freetown, the capital, via a 3-hour drive on well-maintained roads. While the primary road network within the TDA is in commendable condition, some "last mile" roads might require enhancements for optimal accessibility.



MAP 06 - Mamunta Mayoso TDA

KEY TOURISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

The TDA is predominantly forested, with significant portions designated as protected areas, notably the Mamunta-Mayoso and Farangabai Forest Reserves. The Rokel River's Bumbuna Waterfalls stand as a sought-after attraction. Traditional villages like Mayoso and Rogbonko offer immersive experiences into local lifestyles. Makeni, the TDA's anchor point, boasts a lively nightlife, entertainment venues like the Wusum Field Stadium, and natural attractions such as the Wusun Hill.

MAIN CITY/ANCHOR TOWN

Makeni, with a population of around 85,000, serves as the TDA's central hub and the administrative heart of the surrounding district. It provides services, from healthcare and banking to entertainment and shopping, including unique opportunities for diamond shopping. Tourists can also enjoy a range of accommodations, leisure activities, and diverse culinary experiences.

ACCOMMODATION

Lodging options within the Mamunta-Mayoso TDA are primarily situated in Makeni. The 2023 Census indicates 21 accommodations available within the TDA.

CONNECTIVITY WITH OTHER TDAS

Benefiting from its central location, the Mamunta-Mayoso TDA offers potential linkages to several other TDAs, including the Western Peninsula, Outamba Kilimi, Kabala-Loma Mountains, Gola-Moa, and even the Bonthe TDA, contingent upon improvements to the road leading to Mattru Jong.

SUGGESTED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Tourism corridor: prioritize the enhancement of the Freetown – Makeni corridor (186 km) to boost accessibility. This investment, highlighted as a priority in section 5.3, also facilitates access to the Kabala-Loma Mountains TDA.

Supporting services: amplify the development of essential services and amenities in Makeni to further bolster the tourism sector.

Access roads: upgrade and maintain access roads connecting Makeni to key attractions, including the Mamunta-Mayoso wildlife sanctuary and the Bumbuna Waterfalls.

POTENTIAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ZONES

The TDZ identified in the Mamunta-Mayoso TDA is a designated portion inside or on the edge of Mamunta-Mayoso Wildlife Sanctuary with a focus on nature (conservation, birdwatching and wildlife).

Mamunta-Mayoso Sanctuary's key potential is as an unspoilt nature and birding experience offering sustainable, "close to nature" mobile glamping accommodation relatively close to Freetown. It offers unique opportunities to see wetland birds, butterflies (including butterfly garden and feeders), and dwarf crocodiles amongst other flora and fauna. During the rainy season it offers kayak-based nature watching and a wonderful star gazing experience reflected on the lakes. The neighbouring Temne villages (identified as SI) greatly enhance the tourism offer through additional intangible cultural heritage and wildlife activities, raffia production and opportunities to meet and exchange with local people. It will particularly appeal to Eco and Outdoor Fanatics (especially birders) and Mature Adventurers.

5.5.5 Gola-Moa River TDA

OVERVIEW

The Gola-Moa TDA is anchored by the bustling town of Kenema and boasts a rich array of attractions. These include the Gola Rainforest National Park, sections of the Kambui Hills and Extensions Forest Reserve, the Sahun Forest Reserve, and the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary and non-hunting Forest Reserve. It also has an interesting industrial heritage linked to diamond mining.

ACCESS

Kenema, accessible from Freetown via a 4.5-5 hour drive through Bo, serves as the primary access point to the TDA. From Kenema, the Gola Rainforest National Park is a 1.5-2 hour drive away, and the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary is about 2 hours away. The Sanctuary and the Sahun Forest Reserve, home to Jaibui Island, can also be accessed from Bo in approximately 1.5-2 hours. Notably, Kenema has a decommissioned airport.

KEY TOURISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

The TDA is predominantly forested, with significant portions designated as protected areas, notably the Kambui Hill Forest Reserve and the Gola Rainforest National Park. The Moa River's Jaibui and Tiwai islands serve as vital refuges for local fauna and flora. The surrounding villages of Tiwai Island, including Sahun, Boma, Segbewem, Nainiahun, Mapuna, Kambama, Giema, and Jene, are interconnected by a Heritage Trail, offering a unique trekking experience.

MAIN CITY/ANCHOR TOWN

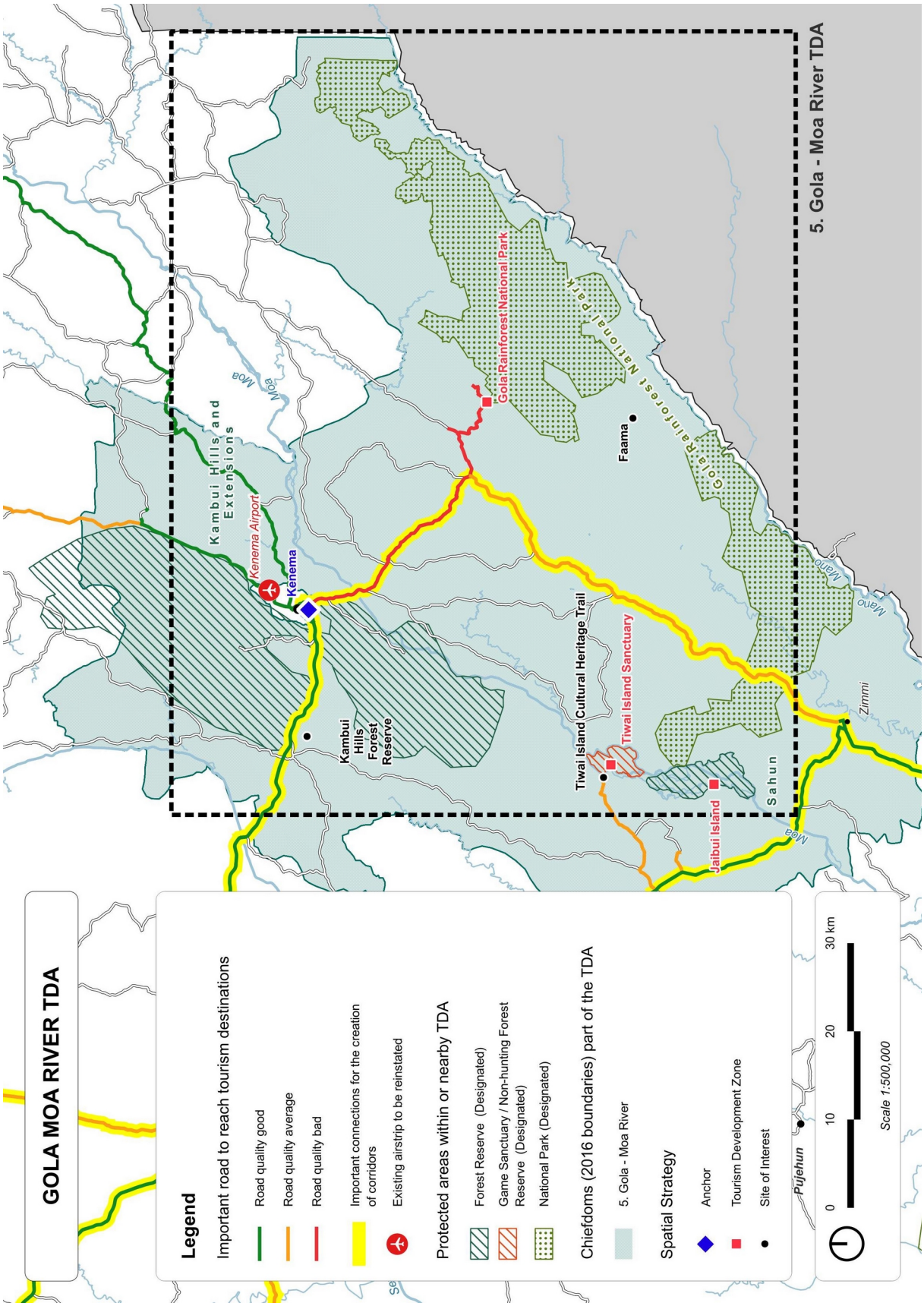
Kenema, with a population of around 200,000, stands as the TDA's central hub and the administrative heart of the surrounding district. It offers several services, from healthcare and banking to entertainment and shopping. Tourists can also enjoy a range of accommodations, leisure activities, and diverse culinary experiences. As the third-largest city in Sierra Leone, Kenema holds significant importance.

ACCOMMODATION

Lodging options within the Gola-Moa TDA are diverse. The 2023 Census indicates 14 accommodations available in Kenema, complemented by guesthouses in villages near Tiwai Island.

CONNECTIVITY WITH OTHER TDAS

The Gola-Moa TDA offers potential linkages to the Sulima TDA, contingent upon improvements to the road connecting Kenema with Zimmi via Gola Rainforest National Park. The reinstatement of the Kenema Airport airstrip would further enhance the possibility of aerial access from Freetown.



MAP 07 - Gola – Moa River TDA

SUGGESTED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Tourism corridor: Enhance the Freetown – Bo – Kenema corridor (272 km) to improve accessibility. This investment, highlighted as a priority in section 5.2, sets the stage for further road upgrades connecting to the Sulima and Bonthe TDAs, that is the Bo – Bonthe corridor and the Kenema – Gola Rainforest – Sulima corridor, with immediate priority given to the Kenema – Gola Rainforest stretch to unlock the potential of the Gola area.

Supporting services: Support the development of additional services and amenities in Kenema, elevating its appeal as a stand-alone destination. For example, development of a regional museum based on diamond mining and industrial heritage.

Access roads: Improve roads within the TDA, ensuring smooth access from Kenema to the Gola Rainforest National Park.

Airport rehabilitation: Explore the possibility of refurbishing Kenema airport to accommodate small charter flights, enhancing air connectivity for tourists.

POTENTIAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ZONES

The TDZs identified in the Gola-Moa River TDA are listed below and presented in map 07. The main themes in these TDZs are adventure and nature (conservation, wildlife safaris and adventure).

- **Gola Rainforest National Park**. Gola Rainforest is the largest remnant of the Upper Guinea tropical moist lowland high evergreen forest in Sierra Leone. Wildlife USPs include Gola Malimbe, pangolins, pygmy hippo and butterfly diversity. It is a primary site for Eco and Outdoor Fanatics, Intrepid and Mature Adventurers who would be attracted by canopy walks, board walks and further development of viewing platforms to enhance the forest and wildlife experience including specialist butterfly and dragonfly spotting. Complementary cultural and natural activities provided by local community could add value to the tourism experience. Offers opportunities for mid to high end ecolodge and mobile glamping[32] accommodation to add to the natural forest experience. Domestic educational groups and SAVE markets will also be attracted by Gola's conservation research and education centre.
- **Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary**. The sanctuary if well established on the tourism circuit and could provide a well-interpreted nature and ecotourism experience with chance to sleep in the forest – with a characterful, sustainable, accommodation experience to add value to a visit. Opportunities exist to see chimpanzees and pygmy hippo – enhanced by camera traps, exceptional guiding, storytelling etc. The site appeals to Eco and Outdoor Fanatics, Intrepid and Mature Adventurers and Domestic markets (including educational groups). The sanctuary and its surroundings is clearly positioned as a responsible destination with the message that a visit contributes to Tiwai's conservation, environmental educational and research programs. The experience is enhanced through cultural activities offered by neighbouring Tiwai Heritage Trail identified as a site of interest (SI) in the wider TDA. In addition, further potential for Tiwai exists through its connectivity with other sites on an ecotourism circuit with Jaibui and Gola Rainforest, or river-based journey to Sulima.
- **Jaibui Island Sanctuary.** Could be positioned as a relatively exclusive ecotourism experience targeted at Eco and Outdoor Fanatics and Intrepid Adventurers. Jaibui Island is rich in biodiversity and home to significant populations of threatened species such as the Western Chimpanzee, several species of monkeys and the pygmy hippopotamus. Besides guided wildlife viewing opportunities, host communities are engaged in sharing other sites and activities around the site such as pristine primary and bamboo forest, waterfalls, sandy

[32] *Glamping is a form of camping involving accommodation and facilities more luxurious than those associated with traditional camping.*

beaches, and their intangible cultural heritage. Conservation and ecotourism activities are being developed here as part of their wider plans to develop an ecotourism trail that connects several sites across the country.

5.5.6 Sulima TDA

OVERVIEW

The Sulima TDA is characterized by its coastal village, Sulima, and the natural beauty of the Lake Mape and Lake Mabesi National Park.

ACCESS

Reaching Sulima from Freetown involves a 6-7 hour drive via Bo. From Kenema, Sulima is about 3 hours away, and from Bo, it is approximately 2.5 hours. Sulima's proximity to the Liberia border is notable. Currently, there's no airport connection, and a boat journey from Bonthe would span over 120 km, with the absence of port facilities along the coast.

KEY TOURISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

Sulima is a small and charming fishing village at the estuary of river Moa, with beautiful unspoiled beaches. Nearby, the protected wetland area of Lake Mape and Mabesi is a haven for birdlife and a key attraction for birdwatcher and nature lovers.

MAIN CITY/ANCHOR TOWN

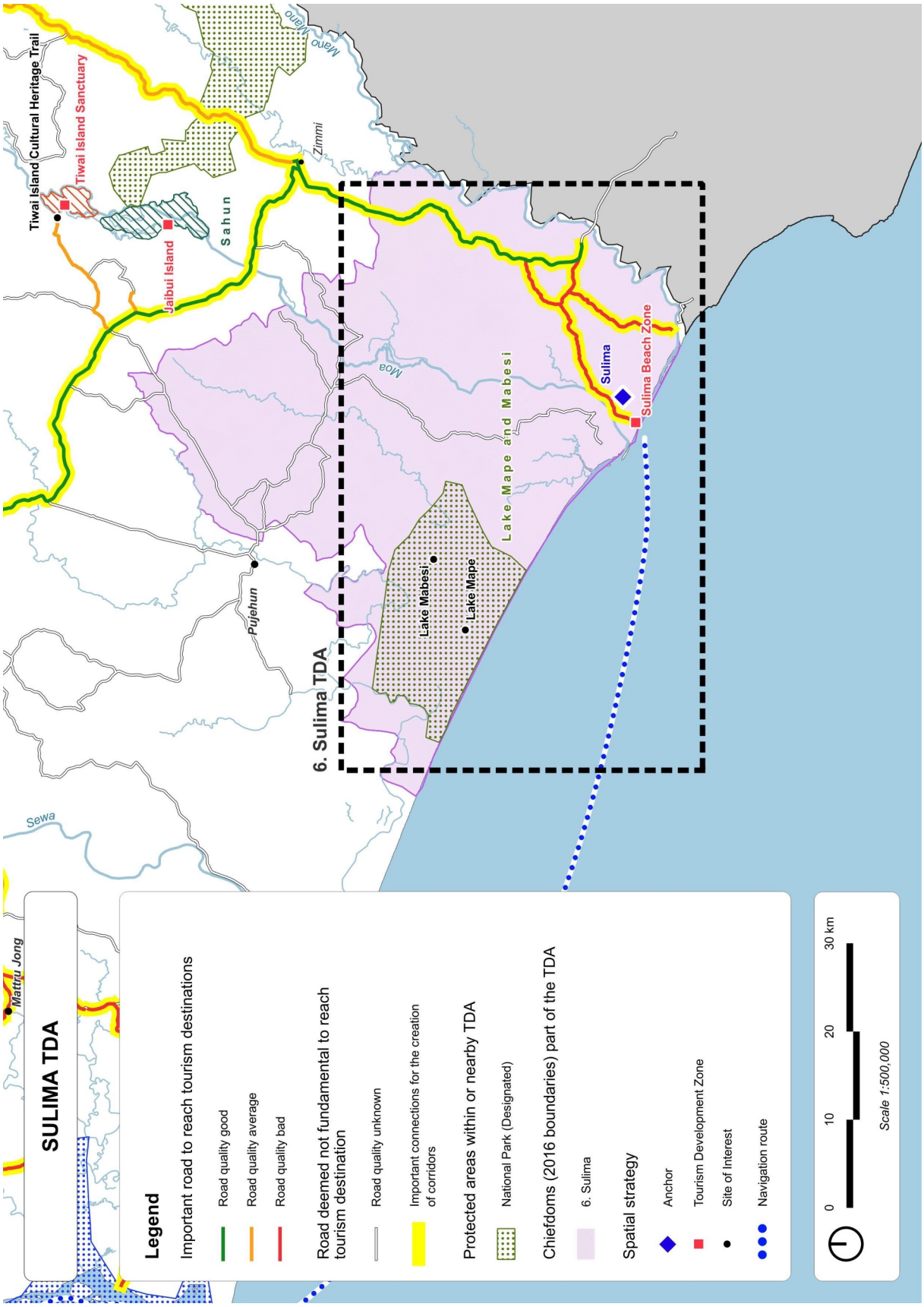
Sulima stands as the primary settlement within the TDA. However, it remains a modest village with limited tourism-supporting amenities, such as accommodation and leisure activities. Pujehun, the administrative hub for the Pujehun District, offers essential services like banking and public administration. However, accessing Pujehun from Sulima presents challenges. Sulima has a population of around 12,000, with fishing and rice farming as its primary economic activities.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation within the Sulima TDA is sparse, with only basic lodging and no registered accommodation as per the 2023 Census recording.

CONNECTIVITY WITH OTHER TDAS

Potential connections exist between the Sulima TDA and the Gola-Moa TDA, contingent on the improvement of the road linking Kenema and Zimmi via Gola Rainforest National Park. Coastal navigation could connect the Sulima and Bonthe TDAs, provided intermediate ports and harbours are developed. Reinstating the Bo or Kenema Airport airstrips would enhance the possibility of aerial access from Freetown.



MAP 08 - Sulima TDA

SUGGESTED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Tourism corridor: prioritize the Bo – Sulima corridor (175 km) for enhancement. As detailed in section 5.3, this investment's effectiveness hinges on the prior improvement of the Freetown-Bo corridor.

Inter-TDA connectivity: invest further in the Kenema-Sulima via Gola Rainforest National Park and Zimmi road (162 km) will foster better connections between TDAs.

Supporting services: bolster the development of essential services in Sulima, enhancing its appeal as a destination.

Access roads: upgrade roads within the TDA, ensuring smooth access from Sulima village to Lake Mape and Lake Mabesi, and between Sulima village and the main road leading to the border post.

Ocean corridor: implementing strategy 3.4, which emphasizes water-based tourism transport, will activate the Freetown – Bonthe – Sulima boat route, paving the way for enhanced access and circuit creation.

POTENTIAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ZONES

The TDZ identified in the Sulima TDA is the Sulima Beach Zone, 200-500 m inland from the high-water mark, the Moa River Estuary mouth and Kasada Island at the Moa River mouth. The TDZ offers several themes of interest such as beach tourism and cultural interactions (beach/leisure/traditional practices and handicrafts/adventure/surfing). It could become and attractive surfing and beach destination targeted at Eco and Outdoor Fanatics, Intrepid Adventurers and Domestic Breaks and International Beach Relaxers. While currently undeveloped, the zone has the potential for a range of quality and sustainable beachside accommodation and infrastructure, to meet different requirements and budgets of target markets. Activities could include beach café(s), water-based and cultural activities, restaurants, and handicraft sales supporting empowerment of the Women in Tourism group and livelihood opportunities for the local community. It is a strategic location close to Liberian border, with access by sea. The Moa river provides access to Tiwai Island Sanctuary and Jaibui Island Sanctuary and as such there is longer term potential for Sulima to be included on wider tourism circuits and thematic itineraries.

5.5.7 Bonthe TDA

OVERVIEW

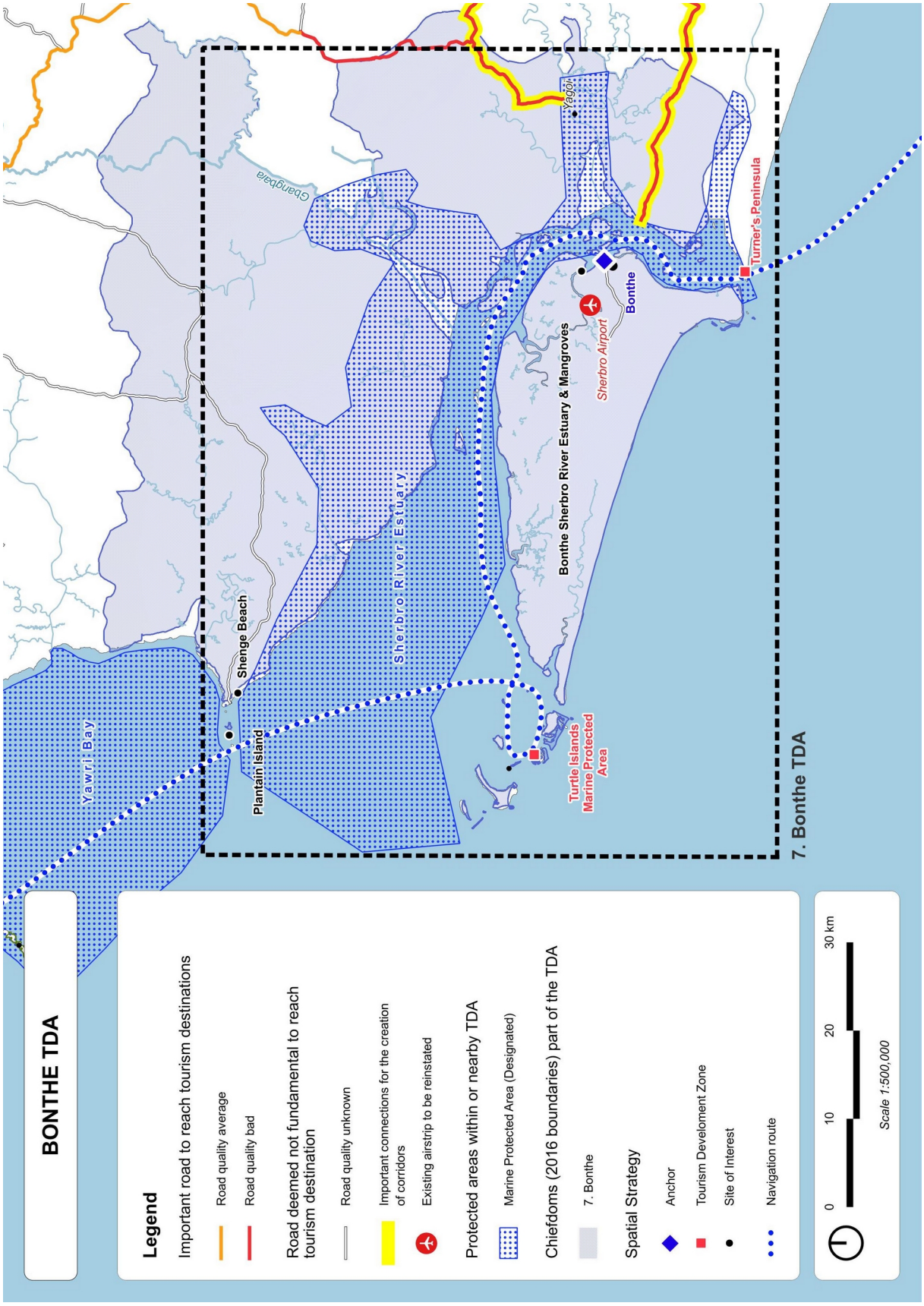
The Bonthe TDA encompasses the Sherbro Island and the Turtle Islands, with a significant part of the region designated as a Marine Protected Area.

ACCESS

Access to Bonthe is possible via a 4 to 5-hour boat journey from Freetown, although there are safety concerns. An alternative route involves a 5 to 6-hour road trip to Yagoi, from where a ferry service to Bonthe is available with an overall duration of the trip of 7 to 8-hours.

KEY TOURISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

The Sherbro River Estuary, designated as a Marine Protected Area, is abundant in mangrove forests and wetlands. Other attractions in the region include Bonthe town, the Turtle Islands, Turner's Peninsula, Plantain Island, and the scenic Shenge Beach.



MAP 09 - Bonthe TDA

MAIN CITY/ANCHOR TOWN

Bonthe stands as the primary city within the TDA, offering a range of services for tourists, including accommodation, leisure activities, health care, and security. Additionally, it supports the tourism sector with manpower, public administration, banking, and commercial services. As the administrative hub for the Bonthe District, one of Sierra Leone's sixteen districts, Bonthe boasts a population of around 200,000, ranking it as the third-largest town. The predominant economic activities in Bonthe revolve around fishing and rice farming.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation options within the Bonthe TDA are sparse, consisting of a few basic local guest houses, with the 2023 Census indicating no recorded establishments in the region.

CONNECTIVITY WITH OTHER TDAS

Potential connections exist between the Bonthe TDA and the Freetown and Sulima TDAs through coastal navigation. To ensure a connection with Mattru Jong, road enhancements might be necessary. The potential reinstatement of the Bonthe Airport could pave the way for air charter services linking the region to Freetown.

SUGGESTED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Tourism corridor: enhance the Bo – Yagoi corridor (113 km) for improved accessibility. As outlined in section 5.3, the success of this investment is contingent upon the prior enhancement of the Freetown-Bo corridor.

Supporting services: enhance services and amenities in Bonthe to elevate its status as a sought-after destination.

Docking facilities: upgrade docking facilities at Yagoi, Bonthe, the Turtle Islands, and Plantain Island to facilitate access to Bonthe via the Yagoi ferry and to ensure seamless coastal navigation to the north-west (Banana Islands, Kent, Freetown) and south-east (Sulima).

Ocean corridor: the execution of strategy 3.4, focusing on water-based tourism transport, will establish the Freetown – Bonthe – Sulima boat route, creating additional avenues for access and circuit creation.

Airport rehabilitation: assess the feasibility of reviving the Bonthe airport to cater to small charter flights, thereby enhancing air connectivity for tourists.

POTENTIAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ZONES

The TDZ identified in the Bonthe TDA are listed below and presented in map 09. The main themes in these TDZ are adventure, coastal, nature (conservation and wildlife/beach/adventure/ traditional practices and handicrafts/intangible heritage/colonial and slave heritage/beach/conservation and wildlife).

Turtle Islands Marine Protected Area (Bakie, Chepo, Sei, Yele, Bumpetuk, Hoong, Mut, and Nyangei Islands). The area offers pristine, beautiful, and remote islands, marine and estuary environment hosted by local Sherbro (and other) island communities. It could appeal to Intrepid Adventurers and Eco and Outdoor Fanatics and offers a wide range of nature-based activities: fishing (for food as well as sport); free diving and spear fishing; snorkeling; wreck diving; self-catered wind sports such as wind and kite surfing; safe island-to-island kayaking and SUPping; turtle, dolphin and whale watching; and star gazing. Alternatively, an additional target market is International Beach Relaxers staying in high-end, small-scale sustainable eco-accommodation.

Turner's Peninsula. Offers a large stretch of coastal peninsula to the South-east of Bonthe, running parallel to the coast, bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and being home to Lake Kenema. The peninsula was occupied by the British from 1825. Although the peninsula is inhabited along all of its length, substantial stretches of open land remain undeveloped.

6. Institutional arrangements

To implement the proposals emanating from the strategic framework, the various institutional shortcomings identified in the diagnostic study should be urgently addressed. The focus should be on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism institutions, improving public sector co-ordination in tourism and strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks for improved sector governance and increased competitiveness.

Important institutional issues relate to the need for:

- Re-enforcing the position of tourism as a declared national economic priority, in line with the Government's Medium-term National Development Plan.
- Ensuring coordination and collaboration between MoTCA and all MDA's that are directly and indirectly involved in executing the NSTP and adherence to the requirements emanating from the proposals contained herein.
- Structuring and strengthening the Directorate: Tourism and the NTB in accordance with the requirements emanating from the NSTP.
- Strengthening collaboration and synergies between the Directorate: Tourism and the Directorate Cultural Affairs and their respective agencies.
- Establishing a strong public-private-community partnership, aligned to the principle that tourism management will be government-led, private sector driven and community-based.

NOTE: The institutional concepts and proposals contained here are indicative and the organisational structure will be refined based on the findings and proposals contained in Management and Functional Review of MoTCA conducted in 2024[33], in line with Strategy 5.2 above.

6.1 ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF TOURISM INSTITUTIONS

The main implementers of the NSTP are the a) the line function Directorate of Tourism in MoTCA and b) the National Tourism Board as implementing agency. The roles, functions and structures of these organisations need to be clarified to ensure focused execution of the tourism strategy and avoid any duplication or fragmentation of human and financial resources.

[33] *Public Sector Reform Unit (2024) Management and functional review of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs of the Republic of Sierra Leone*

6.1.1 Key performance areas and functions of the Directorate: Tourism and NTB

The following destination management performance areas and functions are recommended for the MoTCA and the NTB.

Table 23 – Key Performance Areas and Functions – Directorate Tourism and NTB

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS	FUNCTIONS
KPAS AND FUNCTIONS TO BE PERFORMED BY THE MOTCA	
1. TOURISM AND POLICY AND PLANNING	
Legal, policy and strategy support	– Revising and updating the Tourism Act and regulations as required – Formulating, spearheading and monitoring implementation of NSTP – Scrutinising and providing input to policies of other sectors to ensure that they consider tourism and visa versa – Communicating policies, strategies and progress to public and private stakeholders – Preparing tourism funding proposals and submissions in support of strategy – Advising on and conducting land-use management plans for TDZs
Destination sustainability	– Keeping track of and monitoring the execution and impacts of all tourism-related destination plans and programs, in line with internationally recognised success indicators – Supporting and enforcing the proposed tourism sustainability guidelines – Supporting gender and youth empowerment
Tourism licensing regulations and planning approvals	– Devising tourism licensing requirements and other regulations for tourism operations and management, including accommodation, tour guiding, tour operating, CBT and others – Manage developments in TDZs and facilitating approval of tourism development proposals – Liaising with other Ministries, provincial and local authorities to ensure effective application of planning and licensing requirements
2. TOURISM COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS	
Partnership facilitation	– Act as secretariat for the Presidential Tourism Council (PTC) and Tourism Liaison Committee (TLC) – Follow through and monitor the agenda and progress of the PTC and TLC
International cooperation	– Manage membership of UNWTO and leverage UNWTO support – Managed membership of ECOWAS and participate actively in ECOWAS tourism program – Manage and leverage feasible bilateral agreements – Pursue and leverage donor relationships in favour of tourism

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS	FUNCTIONS
Inter-MDA cooperation	– Devise and coordinate various inter-ministerial tourism strategies e.g. – safety, security and crisis management strategy – lands – aviation, access and immigration – transport – others of relevance
National-local cooperation	– Coordinate local strategy implementation with district and local governments – Support and advise regional and local authorities and where required facilitate formulation of local levels tourism plans
Private sector cooperation	– Set up and manage regular liaison opportunities with private organisations – Coordinate and support the TLC
3. INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS ADVANCEMENT	
Business and investment support	– Advise and provide technical support to MSME's and community enterprises, working closely with public and private financial and technical support institutions – Act as an advisory point for tourism investors and refer them to appropriate processes and organisations – Initiate tourism investment promotion and facilitation program through SLIEPA – Advocate, facilitate and if needed manage selective tourism enterprise and investment incentive schemes
Training and capacity building	– Monitor, formulate and facilitate appropriate, quality tourism training systems and supply in cooperation with NTB and Ministry of Higher Education. – Monitor training demand and act as a communication bridge between training institutions and the tourism industry – Initiate and facilitate the development and execution of short-term training interventions in support of gender and Youth Empowerment – Conduct training and support programmes for MSME and community-based tourism enterprises including training, mentorship, and coaching – Develop and fund a capacity building, licensing and formalisation programmes for tour guides, tour leaders, specialist guides, and local community guides in collaboration with NTB. – Lead the implementation of the National Tourism Capacity Building Strategic Action Plan.
KPAS AND FUNCTIONS TO BE PERFORMED BY NTB	
1. DESTINATION MARKETING	
Brand management	– Brand leadership, development and advocacy – Reputation and image management – Crisis communication and PR – Marketing and brand collateral development and merchandising

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS	FUNCTIONS
Destination marketing	– International marketing – Domestic marketing – Online (e-) marketing – Visitor information and merchandising
Statistics and information management	– Ensure valid and reliable visitor arrival statistics, in collaboration with NTB – Work with MoTCA divisions, SSL and private sector to improve the quality of supply databases – Work with SLHATA, SSL and others in collecting and collating valid and reliable domestic and international demand trend information – Analyse, interpret, publish and communicate statistics and research – Lead and facilitate development of Tourism Satellite Account – Publish and communicate research and statistics
Market research and intelligence	– Conduct visitor satisfaction and expenditure tracking/surveys – Manage market intelligence, segmentation and strategy advice, including market portfolio analysis, segmentation and strategic visitor flows – Monitor image performance, including CBT and contributions to the SDGs
2. INDUSTRY QUALITY ADVANCEMENT	
Licensing, grading and classification	– Issue tourism operating licenses – Develop, consult and improve the Grading and Classification System – Market, advocate and ensure membership of the Grading and Classification Systems – Implement and operate the Grading and Classification System
Visitor information, awareness and care	– Promote tourism in schools – Promote community awareness and sensitisation, including cleaning, anti-litter, etc. – Launch tourism welcoming and customer care campaigns – Tourist information provision and distribution
3. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	
TDZ and Circuits enhancement	– TDZ implementation and enhancements – Tourism circuits developments
Visitor services enhancement	– Tourism signage improvement – Development of public tourism facilities in key tourism zones – Visitor safety and crisis management
Special capital projects	– Manage capital improvements, community project enhancements, etc.

6.1.2 Areas of revenue generation and cost recovery

While all public sector revenue generation mechanisms should be carefully considered regarding their fairness and tourism cost impacts, the tourism program offers substantial scope for revenue generation, through among others, the following mechanisms:

- A well-considered and tourism-bespoke visitor levy.
- Public-private-partnership engagements in the proposed Tourism Development Zones, including lease and rental fees, concession fees, service charges and other mechanisms.
- Usage and entrance charges for public (nature, culture and man-made) facilities and spaces under the jurisdiction of the Ministry.
- Service charges for development assessments and approvals.
- Tightening up and streamlining of licencing fees.
- Tightening up of lease and rental fees of properties currently owned by the Ministry.

Co-marketing charges to private entrepreneurs for participating in travel trade workshops, exhibitions, digital and print marketing exposure, etc.

6.2 ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF OTHER KEY SECTORS AND MDAS IN SUPPORT OF TOURISM

Implementing the various strategies, actions and spatial priorities identified in the NSTP requires the coordination and participation of a wide spectrum of MDAs, as outlined in Table 24.

Table 24 – Sectors and institutions involved in implementing the NSTP

SECTOR	KEY INTERVENTIONS	KEY MDAS
Transport	Promoting accessibility and addressing the cost of travel which is important for attracting and facilitating more travel and tourism. In this regard MDAs have the following roles to play in implementing the NSTP: Road Transport Development – Prioritizing the development of key tourism roads – Developing tourism information and directional signage on all major highways – Providing tourist stop over points and have them incorporated in all major road developments – Prioritizing programmes to ease traffic congestion in the city – Supporting incentives for tour operators to procure tourist special purpose vehicles Water transportation – Conducting technical mapping studies of all key water bodies to facilitate safe water navigation inland and in the ocean – Supporting the promotion of cost effective water transportation through incentives for innovative and efficient water transport systems – Supporting the mapping and development of tourist itineraries of key tourist attraction areas within the water bodies – Regulating safe and efficient tourist water transport services – Providing of safe and comfortable passenger ferry and boat boarding	Min Transport and Aviation (MoTA) Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Airport Authority Maritime Administration Sierra Leone Road Authority (SLRA)

SECTOR	KEY INTERVENTIONS	KEY MDAS
	facilities and infrastructure Air transportation – Renovating and expanding the international airports and airstrips – Establishing new airstrips in underserved tourist areas – Supporting the establishment of domestic flights to key tourism areas – Supporting the establishment and coordination of an air rescue services for emergencies in tourist attraction areas – Facilitating the development of a cost effective domestic and regional air service	
Justice, Law and Order	Development of tourism and travel industry requires conducive legal environment. MoTCA will work closely with the Justice, Law and Order sector to institute and support a regulatory environment in the areas of; Regulation Development – Redrafting of the Tourism Act – Reviewing and harmonizing multiple regulations to facilitate sustainable tourism development and promotion – Supporting the development of operational regulations and guidelines for the tourism sub sectors Immigration – Supporting the development of efficient visa processing platforms – Ensuring effective recording of visitor arrivals and departure data – Building the capacity of immigration officers in customer handling and visitor statistics collection Tourism policing – Ensuring safety and security of tourists, tourism resources and installations – Expanding and supporting Police deployment in key tourism attraction areas – Building the capacity of the Police to investigate and prosecute tourism related crime – Building the capacity of Police to support visitor information and service needs – Supporting tourism regulation enforcement and quality assurance	Min Justice (MoJ) Min Internal Affairs (MoIA) Law Reform Commission (LRC) SL Police (SLP)
Foreign Affairs (international and regional)	The competitiveness of the destination is enhanced by actions that broaden the country's visibility and positive image in the international community and easing the facilitation of travel. The Tourism sector in Sierra Leone will achieve these objectives by working with the international relations sector on the following interventions; – Promoting good relations with the regional neighbors – Promoting travel facilitation through the online visa processing platforms – Facilitating destination promotional programmes and visitor information provision – Supporting proactive engagement programmes to address negative travel advisories and crisis management – Supporting partnership development with international tourism and	Min of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation (MoFAIA) Office of Diaspora Affairs (ODA)

SECTOR	KEY INTERVENTIONS	KEY MDAS
	travel organizations such as UNWTO and ECOWAS – Attracting regional investment into the tourism sector	
Land administration and governance	The development of tourism attractions and enterprises will require efficient planing and development of TDAs and TDZs. This will be supported and promoted by the local government offices and chieftainship areas. MoTCA will work closely with the land planning and regulating authorities and the local and community leadership to achieve the development objectives through the following interventions: – Supporting the identification, zoning and facilitation of TDAs and TDzs – Setting aside land for tourism investment – Supporting identifying, gazetting and protecting key tourism natural and cultural resources – Strengthening tourism regulation – Where appropriate, establishing district tourism associations to coordinate public and private sector development – Mobilizing and guiding communities to integrate tourism in their development initiatives – Promoting investment, incentivising and attracting tourism enterprises – Establishing and monitoring tourism development	Min of Lands, Housing & Country Planning (MoLHCP) Min of Local Government & Community Affairs (MoLGCA) Min of Works & Public Assets (MoWPA)
Environment, conservation, water and energy	MoTCA will coordinate with environment sectors to promote the following initiatives: – Protecting wildlife resources in the Protected Areas – Establishing and promoting ecotourism products within the Protected Areas – Protecting ocean, lake and river shores from encroachment and pollution – Strengthening and coordinating the enforcement of EIAs and SIAs in tourism enterprises, mining and industrial and developments – Strengthening the enforcement of pollution control laws and guidelines – Supporting programmes to mitigate climate change and promote “green” operations – Supporting the control and protection of Protected Areas from invasive species and pollutants – Promoting alternative sustainable energy sources in tourism areas - particularly those outside the supply range of the hydro electric grid	Min of Environment & Climate Change (MoECC) Min Fisheries & Marine Resources (MoFMR) Min of Water resources & Sanitation (MoWRS) Maritime Administration (SLMARAD) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Protected Areas Authority (PAA)
Business development and investment	A key principle underpinning sustainable tourism destination development is that of tourism being government led (i.e. ensuring appropriate destination policies, strategies, legal frameworks and public sector support for creating an enabling tourism environment), and private sector driven (i.e. engaging in the business of tourism, including investment, trading, selling, production, customer service provision). To ensure this, the following activities should be addressed: – Ensuring a safe and stable business environment – Ensuring security of land, property and business tenure – Avoiding excess and unnecessary business costs and taxes	Min of Trade & Industry (MoTIA) Min of Communication, Technology & Innovation (MoCTI) Min of Agriculture & Food Security (MoAF) Sierra Leone Investment and Export promotion Agency (SLIEPA)

SECTOR	KEY INTERVENTIONS	KEY MDAS
	– Creating a regulatory environment that provides for seamless processes and ease of doing business – Providing support and incentives for new tourism investments – Promoting backward & forward linkages with tourism & other sectors – Promoting ICT and technology innovation in tourism – Ensuring effective tourism statistics and economic monitoring	National Investment Board (NIB) National revenue Authority (NRA) Statistics SL (SSL) Bank of SL (BSL)
Culture	Sierra Leone is endowed with a rich and diverse cultural resources. To develop this resource the sector will enhance coordination to achieve the following actions: – Mapping and documenting cultural tourism resources and attractions – Protecting and developing cultural tourism sites and practices – Advancing contemporary culture and the creative arts – Supporting cultural institutions to protect and develop their cultural assets as tourism products	Min of Tourism and Culure (MoTCA) Monuments & Relics Commission (MRC) National Museum (NM)
Gender, youth and labour	The empowerment of marginalised groupings in society is a paramount principle of the sustainable tourism development and specific strategies and actions are required in this regard. This includes: – Promoting and empowering youth, women and marginalized communities to benefit from tourism – Mainstreaming gender and youth empowerment in tourism – Promoting the enforcement of occupational health and safety regulations in the tourism sector – Promoting fair labour practices in the tourism sector	Min of Tourism and Culture (MoTCA) Monuments & Relics Commission (MRC) National Museum (NM)
Overall coordination, financing and monitoring	Sustainable tourism development is dependent on the integration of tourism-related programmes by a wide spectrum of MDAs and coordination and joint action in Government is of key importance to a successful tourism sector. Aspects to address include: – Ensuring that all MDAs mainstream tourism in implementation of their mandates – Monitoring implementation of the NSTP – Supporting efficient collection and management of tourism performance measures and statistics – Ensuring effective tourism disaster and crisis planning, management and communication	Office of the President (OP) Min of Finance (MoF) Min of Planning & Economic Development (MoPED)
All other functions	While implementing their respective mandates, all MDAs will mainstream tourism in their respective sectoral planning and implementation of activities	Office of the President (OP) Min of Planning & Economic Development (MoPED)

6.3 COORDINATING STRUCTURES

The following institutional architecture is proposed, which will be implemented through the strategies and actions proposed under Goal 5 of the NSTP. Figure 17 presents a basic organogram of the proposed overall tourism institutional structure for the sector. Among others, it proposes the establishment of various coordination mechanisms, including:

6.3.1 The Presidential Tourism Council (PTC)

The PTC will be comprised of relevant Ministers and senior officials, chaired by the President (or Deputy President) and co-managed by the Ministries of Planning and Economic Development and Tourism and Cultural Affairs. Since tourism cuts across almost all Ministries, its success is highly dependent upon the coordination and cooperation of other partners such as Planning, Lands and Housing, Immigration, Transport, Higher Education and Training, Environment, Finance and various others.

The main functions of the PTC will be to:

- Bring all MDAs involved in implementing the NSTP tourism under one umbrella, at a political leadership and senior executive level.
- Identify key aspects of the tourism strategy that require action and instruct MDAs to implement these.
- Identify and unblock obstacles that inhibit implementation of the NSTP and tourism growth.
- Make recommendations on tourism policy matters and help to prioritise tourism policy and infrastructure improvements on an annual basis, as part of the budget cycle.
- Monitor performance and progress with implementing the NSTP.
- Establish suitable inter-MDA working groups on key aspects of the NSTP, such as tourism statistics, crisis management and others. The envisaged working groups could be:
- Planning, monitoring and competitiveness.
- Access, infrastructure and immigration.
- Quality, sustainability and human resources development.

6.3.2 Tourism Liaison Committee (TLC)

For the tourism strategy to be effective, there needs to be a strong network of stakeholders that all share a common vision and participate in the development and implementation of the tourism development strategy. Public-private partnership does not mean that the parties have to agree on all strategic issues; rather issues and strategies of common concern should be identified and addressed through joint effort by all parties. The proposed TLC will be established by MoTCA as tourism public-private-community-partnership mechanism, through formalised agreements (MOUs) with private sector and civil society organisations. It could have various workgroups to deal with an agenda of key elements for advancing private sector tourism growth.

The Committee will be chaired by the Permanent Secretary (PS) of MoTCA and should be comprised of senior level officials of MoTCA, NTB, SLHATA, ASSET, the tourism guides association, selected individual industry stakeholders with international expertise (including managers of international hotel chains) and other relevant trade bodies and associations.

The committee's key roles will be to:

- Inform the tourism private sector of progress made with implementing the NSTP and of policies and projects that could affect their businesses.
- Solicit the views of private and civil society organisations regarding tourism planning and policy matters.
- Invite and secure private sector participation in implementing the strategies and actions contained in the NSTP, especially where public-private partnerships are required.
- Recommend performance metrics to track the success of the tourism sector, as well as provide advice regarding the best use of MoTCA's limited funds to leverage public-private sector tourism partnerships and contributions.
- The TLC should meet at least twice per annum.

6.3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Unit

The lack of effective implementation of policies and plans is one of the key shortcoming identified during the NSTP process and this should be addressed as a matter of priority.

A key requirement for implementation is the establishment of a project monitoring and evaluation unit within MoTCA, reporting directly to the Permanent Secretary and functioning at a senior management level.

The unit will serve as the Secretariat to the PTC and its role will be to supervise the implementation of plans and projects contained within the NSTP and other tourism plans on a day-to-day basis, evaluate and monitor implementation progress at both national and TDA level and ensure that the agreed schedules of activities are implemented. More specifically the unit should have the following key functions:

- Coordinating implementation of actions contained in NSTP and other tourism plans by the various departments and agencies of MoTCA, other MDAs and local government bodies.
- Monitoring and advising on implementation of NSTP and other tourism plans.
- Ensuring finalisation of local area action plans for TDZs.
- Acting as a secretariat for the Presidential Tourism Council and Tourism Liaison Committee.

Such a unit will only be successful if it is equipped with skilled and professional staff, is functionally independent and is mandated at the highest level. While the unit will be chaired and led by senior management, the detailed planning and management process must involve all units of MoTCA as well as relevant MDAs, the private sector and NGOs.

The unit may be supported through a technical assistance programme, possibly funded by SLEDP and involving external experts tasked with providing the unit with technical assistance and advice.

6.3.4 Tourism-Culture Workgroup in MoTCA

Given the important contribution of cultural resources and experiences to the tourism strategy, it will be crucial to foster closer collaboration between tourism, cultural heritage bodies and the creative and entertainment industries.

The proposed Tourism-Culture workgroup should include representative from the Directorates of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, NTB, MRC and its affiliates, private sector and NGOs working in the cultural and performing arts arena.

The MRC, in particular has a vital role to play in both developing cultural sites and monuments for the benefit of tourism, and collaborating closely with NTB in promoting such sites and monuments locally and internationally.

In addition, it will be important to review roles, responsibilities and projects assigned to Monuments and Relics Commission in light of NSTP action plan and new institutional arrangements.

It should be noted that the restructuring process in MoTCA includes the expansion of the Directorate Culture to include the development and promotion of innovation, creativity and the creative and performing industries.

The workgroup should come up with a plan of action for ensuring better collaboration and action in sites management, creative cultural product development, marketing, investment promotion, quality assurance, community engagement and other success factors for sustainable tourism management.

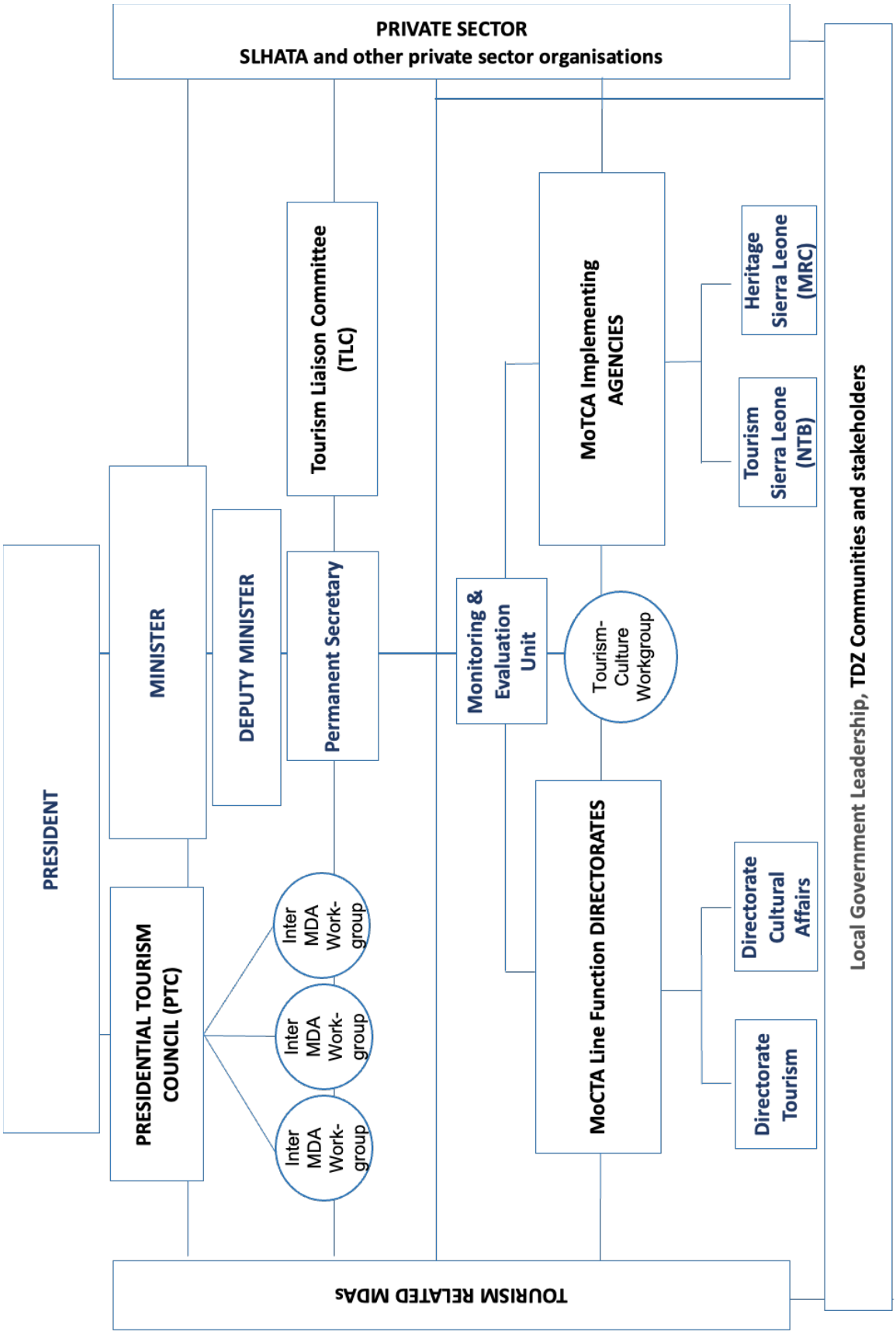


Figure 17 – Proposed tourism sector institutional structure

7. Implementation

The following section sets out implementation structures, requirements and phasing for the NSTP proposals contained in the previous sections.

Among others, a detailed five-year action plan is provided, which should serve as a basis for budgeting, coordinating and monitoring the implementation of priority strategies and actions.

7.1 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES AND PHASING

7.1.1 Implementation phasing

The goals, strategies and actions proposed in the previous section are extensive and, since Sierra Leone is in the early stages of the tourism destination life cycle, a three- phased approach is envisaged for implementing the recommendations and building up tourism over the next 10 years and beyond, as indicated in Figure 18 .

The phases are:

- Year 1-5: Phase 1, "**Consolidation**", where the focus will be on addressing the critical success factors for sustainable tourism growth as identified in the diagnostic study and prioritised by stakeholders. Strategies and actions that address the critical success factors identified in the diagnostic report and that have been rated by public and private sector stakeholders as immediate priorities, have been prioritised for implementation during this phase. The aim is to lay sound foundations for sustainable tourism growth.
- Year 6-10: Phase 2, "**Stepping Up**", where the focus will be on deepening the quality and positive impacts of tourism, while continuing improvements of Phase 1 initiatives.
- Year 11 onwards: Phase 3, "**Sustainable Growth**", where the focus will be on retaining and enhancing the growth achieved in Phases 1 and 2.

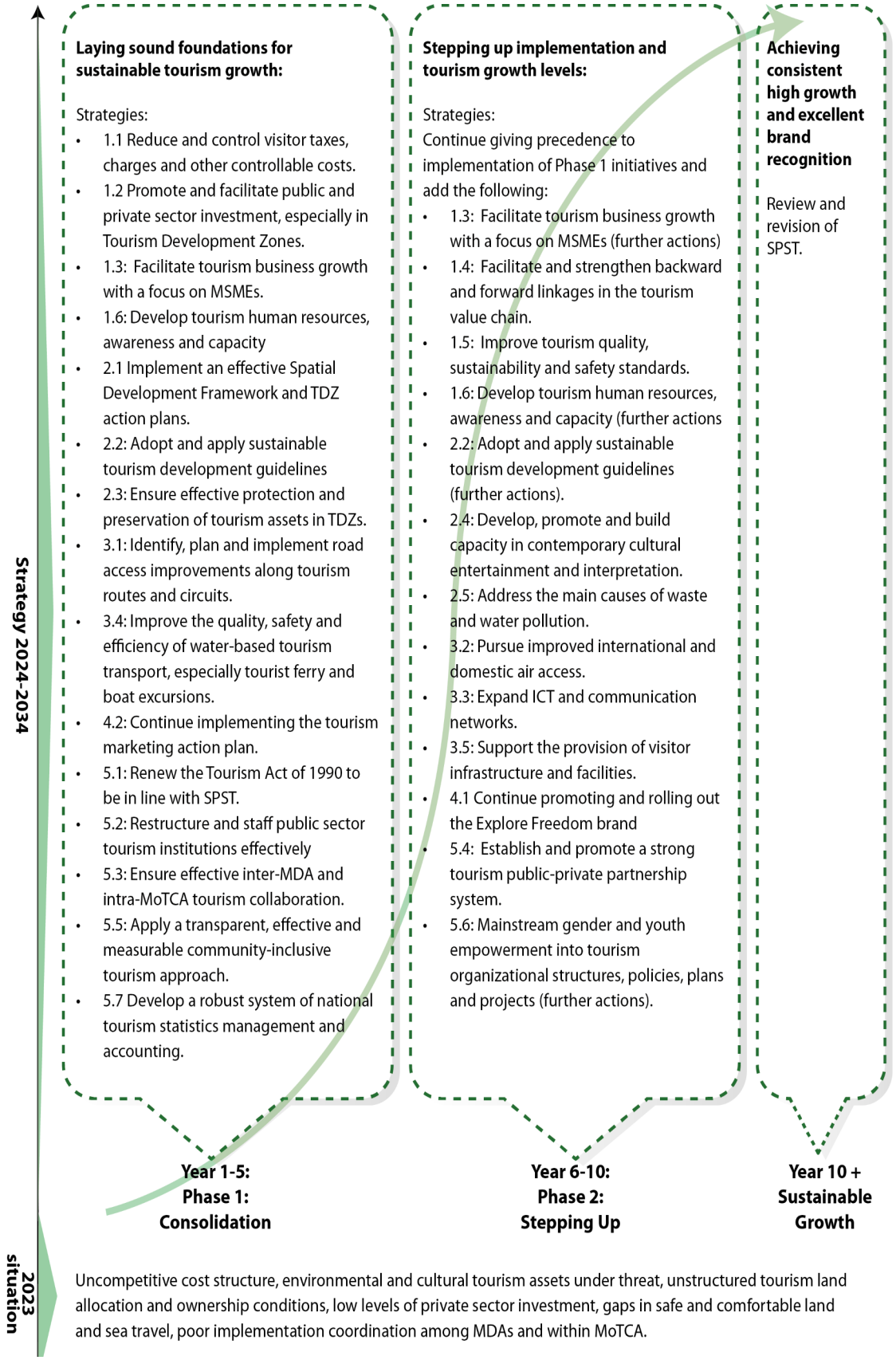


Figure 18 – Implementation phasing of the NSTP

7.1.2 Priority strategies and actions

These priority strategies and selected priority actions are listed below and are included in the costed Action Plan tables (Section7.5).

Table 25 – Priority strategies and actions for implementation in Phase 1, Years 1-5

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
GOAL 1: TO IMPROVE TOURISM BUSINESS CONDITIONS, COSTS AND QUALITY	
Strategy 1.1 Reduce and control visitor taxes, charges and other controllable costs.	– Establish a national workgroup on tourism cost competitiveness. – Conduct a detailed comparative evaluation of visitor and operator taxes, charges, airfares and other cost items. – Make and implement proposals for addressing cost disparities. – Track cost of travel to Sierra Leone and competitors over time.
Strategy 1.2 Promote and facilitate public and private sector investment, especially in Tourism Development Zones.	– Conduct scoping studies of all priority tourism development zones in close collaboration with NIB and SLEIPA. – Promote and facilitate public and private sector investment in priority tourism areas, and introduce a suitable tourism investment incentive package. – Promote tourism investment opportunities emanating from the scoping studies. – Monitor and report on the nature and extent of tourism investment.
Strategy 1.3 Facilitate tourism business growth with a focus on MSME development	– Develop a coordinated tourism MSME support programme aimed at women and youth entrepreneurs.
Strategy 1.6 Develop tourism human resources, awareness and capacity at all levels	– Develop and fund a capacity building, licensing and formalisation programmes for tour guides, tour leaders, specialist guides, and local community guides.
GOAL 2: TO PROTECT, PRESERVE AND SUSTAINABLY DEVELOP TOURISM'S NATURAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES	
Strategy 2.1 Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework.	– Endorse and advocate at the governmental level the SDF as the primary spatial blueprint directing tourism development in the country. – Draft proposals to the Cabinet to officially designate the TDZs – Craft detailed development blueprints for the most promising TDZs, in consultation with relevant MDAs.
Strategy 2.2 Adopt and apply sustainable tourism development guidelines	– Provide capacity building and mentoring support for MoTCA and partners to operationalise the sustainability guidelines and integrate them into existing ways of working. – Provide support for the implementation of the Green Label for Hotels and Restaurants to promote circular business operations.
Strategy 2.3 Ensure effective protection and preservation of tourism assets in declared Protected Areas and (tangible) Cultural Heritage Sites.	– Develop forest visitor infrastructure to improve wildlife viewing, recreation and conservation objectives. – Develop nature-based trails and circuits with focus on improved interpretation and locally unique themes. – Engage community members and MSMEs in providing additional nature and agritourism experiences. – Conduct a tourism stock-taking and evaluation of current and potential cultural heritage sites and projects. – Launch a heritage tourism support programme. – Develop and create a Freedom Museum and "Cotton Tree Park" as a new flagship cultural heritage project.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
GOAL 3: TO IMPROVE VISITOR ACCESS TO AND AVAILABILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURAL SERVICES AT TOURISM AREAS	
Strategy 3.1 Identify, plan and implement road access improvements along tourism routes and circuits.	– Conduct a comprehensive assessment and mapping of the current state of tourism corridors. – Set and enforce standards for tourism corridors. – Develop and maintain essential roadside amenities and emergency services along tourism corridors. – Collaborate with telecom providers to ensure consistent internet coverage along tourism corridors. – Implement clear and informative road signage. – Prioritize and launch a programme to upgrade “last mile” roads in coordination with the development of the TDZs they connect to. – Set up mechanisms to gather feedback from tourists and local communities about road conditions.
Strategy 3.4 Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, especially tourist ferry and boat excursions.	– Establish a Water-Based Tourism Transport Task Force to oversee the strategy's implementation. – Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study of water-based transport. – Improve the ferry terminals, passenger and baggage handling system for transfers between Lungi and Aberdeen.
GOAL 4: TO PROMOTE A SOUGHT-AFTER TOURISM IMAGE AND ACHIEVE CONTINUED GROWTH IN TOURISM DEMAND	
Strategy 4.2 Continue implementing and refreshing the national tourism marketing strategy and action plan	– Ensure adequate budget for sustaining and expanding the international marketing drive beyond current SLEDP funding. – Build on and expand the domestic marketing efforts already undertaken. – Engage private tourism businesses in marketing initiatives and activities.
GOAL 5: TO ENSURE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION	
Strategy 5.1 Review the Tourism Act of 1990 to be in line with the Tourism Policy and the proposals contained in this NSTP.	– Appoint a legislative review panel to undertake the redrafting process. – Clarify the roles and powers of MoTCA in collaboration and consultation with other MDAs. – Draw on Tourism Acts of successful destinations in drafting and promulgating the Act.
Strategy 5.2 Restructure and staff public sector tourism institutions effectively and appropriately.	– Undertake a professional work study and recommend restructuring of the tourism and cultural institutions. – Obtain Cabinet approval and engage in a suitable expansion and restructuring process.
Strategy 5.3 Ensure effective inter-MDA and intra-MoTCA tourism collaboration.	– Establish a Presidential Tourism Council. – Set up and manage a Tourism-Culture Workgroup in MoTCA.
Strategy 5.5 Apply a transparent, effective and measurable community-inclusive tourism approach	– Pilot and fund development of JV/PPP/PPCPs partnership models to improve CBT products and community tourism infrastructure. – Develop a “responsible tourism encounters” project to implement practical responsible management strategies aimed at improving products and managing impacts
Strategy 5.7 Develop a robust system of national tourism statistics management and accounting.	– Establish a Tourism Statistics Committee. – Conduct training and mentorship to build capacity/awareness of tourism statistics. – Expand the existing Tourism Statistics Department. – Implement the SLSTS, including the required data collection procedures and surveys.

7.2 PRIORITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND ZONES

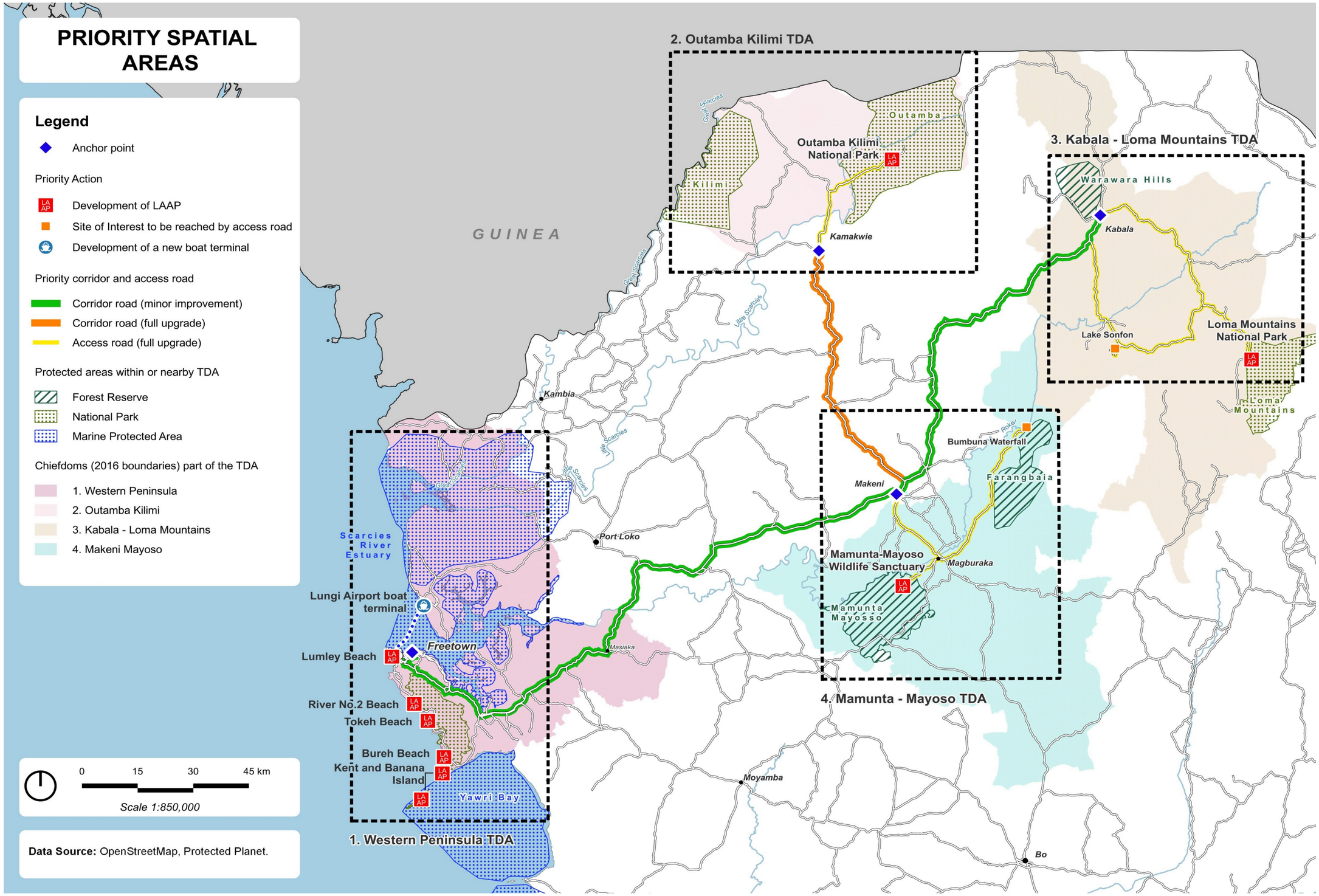
7.2.1 Criteria for prioritization of spatial areas

The selection of spatial target areas for the initial phase of the 5-year action plan is guided by strategic criteria aimed at maximizing the impact on Sierra Leone's tourism sector.

The selection and prioritization of Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) and the corresponding Tourism Development Zones (TDZs) within them have been meticulously undertaken, with reference to the strategic map provided (see map MAP 10). This process is rooted in a comprehensive set of criteria that align with the strategic objectives detailed in Section 4: Goals, Strategies, and Actions for Sustainable Growth. The criteria used to guide this prioritization include the following.

- **Strategic alignment**. Ensuring that the development of TDAs and TDZs is in harmony with the broader strategic framework, which aims to foster sustainable growth within the tourism sector.
- **Catalytic growth potential**. Identifying areas and projects with the capacity to act as catalysts for broader economic development, thereby stimulating further investment and growth within the region.
- **Site attractiveness.** Evaluating the intrinsic appeal of the sites, which encompasses not only their natural and cultural allure but also considers the findings from the analysis of current investment potential and readiness. This analysis, which included 22 key tourism sites, was conducted during the diagnostic phase and is detailed in the "Diagnostic Report", Volume I, Table 11.
- **Investment efficiency.** Prioritizing the development of TDAs that necessitate minimal investment to become accessible, thus ensuring a judicious allocation of resources.
- **Benefit dispersion.** Aiming to distribute the socio-economic benefits of tourism more broadly across the country. This criterion focuses on the geographical spread of tourism activities to maximize the positive impacts on local communities and economies, with the understanding that it is not feasible to cover the entire nation within the initial 5-year action plan.

These criteria have been applied to systematically review and select the TDAs and TDZs that will be the focus of concerted development efforts in the near term. The aim is to create a balanced and strategic approach to the growth of Sierra Leone's tourism sector, ensuring that it is both sustainable and beneficial to a wide array of stakeholders.



MAP 10 - Priority Action Plan

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7.2.2 Priority TDAs, TDZs and corridors

A key immediate action is the **construction of a new boat terminal at Lungi serving the Freetown International Airport,** as outlined in Strategy 3.4: "Improve the quality, safety, and efficiency of water-based tourism transport". This project is critical as Freetown International Airport is the primary entry point for visitors to Sierra Leone and has the potential for a public-private partnership (PPP) with ferry service operators.

Furthermore, the analysis has identified the following TDAs for immediate action:

- **Western Peninsula**: With Freetown as the anchor city, this area includes five priority TDZs such as Kent and Banana Islands, Lumley Beach, Bureh Beach, Tokeh, and River No 2.
- **Outamba-Kilimi**: Based in Kamakwie, a designated TDZ of 100 – 200 Ha is planned within or near the Outamba Kilimi National Park.
- **Kabala-Loma Mountains**: In Kabala, a TDZ covering key villages around the Loma Mountains National Park is envisioned to serve as a tourism buffer zone.
- **Mamunta-Mayoso**: In Makeni, a designated TDZ(s) of 50 – 100 Ha is proposed near the Mamunta-Mayoso Forest Reserve.

The priority road corridors are those that provide access to the selected TDAs. Initial improvements will focus on roadside amenities, signage, mobile and internet coverage, and safety and security measures. Within the TDAs, access roads will be improved to ensure, as a minimum, access from the anchor city to the TDZs.

Table 26 – Priority TDAs and TDZ

TDA	ANCHOR CITY/GATEWAY	PRIORITY TDZS
Western Peninsula	Freetown	Kent and Banana Islands, Lumley Beach, Bureh Beach, Tokeh, River No 2
Outamba-Kilimi	Kamakwie	Designated TDZ within/outside Outamba Kilimi NP
Kabala-Loma Mountains	Kabala	Designated TDZ around Loma Mountains NP
Mamunta-Mayoso	Makeni	Designated TDZ(s) near Mamunta-Mayoso Forest Reserve

Table 27 – Priority Road Corridors

FROM	TO	TYPE	DISTANCE (KM)	TRAVEL TIME (HH:MM)	INFRASTRUCTURE QUALITY
Freetown	Makeni	Road	186	3:00	Good
Makeni	Kabala	Road	120	2:00	Good
Makeni	Kamakwie	Road	92	2:00	Average/Bad

These tables outline the focus areas for the first phase of the NSTP, ensuring a structured and impactful approach to developing Sierra Leone's tourism infrastructure.

7.2.3 Investment opportunities in Western Peninsula beaches

The Western Peninsula is renowned for its idyllic beaches, which are set to be developed into premier Tourism Development Zones (TDZs). The TDZs earmarked for investment include:

- Lumley Beach: a popular destination known for its scenic coastline and vibrant atmosphere.
- Bureh Beach: celebrated for its surfing potential and pristine natural beauty.
- Tokeh: offers a tranquil retreat with its white sandy beaches and clear waters.
- River No 2: famous for its picturesque landscapes and as a location for iconic film scenes.

These coastal zones, with Freetown serving as a convenient anchor point, are poised for significant development to enhance the tourist experience. The proposed investments are designed to be comprehensive and multifaceted, encompassing the following.

Infrastructure improvements

- Upgrading access roads to ensure smooth travel to and from the beaches.
- Expanding parking facilities to accommodate the influx of visitors.
- Installing public lighting systems to enhance safety and extend the usability of the beaches into the evening hours.

Facilities development

- Constructing modern toilet and ablution facilities to meet the hygiene and convenience needs of visitors.
- Establishing beach activity centres to organize and offer various recreational options.
- Developing cafes and restaurants that provide both local and international cuisine in settings that capitalize on the stunning coastal views.

Commercial ventures

- Opening curio and craft shops that showcase local artisans and offer tourists a piece of Sierra Leonean culture to take home.
- Creating site markets and boutiques that provide a range of shopping experiences, from casual to upscale.

Accommodation options

- Building boutique hotels and holiday villages with a cap of 50 beds to maintain an intimate, exclusive atmosphere.
- Offering guest rooms that provide a homely experience, reflecting the local hospitality and culture.

These investments are aimed not only at enhancing the tourism potential of the Western Peninsula beaches but also at ensuring that development is sustainable, respects the local environment, and provides economic benefits to the surrounding communities. The focus will be on creating a cohesive tourist experience that seamlessly integrates the natural allure of the beaches with the convenience and comfort of modern amenities.

Applicable guidelines

- Coastal planning for tourism (see Volume II, section B.2, 8)
- Tourism sites and attractions (see Volume II, section B.3, 15)
- Design of tourism facilities (see Volume II, section B.3, 16)

7.2.4 Investment opportunities in Kent and Banana Islands TDZ

The TDZ encompassing Kent and Banana Islands offer a rich tapestry of historical and natural attractions. Kent, located on the mainland, and Dublin, situated on the main island of the Banana archipelago, together form a unique cluster of experiences that draw visitors into the pre-history, colonial, and slave history of Sierra Leone, as well as its lush forest nature and botanical diversity.

The investment strategy for Kent and Banana Islands is holistic, aiming to elevate the visitor experience through significant enhancements in infrastructure, facilities, and services. The key components of the investment include the following.

- Improved access and signage: upgrading the routes to Kent and Dublin with clear signage to guide visitors, ensuring a seamless journey.
- Development of interpretative trails: setting up a visitor interpretation facility to serve as an educational resource centre. Establishing educational trails that provide insights into the rich pre-history, the colonial past, and the poignant slave history, as well as the diverse flora and fauna of the region.
- Enhanced facilities: ensuring the availability of potable water across the TDZ for the convenience of visitors. Building modern toilet and shower facilities to cater to the needs of tourists.
- Utilities upgrade: implementing a comprehensive upgrade of water and electricity infrastructure to support the new and existing facilities.

Specific investments in Kent include the following.

- Visitor Amenities: Constructing facilities for visitors, including toilets and showers, to enhance comfort and hygiene.
- Fishermen's Facilities: Developing dedicated areas for local fishermen, integrating their activities with the tourism experience without disrupting their livelihoods.
- Beachfront Restaurant: Establishing a 100 square meter restaurant on the beach, offering local gastronomy in a setting that complements the natural beauty of the area.
- Urban Furniture: Placing site-appropriate benches and bins to maintain cleanliness and provide resting spots for visitors.

Specific investments in Dublin include the following.

- New Jetty Construction: Building a new jetty to facilitate access to Dublin and improve the logistics of travel between the islands and the mainland.
- Community Centre Extension: Expanding the community center to include an interpretation center for Banana Islands, complete with visitor and staff toilets, enhancing the educational aspect of the visit.
- Landscaping of Historical Ruins: Transforming the ruins of the British fort and slave encampment into a "Slaves' Memory Garden," a reflective space dedicated to the memory of those who suffered during the slave trade.
- Restoration of Portuguese Wharf: Restoring the historical Portuguese wharf to preserve its cultural significance and integrate it into the visitor experience.

Accommodation options

- Building boutique hotels with a cap of 30 beds to maintain an intimate, exclusive atmosphere. Adaptive re-use of Krio architecture is recommended.
- Offering guest rooms that provide a homely experience, reflecting the local hospitality and culture.

These investments are envisioned to not only preserve and showcase the rich cultural heritage and natural beauty of Kent and Banana Islands but also to provide sustainable economic opportunities for the local communities, ensuring that the development of the TDZ benefits all stakeholders involved.

Applicable guidelines

- Coastal planning for tourism (see Volume II, section B.2, 8)
- Cultural/Heritage Tourism Zones (see Volume II, section B.2, 14)
- Tourism sites and attractions (see Volume II, section B.3, 15)
- Design of tourism facilities (see Volume II, section B.3, 16)

7.2.5 Investment opportunities in Outamba-Kilimi TDZ

The Outamba-Kilimi Tourism Development Zone (TDZ) will sit on an area of 100 – 200 hectares, strategically positioned in proximity of the entrance to the Outamba Kilimi National Park. This TDZ is envisioned as a hub for eco-tourism, blending conservation efforts with sustainable visitor experiences.

The investment plan for the Outamba-Kilimi TDZ should be designed to foster a deep connection between visitors and the natural environment while supporting local communities and preserving the park's biodiversity.

- Visitor and orientation centres. Developing a visitor centre that doubles as an orientation hub, providing educational resources about the park's wildlife and conservation efforts, as well as information about the available activities and trails. It could also double as a research station[34].
- Dining and refreshment options. Establishing a café and restaurant that offers local and international cuisine, using fresh, locally sourced ingredients to support the local economy and provide a culinary experience that complements the natural setting.
- Local artisan shops. Creating spaces for curio and craft shops where local artisans can display and sell their handcrafted goods, offering visitors a chance to take home a piece of the local culture and contribute to the community's livelihood.
- Toilet facilities. Constructing environmentally friendly and sustainable toilet facilities at strategic locations in the TDZ to ensure visitor comfort and maintain hygiene standards.
- Operational infrastructure. Equipping the TDZ with the necessary operational infrastructure, including utilities, water tanks for reliable water supply, storage facilities for materials, machinery sheds, and tool depots to ensure the smooth functioning of the site.

Accommodation options

- **Ecolodges and campsites.** The accommodation strategy for the Outamba-Kilimi TDZ prioritizes the development of ecolodges and campsites. These facilities are to be designed with

[34] *Reportedly, TCS are actively undertaking research in OKNP.*

a capacity of up to 20 beds, focusing on low-impact, high-value tourism that aligns with the principles of sustainability and conservation. The design of the ecolodges and campsites will emphasize minimal environmental footprint, using renewable energy sources, sustainable building materials, and integrating into the natural landscape to preserve the park's wilderness feel.

Applicable guidelines

- Nature/Eco-Tourism Zones (see Volume II, section B.3, 14)
- Tourism sites and attractions (see Volume II, section B.3, 15)
- Design of tourism facilities (see Volume II, section B.3, 16)

7.2.6 Investment opportunities in Kabala-Loma Mountains TDZ

This TDZ should include multiple areas identified in close proximity of key villages around the Loma Mountains National Park. Villages to be considered include, among others, in Loma West: Keimadu, Yaraia Gbenekoro, Yalimba, Bandakoro, Bandakarifaia, Sinikoro, Kania, Konombaia, Krutor, Gbenekoro, Meria, Pirankoro; and in Loma East: Kamaia, Seria, Bonkokoro, Nendu, Mansonia, Burukuma, Burumakudor, Sokurela and Bunbukoro.

The development of the Kabala-Loma Mountain Tourism Development Zone (TDZ) should be a collaborative endeavour, actively involving local communities in the decision-making process. This approach includes identifying suitable land for the TDZ and establishing a consensus on community participation in tourism activities. The investment and operational management of the TDZ would be undertaken by one or more selected private sector operator(s), ensuring professional execution while maintaining a strong community partnership. This participatory model aims to balance local interests with professional management, fostering sustainable tourism development that benefits both the community and the investors.

- **Visitor and orientation centres.** Developing a visitor centre that doubles as an orientation hub, providing educational resources about the park's wildlife and conservation efforts, as well as information about the available activities and trails. It could also double as a research station[35].
- **Outdoor performing venues.** The venue's location should be chosen not only for its practicality but also to highlight and complement the natural environment and landscape.
- **Dining and refreshment options.** Establishing restaurants that offer local cuisine, using fresh, locally sourced ingredients to support the local economy and provide a culinary experience that complements the natural setting.
- **Local artisan shops.** Creating spaces for curio and craft shops where local artisans can display and sell their handcrafted goods, offering visitors a chance to take home a piece of the local culture and contribute to the community's livelihood.
- **Toilet facilities.** Constructing environmentally friendly and sustainable toilet facilities at strategic locations in the TDZ to ensure visitor comfort and maintain hygiene standards.
- **Operational infrastructure.** Equipping the TDZ with the necessary operational infrastructure, including utilities, water tanks for reliable water supply, storage facilities for materials, machinery sheds, and tool depots to ensure the smooth functioning of the site.

[35] *Reportedly, TCS are actively undertaking research in LMNP.*

Accommodation options

- **Homestays**. Homestays offer a unique accommodation option in villages near national parks, providing guests with an authentic, immersive experience of local culture and lifestyle. These stays, typically in family homes, allow visitors to engage closely with the community, partaking in daily activities and traditional customs. Homestays are an excellent way for visitors to connect with the essence of the region while supporting sustainable tourism practices
- **Ecolodges and campsites**. Another accommodation option is the development of ecolodges and campsites. These facilities are to be designed with a capacity between 15 and 30 beds, focusing on low-impact, high-value tourism that aligns with the principles of sustainability and conservation. The design of the ecolodges and campsites will emphasize minimal environmental footprint, using renewable energy sources, sustainable building materials, and integrating into the natural landscape to preserve the park's wilderness feel.

Applicable guidelines

- Nature/Eco-Tourism Zones (see Volume II, section B.3, 14)
- Tourism sites and attractions (see Volume II, section B.3, 15)
- Design of tourism facilities (see Volume II, section B.3, 16)

7.2.7 Investment opportunities in Mamunta-Mayoso TDZ

In Makeni, a designated TDZ(s) of 50 – 100 Ha is proposed near the Mamunta-Mayoso Forest Reserve. Similarly to Outamba-Kilimi, this TDZ is envisioned as a hub for eco-tourism, blending conservation efforts with sustainable visitor experiences. The investment plan should be designed to foster a deep connection between visitors and the natural environment while supporting local communities and preserving the park's biodiversity.

- **Visitor and orientation centres**. Developing a visitor centre that doubles as an orientation hub, providing educational resources about the park's wildlife and conservation efforts, as well as information about the available activities and trails.
- **Dining and refreshment options.** Establishing cafés and restaurants that offer local and international cuisine, using fresh, locally sourced ingredients to support the local economy and provide a culinary experience that complements the natural setting.
- **Local artisan shops.** Creating spaces for curio and craft shops where local artisans can display and sell their handcrafted goods, offering visitors a chance to take home a piece of the local culture and contribute to the community's livelihood.
- **Toilet facilities.** Constructing environmentally friendly and sustainable toilet facilities at strategic locations in the TDZ to ensure visitor comfort and maintain hygiene standards.
- **Operational infrastructure.** Equipping the TDZ with the necessary operational infrastructure, including utilities, water tanks for reliable water supply, storage facilities for materials, machinery sheds, and tool depots to ensure the smooth functioning of the site.

Accommodation options

- **Ecolodges and campsites.** The accommodation strategy for the Mamunta-Mayoso TDZ prioritizes the development of ecolodges and campsites. These facilities are to be designed with a capacity between 15 and 30 beds focusing on low-impact, high-value tourism that aligns with the principles of sustainability and conservation. The design of the ecolodges and campsites will emphasize minimal environmental footprint, using renewable energy sources,

sustainable building materials, and integrating into the natural landscape to preserve the park's wilderness feel.

Applicable guidelines

- Nature/Eco-Tourism Zones (see Volume II, section B.3, 14)
- Tourism sites and attractions (see Volume II, section B.3, 15)
- Design of tourism facilities (see Volume II, section B.3, 16)

7.3 RECOMMENDED APPROACH FOR IMPLEMENTING THE TDZS

A primary determinant of the economic viability of TDZ investments is access. Therefore, the initial step should involve crafting an infrastructure development plan aimed at progressively enhancing access to the various TDAs, shown on 15. Access improvements to TDAs with prioritized TDZs should be given preference.

Subsequent to this, comprehensive scoping studies of priority TDZs are essential. These studies should assess potential market demand based on existing and projected visitor flows, investment requirements and opportunities, land ownership and availability, infrastructure needs, and other pertinent investment factors. An integral part of this scoping process is the evaluation of existing tourism activities, with the aim of providing detailed, costed recommendations to enhance quality, tourist experience, sustainability, and governance.

It is crucial to recognize that the establishment of TDZs, especially in environmentally sensitive locations like protected areas and pristine beach and island sites (excluding the Western Peninsula), is a foundational step for attracting private sector investment.

The approach recommended for MoTCA regarding TDZ development is outlined below.

- **Access-based TDZ prioritization:** align TDZ development priorities with considerations related to investment planning in tourism transport corridors, as detailed in section 5.4.
- **Preliminary TDZ Studies:** conduct initial assessments for all TDZs to understand potential market demand, investment needs and opportunities, land ownership and availability, infrastructure shortcomings, and other key investment factors. These preliminary studies should delineate boundaries of TDZs and be substantiated into a tourism development concept brief.
- **Detailed TDZ blueprints:** for tthe most promising TDZs, a local area action plan (LAAP) should be prepared according to the following procedure.

1. Upon request of MoTCA, the MoL declares the TDZ as a planning area.
2. MoL will protect the planning site from any development during the preparation of the LAAP.
3. MoL will conduct the detailed planning process with the Planning Committee (including a representative from MoTCA, tourism planners and non-permanent members as appropriate); if needed, the services could be outsourced to properly skilled consultants[36].
4. The LAAP should align with the spatial guidelines (→ see volume II, section B.3), delineate a comprehensive development blueprint, including product development strategy, land use planning, signage and interpretation guidelines, an integrated SEIA as per sustainability guidelines (→ see Volume II section B.2), and a cost-benefit analysis.

[36] *Budget for supporting the development of a set of priority LAAP for TDZ included in the action plan.*

5. Public consultation (including 2 months due diligence) on results of planning and suggested land use zoning.
6. Request to Cabinet and consultation with other related MDAs.
7. Declaration of the TDZ area as a LAAP.
8. Transition oversight to MoTCA

Transition oversight to MoTCA

- **Investment opportunity proposals**: highlight investment projects and opportunities across public, private, PPP, and PPCP sectors, as referenced in Strategy 3.5.5.
- **Establishment of a tourism practitioners' network**: Create a network of responsible and sustainable tourism practitioners in charge of or involved in TDZs, complemented by a "one-stop-shop" for support and collaborative efforts to enhance sustainability practices (refer to Strategy 1.6 action 1.6.2).
- **Ongoing oversight**: Actively oversee, supervise, and monitor the continuous development and operations of the TDZs. The oversight roles on MoTCA, NTB and the Ministry of Land and housing, among others, should be clarified upfront.

7.4 INTEGRATING THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GUIDELINES

The sustainability guidelines in Volume II (Appendix B) of the NSTP are designed to inform the sustainable planning, management, and operation of the tourism sector in Sierra Leone in line with the new spatial development framework (SDF). Drawing on international best practices, they provide practical guidance for addressing key social, environmental, and spatial issues affecting the tourism industry in Sierra Leone that were identified during the NSTP diagnostic report.

There are **16 sustainability guidelines** addressing **key social, environmental, and spatial sustainability issues** to be addressed in the tourism context for Sierra Leone.

Each of the guidelines introduces the following elements for the different issues/topics covered to inform a sustainable approach to the implementation of the Action Plan in practice:

- relevant concepts;
- key sustainable management approaches;
- regulatory and practical enforcement measures;
- stakeholder roles and responsibilities;
- sustainability indicators for measuring progress;
- capacity building; and
- links to further information.

An **overview** of the 16 sustainability guidelines referred to in the Action Plan is provided below in table 28. In addition, **9 ways to integrate these sustainability guidelines** into the tourism industry's existing ways of working in Sierra Leone are identified for consideration, as summarised in figure 19. Further details of these proposed mechanisms or entry points to integrate the sustainability guidelines and apply this approach to implementation of the Action Plan is provided in Volume II.

Table 28 – Sustainability guidelines overview

	#	SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES	PURPOSE	INTEGRATION INTO EXISTING WAYS OF WORKING
	SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL			
	1	Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA)	Improve assessment and management of environmental and social impacts of tourism development projects through existing, legally-binding planning, licensing and approval processes.	Integrated ESIA process & safeguards
	2	Community participation and community-based tourism (CBT)	Introduce new, accessible and structured support for communities to work in equitable partnership with other stakeholders and develop improved CBT initiatives that deliver better tourism experiences and local benefits.	(New) CBT development process & MoTCA basic quality standard/license.
	3	Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming	Use tourism as a vehicle for gender equality through the systematic integration of a gender perspective in all MoTCA institutions, policies, programmes and projects.	GEWE action plan (based on UNWTO gender mainstreaming framework)
	4	Maximising tourism value chain linkages	Use tourism value chain as a management tool for analysing issues, identifying opportunities and designing interventions to add value to the tourism value chain and integrate local stakeholders.	MoTCA planning process for SME/value chain projects in NSTP.
	5	Responsible management of tourist-host interaction	Identify responsible management strategies to support a more structured and active approach to developing positive community-tourist interaction and relationships.	Integrated ESIA process & safeguards Implementation of The Code and training on SECTT/SGBV/child labour. Visitor & community codes
	6	Decent Work	Identify support for employers within the tourism industry to implement responsible employment practices in line with ILO Guidelines on Decent Work and Socially Responsible Tourism.	Integrated ESIA process MoTCA licensing & new ECOWAS standards
	7	Climate change planning, adaptation, and resilience for tourism	Identify responsible management strategies for the tourism sector to address and mainstream climate change mitigation and adaptation through implementation of a wide range of climate actions identified in sectoral and national plans	Tourism Sector Climate Action Strategy & Plan (aligned with National Climate Action/ Adaptation Plans) Integrated ESIA process & safeguards
	8	Coastal planning for tourism	Identify responsible management strategies (drawing on Blue Flag Criteria and integrated coastal zone management approach) to reduce environmental impacts of coastal and marine tourism, regenerate degraded areas, and build resilience for the future.	Island & Coastal Tourism destination management plans for coastal TDAs SL Blue Economy Strategic Framework

	#	SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES	PURPOSE	INTEGRATION INTO EXISTING WAYS OF WORKING
	9	Protected area planning & partnerships for tourism	Use protected area management plans, improved planning processes, partnerships, concessions and other measures to address major environmental issues such as deforestation to conserve biodiversity and support local livelihoods.	Protected Area Management Plans
	10	Natural resource use	Identify responsible management strategies and engagement of forest communities to support better enforcement of EIA licenses and address problems of deforestation.	Protected Area Management Plans
	11	Waste management	Identify range of responsible waste management practices, policies, regulations, stakeholder engagement initiatives, circular business initiatives and monitoring systems to address poor waste management and plastic pollution in the tourism sector.	Implement Sierra Leone ProBlue Circular Economy in Plastics Action Plan
	12	Human-wildlife conflict	Use of conflict-sensitive conservation (CSC), collaborative monitoring and management and practical measures to address the root causes of human-wildlife conflict, support conservation, and design insurance schemes to compensate for losses.	Protected Area Management Plans
	SPATIAL			
	13	Tourism Corridors	Guidelines for creating tourism corridors that are both functional and enjoyable. By focusing on service levels, average speeds, rest points, amenities, and signage, they aim to ensure that tourists' journeys along these corridors are smooth, memorable, and in line with international standards.	Local Area Action Plans for TDZs Integrated ESIA & safeguards
	14	Development control guidelines for TDZs	Guidelines to provide a blueprint for defining the character and nature of each zone. They offer insights into the types of tourism activities, infrastructure, and facilities that are best suited for each zone, ensuring that development is both sustainable and in harmony with the zone's inherent attributes.	
	15	Tourism sites and attractions	Guidelines crafted to ensure that tourists have easy and safe access to these sites, benefit from reliable utilities, and experience efficient circulation within the sites. The overarching goal is to elevate the overall visitor experience, making it both enriching and hassle-free.	
	16	Design of tourism facilities	Design guidelines to emphasize the importance of designing facilities that are sustainable, environmentally friendly, and reflective of the national culture. They advocate for facilities that seamlessly integrate with their surroundings, ensuring that they enhance, rather than detract from, the natural and cultural beauty of the region.	

As a starting point, **9 ways to integrate these sustainability guidelines** into the tourism industry's existing ways of working in Sierra Leone are identified for consideration, as summarised in figure 19. Further details of these proposed mechanisms or entry points to integrate the sustainability guidelines and apply this approach to implementation of the Action Plan is provided in Volume II.

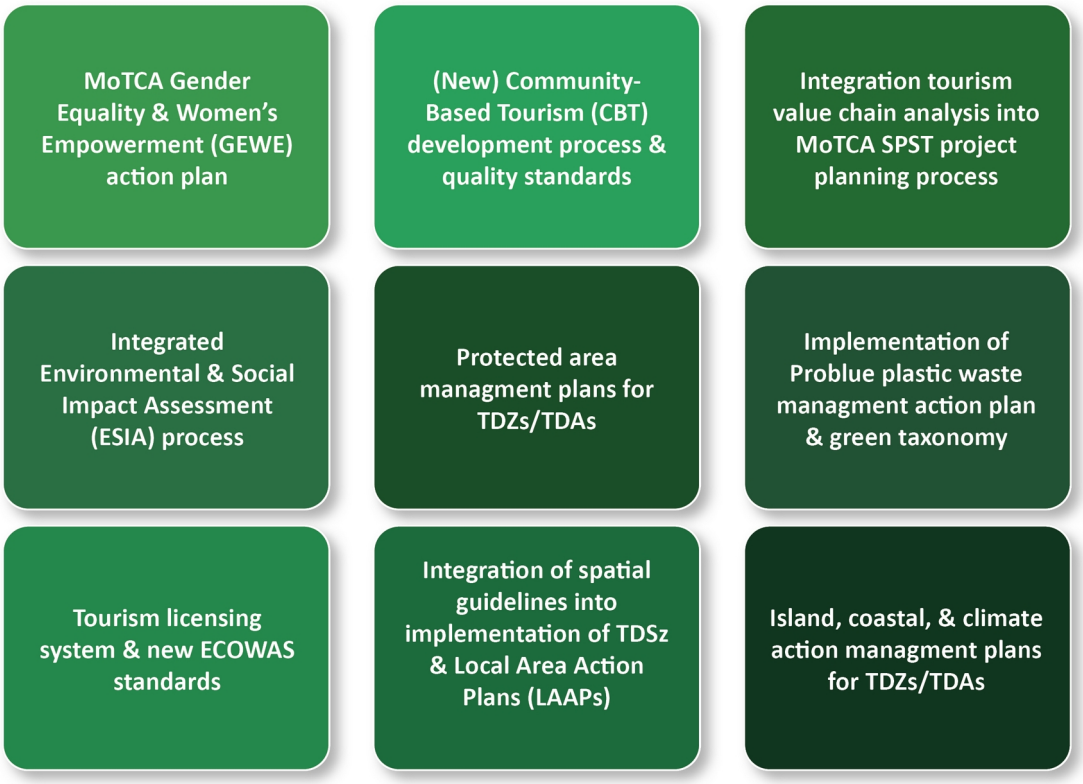

Figure 19 – 9 ways to integrate sustainability guidelines into existing ways of working in Sierra Leone

As will be noted, the **Five-year Action Plan table in the next section includes a column** that indicates which of the 16 sustainability guidelines should be applied when implementing each specific action.

Applying these sustainability guidelines to the implementation of the Action Plan needs to be integrated into existing ways of working and embedded in day-to-day practices of the MoTCA, partner MDAs, tourism businesses, community decision-making structures and other partner stakeholders. How this might work in practice requires a concerted effort by the MoTCA and its' partners with the required local knowledge and technical expertise to map out and identify pragmatic ways of "piggy backing" or integrating the action required by guidelines into relevant standard operating procedures, planning, management and approval processes, business operations and regulations. This is likely to raise **gaps in resources and capacity** that would need to be clarified and costed that have been addressed in this Action Plan (see in particular Strategy 2.2).

7.5 FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The following action plan summarises the goals, strategies and actions that are to be carried out in the first five years (Phase 1), the priority that should be allocated to the various actions, the parties that should be involved in implementing them and an indicative costs of implementing them.

7.5.1 Structure of the Action Plan

The Action Plan should be **read in association with**:

- **Section 4: Goals, Strategies and Actions for Sustainable Tourism Growth**, where the various strategies and actions listed in the table are further elaborated
- **Section 5: Spatial Development Framework**, where further details are contained regarding the locations and development options for the various Tourism Development Areas (TDAs) and Tourism Development Zones (TDZs).
- **Volume II, Appendix A: Sierra Leone System of Tourism Statistics (SLSTS)**, which sets out in detail the various components and implementation conditions of the statistics system.
- **Volume II, Appendix B: Guidelines for sustainable tourism planning and management**, that sets out in detail each of the sustainability guidelines referred to in the Action Plan tables.

Importantly, the action plan should serve as a framework for monitoring progress with implementing the NSTP and for evaluating the extent of such progress. As such, measurable output success indicators are proposed for each action.

The following notes pertain to the various columns of the Action Plan:

- **Number**: The numbers of the goals and the strategies proposed, in accordance with the numbering in Section 5.
- **Strategy**: The individual strategies proposed, summarised.
- **Actions**: The activities proposed under each strategy, summarised.
- **Priority**: Where an "x" in the column 1 (critical) means that the action should be implemented in the first 2-3 years and an "x" in column 2 means that the action should be implemented over the five-year period. Some activities could run throughout the 5-year period.
- **Cost Phase 1 (US$)**: The estimated costs reflected here are for activities proposed for implementation during the first 5 years.

NOTE: All cost presented in the action plan are indicative and need to be verified and finalised during implementation. Most of the costs could range significantly depending on available budget and the scope and scale of activities to be undertaken.

- **Applicable Sustainable Tourism Guideline(s)**: Reference number and name of the Sustainable Tourism Guideline listed in Section 7.3 above and further elaborated in Volume II, Appendix B.
- **Output success indicators**: Measurable indicators for evaluating and monitoring successful completion of the various actions.

NOTE: the success indicators should be refined during the annual business planning process. The indicators are quantified where possible, however, due to limited statistics it is not possible to quantify all output indicators and these should be refined during the implementation process.

7.5.2 Summary of costs: Phase 1

Table 29 – Summary of costs for implementing priority strategies and actions – Phase 1, Years 1-5

#	STRATEGY	ACTION	5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)
Goal 1: To improve tourism business conditions, costs and quality			
1.1	Reduce and control visitor taxes, charges and other controllable costs.	– Establish a national workgroup on tourism cost competitiveness.	5,000
		– Conduct a detailed comparative evaluation of visitor and operator taxes, charges, airfares and other cost items.	80,000
		– Make and implement proposals for addressing cost disparities.	To be determined based on study
		– Track cost of travel to Sierra Leone and competitors over time.	30,000
1.2	Promote and facilitate highly targeted public and private sector investment, especially in Tourism Development Zones.	– Conduct investment scoping and business potential studies of all priority tourism development zones.	600,000
		– Facilitate public and private sector investment in priority tourism areas, and introduce a suitable tourism investment incentive package.	200,000 Tax forfeiting costs to be determined
		– Promote tourism investment opportunities emanating from the scoping studies.	250,000
		– Monitor and report on the nature and extent of tourism investment.	10,000
1.3	Facilitate tourism business growth with a focus on MSME development	– Develop a tourism MSME mentorship & training programme for women & youth entrepreneurs to develop new products/ services	200,000
1.6	Develop tourism human resources, awareness and capacity at all levels	– Develop and fund a capacity building, licensing and formalisation programme for tour guides, tour leaders, specialist guides, and local community guides.	200,000
2.1	Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework.	– Endorse and advocate at the governmental level the SDF as the primary spatial blueprint directing tourism development in the country.	-
		– Draft proposals to the Cabinet to officially designate the TDZs	-
		– Craft detailed development blueprints for the most promising TDZs, in consultation with relevant MDAs.	1,280,000
2.2	Adopt and apply sustainable tourism development guidelines.	– Capacity building support and mentoring for MoTCA to operationalise the sustainability guidelines and integrate them into existing ways of working in partnership with other MDAs and stakeholders.	50,000
		– Provide support for the implementation of the Green Label for Hotels and Restaurants to promote circular business operations.	100,000
2.3	Ensure effective protection and preservation of tourism assets in declared Protected Areas and	– Develop forest visitor infrastructure to improve wildlife viewing, recreation and conservation objectives.	150,000

#	STRATEGY	ACTION	5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)
	(tangible) Cultural Heritage Sites	– Develop nature-based trails and circuits with focus on improved interpretation and locally unique themes.	120,000
		– Engage community members and MSMEs in providing additional nature and agritourism experiences.	30,000
		– Conduct a tourism stock-taking and market - readiness evaluation of current and potential cultural heritage sites and projects.	150,000
		– Launch a heritage tourism support programme.	350,000
		– Develop and create a Freedom Museum and "Cotton Tree Park" as a new flagship cultural heritage project.	1,000,000
3.1	Identify, plan and implement road access improvements along tourism routes and circuits.	– Improvement of priority road corridors	14,020,000
		– Upgrading of access road in priority TDZs	4,660,000
		– Set up mechanisms to gather feedback from tourists and local communities about road conditions.	100,000
3.4	Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, especially tourist ferry and boat excursions.	– Establish a Water-Based Tourism Transport Task Force to oversee the strategy's implementation.	100,000
		– Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study of water-based transport.	400,000
		– Improve the ferry terminals, passenger and baggage handling system for transfers between Lungi and Aberdeen.	3,000,000
4.2	Continue implementing and refreshing the national tourism marketing strategy and action plan	– Ensure adequate budget for sustaining and expanding the international marketing drive beyond current SLEDP funding.	500,000
		– Build on and expand the domestic marketing efforts already undertaken.	200,000
		– Engage private tourism businesses in marketing initiatives and activities.	100,000
5.1	Review the Tourism Act of 1990 to be in line with the Tourism Policy and the proposals contained in this NSTP.	– Appoint a legislative review panel to undertake the redrafting process.	20,000
		– Clarify the roles and powers of MoTCA in collaboration and consultation with other MDAs.	-
		– Conduct a benchmark study of Tourism Acts of successful destinations in drafting and promulgating the Act.	50,000
		– Promulgate the new Act through the government processes.	-
5.2	Restructure and staff public sector tourism institutions effectively and appropriately.	– Undertake a professional work study and recommend restructuring of the tourism and cultural institutions.	30,000

#	STRATEGY	ACTION	5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)
		– Obtain Cabinet approval and engage in a suitable expansion and restructuring process.	-
5.3	Ensure effective inter-MDA and intra-MoTCA tourism collaboration.	– Establish a Presidential Tourism Council.	20,000
		– Set up and manage a Tourism-Culture Workgroup in MoTCA.	-
5.5	Apply a transparent, effective and measurable community-inclusive tourism approach	– Pilot and fund development of JV/PPP/PPCPs partnership models to improve CBT products and community tourism infrastructure (e.g. homestays network, mobile camping, trails, cultural experiences)	200,000
		– Develop "responsible tourism encounters" project to implement practical responsible management strategies to facilitate positive tourist-host relationships and manage impacts	150,000
5.7	Develop a robust system of national tourism statistics management and accounting.	– Establish a Tourism Statistics Committee,	5,000
		– Conduct training and mentorship to build capacity/awareness of tourism statistics.	80,000
		– Expand the existing statistics department in NTB to enable the management of the expanded SLSTS.	Dependent on salary bill
		– Implement the Sierra Leone System of Tourism Statistics (SLSTS), including the following components:	
		– Improvement to Inbound Visitor Arrivals data, including programming changes to SecuriPort System, Training of SLID staff at Airport and Pamalap and seamless data management	25,000
		– Inbound Visitor Expenditure and Characteristics: Full Survey, including Survey planning and execution and Analysis and reporting	200,000
		– Accommodation Utilisation Survey, including efficient data application and API, survey execution and monthly reporting	65,000
		– Inbound Visitor Expenditure and Characteristics collection, with online survey linked to free Wi-Fi service and online database, and analysis of survey data	50,000
		– Domestic and Outbound Tourism Survey	200,000
		– Other Tourism Statistics Data Collection	25,000
TOTAL			**29,005,000**
ACTIONS OF CRITICAL PRIORITY – TO BE IMPLEMENTED DURING THE FIRST 2 YEARS			**7,650,000**

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7.5.3 Five-year Detailed Action Plan – Phase 1

Table 30 – Detailed Action Plan

	STRATEGY	ACTION	PRIORITY DURING YEARS 1-5		5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)	RESPONSIBILITY		APPLICABLE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GUIDELINES (VOL II)	DELIVERABLE (OUTPUT) SUCCESS INDICATORS
			CRITICAL YEAR 1-2	HIGH YEAR 3-5		LEAD	SUPPORT		
GOAL 1: TO IMPROVE TOURISM BUSINESS CONDITIONS, COSTS AND QUALITY									
1.1	Reduce and control visitor taxes, charges and other controllable costs.	– Establish a national workgroup on tourism cost competitiveness.	X		5,000	MoTCA	MoF NRA BSL	Addressing cost competitiveness will address especially: Guideline: 2 – Community participation and CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment & gender mainstreaming Guideline 4 – mainstreaming tourism value chain linkages	Workgroup established and meets at least 2 x p.a.
		– Conduct a detailed comparative evaluation of visitor and operator taxes, charges, airfares and other cost items.	X		80,000	MoTCA	MoF NRA BSL		Study conducted with clear, implementable proposals for improved cost competitiveness
		– Make and implement proposals for addressing cost disparities.	X		To be determined based on study	MoTCA	MoF NRA BSL		Appropriate cost reduction measures and proposals implemented
		– Track cost of travel to Sierra Leone and competitors over time.		X	30,000	MoTCA	MoF NRA BSL		Annual report tracking a basket of tourism costs using a valid and reliable methodology from year 3 onwards
1.2	Promote and facilitate public and private sector investment, especially in Tourism Development Zones.	– Conduct investment scoping and business potential studies of all priority tourism development zones in close collaboration with NIB and SLEIPA.	X		600,000	MoTCA NTB	SLIEPA NIB PAA	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 9 – Protected Areas planning for tourism Guideline 14 – Development control guidelines for TDZs Guideline 15 – Tourism sites and attractions development	Portfolio of private, PPP and PPCP investment & business opportunities scoped and documented
		– Facilitate public and private sector investment in priority tourism areas, and introduce a suitable tourism investment incentive package.	X		200,000 Tax forfeiting costs to be determined	MoTCA NTB	SLIEPA	Guideline 14 – Development control guidelines for TDZs Guideline 15 – Tourism sites and attractions development Guideline 14 – Development control guidelines for TDZs	Land ownership and other potential investment constraints cleared Benchmark study conducted Tourism incentives package developed & agreed
		– Promote tourism investment opportunities emanating from the scoping studies.	X		250,000	NTB	MoFA SLIEPA PAA	Guideline 9 – Protected Areas planning for tourism Guideline 15 – Tourism sites and attractions development Guideline 14 – Development control guidelines for TDZs	Tourism investment portfolio brochure produced for scoped opportunities Investment promotion plan implemented
		– Monitor and report on the nature and extent of tourism investment.		X	10,000	NTB	SLIEPA	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 4 – Maximising value chain linkages	Investment progress report published annually from year 3 onwards

	STRATEGY	ACTION	PRIORITY DURING YEARS 1-5		5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)	RESPONSIBILITY		APPLICABLE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GUIDELINES (VOL II)	DELIVERABLE (OUTPUT) SUCCESS INDICATORS
			CRITICAL YEAR 1-2	HIGH YEAR 3-5		LEAD	SUPPORT		
1.3	Facilitate tourism business growth with a focus on MSME development	– Develop a tourism MSME mentorship & training programme for women & youth entrepreneurs to develop new products/ services		X	200,000	Invest Salone/ SLHATA	MoTCA	Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 4 – Maximising value chain linkages	MSME support mechanisms in place No. of new female & youth tourism enterprises trading profitably
1.6	Develop tourism human resources, awareness and capacity at all levels	– Develop and fund a capacity building, licensing and formalisation programme for tour guides, tour leaders, specialist guides, and local community guides.	X		200,000	MoTCA	NACTG/ AIG Tour operators International guiding association	Guideline 5 – Responsible management of tourist-host interaction	No. guides licensed & passing training programmes. Formalised SL tourist guide association infrastructure & online booking platform operational
GOAL 2: TO PROTECT, PRESERVE AND SUSTAINABLY DEVELOP TOURISM'S NATURAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RESOURCES									
2.1	Implement an effective Spatial Development Framework.	– Endorse and advocate at the governmental level the SDF as the primary spatial blueprint directing tourism development in the country.	X			MoTCA	All line ministries		
		– Draft proposals to the Cabinet to officially designate the priority TDZs (as listed in section 7.2)	X			MoTCA			Cabinet act designating the priority TDZ issued
		– Craft detailed development blueprints for the priority TDZs (as listed in section 7.2), in consultation with relevant MDAs.	X		1,280,000	MoTCA MoL		All spatial guidelines (see Volume II, Appendix B.3)	8 priority TDZs declared as LAAP, with oversight transitioned to MoTCA (→ see section 7.3)
2.2	Adopt and apply sustainable tourism development guidelines.	– Capacity building support and mentoring for MoTCA to operationalise the sustainability guidelines and integrate them into existing ways of working in partnership with other MDAs and stakeholders.		X	50,000	MoTCA	EPA MoLCHP MoGCA SLHATA	All guidelines	New/improved institutional mechanisms in place to apply guidelines (e.g. ESIA, CBT process, gender mainstreaming) No. key staff trained/mentored
		– Provide support for the implementation of the Green Label for Hotels and Restaurants to promote circular business operations.	X		100,000	MoTCA	SLHATA EPA	All sustainability guidelinesn	Annual competition for "green" hotels that subscribe to the green labelling and rewards system Major hotels signing up to the Green Label
2.3	Ensure effective protection and preservation of tourism assets in declared Protected Areas and (tangible) Cultural Heritage Sites	– Develop forest visitor infrastructure to improve wildlife viewing, recreation and conservation objectives.		X	150,000 50,000 per park	NPAA	Forestry Division	Guideline 9 – Protected Area planning for tourism Guideline 15 – Tourism sites and attractions development Guideline 16	Infrastructure in place (as per plan - e.g. visitor facilities, canopy walkways) Visitor satisfaction high
		– Develop nature-based trails and circuits with focus on improved interpretation and locally unique themes.		X	120,000 40,000 per park	NPAA	Forestry Division	Guideline 5 – Responsible management of tourist-host interaction Guideline 9 – Protected Area planning for tourism	Trails in place; visitor satisfaction with interpretation high
		– Engage community members and MSMEs in providing additional nature and agritourism experiences.	X		30,000 10,000 per park	NPAA	Forestry Division	Guideline 2 – Community participation and CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 9 – Protected Area planning for tourism	Engagement mechanisms formalised & occur regularly No. & quality new nature & agritourism experiences Significant increase in local incomes from tourism

STRATEGY		ACTION	PRIORITY DURING YEARS 1-5 CRITICAL YEAR 1-2	PRIORITY DURING YEARS 1-5 HIGH YEAR 3-5	5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)	RESPONSIBILITY LEAD	RESPONSIBILITY SUPPORT	APPLICABLE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GUIDELINES (VOL II)	DELIVERABLE (OUTPUT) SUCCESS INDICATORS
		– Conduct a tourism stock-taking and market-readiness evaluation of current and potential cultural heritage sites and projects.		X	150,000	MoTCA	UNESCO Cultural partners	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 5 – Responsible management of tourist-host interaction Guideline 15 – Tourism sites and attractions development	Completed national inventory & evaluation of sites; costed project/site proposals
		– Launch a heritage tourism support programme.	X		350,000	MoTCA	Tour operators NACTG/ AIG Creative partners	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 5 –Responsible management of tourist-host interaction Guideline 15 – Tourism sites and attractions development	On-site & visitor experience improvements New heritage circuits/ itineraries
		– Develop and create a Freedom Museum and "Cotton Tree Park" as a new flagship cultural heritage project.		X	1,000,000	MoTCA	MoLHP	Guideline 1 – EIA & SIA Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 5 – Responsible management of tourist-host interaction Guideline 9 – Protected Area planning for tourism Guideline 15 – Tourism sites and attractions development Guideline 16 – design of tourism facilities	Freedom Museum & Cotton Tree Park built & operational
GOAL 3: TO IMPROVE VISITOR ACCESS TO AND AVAILABILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURAL SERVICES AT TOURISM AREAS									
3.1	Design and implement road access improvements along tourism routes and circuits.	– Upgrading of the Makeni – Kamakwie road (92 km) to improve access to 02 Outamba-Kilimi TDA, including improvement of Scarcies river crossing		X	9,000,000	MOWPA	SLRA	Tourism Corridors (see Volume II, Appendix B.3.2) Applicable technical standards and regulations	92 km of road upgraded to higher service level
		– Minor improvements on the Makeni-Kabala Road (120 km) improving access to 03 Kabala-Loma Mountains TDA		X	1,300,000	MOWPA	SLRA	Tourism Corridors (see Volume II, Appendix B.3.2)	120 km of road improved
		– Minor improvements on the Freetown-Makeni road (186 km)		X	3,720,000	MOWPA	SLRA	Tourism Corridors (see Volume II, Appendix B.3.2)	186 km of road improved

	STRATEGY	ACTION	PRIORITY DURING YEARS 1-5		5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)	RESPONSIBILITY		APPLICABLE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GUIDELINES (VOL II)	DELIVERABLE (OUTPUT) SUCCESS INDICATORS
			CRITICAL YEAR 1-2	HIGH YEAR 3-5		LEAD	SUPPORT		
	Prioritize and launch a programme to upgrade "last mile" roads in coordination with the development of the TDZs they connect to.	– Upgrading of access roads (roads connecting Kamakwie to the entrances of both the Outamba and Kilimi sections of the National Park.		X	528,000	MOWPA	SLRA	Applicable technical standards and regulations	22 km of access roads improved (gravel)
		– Upgrading of access roads (roads connecting Kabala to the Lake Sonfon Sanctuary, the Loma Mountains, and Mount Bintumani.)		X	1,968,000	MOWPA	SLRA	Applicable technical standards and regulations	82 km of access roads improved (gravel)
		– Upgrading of access roads (roads connecting Makeni to key attractions, including the Mamunta-Mayoso wildlife sanctuary and the Bumbuna Waterfalls.)		X	2,064,000	MOWPA	SLRA	Applicable technical standards and regulations	86 km of access roads improved (gravel)
		– Set up mechanisms to gather feedback from tourists and local communities about road conditions.			100,000	MOWPA	SLRA		Feedback mechanism established and operational
3.4	Improve the quality, safety and efficiency of water-based tourism transport, especially tourist ferry and boat excursions.	– Establish a Water-Based Tourism Transport Task Force to oversee the strategy's implementation.	X		100,000	MoTA	SLMA SLPA		Water-Based Tourism Transport Task Force established
		– Conduct a comprehensive feasibility study of water-based transport.	X		400,000	MoTA	SLMA SLPA	Applicable technical standards and regulations	Feasibility study of water-based transport developed and approved
		– Improve the ferry terminals, passenger and baggage handling system for transfers between Lungi and Aberdeen.	X		3,000,000	MoTA	SLMA SLPA	Applicable technical standards and regulations	New terminal in operation
GOAL 4: TO PROMOTE A SOUGHT-AFTER TOURISM IMAGE AND ACHIEVE CONTINUED GROWTH IN TOURISM DEMAND									
4.2	Continue implementing and refreshing the national tourism marketing strategy and action plan	– Ensure adequate budget for sustaining, expanding and refreshing the international marketing strategy and drive beyond SLEDP funding, based on available market intelligence.	X	X	500,000	NTB	MoFA	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 5 – Responsible management of tourist-host interaction	NTB annual subvention increased with adequate earmarked marketing funding
		– Build on and expand the domestic marketing efforts already undertaken.	X	X	200,000	NTB	SLHATA	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 5 – Responsible management of tourist-host interaction	Annual domestic marketing drive with notable increased domestic travel trend
		– Engage private tourism businesses in marketing initiatives and activities.	X	X	100,000	NTB	SLHATA	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 5 – Responsible management of tourist-host interaction	At least 4 private companies subsidised by 50% to participate in all NTB marketing activities and stands

	STRATEGY	ACTION	PRIORITY DURING YEARS 1-5 CRITICAL YEAR 1-2	 HIGH YEAR 3-5	5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)	RESPONSIBILITY LEAD	 SUPPORT	APPLICABLE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GUIDELINES (VOL II)	DELIVERABLE (OUTPUT) SUCCESS INDICATORS
GOAL 5: TO ENSURE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION									
5.1	Review the Tourism Act of 1990 to be in line with the Tourism Policy and the proposals contained in this NSTP.	– Appoint a legislative review panel to undertake the redrafting process.	X		20,000	MoTCA	MoJ	Formulation of the Act to be checked against all guidelines	Review panel established with effective secretariat
		– Clarify the roles and powers of MoTCA in collaboration and consultation with other MDAs.	X		-	MoPED	Public Service Commission		Roles and powers of MoTCA regarding all aspects of the NSTP clarified and agreed
		– Conduct a benchmark study of Tourism Acts of successful destinations in drafting and promulgating the Act.	X		50,000	MoTCA	MoJ		Benchmark study of tourism acts conducted and lessons extracted and Act re drafted
		– Promulgate the new Act through the government processes.	X		-	MoTCA	Parliament		New Tourism Act promulgated
5.2	Restructure and staff public sector tourism institutions effectively and appropriately.	– Undertake a professional work study and recommend restructuring of the tourism and cultural institutions.	X		30,00	Minister	Public Service Commission	Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 6 – Decent Work	Work study conducted resulting in restructuring of MoTCA with Divisions, KPAs, job levels, job descriptions and performance management
		– Obtain Cabinet approval and engage in a suitable expansion and restructuring process.	X		-	Minister	Cabinet		A restructured MoTCA
5.3	Ensure effective inter-MDA and intra-MoTCA tourism collaboration.	– Establish a Presidential Tourism Council.	X	X	20,000				PTC established and meets at least 2x per annum
		– Set up and manage a Tourism-Culture Workgroup in MoTCA.		X	-	PS	Dir Tourism Dir Culture	All guidelines apply to actions taken	Workgroup meets once per month Joint programmes and projects implemented
5.5	Apply a transparent, effective and measurable community-inclusive tourism approach	– Pilot and fund development of JV/PPP/PPCPs partnership models to improve CBT products and community tourism infrastructure (e.g. homestays network, mobile camping, trails, cultural experiences)		X	200,000	SLHATA	MoTCA	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 4 – Maximising value chain linkages Guideline 16 – Design of tourism facilities	Formalised process for CBT development & partnerships established No. formalized CBT initiatives/ partnerships Community income/ benefits
		– Develop "responsible tourism encounters" project to implement practical responsible management strategies to facilitate positive tourist-host relationships and manage impacts	X		150,000	MoTCA	SLHATA	Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 3 – Women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming Guideline 5 – Responsible management of tourist-host interaction	New operational measures & codes of practice in place for tourism businesses No. signatories to The Code No/type. participants completing trainings on child protection, customer care, cultural awareness etc

	STRATEGY	ACTION	PRIORITY DURING YEARS 1-5		5-YEAR COST ESTIMATE (US$)	RESPONSIBILITY		APPLICABLE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GUIDELINES (VOL II)	DELIVERABLE (OUTPUT) SUCCESS INDICATORS
			CRITICAL YEAR 1-2	HIGH YEAR 3-5		LEAD	SUPPORT		
5.7	Develop a robust system of national tourism statistics management and accounting.	– Establish a Tourism Statistics Committee,	X		5,000	MoTCA	NTB SSL BSL	The following guidelines should be considered in devising surveys and gathering information for the SLSTS: Guideline 2 – Community participation & CBT Guideline 4: Maximising the tourism value chain Guideline 8: Coastal planning for tourism Guideline 9: Protected areas planning for tourism Guideline 11: Waste management	Terms of reference for the Committee Fully functioning Tourism Statistics Committee comprising all key stakeholders
		– Conduct training and mentorship to build capacity/awareness of tourism statistics.	X		80,000				Scope of training requirements Delivery of formal training sessions
		– Expand the existing statistics department in NTB to enable the management of the expanded SLSTS.		X	Dependent on salary bill	NTB	MoTCA Public Service Commissio n		Structure of expanded department Expanded Tourism Statistics Department
		– Implement the Sierra Leone System of Tourism Statistics (SLSTS), including the following components:							
		– Improvement to Inbound Visitor Arrivals data, including programming changes to SecuriPort System, Training of SLID staff at Airport and Pamalap and seamless data management	X		25,000	NTB	SLID		Amended SecuriPort Immigration System Export of data in Excel format Monthly Tourism Statistics Report Online database for processing and monthly reporting arrivals data
		– Inbound Visitor Expenditure and Characteristics: Full Survey, including Survey planning and execution and Analysis and reporting	X		200,000	SSL	NTB		Comprehensive inbound tourism survey report
		– Accommodation Utilisation Survey, including efficient data application and API, survey execution and monthly reporting	X		65,000	NTB	SLHATA		App and online database functioning Monthly Tourism Statistics Report
		– Inbound Visitor Expenditure and Characteristics collection, with online survey linked to free Wi-Fi service and online database, and analysis of survey data	X		50,000	NTB	SSL Airport Authority		Monthly Tourism Statistics Report
		– Domestic and Outbound Tourism Survey		X	200,000	NTB	Airport Authority		Set of questions asses to existing household survey Analysis and reporting Comprehensive domestic and outbound tourism survey report
		– Other Tourism Statistics Data Collection		X	25,000	NTB	SSL		Established procedures for collection of: Tourism characteristic industries, Visits to attractions, Passenger transport data, Digital marketing performance, Social and environmental indicators Excel or similar database structure Monthly Tourism Statistics Repo

7.6 MEASURING AND MONITORING PERFORMANCE: THE SYSTEM OF TOURISM STATISTICS

Appendix A of Volume II of the NSTP sets out the scope and implementation guidelines for establishing a robust Sierra Leone System of Tourism Statistics (SLSTS), which is an essential asset for measuring and montoring tourism performance and for structured and informed decision-making in the sector, in particular for planning, marketing, policy making and regulating tourism.

The proposed SLSTS is based on international best-practice, is embedded in United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) concepts, classifications and recommendations for tourism statistics, and takes into consideration the current situation and needs of Sierra Leone. The proposed system includes the following components:

- **Inbound visitor arrivals:** the measurement of the volume and key characteristics of international inbound visitor arrivals to Sierra Leone.
- **Accommodation utilisation:** the measurement of the use of accommodation rooms and beds, and consequently the calculation of key data such as room and bed occupancy rate, and average length of stay.
- **Inbound visitor expenditure and trip characteristics:** the measurement of expenditure and other trip characteristics (such as length of stay, places visited, activities undertaken, impressions, etc) of inbound visitor arrivals.
- **Tourism characteristic industries:** an inventory of all the businesses that the UNWTO classifies as being in the "tourism industry", which includes accommodation, food and beverage services, and travel agents and tour operators.
- **Domestic and outbound tourism:** the measurement of domestic tourism in Sierra Leone and outbound tourism (to other countries), including number of trips and expenditure.
- **Visits to attractions:** measurement of the number of visitors (and potentially trip characteristics such as country of residence and expenditure) at attractions in Sierra Leone.
- **Passenger transport:** measurement of passengers travelling by various modes of transport between key origin-destination points.
- **Digital marketing performance:** measurement of key indicators from digital marketing activities, including the Tourism Sierra Leone website and associated social media.
- **Social and environmental impacts:** measurement of social and environmental impacts related to the visitor economy.

It is anticipated that the implementation of the SLSTS will be gradual, and therefore each component will be developed when resources for it are available. Consequently, they have been ranked in order of priority (as shown in Figure 20 below) with inbound visitor arrivals being the most important and should be the first to be implemented.

This strategy also sets out, for each of the components of the SLSTS, a two stage development plan: *Initial* and *Full*. It is recommended that for each component the initial phase is undertaken first to establish the data collection, storage and dissemination procedures. After these are embedded, and when resources are available, expansion to full development should follow.

Whilst the SLSTS will provide all stakeholders (both public and private sector) in the tourism sector with an important and useful resource of data, it will also be essential for the development of a Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) for the country, which is a future goal. The TSA will provide key indicators for measuring the impact of tourism on the national economy, such as tourism direct gross value added and tourism's contribution to GDP.

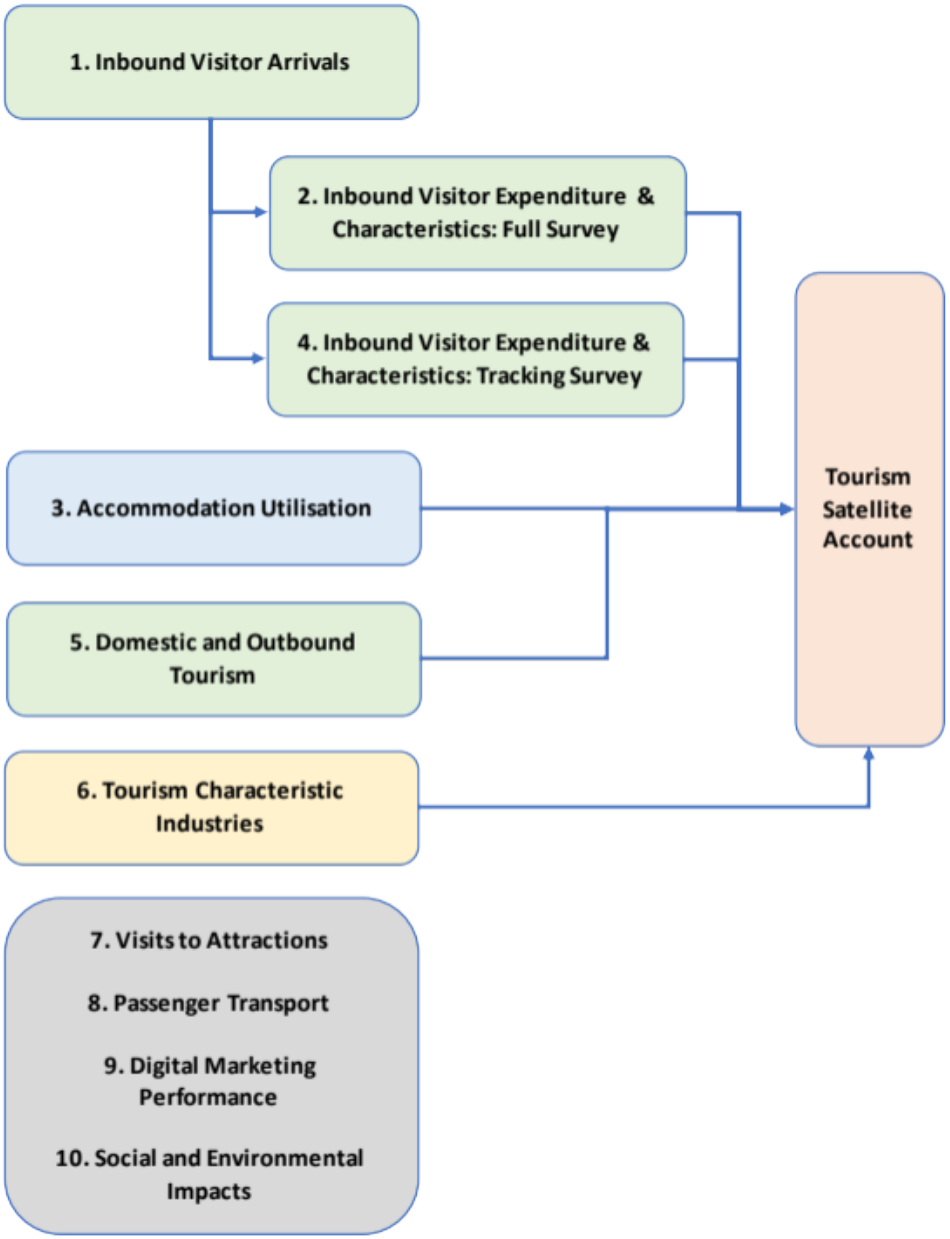
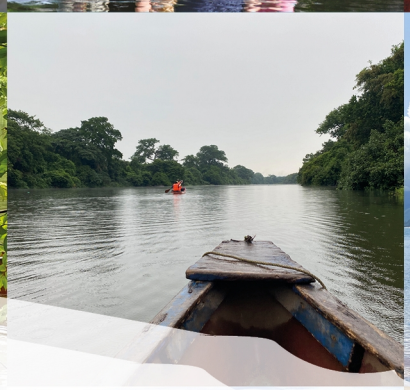


Figure 20 – SLSTS development priorities and links[37]

[37] *Numbers refer to priority level of development. Demand-side data in green; demand vs supply-side data in blue; supply-side data in yellow; other contributing data in grey.*



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