



2020 - YEAR OF DELIVERY FOR SIERRA LEONE:

But where are the
performance indicators?

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I. Introducing the Year of Delivery

In almost all government sectors in Sierra Leone, financial investment increased in the last 10 years yet productivity levels are significantly lower than the years before the war. For instance, Government of Sierra Leone and its donor partners spent at least US\$60 million per annum on agriculture between 2009 to 2019 yet productivity levels for rice stands at 1.13 million tonnes in 2018 compared to 2.7 million tonnes per annum in 1970. The same underperformance is reflected in investments in education and health where Sierra Leone is reporting some of the worst human development indicators in the world¹. In spite of these challenges, a blame game between the two major parties has persistently prevented elites from taking the country's problems in their hands and tackling the root causes of state failure and underperformance, with blame shifting as power changes hands. Since SLPP assumed power in 2018, they consistently pushed the logic that 'the opposition APC is collectively guilty for the state of Sierra Leone, while the ruling SLPP is collectively innocent'. The reverse was the case under APC rule a few years ago.

However, 2020 provides an opportunity to make a break with the past. President Bio has declared 2020 the "year of delivery," following the read out of the 2020 budget (SL9.3 Trillion - nearly US\$1 Bn.). At the opening of the third Cabinet Retreat at the Bintumani Conference, he called on ministers and civil servants to focus on results. However, It has now been five weeks since the big declaration of a '**Year of Delivery**'; unless concrete steps are taken to change business as usual, with true commitment to attacking partisan politics and policies that enrich the few, this new buzzword will yield little, like many others by past presidents (Agenda for Change; Agenda for prosperity).

Despite the emphasis on a "Year of Delivery." the performance targets Bio expects MDAs to deliver this year are unknown to the public (and perhaps unknown to some members of the administration). Voters remain clueless about what results to expect from the Le9 Trillion investment this year, as well as the criteria for punishing and rewarding public servants across the delivery chain. In this brief, we suggest ways for government to move beyond the rhetoric of year of delivery, partnering with citizens for concrete results, and working to reduce our dependency on foreign aid. To do so, government must tell ordinary Sierra Leoneans what is meant by delivery, so they know what to look for, and how to measure it. Commitment to effective service delivery provides the opportunity for the government to reach beyond its base; an improvement in development outcomes will be a win-win for all.

To ground the abstract construct of delivery, this paper discusses two sectors (agriculture and sanitation) to illustrate what delivery means to ordinary Sierra Leoneans. We argue that for delivery to occur President Bio should be courageous enough to dismantle the rent seeking infrastructure in MDAs and publicly declare resources provided to institutions as well as their performance targets. Where performance targets and allocated resources are unclear, it will be difficult to rally citizens around the laudable goal to manage meagre resources to achieve better outcomes, moving citizens and parties out of a blame game mentality.

¹ See UN Human Devel

2. Understanding why Institutions Fail in Sierra Leone

For a country with some of the worst human development indicators in the world, Sierra Leone should exemplify Nyerere's call to "run while others walk," if the country is to catch up development wise.² One component of achieving results requires the transformation of institutions into productive entities in the first place. For this to happen, there needs to be an understanding of why institutions fail to deliver, and how a conducive environment can be created for greater efficiency and innovation.

Peter Ekeh (1975) gave an insightful account of why institutions in Africa persistently fail to deliver results. For Ekeh, colonialism succeeded in creating two publics in Africa: the primordial public realm (i.e. the indigenous entities and communities from which elites hail) and the civic public realm (i.e. the government or the public sector where elites work). Many indigenous communities see it as legitimate for elites to steal from the civic realm (the government/public sector) to redistribute some of the wealth in the primordial realm, i.e. their villages, families or communities. The historical experience of post-colonial Sierra Leone appears to support this thesis: elites have systematically plundered public resources, often with impunity and the full backing of their communities of origin. Over time, Sierra Leone has developed a defacto two-party system where two parties represent, almost equally, two regions of the country. Ethno-regional loyalty keeps voters and citizens divided; unable to unite to demand reforms. In this environment MDAs face little or no public pressure to deliver results.

It is apparent from his call for a Year of Delivery, that two years into his presidency, President Bio realises that Sierra Leone's institutions continue to remain trapped in a bifurcated politics that does not make room for performance and perpetuates state weakness. For example, "Taxes collected are insufficient even for paying the salaries of bureaucrats. Capital expenditures in the development budget often depend on aid and other foreign capital inflows." (CARL upcoming 2020). Yet like his predecessors of past governments, supporters of the governing party expect government to channel personalised resources to families, districts and/or regions. Public trust in institutions is on the decline; and within government offices a silent animosity exists between those who want to change the status quo, and those who view institutions as a source for exploitation and undermine service delivery. Some of this intra-party tension has spilled out into the open, exacerbated by occasional violence from opposition groups who are also dissatisfied with the status quo and want to fast-track a return to power.

3. Putting Institutions on the Road to Delivery – Food and Sanitation

President Bio's SLPP manifesto laid out a bold vision to increase food security for Sierra Leone and strengthen healthcare. The last Bio-Meter (IGR/OSIWA May 2019) showed a combined 28 percent progress towards achieving manifesto commitments for these two sectors. This progress includes donor efforts which have been largely aligned to GoSL's plans in these sectors. This section presents the policy landscape for rice production and the sanitation sector, which, when taken together, demonstrate the constraints to the delivery of results. We also proffer potential choices and trade-offs President Bio could make to achieve results in 2020.

² Jennings, Michael. 'We Must Run While Others Walk': Popular participation and development crisis in Tanzania, 1961-9 in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41(2) · June 2003.

3.1. Delivering Rice for Sierra Leone

Since assuming office some two years ago, President Bio has spent at least US\$11 Million on programmes for improving agricultural productivity. At least 50 percent of these resources in 2018 went to paying off debts to private contractors for supplies contracted by the previous administration. The combined spending from domestic resources and donor funds for agriculture constitute 6% percent of the national budget; however, this has not translated into improvements in agricultural productivity. Bio's plans for the procurement of machines to support the production of rice at an industrial scale has yet to materialize. Consequently, Sierra Leone remains one of the most food insecure countries globally. A country which was a net-exporter of rice in the 1980s has seen its productivity levels plummet from 1960 to 1970, which averaged \$2.7 million annually (USDA 1968, p. 18) to 1.17 tones in 2018 (PEMSD⁴ – Ministry of Agric - 2019).

In light of government promises, there is a general expectation from voters that Sierra Leone could increase rice output this year. This investment could allow the country to reduce rice importation, increase rural employment and ultimately boost household income. The question for many voters is, how much is President Bio going to invest in agriculture this 2020 and with what results? Do we have any targets for rice production and importation this year? What is the baseline? What strategies is government putting in place to minimise inefficiency in the sector? What systems will be implemented to demonstrate results?

Since self-sufficiency in rice, Sierra Leone's staple food, is the central focus of President Bio's agricultural policy, it is useful to review what strategies are in place to increase rice output. MAF's 2019 strategic plan mentions improving inputs, especially seeds, tools and equipment; the broader development of rice lands suitable for partial mechanical cultivation; and intensive cultivation of inland-valley swamps which are developed primarily with family labor. Like successive governments, the Bio administration believes that providing farming inputs, especially fertilisers and improved seeds, will improve rice productivity. About 65% of the sector's programmatic budget is spent on the procurement of input supply by private agro-dealers.

While these strategies seem valid on paper, corruption is one of the biggest setbacks for the sector. Figures from a special audit of the management of fertilisers⁵ (Oct 2018) by Sierra Leone's Auditor General show a price inflation of over three times the cost, causing the sector to lose over 65% of funds allocated for 2016 and 2017. Allegations of fraud in fertilizer procurement are currently under investigation at the Commission of Inquiry.

Annual audit reports provide a clear picture of how Ministry of Agriculture officials, have historically used agricultural inputs for rent-seeking. In interviews with farmers for this paper, there were accusations of MAF officials using farming input supplies to mobilise rural votes during election time. A possible first step in any attempt to increase rice self-sufficiency will

³ Allegations of fraud in fertilizer procurement are currently under investigation at the Commission of Inquiry.

⁴ Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Division (PEMSD) of the Ministry of Agriculture of Forestry

⁵ <https://www.audit-service.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Performance-Audit-Report-on-Management-of-Fertilizers-by-the-Ministry-of-Agriculture-2018.pdf>

require an improvement in the institutional commitment of the MAF to be accountable in the management of input supply. We propose some choices to limit this below:

- a) First, in the face of limited resources, the state should make a choice between buying fertilizers, a process that has been swamped by corruption or procuring machines that can be rented. HE Bio had planned since 2018 to procure machines to support farmers in rural areas. In the absence of mechanisation, it will be difficult for Sierra Leone to return to its rice self-sufficient status of the 60s and 70s. Experts in agriculture estimate that increasing the mechanisation rate in Sierra Leone from 0.2hp/ha to 0.8hp/ha in the next 5 years, can double rice production to 2.4 million tonnes. To achieve this, they estimate that Sierra Leone will need to at least ten times its current stock of machinery over the same period (MAF Strategic Plan 2019).
- b) Second, the state must check corruption in the procurement and distribution of farming inputs as they are a significant source of revenue loss. Although government has set up two agencies: the Fertiliser Agency and Seed Agency to regulate input procurement and supply, given the lucrative nature of an unregulated sector, strong leadership and support at the level of State House will be crucial to drive necessary changes.
- c) Third, the state should put in place incentives and monitoring mechanisms embedded in the public sector as a way to limit financial “leakages.” This could include openly stating and publicly posting performance targets of the MAF and local councils, especially in agricultural districts in terms that are easily understood by citizens. A declaration of performance targets for MAF across key districts will help guide local councils on the proper deployment and usage of devolved agriculture grants.
- d) Fourth, and perhaps the most important, effective monitoring of the management of agricultural inputs should start with a proper registration of all farmers across the country using digital tools like GPS to identify and monitor the acreage cultivated and register what the needs are. The state should also effectively monitor transactions between distributors and MAF agencies responsible for the management of agricultural inputs to eradicate any potential collusion.

Finally, the biggest choice the Bio administration has to make is to ensure that reform in agriculture is not seen as a donor-driven endeavour, but rather a GoSL-driven agenda to increase food supply to voters. Through grounding this initiative as one that is geared toward improving citizens lives, the administration will be able to get citizen buy-in and commitment. The Bio administration should therefore take leadership in dismantling rent-seeking infrastructure in agricultural sector to drive productivity. If the government does not lead on the process of delivering results, even the existing donor interventions will also fail to produce results.

3.2. Delivering Sanitation

Decreasing infant and maternal deaths and improving sanitation, especially in urban areas, are top priorities of the Bio administration. The administration inherited a heavily donor-funded Free Health Care⁶ initiative for pregnant women and lactating mothers. Over the last two

⁶ Behind the Free Health Care initiative was the UN taskforce on innovative international financing for health systems, which was chaired by the UK prime minister, Gordon Brown, and the then president of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick. Its focus was on “finding innovative financing mechanisms to strengthen health systems in

years the GoSL has invested at least US\$11 million (excluding salaries) supplemented by an additional tens of millions of US Dollars of foreign aid. The government has also spent at least \$6m in the last 18 months on monthly cleaning exercises where thousands of youth are mobilized to clean towns and cities across Sierra Leone. Ostensibly, cities across Sierra Leone are cleaner than they were three years ago.

A central challenge for the Bio administration however, is being able to financially sustain the free healthcare and sanitation programmes. Understandably, given the low level of health indicators since the end of the war, high levels of poverty and persistent health shocks (Ebola, Lassa fever, cholera and measles) free healthcare is a logical decision as is a focus on health promotion through ensuring a clean environment. Yet, these are expensive undertakings, and health care in particular is largely subsidised by donors. To date, there has not been a clearly articulated plan on how the country aims to attain financial self-sufficiency in these sectors. Donor funding is finite, and given the importance of these sectors, the country must think of creative ways to ensure Sierra Leoneans can afford their healthcare and sanitation needs and to move away from the reliance on donor funding. The big question is, what is the timescale for transitioning into a system where citizens support their health and sanitation needs. It is worrying that there seems to be no strategic thinking from the governing party or opposition about reducing external aid or preparing citizens to overcome the idea of what constitutes 'Free,' which is rooted in the logic of aid and receivership. Free is not really free, and it has a number of implications for the local economy and policy options available to government.

We present here three steps that government can take to reduce spending on sanitation, and at the same time, significantly reduce disease through strategic interventions that would ensure a conducive legal framework to promote behavioural change:

1. **Transition into a sustainable waste management** We recommend that sanitation programmes of the pre-war era be adopted where improving sanitation was not treated as a one-off monthly event. Instead, commitment and efforts to cleaner communities should be daily endeavours, that are supported by institutional reform. We should return to the pre-war era, when sanitary inspectors were hired to ensure that households and communities are compliant with basic codes and ethics for household and public sanitation as laid out by a designated local council. Daily checks meant that cleaning exercises were institutionalised, rather than waiting for one day a month to be implemented. The fact that sanitation has been devolved to local councils from the centre should support institutional development for sanitation as opposed to funding a centrally controlled initiative.
2. **Citizen's monitoring:** A legal framework and system needs to be developed on sanitation to ensure that citizens monitor and report how and when people throw refuse on public places. An incentive-based system could be introduced to help incentivise behavioural change. For example, a percentage of the fines levied on those who dispose of refuse inappropriately go to individuals who report the incidence.
3. **Teaching sanitation and hygiene:** Behavioral change must be supported by teaching and education. For example, a survey conducted at the height of Ebola revealed that only 38% of Sierra Leoneans wash their hands after using the toilet. This situation may not have significantly changed post-Ebola. To sustainably improve hygiene and sanitation we recommend that a curriculum be developed for School Management Committees (SMC), local authorities, teachers, community leaders,

the poorest countries in the world. The programme was launched in 2009 and £3.2bn raised to go towards abolishing user fees in Nepal and five African countries (Ghana, Burundi, Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Liberia).

parents and even students to help them plan and implement affordable interventions to improve sanitation in primary schools and other institutions of learning. Students should be made to learn of the importance of keeping their environment clean, national pride and ownership, and practicing good hygiene.

4. Conclusion – Points for Reflection

This paper has provided examples in rice and sanitation on how the administration can translate its 'year of delivery' into concrete reform programmes. In so doing, the administration will demonstrate a concrete political commitment to taking our problems into its own hands and to mobilising the country to collectively produce results. Clearly and publicly communicating the results it expects from key MDAs, and resources allocated as well as political courage in addressing the harmful ethno-regional divisions that keeps institutions weak will be key. We offer four points of reflection on how the government can mobilise the country to achieve on its year of delivery.

1. First, there should be recognition that the present divisive politics undermines performance and prevents institutional leaders from effectively developing and utilising the potential of every Sierra Leonean. This division is starkly seen in the rhetoric of many current officials who present the root causes of state failure and underperformance as an 'APC collective guilt and an SLPP collective innocence,' as was also done under APC. A partisan approach to tackling underperformance and state failure will only create sacred cows. It is useful to reiterate that in this Year of Delivery President Bio abide by his own statement at Bintumani when he stated that he "will not hesitate to discipline his own appointees when failing in their missions." The goal of government cannot be attained unless it is owned and supported by citizens across all shades and opinions.
2. Second, publicly declaring performance targets and resources allocated to MDAs for 2020 will force institutional teams to work together and address the many petty infightings that exist in organisations. An open and public declaration of MDA targets would in some way demonstrate Bio's commitment to impartiality and technocratic ruling that would separate his administration from the past.
3. Third, national ownership and leadership on delivery indicators will send out a message that donor efforts, while valuable, are not a sufficient condition for development. Focusing on results means looking inwards to solutions, properly managing our own resources and leading our own agenda for change. This will be a big shift from the common practice where elites turn to China – to show to the West that there is an alternative – without analysing the costs and risks of leaning on authoritarian regimes.
4. Lastly, publicly declaring and displaying short term targets and budgets will not only minimise waste, but help manage expectations and build trust amongst a population that has generally viewed politicians with suspicion and lacking in transparency.