



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WORK

TECHNOLOGY, SKILLS, AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD



PRODUCED BY



MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT,
LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY



MANAGEMENT TEAM



**Honourable
Mohamed
Rahman Swaray**

Minister Of Employment,
Labour And Social Security



**Lansana Mohamed
Dumbuya**

Deputy Minister of
Employment, Labour and
Social Security



**Sinneh
Bockarie**

Ag. Commissioner
Ministry of Employment,
Labour and Social Security



**Joseph
Tekman Kanu**

Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Employment, Labour
and Social Security

A portrait of Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. He is a Black man with short hair, wearing glasses, a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a blurred green tree. A green and white ribbon graphic is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

H.E. Rtd. Brg. Julius Maada Bio

**President of the Republic
of Sierra Leone**

Foreword by the Minister

As Sierra Leone continues its journey toward economic transformation under the visionary leadership of His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security (MELSS) remains steadfast in advancing the Human Capital Development agenda. This agenda is a cornerstone of the Medium-Term National Development Plan (2024–2030).

Today, the world of work is evolving at an unprecedented pace, shaped by technological advancements, demographic shifts, and increasing global interconnectedness. In response, the Government of Sierra Leone, through MELSS, is transforming the labour market to be more inclusive, productive, and resilient. This magazine highlights our achievements over the past two years, the challenges we must confront, and the opportunities we are determined to seize.

Delivering on the President's Vision

Under President Bio's leadership, MELSS has achieved significant milestones:

- **Legislative Modernisation:** Through the historic passage of key legislation, we are building a formalised, rights-based labour economy aligned with international standards and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Recent legislative achievements include:
 - Social Protection Act (2025)
 - Industrial Relations and Trade Union Act (2024)
 - Employment Act (2023)
 - Work Permit Act (2023)
 - Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Act (2023)
- **Social Protection Expansion:** The National Social Safety Net has registered over 84,000 vulnerable aged nationwide, with 63% being women (53,481) and 37% men (31,181). Beneficiaries span 150 chiefdoms, 752 sections, and 3,336 communities. To date, cash transfers have reached 11,606 older adults across 10 districts.
- **Labour Migration Opportunities:** Through bilateral partnerships with countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and with the technical support of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), we are opening safe pathways for Sierra Leonean workers abroad.
- **Youth Employment and Skills Development:** In collaboration with key stakeholders the Ministry is supporting efforts to equip young people with the skills required for a competitive and modern economy. These initiatives contribute to the government's vision of creating 500,000 new jobs by 2028.
- **Labour Migration Opportunities:** The Ministry is committed to protecting migrant workers' rights while maximizing the developmental impact of labour migration. Efforts include:
 - Enhancing skills development programs for global opportunities.
 - Facilitating safer migration pathways through bilateral agreements.
 - Strengthening diaspora engagement initiatives.
 - The ongoing review of the Labour Migration Policy underscores our commitment to this agenda.

Strategic Partnerships: The Power of Tripartism

Our successes are built on robust tripartite collaboration among government, employers, and workers, supported by development partners, civil society, and the private sector. Partners such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), and the International Organization for Migration have provided critical technical and financial support to promote decent work, social protection, labour migration, and digital transformation.

Acknowledging Challenges and Staying the Course

Despite significant progress, challenges persist:

- Infrastructure gaps hinder service delivery.
- Labour systems require digitisation.
- Gender disparities and informal sector integration demand urgent attention.

Through initiatives like the Gender Unit and the acceleration of policies such as the National Labour Migration Policy and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Policy, we are addressing these barriers strategically.

The Future of Work: A Call to Collective Action

In alignment with President Bio's Big Five Game Changers, MELSS is committed to:

- Expanding social protection to informal workers and eradicating child labour.
- Preparing youth for green and digital economies.
- Strengthening diaspora engagement to make labour migration a driver of development.
- Deepening tripartite dialogue through the inaugural National Labour Conference on "Shaping the Future of Work."

As we commemorate Labour Day 2025, we renew our unified call: Development partners, employers, trade unions, local councils, and citizens each play a critical role. Together, let us invest in lifelong learning, gender equality, safe workplaces, and formalising the informal economy.

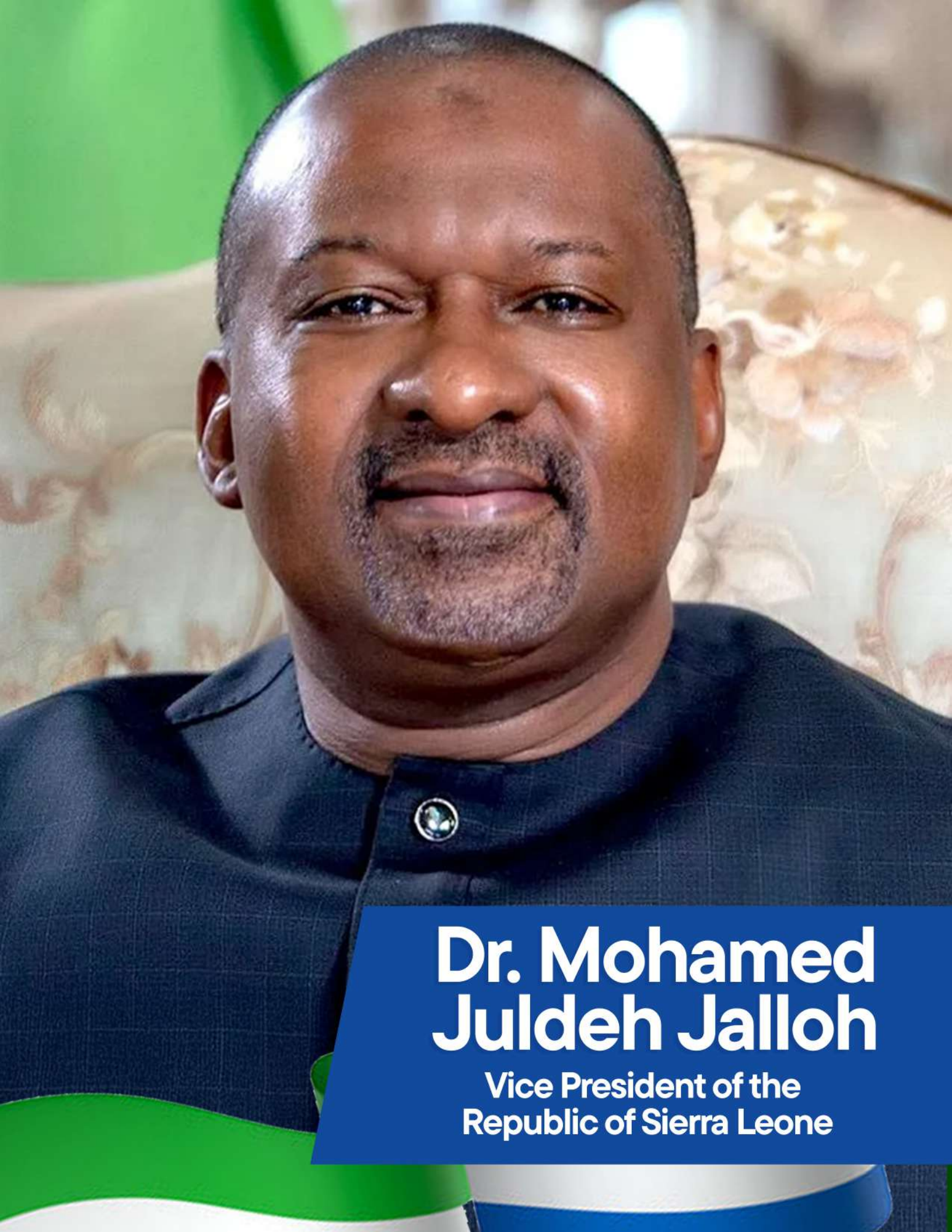
Let us build a Sierra Leone where every worker's contributions are respected, protected, and rewarded. Together, we can shape a future of work that embodies our collective aspirations for dignity, opportunity, and prosperity for all.

Moving Forward with Unity and Purpose



**Honourable Mohamed
Rahman Swaray**

Minister of Employment,
Labour and Social Security



Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh

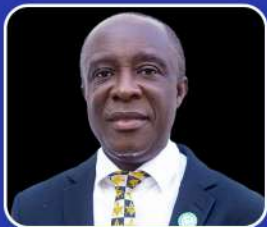
**Vice President of the
Republic of Sierra Leone**

THE EVOLUTION OF TRIPARTISM IN SIERRA LEONE: ORIGINS, GROWTH, AND CURRENT DIRECTION

Tripartism—the global collaboration among government, employers, and workers—is a worldwide cornerstone of modern labour relations. Its origins date back to the establishment of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919, following World War I. The principle was clear and transformative: lasting peace and prosperity depended on social justice, and social justice could only be achieved if governments, employers, and workers had equal voice in shaping labour policies.

The ILO became the first international organisation to formalise tripartite decision-making, with each country represented by two government delegates, one employer, and one worker delegate. This unique governance structure ensured that the interests of workers and employers were directly embedded into international labour standards—a profound innovation that remains vital today.

The Tripartite



**ALBERT
OJO COLLIER**

Executive Secretary
Sierra Leone Employers
Federation



**MAX K
CONTEH**

Secretary General
Sierra Leone Labour
Congress



**BOCKARIE
SINNEH**

Acting
Commissioner

Tripartism in Sierra Leone: Origins and Development

Although Sierra Leone, then a British colony, was not among the founding members of the ILO, it formally joined in 1961, immediately after gaining independence. Even earlier, seeds of organised labour and employer associations had been planted during the colonial era, paving the way for post-independence reforms.

The formal practice of tripartism was strengthened through Sierra Leone's ratification of key conventions:

- Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association (1961)
- Convention No. 98 on Collective Bargaining (1961)

These commitments inspired national mechanisms for social dialogue. In the early 1990s, the Tripartite Labour Advisory Council (TLAC) was established, providing a critical advisory platform to the Ministry of Labour on policy, wage-setting, and industrial relations.

Prominent early figures who shaped tripartism include:



Kandeh B Yillah

*Outstanding trade unionist, longest serving secretary General,
Outstanding trade unionist, national and international*



Jennis AB Wright

*President SLLC
Secretary General Hotel Workers Union*



Siaka Probyn Stevens

*Former President of Sierra Leone, Founding
Member Sierra Leone Labour Congress
President Mines Workers Union*

The civil war (1991–2002)

disrupted labour market structures, but post-conflict reconstruction prioritised restoring **social dialogue**, with heavy support from the ILO and international partners.



Consolidation and Growth: Minister Alpha Timbo's Era

Honourable Alpha Timbo, a former Secretary-General of the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union, became critical of rebuilding tripartism. As Minister of Labour under both President Kabbah and later President Bio, he spearheaded:

- The revival of the National Employment Policy.
- Collaboration with ILO and ECOWAS to promote decent work.
- Introduction of the Wages and Industrial Relations Act, bringing wage regulation under a tripartite framework.
- Enactment of the Employment Act (2023), Work Permit Act (2023), Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Act (2023)

Timbo's tenure embedded tripartism into Sierra Leone's national development agenda.



Modernisation and Transformation: Minister Mohamed Rahman Swaray's Leadership (2023–Present)

Appointed by President Bio in 2023, Hon. Mohamed Rahman Swaray brought new energy and technical acumen to Sierra Leone's labour administration. With a professional background in Human Resource Management and a vision aligned with the Big Five Game Changers, Minister Swaray initiated sweeping reforms, breathing new life into tripartism.

Key Achievements Under Minister Swaray (2023–2025):

Strengthening the TLAC: Over 12 structured engagements were held between 2023 and early 2025 to institutionalise tripartite dialogue.

Modernisation of Labour Laws:

- The National Social Protection Act (2025).
- The Occupational Safety and Health Bill (2024) and the Workers' Compensation Bill (2024) are now under parliamentary consideration.

Expansion of Labour Market Systems:

- The Labour Market Information System (LMIS) was established, and Phase I is operational. Full deployment will track the creation of the 500,000 jobs targeted under President Bio's agenda.
- Work Permit Digitisation is boosting transparency and revenue generation.

Social Protection Innovations:

- Launch of the e-Voucher System for streamlined social safety net delivery.
- Development of an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System to improve citizen feedback and dispute resolution mechanisms.

Strategic Resource Mobilisation:

- A \$6 million grant was secured from the World Bank for social protection programs.

International Engagements:

- Hosted the 24th ARLAC Committee of Senior Officials Conference in Freetown, with 35 participants from 13 African countries.
- Negotiating new bilateral labour migration agreements with the Sultanate of Oman, complementing existing ones with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

Importantly, a Resource Mobilisation Strategy for implementing Decent Work Country Programme Phase II was developed, demonstrating MELSS' commitment to sustainable reform.

Strengthening the Social Partnership: Current Leaders in Tripartism

Minister Swaray works closely with strong social partners who champion the tripartite spirit:

- Albert Oju Collier, Executive Secretary of the Sierra Leone Employers' Federation (SLEF).
- Max K. Conteh, Secretary-General of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC).
- Sinneh Bockarie, Acting Labour Commissioner, MELSS.

Together, these leaders have collaborated on major initiatives such as:

- Increasing the minimum wage by 22% in 2025 through tripartite consensus.
- Promoting ethical recruitment standards for Sierra Leonean migrant workers.
- Formalising the informal sector to extend social security to over 80% of the workforce.



Future Directions: Building a Resilient and Inclusive Labour Market

- Under the guidance of the Ministry and its tripartite partners, future initiatives include:
- Full operationalisation of the LMIS to track national job creation targets.
- Roll-out of National Job Fairs and May Day events promoting employment opportunities and showcasing LMIS functionalities.
- Deploy Labour Attachés in key transit and destination countries (Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE, Turkey, Lebanon, Ghana, Senegal) to safeguard migrant workers.
- Regular social dialogue sessions and a planned Diaspora Conference to leverage skills, investments, and partnerships.
- Expansion of social protection to the informal sector and enhanced labour inspections are core pillars of fostering decent work, productivity, and improved livelihoods across Sierra Leone.

Tripartism as a Driver for Economic and Social Transformation

From its cautious beginnings in the post-independence era to today's vibrant and structured model, tripartism has become indispensable for Sierra Leone's economic growth and social justice.

Thanks to Minister Mohamed Rahman Swaray's reform-driven leadership, President Dr. Julius Maada Bio's visionary support, and dynamic collaboration with employers and workers, Sierra Leone's future of work looks increasingly inclusive, innovative, and prosperous.

As the world of work evolves, tripartism will remain a fundamental engine powering the country's journey towards dignity, opportunity, and prosperity for every Sierra Leonean.

WHY THE NATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE ON SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WORK?

The inaugural National Labour Conference, held from April 29 to May 1, 2025, at the Miatta Conference Centre, marked a significant turning point for Sierra Leone's labour and economic future. Organised by the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security under the theme "Shaping the Future of Work," the conference lived up to its billing: bringing together policymakers, trade unions, employers, development partners, academia, and private sector leaders for a truly national dialogue.

This was no ordinary gathering. It was a timely and strategic response to the seismic shifts reshaping the world of work, from automation and digital economies to climate change and green job creation. The conversations were rich, the energy palpable, and the commitment to change, unmistakable.

Anchored within President Dr. Julius Maada Bio's Big Five Game Changers agenda, the conference amplified efforts around job creation, youth empowerment, and social protection. It also provided a platform for collective action, bridging gaps across sectors and ideologies.

Hon. Mohamed Rahman Swaray, Minister of Employment, Labour and Social Security, set the tone during his opening remarks:



"This conference is a landmark opportunity to shape a shared vision for the future of work in Sierra Leone, one that is inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the aspirations of our people. It also speaks directly to the Big Five Game Changers commitment of His Excellency, President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, particularly in job creation and youth empowerment."

We must prepare our workforce for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow by investing in skills, promoting decent work, and strengthening social dialogue."

As discussions unfolded, it became clear that Sierra Leone is serious about future-proofing its workforce. Topics like the rise of automation, the green economy, youth entrepreneurship, and digital innovation were dissected with clarity and urgency.

Albert Oju Collier, Executive Secretary of the Sierra Leone Employers' Federation, captured the private sector's perspective: "The world of work is evolving faster than ever before, with automation, green jobs, and digital economies redefining how and where we work."

"As employers, we see this conference as a critical space to collaborate with government and labour to shape policies that foster innovation, attract investment, and ensure Sierra Leone's workforce is equipped to compete regionally and globally. The future of work must be about opportunity, resilience, and shared growth."

The message from the workers' side was just as strong. Max Conteh, Secretary-General of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, reminded participants: "As we prepare for the future of work, we must place people at the centre of every policy decision. This conference is not just a dialogue; it's a platform to assert workers' rights, promote gender equity, and safeguard the dignity of labour."

"Our commitment is to ensure that the transformation ahead leaves no one behind, and that workers remain protected, empowered, and equipped to thrive in a changing world."

Employers also recognised that adaptation is key. Tamba A. Kokobaye, an Executive Member representing the Employers' Federation, emphasised:

"As employers, we recognise that the future of work cannot be approached with old solutions. We are seeing new industries emerge and traditional sectors being redefined. This conference allows us to craft policies that support job creation in this changing environment, policies that align with digital transformation, sustainability, and youth entrepreneurship. We must intentionally create pathways for meaningful employment in both urban and rural Sierra Leone."

Behind the scenes, the Ministry had meticulously planned a roadmap. Abu Bakarr Sillah, Deputy Director of Policy Planning and Research at the Ministry, presented the detailed implementation plan: "The future of work requires deliberate planning and inclusive execution. We rolled out a comprehensive activities timeline during the conference, including technical sessions, sectoral breakouts, and consultations."

"These will feed into a national roadmap that outlines actionable steps toward creating future-ready employment frameworks. The expected outcome is a resilient, adaptable workforce supported by enabling policies and strengthened labour institutions."

The conference's structure blended expert panels, technical workshops, sectoral breakout sessions, and high-level plenary discussions. Each track focused on concrete solutions, not just diagnosing problems but proposing actionable reforms.

International frameworks, such as the International Labour Organisation's "Global Commission on the Future of Work" and lessons from South Africa's "Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution," informed much of the discussions.

Perhaps most critically, the conference succeeded in forging a national consensus: the future of work must be inclusive, dynamic, and rights-based. Technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship were positioned not as threats, but as tools for empowerment, if managed with foresight and fairness.

A clear message emerged during the closing ceremony: Sierra Leone is not waiting to react to global labour shifts. It is choosing to act, to shape its destiny. The National Labour Conference was more than just an event. It was a call to action, and the beginning of a coordinated journey toward a future where work uplifts, empowers, and transforms

OP-ED: WOMEN, WORK, AND THE NEW SIERRA LEONE: BUILDING A NATION POWERED BY EQUALITY

BY LOLO YEAMA, SARAH
THOMPSON-OGUAMAH

When His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio introduced the Big Five Game Changers in 2023, he did more than outline an economic transformation plan — he redefined the role of women in Sierra Leone's future. Anchored firmly in human capital development, job creation, technology, gender equality, and agricultural competitiveness, the Big Five Agenda set out an unambiguous political message: no national transformation would be complete without the full inclusion of Sierra Leone's women.

Among President Bio's most historic reforms was the passage of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act, 2023. A 30% minimum quota for women's representation in political appointments, public sector employment, and corporate governance was enshrined in law for the first time. This Act was not an isolated achievement; it reflected a broader, deliberate strategy — integrating gender equality into labour markets, governance, education, and economic planning. Today, the GEWE Act is a landmark symbol of the administration's political will to ensure that women are not merely beneficiaries of development but architects of the nation's destiny.

In the labour sector, the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security (MELSS), under the leadership of Honourable Mohamed Rahman Swaray, has translated this vision into action. Between 2023 and 2025, sweeping reforms such as the Employment Act 2023 and the Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Act 2023 have strengthened workplace protections against discrimination, harassment, and exploitation, with special attention to the needs of women in both the formal and informal sectors.

Statistics Sierra Leone shows that women already constitute nearly 59% of the labour force in agriculture and dominate the informal services sector. However, women's contributions often went unrecognised and unrewarded before these reforms. The Labour Market Information System (LMIS) launch in 2023 marked a pivotal moment: for the first time, gender-disaggregated employment data began guiding policy and investment decisions. As of early 2025, efforts are tracking towards the ambitious goal of creating and formalising 500,000 jobs by 2028, with a targeted inclusion rate for women, particularly in new sectors like ICT, green energy, and agro-processing.

Beyond policy, funding support from development partners has been critical. Between 2023 and 2025:

- The World Bank invested \$6 million into the "Women's Empowerment Project," focusing on expanding women's access to social protection and vocational training.
- UNDP supported capacity-building programs for women entrepreneurs, especially in agriculture and digital innovation.
- The European Union committed €4.5 million to fight sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), ensuring safer workplaces and stronger legal support services for women survivors.
- USAID and the Global Fund jointly contributed \$15 million toward women's health initiatives — strengthening reproductive health services, maternal care, and HIV/AIDS interventions critical to maintaining a healthy and productive female workforce.

Women Breaking Barriers in Sierra Leone



Isata Mahoi
Minister of Gender
and Children's Affairs



**Nemata
Majeks Walker**
50/50 Group Sierra Leone



**Marcella
Samba Sesay**
Executive Director
Campaign for Good Governance



**Dr. Kadie
Sesay**
Former University Lecturer
and Vice President
Candidate SLPP



These investments have built safer workplaces and healthier, more resilient women ready to lead in every sector of the economy. The passage of the National Social Protection Act (2025) further expanded safety nets for vulnerable workers, ensuring that women in the informal economy, previously excluded from pensions and workplace protections, now have a pathway to economic security. Meanwhile, bilateral labour migration agreements with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, managed with ethical recruitment frameworks backed by the IOM, have opened doors for Sierra Leonean women seeking decent employment abroad under safer, regulated conditions. Yet challenges persist. While formal employment opportunities have grown, only about 38% of women workers are in the formal sector compared to 62% of men. Gender wage gaps endure, particularly in male-dominated industries like construction and mining. Moreover, rural women continue to face barriers in accessing finance, technology, and leadership roles.

This is why the Big Five Agenda's emphasis on skills development, youth employment, and gender parity remains critical. Initiatives like the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) — which links training directly to jobs in emerging sectors — are designed to prepare young women to thrive in future workplaces.

Looking ahead, the foundation laid today will define the Future of Work in Sierra Leone. The forces shaping tomorrow's labour markets—digital transformation, green economies, global migration, and demographic shifts—will demand a diverse, skilled, and resilient workforce. A future-ready Sierra Leone must be a gender-equal Sierra Leone.

The reforms driven between 2023 and 2025 under President Bio's leadership are not simply a series of technical achievements; they are a bold political investment in the country's human capital. They firmly believe that when women work, economies grow, democracies deepen, and nations prosper.

The future belongs to the Sierra Leonean woman—the farmer, the engineer, the entrepreneur, the teacher, the minister—who will power Sierra Leone's transformation in the decades to come. By empowering women today, Sierra Leone is building a more just society and securing its prosperity for tomorrow.

“
**The GEWE Act
was a promise.**

**The Big Five
Agenda is the
roadmap.**



Manty Tarawalli

Minister of State
Office of the Vice President



THE STRENGTH OF HOME: HOW SIERRA LEONE'S DIASPORA CAN SHAPE THE FUTURE OF WORK

By Mercy Ijeoma Oguama

There are moments when the threads of your past, passion, and purpose come together so tightly, you can almost feel them weaving into the fabric of history. Being part of Sierra Leone's delegation to the International Conference on the Future Agenda of Action for Global Diaspora Engagement in Cape Verde this September was one of those moments for me. It wasn't just another conference but a testament to how far Sierra Leone has come — and a glimpse into the future we are courageously building together.

I graduated from SOAS, University of London, with a Master's in Migration and Diaspora Studies. I have spent years studying the dynamics of migration and displacement during my Bachelor's in International Relations at Webster University and during my stint as an intern with IOM Sierra Leone and as a volunteer at the Initiatives for Media Development Migrants as Messengers program, also funded by IOM Sierra Leone. But standing alongside my fellow Sierra Leoneans — Mr. Chiblee F. Kamara, Acting Commissioner at the Ministry of Employment, Labour, and Social Security, and our colleagues from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation — made it deeply personal. It was no longer just academic. It was real. It was home.

During those intense two days in Sal, as representatives worldwide gathered, something extraordinary happened. Sierra Leone was named co-chair of the newly launched Global Diaspora Policy Alliance (GDPA) — a technical working group to drive global diaspora engagement efforts forward. This was not merely symbolic. It recognised Sierra Leone's leadership in harnessing its diaspora's energy, innovation, and commitment to tackle global challenges.

The announcement, jointly made by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Government of Cabo Verde, set a tone of ambition and seriousness. It reflected the world's growing trust in Sierra Leone's vision. This vision does not see the diaspora as distant or disconnected, but as partners at the heart of national transformation.

As I listened to the discussions around the power of diaspora communities, I could not help but reflect on our journey. The Sierra Leonean diaspora is vast, resilient, and deeply passionate. We are doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, researchers, and community organisers scattered across continents, carrying Sierra Leone in our hearts wherever we go. But there was no structured way to channel our potential for a long time. That is now changing.

Thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Employment, Labour, and Social Security, with the support of IOM Sierra Leone, real policies and programs are taking root. Initiatives like the Diaspora Agribusiness Forum, the establishment of a Migration Unit within the Ministry, and the Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Act of 2023 are clear signals that Sierra Leone is creating the frameworks needed to facilitate safe migration,

Beyond remittances, which amounted to nearly \$500 million in 2022, the diaspora's contributions are becoming more strategic. We invest in businesses, transfer skills, participate in knowledge exchanges, and strengthen civic life back home. More than anything, we are helping shape a modern vision of work that is global, adaptable, and rooted in dignity.

During the conference, a moment stayed with me. A delegate from another African country approached me and said, "Sierra Leone is showing us that even countries with a difficult past can lead with hope." It struck a deep chord. Hope is powerful, but hope with a plan backed by policy, partnerships, and political will is unstoppable.

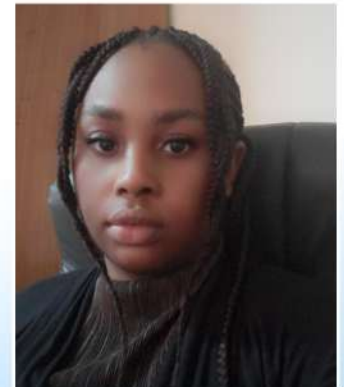
It would be impossible not to acknowledge the incredible support that made our participation possible. IOM Sierra Leone's commitment to strengthening national institutions and building diaspora bridges has been unwavering. Their investment, not just in this conference but in every step of our diaspora engagement journey, continues to open new doors.

As I left Cape Verde, I thought about the future of work in Sierra Leone—about the young people in Kenema, Kambia, and Freetown dreaming of opportunities. Our future of work must be one where global Sierra Leoneans contribute not just money but ideas, technologies, connections, and leadership. It must be one where migration is a choice, not a necessity, and where coming home is not a sacrifice but a celebration.

We have what it takes. The Global Diaspora Policy Alliance is only the beginning. Together—whether abroad or at home—we are weaving a future that honours our roots, embraces our resilience, and wholeheartedly believes that the best of Sierra Leone is yet to come.

About the Author

Mercy Ijeoma Oguama holds a Master's in Migration and Diaspora Studies from SOAS University of London. While at SOAS, she contributed to the Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies, researching and discussing diaspora engagement and migration policies. Passionate about leveraging diaspora potential for national development, Mercy continues to advocate for inclusive migration strategies that bridge global communities with sustainable growth in Sierra Leone.



Photos of leading Men and Women who have relocated from the Diaspora and doing well in Sierra Leone



**Dr. David Moinina
Sengh**

Chief Minister



**Yvonne
Aki-Sawyer**

Mayor of Freetown



**ChukuEmeka
Chikezie**

Entrepreneur



**Aminata
Dumbuya**

Masada Waste Management

LABOUR, DIGNITY, AND HOPE: SIERRA LEONE'S PENSIONERS RECLAIM THEIR FUTURE

When Ya Mbalu Kamara sat in front of her modest home in Makrugbeh, Tonkolili District, clutching her first regular pension payment, the tears that welled in her eyes were not just about gratitude — they were about dignity finally restored.

Sierra Leone's ageing population, especially those in rural areas, lived with uncertainty for decades. After a lifetime of work in farms, markets, mines, and service jobs, many elderly citizens were without safety nets, dependent on family support or informal community systems that often crumbled under economic pressures. Today, that story is changing.

Under the leadership of His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, and through the determined work of the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security (MELSS), Sierra Leone's pension system is undergoing a quiet revolution. The government's National Social Protection Act (2025) and strengthened partnerships with the World Bank and other development partners are now delivering tangible results, reaching pensioners who had long been forgotten.

The impact has been profound for Ya Mbalu Kamara, a 72-year-old widow from Tonkolili Chiefdom.

"This money gives me the strength to live without begging," she said, lifting her cash transfer voucher with a proud smile.

"For the first time in years, I feel seen by my government. I can buy my medicines and my rice. I can even help my grandchildren with school books."

In Pendembu Town, Upper Bambara Chiefdom, Jeneh Momoh also reflected on what the pension cash transfer has meant for her after years of hardship.

"Before this help came, I depended only on the kindness of neighbours. Now, I can plan my life — I can even buy oil for my cooking and small soap for washing. This support gives me dignity."

Her story, marked by quiet resilience, is echoed across rural Sierra Leone. Similarly, Alpha Turay, a community carpenter for most of his working life, shared: "My hands are tired, but my heart is strong. The government's support gives us older adults hope. We worked for this country, and now the country remembers us."

Across in Kaffu Bullom Chiefdom, Port Loko District, Ya Mbalu Kamara explained how the cash transfer has transformed her daily life:

"Before, I had to wait for my sons to send something from the city — sometimes, there was nothing. Now, I can budget my small income and plan for my food and health. It has given me peace."

In the serene community of Kpah Town, Selena Chiefdom, Amie Brima expressed her feelings after receiving her benefit:

"I spent many years working on people's farms. Now, this money helps me buy my pepper, my groundnuts, and my medicines. It brings me happiness knowing I am not forgotten."

For Amie, the cash transfer means she can live independently even in her elder years. These pensioners are among the 28,000+ elderly Sierra Leoneans receiving regular cash transfers and pensions through NASSIT's expanded services and the national cash transfer programs linked to the Labour Market Information System (LMIS). The reforms have significantly reduced the processing time for pensions from over 90 days to under 45 days, an achievement that MELSS celebrates as part of its delivery under the Big Five Game Changers.

Ya Mbalu Kamara emphasised the human side of these reforms: "It is not just money. It is respect. It is saying that we matter."

These stories reflect a broader national transformation. MELSS Minister, Honourable Mohamed Rahman Swaray, noted at a recent event:

"Pensions and social protection are not charity. They are right. They are the reward for lives of work, sacrifice, and service to Sierra Leone. Under President Bio's leadership, we are building a Sierra Leone where no pensioner is left behind."

The World Bank's \$6 million contribution to the national social protection program, complemented by European Union and UNICEF support to strengthen social systems, has amplified the government's ability to reach even the most remote districts. Yet challenges remain. As MELSS internal monitoring acknowledges, rural access, financial literacy, and ensuring that every eligible pensioner is enrolled still require ongoing investment and innovation.

Still, the progress is undeniable. Sierra Leone is moving toward a future where every worker can look forward to retirement with dignity, not despair, and where old age is not a time of abandonment but a time of community recognition.

As Jeneh Momoh reflected, standing proudly outside her modest home in Pendembu: "We built this country. Now the country is building us back."

In the quiet smiles, dignified gazes, and steady hands of Sierra Leone's pensioners, a new future is being written—one payment, one life, one hope at a time.



Jeneh Momoh in
Pendembu



Alpha Turay in
Makeni



Amie Brima Kpah



Nancy Bangura in
Port Loko

Sierra Leone's ageing population, especially those in rural areas, lived with uncertainty for decades



“To Build a great
Sierra Leone,
we must
empower
our children
now”

**H.E Dr Fatima
Maada Bio**

First Lady of Sierra Leone and
Champion of Workers Rights



Leone Rock Metal Group (LRMG) positions itself as an **internationally comprehensive enterprise**, LRMG integrates mining processing, smelting, and steel production within Sierra Leone. This integration spans the entire iron ore supply chain, from extraction at the mine to steel production.



Beyond our corporate achievements, our commitment to societal development shines brightly. We've not only made substantial contributions to the economy but have also woven **threads of progress into the social fabric of Sierra Leone.**



DOCUMENTING INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT, LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

When I first visited the Ministry of Labour more than a decade ago, the environment reflected the challenges many traditional government institutions face.

The corridors were aged, the processes heavily bureaucratic, and the sense of urgency needed to adapt to modern labour realities was noticeably absent. Despite its critical role in advancing workers' rights and social security, the Ministry appeared static and disconnected from the rapidly evolving national and global labour landscape. As Managing Director of the Sierra Leone News Agency (SLENA) — the principal government news agency tasked with documenting national development — I have had the privilege of observing and recording the evolution of our state institutions over time.

Among these, the transformation of the Ministry — now reconstituted as the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security — stands out as a remarkable example of institutional renewal and modernisation.

The turning point came with appointing a Minister whose academic background and professional training in Human Resource Management brought fresh vision and energy. Under the strategic leadership of His Excellency, President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, whose Big Five Game Changers agenda provides a clear framework for national progress, the Ministry's focus expanded beyond traditional labour administration to address emerging global realities — the future of work, digital transformation, green jobs, artificial intelligence, and the strengthening of social protection systems.

This transformation is not symbolic; it is substantive. The Ministry's programs today directly address national priorities, promoting youth employment, building skills for the future, and delivering social security reforms that touch lives across Sierra Leone.

From a media perspective, engagement with the Ministry has evolved considerably.

Clear communication strategies, measurable outcomes, and a strong commitment to transparency now support policy announcements. The leadership recognises that effective governance requires delivering results and ensuring that citizens are informed, engaged, and able to participate meaningfully in shaping their future.

The Ministry's work acknowledges that the future of work is not a distant possibility — it is already upon us. There is an understanding that Sierra Leone must prepare its workforce for a rapidly changing global economy or risk being left behind. In this context, labour is no longer treated as a relic of the past but recognised as a dynamic driver of economic growth and social transformation.

In producing this special edition magazine on The Future of Work, I had the honour of collaborating with an outstanding team comprising Tanu Jalloh, Princess Gibson, Tamba Tengbeh, and Juliana Coker. Zacharia Jalloh and Girls Behind the Lens expertly captured the visual storytelling, while James Combey and Raymond de Souza George professionally developed the creative design and layout. I sincerely appreciate the team's dedication, professionalism, and ability to deliver a comprehensive publication within the demanding timeframe of just one week.

I also wish to formally acknowledge the Permanent Secretary Joseph Techman Kanu, Acting Commissioner Sinneh Bockarie, Acting Deputy Director Abu Bakarr Sillah and the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security team for their tireless cooperation and support. Their patience, responsiveness, and openness to working closely with the media have been critical to ensuring that the Ministry's progress is accurately and thoughtfully documented.

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Institutional transformation does not happen by chance. It requires visionary leadership, commitment to reform, and strong collaboration. The Ministry's ongoing journey is a testament to what can be achieved when public institutions align their mandate with the strategic development priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone, under the leadership of His Excellency, President Dr. Julius Maada Bio.

As a journalist and Managing Director of the national news agency, it remains both a duty and a privilege to chronicle these crucial transitions, ensuring they are correctly recorded, reflected upon, and celebrated as part of Sierra Leone's broader narrative of resilience, reform, and progress.

Author - Yeama Sarah Thompson – Managing Director, Sierra Leone News Agency





We can either be dinosaurs, clinging to the past, or we can be the architects of the future. And here's the kicker — the future is already here.

FROM DUSTY CORRIDORS TO DYNAMIC FUTURES: HOW LABOUR GOT ITS GROOVE BACK

BY MERCY OGUAMA

I still remember my first visit to the old Ministry of Labour, when I tagged along with my mum to meet the Minister.

It was a long walk down a lone dusty corridor, past sour-looking workers hunched over teetering piles of paperwork. The atmosphere was heavy, the energy — well, let's say it could have used a severe jolt. Labour back then felt like a relic of a bygone era, a place where time stood still while the rest of the world sprinted ahead.

Fast forward to today, and it's like stepping into a different universe.

The Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security has been reborn. The future of work didn't just catch up with them — it knocked down the door and set up shop in the same corridor.

At the heart of this transformation is a dynamic, UK-schooled Minister who lives and breathes Human Resource Management—not just in theory but in practice. He's a walking, talking embodiment of modern leadership, blending strategic thinking with people-centred innovation. He understands that work today isn't just about clocking in and out—it's about skills, technology, opportunity, and yes, AI.

Under his leadership, the Ministry is no longer a museum piece. It's a launchpad.

The message is crystal clear from Minister Mohamed Rahman Swaray:

We can either be dinosaurs, clinging to the past, or we can be the architects of the future.

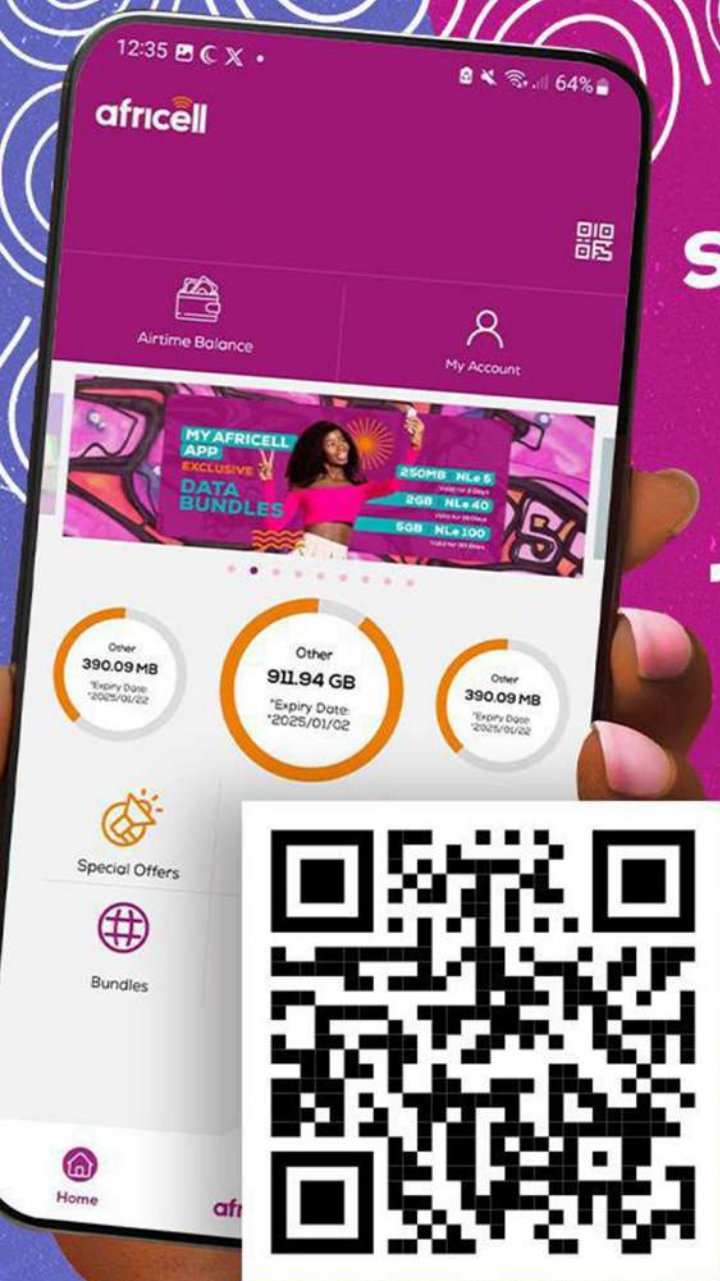
And here's the kicker — the future is already here. It's in how AI is being woven into conversations about jobs. It's in how policies are no longer made for workers, but with workers. It's in how the Ministry now champions the Big 5 Game Changers agenda, not from the sidelines, but from the frontlines.

The dusty corridors have been replaced with dynamic energy. The sour faces have given way to sharp minds and ambitious plans.

Labour didn't just get a facelift — it got a full-blown revolution.

The only question left is: Will you be part of the future, or cling to the fossils of the past?

Because over here at Labour, the future is already at work.



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THE BIG FIVE GAME CHANGERS: PRESIDENT BIO'S BOLD BET ON YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT



We are wholeheartedly committed to delivering sustainable and affordable clean energy that will empower economic growth and unlock new opportunities for prosperity.

President Julius Maada Bio

When His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio unveiled the Big Five Game Changers in 2023, he made a profound political and moral commitment to transform Sierra Leone by investing in its greatest asset—its people, especially its youth. Two years later, the evidence is clear. The Big Five Agenda is not just rhetoric; it is reshaping the future of youth employment, skills development, and national resilience.

At the heart of the Big Five lies a promise to tackle youth unemployment and underemployment head-on. Through the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) launched in 2023, the government began systematically tracking job creation efforts, targeting 500,000 new jobs by 2028. Between 2023 and 2025 alone, over 800 young Sierra Leoneans secured decent employment abroad through bilateral labour migration agreements with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Locally, sectoral mining, construction, and agriculture dialogues have unlocked new employment pathways for young people. Simultaneously, digitising work permits and developing e-Voucher systems are streamlining access for informal workers, integrating thousands of young market women, artisans, and traders into formal labour and social protection frameworks.

Yet the Big Five recognises that employment is not just about creating jobs; it's about building futures. Human capital development has been central to the agenda. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions have received renewed investment, expanding trade testing and certification. Collaboration between the Ministry of Employment and Youth has empowered thousands of young artisans, carpenters, welders, and digital entrepreneurs. The Youth Employment Scheme (YES), launched in alignment with the Medium-Term National Development Plan (2024–2030), directly connects skills training to market demand, preparing young people for jobs in construction, agriculture, ICT, and the emerging green economy.

Beyond national borders, President Bio's government has pursued youth employment as a pillar of foreign policy. Labour migration frameworks have been established with ethical recruitment principles, enabling young Sierra Leoneans to work safely and legally abroad. The proposed deployment of Labour Attachés to major destination countries, including Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE, Turkey, Ghana, and Senegal, will ensure that migration becomes a tool for economic empowerment, not a cause for despair.

The numbers tell a compelling story. As of early 2025, the LMIS actively tracks job creation across sectors, with 500,000 jobs within reach. Social security coverage has expanded by over 25%, incorporating informal sector workers into protection systems. Over 28,000 pensioners now receive regular monthly payments through NASSIT reforms, providing a security model that today's youth can aspire to. International support has also been mobilised, with \$6 million secured from the World Bank to strengthen social protection and promote youth inclusion.

In a political landscape often crowded with promises but thin on delivery, the Big Five Game Changers stand out. President Bio's administration, particularly through the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security under Honourable Mohamed Rahman Swaray, has demonstrated that real change is possible with strategic planning, partnership-building, and political will. This is not merely a story of statistics; it is a story of hope being restored among Sierra Leone's young people — hope that their government sees them, values them, and is willing to invest in their dreams.

As we move toward 2026, the Big Five Agenda is becoming more than a policy framework. It is emerging as a new social contract between the government and the next generation. President Bio's bold bet on youth yields early returns that signal transformation. Continued investment, innovation, and integrity will be needed to complete the journey. But one thing is clear: the future of work belongs to the youth, and under the Big Five, that future is being built today.



STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY: NASSIT'S ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER PRESIDENT JULIUS MAADA BIO'S LEADERSHIP (2018–2025)



Between 2018 and 2025, NASSIT increased its active contributor base by approximately 25%, reaching thousands of additional workers across both the formal and informal sectors.

When President Dr. Julius Maada Bio assumed office in 2018, he made human capital development and social protection central pillars of his governance agenda. Central to this vision was the revitalisation of the National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT), Sierra Leone's main public institution tasked with providing income security for workers upon retirement, and in cases of disability or death.

Over the past seven years, NASSIT has undergone a remarkable transformation. Under strategic leadership and aligned with President Bio's broader Big Five Game Changers, NASSIT has evolved into a more robust, efficient, and people-centered institution. Here's how:

1. Expansion of Coverage and Contributions

Between 2018 and 2025, NASSIT increased its active contributor base by approximately 25%, reaching thousands of additional workers across both the formal and informal sectors.

Key actions included:

- Extending registration to informal sector workers, such as market women, Okada riders, and small-scale farmers, who previously lacked any form of social security.
- Strengthening compliance and enforcement measures, resulting in a significant increase in monthly contributions from employers and employees.
- Introducing simplified registration mechanisms and awareness campaigns, particularly targeting underserved areas outside Freetown.

Today, more than 250,000 contributors are actively registered with NASSIT, a clear testament to growing public confidence.

2. Improved Benefits Delivery and Payment Systems

One of the biggest criticisms prior to 2018 was the delay in processing benefits.

Under President Bio's tenure, NASSIT achieved an average claim settlement period of 30–45 days, compared to previous periods that could stretch for several months. Notable reforms included:

- **Automation of Claims Processing:** Digitizing the workflow for faster verification and approval.
- **Pension Payment Reforms:** Timely monthly pension disbursements through direct bank transfers, mobile banking, and payment points.
- **Introduction of a Life Certificate Mobile App:** Retired pensioners can now confirm their life status annually without traveling long distances, promoting inclusivity and dignity.

According to NASSIT's 2024 Annual Report, over 28,000 pensioners now receive their payments regularly and promptly.

3. Strategic Investments and Asset Management

Sound management of contributors' funds is critical to the trust's sustainability.

During President Bio's administration:

- NASSIT diversified its investment portfolio to reduce risks and increase returns, focusing on real estate, hospitality, infrastructure, and financial markets.
- Key projects completed include the Mammy Yoko Radisson Blu Hotel expansion, and progress on affordable housing schemes in Freetown, Bo, and Kenema.
- Establishment of an Investment Committee to ensure transparency, risk management, and returns aligned with contributors' interests.

By 2025, NASSIT's total investment portfolio grew by more than 40% from 2018 levels, improving fund

4. Pension Reform and Policy Innovations

Recognizing the need for policy updates, President Bio's government initiated:

- A review of the NASSIT Act 2001 to align with international best practices, focusing on expanding benefits, strengthening governance, and improving fund sustainability.
- Support for the Workers Compensation Bill (2024), currently in Parliament, aiming to better address injuries, disabilities, and dependents' benefits.
- Collaboration with the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security (MELSS) on the broader Social Protection Law (2025) to integrate NASSIT's services into national safety nets.

These reforms demonstrate a forward-thinking approach to social security in a rapidly changing economy.

5. Strengthening Customer Service and Corporate Governance

President Bio's focus on public service delivery excellence extended to NASSIT:

- Launch of the NASSIT Call Centre, enabling real-time complaints handling and support.
- Improved annual stakeholder engagement forums to foster dialogue with employers, workers' unions, and pensioners.
- Enhanced internal audit and governance frameworks to ensure compliance, accountability, and efficiency in fund management.

A 2024 citizen survey by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security showed over 70% satisfaction among registered contributors regarding NASSIT services — a dramatic improvement from 45% in 2017.

6. International Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange

NASSIT actively engaged with regional and international bodies to benchmark progress and share experiences:

- Membership in International Social Security Association (ISSA) initiatives on innovation in service delivery.
- Collaboration with institutions in Ghana, Kenya, and Rwanda to learn from best practices in pension fund growth and extension to informal sector workers.
- Participation in the African Union's Agenda 2063 frameworks on expanding social protection coverage.

These engagements positioned Sierra Leone as an emerging leader in inclusive social security in West Africa.

A Legacy of Social Protection Strengthening

Under the leadership of President Julius Maada Bio, NASSIT has shifted from a struggling institution to a more dynamic, transparent, and citizen-focused pillar of Sierra Leone's social protection system.

The Trust's achievements — from expanding coverage to digitising payments, growing investments, and initiating bold reforms — are tangible evidence of what strong political will, strategic leadership, and a commitment to human dignity can deliver.

As Sierra Leone looks toward 2030 and beyond, NASSIT stands better prepared to protect future generations, ensuring that social security is not a privilege for a few but a guarantee for all.

The strides made under President Bio's administration should be celebrated — and built upon — as part of Sierra Leone's national journey towards inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development.





FACT SHEET

Labour Relations Achievements (2023–2025)

Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security (MELSS)

Strategic Reforms and Legislation

Area: Labour Law Reform

- Enactment of the Employment Act 2023
- Enactment of the Work Permit Act 2023
- Enactment of the Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Act 2023
- Employment Regulation 2023 issued
- National Volunteering Policy 2024 validated
- Occupational Safety and Health Bill 2024 tabled in Parliament
- Workers Compensation Bill 2024 tabled in Parliament
- Review of the NASSIT Act 2001 initiated
- Establishment and operationalisation of the Wages and Compensation Commission (2024)

Labour Market Modernisation

Area: Labour Market Systems, Work Permit Automation

- Phase I of Labour Market Information System (LMIS) operational
- Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System developed for worker feedback
- e-Voucher System for transparent social protection delivery developed
- Work and Resident Permit contract ready for signing

Strengthening Tripartism and Social Dialogue

Area: Tripartite Labour Advisory Council (TLAC)

- 12+ structured TLAC meetings held (2023–2025)
- Mining, Construction, and Agriculture sectors engaged
- Formalisation of consultation processes with employers and workers' organisations
- Minimum wage increased by 22% through tripartite negotiations (January 2025)

International Labour Engagements

Area: Regional and Global Engagement, Labour Migration Management

- Hosted ARLAC Senior Officials Conference (2024)
- 13 countries, 35 delegates participated
- Strengthened collaboration with ILO, IOM, ARLAC
- MoUs signed with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE; MOU with Oman underway
- 800+ Sierra Leoneans secured overseas employment (2023–2025)
- Labour Attaché recommendation framework developed (Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE, Turkey, Ghana, Senegal)

Social Protection and Decent Work Expansion

Area: Social Protection Framework, Social Protection Framework

- National Social Protection Act enacted (2025)
- \$6 million World Bank grant secured for social protection programmes
- Integration of informal workers into national safety nets (target: +50,000 by 2026)
- Resource mobilisation strategy paper developed and partnerships expanded

Monitoring, Implementation, and Innovation

Area: Social Protection Framework, Social Protection Framework

- Comprehensive M&E Framework being developed
- Scaling up Employment, Labour, and Social Security Hour media programmes
- National Job Fair and May Day 2025 events planned
- Diaspora Engagement Conference planned to harness skills and investment

Key Impact Data (2023–2025)

| Indicator | Achievement |
|---------------------------|--|
| Job Tracking | LMIS system operational to track 500,000 jobs |
| Social Security Expansion | Coverage expanded: 250,000+ NASSIT contributors, 50,000 informal sector workers targeted |
| Pensioners Served | 28,000+ pensioners paid monthly (improved from 18,000) |
| Contributor Satisfaction | 70% satisfaction rate among contributors (survey, 2024) |
| Wage Harmonisation | Over 90,000 public sector workers now covered under standardised wage structures |



Child Labour in Sierra Leone: The Fight for a Safer, Fairer Future

Despite progress on many development fronts, child labour remains one of the most persistent and painful challenges in Sierra Leone's journey toward inclusive growth. Today, an estimated 38% of children aged 5–17 in Sierra Leone are engaged in child labour, according to Statistics Sierra Leone and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of 2021. Many of these children work in hazardous conditions—agriculture, mining, petty trade, and domestic service—often sacrificing their education, health, and dignity for survival.

The underlying causes are complex: widespread poverty, rural underdevelopment, limited access to quality education, gender inequality, and cultural norms that normalise child work at the expense of childhood. But under the leadership of His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, and through the commitment of the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security (MELSS), Sierra Leone is taking bold steps to confront and eliminate child labour as part of its broader human capital development agenda.

Since 2023, MELSS has intensified its focus on eliminating child labour under the Big Five Game Changers framework, which prioritises job creation, education access, and gender equality. A key achievement has been the review and modernisation of labour laws to align more closely with international conventions, particularly ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour and ILO Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for work.

The newly enacted Employment Act 2023 contains stronger protections against child labour. It sets 15 years as the minimum age for employment and prohibits hazardous work for children under 18. It also mandates employer responsibilities to verify the age of young workers and imposes penalties for violations.

The Tripartite Labour Advisory Council (TLAC), revitalised under MELSS leadership, has integrated child labour elimination into its national dialogue agenda. It ensures that government, employers, and trade unions share responsibility for enforcement and awareness raising.

Importantly, MELSS, in partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and with support from development partners like UNICEF, has begun implementing a National Action Plan on Child Labour (2024–2028). This plan focuses on five key pillars:

- Legislative enforcement: Strengthening labour inspections and penalties for offenders.
- Awareness raising: Community-based campaigns targeting rural areas where child labour is most prevalent.
- Education access: Linking child labour elimination with increased enrollment in primary and secondary schools.
- Livelihood support: Introducing vocational training and income-generating projects for vulnerable families to reduce economic reliance on child work.
- Data and research: Strengthen LMIS data to track and monitor child labour cases better.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, working alongside MELSS, has intensified advocacy efforts to tackle cultural practices and gendered expectations that drive girls, in particular, into domestic labour and early marriage.

Development partners have significantly supported funding for these initiatives. The European Union, as part of its broader human rights support programme, committed specifically to child protection initiatives between 2023 and 2025. UNICEF provided technical assistance and funding for community awareness programmes across rural districts like Kono, Moyamba, and Bombali. The World Bank, through its social protection, has supported cash transfer schemes to families that agree to keep their children in school rather than at work.

Despite these efforts, the road ahead is challenging. Recent MELSS internal assessments suggest that child labour prevalence, while beginning to decline in urban centres, remains stubbornly high in rural mining communities and subsistence farming regions. Enforcement capacity remains limited, including the number of trained labour inspectors and access to remote areas.

Recognising this, MELSS, under the leadership of Honourable Mohamed Rahman Swaray, has prioritised strengthening integrated labour inspections across the country. New mobile inspection teams with digital case reporting tools linked to the LMIS system are expected to roll out by end of 2025. These innovations aim to make child labour detection faster, more accurate, and less dependent on manual reporting.

The fight against child labour speaks directly to the Big Five Game Changers' promise: investing in people, creating decent jobs, and ensuring that Sierra Leone's future workforce is healthy, skilled, and protected from exploitation. No country can achieve sustained economic growth if millions of its children are trapped in cycles of poverty and labour exploitation instead of attending school and building skills. By ending child labour, Sierra Leone is investing in its children's rights and economic future.

As the country marches toward 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, the message is clear:

Every child belongs in school, not in the workforce. Every childhood saved is a step closer to the prosperous, inclusive Sierra Leone that President Bio envisions.

National Labour Conference 2025 – Day 1 in Focus: Social Dialogue Takes Center Stage as Vice President Inspires and President Engages Labour Leaders



64TH YEAR



HAPPY INDEPEDENCE DAY SIERRA LEONE

We celebrate the strength, unity, and **resilience** of our beloved nation.

May we continue to build a **future** filled with hope, **innovation**, and opportunity for all.

Long live Sierra Leone!

