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Youth Career Development: A Special Focus on Sierra Leone

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Abstract

The issue of youth involvement in development has always been a topical one, and it remains significant in global public discussions. As a result, each nation must tailor its youth policies to meet its own specific needs rather than taking a broad approach.

In Sierra Leone, both past and present governments have shown some concern for the youth, albeit with some similarities. In 2003, His Excellency Ahmad Tejan Kabbah established a youth ministry and a national youth policy. His government's primary goals were to instil a sense of dignity in labour in the youth and to instil national consciousness and patriotism in their hearts and minds. [27]

The former President Ernest Bai Koroma's government established the National Youth Commission. All of these efforts are aimed at achieving youth empowerment in national development. However, despite these efforts, the challenge of youth empowerment remains a major one. The youth are still plagued by poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and a lack of the skills and knowledge necessary to obtain decent jobs. One would therefore think that amid these difficulties in career development for youths, an alternative approach could be grafted into the scheme of youths' concerns for holistic national development. In this flicker of hope are green skills and green tourism. [7, 8, 14, 17, 33]

This study carefully examined early childhood and youth education, skill and mindset education, youth employment challenges, and leadership and career development interventions. Most of which are embedded in green skills and green tourism. To achieve youth empowerment in Sierra Leone in all of these areas, the study recommends the following:

- Education institutions with revised curricula.
- Self reawakening of knowledge.
- Adequate loan facilities with low-interest rates, especially for agriculture-based industries.
- Respect and care for the cultural heritage of our country.
- Motivation for academic excellence.
- Support for recyclable materials and mitigation of climate change hazards.
- The establishment of industries and factories to expand the job market.

Keywords: Youth Career Development; Sierra Leone; Education; Employment; Green Skills; Green Tourism; Digital Media; Leadership.

Introduction

The term 'youth' has been defined and examined in different ways by different schools of thought. According to the United Nations, youths are persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. In the African context (including Sierra Leone), a youth is considered to be a person within the age bracket of 15–35 years. The inspiration for youth empowerment has become a global concern, especially in Africa. Youth empowerment is a process by which young people are allowed to access the capacity and authority that can help them make informed decisions to implement change for their livelihood. This perception is most common in Africa, where the menace of youth incapacity is rampant. Sierra Leone is no exception. [57, 58]

Sierra Leone is located on the West Coast of Africa and has an area of 71,740 square kilometres. It is bounded on the north-east by Guinea, on the south-east by Liberia, and on the south-west by the Atlantic Ocean. The youth population makes up 70% of the country's population. Sierra Leone first became inhabited by indigenous Africans at least 2,500 years ago. The Limbas were the first tribe, and in the mid-16th century, the Mane people invaded

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the coastal people of Sierra Leone. After the abolitionists' activities brought about the establishment of Freetown, the British formalised it as a crown colony in 1808. This was followed by the declaration of Sierra Leone's hinterland as a protectorate in 1896, and on April 27th, 1961, the country gained its independence. The official language is English. The climate is tropical, hot, and humid, with the rainy season and the dry season, along with two months of harmattan. [87]

Since the rise of the All-People's Congress (APC) in Sierra Leone in 1968, the political situation has provided limited opportunities, especially for the youth. Educational institutions, which would have served as a preparatory ground for future economic engagements for the youths, were bastardised with thuggery, illicit diamond mining, and trade in used clothes as the most attractive to youths. In fact, the popular idiom then suggested: "Dem say Bailor Barrie, you say Davidson Nicol." [89, 91, 92]

An economic crisis sets in, which results in a bloody civil war led by Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) as a way of challenging the rule of President Joseph Saidu Momoh in 1991. The youths who had been marginalised saw the war as an opportunity to fill the emptiness of their lives. For them, it was the greatest opportunity to use violence as a means to voice their frustration at their lack of involvement in the governance of their country; the war was considered by the youths as a way of paying back the local authorities. [88, 89, 90]

At the end of the war, the government of Sierra Leone began establishing a decentralised kind of government in conjunction with the restructuring of the chieftaincy system to make sure there was greater youth participation. [93, 94] The Government of Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabba instituted the youth ministry with the vision statement suggesting "to reinvent the time-honoured notion of dignity in labour, instil national consciousness and patriotism in our young citizens, so as to lay the foundation for the emergence of a responsible citizenry in the service of a one and indivisible Sierra Leone." To further engage the minds of the youths, Tejan Kabba instituted okada riding. [95, 96]

With the APC back in power in 2007, their manifesto indicated the need for greater youth participation in all forms and levels of governance. This policy was revamped in July 2012, when the same APC government mentioned the inclusion of youths in decision-making to be accountable and to ensure that conflict did not return. This policy had a broader perspective which was the "Agenda for Prosperity" for every Sierra Leonean, particularly the youths. As a policy, it aimed at achieving a sustainable future, low carbon and increased economic growth. [97, 98] In this same vanguard of career development and sustainable growth, another enactment in 2017, lapsing up to 2021, known as "National Environmental Policy (NEP)" geared towards land reforms, illegal logging, recycling of recyclable materials and protection of cultural heritage. This is how green skills and green tourism became complementary to career development for youths and national economic growth. [11]

The entire population of Sierra Leone was put at 7,976,983 in 2020, 8,141,343 in 2021, 8,306,436 in 2022, 8,472,215 in 2023, and 8,638,684 in 2024. [99] At each level of this growing population, one-third represents the youth, with 70% sharing the unemployment and underemployment rates. Besides the national programmes to positively change

the minds and focus of youth empowerment and development, there have also been international organisations and bilateral treaties purposefully designed for the same. [100, 101] For instance, the IOM partnership from Japan, funded by the Japanese Government, was aimed at "reducing the risk of irregular migration through employment promotion and entrepreneurship support for the youth" in Sierra Leone, covering the period from 2019–2022 [102] Also, Plan International, a German-sponsored international organisation that has been in Sierra Leone for over 40 years, has been trying to support Sierra Leonean children in Moyamba district, southern Sierra Leone, to go to school in preparation for good jobs. [103] Restless Development, a United Kingdom (UK) International Citizen Service (ICS)-funded programme, has also been here with interventions that can give the youth orientation on 'sexual and reproductive health and gender equality, among others. [104]

The author of this project is of the opinion that while all of these organisations, both local and international, may have done some things to help the young people in Sierra Leone, the challenges blighting the good livelihood of the same youths still remain unemployment and underemployment. It means there are missing links; some things are lacking that require the attention of state actors and other stakeholders for prompt action.

Aims

This research will be of value to other researchers, local authorities, and the youth. It will equip the youth with problem-solving techniques and the right tools for implementation, performance, and need analysis. It will also inspire the youth to transform current jobs, which are often risky and lack prestige, into productive ones.

Objectives

- To promote formal and vocational education, and decent work opportunities for youths in Sierra Leone.
- To help reduce unemployment, crime rate and drug abuse among youths.
- To boost the middleman capacity in Sierra Leone as a national economic strategy.
- To create healthier and better qualities of life for the youths.
- To provide the enabling environment for the youths.
- To expose the problems in youth education.
- To develop youths with credible skills that will earn them decent jobs to do.
- To encourage youths in Sierra Leone to take up leadership roles in their local communities and at national level.

Methodology/Approach

The author of this research paper first identified the communities within the targeted cities and the individuals who would serve as resource persons. These included ordinary youths, youth leaders, women's leaders, non-governmental organisations, parastatals, heads of educational institutions (including vocational training centres), civil societies, and religious organisations.

On the agreed dates, the author administered questionnaires and conducted individual interviews, sometimes on tape, with the resource persons. The questions in the questionnaires and those posed verbally were related to the

objectives of the project. Most of the respondents, except a few, gave their answers in either the common lingua franca (Creole) or the indigenous language that is largely spoken in the community.

The methodology design is descriptive, with information gathered and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Research Design

The research used a descriptive design, which is a type of research that combines qualitative and quantitative methods. The population sample was drawn from the demographic data of the Sierra Leone population between 1955 and 2023. The sample size for this study was 120 youth, who were drawn from the targeted communities in the capital city (Freetown) and the provincial cities of Bo, Kenema, and Makeni. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to collect data for the study, and the data was then analysed.

Chapter One

Early Childhood and Youth Education

Education is as old as human existence on earth. Even before the advent of colonialism in Africa, Africa had its own unique system of education that was geared towards transmitting the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of its society from one generation to the next. This was further intended to prepare the young people for their future membership and role in the maintenance and development of society. Formal education entered the African scene with the advent of colonialism. [105] It was introduced in Sierra Leone with the founding of Freetown as a settlement for freed slaves in 1787. About 300 pupils were admitted into the first schools of settlement, and every illiterate person was eager and ready to learn. Shortly after that, Christian organisations like the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Wesleyan Methodist Mission, and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) joined the race to westernise Sierra Leone. The school system followed the same pattern as it did in England then. [106, 107, 109]

During colonial rule, beneficiaries of Western education (formal education) were not encouraged to develop creativity and skills that would transform them into owners of businesses. [108] The attendance of girls was disproportionate to that of boys, largely due to cultural beliefs and traditions. However, there was an increase in

the proportion of girls attending primary schools, from 36% of enrolment in 1965 to 50% in 1970. Today, there are more girls in some schools in the Western and Southern regions than boys.

Early Childhood Education

(I) Pre-school

As the school system graduated from British standards to new patterns of primary and secondary education, kindergarten (pre-school or nursery) education, which had also been introduced, gained prominence. Early childhood education fits into the kindergarten kind of education.

Early childhood is the period from birth to eight (8) years. Education at this level is connected with the teaching of children in both informal and formal ways at and before the age of eight (8). The objective is to guide the growth and development of children within this age bracket. At this age, children are highly dependent on their adult carers, which include their parents, daycare providers, babysitters, extended family members, and teachers. At this level of education, children are expected to have some amount of thinking, self-control, self-confidence, and language or literacy skills. It also provides the children with certain strategies that will help them develop the emotional, social, and cognitive potential required for lifelong learners. In 2015, there were 644 registered and approved pre-schools operating in Sierra Leone, the bulk of which were found in Freetown, the capital city, and Bo, the southern provincial city. [36, 37, 38, 110, 111]

(II) Primary School Education for Early Childhood

Primary school education, which follows preschool, has existed in Sierra Leone since the founding of Freetown as a settlement for the freed slaves in 1787 by the Sierra Leone Company. Before the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education, children graduated from grade seven, where they sat for the Selective Entrance Examination (SEE). The name changed to National Primary School Examination (NPSE) with the coming of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in the 1990s. This system calls for 6 years of primary school education, 3 years of junior secondary school education, 3 years of senior secondary school education, and 4 years of university studies. Children who succeed in grade six write the National Primary School Examination (NPSE). [112]

The table below illustrates the number of pre- and primary schools with their specifications [113]:

	Community	Government	Mission	Others	Private	Total
Pre-school	256	151	721	5	625	1,758
Primary school	881	1,163	4,412	7	691	7,154

(III) Secondary School and Higher (University) Education for Youths

Successful students in the NPSE will enter junior secondary school, which is an intermediary between elementary education and senior school education. It is largely at this level that children become youths. By the time they enter senior schools, they are already within the age bracket of a youth. That level of education is attained after three successful years in junior high schools, which is guaranteed

through the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The Government of Sierra Leone, both past and present, has emphasised the BECE in such a way that without it in its required units, the student will not proceed to the senior school sector. In senior secondary school, students go into subject specifications: science, arts, and commerce. [40, 114]

We have now learned that formal education up to senior high school level is mainly for youth. Beyond this, which

involves skills and vocations, these are also designed for youths to a very large extent. Youth education is therefore considered to be the sort of education that deals with teaching young people different subjects, usually at school, college, or technical training centers. Any of these serves the youth's purpose of attaining knowledge that can give them the opportunity to attain goals and the orientation of norms and values in our society.

However, the focus of most youths in Sierra Leone is to acquire a university certificate or degree, which, to them, is a sure way to economic and political success. Only a few excellent youths will go for law, medicine, or engineering, which is expected to place them higher than their colleagues in society. However, some also choose to pursue education as a profession. Thus, this type of education is linked to the expectation of elite status. In most African countries, particularly Sierra Leone, youths are made to believe that social advancement in economic life and politics is attributed to educational advancement. So almost every youth wants higher education.

Higher education started in Sierra Leone with the establishment of Fourah Bay College (FBC) in 1827. Today, Sierra Leone's higher education universities comprise the following:

(I) University of Sierra Leone, Freetown:

- a. Fourah Bay College (FBC)
- b. The Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM)
- c. College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS)

(II) Njala University, Bo, Monkonde, Freetown and Bonthe.

(III) University of Makeni, Makeni.

(IV) Milton Margai Technical University, Freetown.

(V) Ernest Bai Koroma University, Magburaka.

(VI) Eastern Technical University (ETU-SL), Kenema.

(VII) Central University, Mafunde.

(VIII) The University of Management and Technology (UNIMTECH)

Higher education is expected to produce the high-calibre and top-level manpower requirements for the youth. FBC still provides education in pure and applied sciences, with special emphasis on certain professional courses in engineering, technology, law, the arts, and behavioural sciences. Njala University is still promoting the sciences: agriculture, home economics, environmental science, education, forestry, and veterinary science. Accounting courses are offered at IPAM, while COMAHS promotes the medical profession and related health sciences.

(IV) Technical and Vocational Education

With the advent of the 6-3-3-4 system of education in the early 1990s, technical and vocational education (TVET) was emphasised. This system of education caters to early school leavers and other adults who did not have the opportunity to access university education. [6, 43] In this way, it was expected that an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and middleman capacity would be attained. After the eleven-year civil war, the post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction, and resettlement of ex-combatants was quickly integrated into the vocational training system. For fear that the youth might return to war, the trainees (those youths who were conscripted into the

different armed factions to fight the war) were supplied with the tools to enhance their capacity to live an independent decent life. Course duration is between one and three years depending on course specification. [25, 41] Below is a list of a few technical and vocational institutions and the programs/courses that are offered [115, 117]:

- Freetown Polytechnic, Kossoh Town, Freetown.
- Saint Joseph Technical Institute, Lunsar.
- Institute of Advanced Management and Technology, Kissy Dockyard, Freetown.
- Institute of Business Studies and Administration, 35 Rawdon Street, Freetown.
- Technical College, Congo Cross, Freetown.
- Ladies in Development Training Institute, Regent Road, Freetown.
- Mohan's Technical Vocational Centre, John Street, Freetown.
- Women's Vocational Centre, Brookfields, Freetown.
- National Centre for Vocational Studies, Campbell Street, Freetown.
- SLOIC, Matru Road, Bo.
- SAIDAC, Salina, Bo.
- Craftshare Institute, Bo No.2, Bo.
- Mugbotima Skills Training Centre, Somaila Street, Kenema.
- Nyadeyama Vocational Training Centre, Benson Street, Kenema.
- Young Men Training Centre, Combema Road, Kenema.

Some of the leading courses that are offered in these technical centres and vocational schools are as follows [116]:

- Auto-mechanic
- Carpentry
- Computer studies/secretarial science
- Cosmetology technician
- Electrical engineering
- Heating and air conditioning (H+AC) technician
- Medical assistance
- Plumbing
- Fashion designing
- Tailoring
- Driving
- Business studies
- Engineering science
- Catering and hotel management
- Metalwork
- Agriculture and extension work

Reflecting back on the increasing youth population in Sierra Leone, eight out of ten people are young people, with about 45% under the age of 15 years, plus 62.5% under 25 years. [118] There is no doubt therefore that education is very important to the youth of this country.

Chapter Two

Skill Set and Mindset Education

A mindset is understood to be an established attitude or set of beliefs. Our mindset, therefore, is the way we approach challenges, the way we think and feel about the ability we have, and how we react to the challenges owing to the beliefs we hold. In other words, our thought habits (i.e., what we think) will always affect what we do, even as

youths. It can either result in stagnation in life or progress in life patterns. This takes us to the two kinds of mindsets. These are 'growth mindset' and 'fixed mindset.' [46]

In a growth mindset, the person believes that there is a possibility for the ability to change from a standstill to progress because of the maximum application of effort, endurance, and practice. For example, a learner with a growth mindset sees the difficulty in solving problems in mathematics and English. Such a person holds the view that perseverance and practice will yield a better dividend. In a growth mindset, difficulties and mistakes are seen as ways to learn and live. [49, 51, 119]

A fixed mindset, on the other hand, tells us about the people (children and adults) who have nurtured the belief that their intelligence, talents, and personalities are fixed and will never grow or improve, no matter the effort exerted. Such people believe they are born with a certain level of ability (or special skill) and are unable to improve over time. [49, 120]

A skill set refers to a specific area of competence, knowledge, experience, and abilities required to do a job. Such skills can be divided into 'soft' and 'hard.' Soft skills refer to interpersonal or adaptive skills, which can be practical skills. This involves emotional intelligence, critical thinking, conflict resolution, communication skills, and so on. A soft skill is displayed during a job interview. Hard skills, on the contrary, are skills that are learned. It relates to how a person can do a particular job. [121]

From what we have learned so far, it is clear to understand the relationship between mindset and skill set. It further draws our attention to skill sets, especially when the mindset is characterised by growth.

Sierra Leone has a youth situation that requires a close examination of its connection with mindset and skill set. Sierra Leonean youths have undergone four stages prior to independence. During the colonial period, the job market was created in such a way that youth with little or no formal education had a place in society. Some worked as messengers, clerks, labourers, or sales agents in the British Colonial Administration. The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board (SLPMB), backed by the rice production project at Torma Bum helped to expand the job market, which promoted youth welfare, peace, and national economic growth.

At that time, the provision of schools and tertiary institutions in the colony by the British colonial masters was done with the hope of civilising and capacitating Sierra Leoneans to gain white-collar jobs. Such was the exuberant youth empowerment; if a youth was not working in the cooperative farms or firms, he would be working in the colonial administration in the clerics, the Marketing Board (SLPMB), mining corporations (NDMC), or in the railway. Local industries like pottery, palm kernels, weaving, and other crafts, as well as meaningful apprenticeships, were common and became successful due to youth participation. Symbolically, as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) boosted the national economy, the youth themselves lived comfortable lives. Hence, it became a little difficult to see an interplay of mindset and skill set because youths were at liberty to make choices among different jobs that were always available. Some youths who were intelligent at Whiteman's education benefited from scholarship schemes from the British Colonial Government. In this drive, the mindset of a few youths started growing in the direction of

getting a scholarship to the United Kingdom (UK) to study medicine, engineering, or law. [50, 51]

However, with the coming of independence in 1961, this healthy youth life enjoyed a momentary stay. From 1967 to 1985, Sierra Leone declined into a prolonged period of repressive rule and military coups. By the end of the century, as a one-party state, Sierra Leone's economy was crippled by a high level of corruption. In all these, the once-industrious youths were transformed into thugs, thieves, gamblers, prostitutes, illicit miners, and the like. For the youths at that time, their mindset was not growing, particularly when there was no scheme to motivate them into a skill set. That is why the guerrilla warfare of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh, thrived faster and more destructive than expected. The simple reason is that the youths saw it (the war) as a better way to revive their battered lives. Zack Williams (2001) and Williamson (2006) state: "Youth were 'loose molecules' looking for chances to voice their political opinions through being perpetrators of violence. [52, 61, 62]

Hope returned to the youths with the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord in 1999, marking the end of the eleven-year civil war in Sierra Leone. 6-3-3-4 system of education had already been introduced in Sierra Leone by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) in 1993. With the peace accord, coupled with 72,490 disarmed combatants marauding across the length and breadth of the country, the 6-3-3-4 system was given a new outlook; ex-combatants with academic requirements were given scholarships to study in tertiary institutions. For those youths who were not up to WASSCE or O' Level standards, efforts were made to shift their minds from violence and the high risk of death to the acquisition of technical and vocational skills, either in established institutions or through apprenticeship. The Tejan Kabbah Government, in collaboration with international organisations, gave each former combatant a resettlement package comprising money (cash) and a tool bag, depending on what they had learned. In order to induce them to hand over their weapons, each combatant received \$150.00. This was a way of effecting a growth mindset—from war with violent and brutal actions to skills. [41, 122] Leading technical and vocational institutions that offer skills, vocations, or new career preparation include the following [6, 117]:

- Technical College, Congo Cross, Freetown.
- Women's Vocational Centre, Brookfields, Freetown.
- Institute of Advanced Management and Technology, Kissy Dockyard, Freetown.
- Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), Freetown.
- Manjama Institute, Shellmingo, Bo.
- SAIDAC, Bo.
- Munafan Training Centre, Kenema.
- SLOIC, Mattru Road, Bo.
- Young Men Training Centre, Kenema.
- Saint Joseph Technical Institute, Lunsar.

As the mindsets of some of the youths moved from violence to peaceful settlements rich in skills, there were those who damned the vocational and technical skills for okada riding that the government instituted, parallel to technical and vocational centres. In fact, the majority of the youths sold their toolkits for okada riding. Regardless of

this, some remained in the practice of these skills and professions: computer skills, tailoring, weaving, gara-tie-dye, hairdressing, carpentry, accounting, auditing, etc. Among the youths were those who did teacher training courses in the teacher training colleges around the country—Freetown Teachers College, Bo Teachers College, Port Loko Teachers College, Makeni Teachers College, Eastern Polytechnic, now Eastern Technical University, Njala University, and Fourah Bay College. [50, 52, 53, 54]

With the inclusion of guidance and counselling in the school curriculum, it became evident that Sierra Leone was on the path of better mindset and skill-set education. The guidance counsellors were initially attached to schools and were benefiting from refresher training that made them more professional. A child with very low cognitive ability had the opportunity to be counselled to allow his mindset to grow into useful technical or vocational skills. However, with all those institutions and concepts for youth empowerment development, the last 15 years of governance structures have not maintained a grip on the glory the youth enjoyed in colonial Sierra Leone. [123]

Chapter Three Youth Employment Problems: Dimensions, Causes, And Consequences

The youth employment problem is the same as youth unemployment and underemployment. In other words, if a youth has a problem with employment, the logical conclusion is that the youth is either unemployed or underemployed. It is clear to see Sierra Leonean youths in these categories. Unemployment is the condition of being capable of working, actively seeking work, but unable to get any work. Underemployment is when a person does not work full-time; it could also mean a person who picks up a job that does not reflect the training and financial needs of the person or a part-time worker. Unemployment and underemployment are directly connected with the youth situation in Sierra Leone in such a large proportion that it has become necessary to investigate and assess their causes and consequences and how they can negatively impact youth empowerment if allowed to continue. [60, 124]

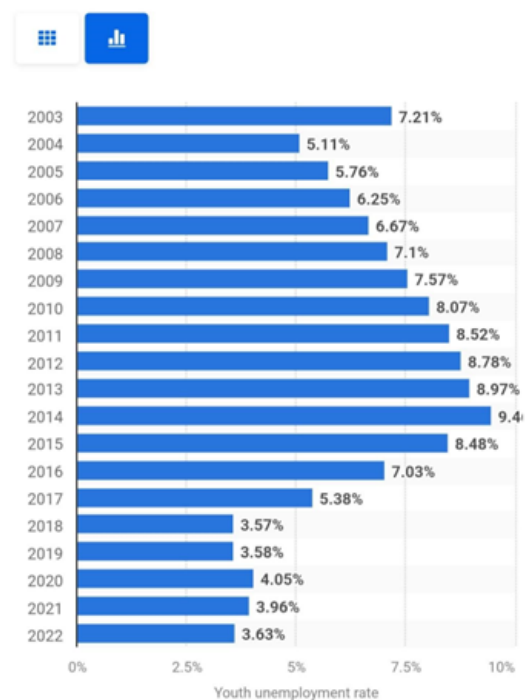
This research discovered that the current population of Sierra Leone stands at 8,306,436. A third of this population are youths (between 15 and 35 years old), with 70% of them either unemployed or underemployed. 45 percent of this population is in the category of those youth who are illiterate and unskilled. Although the illiteracy rate has increased a little, the population of unskilled youths is still unfriendly. Some youth drop out of formal education at primary school besides those who did not go to school; these are mostly unskilled. The majority of people in this category have migrated from rural areas to towns and cities to become okada riders or traders in used clothing. The proportion of youths who fail to gain entrance into tertiary institutions, either due to financial constraints or a lack of academic credentials, is quite high. [125, 126]

According to the former minister of education, Dr. David Moinina Sengeh, 156,231 candidates sat for the WASSCE in 2021. Out of this total, 62,559 students obtained university requirements in five subjects (including English). Clearly, then, 93,672 failed to enter the mainstream of university programs. [127] With a little fraction of this attracted to certificate and diploma

programmes, In teacher training colleges and technical and vocational institutions. A bulk of them turn into job seekers; in most cases, as they become unsuccessful, they recline into okada riding as a last resort.

Formal education has its pitfalls as well. Recent times have suggested to us that success in university education is not enough to attract a decent job for graduates. Research has also shown that 75% of graduates in B.Sc. Social Work and Banking and Finance remain either unemployed or underemployed. Such youth with these professional qualifications who fail to secure a job related to their course of study will turn to the classroom, and since what they teach in that circumstance is not actually the things they learned in the pursuit of their professional courses, they will be considered underemployed. Unfortunately, even those who do courses that are teachable may only end up being engaged in part-time employment, which falls into the category of "visible underemployment." Some graduates of technical and vocational institutions are now graduating with little or no financial freedom afterwards. The situation with youth employment in Sierra Leone is a growing concern. Their unemployment and underemployment conditions are considered to be among the highest in the West African sub-region, standing at 70% of the nation's youth population between 2021 and 2022. The rate fluctuates between 2003 and 2022, which is illustrated in the bar chart presentation below [128].

Sierra Leone: Youth unemployment rate from 2003 to 2022



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The graph above indicates a rise in youth unemployment and underemployment from 6.67% in 2007 to 9.46% in 2014. Several rhetoric will draw our attention to this negative trend plaguing our youthful population. Some people often ask: What are the causes of youth unemployment and underemployment in Sierra Leone? First, some of the jobs that are available have to do with

skills, especially skills that are connected with industries and factory activities. It means a job vacancy for industrial engineers will only be available to the very few who are privileged to do the course. The same is true for chemical engineering, etc. These and many other complex skills required in key industries and companies like Vimetco and Sierra Leone Rutile Limited in Bonthe and Moyamba Districts are either not academically and adequately covered in our universities or expensive to study in universities abroad; therefore, our youths lack the capacity to perform satisfactorily. For instance, there is a difference between a mechanical engineer and an industrial engineer; an auto-electrician and an auto-mechanic; an experienced taxi driver and a trailer driver. Most of our youths, both at middleman capacity and university graduate level, are not trained and disciplined for most of the job vacancies that exist. [57, 58, 129, 130]

Also, the high fertility rate and the rapid growth of the youth population are causal agents of youth employment problems. This study has learned that the population of Sierra Leone grew by 3.2% between 2004 and 2015, from about 5 million to 7 million people. Most of these totals are youths; eight out of ten people are under the age of 35. [118]

Moreover, rural-urban migration largely contributes to youth employment problems. Most youths who find their way from rural settlements to cosmopolitan towns and cities fall within the early school leaver category, as well as those who intend to learn skills or vocations. Yet, there are youths who migrate from rural areas to towns and cities for adventure. Remember, all of these do not have technical or vocational skills or the requisite education to command a decent job in urban areas. As they move to urban settlements, there has been a corresponding drop in rural industries.

Furthermore, youth overdependence on politics produces youths without a formal higher education and skills. They are divided between the two main political parties in the country. Instead of using their political connections to acquire technical skills or vocations, they wait for handouts from their political demagogues.

Poor work ethics among some Sierra Leonean youths are making them unemployed or underemployed. Jobs in any category must have codes of ethics; some of them are implied. Such job ethics include hard work, diligence, a sense of responsibility, respectability, and reliability. Owing to these factors, including entrepreneurship inability, many Sierra Leonean youths are either out of jobs for which they are trained or have no job at all. [60]

This research has discovered that beyond economic costs, the high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment have severe ramifications. Some of the youths who have few job prospects and very little hope of future progress would source criminal activities and lawless behaviours as their immediate alternatives. They may easily join armed conflict, as was evident in the early 1990s when Sierra Leone witnessed massive recruitments of unemployed and underemployed youths into the different armed factions in the Foday Sankoh war. [61]

Unemployed youths will either stay outside income or live on reduced income. Their desperate need for life requirements will lead them into criminal activities.

Moreover, being unemployed is stressful, which can lead to stress-related illnesses like headaches, diabetes, high blood

pressure, mental health challenges, heart disease, insomnia, and so on. This will result in a further decline in the person's general well-being since the unemployment condition will make it difficult, if not impossible, to get adequate treatment. In extreme cases, this study has proven that the affected youths may not have a firm grip on marital relationships; hence, even the children's education will suffer as well. [130—133]

Unemployment and underemployment will also negatively impact society and the national economy. There will be a high rate of poverty, limited employment opportunities, low-quality housing, fewer or no availability of recreational facilities, and limited access to public social amenities. Since such youths cannot easily buy, producers and traders will have less cash flow into their businesses, which will further negatively affect the national economy. [134]

Chapter Four

Green Skills and Green Tourism Careers

As per the ILO's projection, the global job gap is expected to reach 453 million by 2023. This figure comprises 191 million unemployed individuals worldwide and 262 million individuals who wish to work but do not meet the criteria for being unemployed. [135] Also, according to the ILO, by 2030, an estimated 25 million youths, aged between 15 and 29 years, will likely enter the labour force to seek employment. The question many are asking is: Where will the new jobs come from? One possible source of job creation will certainly be in the corridors of green skills and the enhancement of the green economy. To achieve this, the government and educational institutions, including everyone, would have a part to play.

What are green skills and green tourism?

Green skills can be defined as the knowledge, capabilities, abilities, values, concepts, and attributes that are needed to develop and maintain the potentials that are necessary for the achievement of a resource-efficient nation. [136] Green tourism, on the other hand, refers to a type of tourism that is focused on reducing the negative effects of travel and promoting environmental conservation and social responsiveness, giving tourists the opportunity to enjoy experiences in their travels while at the same time preserving the natural and cultural heritage of a society. [137, 138]

Among the major green courses and skills are the following [82, 139, 140, 141]:

- Eco-economics
- Environmental management
- Sustainable development
- Critical system
- Critical thinking
- Scientific understanding
- Nature connectivity
- Monitoring and evaluation skills
- Defence skills
- Historical and cultural understanding
- Pioneering and entrepreneurial skills
- Information skills
- Artistry
- Dynamic operation and crisis management skills
- Practical and technical skills

On the side of green tourism courses and skills, they encompass environmental conservation, economic

development, cultural preservation, climate change mitigation, and self-growth. [142]

There is every need that certain items of these, if not all, should meet the requirements of establishment and sustainability. If this is to be possible, there should be a reasonable match in terms of the availability of the most needed infrastructure, industries, and technologies.

Also, reliable management strategies and the judicious use of natural resources must be considered. Added to these will be the availability of new skills, which are inevitable in the face of new production processes and creative business models. These will lead to the creation of new jobs such as engineering and technical skills, scientific skills, and management skills—salesmen, climate analysts, transportation designers, securities, and other specialists. So, green skills and green tourism are a compendium of many things, not only the greening sense of it as the name suggests, but a focus on broad areas like critical thinking, creativity, skills of adaptiveness, fortitude, practical show of empathy, etc.

The Role of Education and Training in Developing Green Skills for Youth in the Tourism Sector

Education is pivotal in the development of green skills and green tourism careers. This has to do with the expectations of learning institutions—schools, polytechnics, and university colleges. [81] If youths in Sierra Leone are to achieve the acquisition of green skills and the enhancement of green tourism careers even for adults, it is prudent to examine the role of education. What should be the preoccupation of learning or training institutions? Are there expected duties that tutors should perform? What will be the responsibility of learners?

Answers to these questions are the fundamentals for addressing this topical issue. First, it embraces the inspiration of youths to develop the values and desired attitudes concerning the environment. Once there is a drive towards the environment, the learner or youth sees the environment as a place capable of exposing him to materials that are very necessary for sustainable development. It is therefore the role of education to formulate learning curricula and interpret them in a way that can meet the needs of the environment, traditions, and culture of our country. Hence, the new school curriculum that came into practice in the academic year 2023 for the senior secondary schools was designed to achieve this requirement. [1, 143]

If the intention of this curriculum is to treat not only core subjects but to also cover the applied domain (i.e., to teach practical problems and to know the ways to solve them), including everyday subjects to instil general knowledge and life skills, it means Sierra Leone is on the way to achieving the development of green skills.

With this, Sierra Leonean youths will possibly receive lessons that will certainly contain information, communication, and technology (ICT), creative-based skills, as well as outdoor activities with project focus.

Also, institutions in education should collaborate and exchange good practices and problems so that stronger ones will help graduate the weaker and less equipped to the expected standards.

Moreover, it is not only universities that should embark on critical thinking; this concept should also stream through polytechnics. Youths graduating from these institutions

should be made to imbibe into their learning process team building in their acquisition of green skills (hard green skills), reasonability, project-based learning, and crisis management.

Strategies for Engaging Young People in Green Tourism Careers

The strategies to promote green tourism are the business of everyone—individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), parastatals, community action groups (CAG), women's groups, and, of course, the government. Owing to the diversity of players, the strategies for promoting green tourism careers to young people will take different forms.

First, individuals should have self-reawakened knowledge to nurture awareness of sustainable tourism by transforming themselves into both subjects and objects of what we shall achieve; support local and traditional restaurants. In other words, it pays if we take more time enjoying ourselves with locally prepared food than spending time in luxurious hotels.

Also, individuals and organisations should support legislation designed by the government for the achievement of green tourism careers, especially when it deals with the protection of the environment. We should support the government's effort to fight against illegal trade in logging and other forms of deforestation that do not yield any reasonable dividend to our livelihood. Added to these must be our stance against exploitation of children, including the looting of national artefacts, which will translate and protect our cultural heritage for foreigners and children yet unborn.

Even when we travel locally, it is necessary to share our findings or opinions with family members, friends, and on social media. This will help spread awareness about sustainable tourism.

Revert to the use of locally purified water. This makes you a player in the solution, and at the end of it, you would have contributed to boosting the domestic economy; in effect, avoid imported bottled water in supermarkets and mini markets. Support recycling processes for rubber and plastic materials. As it has been said earlier, be part of the strategy to support decarbonisation in order to combat climate change hazards and their related environmental and socio-economic impacts. Such contributions will achieve the restoration of the ecosystem since there will be a steady decline in biodiversity and the mindless destruction of our fragile habitats. The result of all these is the achievement of ecological health by promoting green tourism careers for young people. Although COVID-19 has obstructed these beauties, they can be rejuvenated.

Furthermore, Sierra Leoneans, including organisations, should drive towards the avoidance of activities that will injure or harm the animals. The strategy should be to stop the illegal trade in animals together with their hides and other products; supporting environmental tours instituted by the government and NGOs will provide jobs for Sierra Leonean youths.

The Role of Government Policies in Supporting Youth Career Development in Green Tourism

As the match towards the realisation of green skills and green tourism careers becomes topical in Africa, much is expected from the government of Sierra Leone.

First and foremost, the government should adopt legislation

and formulate policies that can promote or support youth career development in green tourism. In 2012, the government of Sierra Leone legislated the Agenda for Prosperity [97], which was considered the basis for the achievement of a sustainable future for every Sierra Leonean, particularly the youth. The nucleus of this was the aspiration to achieve low carbon emissions and economic growth. However, the objective aimed at was far-fetched; hence, another enactment was made in 2017, which was projected to lapse up to 2021. This came to be known as the Environmental Protection Agency Strategic Plan [11], with the prerogative of moving in the direction of developing socio-economic goals. All of these were embedded in the National Environmental Policy (NEP), with the expectation that they would be realised in five phases. This is indicated in the table below.

The Goal of NEP in 5 Phases.

Component 1	Institutional Development and Legal Reform
Component 2	Land Reform
Component 3	Registration of Land Tenure System
Component 4	Project Management
Component 5	Contingency Emergency Response Component

However, the expected outcome of the actualization of career development in green tourism has not yet reached its optimum. Therefore, the author of this research is of the opinion that the government should revamp its policies in the areas analysed below:

- To fight against illegal trade in logging in such a way that defaulters are brought to book. This will create the reverse of deforestation.
- The government should institutionalise logging in a way that will allow crafters and carvers to construct or prepare luxury furniture, sailing boats, and many others. With this institution, career development will be achieved to a very large extent.
- The government should support institutions that are interested in recycling recyclable plastic, rubber, or steel materials into other products instead of burning them to contribute to air pollution. Projects of this nature will meet the objective of ecosystem restoration; climate change hazards and their environmental challenges will be mitigated.
- The government should give financial incentives to local farmers as a way of motivating youths to take the inverse of rural-urban migration. The crime rate in urban towns and cities will be minimised, and local food production will increase.
- Government to care for heritage places (cultural heritage), thereby discouraging the stealing and selling of our heritage materials.
- Government to donate substantial funds to tourism businesses and projects.
- The government should embark on building more polytechnics so as to achieve career development.

Chapter Five

Youth and Digital Media

Before the computer and digital age, media was used to mean expressions of information and entertainment, which involved the radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, journals, and megaphones. With advancements in science and technology, new models of media have found their way into the new media system. This new system, which disseminates information and entertainment to the world, is called digital media because it involves digital cables or satellites that send binary signals (0s and 1s) to other electronic devices, which perform the function of translating them into videos, graphics, texts, podcasts, and digital arts. If you go to YouTube while using a mobile phone, you are dealing with one of the biggest players in visual digital. Other launchers include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, etc. In Sierra Leone today, many prefer to read news online rather than in traditional newspapers and magazines. Advertisements, announcements, and meetings can now be conducted using digital media. Digital media companies include Google, Netflix, Apple, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, etc. [66, 69, 144]

Examining the fast-growing rate of technology, the world over and its benefits, the youths of Sierra Leone have begun to tap into it. Among the existing institutions are Central University, Limkokwing University, Blue Crest College, the American College of Science and Technology, and the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM). The learning contents are information technology and systems, mass communications, graphic design, website development, digital media marketing, etc. Of course, some Sierra Leonean youths acquire these technologies through apprenticeship. [69, 70]

To a very large extent, digital media has encouraged and promoted the entertainment industry in the country. Most of our musical artists are often seen and heard on Africa Young Voices (AYV) television, radio, and other media houses in the country. Politicians have occupied these platforms too. Some youths are employed by politicians of the two major political parties (SLPP and APC) to carry out digital political campaigns. It is no gainsay that messages informing the public about government development activities and the pitfalls of the opposition are transmitted on WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook in forms of audio, text, and video. For instance, General Kalokoh and Gento of the ruling political party, the SLPP, dominated the digital media with politics during the 2023 general elections in Sierra Leone. Other politicians did the same. [67]

Regrettably, however, some youths have used digital media to promote immorality, such as pornography. This negative use of social media is fertile ground for sexual immorality, along with its attendant problems like sexually transmitted infections (STI), unwanted pregnancy, and rape, among many others among the youths of Sierra Leone.

What is unfortunate, too, is the use of digital media to spread hate speech. By and large, it has provided new forms of technical industry; some youths are mobile phone repairers, fixing up programmes in radio stations, etc.

Chapter Six

Leadership and Career Development Interventions

Leadership is the ability of individuals to influence and guide followers or other members of an organisation.

Leadership involves making sound decisions, creating and articulating a clear vision, establishing achievable goals, and providing followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals [145]. Leadership for youth is part of career development. Career development is the process of managing life, learning, and work over the lifespan. It assists young people to navigate their path of life through education—formal, informal, or non-formal—and trains them into employment and fulfilling work lives. Career development allows youths to discover who they are, what they do, and what they prefer to do. [76, 146]

The concept of leadership and career development is now phenomenal in Sierra Leone. The scheme of vocationalisation of Sierra Leone education had begun as far back as 1830 but gained prominence in 1988. [147] Vocational education was instituted in Sierra Leone to prepare learners for careers that are based on manual or practical activities. At the earlier stage, this training was confined to certain trades and vocations like carpentry, tailoring, driving, cloth weaving, welding, and automotive services. These were careers or occupations designed for youth empowerment and development. However, the horizon of vocational training has expanded to suit the evolution of time. In Sierra Leone, particularly immediately after the civil war, a wider range of career preparation involved these [6, 148, 149]:

- Auto-mechanic
- Computer networking
- Dental assistance
- Electrician
- Heating and air conditioning technician
- Plumbing
- Fashion designing
- Engineering
- Catering and hotel management
- Agriculture and extension work
- Business administration
- Accounting and finance

As more attention was paid to youth empowerment to meet the needs of a modern society, several interventions were applied for additional courses in all sectors of education in the country. The new skills included:

- Project management
- Information technology
- Health careers
- Administrative careers
- Sales careers

The youths who maintained formal education entered into various careers like law, engineering, accountants, medical

and surgical doctors, pharmacists, state-registered nurses, laboratory technicians, and digital media careers that involve graphic designers, web designers, and media specialists.

One fact that has already been stated is that leadership is also a career that has to be developed if Sierra Leone is to achieve youth empowerment. Such interventions begin with leadership practices at school; hence, we often establish prefectorial boards in schools and student union governments in colleges. These practices help some youths occupy future leadership positions with ease and confidence. Besides, other interventions have been made outside these institutions. Below are a few of them.

- Ministry of Youth Affairs — Sierra Leone
- Plan International
- Restless Development
- YOUNGO
- Youth leadership programme
- Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI)
- Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young Africans
- Global Sustainability Leadership Fellowship
- Africa Matters Ambassadors Programme
- Aspire Leaders Programme
- Community Solutions Programme
- One Million Leaders Africa Fellowship
- Internet Society Youth Ambassadors Programme, etc.

Religious organisations, both Christianity and Islam, have instituted leadership training among youths in Sierra Leone. Even traditional institutions, e.g., poro and bondo secret societies, had long ago emphasised leadership and youth development. All of these efforts have not really translated into good leadership samples in national politics. Even our youth leaders in local and national politics do not have workable structures that will cater for the employment needs of youths in the areas of entrepreneurship, the establishment of more industries and factories, the reinstatement of cooperatives, and diamond mining companies.

**Chapter Seven
Findings / Results**

This research has discovered that there is a corresponding increase in the total population of Sierra Leone and the youth population. In other words, the rising rate of the Sierra Leone population is proportional to the yearly increase in its youth population. Below is the total, which illustrates the total population and the proportionate increase in the population of young people (from 0 to 35). [99]

Year	Total Population	Population Of Young People (0–35 Years)	Growth Rate
2022	8,306,436	5,814,505.2	2.10%
2021	8,141,343	5,698,940.1	2.13%
2020	7,976,983	5,583,888.1	2.10%
2019	7,813,215	5,469,250.5	2.13%
2018	7,650,150	5,355,105.5	2.16%

2017	7,488,423	5,241,896.1	2.18%
2015	7,141,914	4,999,339.8	2.25%
2010	6,415,634	4,490,943.8	2.59%
2005	5,645,624	3,951,936.8	4.25%
2000	4,584,571	3,209,199.7	1.27%
1995	4,303,953	3,012,767.1	-0.07%
1990	4,319,762	3,023,833.4	2.57%
1985	3,805,311	380,531.1	2.35%
1980	3,388,495	2,371,946.5	2.21%
1975	3,037,154	2,126,007.8	2.04%
1970	2,744,891	1,921,423.7	1.82%
1965	2,508,219	1,755,753.3	1.59%
1960	2,317,636	1,622,345.2	1.36%
1955	2,165,815	1,516,070.5	1.19%

Sierra Leone's natural resources are so elaborate and in such a deposit that, if well tapped, will have the potential to cater for the socio-economic needs of youth. For instance, the country had positive returns from agricultural products before and just after independence. These were some of the agricultural products: rice, coffee, cocoa, palm oil, palm kernel, pea nuts (ground nuts), poultry, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and fish. Mineral resources in rich deposits of diamonds, gold, titanium, bauxite, iron ore, chromite, and so on are largely mined by illiterate and unskilled youths. Export commodities included diamonds, iron ore, rutile, bauxite, cocoa, coffee, rice, and fish. [39, 150, 151] The Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board (SLPMB) and the National Diamond Mining Company (NDMC) were notable exporters of these goods. [152—154] However, with all these resources, Sierra Leonean youths are classified among the countries with the worst youth employment problems in Africa. [60] Many Sierra Leoneans, both home and abroad, have opined that the menace of youth unemployment can be attributed to poor leadership. The widening gap between Sierra Leone's potential and its economic performance is an illustration of a lack of sound leadership that can harness all the resources for equitable distribution to the people of Sierra Leone, especially the youth. Therefore, there is a need for leadership enhancement interventions that will trigger our leaders to do better. Most Sierra Leonean youths themselves are not in that vanguard of leadership preparedness that could help them participate in leadership conferences such as leadership retreats to give them better leadership performance that will eradicate or drastically reduce youth employment problems. [73—77]

It is against this background that leadership training among youths must be revamped and sustained; if the school of old leaders has failed, perhaps the youths who suffer tremendously when national political leadership fails will do better. [74, 75] From 2008 up to 2019, the growth in

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a result of new companies and local businesses has been appreciable; yet there is still the social menace of youth unemployment showing its ugly face. Some of these foreign companies and a few local businesses prefer to hire foreign workers from abroad rather than employ Sierra Leoneans. It is interesting to learn that even though employing foreign workers will cost the companies more money, they will still prefer non-Sierra Leonean workers. Two main reasons, among others, are attributed to this: One is that Sierra Leoneans may not be skilled for most of the jobs. Added to this is poor work ethics among Sierra Leonean youths.

The main cause is a lack of appropriate curriculum and quality delivery that would cater for and match the sociocultural and economic requirements of fast-growing scientific and technological development. For instance, it is amazing to learn that some school proprietors and other employing agencies employ untrained and unqualified teachers to teach at all levels in formal schools—from nursery to primary and secondary education. This is a result of poor work conditions for teachers in Sierra Leone. Today, teachers who teach biology and chemistry are taking further courses in medical schools as a walkout strategy from the teaching field.

Youths with engineering and other physical science credentials may have acquired them at poorly equipped universities in the country. Corruption has made it even worse. Such youths lack the practical orientation that should accompany those courses. If an institution offers auto-mechanics in the specification of 'Heavy Duty' and lacks the heavy duty practical apparatus, the student will learn the theory but will be inept in the practical realities of the job for which the training is done.

Another factor contributing to youth employment problems is a lack of job opportunities. The British colonial masters created some parastatals to aid the export of raw materials to feed their industries. Youth employment was at ease up

to 1975, especially with the presence of the Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), which later came to be known as the National Diamond Mining Company (NDMC), the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board (SLPMB), the Railway, and the Sierra Leone Development Company (DELCO). A few years later, the closure of these parastatals resulted in problems with youth employment. There was no alternative established to maintain a hold on youth employment.

The uneasy calm is in the commercial transport sector, which the youths have focused on. Earlier attempts to reduce rural-urban migration just after the war are now the inverse. With their seizure of this sector, the okada riding, which is now a new-found treasure for most of our youths, may pose a security threat to other Sierra Leoneans. They had most often inflicted violent harm on others in times of conflict. Instead of using legal means with the police, they involve themselves in jungle justice. If anything impedes their riding activities for a few days, as it often happens with the irregular increase in the pump price of fuel, their presence and extra social activities pose a threat to peace and security.

Recommendations

The following are suggestions to solve youth unemployment and underemployment problems in Sierra Leone:

Change or improvement in the educational system. As some youths gain entrance into universities, those below the entry requirement should be encouraged to go into technical and vocational skills; they should learn skills or vocations that are practically gainful.

There is a need to popularise entrepreneurship so that an engineer who has learned his skills will establish his unit as a private enterprise. This will not only provide a reliable job for the youth himself but also for other young people.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the government should give subventions to business enterprises and skills training centres for the sustainability of youth employment.

The government and its partners should revamp agro-based industries in rural areas to attract youths to live in rural areas. Once they are sure of comfortable and meaningful lives in the rural areas, it will check on rural-urban migration.

To do sales in both agricultural produce and mineral products with government institutions that will be established for the purpose, only government institutions will have the sole right to export agricultural produce and minerals like diamonds, iron ore, rutile, bauxite, gold, etc. Employment in these government institutions should be Sierra Leonean youth centred.

Population growth should be checked and controlled so that the government can easily and adequately cater for its youth in terms of employment and other welfare.

The government should have a Youth Development Fund that will make available small-scale loan schemes to youths, which will aid them in starting a business.

The youths of Sierra Leone should study ethics and morals as compulsory subjects in schools, colleges, and technical and vocational training institutions in order to shape their moral stature.

Conclusion

The youth employment problem has not received the attention it deserves. Therefore, it continues to be a problem in Africa, especially in Sierra Leone, with no let-up in its negative impacts on the economy, social institutions, and security of the country. In spite of the implementation of different kinds of initiatives to train young people and make them fit for employment, unemployment and underemployment still remain as high as 70%. [60] The Ministry of Youth Affairs and the National Youth Council, superior and important, among other institutions, have made positive marks; yet the devil is still with the youths—the devil of poverty, under-education, illiteracy, and idleness.

The World Bank youth programme has long been on the plan to collaborate with African leaders to investigate and recommend policies that can give the youth access to stable jobs. This is in the right direction because the aggregate of peace in Africa, Sierra Leone being no exception, is grafted on poverty alleviation, sustainable development, youth capacity building, and the availability of employment facilities. In the midst of all these brilliant ideas, Sierra Leone needs a lot to do with controlling its population. A constantly rising number of people entering the labour force is among the biggest challenges Sierra Leone is facing. Population growth, a high fertility rate, and a slow pace of job creation continue to bedevil the youth of Sierra Leone. On this note, the government needs to promptly act on the recommendations of this research; otherwise, the problems with youth employment will continue to be a malaise, not only for Africa as a whole but for Sierra Leone in particular.

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