



Country Factsheet: Sierra Leone

This country factsheet offers a summary of Sierra Leone's plastic related policy frameworks and key data concerning plastics in the economy, waste, and environment, drawing on findings from the AFRIPAC project and publicly accessible data sources. Detailed reports can be found on the AFRIPAC Data Hub¹.

National Overview

Demographic Details:		
Area (2019)	72,300 km ²	UN Data ²
Total population (2024)	8,400,000	
Population density (2024)	116 per km ²	
Urban Population (2018)	42 %	
Population projection (2050)	13,600,000	
GDP (2024)	US\$ 3,481,000,000	

Plastics Trade Data

HS codes are often too broad for detailed monitoring as many plastic products are not clearly identified, and trade data can be incomplete or inconsistent due to fragmented reporting. Despite these challenges, HS-based statistics still provide a reliable high-level view of plastic trade flows and use, helping to inform and support regulatory design.

Overall, trade data shows Sierra Leone is an import-reliant, fast growing market, although exports remain small. The bulk of plastic products imported are mainly from Ghana, Guinea, China, and India. Demand is led by primary resins (e.g. HDPE, PET, PP, LDPE) and consumer product streams (e.g., polyester, PVC).

Data	Trends	Source
General trade trends in West Africa		
General import and export trends in West Africa (2005–2022)	<p>Import volume increased by 459%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Primary forms: ↑ 556%.Intermediate forms: ↑ 1,890%.Final manufactured goods: ↑ 1,946%.Plastic waste: ↑ 67% (peaked in 2014). <p>Exports volume increased by 265%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Growth mainly in intermediate and final manufactured products.Plastic waste exports grew from 0 to 40,000 tonnes (2005–2022).	UNCTAD ³

Data	Trends	Source
General trade trends in Sierra Leone		
Imports of primary and product forms of plastic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imports grew from 26,100 to 52,500 tonnes/year (2017–2021). Primary forms between 2017–2021 by volume were mostly: HDPE (22%), PET (19%), other (17%), PP (16%), LDPE (15%). Product forms between 2017–2021 by volume were mostly: polyester (33%), PP (16%), PVC (15%), LDPE (11%). 	UNEP-IUCN Hotspotting tool ⁴
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2014–2018 imports by volume were 56% plastics in primary form, 41% products, and 3% waste. Between 2014–2018 imports by value were 29% plastics in primary form, 69% products, and 1% waste. 	UN Comtrade ⁵
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imports of total plastics were estimated to more than double to >40,000 between 2016–2018. 	UNCTAD ³
Exports of primary and product forms of plastic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exports on average were ~532 tonnes/year (2017–2021). Primary forms exported by volume between 2017–2021 were mostly: other (46%), PP (42%), PS (9%), LDPE (4%). Product forms exported by volume between 2017–2021 were mostly: LDPE (19%), synthetic rubber (19%), PS (19%), polyester (12%). 	UNEP-IUCN Hotspotting tool ⁴
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2014–2018 exports by volume were 0.01% plastics in primary form, 99% products, and 0.7% waste. Between 2014–2018 exports by value were 0.002% plastics in primary form, 99% products, and 0.1% waste. 	UN Comtrade ⁵
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exports of total plastics were estimated at 1,000 tonnes/year between 2014–2015, and 0 tonnes/year between 2016–2018. 	UNCTAD ³
Imports by application (top use cases 2017–2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clothes indicate the highest annual import volume followed by household, hygienic or toilet articles. The import volume of clothes remained relatively stable (~4,252 tonnes/year) while household, hygienic, and toilet articles saw a 5-fold increase over the same time period, reaching 5,760 tonnes in 2021. Other top uses include packaging, tubes, pipes, and hoses. 	UNEP-IUCN Hotspotting tool ⁴
Problematic & avoidable plastics (PAP) (2013–2022)	<p>This section provides a brief overview of trade data on plastics that are being discussed as part of the draft Plastics Treaty negotiations, specifically a proposal submitted by Georgia, Peru, Rwanda, Switzerland, and Thailand⁶.</p> <p>Highest import volumes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> HS Code EPS (390390): styrene polymers; in primary forms. HS Code PVC (392329): plastics; sacks and bags (including cones). HS Code PVC (392390): Plastics; articles for the conveyance or packing of goods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By value these rank 392329, 392390, and 390390. An estimated 4% of imports may include PAPs. <p>Highest export volumes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost entirely styrene polymers in primary form (390390). An estimated 22% of exports may include PAPs. 	UN Comtrade ⁵

Note: UNCTAD functionally categorises plastic trade (primary to final forms, including waste) offering a strategic, lifecycle-oriented view, though less precise than UN COMTRADE data and the UNEP-IUCN Hotspotting tool as it overlooks many final plastic products, including filled packaging and embedded plastics. It is important to note that both UNCTAD and UNEP-IUCN data includes synthetic textiles and rubber into plastic categories and excludes electrical products.

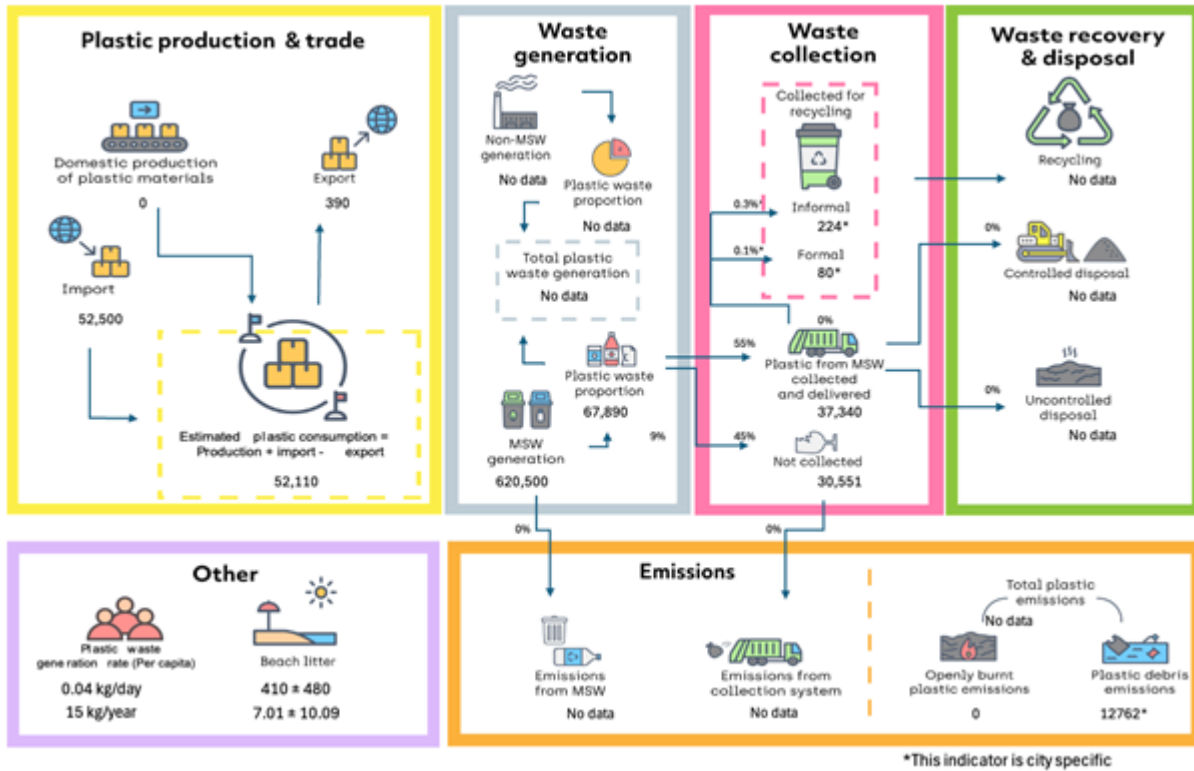
Waste Management and Emissions Data

The table compiles some of the most recent waste management and plastic leakage figures from reported data and models. Simplified material flow analysis (MFA) diagrams compare reported data with 2020 model estimates⁷, using key lifecycle indicators and contemporaneous trade data from the UNCTAD (experimental) database³ and the UNEP-IUCN Hotspotting tool⁴ to provide broader context.

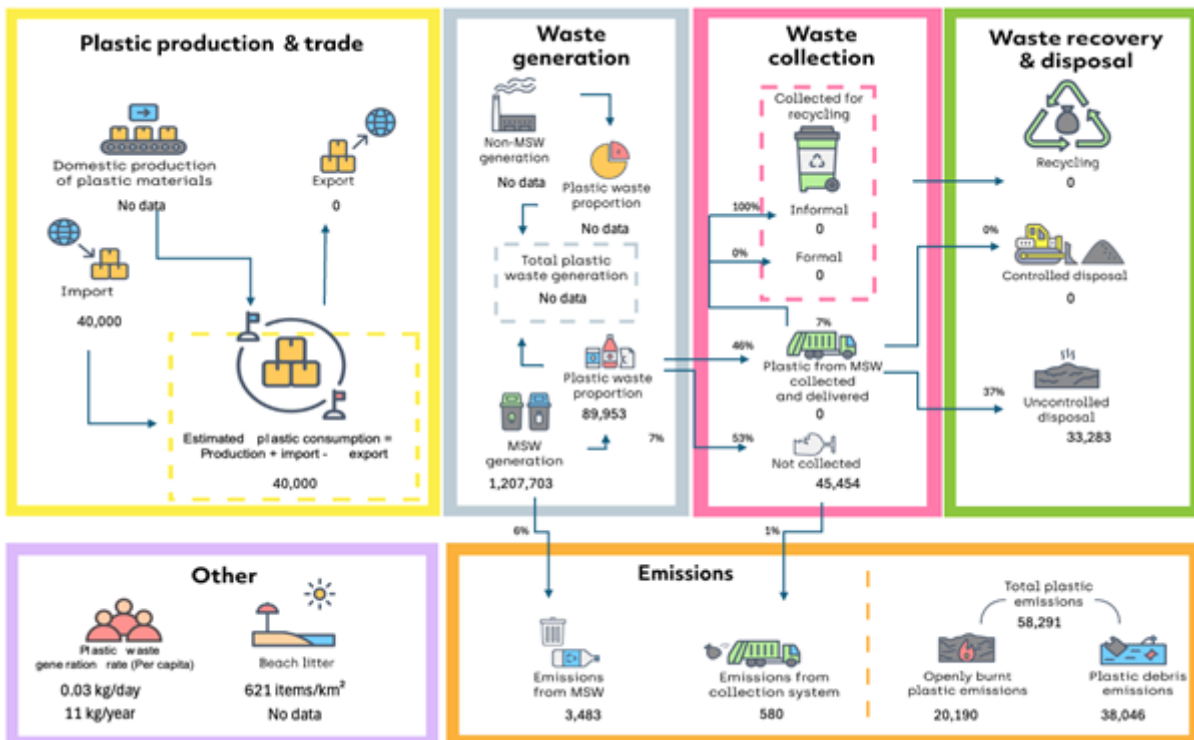
Data	Value	Unit	Source
Waste management data			
Per capita municipal solid waste (MSW) generation (no date)	0.31	kg/person/day	World Bank (2023) ⁸
Total MSW generation (no date)	620,500	tonnes/year	
Waste accumulation in landfill (2007)	12,890,000		UNSD (2023) ⁹
Per capita plastic waste generation (2010)	0.04	kg/person/day	Jambeck (2015) ¹⁰
Total municipal plastic generation (no date)	67,890	tonnes/year	World Bank (2023) ⁸
Plastic composition of MSW (2019) [SDG Indicator 11.6.1]	9	%	
MSW collection coverage in Western Area Urban District (WAUD) (2022–2023)	55		
MSW collection coverage in urban areas (2004)	40		
Plastic waste recycling rate (2019)	5		
Plastic waste generated in WAUD (2022–2023)	23,074	tonnes/year	World Bank (2023) ⁸
Plastic waste recycled in WAUD (2022–2023)	15	%	
Plastic waste uncollected in WAUD (2022–2023)	11,722	tonnes/year	
Number of domestic recycling companies (2013)	13	–	
Emissions data			
Plastic leakage to land in WAUD (2022–2023)	9,976	tonnes/year	World Bank (2023) ⁸
Plastic leakage to waterways and coast in WAUD (2022–2023)	2,866	tonnes/year	
Beach litter (2018) near Freetown site [SDG 14.1.1b]	621	items/km²	Global Plastics Hub ¹²
Beach litter (2021–2022) across 4 sites [SDG 14.1.1b]	410		Lavelle et al. (2024) ¹³
	7	tonnes/km²	

Simple Material Flow Analysis combining trade data with a) data based on sources between 2018–2023 and b) modelled data for 2020, with trade data from 2018

a)



b)



Values are in metric tonnes per year unless stated otherwise. Modelled data excludes e-waste, textiles, and rubber.

Relevant Governance, Policy and Legislation

Theme	Policy and Legislation
National coordination bodies	<p>Environment Protection Agency Act (2022)¹⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific national coordination body for plastics yet formalised; coordination under Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC). • Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs (MoLGCA) • Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation (MoWRS) • National Water Resources Management Agency • Ministry of Health (MoH) • Ministry of Finance (MoF) • Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS) • Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) • Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MoGCA) • Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) • National Revenue Authority (NRA)
Plastic production and trade	<p>Sierra Leone Plastics and Plastic Waste Management Policy (2023)¹⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines 5 goals, 16 guiding principles, and 13 strategic actions. • Aims to reduce plastic pollution, create green jobs, support communities and businesses, and promote circular, sustainable solutions through innovation and partnerships. • Emphasises a phased, coordinated transition to a circular plastics economy across the full value chain, guided by the precautionary principle and flexible policy tools. • Uses short-, medium-, and long-term actions with regular reviews to ensure adaptability and effectiveness. • Encourages eliminating problematic plastics and improving systems, behaviour, product stewardship, transparency, and accountability, without mandating outright bans. • Provides a broad framework but lacks detailed implementation guidance. • Calls for clearer stakeholder roles and coordination mechanisms to enhance cross-sector collaboration and accountability. • Highlights the need for strengthened institutional capacity, legal alignment, enforcement, and data systems to support implementation and monitor progress. • Stresses the need for sustainable financing, including full cost recovery, polluter pays, and producer responsibility, to address funding gaps and attract private-sector investment. <p>Environment Protection Agency Act (2022)¹⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandates that all projects listed in the First schedule of the Act must obtain an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) License before commencing operations. • Notably, manufacturing activities or establishments, including wastes recycling operations, are specifically listed. Projects involved in these activities are legally required to undergo the EIA process and secure the necessary licence to ensure compliance with environmental protection standards. • Bans the import or export of toxic or hazardous waste into Sierra Leone for purposes of storage or disposal. <p>Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency Act (2016)¹⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports SME development and youth-led initiatives, offering a platform to empower waste management, reduction, recycling, upcycling, and green innovation enterprises that transform plastic waste into useful products (e.g., bricks, pavers, housing). • Provides financial and technical support, encouraging SMEs to adopt circular economy practices. <p>Circular Economy Principles adopted in National Strategies¹⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Project (SLEDP) project fostering plastics circular economy by improving the business environment and creating opportunities, addressing risks to tourism and other sectors affected by inadequately managed plastic waste.

Theme	Policy and Legislation
Plastic waste management	<p>Integrated National Waste Management Policy (2012)¹⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-stakeholder framework for waste management (2012–2016), engaging government, private sector, donors, NGOs, and communities, and emphasized legal reform, capacity building, infrastructure development, public awareness, and environmental protection. • Although not plastic-specific, it covers healthcare, municipal solid waste management, waste reduction, sorting, recycling, reuse, resource recovery, water container labelling, and enforcement. • The strategy proposed the establishment of waste management committees, plans, and audits, encouraging local governments to pursue a regional approach to solid waste management. <p>Environment Protection Agency Act (2022)¹⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers waste management, pollution control, sustainable development, and environmental protection, with enforcement provisions and penalties for non-compliance. • Empowers the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to create regulations on plastic waste management, which can be used to advance reduction, recycling, and extended producer responsibility (EPR). • New framework legislation could delegate regulatory authority to the EPA Board to promote circular and sustainable plastic solutions. <p>The Freetown Waste Management Ordinance (1950) and Byelaws¹⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses waste management in the capital city, with implications on how waste (including plastic) is handled within Freetown. • Focuses on collection of solid waste, with no provision for waste separation. • Mandates all solid waste collection service providers are required to register with the Freetown City Council (FCC) and pay prescribed fee. • Mandates that all producers of waste, including plastics, must register with the FCC and pay for the collection of the solid waste they generate. • Prohibits the disposal of waste in public spaces and littering the environment. Violations are subject to a maximum penalty of five thousand Leones (Le5, 000), six months imprisonment, or both. <p>Public Private Partnership (PPP) Act (2014)²⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a framework to develop waste infrastructure projects, including recycling facilities, sorting centres, and waste-to-energy plants. • Aligns with the plastics policy by offering a mechanism to finance and scale plastic waste management infrastructure, incentivizing private sector engagement through tax waivers, land access, and public co-investment. <p>Healthcare Waste Management Plan (2022)²¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed in response to COVID-19 and aims to improve coordination and ensure environmentally sound, technically feasible, and financially viable healthcare waste management. • Provides guidelines for the incineration of healthcare waste. • While it mentions medical plastics, it lacks a comprehensive approach to their environmental impact and limits cross-sector coordination. <p>COVID-19 Waste Management Standard Operating Procedures²²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phased procedures for handling healthcare waste during the COVID-19 pandemic. • Emphasising segregation and disposal of plastic-containing medical waste to prevent environmental contamination, particularly reducing plastic pollution in landfills and marine ecosystems during public health emergencies. <p>Maritime Zone (Establishment) Decree (1996)²³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits the release or dumping of harmful substances, including plastics, into national waters, with strict penalties (fines, imprisonment, or both) for violations. • Effective monitoring and enforcement remain a challenge.

Theme	Policy and Legislation
	<p>Sierra Leone Maritime Administration (SLMA) Act (2000)²⁴, the Merchant Shipping Act (2003)²⁵, and the Sierra Port Facility and Ships Security Act (2022)²⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes the SLMA as the primary institutional mechanism for overseeing maritime activities, which could include emissions of plastic pollution from ships and other vessels in territorial waters. • Sierra Leone has also developed an Integrated Coastal and Marine Protection Regulations, which seeks to address marine pollution, including from plastic waste. • Further defines regulatory structures that could be leveraged to combat pollution and environmental concerns related to ships and ports.
<p>Non-plastic specific policies</p>	<p>Local Government Act (2004)²⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines roles of municipal and district councils in waste collection, transport, and disposal, including provisions and responsibilities for waste management at the local level. • Effective implementation requires aligning policies to provide clear responsibilities, adequate funding, and capacity support at the municipal and district levels. <p>Public Health Act (2022)²⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulates sanitation, waste disposal, and disease prevention, framing improper waste management as a public health threat. <p>The Customs Act (2011) and Regulatory Frameworks²⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulates the import and export of goods, overseeing all border crossing points. • The Customs Department will be critical in monitoring the trade of plastics and implementing mechanisms for collecting associated duties, although their role has not been explored within the context of plastics and plastic waste management as current policies and legislative frameworks do not adequately integrate these responsibilities. <p>Infection Control and National Healthcare Waste Management Strategic Plan (2015)²¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework for managing healthcare waste across the entire lifecycle focusing on safety, efficiency, and minimizing risks to health workers, patients, and the environment. • While not plastic-specific, it recognizes the need for improved waste management and improved guidelines within healthcare settings. <p>Tourism Act (1990)³⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents an opportunity to promote sustainable practices in tourist areas, including reducing single-use plastics and improving waste management in environmentally sensitive and tourist settings. <p>Local Content Agency Act (2016)³¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes the use of local labour, resources, and enterprises, making it relevant for supporting domestic businesses engaged in waste management, recycling, sustainable technologies, and other innovative solutions. <p>National Water Resource Management Act (2017)³²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governs water resource protection, focusing on liquid waste, sewage, and pollution prevention from improper waste disposal. • Strengthening the link between water and waste management could improve water quality and public health outcomes, while avoiding duplication of efforts. <p>Draft National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) initiative (2024)³³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) initiated by EPA to track Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), although they are not explicitly covered in the legal framework.

Theme	Policy and Legislation
Regional conventions	<p>Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa³⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibits the import of hazardous waste into Africa and promotes sound management of hazardous waste within African countries. Sierra Leone have signed but not ratified the convention. <p>Abidjan Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Development of the Maritime Environment and the Coastal Zone of the West African Region³⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ratified by Sierra Leone in 2005, it is part of a network of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, aiming to prevent, reduce, and combat pollution in the marine environment and inland waters, while ensuring the environmentally sound management of natural resources using the most appropriate means available within a State's capabilities. Established obligations to prevent, reduce, and combat pollution from ships, aircraft, land-based sources, airborne sources, and activities related to exploitation of the seabed. <p>Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Environmental Policy (2008) and Regulation (C/REG.17/12/23)³⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECOWAS includes 15 countries and was established in 1975, with revisions in 1993 that were ratified by Sierra Leone in 1995. Provides a regional environmental governance framework and Environmental Action Plan (2020–2026) for ECOWAS Member States to support implementation of regional and international commitments. Establishes conditions for the prohibition and authorisation of plastic bags (<60µm), packaging, single-use or disposable products and waste. Establishes structures and mechanisms for cooperation in the control of the production and marketing of plastic containers and other articles, plastic product harmonisation, and the environmentally sound management of plastic waste. Facilitates the creation of a circular economy through market, economy, and policy instruments (taxes on imports of plastic products, conditions for authorization by the competent authorities for placing biodegradable or special-purpose plastic articles or packaging on the market, eco-design standards, financial incentives, deposit-return schemes (DRS) for plastic bottles, mandatory take-back programs for used plastic products for marketers and distributors, mandatory marking of plastic products, EPR systems that cover the costs of processing and cleaning up waste from plastic products, establishment of national entity for plastic waste logistics, mandatory curb side recycling targets under EPR). Restrictions on landfilling of plastic waste, ban on open burning and incineration of plastics, and penalties for illegal dumping. Despite lack of implementing texts, awareness among national stakeholders, and national integration, Sierra Leone aims to adopt elements of this regulation into the developing plastic legislation. <p>Draft African Guidelines on Marine Litter (2021)³⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports countries in developing legislation to reduce marine litter, protect ecosystems, and promote regional collaboration. Sierra Leone is currently developing relevant legal frameworks, and these guidelines offer timely and valuable guidance for addressing marine litter through new national policies. <p>Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa (2008)³⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signed by Sierra Leone in 2008, the declaration commits governments to address public health challenges linked to environmental factors through intersectoral collaboration, capacity building, surveillance, and policy integration. Sierra Leone's National One Health Platform aligns with the Declaration by promoting coordinated responses to health-environment threats, including plastic pollution, and supporting progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). <p>Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa (2008)³⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signed by Sierra Leone in 2008, the declaration calls for an integrated, multisectoral approach to health, recognizing that social, economic, environmental, and governance factors are deeply linked to health outcomes. Highlights climate change and environmental sustainability as key health determinants, reinforcing the need to link environmental action (e.g., plastic pollution control) with health strategies.

Theme	Policy and Legislation
International conventions	<p>The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992)⁴⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While not a treaty requiring ratification, over 175 countries (including Sierra Leone) have signed this declaration, which outlines 27 principles that have subsequently been incorporated into international agreements and national laws. Key principles include: • Human centred development, promoting sustainable production and consumption, with integration of environmental protection into development policies; • States have the right to exploit their resources, but also the responsibility to prevent damage to the environment, including beyond their national jurisdiction; • The precautionary and polluter pays principles, and the need for environmental impact assessments; • States should cooperate to protect ecosystems and biodiversity, with environmental standards harmonised internationally; • Recognises various national capacities in addressing environmental damage; • Citizens and the use of traditional knowledge should be involved in environmental decision making; • Development should meet the needs of both present and future generations; • International and national laws should be further developed to address environmental damage and liability. <p>Basel Convention on Transboundary Waste⁴¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. It also covers 'other wastes' requiring special attention including household waste, incinerator ash, and plastic waste. • Sierra Leone ratified the Convention in 2016 but there is no detailed domestic legislation that fully implements the Convention's plastic waste trade amendments. • An amendment in 1995, which entered into force in 2019, formally prohibits the export of hazardous waste for final disposal and recycling from Annex VII countries (European Union, OECD, and Liechtenstein) to developing countries, was ratified by Sierra Leone in 2020. • In 1999 an Additional Protocol established a comprehensive regime of liability, adequate and prompt compensation for damage resulting from transboundary movement and disposal of hazardous wastes and other wastes, including illicit traffic in such wastes. • In 2021 amendments on plastic waste became effective for all Parties that had not submitted a notification of non-acceptance: • Annex II (Y48) – <i>Plastic waste requiring special consideration</i>: This includes mixed, contaminated, or difficult-to-recycle plastics. • Annex VIII (A3210) – <i>Hazardous plastic waste</i>: Plastics that are hazardous due to contamination with chemicals or other toxic components. • Annex IX (B3011) – <i>Non-hazardous plastic waste that can be traded more freely</i>: This includes clean, sorted, and recyclable plastic waste intended for environmentally sound recycling. • Plastic wastes that fall under Annex II or VIII now require Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure expansion. • In 2022, new technical directives and guidelines on the environmentally sound management of waste, including plastic waste, were adopted. <p>Rotterdam Convention on Hazardous Chemicals⁴²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratified by Sierra Leone in 2016, the Convention promotes shared responsibilities in relation to the trade of hazardous chemicals and pesticides through a PIC procedure. • Sierra Leone has a draft regulation on Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides to establish proper controls and reduce risk, ensuring the use, handling, and disposal of these substances are managed to minimize human and environmental harm. • A National Implementation Plan (NIP) includes objectives, strategies, timelines and budgets for managing persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and meeting international commitments, however the implementation is facing challenges including capacity constraints, weak public awareness, and lack of infrastructure. • Sierra Leone is also developing a National Pollutant Inventory (NPI), which could include hazardous chemicals, pesticides, and waste. • Sierra Leone still has steps to take to fully domesticate the Convention within its national legal framework. <p>Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)⁴³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratified by Sierra Leone in 2003, aiming to eliminate or restrict the production and use of POPs. • The Convention lists a number of plastic additives to eliminate but does not fully address the scope and scale of damage caused by burning plastic waste. • There is a gap between these international obligations and national frameworks, of which the EPA Act serves as the primary legal tool for implementation.

Theme	Policy and Legislation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A NIP for the Convention was developed in 2008, which seeks to achieve Sierra Leone's commitment to the Convention, ensuring effective management of POPs, providing a basis for monitoring the action plans and strategies, periodically reviewing and updating to align with decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP), to adopt pathways for the integration into sustainable development strategies, to promote regional and global cooperation and national stakeholder engagement, and to facilitate public awareness and engagement. • The NIP was reviewed in 2019, with one of the targets to develop and strengthen the legal and institutional framework for the effective management of POPs. <p>Minamata Convention on Mercury⁴⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratified by Sierra Leone in 2016, the Convention protects human health and the environment from emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds, aiming to ban use and reduce emissions. • Sierra Leone conducted a Mercury Initial Assessment (MIA) in 2019 and there is an existing National Action Plan (NAP) for reducing mercury use in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector. Despite this, Sierra Leone lacks specific regulatory measures to fully implement the Convention. <p>United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)⁴⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratified by Sierra Leone in 1997, it establishes a comprehensive legal framework governing all activities on oceans and seas, including marine environmental protection, resource management, and measures to prevent, reduce, and control marine pollution. • Implemented partially via Maritime Decrees in Sierra Leone but implementation remains a challenge due to the evolving nature of the industry, lack of harmonisation, institutional capacity, availability of port reception facilities, and noncompliance with policy and legislation. <p>International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) (1973)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sierra Leone ratified MARPOL Annex V in 1997, which strictly prohibits the discharge of plastics into the sea and mandates responsible shipboard waste management, including storage, segregation, and disposal at designated port reception facilities. • The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) have also established a general Action Plan to address marine litter from ships. <p>Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) (2023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) ensures the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, covering marine genetic resources, area-based management tools, environmental impact assessments, and capacity building. Sierra Leone signed the BBNJ in 2023 but has not ratified this agreement. <p>The London Convention (1972)⁴⁶ and London Protocol (1996)⁴⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits the incineration and dumping of certain types of wastes and substances contained in the list set out. • Ratified by Sierra Leone in 2008. <p>International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)⁴⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures maritime safety but indirectly supports marine environmental protection by requiring safe waste handling practices aboard ships, including plastics. • Ratified by Sierra Leone in 1993. <p>Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)⁴⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratified by Sierra Leone in 1995, the Convention promotes the conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits. • Target 7 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2021) emphasises the importance of reducing pollution, with a specific focus on plastic pollution. • The National Protected Area Authority (NPAA), Conservation Trust Fund Act 2022, and Forestry Act 2022 in Sierra Leone address biodiversity but not specifically plastics. • Sierra Leone also ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in 2020 and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing in 2017. <p>The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁵⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All United Nations Member States adopted the 17 SDGs as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. • Aiming to transform societies and economies to become more sustainable, balancing economic growth, social development, and environmental protection.

Theme	Policy and Legislation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes suggested indicators for monitoring each goal. Emphasizes the importance of reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised populations. Requires partnerships and collaborations between governments, the private sector, civil society and individuals. The most relevant goals for plastic policies include SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 3: Good health and well-being, SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation, SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production, SDG 13: Climate action, SDG 14: Life below water, SDG 15: Life on land, and SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals. <p>Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁵¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UNFCCC was ratified in 1995 and the Paris Agreement in 2016 by Sierra Leone, which aims to limit global warming to below 1.5°C through nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement makes no reference to fossil fuels or their petrochemical derivatives. Even if fully implemented, State's NDCs remain inadequate to limit warming to 1.5°C. <p>World Trade Organization (WTO) Policies and Practices⁵²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sierra Leone has been a member of the WTO since 1995, which establishes global trade rules, including agreements that affect goods and services, and addresses trade-related aspects of environmental measures, promoting sustainable development. Sierra Leone was also a member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) since 1961, which was replaced by the WTO in 1995. Sierra Leone engages in dialogue on Plastic Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade (DPP), which includes discussions in the Committee on Trade and the Environment (CTE) and other fora.

Key Gaps and Recommendations

Category	Identified Gaps	Recommendations
Legislative and regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of specific legislation targeting plastic waste. Current laws treat plastic as general waste. Existing regulations are not enforceable due to lack of legal backing for the 2023 Plastics Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop dedicated framework legislation and regulations for plastic waste management with clear mandates. Translate the 2023 Plastics Policy into enforceable legal instruments to ensure compliance and accountability
Institutional framework and intersectoral coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional fragmentation and overlapping mandates without coordination mechanisms. Limited engagement of key stakeholders including private sector, civil society, and informal waste workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a national coordination mechanism for plastic waste management with clear roles and reporting structures. Formalise and support engagement of all stakeholders including informal sector and local communities.
Implementation tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of infrastructure for plastic collection, sorting, storage, and recycling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in infrastructure for effective plastic waste segregation, collection, and recycling to support circular economy.
Financing and economic incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current policies rely heavily on government subvention and donor support; lack sustainable financial mechanisms. Lack of economic instruments (e.g., EPR, plastic taxes, incentives) to regulate and influence plastic production and disposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce sustainable financial mechanisms including full cost recovery and polluter pays principles. Implement economic incentives such as EPR, plastic tax, deposit-return schemes, and innovation grants.
Human and technical capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient technical capacity and resources at local government level for effective implementation and monitoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen capacity building programs and resource allocation for local councils, customs, and regulatory bodies.

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