Annual Report

2024

EPA-SL
ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AGENCY

Government Of Sierra Leone



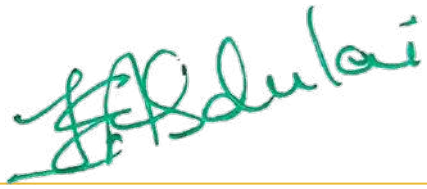
Foreword

As we release the Environment Protection Agency's (EPA) 2024 annual report, we take stock of the tremendous progress we've made this year and anticipate our goals for 2025. The successful execution of the **EPA Transformation Strategy (EPATS)** is highlighted in this report, demonstrating our steadfast dedication to tackling Sierra Leone's most urgent environmental issues that affect the welfare and means of subsistence of our people.

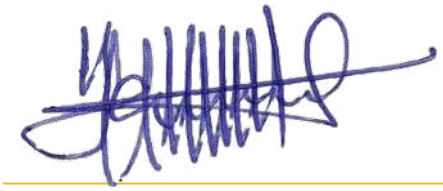
The government is pleased with the advancements made under this strategic plan, which has strengthened environmental governance, bolstered our regulatory enforcement, and promoted climate resilience and sustainable resource management. This report also highlights our accomplishments in reducing pollution, adapting to climate change, and conserving natural resources- all of which were made possible by the collaborations and joint efforts of numerous stakeholders. It demonstrates how our cooperation with global organisations, community-based projects, and legislative actions has increased our influence, reached more people and fostered more adaptability to escalating environmental risks.

EPA is steadfast in its resolve to fortify its strategies, broaden its sphere of influence, and guarantee a sustained contribution to Sierra Leone's development in the future. Our objectives for 2025 include strengthening community involvement, promoting innovation in natural resource management, and improving environmental protection systems. Although we are aware that there are obstacles in our way, we are optimistic that with teamwork, we can create a future where all Sierra Leoneans can prosper in a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

We would like to take this occasion to express our gratitude to our board members, government partners, international partners, civil society organisations, and the hard-working EPA staff for their unwavering support. Our accomplishments have been made possible by your commitment, and we look forward to working with you to build a more prosperous and sustainable Sierra Leone.



Mr. Jiwoh Abdulai
Minister of Environment and Climate Change



Hon. Yusuf Makery
Chairman, Environment Committee, Parliament



Dr David M. Sengeh
Chief Minister

Message from the Board of Directors

We are pleased to submit the EPA 2024 Annual Report on behalf of the EPA Board of Directors. Thanks to the diligent execution of the EPA Transformation Strategy (EPATS), EPA has achieved tremendous progress this year in promoting environmental sustainability and resilience. The accomplishments demonstrate the agency's steadfast dedication to tackling Sierra Leone's most urgent environmental issues, which are essential to preserving our communities' livelihoods and general well-being.

The report in front of you provides a thorough summary of our joint initiatives to improve environmental governance, bolster regulatory enforcement, and promote climate resilience and sustainable resource management. We are very happy with the advancements in pollution control, climate change adaptation, and natural resource conservation. The EPA's efforts this year demonstrate the agency's commitment to bringing about long-lasting improvement. Without the commitment of the whole EPA team and the important assistance of our partners, which range from global organisations to local community leaders, these achievements would not have been achieved. To guarantee that environmental concerns are at the centre of national growth, we have collaborated to mainstream sustainability across industries.

The EPA is well-positioned to expand on these successes going ahead, setting the stage for even more ambitious projects in 2025 and beyond. We acknowledge that there are still obstacles to overcome when we consider the advancements made in the direction of a sustainable Sierra Leone. To do this, EPA is committed to increasing its influence through the expansion of successful programmes, the integration of innovative ideas, and the enlargement of community engagement to support local environmental stewardship. To create a more resilient country, we are dedicated to improving adaptive capacities, utilising data-driven decision-making, and honing our policies as environmental concerns grow more complicated.

In the upcoming year, promoting sustainable practices, raising public awareness, and strengthening local communities through capacity-building initiatives will all receive more attention. Since we understand that achieving sustainability calls for teamwork, we are dedicated to establishing new alliances with both public and private organisations. The EPA will keep leading efforts to improve the regulatory framework that oversees environmental protection at all societal levels, achieve climate resilience, and encourage responsible consumption.

For their unwavering dedication and efforts, the Board of Directors would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Government of Sierra Leone, international development partners, civil society organisations, and the hard-working employees of the EPA. Your cooperation and diligence have been essential to reaching the 2024 objectives. As we continue this momentum in the direction of an even more prosperous, resilient, and sustainable Sierra Leone, we look forward to our collaboration.



Mr Emmanuel Konjoh

Board Member (on behalf of the board), and Chief Director,
Ministry of Trade and Industry

Message from the Executive Chairman

I have the honour of introducing the Sierra Leonean Environment Protection Agency's (EPA) 2024 Annual Report. When I think back on the past year, I'm struck by the difficulties we encountered as well as the outstanding advancements we made in the fight for sustainability and environmental resilience. Although the path has been difficult, the progress we have made as a team is evidence of our shared will to preserve and repair our ecosystem for current and future generations.

For the EPA, 2024 has been a crucial year. We have reinforced our foundation to address new environmental concerns and intensified our efforts to protect Sierra Leone's natural resources under the EPA Transformation Strategy (EPATS). Our accomplishments, which include stronger governance frameworks, increased regulatory enforcement, and pollution reduction and climate adaption programs, demonstrate a strong commitment to significant change. Amid a fast changing local and global environment, we encountered difficulties in achieving our lofty objectives, but we welcomed these challenges as chances to develop, adapt, and innovate.

The notable success we made this year in lowering pollution levels in major cities through awareness campaigns and regulatory initiatives was one of our main accomplishments. By collaborating closely with communities who are at risk and assisting them in becoming more resilient to the effects of climate change that are posing an increasing danger to their means of subsistence, we have also increased our focus on climate adaptation. Communities' participation and comments have been especially positive, and they are a potent reminder of the importance of our work.

The accomplishments listed in this report are the result of the diligence, tenacity, and knowledge of our committed employees. Every member of the EPA team has worked tirelessly, and for that I am incredibly proud. I want to express my sincere gratitude to our partners—government ministries, private sector companies, civil society organisations, and international agencies—for your steadfast support. Our success is largely a result of collaboration, and I am certain that long-term alliances are the only path forward.

We understand that our journey is far from over as we look to 2025. We are more determined than ever to build on the progress we accomplished in 2024 while tackling new and ongoing challenges in the upcoming year. We intend to start new projects in 2025 that will change the way we think about environmental preservation. Community-driven conservation initiatives will be given top priority, enabling local advocates who are aware of the particular dynamics of their environment. To enable communities throughout Sierra Leone to actively participate in decisions that impact their environment, we also seek to increase openness and public involvement.

Our future will also be significantly influenced by innovation and technology. We plan to use new tools to improve enforcement, data analysis, and monitoring. We may improve our capacity to react swiftly to environmental concerns by adopting digital solutions, making sure that our activities are supported by the most up-to-date and precise data available.

We understand that our journey is far from over as we look to 2025. We are more determined than ever to build on the progress we accomplished in 2024 while tackling new and ongoing challenges in the upcoming year.

Increasing the scope of our work on climate resilience will be another priority for 2025. We are aware that the most vulnerable people are disproportionately affected by the climate catastrophe. We are dedicated to making sure that adaption strategies serve the most vulnerable populations by being both equitable and successful. This entails allocating our funds to assist regional adaptation projects, expanding access to climate-smart farming methods, and giving rural communities' water security top priority.

In order to guarantee effectiveness and quality in all we do, we are also dedicated to changing our internal procedures. In my ideal world, Sierra Leone's EPA would be the benchmark for environmental governance in the entire region. To realize this vision, we must invest in our employees by giving them the education, tools, and chances for innovation and career advancement they require. People are the EPA's greatest asset, and I can't express how appreciative I am of our staff's commitment and enthusiasm.

To all of Sierra Leone's citizens, partners, and stakeholders: we will keep working towards a world in which everyone has access to safe drinking water, clean air, and the breathtaking natural beauty that our nation is endowed with. We all have responsibility for protecting the environment, and I encourage everyone to come along with us as we work to make Sierra Leone greener and more sustainable.

Together, let's make sure our kids grow up in a world full of opportunity, health, and scenic beauty. I have no doubt that 2025 will bring even more achievements, resiliency, and optimism if you continue to support me. By working together, we can overcome the challenges that lie ahead and build a future in which every community prospers, and Sierra Leone's natural heritage survives.

With great gratitude and hope for the future,



Dr Abu-Bakar S. Massaquoi

Executive Chairman, EPA

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List of Abbreviations

ASGM	Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
BIOFIN	Biodiversity Finance Initiative
BOT	Build-Operate-Transfer
BSL	Bank of Sierra Leone
BTR	Biennial Transparency Report
CBIT	Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency
CDRs	Country Desk Reviews
CEDAS	Centre for Environmental Data and Statistics
CEECOM	Chiefdom Environmental Enforcement Coordination Committees
CI	Conservation International
CLA	Collaborative Learning and Adapting
COEs	Centres of Excellence
COPA	Climate Ozone Protection Alliance
CSSL	Conservation Society of Sierra Leone
DSA	Daily Subsistence Allowances
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMS	Environmental Management Systems
EPA	Environment Protection Agency
EPATS	EPA Transformation Strategy
FHRC	Flood Hazard Research Centre
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GRS	Grievance Redress System
ICAT	Initiative for Climate Action Transparency
INCs	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committees
IOI-SA	International Ocean Institute-Southern Africa
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LEEP	Lead Exposure Elimination Project
LT-LEDS	Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy
MDAs	Ministries, Departments, Agencies
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MICCOM	Multilateral Environmental Agreement Implementation Coordination Committee
MOAs	Memorandums of Agreement
MoECC	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
MPs	Members of Parliament
MRLE	Mine Rehabilitation Liability Estimator
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
N3P	National Plan for Pollution Prevention

NPI	National Pollutant Inventory
NRA	National Revenue Authority
NRM	Natural Resource Management
ODS	Ozone Depleting Substances
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
RCMRD	Regional Centre for Mapping Resources for Development
RETA	Refrigerant Technicians Association of Sierra Leone
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
RUSLP	Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project
SLCRP	Sierra Leone Coastal Resilience Project
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SMEDA	Sierra Leone Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Development Agency
SOER	State of Environment Report
TSA	Treasury Single Accounts
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAP	Western Area Peninsula

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1. Overview

The EPA's 2024 Annual Report offers a thorough summary of the organization's unwavering dedication to ensuring that everyone lives in a clean, safe, and healthy environment. Significant progress was made this year in a number of important environmental areas, demonstrating the agency's accomplishments in carrying out the EPATS and furthering its goals of enhancing environmental governance, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering transformative change.

In 2024, EPA focused its efforts on strategic priorities that support its mission, such as environmental risk awareness, research and innovation, sustainable resource use, pollution prevention, compliance and enforcement, climate analysis and management, and system and infrastructure improvements. The agency's accomplishments in these areas show how committed it is to strengthening Sierra Leone's environmental resilience and establishing a strong regulatory framework.



Important Accomplishments in 2024

- **Compliance and Enforcement:**
  With an emphasis on the creation and implementation of environmental regulations, the EPA greatly increased the scope of its regulatory activities in 2024. The agency addressed environmental violations in areas that had previously gotten little attention by ensuring compliance across a broad range of industries through both routine and ad hoc inspections. Stronger environmental protection measures are a result of more effective infraction detection brought about by investments in monitoring systems.

- **Climate Analysis and Management:**
  The EPA took proactive steps to improve Sierra Leone's climate resilience in response to the increasing effects of climate change. The agency made sure that the nation's concerns were acknowledged, and that support was obtained for climate-related activities by carrying out climate adaptation programmes, assisting with national climate policies, and actively participating in international climate networks. More precise scenario planning and adaption strategies for sensitive areas were made possible by advanced climate analytics.

- **Natural Resources Management:**
  The EPA worked closely with local communities and international partners to create equitable policies for resource extraction and preservation to encourage the sustainable use of natural resources. Important projects included biodiversity conservation initiatives that prioritised species protection and habitat restoration, as well as sustainable management of land resources.

- **Pollution Prevention:**
  With an emphasis on urban areas and mining communities, the EPA broadened its pollution prevention programmes in 2024. More funding was raised, trainings were held, and evidence was compiled, with a focus on safeguarding the public's health in communities engaged in artisanal mining. Future initiatives that lead to measurable reductions in chemical contamination, plastic waste, and hazardous emissions will be shaped by these efforts. These actions have the potential to improve environmental quality and health outcomes by lowering exposure to harmful pollutants.

- **Innovation, Technology, and Research:**
  The EPA made investments in cutting-edge technologies for environmental monitoring and data analysis because it understood how important it was to make decisions based on facts. More precise environmental forecasts and evidence-based regulatory decisions were made possible by this method. Innovative responses to urgent environmental issues, like piloting e-mobility programmes and other green technology, were made possible by collaborations with research institutions and international development partners.

- **Development of Systems and Infrastructure:**
  The EPA made major improvements to its internal systems, such as digitising environmental reports and updating infrastructure, in recognition of the value of operational effectiveness. These system upgrades have made it possible for the agency to handle environmental problems more effectively and have improved its ability to react to environmental concerns. Additionally, EPA activities now have more funding and a wider audience because of strategic alliances with donors and development groups.

Gazing Ahead

As 2024 comes to an end, EPA is taking stock of the important lessons it has learnt. In the future, the agency intends to improve inter-agency cooperation, boost innovation through new technologies, and modernise data systems to better track progress. Additionally, increasing community involvement will be prioritised to cultivate grassroots backing for environmental sustainability projects.

As EPA expands its programmes and works to protect Sierra Leone's natural environment for future generations, these findings will inform its future policies. While maintaining its focus on accomplishing the goals outlined in the EPATS, EPA is dedicated to building on the achievements of 2024 by advancing environmental protection, regulatory enforcement, and sustainable development.

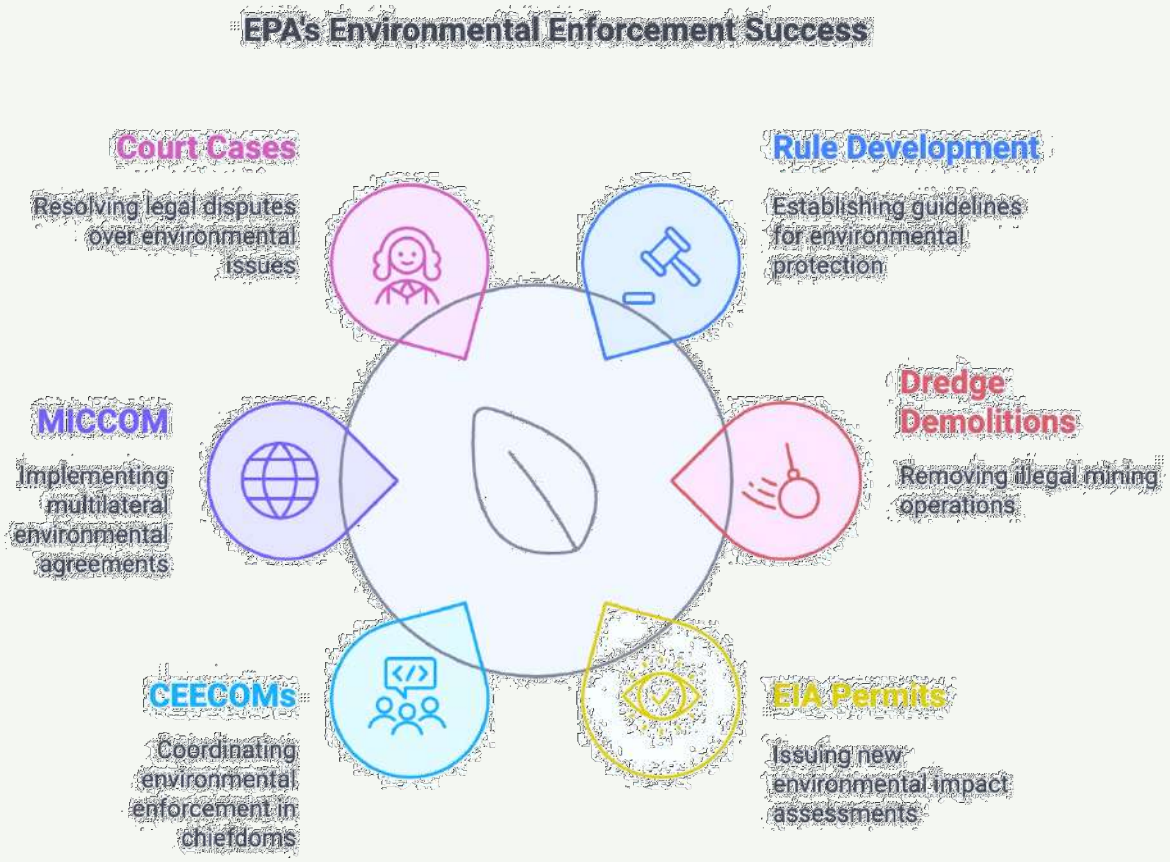


2. Key Focus Areas and Impact

2.1. Compliance and Enforcement

Overview

By developing and enforcing rules on lead-in-paint, air quality, and ozone-depleting substances, EPA achieved notable progress in compliance and enforcement in 2024. During the agency's on-the-ground operations, more than 136 dredges engaged in river dredging for illicit mining were successfully demolished, and 62 new EIA permits were issued. Enforcement efforts were bolstered by the creation of the Chiefdom Environmental Enforcement Coordination Committees (CEECOMs) in ten hotspot chiefdoms and the Multilateral Environmental Agreement Implementation Coordination Committee (MICCOM). EPA pursued 40 unresolved court cases, trained 230 consultants and proponents, and carried out 983 monitoring inspections and audits. Along with creating an action plan to establish CEECOMs as Village Green Courts and community monitoring and mediation centres by 2025, the agency also inked Memorandums of Agreement with the RSLAF and SLP to strengthen law enforcement. The EPA Board and the Environmental Committee of Parliament conducted their first-ever field inspections, strengthening supervision and ensuring compliance and efficient rule implementation throughout Sierra Leone.



Progress Markers

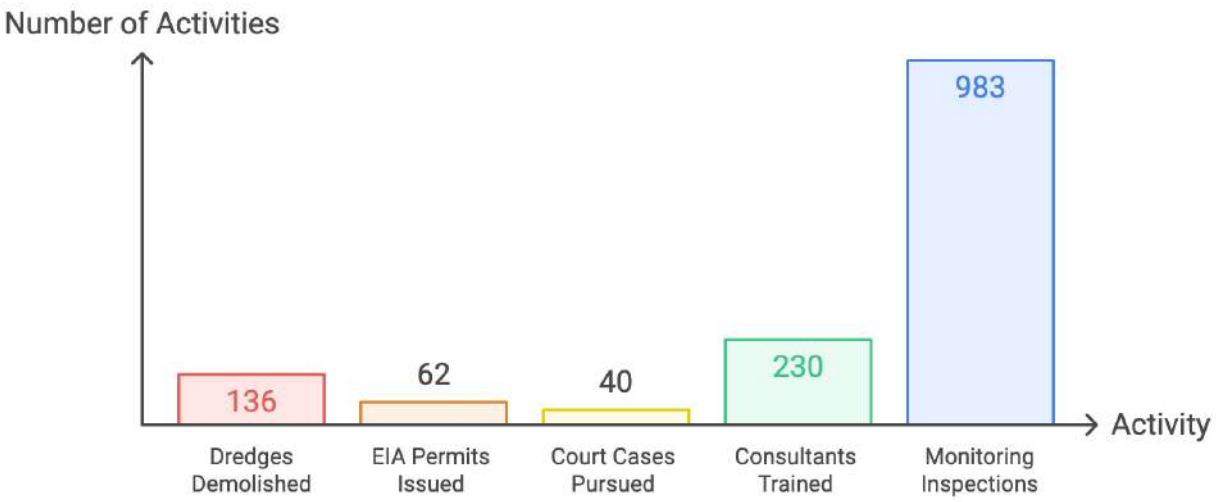


Fig. 1: EPA enforcement and compliance assurance progress in 2024

Feature stories

FS1: Strengthening Environmental Safeguards: New Regulations for a Sustainable Future

The fight against pollution and ecological deterioration has advanced significantly since the EPA created several important environmental legislations in 2024. These include regulations for Lead-in-Paint, Air Quality, and Ozone Depleting Substances. These new frameworks were carefully crafted to phase out ozone-depleting compounds, reduce air quality threats, and restrict dangerous pollutants. To guarantee a cleaner and safer environment for coming generations, the rules not only support local enforcement efforts but also comply with international environmental commitments. These rules have had the immediate effect of making local communities and companies more conscious of environmental compliance. The regulations are anticipated to improve ecosystem resilience, reduce threats to public health, and promote sustainable practices in several industries over time. These regulations support Sierra Leone's commitment to international environmental goals and offer a strong basis for attaining a better environment by delineating distinct legal boundaries.





Plate 1: Stakeholder consultations for the development of new regulations

FS2: Paving the Way for Waste Management Reforms: Policy Research Initiatives

The EPA's substantial policy study effort, first supported by UNEP and then expanded with a small grant from IUCN, was a major step towards comprehensive waste management reform. This study investigated potential legal revisions to alleviate Sierra Leone's waste management issues. The EPA has developed a roadmap for future law reforms to facilitate improved waste reduction, collection, and recycling operations nationwide by carefully analysing current gaps and comparing them to global best practices. The increasing discussion on sustainable waste management solutions among stakeholders, such as municipalities, private sector players, and civil society organisations, is already demonstrating the influence of this policy research. Future advantages include enhanced environmental standards, more robust enforcement systems, and more efficient waste regulations, all of which will eventually lead to cleaner cities, healthier communities, and a more sustainable ecosystem.





Plate 2: Stakeholder consultations for plastic waste management and INC5

FS3: Community-Led Eco-Stewardship: Establishment of CEECOM and MICCOM

The Multilateral Environmental Agreements Implementation Coordination Committee (MICCOM) and the Chiefdom Environmental Enforcement Coordination Committees (CEECOM) were formed by the EPA in 2024. By giving local communities the authority to actively enforce environmental laws, CEECOMs will help them feel more in control of how their natural resources are managed. On the other side, MICCOM will improve coordination between government agencies and important stakeholders by ensuring that international environmental obligations are smoothly incorporated into domestic initiatives. With the creation of these committees, grassroots compliance is expected to increase, with community members being crucial in keeping an eye out for and reporting environmental violations. Chiefdoms and other local stakeholders will continue to be essential partners in accomplishing sustainable development objectives and meeting international commitments thanks to CEECOM and MICCOM's future improvements in environmental governance.







Plate 3: Cross-section of CEECOM members and EPA staff during chiefdom-level consultations

FS4: Effective Monitoring and Enforcement: 980 Visits and Destruction of Illegal Dredges

During 980 targeted environmental monitoring inspections in 2024, the EPA showed its dedication to environmental preservation by identifying and destroying more than 130 unlawful dredges. These dredges, which had been seriously damaging the environment, especially river ecosystems, were successfully destroyed, stopping additional damage. Rapid enforcement actions were made possible by the monitoring trips, which gave the EPA vital information and insights into environmental issues on the ground. Destructive practices that damage biodiversity and disturb ecosystems, such as illicit dredging, have decreased as a direct result. Long-term, this effort will strengthen Sierra Leone's legal frameworks for the preservation of natural resources, restore natural habitats, and preserve water quality. Additionally, by sending a clear message that unsustainable methods will not be accepted, this all-encompassing enforcement strategy deters future violators.



Plate 4: Dredge demolition along the Sewa River



Plate 5: Community sensitisation during dredge demolition exercise

FS5: Strengthening Accountability: Field Visits by EPA Board and Parliament's Environment Committee

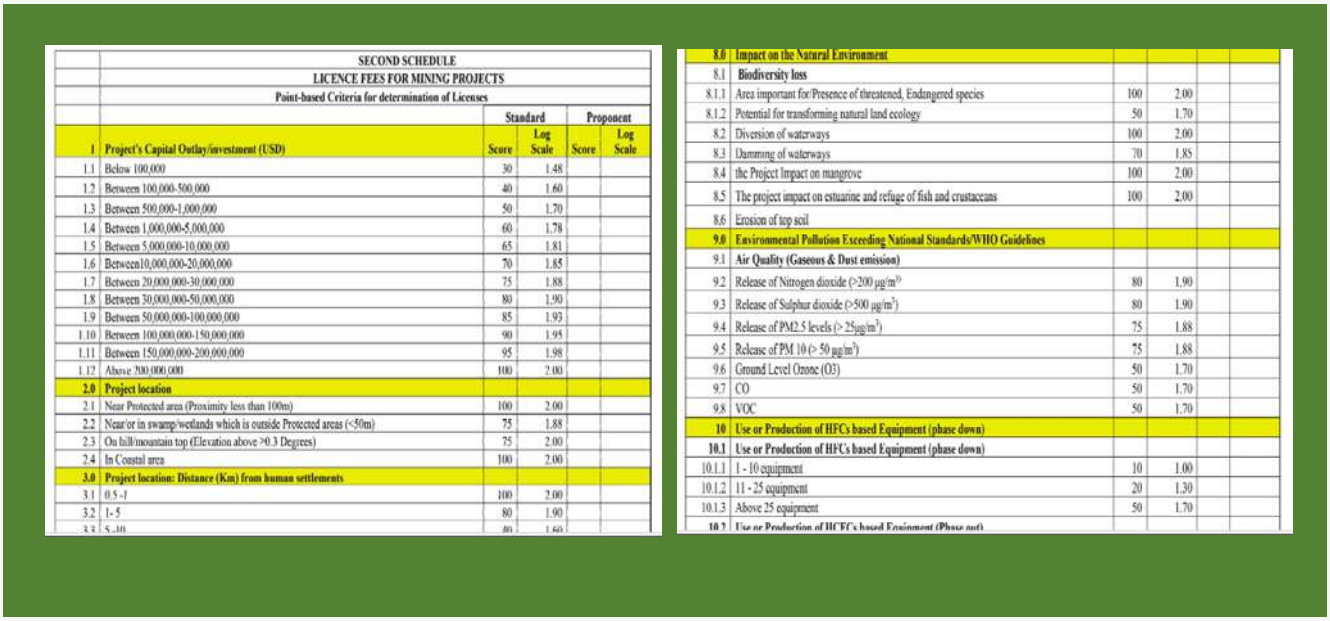
Together with a separate monitoring visit by the Environmental Committee of Parliament, EPA arranged the first-ever field visit for its Board members to increase accountability and transparency. Through these trips, important decision-makers were able to learn more about the environmental problems impacting communities and witness firsthand the difficulties experienced by project proponents. The exchanges with stakeholders, community leaders, and field officers yielded priceless information about the real-world effects of environmental laws and initiatives. A shared commitment to environmental sustainability has already resulted from these visits, strengthening bonds between the EPA, the Parliament, and the people they serve. Long-term effects include improved public trust in EPA's operations, better informed policy decisions, and increased alignment between regulatory actions and community needs. These programs highlight how crucial direct participation is to promote efficient environmental governance and guaranteeing that laws result in tangible advancements.



Plate 6: Cross-section of board members during visit to Socfin

FS6: Advancing Governance: Empowering Transparency Through Sector-Specific EIA Fees

The implementation of sector-specific Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) fee matrices in 2024 marked a significant advancement for EPA in improving environmental governance. This new graduated fee structure was painstakingly created to offer an equitable and open method of calculating EIA fees for various industries. The EPA sought to make sure that the environmental impact of each sector was adequately considered by adjusting fees to the size and complexity of projects in a variety of industries, including mining, agriculture, infrastructure, and energy. This made it simpler for businesses to comprehend and fulfil their environmental responsibilities. It is anticipated that the implementation of these industry-specific pricing matrices will have major advantages in the future. It has, in the near run, increased compliance and enhanced fee collecting efficiency. Better ties between the EPA and the regulated businesses have also been cultivated by the new system's clarity, which offers predictability and transparency in the EIA licensing procedure. In the future, these charge matrices will support a more sustainable development strategy since businesses are more likely to embrace environmentally friendly practices when the costs of environmental compliance are directly related to their operations.



SECOND SCHEDULE
LICENCE FEES FOR MINING PROJECTS
Point-based Criteria for determination of Licenses

		Standard		Proponent	
1	Project's Capital Outlay/investment (USD)	Score	Log Scale	Score	Log Scale
1.1	Below 100,000	30	1.48		
1.2	Between 100,000-500,000	40	1.60		
1.3	Between 500,000-1,000,000	50	1.70		
1.4	Between 1,000,000-5,000,000	60	1.78		
1.5	Between 5,000,000-10,000,000	65	1.81		
1.6	Between10,000,000-20,000,000	70	1.85		
1.7	Between 20,000,000-30,000,000	75	1.88		
1.8	Between 30,000,000-50,000,000	80	1.90		
1.9	Between 50,000,000-100,000,000	85	1.93		
1.10	Between 100,000,000-150,000,000	90	1.95		
1.11	Between 150,000,000-200,000,000	95	1.98		
1.12	Above 200,000,000	100	2.00		
2.0	**Project location**				
2.1	Near Protected area (Proximity less than 100m)	100	2.00		
2.2	Near/or in swamp/wetlands which is outside Protected areas (<50m)	75	1.88		
2.3	On hill/mountain top (Elevation above >0.3 Degrees)	75	2.00		
2.4	In Coastal area	100	2.00		
3.0	**Project location: Distance (Km) from human settlements**				
3.1	0.5 -1	100	2.00		
3.2	1- 5	80	1.90		
3.3	5 -10	60	1.60		

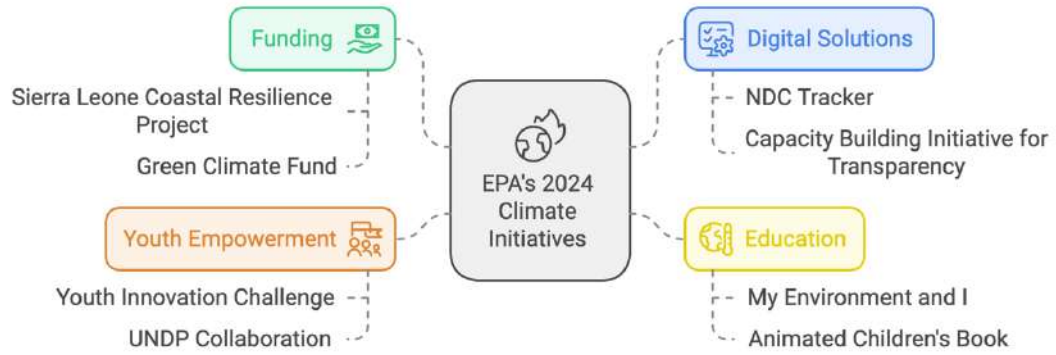
8.0	**Impact on the Natural Environment**				
8.1	**Biodiversity loss**				
8.1.1	Area important for/Presence of threatened, Endangered species	100	2.00		
8.1.2	Potential for transforming natural land ecology	50	1.70		
8.2	Diversion of waterways	100	2.00		
8.3	Damming of waterways	70	1.85		
8.4	the Project Impact on mangrove	100	2.00		
8.5	The project impact on estuarine and refuge of fish and crustaceans	100	2.00		
8.6	Erosion of top soil				
9.0	**Environmental Pollution Exceeding National Standards/WHO Guidelines**				
9.1	**Air Quality (Gaseous & Dust emission)**				
9.2	Release of Nitrogen dioxide (>200 µg/m³)	80	1.90		
9.3	Release of Sulphur dioxide (>500 µg/m³)	80	1.90		
9.4	Release of PM2.5 levels (> 25µg/m³)	75	1.88		
9.5	Release of PM 10 (> 50 µg/m³)	75	1.88		
9.6	Ground Level Ozone (O3)	50	1.70		
9.7	CO	50	1.70		
9.8	VOC	50	1.70		
10	**Use or Production of HFCs based Equipment (phase down)**				
10.1	**Use or Production of HFCs based Equipment (phase down)**				
10.1.1	1 - 10 equipment	10	1.00		
10.1.2	11 - 25 equipment	20	1.30		
10.1.3	Above 25 equipment	50	1.70		
10.2	Use or Production of HCFCs based Equipment (Phase out)				

Plate 7: Image of revised EIA fee matrix

2.2. Climate Analysis and Management

Overview

By securing substantial funds for climate resilience, developing innovative digital solutions, and increasing openness in climate action, the EPA made impressive strides in 2024. The EPA established a solid basis for coastal adaptation in 75 villages by helping Save the Children International secure $28.6 million from the Green Climate Fund for the Sierra Leone Coastal Resilience Project. A Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) tracker is one of the vital digital tools made possible by successfully completing the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT), which advanced climate transparency. The first-ever animated children's book on climate change, "My Environment and I," opened a new era in climate education, and the Youth Innovation Challenge started in collaboration with UNDP, empowered young inventors whose innovative solutions would be displayed during COP30 in Brazil. These accomplishments collectively demonstrate the EPA's dedication to improving the climate governance process (see diagram) via robust policy frameworks, open stakeholder participation, and successful climate action strategy execution.



Progress Markers

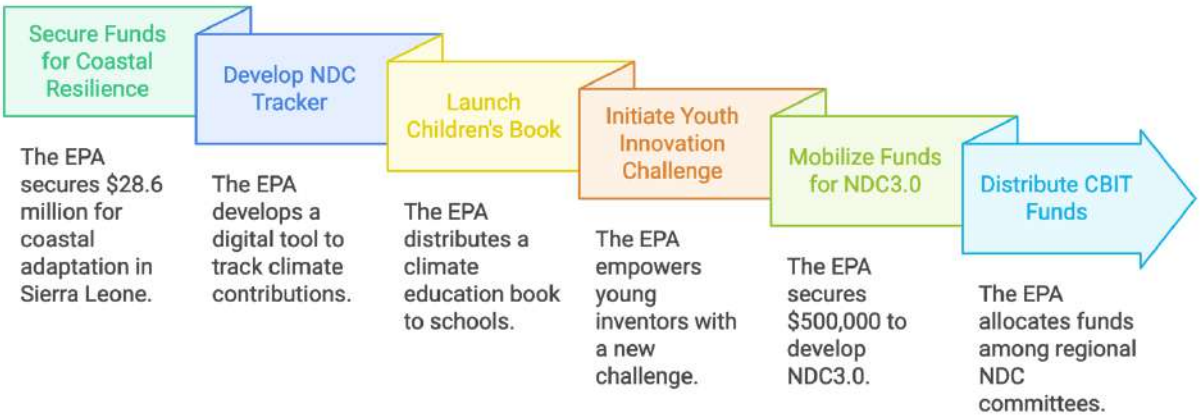


Fig. 2: EPA's climate management progress in 2024

Feature stories

FS1: Using GCF to Help Increase Coastal Resilience

The Sierra Leone Coastal Resilience Project (SLCRP) was launched in 2024 when EPA and Save the Children International successfully obtained $28.6 million from the Green Climate Fund (GCF). 75 coastal villages are the focus of this historic project, which aims to enhance livelihoods and promote sustainable practices. SLCRP seeks to improve their economic standing by encouraging conservation, community training, and sustainable resource use. The main goal of the initiative is to increase communities' ability to adapt so they can prosper even in harsh environmental circumstances. The SLCRP's long-term objective is to build a resilient and strong coastal area that can handle the difficulties brought on by climate change. The initiative ensures the durability of its interventions by fostering grassroots-level ownership through active engagement with local stakeholders, such as local governments and community leaders. It is anticipated that these coordinated initiatives would increase climate resilience in vulnerable areas, putting them in a better position to endure and adjust to future climate emergencies.



Plate 8: GCF Funded Activity Agreement signing in Kigali in March 2024

FS2: Motivating Youth to Create Innovative Solutions for Climate Change

Young people in Sierra Leone who wished to actively participate in climate change found promise in the UNDP-sponsored Youth Innovation Challenge. Three finalists were finally awarded cash to explore their initiatives after 22 bold and creative ideas were chosen through a rigorous process that included a competitive bootcamp. To raise awareness and attract support, these finalists were granted the exceptional chance to showcase their projects at COP29, an international forum. By giving them the money, skills, and information they needed to combat climate change, this programme empowered youth. Additionally, the Youth Innovation Challenge acted as a springboard for innovative ideas in several domains, such as waste management, climate-smart agriculture, and renewable energy. It inspired young people to think creatively and to imagine initiatives that would have a direct influence on their communities. By pursuing these problems and creating an atmosphere that supports young environmental leaders, EPA hopes to further incorporate youth into the national climate agenda.



Plate 9: Three winners of the inaugural Youth Innovation Challenge



Plate 10: Award of funds to three winners of the inaugural Youth Innovation Challenge

FS3: Inspiring the Next Generation with a Climate Storybook

"My Environment and I," Sierra Leone's first animated children's book about climate change, was proudly unveiled by EPA. The book, which was released in 2024, introduces young readers to the complicated subject of climate change using clear language, captivating narratives, and colourful graphics. It seeks to teach kids the value of environmental stewardship and aids in establishing the groundwork for responsible, knowledgeable behaviour. The book aims to equip young readers with the knowledge they need to take care of their natural environment by making climate ideas approachable. The release of "My Environment and I" is also a significant step in Sierra Leone's efforts to mainstream environmental education. To make sure the book's message reaches as many young minds as possible, EPA intends to distribute it widely in schools and community centres in partnership with educational institutions. Future generations will be better prepared to take significant climate action, according to the EPA, if sustainability and environmental responsibility are instilled early in life. By showcasing the effectiveness of storytelling as a teaching and transformational tool, this project helps foster an environmentally conscious society that will have a lasting effect.



Plate 11: Launch of handbook on World Environment Day during Symposium at Fourah Bay College

FS4: The CBIT Project: An Important Advancement in Climate

The successful completion of the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) marked a significant advancement in improving climate transparency. This program aimed to strengthen data monitoring capabilities and increase accountability for Sierra Leone by developing a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) tracker. Data providers received training sessions as part of it, giving them the know-how to precisely quantify emissions in important industries including waste management, industry, and agriculture. The release of sector-specific guidelines for greenhouse gas accounting also guarantees the use of dependable and uniform techniques for environmental monitoring. To help Sierra Leone learn from similar situations and align with global best practices, the CBIT project also promoted regional collaboration by contributing to a panel discussion in Japan and arranging a learning exchange with Ghana and Liberia. Sierra Leone is now better prepared to fulfil its international climate reporting responsibilities under the Paris Agreement thanks to increased transparency in climate-related data.



Plate 12: CBIT learning event in Zimbabwe

FS5: Launch of the Biennial Transparency Report Project Transparency

In 2024, the EPA launched the Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) Project with $600,000 from UNEP. To comply with international climate reporting standards, Sierra Leone must improve its mechanisms for gathering and reporting climate data. To fulfil international obligations and inform domestic climate policy, the initiative intends to make sure that the nation's advancements in climate adaptation and mitigation are methodically recorded and shared. Additionally, the BTR initiative lays the groundwork for creating a strong framework for transparency and accountability. It is anticipated that the BTR project will revolutionise Sierra Leone's climate data collection and reporting, resulting in a more realistic assessment of the nation's climate change mitigation efforts. Sierra Leone can make evidence-based decisions, allocate resources efficiently, and plan future climate initiatives thanks to the emphasis on enhancing data quality. The BTR also contributes to enhancing Sierra Leone's reputation internationally by establishing solid guidelines for open reporting and data integrity, which helps the country draw in more foreign collaboration and funding for its efforts to increase climate resilience.

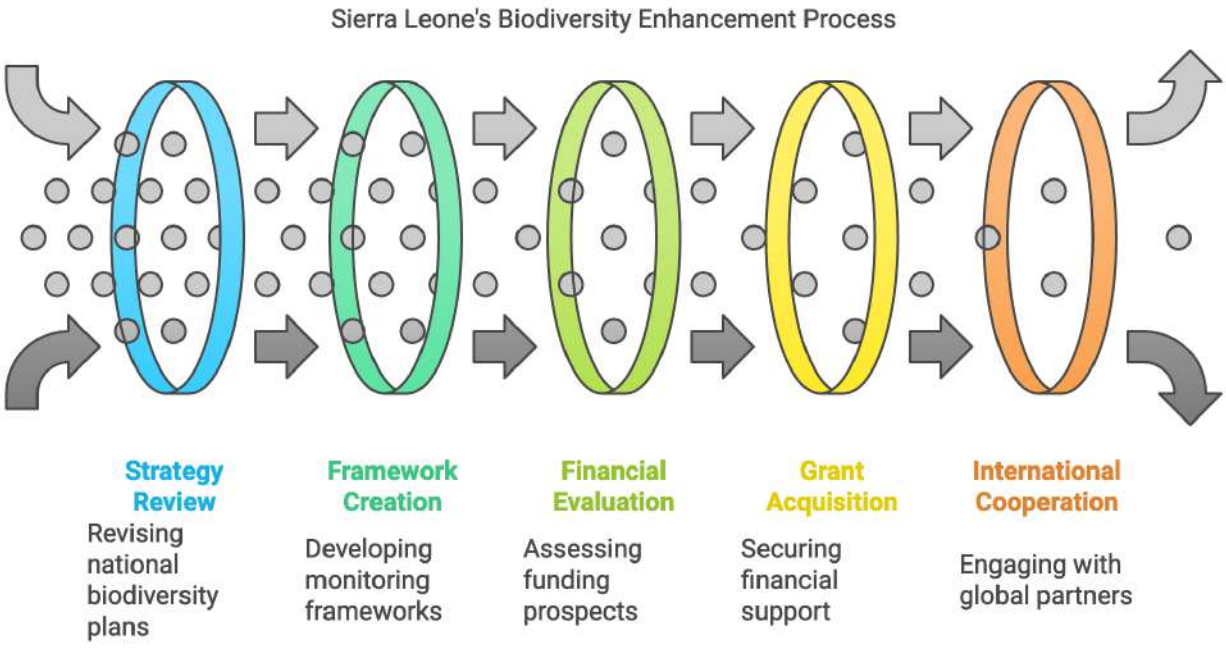


Plate 13: launch of Biennial Transparency Reporting (BTR) project

2.3. Natural Resource Management

Overview

The NBSAP Early Action Project was the primary focus of NRM activities in Sierra Leone in 2024. As a result, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) was quickly reviewed, a national framework for monitoring biodiversity was created, and prospects for financing biodiversity were evaluated. In addition to mobilising technical assistance to create a comprehensive biodiversity finance strategy, our efforts resulted in the acquisition of a $75,000 grant from the Abidjan Convention and a $450,000 grant from UNEP for the development of NBSAP 6.0. By participating in several training programs on ocean innovation and marine spatial planning with important partners including the International Ocean Institute-Southern Africa, IUCN, and GRID-Arendal, Sierra Leone furthered its international cooperation. To encourage cooperative land-use decision-making, the UNDP Western Area Peninsula Conservation Project also organised a training of trainers, created a balanced scorecard, and carried out a stakeholder analysis. Sierra Leone's excellent participation at COP 16 in Cali, which demonstrated the country's leadership in biodiversity protection and sustainable land management, supported these initiatives. When taken as a whole, these projects show Sierra Leone's dedication to using alliances and funding to bolster its environmental programs and biodiversity preservation plans.



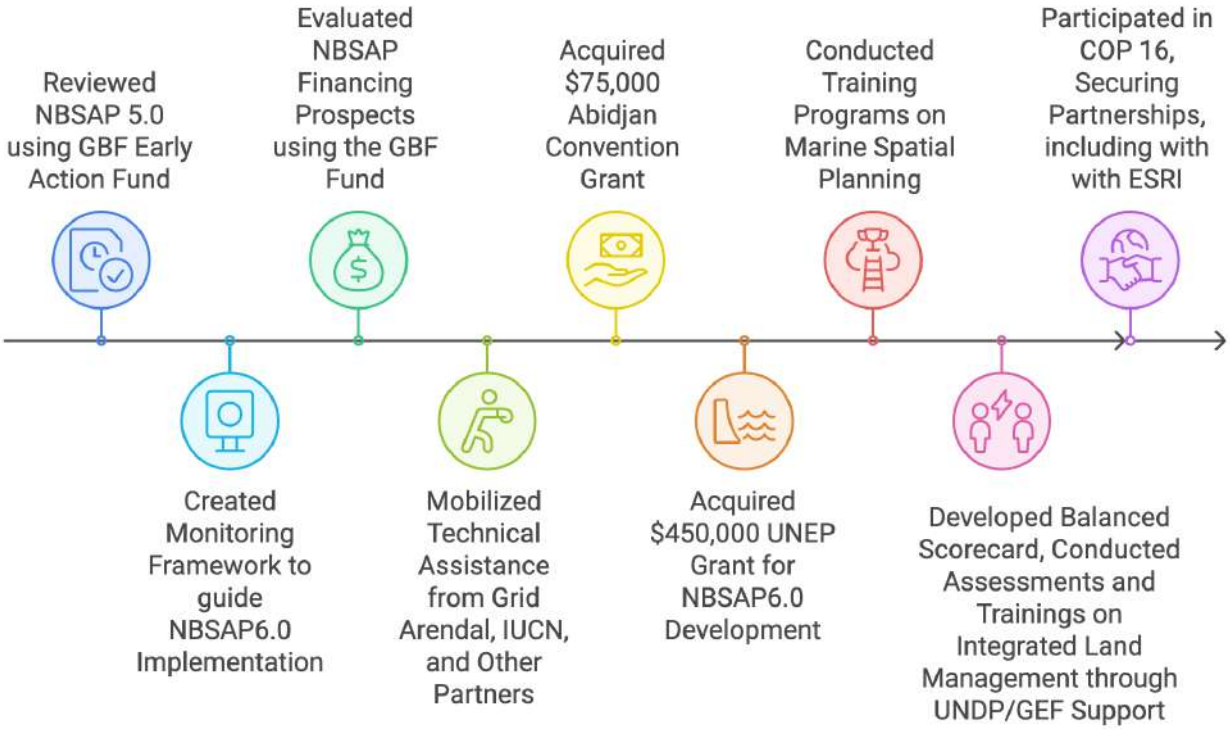


Fig. 3: Natural resource management milestones achieved in 2024

Feature stories

FS1: Coastal Conservation Boost: Securing $76000 for Sustainable Co-Management

We won a $76,000 award from the Abidjan Convention to promote sustainable management of its coastal landscapes, which is a major victory for coastal conservation. The creation of co-management plans, the mapping of significant coastal regions, and an extensive baseline survey will all be aided by this award. It is anticipated that these programs will increase resilience to the effects of climate change, encourage greater management of coastal resources, and encourage local communities to participate in conservation activities. More educated decisions about coastal ecosystems and greater community involvement in preserving these important habitats are two immediate effects of this research. Long-term, this project will lay a vital basis for conservation efforts in the future, guaranteeing the preservation of biodiversity and the ongoing support of local livelihoods and national development objectives by the advantages of healthy coastal systems.



Plate 14: Signing of Agreement with NPAA for the implementation of the Abidjan Convention grant

FS2: Building Capacity for Ocean Innovation: Cross-Government Training on Marine Spatial Planning

A capacity-building program on Ocean Innovation and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) for cross-government stakeholders in Sierra Leone was successfully concluded by the International Ocean Institute-Southern Africa in collaboration with IUCN and the Abidjan Convention. To promote interagency cooperation and improve the management of marine resources, the training sought to provide important government employees with the information and resources required for efficient ocean governance and marine spatial planning. In the end, this program has supported the sustainable use of ocean ecosystems by laying the foundation for more unified and scientifically based management of marine resources. In the future, these newly developed abilities will be crucial in creating all-encompassing marine management strategies that strike a balance between the demands of local livelihoods, tourists, and conservation- helping to create a robust and healthy ocean economy.



Plate 15: Cross-section of trainees at the Marine Spatial Planning webinar organised with IOI- Southern Africa, IUCN, and Abidjan Convention

FS3: Early Action for Biodiversity: Implementation of $650,000 NBSAP Initiative

We secured an additional $450,000 from UNEP to create NBSAP 6.0 and started implementing the $200,000 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Early Action Project. To create a National Biofin Strategy and boost finance flows for biodiversity conservation, the agency will also be receiving vital technical assistance from the UNDP Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) in 2025. The improvement of biodiversity governance and the creation of action plans to achieve the objectives of the Global Biodiversity Framework are two immediate effects of these initiatives. To ensure the long-term preservation of Sierra Leone's unique natural heritage, future effects will include enhanced financial mechanisms for biodiversity conservation, better ecosystem health, and increased capability for biodiversity management.



Plate 16: Stakeholder consultations on rapid review, financing framework, and monitoring indicators

FS4: Championing Biodiversity Action: Winning the UNDP NBSAP Accelerator Partnership Fund

After competing against 33 other nations, we achieved a significant milestone by being selected for the first cohort of the UNDP NBSAP Accelerator Partnership Fund. Sierra Leone will be at the forefront of biodiversity protection in the world thanks to this cooperation, which will offer consistent assistance for the country's NBSAP implementation over the next three years. This accomplishment represents a turning point for the nation's biodiversity efforts and guarantees access to the tools and knowledge required for the NBSAP to be implemented successfully. It is expected that the partnership's ongoing support would spark revolutionary changes that will strengthen ecosystem resilience, better integrate biodiversity into national development, and raise the standard of living for populations who rely on natural resources.



NBSAP accelerator partnership

08/02/2024

Joseph S. Turay
CBD National Focal Point
Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Republic of Sierra Leone

Dear Joseph S. Turay,

I am writing in reference to your Expression of Interest in hosting an NBSAP Accelerator Partnership in-country facilitator embedded within the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

After careful consideration of submissions received, we are delighted to inform you that your submission has been selected. We look forward to working with you over the next three years to accelerate action and implement your revised NBSAP in alignment with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The country partner selection process was highly competitive; in a relatively short timeframe, we received more than 30 expressions of interest from low- and middle-income countries and regions. The expressions were of an extremely high standard. Not only did we receive many innovative and interesting proposals, but we also saw strong commitments to engage from ministries of environment, as well as other relevant ministries.

The role of the in-country facilitator is crucial in bridging communication, facilitating mutual understanding, and advancing our shared objectives of living in harmony with nature. By embedding the facilitator within the government, we aim to support the Republic of Sierra Leone to accelerate NBSAP implementation processes, promote coordination through a Whole of Government and Whole of Society approach, and maximize the impact of NBSAPs for the benefit of all.

We are excited about the prospect of working closely with you to bring this vision to fruition. We are confident that together, we can achieve meaningful progress and create lasting positive change in the Republic of Sierra Leone. We look forward to the opportunity to work closely with you.

Warm regards,

Katherine Madden

Katherine Madden
Global Coordinator
NBSAP Accelerator Partnership

Plate 17: Notification of selection for the initial cohort of the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership Fund

FS5: Innovative Mine Rehabilitation: Developing and Piloting the Mine Rehabilitation Liability Estimator (MRLE)

We created a Mine Rehabilitation Liability Estimator (MRLE), a cutting-edge instrument to guarantee financial accountability and responsibility for environmental restoration, to mitigate the negative environmental effects of mining. To minimise environmental hazards, financial provisioning procedures are being implemented to guarantee that mining activities appropriately account for the cost of site rehabilitation. Better regulatory control and a system to make mining operators responsible for environmental restoration are among the immediate effects. Long-term financial provisions will assist biodiversity recovery, protect public health, and aid in the restoration of ecosystems impacted by mining operations- all of which are in line with the nation's goals for sustainable development.



Plate 18: Cross-section of proponents and consultants at MRLE consultations

FS6: A Balanced Scorecard for Collaborative Land Use Management: Changing Decisions in the Western Area Peninsula National Park

Through the UNDP GEF Western Area Peninsula (WAP) project, we created a Balanced Scorecard for Collaborative Land Use Decision-Making in the Western Area Peninsula National Park. This novel paradigm combines environmental, social, and economic factors to improve land-use planning and promote sustainable resource management. The Balanced Scorecard enables stakeholders - from local communities to government agencies - to work together successfully, aligning land-use decisions with conservation priorities and development goals. This tool promotes community knowledge and engagement, ensuring that local voices are included in decision-making processes, resulting in sustainable livelihoods, better environmental stewardship, and improved ecosystem resilience. This program not only improves integrated land management, but it also creates a shared vision for the long-term protection and sustainable use of this important biodiversity hotspot.



Plate 19: Cross-section of stakeholders at review of ILM balanced scorecard

2.4. Pollution Prevention



Overview

The EPA achieved notable progress in environmental health and safety in 2024, especially in the areas of pollution avoidance, plastic management, and capacity building. Important accomplishments included working with Grid Arendal and Common Seas to develop a partnership framework to conduct a baseline survey on plastic pollution and produce a revised national action plan, as well as creating an engagement paper for the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) that argued for a systematic, phased ban on single-use plastics. Furthermore, the EPA led the Refrigerant Technicians Association of Sierra Leone (RETA) in educating and equipping 300 female technicians, as well as developing a partnership with RETA USA, greatly increasing the nation's ability to provide sustainable cooling solutions. An important milestone in the fight against pollution in all sectors by 2025 will be the creation of the National Plan for Pollution Prevention (N3P), which will be positioned as a comprehensive framework like the NDC and NBSAP. To guarantee a lead-free future for Sierra Leone, the EPA also carried on with its effective lead prevention initiatives, developing legislation and interacting with the public. These achievements demonstrate the organization's dedication to supporting sustainability, creativity, and neighbourhood-based approaches to environmental problems.



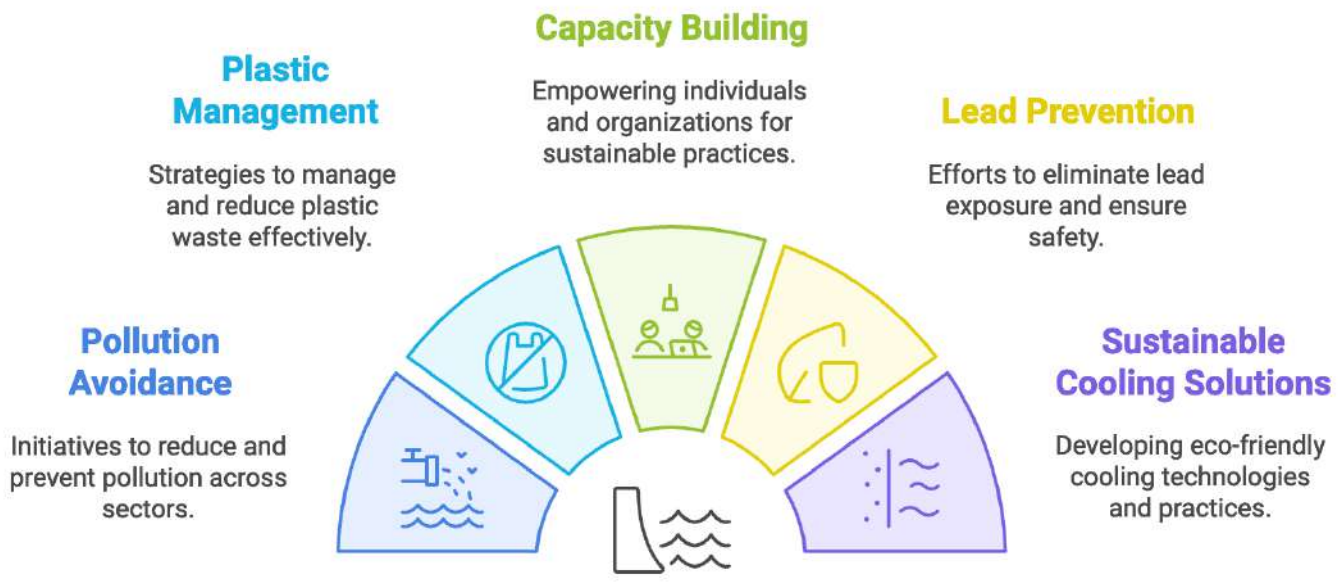


Fig. 4: Pollution prevention activities in 2024

Progress Markers

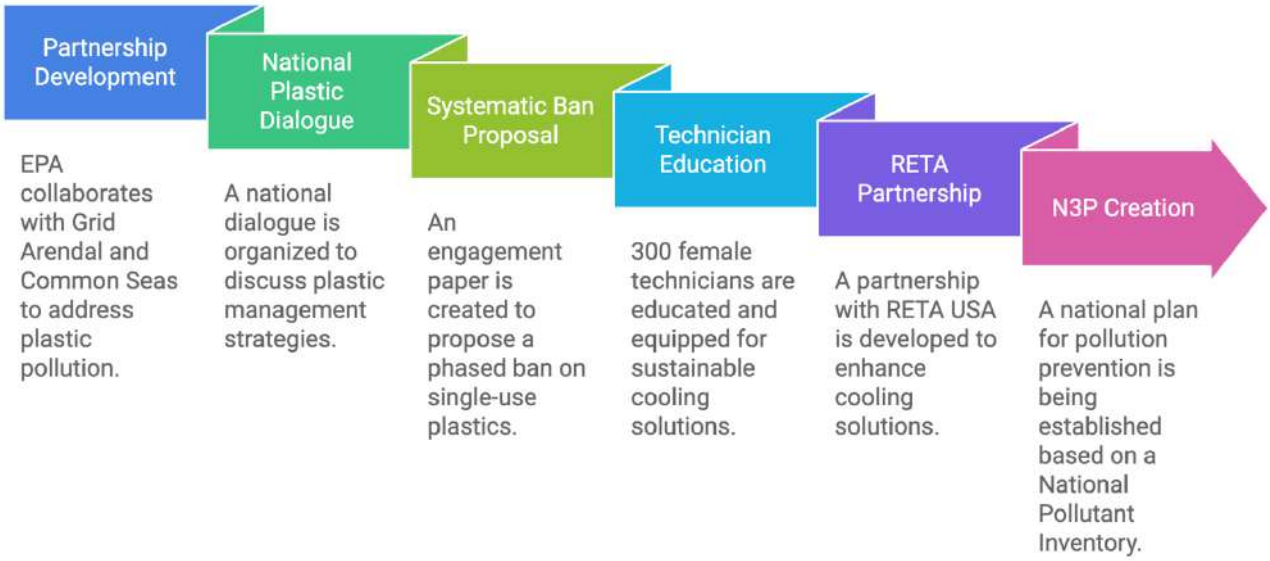


Fig. 5: Pollution prevention activities in 2024

Feature stories

FS1: National Plastic Management Initiatives: A Step Towards Sustainability

The EPA's attempts to manage plastic waste gained momentum in 2024, as evidenced by the agency's active involvement in plastics-focused Intergovernmental Negotiating Committees (INCs) and the evaluation of Sierra Leone's current plastic policy. Co-funded by GRID-Arendal and IUCN, the EPA also led the effort to organize a National Plastic Dialogue that brought together academics, government, business, and civil society players. To coordinate efforts to manage plastic waste and create solutions to reduce plastic pollution in Sierra Leone, this national dialogue was an essential first step. These interactions had various effects since they set the stage for creating a comprehensive legislative framework aimed at more successfully addressing plastic waste. The EPA is setting up Sierra Leone to become a leader in creative and sustainable plastic management solutions by encouraging cross-sector collaboration and incorporating INCs' lessons learnt. To protect the environment, the long-term strategy calls for a shift to a circular economic model that prioritises recycling, reusing, and reducing plastic.



Plate 20: Cross-section of participants at National Plastic Dialogue



Plate 21: EPA staff at the pre-INC5 expert group meeting in Bangkok

FS2: Launching the GEF GOLD+ Project to Formalise Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining

To formalise Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) in Sierra Leone, the EPA and Conservation International launched the $2.7 million GEF-funded GOLD+ initiative in 2024. By lowering mercury consumption and encouraging best practices for ethical gold mining, this large-scale project, focusing on gold mining hotspots in three districts, aims to enhance the ASGM sector's environmental and social sustainability. It is anticipated that the GOLD+ project will have a profoundly positive effect on the environment, local people, and gold miners. The project's goals are to lower mercury contamination, raise ASGM miners' access to financial incentives, and enhance occupational health and safety regulations by promoting formalisation. The project aims to make Sierra Leone a paradigm for ethical gold mining in Africa, strengthen the resilience of mining communities, and make supply chains more transparent.



Plate 22: Minister of Environment with the visiting CI team during the project launch

FS3: The National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) marks a breakthrough in pollution prevention.

With UNDP assistance, the EPA completed Sierra Leone's first National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) in 2024. The nation's first National Plan for Pollution Prevention (N3P), a significant advancement in tackling pollution issues, equivalent to an NDC and NBSAP, is preceded by this extensive database. The NPI offers a methodical way to monitor pollution sources, facilitating improved management and decision-making. To establish a robust regulatory framework to tackle pollution, this endeavour is essential. The EPA hopes to reduce harmful emissions and clear the path for successful N3P implementation by identifying pollution sources across the nation. By maintaining a healthier ecosystem, enhancing environmental quality, and protecting public health, the NPI is anticipated to have a beneficial long-term effect.



Plate 23: Cross-section of participants at NPI launch event

FS4: Building RETA Capacity: Educating Technicians and Increasing Quality

In 2024, the Refrigerant Technicians Association of Sierra Leone (RETA) experienced a notable uptick in activity because of the EPA's facilitation of training sessions and provision of necessary equipment. In Kenema and Bo, the EPA also created new Centres of Excellence (COEs) for refrigerant management using a $250,000 grant from the Montreal Protocol through UNIDO. This programme specifically aimed to promote excellent practices in refrigerant management and reduce ozone-depleting pollutants. This project had an immediate effect by giving RETA technicians more ability to implement eco-friendly refrigeration techniques. These steps have set the stage for the nation to further expand the use of climate-friendly technology, which will help fight climate change and improve sustainability in the cooling industry in the long run.





Plate 24: Provision of equipment to female RETA Technicians and road show in Bo to raise awareness on World Ozone Day

FS5: Global Acknowledgement: Sierra Leone Becomes a Member of the Climate Ozone Protection Alliance (COPA)

Sierra Leone officially joined over 100 nations committed to eliminating ozone-depleting compounds in 2024 when it joined the esteemed Climate Ozone Protection Alliance (COPA). Through its participation, Sierra Leone was able to obtain funding for several projects, such as training courses and an evaluation for the development of the Kigali ODS Phase-out Plan. In 2025, further evaluations will examine eco-friendly programs and training opportunities. Sierra Leone's dedication to environmental protection has reached a significant milestone with its membership in COPA. In addition to encouraging improved cooperation with foreign partners, this worldwide recognition provides access to vital capital and technological know-how. By using these resources, the EPA hopes to greatly advance global climatic and environmental goals while fostering a more environmentally friendly and ozone-friendly future.



Plate 25: Training of technicians in effective refrigerant management

FS6: Improving Lead Protection: Working with LEEP to End Lead Exposure

The EPA committed to working with the Lead Exposure Elimination Project (LEEP) to reduce lead exposure in Sierra Leone through several initiatives between 2024 and 2027. This entails launching public awareness initiatives, educating the paint industry, and assisting producers in implementing safer procedures. The partnership also involved developing lead-in-paint rules and interacting with Members of Parliament (MPs), setting the basis for the country's participation in the UNICEF-USAID Partnership for a Lead-free Future, launched in New York in September 2024. Significant progress has already been made in increasing awareness and establishing the legal foundation for safer practices, making the results of this collaboration encouraging. In the long run, this partnership seeks to guarantee a lead-free environment in Sierra Leone, shielding susceptible populations- children in particular- from the negative consequences of lead exposure.



Plate 26: LEEP-funded paint studies to support the development of a lead-in-paint regulation

2.5. Innovation, Research, and Technology

Overview

The EPA achieved significant strides in 2024 in the fields of innovation, technology, and research to advance environmental protection and climate resilience. Among the major achievements were the creation of three Country Desk Reviews (CDRs) on important EPATS pillars and the completion of three of the seven digital solutions intended for the OneEPA database: the Grievance Redress System (GRS), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Navigator, and Project Manager. In addition, we carried out several studies, such as an evaluation of e-mobility's viability, which led to the development of an e-mobility strategy; research on Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) to guide the Kigali Implementation Plan; and a study of the relationship between migration and climate change in cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Notable collaborations included a baseline survey of coastal landscapes, research on waste policies and potential reforms with UNEP, a paint study supported by the Lead Exposure Elimination Project (LEEP) to support the development of a lead-in-paint regulation, and a stakeholder and capacity needs analysis for collaborative land-use decision-making in the Western Area Peninsula National Park. EPA also began preparing 10 briefing notes to examine and synthesise previous studies in advance of the 2025 Collaborative Learning and Adapting (CLA) workshop. Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), artisanal and small-scale gold mining, outdated pesticides, the situation of climate finance, and the condition of the marine environment are just a few of the issues that will be discussed in these notes. With the operationalisation of the Centre for Environmental Data and Statistics (CEDAS) in 2025, the EPA will be committed to gathering thorough data and publishing important reports to support evidence-based decision-making across the government.

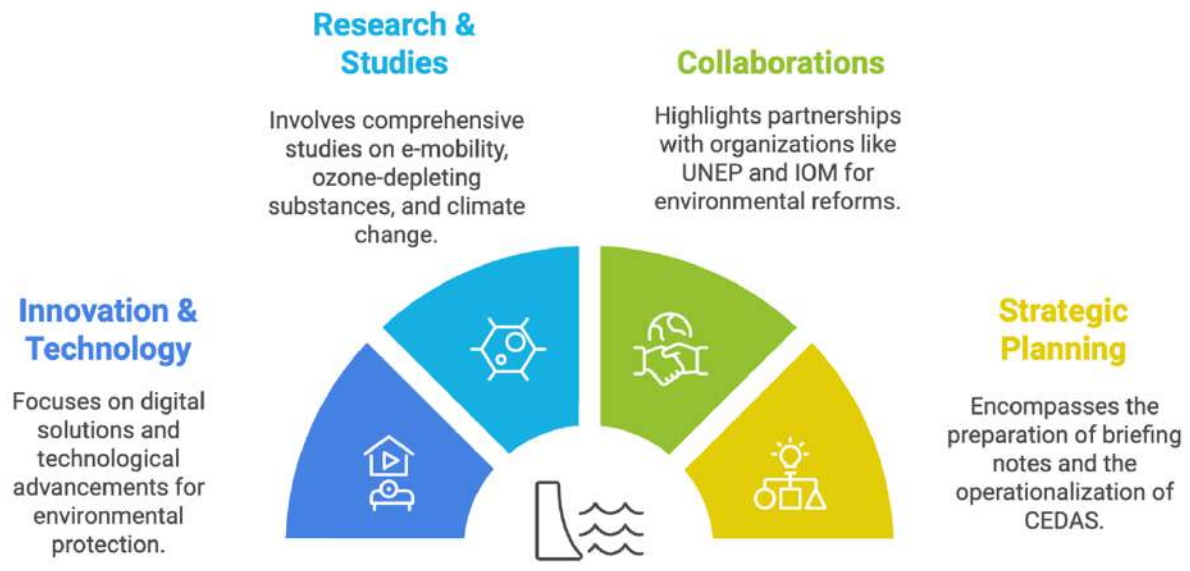


Fig. 6: Innovation, Research, and Technology deliverables in 2024

Progress Markers

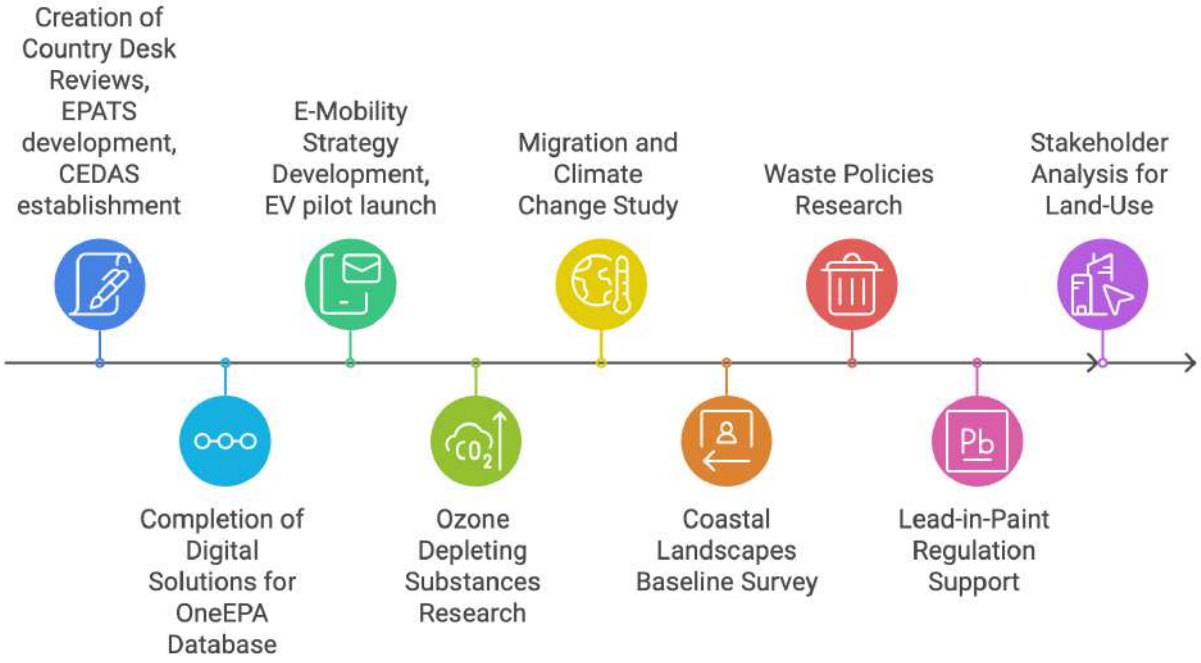


Fig. 7: Innovation, Research, and Technology milestones achieved in 2024

Feature stories

FS1: Using an Environmental Data Hub and Capacity Building to Advance

A few country desk reviews on the main tenets of the EPATS- natural resources, climate change, and environmental health- were carried out in 2024. A three-year operationalisation strategy for the Centre for Environmental Data and Statistics (CEDAS) was created because of this endeavour. A thorough 10-day Geographic Information System (GIS) training was held with the Regional Centre for Mapping Resources for Development (RCMRD)-Kenya to strengthen the CEDAS team's capabilities. This training helped staff members improve their knowledge of spatial data analysis, which is an essential tool for efficient environmental monitoring and decision-making. A solid basis for future success has been established by the advancements made in strategic planning and capacity building under EPATS. EPA has put itself in a better position to manage environmental data, produce high-quality maps, and comprehend Sierra Leone's natural landscape by providing CEDAS staff with state-of-the-art GIS skills. It is anticipated that the three-year CEDAS operationalisation plan will revolutionise the agency's capacity to gather, handle, and distribute environmental data, resulting in better policymaking and enforcement.

FS2: Green Mobility: Using Electric Mobility to Empower Youth

With the conclusion of an e-mobility feasibility assessment that resulted in the creation of the nation's first-ever E-Mobility Strategy, the EPA made major progress in advancing green mobility in Sierra Leone. The organisation established a pathway for young people to pursue green careers by launching 15 electric tricycles (e-kekehs) as part of a pilot program and placing three charging stations in strategic areas. This programme is a component of a larger plan to lower transportation-related carbon emissions while giving young people job opportunity. By providing a cost-effective and ecologically friendly substitute, the e-kekehs have shown the promise of clean energy solutions in local transportation. The e-mobility effort will have a significant impact in the future. The pilot project offers insights into the opportunities and constraints related to the adoption of electric vehicles and acts as a model for e-mobility expansion throughout Sierra Leone. In addition to lessening the transportation sector's environmental impact, EPA is assisting in the development of the next generation of green technicians and entrepreneurs by providing chances for young people. It is anticipated that the pilot's growth will drastically cut carbon emissions, lessen dependency on fossil fuels, and open up a market for e-mobility services in Sierra Leone.





Plate 27: 3W solar kekes introduced during launch of national e-mobility strategy and plan for demonstration and QR codes for documents developed

FS3: A Digital Advancement: The Creation of the OneEPA Database

By creating three interfaces for the planned seven-interface OneEPA database in 2024, EPA achieved a major stride forward in its digital transformation journey. This involved developing a Grievance Redress System (GRS), an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Navigator, and a digital project database called "Project Manager". While the Project Manager centralised project monitoring to improve management and collaboration, the EIA Navigator digitalised the licensing process, making it more effective, transparent, and user-friendly. The GRS was created to increase citizen responsibility and engagement, with assistance from a manual and a toll-free helpline (1099) in collaboration with Orange SL. The purpose of these digital technologies is to improve Sierra Leone's environmental governance's effectiveness and transparency. 2025 and beyond, citizens will find it simpler to file environmental complaints thanks to the GRS, which also guarantees that these problems are resolved quickly. By streamlining the entire evaluation procedure and cutting down on administrative hold-ups, the EIA Navigator will make sure that development projects comply with environmental regulations. Overall, EPA has made great progress in increasing environmental compliance, increasing transparency, and guaranteeing successful citizen participation in environmental management by digitising these essential elements.

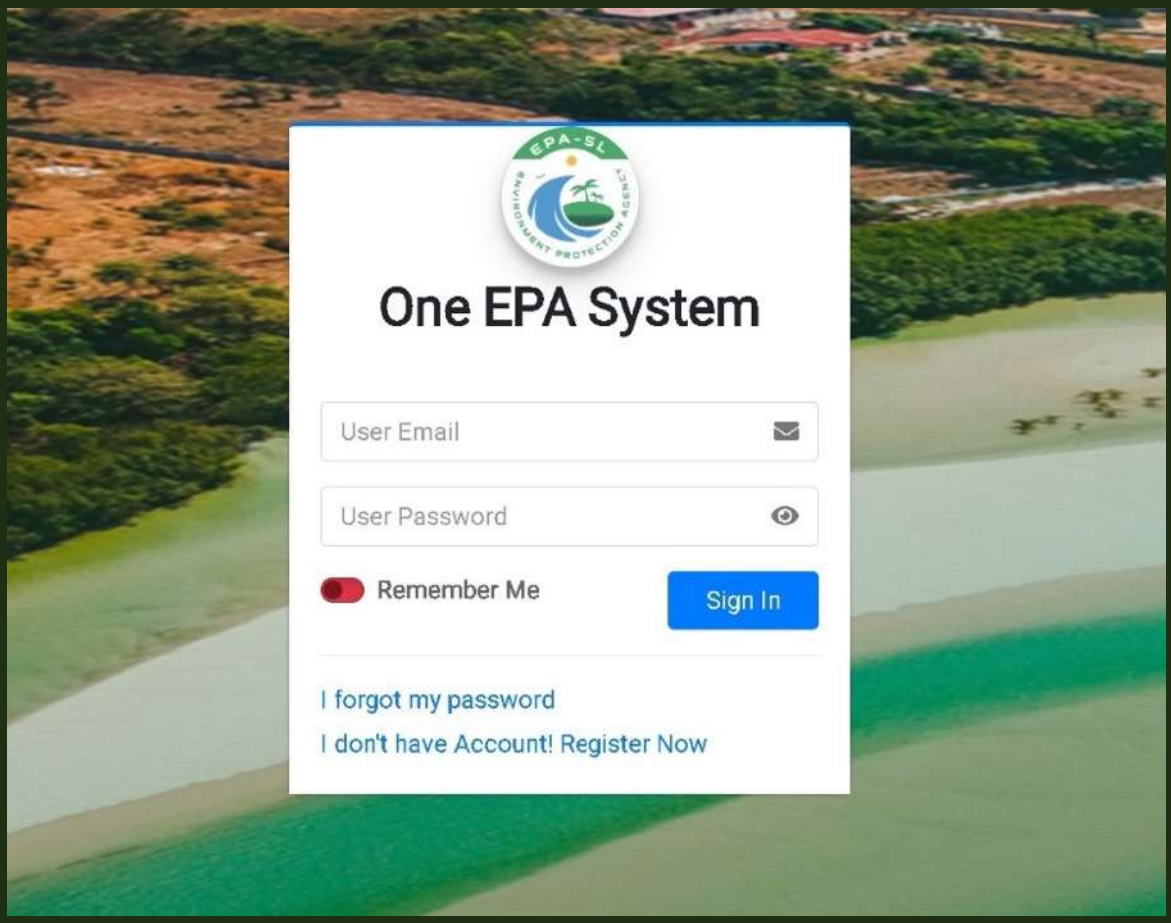


Plate 28: Home page of the OneEPA Database

FS4: Environmental Monitoring Is Being Revolutionised by Mobile Lab

A cutting-edge mobile laboratory for monitoring air and water quality was procured by the EPA through the World Bank's Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project (RUSLP). Going forward, the EPA will be able to quickly examine environmental conditions on-site thanks to the mobile lab's state-of-the-art equipment, which guarantees prompt detection of contaminants and possible environmental dangers. This transportable facility strengthens normal monitoring of critical locations and greatly expands EPA's ability to respond to environmental incidents. The EPA will swiftly and effectively evaluate the quality of the air and water in both urban and rural areas thanks to the mobile lab, revolutionising environmental monitoring in Sierra Leone. The information gathered will help safeguard the environment and public health by informing future policy choices and assisting with enforcement actions. The EPA can improve local participation, inform the public about environmental issues, and cooperate to combat pollution and protect Sierra Leone's natural resources by bringing technology into communities.





Plate 29: Mobile Lab secured through World Bank/RUSLP support

FS5: Empowering Voices: 19,000 Citizens Participate in the 2024 Annual Environmental Scorecard (Pulse Survey)

The 2024 Annual Environmental Scorecard (Pulse Survey) was introduced by the EPA in partnership with Action Aid Sierra Leone and Yamsal Development in a ground-breaking attempt to strengthen community-driven environmental governance. With the help of 19,000 participants from eight districts, this survey gave communities a strong forum to share their environmental management experiences and concerns. The EPA seeks to guarantee that environmental initiatives are in line with community demands by elevating local voices, promoting both technical efficacy and relevance at the grassroots level. Important topics like environmental governance, environmental education, partnerships, and other issues, were evaluated by the Pulse Survey. It promoted accountability and openness in environmental governance by highlighting both areas that required improvement and the accomplishments that had been made. This cooperative method represents a critical turning point in creating a strong feedback mechanism for environmental performance and promoting a people-centered approach.

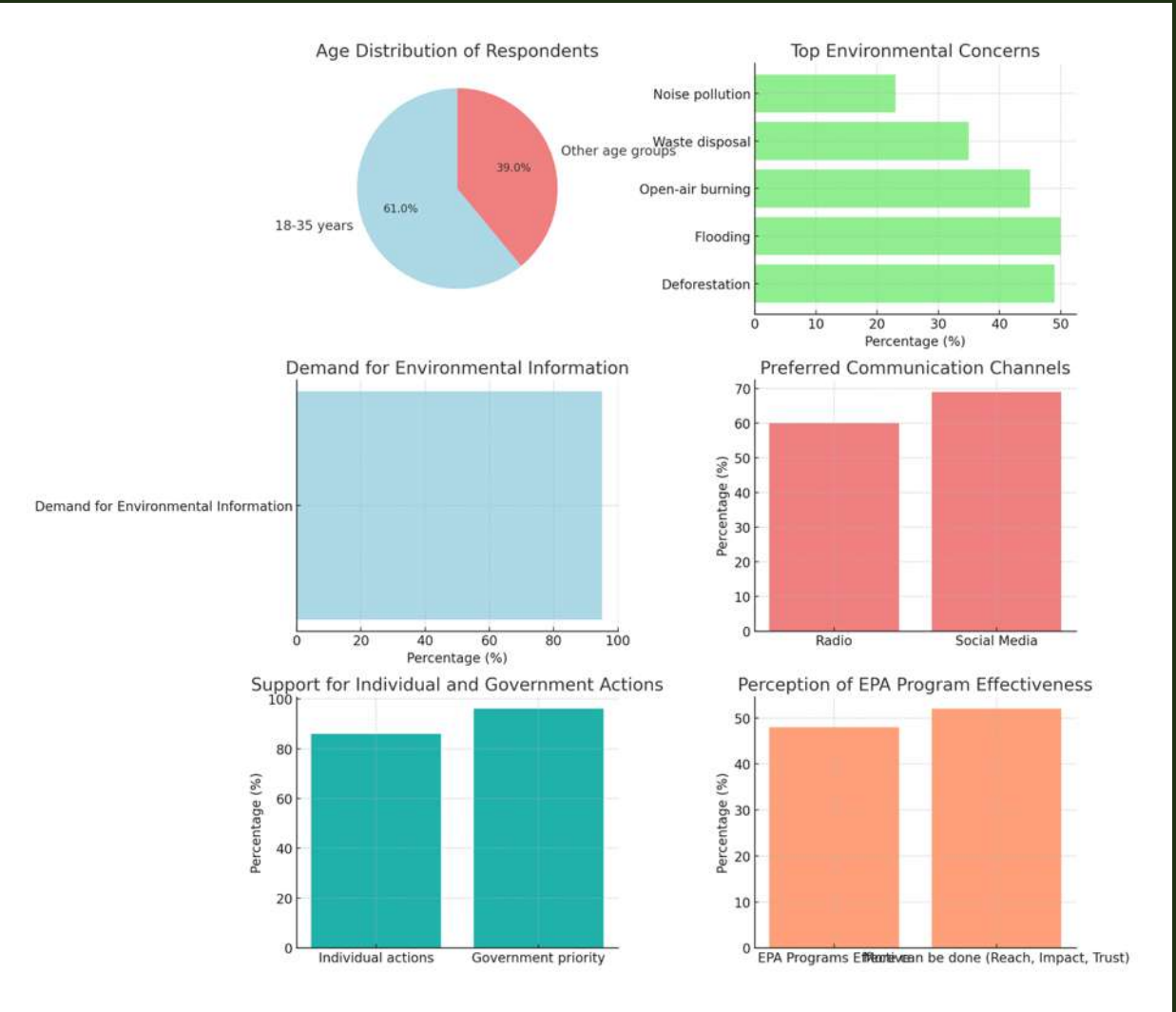


Fig 8: Charts from Pulse Survey conducted in 8 districts

2.6. Systems and Infrastructure



Overview

The EPA made great strides in 2024 to improve its infrastructure and systems, providing a solid basis for Sierra Leone's future environmental administration. The formation of the EPA Infrastructure Committee facilitated creative Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) funding discussions for the headquarters and resulted in the Freetown office being strategically moved to a more useful location. The agency's dedication to sustainable infrastructure nationwide was demonstrated by the Green Horizon Project, a building design created for the building of regional offices starting in 2025. Eight new cars (Toyota Landcruisers) were also purchased to enhance field operations, and significant rebranding initiatives, such as a new logo, website, and safe licence issue procedures, updated the agency's image and bolstered public confidence. Lastly, a query-free audit report emphasised EPA's sound financial management, reaffirming openness and trustworthiness with stakeholders. Together, these achievements improved EPA's operational effectiveness and ability to successfully fulfil its environmental purpose.



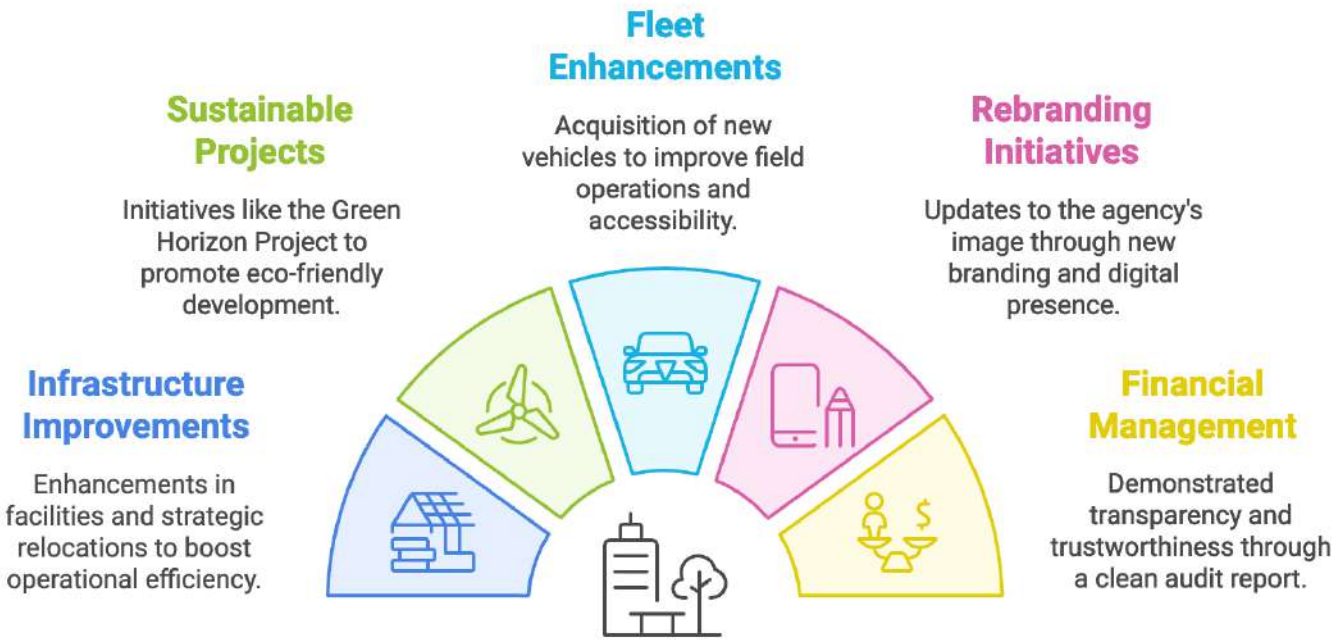


Fig 9: Focus of systems and infrastructure initiatives in 2024

Progress Markers

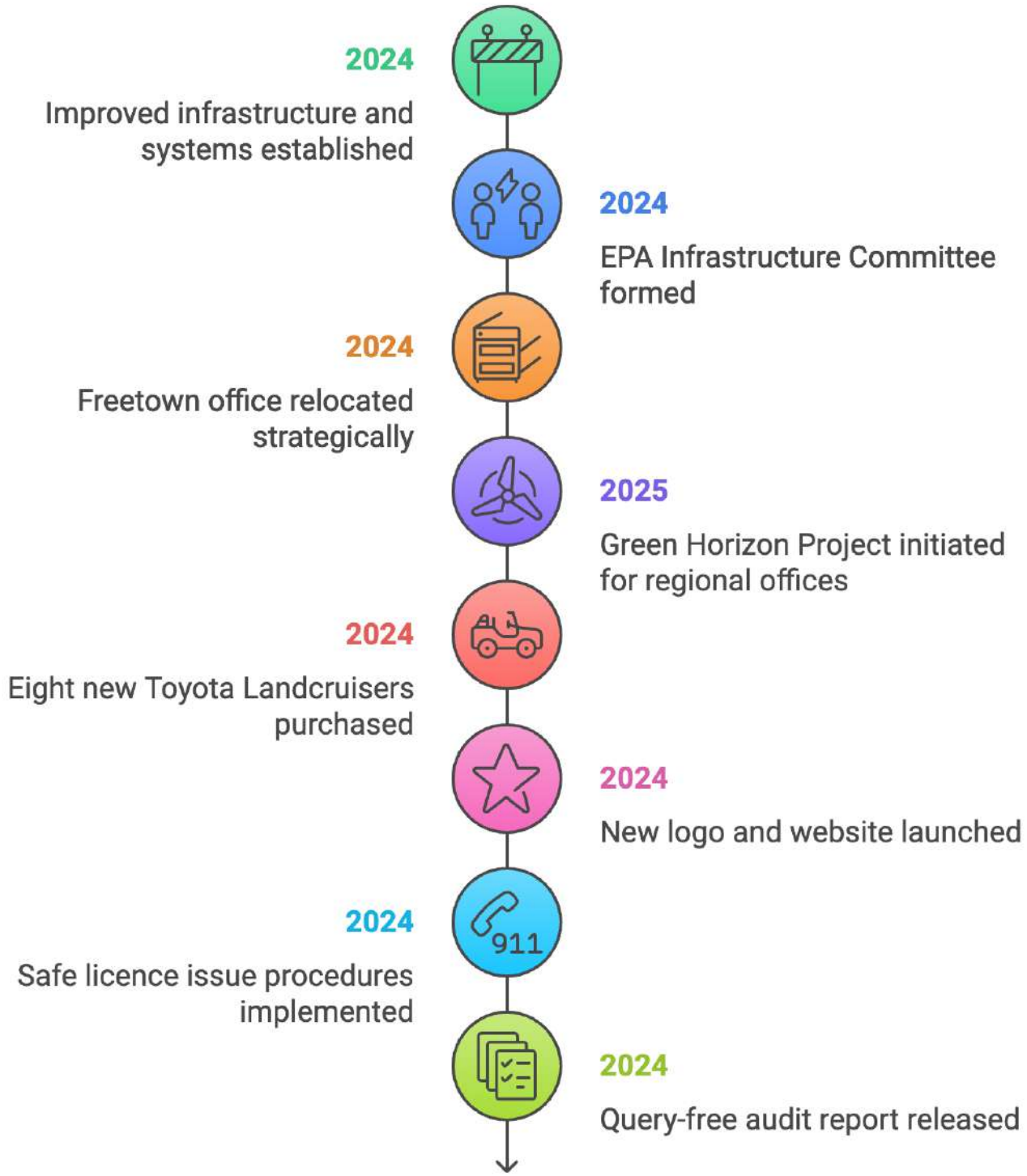


Fig 10: Key systems and infrastructure milestones achieved in 2024

Feature stories

FS1: Building Blocks: BOT Financing and the EPA Infrastructure Committee

By creating an Infrastructure Committee in November 2023 to address persistent problems with office buildings, EPA made a big accomplishment. Investigating previous contracts for the partially built nine-story Freetown office and looking into creative options like Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) finance were the committee's first priorities. The EPA tried to clarify responsibilities and determine a course of action by thoroughly reviewing past agreements. The investigation of BOT funding offered a possible means of finishing the building without unduly taxing government resources, demonstrating EPA's dedication to overcoming obstacles with ingenuity and tenacity. Better infrastructure will be made possible by these preemptive steps, and it is anticipated that this will support EPA's activities in the years to come. When finished, the new headquarters will provide a secure and comfortable workplace, enabling employees to work more productively and enhancing the agency's capacity to deliver vital services to the country. The committee's work has brought attention to how crucial strategic planning is to resolving physical infrastructure issues that have impeded the organization's advancement in the past.



Plate 30: Unfinished EPA headquarters in Freetown

FS2: Increasing Knowledge: Global Staff Development and Training

The EPA understands that to properly address Sierra Leone's environmental concerns, capacity building was essential. Staff members travelled to various countries for about 50 training sessions and conferences in 2024. Building the skills necessary to manage the nation's environmental priorities requires exposure to international environmental best practices, standards, and information exchanges, all of which were provided by these engagements. Participation in significant conferences and staff exchanges in Liberia, Zimbabwe, and Japan offered priceless chances to build relationships, establish alliances, and advance EPA programmes. As the agency improved its capacity to report on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) and conform to international norms, the advantages of this training were already apparent. These expanded abilities and global partnerships have enhanced EPA's position as a leader in environmental governance in Sierra Leone and created avenues for future financing opportunities. The EPA is better prepared to handle urgent environmental issues and promote sustainable development nationwide because of the knowledge acquired from these interactions.



Plate 31: Staff from the CCS at the GHG Inventory Training in Kigali



Plate 32: Staff at the Planet Gold meeting in Manila



Plate 33: Staff at Regional Montreal Protocol Engagement in Mozambique



Plate 34: Staff at Global Transparency Forum in Tokyo



Plate 35: Staff at CBIT learning exchange in Monrovia



Plate 36: Staff at Urban Shift training in Morocco



Plate 37: Staff at SDG14 training in the USA

FS3: Green Horizon: Creating Eco-Friendly Regional Offices

The EPA created the "Green Horizon Project"- a template for new regional offices that put sustainability and functionality first- to improve the effectiveness of its operations throughout Sierra Leone. Multiple office spaces, a store for necessary equipment, a showroom specifically for the Centre for Environmental Data and Statistics (CEDAS), and a conference boardroom were all carefully incorporated into the office building design. The EPA infrastructure committee is leading this project, which demonstrates the agency's dedication to constructing regional facilities that complement its sustainability philosophy. In addition to offering much-needed contemporary infrastructure, the design of these buildings attempts to promote environmental consciousness by including CEDAS showrooms, which will act as hubs for regional outreach and education. Decentralising EPA's operations and guaranteeing that environmental governance is applied successfully and uniformly throughout Sierra Leone are the goals of this effort. Additionally, by improving cooperation with regional stakeholders, the new regional offices will increase the effectiveness of the agency's initiatives.





Plate 38: Design for EPA offices in the regions

FS4: Streamlining the Process: Purchasing Vehicles for Field Work

An ageing fleet of vehicles presented EPA with major obstacles during 2024, impeding enforcement efforts, environmental audits, and field monitoring. To solve this, the EPA used a UNDP co-creation programme to acquire eight new cars. These vehicles have significantly increased the agency's capacity to carry out field operations, improved employee safety, and guaranteed prompt reactions to environmental issues. The new cars represent EPA's commitment to operational effectiveness and removing logistical obstacles that have hindered its work in the past. The EPA can now more efficiently fulfil its responsibility throughout Sierra Leone thanks to dependable transportation. New car purchases have raised employee satisfaction and expanded the agency's ability to keep an eye on environmental compliance, especially in remote locations. These enhancements are essential to achieving EPA's goals and guaranteeing that the agency will keep up its enforcement of laws and promotion of sustainable practices nationwide.

FS5: Enhancing Workflows and Rebranding to Strengthen Brand and Processes

To strengthen the agency's identity and optimise internal procedures, EPA implemented major branding and workflow changes in 2024. This involved updating work resources such as PowerPoint templates and letterheads, creating a new logo, and redesigning the official website. The EPA created official folders for license distribution, implemented licensing securitisation procedures, and drafted an Environmental Management Systems (EMS) Playbook in response to proponent reporting challenges. To make sure that all parties involved are aware of their roles and obligations, a condensed version of the EPA Act was also produced and will be provided with licenses beginning in the middle of next year. The agency's operational integrity and public image have improved because of these modifications. The EPA showed a significant commitment to building stakeholder trust by modernising communication mechanisms and guaranteeing openness in licence issuance. While the new branding has strengthened the EPA's standing as a forward-thinking and aggressive environmental authority in Sierra Leone, the streamlined procedures have increased workflow efficiency. It is anticipated that these actions will improve stakeholder confidence and convey the agency's mandate and mission more effectively.



OLD LOGO



NEW LOGO

Plate 39: Old and new logos of the EPA

FS6: Outstanding Financial Management: Audit Without Any Queries

The fiscal year's clean audit report was one of EPA's most noteworthy achievements in 2024. The agency demonstrated flawless financial management procedures and regulatory compliance when it successfully finished an audit without receiving any questions. This accomplishment demonstrated the value of the agency's updated financial practices, which included weekly income tracking spreadsheets and staff training on QuickBooks. EPA's trust with partners, donors, and the government is enhanced by this achievement. Sustaining confidence and obtaining further finance depend heavily on effective financial management. The EPA's dedication to accountability and openness is demonstrated by the clean audit, which puts it in a good position to receive more funding from foreign partners. This accomplishment will play a key role in improving the agency's ability to gather the resources required to support significant environmental projects and activities in the future.



2.7. Environmental Risk Knowledge Creation



Overview

Through several programs, the EPA significantly improved public engagement and knowledge of environmental risks in 2024. Through extensive social media outreach on sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (previously Twitter), and LinkedIn, the agency spread environmental themes to a wide range of users. Furthermore, the EPA promoted community-driven environmental stewardship by establishing nature clubs in schools, establishing lively ecomurals, and holding village-to-village community outreach events around the country. Another significant achievement was the effective mobilisation of commercial funding for environmental communication initiatives like the "GreenRun," which drew 12 business partners. To increase climate education throughout Sierra Leone, these initiatives were supported by the premiere of the "Unearth Sierra" movie episodes, several talk shows on TV and radio, and strategic alliances with regional radio stations. When taken as a whole, these programs increased community involvement in environmental conservation projects and raised public awareness of environmental hazards.

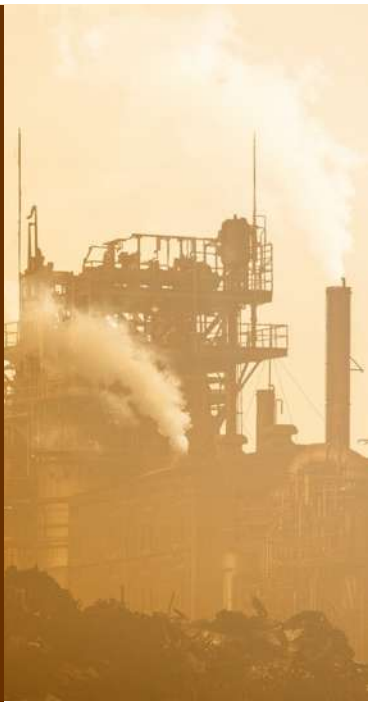




Fig 11: Key public engagement initiatives in 2024

Progress Markers

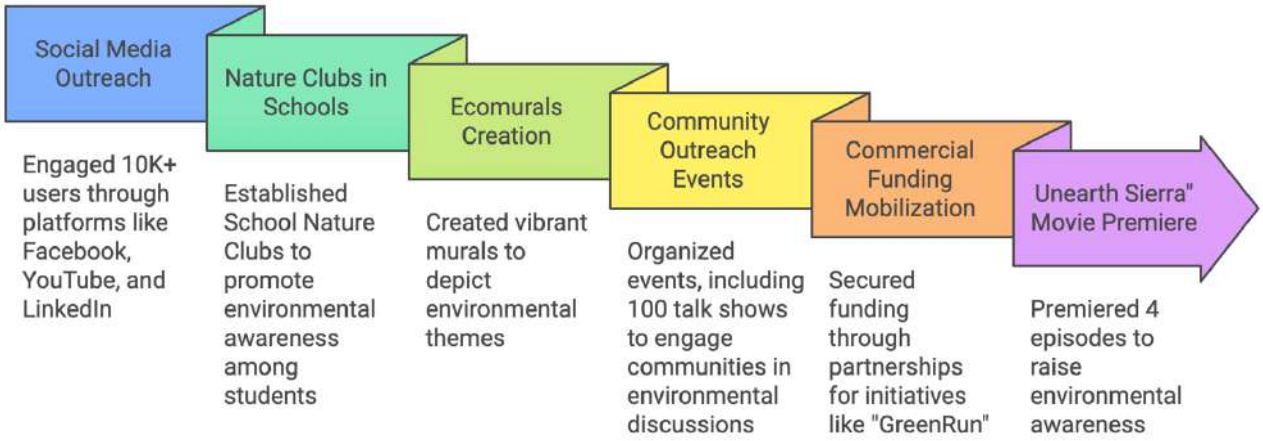


Fig 12: Key public engagement milestones achieved in 2024

Feature stories

FS1: Using Social Media to Increase Environmental Awareness

The EPA increased its social media outreach on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (previously Twitter), and LinkedIn in 2024, greatly expanding its reach and influence. The EPA was able to successfully engage a wide range of audiences and increase awareness of urgent environmental issues because of their multi-platform strategy. Through thought-provoking initiatives, live Q&A sessions, informative movies, and interactive posts, the EPA introduced environmental issues into thousands of Sierra Leoneans' everyday interactions. More people were taking part in conversations on environmental stewardship and accepting personal responsibility for sustainable actions, which immediately increased public engagement. Going forward, the momentum generated by this extensive social media campaign will keep spreading the word about EPA, especially when it comes to rallying support for neighbourhood-based environmental projects. The EPA is creating a culture of environmental consciousness by keeping environmental issues in the public view. This will pave the way for improved policy advocacy and group action in 2025 and beyond. Social media's widespread use has been shown to be a successful strategy for changing people's behaviour and motivating them to take an active role in preserving Sierra Leone's natural heritage.



Plate 40: QR Codes for EPA's social media pages

FS2: Using Strategic Initiatives to Engage Industry

The EPA took a big stride in garnering commercial funding for environmental communication initiatives in 2024 when it developed a Corporate Strategy with nine items specifically designed for public involvement. During the GreenRun event in June 2024, the approach not only highlighted important areas where the involvement of the private sector might have the greatest impact, but it also resulted in fruitful partnerships with twelve industry participants. The GreenRun became an example of corporate and community partnership thanks to the financial donations and active involvement of these business partners, which demonstrated the growing interest and dedication of private firms to environmental causes. This programme has significant long-term effects. It is an effective example of mobilising the commercial sector to support environmental concerns, which is essential for expanding EPA's outreach and communication initiatives. To ensure that environmental sustainability becomes a shared objective across society, the EPA plans to build on this foundation by establishing even more opportunities for industry and public involvement through the introduction of the Green Innovation Expo and Green Heroes Awards in the 2025 WED Eco-Festival.

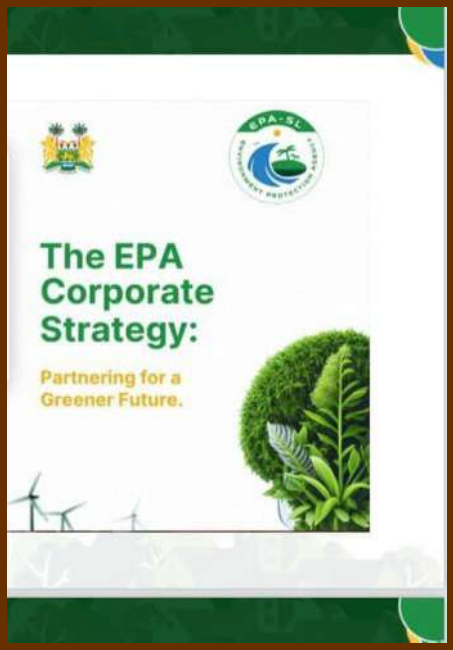


Plate 41: EPA Corporate Strategy

FS3: Honouring World Environment Day: The Achievement of the GreenRun

Held in honour of World Environment Day (WED) 2024, the EPA's GreenRun event was a dynamic assembly that united Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and members of the commercial sector to promote environmental conservation. Raising awareness of sustainable living and the pressing need for climate action was made possible by this inclusive event. Diverse groups' involvement reaffirmed the value of tackling environmental issues from a societal perspective, encouraging group ownership and a sense of community in environmental preservation. In 2025, the GreenRun will change its name to the WED Eco-Festival, which will feature a Green Innovation Expo and a Green Heroes Awards programme honouring people and groups who have made noteworthy environmental protection efforts. The EPA hopes to increase engagement and promote meaningful change by making environmental advocacy more approachable and engaging for younger generations with the addition of a social media challenge.



Plate 42: Tape-cutting at GreenRun event in Freetown on World Environment Day

FS4: WasteXpress: Transforming the Management of Waste



Plate 43: Handing over of 15 marked 300L bins to State House officials

An important turning point for Sierra Leone's waste management efforts was the introduction of WasteXpress in 2024. By placing bins in strategic metropolitan places, starting with fifteen 300 litre bins at State House and fifteen at the House of Parliament, WasteXpress sought to improve community convenience in waste segregation and disposal while also promoting a cleaner environment. The campaign addressed the problem of littering and promoted appropriate waste management practices by emphasising the deployment of easily accessible rubbish bins. By lowering the danger of diseases linked to garbage, this initiative not only enhanced the aesthetics of public areas but also benefited public health. With additional bins being placed in underprivileged areas and educational initiatives encouraging appropriate waste disposal, WasteXpress's influence is anticipated to increase over the next several years. This programme establishes a standard for community-driven waste management techniques and demonstrates EPA's dedication to developing creative and scalable answers to urban environmental problems.

FS5: "Unearth Sierra": Highlighting Environmental Concerns through Documentary Films

A key component of the EPA's public awareness effort is the "Unearth Sierra" video series. Episodes that focused on important topics such as the effects of climate change on vulnerable coastal communities and the environmental effects of river dredging for illicit mining were broadcast on AYV TV, SLBC, and social media in 2024. By employing gripping storytelling and visual narratives to promote comprehension and empathy, the series played a significant role in drawing environmental issues to the attention of a wider audience. The foundation for increasing public involvement and promoting environmental preservation action has been established by these videos. The EPA hopes to further encourage environmental stewardship and shared responsibility when more episodes are created. "Unearth Sierra" is significantly contributing to the development of a more knowledgeable and ecologically conscientious population by keeping the spotlight on Sierra Leone's environmental issues and the neighbourhood-level initiatives to address them.

- **Raid on dredge miners:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPZRFNSu3CY
- **Disappearing islands:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCZOSuWeaQg&t=56s
- **Charcoal burning:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el_SwHKjlLQ&t=10s

FS6: Collaborations with the Media for Environmental Education

More than 100 episodes of environment-focused radio and television talk shows in 2024 greatly enhanced EPA's outreach to local media. The impact of EPA's messaging was notably increased by collaborations with AIRadio, which offered platforms for free airtime devoted to environmental and climate education initiatives. Even the most isolated areas now have access to vital information because of these media collaborations, which made significant subjects like waste management, biodiversity conservation, and climate change adaptation available to audiences across the country. Reaching a variety of audiences through radio and television has been shown to be successful, particularly in places with poor internet connectivity. These initiatives will keep educating the public, encouraging behavioural change, and equipping communities with the information they need to take an active role in environmental governance. Community-driven approaches to sustainability are reinforced and environmental issues are kept at the forefront of public discourse because of EPA's regular appearance in conventional media.



Plate 44: Regular EPA Talk Show at AIRadio on Tuesdays



3. Financial Performance

Donors' grants and pledges

New funds from international partners for current and prospective projects totalled $12.5 million and NLe 7, 439,818. Additionally, partners such as Breakthrough Action and Africell (SL) Limited offered in-kind assistance for the corporately sponsored GreenRun amounting to around $10,700. Various beverage businesses provided various drinks for the GreenRun on World Environment Day, Africell donated a year-long free one-hour radio program slot to the EPA on Tuesdays, and Orange donated a toll-free line for the Grievance Redress System, which will be introduced next year. These significant sums demonstrate the agency's proactive attempts to strengthen ties and increase its pool of finance for sustainability projects. The direct support from corporate partners also shows how private-sector players are becoming increasingly engaged in environmental awareness and action.

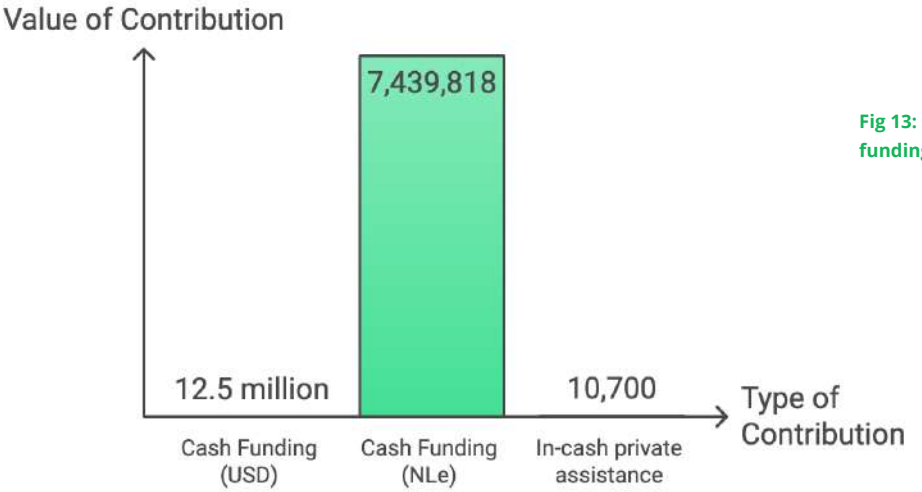


Fig 13: Externally-sourced funding for EPA initiatives

These figures exclude direct technical assistance offered by regional programs run by Grid Arendal, IUCN, UNEP, LEEP, NDC Partnership, and UNDP. They also do not include funds pledged for upcoming activities, such as $450,000 from UNEP for a thorough review of the NBSAP, €540,000 from GIZ/BMZ for the development of NDC3.0 through the NDC Partnership, $165,000 from UNOPS for the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT), and UNDP, which has committed to funding post-COP29 engagements and the development of the country's carbon market framework.

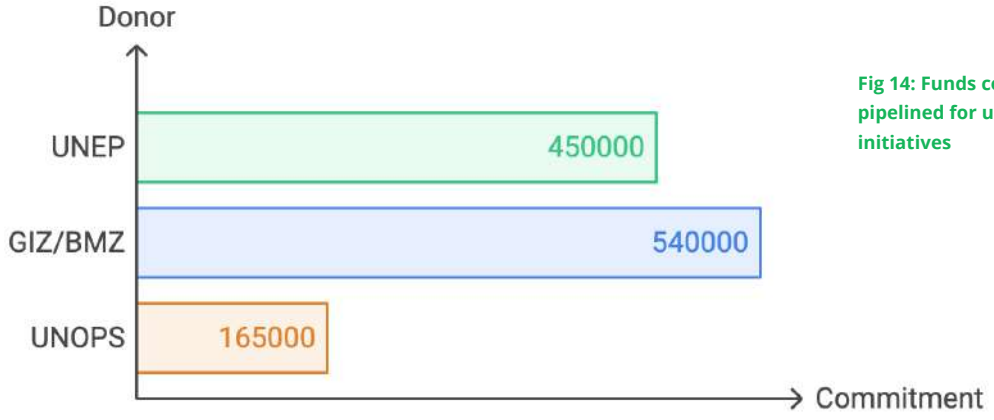


Fig 14: Funds committed and pipelined for upcoming EPA initiatives

Revenue and expenses from internal sources

The EPA is a self-sustaining institution that primarily earns money through traditional means, such as licensing fees for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), screening and application costs, ground truthing fees, and fines. The Fiscal Management and Control Act of 2017 established the Treasury Single Accounts (TSA) system, which entails depositing all non-donor-generated income into the TSA Revenue Collection Account at the Bank of Sierra Leone (BSL). The EPA then receives its 90% portion of the revenue from the Ministry of Finance to its Disbursement Account, which is likewise kept at BSL. This money is used to fund everyday operational expenses, such as salaries, Board allowances, and environmental management costs.

During FY2024, the Finance Directorate managed several significant activities, including the submission of the FY2025 Strategic Plan and Budget to the Ministry of Finance. The statutory audit for the 2023 fiscal year, which included three donor-funded initiatives, was successfully completed, with all three projects getting unqualified audit opinions. The agency also guaranteed that worker salary, board allowances, and tax payments to the National Revenue Authority (NRA) and NASSIT were processed on time. Financial personnel also reconciled bank accounts and submitted quarterly financial reports on time.

It is important to note that the EPA exceeded its expected yearly revenue budget of **NLe 82,308,100** by **NLe 66,037,520.34** in FY2024, resulting in a total income of **NLe 148,345,620.34** mobilised in 11 months (from January to November 2024). The money comes from EIA license and monitoring fees, screening and application fees, ground truthing fees, and other sources like penalties, fines, public disclosure, and permits, demonstrating the EPA's good management of financial and technical resources. However, despite the significant growth in revenue, the agency's expenses have also increased. Our 2024 expenses totalled **NLe 97,023,439.12**, which included **NLe 51,916,844.84** for personnel compensation, **NLe 326,630.8** for board expenses, **NLe 13,875,087.20** for operating expenses, **NLe 19,650,610.60** for environmental and monitoring program expenses, and **NLe 8,565,681.12** for capital expenditures (to procure six vehicles and six plots of land in Kenema). The total projected revenue for 2025 to cover recurrent and capital expenses, including staff emoluments; operating expenses; construction of two regional offices in Bo and Kenema; completion of three floors of the Freetown building; procurement of five vehicles, two Jet skis and two motorbikes is **NLe184,950,000.**

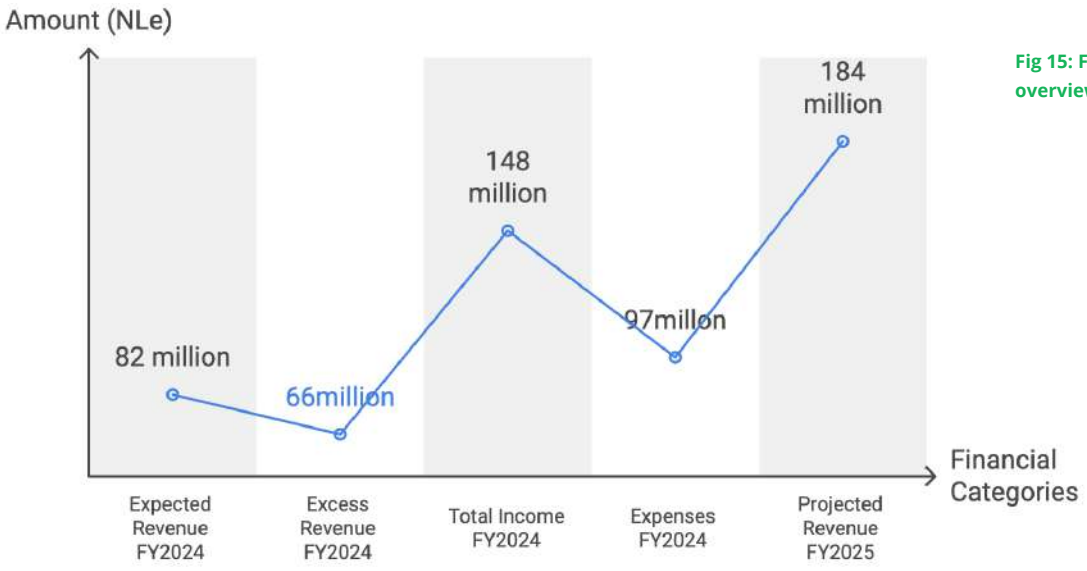


Fig 15: Financial overview (2024 – 2025)

4. Partnerships and Collaborations

Overview

We made great progress in 2024 in cultivating alliances and teamwork that are essential to furthering the country's environmental goals. Securing several funds and assistance for a range of projects, fostering closer ties with regional and global organisations, and putting significant initiatives into action across multiple environmental sectors are some of the major accomplishments. Notable collaborations included the Abidjan Convention, the International Ocean Institute-Southern Africa, and the IUCN to improve marine management through coastal resilience and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP). Additionally, the EPA collaborated closely with Common Seas, Grid Arendal, and other partners to address coastal zone management and marine debris. The EPA was able to secure significant funding for NDC policy effectiveness assessments and climate action scaling through partnerships with UNOPS ICAT, UNEP CCC, GIZ/BMZ, and the NDC Partnership. The $8.9 million climate adaptation technology initiative for MSMEs was made possible by the agency's partnership with UNIDO and SMEDA, demonstrating EPA's dedication to resilience and sustainable development. These collaborations demonstrate EPA's commitment to using partnerships and collaborations to solve environmental issues and promote sustainable growth.





Plate 45: Visit by Liberian Ambassador to Sierra Leone and Head of the Liberian EPA in October



Plate 46: Visit by Daniella Raik, Conservation International



Plate 47: Visit by Canadian High Commissioner to Ghana



Plate 48: Visit by Iceland Embassy in Sierra Leone

Feature stories

FS1: Empowering Youth for Environmental Innovation: EPA and UNDP Launch Youth Innovation Challenge

The Youth Innovation Challenge, an initiative to develop young talent in environmental innovation, has been successfully conducted by the EPA Sustainability Incubator in partnership with the UNDP Accelerator Lab. At the end of the competition, twelve competitors received practical training to improve their skills in climate and environmental solutions, and three exceptional finalists earned funds to realise their creative ideas. In addition to directly empowering young people, this programme encourages innovative thinking and action to address urgent environmental concerns in Sierra Leone. Young innovators are currently making a difference by coming up with innovative ideas, and future effects will include more young people getting involved in environmental projects, boosting community resilience, and producing a new generation of environmental leaders.



Plate 49: Cross-section of finalists at the Bootcamp

FS2: Forging Strategic Partnerships: Boosting Sustainability Initiatives and Monitoring Impact

Through the Programme Accelerator and Sustainability Incubator initiatives, we held numerous meetings and effectively built a Partnership approach and developed a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) strategy for delivering the EPATS. These actions have been essential for both creating new projects to improve Sierra Leone's environmental resilience and tracking the effects of ongoing projects. The agency's operations are already more effective and efficient thanks to this strategic approach, which guarantees well-coordinated programming interventions. In the future, these efforts will set the stage for significant collaborations, enhanced openness, and quantifiable advancements in the pursuit of the country's environmental objectives.

FS3: Conservation Collaboration: New Partnerships Drive Local Environmental Actions

Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) have been signed by the EPA with the Flood Hazard Research Centre (FHRC) at Middlesex University in the United Kingdom and the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL). As part of this partnership, CSSL and EPA are working together to implement a small grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies to carry out important environmental projects that will tackle the problems associated with biodiversity conservation, the ratification of the biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty. Knowledge sharing, capacity building, and the creation of community-based conservation initiatives are all being improved by this partnership. The partnership's long-term goals include increasing conservation efforts, utilising global knowledge, and eventually strengthening Sierra Leone's ability to withstand environmental and climate shocks.



Plate 50: Cross-section of CSSL staff visiting the EPA

FS4: Coastal Resilience: Strengthening Partnerships for Sustainable Marine Management

To tackle important marine environmental issues, EPA has formed a fruitful collaboration with Grid Arendal, Common Seas, IUCN, and the International Ocean Institute-Southern Africa (IOI-SA). A Marine Litter Baseline Survey, Marine Spatial Plan (MSP), and successful coastal zone management techniques are the expected products of the teamwork. As a result of these collaborations, efforts to combat marine trash and improve the management of coastal resources have already made headway. Both coastal communities and the larger marine environment will gain from these activities continued and future effects, which include improved sustainable use of marine resources, healthier marine ecosystems, and increased coastal ...



Plate 51: Cross-section of trainees in Marine Spatial Planning

FS5: Building GIS Expertise: Establishing CEDAS with UNEP Support

Using funds from the UNEP CBIT initiative and in partnership with the Regional Centre for Mapping Resources for Development (RCMRD), EPA provided key staff with a 10-day GIS training. With the help of the acquisition of vital equipment, such as a plotter, desktop computers and ESRI software, this capacity-building project aimed to improve the fundamental skills needed to establish the Centre for Environmental Data and Statistics (CEDAS). The agency's capacity to efficiently collect, handle, and evaluate environmental data has already been improved by the training and tools. In the future, these advancements will strengthen environmental monitoring activities, enhance EPA's ability to make data-driven decisions, and assist in developing conservation programs with precise geographic information.





Plate 52: Cross-section of GIS trainees in Freetown and Bo

FS6: Studying the Climate-Migration Nexus: Partnership with IOM

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the EPA started a study project on the relationship between migration and climate change that focuses on two coastal villages in Sierra Leone. With the assistance of environmental monitoring tools to guarantee data fidelity, this study attempts to investigate the connections between the effects of climate change and human migration. An improved comprehension of how migration patterns in vulnerable communities are being impacted by climatic problems is the study's immediate effect. Better policy creation to address climate-driven displacement and increased resilience for coastal people through focused adaption measures are among the long-term effects.



Plate 53: Equipment provided by IOM for coastal resilience research activities

FS7: Joint Enforcement: MOAs with SLP and RSLAF for Environmental Protection

To carry out cooperative patrols for environmental enforcement, the EPA has inked Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) with the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP). These patrols are intended to improve the protection of natural resources against unlawful exploitation and environmental crime, as well as to fortify regulatory compliance. Because of this partnership, enforcement actions are now more widely known, which helps to promote deterrence against environmental infractions. These cooperative patrols will be essential for maintaining biodiversity, ensuring environmental regulations are followed, and encouraging a compliance culture in the local communities.



Plate 54: The EC and CDS, after signing the MOA

FS8: Supporting Climate Champions: Funding COP 29 Participation and Capacity Building

Topping-up funds from Climate Parliament UK, the EPA facilitated the attendance of four Members of Parliament (MPs) at COP 29. To enable MPs to successfully lead climate action at the policy level, EPA also obtained a Green Climate Fund (GCF) readiness grant through this cooperation to strengthen their capacities in climate governance. MPs now have a better awareness of international climate negotiations, which gives them the ability to actively influence national climate policy. In the future, this will guarantee a unified strategy for tackling climate issues at the national and worldwide levels and increase legislative support for environmental projects.

FS9: Securing Funds for NDC Implementation: Collaboration with UNOPS and UNEP

Through good collaboration with UNOPS ICAT and UNEP CCC, EPA was able to obtain a $165,000 grant for policy effectiveness research on the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) as well as pertinent trainings and evaluations. This will be crucial in assessing how well the country's climate policies are working and pinpointing areas that need work. The EPA's improved ability to comprehend the performance of present policies and develop data-driven enhancements is the immediate advantage. These studies and capacity-building initiatives will eventually result in more successful climate action and guarantee that the nation's pledges are in line with global climate ambitions.



Plate 55: Meeting with ICAT Team at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan

FS10: Scaling Up NDC 3.0: Funding Secured for Sierra Leone's Climate Commitments

Through the NDC Partnership and GIZ/BMZ, EPA has been able to obtain a €540,000 funding for the creation of NDC 3.0. The country's NDC will be updated, climate activities will be scaled up, and policies will be in line with the most recent global climate goals thanks to this investment. This money has already given the NDC a platform to progress, keeping it both ambitious and attainable. Implementing strong climate policies, boosting international assistance, and enhancing Sierra Leone's ability to withstand the effects of climate change are all anticipated outcomes of this award.
Please note, I have also been unable to source pictures for this event



Plate 56: Presentation of requirements for NDC development at GoSL-BMZ dialogue in Freetown

FS11: Supporting MSMEs with Green Technology: Collaboration with UNIDO and SMEDA

To support sustainable business practices, EPA is co-implementing an adaptation technology project for MSMEs worth $8.9 million with UNIDO and the Sierra Leone Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDA). To enable businesses to implement more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly technology, a total of $250,000 was obtained through the Montreal Protocol to outfit Centres of Excellence (COEs) for refrigeration. MSMEs and businesses generally will have easier access to sustainable technologies, which will lower their operating expenses and carbon footprint. Long-term effects will include increased climate resilience, increased competitiveness of MSMEs in Sierra Leone, and a greater contribution to the nation's sustainable economic growth.



Plate 57: Newly refurbished COE at the Government Technical Institute in Bo

FS12: A Significant Development in Cooperation: The First Government-CSO Climate Change Conference

In an effort to promote communication between policymakers and civil society organisations, we organised the first-ever Government-CSO Climate Change Conference in partnership with Terra Tech Germany, SEND (a national NGO), and other stakeholders. This momentous occasion offered a broad forum for creating integrated strategies for climate resilience, increasing the involvement of CSOs in climate governance, and fortifying cooperative endeavours for sustainable growth. An actionable roadmap for strengthening climate adaptation activities was produced and a joint communique signed because of the conference, setting the stage for more extensive collaborations and locally driven climate projects throughout Sierra Leone.



Plate 58: EPA staff on stage during side event at the conference

FS13: Developing Strategic Alliances: Promoting Lead-Free Paint Initiatives in Sierra Leone

The EPA is making great progress in Sierra Leone's transition to a lead-free environment through our partnership with the Lead Exposure Elimination Project (LEEP). The Lead-in-Paint Regulation was developed with the early help of LEEP for paint studies and consultations. Now, with a renewed agreement that runs until 2027, LEEP will help administer the rule, encourage public participation, support additional paint research, and promote alternatives to paint that contains lead. This collaboration is a prime example of our mutual commitment to environmental safety and public health. In addition to upholding lead-free laws, we are strengthening community resilience and protecting environmental health by offering sustainable solutions and raising awareness. We are eager to observe how this affects environmental enforcement and the welfare of communities in Sierra Leone.



Plate 59: Cross-section of staff during visit by LEEP Director

5. Challenges and Looking Ahead

Challenges Faced During the Year

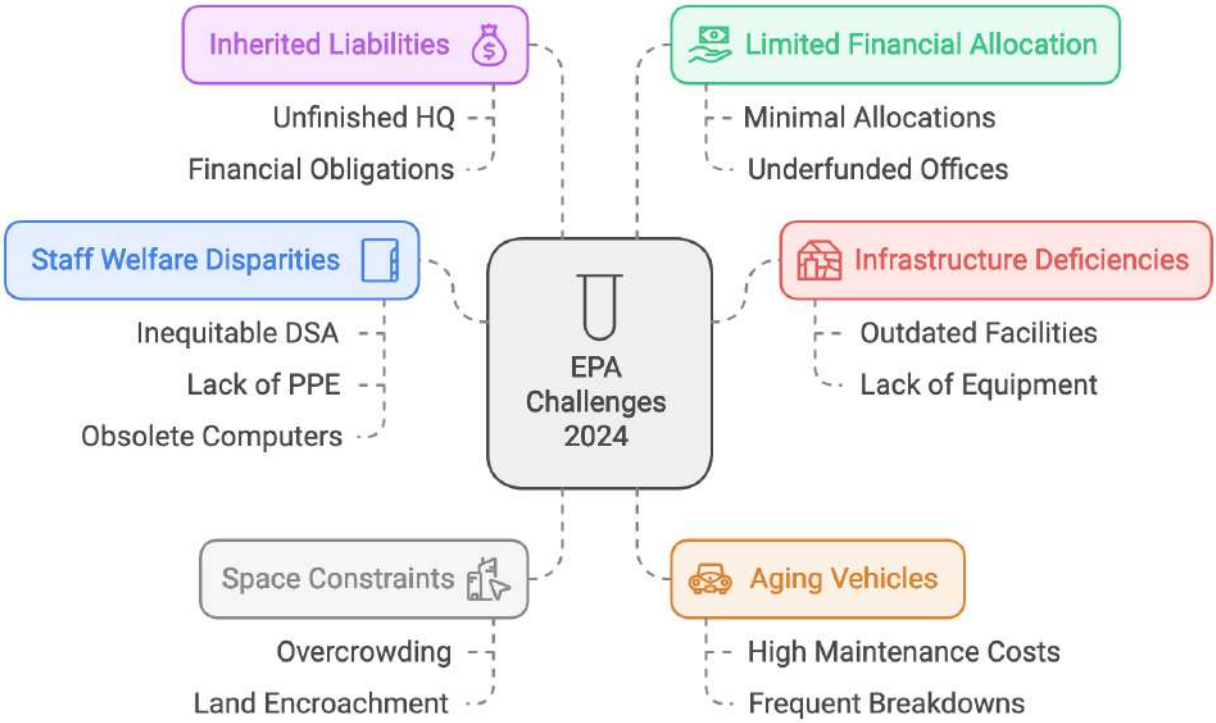


Fig 16: Key challenges faced by the EPA

During 2024, the EPA faced several formidable challenges that significantly impacted operational effectiveness and risked undermining long-term progress. These challenges included:

- **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Outdated facilities both at the headquarters and regional offices created a challenging work environment. The regional offices in Makeni, Kono, Bo, and Kenema are rented and lacked basic equipment, such as office furniture and environmental monitoring tools. The main office in Freetown was also in a dilapidated condition, prone to flooding, and unable to accommodate the growing workforce.



Plate 60: Flooding at Dundas Street- former location of the office

- **Space Constraints:** Staff numbers exceeded office space capacity, leading to overcrowding and an inability to provide a conducive workspace. The Bo and Kono offices were facing threats of encroachment on the lands acquired, while the land in Makeni had already been lost to encroachers.

- **Aging Vehicles and Limited Mobility:** Majority of the vehicles used by the agency were procured in 2014/15 and had reached the end of their serviceable lives. High maintenance costs and frequent breakdowns hampered the effectiveness of environmental audits and monitoring visits, limiting EPA's ability to fulfill its regulatory duties effectively.



Plate 61: Old vehicles in the fleet causing frequent breakdowns in the field

- **Inherited Liabilities:** EPA inherited significant liabilities for an unfinished 9-storey headquarters at New England in Freetown. The financial obligations surrounding the building posed a substantial strain on the agency's resources.

- **Staff Welfare Disparities:** There were major disparities in the Daily Subsistence Allowances (DSA) between field staff and headquarters staff. Field staff received only NLe 100 daily compared to NLe 700 for headquarters staff, despite having to sleep over at times. Additionally, there was a lack of basic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which negatively impacted staff morale. Similarly, many employees lacked computers or were given obsolete ones (often old ones used by Freetown staff), which reduced productivity. Regional transfers were frequently punitive, leaving moved employees without meaningful travel or work possibilities, limiting their development and engagement.

- **Limited Financial and Resource Allocation:** Allocations for regional offices were minimal and often transferred into staff accounts. Some regional offices were barely functional, with no furniture, printers, photocopiers, or even visitor chairs. Staff in some regional offices had to pay for electricity bills personally, highlighting severe underfunding.

How EPA Overcame Key Obstacles in 12 months

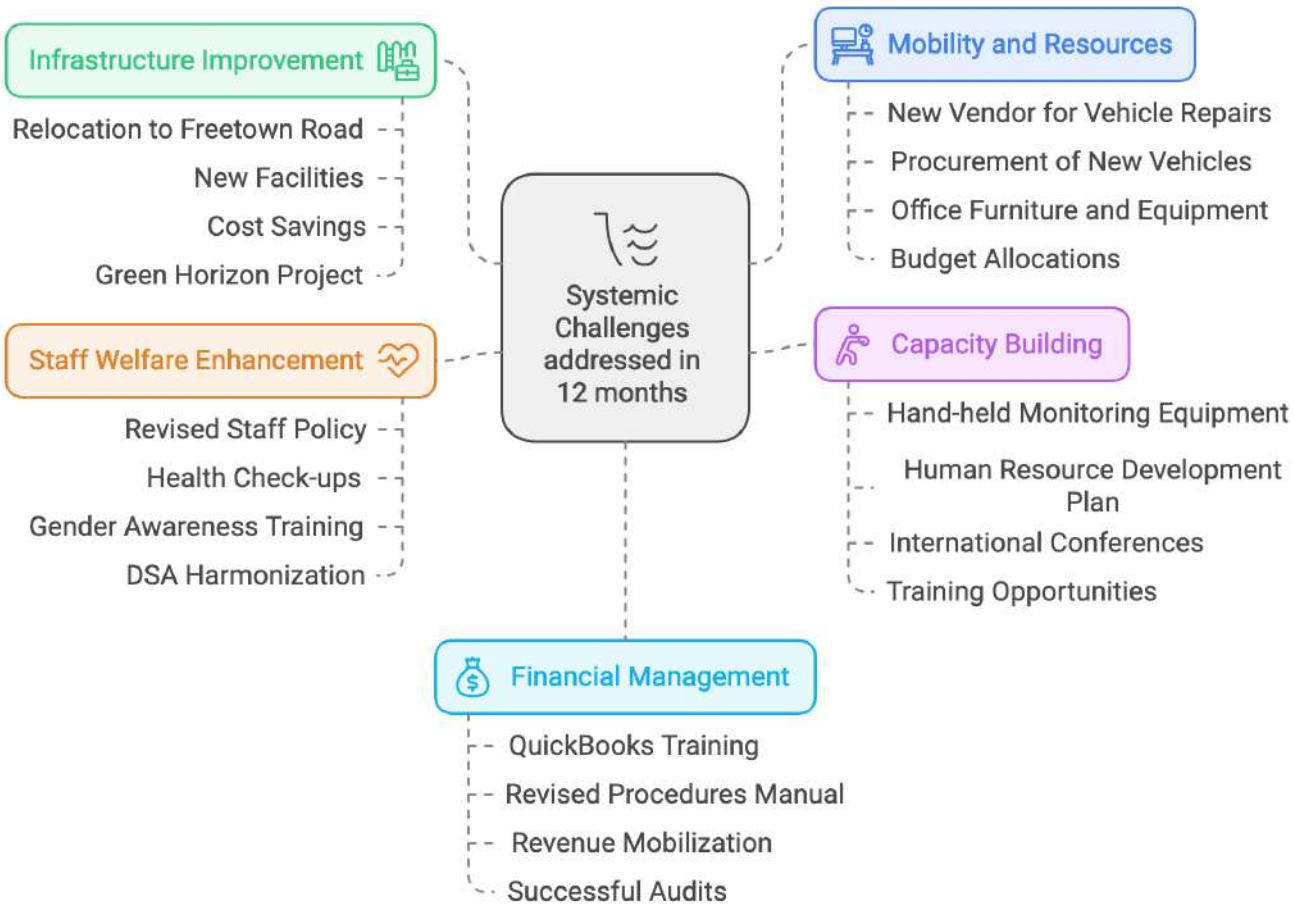


Fig 17: Steps taken to address challenges

Despite these challenges, the EPA took significant steps in addressing the obstacles throughout the year:

- **Infrastructure Improvement:** The Infrastructure Committee, established in late 2023, facilitated our relocation from the cramped and flood-prone Dundas Street office to a more spacious and well-equipped building at 38 Freetown Road Wilberforce, previously occupied by UNFAO. This relocation improved workspace conditions, included new facilities such as a canteen, driver's room, and car park, and resulted in cost savings on rental expenses. For regional offices, the EPA partnered with RCC to produce a building design for future offices under the "EPA Green Horizon Project." Six plots of land were also secured in Kenema with the help of the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Country Planning.



Plate 62: New office location at Freetown Road, Wilberforce

- **Improving Mobility and Resources:** EPA contracted a new vendor to address costly vehicle repairs and procured eight new vehicles through UNDP to resolve mobility issues, improve environmental monitoring capabilities, and ensure staff safety. Essential office furniture and monitoring equipment were provided to regional offices. Quarterly budget allocations and bank accounts were established for regional operations, environmental monitoring, community education, and utility bills, ensuring regional offices received consistent support.

- **Capacity Building:** The EPA secured hand-held monitoring equipment from IOM and GIZ, and preliminary training sessions were conducted for relevant staff. A comprehensive human resource development plan was developed, and staff were provided with numerous international and local training opportunities. Staff attended international conferences, including those on Chemicals Management, Climate Transparency, and Greenhouse Gas Accounting, among others. Exposure to these fora allowed EPA staff to learn from global best practices, expand networks, and secure partnerships that enhanced EPA's project funding and aligned operations with international standards.

- **Staff Welfare Enhancement:** The staff policy is being revised, and a new organogram is being created to create more positions and allow career growth opportunities, thereby boosting morale and retention. PPEs were procured and distributed, routine health check-ups (for breast cancer) were conducted, and gender awareness and sexual exploitation and abuse trainings were delivered. DSAs were harmonized to address the disparity between field and headquarters staff, thereby fostering fairness. Computers have now been procured for most employees across the organization, ensuring staff have the necessary tools to work effectively. Travel and training opportunities have also been distributed more fairly, ensuring equitable professional growth. Additionally, some staff who had long been contractors were regularized, and consultants were hired to bolster organizational capacity.



Plate 63: Staff in recently procured PPEs during an environmental audit

- **Financial Management:** To improve operational transparency, sessions of financial management training using QuickBooks were conducted, and a revised procedures manual was developed. Revenue mobilization was enhanced, with weekly tracking reports generated to ensure effective financial management. Successful audits, with no queries, underscored the improved financial oversight.

Lessons Learned

- **Infrastructure Improvements:** The infrastructure challenges highlight the need for a stable foundation for EPA operations. Securing permanent office spaces and ensuring adequate facilities should be a priority to support operational effectiveness.

- **Staff Welfare and Capacity:** Investing in staff welfare and professional growth is crucial. Harmonizing allowances, offering training opportunities, and providing appropriate equipment will be central to retaining skilled staff and ensuring a motivated workforce.

- **Continuous Capacity Building:** Exposure to international conferences and workshops plays a critical role in aligning the agency's practices with international standards and should be prioritized to maintain high operational standards and build valuable partnerships.

In 2025, the EPA intends to implement these lessons by enhancing infrastructure initiatives, forging stronger partnerships, and further expanding staff well-being programs. By addressing these fundamental issues, the EPA will become more effective, thereby facilitating significant changes in environmental governance throughout the nation.

6. Future Goals and Initiatives

The EPA will strategically concentrate on a few important projects in 2025 that aim to improve climate resilience, build institutional capacity, and promote sustainable environmental practices. The EPATS and MEL Strategy (MELS) will serve as the foundation for these programs. To fulfil national and international commitments and guarantee effective environmental governance, we will prioritise the following key activities and more for 2025 (with prioritization based on the outcomes of the Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) workshop to be held in February 2025):

CEDAS Operationalization and Data Systems Development: As part of the 7-interface oneEPA database that we are building for integrated environmental data management, we have established the Centre for Environmental Data and Statistics (CEDAS). A formative workshop to create a data inventory and data gaps register and launch pilot projects for the creation of an Environment Atlas (envATLAS) will be a priority in 2025.

National Pollution and Emission Planning: We will update the National Pollutants Inventory (NPI) in early 2025 and produce the country's first ever National Plan for Pollution Prevention Plan (N3P1.0), equivalent to an NDC and NBSAP. This work will be done alongside the development of the next generations of the NDC, NBSAP, and the first generation of the Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS).

Implementing the Biodiversity Strategy: Following the development of NBSAP 6.0 in early 2025 and its associated strategies, we will work with the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership Fund to deploy an in-country facilitator. We will also increase public understanding and support for biodiversity projects by launching a biodiversity education campaign.

Mechanisms for Financing Climate and Ecosystems: To support efforts for climate resilience and ecosystem restoration, we will seek to work with the Ministry to establish a National Climate Fund and a National Ecosystem Restoration Fund, alongside a Climate Finance Innovation Lab.

Marine Spatial and Ecosystem Planning: In 2025, we will also prioritise the valuation of ecosystem services for agricultural planning, define agro-ecological zones and create a marine spatial plan for the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.

GCF Work plan: To improve the efficient execution of climate projects, we will prioritise the completion of a National Work Programme for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the commitment of available readiness funds.

CEECOM and MICCOM Hubs: Next year, we will put CEECOM and MICCOM hubs into operation so they can be used as village green courts for grievance redress and a hub for trainings in locally-led compliance assurance, as well as for monitoring MEA progress and performance.

Green Cold Chains and Cleaner Production Audits: To move the great work we have done with Centres of Excellence; we will seek funding for the deployment of environmentally friendly cold chain systems in support of the great work being done on building food systems resilience in rural areas.

Green Mobility and Plastic-Free Initiatives: We will also prioritise the expansion of green mobility initiatives, such as developing the capacity for sustainable transport technology, and start a "Plastic-Free Community" challenge.

Building Capacity and Sharing Knowledge: We will educate environmental journalists on climate narratives and lead intersectoral learning sessions on the implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA). To enhance climate transparency, we will produce the first Biennial Transparency Report (BTR).

Women-Led Resilience Centres and Youth Innovation: To empower women and youth in climate adaptation, we will also prioritise the creation of women-led community resilience centres and host the second Youth Innovation Challenge for green solutions.

Government-CSO Coordination and Collaboration: To encourage multi-stakeholder participation, we will plan an annual forum for government-CSO coordination on MEA implementation. Additionally, we will arrange various learning exchanges to facilitate the establishment of a Carbon Market Office and launch a new GCF bid.

Environmental Monitoring and Mobile Lab Deployment: To improve environmental surveillance and assist citizen science and community monitoring projects, we will operationalize the mobile lab for on-site air and water quality monitoring and publish our first set of insights through CEDAS.

GreenRUN, Expo, and Annual Reporting: To share progress, honour environmental accomplishments, and motivate community action, we plan to host a Green Expo/Eco-festival in 2025 and create an annual MEA implementation report.



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