Economic and Public Financial Management

Sierra Leone Trend Analysis | Fiscal Decentralisation | 2017, 2023 and 2025

IGR

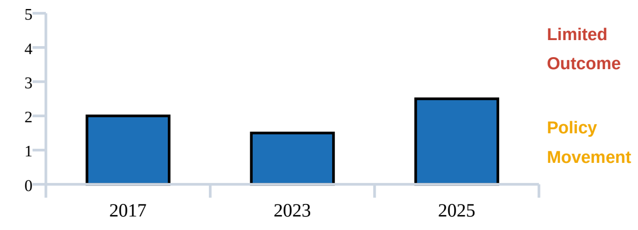
Strategic objective: By 2028, fiscal decentralisation should be notably strengthened to improve service delivery at sub-national level. The evidence shows policy movement by 2025, but limited practical improvement in council fiscal autonomy, revenue capacity, and predictable transfers.

2017 Baseline
2.0 / 5

2023 Position
1.5 / 5

2025 Reform Movement
2.5 / 5

Outcome Trend Score: Fiscal Decentralisation



Year	Trend position	Evidence observed	IGR interpretation	Scorecard status
2017	Legal and administrative baseline	Local Government (Amendment) Act 2017 passed to adjust for new districts. Property cadastre systems were attempted to support council revenue, but capacity and implementation constraints limited financial devolution.	Decentralisation existed more in legal form than in fiscal practice. Councils remained dependent on central transfers.	**Weak baseline**
2023	Stagnation and weak devolution	No fiscal decentralisation policy in place. Local councils faced severe transfer delays. Local council budget share remained below 6% of the national government budget.	This indicates limited commitment to predictable, autonomous local financing and weak service delivery leverage at council level.	**Low outcome**
2025	Policy launch with limited outcome shift	Fiscal Decentralisation Policy launched. City-level Revenue Mobilisation Committees established. However, councils remained highly dependent on central government and donor funds, with weak domestic revenue capacity.	Policy architecture improved, but fiscal decentralisation outcomes have not yet materially changed. Reform is visible, but impact remains constrained.	**Policy progress**

Main Trend Finding

Between 2017 and 2025, Sierra Leone moved from a weak legal-administrative decentralisation baseline to a more formal policy framework. However, the trend is not yet an outcome improvement trend. Councils still face dependence on central transfers and donor funding, delayed transfers, and weak own-source revenue generation.

Scorecard Judgment

Overall rating: Limited progress. The reform direction is positive, but implementation remains below the ambition of the MTNDP 2024-2030 target. The key test for 2026-2028 is whether policy reforms translate into predictable transfers, increased local budget share, stronger property revenue systems, and improved sub-national service delivery.

Priority Actions for IGR Tracking

1. Publish annual fiscal transfer timeliness data.
2. Track local council share of national budget annually.
3. Measure own-source revenue growth by council.
4. Monitor rollout of property cadastre and revenue committees.
5. Link fiscal decentralisation reforms to visible service delivery outcomes.

Source note: MTNDP 2024-2030, Page 155; Local Government (Amendment) Act 2017; author verification notes provided by IGR. Scores are interpretive scorecard ratings derived from the evidence supplied, where 1 = very weak outcome and 5 = strong outcome.