

Sierra Leone Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (SLEITI)

Open Data Policy

Definitions

The following definitions are used in this Policy:

“Open Data”: Data that anyone can access, use and share, because it is made available with the technical and legal characteristics necessary for it to be freely used, reused, and redistributed by anyone, anytime, anywhere.

“Open Standard”: Any common standard for open data that is developed and maintained collaboratively and transparently, and can be accessed and used by anyone.

“SLEITI data”: Data that is collected and published by SLEITI under the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, including that data which SLEITI is *required* to collect and publish under the EITI Standard, but not limited to such required data if the SLEITI Multi-Stakeholder Group, including GoSL, should decide to go beyond the requirements in terms of the extractives sector data it collects, analyses and makes public.

Context and Rationale

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) exists to promote and increase access to and understanding of information on extractives sector industry rights allocations, payments, and revenues to governments in order to promote accountable and equitable management of natural resources.

SLEITI already publishes information (data) for this purpose through the EITI Reports. In addition data on payments by mining companies to Government, as well as other company license information, is published and accessible through the Government of Sierra Leone’s (GoSL’s) [Online Repository](#), which draws on data in the Government’s Mining Cadastre Administration System.

However, more can be done to increase the use-ability and interoperability of data released under EITI in Sierra Leone in order to create a firmer foundation and more powerful resource for individuals, media, civil society, and industry to make use of data in making decisions and contributing to public debate. Internationally-recognised standards and principles on open data chart a course for how this can be achieved, in particular the [Open Data Charter](#) which the Government of Sierra Leone formally adopted in September 2016.

This Policy fulfils Requirement 7.1.b of the [2016 EITI Standard](#)(p29) that the EITI Multi-Stakeholder Group in implementing countries agree a clear policy on the access, release and re-use of EITI data, and takes into consideration the measures that EITI implementing countries are encouraged to undertake in Section 6 of the 2016 Standard (“Open Data Policy”, pp45-46).

Existing Legislative and Policy Framework

- **[Open Government Partnership National Action Plan \(2014\)](#)**: Sierra Leone’s OGP National Action Plan, published in 2014, commits to the completion of an open data readiness assessment, the creation of a government open data portal, the publication of 70% of mining and agricultural contracts (most large-scale mining contracts have since been published: <http://www.nma.gov.sl/resourcecontracts/>), and the completion and publication of audits of the Diamond Area Community Development Fund and the Community Development Fund.
- **[GoSL Document Adopting the Open Data Charter \(2016\)](#)**: In adopting the OpenData Charter, GoSL committed that its ‘Open Data Council’ would, among other things, oversee the launch of an Open Data Repository, the creation of a machine-readable list of priority datasets, and “adopt an open license by default for government data”.
- **[Right to Access Information Act \(2013\)](#)**: While the Act does not make specific reference to open data standards or to SLEITI data, the ‘Open by Default’ principle set out below is in line with the Act’s central provision that “Every person has the right to access information held by or under the control of a public authority.”

Guiding Principles

This Policy adopts a set of principles to guide the release of existing and new datasets under EITI and thus provide a foundation for the access, use and re-use of data. These guiding principles, which are adapted from the International Open Data Charter, are that **SLEITI data should be:**

1. Open by Default

Because free access to, and subsequent use of, government data relating to the management of natural resources and the extractive industries is of significant value to public debate, society and the economy, it should, therefore, be open by default. For any data that cannot for legitimate reasons be released, clear justifications should be given as to why it cannot.

2. Timely and Comprehensive

SLEITI data should be released as fully and as early as possible. Comprehensive lists of and guides to available data should be made easily available. Original, unmodified data should be made available as far as possible, but links should also be provided to existing analyses,

visualisations and summaries based on the data, in order that users can both benefit from analysing, packaging, and visualising raw data themselves and also benefit from work that others, including SLEITI itself, have already undertaken.

3. Accessible and Usable

SLEITI data, including all past EITI Reports, should be available on the internet, free of charge, under an open and unrestrictive license (such as Creative Commons with Attribution, [CC-BY 4.0](#)) that allows users both free access to it and unrestricted re-use of it.

Feedback mechanisms should be put in place so that users can provide feedback on the quality and usefulness of data and SLEITI/GoSL can take account of this feedback in ongoing improvements to systems, data standards and data access channels.

Open data formats of all SLEITI Reports (at least .xlsx or .csv) should be published alongside narrative reports henceforth, and the Independent Administrator tasked with providing these. And as soon as possible, data contained in SLEITI Reports should be made fully machine-readable (in addition to, not in place of, highly accessible and comprehensible human-readable versions) and appropriately tagged, including with unique identifiers (eg for companies) as far as possible.

As part of its EITI mainstreaming efforts SLEITI should advocate for GoSL data released through the Online Repository similarly to be made machine-readable and compliant with appropriate open standards, in line with GoSL's adoption of the Open Data Charter. Ultimately, successfully encouraging compliance with open standards and principles in the data that is published through the Online Repository would be a major success and should be a goal for SLEITI in the nearest term possible. If publication to open data standards of all SLEITI data can be achieved through government portals (either the existing Online Repository, the GoSL's new Open Data Portal, or across both) then SLEITI may not need to produce and host its own separate open datasets (and can instead simply link from its website to those).

4. Comparable and Interoperable

SLEITI should seek to ensure as far as possible that data it releases is interoperable with national and international standards, including adopting data standards approved by the EITI Board.

SLEITI should also ensure that all data is fully described, and that all documentation accompanying data is written in clear, plain language, and that data users have sufficient information to understand the source, strengths and limitations of the data.

5. For Improved Governance, Citizen Engagement and Inclusive Development

Recognising that EITI data should not only be available but publicised, engaged with and used, SLEITI should continue to promote awareness and understanding, especially among policymakers, civil society and the media, of available open datasets, how they can be navigated, and their potential uses.

Equally, recognising that in Sierra Leone itself only a limited proportion of the population have access to the internet, and a still smaller proportion the technical skills to analyse raw datasets, SLEITI should continue to carry out significant analysis, data visualisation, and audience-appropriate public communications across multiple channels to ensure extractive industries data is informing public debate and leading to improved accountability in natural resource governance.

Finally, through making public its efforts and successes in meeting open data standards and principles, SLEITI should also seek to demonstrate more widely the power of open data for supporting informed debate and inclusive development.

Data Covered by this Policy

The scope of this Policy is SLEITI data in general: those datasets currently published by SLEITI in EITI Reports, in line with the requirements of the EITI Standard. Namely, mining, oil and gas companies' reported payments to government each year (above annually agreed thresholds of materiality, etc), government agencies' extractive industry revenues from companies, and a reconciliation of the one set against the other, as well as aggregate overall government revenues from each revenue stream, production and export volumes and values, extractive sector contribution to the economy etc, The policy will cover new sectors as determined by the multi-stakeholder group.

In line with the principles set out in this Policy, SLEITI will in addition to the above take an 'open by default' approach to considering the release of any further datasets that in future it is in a position to publish.

Implementation

An implementation plan and implementation monitoring framework for this policy will be developed in early 2017 and incorporated into the SLEITI Workplan.