

# **Freetown Named as Finalist in Bloomberg Philanthropies 2021 Global Mayors Challenge**

*Freetown among 50 Champion Cities Selected to Advance in Global Innovation Competition Uncovering Most Transformative Urban Solutions to Emerge During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

*Freetown Enters Four-Month Testing Phase with Support from Bloomberg Philanthropies*

**Freetown, June 15, 2021** – Freetown is one of 50 Champion Cities selected today as finalists in the [2021 Global Mayors Challenge](#), a global innovation competition that identifies and accelerates the most ambitious ideas developed by cities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These 50 urban innovations rose to the top of a competitive pool of more than 630 applications from 99 countries, in the first-ever Global Mayors Challenge.

As a Mayors Challenge finalist, Freetown now advances to the four-month Champion Phase of the competition. From June through October, the 50 finalist cities will refine their ideas with technical assistance from Bloomberg Philanthropies and its network of leading innovation experts. Fifteen of the 50 cities will ultimately win the grand prize, with each receiving \$1 million and robust multi-year technical assistance to implement and scale their ideas. Grand Prize Winners will be announced in early 2022.

*“These 50 finalists are showing the world that in the face of the pandemic’s enormous challenges, cities are rising to meet them with bold, innovative, and ambitious ideas,” said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg LP and Bloomberg Philanthropies and 108th mayor of New York City. “By helping these cities test their ideas over the coming months, we will have a chance to identify cutting-edge policies and programs that can allow cities to rebuild in ways that make them stronger and healthier, and more equal and more just.”*

Freetown proposes to tackle urban deforestation through the “Freetown the Tree Town Campaign”, the city’s flagship climate adaptation initiative! The Campaign, which seeks to not only plant but grow one million trees in Freetown’s deforested catchment areas, incentivizes community-led environmental stewardship with robust monitoring powered by green technology.

“Localizing global effort on climate change is needed now – in the wake of COVID-19 – more than ever. In Freetown, we are committed to delivering a climate-sensitive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and we are most grateful that the financial and technical support from Bloomberg Philanthropies, through the 2021 Global Mayor’s Challenge, will help us move our ambitious plans forward,” said Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr OBE, Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The 50 Champion Cities submitted ideas addressing four of the most significant challenges borne of the pandemic: Economic Recovery & Inclusive Growth; Health & Wellbeing; Climate & Environment; and Good Governance & Equality. A prestigious selection committee co-chaired by Bloomberg Philanthropies board member Melody Hobson, Co-CEO & President, Ariel Investments, and David

Miliband, President & CEO, International Rescue Committee, assessed the applications to determine the Champion City finalists.

*This is always an especially exciting phase of the Mayors Challenge, helping mayors push their innovations to even greater heights," said James Anderson, head of Government Innovation at Bloomberg Philanthropies. "While 15 cities will ultimately take home grand prizes, all 50 cities receive world class coaching and support to improve their ideas and their potential to improve lives."*

The 2021 Global Mayors Challenge builds on the success of four previous Bloomberg-sponsored Challenges in the U.S. (2013 and 2018), Europe (2014), and Latin America and the Caribbean (2016). For more information, visit [mayorchallenge.bloomberg.org](https://mayorchallenge.bloomberg.org) and @BloombergCities on Twitter and Instagram.

### **About Freetown**

Freetown, Sierra Leone, is the nation's capital and it accounts for over 15% of the country's 7 million population. As part of the #TransformFreetown Plan, an integrated and inclusive approach to tackling the problems Freetown, the Freetown City Council, under the leadership of Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer, has identified environmental management as one of the eleven priorities of the city. Freetown has set itself a target to double Freetown's tree cover by 2022.

### **About Bloomberg Philanthropies**

Bloomberg Philanthropies works in over 120 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's charitable activities, including his foundation and his personal giving. In 2016, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed \$600 million. For more information, please visit [www.bloomberg.org](https://www.bloomberg.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), and [Twitter](#).

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