



The Challenges of
Third-Party Politics
The Rise & Fall of KKY



Exclusive Interview
with
Femi Claudius-Cole



SIERRAEYE

June 2023 Digital Issue No. 002



**Ultimate
Showdown:**

BIO

VS

KAMARA

**in historic
rematch**

**Exclusive
interviews**

MANY MORE

Contents..



Dear readers,

Welcome to the second edition of **Sierraeye Digital Magazine!** In this issue, we cover a wide range of topics, including elections, governance, economy, politics, environment, entertainment, and more...



ALIEU TUNKARA
Editor

Sierra Leone is currently in a state of political excitement and enthusiasm as we approach the elections on June 24, 2023, just a month away. The multi-tier elections, including the presidential, parliamentary, and chairman/mayoral polls, will take place on the same day, allowing Sierra Leoneans to choose their preferred candidates.

While voters prepare for the polls, election management bodies, such as the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL), Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), Sierra Leone Police (SLP), and Judiciary, are working diligently to establish the right framework for a peaceful and fair electoral process. These institutions are collaborating with international election observers from 26 EU member states, Canada, and Norway to ensure a credible and acceptable outcome. To support this endeavour, a team of 100 EU observers, led by Chief Observer Evin Incir, a member of the European Parliament, has arrived, with 28 long-term observers deployed across Sierra Leone to cover all 16 districts. The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) will closely monitor and assess various aspects of the electoral process, including the legal framework, election administration, campaign activities, the role of state institutions and civil society, media conduct, voting, counting, and tabulation, among others. These observation efforts aim to ensure a credible election.

Additionally, local observers, notably the National Elections Watch, will play a crucial role in the observation process. This edition of Sierraeye Digital Magazine is aligned with the current moment by focusing primarily on the upcoming election. We have had the opportunity to interview high-profile politicians, including the incumbent candidate, President Julius Maada Bio of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Dr. Samura Kamara, the candidate for the main opposition All People's Congress (APC) to gauge their views on the election. We also interviewed Dr. Femi Claudius Cole, leader of Unity Party, even though her party was not allowed to register.

President Bio highlighted his main priorities, which include addressing food security, improving infrastructure, investing in education, empowering youth, and driving the country's growth through digitalization. On the other hand, the APC candidate emphasizes the economy, peace, national cohesion, and education. The Unity Party leader's key priority is inclusive governance and the unification of

Sierra Leone. She strongly believes that the country can only develop if individuals with the right knowledge and skills are hired based on merit, free from ethnic, regional, and political considerations.

Furthermore, the alliance between Dr. Kandeh Kolloh Yumkella's National Grand Coalition (NGC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) has sparked significant discussion and debate. Many Sierra Leoneans perceive this move as a betrayal of hope. The formation of the NGC in 2018 raised hopes for a viable third force in Sierra Leone's political landscape as the People's Movement for Democratic Change and Coalition for Change gradually faded away. However, these hopes were shattered when the NGC leader crossed over to the ruling party, citing the need to end tribalism and regionalism as a justification for his action. Now, Sierra Leoneans are once again searching for another viable third force as they seek alternatives to the two traditional political parties.

Another thought-provoking aspect of this edition is Basita Michael's legal analysis, which sheds light on how Sierra Leonean women continue to face disempowerment despite promises of empowerment schemes by politicians. The legal luminary focuses on the statutory loopholes and caveats surrounding women's empowerment, particularly the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) Act 2022.

In the People's Lawyer column, Lawyer Michael also provides insights into the concept of the franchise, which is something everyone hopes to exercise in the near future. She explains that the right to vote for any candidate of one's choice cannot be taken away by anyone, regardless of their status. Furthermore, she delves into the conditions under which individuals who are not registered in a particular center can still cast their vote there.

This edition of Sierraeye Digital Magazine covers various other notable issues of the day, ensuring a comprehensive and diverse range of topics for our readers.

As we enter the election period, our sincere hope and prayer are for peace to prevail in Sierra Leone. The Sierraeye Magazine team remains deeply grateful to our esteemed readership and advertisers, as without your support, none of this would be possible.

Thank you for being a part of Sierraeye Digital Magazine, and we hope you enjoy this edition filled with valuable insights and perspectives.



Dear Editor,

Subject: Promoting Peaceful Elections in Sierra Leone

I write to emphasize the pressing need for peace before, during, and after the upcoming elections in Sierra Leone. Peace should be prioritized above all else, and we must not allow political parties to jeopardize it.

Over the past three months, we have been closely observing the political landscape in our country, and disturbing signs of conflicts have emerged. The threats emanating from supporters of the main opposition party, the All Peoples Congress (APC), and the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) should not be taken lightly. Supporters of both parties have been openly declaring that they will not allow their opponents to campaign in their respective strongholds. South-Easterners have voiced their opposition to APC campaigning in their communities, while North-Westerners have issued similar threats against SLPP campaigns in their regions.

How can we evaluate a political party's platform if we do not hear campaign messages from its officials? The answer is clear: we cannot. Moreover, such threats and counter-threats only serve to undermine peace and stability. Despite their political differences, it is crucial that we witness political parties campaigning throughout the country. The SLPP should be free to campaign in the North-West, and the APC should have the same freedom in the South-East. Such actions will send powerful messages of peace and unity.

We strongly condemn any form of violence or brutality during the campaign period. As Sierra Leoneans, we should view ourselves as a unified people with a shared heritage and culture. One person's problem should be viewed as a concern for all. Political contests should not be approached as a do-or-die scenario but rather as civilized competitions that provide voters with alternatives.

It is our sincere hope that all political parties can set aside their differences and work together for the common good. This collaborative approach will contribute to a peaceful and prosperous future for our nation.

Sincerely,

Aloysius Massaquoi

Bo Town

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Urgent Need for Extensive Voter Education

We, the people of Sierra Leone, are urgently calling upon the National Commission for Democracy (NCD), the government, and other relevant agencies to prioritize and carry out comprehensive voter education initiatives. It is essential to address the issues of void votes, double and multiple voting that have plagued our electoral processes in the past.

Voter education holds immense importance, particularly for first-time voters who may lack a fundamental understanding of the essential steps involved in voting. However, even experienced voters can benefit from ongoing voter education to ensure they are well informed and can make informed decisions at polling centers.

During each election cycle, void votes consistently constitute a significant portion of the total votes cast, casting doubt on the effectiveness of the NCD and other relevant agencies. This issue dates back to Sierra Leone's first multi-party elections in 1996 and has persisted in subsequent elections in 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2018. Furthermore, instances of double or multiple voting often occur due to a lack of sufficient voter education. Some voters mistakenly believe that casting multiple votes for their preferred parties is permissible, unaware that such actions severely undermine the credibility of the electoral process.

To address these challenges, it is imperative for the NCD to collaborate with other relevant agencies in designing and implementing comprehensive voter education programs well in advance of polling day. Drawing inspiration from successful initiatives, such as a community-based organization in Port Loko district that recently educated women on voting procedures and other electoral aspects to enhance their political participation, the NCD and other agencies should adopt similar approaches.

By prioritizing voter education and empowering citizens with accurate information, we can foster a more inclusive and informed electorate. This will contribute to the credibility and transparency of our electoral processes, ensuring that every vote counts.

Sincerely,

Alie Sesay

Port Loko District, Northern Region



Dear Editor,

Subject: Advocating Issue-Based Campaigns and Civil Discourse

I write to express our collective frustration with the prevalence of abusive language and personal attacks during political campaigns. It is high time that campaigns focused on issues rather than resorting to invectives.

In previous elections, we have witnessed the use of obscene language across party lines. However, the upcoming June 2023 election seems to be heading towards new lows. Political ambition should not drive individuals to engage in lawlessness or indulge in derogatory language. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok, have become hotbeds for insulting words, hate speeches, inciting statements, and smear campaigns disguised as campaign strategies. Some politicians have been accused of inciting such behaviour.

We earnestly hope to witness a significant shift this year. Instead of using disrespectful language against each other, politicians should focus on educating the electorate about key issues and policies. Political education is a crucial tool in civilized and mature democracies. We can take inspiration from countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, where debates are organized for presidential candidates to explain their manifestos to the people. Through proper sensitization, voters can make informed decisions based on the issues presented.

In 2008, a notable debate centered on the economy and military policies towards the Middle East was organized for the two US presidential candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain. During the debate, the candidates agreed on revitalizing the economy but differed on military actions in the Middle East. McCain promised to improve the economy while continuing President George Bush's policies in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other hand, Obama pledged to address the economy and change the course of action in those countries. The electorate voted based on these issues, and Obama became President, as they desired the return of American troops.

Similar debates were held for former President Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in 2016, as well as for Trump and President Joe Biden in 2020. Sierra Leone took a page from the US book in 2018 when a debate was organized for all presidential aspirants. This platform shed light on various developmental issues, and the people expressed their will through the ballot box.

Considering these examples, why should Sierra Leone not continue on this path of issue-based politics? It is time for a shift in our political trajectory, where civil discourse and meaningful debates take precedence over personal attacks.

Sincerely,

Lauretta Goba, Allen Town, Freetown

Dear Editor,

Concerns Over Heavy Military Presence on Our Streets

I write to express my deep concern regarding heavy military presence on our streets, which is causing panic and fear among members of the public. It seems that hardly a day goes by without encountering armed soldiers in our communities. This situation raises important questions: Are we at war? The answer is no. Since we are approaching elections, it is imperative that soldiers remain within their barracks.

Many citizens, myself included, are worried about using the army to intimidate voters before and during the voting process. Such actions are not common in other countries. In neighboring Liberia, for instance, it is extremely rare to spot a soldier, let alone an armed personnel, on the streets, even during street protests. Law and order are effectively maintained by the police and immigration officers in Liberia.

While we recognize the crucial role soldiers play in maintaining peace in our country, it is important to note that their primary responsibility lies in ensuring external security. The task of maintaining internal peace and order falls within the jurisdiction of the police, not the army. I sincerely believe that removing soldiers from our streets and keeping them within their barracks will contribute to a more peaceful Sierra Leone.

The current situation fosters tension between civilians and the army, which is undesirable and counterproductive. I hope our government takes this matter seriously and addresses it promptly for the benefit of our nation.

Sincerely,

Ibrahim Bangura

Calaba Town, Freetown

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Dear People's Lawyer,

I seek your advice regarding my right to vote in the upcoming election. My name is Baimba Samu, and I live with my uncle, who belongs to a religion prohibiting participation in elections. However, my uncle has a candidate in mind that he wants me to vote for, while I have a different political candidate in mind.

Recently, my uncle has been threatening to stop paying my school fees and even to kick me out of his house if I do not vote for his preferred candidate. He claims that everyone under him must vote for the politician he supports because the politician has been his key helper.

I am worried that my uncle's actions may be illegal, and I would like to know what the position of the law is in this regard.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,
Baimba Samu

Dear Baimba Samu,

Thank you for contacting me with your concerns regarding your right to vote in the upcoming election. Despite your political preferences, I understand that you are facing a difficult situation with your uncle's insistence on voting for his preferred candidate. I will do my best to provide you with guidance on the legal aspects of your situation.

Firstly, it is important to note that the right to vote is a fundamental right protected by the 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone. According to Section 31 of the constitution, every citizen of Sierra Leone who is eighteen years of age or older and of sound mind has the right to vote. This means that religious beliefs should not be a barrier to exercise your right to vote.

As a voter, you are free to choose and support the candidate or political party of your choice. It is not permissible for anyone, including your uncle, to coerce or force you to vote for a specific candidate against your will. Your uncle's actions in threatening to withhold your school fees or evict you from his house if you do not vote for his preferred candidate may be considered illegal.

Under the provisions of the Public Elections Act, Act No. 17 of 2022, specifically Section 123 subsection (1), paragraph (a), it is an offence to use or threaten to use force, violence, harmful cultural practices, fraudulent devices, tricks, or deception to induce or compel a person to vote or not to vote for a particular candidate or political party. If found guilty, the offender can face a fine of not less than 20,000 Leones, imprisonment for a term of 5 years, or both.

In light of the situation, I strongly advise you to report your uncle's threats of coercion to the nearest police station or the office of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone. They can take appropriate action and provide you with further guidance on protecting your rights and ensuring a fair electoral process.

It is crucial to remember that voting is done through a secret ballot, as stated in Section 72(1)(e) of the Public Elections Act of 2022 (Act No. 17). This means that your uncle will not have any knowledge of the candidate you voted for on election day, ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of the voting process.

I hope this information clarifies your rights and provides you with a course of action to address your concerns. If you have any further questions or require additional assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,
People's Lawyer



Dear Lawyer,

I am seeking your advice on my voting rights in the forthcoming election. My name is Dalanda Stevens, and I am a compliance officer at a Commercial Bank in Freetown. I registered to vote in Freetown, but my bank has now posted me to the Kailahun Branch in Kailahun, where I will likely be during the election.

I have heard that people can only vote where they register, and I am unable to travel to Freetown to vote due to my tight official schedule. I am concerned about whether I can still exercise my right to vote in the upcoming election and would appreciate any guidance you can provide.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,
Dalanda Stevens

Dear Dalanda Stevens,

Thank you for reaching out to me with your concerns regarding your voting rights in the forthcoming election. I understand that your bank has transferred you to the Kailahun Branch, making it difficult for you to travel to Freetown, where you originally registered to vote. I will provide you with guidance on the legal options available to you in this situation.

According to the Public Elections Act (No. 17) of 2022, voters are generally required to cast their votes at the center where they are registered. The voter registration details are sent to the respective polling stations on election day, and individuals can only vote at the center where their information appears in the voters' register. This provision is stated in Section 72, Subsection 1, Paragraph (a), Subparagraph (i) of the Public Elections Act.

However, there are exceptions for public officials and individuals engaged in official duties who are unable to vote at their registered centers. In such cases, you can apply to the Returning Officer of the area where you are currently posted no later than 15 days before the scheduled voting day to request an authorization certificate. This certificate allows you to cast your vote in a polling station other than the one where you are registered. The Returning Officer will issue the certificate if they are satisfied with the validity of your application.

To support your application, it is important to provide written confirmation from your employer or supervisor, acknowledging your official duties and the need for you to vote in a different location. The provisions for applying for an authorization certificate and the conditions under which it is issued are outlined in Section 72, Subsections 2, 3, and 4 of the Public Elections Act.

Therefore, I recommend that you promptly apply to the Returning Officer of the Kailahun District for an authorization certificate. Clearly explain your situation as a public official and include written support from your employer. Once you receive the certificate, present it to the Presiding Officer at the polling station in Kailahun, where you intend to vote. The Presiding Officer will verify the authenticity of the certificate and permit you to cast your vote accordingly.

I hope this information clarifies your options and empowers you to exercise your right to vote in the upcoming election. If you have any further questions or require additional assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Best regards,
People's Lawyer

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this consistent achievement. In spite of the very tough global economic headwinds, our economic reforms have won the confidence of international

Our institutional reforms have been consistent and are yielding results in spite of the very poor baseline we inherited. We have worked to make public services more effective and available. We have opened up democratic spaces and encouraged greater political participation, especially for women. My party went one step further beyond the public elections law to remove all possible financial constraints on the participation of women in public elections. By all international measures, there is now greater access to justice. We have invested in people right across the board and our human capital development initiative has been lauded the world over. I think we have made tremendous progress in building a better Sierra Leone over the last five years.

Sierraeye: As the leader of Sierra Leone for the past five years, how do you view the country's governance system?

President Bio: We have made tremendous progress. Objective international measurements are conclusive about how much progress Sierra Leone has made on various governance indicators. On accountability, Transparency International and the Millennium Challenge Corporation show consistently high grades in the hard control of corruption indicator over five years ago when the then APC government consistently failed. We will soon be awarded the compact for

financial institutions like the IMF, World Bank etc and they are still with us quite unlike during the last government when they left because of the haphazard handling of the economy. We have attracted hundreds of millions of dollars to fund various sectors because our governance environment is sound.

We have promoted and protected rights. We have abolished the death penalty, hold no political prisoners, repealed obnoxious press laws, created new institutions to uphold our peace, cohesion, and democracy. Our country has been consistently ranked one of the most peaceful and tolerant in Africa. That is progress.

Sierraeye: What do you consider to be your administration's major accomplishments?

President Bio: We have done better on all indicators than the baseline five years ago. On education, there is global recognition of the gains we have made. More children are in school; we have achieved gender parity at basic education and more girls are in school; we now have better learning outcomes; we have better retention and completion rates; and we have higher numbers of passes in public exams.

For health, we have not only made massive investments that have led to greater access to quality healthcare by more citizens, we lead in the sub-

region on key outcomes like maternal and infant mortality and immunisation rates, among others.

Our efforts in infrastructure have been better than in preceding years. We have built a new airport, more ultra-modern bridges, more township roads, more feeder roads and bridges to connect producers to the market, port expansion, and more public buildings, including a new Foreign Service Academy, ultra-modern military facilities, the new ACC building, among others. We have doubled access to electricity from 16% to 32% and we have lit up a total of 90 towns and villages throughout Sierra Leone.

We have passed very progressive laws, including the gender bill, the sexual offences act, the repeal of the seditious libel law, the abolition of the death penalty, and more. We have made irreversible progress towards building a just, peaceful, and inclusive society, and we done all of this under very hard circumstances.

Sierraeye: The Free Quality Education program is one of your flagship projects. How has it impacted education in Sierra Leone? There are still significant challenges, particularly in rural areas. What steps has your government taken to address these challenges, and what more can be done to improve education in the country?

President Bio: I noted earlier that learning outcomes, completion and retention rates, gender parity, success rates are all better. Because of our radical inclusion policy, pregnant girls and parent learners persist and thrive in school. We have built more schools in collaboration with development partners and the private sector, trained more teachers, and used more innovation and data in education. We will continue to build on these successes of the last five years. Sierra Leone is looked up to for global leadership in education, as evidenced by my co-chairing the UNESCO High-Level Steering Committee on SDG4 with the UNESCO Director General and my co-chairing the UN Transforming Education Summit with the UN Secretary-General.

The key challenge is the constrained fiscal space, especially as a

consequence of COVID-19 and the global economic downturn from the geopolitical problems in Ukraine. While our education outcomes are better by every measure, we need more money to build more school infrastructure, train more teachers, invest in improving student success, and invest in foundational learning to make our work in primary education easier. We will maintain the increased funding levels of 22% and continue to work with our partners and the private sector to build on our successes. Education is the bedrock of inclusive and sustainable national development. Countries that have invested in education develop at a faster rate.

Sierraeye: The issue of corruption has been a long-standing problem in Sierra Leone. What measures has your government taken to combat corruption, and what progress has been made in this area?

President Bio: Legislative and policy reforms, a national strategy for fighting corruption, a specialised anti-corruption court to fast-track trials, and a committed leadership at the Anti-Corruption Commission have all contributed to my government having the highest numbers of convictions and highest levels of asset recovery rates ever. We have made corruption more difficult, costlier, and riskier and cases fully prosecuted.

International commendation of our efforts against corruption, the consistently high pass marks for the control of corruption by both Transparency International and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and even peer-learning missions to Sierra Leone indicate that we have done a phenomenal job fighting corruption.

Sierraeye: What are the major challenges you have faced during your time as president, and how have you addressed them?

President Bio: The

major challenge has been dealing with the economic impact of the multiple crises of COVID-19 and the fall-out from the Russian-Ukraine war. The crises have wrought untold suffering with high food, fuel, and energy prices on hundreds of millions. Sierra Leone being a small economy that imports most of its essential commodities, is unable to influence global prices, so we are fully exposed to the high cost of living like everywhere.

So we have worked to shield our people from the worst impact of the crises. We have provided credit facilities to ensure availability of essential commodities on the market. We have provided subsidies and waivers to reduce the pace of price increases.

We are also working on long-term fixes by growing our economy from the



ground up. We have put in place the macroeconomic basics and worked to harness our mineral and fisheries resources, expand the agricultural and small-scale manufacturing base, and providing a conducive ecosystem for foreign direct investments. Economies are tough the world over, but we are making every best effort to manage and develop our economy.

Sierraeye: As the SLPP's flag-bearer in the upcoming elections, what are your expectations for June 24th?

President Bio: I expect that the people of Sierra Leone will look at the baseline of mismanagement and austerity from which we came in 2018, the leadership I have provided, the great progress we have made over the last five years, and my plans to consolidate and expand our achievements in various spheres in human capital development, infrastructure, energy, and international respectability we have gained as a result of our progress. I believe that they will re-elect me to continue doing the hard work of transforming this country.

Sierraeye: Do you anticipate the possibility of a run-off, and if so, how do you plan to approach it?

President Bio: I don't anticipate a run-off.

Sierraeye: In the event of a run-off, how do you intend to bring opposition parties to your side?

President Bio: Two of the major opposition parties – the NGC and C4C have endorsed my presidency and we are now in an effective and progressive alliance. Several key leaders of the All Peoples Congress party, including a former Vice President, former government ministers, and former members of parliament, have publicly declared their support for my re-election. I think we will have enough votes to win elections in the first round.

In the unlikely event of a run-off, I will appeal to other smaller parties and independent Sierra Leoneans to bet on a future of possibilities, opportunities, and progress with my presidency.

and putting Salone first. Together we have a good pool of expertise and experience, committed leadership, and the right mindset to take the country further. It is a great team that will address the challenges facing the country. The strategic alliance is the right thing to do.



Sierraeye: Two years ago, the COPPP was highly critical of your administration's policies. What steps have you taken to address their concerns and possibly bring them over to your side in a potential second round?

President Bio: We are in a strategic alliance with opposition parties that share our vision and have a significant following. You have mentioned the NGC, the C4C, and progressive former APC top brass in a former vice president, former ministers, and former honourable members of parliament. We are open to dialogue about the best interests of Sierra Leone and we are willing to speak to every Sierra Leonean who shares our view that we have a real opportunity to transform Sierra Leone from what it is.

Sierraeye: What assurances can you give to Sierra Leoneans that the upcoming elections will be peaceful and credible?

President Bio: The ECSL has shown that it is objective, transparent, and accountable. Even when its decisions were challenged in the Supreme Court, there was a transparent trial that was fully broadcast to the public. That illustrates that political parties must get recourse to the courts in order to resolve electoral disputes or disagreements around electoral processes. We wish for full compliance on the part of every citizen with all extant electoral laws and processes. We want every Sierra Leonean to vote in fair, peaceful, and inclusive elections.

Sierraeye: Can you describe the current relationship between the SLPP and the main opposition APC party in Sierra Leone?

President Bio: As with all political parties competing to govern the state, there is natural competition. I believe that competition should be healthy, peaceful and be undertaken with a view to the best interests of Sierra Leone. As a Presidential candidate, I presented my New Direction manifesto in 2018 with concrete commitments. I want Sierra Leoneans to judge me based on the commitments I made and my achievements. I do not believe political pluralism should be about spreading deliberate disinformation and hate. It is a contest of ideas – the best ideas that can make Sierra Leone a better place for us all.

Sierraeye: Why was there a need to form a strategic alliance with the National Grand Coalition (NGC) party?

President Bio: Both parties decided, as equal partners, that we share the same view on progressive politics



Sierraeye: How confident are you in the electoral management bodies, particularly the ECSL?

President Bio: Sierra Leone has conducted five peaceful democratic elections with peaceful outcomes and processes. The current ECSL has conducted several bye-elections in which the opposition and ruling parties have both won and lost. All those elections have been largely peaceful and the outcomes have been accepted by all parties. I believe that the ECSL has won the public trust and confidence by consistently dealing with an equal hand. I am informed that their work is complemented by civil society observers, local and international elections observers, our development partners, and representatives of political parties.

Sierraeye: Will you accept the results of the election and congratulate the winner if you lose?

President Bio: I will be congratulated on June 24 because the people of Sierra Leone have seen the quality of leadership I have provided over the last five years. But more seriously, I do not believe that there are any losers in elections. On the day after the

elections, we should set all elections-related acrimony to one side and focus on the more urgent and difficult task of transforming our nation.

Sierraeye: Drawing from your experience in the past five years, what will be your priorities in the next five years if you are declared the winner?

President Bio: We will continue to work on all the programmes we set out in the New Direction manifesto. But I believe that an emphasis on “The Big Five-Game Changers” will fast-track the transformation of our economy. These include:

1. Feed Salone: An initiative to boost agriculture productivity for food security, boost exports and economic growth, and reduce poverty by creating jobs;
2. Productive Infrastructure Programme (PIP): An infrastructure initiative to support agriculture, industry, and businesses.
4. Education and Skills Development for the 21st Century Industry – skilled workers attract foreign direct investments.
3. Youth Employment Scheme (YES): A presidential initiative to create 500,000 jobs for the youth in five

years.

5. Accelerating Growth through Technology and Digital Innovation -- focus on digitising the financial sector and deepening financial inclusion

Sierraeye: Sierra Leone is one of the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. How do you plan to address this issue and what steps has your government taken so far?

President Bio: We signalled our serious intent to tackle climate change vulnerability by establishing a standalone Ministry of Environment. The ministry has developed and implemented very meaningful adaptation and mitigation policies and actions, including reforestation and the protection of water catchments. We will push climate-smart approaches in our agriculture productivity drive and provide additional incentives for agro-forestry and conservation.

Overall, despite the economic challenges of the last three of those years, the past five years have been exciting years of inclusive transformation and sustainable development for Sierra Leone.

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“Sierra Leoneans are desperately yearning for a change of leadership which they want to see come to pass without any delay.”

**Exclusive Interview
with the
APC Presidential Candidate
Dr. SAMURA KAMARA**

Sierraeye: As the flagbearer of the main opposition party, the All Peoples Congress (APC), what are your plans and vision for Sierra Leone if you win the June 24 elections?

Dr. Samura Kamara: My mission is about building one nation, united and growing, with jobs that pay living wages and thriving businesses. The first crucial assignment is to ensure a smooth and peaceful transition. I would like to use that as a foundation for take-off with my wider agenda of uniting the country, restoring institutional independence and governance rooted in the rule of law, procedures and process. No one should be so scared and run away because of government changes; no citizens should be afraid that they would lose their jobs just because of a change of government. I intend to govern a Sierra Leone where every citizen is treated fairly and justly by their government. Once I set the tone at the top, my immediate priority would be to stem the depreciation of the Leone along with inflation and adopt measures that restore investor confidence. Then, we will rationalise government expenditure and review the FQE and Free Health Care initiative to ensure effective implementation and impact. The medium to long-term plans include putting the economy on a growth trajectory, strengthening national cohesion, dealing decisively with corruption and ensuring that the public service becomes as efficient and effective as it could be. Appointments or enrolments will be based purely on merit rather than political or ethnic considerations.

Sierraeye: Intra-party divisions within APC have been a challenge in the recent past; how have you worked to unite the Party ahead of the upcoming elections?

Dr. Samura Kamara: Divisions and conflicts are bound to occur in any human organisation, institution, or group, especially a political party that allows democratic principles to thrive. What is important is the mechanisms in place to manage such conflicts or divisions and dispositions for uniting and healing. Yes, we have had our fair share of internal disagreement, but we also suffered considerable outside interruptions aimed at dismantling our Party. So far, you would agree that we have made considerable progress – we held very peaceful and commendable democratic lower-level elections and an extremely transparent National Delegates Conference from which I was elected as the presidential candidate. The APC Party has these structures that, over the years, have delivered when necessary. I was elected flagbearer because the delegates believe that I have what it takes to bring everybody on board, and they see me as being in the most vantage position to do this, and I have been doing it. All former flagbearer contestants are fully on board my campaign. They hold very important positions and

support my campaign like it is their own. I have also reached out to most of those members of the Party



who had felt aggrieved at one time or the other. In fact, one of the resolutions in the National Delegates Conference in which I was elected flagbearer was the readmission into the Party of former members who had been out of the Party for one reason or the other. And I am actively involved in the process of implementing that resolution. We will continue to build on this progress and make the APC the formidable Party it must be in Sierra Leone.

Sierraeye: What is your stance on cooperation and collaboration with other political parties in Sierra Leone, particularly the ruling Party, SLPP?

Dr. Samura Kamara: I believe in consensus building and working with like minds, as does my Party. We have shown our willingness to cooperate on countless instances, including in the fight against Covid 19 in raising awareness, providing relief support, supporting regulations, and the state of emergency. We supported the enactment of many legislations we believe are in the national interest and objected to those we felt were purely for political exigencies. Time is up for the SLPP government because, by June 25, I shall have been elected president, but for the remaining few weeks, we stand ready to continue to support government policies and programmes that are in the national interest. The bottom line is we are all Sierra Leoneans and I consider all Sierra Leoneans as my compatriots, and my dedication to this country makes it imperative that I work with all, primarily to ensure that we overcome the challenges that this country currently faces enormous challenges that need all shoulders to the wheel. I strongly believe that we need every Sierra Leonean on board to move Sierra Leone forward. As a result, no Sierra Leonean will be discriminated

against or left behind because of ethnic, regional, political, gender, political and physical dispositions.

Sierraeye: Do you anticipate the possibility of a run-off in the coming elections and how is your Party preparing for such an outcome?

Dr. Samura Kamara: I have very high hopes of winning these elections on the first ballot and therefore do not envisage a run-off. Our feedback from all over the country indicates that. Sierra Leoneans are desperately yearning for a change of leadership which they want to see come to pass



without any delay. They will therefore come out in their millions to vote for that change on 24th June 2023. My attention is focused on doing that right now and on preventing actions from opponents that may not want that victory on the first ballot to happen. Our energies are focused on that, on getting the mandate of the people on the first ballot and getting on to the urgent task of rebuilding the nation. Notwithstanding, in any competition, you must fully prepare yourself for any outcome. I believe that if there is a run-off, I will be entering the second vote from the vantage position of leading the first-round results. The APC Party has clear plans in the event of a run-off and I am fully convinced that those plans will produce the needed votes to win in the second, which requires a simple majority.

Sierraeye: If a run-off occurs, how will you approach other political parties to form a coalition and secure their support?

Dr. Samura Kamara: This is a very

hypothetical situation. However, it is incumbent upon any Party whose candidate qualifies for a run-off to strike deals with other parties. My Party will be no exception. In any case, we are currently focusing on building alliances for a first-round victory. We have the numbers; many people from different parties are working to ensure that individuals from even within the SLPP are fed-up with the extremist wing that has captured their Party and want a return to a united, tolerant, and growing nation. My Party will talk to other Parties to agree on how we can work together to benefit Sierra Leone and not individuals.

Sierraeye: The Proportional Representation system has been a point of contention in the past; how will you and your Party handle it during the upcoming elections?

Dr. Samura Kamara: For starters, the

PR system is an imposition on this country, and we believe that it was done outside the law. We took the matter to the Supreme Court, but the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone thought otherwise. However, I must say this - the PR as it stands is also based on a very controversial mid-term census. They know it is so, hence their decision to do some average of 2015 and 2021 censuses to determine seats in the country - this is a grave point of contention. But the ECSC has decided to go along with it. As a law-abiding Party, we accepted the PR and gave our people a chance to choose their representatives by participating, though we also find the PR system very controversial. We are fielding candidates for Local Council and Parliament along the dictates of the PR system. As a Party, we are fully cognisant that most voters are not au fait with the PR system and therefore need some education on the system. As a responsible Party, it has commenced a nationwide education and sensitization campaign to ensure



that the citizens fully understand the PR system in terms of the voting system and its implications.

Sierraeye: Will your Party prioritize gender equality and women’s empowerment when selecting candidates for parliamentarians, councillors, and mayors?

Dr. Samura Kamara: Women are the heart of our electoral system, our governance philosophy, and our strategies for growth, inclusion and justice. In the just ended dispensation, our Party had two female mayors and a district council chairperson, the only Party who did that. Our APC Party 2022 Constitution stipulates that for each category of electoral positions, the 30% gender requirement must be strictly adhered to. We have therefore ensured that over a third of our candidates for the Local Councils and Parliamentary elections are women. We firmly believe that the future is about gender equity in all fields of endeavours, from governance to culture to economics, to education and justice - all sectors of life. When elected, I will take affirmative action in my appointments in favour of women.

Sierraeye: If you are elected president, what are the priority areas you plan to focus on?

Dr. Samura Kamara: The priority areas include:

- Fixing the economy to address the cost of living crisis
- Building One Nation - Uniting the country, peacebuilding and national cohesion
- Promoting Education for Employment and Entrepreneurship
- Health – Quality and accessible health for all
- Infrastructural development – build more roads, improve access to safe drinking water, expand clean energy supply in urban and rural areas,
- Women and Girls’ empowerment
- Reinvigorating the National Decentralization Reform and linking it with rural development

Sierraeye: Sierra Leone’s economy has faced challenges in the past, what specific policies do you have in mind to address this?

Dr. Samura Kamara: Sierra Leone’s economy and general society currently face two types of challenges- one, there are the challenges heaped on this nation by the actions of the current administration- these are

challenges of human rights abuses, rising costs, incompetent handling of currency, waste of public resources and divisive governance never before seen in this country. And there are also the persistent long-term challenges- high incidence of poverty, illiteracy, low electricity and gender inequality. We commit our governance to meet these challenges. We will pursue the following policies:

- Address the cost-of-living crisis through economic stabilisation measures, experienced fiscal and responsible monetary policies, removing irresponsible taxation on basic commodities, and building trust in the economic management of the state.
- Address persistent economic deficiencies at the structural level, restore macroeconomic stability and transform Sierra Leone from a consumption economy to a competitive production economy through an agrarian, tourism and services export-oriented revolution leveraging the potential of indigenous businesses and digital transformation.
- Create jobs and pathways for every adult, especially youth and women, to earn a living wage through the

design and rollout of sustainable cross-sectoral job-creation interventions in collaboration with local and international partners while reforming and capacitating the civil and public service to be service-delivery-oriented.

- Invest in physical and digital public goods and regulatory frameworks for mutually beneficial partnerships with the private sector, international financial institutions and development agencies and regional economic bodies and in the energy, transportation, water supply and Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) sectors to change the trajectory of infrastructural development.
- Constructively engage and collaborate with our development partners and the Diaspora to align priorities, ensure value for money in ongoing and future investments, and pursue mutually beneficial partnerships with deep respect for their taxpayers.
- Deepen the fight against climate change, protecting our environment and creating green jobs on a foundation of improved natural resource management strategies.
- While focusing on addressing our immediate to medium-term challenges of cost of living, untold hardship and eroded national cohesion with speed, clarity, scale, and impact, we will also work toward long-term development that is green, resilient, and inclusive.

Sierraeye: If you are elected president, what will be the composition of your government and what key appointments will you make?

Dr. Samura Kamara: We will have a 'wan nation' government- reflective of the various groups in the nation. My government will be one of competent Sierra Leoneans with a proven track record for discipline, hard work and integrity. It will be broad-based with a national outlook. In making political appointments to the public service, we will pay special attention to professional competence, ethnic and gender inclusivity.

Sierraeye: Do you trust the election management bodies, particularly the

Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL)?

Dr. Samura Kamara: It was an American statesman who said, 'trust but verify. Our trusts are directly proportional to the verifications we have been seeking- verifications relating to the voter ID cards, the recruitment of elections staff, to the publication of a disaggregated voter register. The ECSL has not been forthcoming on these. They have, therefore, not inspired trust and confidence. Trust does not come in a vacuum; it is generated by deliberate actions. Even when we reach out to them with concerns, the Commission and the Chief Electoral Commissioner have not been forthcoming. In many cases, they have been dismissive and unresponsive. Such an attitude to the main opposition party only undermines trust; it does not inspire it. But we are committed to the process, we are very watchful, and we will not allow the people's mandate to be stolen. They have put many obstacles in our path, but we are moving forward.

Sierraeye: If you do not win the election, will you accept the result and congratulate the winner?

Dr. Samura Kamara: Even though the question is hypothetical, by all standards, the outcome of free, fair, peaceful, inclusive and credible elections will be acceptable to everyone. I do not anticipate losing the June 24 polls, but if the will of the people is fairly and credibly reflected in an outcome that favours my opponent, I would not have any problems accepting the people's decision and congratulating the winner. Equally, I expect my opponents to congratulate me on winning the Presidential elections, which is imminent and not to put obstacles in the way of the people's genuine mandate.

Sierraeye: If you do not win, what advice would you

offer the winning candidate to ensure a peaceful and prosperous Sierra Leone?

Dr. Samura Kamara: A genuine winner will bring about genuine governance and reconciliation, and these are the only principles that will tackle the challenges and should be part of revisiting the long-standing proposition, 'winners-take-all.' The task of the next government, the government of the genuine winner, will be to address the issues I highlighted above.

Sierraeye: You were instrumental in implementing the Agenda for Change and Prosperity during the past APC government; what specific areas would you advise the winner to focus on to ensure a better future for Sierra Leone?

Dr. Samura Kamara: Attract investment, grow the income, and invest in building the capabilities of our people for thriving businesses, jobs that pay living wages, and a united, tolerant and democratic nation. Also, strengthen the monitoring and evaluation aspects.

Sierraeye: What do you see as the biggest challenges facing Sierra Leone in the next five years, and how will you



address them if you became president?

Dr. Samura Kamara: I have already spoken to that: address urgent issues relating to rising costs of living, joblessness, businesses going under, and a divisive nation. I will be a jobs president, a unifying president, a respecter of the rights of all.

Sierraeye: As an opposition leader, what is your assessment of the current state of democracy and human rights in Sierra Leone?

Dr. Samura Kamara: Notwithstanding his outrageous claim of being a Father of Democracy, President Bio's actions in the last five years have not only undermined democracy but also tended towards destroying it in Sierra Leone. The gains of the past two regimes at rebuilding a democratic political system, improving the legal system, combating corruption, promoting human rights and enhancing grassroots participation in national development have all been eroded by the Bio Administration. Some of the actions of President Bio to erode the country's democratic credentials include:

- Democratic institutions have all been captured by the State and therefore functioning on the directives of State House. President Maada Bio, through manipulations, has succeeded in capturing all state institutions involved in the electioneering process. The ECSL, PPRC, Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone,

and NCRA are virtually staffed both at Commission and technical levels by SLPP cardholders and loyalists to the mission of this Government and the Nation's Public Broadcaster, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, which is expected to function independently. The same is said for the leadership of the Sierra Leone Police, the Sierra Leone Military Forces, the Prisons and the Office of National Security;

- Deliberate and calculated efforts to undermine National Unity and Cohesion. President Bio took deliberate actions to divide the country along tribal, regional and party lines. His penchant for staying in power has no boundaries, even at the expense of disuniting the country. His public utterances and those of his surrogates are very divisive and chaos-inviting.
- Subversion of the independence of the other two Arms of Government: the Legislature and the Judiciary as part of the State Capture agenda. President Bio has succeeded in making the Justice Sector and Parliament rubber stamp bodies to aid his illegal and dictatorial actions. By so doing, he has effectively dismantled the system of checks and balances envisaged in the Constitution of Sierra Leone;
- The Bio Government is showing no hesitation to order the continuous violation of the rights of citizens.

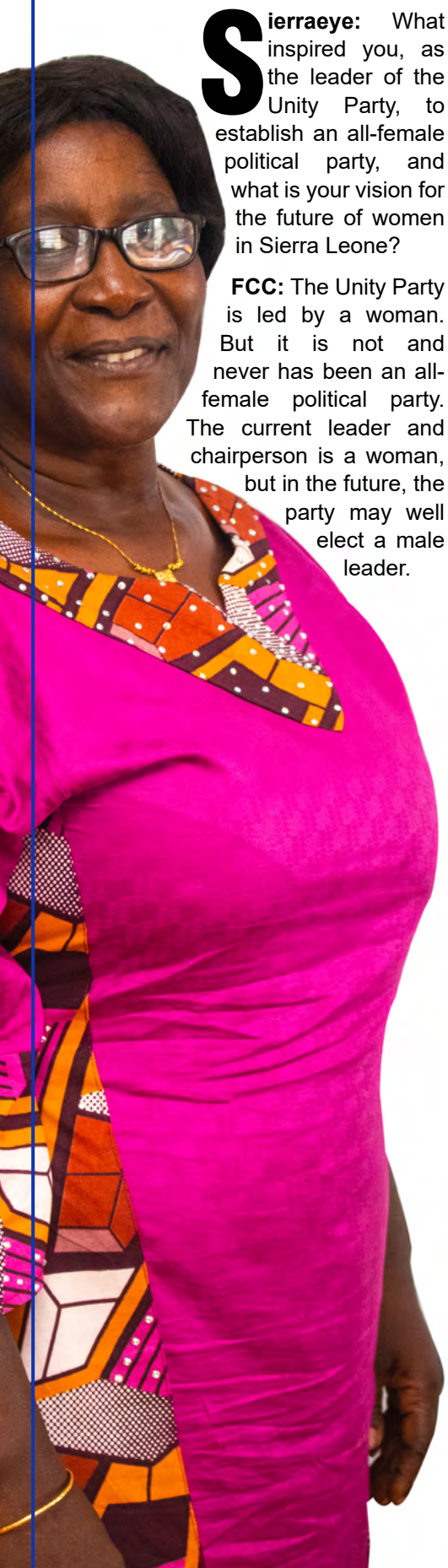
Scores of extra-judicial killings have been reported in the last five years and have been swept under the carpet. The security forces, particularly the police and even his presidential guards, continue unjustifiable terrorizing and unleashing violence on peaceful citizens. The Government summarily dismissed people with tenured jobs and replaced them without following due process.

- Peaceful citizens are dehumanized in the guise of fighting corruption. State-sponsored land grabbing and seizure abound, the restriction of free speech and heavy clamping down on dissenting views and opinions is a common occurrence and the denial of citizens to their constitutional right to peaceful assembly and demonstration.
- Nurturing and superintending over unprecedented political intolerance in the democratic history of Sierra Leone. President Bio embarked on actions that showed naked disregard for the main opposition political parties leading to the formation of COPPP and the withdrawal of key opposition parties from the Association of Political Parties (APPA).
- The Government has succeeded in killing the decentralization reform that Tejan Kaaba and Ernest Bai Koroma regimes struggled to initiate and nurture.



An Exclusive Interview with Unity Party Leader **FEMI CLAUDIUS COLE**

Championing Inclusivity and Equality



Sierraeye: What inspired you, as the leader of the Unity Party, to establish an all-female political party, and what is your vision for the future of women in Sierra Leone?

FCC: The Unity Party is led by a woman. But it is not and never has been an all-female political party. The current leader and chairperson is a woman, but in the future, the party may well elect a male leader.

Sierraeye: In a political landscape dominated by traditional political parties, how has your party acquired support and attracted voters?

FCC: What a party does is publicize what it stands for, through its advocacy, and its challenge of bad government policies. We have garnered support by pushing for freedom of speech, highlighting the blatant disregard for the Constitution that endangers our fragile democracy.

Powerful opposition to the government places one's liberty at great risk, as evidenced by my arrests and detention at the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) and being named a person of interest in the Special Investigation Committee's report.

Sierraeye: What is the most pressing issue confronting women in Sierra Leone, and how would your party solve it if you won the elections?

FCC: Women face various challenges, and all are equally significant. Women are excluded from the core of political decisions and policy, by Cultural, religious, and societal norms that prescribe a woman's role in society. The belief is that politics is a man's domain, and the home is the best place for women. A lack of political financing also hampers women's political participation. These challenges could be overcome by legislation coupled with foundational capacity building of women and girls, placing qualified women in key positions in cabinet, institutions, and on boards. Immediate implementation of zero nomination fees for all electoral processes. Provide financial and logistical support for female candidates contesting elected or appointed offices.

Sierraeye: How would your party collaborate with other political parties, including the ruling party and the main opposition, to advance your party's agenda and promote gender equality in Sierra Leone?

FCC: I am the chairperson of COPPP, which is a consortium of opposition

political parties that have been working together to address key issues that impact the democratic space, issues such as women's representation, the decentralization policy, the cybercrime bill, and the introduction of the proportional representation system.

Sierraeye: What specific programs and initiatives would your party prioritize if elected?

FCC: If I were to win the election, (which, I have already been excluded from) there would have been several priority areas in need of immediate intervention. Research into potential team members must have been done prior to the elections, the first priority would be, appointing a competent governance team that can start work on healing the deep divisions that have grown in intensity over the past five years. The cooperation of all would be the most important driver of our development. Uniting the country must be a top priority.

Sierraeye: With the upcoming election, how do you plan to raise awareness of your party and mobilise voters to support your candidacy?

FCC: The Unity Party has been unfairly excluded from the electoral process, therefore as a member of COPPP, we will support, raise awareness, and mobilise voters to support the COPPP chosen candidate.

Sierraeye: Do you believe that the electoral system in Sierra Leone is fair and transparent, and how do you plan to ensure free and fair elections for all parties?

FCC: I do not trust the electoral bodies, namely the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL). The ECSL recommended the Proportional Representation (PR) system to the President on the eve of the general election with no consultation with the electorate or political parties. The PR system currently implemented with its

high threshold and embedded rules, forces parties to nominate and pay for double the number of parliamentary and council seats. This has placed a burden on smaller political parties as evidenced by significantly decreased participation in this electoral process. And the shenanigans of both institutions have seen intra-party conflicts go unresolved and the presidential race reduced to comic relief.

Sierraeye: How will you work to increase women's representation at all levels of governance?

FCC: The Unity Party headquarters is a safe space where women from all parties are welcome and are assisted with any issue brought to our notice. Women must be sought out, and their opinions, ideas, and plans explored. Women's participation and representation should be actively encouraged and utilized at all levels of governance.

Sierraeye: What role do you see your party playing in shaping the future of Sierra Leone, regardless of the outcome of the election?

FCC: As opposition parties, we may not be in government, but are an integral part of governance, checkmating the excesses of the executive. Engaging and participating in the protection of democracy and the constitution. And serving if called upon, in the interest of the country's development.

Sierraeye: Do you still consider the All Political Parties Association (APPA) a key partner?

FCC: COPPP has no relationship with APPA.

Sierraeye: Can you tell us, as the head of COPPP, what inspired such an idea?

FCC: The proposed enactment of the decentralization policy was the catalyst for the formation of COPPP. Opposition political parties found that speaking with a united voice had the greatest impact than each advocating in silos.

Sierraeye: What will be COPPP's role if there is a run-off?

FCC: We are still having conversations as to how and whom we can work with to see a change of government.

Sierraeye: By contesting the 2023 elections, your party is preparing for victory. Do you foresee a run-off?

FCC: As I explained earlier, the Unity Party has been disqualified from active participation in the election, but we hope that there will be no run-off, and pray for a resounding SLPP defeat.

Sierraeye: As an opposition politician, what is your assessment of the state of democracy and human rights in Sierra Leone?

FCC: Our democracy has been on life support and our human rights record is devoid of humanity, compassion, and justice. Extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests have become the rule and not the exception.

Sierraeye: If you lose the elections, will you accept and congratulate the winner?

FCC: Due to my exclusion, this question would be more appropriate if directed to the incumbent.

Sierraeye: The People's expectations are high; what specific areas do you want the winner to focus on?

FCC: I want the next President to have an inclusive team. Governing the country is not a one-party or a one-tribe affair. Just like it takes a village to raise a child, governing a country takes a team. We do not want a President who thinks he knows it all, but one who will govern with inclusivity, has people with ideas, and listens to them. I remember after August 10, Solomon Jamiru gave a healing speech that resonated with the people. While the president's speech was riddled with innuendoes and accusations more inflammatory than placatory. A leader cannot be everywhere, cannot know everything, and cannot do everything, but must listen, collaborate, and engage. But, to run the country: your way or the highway, the results will be a one-term Presidency.

Sierraeye: Your party's slogan is 'We Are Stronger Together,' how do you intend to promote unity and reconciliation in Sierra Leone?

FCC: The name, the party symbol and the slogan connote 'unity.' When people ask: where is our base? We say our base is Sierra Leone. In Unity

Party, everybody is welcome. It is not a party based on region and tribe. The Unity Party's goal is to shift the trend away from the tribal divisions that have divided our country. As the country is so polarized, and tribalism is rife, if Unity Party were ever to be part of the government, its emphasis would be on inclusion, compassion, consultations, and listening to all voices whether praising or criticizing.

Sierraeye: How do you plan to address the issue of unemployment, particularly for the youth and women in Sierra Leone?

FCC: First and foremost, I will advise the government to be inclusive and retain competent people in governance. The space should be opened for all to contribute equally. When that is achieved, the government should open the country to manufacturing and investment.

Sierraeye: What is your thought on the state of free healthcare in the country?

FCC: There is no such thing as free healthcare because women pay for everything. If you don't pay, you don't get treated. Free healthcare is, therefore, a misnomer.

Sierraeye: How do you plan to ensure that government is transparent and accountable to the people of Sierra Leone?

FCC: A party in opposition can only perform oversight functions. Although I have been locked up twice at the CID, as a party we will continue my advocacy and criticism of the government.

Sierraeye: Your party has been described as a 'third force' in Sierra Leone's politics, how do you plan to break the dominance of the two main political parties?

FCC: Before I get to the point of breaking anybody's dominance, I need to, first of all, break the bias. I need to break the way ECSL (Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone) and PPRC (Political Parties Regulation Commission) have tilted the scale away from political parties. They have set the threshold under the proportional representation that smaller parties are excluded. So, to enter the ring, I must first own a pair of boxing gloves.



Redefining International Engagement in African Governance

Moving Beyond Election Monitoring

African leaders' abuse of power has created a pressing need for the international community to respond. Their desire to remain in power for extended periods often leads to the suppression of free speech, disregard for the rule of law, acts of terror and intimidation, and intolerance towards political opponents. Such undemocratic practices not only undermine the foundations of democracy but also serve as catalysts for bloody revolutions, armed conflicts, coups, and counter-coups across many African states. As bad governance continues, there is an increasing demand for international bodies like the UN, EU, AU, ECOWAS, and others to expand their role beyond

monitoring elections and actively engage in monitoring governance.

Political and Security Crises



Recent political and security crises in countries like Guinea, Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Somalia, and Sierra

Leone are stark examples of the consequences of bad governance in Africa. Guinea witnessed a bloodless coup in September 2021, resulting in Colonel Mamady Doumbouya assuming power after toppling former President Alpha Conde. ECOWAS promptly condemned the coup and demanded Conde's release. However, criticism was directed towards ECOWAS for its lack of a proactive strategy to prevent the Guinean coup, as they could have intervened during Conde's manipulation for a third term. Former President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone has joined rights campaigners in urging the international community to vigilantly monitor governance systems in Africa to prevent power abuses.

Threats to Democracy

Former President Koroma's call comes at a time when he and other past government officials face threats of arrest and imprisonment for corruption and money-laundering offences. He highlights the challenges of weakening institutions of accountability, manipulation of the judiciary, and abuse of civil liberties, which all undermine peace on the continent. Instances such as the arbitrary suspension of the Auditor-General, disruption of parliament, imposition of a speaker, and replacement of elected members by court judgments are clear signs of democratic setbacks, according to Koroma and rights activists. They argue that monitoring political systems can help curtail these excesses and ensure leaders exercise their powers with restraint.

Governance Challenges

Somalia's prolonged absence of a legitimate government, characterized by piracy and terrorism, has earned it the label of a "failed state." The country has been torn apart by rival factions vying for control, and this power vacuum prevented Somalia from signing the 1989 Geneva Convention on the Rights of the Child. The African Union (AU) has been actively involved in restoring order in Somalia by deploying peacekeeping troops. Sierra Leone has played a significant role in the AU's peacekeeping efforts in Somalia, despite facing threats of reprisal attacks by Al-Shabab terrorists.

The Case of Sudan and Libya

Sudan, Africa's largest country, has been divided into two separate political

entities with different governments due to ongoing governance issues. Former President Umar Al-Bashir, who ruled Sudan for years, is in custody following his arrest in 2017. Libya shares a similar fate, with a political situation mirroring Somalia's. After the toppling and assassination of President Muammar Al-Gaddafi, Libya descended into chaos. Gaddafi's regime was marked by suppression of free speech, brutal crackdowns, lack of respect for human rights, freedoms, and human dignity, as well as the exclusion of the majority from state governance. The ensuing armed struggle was an attempt to restore political stability, but the absence of an effective government has turned Libya into a landing place or transit point for illegal African migrants seeking opportunities in Europe.

Governance Challenges in Nigeria

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has long grappled with governance challenges ranging from economic mismanagement to insecurity. The unequal distribution of oil wealth has sparked grievances among oil-producing states, leading to protests against successive governments. One of the significant consequences of Nigeria's bad governance is the emergence of the extremist group Boko Haram, which has been active since 2002. Through acts of terrorism, Boko Haram has sent a compelling message to the government, highlighting the social injustice prevailing in the country. The abduction of over 300 girls from a school in Chibok stands as a tragic reminder of the high price Nigeria

pays for its governance failures. Unfortunately, the government's efforts to curb terrorism have been insufficient, and the threat persists.

Moving Beyond Election Monitoring

To achieve lasting peace and stability, it is imperative for the international community to go beyond mere election monitoring and focus on monitoring governance systems in Africa. The limitations of existing approaches have become evident as bad governance persists, resulting in political and security crises across the continent. By actively monitoring governance, international bodies can play a crucial role in curbing power abuses and ensuring leaders exercise their authority responsibly. This entails vigilance in upholding the principles of democracy, protecting civil liberties, strengthening institutions of accountability, and promoting respect for human rights.

The prevalence of bad governance in Africa poses significant challenges to peace, stability, and the overall development of the continent. The international community's engagement must extend beyond monitoring elections to effectively address these challenges. By actively monitoring governance systems, international bodies can contribute to curbing power abuses, promoting democracy, and fostering accountable leadership. It is through these efforts that Africa can overcome the limitations of its governance practices and work towards a brighter future characterized by peace, stability, and prosperity for its people.





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THE CHALLENGES OF THIRD-PARTY POLITICS

From 2005 to 2017, Dr. Kandeh Kolloh Yumkella (KKY) was the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Under-Secretary-General, and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All.

The Rise & Fall KKY

In 2017, he left the UN system to pursue a political career in Sierra Leone with the aim of overhauling our politics. His ultimate goal was to become the leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and clinch the presidency after ex-President Ernest Bai Koroma.

As an agricultural economist and development expert, he was convinced that Sierra Leone needed him to revamp an economy that had been wrecked by what past governments referred to as "twin shocks" (the Ebola outbreak and the fall in the Iron Ore price).

The euphoria generated by Yumkella's arrival in Sierra Leone in 2017 was second to none.

His name was sung on rooftops, and almost every Sierra Leonean wanted to get a glimpse of a man who many said was ready to right the errors of the past.

His fame grew like a bushfire in the harmattan in a short time, and all hopes were placed on him. A huge number of Sierra Leoneans threw their weight behind him, praying for a better Sierra Leone.

Yumkella's arrival on the political scene was reminiscent of President Tejan Kabba's

ascension to power in 1996. Both were former UN officials who left the international system to pursue political careers in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone needed peace, and Kabba, a former UN official, became the ultimate choice for the presidency.

Yumkella was poised to revamp Sierra Leone's economy, but he was not made President.

As a man who had served for years in the UN, Yumkella possessed a deep knowledge of geopolitics that would have enabled him to manipulate the international environment to promote national development objectives if he were President.

However, a third party was in the drama. The then flag-bearer, President Julius Maada Bio remained equally ambitious for the party's flag.

Bio contested the 2012 elections with ex-President Koroma and lost, but his zest for the presidency did not waver. He was poised for a second presidential bid, although some party stakeholders were against his move.

Bio's transfer of power from military to civilian rule in 1996 made him a national icon of democracy. Such enviable history still lingers in the sands of time, and is a trump card for Bio's campaign.

Bio was dubbed “Father of Democracy,” especially by his party’s grassroots for his role in Sierra Leone’s democratic transition. Then SLPP Chairman, Chief Somano Kapen, endorsed Yumkella for the party’s flag as both hail from Kambia district in Northern Sierra Leone.

But, within a twinkle of an eye, events took a sudden twist in the SLPP. Yumkella’s ally, Somano Kapen, was forced out of the party during an SLPP conference in Kenema in the Eastern region.

Many saw the move as the product of a conspiracy among SLPP stalwarts.

Thuggery and humiliation did not initially water down Yumkella’s political ambition. He fought hard but later backed out of the race when it became clear that he did not enjoy the support of the party’s rank and file.

He left the SLPP and aligned himself with firebrand ex-SLPP politicians, mostly academic elites, to form the National Grand Coalition (NGC) to advance his political objectives. In a short time, Yumkella established branches all over the country.

He enjoyed a smooth journey in the NGC as he was unanimously elected flag-bearer fueling hopes for a third political force in Sierra Leone.

In the 2018 elections, he campaigned with great vigour and received votes from almost every village, town, chiefdom, district, and region in the country. He got the highest votes in his home district of Kambia, securing four parliamentary seats, including his own in Constituency 062.

Yumkella however lost the presidential elections to the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), receiving only 6% of the votes, but the hope that NGC would one day govern Sierra Leone remained alive.

Despite setbacks, he remained resolute and continued to speak out on national issues.

He criticised government’s handling of COVID-19 pandemic and called for more transparency and accountability in the country’s governance system.

He also remained vocal on sustainable

development, energy, and the environment using his platform as a former UN official to advocate change.

Sierra Leoneans appeared tired of the governance styles of the two main political parties, the opposition All People’s Congress and the ruling SLPP. Many citizens believe that they haven’t seen much progress since the country gained independence in April 1961. As an NGC parliamentarian, Yumkella was highly critical of President Julius Maada Bio’s regime, which he repeatedly referred to as a “junta democracy.” He branded the two main political parties as Alusine and Alhassan, twin figures that have wrecked the country. People believed and followed him, hoping for a change from the status quo and a new hope for their country’s future.

Against all odds, in April, 2023, he formed an alliance with the SLPP, resulting in several resignations, including that of the erstwhile Chair, Dr. Denis Bright. Yumkella cited the need for unity and collaboration in the country’s politics and expressed his willingness to work with President Bio and other SLPP leaders to move Sierra Leone forward. His return to the SLPP was met with mixed reactions with some of his former supporters expressing disappointment and others welcoming his decision. Many see the alliance as the first step towards Yumkella’s return to the SLPP, especially after President Bio presented him with ‘Bora and Kola’ during a visit to his hometown, Samu.

As it stands, Yumkella’s popularity in the country is steadily dwindling.

He has been unable to deliver on his promises made during his election campaign as a member of parliament. His decision to form an alliance with one of the worst human rights violators in government has caused disappointment and anger among many Sierra Leoneans who see him as a traitor.

The announcement of the alliance led to a backlash on social media, with many branding Yumkella as incompetent and lacking sound political judgment. Yumkella’s political future appears bleak as he has failed to maintain the hope and trust of many of his supporters.

With the 11.9% threshold to secure a parliamentary seat under the proportional representation system, Yumkella’s NGC is unlikely to perform well in the upcoming elections. He has endorsed President Bio and will not be running for the presidency or his parliamentary seat.

Yumkella’s chances of winning the flagbearership within the SLPP are slim, as many within the party do not trust him and have not forgiven him for leaving the party, a move that would robbed SLPP of victory in the 2018 elections.

Many say his dream of becoming the President of Sierra Leone may have all but dissipated as he lacks sound political judgment and has lost the trust of his supporters.

The rise and fall of Kandeh Koleh Yumkella is a complex and nuanced story that highlights the challenges of politics in Sierra Leone. His initial popularity was driven by his vision for socio-economic reform and sustainable development, which struck a chord with many Sierra Leoneans who were frustrated with the status quo. However, the reality of party politics proved a significant obstacle, and Yumkella’s attempts to create a third force in the country’s political landscape ultimately failed.

Despite his efforts to create a viable alternative to the two main parties, Yumkella could not gain significant traction in the 2018 elections, winning just 6% of the presidential vote. His subsequent decision to form an alliance with the ruling party, SLPP, was met with widespread criticism and accusations of political opportunism. This move further eroded his support base and damaged his reputation as a principled politician.

Yumkella’s story underscores the challenges facing politicians in Sierra Leone and the difficulty of uprooting the entrenched two-party system.

Despite his passion and commitment to change, Yumkella was ultimately unable to navigate the complex web of political alliances, power dynamics, and entrenched interests that characterise the country’s political landscape.

Sierra Leone's 2023 elections and the "HOWNESS" of economic transformation



It's the system, stupid.

Imagine looking out to sea somewhere along Sierra Leone's vast coastline and watching a container supertanker and a pam-pam or dugout canoe heading into port. The captains of these two vessels face different options and prospects and operate by different rules. They operate in different systems. If we want the pam-pam to outperform the supertanker, we can just change the captain, we need to change the system within which the captain operates.

When diagnosing our problems, we often blame office-bearers for systemic challenges. If we make recommendations to one without considering the system within which they operate, our suggestions will be useless. The same applies to Sierra Leone's economy: the system will constrain the captain's options. In fact, the system might even determine what sort of captain we get. We must also share responsibility as actors within the system for shaping it and sustaining the very behaviour we claim to condemn.

Ethnoregional political patronage limits options

To understand the structure and relationships that shape politics and policymaking in Sierra Leone today, look at a political party map of Sierra Leone that the Institute for Governance Reform (IGR) produced after analyzing results from the 2018 elections.

Ethnoregionalism gives us the map we see. IGR's map of Sierra Leone is red (APC) to the north, green (SLPP) to the south, with a pocket of rainbow (NGC) in the northwest corner and a smattering of yellow (C4C) tucked away in the east.

Ethnoregional loyalties and patronage—not ideologies, manifestos, or policy promises—shape election outcomes. Ideas, ideologies, policies, and past performance (for an incumbent especially) matter, but not as much as ethnoregional patronage.

Personnel is policy

Such patronage isn't unique to Sierra Leone. Every incoming elected US president has some 3,000 positions to fill, many of which go to the biggest fundraisers or people to whom the president feels indebted. US President Ronald Reagan's director of personnel, Scott Faulkner, once said, "personnel is policy." Patronage-based appointments can harm the US or Sierra Leonean public interest.

Leaders want a team of loyalists they can trust to deliver on their agenda. But trustworthiness isn't just loyalty to the boss. Competence, capability, expertise, experience, networks, reputation, and wisdom matter too. Individuals and teams need these qualities. A group of brilliantly talented individuals who won't or can't work together is hardly better than a bunch of close-knit incompetents. Voters

should consider limiting their support to political contenders who put forward credible teams before the elections.

Bottom line: economic transformation for inclusive growth

Political actors in Sierra Leone agree they need to turn our economy around. For as long as Sierra Leone's productivity remains low, the country will remain trapped in poverty and at the mercy of the ebbs and flows of demand and prices for its export commodities (mainly minerals and agriculture). The answer is economic transformation to shift the workforce from low-productivity agriculture into higher-productivity manufacturing and services while drastically improving agricultural productivity.

This is easier said than done. Any economy is a complex system of many interrelated moving parts. There is no magic bullet, lever, or wand. Our policymakers must make careful decisions using the best available evidence (and there's a lot!).

Public-private partnership

Teamwork and coordination are critical. And not just among government actors. Private sector actors (and workers) are vital partners to the government in managing the economy. There's no one genius with all the answers and fragmented, siloed approaches to policy design and implementation don't work.

As we approach the 2023 elections, let's consider the why, what, how, who, and when of policies and strategies to transform our economy and lives. The why is economic transformation leading to inclusive growth that works for millions of Sierra Leoneans. The how is a more collaborative, cooperative, coordinated approach to governance in terms of conceptualization, design, and implementation.

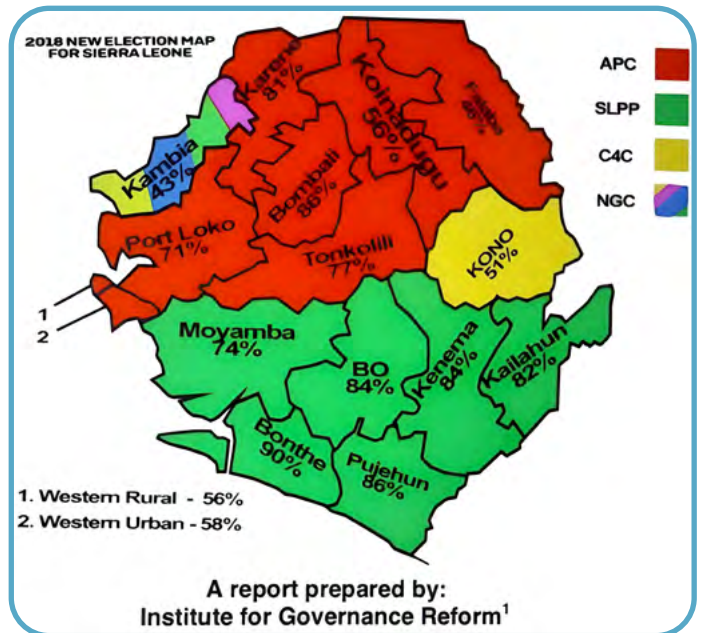
Playing the long game

Economic transformation is a long-term goal stretching far beyond the 60 months of one party's tenure. We need a 60-year time horizon. For this, we need national cohesion. It is unrealistic to separate economics from politics. The two go hand-in-hand. Consensus-building across political divides is essential. Sierra Leone already operates with a five-year Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP). A Long-Term National Development Plan (LTNDP) spanning decades should guide the MTNDP. Power will sometimes change hands. But this shouldn't change the LTNDP, a roadmap from which each administration carves out its MTNDP. But the LTNDP isn't the place for lofty ideals, fairytales, and empty words. It must be concrete, credible, and actionable but flexible enough to allow changes in response to our uncertain world of threats and opportunities.

Speaking of fairytales, all these fancy words here will come to naught if we can't get the right people in the right places at the right time under the right conditions with the right resources and mandates to do the right things. Remember, "personnel is policy." Because politics has become so toxic, many Sierra Leoneans with stellar professional track records shy away from public service. And the fact that most, if not all, institutions appear to increasingly operate based on "orders from above" rather than with a reasonable degree of operating autonomy means it will be harder and harder to persuade good people to take up positions. President Obama cautioned while visiting Ghana, "Africa doesn't need strongmen, it needs strong institutions."

Container supertanker or pam-pam economy?

So, we return to where we started: In the end, it's all about "the howness," as a senior government advisor in a previous administration once put it.



We'd probably want a supertanker container economy, not a pam-pam one. Sadly, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Politicians will make election promises, but will they keep them? Hopefully, citizens will remain active in holding officials to account. That's the social contract we need.

Rev Martin Luther King Jr once said, "A man dies when he refuses to stand up for that which is right. A man dies when he refuses to stand up for justice. A man dies when he refuses to take a stand for that which is true." A question for us all is, are we dead already, dying, or alive?

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National Grand Coalition

Hope Betrayed?

Five years ago, I cast my first vote in my country's election. A few months prior to the March 2018 elections in Sierra Leone, I wrote an article about how the National Grand Coalition (NGC) could offer a viable third option for Sierra Leoneans who did not wish to vote for the two main political parties, the Sierra Leone People's Party and the All Peoples Congress.

Here's an excerpt:

"The National Grand Coalition, led by Kandeh Koleh Yumkella (KKY), has presented itself not only as a force for change, but for many young Sierra Leoneans, a platform for defiance to the two long-standing parties, as well as hope that under a coalition umbrella, ethnic and traditional party lines will be blurred and overridden.

Yumkella has positioned himself as a viable third option for the presidency among young Sierra Leoneans who are hungry for a formidable non-SLPP and non-APC alternative. It appears that even if the NGC does not win the March 2018 elections, the party will split votes on both sides, and supporters will remain loyal to the KKY movement, a political

brainchild of Yumkella's, preaching a new dawn of hope for socio-political

party SLPP to form a "progressive alliance."

Six years ago, when the NGC emerged on the political scene, I was eager to believe they were a viable political alternative. Having been born at the start of the civil war, I grew up in a Sierra Leone, that had been left in ruins. I witnessed enough to believe that the two main political parties, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All Peoples Congress (APC) lacked what it would take to move Sierra Leone towards long-term progress. The SLPP's years of economic mismanagement after the war resulted in a sweeping victory for the APC in the 2008 elections. I recall how Sierra Leoneans took to the streets, hopeful that corruption would be eradicated and we would finally move toward prosperity and progress. However, towards the end of President Ernest Bai Koroma's second term, the APC became increasingly unpopular, particularly among centrist voters. The SLPP became a formidable opposition, and the elections went into a run-off. During that period, the NGC emerged to fill a void for young Sierra Leonean voters who did not feel

and socio-economic change in Sierra Leone."

In April this year, Kandeh Koleh Yumkella announced that NGC had signed an agreement with the ruling



a strong sense of loyalty to either the APC or the SLPP. For many of us, the NGC represented a breath of fresh air and a possibility of hope.

When the APC party lost the elections in 2018, it was a sign that even some of their long-time supporters wanted to change. Some ex-supporters voted for NGC in the first round of the elections, knowing that although NGC would not win, a vote for another party would mean that APC would be out.

Unfortunately, the current government led by SLPP seems to mirror the problems that led to APC's unpopularity. As the June elections approach, the complaints are pretty much the same as they were five years ago. For years, the country has struggled with a weak national electrical grid, a struggling healthcare system, and a lack of opportunities for marginalized youth. While there have been some strides in the SLPP government, such as the passing of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act (GEWE) which the government says will "address the gender imbalances in this country comprehensively," the current leadership still seems disconnected with the realities of everyday Sierra Leoneans.

Furthermore, the government's actions often contradict the policies they claim benefit Sierra Leoneans. Outcries from activists are met with arbitrary arrests, such as the detention of Unity Party leader Femi Claudius Cole. Last year, 21 people were reportedly killed during protests against the dire economic situation in the country. Two years before this, in 2020, four people were killed when police and soldiers opened fire on protesters in northern Sierra Leone. There have also been other cases of injustice, including the indefinite suspension of the Auditor-General, Lara Taylor -Pearce.

When NGC won four parliamentary

seats and little under 7% of the votes in the first round of the 2018 elections, this catapulted Yumkella as a leading force in national politics. It positioned the party as a movement for voters who were tired of APC and SLPP. Yumkella's mantra has consistently been "Salone Fos," putting Sierra Leone's interest ahead of tribal or regional affiliation. So, in the

recent elections in Africa's largest economy, many asked whether such a movement could be possible in Sierra Leone, with NGC potentially leading it. With Yumkella's announcement, it doesn't seem so.

Two weeks ago, Sierra Leonean businesswoman Zainab Sherriff shared a video expressing her grievances against the government. She also echoed sentiments similar to many Sierra Leoneans who believe that both leading political parties have failed the country. Unfortunately, those who attempt to critique the country's leadership honestly are often labeled as "the opposition" or "anti-government." This deep mistrust of people who do not align with either party deprives us of alternative perspectives and visions for our country, which could help us build collective and inclusive realities that cut across regional, class, and ethnic lines. Yumkella's announcement has forced non-partisan Sierra Leoneans into a dilemma and possible voter apathy.

With the June elections fast approaching, the question is, can we dare

to hope? Can we continue searching for a third option that will bring us closer to these realities?



formation of this "progressive alliance," the "Put Salone Fos" mantra seems like a partnership meant to unite everyone across political differences for Sierra Leone's interest and propel us forward.

However, Yumkella's message to centrist voters and NGC supporters is still unclear as to whether he is committed to asking the hard questions to seek answers that Sierra Leoneans need, whether his voice will be diluted under this coalition, and whether he will hold the country's leadership accountable- a promise he had made to supporters after the 2018 elections.

When Peter Obi led a movement for a "New Nigeria" and rocked the



Ngozi Cole

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Sierra Leone's Political Parties A REFLECTION ON DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION AHEAD OF THE 2023 ELECTIONS



LENA THOMPSON
*is a lecturer
writing in her private capacity*

As Sierra Leone gears up for the much-anticipated presidential, parliamentary, and local council elections in June 2023, citizens are preparing to elect leaders who will rule them for the next five years. This election will mark the fifth election since the end of the civil conflict in 2002, a significant achievement and progress for democratic consolidation. However, as the country's political parties gear up for another electoral battle, questions remain about the role of political parties in Sierra Leone's democratic process.

Sierra Leone's political parties have a long and varied history, dominated by a two-party system, in which the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the All Peoples Congress (APC) continue to dominate the political landscape. While smaller parties exist, they lack influence and most likely disappear or are absorbed into one of the two dominant parties. The electoral system of a single majoritarian further compounds this political makeup.

Political parties are crucial to the democratic process, providing choices for citizens by articulating their policies, recruiting personnel, and providing a vision and strategies to achieve this according to their political ideology. However, they can also be sources of tyranny and repression, as seen in Sierra Leone's history. Political parties are the link between the state and civil society, the institutions of government, and the groups and interests that operate within society.

The key to any democratic process is representation, and political parties are the vehicles for representation. The ethos of that political party matters just as much as the candidates put forward

by these parties and the people who vote. In previous elections, people tended to vote according to the colour or symbol without truly knowing the candidates. Political campaigns are designed and geared towards national-level cult-like euphoria regardless of a particular candidate's suitability, character, or integrity. Building the odd water well, distributing school materials, or giving away money and t-shirts to rallying crowds has been the modus operandi for candidacy.

Moreover, political parties should also reflect the national composition. Ethnicity, age, or sex are important components of inclusive representation. Much has been documented about the lack of political and public space for women, and it is argued that introducing proportional representation would increase female representation. However, political parties' internal structures relegate women to the sideshow of women's wings, cooks, praise singers, and dancers. Those who make it are reluctant to rock the proverbial boat and challenge the patriarchy within their party.

Furthermore, very little has been said or done to include Sierra Leoneans born and bred of different races or ethnicity in our political space. Yet Sierra Leoneans who emigrate to other parts of the world expect and are afforded the same right to vote or be voted for in their adopted country. This hypocrisy reflects lazy and discriminatory politics devoid of any justification for the othering.

Political parties stand on their ideology, policies, and agenda. This attracts votes, but political parties lack a clear-cut ideology in Sierra Leone.

Some identify themselves with, for example, Socialists-Comrades, while others describe their policies as social democratic. The wish list of party manifestos enshrines all the wonderful ideas and many unfulfilled promises. Rather than delivering on these promises, citizens are inundated with a barrage of gimmicky soundbites and populist rhetoric as a quick fix to describe intentions. In 62 years, Sierra Leone has yet to achieve the meaningful political or economic development promised to catapult it from one of the poorest countries in the world to a middle-income country.

One of the most disappointing and disturbing aspects of political parties in Sierra Leone is political cross-carpeting. Party cross-carpeting has become a predictable art form during every election and is the hallmark of political dregmanism and the politics of survival. Financial godfathers and kingpins who buy their way into positions and contracts with little or no experience in public life also plague the political landscape.

Political party reform is necessary to practice inclusive politics in Sierra Leone. Different opinions and people should be made to feel part of the process to usher in the much-needed development in the country. Multiparty democracy is a preferred form of governance, but the tenets of democracy must be adhered to, including transparency, financial probity, and adherence to ideals and principles. Sierra Leoneans need to choose their leaders based on character, suitability, and integrity, and political parties must focus on articulating policies that can bring about meaningful political and economic development.

Sierra Leone's Supreme Court Mandates Proportional Representation for 2023 General Elections: A Landmark Decision in Electoral Reform



On January 27, 2023, the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone delivered a ruling in a case brought by two members of the main opposition, the All Peoples Congress party. The case concerned the use of the Proportional Representative Electoral System in the upcoming general elections on June 24, 2023. The petitioners, Honourable Abdul Kargbo and Harikatu Maxwell-Caulker, questioned the constitutionality of the PR voting system and asked the court to declare it unconstitutional.

Respondents in the case were the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, and the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL). The respondents argued that the PR system was necessary because of significant changes in the country's population, which had grown by 6.4% from 2015 to 2021, according to the 2021 controversial mid-term census. They also argued that conducting a boundary delimitation exercise was impossible due to the provisions of the ECOWAS Protocol and the Public Elections Act 2022.

The petitioners, on the hand, argued that the use of the PR system undermined democracy because it prevented independent candidates from participating and excluded a large number of people due to the significant change in the population. They further submitted that the Constitution's section 38(A) had conditions that warrant the use of PR, particularly where existing and current constituencies represent the current parliament, which were not met in this case.

The Petitioners also argued that the President's directives to ECSL regarding the June 2024 general elections to be held using the PR system are unconstitutional and that he exceeded his constitutional powers, especially since the current Parliament is still in existence. They contended that in a democratic state, it is wrong and impermissible to vest the President with the sole power to order or direct a change in the electoral system without the consent of Parliament and in the presence of existing constituencies. They claimed that the Constitution only gave the President the authority to direct the use of PR when the conditions outlined in Section 38A of the Constitution were met.

The Supreme Court ruled that the President's directive to use the PR system for the upcoming election was in line with Section 38A (1) of the Constitution, as amended, and he did not act outside his powers.

The Court outlined the processes for conducting the election, which included conducting a census, boundary delimitation of constituencies, and approval by the ECSL. The Court held that the default position is to conduct the election on a constituency basis, but since the above factors in the setting-up process have not been done, the alternative is for the ECSL to advise the President to declare the upcoming election to be conducted on a PR basis.

The Court also ruled that the existing parliament represented by constituencies will be dissolved soon, making way for constituencies to be established, which will not be the case

this time around. The Court further held that the statutory instruments No 13 and 14 of November 16, 2022, which were previously challenged as unconstitutional, were part of Sierra Leone law and did not violate Sections 33 and 38 of the Constitution, and Section 171 of the Public Election Act.

Furthermore, the Supreme Court ruled that the president's directive to the Electoral Commissioner of Sierra Leone to hold the 2023 public elections for ordinary members of parliament by the PR system rather than constituency was in line with Section 38A (1) of the Constitution, as amended, and thus he did not act outside his powers.

The Court further ruled that independent candidates can participate in the electoral system, stand for election, and be included in any of the seats represented in the country's sixteen districts. The court also stated that the statutory instruments No 13 and 14 of November 16, 2022, which were previously challenged as unconstitutional by Hon. Kargbo and Councillor Maxwell-Caulker, were part of Sierra Leonean law and did not violate Sections 33 and 38 of the Constitution, and Section 171 of the Public Election Act.

The petitioners were represented by Dr Abdulai Conteh, while the Attorney General was represented by the Solicitor General R. B. Kowa ESQ and ECSL represented by Dr Emmanuel S. Abdulai.



By
Mohamed Wurie Bah



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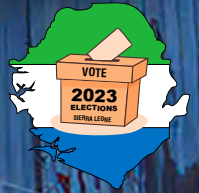
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THE URGENT NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Recently, Djibouti took a bold and much-needed step to improve their water supplies and enhance livelihood through their mission to restore their ecosystem – joining countries like The Gambia, Senegal, Mali, etc., to build the Great Green wall of Africa. Once completed, this initiative will create around 10 million jobs in rural areas by 2030. Wouldn't it be amazing if Sierra Leonean Political leaders followed suit? – step up to develop sustainable solutions for our environment!

As the June 2023 general elections in Sierra Leone approach, politicians must prioritize environmental issues and sustainable solutions in their

manifestos. Climate change has had a significant impact on Sierra Leone's environment and economy, with the country ranked among the top 10% of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in the world. In recent times, several papers documenting the impacts of climate change on Sierra Leone's environment and economy have been published by the Ministry of Environment. The National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) 2020 report estimates that Sierra Leone could face annual flood-related losses of up to US\$200 million by 2030. The 2016 floods and 2017 mudslide were reminders of the urgent need to address environmental issues in the country.

Sadly, the country's reliance on fossil fuels has led to dangerous levels of air pollution, land degradation, and a lack of clean water. We still use charcoal as our primary cooking fuel. Sea-level rise has forced many people to relocate, and deforestation has endangered the country's wildlife and water supply. To tackle these issues, political leaders must incorporate environmental protection measures into public policy and incentivize companies to minimize their carbon footprint. Solar, wind, and other renewable sources of energy can be invested in to reduce pollution and save valuable resources. Reforestation and agroforestry programs should be financially supported by the state to reduce deforestation and restore

Sierra Leone's Impending Elections



previously lost green areas. This will aid in creating new employment, preventing soil erosion, and enhancing livelihoods for Sierra Leoneans. Preserving the country's current forests will assist in preserving the country's natural beauty, supporting tourism, and serving as a source of revenue and employment opportunities.

The government must prioritize access to clean water, develop effective sanitary infrastructure, and implement water quality control strategies. Getting people access to clean water first is a fundamental freedom many people in Sierra Leone lack. In addition to ensuring access to potable water, the government should prioritize the development of effective sanitary infrastructure in both urban and rural regions and implement effective water quality control strategies.

Sustainable agriculture methods like climate resilient agriculture and effective water management are two more areas where the government could invest. Coastal and marine challenges and regenerating damaged forests are other programs that can be prioritized. Early political support for environmental initiatives is essential to ensure a cleaner, healthier environment for Sierra Leone's future. Politicians are responsible for ensuring that environmental concerns get enough attention in the upcoming elections.

Regarding these programmes, policymakers in Sierra Leone need

to prioritize the allocation of sufficient funds to enable government make the necessary adjustments. Government's ability to facilitate this process will depend on its ability to facilitate open communication and cooperation among businesses, civic society, and other interested parties. This will enable a more transparent discussion on environmental sustainability and increase confidence in government measures' efficacy and right application. When everything is said and done, Sierra Leone's impending elections should be a chance to put environmental conservation and restoration at the forefront of government priorities.

To maintain Sierra Leone's ecology, lawmakers should work to review national policies and implement international environmental rules and regulations. These rules, which have been adopted and ratified, should be domesticated through parliament to ensure that they are implemented nationally. This is crucial to consider environmental issues and implement the best environmental solutions. It could entail encouraging corporations to embrace green technology, building fund to support environmental restoration initiatives, and establishing laws to restrict deforestation and battle environmental issues. Politicians in Sierra Leone should use the upcoming elections to prioritize environmental protection, as their actions will significantly impact the country's environmental future.

The country can have a bright and healthy future if critical sectors are given the necessary resources and focus. Sustainable agriculture methods and effective water management are two more areas where the government could invest. Other programmes should focus on adapting to coastal and marine challenges and regenerating damaged wood. With early political support for environmental initiatives, Sierra Leone may enjoy the benefits of a cleaner, healthier environment in years to come. Politicians have the responsibility to ensure environmental concerns get enough attention.



Haja Isatu Bah is a 25-year-old feminist, entrepreneur, and environmentalist. She has a degree in Environmental Studies from Skidmore College, New York, USA. She is also the founder of Uman4Uman – a social enterprise that produces and sells reusable menstrual pads to girls and women in Sierra Leone

Patriarchal Gatekeepers: Hindering Women's Progress in Sierra Leone's Political Landscape



Basita Michael
is the founder of
Sierraeye Magazine

Have you ever wondered why Sierra Leone's progress never truly embraces progressive ideals? The answer is remarkably simple, and it is right in front of us. It all boils down to the continuous marginalization of women. While Margaret Thatcher may not be everyone's favorite politician, she was correct when she said, "If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman."

Continuing to marginalize 52 percent of the population and expecting sustainable growth and progress is both dishonest and detrimental to the national interest. Women constitute 52 percent of Sierra Leone's population, yet pervasive institutional discrimination against them has resulted in numerous intersecting inequities. This sad situation has profoundly affected women's representation in politics, the platform through which they can meaningfully shape their own destinies as well as the fate of the entire nation.

Legislation that was intended to put an end to this bias has fallen short of expectations. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act, as well as recent laws such as the Public Elections Act and the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) Act, have revealed how those entrusted with protecting and promoting women's inalienable right to equality have instead become enablers and enforcers of unequal power dynamics between men and women. I refer to them as patriarchal gatekeepers.

Let me introduce you to some of these gatekeepers and their behaviour that help contextualize the situation. Among them are our own politicians and lawmakers who, driven by self-interest, have passed laws that do not

aim to eliminate discrimination but rather to deny women equal participation.

Take, for example, the GEWE Act. Despite the misinformation, distortions, and propaganda that attempt to portray it as a genuine stride for women, it falls short. Contrary to popular misconception, the GEWE Act does not mandate 30 percent representation in elected and appointed positions.

Section 3(1) of the Act states, "In making appointments to cabinet and other government positions, the President may take due consideration of the possibility of appointing women to at least 30%." There is no guarantee that this will be implemented, even if it pertains to cabinet and other government positions. The paradox in this clause is astounding: the President may consider appointing women but is not obligated to do so.

Section 3(2), which addresses non-Presidential appointments to public offices, states that "at least 30% shall be women." However, this raises the question of how many appointments in the government are not made by the President. Perhaps only a few of the lower-level positions. Consequently, women will hold 30% of the lower-level positions in the public sector. In contrast, the top positions will be subject to the whims and caprices of the elected President.

Contrary to media reports, this Act does not mandate 30% female representation in Parliament. Section 2 merely reiterates the Public Elections Act 2022, indicating that public elections will be held, but it does not address the election process itself.

While Section 58 subsection 2 of the Public Elections Act 2022 requires one out of every three nominations to be

made by a woman, a nomination does not guarantee election. Civil society raised concerns about the potential negative consequences of this provision, but these objections were disregarded.

"While this has the potential to increase women's representation in parliament from the current dismal 12 percent, we are concerned that implementing this law in a district block system may prevent women from securing the intended one-third representation in certain districts. This is because, the 16 districts forming the district blocks have varying population sizes and, therefore, a varying number of MPs. In districts where the total representation cannot be evenly divided by three, women will not achieve adequate representation as mandated," stated the Institute for Governance Reform (IGR). As a result, women may not have sufficient representation in districts where the overall representation cannot be evenly divided by three.

In a proportional representation system, placing women high on a party list is a requirement that can enhance women's political representation. The ideal practice is the "zipper system," where men and women alternate positions. Unfortunately, the laws do not mandate political parties to place women at the top of the nomination list, creating uncertainty and challenges in implementing these laws to increase women's representation to at least 30% in Parliament and local council elections.

Another example of patriarchal gatekeeping is found in the wording

of section 42 of the PPRC Act. It states that a political party must have at least 30% female representation in executive roles at all levels, from ward to national. This provision allows political parties to choose whether or not to appoint women to executive positions, rendering it ineffective in bridging the gender gap within political parties.

The examples above clearly demonstrate Parliament's lack of genuine commitment to increasing women's political representation.

APC and SLPP are also complicit in gatekeeping patriarchy, although in a less complex and subtle manner. What sets them apart is how they collectively and swiftly violated the very laws they legislated and voted for. Even before the ink on the bills had dried, both parties selected and supported men in crucial decision-making positions, including top leadership roles.

Despite the 2004 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report calling for a minimum of 30% representation of women at all levels of decision-making, as well as the promises made in their manifestos, the APC and SLPP have failed to demonstrate inclusivity and women's participation in line with the modest spirit of the GEWE and the Public Elections laws for the upcoming general elections in June.

In an open letter dated May 9, 2023, the 50/50 Group, an organization dedicated to women's political empowerment, highlighted these alarming developments. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of inclusivity in the nomination process, the placement of women lower on candidate lists, and the failure to meet the 30% quota, even at the local council level. They noted "First, we received a series of complaints by women across the APC and the SLPP that the processes for Nomination have not been fully inclusive. Some of the concerns expressed included selection of candidates by elites who are unfamiliar with district candidate preferences; delegates voting based on financial incentives, rather than candidate popularity; and unfair vetting processes of candidates.

Second, as lists from political parties,

we note that many have women in the third position, rather than first or second, while some lists for candidates do not even meet the 30% quota, including at local council level. Third, we have received complaints from UNITY Party, the only party currently headed by a woman, about not receiving clearance to nominate candidates."

Furthermore, the UNITY Party, the only party currently led by a woman, complained about not being granted permission to nominate candidates.

Moreover, the PPRC itself acts as a patriarchal gatekeeper. Instead of rejecting the marginalization of women in politics, it remains oblivious to it. Lack of will to enforce the letter of the law is perhaps not surprising, given that the four-member commission does not include any female members.

PPRC Chairman, Abdulai Bangura's recent statement is an example of gatekeeping. He lamented that most political parties did not nominate candidates in line with the spirit of the Public Elections Act. "If you can't give women the first position, put them in the second," he bemoaned. It is unacceptable that, despite acknowledging and being aware of the violation of the law, the PPRC Chief merely reprimanded political parties instead of utilizing authority granted by law to impose consequences for noncompliance.

Some influential women, who fail to see beyond self-promotion and self-preservation, also act as patriarchal gatekeepers. It is not to say that women should be treated as a homogeneous group, but it is disheartening to witness women using their positions and beliefs to undermine and diminish the efforts of their fellow women towards equality. They become gatekeepers of the status quo, perpetuating the ongoing marginalization and discrimination of women for personal gain. This was particularly evident during the process leading to the passage of the GEWE Act.

Even the Ministry of Gender, led by a woman, has failed to stand up and provide Sierra Leonean women with a fair chance of achieving truly revolutionary legislation. The Minister has



disregarded numerous concerns raised by high-profile women from the Yellow Ribbon Group from the very beginning.

In the end, the Minister, her allies, Parliament, and President Bio's entire administration were content with settling for a law that was not intended to narrow the gender gap in politics. Instead, they enacted legislation that granted men the authority to define the acceptable degree of female representation. It is disheartening to see that even this level of acceptance, as judged by men, is not being upheld in light of women's ongoing experiences leading up to the June elections.

To summarize, understanding why the 2023 elections will not result in increased women's representation requires acknowledging that patriarchal gatekeepers have sold off the cause of women to the highest bidder. It serves as a reminder that the story of Sierra Leonean women is one of betrayal by those who were entrusted to protect and defend them, rather than one of weakness or ignorance. The struggle for true gender equality and women's empowerment in Sierra Leone continues, and it requires a collective effort to challenge and dismantle the barriers imposed by patriarchal gatekeepers.





DIDIERDROGBA

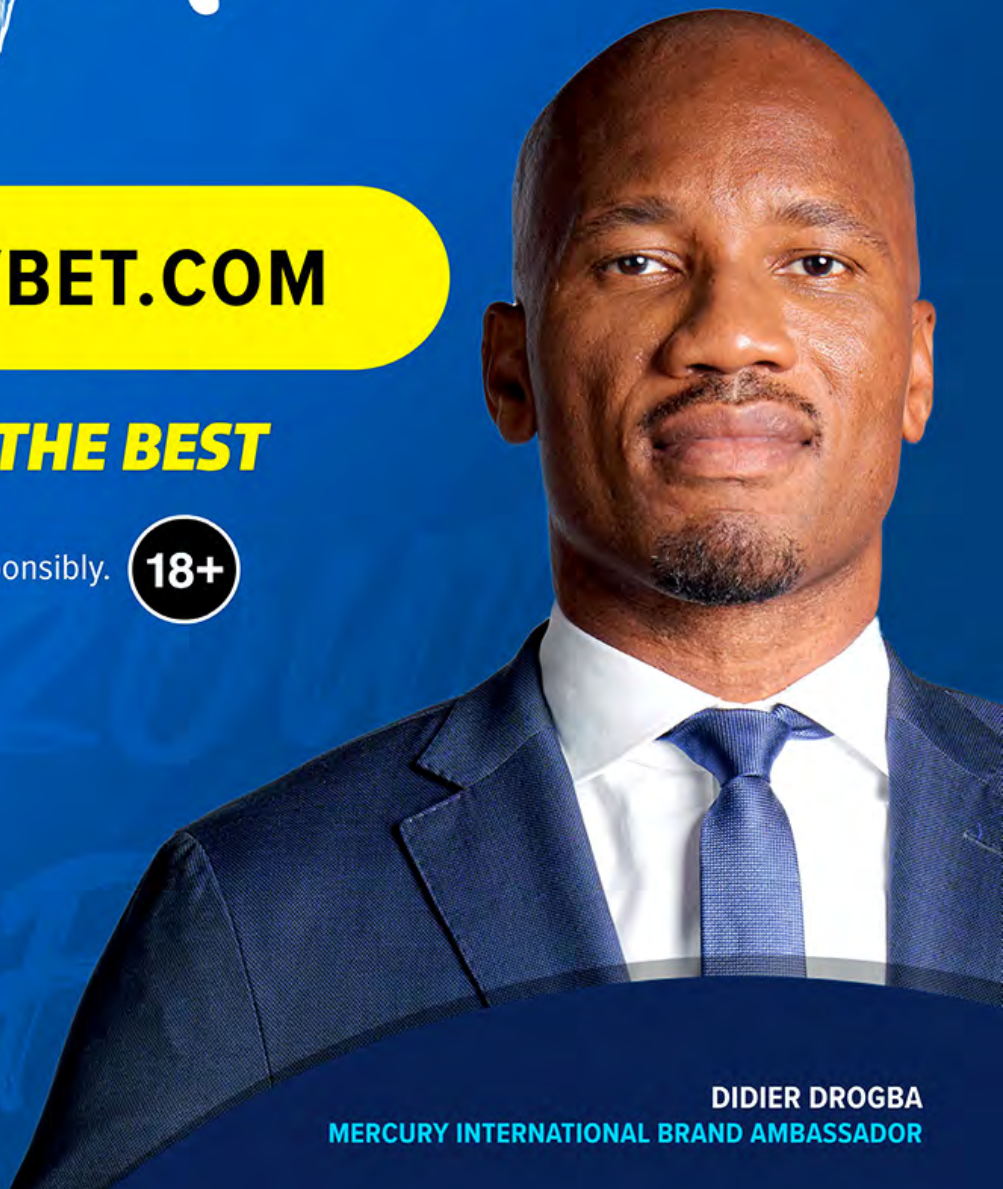
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SHAPING SIERRA LEONE'S FUTURE: INSIGHTS INTO THE CRUCIAL JUNE 2023 ELECTIONS

Sierra Leone finds itself in a state of political tension and rising violence, posing a grave threat to the fragile peace and security the country has worked hard to establish. Compounded by economic challenges, such as soaring inflation and increased food and fuel prices, Sierra Leone's upcoming June 24 elections hold regional significance. This critical juncture occurs amidst strained political relations between the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), led by President Julius Maada Bio, and the main opposition All People's Congress (APC) party. Additionally, concerns regarding the independence of democratic institutions, notably Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL), further complicate the situation. The outcome of the June elections will have far-reaching implications for the balance of power, political stability, and the future of democracy in Sierra Leone.

Election Reforms and Their Importance

Sierra Leone recently witnessed significant election reforms through the signing of the Public Elections Bill 2022 by President Julius Maada Bio. This legislation aims at repealing and replacing the Public Elections Act 2012 and provide supplementary provisions to Sections 32 and 33 of Sierra Leone's Constitution. The

importance and the pressing need to strengthen the country's electoral laws. As a result of the dialogue between the Parliament's leadership, the Speaker, and the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, amicable resolutions were reached. The amended act is expected to contribute to the development of robust and inclusive democracy in the 21st century, ensuring equal representation for all individuals. Now, the Chief Electoral Commissioner of Sierra Leone will operate independently, free from any fear or favour. The Commissioner's newfound authority includes announcing election dates, which was previously the president's prerogative, and canceling election results in areas affected by electoral violence or malpractice.

Challenges and Concerns

While the electoral reforms hold promise, concerns have been raised, particularly by the opposition, regarding the use of the district block or proportional representation (PR) system. The PR system, outlined in Sections 38 and 38a of Sierra Leone's 1991 Constitution, allows for two types of elections: constituency-based and proportional representation. The laws governing

the PR system were not amended during the parliamentary review of the bill, reaffirming that all public elections in Sierra Leone shall continue to be conducted according to the Constitution. However, this has generated apprehension among civil society organizations, especially regarding sensitizing the population, particularly the youth and first-time voters, about the PR system's intricacies. The Electoral Commissioner of Sierra Leone has assured the public that extensive sensitization campaigns will be carried out across the country, supplementing an already published electoral calendar.

Moreover, Sierra Leone faces ongoing



challenges in maintaining peace and order as the electoral activities draw nearer. Intra and inter-party tensions remain high and have often escalated into physical violence, resulting in injuries and property damage. Instances such as the burning of Hon. Hassan's vehicle by members of his party in Mongor Falaba District exemplify the level of discord within political factions. Furthermore, the issue of women's participation and inclusion in the governance system remains a concern. While recent legislation mandates increased female representation in parliamentary elections, gaps and shortcomings persist in addressing the unique challenges women face in Sierra Leone.



extensive parliamentary debate surrounding the bill highlighted its

constituency-based and proportional representation. The laws governing

Mitigating Election-Related Violence

Addressing the risk of election-related violence in Sierra Leone necessitates a collaborative, multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders, including the government, political parties, civil society organizations, election management bodies, and the international community. Key strategies include fostering a level playing field for political parties, promoting tolerance and peaceful discourse, bolstering security measures, conducting comprehensive voter education campaigns, facilitating dialogue and conflict resolution, and ensuring international support.

To create a level playing field, it is essential for the government to ensure equal access to resources, media coverage, and opportunities for all political parties to campaign freely without intimidation or harassment. Impartial application and consistent enforcement of electoral laws and regulations are crucial to avoid any perception of bias.

Political leaders and parties are responsible for promoting tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful discourse among their supporters. They should refrain from using inflammatory language or inciting violence, instead focusing on issue-based campaigns



and avoiding personal attacks or hate speech. Civil society organizations can also play a vital role in promoting peaceful discourse and facilitating dialogue among different stakeholders.

Law enforcement agencies need proper training and deployment to maintain law and order during the election period. They should act in a neutral and professional manner, ensuring the rights and safety of citizens,

candidates, and election officials are protected. Adequate measures should be in place to prevent and respond to acts of violence, including hate speech, intimidation, or attacks on individuals or property.

Voter education campaigns should ensure citizens are aware of their rights, responsibilities, and the importance of peaceful participation in the electoral process. Educating voters on proper voting procedures, the legal means to resolve disputes,



and the consequences of engaging in election-related violence is crucial.

Effective dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms should be established to address any disputes or grievances arising during the electoral process. This can include establishing mediation or arbitration processes, inter-party dialogues, and a culture of peaceful conflict resolution through legal channels rather than resorting to violence.

The international community can provide support through election monitoring missions, technical assistance, and diplomatic engagement. International observers are crucial in ensuring transparency and credibility throughout the electoral process. Early warning and response mechanisms should be in place to prevent or mitigate any potential violence.

The government must explore dialogue and seek a negotiated settlement that provides a win-win solution for all parties involved. While judicial options are being pursued, political parties should refrain from acts that could destabilize the country and instead embrace peaceful means to address underlying issues. Citizens must



remain calm and refrain from engaging in violence, understanding the grave implications it holds for the country's peace and stability.

Civil society organizations are called upon to embark on extensive public education and sensitization campaigns, highlighting the potential consequences of escalating conflicts and their impact on democracy and peace.

Media outlets are responsible for demonstrating professionalism in their reportage, presenting events accurately and without unnecessary sensationalism. By airing court proceedings and fostering transparency, the Supreme Court can build public confidence in the judiciary, mitigate negative public sentiments, and discourage aggrieved parties from inciting violence.

The June 2023 elections in Sierra Leone are pivotal for the country's democratic progress and stability. Addressing economic challenges, ensuring the independence of democratic institutions, and promoting peaceful and inclusive electoral processes are critical steps toward fostering a resilient democracy. By engaging in collaborative efforts, stakeholders can mitigate election-related violence, uphold the rule of law, and safeguard the rights and safety of citizens. The international community's support and commitment to democratic principles will play a vital role in Sierra Leone's journey toward continued progress and development.





The Evolving Role of Music in Sierra Leonean POLITICS

Music has always played a significant role in Sierra Leone as a source of entertainment and a means of glorifying heroes and leaders. Politicians have often used music to gain popularity and advance their agendas.

However, musicians have also played a crucial role in promoting unity, democracy, peace, and national cohesion through their lyrics. It was in the 1970s that the entertainment industry started to flourish.

The likes of S.E. Rogie, Ebenezer Calendar and several others were at the scene.

However, economic hardship of the 1980s made many to seek fortunes in Europe and the United States.

In their absence, the rhythms of Bongo Man, Afro Combo, Afro National, Sabanoh-75 and Congolese lyrics occupied the music space in Sierra Leone. In 1991, new artists appeared in the entertainment industry and contributed significantly to the development of music in Sierra Leone.

Steady Bongo and Jimmy Bangura deserve a particular mention. "You Get For Ready Before You Married" was Steady Bongo's first music that rocked Sierra Leone.

His hit song, "Welcome to Democracy," which he released in 1998 following the restoration of President Ahmed Tejan Kabba to power by ECOWAS after the 1997 coup by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, played a crucial role in convincing Sierra Leoneans that democracy was the only way out.

When the Kabba administration was

confronted with the deadly HIV/AIDS, Steady Bongo toured the country with Aids prevention messages. His music career continued until 2018 after President Julius Maada Bio came to power.

He praised and cautioned Bio to rule in the people's interest. In his lyrics, he made it clear that the people brought the change, and when change was needed, nobody could stop it.

Despite the positive influence of music on society, politicians often employ or exploit the talents and services of artists for their own gain, resulting in the creation of factions and groups with competing interests. Proxy wars are rife in the entertainment industry, and inflammatory exchanges among artists are not uncommon, breeding discord among themselves. The state of disunity badly derails progress in the world of music, and factions and groups with political linkages have emerged with competing interests.

With conflicting interests, factions with political ties have emerged. The Black Leo Group of Amara Turay, also known as Kao Denero, and the Red Flag Movement (RFM) led by Alhaji Amadu Bah, nicknamed LAJ, are at odds. According to analysts in the music industry, the two factions have distinct political ties. While the Black Leo Group is rumored to have support from the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), the RFM is said to have close ties to the main opposition, All Peoples Congress. After he was named Entertainment Ambassador, Kao Denero's connections to the SLPP were made public.

Many people have expressed surprise over LAJ's arrest and incarceration. Fingers are pointed at opposing forces in the music industry to have fuelled LAJ's arrest and detention. Kao Denero recently released a statement to clarify his identity, claiming that he had nothing to do with LAJ's arrest.

Patronage to politicians by artists is not a new phenomenon in Sierra Leone. In 2007, Innocent was brought into the APC fold following the release of his hit song "We Gee Dem Notice." The music, which was released after President Ahmed Tejan Kabba of the

SLPP had exhausted his second term, pushed SLPP to the exit door. It sent many APC grassroots into a frenzy, calling for political transition. The APC-backed artist did not give up eulogising APC after the 2007 election. He released "Wuna Gee Dem Chance," which means the defeated SLPP should give the APC a chance to rule.

The trend of using music to criticise and hold power accountable started in the early 2000s when Joseph Gerald Adolphus Cole, popularly known by his stage name, Daddy Saj, produced his corruption song against the Tejan Kabba administration, which he accused of endemic corruption. Saj was a rapper and arguably the biggest and most popular artist of his time. He used his rap style, a blend of hip-hop and goombay, to expose corruption in state governance. Although Saj left for the United States, his voice laid the foundation that Emmerson Amidu Bockarie, a social commentator and an Afropop singer, continued to build on. Emmerson used his music to hit hard on politicians to sanitize society of corruption, although he did not directly attack them.

Under the new APC, Emerson was a bit mute but went wild when he released 'Yesterday Betteh Pass Tiday,' interpreted to mean Tejan Kabba's leadership is better than Koroma's. The music did not, however, enjoy popularity in the North-West regions widely seen as APC strongholds. In Freetown, the nation's capital, Emerson's album was bought and thrown away at dustbins, a move to frustrate him from singing and holding the new APC government to account.

Despite the setback, Emerson did not give up his critical music. His songs hinged on corruption which he saw as cancer to Sierra Leone. The 'Yesterday Betteh Pass Tidae' hit set the pace for most of the songs Emmerson released between 2007 and 2018. The reform of the anti-corruption laws from lenient to severe ones has been attributed to Emmerson's hard-hitting songs. There is no gainsaying that he was part of a group of artists who cried for regime change in early 2017 to save Sierra Leone from what they referred

“Wudat We Dae Vote Now Ba....” the question means who are we going to vote for in the 2007 election, with just a few months to the polls.

to as an “economic collapse.” Although Emerson appears critical of the Bio regime, he was accused of not doing enough compared to what he did in the Kabba and Koroma administrations. As his popularity rating and appreciation dropped, Emmerson stopped singing when he was needed most, a move that raised suspicion of collusion with the Bio regime. At the moment, Emerson is seen as a walking corpse.

Apart from Emerson and Daddy Saj, a group of artists called 'Hard Life' contributed significantly to educating Sierra Leoneans about economic hardship at that time. They compelled the government to act like the youth had nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep. 'Hard Life' hardly got a moment's rest, especially when Tejan Kabba was riding into the sunset. They asked who Sierra Leoneans would vote for to lift them from the state of abject poverty and suffering backed up by Jungle leaders and other critical musical groups.

“Wudat We Dae Vote Now Ba....” the question means who are we going to vote for in the 2007 election, with just a few months to the polls.

In conclusion, while music has been used to promote unity, democracy, and peace in Sierra Leone, it has also been used to further political agendas. Artists have been employed or exploited by power-seekers striving to achieve their ends, and the result has been the creation of factions and groups with competing interests. Nonetheless, music has continued to play a critical role in holding power accountable and ensuring regime changes in Sierra Leone.

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