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Seesaws, Claw Backs and
the Tripod of Democracy in

Sierra Leone.

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With Sierra Leonean Businessman
Rodney Michael On The Economy.

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2023

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SiERRAYE.

MAGAZINE & NEWS



Welcome.

Sierra Leone Under the Microscope

Welcome to the maiden edition of the digital edition of Sierraeye magazine, which looks into wide-ranging political, social, and economic issues. It includes news articles, editorials, critical commentaries, and helpful advice on implementing policies and strategies to help Sierra Leone emerge from its economic morass. We also examine some of the setbacks to the consolidation of democracy in Sierra Leone.

“The country has seen two political transitions in its democratic evolution. However, unchecked police excesses are gradually undoing the progress gained over time. Scenes of police brutality on opposition parliamentarians in the well of parliament left a lot to be desired”.

The People’s Lawyer column, which clarifies legal information the public needs to know, is highly educational and fascinating. It responds to legal questions on how a testator (one who dies leaving a will) and an intestator (one who dies without a will) ‘s property could be shared among surviving spouses, children and family members. Sharing of the estate has always been a controversial issue, especially between the surviving spouse and the deceased’s family members. Most spouses strongly believe in the deep-rooted tradition that anything left behind by their deceased partner belongs to them. The attempt

in some customs by family members to inherit the deceased’s wife against her consent makes matters worse.

Send any legal issues you want the People’s lawyer to respond to, write to
editor@sierraeyemagazine.com

In addition, key events that define 2022 are also examined and analysed. The recent August 10 demonstrations and police response are also delved into. The demonstration tagged as the deadliest is second only to Sierra Leone’s decade-long civil war. Many discussions and debates erupted after the mayhem. Many Sierra Leoneans argued that police officers were unprofessional in their response, while others said the opposite. The intermittent waves of protests in the formal and informal sectors are defining characteristics of the year under review. It may be argued that the protests contributed, in no small measure, to the economic meltdown we see today.

A glance at what lies ahead of 2023 also forms part of the magazine’s content. The contentious district block proportional representation system is one of the current year’s contentious concerns. The main opposition party prefers the first past the post or constituency-based system. This difference is the subject of litigation in the Supreme Court.

Another issue discussed was the invitation extended to over 40 African Heads of State, including President Julius Maada Bio, by the US President, Joe Biden. The discussions centered on strengthening partnerships, funding for climate change adaptation, health, infrastructure, elections and governance, among others. President Bio informed Sierra Leoneans that the main issue discussed was building and sustaining partnerships between the US and Africa. How Africa will benefit from the partnership remains an unanswered question.

Business magnate Rodney Michael also provided his perspective on the economy. He called for a more practical approach in managing the economy. Too many restrictions on business portray the Bank Governor, Professor Kelfala Kallon as being out of touch with economic realities.

There are many other attention-catching stories in this inaugural edition. Send your comments and feedback to us at

editor@sierraeyemagazine.com

Happy Reading!

CEO and founder:
BASITA MICHAEL



editor
ALIEU TUNKARA



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Cover Story

Seesaws, Claw Backs and the Tripod of Democracy in Sierra Leone.



Democracy analysts say that a country that has had two peaceful democratic changes of government could be justifiably assumed as consolidating its democracy. This seemed to be the promise in Sierra Leone in April 2018 when there was a peaceful transfer of executive power from an All Peoples Congress (APC) government to the opposition Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), which had won that year's presidential elections. This was the second time there had been a change of government, the first being in September 2007 when the APC won the presidential and parliamentary elections of that year and executive and legislative power was handed over to them.

The 2018 democratic change was, however, a little different from that of

2007. Whilst the electorate returned the SLPP to the presidency in 2018, the APC emerged as the largest party in parliament, which put it in pole position to hold on to the Speakership of that august body. This was not to be. In a bizarre twist, on the first day of the new parliament, where the speaker was to be elected, police officers entered the well of parliament and forcefully removed ten APC MPs. The police were acting on an unprecedented ruling of a high court judge who had ordered MPs' removal on claims by the newly installed president's party, the SLPP, that the ten APC parliamentarians were not duly elected in the very same elections that gave the new government its executive mandate. Was this a seesaw moment in the country's democratic march – a high point of the country respecting the electorate's ex-

ecutive mandate while at the same time thrashing the people's parliamentary mandate? The Ghanaian Kwesi Prempeh once wrote about the jurisprudence of executive supremacy, about the judiciary seeing itself as beholden to the wishes of those with executive power. Was this being replayed in Sierra Leone when the judiciary played its hand in the saga of the removal of the ten MPs? The judge would vacate the injunction after an SLPP member was elected speaker. The ten MPs resumed parliamentary sittings. However, a year later, the courts removed the MPs and installed nine defeated SLPP candidates as MPs in their stead.

The new government commenced an anti-corruption campaign with extraordinary panache, establishing a Government Transition Team (GTT).

This tripod has been severely shaken since 2018.



During the launch of the GTT report, a key official of the new government accused the previous administration of egregious 'acts of corruption,' called the new opposition APC 'a vast criminal enterprise,' named alleged corrupt officials on the basis of their ethnicity, and indicated that the government would set up a 'judge led' led commission to hold to account those found wanting.

Democracy watchers say democracy rests on a tripod of civic discourses, respect for procedures and meeting substantive material and other goals, particularly what has been referred to as the welfare functions of the state – or to use words that have become popular in Sierra Leone, bread and butter issues.

A number of very visible actions were adjudged as violative of key procedures. These included the sacking of the erstwhile commissioner of ACC, a position that has secure tenure, requiring the occupant's removal to go through the same process as that relating to the removal of a high court judge. Members and supporters of the new governing party claimed what they saw as a constitutional loophole relating to the removal - the president has 'supreme executive authority' to do it. This argument could be seen as an attempt to equate the sacking of the commissioner with that of an equally controversial removal of a vice president during the previous APC Government. Supporters of the new administration would utilize the same arguments to justify the removal of other tenured high officials, including the Ombudsman and Commissioners at the Human Rights Commission.

Later, the Auditor General would also be suspended in a move many saw as controversial and an attempt to get out of the way a stolid voice for accountability. Her audit reports had revealed enormous losses to the state and irregular expenditures by government officials. These corruption revelations would gravely dent the image of a government that had touted the fight against corruption as key to its management of the state.

Another of the foot of the tripod of democracy that has been badly hit is civic discourse. Civic discourses issue forth from what is referred to as civic friendship – seeing other citizens, be they supporters of one's political position or not, as people that one should

interact with - in words and actions – respectfully. These are the governing, deliberative and social competencies that glue democracies, and they warrant respectful restraint in the choice of words and phrases used by political and civic leaders, partisans and ordinary citizens in public discourse on governance. The new administration in 2018 prioritized several worthy discourses on the national agenda relating to corruption and human rights, especially rights of and justice for women and girls that are sexually abused.

However, the hits on civic discourses - betraying a growing lack of civic friendship – started very early. The new government called the opposition party a 'criminal enterprise' and labeled its supporters' terrorists.' Widespread protests on August 10, 2022, by civilians, were called an insurrection by the government. Opposition activists also pushed up what would be called a politics of invectives, with insults against the mothers of opponents both within opposition ranks and in government becoming a staple and widely listened to discourse in the country.



“Democracy is consolidated by its material dividend – the bread and butter issues. This has many components – including improving access to health, education, water, livelihoods and food security”



The government has claimed improvements in electricity and lauded its flagship Free Education Programme on which it spends over 20% of the national budget. Seesaw discourses and actions also dogged these bread-and-butter issues of Sierra Leone's democracy. Inflation is very high, food costs are bludgeoning, and the national currency, the Leone, is plummeting against the dollar, leading to decreases in real incomes for teachers, health workers and ordinary citizens. Increases in the education budget has seen increased enrollments at all levels of education, but learning outcomes and examination integrity are at very low ebbs. In the WASSCE Exams of 2022, the Government announced that the number of candidates achieving direct university degree programme entry requirements by obtaining five credits, including English and Mathematics increased by 1781%. This was an increase widely seen as impossible and which are allegedly attributed to the doctoring of the data.

This brings us to a discussion of the politics of numbers. Where democracy rests on a tripod of civic discourses, respect for procedures and meeting substantive material and welfare needs, numbers could be seen as the fire underneath. Democracy is very numeric; it is based on counting to decide many crucial things – from the elections of

presidents, MPS and councilors to providing services. This warrants numbers that are largely reflective of the actual. There has, however, emerged huge credibility gaps relating to two big numbers schemes in the country – a controversial mid-term census in 2022 and a voter registration exercise later in the year. For instance, the mid-term census showed an incredible 40% decrease in the population of Freetown, a city considered a stronghold of the opposition APC. This decrease happened despite school censuses showing more population of school-going children in Freetown than the governing party strongholds, which the census showed as having great growths in number. Freetown's mayor also presented a cartographic drawing of sprawling new settlements since the 2015 census – evidencing an increase in population rather than a decrease. The voter registration exercise would show slightly better figures, but again these would be blighted by the elections body's restric-

tions on registration of new voters in Freetown and other opposition strongholds; and its non-transparency in the removal of over 250,000 registrants from the election rolls.

Electoral bodies are the referees in the numbers game that undergird democracy. The registration exercise and several other incidents – including the opposition boycott of parliamentary votes to confirm some of its commissioners – on claims that they were biased – are creating doubts about the country's ability to hold free and fair elections

In its anti-corruption crusade, the government established three judge-led commissions of inquiries. Opposition MPs voted against the establishment of the commissions, saying it was a witch hunt against its members. The commissions' establishment met the statutory requirements to pass through parliament. However, the government failed to establish rules of procedure for the commissions. The Sierra Leone Bar Association challenged this as violative of constitutional and statutory instruments and commenced court action. The court administration, however, failed to assign the case to a judge to determine the matter. The failure of the courts to assign several cases brought up against government actions would become a sore staple since 2018.

Democracy analysts often talk of claw-back clauses in their discussions of seesaw situations in a country's governance system. These are about rights and progressive legislations that are given with one hand being clawed back with the other hand. These clawbacks could be through other laws and regulations or substantive actions. The country has witnessed several great reforms relating to human rights and press freedoms being legislated and actions being taken to implement them. These included a stronger sexual offences act to protect the rights

of women and girls and punish perpetrators; the repeal of seditious libel provisions in the 1965 Public Order Act that successive governments had used to harass journalists and gag the press; and the repeal of the death penalty. However, a new Cyber Security Act would be seen as revamping free speech restrictions for the social media age. The repeal of the death penalty did not stem killings at the hands of state agents, including the killing of scores of prisoners at the Pademba road prisons and scores more during widespread protests in August 2022.

Political parties and civil society organizations help to expand the civic spaces so necessary for democracy consolidation. Where political parties and civil society groups are roiled by enormous internal problems, patrimonial co-optation, or undemocratic external restrictions, democracy consolidation becomes very challenging.

The major opposition party, the APC, has its share of challenges. Unhinged by its unexpected loss in the 2018 elections, its executive was receiving blows from reformers and dissidents within the party and also from its old nemesis, the SLPP, which now controlled the government. A visible faction within the APC - who constituted themselves into a body known as the National Reform Movement (NRM) - called for a new constitution that would do away with the party's vaulted selection clause. They wanted the party to rely exclusively on elections to choose its executive members and

election candidates. The executive had formed a nine-man committee to look into why it lost the 2018 presidential elections. The considered view relating to the report that the nine-man committee presented was the party establishment failed to implement the recommendations. The establishment also tried to stem the rebellion by establishing a constitutional review committee comprising members of the reformist voices. The NRM was, however, irked by a number of transitional clauses in the new constitution and continued their cases in court.

Many would see the court cases as offering the government an opportunity to meddle in opposition APC affairs. A number of the reformist voices were prevailed upon by reconciliatory voices to drop the court case and settle for an intra-party solution to the impasse. However, an APC member from the diaspora decided to continue the case. The judge, then on contract, and with his tenure as a contract judge in the hands of the executive, had already placed several crippling injunctions on the APC, including preventing it from holding conventions. In finally deciding the case, he dissolved the entire decision-making bodies of the APC at the national, regional, district and constituency levels, and handed over control of the party to a 21-man committee comprising two factions chosen by the leader of the APC in parliament, and the member from the diaspora respectively. The result was gridlock, with the party hardly able to render its voice on several key governance issues. At the time of writing, the party was still struggling with conducting internal elections that would lead to a delegate conference where a presidential flag bearer would be elected. Meanwhile, the SLPP has already, months ago, chosen - unopposed - its presidential flag bearer.

Civil society in the country has had to deal with the loss of its vibrant and critical voices through cooptation by the state either through direct recruitment as members of the government or indirectly as members of commissions, and boards of directors, amongst others. While civil society actors being within state structures could result in their accumulated progressive insights integrated into state decision-making, in Sierra Leone, the loss of these critical voices within civil society has often resulted in the civic space being occupied by persons with less deliberative competencies and poorer institutional memories of civic engagement. Many of these void fillers have become champions of new uncivil discourses and the exploding politics of invectives. Civil society actors have also complained about restrictions on their activities, including new registration requirements and onerous regulations relating to how they should operate in the country.

Democracy is at crossroads in the country. The feet of its tripod are being hit by seesaw situations and clack back actions. Civic friendship is being cut into shreds; the politics of invectives is rising; and the fires underneath the tripod are being smoldered by controversies over census numbers and voter registration figures.

Letters to the Editor

Police Officers Absent on Major Intersections In the City.

I am pissed off at police absence at major intersections in the city, which is one of the causes of frequent accidents. Drivers and tricycles and bike riders seemingly do not know what to do when they approach the intersections. By law, they must reduce their speed, keep to their lanes and put on their sound systems. These normal safety precautions will cut down on road accidents if properly applied. These precautions, however, are constantly trampled on since the boots are not on the ground to enforce the traffic rules. The police are often deployed at these intersections in the early morning hours and later vanish into thin air.

One will never see them again for the rest of the day until another morning. Who will regulate human and vehicular traffic? Who will prevent accidents there? Mamboreh Junction, Last Station, Calaba Town, and PWD Junction are bright examples of unmanned intersections. I expect that police officers must be on these points to regulate vehicles, tricycles and motorcycles to ensure the safety of commuters, traders and even drivers. Apart from intersections, drivers must ensure that speed limits are reduced to their barest minimum in residential areas, especially in densely populated zones.

Drivers usually speed off and enjoy a field day due to the absence of police officers at the intersections. Little wonder that accident statistics keep rolling every year. Between 2020 and 2021, over 2,000 road accident-related deaths took place, according to WHO data.

In the past, we used to see frequent police patrols on the streets to prevent driving without due care. In several instances, drivers are warned and sometimes arrested and charged in court for breaking the rules. Police presence is a deterrence to crime, but the reverse is dangerous. The public is afraid when police officers are not on the ground to check drivers. It is a real disaster to society when those who should enforce the law are not in the hot spots.

~ Ibrahim Kamara, a teacher at Calaba Town.

'Temple Run' Damaging Sierra Leone



A year hardly passes by without dozens of Sierra Leoneans repatriated from Asian, African and European countries to Sierra Leone. Many Sierra Leonean men and women have been trapped in dangerous situations in Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Oman, and

Kuwait, warranting humanitarian agencies to intervene. Germany, Italy, Cyprus and other European countries are still wrestling with irregular migrants, and sending them back home is the only option at the moment. International Organization for Migration and other local agencies have made an effort to save these desperate Sierra Leoneans. They are lured into going through the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert by good stories told by traffickers. Many perish along the way, but their zest to venture into risky trips is still unwavering. Those who made it to their destinations sometimes end up in jails and detention centres.

The mad rush for greener pastures will not stop as long as there are traffickers who facilitate the move but benefit from the victim's labour. They assure them of good jobs and better lives upon reaching their destinations. But, these promises are mere baits. Victims were exposed to sweatshops and treated as enslaved people, as their passports and other travelling papers were taken away from them. Between 2018 and 2019, Sierra Leone received 16 deportees from the United States with threats that more would be sent home. Not too long, over 30 Sierra Leoneans were intercepted in Senegal and sent back to Sierra Leone. The Algerian government also repatriated dozens of Sierra Leoneans.

Another batch of 100 Sierra Leoneans were also brought home from Oman and Kuwait, most times in famished conditions. Government must pay attention to the social menace to save Sierra Leonean youth.

~Sheku Bangura Ferry Junction, Freetown

Deteriorating sanitary conditions sends a strong message to the government to bring back the National Cleaning Day. Kissy Road, Guard Street, Abacha

street and some streets in the city centre still grapple with filth, although a Freetown City Council bye-law of 2010 is in place. The bye-law prescribes minimum fines for those who litter the streets. Ditches along Kissy Road in Freetown are dungeons emitting stench that afflicts passers-by. The situation is much more embarrassing during the rains. Other streets also face similar health threats. Such slum communities as Kroo Bay, Susan's Bay, Moa Wharf, Big Wharf, Mabela are the worst affected.

The congestion in these riverine communities is caused mainly by migrants from the provinces who hope to make a fortune in the city. The filthy sites are breeding places for mosquitoes, cockroaches and even rodents. According to public health professionals, malaria, lassa fever, and cholera are filth-related diseases. The public appreciates sanitary boxes deployed by FCC to reduce littering, but fewer results have been produced. Residents sometimes place dead dogs and other animals in the boxes. FCC is, however, overwhelmed with the environmental hygiene problems in the city. Either the council lacks the required funds to enforce cleanliness in the city or does not get the necessary

Gov't Must Bring Back National Cleaning Day

support and cooperation from the central government. I saw firsthand the benefits of National Cleaning Day in 1992 during the National Provisional Ruling Council. At that

time, the last Saturday of every month would be reserved to clean communities, streets and compounds across the country. Police and military officers used to monitor and participate in the cleaning exercise. The people accepted it wholeheartedly, and it formed part of the people's culture. To organise the cleaning day in a special way, some communities formulated and enforced bye-laws which they strictly enforced. Bo city in the South is a shining example of a community that had bye-laws to strengthen the National cleaning Day even after 1996. Due to the enforcement of bye-laws on the Cleaning Day, Bo usually wins the 'Cleanest City' award. These sacrifices made Bo city hygienic and free from diseases. The Cleaning Day disappeared in 1996 and resurfaced in 2018 but was not destined to last long, and it is no longer practised in Freetown here. It was a good start by the government to bring back the Saturday cleaning exercise, but its abandoning raised many questions. The government must know that 'Cleaning Day' is the best solution for a decent city.

~Mabinty Conteh, Mabela Community in Freetown

Local Policing Partnership Boards Are Fading Away

I am less comfortable with the slow passing away of Local Policing Partnership Boards (LPPBs) in various police divisions across the country. The absence of LPPBs has stalled the relationship and cooperation between the police and civilians. The seemingly bad blood between the police and the public has led to more crimes in once peaceful communities. The theft of mobile phones, robbery, and house-breaking are not infrequent in the country.

What is more embarrassing is the field day enjoyed by the perpetrators because the police do not get the much-needed information from communities. Police capacity to detect and prevent crime squarely rests on a relationship with the public. The LPPBs are the vehicles for such a relationship. It is indisputable that the police can successfully fight crime only when the public provides accurate and timely information. It is also true that community stakeholders know the criminals

more than the police, and a tip-off can help. Providing information to the police is vital in that only the good guys with guns can stop the bad guys with guns. But how can the bad guys be stopped when there are no LPPBs to assist the police in the day-to-day policing of society?

Policing in any modern society should be intelligence-led. LPPBs used to provide such information to the police for the safety of communities. LPPBs came into existence in early 2000 to help the police fight crime in communities. The boards were platforms for interaction consultations on crime prevention strategies. Bear in mind that police efficiency does not lie in their visible capacity to handle crime but in the absence of crime.

This objective can be achieved only when there is a healthy relationship between the police and the public.

LPPBs can bridge the communication gap between the police and the communities.

~Retired Principal, Ibrahim Sesay, Calaba Town, Freetown.

The People's Lawyer

MESSAGE ONE

”

I am Bintu Hawa Sesay. In 2004, I entered into a customary marriage with my late husband. We had three children and lived in the village of Ropolar. During the course of our marriage, we bought several properties, including our matrimonial home. My husband died a year ago, and his family has told me I can either marry one of them or take my kids and move back in with my parents. They have taken away all the papers for the properties that my husband and I bought. I want to know what the law says about me in this situation. Please advise me.

MESSAGE TWO

”

I have been married to my husband for over fifteen years. We had a traditional marriage that was registered. In January 2017, my husband abandoned me and our two children. He moved with another woman to one of the houses we constructed together. During our marriage, we built three houses. Seven months ago, in July 2022, my husband suffered a heart attack and died without making a will. Now, the girlfriend of my late husband is asserting that she is the common law wife and making claims to all properties, including the home where I currently reside with my children. She has given me two months to move out of my residence, or she would call the police to evict me. I am confused; I have no idea what to do. Please advise me.



DEAR LADIES,

Thank you for your inquiries. The distribution of the properties of a person who dies without leaving a valid Will is governed by the provisions of the Devolution of Estates Act of 2007. Pursuant to subsection 1 of section 1, the Act applies to everyone who dies leaving property in Sierra Leone irrespective of the person's religion or ethnic origin - except family property, chieftaincy property, or community property held under customary law.

Your customary marriage does not preclude you from benefiting from your late husband's estate. This is because a customary marriage is a valid marriage in law and is so recognized by section 2 of the Devolution of Estates Act 2007, which defines marriage to include "marriage under the Civil Marriage Act, Christian Marriage Act, the Mohammedan Marriage Act or any CUSTOMARY law." (capitalization mine) Consequently, as the surviving spouse of your late husband, you have the legal right to share his estate with your children.

As a matter of law, you have the legal right to administer his properties and distribute them in accordance with the law. This right is provided for in subsection 2 of section 3 of the Devolution of Estates Act of 2007, which provides that "The spouse of an intestate and in the absence a spouse, the next-of-kin of the intestate shall be entitled to apply for letters of administration in respect of the deceased's estate." Taking out letters of administration will authorize you to administer and distribute your husband's estate.

Upon taking out letters of administration, you will be under an obligation to distribute his properties in strict compliance with the laws, specifically section 8 of the Devolution of Estates Act 2007, which prescribes how the distribution shall be done:

- (a) 35% to the surviving spouse;
- (b) 35% to the surviving child;
- (c) 15% to parent surviving parent and
- (d) 15% in accordance with customary or Muslim law, as applicable.



Bintu Hawa Sesay, regarding the topic of remarriage, you are not required by law to marry any of your late husband's siblings or cousins. Consent is one of the prerequisites for a lawful marriage, thus, no one can force you to marry against your choice.

In addition, it is illegal for them to threaten to evict you from your matrimonial home if you do not comply with their requests. According to subsections 2, 3, and 4 of section 33 of the Devolution of Estates Act of 2007, it is illegal to evict you and your children from the matrimonial home before the distribution of your husband's estate. On summary conviction, such conduct is penalised by a fine not exceeding Le 5,000,000.00 or by a period of imprisonment not exceeding two years.

Furthermore, their intermeddling with the properties of your deceased husband is illegal. Section 32 of the Devolution of Estates Act of 2007 makes it an offence for anyone without lawful authority to take possession of, causes to be moved, or otherwise intermeddles with any property belonging to the estate. Should they be found guilty of such an offence by a court of law, they shall be liable to a fine not exceeding Le 5,000,000.00 or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding one year or to both fine and imprisonment.

Please hire a lawyer to help you take out Letters of Administration in respect of the estate of your deceased husband. This will enable you to administer and distribute the properties.



Anonymous,

A critical issue is whether the 'girlfriend,' having cohabited with your husband for over five years, can inherit from his estate. At first glance, one would think that she has a right to benefit from the properties based on section 6, subsection 1 of the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act of 2009, which provides as follows:

“Where the personal law of the cohabiting persons is customary law and the persons –

- (a) are not below 18 years; and
- (b) have lived together as husband and wife for a continuous period of not less than five years, they shall be deemed to be married under customary law notwithstanding that they may not have performed and customary rites of marriage.”

But section 1 of the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act of 2009 defines “cohabiting” persons to mean “persons

who, WHILE NOT MARRIED, have lived as married persons for a period of not less than five years.” This position is reaffirmed by section 2 of the Devolution of Estates Act 2007, which defines a spouse to include “an unmarried man/woman who has cohabited with an unmarried woman/man as if he/she were in law his/her husband/wife for a period not less than five years immediately preceding the death of the intestate or testate.”

Hence, for the 'girlfriend' to claim that she is a spouse and therefore entitled to benefit from the estates, the deceased must not have been married to another person at the time of cohabitation. This is not the case in your situation because, at the time, the girlfriend cohabited with your husband, he was already married to you. Therefore, the girlfriend has no legal basis for laying claims on the properties of your deceased husband.

Also, her threats to evict you from your matrimonial home are unlawful. Section 33 subsections 2,3 and 4 of the Devolution of Estates Act

2007 makes it an offence for anyone to evict you and your children from the matrimonial home before the distribution of your husband's estate. Such conduct is punishable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding Le 5,000,000.00 or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding two years.

Furthermore, her actions of intermeddling with the properties of your deceased husband are illegal and have serious legal consequences, as section 32 of the Devolution of Estates Act of 2007 makes it an offence for anyone without lawful authority to take possession of, causes to be moved or otherwise intermeddles with any property belonging to the estate. Should the court find her guilty of such an offence, she shall be liable to pay a fine not exceeding Le 5,000,000.00 or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding one year or to both fine and imprisonment. Please hire a lawyer to help you take out Letters of Administration in respect of the estates of your deceased husband. This will enable you to administer and distribute the properties.





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A Look Back at 2022

The Year in Review

August 10 Demonstrations

Several social, political and economic milestones defined the year in review, with the August 10 demonstrations being the most spectacular event.

It was in August 2022 that a group of protesters turned wild while the police embarked on a wild goose chase, allegedly killing 25.

Six policemen were fatally injured in what may have been a retaliatory act. Unofficial accounts indicate a higher number of casualties. Placards carried by the protesters spoke one language: 'Bio Must Go,' a move contrary to the Public Order Act 1965. The law stated that a police clearance must be requested before a protest is held.

To many Sierra Leoneans, the public order law is bad, but a bad law is a law until repealed.

The protest was preceded by a two-day sit-at-home in which almost the whole country participated.

But, the violent protest took place in the country's North and West regions, widely seen as strongholds of the main opposition, All People's Congress (APC).

It was unclear who first pulled the trigger that led to the loss of lives and property on that fateful day.

Civilian sources pointed accusing fingers at the police for opening fire at

an unarmed and defenceless youth, while police spokesperson Assistant Commissioner Brima Kamara proffered a contrary account.

Kamara claimed that the protesters who overran Freetown were the first to kill an unarmed police in cold blood in the east of the capital city, Freetown.

The policeman, according to the assistant police commissioner, was returning home after night duty.

Kamara expressed fear about the mayhem that would have occurred in Freetown if the police had failed to act swiftly.

"Freetown would have seen blood-bath had the police been reactive," Kamara recounted.

He stated that police action was timely as a stitch in time saved nine.

Order was restored when Vice President Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew.

Army personnel replaced police officers on the streets under the Military Aid to Civil Power (MACP) protocols. Formulated in 1996, the MACP policy provides the basis for the army to take over internal security.

Soldiers' presence on the streets is justified only when there is an apparent lack of police capacity to handle the riots.

The Minister of Information and Communication struck a different tone than the police spokesman. Mohamed Rahman Swarray did not mince words in accusing top APC politicians of plotting, orchestrating, and financing what he called an insurrection.

APC politicians distanced themselves from the riot, saying they bore no hand in it. APC's interim Chair, Alfred Peter Conteh, said his party had nothing to do with the protest. "We are a law-abiding party, and we are ready to uphold the peace and security of the state," Conteh cleared APC members of the allegation.



Foreign journalists in Sierra Leone indicated that the protest was staged against the high cost of living.

A special investigation committee, however, has been set up to look into the causes of the demonstration.

The committee will provide answers to three basic questions: What happened on August 10? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again?

The committee is now in full swing.

Women were the first to take on Bio's government on the streets for economic hardship.

Their bloodless protest in July 2022 was a precursor to the August 10 demonstrations. Dozens were arrested and detained for days. Calls by rights campaigners led to their release without charges.

Waves of Arrest After August 10

Despite claims that the protest was staged for a genuine reason, it did not however go without intermittent waves of arrest, most times on finger-pointing.

A prominent lawyer and candidate for the position of Secretary General of the opposition APC, Ady Macauley,

was held in a police cell for expressing his legal opinion in a tv programme on the eve of the protest.

Macauley's arrest was unlawful by all legal standards, although police cited incitement to justify their action.

The lawyer was not alone in the police net. Close to 500 alleged protesters were nabbed and slammed with murder, arson and malicious damage offences, among others. They are standing trial in several magistrate courts in Freetown.

Thirty were recently released for want of prosecution, and dozens were convicted with jail terms ranging from 2 to 5 years. Others are still remanded.



Petty traders who had colonised Abacha Street for years were forcefully moved after the August 10 protest.

Their tables and stalls were destroyed in a night.

It was suspected that a good number of Abacha traders participated in the demonstrations. They refused to sell during the two-day stay-at-home on 8th and 9th August 2022 despite the government's call to come to their shops and stalls.

A good number took to the streets on 10th August, demanding the resignation of President Bio.

Abacha Street knew no quietness and order since it was

Forced Movement of Traders from the City Center

colonised by petty traders who escaped from rural communities during a decade-long war.

Traffic congestions, quarrels, affrays, pick-pocketing, and other forms of petty thievery were hallmarks of Abacha Street. Police raids were also not uncommon. The hustling and bustling of traders on Abacha Street to eke a living is another side of the drama. The rural escapees, illiterate and poor, street trading became the ultimate means of survival in a city that is not friendly to have-nots. Pockets of traders are, however, emerging again on the sidewalks of Abacha Street to sell. But, it is now clear that they are slowly breathing a sigh of relief as bright light glitters at the end of the tunnel.

A giant market for traders at Salad Ground in Freetown is nearing completion. Traders on all streets in Freetown would be relocated to halt street trading.



Sit-Down Protests By Shop Owners and 'Okada' Riders

Sit-down strikes by men in the informal sector also defined the year in review. In July 2022, shops were under lock and key for almost a week for what owners referred to as harsh taxes.

What is seen as a harsh tax is considered revenue mobilisation by the government.

Electronic tax collection machines were installed in shops to collect the composite Goods and Services Tax (GST) introduced in early 2008.

For the government, the collection of tax by electronic means prevents leakages.

Shops were re-opened after the two sides came to terms.

A sit-down strike by commercial motorists ('Okada' riders)

in 2022 also did not go unnoticed.

It still lingers in the memories of many Sierra Leoneans.

It was a move to invite the government's attention to fuel hoarding, intermittent price hikes, and, sometimes, police harassment.

The price was unfair for the 'Okada' riders since the existing situation did not warrant a price rise.

A commercial motorist plying in the east of Freetown, Samuel Ngakui, pointed out the collusion between fuel dealers and black marketers as the cause of the price increases.

"They hoard fuel, especially petrol, whenever they want to increase the price.

They have a simple way to do it

They invite black marketers to a secret meeting and inform them about the hoarding and their share. Price increases start when the two parties agree," Ngakui explained.

Commuters are the ultimate victims of the conspiracy as they bear hoarding incidence.

Filling stations are sometimes shut down from the public as dealers would complain about a complete shortage.

Almost two weeks to Christmas eve, endless fleets and queues were at filling stations in the city and the provinces.

Drivers and private users were dragged into a panic buying to stockpile on their stocks as they foresaw a shortage.

The hands of the Petroleum Regulatory Agency seemed tied down as frequent shortages became a recurrent phenomenon.



Industrial Actions By Gov't Workers

Industrial actions by teachers, health professionals, lecturers and Sierratel workers are not infrequent in Sierra Leone. But they, however, reached a high peak in 2022. As one industrial action subsided, another reared its head.

Relatively better pay packages have been ensured for lecturers following a 75 percent increase in salaries out of the 100 percent demanded by the lecturers. A 25 percent increase is reportedly still pending. Teachers' take-home package is still a challenge for the government.

The 35 000 workforce is not yet out of the woods as their take-home packages cannot take them home.

No teacher in Sierra Leone, including a Principal, earns NLe, 3,000 (three thousand Leones) a month, a factor that nurtures and nourishes several forms of graft in the education sector.

The Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU), the umbrella body for teachers, has been bargaining with the government for improvement in the conditions of service for teachers, but little result has been achieved. Teachers' survival is still life on a knife edge as they still remain on the wrong end of the bargain. At an SLTU quadrennial conference held in December 2022, Appeals Court Judge Monfred Sesay said, "teachers were still poor, but there were no poor ministers, no poor judges, no poor lawyers and poor doctors."

Justice Sesay, the guest speaker at the SLTU conference, had taught for 20 years and left the classroom to seek fortune elsewhere.

In the late 1980s, he lost his job owing to an industrial action he championed. The flurry of industrial actions has still not improved teachers' welfare in the face of a Free Quality Education project. Like the teachers, Sierratel workers are not at ease with the government owing to non-payment of salaries and wages.

In April 2022, the wageless workers barricaded the SIERRATEL building in Freetown to disrupt work. It was a clarion call to the government to look into the workers' plight. Sanity returned to the office after police intervention.

The Chair of the National Privatisation Commission, Dr. Prince Harding, saw the transfer of the state-owned telecoms company from state to private ownership as the only way to solve the workers' problems. A dark cloud, however, hangs on Sierratel, a company struggling with NLe411m financial liability.

To date, workers still go unpaid; they either continue or submit their fate to the passage of time.

An Exclusive Interview

With Sierra Leonean Businessman Rodney Michael On The Economy



RODNEY MICHAEL

Sierraeye: What do you think about the Bank Governor's handling of the economy?

Rodney Michael: I have reservations about the Bank Governor's handling of the economy. He is too theoretical than practical. Due to the prevailing business atmosphere, he must understand that the economy is informally controlled.

Sierraeye: How?

Rodney Michael: The more you make it difficult for the formal sector, the more you weaken it and strengthen the informal sector. For the private sector, for example, to acquire loans through the formal means is very difficult; the process is too long, and the conditions are very stiff. However, getting credit from the informal sector is much easier, swift, and less hassle-free. Business people will go for loans in the informal sector even if it implies paying a much higher interest rate.

Sierraeye: Do you have reservations about the redenomination of the Leone?

Rodney Michael: Yes. I have. The redenomination is intended to restore confidence in the Leones. For it to work, you must put in place structures that will give that confidence.

Sierraeye: What are the structures?

Rodney Michael: The Bank Governor must ensure that there are enough new Leones in the market for all to access it. Cash restriction was a bad policy; instead of restoring confidence, it created panic and a lack of confidence.

Sierraeye: Did the Bank Governor ensure that the structures were in place?

Rodney Michael: No. He did not ensure that structures for confidence building were in place. The reversal of his decision and reintroduction of the old Leones into the market was a clear manifestation that the necessary structures were absent. Concerns were also raised when he introduced the old Leones about whether the Leones were printed. The extension of the deadline for the old Leones to go out of the market indicates that the Bank Governor was not well prepared. When you print new notes, you have to consider the exchange rate difference at the time of the printing and accommodate the increase of the cash in the market based on the current exchange rate.

Sierraeye: Did the Bank of Sierra Leone make provision for the exchange rate deficit?

Rodney Michael: I don't think the Bank of Sierra Leone made provision for the huge exchange rate deficit before the circulation of the new Leones, and as such, the market required more physical cash since our economy is cash-controlled.

The shortage of the new Leones also affected consumer confidence. There are also several factors that coincided with the new Leones.

“Government should never subsidise since it is not a pro-poor policy”

~ Rodney Michael.



Sierraeye: What are these factors?

Rodney Michael: Incredible amounts of revenue generated, for instance, through the informal sector, cannot be accounted for nor easily estimated, neither can the amount be easily determined. The revenue is generated through illegal businesses, drug trade and corruption, whose funds are used to strengthen the informal sector. Before 2008, however, the banking sector was a doable creditor for the private sector.

Sierraeye: How do you contrast the past to the present regarding lending and borrowing from the formal and informal sectors?

Rodney Michael: Today, for a quick turnover, brisk business and quick profit, the private sector prefers soliciting credits from the informal sector irrespective of the higher interest rate or commission they might pay. All this occurs because the formal sector (the banking sector) is now restricted with stringent conditions to authorise credits despite adequate security being made available. For several reasons, controllers of the informal market would prefer to keep their money in foreign exchange rather than the Leones.

Sierraeye: What are the reasons?

Rodney Michael: Foreign exchange is easier to keep at home than the Leones. Revenue from the informal market is mostly through illegal means. Consequently, there will be an obstacle to the banking sector.

Because the informal sector has been allowed to go so strong and make so much profit, and especially those acquiring their funds through the trading of drugs and illegal substances as well as corruption, they can afford to buy foreign exchange practically at any price.

This is why many would think the new Leones is responsible for the exchange rate hike. But, in reality, the

exchange rate hike is caused by the lack of confidence in the formal sector, allowing the informal sector to take absolute control of the economy.

Sierraeye: What can you say about the restriction of the US dollars?

Rodney Michael: Restriction of the US dollars affects confidence in the economy and creates artificial scarcity as many were afraid to expose the amount of cash foreign exchange they have in their possession. An economy like ours does not need very stringent rules and regulations.

Sierraeye: Why?

Rodney Michael: The economy is much cash-related, so we need to encourage easier trading opportunities like we had in pre-2008 under President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. Even if it is misconstrued that they were encouraging the dollar as the second currency.

Sierraeye: Is the foreign currency restriction a mistake by the Bank Governor?

Rodney Michael: It was a big mistake as everyone lost confidence. Owing to the restriction, nobody could withdraw beyond NLe 30,000 (thirty thousand New Leones). People will run away when you come up with such restrictions. The other mistake was that they tended to think the new Leones was hoarded. It was not hoarded; the only thing, the people need cash because the economy is cash-controlled. It is only foreign currency that the people will board.

Sierraeye: What is the effect of the Bank Governor's mistake?

Rodney Michael: The banking sector became weaker because there was no other money to credit people.



Sierraeye: What is your general understanding of inflation in Sierra Leone?

Rodney Michael: There is inflation in the country because the Leone is weak in the face of the dollar. If, for example, you import 95% of your commodities, and the Leone has lost its value against the foreign exchange; naturally, you can have inflation equivalent to the exchange rate difference.

Sierraeye: What measures will you suggest to the government to reduce inflation in the country?

Rodney Michael: To control inflation, the government must control the exchange rate and stabilise prices. There is no easy solution since we import more than we export. In such a situation, the demand for foreign currency is far greater than we can generate.

Government must think out of the box and think about unconventional ways of generating revenue to ease the pressure. Sierra Leone could learn from neighbouring Guinea, where the export of gold minerals carries a minimal charge far less than what we charge on the gold export. The foreign exchange must come through the banking sector to encourage more export from Sierra Leone.

Government must encourage investors, tourists and diasporans to come into Sierra Leone with either cash foreign exchange or a transfer of foreign currency through the banking sector for use in Sierra Leone. Economy-wise, President Ahmed Tejan Kabba survived because there were no tight restrictions although he took over governance when the country had nothing. Bio had a golden opportunity, but the Bank Governor is messing him up.

Government must also ensure the availability of foreign exchange in the banking sector at all times for those within the formal sector and the public at large through

legitimate means.

Sierra Leone should revert to pre-2008 economy where contractors and business people were paying foreign exchange and could trade among themselves in foreign exchange.

Also, individuals could keep foreign exchange in their bank accounts and use such foreign exchange to pay for services, facilities, bills, or even sell to business entities, and could freely withdraw to sell to the banks. This allowed for more foreign exchange through the formal sector.

There should be much more encouragement for factories to produce locally, especially where our raw materials are mined, like iron ore, as is done in Ghana. This will bring more foreign exchange to the country. Government should never subsidise since it is not a pro-poor policy. The largest fuel consumers are not the poor but the middle and upper class.

Sierraeye: Will there be no impact on the poor if the fuel is left unsubsidised?

Rodney Michael: The impact on the poor is far less than those benefiting from the subsidies.

Sierraeye: How?

Rodney Michael: The impact on the central budget is far greater than the benefit derived by the poor. Frequent fuel shortages are brought about by restricting the government's power to control the commodity.

However, the government's current effort, through Petroleum Regulatory Agency, in working with fuel importers to monitor the global market and support them with foreign exchange as best as possible at a lower rate is the right step in the right direction. Such a move helps keep in check the domestic cost of fuel. The result of which is the recent reduction in fuel prices.



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Will 2023 Be

The Defining Moment for **Sustaining Democracy** in Africa?



Dr Steven N. Rogers (Executive Director of Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN))

At the invitation of U.S. President Joe Biden, 40+ African Presidents and Heads of States descended on Washington DC in the middle of the December shopping season to attend the US-Africa leaders summit. As the extra 'delegates' went about their Christmas shopping or relaxed in

posh hotel lobbies to watch the World Cup, US government officials and their African counterparts formed new partnerships and associated funding for health, infrastructure, climate adaptation, democratic elections and governance. The outcome of the 3-day summit was a \$55 billion package of US assistance to Africa over three years. The obvious big elephant in the room was China and Russia's influence in Africa. Then there was also the small matter of the fear

of democratic backsliding on the continent.

This article is really about the 'small matter' - democratic backslide. Democracy, as we know it in Africa, will be further tested in 2023. The year promises to be a very busy election year as Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Gabon, Somaliland, Sudan, Zimbabwe and a host of other African countries go to the polls. This hectic election calendar represents a sign of the continent's swelling optimism in democracy and faith in the peaceful transfer of power. This is excellent news for Africa. And like the Kenyan election, there are bound to be surprise election outcomes in some upcoming polls. But 2023 also raises the specter of a democratic backslide, as has been recently witnessed in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Sudan. In essence, while there has been a steady rise in democratically elected governments on the continent, these governments, however, have failed to deliver on key promises. As a result, some of the continent's brightest democratic spots have seen an alarming upsurge in inequality, poverty, unemployment, and insecurity, thus providing a textbook breeding ground for susceptibility to political instability. To underscore the criticality of this development, this minor detail was not lost

on the Biden administration's invitation list. In addition to committing millions of dollars to counter democratic backsliding, at least four African countries that recently had military coups (Sudan, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso) were not invited to the summit.

What does this mean for 2023? It means good governance will be key to the survival of democracy as we know it. With Covid19 now in hindsight, many elected governments will have to find new narratives to justify their legitimacy beyond winning free and fair elections should they continually fail to deliver on their election promises. For instance, Nigeria's high youth unemployment and Sierra Leone's raging drug crisis have already provided some prelude to the serious security challenges ahead of 2023. They will be among the many thorny issues that the governments of these countries would have to contend with to survive. It means African leaders will have to look for answers within their borders rather than outside. Because while China and Russia have no sustainable interest in Africa, there is very little to suggest that the West (including the United

States) can help bring real change to the continent. Like China and Russia, they have very narrow vested interests. The Ukrainian President's visit that immediately followed the summit demonstrates this. Ukraine's president Zelenski boarded a US Air Force plane to Washington and left with \$45 billion after having a face-to-face talk with Biden and making a speech to a joint session of Congress. Despite nearly a year of planning, none of that was afforded to any African leaders. Ukraine has roughly 39 million people compared to Africa's 1.3 billion people. But all the African leaders walked away with were photo-ops and funding yet to be tabled before Congress for approval. I firmly believe that America's strategic interest in Africa is far less ambitious in comparison to Africa's real economic potential. But that economic potential will only be harnessed through good governance. Only good governance will lift people out of poverty and sustain democracy in Africa as we know it because wealth and economic development will never come from abroad. And 2023 will be a defining moment.

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How 'Kush' Destroys

Sierra Leone's Future

Ayodele D. Cole



Cocaine, cannabis and tramadol were widely used drugs by the youth in Sierra Leone, although not at same alarming rate like 'Kush.' Kush, a new drug whose origin has been traced to countries outside Sierra Leone, is steadily taking a relatively high death toll among the youth in Sierra Leone.

Incidences of insanity have also been linked to the new drug. 90% of the male admissions to the psychiatric ward are due to Kush use. On the streets of Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, it is not uncommon to see young boys who appear drowsy and giddy. The new drug problem persists and has spread to young people in the rural areas.

Most active drug users say it takes away their frustration, and they cite hard times to justify the 'kush' intake.

A youth at a car wash, Osman Kamara, alias Wizzy, says 'kush' cools down pressure and frustration.

"Kush makes us forget most of the problems in the country. No job and no money makes it difficult for us, and only kush can solve our problems for now," Kamara explained.

Although most youths see 'kush' as a problem-solving drug, others say it is not. Ibrahim Sesay, a petty trader at a nearby garage in Freetown, said the drug only helped the youth to forget their problems for a moment.

"The youth will forget for a moment after taking 'Kush,' but the problems are sure to come back when the Kush effect has gone away," Sesay told this press.

The punishment for drug peddling and use was less severe in the old Drugs and Pharmacy Act 1988.

However, the illegal landing of a cocaine-loaded airplane in Sierra Leone in 2008 prompted authorities to have a tough law in place.

An emergency Anti-Drugs Act 2008 was speedily passed by lawmakers to punish the cocaine traffickers and those who will tread a similar path in the future.

The current drug law could keep convicts for lengthy jail terms as a deterrent. Harsh drug laws have not kept Sierra Leone safe from the danger of 'Kush.'

Members of the two principal security agencies, the police and the army, have not helped the situation; they instead worsen it as it is believed that many of their members are vital participants in the drug trade.

Two soldiers caught under the influence of kush were recently dismissed from the army. Two police officers were also relieved of their duty for taking 'kush.'

In October last year, three police officers bound for an AU peacekeeping mission in Somalia were also sacked and imprisoned after they were caught with cocaine.

The dismissal of former Inspector-General of Police Ambrose Sovula coincided with the discovery of a container allegedly loaded with drugs was let go and replaced with a frozen chicken container.

The dismissals, however, have not restrained police and army personnel from using 'kush.'

"Who will prevent dangerous narcotics from entering the country?" Numerous Sierra Leoneans have inquired. It is challenging for the government to provide the answer to this question"

The Executive Director of Social Linkages for Youth Development, a national NGO, has urged the government to implement a robust drug monitoring mechanism to stop importing harmful drugs into the country. "The country has a weak drug-control system to stop 'Kush' suppliers," he said. Kamara also noted that Sierra Leone is still regarded as a major transit and consumption route in the West African sub-region. However, officials at the Sierra Leone Ports Authority are encouraged by foreign embassies in Sierra Leone to increase vigilance.

A senior official at the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency said a quantity of 'Kush' was recently intercepted at the quay and stopped from entering the country.

If narcotics continue to enter the country, the consequences will be catastrophic.

At the annual government retreat in November 2022, in Kenema City in Eastern Sierra Leone, Assistant Director in the Office of National Security Abdul Will Kamara pledged his institution's commitment to the fight against 'Kush' and other drugs. They expressed hope that they would nip the social menace in the bud with solid partnerships.

However, the porosity of borders remains a big concern in the fight.

A report on border inspection in 2019 conducted by the Internal Affairs Ministry indicated that over 100 unmanned routes and illegal crossing points exist in Sierra Leone.

The current situation makes the fight against 'Kush' complex. Although the government appears to be putting measures in place to keep 'Kush' in check, they are not successful as the supply chain is still strong. The drug keeps flowing into the country since traffickers still have field days.

Nigeria's Obidients

and state governors; the question about structure

Figure: Peter Obi



budget, is allocated to subsidy spending, the highest ever! There has been a limited gain in anti-corruption, and insurgency remains a significant threat. Today, insecurity is widespread, resulting in military deployment to Nigeria's 36 states and the federal capital, Abuja, for the first time in its history.

The problem with Nigeria is leadership, Chinua Achebe, the late literary icon, once quipped. Leadership should therefore be the number one item

on the ballot as Nigerians go to the polls next year.



Dayo Olaide
(Social development analyst)

It is almost the twenty-third anniversary of Nigeria's democracy, and the general elections in 2023 are in the headlines. Nearly eight years ago, Nigerians elected President Buhari of the All Progressive Congress (APC) to

tackle corruption, fix the economy, and curtail the reign of terrorist gangs in the northeast. Buhari's election was a protest vote against the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the then-ruling party, for squandering an enormous oil windfall and boasting it was unstoppable from ruling Nigeria for 60 years. But Buhari has failed in all three promises.

Nigeria's naira worsened from about N199 to the dollar in 2015 to N760 in today's parallel market. The then-candidate Buhari had declared oil subsidy spending an organized fraud by the PDP government. But eight years on, subsidy spending has more than quadrupled under his watch as President and petroleum minister. From N316. bn in 2015 to N1.43 trillion in 2021. A staggering N6.7 trillion naira (about \$15 billion), or one-third of the 2023

The stakes have never been higher for a President with character and integrity to fix Nigeria and slow the descent into a full-blown crisis. Nigeria has made commendable progress toward modernizing its laws since 1999. But the lack of visionary, committed leadership has made nonsense of its vast human and natural resource endowment and the rule of law. Today, it is the source of institutionalized impunity and lack of accountability.

Without installing a president with integrity and character strength, Nigeria has little chance of defeating the vested, powerful interests holding the country down. Moreover, it has yet to come out of the hole it finds itself in courtesy of the chain of bad governance, poor policy decisions, and missed opportunities over the last twenty-two years.

The Obidients are a group of Nigerians championing a new Nigeria who sees Mr. Peter Obi as a credible vehicle. In seven months since Mr. Obi adopted the little-known labor party, the Obidients have garnered momentum never witnessed in Nigeria's politics for a little-known candidate and party. The meteoric rise in popularity and acceptance of Mr. Obi in just seven months seems like a tale from the children's cartoon. But it is real. Several independent polls put Mr. Obi ahead of two other top contenders, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the ruling APC and Alhaji Atiku

Abubakar of the PDP.

Mr. Tinubu is a former two-term Lagos state governor whose birth, age, name, education, and career have been the subject of controversies. In addition, questions about his health status and wealth source have never been answered. Instead, convoluted explanations from Mr. Tinubu and his supporters have fueled more questions.

Alhaj Atiku Abubakar, is a former vice president to President Obasanjo. He is a serial runner, having previously lost four presidential attempts to the late former President, Umaru Yar'Adua, in 2007, Jonathan in 2011, and Buhari in 2015 and 2019. Today, Alhaj Atiku bears the burden of the 16 years of PDP rule, which Nigerians still remember.

“For both Tinubu and Atiku, the 2023 elections is probably their last chance, which increases the stakes for both”

Power is back on the streets, says Femi Falana, Nigeria's respected human rights activist and senior advocate. State governors, on the hand, boast of being the custodians of 'peoples power' given the enormous resources they control and their stranglehold over local government administration. Mr. Obi and his supporters hope to burst this myth and prove that the people are the real structures.

“The Obidients are confident that their candidate will win if the elections are free and fair. Fifteen years ago, this would have been a lofty dream”

But a free, fair, and transparent election is plausible in today's Nigeria, courtesy of the convergence of several critical factors. A reform-minded, open, and partnership-oriented electoral umpire- the independent national electoral commission (INEC). A cleansed voter register and a registration process that allows INEC to fish out and delete fraudulent and multiple registrants. Perhaps much more reassuring is the introduction of a series of innovative ideas and significant deployment of technology into the electoral process – improved electoral law, voter verification, authentication technology, and results transmission and verification technology. Finally, an exasperated youth population is hungry to retire Nigeria's web of self-serving and corruptly extractive political class and godfathers who have historically used state resources and instruments of coercion to determine election outcomes.



But nothing is more important than the massive education, sensitization, volunteering, and mobilization by the Obidient movement. For the first time, ordinary Nigerians put their money, time, resources, influence, and mouth where it matters. They are bent on proving that citizens are the critical structure for voter mobilization. They are eager to rewrite the narratives of the politics of electoral victory.

A victory for Obi would confirm Mr. Falana's declaration that power is back on the streets and no longer in the governor's government houses.

It would threaten the myth about the power of money in political mobilization in Nigeria. Both Atiku and Tinubu pack a deep pocket to prosecute the elections. For example, a bullion van entered the latter's residence during the 2019 elections. There has been no investigation into this since then. Similar experiences reared their heads during party primaries by leading political parties in 2022. Delegates of the APC and PDP were alleged to have received between \$10,000 to \$35,000 from the frontline aspirants. This is in addition to payment for the expression of interest and application form for the party's presidential ticket—the application form and expression of interest costs Tinubu and Atiku N100 million and N40 million, respectively. Both are ready to open the vaults to land the presidency.

Nigerians may have a chance to rest the over-confident ruling APC and the main opposition, PDP, once and for all. But those calling for a new Nigeria must show up. They must collect their permanent voter cards and turn up at the polling units. Youths represent the largest segment of

the Obidients. And they can deliver Mr. Obi to the 'Aso villa' come 2023 as the largest voting bloc.

The rising fortune of Mr. Obi and the labor party is reaching worrying heights for APC, PDP, and their supporters. Yet, both parties will not fold their hands and watch a political tsunami befall them. So, whether this voyage to oust the kleptocratic ruling class succeeds is yet to be seen.

“But one thing is for sure, Nigerians cannot afford to be despondent or too much in a hurry”

This means the new thirst for a trusted, credible, courageous leader sympathetic to the course of ordinary Nigerians must be sustained beyond 2023, no matter what happens. Suppose the hunger for change dies with the 2023 elections. In that case, Nigerians championing change are no different from the jaundiced political class that has shown a lack of capability to envision beyond a four-year cycle and consequently has been unable to provide the much-needed leadership to address the existential questions facing Nigeria. But whichever way the pendulum swings, Nigerians and Africans may be at the cusp of a new lesson on the power of voters.

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Combatting the effects of climate change

does Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative hold any lessons for forest protection in Sierra Leone?



Sonkita Conteh is Director, Namati, Sierra Leone

combat the adverse impacts of deforestation and climate change.

When the project was launched in 2019, the Ethiopian government claimed that more than 350 million trees were planted

Life begins as a seed. On board an Ethiopian Airlines flight from Addis Ababa after the COP27 meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, the crew screened a short film on Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative- an ultra-ambitious plan to plant billions of trees across Ethiopia to

in a single day by some 23 million volunteers.

While this record still awaits verification, the government has drawn wide-spread praise for its ambitious plan to bring back the country's forests, which according to the United Nations, plummeted from 35% of total land area in the 1900s to less than 5% in the 2000s. Ethiopia's mostly rural population which rely on rain-fed farming for their livelihood, have been fighting a losing battle against droughts, desertification, and land degradation.

The narrator pointed out that Ethiopia wasn't only signing agreements to protect the environment but was taking concrete steps on the ground to make good on those promises. The country, it appears, is determined to stop, and reverse deforestation. So far, Ethiopia claims to have planted a staggering 25 billion tree saplings since 2019 with a 70% survival rate. In the two years of the project's



life, the government estimates that the carbon impact equates to the removal of 65 million diesel cars from the roads for a year. Among the billions of seeds that were planted, half a billion were fruit trees which would provide livelihoods for hundreds of thousands and bolster food security.

The problems of deforestation and adverse climate change are not unique to Ethiopia or any country. They are global in nature with varying and often devastating intensity of country-level manifestation. For example, in Sierra Leone, original forest cover plummeted from 60%, fifty years ago, to about 4% now. Across rural communities, water sources are drying up and farmlands are turning to dust. Half of the country's population is food insecure. Rainfall has become more erratic and deadly with flooding, landslides and death by flooding or landslide common occurrences in the rainy season. The country is among those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. As was the case in Ethiopia before 2019, forests systems in Sierra Leone are under threat of extinction.

However, in 2019 while Ethiopia was planting 350 million trees in a single day, Sierra Leone was busy shipping off some 10 million slow-growing rosewood trees to Asia, destroying approximately 200 thousand acres of rain forest in the process.

The government generated the grand sum of US \$ 25.7 million from the destruction of original forest that is 10 times the size of the capital, Freetown. That same year, in an address at the UN General Assembly during the Climate Action Summit, the country's President noted that "Sierra Leone...is rated as the third most vulnerable [country] to the effects of climate change" and complained that the country is a "victim of actions we have not contributed to" and thus is unfairly and unacceptably paying the price both in terms of human lives and lack of development. He announced that the government was taking various actions to address climate change including planting over 100,000 trees as part of a five-year plan to plant two million trees. Even if this commitment was religiously undertaken, the government had effectively, in a single year, invalidated its five-year reforestation plan, five times over. The forest deficit will continue to grow as the government fully embraces timber exportation as a means of revenue generation.

At COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland in 2021, the Sierra Leone President joined 143 other leaders to commit





to conserve, protect, sustainably manage, and restore forests and other ecosystems. In the same month that he signed this declaration to protect forests, the government announced a resumption of the timber trade which had been suspended because of the rains. So, while the president was signing up to protect and restore the country's forests in Glasgow, on the ground, the government gave the green light to resume their plundering. For the Sierra Leone government, the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use, it would seem, was not worth the paper it was written on. The failure or refusal to abide by the Glasgow Declaration is not surprising. In pursuit of timber revenue, the government has been violating its own environment and forest protection laws over the years. Making a few bucks now seems a much more desirable proposition than saving lives in the future.

At COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, government officials talked a good game on forest protection and sustainable management of natural resources- a review of the country's forestry laws, among others, is on the cards. Back home however, the customary government press release to restart the season of pillaging of the nation's fast dwindling forests was being issued. Somehow the timing of COP always shows the hollowness of the government's commitment to protect the country's forests in sharp relief.

So, given that both Ethiopia and Sierra Leone have suf-

fered adversely from severe forest loss, what lessons can the latter learn from the former's sterling actions to bring back its forests? Perhaps the most significant lesson is that commitments on paper should be matched by equivalent action on the ground. Sierra Leone has enacted laws and signed up to international agreements and declarations to protect its forests and sustainably manage vulnerable ecosystems. Yet, governments past and present repeatedly renege on these commitments for a few dollars. The truth is that revenue derived from destroying forests is never equal to the value of the forest that is lost. Additionally, a person's word should be their bond. By persistently flouting written commitments, the government risks losing credibility in the eyes of its citizens and among the club of nations.

A further vital lesson is responsiveness to the lived realities of the population. Ethiopia's majority rural citizenry faced an existential threat-farming was being extinguished by droughts and land degradation.

The government responded with a massive plan to regenerate forests. Across rural communities in Sierra Leone, inconsistent rainfall, drought, and dwindling soil fertility have deepened poverty, food insecurity and left many without clean, safe water. While local communities and their chiefs are enforcing bye-laws that prevent logging and charcoal burning, the government merrily carries on with the timber export trade and the decimation of the last remaining forests.

Life indeed begins as a seed. The seed that is sown now will determine the quality of life that the citizens of Sierra Leone will have in the future. There is a lot at stake. The government needs to start sowing the right seeds now by stopping the timber export trade and embarking on aggressive reforestation or risk a perilous future for a nation that has been lurching from one crisis to another.



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Does Sierra Leone Need

A Court Of Human Rights?



Sierra Leone has an Anti-Corruption Division of the High Court to stop graft, a Sexual Offences Division to halt sexual abuse, and a Fast-Track Commercial Court Division to handle commercial disputes, but it does not have a human rights court to address specific human rights abuses. **This situation raises the question if Sierra Leone needs a human rights court.**

To a large extent, the question is relevant to the present day, as a big question mark hangs on Sierra Leone's commitment to protecting and promoting human rights and civil liberties.

In 2013, this tricky question arose during an interface among students of the Human Rights Clinic at Fourah Bay College, the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), and the Human Rights Commission (HRC), then headed by Jamesina King, now a judge of the High Court.

It was just too tough to offer an immediate answer.

The students were clear about having a human rights

court to keep state and non-state actors in check while executing their duties.

On the other hand, the SLP and HRC said a human rights culture can still be maintained in Sierra Leone without a human rights court.

The death of a pupil at Anzarul Secondary School in 2013 after a police shoot-out prompted the debate. The fatality occurred as the police were trying to quell a riot staged by the pupils. The then head of SLP Public Relations, Ibrahim Samura, struggled to respond to allegations of police brutality against the pupils.

The Police Discipline Regulations, 2001 prohibits the discharge of a firearm without just cause, and the arguments, at that time, hovered on the proportionality rule. The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 and the Public Order Act, 1965, places limitations on the use of force by the police. The laws succinctly prescribe that using police might to keep the people of Sierra Leone safe should the rule. The exception takes place only in exceptional circumstances.

In the Anzarul killing, many Sierra Leoneans accused the



police of using more force than necessary since the pupils were unarmed, defenceless and vulnerable. In such situations, the argument continued, police were therefore obliged to use maximum restraint in the use of lethal force. Deadly force, by all standards, can be used only when all means to restrain rioters have failed and lives and property are under constant threat. The Anzarul killing is not the only incident in which the principal law enforcement agency had been implicated.

**In recent times, accusing fingers have been pointed at the police for murdering residents in Tonkolili, Mak-
eni, Port Loko and Western Rural
districts in North-West regions, but
none have been humbled in a court.**

Honourable Zainab Catherine Tarawallie argued that “the death penalty has been abolished, but extra-judicial killing is legalised in Sierra Leone.” Citizens’ rights are threatened in riotous situations and peacetime. Recurrent 2019, 2020 and 2021 HRC reports have gone to great lengths explaining how the police arrest and detain persons for civil offences. The police, the report notes, most times, act outside the normal chain of command. The United States Human Rights Report, 2021, also made similar claims.

The HRC allegations were also confirmed by a Legal Aid

Board official in Sierra Leone, Abdul Rahman Fofanah, who said police officers detained civilians for civil offences citing micro-credit loans as a bright example. “The police have no business arresting persons for civil offences. They are entitled only to look into criminal matters,” he explained.

The police are also under obligation, according to the Legal Aid Act, 2012, to inform the Legal Aid Board officers when an indigent citizen is arrested and detained so that legal representation can be provided from the onset of the investigation. Police, most times, have failed to carry out this legal duty. Police failures under the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA), 1965, have not gone unnoticed. The law outlines in section 13 the circumstances under which the police can arrest without a warrant. But arrests without warrants are not infrequent. Similarly, the principles of legality, procedural correctness, proportionality and necessity which guide arrest are usually flouted by police officers. What about interrogations that last for nearly a day when it should go for an hour in civilised jurisdictions?

Interrogations are not investigation since there is no reasonable suspicion that an offence has been committed. The police only have doubt about a person’s conduct or activities.

What about unlawful detention that emanates from unlawful arrest?

In 2013, 24 soldiers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces deployed at the 5th brigade were arrested and detained for over a year on false claims of treason. They were later released due to want of prosecution. Former Minister of Defence Alfred Paolo Conteh also succumbed to a similar fate in 2014 when he was charged with treason.

He also saw the light of a free day when the court proved his innocence. Like the 24 soldiers, Conteh’s only benefit was the freedom restored to him after a year of incarceration. Sierra Leone’s legal system is deficient in a compensation law, although she is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966. The ICCPR states that one who suffers a miscarriage of justice is entitled to compensation.

What about suspects held in police cells longer than that prescribed by law?

The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone stipulates the maximum detention period of 10 days for capital of-



fences and 72 hours for other offences. In Sierra Leone, suspects are detained in police custody for close to two or three weeks for minor offences. In August 2022, Kadie Kalokoh spent 12 days in a police cell at Central Police Station in the nation's capital, Freetown, for minor offences. The female suspect was picked up by police at her stall on Abacha street for disorderly behaviour and riotous conduct during the August 10, 2022, demonstrations. The prolonged detention period was foreseen and would have been forestalled had the police granted bail.

Like Kadie, dozens of other suspects languished and nearly perished in police cells where they were held for longer periods. The agony of those tortured during detention will also not easily fade away. What about those whose rights were abused by security operatives between 2020 and 2021 in a state of emergency without rules? The Covid-19 public emergency, which went on for over a year, left the people of Sierra Leone at the mercy of police and military officers.

In lockdown situations, most residents who fell into the hands of state security personnel were not spared. Under a lockdown without planning, the people were out and about for food and water. Once intercepted by men in uniform, they were asked to lie on the ground and watch the sun, a form of torture.

Others were handcuffed and flogged in public view. At the Mamboreh intersection in Freetown, two army personnel flogged a man with a block on his head for failing to put on a facemask. The harsh memories of four teachers who were handcuffed and paraded at the Cotton Tree, in the

heartland of Freetown, for alleged exams malpractices still linger. The teachers were convicted before they were investigated, an act that negates the presumption of innocence, a universally accepted judicial principle.

The dreadful act shocked the conscience of many Sierra Leoneans and raised vital questions about Sierra Leone's human rights credentials. A teacher and rights campaigner, Ibrahim Bangura, has vehemently argued in favour of a human rights court.

“Because of the failings as well as legal and policy gaps in the protection of human rights, this generation has realized that a court of human rights is urgently needed.”

I hope that public officials will be more professional when a court questions their actions,” Bangura expressed hope.

He also argues that abuse of human rights by duty-bearers renders society fatal, but it is more fatal when there is no court to place state actors on their toes. Sierra Leone, however, prides itself with a law that seeks to recognise and respect fundamental rights, civil liberties and freedoms.

The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 contains two chapters that protect the rights of citizens. Although the rights under fundamental principles of state policy in chapter two are not enforceable, governments are encouraged to work towards achieving those rights.

However, the rights in chapter three, which are about the recognition and protection of fundamental human rights and individual freedoms, confer legal rights on citizens when they are infringed on.

They include the right to life, liberty, security of person, the enjoyment of property, protection of law, freedom of conscience, expression, assembly and association, respect for private and family life and protection from deprivation of property without compensation, among others.

The Supreme Court, by law, has original and appellate jurisdiction to hear infringement on any of these rights, but getting the right quorum of judges is a significant bottleneck.

It is hoped that a special court for human rights will solve the problem.



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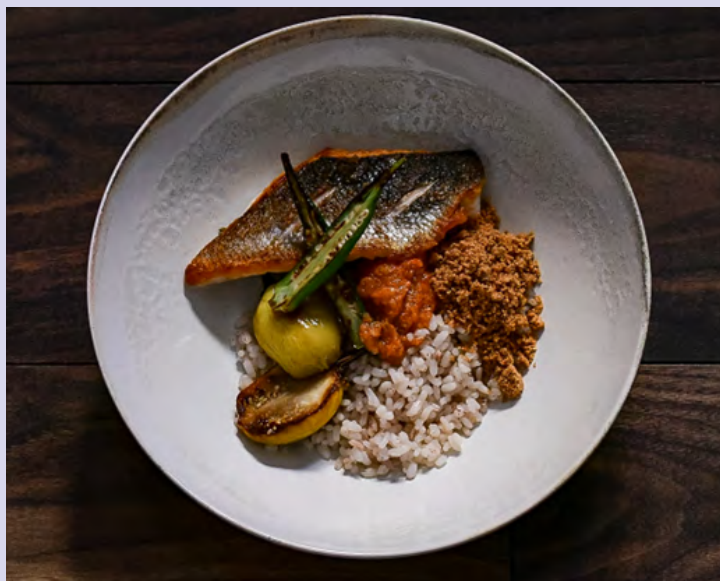
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Interview

With Chef Maria Bradford



I grew up in Freetown and lived on Sir Samuel Lewis Road, just off Aberdeen Ferry Road. My mother was a single parent, raising me, my brother and two sisters. Of course, we had plenty of aunts and uncles around too. I went to Roosevelt primary school and later Vine Memorial School for girls.



Sierraeye: When did you leave Sierra Leone?

Maria Bradford: I left Freetown in my late teens in order to come to the UK as an international student. I studied Finance and Accounting and gained a BA Hon's in Business Administration with Accounting and Finance.

Sierraeye: Was there anything that you thought you wanted to do before you started cooking?

Maria Bradford: Career advice, in Sierra Leone is limited. Parents and other family members often encourage entry into one of the traditional professions such as accounting, law or medicine and I think there's a lack of appreciation of the broader range of career options which may be possible, less competitive and more relevant. There's limited appreciation for creative pursuits. I was good with maths so automatically accounting or medicine was chosen for me. I had no idea what I wanted to do or to be, or what I might be go. The biggest surprise to me was finding out later in life that I am actually a creative person. I simply didn't know who I was or that I had this skill.

Sierraeye: When and why did you decide to become a chef?

Maria Bradford: I loved dinner parties and cooking for friends and family and many people would say "You should sell this" or "You should open a restaurant." I thought they were being polite but this went on for almost a decade and the penny started to drop with me. Perhaps I should? I catered for my cousins wedding in 2017 and launched Maria Bradford Kitchen and small product line. Sierra Leonean's kept commenting that the

way I plate traditional Salone food and afro-fusion dishes was 'Shwen Shwen' which means 'Fancy' and I liked it so much I decided this was a far more fitting name for what I do.

Sierraeye: Who taught you how to cook?

Maria Bradford: Like most African children I started cooking when I was eight years old and was taught to cook by my mother, who in-turn was taught by her mother. I guess that story is not an unfamiliar one for most girls in Sierra Leone.

Sierraeye: How do you describe your overall cooking philosophy?

Maria Bradford: For me, cooking is about connection; connecting people through food and I wanted to bring traditional Sierra Leonean dishes and Afro-fusion dishes to a broader audience. I wanted to also prove traditional Sierra Leonean cuisine can be plated in a fine dining style and I wanted to show off our colorful culture, enhance it where possible and create a platform on which others can build.

If I have a philosophy it is that traditional Sierra Leonean food can be prepared with the finest ingredients with provenance that I can lay my hands on, and it can be plated and presented nicely but it must still be authentic and not lose any of it's authenticity. When it comes to ingredients my philosophy is really simple "fresh is best". When I prepare Afro-fusion dishes this is my opportunity to really get creative and experiment.



Sierraeye: What is your signature dish?

Maria Bradford: This is tough, I love cassava leaf so.....

Sierraeye: Is there one magic ingredient that you are secretly obsessed and use in most of your dishes?

Maria Bradford: I like hibiscus...

Sierraeye: What is your least favorite dish to prepare?

Maria Bradford: I don't have one

Sierraeye: Why is it important to put Sierra Leone cuisine on the global map?

Maria Bradford: Africa is the final frontier of food and our continent has much to offer. We have plenty of ingredients to draw on and some fantastic producers, however when we look at the top 20 most popular food cultures globally, there is not a single African country on the list. I'd like to change that.

Sierraeye: Do you think that Sierra Leone could one day become like Indian food globally?

Maria Bradford: Realistically, I cannot see that happening



anytime soon. However, I can honestly say a far broader audience will be trying, and more regularly consuming our food in the next few decades.

Sierraeye: From the perspective of your clients what the criticisms about our cuisine? Too spicy? Too much carbs?

Maria Bradford: It's true some older Europeans cannot tolerate the spice. Post war food shortages and rationing during the second world war, plus a generally a carb heavy cold climate diet led many of those born in the mid 1900's to prefer plainer food. Indian food only started becoming popular in the 1950's and 1960's in the UK. African food is only starting to take off now. There's so much more to our food than "spicy and carbs"

Sierraeye: Is there sufficient variety in our cuisine to provide for example vegetarians?

Maria Bradford: Yes, we can adapt what we do for vegetarians and vegans. I think our food can open up a range of exciting possibilities.

Sierraeye: Do you plan to open a branch of shwen shwen in Freetown?

Maria Bradford: I would love too. One day. Doing business in Sierra Leone would not be easy and it comes with risks. Political instability and corruption certainly don't

encourage foreign investment and even if you're Sierra Leonean like me, you need fairly serious connections and deep pockets to get started in the way I would like to.

That said, I would love to one day.

For now, my young children and family here in the UK need me and I have a lot going on here.

Sierraeye: What is your message to aspiring to aspiring chefs in Sierra Leone?

Maria Bradford: Just follow your dreams, believe in yourself and don't give up.

Sierraeye: Any major awards you have won that you want to tell our readers about?

Maria Bradford: Appearing in the Guardian's OFM 50 was a pretty big deal for me and being recognized by the Sierra Leonean community in the UK for my contribution to culinary arts at the 'Salone Oscars.' I was also recognized for African food by Be Inclusive Hospitality which was a proud moment. The thing I am most excited about is the forthcoming launch of my debut cookbook entitled 'Sweet Salone' which is to be published in 2023.



and The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)



Abdul Deensie is Policy Analyst and Consultant and Former Congressional Black Caucus, Donald M. Payne Foreign Policy Fellow

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) was established by the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 by the 108th United States Congress. Congress approved the new initiative in January 2004. The act established the foundation of the Millennium

Challenge Corporation, which is “based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces good governance, economic freedom, and investments in people. MCC’s mission is to reduce global poverty through the promotion of sustainable economic growth.”

The MCC represents a significant change in the way the United States delivers economic assistance. The concept differs in several respects from past and current U.S. aid practices at other agencies, including but not limited not:

- A competitive process that rewards countries for past actions measured by objective performance indicators.
- A mission to seek poverty reduction through economic growth, not encumbered with multiple sector objectives.
- A requirement to solicit program proposals developed primarily by qualifying countries with broad-based civil society involvement.

The MCC operates two types of assistance programs: a long-term, large-scale investment in a country, known as a Compact, and a short-term, more narrowly defined effort to help prepare possible candidates for compact eligibility, known as the Threshold Program. MCC compacts are five-year grant agreements proposed and implemented by well-governed countries. Compacts aim to achieve poverty reduction through economic growth by targeting the principal “binding constraints to growth” in an economy.

Threshold programs are smaller, shorter (usually two- to four-year) programs designed to assist promising candidate countries to become compact eligible. Threshold programs originally addressed shortcomings in a country’s qualifying indicators, especially corruption, the most common cause of a failing scorecard. At the request of Congress, MCC conducted an extensive review of its threshold programs. Rather than individual indicators, threshold programs since 2011 have targeted the broader policies affecting a country’s scorecard performance through programs oriented on potential binding constraints to growth.

Deliberations for the MCC program to be instituted in Sierra Leone started in 2007. The deliberations culminated in a December 2008 letter written by former President Ernest Bai Koroma to Ambassador John Danilovich, CEO, Millennium Challenge Corporation, requesting an MCC Threshold Grant. In the letter, former President Koroma stated, “I have decided to personally make this request for consideration for a Threshold Grant within the next year. The primary indicators I have selected for improvement that will fall under the auspices of the MCA Task Force I have set up are: ‘Control of Corruption’ and land reform in the 2009 scorecard.”

In December 2012, Sierra Leone was selected by the MCC board of directors to develop a Compact after passing 12 indicators on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 scorecard, including the hard hurdle, Control of Corruption, with a score of 53%. The country set up the Millennium Challenge Co-

Compact Development Process Overview

	Preliminary Analysis	Problem Diagnosis	Project Definition	Project Development	Negotiation
Eligible Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names a National Coordinator and puts together a compact development team • Analyzes constraints to economic growth opportunities for private investment and poverty reduction • Undertakes broad consultations with stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands compact development team • Analyzes key root causes of binding constraints • Defines, develops initial project ideas to address constraints • Submits Concept Notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines and scopes specific projects and activities • Builds strong project logic for proposed compact program • Identifies intended beneficiaries • Consults stakeholders on project design • Submits detailed Project Proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts feasibility, environmental and other studies • Measures expected economic impact • Identifies risks and mitigation measures • Begins establishing structures needed in implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalizes monitoring and evaluation framework • Negotiates legal, financial, technical terms of program • Creates dedicated MCC unit for implementation
MCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffs a country team • Provides compact development guidance • Advises and assists with analyses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews, approves Concept Notes • Approves concept projects for further development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews, approves Project Proposals • Approves projects for full development and appraisal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May fund necessary preparatory studies • Oversees, manages procurements • Conducts thorough project appraisal • Makes final decision on projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifies Congress of intent to negotiate • Defines budget and commits funding • Obtains approval of MCC's Board • Signs agreement

Source: World Bank

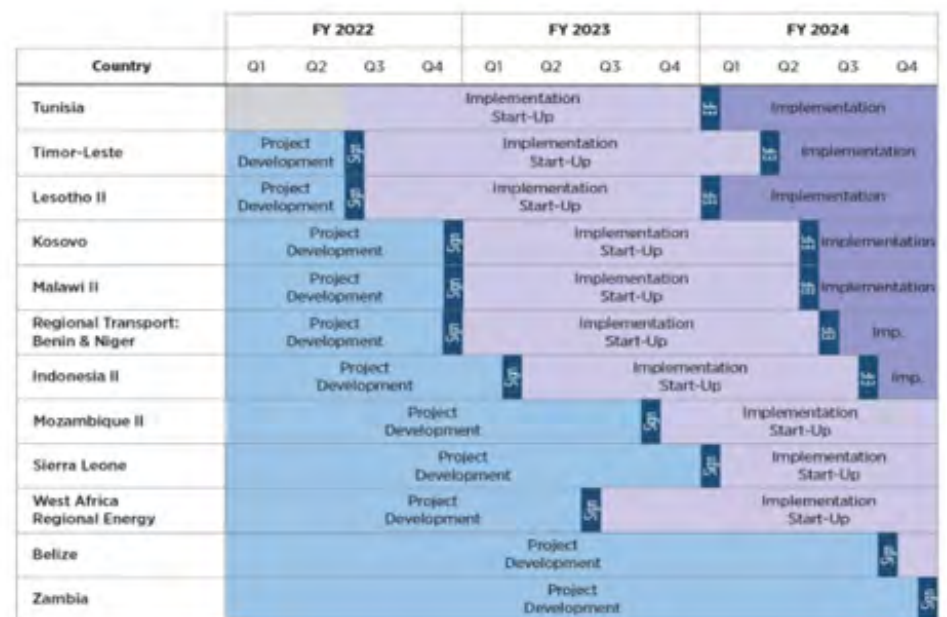
ner with a National Coordinator and staff. However, Sierra Leone failed the hard hurdle ‘Control of Corruption’ indicator with a score of 47% the following year on the MCC FY 2014 scorecard. Although the country passed half of the scorecard by passing 11 indicators, at its board meeting in December 2013, Sierra Leone was not re-selected to continue Compact Development. Though the MCC stated, it would maintain ‘continued but limited engagement’ with the country.

In December 2020, Sierra Leone was again selected by the MCC board of directors as eligible for compact development after passing 11 indicators on the FY 21 scorecard, with a score of 71% on the hard hurdle ‘Control of Corruption’ indicator and pass on other hard hurdle indicators under the Democratic Rights category. It should be noted that once a country

- FY 2019: 71%
- FY 2020: 79%
- FY 2021: 81%
- FY 2022: 83%
- FY 2023: 79%

At its recent board of directors meeting in December 2022, Sierra Leone was re-selected as eligible to continue developing a compact. The country is on track to sign a multi-million dollar compact in the last quarter of FY 23 or the first quarter of FY 24 (calendar year, 2023).

Compact Development Timelines



WHAT

The MCC Scorecard is NOT



President Bio receives scorecard from former US Ambassador Maria Brewer

Basita Michael
legal practitioner and
founder of Sierraeye
Magazine.



Louis Jakob Rolfes
Completed his 3 months
'wahlstation' (trainee-
ship) with ILRAJ.



The release of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) scorecard for Sierra Leone for the fiscal year 2023 has sparked heated debate. Some praise the government for passing the MCC scorecard for the fourth time in a row and for achieving high ratings, particularly in terms of primary education expenditure, girls' prima-

ry education completion rate, and control of corruption immunization rate, among others.

Others, in turn, raise their eyebrows at the validity of the results, particularly in the 'Ruling Justly' category. The scorecard registers, for instance, a 79 % pass for Sierra Leone in the 'Control of Corruption' indicator. They assume that the MCC's methodology must be flawed if Sierra Leone scores high in the 'Control of Corruption' indicator while they suffer from the excesses of corruption on a daily basis.



For a country that has also attracted negative attention for its lawlessness, police brutality, bye-elections violence, human rights violations, impunity, the suppression of dissent and democratic rights such as the right to freedom of assembly and association, many citizens were shocked to learn that Sierra Leone achieved high ratings in the rule of law, civil liberties, political rights and Freedom of information all falling in the category of ruling justly. They could not understand how Sierra Leone scored highly in “ruling justly” when state institutions such as the police and the judiciary that are meant to protect their rights are the ones that, on countless occasions, have breached their rights, delivering instead impunity and injustice mostly perpetrated against those perceived as a threat to the poor weak and marginalised.

The mixed reactions described above are understandable first reactions. However, a closer examination of the MCC scorecard’s purpose and methodology suggests no compelling reasons for the government and its supporters to take excessive pride in the outcomes. Likewise, one should not be overly suspicious or hastily conclude that the MCC’s methodology produces unreliable outcomes.

To understand its informative value, it’s perhaps better to explain what the MCC scorecard is not rather than what it is.

The reason is that, in a nutshell, the MCC scorecard does not reflect the current state of affairs in Sierra Leone, be it in the ruling justly category or otherwise and does not aim to do so.

The aim of the MCC scorecard is merely to select countries eligible for MCC assistance. Eligibility rests on how well a country performs relative to other countries in the same lower middle-income category on 20 transparent, third-party indicators of the rule of law, economic freedom, and investing in people. Simply put, the fact that a box is green on the scorecard only means that a country meets the required performance standard relative to other countries and might be, therefore, eligible for MCC assistance.

To put things in perspective, let’s take the rule of law. Sierra Leone scored 65 percent. This does not necessarily imply that Sierra Leone is a country that respects the rule of law, nor does it measure the state of the rule of law in Sierra Leone. It does not aim to do this.

This finding is supported by the fact that most of the values on the scorecards are only relative values. For 16 out of the 20 indicators (except for the indicators’ Inflation,’ ‘Immunization Rates,’ ‘Political rights,’ and ‘Civil Liberties’), a country must only score higher than the median score relative to other countries in its income group (either group of low-income countries with GNI/capita ≤ \$ 2,045 or middle-income countries with GNI/Capita \$2,046–\$4,255). For those indicators, a country must not perform better than an absolute threshold.

Attempting to make this clear, let us imagine a school class (the group of low- or middle-income countries) that writes a maths test. The teacher decides that the students do not have to respond correctly to half of the 100 questions of the test to pass (which would be an absolute threshold). He adopts a different approach according to which students already pass if they give a correct answer to more questions than the average of the students (the approach the MCC adopts for most indicators). This implies that if the average of the students correctly answers 20 questions, students who correctly answer 21 questions already pass the test.

Sierra Leone is in the group of low-income countries. This implies that, for most indicators, Sierra Leone achieves a high score if it performs better than countries like Afghanistan, North Korea or Yemen - countries that are not known for their respect for the rule of law. Thus, where for instance, the scorecard registers a 79 % pass for Sierra Leone in the 'Control of Corruption' indicator, this does not necessarily mean that Sierra Leone is doing a fantastic job when it comes to fighting corruption. The indicator only tells us that Sierra Leone performs better than other low-income countries. It does not indicate that Sierra Le-

one performs well in absolute terms. Sierra Leone would certainly achieve a lower score if it were compared to other higher-income countries or all countries of the world.

Herein lies precisely the danger of the MCC's approach. The use of indicators for which a country must only score higher than the median score relative to other countries in its income group provides little incentive for countries to continue to improve on the indicators once they have passed this hurdle. Countries either pass the hurdle or not. If they pass it, they do not receive further benefits if they pass it by a large margin. If they miss it, they do not have to fear sanctions for missing it by a large margin. A student who has passed the above-mentioned maths test might be satisfied with being better than his classmates. He might be, therefore, reluctant to invest more time in maths to become a good mathematician. The same could happen to Sierra Leone. The country has passed the scorecard only by a small margin. It has passed 11 out of 20 indicators. This could lead to a situation in which the government does neither continue to improve on the passed 11 indicators nor try to pass the missed 9 indicators since the country is already eligible for assistance. As long as other low-income countries do not improve significantly on indicators, Sierra Leone would not need to make additional efforts to perform better than them.

" Therefore, there is no reason to be overly proud of the scores and rest on its laurels. Equally so, skeptics should not attribute to the MCC scorecard what it does not intend to do, which is to reflect the daily experiences of Sierra Leoneans, because it is not and never claimed to do so "



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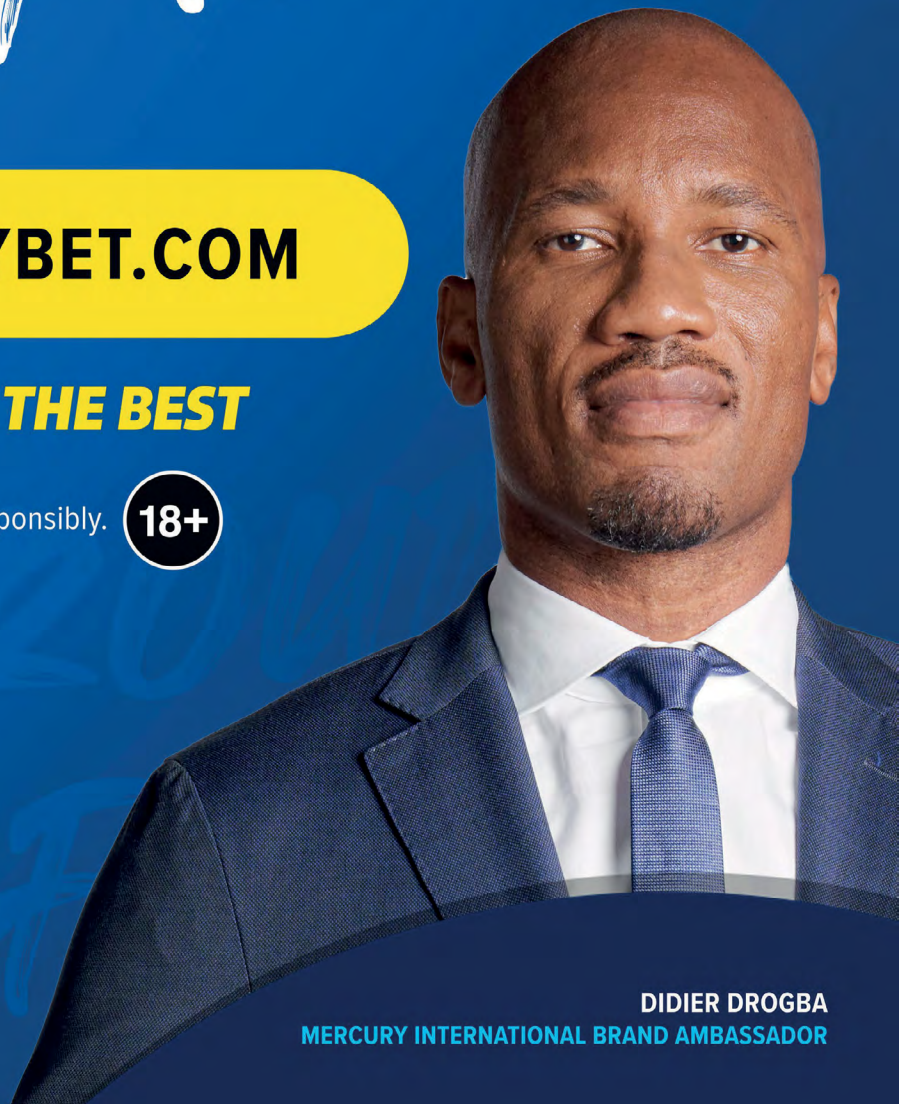
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A Presidential Transition Law Matters



The Sierra Leone Constitution of 1991 seeks to ensure good governance within the state, but the absence of a transition clause reveals a significant flaw. **Without any law to regulate the transfer of power, political transitions in Sierra Leone have always been a ride on the rocks.** As a result, incoming presidents always find it challenging to consolidate peace and stability in the first few weeks of governance.

The Governance Transition Team (GTT) report 2018 notes that the transfer of power from one government to another is part of Sierra Leone's culture. But the transitions have not always gone

smoothly in recent times. "Our political system fashioned by the 1991 Constitution has fully not developed the mechanisms necessary to make presidential transitions truly orderly and routinised," the GTT report reads.

It also indicated that the transfer of power in 2018 took the form of an emergency situation. Several ugly developments, including repeated episodes of violence in some parts of the country, the vandalism of the President's lodge at Hill Station and the looting of government vehicles by outgoing officials, according to the report, suggest a legal framework to guide the transfer of power.

In March 2018, President Julius Maada Bio was hastily sworn in at the Raddison Blu Hotel in Freetown instead of State House, which, for years, has been the usual avenue for the oath-taking. The swearing-in ceremony marked the third political transition since the return of multi-party democracy in 1996.

The turbulence, insecurity and threats of violence hanging on the atmosphere pushed the swearing-in ceremony to a different location. It took days for the new President to restore calm and order. Ministers, permanent secretaries,

directors-general and other heads of agencies who were disappointed with the declaration of Maada Bio as President allegedly undermined the transition.

Several former government officials abandoned their offices while many melted into thin air. Ministry of Youth Affairs was singled out as one where officials took a French leave due to regime change without handing over notes. The former Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Captain Momodu Alieu Pat-Sowe, left Sierra Leone on the day ex President Ernest Bai Koroma handed over power to President Bio. The immediate departure of former government officials without proper handing over and taking over procedures became a popular subject for discussions at the defunct commissions of inquiry.

The transition period became more cumbersome when allegations of stealing government vehicles filtered through the public, prompting a counter-response. A group of civilians, led by the sacked Mines Minister, Rado Yokie, were let loose on the streets of Freetown, the capital city, to retrieve what they referred to as stolen assets. Without proper orientation, the vigilantes did not know precisely who should be targeted.

Apart from ministers, senior government officials were relegated to objects of humiliation by the irate youth. High-ranking judicial officials were not spared. A high court judge in Freetown was pushed out of his vehicle on the street not until a call from higher quarters reversed the youth's action.

Ex-President's daughter, Alice Mansaray, also became an innocent victim as her residence was raided by the vigilantes for government vehicles. Mrs. Mansaray was mistaken for a government official, and an appeal to Mr. Yokie got the thugs out of her premises. The rampant dismissals of public officials, especially ambassadors, high commissioners and principal representatives abroad and the controversial setting up of commissions of inquiry made matters worse.

The 2018 political transition was not the only rudderless transfer of power Sierra Leone has seen. It could be traced back to 1967 when the Governor-General, Henry Lightfoot Boston, was detained on the orders of the Army Chief, Brigadier David Lansana, on the eve of a transfer of power from Prime Minister Albert Margai to Siaka Probyn Stevens, who was also arrested. Both were, however, released, but the transition never worked well. At that time, conflicts, thuggery and undercurrents of disorder were visible in almost every part of the country, prompting a military take-over immediately followed by a declaration of martial law. The historic, turbulent transition triggered intermittent waves of the political thuggery that defined Sierra Leone's politics for years. The TRC report, 2004 noted the use of the youth for ephemeral intervention into politics as thugs, especially during transitions.

According to the report, the unwarranted manipulation of the young men constituted an element of disorder in the evolution of the state of Sierra Leone. For an extended period, coups and counter-coups replaced violent transitions. However, the 1996 transition of power from President Bio, then military ruler, to President Ahmed Tejan Kabba was a bit peaceful since Sierra Leoneans had made up their minds for

peace. They wanted to see late President Kabba end the war and return Sierra Leone to the development path. Sierra Leoneans would therefore support any move for peace and development at that time. A troublesome transition, however, resurfaced in 2007 when President Kabba handed over power to former President Koroma. The transition was also hallmarked by violence and thuggery as government officials were chased for alleged theft of government vehicles. An order for all public vehicles to halt movement was issued almost immediately after the allegations were made. SLPP headquarters in Freetown was partially vandalised, property worth millions of Leones carted away and women allegedly raped.

To cool down troubled waters, former President Koroma took responsibility for the damage. He donated Le 40m (NLe 40,000) to give back a facelift to the party office.

The former SLPP (Sierra Leone People's Party) Spokesman, Victor Reider, was intercepted at Gendema, a town bordering Sierra Leone with Liberia, as he tried to escape for his life.

Key SLPP sympathisers and supporters who had no business with governance went into hiding due to fear of the government's reprisals. Senior 'Tana' members in Bo city in the Southern region sought safe havens after President Koroma was declared winner of the 2007 elections. 'Tana' is a group of loyal SLPP supporters who generated pump and pageantry for late Vice President, Solomon Ekuma Berewa, ex-President Koroma's main challenger.

Many Sierra Leoneans argued that the Kab-

ba-Koroma transition would have been more violent had the new administration displayed political intolerance to SLPP. Unlike other previous administrations, ex-President Koroma worked with ex-ministers for three months with full pay.

However, a commission of inquiry was set up to look into the management of funds under the SABABU Education project. The tribunal did not last long, as it was closed after investigations were completed. Professor Alpha Tejan Wurie was the main person of interest at the commission. Mature and liberal democracies have transition rules to ensure the smooth transfer of power from outgoing presidents to incoming ones.

The United States is a typical example of a country with a sound transition system. Outgoing presidents spend three months in office after the elections before handing over power. A chronology of recent American political transitions indicates thus: in 2008, President George Washington Bush spent three months in office before handing over to his successor, President Barack Hussein Obama. Almost invariably Obama transferred power to Donald Trump in 2016 after spending three months in the White House. Despite challenges and threats of conflicts in the 2020 American elections, Trump stayed in office for three months before President Joe Biden took over.

The trend continues, but will Sierra Leone lend a leaf from other countries that have a clear transition law?



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WHAT'S NEXT

For Leone Stars?



2021 was a year of glory for the Leone Stars as they returned to the African Cup of Nations (AFCON) twenty (20) years after they left. It was a surprising return to the continent's highest football competition. The football authorities had been at each other's throats, a sign of Sierra Leone resurfacing on AFCON was faint.

Although the players' aim was high, they failed to go through the group stages. They retired to their trenches and hope to play another day. They are devising strategies to return to full strength for the next AFCON and possibly the World Cup.

Whether they would make it again to the tournament next year or clinch the trophy remains one of the hottest questions.

The President of the Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA), Thomas Daddy Brima, sounded confident as he outlined plans for the national team. Eight Leone Stars players have retired, and their replacements are yet to be found. The SLFA President currently faces the task of building a formidable team that will fly the country's flag in foreign countries. He is starting off with friendly matches and engaging other teams across Africa and the continent to build a national football team.

To the SLFA President, friendly matches are important. They build the capacity of current players since a good number have left the pitch. "To build up a national football team requires a lot: financial and material support," he said. Scouting for foreign-based players is difficult in trying to build up a national football team.



SLFA's current focus is solely on fielding a squad for upcoming World Cup and AFCON qualifying matches. For the time being, Sierra Leone lacks a team that can compete well on the international stage. The football body is trying to set up teams A and B, but this will take time since the players stay in different countries. For their potential to be tapped, SLFA needs to organise friendly matches.

Despite the challenges, Leone Stars are doing relatively well in their matches. Home-based players will be spotted as the matches are played. Getting the team out of

the country requires money, which has been one of the biggest challenges. Everyone in the football family wants to be part of the delegation, and the resources are not enough for everyone.

Standard pitch is a big headache for Sierra Leone, a factor that explains why they always take most of their games to other countries. The country loses when matches are played in other countries. Sierra Leone still struggles to catch up with Fédération Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) demands for a standard football field. Most of Sierra Leone's football pitches are made up of artificial turf, which does not qualify Sierra Leone to host international matches. The country's national stadium, the only pitch with natural turf permissible by FIFA for international matches, is being renovated, a project that will last for two years.

A former Leone Stars player Abdul Sesay aka Dkoks, said, "In all my years in the football game, the two football bodies with the responsibilities to administer sports in the country: SLFA and Ministry of Sports, have always been strange bed-fellows. The latter is a major stumbling block for the former."





In a situation of all-time conflict, it is difficult for objectives to be achieved. Sports Ministry is a supervising ministry for SLFA and must provide the necessary guidance. But, what is glaring and peculiar to Sierra Leone is the tension between SLFA and the Ministry, with allegations that the latter always insist that they dictate what SLFA should do and who should be invited for a particular match.

Sesay, the old-time player, hopes this conflict will not continue under this new administration. "For us to succeed in football, especially our national team, there should be a required maximum attention and financial input. The government must fully support the FA to acquire the

services of a professional coach and other professionals to handle the affairs of the team," Sesay recommended. He said local coaches had been given the opportunity to prove their mettle but failed to meet the people's expectations. Contemporary football has gone scientific and requires coaches with high academic standards, not coaches whose only qualification is to be a retired footballer who played for Sierra Leone at the time when players played with no boots and no nets at the back of goalposts.

The FA must avoid playing to the gallery of footballers who call the secretariat pleading for invitation even though some have no teams in the countries they reside. The invitation must be based on players with teams. Attention must be paid to youth football as several Leone Stars players are on the threshold of retirement. With all these lofty goals in mind, Leone Stars are set to glitter again on the global stage, but it is still a wait-and-see affair.





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A Year of Pivotal Elections

Elections

Sierra Leone will see a politically exciting moment in June 2023 as the country prepares for multi-tier elections. The local council, parliamentary and presidential elections will be held at a go. This is the second time Sierra Leone is holding multi-tier elections since 2018. The polls for the local councils should have taken place in 2021 but were postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020. The Local Government Act 2004 provides that local council elections should be held every four years.



Dr Abdulai Conteh arguing the proportional representation case before the Supreme Court

On the other hand, the Constitution of Sierra Leone stipulates five years for the conduct of presidential and parliamentary elections. Calls for the two elections to be conducted simultaneously made economic sense.

Although many hope that the electoral period will be peaceful, undercurrents of conflicts cannot be ruled out between the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the main opposition, All People's Congress (APC). The divide over the electoral system to be used in the upcoming elections cannot be buried in the sand.

Proportional Representation vs. Constituency-based Systems

The ruling party deeply favours a PR model, but the main opposition oppose the system, arguing that it is not in the country's interest.

They argue that constituents do not know who represents them in parliament under the district block system. That democratic accountability is stalled as parliamentarians will be answerable to their political parties and not the people.

Political parties select and send lists of parliamentarians per district to the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone and seats are allocated to parties according to the votes they secure in the district. A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court opposing the adoption of the PR model. Dr. Abdulai Osman Conteh, Joseph Fitzgerald Kamara and Ady Macauley have presented their arguments before five judges in the country's highest court on behalf of Abdul Conteh and Councillor Hakiratu Maxwell-Caulker, both of the APC. The Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, the 1st Defendant, and the Electoral Commission, the 2nd Defendant, will be represented by their lawyers.

As APC runs to the court to interpret the law, all eyes will be fixed on the Supreme Court. Many Sierra Leoneans see the case as a trial on the Chief Justice and his judges. Their decision would go a long way in determining Sierra Leone's peace in 2023.

Although APC lawyers hope for a just and fair ruling, that hope has generated more questions than answers. To many, the hope is fragile, especially when one looks back at the case of Sam Sumana vs. Attorney-General. Koro-ma's action was seen as unlawful by many, including a senior APC lawyer, Dr. Abdulai Conteh, one-time Attorney-General and framers of the 1991 Constitution. The Supreme Court, however, favoured the then government, shocking many Sierra Leoneans. The public has long raised concerns about the judiciary's impartiality and independence in cases involving the government.

In a press conference at APC headquarters in Freetown in December 2022, top APC politicians vowed to resist the PR model. One of APC's lawyers, Ahmed Sesay made it clear that no condition exists in law for the conduct of parliamentary elections on a PR basis. He cited section 38(a) of the 1991 Constitution, which says the PR model can be adopted only when constituencies are non-existent, and there is no sufficient time for boundary delimitation. Looking back at the recent past, he maintained that the PR model should not be the regular format for parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone, adding that it was a contingency provision.

APC's press release dated December 16, 2022, reads: "It will be recalled that the proportional representation is a product of its time, and it is a fall-back position: when there are no wards or constituencies in the country. This was the rationale and prevailing circumstances that warranted the amendment introduced in 2001 as now contained in section 38(a) of the Constitution. The country had just come from a brutal... rebel war foisted on the country, which resulted in the destabilisation of communities apart from the loss of human lives and destruction of property."

SLPP, however, presents a contrary argument.

For the SLPP, the PR system of elections is legal. It is an entrenched clause in the country's highest law. They also argue that the PR will promote peace and national cohesion. The model was used in 1996 when much of Sierra Leone was under rebel control. It was also similarly applied to the 2002 elections since several communities, especially in the provinces, were yet to resettle. The model was legalised after a constitutional amendment in 2001, but Sierra Leone reverted to the constituency-based model in the 2007, 2012 and 2018 elections. For many Sierra Leoneans, the constituency model is much more democratic and must be the only choice save for abnormal circumstances.

Too Many People Chasing One Flag



Supporters of Dr Samura Kamara

Aside from the struggles outside, APC is not at ease within itself. Vaulting political ambitions is slowly and silently killing the party even before the general elections.

APC has over a dozen flagbearer aspirants ready to battle it in a convention slated for February 2023. The number was 28 in 2017 during a national in Makeni. The number was high as no one believed the party would be defeated in the 2018 election. They were fixated on plans for a Koroma 'third term.' From their perspective, APC would continue to lead the party after 2023.

The threats generated by the race for the party's flagbearer weakened the pillars of peace while strengthening the pillars of conflict. There are now multiple factions within the APC vying for control of the party, the 'BIG SIX' being the most influential.

The group, which consists of senior ex-ministers in the Koroma-led government, seems a bit uncomfortable with Dr. Samura Kamara's candidacy. Kamara was handpicked by former President Koroma for the 2018 elections. Before its review in March 2022, the 1995 APC Constitution provided for either election or selection.

"It was under this clause that Kamara, who had never expressed any intention of contesting, became the flagbearer. Now, the signs are clear that Kamara is among the favourite for the flagbearership"

He is greatly loved and admired by grassroots members, but it would be no pushover for him as other candidates have formed a coalition. The direction they are heading remains unclear. Whether Samura Kamara will be the first across the finish line is one of the hottest topics on the streets, lorry and car parks, 'Ataya' bases, homes, churches, mosques and the list continues.

For many, Kamara is the man who most exemplifies President Bio, another figure who gained popularity and power by appealing to and winning the support of ordinary citizens rather than the nation's political elites.

SLPP's crème de la crème was going to enforce a provision in the hitherto unreviewed SLPP Constitution that one who contested once as flagbearer should become an ex-officio member of the party if he lost the elections. This provision caught Bio as he was defeated in the 2012 elections. He was almost losing grip of SLPP after he lost elections to ex-President Koroma. The disagreement between the elites and the grassroots made him sail through troubled waters. The grassroots dream became a reality when President Bio was announced as the winner of the 2018 elections. Through APC grassroots action, will Samura Kamara enjoy a similar fate like Bio?

SLPP In 2023 Elections

The ruling SLPP now has a flagbearer, President Julius Maada Bio, for the 2023 elections, who is also the party's leader.

By their looks, SLPP politicians seem ready to take on other political parties, especially APC, in the June 24 elections. However, controversies over Bio's candidacy might shoot up in the eleventh hour. A staunch SLPP member, Stephen Sahr Mambu, is highly critical of how Bio emerged as the party's flag bearer. Mambu, who hailed from Kailahun, said the December 2021 convention was never meant to elect a flagbearer but national party officers.

"I will take the matter to court to challenge Bio's candidacy," he said during a press conference at SLAJ (Sierra Leone Association of Journalists) headquarters in Freetown.

The argument holds that Dr. Prince Harding, who nominated him, had an albatross hanging on his neck. He was a murder suspect probed by the Criminal Investigation Department. The case, however, appeared to have suffered a deadly blow since Bio became SLPP flagbearer.

As expected, his candidacy will hold, and it will be the third time in a row that President Bio has been elected the party's flag.

Legal Suits and the Emergence of New Political Parties.

All powers will cease when parliament is dissolved in March 2023. The political class will face the electorate to seek a fresh mandate.

Political sovereignty belongs to the people from whom, government through the Constitution, derives its powers, legitimacy and authority. In the process of canvassing, Bio's government becomes a shadow government, implying that he no longer enjoys real powers until he is re-elected. Litigations cannot be ruled out in the interlude.

There is a slim chance there might be a fight within the SLPP regarding Bio's candidacy, while the APC will end up in court again if there is foul play or any candidate is aggrieved in its national convention.

APC flagbearer aspirants have cultivated strong suspicion of favouritism for Samura Kamara, which may germinate in the near future. Koroma's handpicked flagbearer is fighting back as he tours the north and other parts of the country.

However, his counterparts appear ready to resist any such malpractice either in court or by other means. New Parties will be formed if the court fails. The candidates seemingly share a common aim, and that aim is to wreck Kamara's chances in the polls and put an end to his presidential ambition. The formation of new political parties is not a strange phenomenon in Sierra Leone's political landscape.

In 2007, Charles Francis Margai left SLPP after he was allegedly mistreated by senior SLPP members, including late President Ahmed Tejan Kabba, in the 2006 convention in Makeni. He formed his own party, the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC). Margai suspected that his main rival, late Vice President Solomon Ekuma Berewa, was highly favoured by delegates. PMDC took away ten (10) parliamentary seats from SLPP, a

factor that contributed to the party's defeat.

Former Vice President Samuel Sam Sumana faced a situation similar to Margai's. He founded the Coalition for Change (C4C) in 2016 following his expulsion from APC and dismissal as Vice President. It was one of the biggest shocks for Sam Sumana, a man who would later aspire for the highest the country's highest office.

In the 2018 elections, he took away eight parliamentary seats out of nine APC had to its credit in the Kono district. He shattered APC's stronghold in the eastern district.

Almost invariably, Sam Sumana was also accused of sounding the bell for APC's death knell in the 2018 elections through his party.

He is back in the party after joining ranks with his former boss, President Koroma, although his reinstatement in APC remains highly controversial.



The National Grand Coalition led by Dr. Kandeh Kolloh Yumkella is a product of SLPP's perceived unfair treatment.

In 2016, the former United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) boss returned home with great hope of leading the country through SLPP. But the hope turned into a nightmare. Without any alternative, he formed the NGC to take back control of his political destiny. They won four seats in parliament. Similar to PMDC in 2012, C4C and NGC will fare poorly in the June 2023 elections. However, new political groups might enter the fray and potentially stir things up.

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