

THE UNIFIER MAGAZINE

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025 EDITION



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THE UNIFIER MAGAZINE

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 3



Inspired by New, Big & Bold Ideas

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our special International Women's Day edition of The Unifier Magazine. This month, we proudly present "We Celebrate You! The Current State of Women and Girls in Sierra Leone," a tribute to the incredible strength, resilience, and transformative power of our nation's women and girls.

We bring you a series of inspiring profiles that spotlight women who are positively reshaping our country in a subtle way:

- Humu Knox – From Culinary Dreams to Inspiring Reality in Sierra Leone: Discover how Humu is turning her passion for cuisine into a beacon of hope and empowerment.
- Abie Pieh – Beyond Celebrating, Towards Empowering: A Call to Action for Sierra Leone's Women: Abie's journey is a rallying cry for meaningful change and the empowerment of every woman.
- Isatu Z. Konteh – Empowering Narratives: A Catalyst for Change: Explore how Madam I. Z. Konteh is using her voice to challenge stereotypes and drive progress.
- Valda Kaikai – A Symphony of Leadership and Purpose, Inspiring Change in Sierra Leone: Valda's leadership is a testament to the power of vision and dedication in creating a better future.

We also continue our pressing series on Economic Justice for Sierra Leone, exploring the challenges and opportunities that define our economic landscape.

This month, our analysis, "Why Sierra Leone Is Poor? Insights from The Undercover Economist," reveals the hidden forces that have kept our nation in economic hardship, and we offer thoughtful policy recommendations for building a more equitable future.

Finally, we revisit our enduring feature, The Four Signs of a Leader of Hope, examining the qualities that our nation desperately needs in these challenging times.

This edition is more than just a celebration—it's a call to action. As we honour the achievements of our women and girls, we also recognize the critical work that lies ahead. Let us use this moment to recommit ourselves to the pursuit of equality, justice, and sustainable development for all.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Together, we can inspire change and shape a brighter future for Sierra Leone.

Editor

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THE CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS EMPOWERMENT IN SIERRA LEONE



Exhausted yet resilient, these women gather on the streets of Freetown after a long day of struggling against poverty and hardship.

As Sierra Leone celebrates International Women's Day, examining the realities that shape the lives of women and girls in our society is imperative. Despite progress in various sectors, deep-seated gender stereotypes and structural barriers continue to limit their participation in politics, business, and decision-making processes. This article explores

the current multifaceted challenges facing women and girls in Sierra Leone.

Limited Participation in Key Spheres

Political Participation:

Women in Sierra Leone remain significantly underrepresented in politics. With only 15% of parliamentary seats held by women and even lower

representation at the local government level, systemic barriers persist.

Societal expectations often discourage women from pursuing political careers, and limited access to established political networks further compounds this issue. Moreover, incidents of gender-based violence continue to deter

active participation, leaving women with fewer opportunities to influence policy and governance.

Economic Participation:

Economic opportunities for women are similarly constrained. Despite their potential, many Sierra Leonean women are confined to the informal sector or low-paying jobs due to limited access to quality education and employment opportunities. Gender-biased hiring practices and the persistent undervaluation of women's work restrict their economic independence, ultimately limiting their decision-making power both at home and in society.

Decision-Making Processes:

Women are often excluded from critical decision-making processes at the community and household levels. This marginalization hinders their ability to affect change in areas that directly impact their lives and perpetuates a cycle of disempowerment that undermines broader social and economic development.



The Impact of Deep-Seated Gender Stereotypes

In Sierra Leone, traditional gender roles and cultural norms continue to define and restrict the opportunities available to women and girls. Stereotypes that cast women primarily as caregivers and homemakers limit their access to education and career advancement. These entrenched views contribute to high dropout rates among girls, as many are expected to prioritize domestic duties and face the pressures of early marriage over formal education.

Furthermore, these stereotypes underpin a disturbing tolerance for gender-based violence. Practices such as domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, and forced child marriage persist, violating women's rights and compromising their ability to live safely and freely.

Barriers to Education and Employment

Limited Access to Quality Education:

Educational disparities remain a significant barrier for women and girls in Sierra Leone. Schools lack essential resources and qualified teachers in rural areas, resulting in limited educational opportunities. This gap curtails personal development and restricts future economic prospects, as education is a critical tool for

empowering individuals and lifting communities out of poverty.

Limited Employment Opportunities:

Women face a higher unemployment rate than men—17.5% compared to 15.2%—reflecting a substantial gender gap in the labour market. The scarcity of jobs and the mismatch between available skills and labour market demands further hinder women's economic participation. This, in turn, undermines their capacity to contribute to the nation's development and secure financial independence.

Lack of Financial Resources:

Access to financial capital remains a major challenge. Cultural norms and discriminatory practices often prevent women from obtaining loans, credit, and property ownership. This financial exclusion leaves many women economically vulnerable, limiting their ability to invest in education, healthcare, and entrepreneurial ventures. Poverty exacerbates their vulnerability to exploitation and perpetuates cycles of economic and social disadvantage.

Real Change is Coming

The Unifier's Perspective on Empowering Women and Girls in Sierra Leone

Real transformation and national progress in Sierra Leone begin with the full empowerment of women and girls. For too long, deep-rooted gender barriers have limited opportunities, curbed potential, and hampered sustainable development. At The Unifier Magazine, we believe that dismantling these obstacles is essential to harnessing the full potential of our nation's most valuable resource—its people.

Education: Building a Foundation for the Future

Quality education is the cornerstone of empowerment. In Sierra Leone, ensuring that every girl has access to free, quality education is imperative. This means eliminating school fees, providing scholarships, and significantly improving educational infrastructure—especially in rural communities. By promoting STEM education through mentorship programs and scholarships, we can inspire a new generation of Sierra Leonean innovators. Additionally, providing comprehensive sexuality education empowers girls to make informed decisions about their bodies and reproductive health, laying a strong foundation for their future.

Economic Empowerment: Creating Opportunities for All

Economic independence is critical for breaking the cycle of poverty. Supporting women entrepreneurs through microfinance, training, and mentorship is essential for enabling women to start and grow sustainable businesses. Equally important is promoting equal access to land and property rights, ensuring that women can own, inherit, and manage assets. Addressing gender pay gaps through robust equal pay legislation and promoting pay transparency will further level the playing field, allowing women to contribute fully to Sierra Leone's economic growth.

Political Participation: Amplifying Voices for Change

Women's representation in government remains critically low in Sierra Leone. To foster true inclusion, it is vital to implement quotas that ensure women occupy seats at all levels of government. Strengthening women's leadership through targeted training and mentorship programs can further enhance their impact on policy-making and governance. Moreover, involving women in peacebuilding and decision-making processes ensures that diverse perspectives shape our national agenda, promoting a more stable and equitable society.

Health and Well-Being: Ensuring a Healthy Future

Improving access to quality healthcare is not only a moral imperative—it is essential for the development of our nation. Ensuring affordable and quality maternal healthcare, family planning, and sexual and reproductive health services will provide women with the support they need to thrive. It is also critical to eradicate harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) through strict enforcement of laws and robust public awareness campaigns. Additionally, addressing gender-based violence by strengthening law enforcement and providing comprehensive support services for survivors is key to creating safe, supportive communities.

Social and Cultural Change: Redefining Gender Norms

Empowering women in Sierra Leone also requires challenging long-held gender stereotypes. It is essential to promote positive portrayals of women and girls in media and education, while actively engaging men and boys as allies in the fight for gender equality. By celebrating the achievements of women across all fields, we can inspire future generations and build a culture where every individual's contribution is recognized and valued.

Implementing Universal Health Care by 2030

A healthy nation is a prosperous nation. To ensure that every Sierra Leonean has access to quality healthcare, the implementation of Universal Health Care (UHC) by 2030 is paramount. This ambitious goal can be achieved through a phased implementation plan that gradually expands coverage and financial protection. Forming partnerships with private healthcare providers and exploring innovative community-based insurance schemes can help overcome affordability challenges and broaden the reach of health services.



A Call to Action

The journey toward a more equitable, just, and prosperous Sierra Leone is deeply intertwined with the empowerment of women and girls. Real change demands a holistic approach that encompasses quality education, economic opportunities, political inclusion, health improvements, and cultural transformation.

At The Unifier Magazine, we remain committed to championing policies and initiatives that bring about lasting progress for all Sierra Leoneans. Together, by addressing the barriers that limit opportunity and fostering an environment of inclusivity, we can build a nation where every woman and girl has the chance to contribute to, and benefit from, our collective success.

Let us work together, from the grassroots to the highest levels of government, to create a brighter future for Sierra Leone—one where empowerment and equality are not merely ideals, but realities.



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RELAX REFRESH REPEAT



HUMU KNOX

**FROM CULINARY DREAMS TO INSPIRING REALITY
IN SIERRA LEONE**

The Unifier Magazine



Humu Knox's story is more than just a delicious journey of flavoured yogurts and cupcakes. It's a testament to the unwavering spirit and entrepreneurial potential of women in Sierra Leone. Fueled by a passion for baking and a yearning for high-quality treats, Humu embarked on a quest to fill a void in the market, refusing to settle for anything less than her own standards of creativity and taste.

Her first hurdle, however, was a lack of formal training. Unfazed, Humu channelled the resourcefulness often inherent in women entrepreneurs. She perfected recipes for quality yogurt and cakes based on her sister's expertise and her relentless experimentation. This determination and willingness to learn are hallmarks of the many women who defy limitations and carve their own paths.

Humu understood that passion alone wouldn't suffice. She sought to solidify her business foundation and joined the Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (OWNERS). This organization, fostering women's empowerment through entrepreneurship, provided her with invaluable skills in areas like quality management, finance, and leadership. Mentorship further equipped

her with industry-specific knowledge and the crucial confidence to navigate the business world.

With newfound knowledge and unwavering drive, Humu launched "Kol Hat Frozen Yogurt." Her strategic location and focus on quality proved successful, with her sales growing by 15% within a short period. She even began securing contracts for parties, a testament to the growing demand for her delicious creations. Humu's story exemplifies how women when empowered with knowledge and resources, can thrive and contribute to their communities by creating jobs and fostering local businesses.

However, the journey wasn't without challenges. The Ebola crisis presented a significant setback, yet Humu's resilience, another key trait of countless women entrepreneurs, allowed her to maintain her existing distribution network.

Humu recognizes the collective strength of women. She believes that collaborating and supporting one another is crucial for overcoming obstacles and achieving sustainable success. She encourages women to embrace their courage, perseverance, and tenacity, the very qualities that propel them

forward despite societal expectations and limitations.

Her journey is an inspiration not only for women aspiring to entrepreneurship but also for anyone facing challenges. Humu Knox's story is a delicious reminder that with dedication, resourcefulness, and the support of empowering organizations, even the most ambitious dreams can be whipped up into success, inspiring others to do the same.

As Humu looks towards the future, her goals include expanding her distribution network and acquiring new equipment. However, her vision extends beyond personal growth. She advocates for continued training, counselling, and funding for women entrepreneurs, recognizing that investing in their potential creates a ripple effect of positive change for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Humu Knox's story is a call to action. It's a story of flavour, resilience, and, most importantly, empowering women to rise, lead, and create a future as sweet and satisfying as their creations.

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BEYOND CELEBRATING, TOWARDS EMPOWERING: A CALL TO ACTION FOR SIERRA LEONE'S WOMEN

By Abioseh Kamara-Pieh



Dear Women of Sierra Leone, March 8, 2025 is International Women's Day, and while it's crucial to acknowledge the strides we've made – from girls' education to political participation – we must go beyond mere commemoration. This celebration is a springboard for action, a rallying cry for us to claim our rightful place in shaping Sierra Leone's future.

Yes, the reality stings. Despite our capabilities and efforts, we remain largely absent from the decision-making tables in politics, science, technology, and

beyond. This isn't unique to Sierra Leone; it echoes across continents, a pervasive narrative whispered in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and even the United States.

But there's a tide changing, a wave of empowered women rising. Sierra Leone, now basking in the spotlight of burgeoning democracy, needs this wave more than ever. Yet, skepticism exists. Some doubt our capacity, labelling us capable homemakers but not visionary leaders, child-bearers, not architects of progress. Our names remain absent from leadership rosters, and our voices are unheard in critical discussions.

But these are mere roadblocks, not insurmountable obstacles. The revolutionary spirit, the visionary spark, the architectural prowess – they lie within us. Yes, the climb will be steep, demanding a tenfold effort to overcome ingrained biases and prejudices. We will be underestimated, underrated, and perhaps even ridiculed. But

remember, history thrives on the shoulders of those who dared to defy expectations. So, women - sisters and mothers of Sierra Leone, today's call is not for mere participation but for ownership.

Take charge: Shed the diffidence and self-doubt. Claim your space, raise your voice, and demand to be heard.

Be "selfish": Don't shy away from pursuing your dreams with laser-sharp focus. Your ambitions are not burdens but stepping stones to a more equitable future.

Work hard, double hard: Mediocrity has no place in this revolution. Hone your skills, expand your knowledge, and strive for excellence in all you do.

Don't expect tokens: Recognition must be earned, not handed out. Let your achievements speak for themselves.

Be creative: Challenge the status quo with innovative solutions

and fresh perspectives. The world needs your unique voice.

Don't be afraid to be yourself:

Authenticity is your power. Embrace your individuality and let it shine through.

Mentor others: The strength of this movement lies in its collective force. Lift others up, share your knowledge, and empower the next generation of female leaders.

Seek help when needed:

Collaboration is key. Don't hesitate to reach out for support, guidance, and partnership.

Say "no" to common favours:

Don't let societal expectations and gender stereotypes burden you. Prioritize your goals and say "no" when they don't align with your vision.

Remember, sisters, you are the architects of the future we envision. Build the Sierra Leone we deserve, the one where girls dream without limitations and women lead with unwavering confidence. Be the inspiration, the changemakers, the driving force behind progress. The Unifier stands with you, celebrating your achievements and walking alongside you in this unwavering fight for equality.



This International Women's Day, let's move beyond celebration and step into action.

Let's rewrite the narrative, shatter the glass ceilings, and build a Sierra Leone where every woman can thrive, lead, and reach her full potential.

This is our time. Let's rise together!

In solidarity,

Mrs. Abioseh Kamara-Pieh

Abioseh Kamara-Pieh is a Family Nurse Practitioner-BC, an entrepreneur, and a Minister of the Gospel. She resides in the USA with her family - handsome husband and two beautiful girls.

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ISATU Z. KONTEH

EMPOWERING NARRATIVES - A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

The Unifier Magazine



Within the complex fabric of women's empowerment, Madam Isatu Zama Konteh emerges as a luminary, illuminating paths of inspiration and catalyzing transformative change. Rooted in the belief that authentic connections foster collective growth, she advocates for open and honest conversations, igniting a beacon of empowerment that resonates far beyond her immediate circles.

Championing Authentic Connections:

Madam I. Z. Konteh, a devoted advocate for gender equality and community development, radiates a passion for meaningful human connections. Her fervent desire to encourage open dialogues stems from a profound belief that authenticity is the cornerstone of personal and societal growth. Through her advocacy, she sparks conversations that go beyond the surface, creating a space where individuals can authentically share their stories, fostering a culture of understanding and collective progress.

A Beacon of Hope for Women's Empowerment:

With a Master's Degree in Rural Development, a Bachelor's Degree in Education, and a Higher Teacher's Certificate, Madam I. Z. Konteh exemplifies

the multifaceted strength of women in leadership. Over two decades, she has dedicated herself to the cause of women's empowerment, weaving a narrative of resilience and determination. As a mother of two, she embodies the principles she advocates, demonstrating that women can excel in various roles, both personally and professionally.



GEKO-Sierra Leone: Empowering Lives, Transforming Futures:

Madam I. Z. Konteh co-founded Geko-Sierra Leone, a national NGO with a global vision. This organization, affiliated with Geo Unna in Germany, serves as a catalyst for women's empowerment and addresses the challenges faced



by disadvantaged young boys and girls. Through her leadership as Executive Director, Geko-Sierra Leone has been a force for positive change, helping thousands overcome adversities and offering a lifeline for brighter futures.

Leadership Anchored in Excellence:

In her diverse roles as a manager, consultant, director, teacher, administrator, mother, and wife, Madam I. Z. Konteh epitomizes excellence in leadership. Committed to bringing out the best in every



person, she fosters hope, solicits input, and establishes relationships based on confidence and trust. Her leadership style emphasizes the transformative power of collaboration and the potential for collective success.

A Faithful Journey:

Madam I. Z. Konteh's unwavering faith has been the guiding force throughout her journey. As a seasoned member of the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone, she has served in various capacities, breaking barriers as the first female lay leader of the Michael Dean Mueller Wesleyan Church in Lumley, Freetown. Her faith is not just a personal anchor but a source of inspiration for her service to the Christian community.



Dedication to Education:

A passionate educator, Madam I. Z. Konteh's impact extends to the realm of education. From teaching in primary and secondary schools to her current role as the school administrator of Leone International Academy, she supervises the smooth running of the academy, ensuring excellent results at various academic levels. Her commitment to education aligns with her broader vision of empowering future generations.

A Beacon of Inspiration:

Madam Isatu Z. Konteh stands as a testament to the extraordinary impact ordinary individuals can have on society. Her advocacy, fueled by curiosity and a dedication to uplifting the disadvantaged, led to the creation of Geko-Sierra Leone. Her message to women resonates with strength and resilience, "I believe you can do and be whomever you want to be with hard work, dedication, and prayers. Never give up! Keep your heart open to all the goodness that the universe brings. Support other women!"

Madam Isatu Z. Konteh's story is not just one of personal achievement but a narrative that inspires and empowers, creating ripples of positive change for women and the community at large.



“What matters the most to me in my everyday life is how we connect with one another. That’s why I encourage open and honest conversations — because when we help each other be authentic, we can help each other grow as individuals and as a society.

Let’s share our stories. I look forward to getting to meet and know you more.”

Madam Isatu Zama Konteh is an engaged advocate for gender equality and community development. She holds a Master's Degree in Rural Development, a Bachelor's Degree in Education, and a Higher Teacher's Certificate. Over the past 23 years, she has been involved with various causes as a consultant, director, manager, speaker and mentor, including the US Peace Corps, Mano River Union, women's and girls' rights and the role of women in rural development.

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VALDA KAIKAI

**A SYMPHONY OF LEADERSHIP AND PURPOSE,
INSPIRING CHANGE IN SIERRA LEONE**

The Unifier Magazine



The Unifier Campaign, led by Dr. Richard Konteh, strongly emphasizes women's empowerment within Sierra Leone's political landscape. Central to this initiative is the Unifier Women wing, which actively promotes the participation of women from diverse backgrounds in leadership roles and decision-making processes within the party. The campaign asserts that increasing women's leadership is pivotal for transformative change in the nation's politics.

Dr. Konteh consistently advocates for women's advancement, emphasizing that investing in women is essential for accelerating Sierra Leone's progress. This perspective is shared through various platforms, including broadcasts on The Unifier Radio. Sierra Leone has witnessed significant strides in women's empowerment and leadership, particularly in political and social spheres.

Mrs. I.Z. Konteh, a dedicated advocate for women's involvement in peacebuilding, plays a pivotal role in the Unifier Women's wing of the All People's Congress (APC) party in Sierra Leone. Recognizing the crucial role of women in fostering peace and unity, Mrs. Konteh emphasizes their active participation in decision-making processes within the party.

The Unifier Women initiative

strives to increase women's representation across various sectors, including local and national government and corporate boardrooms, aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

This movement aligns with broader efforts to empower women and girls in Sierra Leone, contributing to the nation's development and prosperity.

Valda KaiKai is a passionate advocate for women's empowerment and social change in Sierra Leone. Her work extends to her significant contributions to the Unifier campaign, where she actively promotes the inclusion of women in leadership and political decision-making processes. Through the Unifier Women wing, Valda champions the idea of women as central players in Sierra Leone's development, pushing for their increased representation in governance and societal transformation. Her leadership embodies the values of unity, empowerment, and opportunity, working toward a future where women's voices are amplified and their impact on society is fully realized. Through both her humanitarian efforts and political advocacy, Valda continues to inspire and create pathways for women to take on leadership roles in all sectors of Sierra Leonean society.

To all the remarkable women of Sierra Leone, In these challenging times, I want to remind you that you are the backbone of our families, communities, and nation. You are the heart that beats through every corner of Sierra Leone, and together, we have the power to transform our country for the better. The Unifier campaign, led by Dr. Richard Konteh, brings with it a vision of hope, economic recovery, and most importantly, women empowerment. We know the road to progress has not been easy, but we can create the change we need with unity and the strength of women like you.

Dr. Konteh's commitment to improving our economy, creating jobs, and ensuring that women have equal opportunities in leadership and decision-making is something that will uplift every woman and family in Sierra Leone. His vision for a united, thriving nation can only be realized with your support. I urge you to cast your vote and influence your families and communities to vote for Dr. Richard Konteh as our Flagbearer. Your voice matters, and together, we can shape a brighter future for our children and future generations.

Let's unite for change, empowerment, and a future where every woman in Sierra Leone has the opportunity to thrive. Stand with Dr. Konteh—your vote is a vote for hope, a vote for economic recovery, and a vote for the power of women. Together, we are unstoppable.

With heartfelt encouragement,
Valda KaiKai



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ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR SIERRA LEONE

Why Sierra Leone Is Poor? Insights from "The Undercover Economist"

In our ongoing commitment to exploring the critical challenges and opportunities facing Sierra Leone's economy, The Unifier Magazine has launched the **"Economic Justice for Sierra Leone"** series. In our January 2025 edition, we set the stage by outlining the deep-seated issues contributing to economic disparity, and our February issue highlighted our unifying fight toward sustainable and inclusive development. This special March edition delves into *"Why Sierra Leone Poor: Insights from The Undercover Economist."*

Sierra Leone's persistent poverty is a complex issue with deep historical, institutional, and structural roots. Despite being endowed with abundant natural resources and a resilient, youthful population, the country continues to struggle with economic underdevelopment. This article examines the key factors that have contributed to Sierra Leone's prolonged poverty and offers insights into



what must change to create a more equitable and prosperous future.

Historical Legacies and Structural Constraints

The legacy of colonial rule has left an indelible mark on Sierra Leone's economic structure. Colonial policies were designed primarily to extract resources for the benefit of the colonizing power rather than to develop local economies. As a result, the nation's institutions were built around resource extraction, creating an

economic model that has proven difficult to transform. Even decades after independence, many of these extractive structures persist, hindering diversification and leaving the economy overly dependent on a narrow range of commodities, such as diamonds and other minerals. This historical imbalance continues to impact government policies, perpetuating a cycle where short-term gains from resource exports overshadow the need for long-term development.

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Weak Institutions and Governance Challenges

A critical factor in Sierra Leone's economic struggles is the weakness of its institutions.

Corruption and mismanagement have long plagued public administration, leading to inefficient allocation of resources and undermining public trust.

When institutions fail to deliver transparency and accountability, both local entrepreneurs and foreign investors lose confidence in the system, stalling progress.

The lack of effective regulatory frameworks has allowed rent-seeking and political patronage to flourish, diverting public funds from vital investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare. Without strong, accountable institutions, sustainable development remains an elusive goal.

Market Inefficiencies and High Transaction Costs

Sierra Leone's economy is further hampered by persistent market inefficiencies. Poor infrastructure—characterized by inadequate transportation networks, unreliable electricity, and limited digital connectivity—drives up transaction costs and restricts the flow of goods and services. Small-scale producers,

who form the backbone of the economy, struggle to compete in an environment where high costs diminish profitability and inhibit growth. Additionally, a heavy reliance on imported goods, compounded by a depreciating national currency, inflates the prices of everyday commodities, making life increasingly difficult for ordinary citizens.

Inadequate Investment in Human Capital

The state of human capital in Sierra Leone is a critical factor in its ongoing poverty.

Insufficient investment in education and healthcare leaves many citizens underprepared to participate in a modern economy.

Overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of skilled teachers, and inadequate educational infrastructure limit the development of a competitive workforce. Poor health outcomes, exacerbated by under-resourced healthcare facilities, further reduce productivity and impede economic progress. When people are not equipped with the skills and well-being required to thrive, the cycle of poverty is perpetuated from generation to generation.

External Shocks and Global Pressures

Sierra Leone's vulnerability is magnified by its exposure to external economic shocks. Global commodity price fluctuations, adverse weather events, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have all taken their toll. As a small, open economy, Sierra Leone is particularly sensitive to changes in global markets. A drop in the price of key exports or a surge in import costs can quickly derail progress, leaving the nation struggling to maintain stability and protect its citizens from economic hardship.

The Road to Sustainable Development

Addressing the multifaceted causes of poverty in Sierra Leone requires comprehensive and sustained efforts. Key to this transformation is the need to strengthen institutions through transparent governance and robust anti-corruption measures. Diversifying the economy—by investing in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology—can reduce reliance on volatile commodity exports and create more stable sources of income. Simultaneously, investing in infrastructure and human capital will lower transaction costs and empower the nation's workforce to meet the challenges of the modern economy.

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Government policies must also be sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable populations, ensuring that growth is inclusive and that public services reach every corner of the country. Only through a concerted effort that addresses both historical legacies and current market inefficiencies can Sierra Leone break free from the cycle of poverty and pave the way for lasting sustainable development.

Conclusion

Sierra Leone's poverty is not the result of a single factor but a convergence of historical, institutional, and structural challenges that continue to impede progress. Understanding these complexities is the first step toward crafting effective policies that promote economic justice and equitable growth. With determined leadership, comprehensive reforms, and a focus on building strong, inclusive institutions, Sierra Leone can unlock its full potential and set a course toward a brighter, more prosperous future for all its citizens.



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THE FOUR SIGNS OF A LEADER OF HOPE



Amid Sierra Leone's political, social, and economic challenges, we desperately need leadership that inspires hope, unity, transformation, and progress. This nation is always caught in cycles of division, hardship, and uncertainty. We all know that feeling too well - that feeling is "leadership sadness."

Given the struggles that our country is going through right now, it is very sad to see men and women in leadership positions and roles who choose to lead by pushing people apart rather than by bringing them together. Those who claim to be leaders today in this country are leaning into the things that separate us, stoking fear over hope, or they simply shrink back from the moment and allow the darkness to swallow them instead of lighting a candle to fight it.

This is a time of darkness. But there is reason for incredible hope. We have the people and tools necessary to turn this moment into an opportunity to help change our country. Here are the four signs of a leader of hope you should carefully look for among the noisy crowd:

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They Dig for Gold While Others Dig for Dirt

This is an easy one to tackle, especially during political campaigns. We're often bombarded by attack ads and smear campaigns that seek to bring out the worst about a potential elected leader, and illustrate how things will only get darker if they're elected. It's a race to the bottom where no one wins. Divisive leaders aren't afraid to tear things down and allow fear to run freely.

On the contrary, leaders of hope look for what's good in others and the situation around them. They believe in the best of people and believe in the best of our future. Leaders of hope inspire others to seek out what's true, noble, good, praiseworthy, and inspiring. They paint a picture of a more brilliant tomorrow that everyone can see themselves in.

They Live Out Good Values While Others Live Out Emotions

This may come across as harsh, as emotions are something everyone must wrestle with. But while we all feel various emotions, divisive leaders put emotion at the center of their leadership, creating instability and uncertainty that only amplifies the chaos around them. When leaders lead from a place of emotion, they are at the mercy of those emotions

changing—for better or worse—and so are the people they lead.

Leaders of hope, however, lead from a place of good values, and good values never change. They are good across time and circumstance and provide a stable foundation for discussion, planning, and decision-making. Because values are as true tomorrow as they are today, they provide consistency for those who follow and create a sense of confidence amid chaos.

They Build Bridges While Others Burn Them

This may sound hyperbolic, but divisive leaders aren't the least bit afraid of sacrificing relationships for their agenda. They will gladly burn down a bridge to one audience if it means creating a connection with a newer, more attractive audience that can help them now. As a result, they create an atmosphere of disloyalty and mistrust, which only increases the sense of uncertainty and chaos that their followers must battle.

This is not how leaders of hope operate. Leaders of hope continually build bridges to new people without burning any bridges from their past. They understand that relationships are the key to achieving great things, and nurturing those relationships is part of the work that good leaders do. Leaders of hope will find new and creative ways to reach not only audiences who

agree with their message, but audiences who aspire to their vision.

They Tell the Truth While Others Manipulate It

If you've heard the terms "fake news," "misinformation," and "disinformation" once, you've heard it a thousand times, and with good reason: people are struggling to know who to trust when it comes to finding out the truth about what's going on in the world. Divisive leaders take advantage of this situation by manipulating truth to their advantage—leveraging half-truths, or only telling certain sides of a story that make them look good. Sometimes, they hide their mistruths behind the falsehoods of others; they point out the lies that others tell in order to hide their own. It further disintegrates the trust of those who follow and deepens the darkness.

Leaders of hope stand on the truth. They bring facts and reality into the clear light of day and present them to their people for consideration, reflection and



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discussion. They don't gloss over uncomfortable truths or attempt to hide past mistakes. Instead, they lead the way by addressing issues openly and honestly with an eye towards doing right instead of being right. AAs a result, they model a hopeful way forward for their followers and restore belief in the truth and its power to affect positive change.

We need leaders of hope. We need men and women who aren't optimistic about the future—passively longing for a better to eventually reveal itself—we need men and women who are hopeful about the future and actively seeking ways to bring it to pass. We need leaders who will rise above the darkness and light the way to a better tomorrow.

A Leader for Today, and for Tomorrow

Sierra Leone faces significant challenges—economic instability, political division, and social unrest. Yet, amidst these trials, there is hope. Dr. Richard Konteh embodies the qualities of a leader who will not shrink from these challenges but rise above them, lighting the way forward. His leadership is rooted in optimism, grounded in solid values, and committed to building bridges rather than creating divisions.

For Sierra Leone to thrive, we need leaders like Dr. Konteh,



who believe in the potential of their people, who value unity over division, and who lead with integrity and transparency. Dr. Konteh's vision for Sierra Leone is one where every citizen has the opportunity to succeed, where political differences are set aside for the greater good, and where hope and progress are the driving forces of the nation's future.

If we are to build a brighter Sierra Leone, we must look to leaders like Dr. Konteh. As he continues his work as "The Unifier," he shows us that true leadership is not about power or recognition—it's about serving the people, telling the truth, and fighting for a better tomorrow. Sierra Leone is on the brink of something great, and with leaders like Dr. Richard Konteh, we can hope for a future where unity and prosperity reign.



DR. RICHARD KONTEH

The Unifier

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The Defender

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