

Sierra Leoneans First

National cohesion & civic renewal

Ask most Sierra Leoneans about their family and you'll often hear about a grandmother who was Temne, a grandfather who was Mende, a Christian aunt married to a Muslim uncle, and no one thinking twice about it. It's an inheritance of tolerance most countries would envy.

WHY THIS MATTERS

And yet, election after election, that inheritance is being quietly spent down. Sierra Leoneans are increasingly taught to see themselves as a region and a political camp before they're citizens of one nation — the same fracture our own Truth and Reconciliation Commission identified as a root cause of the civil war. Into the gap left by that division, and by a generation of young people with too little reason to feel they have a stake in the country, has poured a genuine crisis: the drug kush, whose grip has grown so fast it's been declared a national emergency.

WHAT WE'RE PROMISING

Rebuild a shared Sierra Leonean identity that holds above region and party, so no citizen is a loser simply for how they voted or where they were born.

FLAGSHIP — One Salone

Cohesion isn't built by being preached at; it's built by people from different regions actually meeting, working, and depending on one another. One Salone does this deliberately, in three ways that lean on what already exists rather than costly new institutions: district and chiefdom twinning, where communities from different regions are paired for shared schools visits, sports fixtures, and joint projects; a voluntary One Salone Service, where young Sierra Leoneans spend time working in a different region on something genuinely useful — a literacy campaign, agriculture, public works — living among people they'd otherwise never meet; and open participation for professionals, retirees, faith leaders and the diaspora who want to help knit the country together.

HOW WE'LL MAKE IT REAL

- Civic education becomes a real, examined subject, not a forgotten one — built on Sierra Leone's own post-war peace-education foundations, taught from primary school, and tied to the cross-district contact above so children meet the lesson in person, not just read about it in a book.
- We'll work with the institutions Sierra Leoneans already trust more than politics: our religious councils, Christian and Muslim, are being invited to agree their own shared message of tolerance and peace and carry it in their own words from the pulpit and the minbar — government's role is to support that if faith leaders choose to lead it, not to script it. And we'll treat our paramount chiefs and elders as essential partners in holding communities together, working out clearly, alongside our governance reforms, how their authority and that of elected local councils fit together so the two reinforce rather than undermine one another.
- We'll act on our own Truth and Reconciliation Commission's unfinished business — starting with a published, honest accounting of which of its recommendations have been met and which haven't, then completing the reparations still owed to the war's victims and strengthening the national body charged with safeguarding our cohesion.
- Public appointments will be protected from political capture in law — so that no minister of any government, including our own, can pack the state with loyalists or purge it of others after an election — and we'll enforce the law reserving a substantial share of seats in Parliament and local councils for women, so half the population becomes a fair share of its decision-makers, not just its population.

“We are being taught to be northerners and southerners, this party and that, before we are Sierra Leoneans. That is the fracture we must heal.”

Full policy chapter available at sorielsulaiman.sl/publications/cohesion