

Bringing Down the Cost of Living

Household costs & consumer protection — Affordable Sierra Leone, Part 2

A mother in the market does the same math she does every week, and the bag of rice that used to leave a little over now leaves nothing — even though she's been told, more than once, that the economy is growing.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A growing economy is not the same thing as an affordable one. A country can report rising output and falling inflation while a family still can't afford the essentials, because the benefits of transformation don't reach the household budget on their own — they have to be deliberately delivered there. Between the farmer who grows the food and the family that eats it lies a long chain of transport, middlemen, fees and market power, and that's exactly where the cost of living hides.

WHAT WE'RE PROMISING

Government should stop making life unnecessarily expensive. That is the whole of this chapter — not price controls or subsidies the country can't afford, but competition, efficiency, honest markets, and making sure the gains of a transforming economy actually show up in a family's monthly budget.

FLAGSHIP — The Cost-of-Living Reduction Programme

Because a promise about the cost of living means nothing unless it can be checked, this becomes the most measured commitment in the whole manifesto. We will build and publish a plain household cost-of-living index — independently verified, not marked by the government's own hand — tracking what an ordinary family actually pays for food, transport, energy and basic services against what they earn, reported every year as a fixed part of the national budget. Where the cost of living falls, citizens will know it's real; where it rises, they'll hold us to account, as they should. We ask, in the end, to be judged on this.

HOW WE'LL MAKE IT REAL

- The first and most honest place to look for savings is government itself. The market dues, licences, registration fees and informal payments a trader pays before ever selling a bag of rice all fold into the price a shopper pays — so before we ask anyone else to lower their prices, we'll stop inflating them ourselves.
- We'll enact a real competition law, giving Sierra Leone the power other nations already have to investigate and penalise price-fixing, cartels and the abuse of market dominance — and properly resource the consumer-protection body that exists on paper so an ordinary citizen cheated in the market finally has somewhere to turn.
- We'll invest in the humble infrastructure of the marketplace itself — storage, aggregation points, orderly market spaces, and simple market-price information — so a farmer and a trader both know the fair price, and less of a harvest's value is lost to spoilage and waste between the farm and the plate.
- And we're honest about price controls: a price fixed below what it costs to supply a good doesn't make it affordable, it makes it vanish into shortages and a black market where the poor pay more than ever. Targeted, temporary protection has its place in a genuine emergency; it is not a substitute for the harder work this chapter actually commits to.

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Full policy chapter available at sorielsulaiman.sl/publications/cost-of-living