

Safety Where People Live

Security, public safety & national service

A young Sierra Leonean weighing whether to join the police force asks a question no recruiter has ever been able to answer honestly — not what the starting salary is, but what a full career looks like, and what happens after it ends.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Sierra Leone's security institutions are not starting this conversation from zero. The Sierra Leone Police is in the middle of a deliberate transition from a Force to a Service, guided by its own Strategic Development Plan and benchmarked against Ghana's own successful transition; the Office of National Security coordinates the country's security architecture and has published, for the first time, a national security strategy covering maritime security, cybercrime and organised crime; the armed forces have themselves acknowledged the corruption, mismanagement and low morale that hollowed out their welfare over the past decade, and begun reforming their own culture. The problem has rarely been a shortage of plans — it's been that good roadmaps have run on donor goodwill and skeleton budgets rather than sustained government commitment. And one gap remains genuinely unaddressed by any of them: what a full career in the security services actually looks like, from recruitment to life after service. Sierra Leone's security institutions are competing for the same talented, ambitious young people as agriculture, technology and the diaspora pipeline — and a uniform and a salary alone cannot win that competition against emigration and the informal economy.

WHAT WE'RE PROMISING

Fund what's already written, and build what's genuinely missing: a security sector that is professional, properly resourced, trusted by the citizens it serves, and structured as a real long-term career for the people who serve in it — not just a uniform.

FLAGSHIP — A Career, Not Just a Uniform — Join, Thrive, Transition

This is the one area where existing policy is genuinely silent, and our most distinctive contribution to the sector. Join: merit-based, transparent recruitment built into the Police's own digitalised registry and the armed forces' recruitment systems, with entry criteria and selection outcomes published, and deliberate gender-inclusion planning extended to the armed forces as well, building on the 30% gender-representation target the police have already adopted for themselves. Thrive: service becomes certified, portable skill-building — the logistics, communications, engineering, emergency medicine and leadership skills personnel already gain in service formally mapped against the national technical and vocational training framework, so a completed training module earns a real civilian qualification alongside a rank, not just experience that stops meaning anything the day someone leaves. Transition: a Security Service Transition Pathway certifies civilian qualifications before discharge, not after, gives departing personnel structured access to existing national enterprise and employment programmes, protects the pension rights they've earned through NASSIT, and gives them a single Veterans and Transition Support Desk, jointly run with NASSIT, to navigate all of it — financed through programmes that already exist, not a new fund, so the commitment is affordable as well as credible.

HOW WE'LL MAKE IT REAL

- Citizens are often told to trust “the security sector” without a clear sense of what it actually is. We'll make the architecture itself easier to understand and hold accountable: the Police handle law enforcement and day-to-day public safety, with the Family Support Unit investigating violence against women and children and the Transnational Organised Crime Unit leading on drug trafficking; the

Independent Police Complaints Board handles complaints against police conduct; the Office of National Security coordinates the whole architecture; the armed forces are constitutionally responsible for territorial defence, with a domestic role limited to supporting the police, under Military Aid to Civil Power arrangements, only in extraordinary, civilian-authorised circumstances. No new parallel security bodies where existing ones, properly resourced and held accountable, can do the job.

- Local Policing Partnership Boards have operated in every police division since the mid-2000s, and their record is honestly mixed — they work best where genuinely community-owned, and have sometimes become a source of informal advantage rather than civic contribution. We'll issue a single, nationally consistent charter for how they operate, require members to be formally vetted with fixed terms, and make explicit and non-negotiable that community volunteers hold no arrest, detention or enforcement powers and may carry no weapons — an early-warning and referral mechanism to professional policing, never a substitute for it. Boards will operate on a strictly non-partisan basis, with breaches handled through SLP divisional command and the Independent Police Complaints Board, and standardisation will be financed from within the Police's and ONS's own budgets, not from local council development money that communities already need for health, education, roads and water.
- The Family Support Unit's mandate to investigate violence against women and children isn't in question; its capacity to deliver on it is. An independent 2026 assessment found unreliable forensic capacity, trained officers rotated away from FSU duty just as their training becomes useful, and case files still largely on paper. We'll fix each of these specifically: stronger forensic capacity, a minimum-tenure policy so trained officers stay in post, digital case-management rolled out across every FSU formation, and a strengthened partnership with paramount chiefs under the existing 2011 memorandum of understanding, so a case reported in a chiefdom is followed up consistently, not left to whoever happens to be listening.
- Kush is today's most visible crisis, but trafficking routes and the substances driving them shift over time, so we're building a response for whichever threat is doing the most damage in a given year, not one locked to today's crisis. We'll expand enforcement capacity against trafficking through known land-border and coastal routes, establish a standing coordination protocol between enforcement and the health and social-protection systems so operations route young people toward rehabilitation rather than only through the courts, and link anyone exiting enforcement or rehabilitation to the same transition pathway built for departing security personnel — so their exit leads somewhere, not nowhere.
- The armed forces have been candid about the corruption and neglect that hollowed out soldier welfare, and we'll resource their own reform, building on precedent already under way such as the barracks works at Gondama: a phased barracks and accommodation modernisation programme, improved conditions of service and equipment. Every welfare commitment is paired with the other half of the same sentence, deliberately not optional — reinforced civilian and Defence Council oversight of the armed forces, and military support to police kept strictly to the exceptional, civilian-authorised circumstances allowed under Military Aid to Civil Power arrangements, never a routine substitute for policing.

“A country that wants young people to choose the uniform must be able to answer, honestly, what their life looks like on the other side of it. This is that answer.”