

The Foundations of a Safe Community

Water, sanitation, housing & resilience

A family lives in a hillside settlement in Freetown, on land they don't legally own, with no piped water and no drain to carry away the rain. They know, the way everyone in that community knows, that a truly heavy rainy season could take their home — or their lives — the way it did for hundreds of their neighbours in 2017.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Most Sierra Leoneans, and the great majority of city dwellers, don't live in the planned estates that housing policy usually imagines — they live in informal settlements that grew up wherever land could be found, often the most dangerous land: flood plains, riverbanks, unstable hillsides. And despite rivers and rainfall most countries would envy, most Sierra Leoneans still don't have water piped into their home — the utility that's supposed to supply Freetown loses enormous amounts to leaks and theft, and responsibility for water outside the capital is genuinely confused between two different laws that both claim it.

WHAT WE'RE PROMISING

Communities that are upgraded and made secure, cities that are planned before they become dangerous, housing an ordinary family can actually afford, and, for the first time for most Sierra Leoneans, water that reaches the home through a pipe rather than a walk.

FLAGSHIP — The Foundations of a Safe Community

Rather than clear informal settlements or pretend they don't exist, we will upgrade them in place — water, sanitation, drainage, and secure land tenure delivered through settlement-improvement committees where residents themselves help plan their own community's upgrading. Secure tenure is the lever that changes everything else: a family that could be cleared from its land at any moment will never invest in improving that home, however much it might want to. Once tenure is secure, families start building their own security, one improvement at a time.

HOW WE'LL MAKE IT REAL

- We'll treat water first as a problem of delivery and institutions, not only new pipes. The cheapest water available to Freetown is the water it already produces but never delivers, lost to leaks and theft — so fixing the Guma Valley Water Company's losses is the single highest-return investment in the sector, and we'll end the confusion over who's responsible for water outside the capital by reconciling the contradictory laws and finally making devolution to local councils real where they can be given the capacity to deliver.
- Our aspiration is stated plainly: piped water running into the home for our cities and major towns, not merely a shared standpipe down the road — named concretely for Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Port Loko and the Western Area Rural District, with modest, judgeable targets rather than vague promises.
- We'll open up affordable housing supply by having government provide serviced land — water, roads and power already in place — and back housing finance families can actually use: incremental building loans, cooperatives, home-improvement loans, and expanded mortgages.
- Fast-growing towns like Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Port Loko will get enforced, up-to-date building and land-use plans, with the planning authorities actually empowered to enforce them — so they don't repeat Freetown's mistakes as they grow.
- And we'll invest directly in drainage, hillside protection and watershed restoration in the flood- and landslide-prone areas we already know are high-risk, so a disaster on the scale of 2017 is never

allowed to happen again.

“Security of land is the foundation of everything else.”

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