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COUNTRY PROFILE: SIERRA LEONE

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I. Introduction

Sierra Leone is situated on the southern edge of what used to be the Great Empire of Mali which covered a vast part of West Africa, incorporating parts of modern day Ivory Coast, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, Niger, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia. The Empire prospered in the 13th to 15th century, covering an area of over 24,000 square kilometres, influencing the ethnic diversity of contemporary Sierra Leone. Today it borders Guinea to the North and East, Liberia to the South East and the Atlantic Ocean to the West. Sierra Leone occupies an area of 71, 749 square kilometres and has an estimated population of just over 6 million people.

It has a largely non-arid terrain, which is divided into four regions; Northern Province, Southern Province, Eastern Province and the Western Area. It is furthermore divided into 14 districts, which include; Bo, Bombali, Bonthe, Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Koinadugu, Kono, Moyamba, Port Loko, Pajehun, Tonkoili, Western rural districts and Western Urban district, which comprises of the capital, Freetown. The country's ethnic groups include the Temnes, Mendes, Limbas, Konos, Krioles (Krio), Mandingos, Lokos and other ethnic nationalities including refugees from the Liberian civil war. The official language of Sierra Leone is English but there are other ethnic dialects. Krio, which make up a significant portion of the population, has adopted Krio (Creole) as an alternative language of communication. This has also become a *lingua franca* for other peoples in Sierra Leone

II. Political History

The name Sierra Leone came around the 15th (1462) century when Portuguese explorers Pedro de Sintra gave it to a mountain beyond Rokel River meaning 'Lion Mountains'. Europeans interest in Sierra Leone was predominantly spurred by the slave trade but also in commodities like ivory, and camwood. The entry of Europeans into Sierra Leone during the slave trade era equally generated interest, especially from the British, to establish bases on the islands off the coast to remain in the control of the local chiefs. As the era of slavery and slave trade was coming to an end, the country stayed under the control of the Sierra Leone Company, which controlled the settlement of Freetown in which ex-slaves from Britain and Nova Scotia Canada were brought. The company later handed over control to the British who subsequently hosted slaves that were captured from slave ships.

Freetown became the capital, in 1787 and was used by the British as a home for ex-slaves. The origin of the ex-slaves was mixed, including people from Yoruba, Ibo, Aku Congo, and Hausa descent. During the 1800s, many black Americans and English traders migrated into Freetown. This diverse population of ex-slaves consisting mainly of former West Africans formed a new tribal group called the Krio.

Politically, Sierra Leone inherited a British system with diverse people from different ethnic origin. The Krio although a minority of the Sierra Leone people, were favoured by the British because of their success in trade and their Western style of administration. Despite their critical stands against the British, they received high posts in the civil service during the British colonization of Sierra Leone because of the education and success in trade. However, there was indigenous revolt against the British system in which the British accused the Krio of complacency. Many Europeans and Krios were killed. With subsequent development and increase in infrastructure, the British was still unable to trust the Krios and opened up a system of competition that favoured British companies like John Holt, Lever Bros and Paterson Zochonis against indigenous ones owned mostly by the Krios. Moreover by 19th century, the Lebanese were already competing with them in the retail sector.

With signs of displacement in the retail sector looming around the Krios, they redirected their efforts into education and made their first bold step in politics by supporting the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) whose leader was Dr Herbert Bankole Bright; a Krio. The popularity of the NCBWA galvanized others to form political groupings and 1938 the West African Youth League upon return of Wallace Johnson who later helped organized the Pan-African Congress of Trade Unions in 1945 together with Bankole Bright who was then the leader of the National Council for the Colony of Sierra Leone (NCCSL) and opposed the granting of majority Seats to the protectorate under the proposed 1947 Stevenson constitution. Nevertheless, the Krios were neglected when progress towards self-government began.

Other political associations began to grow and in 1951, Dr. Milton Margai formed the Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP) with his younger brother Albert Margai. However previous parties, such as NCCSL, were still participating in politics but the NCCSL suffered a shock and resounding defeat in the hands of the SLPP in the 1952 elections. This paved way for SLPP members to be selected to serve as ministers in the Executive Council in 1953. In 1954, Sir Milton Margai, a native and leader of the Sierra Leone's Peoples Party (SLPP), was appointed the Chief Minister of Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, the Krios or Creoles still retained high proportion of people in the civil service. The successful election did not translate into economic stability as few signs of boom were followed by a decline in economic growth.

The downturn in economy led to protests and strikes in 1955, which affected the authority of the local chiefs, who began to depend on the British for their security and power. Local farmers refused to pay tax, engaged in civil disobedience and stopped their customary tributes to the chiefs. Further revolts and protest led to destruction of properties of the local chiefs. This prompted the British to introduce reforms in the existing system of local administration and governance. The constitution of 1956 provided for election to the House of Representatives, in contrast to the previous selection council of the legislative council by reserved seats for paramount chiefs. An election was conducted in 1957 and Dr. Margai's SLPP won the majority while the

United Progressive Party led by Cyril Rogers-Wright (later called Wallace Johnson) became the official opposition party.

Two years after the election, the ruling party suffered intra party crisis and the brother to the leader Albert Margai together with Isaac Stevens broke away from SLPP and formed the People's National Party (PNP). However when talk for independence reached advanced stage, the United Front Coalition was formed thus bringing the two brothers together Sir Milton Margai as the leader and Albert Margai as the Minister of Agriculture. Following the pre-independence negotiation and the uniting of both Margais, Siaka Stevens broke away and formed the All People's Congress (APC) aligning his party to the left core ideology and agenda, as a way of seeking mass support. He also sought to downplay the need for independence arguing that, election should be conducted prior to independence. This was backed by his perceived national grass-root support. When it became obvious that his demands were not to be met, he engineered operation violence and sabotage as a way of driving his point home. However, he was arrested and detained until the granting of independence on 27 April 1960. After successfully winning over the more liberal Krios and leading a Sierra Leone delegation in London in 1960, Sir Milton Margai led Sierra Leone towards a relatively peaceful independence. The opposition continued to openly criticize the government and demand changes in policies and style of governance.

After Sir Margai's death in 1964, his brother Sir Albert Margai succeeded him as Prime Minister. Motivated to replace Krio administration with Mende (a Southern majority tribe), Sir Albert and the SLPP faced a close defeat in the 1967 election to the opposition, All People's Party (APC), which received strong support from the Krio. Siaka Stevens, leader of the APC was then announced the new Prime Minister on 17 March 1967. A few days later, Siaka Stevens was placed under house arrest by the Republic of Sierra Leone's Military Forces (RSLMF), led by Brigadier David Lansana, a strong supporter of the Margai government on 21 March. Two days later, on 23 March a second coup was staged by junior officers who arrested Lansana and removed the Governor General Sir Henry lightfoot-Boston and suspended the constitution. Thereby, allowing Siaka Stevens to flee to nearby Guinea.

Another counter coup d'état (the third successive) was staged shortly after, on 30 March by Brigadier Juxon Smith. The Smith-led coup d'état lasted for a year before another counter coup was organised by warrant officers who reinstated Siaka Stevens and his party into power, with Chief Justice Teja-Sie as the Governor General in 1968.

The resumption of Siaka Stevens as the Prime Minister did not quench the political instability in the country. The instabilities culminated in an attempted coup, which compelled Siaka Stevens to declare a republican constitution under the common wealth and become the first President of Sierra Leone on 21 April 1971. Political instability and agitation continued during Stevens' presidency. This was

apparent in the elections of 1973 and 1977 in which the SLPP lost, arguing that the APC used its incumbency position to influence the elections. As controversy raged on after the 1977 election, the APC led parliament passed a law in May 1978 banning all other political parties, thus making Sierra Leone a one party state. The APC led government however allowed members of SLPP to remain in the parliament as members/supporters of APC and some were appointed as cabinet ministers. There were also massive interferences in both the civil service and the judiciary by the APC led government.

Between the two controversial elections, Siaka Stevens was making attempts to build regional and continental allies and support. In 1973, he signed a treaty forming the Mano River Union to facilitate trade between Sierra Leone and Liberia with William Tolbert and subsequently brought Guinea into the pact in 1980. He also stretched its support and alliance-building by joining ECOWAS in 1975 and hosting the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) in Freetown in 1980. The rallying of support was followed by a national convention of the APC in 1985, which surprisingly saw Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh elected as the Secretary General of the party, beyond the expectations of many who thought the then Vice President; Sorie Ibrahim Koroma would replace Stevens. Both Stevens and Koroma resigned giving room for Momoh to win almost 99% of the vote in the single party system.

The next couple of years were characterised by a volatile system including a pact with the IMF, the launching of Leone as the national currency and continued accusations of corruption. There were also agitations for political pluralism and multi-party system. Initially, General Momoh diffused the agitations on the basis of the argument that it would polarise the country into ethnic divides. However, following strong agitations, he accepted constitutional reforms that limited the Presidency to two, five year terms and multi-party democracy. This was approved by 60% of the voters August 1990. Soon after, in September, six political groupings came together to form that United Front of Political Opposition Movements (UNIFOM).

In 1991, Civil War broke out between armed rebels called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) which was controlled by Foday Saybana Sankoh. The RUF seized a large part of the Eastern Sierra Leone, including its mines, pushing back the military force into Freetown. The RUF received strong backing from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, who subsequently became the President of Liberia. As Momoh was battling with insurgency from the RUF, the military led by Captain Valentine Strasser staged a coup d'état aggravated by salary demands on 29 April 1992. They suspended the constitution, banned all political parties and formed the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). With backing from ECOWAS military unit ECOMOG, the NPRC pushed the RUF further into the borders of Sierra Leone and began plans to reduce the role of the military in governance. John Benjamin became the appointed Chief Secretary of State in the

new reformed military led government. In the December 1992, an attempted coup led by Lamin Bungura was aborted leading to the execution of 17 of the plotters.

International pressure mounted on Sierra Leone to be returned to civilian rule and was followed by the suspension of all forms of aid to Sierra Leone by Britain. In response to that, all political prisoners were released, although press censorship was imposed in 1993. However, plans to return to civilian government were still on course and would begin to materialise in 1996. The government formed the Interim National Electoral Commission led by James Jonah. This was followed by new constitutional reforms and changes including the reduction of permitted terms in office of the President to two-four year terms, and the establishment of a bicameral legislature; creating the House of Representatives and the Senate. Nevertheless, the conflict prevented the reorganisation of the districts for the election. As the preparations were on-going, in January 1996 Julius Maada Bio staged another coup and claimed that Strasser was attempting to change the age restriction in the reformed constitution in order to hold on to power. He then vowed to ensure the continued transition period.

The 1996 election saw Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP elected as the President after second round of vote. After one year in office, on May 25 1997, President Kabbah was dethroned in yet another coup led by Major Johnny Paul Koromah. The group of armies that led the coup, called Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) forced Kabbah into exile in Guinea. They were also sympathizers of the RUF and proceeded to incorporate RUF into the government. However the Nigerian government immediately responded by demanding total return of power. Ten months following the imposition of the junta, The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) led by Nigeria, ousted Koromah led military government and pushed the RUF out of Freetown. President Kabbah was then reinstated into an unstable Sierra Leone.

Months later, while ECOMOG was still present in Sierra Leone, RUF attempted to take over Freetown but the attempt failed, albeit with a devastating impact on Freetown, killing over 6000 people. The results of the Freetown battle forced the government to sign the Lome peace agreement with the RUF in July 1999, which made Sankoh Vice President as well as the minister in charge of diamond production. ECOMOG soldiers departed Sierra Leone in April 2000. Without delay RUF soldiers began to violate the peace agreement. In May 2000, the RUF shot and killed 20 demonstrators outside Sankoh's residence. Sankoh was later arrested and charged with attempted coup. Seeing the instability in Sierra Leone, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorized a UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which with the help of the British, successfully demobilized RUF soldiers.

By 2002, Sierra Leone was able to hold Presidential and Parliamentary elections, under the 1991 constitutional, Electoral Laws act (2002), the Political Parties Act (2002). Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP won the election and was returned to power. In

August 2007, Sierra Leone held a second post-war election which saw previous election's runner-up, Ernest Koroma of the All Peoples' Congress as president. Relatively peaceful Parliamentary and Presidential elections were held in August 2007. None of the candidates received the needed 55% to win in the first round and a second round election was held between the two candidates with the highest votes. Ernest Bai Koroma of the All People's Congress (APC) and Solomon Berewa of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Ernest Bai Karoma won the second round. The APC received 59 of the 112, while the SLPP received 43 seats and the PMDC received 10 seats.

III. Structure of Government

The main branches of government in Sierra Leone include the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary:

a. The Executive:

The executive is made up of the President, Vice president, and a cabinet of ministers. (i) **The President** is elected by popular vote for a five-year term, renewable once. He is also the head of government and Commander in chief. (ii) **The Vice President** is elected jointly with the president as a running mate. (iii) **Ministers** are appointed by the president with the approval of the parliament.

b. The Legislature:

The legislature consists of a single legislative chamber. It comprises of the President, the Speaker and Members of Parliament. There are 124 seats; 112 members elected by popular vote, 12 filled by supreme chiefs elected in separate elections, members serve five-year terms.

c. The Judiciary:

At the top of the Sierra Leone Judicial system are the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, High Court of Justice, and the magistrate courts. The Judicial system is headed by the Chief Justice, who is appointed by the President. The president selects and parliament approves Justices for the three courts. Local chieftaincy courts administer customary law with lay judges; appeals from these lower courts are heard by the superior courts.

IV. Legal Framework for Elections

a. The Electoral System

The President is elected by an absolute majority vote through a two-round system to serve a five-year term, renewable once. Run-off elections are held between the two front-runners where none of the candidates get 55%+ of the total votes during the first round. The Assembly is elected, through a mixed electoral system, whereby two-thirds of the total elected seats are chosen in accordance with a proportional representation list system, and the remaining one-third is elected in

accordance with an individual candidacy system. Elections to the National Assembly are conducted over three stages, each involving polling in nine governorates (out of a total of 27 governorates).

b. The Legal Framework

The constitution of 1991 recognized two bodies to supervise the representation of the people; The Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC) and the National Electoral Commission (NEC).

V. Election Management

a. The National Electoral Commission (NEC):

The constitutional declaration section 33 of 1991, ACT No.6 and Section 28 of the Chieftaincy Act of 2009 declares the NEC mandate. The NEC has the sole authority to prepare and conduct all public elections and referenda. The NEC is composed of five commissioners, with a Chief Electoral Commissioner as the Chairperson and four commissioners for each of the provinces. The President appoints the members of the commission after consultation with the political parties and approval of the parliament. Members of the commission serve a term of five years. The commission is mandated to undertake the following activities:

- Conduct all public elections and referenda (by secret ballot);
- Register voters;
- The Commission must determine the number of constituencies and their boundaries, at intervals of between five and seven years and
- Regulate the efficient performance of its functions.

b. The Ministry of Interior:

The ministry of interior is responsible for assisting the electoral process. Furthermore the Ministry is required to supervise the security during the electoral process.

c. The Judiciary:

The judiciary system is responsible for the preservation of accountable, transparent, free and fair elections. The High Court has set out two divisions to oversee the electoral process; the Electoral Offences Court and the Election Petition Rules Court.

(i) **The Electoral Offences Court** is liable of hearing criminal offences committed against the Electoral Laws Act and (ii) **The Election Petition Rules Court** handles civil matters related to the results of the election.

VI. Voter Registration and Registration of Candidates

a. Voter Registration:

In the upcoming elections, a biometric registering system has been used, wherein voters are photographed and required to give fingerprints. This was done, in four phases, between 23rd January and 26th March 2012, with one phase per district ward. People are also given voter ID cards. Between 1st-27th August 2012, as well as 6th and 10th September 2012, new voters ID cards were given out. By the end of the first round 2,435,114 ID cards had been issued, 99 suspected cases of fraudulent registration were being investigated and a total of 133,557 had been printed. These were scheduled to be issued in the second round, together with unclaimed cards. In order for citizens of Sierra Leone to be eligible voters, they are required to be 18 years of age or above and of sound mind. The Electoral Laws Act 2002 requires the commission to partition the country into constituencies for the purpose of registration of voters. An eligible voter may only be registered in one constituency.

b. Registration of Candidates:

7th September, 2012 was the deadline for submission of Political Parties Approved Lists of Candidates for the Local Council Nomination. The nomination commenced on 12th September, with the following candidates making nominations on the days given in the table below:

LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS		PRESIDENTIAL & PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS	
DAY	Name of Political Party	DAY	Name of Political Party
1	UNPP	1	UDM
2	PMDC	2.	UNPP
3	RUFP	3	RUFP
4	NDA	4	PMDC
5	CDP	5	SLPP
6	PLP	6	PDP
7	APC	7	NDA
8	PDP	8	APC
9	UDM	9	CDP
10	SLPP	10	PLP
11	Independent Candidates	11	Independent Candidates

The deadline for the submission of approved lists for Presidential and Parliamentary candidates is 28th September, 2012. Individuals can stand position of president through the following criteria: (a) must be born in Sierra Leone; (b) should be at least 40 years of age; (c) should be a member of a political party; (d) should be able to speak the English language.

c. Registration of Political Parties:

According to the PPRC Act No 3 of 2002, the Political Parties Registration Commission has an obligation to register “any association of persons formed to participate in shaping the political will of the people”. An application shall include the

name of the party, its aims, objectives and purposes, which may not be in conflict with the constitution. It should include the internal organization of the party, which should reflect the democratic values of the Constitution, including provision for free and fair election of leadership in the proposed party, at regular intervals.

It should also contain the business addresses of the political party offices in Freetown and their registered offices in each of the provincial head-quarters (which is owned or leased for at least five years for the purposes of the proposed political party), as well as names of persons who are authorized to accept and issue process on behalf of the proposed party. Moreover, they need to submit an abbreviation of the party, which can be used on ballots and a description of its motto, symbols or colours, which is consistent with the information submitted in the abovementioned points. An association shall not submit a symbol, name or motto which is obscene or a name, color, motto or symbol which is identical to/closely resembles that of another already existing party or the Republic. A non-refundable registration fee of Le 250, 000.00 shall be submitted together with the application.

Within 7 days of receiving the application, a Government Notice shall be made about the application. This should invite for objections from any person about the abovementioned points. If no objection has been received within 60 days of receiving the application and abovementioned criteria are fulfilled, the party shall become registered. If an objection has been raised it shall first be settled whether it is valid or not, before the party may be registered and receive a final certificate of registration. Without one, an organization will not be allowed to organize or hold public meetings. A Party should not have a founding member/leader/member of its executive body, a person who is not eligible to be elected as a Member of Parliament according to the constitution. Members should not be predominantly from one religion, ethnicity, tribal group, or geographical area.

People who are employed by the Public Service Commission, Judicial and Legal Service Commission, or who are members of the Sierra Leone Police Force or the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone are not allowed to be a founding member of a Party; hold office in a Party; seek election as President of the Republic, to Parliament; speak in public, or publish anything on matters of political party controversy; engage in canvassing in support for any party or candidate that is up for election. This can only be done after a period of 12 months from leaving such a position. If an association wishes to appeal a refusal of registration, it may do so with the Supreme Court, which will give a reply within 30 days; or it may do so directly to the Commission but if the Commission fails to register the Party within seven days, the association must turn to the Supreme Court.

VII. Candidates that Contested the Presidential Elections

Nine Political Parties has nominated Candidates for the 17 November Presidential Elections. They include:

Presidential Candidates 2012

SN	First Name	Surname	Voter ID	Sex	Date Of Birth	Address	Occupation	Party	Election Type
1.	Ernest Bai	Koroma	1204539	M	02/10/1953	11 Femi Turner Drive	Politician	APC	Presidential
2.	Joshua Albert	Carew	450023	M	19/04/1952	Taiama Town	Politician	CDP	Presidential
3.	Gibrilla	Kamara	2003787	M	08/07/1963	45 Kissy Road Freetown	Contractor	PDP	Presidential
4.	Kandeh Baba	Conteh	734813	M	15/10/1958	66 Bai Bureh Road Kissy	Politician	PLP	Presidential
5.	Charles Francis	Margai	1040543	M	19/08/1945	12 Nylander Street Aberdeen	Lawyer	PMDC	Presidential
6.	Eldred	Collins	416627	M	14/03/1955	Dora Drive Benguema	Engineer	RUFPP	Presidential
7.	Julius Maada	Bio	664204	M	12/05/1964	29 Kosonelli Driver Spurloop	Politician	SLPP	Presidential
8.	Mohamed	Bangura	2052685	M	12/07/1971	80 Off Bai Bureh Road, Quarry Kissy	Journalist	UDM	Presidential
9.	Dr James Obbahi	Fullah	1792488	M	13/12/1955	5 Father Street Yele	Lecturer	UNPP	Presidential

VIII. Election Outcome

The 17 November in the Republic of Sierra Leone was conducted in a free, fair and peaceful manner. The result of the Election shows that the incumbent President Ernest Bai Koroma of APC defeated his closest rival Julia Maada Bio to remain in power until 2017. He won the Presidential Election gaining 58.7% against 37.4% won by the closet opposition Julius Maada Bio. The result also showed that APC secured 67 Seats out of 109 declared results in the Legislative Election while SLPP gained 42 Seats. Despite initial contestation by the SLPP, the result has now be accepted and Sierra Leone have marked another successful transition after 11 years of civil war.