CHAPTER EIGHT

National Vision for Sierra Leone

Introduction

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions look to the lessons of the turbulent past in order to build a peaceful future. Only by doing so can such commissions develop recommendations to address the problems that cause conflicts. The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) decided that looking to the past was not enough to enable it to make recommendations that were relevant, robust and would capture the imagination of Sierra Leoneans. The future society that the recommendations are designed to achieve has to be properly understood and described; in short, it has to be “envisioned”. This future society or “vision for a future Sierra Leone” is the prescription. It is the kind of society we wish to build here in Sierra Leone. It is set out in this unique chapter of the TRC report in the form of the National Vision for Sierra Leone. The recommendations in this report aim to help translate the vision into reality.

Mohamed Bockarie, a youth in his late 20s, is a stamp-maker by trade. He created this stamp for the National Vision for Sierra Leone, proclaiming the message: “IT’S TRUE THE WAR IS OVER — WELCOME TO NEW SIERRA LEONE”. Inside the map of the country is a crowd of men, women and children cheering together. They are following a figure who is striding forwards, bearing the national flag.
BACKGROUND TO THE NATIONAL VISION

2. Early in its mandate, the TRC decided to facilitate the construction of a “vision” that would act as a “roadmap” to work towards the needs of post-conflict Sierra Leone. The question that gave rise to the National Vision project was: What does the TRC envisage for Sierra Leone after 11 years of war?

Extract from “My Sierra Leone”
By the RUF Prisoners at Pademba Road Prison

MY SIERRA LEONE, a new chapter and era has opened
With awareness at every door
We must not let go
Because we’ve known the causes of our woes
It keeps us conscious and awake at all times
The past must remain the past
With the past we know the present
And combined we make the future
Now is the time to move forward, ever but only with oneness
Our mistakes have opened the doors of discoveries
And our discoveries must lead to recoveries

Patrick Sinnah, an artist in his 30s, submitted this painting of 13 faces looking to the future: a bright new day, good roads and shining streetlamps, flourishing natural resources and education for all. The faces represent the twelve districts and Freetown, while the green, white and blue colours of the national flag signify strength in unity and pride in being Sierra Leonean.
3. In particular the TRC set out to gauge the expectations of Sierra Leoneans in the context of existing initiatives being undertaken by the Government and the international community. The TRC would then be in a position to assess whether such initiatives could fulfil the hopes of the people of Sierra Leone.

4. This strategy required the Commission to get a sense of the expectations, hopes and aspirations of the people of Sierra Leone. The TRC would need to reach out to individuals in all spheres of society – hence the requirement for a national campaign to gather inputs and contributions towards a national vision. The TRC would then compare and contrast these inputs with what was realisable under current plans and initiatives. Ideally the TRC recommendations would address the lacunas and fill the gaps.

THE CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

5. The TRC decided to provide a platform for individual Sierra Leoneans to express their expectations and aspirations. The Commission saw the creation of a National Vision as an inspirational project in which all Sierra Leoneans, young and old from all different backgrounds, could participate. One means soliciting input was a call to the public for their ideas and contributions.

6. Judge Laura Marcus-Jones, the Deputy Chairperson of the TRC, launched the “Call for Contributions to the National Vision for Sierra Leone” at a press conference at TRC Headquarters on 17 September 2003. On behalf of the Commission, Judge Marcus-Jones invited Sierra Leoneans to set out their hopes for a future conflict-free Sierra Leone.

7. The TRC did not limit the form or scope of contributions. The public were invited to make their contributions in any form they wished, including by way of essays, poems, slogans, songs, drama, paintings or photographs. The TRC suggested that contributions may:

- Describe the kind of society the contributor would like to live in;
- Suggest how to make Sierra Leone a better place to live in;
- Set out the contributor’s hopes and aspirations for Sierra Leone;
- Describe where the contributor would like to see Sierra Leone in five or ten years; or
- Provide anything creative that inspires peace and unity – and pride in being Sierra Leonean.

8. The TRC advertised its campaign in newspapers, on the radio and in leaflets distributed around Freetown and in the provinces. It was also announced that selected contributions might be included in the final report of the TRC, displayed nationally and internationally in an exhibition, or published as part of a collection in a separate book.
A NATIONAL VISION FOR SIERRA LEONE

A CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE TRC

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) seeks contributions from members of the public to assist the TRC to build a National Vision for Sierra Leone. Contributions may:

- DESCRIBE THE KIND OF SOCIETY THE CONTRIBUTOR WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN.
- SUGGEST HOW TO MAKE SIERRA LEONE A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE IN.
- SET OUT THE CONTRIBUTOR’S HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS FOR SIERRA LEONE.
- DESCRIBE WHERE THE CONTRIBUTOR WOULD LIKE TO SEE SIERRA LEONE IN 5 OR 10 YEARS.
- DEVISE SLOGANS FOR A NATIONAL VISION.
- SUPPLY POEMS, SONGS, PAINTINGS OR PHOTOGRAPHS THAT SYMBOLISE THE NEW SIERRA LEONE.
- PROVIDE ANYTHING CREATIVE THAT INSPIRES PEACE AND UNITY - AND PRIDE IN BEING SIERRA LEONEAN.

Selected and creative contributions will be used in the Report of the TRC and the author/creator will be accredited. Selected contributions may also form part of a larger collection that may be published in a separate book. Contributions may also be used in an exhibition that will be put on display throughout Sierra Leone and around the world.

Contributions must reach the TRC by Friday 12 November 2003 and may be delivered or posted to:

The National Vision Project, TRC, Brookfields Hotel, Jomo Kenyatta Rd, New England, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Contributions may also be emailed or faxed to the TRC. The contributions may be collected from the TRC on 28 November 2003.

YOUR VISION. YOUR FUTURE.
RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

9. Over the course of two months, the TRC received over 250 contributions representing the efforts of over 300 individuals. The TRC and its Commissioners were overwhelmed by the effort, time and resources that so many Sierra Leoneans devoted to preparing their contributions. Among the contributors are men and women of all ages, backgrounds, religions and regions, including adults and children; artists and laymen; amputees, ex-combatants and prisoners. The contributions include written and recorded essays, slogans, plays and poems; paintings, etchings and drawings; sculptures, wood carvings and installations.

Kabie Farama, a youth injured in the war, submitted this powerful, colourful two-part vision of reconciliation in action. In the upper half of the sketch, a perpetrator shoots at a victim. In the lower half, the victim joins hands and dances together with the perpetrator, who has given up his gun.

This picture is an inspirational invitation to all Sierra Leoneans who were affected by the war to take part in the process of reconciliation.
The TRC even received a sea-worthy boat called the "Future Boat", painted in the national colours of green, white and blue. The two creators described their contribution in the following terms:

“We built this boat as an inspiration to young people to develop themselves. This is to let the people of Sierra Leone know that they as carpenters can do something to develop Sierra Leone.”

- Ibrahim Bangura and Tejan Suma
11. While contributors worked separately, a number of common themes and forms emerged. Although the TRC asked Sierra Leoneans to speak about the future, the majority of contributions addressed the future by making reference to the past. Many of the contributions included common motifs, such as: the map or outline of Sierra Leone; the scales of justice; the colours of the national flag; the words “peace”, “unity” and “love”; references to Sierra Leone’s natural resources; and images of houses. Some of the contributions set out prerequisites for a peaceful and prosperous Sierra Leone in the years ahead, while others point to the severe problems facing our society today. They serve as signposts for the future; signposts that we ignore at our peril.

12. Most of all, the contributions show what Sierra Leone can be. They show the enormous potential that exists in this country – potential that must be harnessed positively and productively. They point to the need for basic respect and tolerance amongst all human beings. The contributions amply demonstrate that Sierra Leone can and must reach for new heights.

13. The National Vision has provided an exciting opportunity for individual Sierra Leoneans to contribute their ideas and talent to the process of peace and reconciliation. Through the National Vision, Sierra Leoneans of all ages and backgrounds can claim their own citizenship space in the new Sierra Leone and make their contributions to the country’s cultural and national heritage.

“If you look closely you will see the drums have been rolled out. Drumming has actually started with the dancers in joyous mood. This indicates the celebration of the peace that has been achieved in Sierra Leone with the hope of prosperity accompanying it.”

Description of the painting “Celebration Time” by El-Denis

Crowd: “A child cannot be thrown into a house on fire because he set that house on fire. They are our brothers and sisters and we accept their apology.”

- in “Reconciliation – the Way Out” by Ernest and Julius Mannah
THE LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL VISION EXHIBIT

14. The National Vision Exhibit was launched on 10 December 2003 at the National Stadium in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Chairperson of the TRC, Bishop Joseph Humper, officially opened the Exhibit with these words:

“The Vision should not stop with this Exhibition. In fact it must live beyond the life of the TRC. Each contributor, as indeed each Sierra Leonean, has a role to play in his or her own sphere in advancing the causes of peace and unity. Each one of you has shown your love for your country. You have demonstrated your courage and your energy to bring peace and unity to all corners of the land. Each one of you gives me enormous hope that the future of Sierra Leone is indeed a bright one… There is much work to be done to build this country. We must start this work now.”

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“The journey of a hundred years begins with a single step. Our beloved country has been moving along the road to total liberation since the colonial days”.

- from “Let us Come Together with Love to Solve the Problems of Sierra Leone”, an 83-page visionary essay

By the RUFP Prisoners at Pademba Road Prison

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Salone Pikin
By Emmanuel Bryma Momoh

I heard the cry of 'Salone pikin' being conscripted
'Salone pikin' raped, killed
Were they not forced to drink in human skulls?
Oh 'Salone pikin'
Where is your future?
Sweet Salone
Now I can see the future clearly
One Salone
'Salone pikin' disarmed
'Salone pikin' now a doctor
'Salone pikin' save lives
Sweet Salone

Aged in his mid-20s, Emmanuel Bryma Momoh works as a human rights officer for UNAMSIL, based in Koidu Town. He writes poetry for a hobby. He wrote “Salone Pikin”, which in Krio means “Sierra Leone’s Child”, to commemorate the many children affected by the violence in Sierra Leone.
15. Over 400 individuals, many of them contributors, attended the launch. The event featured selected contributions and each contributor received a “Recognition of Contribution” certificate. When the TRC first decided to award prizes to the National Vision contributions, the TRC projected one overall winner and two runners-up, but the excellence of so many contributions in many different forms demanded that there be winners and runners-up in a variety of categories. The TRC awarded winners and runners-up in six categories and 30 certificates of Honourable Mention were issued. For a full list of contributors, winners, runners-up and recipients of honourable mention awards, please see the Appendix.

MY NATIONAL VISION FOR SIERRA LEONE
A RENAISSANCE SIERRA LEONE
By Bishop Joseph C. Humper, TRC Chairperson

At every stage of a country's development, people are called upon to set out their dreams for the future of the nation. That time has come for Sierra Leone. There is the popular saying that “A people without vision the nation perish.” Now is the moment for all peace-loving citizens to make a contribution towards A NATIONAL VISION FOR SIERRA LEONE. Adults, youth and children have a singular responsibility and privilege to share with the nation and the international community their visions for this country.

I seize this opportunity to articulate my VISION FOR A SIERRA LEONEAN RENAISSANCE.

1. I envision that a revived Sierra Leone, born out of the ashes of a reckless and senseless civil conflict, shall become active and committed to the establishment of genuine peace.

2. I long for a nation where people have trust and confidence in their nation's leadership. The leadership must know that the trust and confidence of the people is not automatic; it is earned through honesty and lost through corruption and greed.

3. I would like to see the nation's citizens, and particularly those vested with great responsibility, look to enrich the nation and its least privileged before they enrich themselves.

4. I envisage a nation in which the people are courageous enough to confess and forgive. Too often we blame others for our ills. It is time we looked within. Not a single Sierra Leonean can claim that there is no need for him or her to confess and forgive. We are all responsible for allowing our beloved country to slide into chaos and mayhem. Only when we have dismissed all pretence can we truly move forward.
16. The National Vision Exhibit opened at the National Museum in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 15 December 2003. To satisfy the momentum that the Exhibit had generated, a voluntary National Vision Team, comprised of nationals and internationals, was established. The Team conducted guided tours of the Exhibit at the National Museum every weekday during January and February 2004. Members of the Team promoted awareness of the National Vision through leaflets, presentations, meetings and radio shows. An article published in The Democrat on 17 December 2003 wrote of the National Vision: “This is crucial to our quest for lasting peace and sustainable development”.

17. On 22 December 2003, the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the Minister of Education, Dr. Alpha Wurie, undertook a televised tour of the Exhibit and publicly pledged their support for the National Vision and the prospect of a national tour. Between 20 December 2003 and early February 2004, more than 1,000 people signed their names and wrote their comments in a register of visitors to the Exhibit. Comments and excerpts from this “National Vision Guest Book” are reproduced below:

Rajiv Bendre, Director, British Council
“A moving and uplifting exhibition”

Mary Margaret Dineen, National Democratic Institute
“Inspirational representation of the positive human potential for peace, harmony and development Sierra Leone deserves. Bravo and thank you”

Honourable Chief Hindowa from Bo
“Congratulations to the Vision. I think this is what Sierra Leoneans need. I support that the vision move to the provinces so that every Sierra Leonean will include in the Vision for Sierra Leone”

Edmund Makiu, UNICEF
“This is the best Sierra Leone has ever had. Sierra Leoneans need to work hard to meet the wonderful vision”

Moisia Kawa
“I wish to see this programme included in the school curriculum of Sierra Leone in order to educate our young students about their role in the development of our beloved country”

Claudine A. E. Davies, Lemount College
“I’m amazed at the terribly exceptional talent our country possesses in people. Sierra Leone, indeed, has a bright future”

David Minah, Sierra Leone Government
“The exhibits are highly moving and they depict what we’ve been through. Reconciliation is the way forward and we should all join in it so that Sierra Leone can move forward to a brighter future”

Mark S. Koroma
“I really find it beyond comprehension why I was so late in partaking of such things as a Sierra Leonean. But to be justice, I am very much grateful of what I saw my brothers and sisters did and I hope to see more.”
Mrs. Florence Okrap-Smart, Lemount College
“A laudable venture which needs to come to fruition with the help of everyone”

AR Hassan-King
“I congratulate the TRC and all the contributors. The nation has spoken”

18. By the end of January 2004, more than 600 school children had visited the Exhibit and taken part in group discussions on the significance of the National Vision to Sierra Leone’s future. The National Vision Team also arranged tours for Members of Parliament, government officials, ex-combatants and amputees. Many UNAMSIL peacekeeping troops also visited the exhibit.

I Saw
By Mohamed Sekoya
I saw the atrocities in Sierra Leone
Yes I saw
I saw the people running for their lives from cities to towns, towns to villages, villages to the bush
Yes I saw
I saw rebels, Sierra Leone Army and Kamajors shooting in the streets, killing, attacking and looting
Yes I saw
I saw children crying for food
Yes I saw
I saw abomination between man and woman, man and man, woman and woman, adults and children
Yes I saw
I saw a victim helping a victim
Yes I saw
I saw the United Nations peacekeeping forces and I was happy
Yes I saw
I saw the rebels coming home for peace
Yes I saw
I pray never to see again what I saw in my beloved Sierra Leone.

Mohamed Sekoya, a draftsman in his mid-20s, read aloud his poem “I Saw” at the launch of the National Vision Exhibit. In this piece, he uses the formula of repetition, a means of emphasis and affirmation in the Sierra Leone oral tradition.
THE NATIONAL VISION AND TRANSITIONAL SIERRA LEONE

19. The National Vision has added considerably to debates around Sierra Leone’s future. The National Vision can continue to have a positive influence on the key areas of development described in the following paragraphs:

• **Artistic and scholarly expression:** The National Vision offers an interactive forum for traditional and contemporary expression. It encourages artistic and scholarly drive and talent through individual recognition.

• **Awareness and acknowledgement of the war:** The National Vision is a forum for all voices to be heard, engaged with and preserved. It emphasises that the war occurred because of specific problems in society that must be addressed for change to take place and peace to become permanent. The National Vision has made these important messages uniquely accessible to all, including vulnerable groups such as children, the illiterate and those traumatised by the war.

• **Self-empowerment:** By displaying individual contributions to Sierra Leoneans and the international community, the National Vision affirms and validates the voices and talents of individual Sierra Leoneans. The Vision affirms the claim expressed in the contributions that Sierra Leone is capable of moving towards a peaceful and democratic future. It reiterates the need for individual Sierra Leoneans to participate in this process.

• **Unity:** The National Vision unites victims, ex-combatants, prisoners and free citizens of all ages, backgrounds, religions and regions under one common purpose: to ensure a better future for Sierra Leone. In this way, the National Vision fosters a new unified pride in being Sierra Leonean.

• **Healing:** The National Vision provides a space for personal and communal healing for its contributors and for those engaging with the contributions, in a country where conventional forms of therapy are largely inaccessible and unfamiliar.

• **Democracy-building:** The National Vision is a uniquely democratic, non-partisan and interactive civic space representing individuals regardless of age, background, region or religion. It serves as forum for open and active dialogue in Sierra Leone on political and social issues of the past, present and future.

• **Reconciliation:** As a public space, the National Vision Exhibit physically brings together different stakeholders in the same room, thus initiating the process of reconciliation through dialogue. Many contributions serve as acts of reconciliation on the part of contributors, as they express contributors’ willingness to reconcile and invite others to do the same.
• **Reparation:** By “memorialising” the harsh realities of the past, the National Vision serves as a form of symbolic reparation to Sierra Leoneans, to whom public forms of acknowledgement reinforce community bonds.

• **Never Again:** By examining the pre-conflict and conflict periods in Sierra Leone and envisioning a better future, the contributions argue publicly that one cannot look forward without looking back. They express the desire of Sierra Leoneans that the past should not be repeated and that every Sierra Leonean should participate in ensuring this culture of “never again”.

Nine Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFP) detainees held at Pademba Road Prison for over four years submitted a range of art and craftwork to the National Vision. They also jointly wrote an eighty-three-page visionary statement. This painting (above left) depicts a shackled man, who is not, however, in a prison. This man could be any Sierra Leonean who for years has been shackled by poverty, bad governance and division, despite Sierra Leone’s plentiful resources, as symbolised by the blue and green background. Only when this man frees himself of these man-made shackles may he move towards the bright dawn of a better future. To do so, the prisoners write: “Let us come together in love and solve Sierra Leone’s problems.”
20. “No lasting achievement is possible without a vision and no vision can become real without action and responsibility.” With these words, the President of Sierra Leone, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, launched “Vision 2025” on 15 March 2001 in the face of the human, institutional and financial challenges that have confronted Sierra Leone after the eleven-year war. A government venture, Vision 2025 was initiated by the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning and implemented by a National Core Team of Experts including leaders from the areas of culture, tourism, industry, gender, the economy, agriculture and political science. The UN Development Programme Sierra Leone provided financial and institutional backing while Africa Futures, a regional project of UNDP, provided technical support.

“The kind of society our organisation will like to see the citizen of the Nation (Sierra Leone) live in, is where some one is some-body and no-one is no-body; where every individual is respected”.

- from “Youth Movement and People’s Rights Contribution to the National Vision”, Wurie Mamadu Tamba Barrie

Extract from “The New Sierra Leone”
By Senessie Rogers

A Sierra Leone, I hope and pray
Fervently that one fine day
Will grow plump ripe, like a fat
Placid unassuming mother
That'll breast-feed children
Of the four comers of the earth
A transparent and tolerant
mistress
That'll teach her little children
The old tradition that, any time
they sit down
To eat, they must remember that
There're others coming after them
That may be equally, if not
More hungry and thirsty
A selfless Sierra Leone
A sweet Sierra Leone

“I dream of a Sierra Leone that will be worthy of the title of the Athens of West Africa; a land flowing with milk and honey, not one obsessed with silk and money; a promised land and a land of promise, where people will come running to seek pastures greener, instead of running away from our rotten infrastructure”

Extract from “My National Vision for Sierra Leone”
By Chinsia E. Caesar
21. Key questions driving Vision 2025 included: What kind of nation do Sierra Leoneans want their country to be? What challenges must be confronted? What are the most appropriate policies and programs? Vision 2025’s motto sums up the goals of the initiative: “United People, Progressive Nation, Attractive Country”. Vision 2025 aims to replace poverty and underdevelopment with peace, stability and wealth creation in Sierra Leone. To prepare a vision for long-term development that ensures national ownership of the development agenda and promotes a democratic and participatory process, Vision 2025 engaged national and international stakeholders in consultations. A national Steering Committee, headed by the Minister for Development and Economic Planning, organised consultations with students, refugees, internally displaced persons, private institutions, members of government, combatants, paramount chiefs, the national security forces, NGOs and civil society. Methods for soliciting input included radio phone-in conversations, questionnaires, essay competitions, workshops, regional consultations and interviews.

22. The August 2003 publication of Vision 2025 included: a report on the conclusions reached among stakeholders for the way forward; a strategic diagnosis of the country’s past and present situation; alternative possibilities for Sierra Leone’s future; and suggestions for a national focus and individual and collective responsibility in the national vision. Vision 2025 is to be a “guidepost” for Sierra Leone’s future development. Additionally, it is to be a “living document that will be continuously reviewed and adapted to changing scenarios” at home and abroad. The 2003 document proposes the creation of a national “Vision Council”, made up of visionary leaders from different sectors, to ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the activities of Vision 2025.

The National Vision for Sierra Leone and its Complementarity with Vision 2025

23. The TRC’s National Vision for Sierra Leone uniquely and effectively complements the Vision 2025 initiative. Vision 2025 is a government policy document that outlines implementing strategies for the development of Sierra Leone over the next 20 years. As the National Vision for Sierra Leone serves as a non-partisan, inter-generational forum for dialogue, it raises awareness around the existence of processes like the one steered by Vision 2025. Indeed, the National Vision encourages individual Sierra Leoneans, especially the youth, to contribute to the dialogue entailed in such processes. The National Vision therefore has great potential to serve as a vehicle for continuing popular input into Vision 2025.
THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE NATIONAL VISION

24. The National Vision for Sierra Leone has gathered increasing momentum nationally and internationally as a nation-building programme. It has attracted the attention of representatives from different sectors of society including human rights activists, politicians, representatives of arts and culture, government, the business community and people in the provinces. Its diverse appeal lies in the fact that it is a peoples’ project, not a political project. Moreover it is not time bound.

25. The Commission is of the view that participation in the National Vision project should be expanded. The Commission accordingly recommends to government and civil society stakeholders that the National Vision should become a permanent open, interactive civic space for all stakeholders in Sierra Leone to engage in dialogue through artistic and scholarly expression on political, moral and social issues of the past, present and future.

26. To ensure maximum exposure for the National Vision contributions, the Commission recommends that the following activities should take place:

- **Further Freetown Exhibits:** In order to access as many groups as possible, the Exhibit should be put on display in diverse locations around the capital. Eventually, the National Vision Exhibit should be housed in an appropriate, permanent location that will be an active and interactive site of workshops for different interest groups (women, children, youth, political leaders, etc.) around issues addressed in the contributions.

- **A National Tour:** To ensure the visible accessibility of the Exhibit to as many Sierra Leoneans as possible, the National Vision should travel outside of the capital. The National Tour should bring the Exhibit to selected cities and towns in all provinces, where workshops could be held and the continued submission of contributions could be encouraged.

“I wish for the day when politicians are inducted into politics not for self-aggrandisement and self-assertion, but for genuine patriotic intentions geared towards nation-building. I look forward to a society where freedom of association, speech and movement are amplified so that government is kept on its guard and compelled to be responsible”.

- from an essay by Sahr Egbinda Juana
• **An International Tour:** An international tour would raise awareness around Sierra Leone and the issues discussed in the contributions. It would encourage others to consider applying this paradigm of a National Vision to their own contexts. It would further bring international exposure to the wealth of creative talent in Sierra Leone.

• **A Publication:** A possible publication would be a book containing photographs of contributions, biographies of contributors and essays by different leaders on reconciliation, national healing and related topics.

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**Olu Francis Davies** is a carpenter from Kenema. At the centre of his wood carving lie two of the most popular themes in the National Vision: the national flag of Sierra Leone and the scales of justice. The green, white and blue of the flag constitute the only colour on the piece, which emphasises the motto at the base of the carving: “unity is strength”. The other carved words reflect desired objectives for a future Sierra Leone.

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27. In order to realise the four activities described above, the Commission recommends that the National Vision fall under the wing of the TRC’s successor body, the proposed National Human Rights Commission (HRC); or alternatively that the National Vision work in close collaboration with the HRC. Pending the formation of the HRC, the Commission recommends that civil society and government commit to keep the National Vision alive and establish a provisional vehicle or structure under which its activities can continue.
28. The Commission accordingly recommends the establishment of an independent Trust to oversee the activities of the project. The National Vision Trust should have independent trustees, representative of the different sectors of society, serving on the body.

29. The Commission notes that the National Vision for Sierra Leone as a project of the TRC must remain true to the founding principles underlying the TRC. As such all future National Vision activities must:

- serve the preservation of peace, strive for unity and promote healing and reconciliation; and
- Remain independent and non-partisan. The National Vision should always represent the collective visions of its contributors. It should never be the vision of a particular NGO or the vision of Government or any particular interest group.

30. The Commission notes that the contributors to the National Vision project have handed their contributions to the TRC in trust. The TRC advertisement that called for contributions stated that contributors were entitled to have their contributions returned to them. However the TRC stated publicly (in the advertisement and in its public announcements) that the contributions would be taken on provincial and public tours; and that the contributions would form part of a publication. On this basis the vast majority of contributors have entrusted their works to the TRC in order that such pledges may be realised. The Commission accordingly calls on the TRC’s successor body or any provisional National Vision structure to take steps to fulfil these objectives and in particular to ensure that works of the contributors to the National Vision for Sierra Leone:

- are respected;
- are properly preserved;
- receive maximum public exposure and are not kept out of the public eye;
- are used to further the causes set out in the founding principles;
- are not used to further any political or commercial interests; and
- become part of a permanent exhibit in Sierra Leone.
31. The Commission further calls on the TRC’s successor body or provisional National Vision structure to strive towards the following objectives:

- promote artistic and scholarly expression in Sierra Leone and recognise artistic and scholarly drive and talent;
- complement and support the work of like-minded bodies, in particular Vision 2025, and collaborate with such bodies in joint projects;
- promote awareness and acknowledgement of the war by displaying Sierra Leoneans’ visions for the future and encouraging audiences to engage with them and the issues they address;
- promote unity and reconciliation by encouraging different stakeholders to gather together to discuss the contributions’ themes and possible ways to address problems raised;
- broaden discourse on how to implement, through individual and group actions, solutions to issues raised in the contributions by arranging workshops and conferences;
- empower individual Sierra Leoneans by serving as a vehicle for individual voices to be heard and engaged with;
- promote personal and communal healing by continuing to encourage the submission of contributions around the country;
- ensure that the National Vision for Sierra Leone remains a democratic, non-partisan, interactive and civic space representing all individuals regardless of age, background, region and religion; and
- encourage the National Vision to serve as a form of symbolic reparation through its status as a memorial.

Wilfred Thomas painted his contribution in the form of an eye, underlining vision and transparency. The scales of justice again lie at the centre, as does the flag. Images of a healthy society fill the eye, including classrooms full of children, cultivation of the country’s resources in the fields and at sea, paved roads and bridges, modern buildings, and different Sierra Leoneans holding hands in a gesture of reconciliation.
Extract from
“My Country”
By Mohamed Turay

Beneath forest trees
Lay my country covered with leaves
Trampled on by decades of misrule
Shoved to the bottom of the world’s pool
Then –
The sunbeam penetrates the earth
Excavating the man-made unenviable wrath
As the blood-drenched land weeps
The world struggles to make it leap
My country becomes a den
But I dreamt that at dawn
Peace and love cleared the gun
Propelled by unity, focus and forgiveness
Sierra Leone will again lie in the garden of bliss.

Extracts from
“My Vision, My Home, My Sierra Leone”
By Ustina More

There’s no place like home, like Sierra Leone
Where in spite of the family each struggles alone
Through the squalor of sewage and refuse that’s prone
To put anyone off from the place he calls home.

With the prospect of making it all on our own
We will drag ourselves out of this poverty zone
We will raise up our hearts and our voices as one
And we’ll find our way forward with some National Vision.

Ahmad Saiwo, of Peace Links Sierra Leone, submitted this novel “Vision” painting. He creates the “V” of “Vision” out of two hands praying. The “I” is a candle of peace, wrapped in barbed wire. The “O” of ‘Vision’ opens up into a rainbow that reveals the form of Sierra Leone. People from the four corners of the country represent diversity. At the centre again lie the scales of justice. In Ahmed’s vision, as represented by the even scales, every Sierra Leonean is equal before the law.
CONCLUSION

32. The TRC cannot claim to have developed a complete vision for a future Sierra Leone. Such a vision must be an ongoing project for all concerned Sierra Leoneans, to which the National Vision for Sierra Leone aims to contribute, as a developing record of the evolution of thoughts on the past and present and on vision for the future. A clear vision for the future of the country provides the objectives towards which we all must strive. It also provides the yardstick for the measurement of our progress.

33. The TRC campaign for a National Vision for Sierra Leone has produced a collection of contributions that form part of Sierra Leone’s national heritage. The contributions stand as testimony to what is possible in Sierra Leone. They speak of struggle and hope. The contributions inspire and challenge all of us to rise above the past and to build a better future. Their messages must be taken seriously.

Extract from
“My National Vision for Sierra Leone”
By Chinsia E. Caesar

“I want to see a Sierra Leone in which my people come together purposefully in pursuit of a different kind of national reconciliation... I want to see meaning given to that so-called spirit of love, unity and patriotism that is supposed to keep us together as one people and one country.

I picture myself travelling between Sierra Leone’s towns and villages on roads that are free of potholes... I picture myself walking through streets free of swarming dust and overflowing rubbish containers. I want to be free to fill my cup with taps that are running with safe drinking water; free to go out in the evenings under the light of functioning street lamps; free to make use of a power supply that runs for twenty-four hours a day.”
34. Perhaps most importantly, the National Vision has emphasised the significance of each individual contributor to Sierra Leone. The work of building a new and better Sierra Leone belongs to every stakeholder in Sierra Leone. The individuals who have lent their hopes and dreams for Sierra Leone to this exhibit are actors in the process – as is each visitor to the Exhibit – and as such they are all vehicles for change. The Exhibit is a catalyst and it is up to each individual to ensure that it maximises its potential to effect day-to-day change.

In the words of one National Vision contributor, Wurie Mamadu Tamba Barrie:

“The inspiration is let’s sprint; if we can’t sprint, let’s run; if we can’t run, let’s walk; if we also can’t walk, then let’s crawl; but in any way possible, let’s keep on moving.”

Santos Kallon, a 24-year old victim of the war, is an immensely skilled woodcarver and sculptor. He submitted a wooden statue in the person of a woman to represent his vision for Sierra Leone. On the back of the flag, Santos carved the words that his vision embodies: peaceful, as a woman represents peacetime; proud, as she stands tall with her shoulders back and head held high; patriotic, as she is wearing a cloth in the colours of the national flag; but humble, as her hands are behind her back and her eyes are gently closed. The woman’s positioning indicates the wish that all Sierra Leoneans stand together: under one flag, for one Salone.