



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF SIERRA LEONE



My dear young brothers and sisters, I write to you today not as a politician speaking from a distance, but as someone who has seen firsthand pain, frustration, and lost hope many young people in our country are living with.

The crisis facing our youth today is real. The drug crisis, in particular, has cut across families, communities, surnames, regions, and political parties. It does not discriminate. It has taken promising young lives, shattered homes, and left mothers and fathers grieving children who are still alive but slipping away.

This is not something I speak about from theory. My own family has been affected. A young nephew of mine who was very brilliant, full of promise, and doing well in school fell into this struggle at a very young age. Watching him deteriorate was heartbreaking. It was the first time I truly understood how destructive this crisis is, and how helpless families often feel when there is little support and no clear system to help young people recover. But beyond the drug itself, we must be honest about *why* many young people are vulnerable in the first place.

We live in a society that is still carrying deep wounds. The war may have ended in 2002, but its effects did not disappear with the signing of peace. Many young people grew up in an environment where promises were made but not fulfilled, where opportunities felt distant, and where the state often seemed absent from their daily struggles.

Out of this frustration, young people created their own spaces to survive, to talk, to belong. Places like the Ataya Base became more than just coffee spots, they became platforms for expression, discussion, and identity. In many ways, they were youth parliaments: spaces where young people talked about their pains, their anger, their dreams, and their hopes for a better Sierra Leone.

This should tell us something important: **young people are not disengaged, they are searching for inclusion.**

The truth is simple: when a society fails to involve its youth, the youth will find other ways to cope. When education does not lead to opportunity, frustration sets in. When talent meets unemployment, hope begins to fade. When young people feel ignored by the system, some turn to drugs, gangs, or destructive habits not because they want to fail, but because they feel abandoned. That is why I believe deeply that **youth inclusion is not optional, it is essential.**



If you complain about bad roads, it means you understand governance. If you complain about police misconduct, it means you understand justice. If you complain about healthcare, education, or unemployment, it means you understand how society should work. So I ask you this: if you understand these things, why stay away from the very system that determines them?

Ignoring politics is like ignoring your own life, your family, and your home. Politics is not just about elections or politicians, it is about decisions that shape your future. When young people step back, others step in to decide on their behalf. Every country where young people are excluded did not arrive there by accident. It happened because too many young people believed politics was not their business.

I want you to know this: your voice matters. Your ideas matter. Your future matters. There are many brilliant minds within our political spaces, within our party structures, and within our national institutions. Our history shows that progress is possible when discipline, vision, and character are valued.

Choose carefully who represents you. Not with anger. Not with violence. But with thought, patience, and courage. Support leadership that listens, that understands pain, that believes in systems over slogans, and that sees young people not as tools during elections, but as partners in nation-building.

Above all, believe that you belong. A citizen is someone who feels they have a name, a voice, and a stake in society. Sierra Leone will only rise when its young people stop seeing themselves as spectators and start seeing themselves as stakeholders.

I believe in you. I believe our country can do better. And I believe that with courage, discipline, and unity, you will not just inherit Sierra Leone, you will help rebuild it.

May hope guide you.
May wisdom strengthen you.
And may our nation rise through you.

Thank you.

Dr. Ibrahim Bangura



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