

# SIERRA LEONE CENTRAL UNION

Solid Achievements in 2013 & Greater Ambitions in 2014



United we stand Divided we fall

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## **Forward**

**Dear Compatriots,**

One of the joys of preparing an annual report is that it gives us the opportunity to look back and be thankful for all that has been accomplished. The past year was filled with wonderful opportunities and many challenges. Some of the highlights were:

2013 was an extraordinary year for our Union. We showed all and sundry how democratic the union is, by staging the most spectacular Chairmanship election. On board came The Sierra Leone Organisation in Bergen op Zoom. We also punched way above our weight by organising spectacular events such as: our Independence Day, Annual Outing and an end of year Dinner in the history of The Sierra Leone Central Union (SLCU) in The Netherlands. With a robust talent and network oriented policy, supported by a focused, motivated Leader, we are Strong, Smart and Moving Forward. And We Have Just Started! Thus, we will continue to act robustly and focus on 2014 as the year for total accomplishment. With all this in mind, I wish to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the many individuals who volunteered their time to contribute to the success of the SLCU last year. Special thanks are due to our brave Chairmen, Executive and Advisory Council members and other dedicated men and women who are on the wagon to bring prosperity and quality to our communities and in advancing the aspirations of the SLCU. You all deserve my thoughts and appreciation.

In this report, I present to you our achievements in 2013 both in terms of policy and finance and our plans ahead for 2014.

BY ... ABUBAKARR BANGURA

CHAIRMAN

## **Background information**

The Sierra Leone Central Union –The Netherlands (SLCU) is an organisation that emerged out of a consultative process involving Sierra Leoneans living in the Netherlands. The SLCU provides an umbrella to 14 Sierra Leonean organisations in The Netherlands and the leading organization of Sierra Leoneans in Mainland Europe.

The names of these organizations are highlighted below:

2. Sierra Leone Descendants Organisation - Breda
3. Sierra Leone Alliance –Schiedam
4. Sierra Leone Organisation - Dordrecht
5. Mensen in Actie Netherlands - Eindhoven
6. Sierra Leone Organisation - Helmond
7. Sierra Leone Humanitarian Association - Leiden
8. Club Sierra Leone Nederland - Nijmegen
9. Sierra Leone Progressive Union - Tilburg
10. Sierra Leone Association - Utrecht
11. Sierra Leone Patriotic Organization - Enschede
12. Sierra Leone Amsterdam United Foundation
13. Sierra Leone Humanitarian Organisation- Rotterdam
14. Sierra Leone Organisation- Bergen op Zoom

As a community organisation, we are guided by democratic principles which are outlined in our constitution and embedded in our organisational structure and modus operandi. Our members are mostly organised around themes of culture, empowerment and social advancement.

## **Mission**

We facilitate the integration of Sierra Leoneans in The Netherlands within the framework of Dutch government policy and stimulate Dutch-based Sierra Leoneans' active participation in the development of Sierra Leone.

To ensure SLCU's endeavors towards its goals are undertaken in an efficient and effective fashion, the Union has instituted three governing bodies: the General Assembly, the Executive Board and the Advisory Council.

*a. The General Assembly*

Each of the 14 member organisations is represented by three delegates, and they together form the General Assembly. The assembly convenes once every quarter for discussion and decision making. Proposals are passed with 2/3 majority and subsequently implemented by the Executive Board. These meetings rotate around the municipalities where the member organisations are located.

*b. The Executive Council Board*

The General Assembly is assisted by an elected Executive Council headed by the President with the main task of developing action programmes, formulating policy proposals, and communicating policies and activities to all Sierra Leoneans in The Netherlands, back home and elsewhere in the world. Members of the Executive Council are elected from all member organizations.

*c. The Advisory Council*

The Executive Council in turn is supported by an Advisory Council consisting of a team of able, experienced and respected elders from the Sierra Leonean community in The Netherlands.

The functions of the Advisory Council are to:

1. Advise on strategic and executive issues;
2. Monitor all SLCU programmes;
3. Serve as the custodian of the SLCU constitution;
4. Conduct free and fair elections.

### **3. Our methodology**

Our methodology is based on a democratic, participatory model, whereby the elected officers and grass-roots members exchange and develop actionable ideas during formal as well as non-formal discussions. As much as we embrace informal inputs from grass-roots members, we consistently ensure that proposals, policies, budgets, project plans and reports run through the formal structures of our Union as described above.

We encourage grass-roots members and member organizations to invest their time, energy and if needed money towards SLCU activities.

### **Our achievements in 2013**

The output of our methodology is reflected in the following achievements categorized in these five policy areas:

- Talent Development
- Organizational management
- Socio – cultural advancement in The Netherlands
- Development in Sierra Leone
- Home and Abroad Networking Policy.

### **Talent development**

Recognition and management of Sierra Leonean talents

Development is all about people. Thus, SLCU's topmost priority in 2013 was to develop the human capital within our diverse communities. We supported several initiatives.

SLCU invented a fresh network of Sierra Leonean talents in The Netherlands. We supported them financially and provided them with Awards in recognition of their contribution in our society. Below are the different initiatives we supported:

1. Artists Union
2. Djs
3. SL-Movie Makers
4. Sierra Leone Women Convention / Sisters Unite
5. ICT Group
6. Community Football Clubs
7. Children with special talents
8. Entrepreneurship
9. Culture
- 10.10 Catering

### **Community Work**

In 2014, we will move further to set up a Project Bank, collate a Database and more importantly continue to develop a Talent Management Programmes of a practical nature; in line with SLCU's socio-cultural development strategies.

We will stimulate the entrepreneurship mindset of our talents. Thus, regular workshops and meetings to foster the entrepreneurial mindset and skills amongst Sierra Leoneans here and back home will be organised from time to time.

*b. SLCU Lawyer*

We are delighted to inform members that we have now retained the services of a lawyer to represent the SLCU on refugee and immigration issues. We have put structures in place that will help provide incentives for our brothers and sisters in need and will continue to do so in 2014. However, such help as a union will be restricted to only registered members of our Union.

*c. The involvement of Sierra Leone women into our activities!*

We have been able to reach out to the women. The two well known women groups namely: The Sierra Leone Women Convention which is a project idea of our member organisation in Enshede and Sisters Unite, which is a project idea of another member organisation (M.I.A). in Eindhoven.

**Total number of persons reached**

Results in terms of the number of persons visited or who attended our events and visit our website is estimated in 2013 to be around 6000 people. We are proud of you all.

**Supplement on SLCU - 2014**

No	Activities	Total number of participants
1	Independence -Symposium	150
2	Independence -Night disco	450
3	June event -Outing	2000
4	June event –Show	1000
5	December dinner	130
6	General and executives meetings	150

**Organizational Management**

The year 2013 was an onward match for the organisation. Our achievements and management capabilities are all visible. Step by step we are getting recognition for the work we are doing as a union. We have done a great deal to build confidence among our communities.

**Our achievements are described below:**

1. In the first place a new member organisation from Bergen Op Zoom joined the SLCU, thereby bringing the total membership of organisations within the SLCU to 14.
2. We have been able to improve overall organizational direction.

Through mapping out our strategies for the coming years. Thereby making sure that we are able to follow our plan as a guide to direct the affairs of the Union in the coming years.

3. We visited several organisations in their cities. The aim being to get in touch with their members, listen and dialogue on the new policy direction of the SLCU. This we would continue to do in 2014.
4. Through our community touch, we are better placed to understand the achievements of SLCU member organisations. This was done through allowing each organization to make a short presentation of their activities, achievements and network relations in their various cities. We would highlight this in our annual report presentation in 2014. At the same time, we would surely continue to build and develop capacity of executive members; so as to help them develop welfare projects for their members and embark on viable development projects back home.
5. Advisory Council members were appointed by member organisations. The council is currently working hard to project issues that will enhance the development of a smart diaspora organisation (such as the SLCU) in Europe.
6. Subsidies were given to all organisations including the Advisory Council to help boost their financial standing.
7. Communication both within and outside the Union has been improved and we are happy about the positive comments we are getting for this very crucial step.
8. Finally, we established the SLCU office in The Hague. The Sierra Leone Central Union (SLCU) front office was opened in The Hague on the 30th of November, 2013 under the Distinguish Patronage of HE. Hon. Ibrahim Sorie, (Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium).

The functions of the office is to:

- Promote Sierra Leone's investment climate
- Map out, monitor and facilitate private sector lead programme(s) and project(s) that are meant to accelerate development in Sierra Leone
- Coordinate activities and programmes of all member organisations, as well develop projects for members and provide guidance for fund-raising and services.
- Serve as a resource and information centre for Sierra Leoneans in The Netherlands, the private sector, NGOs and other development partners.

## **Development in Sierra Leone**

We are working to create new jobs and new opportunities for small businesses upon construction of SLCU Business School in Lungi.

A high level delegation will visit Lungi in 2014 to meet and discuss the way forward.

SLCU will continue to work tirelessly in 2014 to construct and complete phase 1 of the school building, set up a management team and open the school for the first batch of 50 students to get access to state of the art education.

We were also able to get funding for the project from Wilde Ganzen. The 17,000 euros funding will be made available only when we are also able to also generate 17,000 euros in cash for the school. Our money will be handed over to Wilde Ganzen and both amounts will in turn be transferred to our project partner in Sierra Leone by Wilde Ganzen upon approval by the SLCU.

## **Home and Abroad Networking Policy.**

Increase cooperation with The Sierra Leonean Embassy in Brussels, networking with new emerging Sierra Leonean organisations in the Netherlands and in Europe and with companies interested in Sierra Leone are the ambitions we undertook in 2013. SLCU is strongly convinced that the conduct of our Networking Policy must be guided by profound changes that are taking place in our national and international environments.

Against this backdrop, the SLCU continue to play an active role in networking and increasing cooperation with the Sierra Leone Embassy. More specifically, we will champion with renewed vigour the cause and ideals of the SLCU. The communique with the Embassy in 2013 is departure points for our relationship in the coming years. Our collaboration with the Embassy will be guided by the extent to which such co-operation will enhance our productive capacity that will benefit SLCU.

Moreover, H.E. Dr Ernest Bai Koroma is expected to The Netherlands in April 2014. We are currently working together with Embassy and all stakeholders in The Netherlands to make this visit a success.

To effectively facilitate this, the SLCU is now taking the lead for implementation of a joint project with the Embassy. Part of this project is to facilitate a meeting with the Mayors of Amsterdam, Arnhem,



Enschede, Tilburg, Nijmegen and Utrecht respectively. It is to present Sierra Leone's case for business partnership between companies in both countries. Such a move we are convinced will enhance the building of a strong business network that will join us to jointly welcome His Excellency, President Ernest Bai Koroma during his visit to The Netherlands in April, 2014.

Our connection with Sierra Leonean community in Mainland Europe has been robust in 2013 and we will continue that in 2014. Thus, we recognise the need to reach out to Sierra Leoneans in other Mainland Europe namely: Germany, France and Belgium. This year, SLCU delegations consisting of 40 members, paid visit to Germany, and another delegation visited Belgium to network with our counterparts. The Sierra Leonean organization in France has also been contacted for networking and cooperation.

With this connecting relationship made in 2013, we hope to provide a good starting point in 2014 to design and open the first Sierra Leonean digital platform organization in Europe. This platform is meant to exchange ideas and coordinate our work in mobilizing the Sierra Leonean community across Europe.

### **Emerging Sierra Leone organisations in The Netherlands**

The emergence of new social organisations in The Netherlands by Sierra Leoneans, presents both an opportunity and a concern to the SLCU and its membership. It may dilute our diaspora's limited human resources, duplicate efforts, confuse external stakeholders, etc. Thus we have reached out to various organisations, some of which were provided with subsidies. In 2014, we will move on to structure all such relationships.

Our network relationship in Sierra Leone is gaining grounds.

We had contact with the Open Government Initiative headed by Madam Kadajah Sesay. OGI is the bridge between government and the people and works with civil society groups in the country as well as in the diaspora. We awarded the Sierra Leone Brewery Limited, The Africa Minerals Company for their contributions to the economy of our country. We also awarded IAMTECT for their contribution to the educational development of Sierra Leone and to Jimmy B for his contribution to cultural building.

We will continue our network relationship with these institutions and 2014 and will extend stronger linkages with the Office of the Diaspora at

State House, to increase our influence on diaspora issues

### **SLCU Financing**

Please see below the income and expenditure statement of SLCU in 2013. We started with 1,000.25 euros in March 2013, with a debt of 370 euros. Despite this financial down turn, we struggled to work hard, relied on friends and organisations that provided an interest free lending to SLCU. Such monies were used to organise various events in 2013 and supporting SLCU projects.

At the end of the year, we ended up with a positive amount of -/+6000 euros. We succeeded in bringing to our coffer another 17000 euros for construction of the school. This amount is still with the Wilde Ganzen. Contract to reserve the money for the school project at Lungi has been signed and posted to the organisation in Hilversum.

Mr. Mompleh Jalloh has yet to refund our 12,000.50 euros he illicitly withdrew from the SLCU bank account at the begining of the year. Several attempts were made to retrieve this amount from him. All to no avail. The issue has been reported to the police and it is expected to be brought to court in 2014. The SLCU Advisory Council is also working on the issue.

With a clean track record in the past, we will continue to appeal to our partners to fund our activities in 2014.

The breakdown of all expenditures in 2013 and receipt are available and will be provided through SLCU Financial Secretary when needed.

### **Our action plan for 2014**

The plan activities for 2014 will be guided by our experience in 2013. That is why we will continue to push hard to provide incentives for only those organisations and individuals that are doing extremely well in promoting SLCU activities.

26 April- Independent show,

9 Augustus -Outing / After-Outing Show

20 December –End of year Dinner

Goal is to create a social meeting point for Sierra Leoneans and their counterparts in The Netherlands and beyond. To share ideas about integration and development. Raise substantial income and create awareness to boost our developmental programmes in Sierra Leone.  
Development Programmes

To develop talents, provide a quality work force and be responsible citizens of the country after the civil war.

Continue visit to organisations

Our goal during this visit will be to communicate the content of our new constitution, share ideas on our programmes and activities to all members. Opinions and data collected will be used for future planning, in organising programmes for promoting and serving the needs of Sierra Leonean at home and abroad.

- \* April and May-Visit of the President and Trade Mission To Sierra Leone
- \* End of year activities to celebrate the SLCU's 10th Anniversary
- \* Goal is to create a social gathering for information and dissemination on progress made with the SLCU this year.
- \* General and 2 Executive Meetings
- \* Lastly to partner with the Voice magazine to make known our activities in the year.

Thank you all and stay in touch with us.