



When Fuel Prices Rise, Citizens Pay the Price

A BudgIT Sierra Leone's perspective

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In Sierra Leone today, the rising cost of fuel is becoming a serious concern for many citizens, especially the ordinary citizens. Fuel is not only used for vehicles; it affects almost every part of daily life. When fuel prices go up, transportation becomes more expensive, the price of food commodities increases, and businesses struggle to operate. For ordinary citizens who are already managing limited incomes, these constant increases are making life more difficult.

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NLe 32 per litre



Earlier this year, on 28 January 2026, the government through the National Petroleum Regulatory Authority announced an increase in fuel prices. The price of petrol and diesel rose from NLe 25 to NLe 28.50 per litre, while kerosene increased to NLe 26.76 per litre.

However, the pressure did not stop there. As recently as 7th of March 2026, the government announced another adjustment, raising the price of petrol and diesel to NLe 32 per litre. This means fuel prices have increased significantly within a short period of time, creating serious pressure on the cost of living for ordinary citizens.

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How This Affects Ordinary People

For many Sierra Leoneans, the effect of these increases is immediate.



First, transport fares go up. Drivers of poda-poda, taxis, okadas, and kekehs rely on fuel to run their businesses. When fuel becomes more expensive, they have no choice but to increase transport fares. This affects workers, students, and traders who depend on public transportation every day.

Second, food commodities become more expensive. Farmers and traders must transport goods from rural areas to urban markets. When the cost of fuel increases, the cost of transporting food also increases. As a result, the prices of basic items like vegetables, fish, rice, and cassava products rise in the market.



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How This Affects Ordinary People



Third, small businesses struggle to survive. Many businesses in Sierra Leone depend on generators because electricity supply is not always reliable and available. When fuel prices increase, the cost of running generators also increases. For small shop owners, tailors, welders, and restaurant operators, this means spending more money just to keep their businesses open.



In simple terms, when fuel prices rise, everything else becomes more expensive, and the burden falls mostly on ordinary citizens.

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Why does this matter for Public Accountability

The government has explained that fuel prices are based on a system that considers several factors. These include the price of oil on the international market, shipping and insurance costs, the exchange rate between the Leone and the US dollar, and government taxes and charges on petroleum products.

Because Sierra Leone imports all of its fuel, any change in global oil prices or the value of the Leone can quickly affect the price at the pump.



While these explanations are important, many citizens are concerned about how frequently prices are increasing, the extreme vulnerability of the country and how little protection exists for low-income households.

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What Can Be Done: Recommendations

As an organization that promotes transparency and accountability in public finance, BudgIT Sierra Leone believes that more can be done to reduce the impact of rising fuel prices on citizens.

1

Improve Transparency in Fuel Pricing

Government should clearly explain how fuel prices are calculated and publish simple information that citizens can understand. This will help build trust and allow citizens to know exactly what they are paying for.

2

Review Taxes on Fuel

Some of the taxes and charges on fuel could be reviewed, especially during difficult economic periods, to reduce pressure on citizens.

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What Can Be Done: Recommendations

3

Invest in Reliable Public Transport

A stronger and more affordable public transportation system would help reduce the burden on citizens who depend on daily transport.

4

Promote Alternative Energy

The government should invest more in renewable energy, such as solar power. This will help businesses and households reduce their dependence on fuel generators.

5

Support Vulnerable Citizens

Social support programs should be expanded to help low-income households cope with rising living costs.

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What Can Be Done: Recommendations

Conclusively, fuel price increases are not just numbers announced by authorities; they affect the daily lives of people across Sierra Leone. From transportation to food and business operations, the impact is felt everywhere.

At a time when many citizens are already struggling with the cost of living, it is important for government policies to focus on protecting the most vulnerable while ensuring transparency and accountability in how fuel prices are managed.



For BudgIT Sierra Leone, the goal remains clear: to ensure that economic decisions work in the interest of citizens and that public policies help improve the lives of ordinary Sierra Leoneans.



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