



# **CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING GROUP ON EPIDEMICS AND NATURAL DISASTERS IN SIERRA LEONE**



**Motto:** *'Ensuring health accountability in Sierra Leone'*

**Office Address:** No. 89 Fort Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa

**Tel:** +232 79167457/ +23299954470

**Email Address:** [csoonepidemics@yahoo.com](mailto:csoonepidemics@yahoo.com)

## **COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE MONITORING OF THE THREE DAYS LOCKDOWN IN SIERRA LEONE (3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020)**

**RESEARCHED & COMPILED BY:**

**THE CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING GROUP ON EPIDEMICS  
AND NATURAL DISASTERS IN SIERRA LEONE**

**SUBMITTED TO:**

**THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SANITATION,  
THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR and the SPOKESPERSON  
(E.O.C COVID -19 SECRETARIAT)  
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE**

**MAY 2020**

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## ACRONYMS

<b>AU</b>	<b>Africa Union</b>
<b>APC</b>	<b>All Peoples Congress</b>
<b>COVID-19</b>	<b>Coronavirus Disease discovered in 2019</b>
<b>CSO</b>	<b>Civil Society Organizations</b>
<b>EOC</b>	<b>Emergency Operation Center</b>
<b>ECOWAS</b>	<b>Economic Community of West Africa States</b>
<b>ESCR</b>	<b>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</b>
<b>GNP</b>	<b>Gross National Product</b>
<b>HCP</b>	<b>Health Care Personnel</b>
<b>ICCPR</b>	<b>International Convention on Civil and Political Rights</b>
<b>ICESCR</b>	<b>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</b>
<b>ICU</b>	<b>Intensive Care Unit</b>
<b>MERS</b>	<b>Middle East Respiratory Syndrome</b>
<b>MoHS</b>	<b>Ministry of Health and Sanitation</b>
<b>NGC</b>	<b>National Grand Coalition</b>
<b>PPE</b>	<b>Personal Protective Equipment</b>
<b>SARS</b>	<b>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome</b>
<b>SLPP</b>	<b>Sierra Leone Peoples Party</b>
<b>SGBV</b>	<b>Sexual and Gender-Based Violence</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UDHR</b>	<b>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</b>
<b>WFP</b>	<b>World Food Programme</b>
<b>WHO</b>	<b>World Health Organization</b>

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report focuses on the human rights challenges that occurred during the three days lockdown in Sierra Leone. The sudden emergence of COVID-19 has posed a serious challenge to the political economy of governments across the world Sierra Leone being no exception. At the time of releasing this report, the novel Coronavirus has already killed about 270,000 people globally and infected over 3,805,000 people. While in Sierra Leone, the number of people affected by the virus remains at 231, recoveries 54 and 16 deaths.

The government's response in managing the COVID 19 crisis requires encroaching on the human rights space of the people. Hence, the monitoring and examination of the handling of the coronavirus pandemic is crucial to developing models for protecting the human rights of citizens during the crisis period.

This report explores the epidemiology and implications of the coronavirus, including the meaning of Coronavirus, its origin, preventive measures as well as other viruses that have invaded human history and their similarities and differences with coronavirus.

The report further examines the Human Rights framework within the context of management of COVID-19 pandemic through the medium of emergency powers and rights limitations. It raises a question on the absolutism of Human rights by looking at permissible grounds under which human rights can be curtailed in a state of health emergency. Government's obligation under international human rights laws is also assessed.

An extensive analysis is provided in the report regarding the happenings (positive and negative) that took place before, during and post lockdown. The report highlights some of the human rights-related issues and the enforcement of compliance by government security players in directive and in the management of the pandemic during the lockdown.

The report also explored the socio-economic and human rights challenges encountered by vulnerable groups and communities before, during and post lockdown as well as the government's response in managing these human rights challenges. No doubt, examining the human rights challenges of the coronavirus pandemic is crucial to developing models for protecting the human rights of citizens during the COVID-19 era.

The report called for a joint concerted effort by all to de-escalate the political tensions in the country and redirect a united focus on the fight against COVID- 19.

The report concludes by making specific recommendations to the Government of Sierra Leone, Ministries, Departments and Agencies, the EOC, Civil Societies, the press and the Public

## **PART 1**

### **Background formation of the Civil Society Working Group**

On the 23rd of March 2020, thirty Civil Society Organizations met at the Office of LEGAL LINK and agreed to form a Civil Society Working Group on Epidemics and Natural Disasters in Sierra Leone in a bid to compliment the efforts of government in the fight against COVID 19 in Sierra Leone. A Memorandum of Agreement and Terms of Reference were further developed as legal and regulatory frameworks to guide the operations of the Working Group. Also, a Steering Committee was selected to superintend over the affairs of the Working Group. As at the time of this report, the membership of the Working Group stands at 40.

### **Objectives and Mandate of the Working Group:**

The objectives and mandate of the Working Group are as follows:

1. To monitor and ensure transparency and accountability in the fight against epidemics and natural disasters in Sierra Leone.
2. To raise awareness and sensitization on epidemics and natural disasters including the coronavirus.
3. To lobby and advocate for increased support and interventions in a bid to prevent and or eradicate the coronavirus in Sierra Leone.
4. To engage in report writing and documentation of findings on epidemics and natural disasters including Coronavirus enquiries and investigations.
5. To make strong recommendations to the government, international partners and other stakeholders for legal, institutional and policy reforms regarding the coronavirus.

The Motto of the Civil Society Working Group is: *'Ensuring Health Accountability in Sierra Leone'*.

## **Methodology adopted during the monitoring of the 3 days lockdown**

Observation

Personal interviews

Random sampling techniques

## **Scope of the report**

This report covers monitoring that was done pre, during and post- lockdown (30<sup>th</sup> April to 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020). Even though the report primarily focuses on monitoring that was done within the Freetown Municipality, it however also captures other monitoring activities in the North, South, East and North Western regions of Sierra Leone.

## **Limitations**

- ❖ Few passes were given to the Consortium and hence much of its members were unable to participate in the monitoring exercise throughout the country. In the provinces in particular, the Working Group largely depended on observation reports from human rights activists and sister organizations to analyze the human rights situation in the provinces during the lockdown period.
- ❖ The Working Group never received any funding from the government of Sierra Leone which would have helped empowered them to cover wider areas.
- ❖ Funding of the monitoring exercise came largely from personal contributions of members.

**Statistics of covid-19 confirmed cases, death and survival update from the EOC Secretariat  
as of 6<sup>th</sup> may 2020**



**SIERRA LEONE GOVERNMENT  
COVID-19 NATIONAL RESPONSE  
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE (EOC)  
WILKINSON ROAD, FREETOWN**

**STATUS UPDATE FOR COVID-19**

**Freetown 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020      Time: 11 AM**

Total Cumulative confirmed positive cases	225
Total number of deaths	14
Active New Cases	26
Active cases at Isolation Centres	157
Cumulative recoveries	54
Number currently in quarantine	1,660
Number discharged from quarantine	1,759

For more information, visit our websites [www.mic.gov.sl](http://www.mic.gov.sl) and [www.dhse.gov.sl](http://www.dhse.gov.sl) or call +232-76,622-914; 76-602-460

-END-



Solomon Jamiru Esq

**Spokesperson**



## **Human Rights Obligations during the COVID 19 Pandemic**

No doubt, the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in many countries across the world has posed serious challenges on human rights. In the management of COVID-19 pandemic, many countries have introduced restrictions such as lockdowns, curfews, stay at home order which have restricted citizen's freedom of movement in fundamental terms.

In Sierra Leone, as a strategy to dealing with the Corona virus, a state of public emergency has been declared and several lockdowns have been declared including a curfew. Such measures have had direct and indirect impacts on citizen's fundamental rights. In Sierra Leone, the human rights of citizens are not only protected by the constitution, but also domestic, international and regional human rights laws and instruments.

The pertinent questions however to ask are: is the method adopted by the State in managing the COVID-19 pandemic, not in conflict with human rights laws? How well has the State been able to leverage on the exceptions granted within the framework of international human rights law for the state to restrict some of these rights, in exceptional situations, without being overbearing?

International treaties guarantee the protection non-derogable rights such as the right to life, right to freedom from torture, inhumane and degrading treatment and genocide. These rights must never be limited even in a COVID crisis. According to article 6 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and People's for example, the right to life is guaranteed. In addition, the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights also makes provisions for the protection of 'right to life. In both treaties, the government is obligated to protect the right to life and the right to health of citizens at all times.

### **Emergency powers**

In managing COVID-19, most countries declared a "state of emergency", ie a proclamation that this is not normal times. A state of emergency provides the use of emergency powers to limit fundamental rights. Different countries have used different names to proclaim their state of emergency as allowed within their constitution. Part of the implications of declaring a state of emergency in the context of the coronavirus is the restriction of rights and eventual suspension of constitutions.

### **The obligation of state parties under state of emergency powers**

The treaty monitoring bodies for the respective international covenants and the Human Rights Council have expressed specific obligations that states need to abide by under a state of emergency.

#### **a. Treaty Obligation**

Several international treaties did ring-fence some provisions as „untouchable“ in the limiting of rights. Such provisions are known as non-derogable rights. Such rights cannot be put into derogation or suspension.

## **b. Procedural Obligations**

State party derogating from the convention by using state of emergency powers must do so with the predominant objectives of ‘restoration of state normalcy where full respect for the covenant can again be secured’.

## **c. Compensatory Obligation**

The Human Rights Council has argued that Article 2(3) of the Covenant requires a state party to the Covenant to provide remedies for any violations of the provision of the covenant.

## **Citizens Obligation under a state of emergency**

The United Nations International treaty regimes did not place any obligation on the rights holders. Such an obligation is found in the Africa Human Rights Regime. The Africa charter on human and people’s rights under articles 27 and 28 demand responsibility from the right holders to cooperate with the states in a situation such as this pandemic.

The relevant articles states: Article 27 (1) “Every individual shall have duties towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. (2)The rights and freedoms of each individual shall be exercised with due regard to the rights of others, collective security, morality and common interest”.

(28) “Every individual shall have the duty to respect and consider his fellow beings without discrimination and to maintain relations aimed at promoting, safeguarding and reinforcing mutual respect and tolerance”.

## **Civil Society Obligation under a state of emergency.**

The state of emergency is a period where state derogates from their obligations. In this context, Human Rights institutions and civil society organizations must ensure the monitoring of compliance with human rights obligations during this period.

It is crucial to monitor compliance to non –derogable rights, including standard international customary law on torture and non-discrimination. It is also important to monitor even the derogable rights so that they are not abused.

## **African Commission State Parties Obligations Requirements:**

The African Commission, the treaty bodies that monitor compliance to the Africa charter in its press statement of 24 March 2020, came up with 13 Obligations to the state parties of the African Charter. These obligations include the principle of legality, Non- discrimination and equality, Access to information, Primacy of timely preventive and containment measures, addressing challenges of non-implementation and compliance and Protection of vulnerable groups. Others are Prisons and other places of detention, the right to health, Solidarity and duty of individuals, private sector, community leaders, media and religious institutions, Respect for human and peoples’ rights, Mitigation measures and Monitoring, investigation and corrective measures. It is important

that the state of Sierra Leone takes cognizance of this press release and implement the directives therein.

## **PART 2**

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS DURING THE 3 DAYS LOCKDOWN**

#### **PRE-LOCKDOWN (30<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2020)**

##### **Area of coverage**

Freetown Municipality (Western Urban and Rural), South, North, East and North West regions

After the pronouncement of the 3 days lockdown by his Excellency on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2020, the following were observed.

##### **Positive**

- The Emergency Operation Centre was put into full swing operation before the lockdown.
- There was an introduction of an E-pass system by EOC which helped reduce the tensions of fighting and overcrowding at the EOC office for passes.
- Efforts were made by the government to implement Cash transfers and foodstuffs to vulnerable groups through NACSA. Commencing before the lockdown.
- Monthly financial support was disbursed to the Ministry of Health by the government to aid the fight against COVID 19.
- Update on the COVID 19 and relevant information on the 3 days lockdown was made available by the spokesperson of the COVID 19 secretariat.

##### **Challenges**

- ❖ There were problems with orange money and Africell money transactions before the lockdown leading to panic within the city and difficulty to even purchase electricity and recharge meter during the three days lockdown.
- ❖ Political tensions were on the increase between the ruling party and the main opposition party creating distraction in the fight against COVID 19.
- ❖ Some few arrest and detention of political opponents were also done during this period.
- ❖ There was a report of an escape of case 90 from the isolation centre thereby posing a serious threat to the general population.

- ❖ Since the declaration, there were hike in prices of essential commodities leading to acute hardship on the vulnerable population. Not much was done by the government in terms of policies and regulations to address price controls at the material time.
- ❖ The announcement of a three days lockdown further exacerbated the situation. Even though we commend the government of Sierra Leone for given a few days' notice before the lockdown takes effect, there was an outright lack of policies or regulations to deal with price hiking of essential commodities in the market.
- ❖ There was also an acute shortage of pipe borne water supply in most communities especially in the eastern part of Freetown before the days leading to the lockdown thereby leading to panic and scramble for water among the civilian population.
- ❖ Fuel shortage was also noticed before the days leading to the lockdown thereby creating room for artificial scarcity and black market sales.

### **DURING THE LOCKDOWN (day 1- 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020)**

#### **Area of coverage**

Freetown Municipality (Western Urban and Rural), South, North, East and North West regions.

#### **General observations and findings**

##### **Positive**

- ❖ There was full cooperation on the part of the masses to stay indoors.
- ❖ Orderliness in terms of control and enforcement of the lockdown by the security personnel.
- ❖ No report of police brutality or inhumane and degrading treatment of defaulters.
- ❖ Some few Organisations helping out with food to vulnerable communities.
- ❖ There was effort by the government to implement Cash transfers and foodstuffs to vulnerable groups through NACSA.
- ❖ Cleaning of the CBD area by FCC.
- ❖ Some petrol stations were allowed to operate in order to help assist CSOs, health workers and security personnel to fuel their cars and be able to do their work in such periods.

##### **Challenges**

- Light scarcity.
- Water scarcity in the East but kudoos to the Ministry of Water resources in partnership with the Military police for providing water to a large part of the Easter community.

- Bough holes were opened up and people were allowed to come out in the Street in limited numbers to fetch water. The Hon Deputy Minister of Water Resources was also seen supervising.
- Bakeries and pharmacies remained closed.
- Buses were seen helping out with the transportation of health workers and security personnel.
- Poor organization of cash transfers. There were lots of complaints from disabled people in the East and Northern provinces who were unable to benefit from the cash transfers.
- Use of face masks by the population remains a challenge.
- Respect for social distancing also remains a challenge.
- Private health centres and pharmacies were also closed during the lockdown period.
- We further noted that Bakeriesthat produce bread were not allowed to operate during the lockdown.

By and large however, on the first day, people largely respected the lockdown throughout the country.

## **DURING THE LOCKDOWN (Day 2 - 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020)**

### **Arears of Coverage**

Freetown Municipality (Western Urban and Rural), South, North, East and North West regions.

### **General observations and findings**

#### **Positive**

- ❖ Efforts were also made to keep the CBD clean by the FCC.
- ❖ There was presence of large number of humanitarian Organisations distributing food stuffs and hygiene equipment to vulnerable groups and communities.
- ❖ Efforts were also made to verify the E passes that were given by the EOC by police officers at various checkpoints.
- ❖ Buses were seen helping out with the transportation of health workers and security personnel.

#### **Challenges**

- ❖ Private healthcare centres and pharmacies remained closed.
- ❖ Bakeries were also closed.
- ❖ Water and electricity supply was still a challenge in some areas.

- ❖ There was also an incident of police brutality and inhumane treatment of defaulters on second day. The video is presently in circulation. This was however minimal in scale and degree.
- ❖ There was report of some firing incidence around the Special Court, New England ville area in the early morning hours of day 2.
- ❖ As a result, security was heightened, checkpoints increased and checking of vehicles became robust.
- ❖ There were reports of Police arrests and excess use of force on some youth at Lunsar on day 2.
- ❖ Water and light challenges was also present in many areas particularly in East and Central parts of Freetown.

### **DURING THE LOCKDOWN (Day 3 - 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020)**

#### **Areas covered**

Freetown Municipality (Western Urban and Rural), South, North, East and North West regions.

#### **General observations and findings**

##### **Positive**

- ❖ Much improvement was seen in terms of responding to the challenges of days 1 and 2.
- ❖ Buses were seen taken health workers and security officers to work and security stations respectively.
- ❖ Thanks to the Press Secretary for coming out with a timely update on that. It helped to quell down the tensions.

##### **Challenges**

- There were reports of vehicles apprehended with harmful and dangerous weapons like cutlasses and knives by the police especially in the provinces.
- Non observance of social distancing.
- Light and water still remained a challenge.
- There were heightened tension particularly in the evening hours or day 3 by a good number of communities over rumours of the president announcing an extended lockdown.
- Private health centres and pharmacies were closed.
- Bakeries were also closed during the third day.

## **POST LOCKDOWN OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS - (Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020)**

### **Areas covered**

Freetown Municipality (Western Urban and Rural), South, North, East and North West regions.

### **General observations and findings**

#### **Positive**

- Case 90 who escaped from quarantine has now been captured.
- Normalization of business operations was generally evident right across the country after the lockdown.

#### **Challenges**

- ❖ Persistent price hike in essential commodities remains a serious challenge.
- ❖ There were a few disturbances that occurred on Wednesday morning at Tombo Village community where Youth and fishermen went on the rampage because of measures being introduced to restrict the number of boats going to fish at sea.
- ❖ As a result of the rebellion that took place a lot of collateral damage occurred and also loss of lives.
- ❖ Police responded to the uprising and arrested a good number of youth and declared a curfew within the Tombo Village Community Area.
- ❖ Inter district partial lockdown and curfew still remain enforce after the lockdown
- ❖ There are still rumors making the rounds on social media that an extended lockdown will soon be announced. The silence on this issue by the authorities after the 3days lockdown has created further unrest among the population.
- ❖ Observance of social distancing still remains a big challenge in all regions in Sierra Leone.



### **PART 3**

#### **GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ❖ It is no gainsaying to opine that, the COVID 19 fight in Sierra Leone has been largely strangled by overt political tensions, bickering and animosity. There is therefore a need for urgent steps to be taken in ensuring a complete de-escalation of political tensions in the country.
- ❖ We call on the Inter-Religious Council, the International partners and donor community to facilitate an urgent Consultative meeting between His Excellency, President Julius Maada Bio and former president Ernest Bai Koroma so as to dissipate tensions between and amongst supporters of the ruling party and that of the main opposition party.
- ❖ In a bid to avoid distractions in the fight against COVID 19 and to further ensure unity and social cohesion in the COVID fight, we strongly advise the state to limit its arrest and clamping down of opposition members and stakeholders, and where practicable consider the granting of bail to all those that are currently being detained at the criminal Investigations Department awaiting charges and court trials.
- ❖ While condemning the acts of youths and fishermen of Tombo village in taking the law into their hands, it is important to also emphasize that the seeming lack of a consolidated set of clear and predictable regulations for COVID 19 did contribute in exacerbating the Tombo crisis situation. We therefore call on the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to speedily develop the COVID 19 regulations as required by section 29 of the 1991 Constitution and bring them before Parliament for approval so as to legitimize the restrictions, ensure certainty and predictability in the ongoing limitations of fundamental human rights.
- ❖ To avoid a reoccurrence of the Timbo issue, we urge Parliament to demand that all COVID 19 regulations be laid before it for approval pursuant to section 170 7 and to also provide conscious oversight in the implementation of such measures and regulations by Ministries, Department and Agencies of the state.
- ❖ We further call on the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone to launch a public inquiry into the violence that occurred in LUNSAR and TOMBO communities and also be more robust and vigilant in protecting the human rights of Sierra Leoneans during the COVID 19 crisis.
- ❖ Overt transparency should be shown by the EOC to let the people of Sierra Leone know who and who has been affected with the Coronavirus. We did make this call in our last lockdown report when we only had 7 confirmed cases but it was never adhered to. Unfortunately today, the confirmed cases have geometrically increased to about 225 while the total number of corona deaths has risen beyond 10. Hiding the identity of the affected people will undermine effective tracing of primary contacts, isolation and quarantine and even possible support from the public in the process. In a state of emergency, it is vital to

pinpoint that the right to confidentiality and privacy is limited and cannot be allowed to jeopardize the public interest. The probative value of disclosure far outweighs the prejudicial effect on the person and character of the victim. Also, since the whole world is being affected with the Coronavirus, the fear of stigmatization of victims when their identities are made known is of no moment.

- ❖ We call on His Excellency, the chief human rights defender of the nation to suspend and endorse an immediate review of the Chief Justice's regulation to suspending court sessions and trials for such a long period. As we have all noted, the closure of court proceedings have gravely undermined fundamental human rights in the country. Today, many accused persons on remand are languishing in prison unjustly while suspects are being held unlawfully at the CID without being charged to court, which is a clear violation of section 17 of the 1991 constitution. We maintain that social distancing measures, the use of facemasks and hand washing protocols can always be enforced during court sittings to help minimize the possibility of the spread of the virus.
- ❖ Again, like it did occur in the first lockdown, in this three days lockdown also, there was an apparent neglect to shelter the homeless and mentally challenged persons. In the event of any future lockdowns, we urge the state to have a strategy for homeless people and mentally retarded persons. We recommend that they are taken to the National Stadium, sheltered and fed during the lockdown period to prevent them from being exposed to contamination of the Coronavirus and possible transmission. This is what South Africa has done during its 21 days lockdown.
- ❖ While we commend the state for providing cash transfers and food items to vulnerable groups before the lockdown, it is vital to however pinpoint that the coordination by NACSA of the cash transfers was poor and largely disorganized leading to the neglect of a considerable number of vulnerable persons especially PWDs. We therefore recommend going forward that a special task force comprising of Disable Persons Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and the Disability Commission be set up to ensure that the welfare of PWDS are effectively catered for during anyfuture lockdowns.
- ❖ We also call on His Excellency as Chancellor of the University of Sierra Leone to ensure that the Ministry of Tertiary and Higher Education develops a COVID 19 education strategy for the speedy reopening of at least universities and tertiary institutions in a safe and healthy manner that is in compliance with social distancing measures, the use of sanitizers and hand washing facilities as well as facemasks by all students and lecturers.
- ❖ Also, private healthcare and community healthcare centres and a few pharmacies should be allowed to operate on an emergency basis during lockdowns.
- ❖ A few bakeries should also be allowed to operate on a well-managed basis during lockdowns to guarantee cheaper food alternatives.

- ❖ NATCOM should ensure to develop policies and regulations that will prevent and or minimize the challenges in use of Africell and Orange money by the populace during pre-lockdown periods. The shutdown of Orange and Africell money a day to the lockdown should never be allowed to happen again in the country. The harm done by such unavailability especially to vulnerable communities during the 3 days lockdown cannot be quantified. Furthermore, the need for promotions, free calls, internet services and unhindered communications especially during lockdowns cannot be overemphasized.
- ❖ There should be strong policy or regulation by government through the Ministry of Trade regarding price controls especially for essential goods prior to any lockdown. The practice of traders to make excessive profits at such moments at the expense of the suffering masses should be discouraged.
- ❖ We strongly recommend for a definite expiration timeframe to be stated regarding the Inter District Lockdown and curfew so as minimize the hardship, ensure predictability and full cooperation from the public.
- ❖ Despite the commendable efforts that were made by the government in the area of water and energy supply during the lockdown, it is vital to emphasize that challenges still exists. We therefore recommend that water and energy supply should be made available at a free cost during any future lockdowns. Many countries are doing this at the moment. The Ghanaian government for example has committed to giving free water supply to all Ghanaians for a period of 3 months and at no cost to help cushion the hardship on the vulnerable population. Such mitigating measures can be floated by the government of Sierra Leone at this time to mitigate the hardship which fighting Coronavirus brings along with it.
- ❖ We also recommend that the IRN RADIO platform be maintained at least 3 times a week during the Coronavirus crisis period and not just during lockdowns in order to help with effective and sustainable advocacy and awareness raising throughout the country.
- ❖ A great deal of motivation, support and incentives in the form of PPEs, risk allowances and foodstuffs should be provided to healthcare workers who are at the frontline of this fight.
- ❖ We also call on the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Inter-Religious Council and all religious umbrella bodies to work together and develop a COVID 19 religious strategy for the speedy reopening of all churches and mosques in the country in a safe and healthy manner that is in compliance with social distancing measures, the use of sanitizers and hand washing facilities as well as facemasks by worshippers.
- ❖ Proper management and accountability should also be maintained on the funds and donations that are being made by the international community, donor partners and private businesses on the fight against the Coronavirus in order to prevent another Corona gate inquiry or legal action at the ECOWAS COURT as it is currently with the Ebola.

- ❖ We urge the Sierra Leone police to display the highest form of professionalism during the COVID 19 crisis period and to deviate from excessive use of force, inhumane and degrading treatment to defaulters.
- ❖ Sierra Leone do not have a Defense Production Act like many countries do which might have compelled private institutions, businesses and MDA's to produce essential products and commodities that are needed to help address situations of emergencies like this. Parliament should therefore consider the passing of such a legislation going forward like is the case in many nations across the world. However, in the interim, Government should ensure that the military, the police and private tailoring businesses embark on massive production of PPE's and masks for healthcare workers and the general public should the worse happen.
- ❖ We also recommend the passing of a regulation that mandates the wearing of masks by all citizens when interfacing with the public or public space. These include market women, street hawkers and vulnerable groups who are among the high risk of spreading the virus.
- ❖ Since the number of positive cases has continued to increase at a geometric progression, we recommended an extended 7 days lockdown to offset the spread chain. However, where such lockdown is to be enforced, the government should give at least a week notification and all of the aforementioned recommendations must be put in place by to mitigate the hardship of a prolonged lockdown.
- ❖ The government should ensure that adequate financial support be provided to Civil Society Organizations to help with awareness raising and sensitization of COVID 19 to remote and vulnerable communities throughout the country. Such support should not be disbursed in a selective or discriminatory way. Also, adequate passes should be given out to CSO's and journalists to be able to do effective monitoring during such periods inorder to bring out observations that will lead to policy and legal reforms in the country.
- ❖ Finally, the right to health must be made justiciable in our Constitution so that the government will prioritize healthcare in their agenda going forward. At the moment, the constitution of Sierra Leone does not guarantee the right to health. This is a sad state of affairs and must be reversed immediately. The biggest lesson we should all learn from the coronavirus outbreak is that nations across the world should endeavor to build their health infrastructure to effectively deal with such epidemics in the future.

**END**

Sign:

**Rashid Dumbuya Esq**

**Marcus Bangura**

**Thomas Moore Conteh**

**National Coordinator**

**Secretary General**

**Public Relations Officer**

## **NAMES OF ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CSO WORKING GROUP**

### **LEGAL LINK**

**Democracy Sierra Leone**

**Citizen Advocacy Network**

**CARL-SL**

**Campaign for Good Governance**

**50/50 Group Sierra Leone**

**Shout Climate Change Africa**

**Awareness Times**

**NACFoHRD**

**Initiative for Democracy and Rule of Law**

**Every Child Matters Sierra Leone**

**Forward Sierra Leone**

**Heal Sierra Leone**

**Youth in Action for Christ**

**Council of Churches in Sierra Leone**

**LAF-SL**

**Sierra Leone Union for Disability Issues**

**Citizen Rights Network Sierra Leone**

**Aid Sierra Leone**

**National Youth Coalition**

**Free the Children Sierra Leone**

**Sierra Leone Association of Persons with Albinism**

**Friends of Milla Organization**

**SHRDO**

**Forum of Democrats and Citizenship**

**Commoners Sierra Leone**

**National Disability Women's Forum**

**Forum of Sierra Leone Youth Network**

**Bianca Foundation**

**Civil Society Movement, Kambia District**

**Youth Advocacy Movement- Sierra Leone**

**Youth with Disabilities Network- SL**

**Right to Life Organization**

**Life Guard Children's Foundation-SL**

**Fair Play Advocacy- SL**

**African Youth Initiative Empowerment & Advocacy Network**

**Youth for a Better World**

**Sierra Leone Business Council**