



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Freetown, Sierra Leone**

**04 August 2021**

## **Judicial colloquium on adjudication of Sexual and Gender Based Violence cases in Sierra Leone**

The Judiciary of Sierra Leone, Defence for Children International, Equality Now and WAVES will be conducting a training for all the sixteen judges from across the country who adjudicate matters of sexual violence in Sierra Leone. The training will take place at the Bamoi hotel from August 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.

Access to justice for victims and survivors of sexual violence is quite challenging in Sierra Leone due to several reasons including difficulties faced with trial proceedings and how judgments are done. Since the declaration of rape as an emergency by the President of Sierra Leone, H.E Retired Brigadier Dr. Julius Maada Bio, which resulted in the amendment of the Sexual Offences Act in 2019, many new developments have taken place. This includes the drafting of the Sentencing Guidelines by the Judiciary, as well as the recruitment and deployment of new Magistrates and Judges among other things.

Essentially, these new developments would require updating and refreshing knowledge and skills of judicial personnel who preside and decide cases of sexual violence.

Additionally, trials of sexual offences can best be done if those involved in decision making have sufficient knowledge in not only the substance of the laws and procedures involved in adjudication but also in the application of gender sensitivity, the principle of best interest of the child, non-discrimination and non stigmatisation of victims and survivors.

Hopefully this training will not only help the judges to update their knowledge but will also result in the identification of action points that the organisers and other partners can follow up on in improving practices on access to justice for victims and survivors of sexual violence.

### **For more information**

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