



JOINT STATEMENT

Item 6: UPR adoption of Sierra Leone

Geneva, 30th September 2021

Delivered by Defence for Children International on behalf of Child Rights Coalition - Sierra Leone, and SOS Children's Villages International.

This statement is delivered by Defence for Children International (DCI Geneva) on behalf of the Child Rights Coalition - Sierra Leone (CRC-SL) and SOS Children's Villages International.

This statement presents our position on the Government of Sierra Leone's views on the conclusions and/or recommendations of the Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. We thank all states parties that participated in the review.

We welcome the Government of Sierra Leone's acceptance of 224 of the recommendations out of the 274 recommendations proffered, covering all areas of concern for the UPR process, including access to justice, right to adequate standard of living, and right to health.

We are particularly pleased that the Government accepted all the recommendations in the three advocacy areas that the Coalition focused on during the UPR process: Child Labour, Child Trafficking, and Right to Education.

- The five recommendations to prohibit Child Labour (143-116, 143-254, 143.263, 143.268, and 143.273) are quite general, and focus on prevention, mitigation, and enforcement of laws.
- Eleven recommendations were proffered on human trafficking (143.116-143.126) and 8 of them directly cover Child Trafficking. Recommendations on child labour have implications for child trafficking as well. We continue to channel our advocacy efforts towards a child-friendly anti-trafficking response to ensure that the implementation of the general recommendations to develop a more comprehensive policy to tackle human trafficking works for children.
- The acceptance of all the 16 recommendations on Right to Education (Recommendations 143.156-143.171) will significantly support the full implementation of the Free Quality School Education Programme.



We welcome the voluntary pledge to review the provisions applicable to children under the age of 14 in the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2019, the Sentencing Guidelines for Sexual Penetration Cases and related instruments to bring it into line with the Child Rights Act 2007 and international standards on child rights. We also welcome the voluntary pledge to conclude the constitutional review process.

All the 50 recommendations that the Government rejected affect children's rights. The 44 specific and 4 general recommendations on banning female genital mutilation (FGM) were rejected without qualification. We are gravely concerned that current measures to address the human rights concerns of FGM are grossly inadequate to prohibit child FGM.

Passing a legislation on protecting human rights defenders (143.111) and repealing Part III of the Public Order Act (143.106) are the two remaining recommendations that the Government noted. Rejecting them increases the vulnerability of child rights defenders and child rights advocates to human rights abuse and further narrow the civic space for them.

We recognize the following gaps in the recommendations:

- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (OPIC) acknowledging the legal empowerment of child survivors by giving them the capacity to take legal action on their own with child-friendly rules of procedure.
- Pass a more comprehensive amended child rights bill that addresses all inconsistent and discriminatory clauses.
- Address child labour in apprenticeship, domestic labour, street trading, alcohol manufacturing companies and the agricultural sector.
- Fully implement the Radical Inclusion Policy to ensure the pregnant girls have unhindered access to school.

Informed by the Government's progressive action to lift the ban on pregnant girls attending school, a recommendation that it noted in 2016, we will continue to urge the Government to seriously consider all the noted recommendations particularly an anti-child FGM law, and the gaps in the full enjoyment of children's rights.