



# PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

Parliament Building - O.A.U Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown | [admin@parliament.gov.sl](mailto:admin@parliament.gov.sl) | [www.parliament.gov.sl](http://www.parliament.gov.sl)

14<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

## PRESS RELEASE



### PARLIAMENT ENFORCES IMPLEMENTATION OF SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT

A cross section of Members of Parliament have on Thursday 14/11/2024 commenced a three-day advocacy workshop on the implementation status of the Sexual Offences Act 2012 and its amendment in 2019. The event, which is being held at Gallinest Paradise in Bo City, attracted several other stakeholders, including civil society organizations, line Ministries, Departments and Agencies, and women's rights activists as well as partners.

The workshop is being organized by the Parliamentary Female Caucus with support from IPU and other partners.

In her opening statement, President of the Parliamentary Female Caucus, Hon. Bernadette Wuyata Songa, said the workshop focuses on the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act and expressed hope for collaborative efforts to enhance positive changes in that direction. She informed participants that dialogue and collaborative actions are paramount to advancing advocacy in the implementation of critical legislation. According to her, the menace is not only pervasive but significantly affecting the social and economic fabric of society. She also expressed optimism that the workshop would bring a change. The MP maintained that implementation requires continuous oversight. She noted that it was timely for stakeholders to lend hands to promote the implementation of this important law. She made reference to the many heartbreaking stories in

social media related to sexual assault. "Let us go out in our communities to create awareness of this offence," she admonished all participants to contribute immensely to the workshop in order to have positive deliberations.

Director of Programmes Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Ms. Kareem Jabre via webinar spoke on behalf of the Secretary General of IPU and commended stakeholders, Parliamentary Female Caucus, and other actors for the conduct of the workshop. She said sexual violation is a key issue and made global reference to the occurrence of the offence and called on Parliament to take action. The workshop she said was very urgent and is needed in many ways to fight the menace. She went on to highlight the importance of the workshop and expressed hope for its achievement. She spoke on the roles of MPs in fighting the offences, including the allocation of resources in the implementation of critical legislation. She also outlined key actions that are needed to prevent the sexual related offences.

Deputy Clerk of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Mr. Gilbert Nhabay gave an overview of the workshop. According to him, any law is as good as its implementation. The Sexual Offences Act amendment 2019, he said came as a clarion call on the President that precipitated the declaration of a state of emergency, sequel to the incessant committing of same crime by perpetrators. He used the opportunity to encourage Members of Parliament to promote the implementation. He added that the workshop would improve the knowledge and understanding of MPs to be able to implement the law. He expressed hope that after the workshop, MPs would serve as champions and improve on their oversight on the same. He recalled in 2019 how the Offences escalated and made reference to a research in 2020 that revealed that most of the victims were children. He reflected on the 2019 amendment Act and its objectives and provided other related information. Partners, he said, had urged for responsive actions for the implementation of the law, and state institutions are yet to do more. He encouraged MPs to conduct robust oversight, and he used the opportunity to narrate a recent scenario of sexual offence that caused the death of the victim.

The following important presentations and aspects form part of the three-day workshop:

1. Parliamentary Oversight of Legislation on Sexual violence and Key Provisions of the Sexual Offences Act presented by Hillary Gbedewah, Expert of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
2. Policy Consideration Leading to the Enactment of Sexual Offences Act 2012 and Sexuality Offences Act 2019 (Amendment and Eradication of Key Provisions prevented by Mr. Charles Vandy, Deputy Chief Director, Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
3. Enactment of the Sexual Offences Acts: Status of Trials, Sanctions and Capacity of holding Offenders Accountable
4. Providing Support Services to Survivors of Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)
5. Ensuring the Availability of Prevention Initiative and Programmes and other aspects.

Parliamentary and Public Relations Department, Sierra Leone Parliament.

Contacts:

+23278495023/+23276625960/+23278426851/+23278697776/+23277473804