



HRCSL TRAINS PARALEGALS IN HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH AND MANAGEMENT OF HIV/AIDS



The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) with support from the Global Fund has held a two-day engagement with Paralegals and desk officers in Freetown for the western area, northwest, and northern regions and Bo for south and eastern regions targeting over 100 participants on the human rights-based approach and the management of HIV/AIDS.

According to Abubakar Kamara, Director of Climate Change and Information Services HRCSL, the training focused on empowering the participants with knowledge on how to respect and protect the rights of vulnerable groups including HIV/AIDS, same-sex, persons with disability, and commercial sex workers among others. “These key populations (KPs) often face discrimination and stigma which create barriers to access several rights including rights to health, education, or other social facilities”, he said.

Monitoring and documentation of complaints by these vulnerable groups also formed part of the engagement. Public awareness of the negative impact of the virus and how to support prevention and increase awareness of testing and treatment.



Joshua B.M. Sesay from the National AIDS Control Program under the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in Freetown said in the last survey of 2019, the HIV prevalence in Sierra Leone was 1.7%. He added that the country was divided into seven burden areas where the western area rural showed the highest prevalence of 3.4%.

He noted that to meet the WHO 95 95 95 target which means 95% of all people living with HIV to know their HIV status, 95% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection to receive sustained antiretroviral therapy, and 95% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy to have viral suppression by 2025, they have turned their prevention strategy to the key population.

He said they are key drivers of HIV because their activities put them at a high substantial risk of being infected. He said as part of their awareness-raising drive, they organise moonlight picnics and community engagements.

One of the participants Beatrice Turay from the Female Network Advocacy Group in Magburaka said the training was impactful but most importantly she learnt about the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS Act of 2007. She said the knowledge gained during the training will be cascaded to her community members.



Mr. James P. Magbity from the National AIDS Control Program under the Ministry of Health and Sanitation from Bo regional office disclosed that there are currently sixty thousand people on HIV treatment (60,000) in Sierra Leone. He also noted that the response against HIV/AIDS requires a multi sectorial approach as no single institution can succeed in the fight against the virus.

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