



## POSITION PAPER

### DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD

#### THEME

### "Access to a Child-Friendly Justice System in Africa"

As adopted by the African Union Executive Council, during its 34th Ordinary Session, held on 07 – 08 February 2019, the right of children to participate shall be fully respected. It should be recognized that meaningful, effective and well-informed participation of children and adolescents not only leads to better understanding and a possible solution to the problems they face but is also one of the most effective ways to enhance their social development, self-esteem as well as respect for others and the need for responsible behaviour. At the Network Movement for Democracy & Human Rights (NMDHR) one of our core programme areas is child



protection. We put children's protection and safety at the centre of our work. On the Day of the African Child, we are calling on the government of Sierra Leone to continue to adopt access to a child-friendly justice system in across Sierra Leone.

**CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW:** Larceny accounts for 53% of children detained at Freetown

Remand, 47% of detainees at Approved School and 51% of juvenile court cases in Sierra Leone. In Freetown, children under the age of 14 continue to be apprehended, interrogated by police, charged to court and convicted - In 2018 and 2019, 28 and 25 children below the age of 14 years were respectively charged to Magistrate Courts - Three juveniles detained at Approved School were convicted at the age of 13. (Defence for Children International)





**CHILD LABOUR:** According to the ICFTU report, an overwhelming 71.6 per cent of children between the ages of 5-14 years are working, either in paid or unpaid work, such as child prostitution, mining, domestic work and street begging." Sierra Leone has

signed but not ratified the International Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour or the Convention on Minimum Age.

**POSITION STATEMENTS: As a right-based organization we are providing below five (recommendations by which government can provide access to child-friendly justice system in Sierra Leone.**

- I. That child's right to non-discrimination shall be guaranteed with special protection to be granted to the most vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, children living or working on the street, the girl child, children affected by HIV/Aids, refugee and displaced children, and children who are separated from their families.
- II. That the government of Sierra Leone should develop a comprehensive and coherent national policy for 'Children in the Justice System' which shall consider the interrelatedness of the challenges facing children in contact with the law, be informed by extensive consultation with children and enable their active and meaningful participation in decision making at all levels of governance.
- III. That the government should allocate sufficient resources in the national policy for 'Children in the Justice System'. These policies shall seek to enhance co-operation among those involved in or affected by this process and to encourage the sharing of experiences and best practices.
- IV. National Child Justice Strategy 2006 and the Child Rights Act of 2007 should be developed into the school curriculum and fully implemented at all levels in the country.
- V. The development of children-only and child-friendly courts to help fast-track cases and prevent long court sessions that cause emotional restraining to children.

NMDHR is a member of GirlsNotBrides

#DayofTheAfricanChild #DAC2020