



CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS
SIERRA LEONE

**NARRATIVE REPORT ON ENHANCING COMMUNITY
AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ON INTERNATIONAL DAY
AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT
TRAFFICKING - 26TH JUNE, 2025**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Civil Rights Defenders, is a human rights organization committed to promoting justice, rule of law, equality, and protection for vulnerable individuals, particularly survivors of drug abuse among teenagers, child protection and gender-based violence. Civil Rights Defenders is a non-governmental human rights organization registered in Sierra Leone and its main aim seeks to protect human right violations.

The International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is a United Nations International Day against drug abuse and the illegal drug trade. It is observed annually since 26 June, 1989.

The global drug problem presents a multifaceted challenge that touches the lives of millions worldwide. From individuals struggling with substance use disorders to communities grappling with the consequences of drug trafficking and organized crime, the impact of drugs is far-reaching and complex. Central to addressing this challenge is the imperative to adopt a scientific evidence-based approach that prioritizes prevention and treatment.

This day is set aside to educate the public on issues of concern, to mobilize political will and resources to address global problems, and to celebrate and reinforce achievements of humanity. The existence of international days predates the establishment of the United Nations, but the UN has embraced them as a powerful advocacy tool. The Civil Rights Defenders set aside this day to Launched their pilot initiative for a period of six months with the overall goal to build the capacity of Civil Rights Defenders workers to effectively facilitate, coordinate and support communities in the fight against drugs among adolescence in various communities within Sierra Leone.

2.0 INSIGHT

A one-day seminar was organized on the 26th June 2025 which happens to be the International Day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking among teenager/ young people in Sierra Leone on the theme “Enhance community awareness and education against abuse and illicit trafficking among teenagers/young people in Sierra Leone. This seminar was also staged to launch a six-month pilot project to be implemented by Civil Rights Defenders once funds are made available. Participants presents from various works of life introduced themselves. The Chairman for Civil Rights Defenders, Mr. Allan S. Tuboku-Metzger gave the opening statement followed by various statements made from various speakers from their respective Institutions. In the statement of the Chairman Civil Rights Defenders, he emphasized of the following (See attached full statement):

- That rehabilitation centers should be established at every District
- The rate of Kush users is very alarming
- The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) is not capacitated to execute their mandate effectively
- Collaboration is needed to end the used of harmful drugs by our young people

After the opening statement by the Chairman of Civil Rights Defenders, the following Institutions made their own statements

1. National Drug Law Enforcement Agency

On behalf of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Mr. Augustine Musa, gave a brief statement and made mention of key relevant points as mentioned below

- The issue of drug abuse is not just a crime but a Public Health crisis
- The composition of Kush is a mixture of various component including formalin that used for corpse
- The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency cannot solve the drug abuse in our country alone, and therefore requires collaborative actions from related actors

2. Office of National Security

Mr. Alfred A. Cole, on behalf of the Office of National Security reaffirmed their commitment to the fight against drug abuse and the illicit trafficking among young people in Sierra Leone. As a security arm of Government they also see drug abuse and illicit trafficking as a security threat to our nation which is automatically a concern for them.

3. Ernest Bai Koroma University

On behalf of the Universities of Sierra Leone Rev. Prof. Edwin Momoh made mentioned of their commitment to the fight against drug abuse in our nation as their institutions carry bulk of young people who are the perpetrators. Their involvement in this fight is very key and they are willing to join hands with Civil Rights Defenders in this fight to complement the effort of government. In his statement he emphasized on the following;

- That victims of drugs should not be stigmatized but rather be encouraged
- The key actors (Dealers in drugs) are abstract, but it's only the victims (Youths) that are visible
- Young people can easily access drugs of any type and they are affordable
- Reaffirming their commitment to this fight

After the above speakers, we then moved to the Keynote address which was done by the Chief Director of the Ministry of Youths, representing the Minister of Youths. The Chief Director Mr. Charles Moinina. See Keynote address on Appendix II.

OPEN DISCUSSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This session was led by the moderator to capture views, suggestions and/ or recommendations from participants and they were captured as mention below;

- Rehabilitation centers should be established at every District
- The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency should be empowered logistically to execute their mandate to the fullest.
- The issue of drugs intake should be treated as a national security issue and a concern for all Sierra Leoneans
- The excess use of drugs has resulted to an increase mental health which is also a national health concern
- Partnering and engaging with Institutions that cater for skills development in terms of collaboration should be enhanced.

- The establishment of youth groups on public advocacy in every community
- Drugs peddler's role in circulating drugs are overlooked with little or no actions taken against them
- Increase awareness on the negative impact on the use of drugs in various educational institutions by establishing youth clubs
- The Civic education, the issue of drugs can be captured or mainstreamed
- Drugs users should not be neglected, victimized or shorn but rather they should be encouraged and be reintegrated with their families and the community as a whole

ANNEX 1

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN ON ENHANCING COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ON INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING AMONG TEENAGERS/ YOUNG PEOPLE IN SIERRA LEONE

26th June 2025

Honorable Ministers, members of the Diplomatic and Consular Core, members of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), representatives from the Office of National Security, Ladies and Gentlemen the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking recognizes the severe impact that illicit drugs have on health, development, peace and security. Around 190,000 people die due to illicit drugs every year. But the damage visited upon lives and communities does not stop there. Drug use damages health in the form of debilitating HIV, hepatitis and tuberculosis, while drug trafficking nourishes money laundering, and deadly terrorism. Corruption, the great enabler of organized crime, exists throughout the drug supply chain.

In a collective response to these challenges, we can all work together to reduce the spread of this deadly substance among young people and teenagers. This year, our objective is to agreed on an outcome document of this year's commemoration containing recommendations and suggestions to counter the drug problem in Sierra Leone among young people. One of these recommendations, forged by community consensus, stress the need for Regional / District rehabilitation centers with science-based treatment and care, especially in prisons and for measures reducing the spread of HIV and other infections.

What makes the Civil Rights Defenders passionate about the fight against drugs among young people because the recently released World Drug Report 2024 examines another worrying phenomenon: the nexus between drugs, crime and terrorism had reveals a shifting pattern of relationships. To use just one example, terrorists and non-state armed groups profit from the drug trade. By some estimates, Kush importation and other chemicalize substance has created lot of health and mental disorder among young people and teenagers. As new threats appear, including spreading methamphetamine and new psychoactive substances, old ones continue to thrive. Since

the drug business models are evolving too, we will encourage the Cybercrime unit, Law enforcers, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency and all other relevant authorities to step up.

Once viewed as a marginal actor on the development stage, drugs and crime are now viewed as a disturbing obstruction to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goals 3 on health and Goal 16 on peaceful societies. Our response is to work closely with partners to prevent drugs and crime not simply profiting from, but also fueling, the instability that undermines development, peace, and human rights. The Civil Rights Defenders, on this day, remains committed to peacefully and effectively addressing the challenge of illicit drugs based on the international drug control conventions, and their key principle of protecting the health and welfare of humankind.

Allan S Tuboku-Metzger

Chairman

Civil Rights Defenders – Sierra Leone

ANNEX II

KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY CHIEF DIRECTOR MR CHARLES MOININA MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring you greetings from the Ministry of Youth Affairs. I am here to represent the Hon. Minister of Youth Affairs Mr. Ibrahim Sannoh who loved to be part of this programme today but now engaged in similar important state function. As a Ministry responsible for youth affairs we feel honored for the invite to participate in this laudable youth programme and I must thank the organizers for complementing our work and responsibility to change the negative mind-set of young people to productive contributions to the nation. My main task here is to give the keynote address.

The first keynote is for us all to note and accept the fact that Sierra Leone population is youthful. According to the new status of youth report 2024, 33.3% of the total population between 18-35. This huge population of young people is an opportunity if properly harnessed and given the enabling environment for development. But at the same time it will turn to developmental and potential human resource challenges as insecurity. Of course history has taught us process it will affect our socio-economic strides to making this country a better place to live.

Secondly, it is also worthy to note that Government over the years through policies, Programmes and institutional reforms have made serious efforts towards the empowerment of young people. The Human capital development,

the establishment of technical and vocational institutes, feed Salon, youth employment scheme and empowerment of the Ministry of youth affairs to roll out youth livelihood project in Carwash, Youth in Agriculture, Fisheries commercial transportation, national youth service and skills training Programmes, establishing rehabs centers and town hall meetings.

Despite these efforts there are still good number of our young people involved in drugs and substance abuse and those illicitly trafficking these drugs which is driving this nation forward are dying. What the future holds for this country? Is a million question for all of us. Drug users have relationship with perpetrators of violence. Lawlessness, indiscipline, those who abuse and rape women and distributors of deceases such as HIV/AIDS.

Thirdly, it is also crucial to note that the growing wave of substance abuse particularly, KUSH, Marijuana and Tramadol is no longer an isolated issue but national emergency that cut across all communities. According to Sierra Leone Drug Law Enforcement Agency, over 60% of drugs related arrest involved youth aged 15-30. The 2023 national assessment estimate that 1 on every 5 urban youth in Sierra Leone has experimented with kush or tramadol while 31% of young people in rural settlement know who has developed a mental illness or died from the drug.

Fourthly, the illicit trafficking of these drugs are also very important and cannot be underestimated to note, there had emerged drugs cartels. Cults and smugglers in and across the country making our borders so porous. Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone are currently blaming one another for the prevalence of drugs trafficking caused by their porous borders which resulting to increasing lawlessness, crime rates and poor health condition involving most physical and psychological torture. Most appalling is that funds for development Programmes from government are most often diverted to unplanned health related issues just to save lives.

WHAT THE MISNISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS ID DOING TODAY

Let me highlight some of the key **ongoing interventions** led by the Honorable Minister of Youth Affairs; Ibrahim Sannoh. He has dedicated his work to community outreach in ghettos and high risk areas. Youth clubs and potential areas of youth abode on drugs eg. Juba Bridge, Susans bay, Mountain Cut etc. MOYA has moved from Rhetorics and action to impactful.

Providing food and basic medical care to youth victims of drug abuse.

Listening sessions with youth to better inform policies.

Partnerships for skills training and Reintegration

- In a landmark move, the Ministry signed an **MOU with Milton Maggai Technical University** to provide **vocational and skills training** for recovered youth
- The Ministry is finalizing plans to launch **two pilot recovery centers** in Freetown and Bo District providing **temporary accommodation, therapy and career guidance.**
- **Advocacy and Public Engagement**

Working with the media, youth networks and faith-based organizations to promote positive behavioral change

Supporting the work of youth-led organizations such as YARD-SL, Youth Advocacy Network, and others in their community education drive. He has come up with a new Strategic Plan of the Ministry while creating partnerships with development partners, INGO's, NGO'S and MDA's to change the lives of young people in Sierra Leone. I want to assure you that the MOYA is now a changed Ministry. We are collectively working with and for the youth to change the narrative of "Bra you borbor dae".

Key Strategic Vision: "Empower Sierra Leone Youth as Innovators, entrepreneur's leaders in agriculture, climate resilience, skills and digital economy-fueling, food security, inclusive growth and resilience"

To the Youth

-Change your mindset and start planning your life

-Learn to make use of opportunity today created by government and other stakeholders

- Refrain from taking drugs it's not good for your life and the children
- Make yourself productive to this nation
- Life is about focus and determination also fear God, He is not happy with this life you are living with and you must give account of it on the last day.

THE CALL TO ACTION

Ladies and gentlemen, the fight against drug abuse cannot be won by the government alone. It requires a whole of society approach. I therefore call upon;

- **Parents and guardians** to have open conversation with their children
- **Schools and Universities** to provide psycho-social support and awareness Programmes
- **Religious and Traditional Leaders** to use their influence to preach against drug abuse
- **Youth –led organizations** to serve as agent of change in their communities
- **And our International and development partners** to support us with funding, technical assistance, and training opportunities

CONCLUSION

In closing, I reaffirm the Ministry's unwavering commitment to the eradication of drugs abuse, empowered and engaged. We will continue to listen to the voices of our youth, walk with them and work to dismantle the systems that push them into drug dependency.

On behalf of the Minister of Youth Affairs Mr. Ibrahim Sannoh, I now declare this official launch of the community awareness and education against drug abuse and illicit trafficking among teenager and young people in Sierra Leone championed by the Civil Rights Defenders Sierra Leone on this day 26th June 2025.

Charles Moinina
Chief Director MOYA