



BUSINESSES SHOULD RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS.....

Commissioner Rashid Dumbuya of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) has told businesses that when they respect the rights of workers, the environment and the communities they operate, it will help for the growth of their businesses.

This has been the clarion call from the HRCSL to businesses engaged on their compliance to the guidelines on Business and Human Rights. The Human Rights Commission with funding from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) began engaging businesses in May starting with Sierra Rutile Mining Company Limited/ILUKA, the CSE Construction company, Milla Group of Companies, the MIRO Forestry at Mile 91 and the Sierramins Bauxite in Port Loko.

According to the Head of the Business and Human Rights Unit at HRCSL, Abdulai Yollah Bangura, these engagements are part of the work of HRCSL to address Business and Human Rights issues in the country using the guiding document known as the guidelines for monitoring business and human rights in Sierra Leone. He also said this guideline was developed in partnership with the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Danish Institute for Human Rights to provide a clear and consistent roadmap for monitoring the operations of business enterprises in Sierra Leone in line with its statutory mandate.

Speaking to businesses, Commissioner Rashid Dumbuya emphasized that the guidelines lays emphasis on the 'Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework' of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights standards to which Sierra Leone is a party, as well as domestic policies and laws relevant to operations of businesses in the country.

Giving a background to some of the reasons that warranted a guiding principles on business and human rights, Commissioner Rashid mentioned the incidence at the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh. The plaza was an eight storied building housing five garment factories employing 3,638 workers that collapsed killing 1,132 workers and thousands with serious injuries. The owner of the plaza was more concerned about the profit making rather than ensuring the safety and working conditions of garment workers.

Commissioner Rashid also mentioned the BP deep water horizon disaster that killed eleven oil rig workers in the USA. The oil spilled close to five million gallons of crude oil in to the gulf coast waters devastating natural resources and profoundly harmed the economic and emotional well-being of hundreds of thousands of people. He also linked similar incidence to the incidence that happened in Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria where a ruptured Exxon Mobil pipeline spill of over a million gallons in to the delta for over seven days before the leak was stopped. It caused a demonstration from Local people but they were attacked by state security forces.

The Commissioner also mentioned the incidences that happened at the African Minerals company where workers demanded better wages and also that in Kono against the Koidu Holdings Limited. The names of these companies have now changed to Shandong Steel and OCTEA respectively.



The engagement was done with the involvement of the Ministry of Labour, the National Mineral Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Sierra Leone Police.