

COVID-19 PREVENTION: HRCSL GIVES HOPE TO THE HOME OF THE AGED

COVID-19, like other infectious diseases, poses a higher risk to populations that live in close proximity to each other. And it disproportionately affects older people and individuals with underlying illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and hypertension. Higher percentage of the people who have died of COVID-19 were over the age of 60.

It is against that background that the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) on Thursday March 26th, 2020 gave hope to the aged at the King George VI Memorial Home. Expressing her appreciation to the HRCSL, Sandra Johnson who is the administrative officer made reference to 2017 when they were facing challenges in receiving their subvention from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. She said after a monitoring conducted by HRCSL, and their advocacy, the home received forty million leones as subvention.

The Home Manager at the King George VI, Christiana John highlighted the challenges at the home and laid emphasis on the lack of subvention.

In 2016, the HRCSL also launched its State of the Annual Report at the King George VI Home with the theme, 'respect the right of older persons to live in dignity.'

The Welfare Officer at the Home, Brendaforde Farmer mentioned that the rights of the older persons at the home are not met. She stated the right to health as challenging. "luckily we have two doctors that are seeing them free of cost but in the first place how do we take them to the doctors, no vehicle, how do we buy the drugs or other tests". She queried. She also mentioned that the older persons are being discriminated against in public transportation.

HRCSL Chairperson, Patricia Narsu Ndanema whilst thanking the authorities at the home for recognizing the work of the HRCSL, she pointed out the mandate of the HRCSL which is to protect and promote human rights.

She mentioned several other functions of the HRCSL, one of which she pointed out is to raise awareness on human rights concerns.

Whilst applauding the work of the workers at the home, the Chairperson informed them to take precautionary measures against the COVID-19. She further stated that the older persons have the inherent right to life, dignity, and the integrity of their persons, which shall be protected by law. As well as having the right to be free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. They also have the right to be free from discrimination.

The Director of Education, Communication and Training, Richard Tamba M'bayo explained to the older persons about their rights as espoused in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

The protocol to the African Charter on human and People's rights on the rights of older persons prohibits all forms of discrimination against them and encourages the elimination of social and cultural stereotypes which marginalized older persons.

As a mark of prevention against COVID-19, the HRCSL donated soaps, detergents, rubber buckets, chlorine to be used at the home for the older persons.