



## **HRCSL, YOUTH MINISTRY and NaYCom DISCUSS YOUTH ISSUES**

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) on Thursday 6th February, 2020 discussed youth issues with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and the National Youth Commission (NaYCom) at their respective offices.

The visit according to the Vice Chairperson of HRCSL was to identify ways of possible collaboration and partnership with the two institutions. "As the commission's mandate is to protect and promote human rights for all in Sierra Leone, it is important for collaboration with the Youths ministry as they cater for the people that make up the greater number of the total population of the country" the Vice Chairperson stated.

Commissioner Victor I. Lansana stated that HRCSL was concerned about the increase in crimes and violence among the youth leading them to be in conflict with the law. He revealed that during the Commission's monitoring of detention places, it was found out that majority of the inmates were youths awaiting trial. Noting that some of these youths do not have legal representation or could not fulfill bail conditions and some have been abandoned by their families.

Reacting to the issues raised, the Minister of Youth, Mohamed Oman Bangura stated that most of the problems faced by the youth are societal issues compounded by outdated laws. The minister mentioned that a large number of inmates were incarcerated for minor offences through the laws thus causing over-crowding in the Correctional Centers.

The Minister called on HRCSL to be firm in pushing for the review of some of these laws and also the attitude of the traffic Police and the judiciary with regards to petty offences.

Explaining about strides taken by his Ministry, the Minister spoke about the different projects like the youths in fisheries, youths in agriculture and youths in car wash.

The HRCSL Vice Chairperson thanked the Minister for a fruitful discussion and expressed hope for a sustained collaboration and partnership in tackling the human rights of youths in Sierra Leone.

In an engagement with the Commissioner of the National Youth Commission, Ngolo Katta, the Vice Chairperson of HRCSL Victor I. Lansana informed that he was aware of the Graduate Internship Program that NaYCom was involved in and the HRCSL's doors are open for the next set but because of office space, they will be sent to the regions.

Commissioner Lansana also stated that it was important when speaking to the youths, they should be informed about their rights and their corresponding responsibilities.

"I am aware of the nexus between the HRCSL and the NaYCom, the issue of young people cannot be solved by one sector, it is the collaborative efforts of all sectors, that is why we welcome the idea of collaboration" Ngolo Katta started off.



Whilst welcoming collaboration and partnership with HRCSL, he informed that they were gender sensitive and disability friendly.

The NaYCom Commissioner disclosed that for this year, they plan to undertake skills training for 1,540 young people, a learning center for girls and women and a continuation of the Government Internship Program and the National Youth Service Corp.

"for there to be a breakthrough in the work we do, it requires building synergy and for like minds to work together". Ngolo Katta averred.

In Sierra Leone, youth is defined as young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years and this group according to the national youth commission accounts for approximately 34% of the national population. The major challenges still faced by youth in the country are unemployment, limited educational opportunities, inadequate housing and the difficulties associated with accessing Justice.