
Submission by Sabi You Rights Advocacy Group for the Universal Periodic Review of Sierra Leone

11th session of the UPR Working Group, May 2011

Introduction

In this submission, Sabi You Rights Advocacy Group expresses concern over the ineffective implementation of the three Gender Acts and the prohibitive cost of medical reports for domestic violence. Sabi You Rights Advocacy Group highlights three recent cases of domestic and gender-based violence to demonstrate the need for these forms of violence to be addressed by the government. In section D, Sabi You Rights Advocacy Group suggest four recommendations to the government.

B. Normative and institutional framework of the State

Failure to implement domestic legislation outlawing domestic violence

In 2007 the Sierra Leonean government enacted three gender laws, namely the *Domestic Violence Act*, the *Devolution of Estate Act*, and the *Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act*. Domestic violence is outlawed by these three gender acts as well as by the international Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Africa Charter on Human and Peoples' rights (ACHPR). Sierra Leone is a party to both of these treaties. However, since 2007 domestic violence occurrence is on the increase. Sabi You Rights has observed that only few people have been prosecuted under these acts because the legislation has not been effectively implemented. One of the challenges of domestic violence cases is the fact that victims cannot afford the cost of a medical report, which is essential to report and prosecute domestic violence cases.

C. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground:

Domestic and gender-based violence

In February, 2010, Sabi You Rights documented a case of a school girl who was stoned on her way to after school class by the son of a local police unit commander in Calabatown in Kissi, Freetown. The girl sustained multiple injuries including swollen face. The police were reluctant to

charge the accused and have him brought to court because of the father's influence. The case is now charge to court because of Sabi You rights Intervention.

In March 2010, Sabi You Rights intervened in a case involving another school girl who sustained multiple injuries when her body was lacerated through the use of a razor blade for refusing sex to a 23 year old man in Grafton. However, the young girl is still unable to get justice after many months in court.

In April, 2010, a married woman was seriously beaten and stoned by her husband for failing to cook for him. The woman sustained multiple injuries including a broken skull. Sabi You Rights intervened to ensure that the case was brought to court. In July the husband was sentenced to just six months in prison. The victim did not receive any medical treatment or compensation.

D. Recommendations for action by the State under review

1. The Sierra Leonean government should ensure that the national legislation aimed at preventing violence against women (domestic violence), the three Gender Acts, is fully and effectively implemented on the ground.
2. The Sierra Leonean government should take steps to promote and raise awareness of the three Gender Acts in poor and marginalised communities.
3. All complaints of domestic violence should be promptly, impartially, and effectively investigated and prosecuted in the criminal courts.
4. The Sierra Leonean government should ensure that victims of domestic and gender-based violence have access to appropriate resources including a free medical report and access to legal assistance.
5. The Sierra Leonean government should create a specialised court for to ensure that cases of domestic and gender-based violence are tried expeditiously.