

Network Movement For Democracy & Human Rights

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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19th September, 2017 NMDHR calls on Government of Sierra Leone to remedy the situation that led to seat down strike by Community Health Officers (CHOs)

Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR) with support from the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) has been closely monitoring the implementation of the free healthcare initiative in the following chiefdoms Luawa, Kissi Tongi, Kissi Teng and the Kissi Kama Chiefdoms in Kailahun District. It has come to the attention of NMDHR through our monitors across the four project chiefdoms that key health Personnel who are in charge of health centres in strategic communities in these chiefdoms have abandoned their health centres alleging that the government has not made decision yet on their request. Apparently, they are on a seat down strike, and they have been out of work for the past one week

NMDHR is very much concern about the negative impact that this strike has on the lives of beneficiaries of the free healthcare initiative more especially the pregnant women, lactating mothers and under five children and the wider populace of the project chiefdoms. The Kailahun District is made up of fourteen (14) chiefdoms which comprises of eighty two (82) Peripheral Health Units (PHUs) across the district, and most of the roads connected to these PHUs are very bad which can also be seen as a deterrent to the success of the FHCI not to talk about a seat down strike by healthcare workers in the district which will further undermine the overall objective of the Free healthcare initiative in the district and the Country as a whole.

Healthcare issues are considered to be everyday issue, and there are lots of pregnant women in these areas who by any means need regular medical attention. There are also lactating mothers, and under five children who are very much in need of constant medical attention. Whenever we talk about beneficiaries of healthcare facilities, it is also significant that we talk about People with disabilities and the Ebola Survivors who are in a greater

health complication after they survived the Ebola scourge. We consider these set of people to acquire a better healthcare facility in the Country, and we must not seat and watch them live their lives in an appalling situation as pregnant women are now left with no alternative but to visit Traditional Births Attendants (TBAs) to seek home delivery as health centres are closed in their chiefdoms which has the tendencies to influence maternal and infant mortality in the district.

NMDHR strongly condemns the act of Community Health Officers to stage such unprecedented strike while pregnant women and children are dying due to the cause of their actions. We are equally calling on the government of Sierra Leone to pay great attention on the issue that has led to CHOs abandoned their work which has led to number of people living in a risky situation as there is nobody to attend to any emergency health cases in some chiefdoms in the district.

NMDHR is emphasising that the government of Sierra Leone must give an utmost priority to remedy the situation as this strike is a national call by the entire membership of the Community Health Officers in the Country and now that the Ministry of Health and Sanitation is presently on course on cholera preparedness, therefore we want to believe that these Health Officers are all relevant and important to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation.

NMDHR is a National Non Governmental Organization that is registered with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFeD) and has over fourteen years track record service of existence in Sierra Leone. The Network has over the years played a key role in complimenting the efforts of Government and its Donor Partners in ensuring that there is participatory democracy, absence of gender base violence, women and children health's and youth advocacy among others.

End of Press Statement