



# Youth and Child Advocacy Network Sierra Leone (YACAN-SL)

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **YACAN Condemns acts of Pornographic display and sharing of nude video(s) via Social Media across Sierra Leone and call on State Actors to take immediate and appropriate action.**

The attention of YACAN as a youth focus and gender rights advocacy institution has been drawn to series of recent unethical and nude video(s) making rounds on social media between Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020 to date. As an organization, we are shocked and saddened by these spate of events perpetrated by young people.

While we frown at such demonstrated high degree of immorality, we also wish to note that such action contravenes the 2019 amended Sexual Offences Act of Sierra Leone, with particular reference to the undermentioned Sections;

- Section 14 of the Act: Indecent exposure (exposing genitals)
- Section 15 of the Act : Voyeurism ( observing another person performing a sexual act in private without their consent
- Section 18 of the Act: Indecent material
- Section 22 of the Act: Causing a child to watch sexual activity
- Section 41 of the Act: Publication (No one to publish or make public information identifying a victim under the Act)
- Section 43 of the Act: Attempted Conspiracy ( attempts, conspires, aids, abets, induces, incites, instigate, instructs, commands, counsels or procures another person to commit a sexual offence)

While we continue to condemn this indecent act by different sets of young people, we are also concerned about the continued silence of State actors especially the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs on the sharing and multiple publication of nude and pornographic videos among the general population including children.

Noting the potential psychological damage that such situation is likely to cause on both victims and their families, YACAN is demanding an expeditious action to curtail such practices and where possible bring culprits to face the full penalty of the law. In this regard; :

1. **We call on the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs to take a public position with respect to this incidences of sexual act throughout the country**
2. **We call on the Sierra Leone Police especially the Family Support Unit to take lawful action and inform the General Public within the Shortest possible time.**
3. **We Call on the Ministry of Justice and the Judiciary to ensure they take necessary action in accordance with the 2019 Amended Sexual Offences Act.**
4. **We call on organizations including feminist groups to ensure they continuously engage and remind young people about their roles, duties and responsibilities in society which precludes any act of immoral and indecent behaviours.**

5. We call on the Ministry of Information and Communication, the Cyber Security Unit and the Office of National Security to implement laws that protects children and the general population from accessing pornographic materials via social media safely and to expedite the cyber security apparatus for speedy implementation.
6. We call on all stakeholders to join in the popularisation of the 2019 amended Sexual Offences Act

As we prepare for the celebration of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International day of the Girl Child on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and the 16 days of Activism on gender based violence, 2020, YACAN wishes to remind all stakeholders to uphold the principles of equality and equity.

**Recommendations:**

As an organization, we are proposing the following recommendations to ensure that young people do not continue to engage in nudity and phonographic activities.

1. *We recommend that the Ministry of Information and Communication work with NATCOM to ensure that mechanisms are put in place to regulate the functions of social media in the country.*
2. *We Recommend that the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs coordinate with Ministry of Youth Affairs to popularise the 2019 Amended Sexual Offences Act among young people across Sierra Leone*
3. *We recommend that our religious leaders take the lead as moral guarantors in conducting counselling for young people in universities and secondary schools as their contribution to help address the current situation.*
4. *We recommend that group administrators of social media groups stand out to condemn and desist from sharing any nude or phonographic video's within their forums.*
5. *We recommend that parents, guardians and young people support with counselling of other young people and support them with behavioural change messages in order to ensure that our next generation of young people do not continue with such practices.*

We urge the **Government of Sierra Leone** through the relevant Ministries to immediately take appropriate action(s) on all pornographic videos shared within the last 2 weeks preceding the Celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2020.

Signed.....

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