



Sierra Leone Section

Established in 1998

## CHILD FRIENDLY NEWSLETTER

Front Page

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### “FATHER BURNT THE HANDS OF HIS EIGHT (8) YEAR OLD SON”

An eight year old boy, Abass Bangura, has suffered cruelty in the hands of his own biological father, for allegedly stealing the sum of Le 20,000 (Twenty thousand Leones). The victim, who is a primary three (3) pupil, said in an interview with DCI-SL’s social worker that he was innocent of the accusation, but unfortunately, that did not save him from the pains inflicted on him by his cruel father:



*“He called me into the house, and tied my hands with a cloth. He took kerosene and poured it over my hands, and later set it ablaze with a match. When I saw the flames coming from my hands, I shouted and even thought I was going to die.”*

Though the victim later escaped death from the hands of his father, yet, he sustained severe injuries that led to a medical operation on his hands. According to Dr Rashida, the police doctor in charge, she said

*“the operation was successful, but his hands*

*Contd. Pg. 3*

### “POLICE OFFICER BURNT THE HANDS OF HER YOUNGER SISTER”

A Police Officer, P/C Fatmata Kanu, attached at ‘D’ Divisional Headquarters, kissy barracks, was alleged to have burnt the hands of her younger sister, Marie Kargbo, for stealing her food. The 11 year old girl explained, in an interview with DCI-SL’s Social Worker, about what led to her cruelty: **contd. Pg. 3**



### “14 YEAR OLD CHILD TALKS ABOUT LIFE AT THE REMAND HOME”

A 14 year old child talked to DCI about life at the Remand Home. Since being arrested for allegedly committing murder, this child has spent almost 11 months in detention and explained the challenges of living in the Remand Home:

*‘I feel uncomfortable because I have been separated from my family members and I am now living a different life at this place’*

Despite living an uncomfortable life at the Remand Home, the child was able to recognize certain people and institutions that have contributed immensely in reforming his life while in detention. In an interview session with a DCI-SL social worker, he categorically expressed his appreciation to the following people and institutions:



*DCI-SL introduces education at Remand Home*

*“I appreciate all that the remand officers and social workers have done for me, especially the Defence for Children International (DCI-SL). They have made me remember Contd. Page 4*

### “FOUR JUVENILES OFFENDERS RELEASED, AFTER BEING SENTENCED TO APPROVED SCHOOL”

Four juveniles offenders have been released from the Approved school, after being sentenced at the Juvenile Court for committing various offences. The offenders, ages 11 and under, were released after Defence for Children International (DCI-SL) raised the issue with the Administrative Head of the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs during an inter-agencies meeting. DCI-SL’s Programme Manager reminded the parties that the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Sierra Leone has been recently raised and that this detention was a violation of rights as enshrined in the newly enacted Child Right Act, 2007. According to the Child Act, 2007, *‘any child below the of 14years should not be criminally held responsible for any offence’*

What We Do ?

“We Seek To Protect All Children In Conflict With The Law”

*may not be as active as it should be. He may be partially deformed’*

Meanwhile, the perpetrator is presently facing trial for ‘child cruelty’ at the Freetown magistrate court No.3, presided by magistrate Shyllon. DCI-SL’s Social Worker has been monitoring the court proceedings and will closely monitor the case until it is resolved. However, the mother of the victim, Mrs. Fatmata Bangura, who is also the wife of the perpetrator, has expressed the complexities in having the perpetrator face trial due to his role as the family’s primary breadwinner. In an interview with DCI-SL social worker, she said:

*“Mr. Bangura (perpetrator) is the father and breadwinner of the home. Though he had inflicted pains on his son, the boy always cried for him when he is at the hospital. We need him and ... I am confused”*

**POLICE OFFICER BURNT THE HANDS OF HER SISTER: From Front Page**

*“I was hungry on a Friday evening, when I decided to eat the food left by my elder sister. When my sister arrived home and learnt that I had eaten her food, she took my hands and poured kerosene on it. She later lit one of the local lamps and set my hands ablaze. I started shouting and crying. ‘Shut up, you witch’, she said. I was feeling pain all over my body before a neighbour came to my rescue”*

The victim is presently receiving medical attention at the Government Hospital, Cannaught, while the police officer has received an open detention because she is breastfeeding a 5 month old baby. According to the investigator of the matter: *“the case file has been sent to the Internal Disciplinary Department of the Sierra Leone police (CDIID) for their decision before the matter be charged to court because the matter involved a police personnel”*.

Meanwhile, DCI-SL is closely monitoring the case and will provide information and push for prosecution.

“No Child Should be A Victim of violence and War”

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*my school days because they teach me about the Child Rights Act, civic education and juvenile offences in the country'*

Over the Years, DCI-SL has been providing Educational and Counseling services for young people at the Remand Home. These services have impacted greatly in reforming the lives of children detained on remand. The child also went further to make a resolution about activities he will embark on after living the Remand Home:

*"My conscience judges me to not commit any other crime that is against the country's law, and after this problem I will go back to school"*

Meanwhile, preliminary investigation on the case has been concluded at the Juvenile Court since October last year. The child has now been waiting for months his case to be arraigned before the High Court of Sierra Leone, where his fate will be determined. The child told DCI-SL:

*"I always ask God, why I can't have back my freedom. I say to myself, 'my time is coming soon'"*

Following the above development, the Ministry, notably, the permanent Secretary, reacted swiftly to the sub-missions made by DCI-SL and took the matter with the Law Officers' Department. It was later confirmed that the offenders were indeed below the ages of criminal responsibility, and they were subsequently released from detention at the Approved School.

Since the official launching of the Child Rights Act on the 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2008, much remains to be done by the government, vis-a vis the police and judiciary in the implementation of the Act. As a leading child rights organization, DCI-SL has developed programmes that will ensure that the implementation of the CRA 2007 is maximized.

Though these children have been released, there are no structures for their reintegration and reformation. DCI-SL Executive Director, Abdul M. Kemokai has highlighted this as a key area of the Child Rights Act which needs further implementation.

Between January and March 2009 DCI-SL has monitored and provided legal assistance to 268 (69%) child offenders and 83 (72%) victims of abuse including the ones presented in this newsletter.

With the growing rate of violence against children within and outside the criminal justice system, the government of Sierra Leone must immediately address all the inadequacies that plagued the justice system so that children can enjoy their rights and justice in Sierra Leone. Government must therefore commit adequate resources for the implementation of the Child Rights Act 2007.

For more information, please contact us at [info@dcisl.org](mailto:info@dcisl.org) or check our website – [www.dcisl.org](http://www.dcisl.org), or at 42 Siaka Stevens Street Freetown