

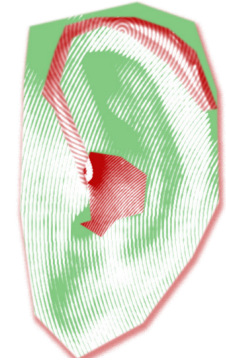
Unlocking the Future: Paving the Way for Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health in Post-Pandemic Freetown

Between April and October 2020, an estimated **2,978 cases of sexual and physical assault were reported**, leaving **Sierra Leone's justice system overwhelmed and unable to fulfill its responsibilities effectively**.

(International Federation of Women Lawyers Nigeria, 2021)

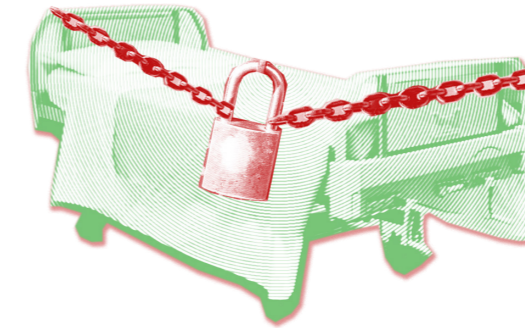


* Deaf participants in Freetown struggled to purchase menstrual products regularly, emphasizing **the need for accessibility measures tailored to individuals with disabilities**.



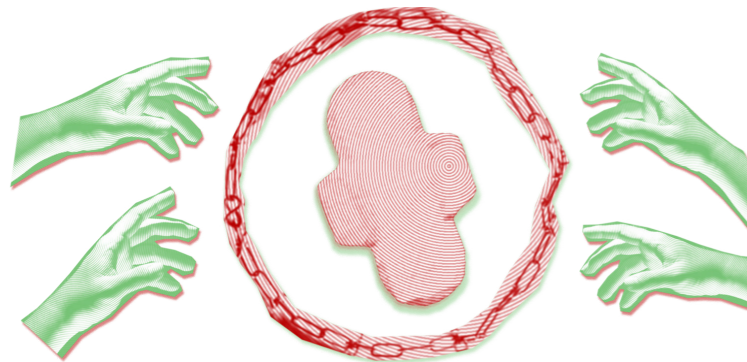
Our research shows:

* **Sex workers** in Freetown were **particularly impacted** by the COVID-19 pandemic, with **limited access to SRHR services** as health centers and youth centers were not functioning.



* Limited access to safe abortion services led to young people resorting to **unsafe methods**, such as using herbs and concoctions.

* **Adolescents** were unable to leave their homes and faced **restricted access to health services** and SRH training.



* Teenagers from low-income families in Freetown encountered **challenges accessing menstrual hygiene products**.

* Life-saving awareness campaigns that supported people to access information and support stopped during the pandemic in Freetown, leading to an increased risk of SGBV.

Recommendations

1. Improve Access to SRHR Services:

- Provide equitable, confidential, and sensitive health services for adolescents and young people.
- Support for youth advocacy groups to actively engage in SRHR advocacy.
- Train healthcare providers to create supportive environments and respect diversity.

2. Expand Access to Menstrual Health Services:

- Prioritise comprehensive education on menstrual health for young people.
- Foster collaboration to provide affordable menstrual products to address period poverty.

3. Ensure Contraception and Safe Abortion Access

- Create non-discriminatory and accessible abortion services for young people, prioritising privacy and safety.

- Promote sensitization efforts on contraceptive use, especially in high-risk areas.
- Advocate for supportive abortion laws to protect access to safe abortion services.

4. Access to SRHR Information:

- Support initiatives to raise awareness and support for sexual health among young people.
- Collaborate to ensure reliable sources of SRHR information and promote open discussions.

5. Recommendations for Addressing SGBV:

- Implement awareness-raising campaigns to prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and engage communities.
- Integrate mental health services with SGBV care.