

STORY OF INERELA+SIERRA LEONE'S RESILIENCE DURING THE EBOLA CRISIS

During the incursion of the Ebola virus in Sierra Leone, the government and the ministry of health and sanitation specifically, were initially confused and baffled as how to tackle this dreadful disease due to the fact that Ebola was a new virus and very complex, as one of its main mode of transmission was critical to Sierra Leonean and health care workers as the culture of washing dead body was its main mode of transmission. This culture of washing dead bodies allowed the virus to spread as wild fire through out the country ‘ The government in its quest to curb the spread of the virus declared full force national health state of emergency these include no public gathering, intermittent lockdown, travel restriction etc. These unfavorable conditions brought about total fear and intimidation upon every single Sierra Leonean including health care workers in the country.

The above condition in the country caused the people of Sierra Leone, health care workers, NGO'S and the government of Sierra Leone to seemingly forget about HIV and AIDS. Even the HIV infected people and other chronically ill patient were afraid to visit health centers due to the immense scrutiny of patients by health care workers or fear of being labeled Ebola positive thereby not having access to health care services. The sound of ambulance serine were even causing some patient in their home to run and hide in the bush as information was constantly giving to 117 which is the ambulance responsible to forcefully take any sick person to the hospital.

This was one of the darkest moments for Sierra Leonean and therefore nobody seems to be interested in HIV and AIDS in that point in time. All funding were directed to fight Ebola in Sierra Leone.

It was during these darkest and complex moment where in INERELA+SIERRA LEONE thought that HIV and AIDS could use this neglect moment as an opportunity to increase infection. Inerela+ Sierra Leone therefore skillfully and tactfully managed to bring together about sixty religious leaders in closed door training on Ebola and HIV and AIDS by using the SAVE tool kit. When we came together in that training, you can sense the

fear of Ebola among some faith leaders though there was some amount of relief after some prayers and exhortation.

However training was successfully done and created great impact as two religious leaders who are now Inerela+SL members were courageous enough to disclose their HIV status to me.

Inerela+SL are currently in partnership with other organizations to fight HIV and AIDS and Ebola in Sierra Leone.

As it is now, WHO had declared Sierra Leone to be Ebola free but not HIV and AIDS free

Inerela+SL is therefore using the SAVE tool kit as a weapon to fight HIV and AIDS in Sierra Leone.