**BRIEF AND SUMMARY REPORT ON AN EXCHANGE PROGRAM ON ALBINISM WITHIN THREE WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES - SIERRA LEONE, LIBERIA AND GHANA** **FROM 17TH MAY – 24TH JUNE 2023**

**INTRODUCTION**

This program was designed for leaders of Albinism associations in three West Africa countries – Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ghana to visit and learn from sister countries and organization and as well draw a roadmap from West Africa albinism movement.

**COUNTRIES VISITED**

This program involved three albinism organizations in three west African countries. Serial Leone, Liberia and Ghana.

Three days visits per each country by Directors of the albinism organizations were planned and executed. Some ended up spending more than three days as the budget for the program designed due to situation on the grounds and engagements.

It was designed such that, Sierra Leone SLAPWA Director went to Ghana (26th May – 2nd June 2023), Liberian Albino Society Director visits Sierra Leone (17th – 21st May 2023) and Ghana Association of Persons with Albinism Director went to Liber

a but was as well joined by Sierra Leone SLAPWA The Director and the Ambassador, model and communication officer. (19th – 24th June 2023)

**INSTITUTIONS VISITED**

In Ghana, the Serial Leone Director paid working visits to the following institutions to learn from them and as well understand their system of operations and support for PWAs. National Council of Persons with Disability (NCPD) Executive Secretary and Staff, Social Welfare, Commission of Human Rights ana Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) Team and Staff, Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations. (GFD) Executive Director and Staff, Ghana Association of Persons with Albinism (GAPA) Executive Director and Staff, Center Manager, Accra Rehabilitation Center. The Director(visitor) as well attended one national advocacy committee meeting for all persons with disabilities in Ghana under the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations.

In Liberia, the team paid visit to ministry of gender, children and social protection, national commission on persons with disabilities, media cooperation of Liberia, Liberia Albinos Society, and visit project site of Liberia Albinos Society. Whiles in Monrovia, the team discovered another albinism organization (Stand up, Step up albinism organization), unfortunately, all efforts to meet with them yields no results.

In Sierra Leone we visited the National Commission of Persons with Disability - Executive Secretary, Amnesty international - Executive Director and staff, SLAPWA's team and Members in the head office and in Bo City, a full program of the purpose of the visit was organize and covered by the electronic media - national broadcaster.

**OBSERVATIONS**

1. There are more than one albinism organizations in two countries visited – Sierra Leone and Liberia
2. Low recognition of albinism and its related issues in the three countries visited.
3. The team observed keenly that, there were no targeted program for persons with albinism in the countries visited which makes recognition a big challenge.
4. There was limited support from government to albinism community in Ghana and Sierra Leone
5. Discrimination and stigmatization exist within the society of the countries visited
6. Many persons with albinism are as well saddled with reported cases of school dropout due to actions of teachers, other learners and school environment.
7. Most parents, children and persons with albinism continue to live in real poverty with no economic empowerment support.
8. Poor health care and access to health care has as well been identify as a limitation to albinism communities during our visits.
9. No proper legislation covering albinism and its related issues even though some laws have albinism at their definition sessions of disability.

**Best practices**

1. Some countries have albinism integrated in national disability law (Ghana).
2. Government budgetary support to albinism development and advocacy (Liberia)
3. Establishment of health care centers for use by PWAs in Libera
4. Establishment and training of media personalities as albinism ambassadors in Ghana.
5. Establish network with professional bodies in health for free counselling service on skin care in Ghana.
6. Annual distribution of sun care product to members through the support of ADEPA PHARMACY and S
7. Development of national albinism action plan towards inclusive society (Ghana).
8. SLAPWA donated 200 sunscreens and 50 with some Advice and Support Booklets for People with Albinism, families and caregivers to the Liberian Albino Society and GAPA respectively.
9. Sierra Leone Association of Persons with Albinism SLAPWA. Has distributed Advice Support Booklets across the country to members and their family with workshop -'Living Safely with Albinism '
10. Training for teachers/ educators on how to accommodate People with Albinism in learning institutions and training of Midwives on to welcome difference across the country.
11. Nationwide distribution of sunscreens and other protective resources to People with Albinism on constant basis since 2021.
12. Support group session for its members to build a community and support system with full support from Lancaster University and Medical Assistance Sierra Leone -UK

**SOME CHALLENGES FACED BY THE TEAM.**

1. Coordination from sister country prior to visit a challenge
2. Limited funding to support teams’ accommodation and DSA

**LOGISTICS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

The trips were made successful through the supports from the sponsoring agencies who provided all funds to cover the following areas;

1. Flight ticket
2. Accommodation for 3 nights
3. Local travel cost and
4. DSA

The team as well were on standby to provide technical supports and incidental to the leaders during their travels. Leaders within the visiting countries as well helped in the coordination and planning of meetings.

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD**

1. Countries with more than one albinism group should be supported to harmonized efforts toward building unity for development.
2. Sub-regional advocacy be launched to include skincare treatment and product on national health delivery systems in the West African region targeting Ghana, Sierra Leone and Libera as first.
3. This exercise should be extended to other sister countries to better understand their plights most especially the francophone countries
4. A formidable West African albinism network be established to champion the albinism advocacy and inclusion work in the sub-region.
5. Countries (Ghana, and Liberia) be supported to develop teacher training manual and parental guide and trained stakeholder on their usage.
6. Online or face to face meeting with all leaders of organization of persons with albinism in West Africa to appreciate their works, share experiences and develop proposal for future engagements.
7. The Liberia Albino Society works hard in these areas

* Change the name of the association to reflect the 21st century contest of albinism
* Ensure the budget from central government cover procurement of sun care products and dermatological services for PWAs.
* Ensure a decentralized albinism program to benefit all PWAs in the country with government support

**CONCLUSION**

We use this opportunity to commend Lancaster University and Medical Care international-Sierra Leone for their support and contributions towards the exchange program. We as well appreciate the contributions and support from the various institutions visited in the three countries. the three leadership of the albinism associations deserved commendation and trust would continue to work together for the betterment of albinism community.

Compiled by

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – GAPA**

**July 1st 2023**

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**PICTURE GALLARY**

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