

## IAAD CELEBRATION IN SIERRA LEONE



In many parts of Africa, people with albinism face discrimination and violence, not just from society at large but sometimes even from their own families. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights estimates that as many as 1 in 5,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa (and 1 in 20,000 people in Europe and North America) have albinism. Reports show that in the past decade, there have been numerous attacks against persons with albinism in different countries—and these are just the reported cases. Many cases go unreported due to the secrecy of witchcraft practices or the involvement of victims' family, among other factors. In many countries in Africa, it is believed that the body parts of persons with albinism possess powers and are good for witchcraft, rituals and amulets for wealth and good luck. Hence, people living with albinism are demonized, targeted for kidnappings and attacks. Persecution, violence and discrimination against persons with albinism is common in Africa countries. This has resulted to Persons with albinism being excluded from society, as well as participating in decision making processes.

In Sierra Leone, there is no in-depth research or reports on the status of the human rights of persons living with albinism. We are generally treated differently because we look different. It is public knowledge in the absence of research and based on testimonials from persons living with albinism that we face discrimination, stigmatization and neglect from society and family members.

The Sierra Leone Association for Persons With Albinism (SLAPWA) in partnership with Lady Ellen Women's Aid Foundation (LEWAF) with support from the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) is currently on a two weeks nationwide research prior to June 13<sup>th</sup> as a way of celebrating the IAAD. This research is led by the Center for alternative policy and research institute (CAPRI).

The research is on the plight of persons with albinism in Sierra Leone with two components. Part one that looks at major concerns and challenges of people with albinism in Sierra Leone – including their access to justice, education, health, employment, etc. Part two that looks at their specific justice needs – what are their own expressed human rights aspirations, concerns, access to justice and challenges interfacing with both informal and formal justice.

The research started on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2018 and would end on the 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 with four persons living with albinism part of the research team.

The research would be climax with radio and television programs on the 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 which is the IAAD to create awareness and sensitization about the condition of Persons With Albinism in Sierra Leone.