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## CGSL GETS \$10,000 GRANT FOR DIGITAL RIGHTS ADVOCACY IN SIERRA LEONE

Freetown, Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 – Chozen Generation Sierra Leone (CGSL) is excited to announce that it has won a grant of USD 9,950 from the Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) to continue its digital rights advocacy in Sierra Leone in the context of the Africa Digital Rights Fund (ADRF). CGSL is one of 13 entities from the continent to secure a grant in the fifth round of the Fund this year.

The organizations will undertake research, capacity building, awareness raising, advocacy and stakeholder's engagement across 25 African countries including Sierra Leone, Algeria, Cameroon, Malawi, South Africa and Ethiopia

In the next three months, CGSL will focus on strengthening the capacity of journalists, bloggers and youth activists on digital rights reporting and advocacy in Sierra Leone. The organization will specifically train selected beneficiaries on the recently passed Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Act as well as on the Right to Access Information Act, which was passed in 2013, supposedly to promote the public's 'right to know' within the context of press freedom.

Whilst a growing number of the country's population is now surfing the internet, Sierra Leone still lacks a law which specifically addresses data privacy and protection. This gap undermines consumer protection and potentially opens the door for data exploitation. In the same vein, the Right to Access Information Act has not resulted in significant improvement in accessing information. The recently passed Cybersecurity Act which is now awaiting presidential assent is an important piece of digital rights legislation. However, a survey by a respected local think-tank revealed that only about 29% of citizens had heard about the proposed law which, among other things, seeks to regulate social media and address some of the challenges with cybersecurity.

This low awareness by citizens of these laws, some of which, critics argue contains provisions that amount to a full-scale crackdown on freedom of expression online is a source of concern. "The lack of awareness by citizens means these laws are largely underutilized or used by rogue officials to suppress citizens" CGSL National Coordinator, Joel Abdulai Kallon said.

It is therefore absolutely necessary to analyze the said law and train journalists and youth activists on some of its major provisions to encourage more engagement and advocacy. Indeed, more public education is still required to ensure that every Sierra Leonean enjoys the benefit of these contemporary legislations.

*CHOZEN GENERATION IS A COMMUNITY OF PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SIERRA LEONE THROUGH THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SOUND LEADERSHIP. WE EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION, HARD WORK, INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP. OUR MISSION IS TO EMPOWER YOUTHS NATIONWIDE THROUGH THE PROVISION OF RELEVANT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, MENTORING, COACHING AND NETWORKING SUPPORT.*

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