



The former UNAIDS Executive Director, Dr. (Baron) Peter Piot, A Belgian microbiologist known for his research into Ebola and AIDS is currently in Sierra Leone assessing the trend of the Ebola epidemic in the country. He was accompanied by representatives from the London School of Hygiene and The Wellcome Thrust from the United Kingdom. In a meeting with stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS held in morning hours of Saturday 20th December, 2014, he expressed his solidarity and the hard times Sierra Leoneans have gone through since the epidemic broke out almost seven months ago. He said, his visit to Sierra Leone was to hear from larger section of the populace and to build synergy with the existing structures set up by the government. He however expressed hope from all the treatment centers he visited that Sierra Leone would overcome the deadly hemorrhagic disease as we all look forward to developing a vaccine in the coming months.

On his statement about HIV/AIDS in relation to Ebola, he said that the history of HIV/AIDS has many lessons to be learnt about Ebola, but the response should be forefront by behavioral change. Statistics about HIV/AIDS has shown great improvement in terms of treatment. Case Fatality has reduced to about 30% .But with regards to developing a vaccine for HIV/AIDS is far from sight he noted, this is because as he put it ‘the HIV/AIDS virus is extremely smart in the human body as the cells in HIV changes over time’. But in any crises, there could also be an opportunity to learn something from it.



In his welcome address, The UNAIDS Country Director Dr. Job Sangboham thanked Dr. Peter Piot for coming to Sierra Leone at this point in time. He said that Dr. Peter Piot is the scientist that discovered the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo way back in 1976, since then he has demonstrated his passion in the fight against HIV/AIDS. He however stressed the need of how we can position HIV/AIDS after the fight against Ebola.

Representing the Network of people living with HIV/AIDs is Iddrisa Songo whose statement was applauded by a great number of invitees highlighted salient challenges PLHIV are faced with in the country especially in this time of the outbreak of the Ebola virus. Among the challenges were:

The Weak health system in Sierra Leone.

Lack of inadequate facility for Laboratory investigation

No functional CD4 machine

No Viral Load Machine



Issue of Drugs Stock Out, which has caused lack of adherence to treatment.

HIV stigma and discrimination

Inadequate support for victims of HIV/AIDS

Lastly, why has it taken so long for over three decades without developing a vaccine for HIV.

In a brief statement, the representative of UNICEF in Sierra Leone Madam Nathalie stressed the need of opportunity for the country to raise more funds for the health system problems in the country and for HIV as well. Statements were also made by representative from National AIDS Control Program and Christian AIDS a U.K. based humanitarian organization.



Baron Peter Piot addresses stakeholders at the WCAR Hall in Port of Spain







Baron Peter Piot with the NACD team and stakeholders in HIV/AIDS