

Sierra Leone joined the global village to commemorate World AIDS Day with array of events started on Friday 30th November to the 2nd December 2018 with



the theme “know your HIV Status, rise, test and be safe” This year marks the 30th anniversary of the first World AIDS Day. Thirty years of activism and solidarity under the banner of World AIDS Day. Thirty years of campaigning for universal access to life-saving services to treat and prevent HIV.

The National HIV/AIDS Secretariat together with its partners; AIDS Health Foundation (AHF), the Network of HIV Positives (NETHIPS), the UNAIDS in S/L and many more gathered in the City of Bo southern Sierra Leone to remember the millions of people who have lost their lives to AIDS-related illnesses, many of whom died because they could not access HIV services, because of stigma, because of discrimination and because of criminalization of some key populations.



In his opening statement the Minister of Health and Sanitation Dr. Alpha Tejan Wurrie made a passionate plead of reflection on how far we have taken the fight of HIV/AIDS across the country. For over 30 years, he said, we have not seem to be making as much gains in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Sierra Leone has about 1,300 health facilities, only about 700 health facilities we have been able to conduct HIV/AIDS testing. Only 305 of those 1,300 health facilities that can afford full treatment of HIV/AIDS. He however committed the government effort in working to increase budgetary allocations and address the recent short falls in the availability of anti-retroviral drugs. The minister said that the ministry of health and Sanitation had therefore agreed on the following:

Restore the District AIDS Committees

Expand on ART treatment coverage

Stop the transmission of mother to child transmission.

He encouraged every Sierra Leonean to come forward to take a test for HIV. Sierra Leone has joined the campaign for people to know their HIV status and their viral load. For those who simply unaware that they are living with a potentially deadly, but treatable, disease. If people don't know their HIV status, people who are living with HIV can't start treatment, and people who are HIV-negative can't get the knowledge and skills they need to keep that way. If people don't know their HIV status, they can't protect themselves, their families, their partners. If people living with HIV don't know their viral load, they won't be sure that the treatment is effective, protecting their health and stopping HIV transmission the Minister said.



The United Nations Special Representative in Sierra Leone Nick Gardner in his statement said for 30 years the response of HIV/AIDS stands at its crossroad. Which way we turn may define the course of the epidemic. Whether we will end AIDS by 2030 or whether future generations will carry on bearing the burden of this devastating disease. More than 77 million people have become affected with HIV and more than 35 million have died on an AIDS related illness. Huge progress has been made in diagnosis and treatment, and prevention efforts have avoided millions of new infections. Yet the pace of progress is not marching global ambition. New HIV infections are not fully rapidly treated enough. Some regions are lagging behind and financial resources are insufficient. Stigma and discrimination are still holding people back especially in some key populations including gay man, Sex workers transgender people who inject drugs prisoners and migrants and there women and adolescence girls. More over one in four people living with HIV/AIDS did not know that they have the virus impeding them from making informed decision on prevention, treatment and other care support services. There is still time to scale up testing for HIV to enable more people to access treatment to increase resources needed to prevent new infections and the end the stigma. At this critical junction we need to take the right turn now.

In a statement made by the Executive Director of NETHIPS, Mr Iddrisa Songo called for a renewed commitment to fight all forms of stigma and discrimination in all sectors in societies. "We must provide necessary care and support to children in our communities who through no fault of theirs have become orphans and vulnerable due to HIV. Let us come together as a

nation and wage war on AIDS pandemic for the sake of our children,” He said.

The Deputy Chief of Africa Bureau of AHF Dr. Patrick Wamae thanks the organizers of the event. His statement reads. ‘We are here again to commemorate another WAD. A day of for celebrating our successes, a day for reflecting our challenges we faced when firm commitment are to be made to eventful victory over HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone and world over. Today over 60,00 of sierra Leoneans living with HIV are quiet living longer, healthier lives due to access better medical treatment, the urgency of winning the war against HIV/AIDS must never be diminished. This day event should serve as a reminder to the government and the policy makers that with just little over 50% in terms of ART coverage, 2,600 deaths, 3,200 new infections every year, carry over this country last year is just not too much, work need to done to fight and defeat AIDS. We therefore need to seek commitment from more key players for AIDS funding for treatment, testing and condoms. To complete the war on AIDS, we need an interruptive delivery of services, the availability of ARVs and test kits and also need the availability of diagnostic capacity. He called for a more concerted efforts to fight HIV/AIDS.



Other leaders Present at the celebrations included the Residence Minister South Mohamed E.K. Alieu who delivered the keynote address of the occasion on behalf of the government of His Excellency the President of the republic of Sierra Leone. They all committed to ensuring positive results in the new direction strategy. The Director General of The National HIV/AIDS Secretariat, Alhaji Dr. Momodu Sesay, gave the vote of thanks.

By courtesy of:

Rahim Ibrahim Kamara.

ICT Manager - NAS



Joyce W. Abu Chairperson of the Occasion, Dept. Commissioner for Children and Nat. Coordinator SURAH



Skit performed by faith-based inter religious council



Executive Director of NETHIPS, Mr Idarisa Songor appealing against stigma and discrimination

