

NAS OPENS NEW BUILDINGS AND BIDS FAREWELL TO OUT-GOING DIRECTOR GENERAL

Written by NAS

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The National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) unveiled its new office buildings on Friday 14 June 2019. Supported by the Global Fund and Government of Sierra Leone. The NAS spent over \$300,000 USD on two buildings in Bellair Park, off Dworzark Farm, in Freetown.

The Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Lands Country Planning and the Environment provided the land where the buildings were built. The buildings are painted brown and yellow. The property has a spacious car park that can host dozens of vehicles.

The buildings has offices and a conference room called, the Alghali Conference Room, named after the institution's former and late Director General, Professor C.D. Alghali. The first building houses the Secretary to the Director General's office, the Director General's office, and the Information Technology office. Another section of the building houses the Human Resource Unit, the Deputy Director General's office, Secretary General's office, and the Strategic Communication Manager's office.

The key mandate of the AIDs Secretariat is to coordinate all responses relating to HIV and AIDS, and to develop a national strategic plan and a national operational plan, and also to advise government on HIV and AIDS related issues.

There was also a handing over ceremony at the new office. The President has appointed a new Director General, Abdul Rahman Chernoh Sessay.

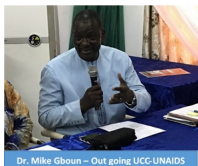
The newly appointed Director General, Abdul Rahman Chernoh Sessay, said he is elated for the new buildings because they used to spend over \$75,000 USD on rent. He said he has a lot of plans for the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS). He said the plans focus on achieving 90/90/90

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target; by 2020, 90% of Sierra Leoneans will know their HIV status, and 90% of those diagnosed with HIV will receive treatment.

He furthered stated that he will ensure effective testing and treatment. He said he will revamp efforts in terms of reaching out to people for them to do the HIV test for them to be able to know their status, and more importantly to let people aware that the disease exist, and also provide counselling for those living with the virus. "I will make every effort to letting people know that the HIV is not a death sentence, and those living with the disease do not feel dismayed," The newly Director General said.



In his statement, the representative from the United Nations AIDS in Sierra Leone (UNAIDS), Michael Gboun congratulated the leadership of the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) and applauded the contribution of the Global Fund to government of Sierra Leone. He said the Secretariat now has a very active AIDS response mechanism because of the legal environment that exists, the structures and systems that have been formulated and developed. The strategy that created a multi-sectorial coordination mandate for NAS inclusive of PLHIV at the center of the response with key population. He was hasten to call on the leadership of NAS to pay attention to the emerging new phase of the AIDS response globally. "There is a transition in the AIDS architecture that needs to be focused on, otherwise we will have a shoe that does not fit in what will make a difference in the lives of our people" he said.

"He said. NAS will be meaningless if PLHIV and vulnerable groups (key Pops) are not in front and center of the coordination mandate, and will be more meaningless if the National AIDS Council (NAC) the highest decision making body does not meet and the structures of the NAC are not functional. NAS is meaningless if HIV new infection in young people are increasing. Stigma and discrimination, the continued harassment of key population groups are an impediment of the AIDS response he said. He called on the newly appointed Director General and every member of staff at NAS to increase multi-sectorial and effective partnership because he said without an increase the area, then the mandate of the institution becomes useless. He expressed concern over universal coverage of the elimination to mother to child transmission which is about 95% but locally mother to child coverage is about 13%, and urged the Secretariat to tackle that. "HIV and AIDS should be included into the free education curriculum," he added.

The out-going Director, 'Alhaji Dr. Momodu Sesay, thanked the current Director General for all

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the support that he had received from him all through his four



and half years of stewardship at the secretariat. He also thanked the entire staff of the secretariat for their unwavering support to his leadership. Alhaji Dr. Momodu Sesay is a public Health Specialist of 30 years expertise in the ministry of Health and Sanitation who had served as district medical officer in Kono district from 2003 and then moved to the National AIDS control Program in 2009 and then served as Director Primary Health Care from 2012 to 2014 until he was appointed Director General of the National Aids Secretariat in 2015. Among the noticeable achievements of Alhaji Dr. Momodu Sesay were the construction of the new office occupied by the secretariat, increase in the number of HIV treatment centers, the implementation of EID & Viral Load intervention to name a few. The structure of the response is on track. He appreciated the support and commitment of partners and service providers in the fight against AIDS and urged them to continue to collaborate their effort to move the AIDS response forward. He thanked the government and the President of Sierra Leone, H.E. Retired Brigadier Julius Maada Bio for his continued support to the secretariat. A lot has happened as far a support to the secretariat is concerned. He said, he is leaving though there are lots of other things to do, in terms of the government response but apart from supporting the structures, the government is also supporting the payment of staff salaries to a certain percent. He thanked the Global Fund and the Kfw German Fund through the CCM-SL for the resources and commitment to the government and people of Sierra Leone. To those present including his former staff at the Secretariat, He asked them for their forgiveness for whatever wrong he might have done to them. He then OFFICIALLY handed over the HIV/AIDS RESPONSE and the Secretariat to the new Director General Abdul Rhaman Sessay. The occasion was climaxed with presentation of gifts from members of staff to the out-going Director General of the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS). The Deputy Director General James Lahai Kamara gave the vote of thanks. Food and drinks were served.

