



***The Honourable Minister of Health and Sanitation Madam Zainab H. Bangura addressing NAS***

**Familiarization visit by the Honourable Minister of Health and Sanitation – Mrs. Zainab H. Bangura – to the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat (NAS), on Saturday 26th February 2011**

On Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2011, the Honourable Minister, Ministry of Health and Sanitation made a courtesy call to the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat. This form part of the familiarization visits to health-related institutions undertaken by the Honourable Minister. The primary objective is to have firsthand information of NAS's operations.

The Director of NAS, Dr. Brima Kargbo welcomed the Minister to the Secretariat and congratulated her, for being the first Minister to visit the Secretariat since its inception in 2002. He assured her of NAS commitments to the campaign against HIV and AIDS in the country.

Dr. Kargbo gave a brief background of the National HIV and AIDS response which started in 1987 when the first case was diagnosed. He noted the government's initial response through the establishment of the National AIDS Control Programme in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the adoption of multi sectoral approach to the epidemic which led to the establishment of the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat as the coordinating body, and the National

AIDS Council overseeing the Secretariat, which was established through cabinet's conclusion in 2002. Thus, the response has been guided by the Principle of 'The Three Ones' (one Coordinating Body, one National Strategic Plan and one M&E Framework).

On that note, NAS developed the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2006-2010, submitted the 2010 country's progress report to UNGASS, conducted a mode of transmission study and consequently developed the new National Strategic Plan 2011-2015 which has been sent to the Global Fund soliciting support.

He informed the Honourable Minister and entourage, about various Donor support to the national response. Namely; surveillance and laboratory strengthening (World Health Organization and Centre for Disease prevention and Control), strengthening PMTCT and Paediatric Care (UNICEF), provision of nutritional support to Persons Living with HIV (WFP), provision of condoms and assistance to women's groups (UNFPA). He noted the immense contribution by the Global Fund with regards the Round 9 HIV and Health Systems Strengthening Project with a total budget of \$86 million for five years. He stated that the Global Fund grant is performance based, whose activities are coordinated at Country level by the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), which comprised a team of stakeholders. The CCM signed the grant agreement for Round 9, on behalf of the government of Sierra Leone. In a bid to effectively implement the HSS Component, a Memorandum of Understanding between NAS, Department for international Development (DFID) and Ministry of Finance has been approved by the Global Fund to establish concrete benchmarks for the payment of salaries to Health Workers. The National HIV/AIDS Secretariat is the Principal recipient for the Global Fund grant on HIV and AIDS in Sierra Leone, hence oversee the implementation of all activities by the 52 Sub Recipients.



*Director of NAS Dr. Brima Kargbo briefing the minister of health and Sanitation Madam Zainab H. Bangura*

However, he expressed concern over the minimal government's contribution to the national response which posed a challenge for sustainability that will be addressed when the Secretariat is transformed to a commission.

He further noted the strides made by the Secretariat in stabilizing the epidemic at 1.5% since 2005; increasing access for 6,000 PLHIVs to Antiretroviral Treatment with a survival rate of 84.5%, and increasing access for all pregnant women to Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV, thus ensuring only 9% transmission of HIV from infected mothers to children, enactment of The HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act in 2007 though its amendment is ongoing, aimed at addressing HIV and AIDS related stigma and Discrimination.

In her remarks, the Honourable Minister thanked the Director and entire staff of NAS for all the achievement so far. She encouraged the team to continue the good work until the Millennium Development Goal on HIV and AIDS is achieved, by 2015. He noted that HIV testing at both private and government institutions have revealed increase incidence in HIV positive cases, though the overall National Prevalence is indicating stability. She urged the NAS Director and entire team to take note of this development and, formulate strategy to cope with this both in terms of consolidating comprehensive knowledge, increasing access to ARV, care and support services for the orphan and vulnerable children, effective decentralized response, and provision of legal assistance to PLHIVs, with active involvement of religious leaders, aimed at promoting the adoption of positive behavior amongst the various target audience.



*A cross-section of NAS staff in a meeting with MoHS Minister*

Finally, she requested that a briefing note be prepared on the following to give a comprehensive background on the entire Sierra Leone HIV and AIDS Campaign.

- Composition and governance system of the CCM, NAS and NAC
- Synopsis of Round 9 proposal with disaggregated budget for HIV and HSS components
- Financial management of Round 9 Global Fund resources
- List of Sub Recipients and their operational areas by Region
- Highlights of the Decentralization of national response and its challenges
- Summary of the mode of transmission studies and strategies to address those impeding factors
- Brief notes on the MOU with Ministry of Finance on the management of the HSS human resource grant
- Statistics of the 6000 PLHIVs on ART
- Update on organizations responsible for orphans and the strategies put in place

In conclusion, the NAS Director thanked the Honourable Minister and entourage for taking time of their busy schedule to visit the Secretariat. He promised to submit the document as request, on time, and stated that the Doors of the Secretariat are always opened for such motivating visit. The entire staff was introduced to enhance acquaintance. The meeting ended at 12:33 p.m.