



*A blind reading the braille, while the Milton Margai school for the blind principal, Albert Sandi and NAS*

The National HIV/AIDS Secretariat (NAS), In collaboration with Christian Aid, Educational Centre for the blind and Visually impaired, and development partners on Friday 5th November 2010, Officially Launched the basic facts on HIV and AIDS in Braille at a ceremony held at the Atlantic Hall of the National Stadium, Brookfields, Freetown.

The theme was: - 'HIV and AIDS information for all, without Discrimination', meaning information on HIV and AIDS must be accessible to all irrespective of their status in society, thus the blind and visually impaired are no exception.

In his statement, Dr. Brima Kargbo, Director, NAS said that he was honoured to deliver a Key note address and perform the official launch of this very important package. "The National HIV/AIDS Secretariat holds this occasion in high esteem as the overall aim is to reach one of our key audiences with accurate, precise and harmonized message in a package that they will be able to relate to. Consequently, the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat appreciate the collaborative effort of all those who in diverse ways have contributed towards the success of this occasion".

The NAS Director further went on to state that, the key priority of the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat is prevention of new infections. And dissemination of correct, consistent and non-discriminatory message in a language and medium that the audience can relate to, will considerably inform and educate same on prevention and other emerging issues on HIV and AIDS, promote existing services leading to uptake and adoption of positive behaviour.

He also informed the audience, that the blind and the visually impaired, are vulnerable to HIV transmission; they can be easily exploited and in communities where Gender Based Violence is prevalent, they are at risk of one. Thus this launching gives partners the extraordinary opportunity to reach this group and empower them with life saving information, which they will need in difficult circumstances and hopefully throughout their life time.

The Senior Programme Officer – HIV/AIDS, at Christian Aid, Mr. Lawrence The, express his

delight in seeing the project come to reality. He thanked other partners for the commitment and collaboration. He informed partners present that, the package was the first in Sierra Leone and hopefully the first in the sub-region. He appeal to partners present, especially the UNAIDS to support the dissemination and production of more of the package, to ensure that all blind and visually challenged have access to it.

The representative from UNAIDS, Sight Savers International, Acting Head Master Milton Margai School for the Blind and President of Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues made meaningful contributions and assured the audience of their support towards the project, and committed to participate in the dissemination of the package.

A skit by youths from Restless Development Organization reechoed the message that HIV and AIDS are no longer a killer diseases, instead they educated their audience on the SAVE (S-safer practices, A-available medications, V-voluntary confidential counseling and testing, E-empowerment) message. Climax of the occasion was when two blind pupils read the Braille in front of the anxious audience. The Chairman of the occasion, Mr. Steven Korosa, Director Special Needs Education, Ministry of Education Youths and Sports, called on all present to treat the issue of disability with ought most importance.

Click to see more [photos from the Launching of Basic Facts on HIV and AIDS in Braille](#)