

## Minister of Health Commissions National Central Public Health Reference Laboratory



Hon Minister of Health delivering statement



US Ambassador to Sierra Leone delivering statement



WHO Representative delivering statement on behalf of UN

The Sierra Leone National Central Public Health Reference Laboratory (CPHRL) was commissioned on 21 August 2012 by the Hon Minister of Health and Sanitation, Mrs Zainab Hawa Bangura. The Hon Minister also launched the National Health Laboratory Policy, National Laboratory Strategic Plan and Laboratory Investment Plan as well as the National Laboratory & Surveillance Working Group. Delivering her statement, Mrs Bangura commended the support and commitment of partners who leveraged resources to support the establishment of the facility. The event was attended by government officials and health sector development partners including the US Ambassador, UN agencies, CDC-USA & other partners.

Delivering the keynote address, the US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Mr Michael Owen, pledged the continued support of the US government to the country's health sector. He said a strengthened health system is important for the development and stability of the country. Speaking on behalf of the United Nations, Dr Wondimagegnehu Alemu, WHO Representative said the establishment of the Lab and the development of the documents are critical for a successful disease surveillance system which depends on a strengthened laboratory support to diagnose causative agents of diseases which in turn guide appropriate interventions. He assured WHO's continued commitment in promoting public health infrastructure and local capacity for effective health service delivery in Sierra Leone.

The CPHRL was established with support from WHO, UNICEF, CDC, GFATM through the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat. Before being upgraded to a CPHRL, the facility was only equipped to diagnose HIV. The country depended on neighboring countries for confirmation of certain tests. The capacity of the lab has now been upgraded and quipped to conduct high level technical confirmatory tests including rubella, Earlier Infant Diagnosis of HIV, bacterial meningitis among others. WHO accredited the NPHRL in March 2012 to undertake measles and Yellow Fever diagnoses in the country following thorough assessment of the suitability of the facility and intensive bench training for its staff by experts from WHO HQ and IST West Africa

It is expected that the available resources and equipment at the facility would help to raise its profile to become a center of excellence and research institution in the Mano River Union (MRU) countries.



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