

## SIERRA LEOENE LAUNCHES MENTAL HEALTH POLICY AND STRATEGIC PLAN



The First Lady Launching the Policy and Strategic



Group photo of a cross section of the participants



The Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation making statement



Dr Teniin Gakuruh delivering WHO statement



Statement by the Chief Medical Officer/MoHS



Cross section of participants

Sierra Leone launched its National Mental Health Policy and Strategic Plan at the commemoration of World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2012. The documents and the commemoration were launched by the First Lady of Sierra Leone, Mrs Sia Nyama Koroma in a function attended by government functionaries and non-state actors including UN agencies and other development partners, mental health advocates, the civil society and the media.

Delivering the key note address, Mrs Koroma stated that mental health is still largely a neglected problem with a high social and economic impact. She described the occasion as an opportunity to demonstrate support for people affected by mental health disorders. *“We must commit ourselves to improve the lives of people impacted by mental disorders, and join the global fight for mental health”*, she added. The Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation Mr Tamba Borbor Sawyerr in his statement reiterated the need for a concerted effort to addressing the burden of mental health in the country.

Dr Teniin Gakuruh delivered the Message of the WHO Regional Director for Africa on the occasion of the commemoration, on behalf of the Country Representative. The Message called on Member States to increase support to mental health programmes by *“allocating adequate human and financial resources for responding to depression”*. It further urged capacity building and the full integration of mental health into national health development agenda. Other partners supporting mental health in the country also assured their commitment to addressing issues of mental health in Sierra Leone.

The launch of the policy and strategic plan is expected to continue to feed the momentum for improvement of mental health service delivery in the country.

The strategic plan identifies targets and sets clear guidelines for the delivery of mental health care and services and the adequate implementation of the national mental health policy. The Policy and Strategic Plan were developed by a core working group headed by the Directorate of Non-Communicable Diseases at MoHS with technical support from all levels of WHO (HQ, the African Regional Office, the Inter-Country Support Team (IST) W/Africa and the Country Office in Sierra Leone.