

## Sierra Leone Commemorates World AIDS Day 2012



Mr Osho Cocker Representing HE the President



The First lady emphasizing need to enhance EMCTCT



Acting Minister of Health delivering statement



Dr Job delivering statement on behalf of the ERSG

Sierra Leone commemorated World AIDS Day on 1 December 2012 on the theme **Getting to zero new HIV Infection, Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS Related Death** by 2015. The Day is commemorated every year to rekindle the general HIV/AIDS awareness across every level of advocacy and mobilization of communities, resources and national solidarity in the fight against the disease. The event was attended by state functionaries including the representative of the President, the First Lady of Sierra Leone, local and international organizations including the UN, the private sector and the civil society. As part of the activities to commemorate the Day, thirty thousand people were targeted to be tested across the country. The President of the republic in his WAD broadcast statement to the nation reaffirmed that HIV/AIDS will continue to be an important issue on his government development agenda. Meanwhile, the WAD message of the WHO Regional Director for Africa was delivered in a nationwide television broadcast by the acting WHO Representative.

Mr Osho Coker, Secretary to the President, speaking on behalf of H.E the President reiterated the Presidential broadcast statement which emphasized the need to strengthen partnership with the civil society and the private sector to complement the dwindling global funds to fight HIV/AIDS. *“This is a serious challenge and our country must be prepared to meet this challenge by raising funds locally, sharing cost and partnering with the private sector”* the statement added. Meanwhile, the first lady Mrs Sia Nyama Koroma emphasized the need for a sustained advocacy for increased VCCT particularly among pregnant women to enhance the elimination of mother to child transmission of the disease.

Dr Sagbohan Job, UNAIDS Country Coordinator delivered the statement of the UN Country Team on behalf of the Executive Representative of the UN Secretary General. Dr Job stated that the fight against HIV should be a shared responsibility and the commemoration an *“opportunity to strengthen the promotion of Human rights and reaffirmation of commitments on HIV and AIDS”*.

The network of HIV Positives in Sierra Leone reiterated their call on all partners to fight stigma and discrimination against people living with and affected by the disease to sustain the gains. They also urged the state and partners to encourage the meaningful involvement of people living with HIV in the design, implementation and evaluation of integrated HIV responses and sexual reproductive health programmes. Sierra Leone has stabilized the prevalence of the disease at 1.5% over the past 4 years for which the country has gained international recognition.



Scene of the venue of the commemoration