

## Sierra Leone Commemorates World Breastfeeding Week 2012



**The Deputy CMO launching WBW 2012**



**Aminata Shamit Koroma delivering statement**



**Experience sharing by community members**



**A health worker speaking on breastfeeding**



**Cross section of community members at the function**



Sierra Leone launched commemoration of *World Breastfeeding Week 2012* on 1 August 2012 on the theme “*Understanding the past - planning the future*”. Every year World Breastfeeding Week is commemorated to promote and support early initiation (immediately after delivery) and exclusive breastfeeding of children 0-6 months as well as continued breast feeding until two years and beyond. The event was launched by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr Alhassan Seisay. Dr Seisay emphasized that breastfeeding is the most important source of nutrition for growth and protection of children against diseases. He said “*exclusive breastfeeding is key towards reduction of infant and child mortality and also enhances child survival.*”

Activities during the Week will focus on community sensitization through meetings at Peripheral Health Units and catchment areas. The aim is to increase and sustain advocacy during and after the World Breastfeeding Week with the aim of promoting behaviour change of mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding. The National Nutrition Programme of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF and other stakeholders, has started dialogues in the urban and rural communities of the Western Area to identify and address misconceptions on breastfeeding. This effort will be extended to other parts of the country throughout the Week.

Promotion of exclusive breastfeeding is an important component of the National Food and Nutrition Programme of the Ministry of Health. Current statistics show an increase in the national exclusive breastfeeding rate at 32% (MICS 4 2010) compared to 11% in DHS 2008. The Programme Manager, Aminata Shamit Koroma said the goal of the Ministry was “*to increase the exclusive breastfeeding rate to at least 50%*”. She said this would impact positively on the nutritional status of children and ensures a healthy start in life by “*Breastfeeding the normal way*”.

The event was attended by officials of the MoHS, WHO, UNICEF, NGOs, community leaders, pregnant and lactating women, men and youths in the George Brooke community.