



## *Embassy of the United States of America*

Public Affairs Office

### **PRESS RELEASE**

Freetown

October 4, 2012

Contact: Boa Lee

Tel: 076 515 000

### **Donors, Government, Civil Society Discuss Coordination Effort to Tackle Hunger and Under-Nutrition in Sierra Leone**

(FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE) – At a meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 2 of international partners, cabinet ministers and leaders from the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and civil society, attendees shared their visions for advancing the objectives of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. The movement takes a multi-sector approach to tackling hunger and under-nutrition. The meeting was hosted by U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and held at the U.S. Embassy. Earlier that day, the meeting attendees participated in a launching and signing ceremony for the SUN Movement at the Miatta Conference Hall in Freetown.

The SUN Movement stakeholders and partners contribute to significant and sustained reductions in hunger and under-nutrition, improve the health of its populations – especially women and children – and ensure lasting economic growth and prosperity of future generations. Sierra Leone joined the SUN Movement in February 2012.

Felicité Tchibindat, the UNICEF regional advisor for nutrition in West and Central Africa, shared that countries that have already launched the SUN Movement have a high governing council upon which members from civil society, the private sector, international donors, and government serve. Ms. Tchibindat said that each stakeholder must identify how it wants to work towards achieving the goals set by the council, suggesting that when stakeholders make hunger and under-nutrition a priority in all of their organization’s programs, the likelihood of success is even greater. “We need to broaden the platform,” she said. “At the end of the day, what is important is making a change in the life of the people” and improving nutrition intake.

Sierra Leone’s Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security Dr. Sam Sesay welcomed the commitment of all stakeholders, saying the problem of under-nutrition and hunger is well-known in the country. The challenges will lie in trying to “coordinate among equals” as well as with educating the populace, especially a significant illiterate population, about nutritional intake and healthy alternatives. With the launch of the SUN Movement and Sierra Leone’s vice president now assigned to oversee the effort, the minister said he has confidence that Sierra Leone can make progress.

U.S. Embassy Chargée d’Affaires Kathleen FitzGibbon urged for strong commitments to, and patience with, the collective movement. “We always have to think about if we helped a victim of malnourishment today,” Ms. FitzGibbon said. “On those days when we think that we cannot get an agreement, we should think about those women and kids. ... Let the SUN shine on all Sierra Leoneans.”

Sierra Leone is developing key documents, including the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy and an implementation plan for its policy to address under-nutrition and hunger. The documents are intended to guide the effective implementation of the SUN initiative. The SUN Movement is expected to greatly consummate gains made thus far towards reaching Millennium Development Goals (MDG), particularly of cutting acute malnutrition in half by 2015.

In launching the SUN Movement, Sierra Leone joins other forward moving countries like Ghana, Benin, Rwanda, Mali, and Mauritania that have already joined the work to lift up nations from the throes of hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

For more information about USAID’s work in Sierra Leone, go online to <http://www.usaid.gov/sl>.