

Concord Times (Freetown)

## Sierra Leone: Supplementary - World Statistics Day Observed

25 October 2010

---

Freetown — The first **World Statistics Day**, 20th October, 2010 was on Tuesday last week celebrated in Sierra Leone by the Statistics Sierra Leone Family in collaboration with the United Nations at an impressive programme held at the Miatta Conference Center, Youyi building on the theme: "Celebrating the many achievements of official statistics and the core values of service, integrity and professionalism".

Delivering the keynote address on behalf of the Guest of Honor His Excellency President Ernest Bai Koroma who could not be present due to pressing state matters, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Dr. Samura M.W. Kamara who played the role of Chairman of the occasion stated that no country can move forward without a strong statistics base.

According to Dr. Kamara, he was particularly impressed and comfortable with the presence of students and pupils from various schools that were invited to grace the occasion, some of whom may decide to become future statisticians. He added that professional statisticians will never be out of jobs. The Finance Minister noted that he was also impressed with the diversity of the representation to grace the programme, which included Mayors of the provincial capital cities of Bo, Makeni, Kenema and Koidu-Sembehun or their representatives.

The Minister also dilated on the significance of celebrating this first World Statistics Day, proclaimed by a Resolution of the UN General Assembly in February this year, something that manifests the global challenge we have taken. The chairman of the occasion listed some of the challenges to include the need to recognize the importance of the day as it allows them to evaluate the human and natural resources potentials that relate to national development.

He said through credible statistics data one may be able to know where we are and how to apply and interpret data; all of which are challenges to students that would like to become statisticians.

Dr. Samura Kamara also traced the roots of Statistics Sierra Leone to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), which was playing only a minor role until Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) was established to replace its functions with a clear mission and vision as a result of a Parliamentary Act creating it in 2002. "If you work for any institution you need an accurate and reliable statistics to determine whether you are failing or not," the Finance Minister stated, noting that it is the responsibility of SSL to make a credible and reliable data base of information that can be useful to society.

The Finance Minister commended SSL for its efforts to develop the use of statistics in Sierra Leone which included the collection of accurate data base that was important for the formulation of policies on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP); the preparation of a demographic health survey in 2008 which is very important in government's concerns to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).

Other achievements of SSL cited by the Minister include the realization of important publications such as two volumes on Gender Based Violence and several important surveys to help in the development of the country. "We now have magazines full of statistical data to help as guides in the tourism and transport sector," the Minister affirmed.

The chairman of the occasion recommended that every ministry, department and agencies of government (MDAs) should have a statistics and a planning unit to quantify time and planning works. He lauded the immense support of the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) as a result of which SSL has planted units in the various Ministries and is developing its management and integration units, adding that knowledge sharing is what the SSL is all about.

In her contribution, the UNFPA Representative in Sierra Leone Mrs. Radiza Ndlovu highlighted the importance that the UNFPA attaches to the works of SSL and to the commemoration of World Statistics Day, 20th October. She repeated the theme of the celebration which focuses on the core values of integrity, service and professionalism, adding that SSL deserves commendation for best practice recommended by international statistics standards, and for the many achievements made.

The UNFPA Representative disclosed that an international website has been established focusing on statistical data country by country and another at the national statistics level: ([WWW.un.org/](http://WWW.un.org/)) ([www.statistics.sl/](http://www.statistics.sl/)).

Mrs. Ndlovu lauded SSL for the first national demographic survey, noting that the SSL has become a stop shop for monitoring and planning purposes. But in her statement, she stated "we still have a long way to go because the development and utilization of statistics is critical in this country". He noted however that SSL should be commended for its role in collaborating with the UNFPA in the collection of demographic and population data and for making them available to other agencies.

In his statement, Mr. Paul Sengeh who represented the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) praised the important role of SSL in the nation's development process, adding that UNICEF continues to support Government and the SSL to enhance the lives of women and children in the country through various interventions. He listed the interventions to include UNICEF's active support to government to conduct the Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), a survey that evaluates the status of women in the country. He said it was the statistics data from MICS and other surveys of SSL that are being used in efforts to achieve the MDG's and the PRSP-2 which is now the Agenda for Change.

Mr. Paul Sengeh outlined the essence of a credible and a reliable data collection, which was why even during the rebel war in the year 2000 they requested the cooperation of the rebels for the collection of MICS data in rebel controlled areas. He

added that right now about 150 enumerators and field supervisors that have been trained by SSL, funded by UNICEF are conducting MICS4 surveys throughout the country.

Among those who made statements is the Acting Statistician General Mr. Mohamed King Koroma, (see separate report), while the World Bank, UNDP and IMF Representatives were absent due to other pressing engagements.

Earlier an official of SSL Mr. Jabbie introduced the keynote speaker and chairman of the occasion Dr. Samura Kamara whom he described as a product of the St. Andrews Secondary School, UCC Bo, and the University of Wales. He is also a former Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone and ex-Financial Secretary of the Ministry of Finance.