



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Sierra Leone launches a comprehensive five-year Action Plan for Health Security in compliance with International Health Regulations.

Freetown, 12 September 2019 – Sierra Leone is now one of only 11 countries in the world with a National Action Plan for Health Security. This milestone was reached today following the launch by the President of Sierra Leone, of a five-year multisector Action Plan to strengthen core capacities in the country as required under the International Health Regulations 2005. The Plan outlines activities that will be carried out over the coming years (2018-2022) to accelerate attainment of Health Security in the country and significantly contribute to the regional and global health security. Already, several capacity building activities carried out in 2018 and 2019 were aligned to the NAPHS as part of the document's fruition.

Implementation of this plan will enable Sierra Leone to prevent the likelihood and reduce the consequences of disease outbreaks and other public health hazards; build national capacities for early detection and effective response systems to public health emergencies and other events of public health threats.

Sierra Leone has a sizeable population of slightly over 7 million people. The population is projected to increase to 10 million by 2030 and 14 million by 2036 respectively. The country's increasing urbanization and other socio-economic activities pose serious environmental challenges. At the same time, the country is prone to disease outbreaks and natural disasters with proportionately high mortalities. In 2014, the Sierra Leone was hard hit by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa that killed approximately 4000 people in Sierra Leone alone; and in 2017, the largest natural disaster on record in the country left an estimated 1000 people dead during a massive mudslides and flash floods in the capital city.

A recent risk profiling conducted by the country with support from the World Health Organization and other multi-sector partners clearly identified and classified 10 priority hazards and threats with potential for serious health consequences.

“We have had health emergencies with catastrophic impacts on our economy and the lives of our citizens in the past largely due to unpreparedness. We learnt lessons from those mistakes and we cannot allow such emergencies to recur, which is why my ministry is promoting multisectoral collaboration to strengthen the country's health emergency preparedness and response capacities”, says Dr Alpha Wurie, Minister of Health and Sanitation. “With the progress made so far, we are probably one of the countries on course to attaining the best protection for our people against disease outbreaks and other public health events despite our current challenges”.

The National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) was developed based on recommendations of the 2016 Joint External Evaluation (JEE) which is a voluntary, collaborative and multi-sector process recommended by the World Health Assembly in the aftermath of the West African EVD outbreak. The purpose of JEE was to evaluate the country's capacity to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to public health events. The JEE process in 2016 gave an opportunity to national authorities and partners to identify the most critical gaps within the country's human, animal and environmental health sectors which were prioritized for enhanced preparedness and response capacity development

In 2018, Sierra Leone also launched a one health platform to holistically address human, animal and environmental health challenges.

“Sierra Leone now has some of the best tools, structures and programmes to tackle health emergency challenges and to foster improved health security”, says Evans Liyosi, WHO Representative in Sierra Leone. “What is most critical moving forward would be a very strong collaboration and demonstrated commitment by the government and all partners in making sure that the required resources are made available to support full implementation of this well formulated action plan that would help to save lives and promote socio-economic development in this country”.

The plan will facilitate multi-sector engagement using a One Health approach and guide implementation of activities for progress towards attainment of International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 core capacities required for enhancing Global Health Security.

A total of 291 million United States Dollars will be required for the full implementation of this comprehensive multi-sector five-year plan to improve quality health emergency preparedness and response capacity and facilitate achievement of universal health coverage in Sierra Leone. Some of the high priority activities set out to be implemented in the first two year are estimated to cost approximately 50 million United States Dollars.

###

For more information, please contact:

At the Ministry of Health and Sanitation

Harold Thomas - Risk Communications Lead/Ag. Health Education Manager
Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Sierra Leone
Email: haroldthomas2007@yahoo.com
Phone: +232 76 602 460

At the World Health Organization

Saffea Gborie - Communications Officer
World Health Organization, Sierra Leone
Email: gboriesa@who.int
Phone: +232 76 77 78 78