

Liberia, Partners Observe World AIDS Day 2015



A partial view of students at the parade

The Government of Liberia through the National AIDS Commission (NAC) and the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) of the Ministry of Health has executed series of activities in observance of the World AIDS Day 2015 in the Country. The national commemoration took place in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, which was unanimously selected by partners. World AIDS Day celebrations were also held in other counties. Ahead of the December 1st parade and indoor program, other major activities held included community outreach, a massive HIV Counseling and Testing campaign, activities for young people including a sports tournament and quizzing competition. There was also a massive media campaign conducted both in Monrovia and the host county, Grand Bassa.

The activities were undertaken by the AIDS Commission in collaboration with its partners including the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Refugee Agency, and other UN agencies. Other partners who supported and participated actively in the planning of the national events include the Planned Parenthood Association of Liberia, the Liberia Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS, the Armed Forces of Liberia HIV

and AIDS Prevention Program, as well as several other civil society organizations and national and international non-governmental organizations.



Panelists at the World AIDS Day press conference: (left) Dr. Ivan F. Camanor, Chairman, National AIDS Commission, and (right) Dr. Betru Tekle Woldeemayat, Country Director, UNAIDS Liberia

Observed on the 1st of December every year, World AIDS Day is dedicated to raising awareness about the HIV and AIDS pandemic; providing a platform to reflect on the achievements made in the national HIV response and to embrace with optimistic solidarity people living with HIV.

World AIDS Day was first observed in 1988, and since then Governments and officials from all sectors in their respective countries have committed themselves to observing the day with speeches, forums, community awareness and media campaign on global and national themes aimed at reaffirming their commitments.

Liberia joined the world over to celebrate the day under the global Theme: “Fast Track-Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030”, with a national Theme: “Liberia Fast Tracking: Scale up Treatment, Know Your Status, Use Condoms and End Stigma and Discrimination.”



Mrs. Korto Reeves Williams, ActionAid Liberia's Country Director, delivers the keynote address

Serving as keynote speaker was ActionAid Liberia's Country Director Mrs. Korto Reeves Williams. Mrs. Williams lamented the gross social, economic and cultural discrimination against women and girls in Liberia, a situation, she pointed out, has contributed to higher prevalence of HIV and among women. The ActionAid Country Director named some of the norms placing women at higher risk of contracting HIV as rape, early and forced marriage; economic challenges, among others. She therefore recommended the setting up of forensic facilities in the country in order to be able to detect perpetrators of rape; the revision of our laws and the repealing of those laws that discriminate against women, and the legislation of stronger laws that will ameliorate the problems of rape and other forms of violence against women.



A partial view of guests at the Indoor Program

The National AIDS Commission's Chairman, Dr. Ivan F. Camanor, during a press conference held to officially launch World AIDS Day 2015, said HIV and AIDS are present here in Liberia and undermining the country's various sectors; therefore, a collective effort is required to AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Statistics have shown that AIDS has killed more than 25 million people between 1981 and 2007, and an estimated 33.2 million people worldwide live with HIV as of 2007. In Liberia, the National Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS) puts the country's prevalence rate at 1.9% in the sexually active age groups of 15 to 49.

Despite recent improved access to antiretroviral treatment and care in many regions of the world, serious challenges including stigma and discrimination, denial of one's positive status, low level of domestic support among others continue to plague the national HIV and AIDS response.