



PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FREETOWN SIERRA LEONE

ABUJA DECLARATION- KEEP YOUR PROMISES FOR WELBODI

This month African Heads of State will gather in Abuja to discuss and review the commitments they made 12 years ago. In 2001 African Heads of State promised to spend 15% of their total annual budget on health by 2015.

In the last three years commitment to the Abuja Declaration has fluctuated. In 2011 the government of Sierra Leone committed 11% to health, in 2012 that percentage decreased to 7.4%. Last year however, the Government of Sierra Leone committed to 10.5% of its total budget to health for 2013. The Budget Tracking Working Group (which includes Budget Advocacy Network, Save the Children, World Vision, Health Alert and MamaYe) recognises efforts made by government to increase health expenditure, yet we know that allocated funds are not getting to where they are most needed on time. Six months into 2013, **less than 2%** of the 10.5% that has been promised has actually been disbursed. In order to ensure good health care for the people of Sierra Leone *consistent* commitment as well as *timely* and *full* disbursement of funds is needed.

Abu Bakarr Kamara from the Budget Advocacy Network expressed his concern about the impact of inconsistent disbursement:

“It is unrealistic to expect local health staff and authorities to perform adequately without being able to plan financially. Even if the remaining 8.5% is disbursed by the end of 2013 it will be impossible to make efficient use of the funds if they come in one tidal wave. Furthermore, the 10.5% commitment made for this year amounts to spending of ONLY \$6 on the health of each Sierra Leonean in 2013. The World Health Organization recommends a spending of \$54 per person, which they have determined is the minimum amount needed in order to provide basic health services.”

Even if our Government meets the promise of allocating 15% of the total budget to health by 2015, we will still be falling very short of the WHO recommended minimum spend per capita. This target is not impossible to achieve; Ghana is currently spending \$57 per person on health in 2013.

Speaking on behalf of Health Alert, Victor Koroma said:

“This Africa Union Special Summit provides a window of opportunity for the leaders of Sierra Leone to keep their promises for health. Furthermore, they must remember that we are watching, and are asking them to ensure that the survival of our mothers and babies is kept amongst the highest priorities.



As the Heads of State meet in Abuja on the 15th of July, we call on the Government of Sierra Leone to not only demonstrate solid commitment towards meeting the 15% target, but to also ensure adequate increases in the per capita spending on health. Government spending on health is \$6 per person (LE 26,000), which is not even sufficient to feed a household of two for a day or to treat complicated malaria and typhoid. Investing in mothers and babies is not only a goal in itself – it also helps achieve other Abuja targets such as those on HIV, TB, and Malaria. And more than that, investing in the health of our mothers and their children will improve our economy in the future **[1]**”.

Speaking on behalf of the MamaYe campaign Dr Yilla said:

“Many more mothers and babies could be saved in our country if they had access to quality health services. Somewhere in Sierra Leone more than 5 women die every day from causes related to pregnancy and child birth. Too many babies die, we lose 11,000 newborns each year. This amounts to one newborn death every 47 minutes. It does not have to be this way. Ensuring our clinics are safe for our mothers and babies requires more funds to be allocated to maternal and new-born health. This will encourage increased use of these clinics.”

Despite Sierra Leone being the fastest growing reformed economies in Africa, its spending on health remains amongst the lowest in the world. The Budget Tracking Working Group will continue to work with government and serve as a reminder to government of its financial commitment to health, in addition to timely disbursement of funds.

For more information please contact

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[1] According to a recent study by Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health:

“For every dollar spent on key interventions for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, about US\$ 20 in benefits could be generated through producing healthy children who enjoy better cognitive development, achieve more at school and become healthy, productive adults.”

Source: http://www.who.int/pmnch/topics/part_publications/knowledge_summary_24_economic_case/en/index.html