



**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS  
MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SIERRA LEONE, AT THE INTRODUCTION OF MOTS  
LEARNING PLATFORM AND THE PILOT  
DISTRIBUTION OF LABORATORY EQUIPMENT AND  
UNIFORMS TO HEALTHCARE STAFF IN BONTHE  
DISTRICT, SOUTHERN PROVINCE – 3 JULY 2020**

Honourable Ministers of Government

Honourable Members of Parliament

Our revered Paramount Chiefs

Local Government Leaders

Development partners

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon.

Let me, from the outset, graciously ask all present to thank all healthcare staff for their selfless service. Let us also remember, in a quiet minute of reflection, those who have succumbed to illness and death during their course of duty.

May the Lord/Allah SWT have mercies on their souls and grant them eternal peace.

As I have challenged Sierra Leoneans, sustainable development is possible when we, as a country, get human capital development right. Our investments in high quality education, food security, and healthcare will yield dividends with a highly skilled and healthy workforce that will participate and compete in the twenty-first century global economy.

On behalf of my Government and the people of Sierra Leone, I acknowledge the interventions of World Vision International Sierra Leone (WVISL) especially in the health sector. I also acknowledge and thank WVISL for the presentations you have made this afternoon. Each item will go a long way towards helping us meet our aspiration to provide Universal Health Coverage for our people. The MOT demonstration sits well with our belief as a government that we can use innovation and technology to accelerate progress on the health goals we have set ourselves in the Medium Term National Development Plan.

Let us consider the overarching context for a moment. The 2019 Demographic and Health Survey reports that Sierra Leone recorded 1,165 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013. In 2019, Sierra Leone recorded 717 deaths per 100,000 live births – a 38% improvement. Although the figures indicate that we have made significant progress, we could do better. The World Bank – Funded Service Delivery Indicators Survey of 2018 in Sierra Leone, indicated the need for skills upgrade for health workers.

We are closely attentive to a key objective in the Universal Health Coverage goals as laid out by the World Health Organisation: that “the quality of health services should be good enough to improve the health of those receiving services.” The argument is easy:

continuous education and training augment the skills of healthcare professionals

So we are here in Bonthe District to reaffirm and fulfil some of the commitments we made in our New Direction manifesto before my Government acceded to office two years ago. Within the service delivery matrix, we pledged to develop training infrastructure, provide trained tutors, and ensure that every healthcare facility had a minimum number of technical staff. We also promised to review and upgrade the training curriculum in existing health institutions for all levels of training in order to equip healthcare staff with the requisite skills to provide high quality patient-centred care.

Government has been working closely with partners to use digital health platforms to accelerate steps towards achieving the SDG Health Goal. My Government, through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation's eHealth Coordination Hub, approached World Vision International to find innovative ways of supporting the remote training of healthcare workers. This technology could also help manage risk communications during public health emergencies and help reduce the high burden of disease, maternal, and child mortality rates through public health messaging.

The features and possible use cases for the MOTS platform have been described to some level. For us as a Government, we see use cases for training community health workers for community sensitizations on routine health care delivery and preventive health protocols and advisories during disease outbreaks. For maternal and child health, it can be used for reminding pregnant and lactating mothers about routine ante-natal clinic visits and vaccinations.

My initial impressions, from the presentation, are that the platform is flexible and it allows for updating and expanding content. If this is so, then advanced and refresher courses can be developed and offered for healthcare workers depending on their needs. I urge the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to explore the possibility of offering SRN and Midwifery level courses using this platform.

The opportunity for localising content and for audio-visual learning is also quite helpful. Healthcare workers need not travel away from their duty stations for days to attend valuable courses that will enhance their skills. Additionally, with the closure of the UBC Mattru School of Nursing and the moratorium on all SECHN training across the country, this platform could be just right for teaching refresher skills for nursing staff.

The reduced cost of training and the ability to reach more healthcare workers with information at the same time also seems to be a unique advantage of this platform. This will help the bottom line in healthcare financing especially at a time when there are competing priorities in the healthcare sector.

So overall, I see a lot of good coming from this collaboration.

On another note, I am also pleased to announce that under the resilient health systems strengthening and sustainability programme, my Government will provide two sets of cadre-specific uniforms for every nurse. This will promote professionalism among healthcare workers. My Government is also providing beds and bedding.

My Government also believes that diagnostic laboratory testing helps healthcare workers provide appropriate, reliable, and high-quality care to patients. My Government is therefore providing laboratory equipment for all PHUs in the Bonthe District. This supports our commitment to providing quality, patient-centred care.

Let me conclude by again thanking the community for their support to healthcare workers and for complying with healthcare directives during these very difficult times. Every individual has

the responsibility to prevent and curtail COVID-19. Only you and your actions can protect you against the virus. These are not normal times but I thank the healthcare workers for their dedication and service. As a Government, we remain committed to providing quality healthcare throughout Sierra Leone because it is key to our sustainable and inclusive development goals.

I thank you.