



## Pioneering Partnership Responds to HIV/AIDS in the World of Work

In a unique initiative, with the aim of helping Sierra Leone's private sector address HIV/AIDS in the workplace, Sierra Rutile, the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat in Sierra Leone (NAS) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have joined forces to evaluate Sierra Rutile's HIV/AIDS programme.

The initiative centres on an in-depth study of Sierra Rutile's longstanding anti-HIV/AIDS partnership with NAS, the United Mine Workers' Union and the ILO, which has been described by NAS's Deputy Director Abdul Rahman Sessay as, "setting the standard for action against HIV/AIDS in workplace." Funded by Sierra Rutile and conducted by NAS with support from the ILO, the study intends to identify the factors which have contributed to the programme's success - in order to document and disseminate best practice amongst Sierra Leone's corporate sector. Preliminary results will be available in November.

Established six years ago Sierra Rutile's highly effective programme tackles HIV/AIDS in the workplace and throughout the surrounding community, and has been characterised by both an unusually high compliance rate amongst those being treated, and a high level of patient confidentiality.

NAS, the United Mine Workers' Union and ILO have worked with Sierra Rutile to develop a programme of HIV prevention, treatment, training and information sharing, as well as a policy of zero-tolerance towards workplace discrimination on the basis of HIV status. Funding from several international organisations - the ILO, the OPEC Fund for International Development and the Global Fund - has enabled NAS to provide free condoms, test kits and antiretroviral drugs, as well as training on HIV prevention. Sierra Rutile provides free clinical services for employees, their families and the local community, which include treatment, information and counselling, as well testing and treatment for other sexually transmitted infections.

Mr Sessay says: "This programme's success in tackling HIV/AIDS in the workplace and local community shows that collaboration between the public and private sectors and the donor community is the way forward. Sierra Rutile has provided an enabling environment, a strong and positive relationship with the United Mine Worker's Union and a commitment to occupational health and safety that has made our relationship with them so productive. We hope that the results of this study will encourage best practice towards tackling HIV/AIDS in other organisations."

Says Sierra Rutile's Environmental Health and Safety Manager, Ansumana Jabati: "Sierra Rutile is committed to the health and safety of our employees, their families and the local community. We are delighted that through this collaboration, we have been able to institute a successful approach to HIV/AIDS that has extended beyond the workplace to develop understanding and provide treatment throughout the surrounding community."