

## Heifer Promotes Government of Sierra Leone's Development Agenda

By Rashid Sesay, Heifer Sierra Leone Country Director

On Tuesday, November 8, the Vice President of the Africa Area Program, Dr. Sahr Lebbie, officially launched Heifer Sierra Leone's projects at a ceremony which took place in the northern district town of Port Loko. The event was attended by government ministers, NGO partners, farmers, Heifer staff members and other stakeholders. In his opening address, Dr. Lebbie disclosed to the audience that Heifer International has been working worldwide in over 50 countries to end hunger and poverty and to care for the Earth. He noted that everywhere the organisation operates, it has made great effort to learn about the culture and traditions of the people and stressed that Heifer strives to integrate new ideas and lessons learned from old projects into new ones.



The ceremony location of Port Loko is one of three where Heifer Sierra Leone has started its projects, the other two being the Western Rural District and Kaulahun in the East. During the ceremony, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Mr. Ali Mansaray, said that since the establishment of the country office in Sierra Leone, Heifer has endeavoured to engage and collaborate with his Ministry in every aspect of its work. He said he is impressed with the level of community engagement that preceded the

development of the Heifer projects, which in his view is the hallmark of present day development paradigm. In highlighting the situation of the livestock sector in the

country, the Minister informed the participants that the livestock sector was severely hit during the 10 year civil war in the country and the re-stocking attempt initiated after the war did not succeed in up-scaling the sector. This was primarily because of a poor implementation strategy. In his opinion, the complete absence of training in animal husbandry, the lack of in-house animal health workers who will urgently provide treatment and the non-confinement of animals popularly practised in the country were largely responsible for the poor performance and the subsequent failure of the massive re-stocking exercise in post war Sierra Leone. The projects Heifer is currently implementing will, among others, address these issues. The Minister stated that he was deeply touched and attracted to the concept of Passing on the Gift (POG). He maintained that POG will not only ensure the sustainability of the projects, but for a country emerging from war, it will help strengthen peace among communities that previously had no meeting point to discuss issues relating to their development.

The Minister urged Heifer to help in the development of a policy for the livestock sector and stated his desire to include POG as an instrument to implement the policy.



*Stakeholders visit a farmer's animals*