WHO Health Academy Project is taken to the streets as SCANAID Senior Secondary School launches “Move for Health Initiative”

**Banjul, 25 May 2012:** Hundreds of people from different walks of life - students, teachers, Ministry of Health and WHO staff, volunteers, media personnel, community and opinion leaders, men and women – took to the streets of Brufut town yesterday to participate in a five-kilometer walk marking the launching of “Move for Health Initiative”.
This initiative, conceived by SCANAID Senior Secondary School, is one of the bye-products of the recently concluded WHO Health Academy Project in the Gambia.

Indeed, the Health Academy Project has once again demonstrated to be a viable health promotion tool that can enhance and promote health in schools through community and multi-sectoral action.

“This was corroborated by the brief statement the Principal of the School, Mrs Mariama Baldeh, gave at the launch of this unique event. According to Mrs
Baldeh, the “Move for Health Initiative” came as a result of what they, as a school, have learnt from the “Staying Fit” module of the Health Academy Project.

Walk and drama on physical activity in progress

“The students and teachers have learnt a lot about the benefits of the physical activity, and that brisk walking is the cheapest way to keep one healthy”. “Hence, the rationale behind this brilliant endeavor - “Move for health”, she asserted. To keep up this momentum, the Principal said that with immediate effect, it has become her school’s policy for every student and member of staff to engage in moderate physical activity before the beginning of the daily classes.

In conclusion, the Principal thanked the WHO Country Office for providing both technical and financial support to this initiative and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare for its support in promoting health in the school.

Principal, Mrs Baldeh (middle) delivering a statement at the launch

In the same vein, the school also launched an ambitious initiative “Operation 10,000 steps”, which aims at encouraging or stimulating students and staff to walk this number of steps a day.
Speaking on behalf of the WHO Country Representative, Dr Thomas Sukwa, at the event, NPO/HPR (Momodou Gassama) thanked SCANAID Senior Secondary School for launching this historic initiative, being the first school to launch this kind of initiative in the Gambia. He commended staff and students of the school, and the local community at large, for translating the health academy project into concrete action.

Mr Gassama, who also gave a lecture on the benefits of physical activity to health, assured the school authorities of the WHO’s continued support to this and other health-promoting initiatives.

A representative of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Mr Omar Badjie, who is also the NCD focal point, pledged his Ministry’s support to this highly commendable initiative, and assured the school authorities of their continued collaboration in promoting health in the school.

As part of the launch, community members were shown the health academy module on physical activity whilst students and teachers measured their BMI.