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**P11**

Suspended EPA Executive Director Nathaniel Blama

# Blama's domestic worker infested

## -as NPHIL identifies 127 contacts

# CNDRA sends 155 non-essential staffers on paid leave



**P11**



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CMYK



# Continental News

## "Preparing for war": Africans scramble for groceries

**A**larmed consumers thronged markets across Africa on Tuesday, many in masks and gloves, to stock up as the coronavirus spread on the world's poorest continent.

Prices rose in some parts, though at least one country, Rwanda, sought to control costs of staple foods. "It is as if people are preparing for war," said an astonished shopkeeper as Rwandans clamoured for rice, cooking oil, sugar and flour at a market in the capital Kigali.

"Prices have gone up - but still they buy."

Initially spared as the coronavirus battered China and then spread out, Africa has seen a rush of cases this month and governments are taking drastic measures to curb its spread.

At least 30 African nations have now reported more than 400 cases, seven in Rwanda.

For many poorer Africans, panic-buying was a privilege



they could not afford.

"Rich people are not afraid of high prices. They are buying in huge quantities," said 43-year-old Pascal Murengezi, a father-of-three hawking second hand clothes outside the Nyarugenge market in Kigali who said he could not afford more than a day's worth of food.

"If the outbreak continues, I

don't know how I will sell clothes on empty streets."

The shopkeeper, who declined to give his name fearing a visit from inspectors,

said Tanzanian rice had risen from 27,000 francs (\$29) to 30,000 francs per 25 kg bag while Pakistani rice was up from 22,000 francs to 28,000

francs.

Speaking as shoppers in masks and gloves picked over items, he blamed wholesalers for the increases. The trade ministry in Rwanda fixed prices late on Monday for 17 food items including rice, sugar and cooking oil. It did not specify punishments for price-gouging.

Exasperated by the rises, Beatrice, a 52-year-old Rwandan with a child and no job, said she could only buy a minimum of rice. "You can't see your children go hungry," she said. "We don't know when this coronavirus will stop. If I had enough money, I would buy a lot more food." Kenya, East Africa's economic powerhouse, also saw a rush on shops after reporting its first coronavirus case on Friday.

Within minutes, shoppers at the upscale Carrefour supermarket near the United Nations complex in Nairobi began piling trolleys with wipes, sanitizer, and staples like rice and long-life milk.

Tusky's, another Kenyan supermarket, urged customers not to panic and this week launched a home delivery

service. Like Rwanda, Kenya stepped in to try and curb price rises.

Its Competition Authority ordered another chain, Cleanshelf Supermarkets, to refund customers for overpricing hand sanitizers. The firm blamed one staff member for making unauthorised price increases. "The recent experience is unjustifiable and we are very sorry," said Veronica Wambui, head of sales and marketing, in a statement the company posted on Twitter.

From South Africa to Senegal, long lines snaked outside stores as families stocked up on items such as disinfectants and pasta.

"This is crazy. There's almost nothing on the shelves," said 68-year-old pensioner Barbara Ollerman, stacking rice in her trolley in Johannesburg's Woolworths.

Auditor Sihle Qalinge at Checkers supermarket nearby said she had sneaked out of work to buy toilet paper - she had been trying to find it since Sunday.

Anna, the manager at Auchan supermarket in Dakar's upmarket Mermoz area, said sales had doubled since last weekend. AFP

## Chad 'repaying \$100m debt to Angola with cattle'

**C**had is repaying Angola a debt of \$100m (£82m) with cattle, Angola's state-run newspaper has reported. The unusual agreement is seen as creating a win-win situation for both nations - Chad is short of cash while Angola needs cattle.

More than 1,000 cows

arrived by ship in Angola's capital, Luanda, as the first payment, Jornal de Angola reported.

In total, Angola would receive 75,000 cattle over 10 years, meaning it has accepted payment of \$1,333 per animal.

Chad would send a further 3,500 head of cattle later this month, the report added. Chad

had proposed repaying the 2017 debt with cattle, and Angola had agreed because it would help the southern African state rebuild its cattle population in drought-affected areas, the state-run daily paper said. Angola is often hit by drought, causing animals to die of hunger and thirst and leaving many villagers destitute.

Although oil rich, the country is still striving to recover from the legacy of a 27-year civil war that ravaged the country after independence.

Chad is described by the the World Health Organisation of Animal Health (OIE) as a "livestock farming country par excellence", with about 94 million head of cattle. Livestock accounts for 30% of Chad's exports, and is its main source of foreign exchange after oil.

In a report last October, the World Bank said Chad's economy "remains fragile and vulnerable to considerable risk, such as oil price volatility and regional insecurity" caused by militant Islamist groups operating in the region. BBC



## South Africans warned over coronavirus money scam



**Fraudsters are asking the public to hand over "contaminated" bank notes**

**S**outh Africans have been told not to hand over money to people who say there are collecting bank notes contaminated by the coronavirus.

The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) issued a public warning that those posing as government officials were fraudsters.

Those involved in the scam have been issuing fake receipts for the money collected, saying banks will compensate them.

"The SARB will never ask members of the public to hand over their cash," the bank said.

In a Twitter thread, it said no banknotes or coins had been withdrawn and no instruction issued to hand in money that might be contaminated.

It also urged members of the public to contact the police when approached by "individuals purporting to be SARB employees or representatives". BBC

# EDITORIAL

## Playing game with COVID-19

THE GOVERNMENT OF Liberia's poor handling of the first officially confirmed case of the deadly coronavirus in Liberia is not only worrisome, but highly irresponsible.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE MANNEH** Weah in a nationwide address Monday, 16 March reported that Liberia has recorded its first confirmed case of COVID-19, involving the executive director of the Environmental Protection Agency, Nathaniel Blama, who chose not to be quarantined by health authorities at the Roberts International Airport in Margibi County after testing positive immediately upon arrival.

**MR. BLAMA ARRIVED** here Friday night, 12 March via Air Brussels from an international conference in Europe. The authorities say other officials who were with him on the same flight are being traced for quarantine to avoid spread of the infection.

**WE ARE DISAPPOINTED** by news that the EPA boss also refused to board ambulance that went to his residence to take him to an observation center; instead, preferring to ride behind the health convoy in his official vehicle. Health Minister Doctor Wilhemina S. Jallah, briefing reporters Monday, said Mr. Blama "slipped thru" health regulations at the airport and went home.

**ARE WE SERIOUS** in fighting the COVID-19 and protecting the public from mass infections that could wreck this country that is already faced by poor health system due to lack of capacity? Or is the current scenario a smokescreen to attract international sympathy, solidarity and support?

**WHY WOULD A** government with well intension to avoid its citizens from getting infected and dying allowed officials to willfully ignore and defile regulations and public safety measures? President Weah should go beyond mere suspension and have Mr. Blama charged and prosecuted for his uncouth behavior and display of wicked arrogance.

**THE NATIONAL PUBLIC** Health Institute of Liberia should strengthen and enforce its surveillance measures without fear or favor, for disease knows no border. From Wuhan, China the COVID-19 has spread to over 10 countries globally, including the United States. Death tolls in the U.S. are in the hundreds, while Italy has lost more than a 1,000 people.

**THE GOVERNMENT OF** Liberia needs to put its act together and gets firm in handling the current nightmare at our doorstep, void of status. An infected Nathaniel Blama or any other person poses serious risk to the public and must be quarantined.

**BESIDES BLAMA,** WE don't know how many others may have "slipped thru" at the RIA or other port of entries in the country, and are posing risk to the public.

**EBOLA KILLED OVER** 4,000 of our people between 13 and 14, wrecked the economy, and left many others parentless. The issue of COVID-19 is nothing to joke with as a country because its impacts are being felt around the world.

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TRULY INDEPENDENT

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# COMMENTARY

By Donna Dickenson, Katie  
Hasson & Marcy Darnovsky

## Heritable Human Genome Editing Is Not Inevitable

*In recent years, the consensus barring genetic changes that would be passed down to a person's every descendant has collapsed, and scientists and bioethicists now focus largely on creating a detailed roadmap for moving forward. But there's a strong case to be made that the previous consensus was correct.*

**L**ONDON - The announcement by the Chinese biophysicist He Jiankui in November 2018 that he had created the world's first gene-edited babies - an egregious ethical and legal breach that resulted in a three-year prison sentence - gave discussions about heritable human genome editing a new sense of urgency. But those discussions are fundamentally flawed. Given the stakes - for today's societies and future generations - a course correction is urgently needed.

Some scientists, futurists, and others assert the inevitability of heritable genome editing - altering embryos or gametes in order to produce genetically engineered children who will pass the changed genes and traits to their own offspring. These proponents seem to assume that, overall, it would probably be a good thing - as long as we wait until the technology is "safe" and apply it under the right circumstances. With this in mind, they have focused largely on creating a detailed roadmap for moving forward.

The organizers of the 2018 International Summit on Human Gene Editing, held just days after He's announcement, proclaimed that "it is time to define a rigorous, responsible translational pathway toward" clinical trials of heritable genome editing. This echoed previous conclusions by the British Nuffield Council on Bioethics and the National Academies of Sciences and Medicine in the United States. The US National Academies, together with the United Kingdom's Royal Society, then established the International Commission on the Clinical Use of Human Germline Genome Editing to fulfill this mission.

But as we - together with 18 other civil-society leaders, bioethicists, scientists, and lawyers in 11 countries - recently argued in the Geneva Statement on Heritable Human Genome Editing, this approach reflects a number of deeply problematic assumptions. Before we start trying to set standards for how and when scientists may genetically engineer future children, we must ask whether they should do it at all.

There is a strong case for barring heritable gene editing altogether. As the Geneva Statement notes, that was the consensus of earlier debates on the topic, dating back to the 1990s. This consensus is reflected in the laws of dozens of countries and in international treaties, such as the Oviedo Convention, a binding Council of Europe agreement.

Like the Geneva Statement, the previous consensus did not eschew all gene editing. If the technology can be made safe, effective, and, ideally, affordable, it could be a powerful tool for treating the sick. But past debates concluded that gene editing should not be used to alter the genetic profile of future children and their offspring.

And make no mistake: heritable genome editing is not a life-saving medical intervention. It neither treats nor cures any existing person. Rather, it aims to create a future person without a harmful genetic variant, or with a desired trait.

Moreover, the claim that genome editing is

needed to prevent the inheritance of genetic disorders is misplaced. For the last 20 years, so-called pre-implantation genetic diagnosis - which screens embryos created through in vitro fertilization - has been enabling at-risk parents to have genetically related offspring who are unaffected by their genetic disorders.

The pervasiveness of such misconceptions is one of the reasons the Geneva Statement calls for a course correction in public and policy discussions about heritable genome editing. Another is that debates have typically emphasized scientific considerations, while ignoring or downplaying the social context in which efforts to alter human inheritance would take place.

It is dangerous to ignore systemic patterns of social discrimination and stratification, powerful commercial forces, and historical experience. The legacy of the eugenics movement alone - and its apotheosis in Nazi "racial hygiene" - should give anyone pause, and yet proponents of heritable genome editing typically dismiss it.

To be sure, coercive state-sponsored eugenics programs may not reappear. But a commercial version, shaped by marketing claims and individual consumer choices, is a very real risk. If CRISPR gene-editing techniques became established in reproductive medicine, there is little reason to doubt that fertility clinics would soon be offering parents with sufficient means the option of genetic "upgrades."

The third critical dimension of the necessary course correction is inclusiveness. Because heritable genome editing would affect everyone, broad public consensus is essential before any steps are taken. Yet scientists and professional bioethicists have so far dominated the conversation.

Not everyone who would be affected by heritable genome editing can participate in the debate. After all, we are talking about making genetic changes that would be passed down to a person's every descendant. This raises the thorny "future generations" problem over which philosophers have long agonized: our descendants have no say in the choices we make - say, our decision to continue pouring carbon dioxide into the atmosphere - but they will have to face the consequences.

In the case of a technology that would likely be marketed to the wealthy as a way to produce "biologically superior" offspring, those consequences could include entrenching a new and fundamental form of inequality. The social implications of that outcome would be profound and terrifying.

Cultivating an effective public debate that embraces a wide range of voices - including human-rights advocates, social scientists and humanities scholars, artists, religious figures, those who suffer from genetic conditions, and those who don't - will require significant human and financial resources. The Geneva Statement's call to clarify and reframe the issue is a step toward that end.

Whether to employ heritable genome editing is not a decision we can take lightly. It certainly cannot be treated as a choice we have already made.

## O-PED

By Federica Mogherini

## Listening to the Pandemic

*The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to call some of the political mistakes of recent years by their name, and adjust our trajectory according to the compass of reality. Seizing it will require people around the world - starting with institutional and political leaders, but, ultimately, all of us - to put reality first.*

MILAN - As of a few weeks ago, no one would have disputed that the most relevant and evident trend in the global politics of our times is "go national." Unilateralism and "zero-sum game" logic seemed to be the new normal: "For me to win, I need you to lose" and "Me first."

These phrases seemed to be the unequivocal and almost uncontested trademark of this century. Moreover, it was a trademark that had almost no limits in terms of geography and ideology: you found it in many different shades, but on each and every continent, in each and every political orientation (including many varieties of unlabelled political movements), across a wide range of institutional systems, and even within some international organizations. This trend seemed to consolidate by the day, with very few voices trying to argue for a cooperative international approach, multilateralism, win-win solutions and a search for common ground, and community-based policies rather than a purely individualistic vision of society.

Today, as the coronavirus pandemic spreads across the entire world, putting at risk so many of our lives and shaking the foundations of our everyday way of life, we need to ask if this paradigm is likely to remain the predominant one. Is the pandemic going to strengthen, or are there lessons we will learn?

Can a virus challenge some of the assumptions on which the current global political landscape is based? Is it going to make us focus on what really counts, on what unites us as humanity, or is it going to fuel the sense of fear and suspicion among and within communities, dividing us even more, increasing the level of toxic rhetoric and behaviors that has already poisoned our societies, and partially paralyzed our collective capacity to act efficiently? Are we going to use this crisis as an opportunity to call some of the mistakes of recent years by their name, and adjust our trajectory at last to the compass of reality?

This pandemic is telling us a number of things loud and clear. If we are willing to listen, these are a few very simple ones.

First, the global community exists. What happens far away has an impact (even a vital one) here and now. A sneeze on one continent has direct repercussions on another. We are connected, we are one. All attempts to consider borders as dividing lines, and to classify people by nationality, ethnicity, gender, or religious belief - all of this loses meaning at once, as our bodies are all equally exposed to the virus, no matter who we are.

Second, I do have an interest in my neighbor's wellbeing. If my neighbor has a problem, it is also my problem. So, if I do not care for the sake of my neighbor, I'd better care for my own sake. Because in an interconnected world like ours, the only effective way to take care of yourself is to take care of others. Solidarity is the new selfish.

Third, global coordinated solutions are needed, desperately needed, and this requires an investment in international multilateral organizations. If you think you can respond effectively to a crisis like this just by adopting national measures, you do what in Italian is referred to as "trying to empty the sea with a spoon": a lot of work with no results.

In order to be effective, you need a systematic, coordinated effort at the global level, with adequate political and financial collective investments in the international multilateral setup that is required to monitor developments, respond to them, and prevent them from getting even worse. If you dismantle the credibility and capacity to act of international organizations, they will be less likely to be effective when you need them, and you will be the one paying the price.

Fourth, science-based political decisions are the only rational and useful way to go. Evidence is the only reliable point of reference we have. Luckily, we have been investing in science for thousands of years - across the world, no civilization excluded, and for very wise reasons. Any distortion from scientific evidence-based decisions, due to short-term political or economic considerations, is simply dangerous.

Fifth, health is a public good. It is not just a private issue. It is a matter of national - and even international - security, and of economic prosperity. As such, it requires both adequate and sustained public investments, and a collective sense of responsibility that each and every citizen is called to exercise. Avoiding contagion is not only a life-saving must for individuals, it is also a vital contribution to the survival of communities and the functioning of public health services, and ultimately, of the state.

Sixth, the global economy needs human beings to stay healthy. Investment in public health, science, and research is an investment in prosperous economies worldwide. Production, consumption, trade, and services - the basis of our economic system - need people to be healthy and safe. It's the economy, stupid!

Seventh, well-functioning democratic institutions are literally vital to our lives. We take things for granted until we risk losing them. The way in which decisionmaking functions (or not) is the ultimate test in times of crisis. If democracy is perceived as a burden that slows or even impedes effective and fast measures, the argument in favor of more authoritarian systems of governance will grow stronger, with all the negative implications this would have on our rights and freedoms. Making democratic institutions work is an investment in our health, our security, and our freedoms and rights.

Last, but not least, nothing is more precious and valuable than life. We sometimes forget, especially when it's our own life in question. This is sound common sense - maybe it's time to go back to basics.

Every crisis can be used as an opportunity to learn lessons from the mistakes of the past, adjust policies, change course, and fix things that we were not even admitting were broken. It all depends on what individuals across the world decide to do, starting with those who have institutional and political responsibilities. But ultimately, all of us will need to decide. Will this crisis be used for short-term individual gains, with the usual scapegoat exercise, or will it be a wake-up call to reality? It's not idealism, it's pure realism.

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## OPINION

By Willem H. Buiter

## When "Whatever It Takes" Isn't Enough

*The US Federal Reserve's surprise weekend announcement of a large interest-rate cut, renewed quantitative easing, and other expansionary measures is a welcome response to the COVID-19 pandemic. But as markets were quick to note, monetary policy cannot save us from this crisis.*

NEW YORK - When interpreting the US Federal Reserve's weekend announcement of new measures to mitigate the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important not to confuse motion with action.

Arguably, the Fed's latest move to ease monetary policy is unprecedented, not least because it was announced on a Sunday afternoon. The Fed cut the federal funds rate by 100 basis points (to the 0-0.25% range), which will likely translate into a meaningful reduction in the marginal cost of corporate and household borrowing from banks. The Fed is also reactivating quantitative easing (QE). In the coming months, it will increase its holdings of Treasury securities by at least \$500 billion and its holdings of mortgage-backed securities issued by one of three quasi-governmental agencies (known as Ginnie Mae, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac) by at least \$200 billion. And it will reinvest all maturing principal payments from these holdings in agency mortgage-backed securities.

In addition to these measures, the Fed also recently expanded its overnight repurchase-agreement (repo) operations and has announced that it will loosen capital and liquidity requirements for banks. But the most important part of the March 15 announcement was the promise to pursue "coordinated central bank action to enhance the provision of US dollar liquidity," in partnership with the Bank of Canada, the Bank of England, the Bank of Japan, the European Central Bank, and the Swiss National Bank. To that end, the pricing of existing dollar-swap lines has now been lowered by 25 basis points; and, more significantly, foreign central banks will "begin offering US dollars weekly in each jurisdiction with an 84-day maturity, in addition to the 1-week maturity operations currently offered."

With this commitment, the Fed finally seems to be acknowledging that the world does not end at the eastern tip of Long Island. But, of course, the Fed could have done even more in response to the COVID-19 crisis. For example, it could have announced more ambitious targets for its QE operations. And it could have pushed the federal funds rate into negative territory, given that the effective lower bound is likely somewhere in the range of -0.5-0.75% (it could be much lower were it not for the regrettable role played by currency). Yes, some scholars argue that there is a threshold (or "reversal rate") below which further rate cuts would reduce rather than boost bank lending, but there is no convincing evidence to justify such fears at current rate levels.

In any case, even if the Fed had taken these additional steps, it still would be merely a bit player in the larger drama. The lead role must be played by fiscal policymakers, who have so far been absent. Unlike the 2008 crash, the COVID-19 pandemic is not a financial crisis that risks spilling over into the real economy. Rather, it is a crisis that started in the real economy - where it has introduced both demand and supply shocks - and has far-reaching implications for the financial system.

Ignoring the financial fallout from the pandemic would lead to further damage to the real economy. It is thus critical that funds be made available to enterprises and households whose sources of income have been disrupted or wiped out altogether. Whether these funds are provided at an interest rate of 1-1.25% or 0-0.25% is of secondary importance. The main concern is that under "normal" lending criteria, many existing borrowers will be judged to have materially impaired creditworthiness. To prevent widespread defaults and insolvency, we need fiscal measures such as credit guarantees, or quasi-fiscal interventions like the credit provided by Germany's state-owned development bank to enterprises that fail to meet conventional creditworthiness criteria.

There is also a strong case to be made for targeted fiscal stimulus. Clearly, health-care expenditures (COVID-19 testing and treatment) should be covered by the state, as should paid sick leave for workers who have been prevented from earning as a result of the pandemic. And similar compensation should be provided to parents who miss work because school closures have forced them to stay home with their children and to all who have lost income because of quarantine or self-isolation. Finally, targeted tax cuts and increased public spending are obvious ways to offset the costs stemming from disrupted supply chains and established demand patterns.

The pervasive uncertainty created by the pandemic is bound to undermine household consumption (by boosting precautionary saving) and corporate investment (because the option value of waiting has increased). Conventional expansionary monetary policies may be somewhat helpful in addressing these conventional Keynesian consequences of the crisis. But, under current conditions, the increase in aggregate demand from interest-rate cuts and QE is likely to be modest. Financial conditions may loosen a bit (to the extent that this happens through US dollar weakening, it will be a beggar-thy-neighbor effect), but the boost to effective demand will be minimal in our debt-ridden economies.

So, unless we get a meaningful fiscal response to the coronavirus crisis, we should be prepared for a steady slide into recession or worse. Under current circumstances, monetary policy simply doesn't have the ability to affect economic performance significantly.

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SOLICITATION NUMBER: VA-669-20-00004

ISSUANCE DATE: 02/26/2020

CLOSING DATE/TIME: 03/25/2020 (17:30 local time)

SUBJECT: Solicitation for the AID Procurement Agent, Cooperating Country National Personal Service Contract (CCNPSC).

Dear Prospective Offerors:

The United States Government, represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is seeking offers from qualified persons to provide personal services under contract as described in this solicitation.

Offers must be in accordance with Attachment 1, Sections I through III of this solicitation. Incomplete or unsigned offers will not be considered. Offerors should retain copies of all offer materials for their records.

This solicitation in no way obligates USAID to award a Personal Services Contract, nor does it commit USAID to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of the offers.

Any questions must be directed in writing to the Point of Contact specified in the attached information.

Sincerely,  
/s/  
Robert W. Appiah  
Supervisory Executive Officer

**ATTACHMENT 1**

**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

SOLICITATION NO: VA-669-20-00004

- ISSUANCE DATE:** 02/26/2020
- CLOSING DATE/TIME FOR RECEIPT OF OFFERS:** 03/25/2020 at 17:30 Monrovia time
- POSITION TITLE:** Procurement Agent
- MARKET VALUE:** \$24,064.00 to USD \$38,498.00 equivalent to CCN-08 in accordance with AIDAR Appendix J and the Local Compensation Plan of the US Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia. Final compensation will be negotiated within the listed market value.
- PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:** Initial two years with possibility of extension depending on need, performance, and availability of funding. This is considered a permanent position.

Employment under any contract issued under this solicitation is of a continuing nature. Its duration is expected to be part of series of sequential contract; all contract clauses, provisions, and regulatory requirements concerning availability of funds and the specific duration of the contract shall apply.

- PLACE OF PERFORMANCE:** Monrovia, Liberia with possible travel as stated in the statement of duties.
- SECURITY LEVEL REQUIRED:** Facility and computer access
- STATEMENT OF DUTIES**

**A. BACKGROUND**

USAID and Liberia maintain a long-standing partnership to support economic stability and growth, strengthen democratic governance, and improve health and education systems. USAID/Liberia fosters a spirit of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, building and supporting local systems so there is no longer a need for external support. USAID/Liberia is the first bi-lateral program to have an approved 2019-2024 Country Development Cooperation Strategy; the Mission is in the midst of designing and procuring a significant number of new activities, and the Mission fully embraces the Agency's newly issued Acquisition and Assistance Strategy as well as the Effective Partnering and Procurement Reform Initiative.

**B. BASIC FUNCTION OF THE POSITION**

This position is in the Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA), USAID/Liberia. The incumbent is under the direct supervision of the Supervisory Contracting Officer (SCO) or his/her delegate. H/she performs procurement duties within the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT) for both commodities and services, including international and local consultants; as well as a limited amount of clerical and secretarial duties on behalf of the SCO and the rest of the OAA team.

Serving as the OAA advisor on simplified acquisitions, h/she is responsible for the operational expense and program related procurement activities for OAA (which includes support to other offices in the Mission), and procures a variety of commodities by contract, purchase order, or other available instrument. The position fully complies with all relevant US Government laws, regulations, policies and procedures; liaises with the Financial Management Office (FMO) and the Executive Office (EXO) to ensure the availability and accounting of funds, proper equipment inventory, etc., and monitors how well the contractors and service providers perform towards achieving a contract's purpose.

H/she is principally responsible for planning and coordinating the procurement of goods and services throughout the year, and will be the technical liaison between the contractor(s) and the Contracting Officer; this will include monitoring services and activity implementation, receiving goods and services, and verifying contractor performance.

The incumbent also serves as the principal administrative support person for the Office Director, ensuring that administrative functions are performed effectively, efficiently, and in a manner that promotes harmony and problem-solving, so that other office staff members may be more effective.

The incumbent is expected to work primarily in accomplishing the specific tasks as outlined below. Given the nature of the position, the Procurement Agent will also be expected to respond to any changes in priorities that emerge during the contract period to provide efficient, timely, and effective services to the Mission.

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**PROCUREMENT DUTIES**

60%

- Performs all OAA local and off-shore procurement actions that are within the Simplified Acquisition Procedure (SAP) threshold for both program and operational expenses (OE) funded requests; from receipt of requests to preparation of purchase order (PO) or contract, and fully close out of the action. Procurement actions may use the full range of procurement instruments available for SAP.
- Provides assistance to support and technical offices on how to prepare appropriate documentation such as statements of work, statement of duties, government estimates (IGCE), evaluation criteria, and single source justifications. Works with Mission personnel to resolve questions related to budgets, classification of terms, reporting/deliverables requirements, market research and developing sources, and special conditions to be included in the solicitation document.
- Develops solicitations and assists the Contracting Officer in screening and reviewing bids and quotations and negotiating contracts. Reviews responses and recommends the best offers based on knowledge of availability, delivery schedules, reliability of suppliers, and cost/price analysis.
- Prepares and reviews final contract language, supplier's bill, and paperwork prior to submission to the Contracting Officer. Writes memorandum of negotiation and justification notes; has the responsibility for planning and organizing work, setting priorities, and making the most efficient use of available resources.
- Conducts periodic informal market surveys to allow reasonable control of prices offered. H/she is knowledgeable of the local and international market and the customs and shipping practices for delivery of commodities. Keeps abreast of market conditions, including price and availability of important commodities and services, and maintains contracts with officials of local supply firms to facilitate resolving procurement problems.
- Prepares contract amendments, negotiates revisions to various contract provisions; writes memoranda of negotiation and prepares other required documentation as needed.
- Monitors contractors' performance to ensure total compliance with the FAR, AIDAR procedures, policies and regulations, and Mission needs.
- Works with the Financial Management Office on financial reviews or audits of implementing partner awards. Analyzes findings and recommends courses of action regarding questioned and ineligible costs to the Contracting Officer.
- Closes out purchase orders, task orders, etc., when deliveries and payments are complete. Maintains a computerized database for generating special, quarterly and annual reports of Mission's procurements. Maintains an updated file of vendors, and all documentation associated with procurements and incoming and outgoing correspondence.
- Maintains contract files and records, prepares reports on closing out purchase orders and contracts which have ended. Maintains an up-to-date filing system (orders, catalogues, magazines), and a contractor/vendor's database.
- Performs contract management support and administrative functions in the review, termination and close-out of government contracts and delivery orders for awards both above and below the simplified acquisition threshold.

**ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES**

40%

- The Agent takes messages in the absence of the supervisor and other staff, directing calls to appropriate staff members, receives and assists visitors, answers questions from the public and/or mission members, ensures that attendees are briefed or provided proper background material for meetings; and arranges for conference room space as required by OAA.
- The Agent receives and places phone calls, sends and receives E-mails, and sets up working meetings, workshops, conferences, and makes appointments at the request of the supervisor and other office staff within OAA with the Government of Liberia, donors, implementing partners, non-governmental organizations, private-sector, and other contacts; responds on behalf of the office director as needed, and takes minutes at meetings when requested.
- The Agent schedules appointments based on knowledge of the supervisor's commitments, maintains the office calendar, maintains and develops leave plans, weekly travel reports, emergency database and the USAID cascade list for emergency contacts. The incumbent will have expertise in word processing and spreadsheet development in the performance of a variety of assignments such as typing correspondence and other documents in draft and final form, proof-reading for format and consistency with standard Mission and Embassy requirements in advance of the supervisor's signature.
- The Agent maintains control of all correspondence for the OAA, is responsible for organizing OAA electronically located project/activity folders ("P" drive and subsequent filing systems), establishing and maintaining computerized tracking systems to track office actions, providing weekly reports to the SCO, drafting non-technical responses to routine correspondence and letters in English, and searching files and records to assemble background information for correspondence and other pending actions. The Agent reviews outgoing mail for proper address, routing, attachments, etc., prior to dispatch, reviewing outgoing correspondence for accuracy and conformance with Mission formatting procedures and special instructions. The Agent distributes internal policies and procedures

- The Agent establishes and maintains files according to standards set by USAID/Washington and the Mission Communications and Records Technician/Supervisor in EXO, and according to ADS provisions related to file and records retention. Marks correspondence and other documents for filing, and files accordingly. Reviews all correspondence prepared in OAA or elsewhere in advance of the supervisor's signature, corrects errors by drafters and edits correspondence, and assures that responding correspondence fully meets the requirements posed by incoming correspondence to which it pertains. The Agent maintains and updates documents such as visitors' lists, telephone listings, personnel rosters, vacation schedules, etc.
- The Agent may assist, in his absence, the subject matter expert (SME) or principal point of contact for multiple procurement related systems such as GLAAS-the Agency's world-wide web-based acquisition and assistance system that manages awards throughout the procurement life cycle, ASIST-the Agency's official electronic filing system, CPARS-the USG's contractor performance and assessment system, etc. As assistant to the SME, the incumbent will be expected to become familiar with how the systems work, and be designated open/close accounts, troubleshoot issues and solve problems, liaise with USAID/W SMEs, etc.
- H/she will make travel arrangements for OAA staff using the Agency's electronic travel system (E2) to prepare travel authorization (TA) requests, submit and track travel approvals by the Regional Security Office when necessary, make hotel and airline reservations through the travel agency and arrange for transportation to and from the airport. The incumbent will prepare travel vouchers after completion of travel. Also, s/he will provide assistance making vehicle requests, apartment and hotel reservations for temporary duty (TDY) arrivals and departures, and ensures welcome kits are ready (if needed) and pre-arrival information is sent to incoming staff. Also, liaises with RSO for security passes, airport passes, emergency contact list, and in-country travel request coordination.
- The incumbent is designated as POC for Country Clearance submissions and approvals through the eCC system, as well as File Custodian for OAA, responsible to upload documents and approved eCCs using ASIST. The incumbent is the primary timekeeper for OAA, collecting Time and Attendance (T&A) sheets from all the OAA staff, compiles these sheets and sends a consolidated report to the USAID main timekeeper. S/he will need to become proficient with WebTA, and other systems as needed.
- Arranges and submits MyServices requests for office related equipment needs, office and cell phone issues, updates/maintains phone lists, and supports USDH and TCN staff with official residential maintenance requests and needs.

**9. POSITION ELEMENTS:**

- Supervision Received:**  
The Supervisory Contracting Officer or her/his delegate assigns work in terms of objectives and priorities. Assistance is provided on assignments. Employee exercises initiative and judgment in developing and coordinating the procurement actions from beginning up to award, in accordance with standard practices and established procedures.
- Supervision Exercised:**  
None.
- Available Guidelines:**  
Guidelines include Federal (FAR) and Agency (AIDAR) procurement regulations, USAID Automated Directives System, Mission Orders, and other Agency and Mission policies and procedures as applicable.
- Exercise of Judgment:**  
Sound judgment is required to identify problems, provide guidance and make recommendations. A considerable degree of sound judgment is required in the analysis of costs, budgets, financial status and other characteristics of prospective contractors; in deciding what questions need to be asked to project officers and proposed contractors to ensure achievement of the acquisition objectives, purchase request or other instrument.
- Authority to Make Commitments:**  
The Procurement agent will participate in discussions and negotiations with potential vendors for related to simplified acquisition procedures. Purchase orders and all obligation documents will be reviewed and signed by the Contracting Officer. The job holder is not authorized to commit or obligate USG funds.
- Nature, Level, and Purpose of Contacts:**  
Daily contact with Mission staff, especially with the FMO, office chiefs, and team leaders or other technical team members including COR/AORs; may require occasional contact with Embassy procurement, mailroom services and shipping and customs staff; regular contact to be expected with counterparts, implementing partners and contractors, as well as with GOL officials and private sector business executives as needed.  
Contact is maintained with the Financial Management Office and other Mission officials to obtain statements of work/scopes of work, financial data, clarification on terms, conditions and specifications of proposed purchase orders and contracts. Frequent and continuing contact is maintained with present and potential contractors, vendors, and suppliers to clarify terms and conditions of contracts and other procurement documents.  
Time Expected to Reach Full Performance Level: One year.

**10. AREA OF CONSIDERATION: Open to All Interested CCNs (Cooperating Country Nationals).**

AIDAR, Appendix J. 1 (b) Definitions:  
(6) "Cooperating country" means the country in which the employing USAID Mission is located.  
(7) "Cooperating country national" ("CCN") means an individual who is a cooperating country citizen, or a non-cooperating country citizen lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the cooperating country.

**11. PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

The work requested does not involve undue physical demands.

**12. POINT OF CONTACT:**

All application packages are to be submitted:

**Procurement Agent**  
USAID/Liberia, C/O American Embassy Service Entrance,  
Gibson Street, Mamba Point, Monrovia  
Or by email to: Agatha W. Mangou, Human Resources Assistant, email: [amangou@usaid.gov](mailto:amangou@usaid.gov) and  
Sylvester Browne, Human Resources Specialist, email: [sbrowne@usaid.gov](mailto:sbrowne@usaid.gov)

**11. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR THIS POSITION**

- Education**  
Completion of a four year university degree in administrative areas to include but not limited to accounting, business administration, finance, marketing, procurement systems, or a related technical/liberal science (agronomy, computer science, ecology, education, environmental sciences, mathematics, political science, etc.) is required. Specialized training in U.S. Government and USAID acquisition and assistance is desirable.
- Prior Work Experience**  
Three to five years of progressively responsible work experience, of which two years could be in procurement, logistics, international development, or related field with other donor organizations, international development organizations, civil society or community-based organizations, private sector, or host-government organizations.
- Language Proficiency**  
Level IV (fluent) English skills are required with demonstrated fluency in both written and spoken English.
- Clearances**  
The ability to obtain medical and security clearances (Public Trust level –building access) in a timely manner is required.

**III. EVALUATION AND SELECTION FACTORS**

- Education—20 points**  
USAID will assess educational qualifications that increase the candidate's competitiveness for the position.
- Relevant Work Experience – 40 Points**  
USAID will assess relevant work experience that increases the candidate's competitiveness for the position.
- Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – 20 Points**  
Must possess strong analytical, communication and interpersonal skills. H/she must have strong command of the English language as well as strong computer, writing and speaking skills, including keyboarding/typing skills. Incumbent must possess highly developed organizational and task prioritization/tracking skills.  
Demonstrated ability to establish and maintain effective relationships at all levels within the Mission personnel, vendors, contractors, and high-level Embassy Officers. Incumbent must possess the ability to shift priorities as required and excellent customer service skills and be able to respond sympathetically to all staff in a timely and positive manner.  
H/she must possess excellent negotiation and persuasive skills. Ability to evaluate the capability of a contractor in terms of adequate productive facilities, current commitments, and financial status is desired. Incumbent must be skilled in determining the responsiveness of price and/or cost proposals, through analysis of cost elements. Must be able to speak authoritatively before USAID's personnel and counterparts to negotiate and represent the U.S. Government's best interests to both U.S. and host country individuals.
- Communication and Computer Skills – 20 Points**  
Applicant skills in oral and written communication in the English language, including the ability to obtain, evaluate, and interpret reports, and to effectively communicate organizational mission and policies to staff and partners will be evaluated. USAID will evaluate the applicant's computer skills, including ease and skill in using MS-Office Suite of Applications and Google G Suite applications, and in using the internet to solve problems and conduct research on matters such as regulatory guidance and compliance.

Total possible points = 100

**ADDITIONAL SELECTION CRITERIA**  
Management will consider potential nepotism/conflict of interest, and visa status when determining successful candidacy.

**SELECTION PROCESS**  
After initial screening of applications, only short-listed applicants will be contacted and invited for an interview and a written exercise. Applicants selected for interview will also be evaluated on their reference checks.

- HOW TO APPLY**  
Applications shall be submitted no later than the closing date specified, and should include the following:
- A clearly typed application cover letter that briefly summarizes why you believe you are qualified for this position.
  - Resume or CV.
  - The names and contact details of three references that can attest to your procurement management experience.
  - Documentation (e.g. copies of certificates or degrees) that address the minimum requirements of the position.
  - One to two-page writing sample broadly related to procurement development in Liberia.

**EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY:** The U.S. Mission provides equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment in employment to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation, marital status, or sexual orientation.

**Liberian Institute of Certified Public Accountants (LICPA)**

Publication of members and member firms in Good Standing for the period January 1 to December 31, 2020



In line with Section 7 of the LICPA Act, the Institute is the **only authority** to license qualified individuals and Accounting Firms to engage in public accounting in the Republic of Liberia. Consequently, any organization (recipients of auditing and assurance services) using the services of anyone/firm not listed by the LICPA is in full violation of the Law. Legal actions will be taken against violators and those doing business with persons or firms not listed by the LICPA. Hence, the following are the accredited firms, licensed members, and members in Good Standing with the LICPA for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Signed:   
S. Moses Kessellie, Jr.  
Executive Director

Approved: Governing Council of the LICPA

**Member Firms licensed to practice (1 January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020)**

Firms		
No.	Name	License #
1	Baker Tilly Liberia	00000037
2	BICON, Inc	00000038
3	Crowe Liberia LLC	00000034
4	Deon and Noed International (DNI) Liberia LLC	00000039
5	Gedei& Associates Inc	00000036
6	Moore Monrovia	00000030
7	MGI-Monbo& Company	00000031
8	Pan African Consultants	00000032
9	PKF- Liberia	00000033
10	PricewaterhouseCoopers Liberia (PwC)	00000042

**Individual Members Licensed to Practice (1 January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020)**

No	NAME	LICENCED TO PRACTICE (YES/NO)
1	Arthur W. B. Fumbah	YES
2	Christopher K. Sokpor	YES
3	David M. Farhat	YES
4	George K.K. Fonderson	YES
5	Nim'ne E. Mombo, Sr.	YES
6	Prince Taylor	YES
7	Ranveek K Suji	YES
8	RoheitSuji	YES
9	Steven DindoSeimavula	YES
10	Theo Dekonty Joseph	YES
11	Winsley S. Nanka	YES
12	Francis B. S. Johnson	YES
13	Paul C. Collins	YES

**Individual members in Good Standing (1 January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020)**

No.	Individual Members	Membership #
1	Alex FavilleElvino Cline	83
2	Amos Odame Adjei	94
3	Andrew S. Jallah	43
4	AnitCeceWollo-Woiwor	79
5	Arthur W. B. Fumbah	19
6	Booker T. Harris	58
7	Brima Koroma	92
8	Christopher K. Sokpor	21
9	David Awuah Mensah	97
10	David M. Farhat	7
11	David O. Carew	39
12	Decontee King-Sackie	77
13	Edward Gomado	66
14	Foday G. Kiazolu	33
15	Francis B.S. Johnson	1
16	G. Cecil Dole	84
17	George K.K. Fonderson	13
18	Hayfron Aboagye	60
19	Hector J. Wuor	51
20	Jerome Padmore	90
21	Jonah EkowAnnobil	96
22	Joseph TohHinneh	87
23	Kolawole Popoola	61
24	L. Olandor Boyce, I	48
25	Leroy NyahFendor	80
26	Micah TebahBelleh	85
27	Mohammed A. Dukuly	71
28	Mohammed B. Korleh	56
29	Mozart Carney Barnard	95
30	NajeemdeenAbiolaGiwa	98
31	Nicholas V. S. Peters	81
32	Nim'ne E. Mombo, Sr.	6
33	Papin Daniels, Jr.	59
34	Patience A. Dzebu	52
35	Paul C. Collins	16
36	Prince Taylor	28
37	Ranveek K. Suji	10
38	Raphael M. Quaye	55
39	Rita Ganidekam	91
40	RoheitSuji	18
41	S. Moses Kessellie, Jr.	38
42	Samora P. Z Wolokolie, Sr.	57
43	Samuel Mensah	42
44	Steven D. Seimavula	25
45	Subozu Kollie	89
46	Theo Dekonty Joseph	14
47	VerleewoSiakor	100
48	Victor S. Tanwone, Sr.	54
49	Winsley S. Nanka	20
50	Yusador S. Gaye	46
51	Zephaniah J. Smith	101
52	Zinnah B. Sackie	62

# MCA-L hires TATA Power to strengthen LEC's technical capacity

In a bid to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC), the Millennium Challenge Account-Liberia (MCA-L) has hired master trainers from Tata Power to provide on-the-job training to at least 100 technical and non-technical staff of the utility. Tata Power is part of a 150-year-old Tata Group of Companies, which is based in India and operates in more than 100 countries across the Asian and African continents.

Tata Power will also assess staff capacity and develop a medium to long-term master and strategic plan for training and capacity building at LEC. The exercise will indirectly impact 60 percent of LEC's entire workforce, while improving the effectiveness of utility operations.

LEC has still not yet fully recovered from a significant decline in the quality of its human resources caused by the civil war. This nine-month program, along with other interventions by MCA-L, will help place LEC on a path to becoming a well-functioning electric power utility that can provide

While there will be limited theoretical training where necessary, he noted that the vast majority of the training would enable LEC staff to gain hands-on, practical experience in a real work setting.

"We bring in more than 100 years of experience in the power sector operations and training," Chourey said about Tata Power's background.

The trainers working with LEC staff are specialists in the power sector, each with over 30 years of experience in generation, transmission, distribution, safety, and training.

Dele Shobayo, MCA-L's technical assistancemanager for the Energy Project, says the training will result in tangible benefits to consumers.

"We are expecting the availability and reliability of the network to improve in the long term. Additionally, the training will result in a safer environment for technicians and consumers," he said.

The on-the-job training complements MCA-L's past investments in LEC's physical assets and ensures



affordable and reliable electricity to the Liberian people.

Tata Power will directly train LEC's supervisors, engineers, and technicians in core technical areas such as transmission and distribution, generation (hydroelectric and thermal), health, safety, and the environment. Non-technical and soft skills training will cover areas such as customer relationship management, inventory control and logistics management, revenue cycle management, revenue mobilization and revenue protection.

As part of its obligations, Tata Power will supervise the construction of an outdoor training center at the Mt. Coffee Hydro Power Plant that will consist of an electrical network to train linesmen in constructing and maintaining power lines and associated infrastructure.

Tata Power's team lead, Vijay Chourey, said the on-the-job training approach selected by MCA-L is effective for the trainees because it minimizes time away from the job.

that LEC will become a more sustainable and viable public utility. Over the past seven months, MCA-L has transferred US\$1.78 million worth of equipment to LEC, including light poles, meters, specialized trucks, and spare parts for thermal generators.

In addition to funding US\$148 million of the total cost of rebuilding the Mount Coffee Hydropower Plant, the compact has also paid for a three-year management services contractor to manage LEC and turn it into a more efficient and profitable company.

About MCA-L: In October 2015, the Government of the United States of America, through its development agency, Millennium Challenge Corporation, provided a grant of US\$257 million to Liberia. MCA-L is an independent, legal, and autonomous agency of the Government of Liberia created by the legislature to administer the compact projects, which address the lack of access to reliable and affordable electricity and inadequate road infrastructure. Learn more about MCA-L at [www.mca.gov.lr](http://www.mca.gov.lr).

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# MCC constitutes several measures to combat Coronavirus

By Lewis S. Teh

With two cases of Coronavirus disease recorded in Liberia, authorities at the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC) have set up a new taskforce that will help health authorities here in combating the disease.

Instituting the taskforce Tuesday, 17 March in the MCC Ball Room, Monrovia City Mayor Jefferson T. Kojee said the setting up of the taskforce is geared towards complimenting efforts of the Government of Liberia to avoid the spread of the deadly virus.

Beginning Sunday, 22 March, Kojee says there will be no selling at marker places, saying he expects commissioners of various townships and community leaders to make sure that this regulation is enforced to the letter.

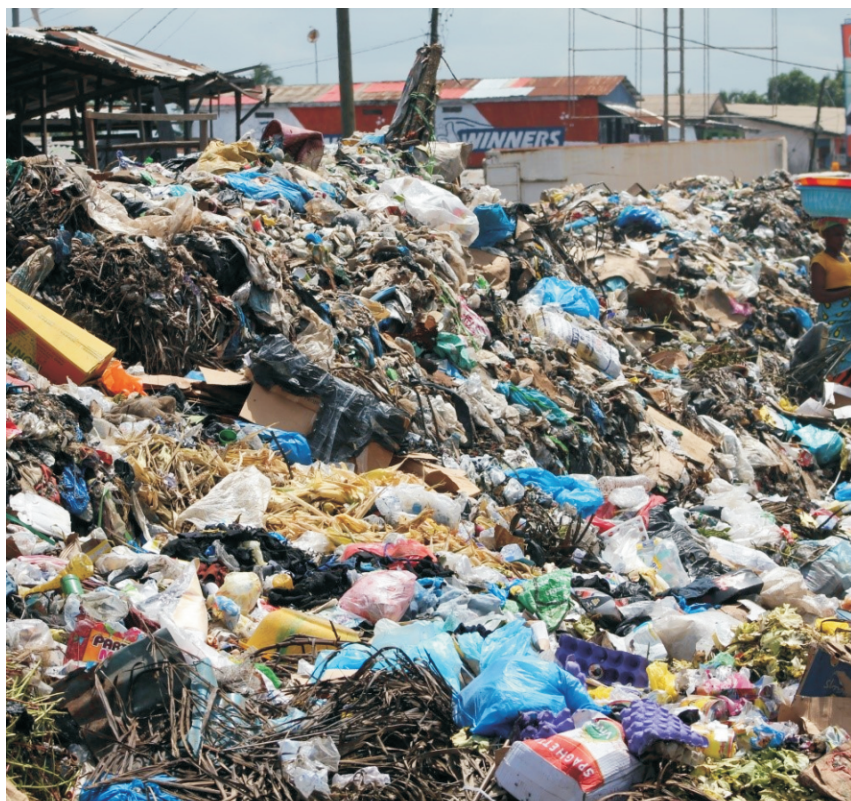
“As City Government, it’s part of our mandate to protect our people here in this city and the country at large. This is why we thought it wise to institute these measures,” Kojee says.

Kojee notes that this is not time to play politics, explaining that the fight against this virus must claim the attention of every political leader, as he also encourages religious leaders to begin to take leadership because the country is at war.

He further thanks President George Manneh Weah for playing leadership role in this fight, saying

everyone must apply seriousness to the fight.

“It’s against this backdrop that we have invited all of our commissioners from the various townships to get them involved and join us to be sensitive in engaging the people by creating the necessary awareness that needs to be done,” Kojee continues.



According to him, the city government is asking all businesses, especially the entertainment centers including night clubs and video clubs to proceed every Friday to assemble at the MCC, along with marker superintendents, and to ensure that each of the businesses have hand washing facilities to avoid the spread of

the virus.

For her part, Liberia’s Cultural Ambassador Madam Julie Endee, cautions citizens who are wearing face masks to be careful, saying once you are not in a danger zone or being admitted, it’s not safe to wear face mask.

“Someone could easily tamper with the face mask that will put you to sleep, and steal your properties. But we are here to join this fight like

we did in the past with Ebola,” she says.

Commissioners at the meeting expressed heartfelt appreciation to Mayor Kojee for the brilliant idea, saying it’s welcoming for the people of Montserrado, and the country at large.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

# Deputy Education Minister urges teachers to be diligent

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong

Deputy Education Minister for Planning, Research and Development, Alton V. Kesselly is admonishing Liberian teachers to discharge their duties with diligence and commitment.

Speaking at the Liberia Mobile Teacher Training College’s fourth cycle graduation ceremony over the weekend in Gbarnga, Bong County, Minister Kesselly said the classroom is a field of passion and professionalism.

Serving as a guest speaker, he explains that if Liberia must be developed, it is necessary for future leaders to be adequately nurtured to take on the mantle of leadership.

Minister Kesselly challenges those who have created passion for the profession to take advantage of teacher training colleges across the country before entering the classroom.

The Deputy Education Minister observes with sadness, the increased number of unqualified teachers in the classroom; something he says is detrimental to the rebuilding process of the educational sector.

He explains further that the Ministry of Education is currently instituting a vigorous monitoring system to ensure that the right people are in the classroom.

For his part, the valedictorian, Oglas Kamara calls on his colleagues to demonstrate sincerity and good behavior in their various institutions.

Kamara says teachers as givers of knowledge, need to demonstrate high level of professionalism in the discharge of their duties for the betterment of the society.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

# Commerce Ministry postpones launch of National Trade Facilitation Committee

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has postponed the official launch of the National Trade Facilitation Committee, in the wake of the prevailing health situation in Liberia.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry Tuesday, 17 March in Monrovia, the formal launch of the National Trade Facilitation Committee should have been held at the Liberian Chamber of

Commerce on Friday, March 20, 2020.

The release says the new date for the program will be announced subsequently.

Meanwhile, the Commerce Ministry says it sincerely regrets over any inconvenience the abrupt postponement of the ceremony may cause its partners who were invited to the official launch of the National Trade Facilitation Committee.—*Press release*

# Phebe Hospital announces financial assistance from government for fuel

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong County

The Medical Director of Phebe Hospital in Bong County, Jefferson Sibley, has confirmed that the hospital has received US\$40,000 from government for the purchase of fuel to run the hospital.

The disclosure about government’s intervention to the hospital in the tune of US\$40,000 was earlier made by Bong County district three Representative, Marvin Cole, on Thursday in an interview with out Bong County correspondent.

Phebe Hospital has in recent time been out of fuel and other essential medical materials to cater to patients.

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The situation is reported to have resulted to patients being charged to purchase fuel and medical materials like gloves, syringes, IV fluid, and drugs before being treated at the hospital.

Representative Cole said members of the county’s legislative caucus prevailed on the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to make available funding to address some of the challenges facing the hospital.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sibley is

calling on leaders of the county and citizens to rally around the hospital in seeking the needed support void of politics.

In the 2019/2020 National Budget, the hospital got an allotment of little over US\$1.8m, but Phebe’s administration says it has only received US\$75,000, in addition to the current US\$40,000 as of September/October 2019.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*

# Français

## Le Coronavirus au Libéria : Weah interdit les voyages officiels

Le président George Weah a interdit tous les voyages non essentiels des représentants du gouvernement et tous les voyages à destination et en provenance des pays ayant plus de 200 cas de coronavirus. Il a aussi suspendu sa tournée à l'intérieur du pays. Ces mesures visent à empêcher la propagation de la maladie dans le pays.

M. Weah a par la suite accordé des congés payés à tous les employés non essentiels de l'Etat et a ordonné à l'Agence de la fonction publique (CSA) d'annoncer la liste des fonctionnaires appartenant à cette catégorie.

Il a également conseillé que tous les bureaux, les commerces, les écoles, les églises et tous les autres lieux de rassemblements publics placent à leur entrée des

dispositifs de lavage des mains.

Le président a annoncé ces mesures le lundi 16 mars à la suite de l'annonce selon laquelle le pays a enregistré son premier cas confirmé de coronavirus mortel qui a déjà coûté la vie à plus de 3000 personnes et infecté 200 000 autres dans le monde.

Le premier patient du coronavirus, le Dr Nathaniel

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Côte d'Ivoire : Le gouvernement adopte des mesures contre le Coronavirus

La présidence ivoirienne a pris des mesures à la suite d'une réunion du Conseil National de Sécurité qui a adopté le renforcement de la lutte contre la propagation du Coronavirus (COVID -19) en Côte d'Ivoire.

Une réunion du Conseil National de Sécurité tenue cet après-midi du lundi 16

mars 2020 a adopté plusieurs mesures pour freiner l'expansion du coronavirus en Côte d'Ivoire dont les autorités en ont confirmé 06 cas à ce jour. Voici la liste exhaustive des dispositions retenues par le Conseil National de Sécurité de Côte d'Ivoire :

- Suspension pour une période de 15 jours

renouvelable, à compter du 16 mars 2020 à minuit, de l'entrée en Côte d'Ivoire des voyageurs non ivoiriens en provenance des pays ayant plus de 100 cas confirmés de maladie à coronavirus (COVID-19) ;

- Renforcement du contrôle sanitaire aux frontières aériennes, maritimes et terrestres ;

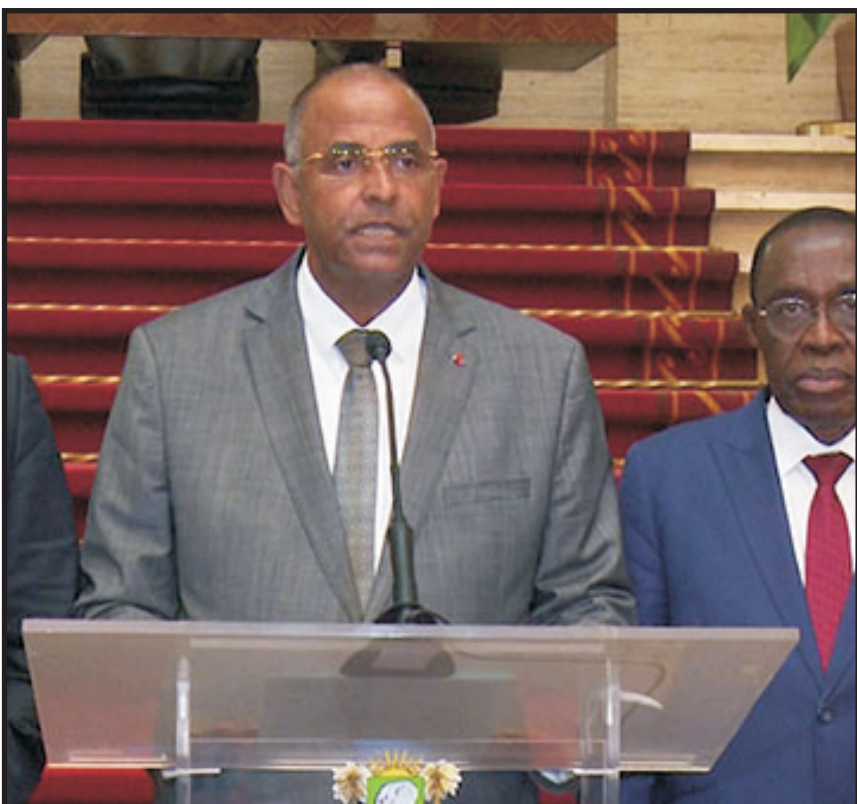
- Mise en quarantaine des cas suspects et des contacts des malades dans les centres réquisitionnés par l'Etat ;

- Fermeture de tous les établissements d'enseignement préscolaire, primaire, secondaire et supérieur pour une période de 30 jours à compter du 16 mars 2020 à minuit ;

- Respect d'une distance d'au moins un (01) mètre entre les personnes dans les grandes surfaces, les maquis, les restaurants, les entreprises, la zone aéroportuaire et les lieux publics ;

- Respect des mesures d'hygiène corporelle, comportementale, hydrique et alimentaire ;

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## Éditorial

### L'affaire du COVID-19 n'est pas un jeu d'enfant

L'incapacité du gouvernement libérien de gérer de manière efficace le premier cas officiellement confirmé de coronavirus au Libéria est très inquiétante. C'est un acte irresponsable de la part des autorités.

Le président George Manneh Weah a déclaré lundi 16 mars dans un discours national que le Libéria avait enregistré son premier cas confirmé de COVID-19. Il s'agit du directeur exécutif de l'Agence de protection de l'environnement, Nathaniel Blama, qui aurait refusé d'être mis en quarantaine après avoir été testé positif par les autorités sanitaires à l'aéroport international Roberts dans le comté de Margibi dès son arrivée.

M. Blama est arrivé ici le vendredi 12 mars dans la soirée via Air Brussels. Il avait pris part à une conférence internationale en Europe. Les autorités disent que d'autres fonctionnaires qui étaient avec lui sur le même vol sont recherchés. Il faut les mettre en quarantaine afin d'éviter la propagation de la maladie dans le pays.

Nous sommes déçus d'apprendre que le patron de l'EPA a également refusé de monter dans une ambulance qui s'est rendue à son domicile pour l'emmener dans un centre d'observation. Il aurait préféré monter dans son véhicule officiel. Le ministre de la Santé, le docteur Wilhemina S. Jallah, qui a informé les journalistes lundi, a déclaré que M. Blama avait « violé » le règlement sanitaire à l'aéroport et était rentré chez lui.

Sommes-nous sérieux dans la lutte contre le COVID-19 et pour la protection du public contre les infections de masse qui pourraient détruire ce pays dont le système de santé est déjà défaillant en raison d'un manque de capacités? Ou est-ce une mise en scène afin d'attirer



la sympathie, la solidarité et le soutien de la communauté internationale ?

Pourquoi un gouvernement qui se dit soucieux du bien-être de ses citoyens, qui ne veut pas qu'ils soient infectés et meurent permettrait volontairement à ses responsables de violer les réglementations et les mesures de sécurité publique? Le président Weah devrait aller au-delà de la simple suspension et faire inculper et poursuivre M. Blama pour son comportement grossier et son arrogance malveillante.

L'Institut national de la santé publique du Libéria devrait renforcer et appliquer ses mesures de surveillance sans crainte ni faveur, car la maladie ne connaît pas de frontière. Depuis Wuhan, en Chine, le COVID-19 s'est propagé à plus de 10 pays dans le monde, y compris aux États-Unis. Le nombre de morts aux États-Unis est de plusieurs centaines, tandis que l'Italie a perdu plus de 1000 personnes.

Le gouvernement du Libéria doit mettre en place des mesures et se montrer ferme dans la gestion de la crise actuelle. Qu'il s'agisse de Nathaniel Blama ou toute autre personne qui présente un risque grave pour le public, il faut qu'ils soient mis en quarantaine pour éviter de contaminer tout le pays entier.

A part Blama, nous ne savons pas combien d'autres personnes ont pu « glisser » entre les mailles à la RIA et aux autres portes d'entrée. Cela représente un risque pour le public. Ebola a tué plus de 4 000 personnes, détruit l'économie et fait des orphelins. La question de COVID-19 n'est pas une plaisanterie car ses impacts se font sentir dans le monde entier.



# Français

## Le Coronavirus au Libéria :

Blama, directeur exécutif de l'Agence pour la protection de l'environnement (EPA), est rentré dans le pays vendredi soir en provenance de la Suisse. Il aurait refusé de se conformer au protocole sanitaire mis en place à l'aéroport.

M. Weaha annonça la suspension pour une durée indéterminée du patient en tant que directeur exécutif de l'Agence pour la protection de l'environnement (EPA), tout en assurant au public qu'un traçage intensif est en cours pour identifier et localiser toutes les personnes avec lesquelles M. Blama est entré en contact.

Le Dr Blama était soigné à l'Hôpital de la Rédemption à Bushrod Island. Selon certaines informations non confirmées, il aurait été transféré à l'hôpital militaire 14 pour des soins mieux adaptés.

«La propagation de ce virus représente la plus grande menace pour la santé et le bien-être du peuple libérien depuis l'épidémie d'Ebola dont a souffert notre pays de 2014 à 2016», a déclaré le président.

Selon lui, le gouvernement est en train de prendre des mesures pour protéger les frontières et les points d'entrée du pays.

Le président Weah a déclaré que M. Blama avait

refusé qu'il fût mis en quarantaine en violation des protocoles sanitaires en vigueur à l'aéroport.

Après l'allocution du président, l'Agence de la Protection de l'Environnement a déclaré à travers un article qui a fait le tour des réseaux sociaux que le président a été probablement mal informé.

« Dr. Nathaniel T. Blama, est passé par le dépistage régulier à RIA avec d'autres représentants du gouvernement », a indiqué le message.

Selon la déclaration rendue publique sur les médias sociaux par la directrice de communication de l'EPA, Danise Love Dennis, M. Blama avait demandé volontairement des tests supplémentaires, sachant qu'il venait de la Suisse, ajoutant que comme le test était positif il s'est mis en quarantaine et plus tard est mis à la disposition des autorités gouvernementales.

«Les informations données au président sont incorrectes. Le Dr Blama est respectueux des lois et s'il n'avait pas demandé volontairement des tests supplémentaires, personne n'aurait su qu'il était positif », a affirmé l'EPA.

Elle a indiqué que M. Blama a informé l'ensemble de son personnel du résultat, et insisté sur la nécessité de se rendre dans le centre de santé pour un traitement.

## Côte d'Ivoire :

- Interdiction des salutations manuelles, accolades et embrassades et de la consommation de la viande de brousse ;

- Fermeture des boîtes de nuit, des cinémas et des lieux de spectacle pour une période de 15 jours ;

- Interdiction des rassemblements de population de plus de 50 personnes pour une période de 15 jours ;

- Suspension de tous les événements sportifs et culturels nationaux et internationaux pour une période de 15 jours ;

- Gratuité totale du diagnostic et de la prise en charge de tous les cas suspects et confirmés de COVID-19.

La panique et la frénésie suscitées par le coronavirus s'emparent d'Abidjan

Avant l'adoption de cette série de mesures, l'on avait assisté à une levée de bouclier et une vague d'indignation des populations ivoiriennes qui estimaient que leur gouvernement ne

faisait pas assez pour prévenir l'explosion plus ou moins inévitable de cas confirmés comme partout dans le monde.

Pendant ce temps, les supermarchés refusent du monde et les populations prennent leurs dispositions en vue d'un auto-confinement. Les produits de grande consommation commencent à manquer à l'appel. Les produits d'hygiène, notamment les gels hydroalcooliques et les caches-nez connaissent une pénurie. Dans les marchés, les prix flambent.

Dame Zofé Lou vendeuse au marché de Bingerville tente d'expliquer cette inflation des prix sur les marchés dans le district d'Abidjan, la capitale ivoirienne : « Les bateaux sont de plus en plus rares. En tout cas c'est ce qu'on nous a dit au port car tout vient de l'Europe et de la Chine. Donc nous achetons plus cher ».

« Cette ruée sur les marchés et les grandes surfaces me rappellent fort bien et personnellement la crise post-électorale de 2010-2011. Ce qui me gêne très franchement c'est

## COMMENTAIRE

Par Donna Dickenson, Katie Hasson & Marcy Darnovsky

## L'édition du génome humain héréditaire n'est pas inéluctable

**L**ONDRES - L'annonce faite par le biophysicien chinois He Jiankui en novembre 2018 selon laquelle il avait créé les premiers bébés au monde génétiquement modifiés - une infraction flagrante aux codes éthique et juridique qui lui a valu une peine de prison de trois ans - a remis les débats sur l'édition du génome humain héréditaire sur le devant de la scène. Mais ces débats sont fondamentalement biaisés. Compte tenu des enjeux - pour les sociétés actuelles et pour les générations futures - il est urgent de réorienter le cours de ces discussions.

Certains scientifiques, futuristes et autres font valoir le caractère inéluctable de l'édition du génome héréditaire - la modification des embryons ou des gamètes afin de produire des enfants génétiquement modifiés qui transmettront les gènes et les traits modifiés à leur propre descendance. Ces partisans semblent supposer que, dans l'ensemble, cette avancée serait probablement une bonne chose - pour autant que nous attendions que la technologie soit « sûre » et qu'elle s'applique dans les bonnes conditions. Dans ce contexte, ils se concentrent principalement sur l'élaboration d'une feuille de route détaillée pour progresser dans cette voie.

Les organisateurs du Sommet international de 2018 sur l'édition des gènes humains, qui s'est tenu quelques jours après l'annonce faite par He, ont déclaré : « il est temps de définir une approche translationnelle rigoureuse et responsable vers » des essais cliniques sur l'édition des génomes héréditaires. Cette déclaration allait dans le sens des conclusions précédentes de l'organisation britannique du Nuffield Council on Bioethics et des National Academies of Sciences and Medicine aux États-Unis. Les National Academies américaines, ainsi que la Royal Society du Royaume-Uni, ont ensuite fondé la Commission internationale sur l'utilisation clinique de l'édition du génome germinal humain pour remplir cette mission.

Mais comme nous l'avons récemment soutenu - avec l'appui de 18 autres dirigeants de la société civile, bioéthiciens, scientifiques et avocats de 11 pays - dans la Déclaration de Genève sur l'édition du génome humain héréditaire, cette approche reflète un certain nombre d'hypothèses profondément problématiques. Avant de commencer à essayer de fixer des normes sur la manière et le moment où les scientifiques pourraient modifier génétiquement des enfants à l'avenir, nous devons nous demander s'ils ont le droit de le faire.

De nombreux éléments plaident en faveur de l'interdiction totale de l'édition de gènes héréditaires. Comme le fait remarquer la Déclaration de Genève, c'était le consensus des débats antérieurs sur le sujet, qui remontent aux années 1990. Ce consensus est mentionné dans les lois de dizaines de pays et dans des traités internationaux tels que la Convention d'Oviedo, un accord contraignant du Conseil de l'Europe.

Tout comme la Déclaration de Genève, le consensus précédent n'a pas rejeté tous les types d'édition du génome. Si l'on parvient à rendre cette technologie sûre, efficace et, idéalement, abordable, elle pourrait être un outil puissant dans le traitement de certaines maladies. Mais les débats passés ont conclu que l'édition du génome ne devrait pas être utilisée pour modifier le profil génétique des futurs enfants ni de leurs descendants.

Et ne nous y trompons pas : l'édition du génome héréditaire n'est pas une intervention médicale qui sauve une vie. Elle ne traite ni ne guérit aucune personne existante. Elle vise plutôt à créer une future personne sans variante génétique nocive, ou dotée d'un trait désiré.

En outre, l'argument selon lequel l'édition du génome est nécessaire pour empêcher l'héritage de troubles génétiques est sans fondement. Au cours des 20 dernières années, ce que l'on appelle le diagnostic

génétique préimplantatoire - qui filtre les embryons créés par fécondation in vitro - permet aux parents à risque d'avoir des descendants génétiquement apparentés qui ne sont pas affectés par leurs troubles génétiques.

L'omniprésence d'idées fausses de ce type est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles la Déclaration de Genève appelle à une réorientation du cours de ces discussions dans les débats publics et politiques sur l'édition du génome héréditaire. Un autre aspect est que les débats ont généralement mis l'accent sur des considérations scientifiques, tout en ignorant ou en minimisant le contexte social dans lequel les efforts de modification de l'héritage risquent de se produire.

Il est dangereux d'ignorer les modèles systémiques de discrimination sociale et de stratification, ainsi que le poids des forces commerciales et de l'expérience historique. L'héritage de l'eugénisme à lui seul - et son apothéose dans « l'hygiène raciale » nazie - devrait servir d'avertissement à tout un chacun, et pourtant les partisans de l'édition du génome héréditaire ont généralement tendance à ne pas en tenir compte.

Il est certain que les programmes d'eugénisme coercitifs parrainés par l'État ne risquent pas de réapparaître. Mais une version commerciale, façonnée par des arguments de marketing et par les choix individuels de consommateurs, est un risque très réel. Si les techniques d'édition du génome de type CRISPR sont mises en place en médecine de la reproduction, alors les cliniques de fertilité ne vont pas manquer cette occasion de proposer bientôt aux parents suffisamment riches de procéder à des « mises à niveau » génétiques.

La troisième dimension essentielle de réorientation nécessaire du cours de ces discussions est celle de l'inclusivité. Parce que l'édition du génome héréditaire risque d'affecter tout le monde, un large consensus public est essentiel avant toute prise de mesures. Pourtant, les scientifiques et les bioéthiciens professionnels ont jusqu'à présent monopolisé la majeure partie de la conversation.

Tous ceux qui risquent d'être affectés par l'édition du génome héréditaire ne peuvent pas participer au débat. Après tout, nous parlons d'apporter des changements génétiques qui risquent d'être transmis à tous les descendants d'une personne. Cela soulève le problème épineux des « générations futures » qui hante depuis longtemps la tradition philosophique : nos descendants n'ont pas leur mot à dire sur les choix que nous faisons - notamment sur notre décision de continuer à déverser du dioxyde de carbone dans l'atmosphère - mais ils devront faire face aux conséquences.

Dans le cas d'une technologie qui risque d'être commercialisée aux riches comme moyen de produire des descendants « biologiquement supérieurs », ces conséquences risquent de fixer pour longtemps une nouvelle forme d'inégalités fondamentales. Il y a de grandes chances que les implications sociales de ce résultat soient profondes et terrifiantes.

Permettre d'entretenir un débat public efficace englobant une large gamme de voix - en particulier celle des défenseurs des droits de l'homme, des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, des artistes, des personnalités religieuses, de ceux qui souffrent de maladies génétiques et de ceux qui n'en souffrent pas - va demander des ressources humaines et financières importantes. L'appel de la Déclaration de Genève à clarifier et à reformuler la question est une initiative qui plaide en ce sens.

L'utilisation éventuelle d'une modification du génome héréditaire n'est pas une décision que nous pouvons prendre à la légère. On ne peut certainement pas la considérer comme un choix que nous aurions déjà fait.

MORE HEADLINE NEWS MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# CODRA holds climate change and plastic pollution conference

By Joseph Titus yekeryan in Bong County

The Community Development and Research Agency (CODRA) over the weekend held a one-day long stakeholder's climate change and plastic pollution conference in Gbarnga, Bong County.

CODRA is a non-governmental and not-for-

profit organization based in Gbarnga, and it is registered under the Association Law of Liberia as a Charity. The agency works in the areas of community development and research.

After the 14 years of brutal civil war in Liberia which led to the massive destruction of the social fabric, CODRA was established in 2009 by a group of Liberians with diverse backgrounds and experiences in social work. They were driven by the passion to serve humanity and to contribute to the alleviation of all forms of human sufferings, including social injustices, poverty, discrimination, pollution and

environmental degradation. The founders believe that by empowering community people, they can set their own development agenda and pursue positive course of action in finding solutions to their problems. The dialogue was part of Forum SYD's sponsored

Sustainable Ownership project, which seeks to empower community and civil society organizations in Liberia. The project is also geared toward creating awareness on climate change through the promotion of sustainable natural resources management. Giving the overview of the conference, CODRA's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Abu Bility said the conference was intended to dialogue practical solutions to global warming in Liberia and increase awareness on plastic waste pollution and discuss the threats, impacts, and ways forward to saving the environment.

Bility furthered that the project was formulated to tackle plastic pollution and other human activities that produce carbon-dioxide in urban communities.

He then encouraged Bongese to take ownership of the project if they ought to ensure a clean and healthy Bong County.

For their part, participants of the day-long conference lauded CODRA and partners for the knowledge acquired, with a commitment to utilize it for the betterment of their communities.

They then recommended the extension of the project to other parts of the county if the true intent of the project should be achieved.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*



# 15,000 pregnant women

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how to seek pre-natal services or where to give birth when the time comes.

He further stated that Mercy Corps would work with community-based organizations, traditional midwives and local leaders, who will be the conduit to provide the needed services.

Mercy Corps Interim Country Director, Ms. Nina Taka said in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and its health policy, Mercy Corps will build on the program to work through national and community level efforts to improve the health care of 15,000 women of reproductive age and children under five in rural communities.

She mentioned that "In Liberia, the neonatal mortality rate is 26 per 1,000 live births, noting that high prevalence in maternal or child mortality erodes the fabric around which communities are built, that is the family".

According to Ms. Taka, the fundamental premise of the SAFE program and why everyone gathered at the launch in Buchanan is [that] each national and community health institution is equipped with adequate skills, system and funding.

"What this also means is that we need to work together as government, civil society organizations and private sector to collectively address the challenges related to maternal and infant health in Liberia," she said.

She thanked the UAE government and the Liberian government for their joint effort to bring practical solutions to improve maternal and child health care.

Dr. Abraham Jawara, Medical Director at the

government hospital in Buchanan, said the hospital reopened in October 2019 after facing various problems, including lack of equipment.

Dr. George Logan, Assistant Minister of Health, also stated that hospitals across the country are having severe difficulties ranging from insufficient drugs and medical supplies to other difficulties faced by doctors and nurses. In the phase one, he said they would be working with 10 clinics and the hospital wards with certain minimum services that match the norm so women will get the treatment they deserve.

The Minister of Health, Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah said the program is about strengthening maternal and child health and it will not only strengthen health facilities, but also tackle communities.

"And we want to make sure that all of our women go to their different areas for their antenatal care and make sure that they have safe delivery and they understand all of the emergency things that will happen," she said.

"I know many times people have brought different types of projects to the community, but this project I'm right here with you because I want to see the results. I want to see when they say we strengthen the facility, I want to come back and see what they did to the facility to strengthen it. When they say they are making sure that mothers and children are safe, I want to come back and see that our mothers and children are safe," she explained.

Minister Jallah concluded that ensuring the program is a success is a team effort that involves the government, communities, Mercy Corps and the Media.

# Pres. Weah congratulates the Republic of Ireland

President George Manneh Weah has sent a message of Congratulations to the Government and People of the Republic of Ireland on the occasion marking the National Day of that country.

In the message to Irish President Michael Daniel Higgins, Mr. Weah extended heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on behalf of the Government and People of Liberia and in his own name to the Government and people of Ireland.

According to a Foreign Ministry release, President Weah expressed hope that as Ireland commemorates its National Day which is referred to as St. Patrick Day around the world, both Liberia and Ireland which have similar virtues of peaceful collaboration of nations will



continue to work together for the protection of Women and minority groups toward the enhancement of human dignity.

The National Day of Ireland is now celebrated around the world by people of faiths. St. Patrick who embodied

the virtues of service, scholarship, forgiveness, peace and harmony throughout his lifespan has inspired the Government and People of Ireland to lead and inspire change around the world through humanitarian and other undertakings.

Mr. Weah also noted that the Liberian Government is proud to have inaugurated the Irish Embassy in Liberia which is a symbol of the growing ties between Ireland and Liberia.

He told his Irish counterpart that Liberia remains grateful to Ireland for all the assistance

it continues to render Liberia geared towards the actualization of the Liberian Government's Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development.

President Weah further disclosed that Liberia, like Ireland share similar values of peaceful collaboration of nations and will continue to support actions that protect women and minority groups.

He then wished for President Higgins personal wellbeing and to the people of Ireland peace and stability.

# Blama's domestic worker infested

By Bridgett Milton

One day after Environmental Protection Agency executive director Nathaniel Blama, tested positive of the Coronavirus, Mr. Blama's domestic employee has been confirmed infested.

The Government of Liberia reported the second case Tuesday, 17 March. The victim is identified as Johnny Phillips, a domestic worker of the now suspended EPA boss, who himself was earlier tested positive upon arrival at the Roberts International Airport onboard Brussels Airline from Switzerland.

According to the Minister of Information, Lenn Eugene Nagbe, health workers here determined that Phillips is a primary contact of Mr. Blama when he returned to his residence.

Breaking the news on Monday, President George Manneh Weah said Mr. Blama arrived in the country over the weekend and chose not to be quarantined, leaving for his home.

The President immediately suspended the official for

time indefinite and banned non-essential travels by officials.

President Weah explained that health workers subsequently followed Blama at his residence with ambulance to take him to a quarantine center, but instead, he chose to drive himself behind the ambulance.

Active tracing and testing are ongoing for primary and

secondary persons he might have come in contact.

The government calls on the public to help keep Liberia safe by following preventive measures, including hands washing and avoiding crowded environment.

The authorities urge all to continue to observe health protocols introduced by the Ministry of Health and the National Public Health

Institute of Liberia.

Surveillance update reportedly released by the NPHIL Tuesday disclosed a total 127 contacts have been identified, 23 of them high risk.

Meanwhile, the government Incident Management Team says it will regularly update the public on additional measures to curtail transmission of the disease. -Editing by Jonathan Browne



Suspended EPA Executive Director Nathaniel Blama

## CNDRA sends 155 non-essential staffers on paid leave

A day following President George Weah's ordered that non-essential civil servants be granted paid leave, in an effort to curtail the spread of the deadly Corona Virus, here, the Center for National Documents and Records Agency (CNDRA) on Tuesday March 17, sent 155 non-essential staffers home on compulsory paid leave for time indefinite.

CNDRA in a release issued said the measure is in straight adherence to President George Weah's latest presidential mandate asking

all non-essential civil servants to stay off jobs on a paid leave.

Briefing staff at its offices at the National Archives Central office on 12th Street in Monrovia, Tuesday morning during a general staff meeting, the CNDRA Director General Emmanuel A. Lomax said only 52 employees amounting to 25% of the workforce will remain on normal duties at the agency until further notice from the government while non-essential Civil Servants going home as of today's date will definitely receive their monthly salaries.

CNDRA Director General

disclosed that the intent of the new measure is geared towards decongesting the huge population at the agency adding that offices with four or more staffers will be reduced to two.

"Those essential staffers that will be on duties are required to come to work every day until further notification.

Based on the condition in the country, we will be sending out information to our workers regarding the recommencement of normal duties".

The National Archives Director General Emmanuel A. Lomax is meanwhile admonishing Liberians to adhere to all safety protocols and measures instituted by the health authorities.

"We are encouraging our people to take all of the necessary measures to prevent the spread of the Covid-19.

Preventing this deadly Corona Virus from spreading across the country should now be our foremost concern" he added.

Emmanuel Lomax commended President George Weah for suspending his presidential nationwide county tour.

On Monday, March 16, 2020, Health authorities announced that Liberia had recorded its first case of the Corona Virus disease known as Covid-19.



## Army Chief of Staff

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beneficiaries.

"No. You are not correct, I as Minister of Defense as a principal officer accountable to the Commander in Chief, took actions that were evolving and subject to the authority of the Commander in Chief, took action as authorized," former Minister Samukai had said.

But in his rebuttal testimony Tuesday concerning who were beneficiaries of the funds, Gen. Johnson said "It was for those who contributed to the funds."

Further, Gen. Johnson testifies that to the best of his knowledge, the account was established as pension account for retirement and death of personnel.

But former Minister Samukai had testified earlier that the account was established to complete welfare challenges facing the AFL, including death and other purposes as authorized to the benefit of the AFL.

Former Defense Minister Samukai, former Deputy Defense Minister Joseph Johnson and former Defense Ministry Comptroller NyumahDorbor are on trial for allegedly embezzling funds generated in the compulsory saving scheme established in July 2009 for AFL personnel during former President Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf's rule.

The officials were indicted on 9 October 2019, accusing them of committing economic

sabotage, theft of property, and misuse of public money, among others.

Through the compulsory savings funds, prosecutors here alleged that Mr. Samukai, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Dorbor deducted the salaries of AFL officers from all ranks to serve as supplementary pension benefits for assistance to wounded soldiers and deceased soldiers' families.

Over US\$1.2m of the US\$1.9m deposited was allegedly misapplied by Mr. Samukai, the prosecution alleges, and claims further that the defendants made themselves the only signatories to the account, leaving out the then AFL Chief of Staff and other ranking officers.

Meanwhile defense officials have testified that President Weah and former President Sirleaf held talks over the soldiers' savings during the period of transition in January 2018, and that President Weah had committed his government to pay back the money.

Following Gen. Johnson's testimony on direct and cross examinations Tuesday, the prosecution and the defense rested with the production of oral and documentary evidence in the case.

The Judge has assigned the next hearing of the case to Thursday, 19 March at 9 A.M., during which the two parties will provide their final argument.

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# Army Chief of Staff, ex-defense minister differ



Major General Prince Charles Johnson, III



Ex-Defense Minister Brownie J. Samukai

By Winston W. Parley

Liberia's Army Chief of Staff Major General Prince Charles Johnson, III, and immediate past Defense Minister defendant Brownie J. Samukai have provided differing answers to prosecutors' question that sought to establish who were the beneficiaries to a compulsory saving funds that

was dependent on deducting soldiers' salaries.

Testifying Tuesday, 17 March as prosecutors' rebuttal witness, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Gen. Johnson said [the saving] was for those who contributed to the funds, in response to the State's question if "only those who contributed to that account under the arrangement are to be the

[beneficiaries].

The prosecution says it brought in Gen. Johnson as rebuttal witness on account of former Minister Samukai's earlier testimony given on Tuesday, 10 March in which he explained that the State was not correct when asked if only those who contributed to the account were the

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# 15,000 pregnant women and children to get improved health care

## -As Mercy Corps launches SAFE Project in Buchanan

Under a one - year program, 15,000 women of reproductive age and children under five in rural communities are poised to receive improved health care to reduce maternal and infant mortality in Liberia.

On March 13, 2020, Mercy Corps launched the Strengthening Maternal and Infant Health (SAFE)

program in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County in collaboration with the Ministry of Health with funding from the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Giving an overview of the program, Mr. Augustine Newray, SAFE Program Manager stated that the project would target maternal and infant health.

Mr. Newray said that Mercy



Corps, relying on the strength of health workers, would ensure that health institutions are better equipped to deliver services. Mercy Corps will upgrade and rehabilitate the maternal and infant wards of the Government Hospital in Buchanan.

He also said they want to work with the community, particularly women of reproductive age to be able to increase their knowledge on

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