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TRULY INDEPENDENT  
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# The New Dawn

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TRULY INDEPENDENT

VOL.10 NO. 80

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# Sirleaf, others enjoy freedom



Mr. Charles Sirleaf



Ex-Governor Milton Weeks

**-but Weeks back to trial**



# Cummings heads CPP

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# Continental News

## Sudan 'must pay' US embassy attack victims

Sudan is required to pay punitive damages to some of the victims of the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania carried out by al-Qaeda, the US Supreme Court has ruled.

More than 200 people died and thousands were injured in the attacks.

Sudan was accused of giving al-Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden technical and financial support. The Supreme Court ruling applies to US nationals, embassy employees and contractors. The ruling comes at a time when Sudan's new government is pushing to be removed from the US's list of state sponsors of terrorism.

The unanimous decision by the Supreme Court means that about \$800m (£650m) out of the more than \$4bn that was awarded in punitive damages in 2011 has been reinstated, Christopher Curran, who was representing Sudan, is quoted by the Reuters news agency as

saying. Nine years ago, the judge in the Federal District Court in Washington said that Sudan should pay roughly \$6bn in compensation as well as the \$4bn in punitive damages, the New York Times reports.

In 2017, Sudan successfully challenged the ruling on the

punitive damages arguing that they were awarded under a 2008 amendment to a law that could not be applied to something that happened 20 years earlier.

The Supreme Court decided on Monday that Congress had said it was

possible for it to be used retrospectively.

"As always, Sudan expresses sympathy for the victims of the acts of terrorism at issue, but reaffirms that it was not involved in any wrongdoing in connection with those acts," Mr Curran said. The case of punitive damages for Kenyans and other nationals who were not directly employed by the embassies, as well as non-US relatives of any of those injured or killed in the attacks, was referred back to a lower court. Matthew McGill, who was representing some of the victims, said: "We are hopeful that this soon will lead Sudan to reach a just and equitable resolution with its victims." The \$6bn compensation was not in dispute in this case and in

February it was reported that Sudan was in negotiations over the sum to be paid.

At that time, Sudan had agreed to compensate the families of 17 US sailors who died when their ship, the USS Cole, was bombed by al-Qaeda at a port in Yemen in 2000.

This was a key condition set by the US for Sudan to be removed from its blacklist, which would allow sanctions to be lifted.

The new government in Sudan in power following the 2019 overthrow of long-serving President Omar al-Bashir is keen to repair relations with the US, which should help end its economic isolation.

Bashir, who is now in detention after being sentenced for corruption, was in power when the embassy and ship attacks happened. BBC



More than 200 people died in the simultaneous attacks on the US embassies in Kenya, shown here, and Tanzania

## South Sudan's VP and his wife contract Covid-19

The Vice-President of South Sudan, Riek Machar, who was part of a taskforce to fight coronavirus, is in self-isolation after testing positive for Covid-19.

Mr Machar said as several other members of the task force were infected a new team was taking over their work.

His wife, who is Defence Minister Angelina Teny, some

bodyguards and other staff also have the virus. Experts worry that decades of conflict has left South Sudan incapable of dealing with a surge in new infections. So far South Sudan has recorded 236 cases of Covid-19 and four deaths. Last week, the authorities announced the virus had reached a UN refugee camp in the capital, Juba, where some 30,000 people have sought seeking shelter and protection.

A case has also been confirmed in a similar camp in northern Bentiu, home to almost 120,000 people, the AFP news agency reports. Mr Machar formed a joint government with his political rival President Salva Kiir in February after years of conflict which has resulted in hundreds being killed and thousands being displaced.

As part of the power-sharing deal, Mr Machar, is ranked first among four vice-presidents serving as deputy leaders to Mr Kiir.

Apart from dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, South Sudan has also been named among countries most at risk of what the UN World Food Programme (WFP) calls a "hunger pandemic".

The WFP says that hunger and malnutrition in the country are at the most extreme levels since 2011, with almost 60% of the population struggling to find food every day.

Making the situation worse, swarms of locusts which had destroyed crops across East Africa arrived in South Sudan earlier this year. BBC



Riek Machar and his wife Angelina Teny were among several high-profile people to test positive

## Rwanda president's son lands top state job

The eldest son of Rwanda's President Paul Kagame has been appointed to the board of a government agency that oversees business registration and tourism.

Ivan Kagame's appointment to the Rwanda Development Board was announced by the prime minister's office on

or social media and has so far avoided dabbling in politics. He holds a business degree from an American university.

Meanwhile, Rwanda's cabinet has extended coronavirus containment measures after it partially lifted a nationwide lockdown about three weeks ago. Bars,



Ivan Kagame's (R) appointment was announced after a cabinet meeting

Monday.

The board was responsible for the signing of multi-million dollar sponsorship deals with top European football clubs Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain to promote tourism in the East African nation.

Thirty-year-old Ivan Kagame is rarely seen in media

schools and places of worship will remain closed. A night-time curfew will now start an hour later at 21:00 local time.

President Kagame also pardoned 50 "young women" convicted for abortion and 3,596 prisoners will be conditionally released. BBC



# EDITORIAL

## Lip-servicing genuine reconciliation

**GENUINE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION** would continue to elude Liberians for long because the country's national leaders seem to lack political will to drive this vital instrument of cohesion. A nation that is so divided in its historical and political existence can but go no further.

**LIBERIANS CELEBRATE MAY 14** each year as National Unification Day, credited to the late 18th president William V.S. Tubman, who saw a compelling need to unite indigenous citizens and former slaves from America, who settled here and exercised a dominance posture over those they met on the ground, perhaps as a result of influence from ex-slave masters.

**DIVISIVE POLITICS OR** politics of exclusion is one vice that has subjected a population of less than 5 million people to deep-seated hate for one another with some semblances of envy, greed and narrow mindedness.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE MANNEH Weah** said this year's National Unification Day couldn't be commemorated officially due to the novel coronavirus fight in the country. But truth to the matter, what is there to celebrate?

**MR. WEAH HIMSELF**, who once headed Liberia's national reconciliation under former president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf prior to winning the presidency in 2017, failed to initiate any meaningful program to bring Liberians together, despite coming from a marginalized and politically deprived segment of the society.

**SOME MAY ARGUE** that he might had adapted such done-care posture for obvious political reasons, not wanting to have a leader whose position he was eagerly eyeing, to take the glory or credit. However, ex-president Sirleaf herself had publicly remarked that her real weakness is forgiveness. She has no desire or interest in pardoning her perceived enemies.

**NOTWITHSTANDING, THEN** here is Mr. Weah, now President, saying he wouldn't sit with members of the opposition to share views and ideas on ways to not just uniting Liberians, but moving the country forward, principally because of persistent criticism against his government.

**SO LIBERIA CONTINUES** to wallop in this unfortunate quagmire with leaders from one administration to another talking reconciliation on their lips, rather than from the bottom of their hearts. They preach one thing in public, and totally mean something else in private.

**JAILED FORMER PRESIDENT** Charles Ghankay Taylor, from the Americo-Liberian background or descendant of settlers, said his greatest regret as a former leader, is he was not able to reconcile Liberians. He led a bloody rebel incursion in 1989 against the first indigenous President of Liberia, Samuel Kanyon Doe in a clearly reprisal attack, for Doe toppling the Tolbert regime, which was dominated by the settlers.

**THIS NATIONAL DIVISIVENESS** has stagnated this country for over a century, and from every indication, is not going away any time soon. The 14 years (1989-2003) civil war even exacerbated the situation. The people are divided from tribes, clans, communities, right into households and families.

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+231-775407211 Managing Editor: Othello B. Garblah; Editor-In-Chief: Jonathan

# COMMENTARY

By Shannon Kowalski

## Sexual and Reproductive Health During the Pandemic

*COVID-19 has not stopped people from having sex and reproducing, despite strained health-care systems. The crisis is an opportunity for policymakers to support initiatives that give women and girls more power over their immediate needs and improve access to critical services in the long term.*

**N**EW YORK - The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted almost every aspect of life, but not sex. Both wanted and unwanted intimacy occurs during a pandemic. With reduced mobility and less access to clinics and hospitals, ensuring quality and timely reproductive health care is more important than ever.

The virus has revealed stark inequities in medicine - and not only in emergency care. Even before COVID-19, adolescent girls, migrants, minorities, people with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ people faced discrimination in doctors' waiting rooms. The crisis is an opportunity for policymakers to support initiatives that give women and girls more power over their immediate needs and improve access to critical services in the long term.

The first priority is to make oral contraceptives available over the counter. This will increase safety, access, and use. In most places, a prescription is required, which prevents women from being fully in control of their bodies. It also may interfere with a patient's access to care free of abuse or privacy violations. This is especially true for teenagers, gender non-conforming people, domestic violence victims, and others who fear discrimination or disrespect in clinical settings.

The benefits of making contraceptives more widely available far outweigh the low risks. Evidence shows that women and gender non-conforming people can screen themselves for counter-indications using simple checklists that accompany medication. Permitting people to get a year's supply, so they can self-administer injectables like Depo-Provera would benefit those in violent situations and others who may struggle to access healthcare. Eliminating third-party authorization requirements and lowering costs for contraceptives would help, too.

Second, we must make abortion more accessible. Regressive policies and recent lockdowns have made in-clinic abortions less available, even though it is an essential medical procedure. Policymakers can and should take simple steps to eliminate unnecessary obstacles to abortion with pills, which would expand women's freedom and reduce clinic visits.

Medical abortions are safe and effective. Millions of women self-terminate pregnancies every year, whether using a combination of mifepristone and misoprostol, or misoprostol alone. There is no need for an office visit. People seeking abortions can assess whether they are eligible, follow instructions on correct dosages, and determine if the abortion is successful. All they need is accurate information, medication, and access to back-up health care if necessary.

The best way to increase abortion access is to make mifepristone and misoprostol available over the counter. At a minimum, policymakers

should make them easier to attain through telemedicine. This is viable and safe as long as consumers are educated about what to expect and can receive post-abortion care without judgment, stigma, or fear of prosecution. People who self-manage their abortions should not be harassed or penalized.

Quality maternal care also is crucial for women in the coronavirus era. Pregnant women face the same stresses as everyone in a pandemic. They face possible job insecurity, loss of income, health coverage changes, and threats to their own health. And then there are unique concerns about the health of their fetuses and newborns.

In many places, overburdened health-care systems can't provide pregnant women with the level of maternal care they expected - and received - before the pandemic. To address this gap, practitioners should help pregnant women practice greater self-care by providing the right tools and information, such as telemedicine, online education, home visits by midwives and other providers, psychosocial support, and ample screening.

These measures will ensure that pregnant women can better monitor their own health, manage common symptoms, identify signs of complications, and know when to seek care. And when they do, they must be able to travel to health-care facilities, even where lockdowns are enforced. This means ensuring emergency transport and personal protective equipment for pregnant women and those who accompany them.

Moreover, policymakers should expand initiatives that de-medicalize birth. Attended home births for low-risk pregnancies, guaranteed presence of midwives, dedicated birthing facilities linked to tertiary care, and home visits for antenatal care help ensure safer deliveries for mothers and providers alike. Many countries have emphasized institutional care, even though de-medicalizing childbirth is beneficial in the best of times, not just in a crisis.

We must avoid enacting knee-jerk measures. It would be regressive to restrict or ban partners or doulas from labor, separate infants from mothers who have, or are suspected to have, COVID-19, or interfere with early skin-to-skin contact, including breastfeeding. The World Health Organization has urged providers to refrain from such measures while caring for pregnant women, parents, and infants. This is critical to prevent an increase in obstetric violence or worse outcomes for women and their newborns.

Governments that do not eliminate barriers to care risk fractured health systems that cannot tend to everyone's needs. In the long term, investments in self-empowerment will strengthen health systems and the quality of care. With education and support, people can manage their sexual and reproductive health-care needs. Policymakers need to give them the power and tools to do so.



## O-PED

By Robert Skidelsky

# The Unspoken Reason for Lockdowns

*Governments cannot openly admit that the “controlled easing” of COVID-19 lockdowns in fact means controlled progress toward so-called herd immunity to the virus. Much better, then, to pursue this objective silently, under a cloud of obfuscation, and hope that a vaccine will arrive before most of the population gets infected.*

LONDON - The COVID-19 pandemic is the first major global crisis in human history to be treated as a mathematical problem, with governments regarding policy as the solution to a set of differential equations. Excluding a few outliers - including, of course, US President Donald Trump - most political leaders have slavishly deferred to “the science” in tackling the virus. The clearest example of this was the UK government’s sudden shift on March 23 to an aggressive lockdown policy, following a nightmarish forecast by Imperial College London researchers of up to 550,000 deaths if nothing was done to combat the pandemic.

Such modeling is the correct scientific approach when the question debars experiment. You can test a new drug by subjecting two groups of lab rats to identical conditions, except for the drug they are given, or by administering it to randomly selected humans in clinical trials.

But you can’t deliberately insert a virus into a human population to test its effects, although some Nazi concentration-camp doctors did just that. Instead, scientists use their knowledge of the infectious pathogen to model a disease’s pattern of contagion, and then work out which policy interventions will modify it.

Predictive modeling was first developed for malaria over a century ago by an almost-forgotten English doctor, Ronald Ross. In a fascinating 2020 book, the mathematician and epidemiologist Adam Kucharski showed how Ross first identified the mosquito as the infectious agent through experiments on birds. From this fact, he developed a predictive model of malaria transmission, which was later generalized as the SIR (Susceptible, Infected, and Recovered) model of contagious-disease epidemics.

The question that interested epidemiologists was not what triggers an epidemic, but what causes it to end. They concluded that epidemics end naturally when enough people have had the disease so that further transmission rates decline. Basically, the virus runs out of hosts in which it can reproduce itself. In today’s jargon, the population develops “herd immunity.”

The science developed from Ross’s original model is almost universally accepted, and has been fruitfully applied in other contexts, like financial contagion. But no policymaker is prepared to allow a killer epidemic to run its natural course, because the potential death toll would be unacceptable.

After all, the 1918-19 Spanish flu killed some 50-100 million people out of a global population of two billion: a death rate between 2.5% and 5%. No one knew for sure what the COVID-19 death rate would have been had the spread of the coronavirus been uncontrolled.

Because there is currently no COVID-19 vaccine, governments have had to find other ways to prevent “excess deaths.” Most have opted for lockdowns, which remove entire populations from the path of the virus and thus deprive it of hosts.

Two months into the European lockdown, however, the evidence suggests that these measures on their own have not had much medical effect. For example, Sweden, with its exceptionally light lockdown, has had fewer COVID-19 deaths relative to its population than tightly locked-down Italy and Spain. And while the United Kingdom and Germany have both been aggressively locked down, Germany has so far reported 96 deaths per million inhabitants, compared to 520 per million in the UK.

The crucial difference between Germany and the UK seems to lie in their respective medical responses. Germany started mass testing, contact-tracing, and isolating the infected and exposed within a few days of confirming its first COVID-19 cases, thus giving itself a head start in slowing the virus’s spread.

The UK, by contrast, is hobbled by incoherence at the center of government and by what former foreign secretary David Owen (himself a medical doctor) has called the “structural vandalism” inflicted on the National Health Service by years of cuts, fragmentation, and centralization. As a result, the country lacked the medical tools for a German-style response.

Science cannot determine what the correct COVID-19 response should have been for each country. A model may be considered validated if its predictions correspond to outcomes in real life. But in epidemiology, we can have confidence that this will happen only if a virus with known properties is allowed to run its natural course in a given population, or if there is a single intervention like a vaccine, the results of which can be accurately predicted.

Too many variables - including, say, medical capacity or cultural characteristics - scrambles the model, and it starts spewing out scenarios and predictions like a demented robot. Today, epidemiologists cannot tell us what the effects of the current COVID-19 policy mix will be. “We will know only in a year or so,” they say.1

The outcome will therefore depend on politics. And the politics of COVID-19 are clear enough: governments could not risk the natural spread of infection, and thought it too complicated or politically fraught to try to isolate only those most at risk of severe illness or death, namely the 15-20% of the population aged over 65.2

The default policy response has been to slow the spread of natural immunity until a vaccine can be developed. What “flattening the curve” really means is spacing out the number of expected deaths over a period long enough for medical facilities to cope and a vaccine to kick in.

But this strategy has a terrible weakness: governments cannot keep their populations locked down until a vaccine arrives. Apart from anything else, the economic cost would be unthinkable. So, they have to ease the lockdown gradually.

Doing this, however, lifts the cap on non-exposure gained from the lockdown. That is why no government has an explicit exit strategy: what political leaders call the “controlled easing” of lockdowns actually means controlled progress toward herd immunity.

Governments cannot openly avow this, because that would amount to admitting that herd immunity is the objective. And it is not yet even known whether and for how long infection confers immunity. Much better, then, to pursue this goal silently, under a cloud of obfuscation, and hope that a vaccine arrives before most of the population is infected.

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## OPINION

By Benjamin J. Cohen

# The Pandemic Is Shaking the Dollar’s Supremacy

*After three years of US President Donald Trump abusing America’s dominant position in the global monetary and financial system, his administration’s disastrous response to the COVID-19 pandemic will further erode faith in the dollar. And if the days of America’s “exorbitant privilege” come to an end, so will much else.*

SANTA BARBARA - With the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the United States seems to have developed a severe case of what psychologists call dissociative identity disorder: it is simultaneously projecting two distinct personalities.

On the one hand, the US Federal Reserve has responsibly assumed a leadership role in international finance, as it did during the 2008 global financial crisis. In March, the Fed quickly resurrected a network of bilateral currency-swap arrangements with some 14 foreign central banks, and introduced new repurchase (repo) facilities for an even broader array of monetary authorities, thus ensuring an ample supply of US dollars to meet global liquidity needs. America’s central bank has once again become the world’s lender of last resort.

On the other hand, America’s president, Donald Trump, has irresponsibly rejected the idea that international cooperation is needed to combat the impact of COVID-19 on public health and economic activity. He remains beholden to the principle of “America First,” which means that other governments must look elsewhere for any semblance of leadership. When given the opportunity, the Trump administration has made clear that it will act alone and solely in the “national interest,” as defined by the president’s own narrow transactional worldview.

This display of conflicting identities is hardly a sign of American fitness, nor does it augur well for the US dollar, long the world’s dominant currency. The longer America puts two faces forward, the likelier it will be to fall from its long-held position atop the international monetary and financial system. After all, how much longer will international investors and foreign governments trust the money of an increasingly unreliable partner?

To be sure, there is little risk of a mass exodus from the dollar at the moment. The Fed’s latest actions are a response to higher demand for dollars (rather than a safeguard against panic sales). This suggests that, if anything, the COVID-19 crisis has reaffirmed the greenback’s critical role as the ultimate safe haven.

Nonetheless, before the pandemic erupted, it was increasingly evident that investors and central banks were looking for alternatives to the “unloved dollar standard,” owing to the Trump administration’s unpredictable behavior and toxic brand of xenophobic nationalism. Around the world, there is palpable resentment over Trump’s indiscriminate use of financial sanctions to punish countries such as Iran, as well as any country that does business with it, including US allies. By “weaponizing” the dollar’s central role in international settlements, Trump has long been inviting others to return fire.

China, in particular, has been increasingly proactive in promoting the renminbi as an alternative to the dollar, not least by gradually opening its \$13 trillion domestic bond market (the world’s second-largest) to foreign institutional investors. Likewise, European countries have launched a new mechanism specifically designed to bypass US sanctions on Iranian oil exports.

With the greenback already slowly bleeding out, the pandemic inevitably will open the wound even wider. That, in turn, will have far-reaching implications for America’s influence in the world and, ultimately, for the US-led post-war international order.

The greenback’s contribution to US power is well understood. As the issuer of the world’s dominant currency, America has long enjoyed what Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, then France’s finance minister, famously called an “exorbitant privilege.” As long as foreigners are hungry for dollars, the US can spend whatever it needs to project power around the world, simply by speeding up the printing press. It also can wield influence more directly, such as by making greenbacks available to friends while withholding them from foes.

But now, Trump’s capricious behavior and pursuit of isolationism threaten to erode US geopolitical power significantly. And once US power is widely seen to be on the wane, the greenback will start to lose some of its appeal, setting in motion a vicious circle: a weaker dollar begets a weaker US, which begets a weaker dollar, and so on.

Indeed, the pound sterling followed a similar pattern in the twentieth century. Sterling’s loss of international standing was both a cause and an effect of Britain’s slow-motion decline from an imperial power to a middling island power off the coast of continental Europe. The dollar is not immune to the same kind of progressive degeneration.

The decline of the US and the dollar’s standing would remove one of the key pillars of the post-war liberal order. For many, that order has been synonymous with US geopolitical dominance. But in the absence of US leadership, competing political models are coming to the fore, promoting nationalism, populism, and various stripes of “illiberal democracy.” America’s split personality will affect more than just Americans. Barring a return to form in Washington, DC, the prognosis for the dollar-centric post-war order looks grim.

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## TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

**Consultancy: To Provide expert technical communication consultancy capacity building training for MAP 'Land for Life' Communication & Reporting Officer and two other staff from MAP Actors in Liberia and building/developing websites and domains for the MAP Initiative**

### Introduction

The project '*Land for Life – Making Policies Work for Food Security*' otherwise known as the MAP – Multi-Actor Partnership (MAP), launched in Liberia in 2017 aims to facilitate the formation of a Multi-Actor Partnership (MAP) platform around land governance and responsible agricultural investment. Such a PLATFORM will bring together Government actors, CSOs, Private Sector, Academia, and Community representatives. Communication is a very essential component of the MAP, it is one of the effective and efficient tools that keeps the initiative very much connected to its many actors.

However, over the years this is one area that has proved to be a fundamental challenge for the initiative because of the huge and demanding role involved with communication. In order to ensure the MAP initiative achieves its desired results, the Communication and Reporting Officer must have the required skillset of effective communication- which includes the relevant tools, technical capacity and reporting expertise.

It is in this regard that the MAP Liberia Secretariat formulates this Terms of Reference to guide the selected consultant in providing expert technical communication training to strengthen the capacity of the Communication and Reporting Officer (CRO). Such capacity building package will deepen the knowledge of the CRO in carry out his duties in the most professional and effective manner. Additionally, the training will involve two staff from two of the MAP actors/organizations.

### Objective

The objective of this consultancy is to provide a tailor-made capacity building training to the MAP Communication and Reporting Officer on the relevant tools and technical skills of effective and efficient communication.

### Expected Outputs of this Consultancy

- Train MAP Communication and Reporting Officer and partner staff on the steps involved in creating social media links, technical set up of blogs and email using organization as domain
- Guide the CRO and other participants on how to host/arrange online meetings/webinars (Business Skype, Zoom, BlueJeans, Microsoft Teams)
- Support the communication and reporting officer to understand the basics on video and audio editing, steps and procedures
- Coach participants on the use of YouTube, including steps involved in creating and uploading videos/documents. Linking the YouTube channel with MAP LfL website is a major concept for this aspect
- Provide skills in photography and writing (developing key messages, writing a story/a blog)
- Provide training on content management system WordPress to administer website (including uploading documents)
- Undertake study and present a basic understanding of the prevailing Liberian laws regarding the publication of photos, video material, and websites.

### Activities

- Develop detailed and easy-to-understand training content/materials and share with MAP Secretariat for inputs.
- Outline the key tools / instruments (software) which the consultancy will roll out in training the CRO.
- In concert with the MAP Secretariat, develop timeline/schedule for rolling out the training.
- Strengthen the capacity of the CRO, other staff and after the training, provide a two-week on-the-job mentoring and coach support.
- Produce training report and recommendations and share with the secretariat.

### Duration of the Consultancy

The consultancy will be carried out for three weeks (21 days) and in two phases beginning June 3, 2020 as follows:

**Phase 1:** Face-to-face capacity training for one week- June 3-9, 2020

**Phase 2:** Provide on-the-job mentoring and coaching support to the CRO after the training-June 10-23, 2020.

### Availability to Provide Training Amid Covid-19

The consultant must be available during this period of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide the training at a safe location selected in concert with the secretariat. The Secretariat and the consultant will come to terms with a feasible schedule for the face-to-face training. Such training will be provided safely in adherence of the guidelines underlined by the government on social distancing, wearing of face masks; perpetual washing of hands and avoiding large gathering to prevent COVID-19. The training will only involve four participants at most.

### Remuneration:

Indicate/state your daily consultancy fees per day.

### Qualifications:

- A good honors degree in social sciences, or mass media with minimum 4 years' professional experience in designing and implementing comprehensive communications plans/activities ideally for INGO/NGOs.
- Additional knowledge and experience in land governance and responsible agricultural investment an added advantage.
- Good photography and graphic design skills Excellent report writing skills
- Good knowledge of consultancy and training skills.

Both Male & Female candidates are encouraged to apply.

### Education:

- Bachelor's degree in communications or related fields: Journalism, Sociology, English, Humanity, etc.
- Master degree is an asset.

### Languages

- Excellent command of spoken and written English

### Computer skills:

- Good knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, Publisher, Excel)
- Experience in photography
- Good working knowledge of modern office equipment (printers, scanners, etc)
- Knowledge in using graphics design software

### Personal Skills:

- Proactive, creative and collaborative team member
- Intercultural competence
- Gender sensitive
- Willing to learn and share knowledge
- Professional and commitment to project demands

### Starting date

- June 3, 2020

### Terms and conditions

Terms and conditions are attractive and will take note of qualification and experience in determining remunerations and related personnel cost:

**Duration:** Twenty-One (21) Days

**How to Apply:** Interested candidates should apply by email to: The Administrator, Rights and Rice Foundation; email: [henri.singbeh@yahoo.com](mailto:henri.singbeh@yahoo.com), cc: [rightsrice@gmail.com](mailto:rightsrice@gmail.com); [ivangray86@gmail.com](mailto:ivangray86@gmail.com).

**Date of release of the Tender Announcement:** May 13, 2020

**Deadline for application:** May 30, 2020 @4:30PM.



## MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## MORE HEADLINE NEWS

# VP Taylor identifies with institutions in Bong

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong

Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor has presented about 700 bags of 25Kg rice and sanitary materials to several

Assistant Finance Minister James Dorbor Sao said the donation was in continuation of the VP's contributions to institutions that are playing key roles in the fight against Covid-19.

Starfish Foundation.

"In these kinds of global crises, it is the responsibility of every good leader to care for his/her people and that is exactly what Madam Taylor is doing in Liberia," he says.

"All we can tell our people is that let them keep washing their hands and follow the necessary preventive measures prescribed by the Ministry of Health to prevent the deadly virus," Mr. Sao adds.

The NPP Bong County chairman then reaffirmed the vice president's unwavering support to Liberians at home and abroad during the Covid-19 crisis.

"The vice president asked me to assure you that this will not be the end, but she will keep lending helping hands to the underprivileged as we all join hands to fight this human killer disease," he concludes.

In a brief remark following the presentation, Press Union of Liberia's Bong County Coordinator, Samuel Kplaiwru thanked Vice President Taylor for the gesture.

Mr. Kplaiwru assured

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 11



institutions in Bong and Margibi Counties.

Presenting the items over the weekend on behalf of VP Taylor in Gbarnga, National Patriotic Party (NPP) Bong County Chairman and

Mr. Sao told newsmen that the distribution of the rice and sanitary materials which started in Montserrado weeks ago also affected media and health institutions as well as beneficiaries of the Jewel

# Peter-ta residents receive donations

By Joseph Titus Yekeryan in Bong

We Care Foundation, a non-governmental organization based in the United States of America has donated food and nonfood items to residents of Peter-ta and other surrounding towns and villages in Bong County.

We Care Foundation is working towards reducing the high illiteracy rate of Liberia by strengthening the country's educational sector through the provision of quality reading materials and creative training and teaching skills for instructors.

The donation according to the organization is part of efforts to lend helping hands to the Sanoyea citizens as they strive together in combating coronavirus in Liberia.

Items donated by the

materials to citizens of Peter-ta and its surrounding villages.

He also used the medium to call on the citizenry to abide by all the health protocols in order to battle the human killer disease.

Meanwhile, Mr. Flomo has appealed to officials to help fix the road leading to the town to enable residents to benefit from development.

"We are really appealing to our officials to help us fix this road, we have a very beautiful area as you can see and we are intending to keep bringing development here in collaboration with our partners, but most of those things will be implemented when the road is correct," he said.

Mr. Folomo continued that when the road is built, there



American - based foundation include 10 bags of 25Kg rice, nose masks, vegetable -oil, clora, soap and schooling materials, among others.

The materials were presented to a well-known citizen of Peter-ta, Deacon Harris Flomo for onward distribution.

Speaking to our Bong County correspondent recently in Peter- Ta, Deacon Flomo praised the charity organization for identifying with residents of his town during the global pandemic in Liberia.

Mr. Flomo promised to equally distribute the

will be a free movement of goods and services in that part of the area.

"We are tired suffering here in this town. We continue to cry out for help so we are again calling on all of those in the public or private sectors to immediately come to our aid," he concludes.

Our Bong County correspondent says Peter-ta falls under Electoral District number four represented in the Legislature by Robert Flomo Whombay while the town is counted under Sanoyea administratively.--Edited by Winston W. Parley

# LISGIS vows transparency in food distribution

By Lewis S. Teh

The Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services or LISGIS assures Liberians that the pending distribution of stimulus food package to residents will be carried out with complete transparency.

LISGIS deputy director general for information and coordination, Wilmot Smith says the task before the institution to conduct enumeration in preparation for the food distribution will be executed transparently.

Speaking to "Prime Morning Drive" Tuesday in Monrovia, he explained LISGIS enumeration teams will consider total number of family heads in each household, including total males and females per household, saying, "we will also be asking for the number of vulnerable people living in that particular house; all of those are intended to show transparency."

He continued that this will

be followed by age category. "We will be marking and taking the head of every family photo; when that is complete, our work is to compile all of those information, package them and send them to the rightful authority; they will decide what next to do."

LISGIS is charged with the

responsibility to formulate and implement national strategies, programs and policies for the development and management of a National Statistical and Geo-Information System and an integrated gender and

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## MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## MORE HEADLINE NEWS

## House passes recast national budget

## -fore COVID-19 response

The House of Representatives has ratified the Government of Liberia's COVID-19 Response Recast Budget, pending concurrence

budget. The House's Committee on Ways, Means, and Finance, and Public Accounts and Expenditure, in line with mandate of Plenary, conducted hearing on the Draft Recast National Budget for Fiscal Year 2019/2020, beginning with the Revenue

at US\$518,005,258.00, forecasting domestic revenue at US\$394,594,258.00 and external resources at US\$123,409,000.00, respectively.

During the hearing, the Committee maintained that salary or compensation remains untouched at 100% of appropriation; essential operational budget is not to be impacted, while Grants and Subsidies are risked or face uncertainty.

Health and Security are considered in the recasting process with emphasis on Covid-19 responses.

At the same time the House has agreed that all fiscal measures provided for in the FY-2019/2020 National Budget remains enforced, except otherwise specifically provided for in the Joint Resolution endorsing the State of Emergency and the stimulus package approved by the 54th Legislature.

Of the US\$42.02 million risked, US\$32.77 million is proposed for re-appropriation for Covid-19 response, while US\$2 million is for Grant and US \$8 million goes towards domestic debt, respectively.

The recast national budget goes into operation effective June, 2020. **-Editing by Jonathan Browne**



by the Senate.

President George M. Weah wrote House Speaker Bhofal Chambers last Friday, detailing the executive's proposal in the draft recast budget and reapportioning more than US\$32 Million in the current 2019-2020 national

Envelope.

The Committee divulges that upon review of documents and testimonies from the Liberia Revenue Authority and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, respectively, the recast revenue envelope is projected

## Cummings heads CPP

The political leader of the Alternative National Congress (ANC) Alexander B. Cummings has been selected to head the four collaborating opposition parties as chairman.

The four Collaborating Political Parties (CPP) are ANC, All Liberians Party (ALP), the former ruling Unity Party (UP) and Liberty Party (LP) of the late Cllr. Charles W. Brumskine.

Mr. Cummings' selection follows the signing of a framework agreement making the institution a legally recognize political party. He takes over from Businessman turned politician Benoni Urey of the ALP who have chaired the union of the four parties for nearly two years.

The signing also comes ahead of the Special Senatorial Election, which is now due for December 15, due to the coronavirus pandemic. It was initially scheduled for October this year.

In a statement issued last weekend, the CPP reflected that about three weeks ago, it announced the finalization of the framework document that officially bounds the four parties together and defines the roles and obligations of each constituent party.

The statement added that the finalization of the document is an immense progress towards building a strong collaboration among the four parties as all contending issues which delayed the signing of the document have been amicably resolved.

The joint statement points out that a formal ceremony for the endorsement of the document has yet to be executed by the four political parties due to the ongoing coronavirus crisis in the country.

However, the CPP says given the exigency of preparing for the 2020 Special Senatorial Elections, the signing ceremony has been scheduled for Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 11 A.M.

In adherence to the emergency health protocols to

fight COVID-19, the CPP says the ceremony will be virtually held among the four political leaders, chairpersons and other executives of the constituent parties to the CPP.

Prior to the signing ceremony, the CPP notes that members of the press will be notified of the link to follow the ceremony live. It says supporters and sympathizers of the CPP are encouraged to follow-up with their respective parties for other relevant information.

On 21 February, leaders of the opposition political parties gathered in Monrovia to affix their signatures to a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) collaboration document.

They commit to forging, branding and re-branding and supporting a common national interest which may collaborate, in keeping in focus the welfare of the people, and not allowing their political differences and personal ambitions to derail the cooperation among opposition political parties here.

They commit also to openly and consistently engage and collaborate on various issues of concerns to the people whom they represent, and establish common national positions.

Further, the CPP commits to promote a common agenda (where necessary) to aid, support and encourage the ongoing efforts of individual political parties aimed at ensuring responsive governance and effective collaboration for the good of the country. Additionally, the CPP commits to demonstrate, above all that political collaborations is not only possible, but also necessary and crucial to the development of democracy, and to encourage the participation of all political parties.

Finally, the CPP agrees to encourage the respective national chairpersons and leaderships of the various political parties to continue with and intensify efforts leading to the commemoration of this arrangement.

## Welthungerhilfe targets 5 counties in southeast Liberia

The German NGO, Welthungerhilfe (WHH) discloses plan to embark on COVID-19 intervention in Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, River Gee, Sinoe and Maryland counties, respectively, southeast Liberia to support the Government of Liberia's efforts to curb the spread of the virus.

According to a press release, River Gee, Grand Gedeh and Maryland share borders with neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, which has reported 1,912 confirmed COVID-19 cases as of May 13th.

It notes that increase in the number of cases across the border poses a serious threat to inhabitants of the southeast.

Welthungerhilfe through the WASH Pillar of the National Incident Management System (IMS) is currently carrying out pilot distribution of handwashing kits, including 25 liter buckets, chlorox, powder

soap and mixture measurement guide to several households in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, ahead of a large distribution exercise of over 6,000 handwashing kits targeting all 58 communities.

Apart from the distribution of handwashing kits in Grand Gedeh County, the institution is

also renovating the roof of the Rally Town Hospital in Grand Kru County and restoring piped water system at the isolation unit in Fishtown, River Gee County.

Additional works at the Fishtown hospital include

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# Français

## L'ex Présidente Libérienne propose une évaluation des mesures contre le Covid-19

L'ancienne présidente Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf a proposé une évaluation de l'impact des mesures prises dans le cadre de la lutte contre le coronavirus afin que le gouvernement prenne une décision éclairée quant à savoir s'il faut ou non poursuivre ces mesures.

"Je pense qu'une évaluation doit être faite maintenant ... et sur la base des circonstances actuelles, y compris le niveau de transmission du virus, je pense que nous pouvons voir

si des mesures supplémentaires doivent être prises", a déclaré l'ancienne présidente Sirleaf à France 24 lors d'une interview le vendredi 15 mai.

Elle estime que chaque pays doit juger sur la base de ses propres problèmes de confiance, avertissant qu'à un moment donné, il faut commencer à s'assurer que la restriction qui est imposée à la population ne rencontre pas de résistance. Il faut qu'il y ait donc de très bonnes raisons pour mettre en place des mesures sévères qui

s'imposent.

Elle estime que si le gouvernement ne procède pas à une évaluation de l'impact du confinement et des difficultés auxquelles les citoyens ont dû être confrontés, il pourrait perdre la confiance du peuple dont il a si besoin pour réussir son combat.

« ... Parce que nous savons aussi que nous imposons des difficultés à la population - les commerçants qui ne vendent plus, les agriculteurs qui ne se rendent plus au travail, les petites entreprises qui sont toutes affectées... c'est une tolérance qui ne peut pas être poussée à sa limite ultime », a averti Mme Sirleaf.

Elle s'est dite convaincue cependant que les verrouillages et le confinement sont des mesures nécessaires lorsqu'une pandémie frappe, car cela est nécessaire, d'autant plus que c'est la seule façon de s'assurer que les gens se conforment aux mesures sanitaires. Mais encore faudra-t-il que le gouvernement gagne la confiance du peuple comme quoi ce qu'il fait est dans leur meilleur intérêt.

L'ancienne présidente a en

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



## COVID-19 : GoldenVeroleum (Liberia) réduit ses effectifs

Golden Veroleum (Liberia) (GVL) a annoncé une réduction de ses effectifs d'environ 440 employés dans ses zones de concession dans les comtés de Sinoe et Grand Kru.

La compagnie cite le ralentissement de l'économie mondiale, y compris l'impact de la pandémie du COVID-19 à laquelle est confronté le monde, la médiocrité des infrastructures entraînant des dépenses de logistique élevées pour l'entreprise, des coûts élevés d'entretien des véhicules et des routes et la chute du prix de l'huile de palme. La société a fait état de pertes insoutenables. La réduction des effectifs a lieu au cours de la deuxième semaine du mois de mai cette année.

Le nombre de salariés licenciés représente environ 10% des effectifs de l'entreprise. La société a fait savoir que «la chute

continue du prix de l'huile de palme brute, les frais généraux élevés associés à l'accord de concession de la société avec le gouvernement du Libéria, la faible production en raison de l'incapacité de la société due à l'arrêt du travail et le climat des affaires incertain sont la

principale raison des pertes financières persistantes. Ces licenciements constituent la troisième réduction de ce type depuis 2013. »

Selon M. Elvis G. Morris, vice-président pour les parties prenantes et le

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Representative Cole

## UMOA : 1556 milliards de FCFA d'encours de crédits alloués par les SFD au 4ème trimestre 2019

L'encours des crédits des systèmes financiers décentralisés (SFD) de l'Union monétaire ouest africaine (UMOA) s'est établi à 1.555,6 milliards de FCFA (2,333 milliards d'euros) au quatrième trimestre 2019, selon les données de la Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (BCEAO).

Cet encours s'est accru de 10% par rapport à son niveau à fin décembre 2018. Selon l'Institut d'émission, cette hausse est observée par ordre décroissant au Mali (+26,7%), au Togo (18,3%), en Côte d'Ivoire (+16,9%), au Sénégal (+5,0%), au Burkina (+4,6%) et au Niger (1,4%). Une diminution de 29,1% a été notée en Guinée-Bissau et 2,6% au Bénin.

« Une part de 50,0% de l'encours des crédits des institutions de microfinance est constituée de concours à court terme », souligne la BCEAO. Les prêts à moyen et long termes représentent respectivement 31,3% et 18,6%

(+16,5%), au Niger (+14,8%) et au Bénin (+5,1%). En revanche, un repli de 6,2% a été relevé en Guinée-Bissau. Selon la BCEAO, les dépôts à vue demeurent prépondérants avec une part de 59,2%. Quant aux dépôts à terme et les autres dépôts, ils constituent respectivement 19,9% et 20,9%.

Durant la période sous revue, l'épargne mobilisée par les SFD a été constituée à hauteur de 50,5% par les hommes, 26,5% par les femmes et 23,0% par les groupements. Le montant moyen de l'épargne par client s'est établi à 101.266 FCFA au quatrième trimestre 2019 contre 89.442 FCFA au titre du quatrième trimestre de l'année 2018, soit une augmentation de 11.824 FCFA. Pour l'ensemble des SFD de l'UMOA, souligne la BCEAO, l'épargne recueillie représente 5,4% de la totalité des dépôts détenus par les établissements de crédit de la zone.

Au quatrième trimestre 2019, le nombre de SFD



sur la période sous revue.

La clientèle masculine des SFD a bénéficié de 57,6% des crédits, là où la clientèle féminine et les groupements se retrouvent respectivement avec 30,3% et 15,6% des financements. L'encours moyen des prêts par bénéficiaire a augmenté de 5,0%, pour s'établir à 106.893 FCFA à fin décembre 2019 contre 101.772 FCFA à fin décembre 2018. Les données de la BCEAO renseignent que pour l'ensemble du secteur, l'encours des crédits a représenté 6,8% des créances consenties par les établissements de crédit de l'UMOA.

Concernant le montant des dépôts collectés par les SFD, il s'est établi à 1.473,7 milliards de FCFA contre 1.243,2 milliards de FCFA 2018, soit une progression de 18,5%. Cette progression est enregistrée par ordre d'importance au Mali (+31,0%), au Burkina (+22,9%), en Côte d'Ivoire (+19,8%), au Togo (+18,4%), au Sénégal

répertorié dans l'UMOA s'est établi à 508 unités. Ces structures ont offert leurs services financiers à 14.554.167 personnes sur cette période sous revue, à travers 4.905 points de service répartis dans les États membres de l'UMOA.

Que dire des indicateurs d'intermédiation des SFD ? Sur ce point, la BCEAO relève « une évolution relativement favorable à l'inclusion financière, avec un taux brut de dégradation du portefeuille qui s'est inscrit en baisse, ressortant à 6,1% contre 7,1% à fin décembre 2018, pour une norme généralement admise de 3% dans le secteur ».

Quant aux SFD en difficulté, 16 institutions de microfinance étaient sous administration provisoire à fin décembre 2019, dont 7 au Bénin, 2 au Burkina, au Niger, et au Togo, une en Côte d'Ivoire, au Mali et au Sénégal.



# Français

## L'ex Présidente Libérienne propose une

autre déclaré : « Nous avons tous été soumis à ces fermetures », affirmant que les fermetures étaient obligatoires pour toutes les activités - églises, mosquées, centres de divertissement, théâtre, bars, écoles et magasins.

Mme Sirleaf suggère qu'au lendemain de la crise sanitaire, il faut aussi améliorer la communication et le financement pour s'assurer que tout ce qui est fait contribue à gagner la confiance du public.

Elle estime cependant que les pays doivent adopter ces mesures dans un premier temps, mais doivent être guidés par les circonstances et être en mesure de communiquer des informations complètes, d'obtenir des informations fiables sur l'état de la transmission du virus et être en mesure d'agir en conséquence.

Le deuxième mandat de Mme Sirleaf a été confronté à l'épidémie d'Ebola qui a perturbé l'économie du pays et mis en évidence la faiblesse du secteur de la santé de son pays.

L'ancienne présidente s'est dite convaincue que le gouvernement a agi conformément aux données - les informations qu'il a reçues des autorités sanitaires quant à l'étendue de la transmission.

Elle a en outre insisté sur la nécessité de s'inspirer de l'expérience d'Ebola, de chercher à savoir comment le Liberia s'en était sorti, tout en se souvenant de la destruction et des morts que la maladie a provoquées. C'est bien une des raisons pour lesquelles il avait fallu qu'ils imposassent ces mesures.

En ce qui concerne l'ouverture des églises, Mme Sirleaf a attiré l'attention du gouvernement sur la nécessité de communiquer avec le public avant de prendre cette décision.

Elle a également dit espérer que le gouvernement donnera au public des informations honnêtes et fiables sur l'état de la pandémie, afin qu'il puisse avoir la confiance de celui-ci tout en sachant que tout ce qui était fait était dans l'intérêt de la survie de la nation et du peuple face à la pandémie mortelle.

Selon Mme Sirleaf, le plus grand défi reste à venir. Elle

a indiqué qu'une fois la pandémie terminée, l'effet sur l'économie va être impressionnant.

« Mais le plus grand défi reste à venir. Tout comme le cas d'Ebola, une fois la pandémie terminée, l'effet sur l'économie va être impressionnant », a déclaré Mme Sirleaf.

Elle a indiqué que le Libéria ne s'est pas encore complètement remis de la destruction de l'économie et donc les Libériens ne peuvent qu'espérer que le soutien qui vient maintenant sous forme de geste humanitaire puisse être en mesure d'arrêter le virus.

Elle a exprimé sa conviction que le nombre de cas de coronavirus sur le continent africain, qui le plus faible par rapport au reste du monde, continuera à être relativement faible. « Nous essayons de nous demander pourquoi et Je crois que certaines des raisons seront liées à notre climat, peut-être à nos gènes », a-t-elle dit.

Mme Sirleaf a également indiqué qu'à la suite de l'expérience d'Ebola, de nombreux pays africains ont agi très rapidement pour mettre en place des mesures de prévention, dont le confinement, la fermeture de tous les lieux de rencontre pour contenir la transmission. « Je sais qu'il y a des prédictions selon lesquelles il pourrait y avoir une nouvelle vague qui pourrait augmenter la transmission en Afrique.

Mais j'aime à croire que ce ne sera pas le cas », a-t-elle dit.

Mme Sirleaf a fait observer que la réaction de la communauté internationale au Covid-19 s'est beaucoup améliorée "par rapport à ce à quoi nous avons dû faire face lorsque Ebola a frappé". "Cette fois, ce ne sont pas seulement trois ou quatre pays africains qui sont touchés, c'est le monde.

L'attention du monde est donc beaucoup plus diligente, opportune et bien plus réactive », a-t-elle dit.

Dans le cas du Libéria, elle estime que les partenaires ont répondu en temps opportun, soulignant qu'elle comprend qu'ils fournissent le soutien technique, pas seulement le soutien financier. Dans un développement connexe, elle a appelé à un soutien dans la lutte contre le paludisme, affirmant qu'il tue plus que toute autre maladie sur le continent africain.

## COMMENTAIRE

Par Shannon Kowalski

## La santé sexuelle et reproductive pendant la pandémie

NEW YORK - La crise de la COVID-19 a bouleversé presque tous les aspects de la vie, mis à part le sexe. En effet, même en temps de pandémie, des rapports intimes ont lieu?; tant consentants que non consentants. Avec une mobilité réduite ainsi qu'un accès limité aux dispensaires et aux hôpitaux, il est plus important que jamais de garantir des soins de santé reproductive de qualité dans des délais raisonnables.

Le virus a mis en lumière les inégalités flagrantes de la médecine?; et non pas uniquement dans les soins d'urgence. Effectivement, avant même la COVID-19, les adolescentes, les migrants, les minorités, les personnes handicapées ainsi que les personnes LGBTQI+ faisaient face à la discrimination dans les salles d'attente des médecins. La crise actuelle donne l'occasion aux décideurs politiques d'appuyer des initiatives donnant aux adolescentes et aux femmes les moyens de combler leurs besoins immédiats ainsi que celles visant à renforcer à long terme l'accès aux services essentiels.

La grande priorité est de mettre à leur disposition des contraceptifs oraux sans ordonnance, ce qui aura pour effet de renforcer la sécurité, l'accessibilité et l'usage. Dans la plupart des pays, une prescription est requise pour pouvoir se procurer des contraceptifs?; empêchant ainsi les femmes d'être pleinement maîtresses de leurs corps. Les prescriptions obligatoires vont à l'encontre de soins aux patientes qui ne porteraient pas atteinte ou n'enfreindraient pas leur vie privée. Ceci est particulièrement vrai pour les adolescentes, les personnes de genre non conforme, les victimes de violence domestique et autres personnes craignant la discrimination ou le manque de respect dans les établissements de santé.

Les avantages de rendre plus communément accessibles les contraceptifs dépassent largement les risques négligeables. Il est démontré que les femmes et les personnes de genre non conforme sont aptes à se protéger des contre-indications en utilisant simplement des listes de vérification accompagnant le traitement. Autoriser les personnes à se procurer un an d'approvisionnement, afin qu'elles puissent s'injecter elles-mêmes des contraceptifs comme Depo-Provera serait également bénéfique pour celles en situation de violences ou celles qui peinent à avoir accès aux soins de santé. De plus, supprimer l'autorisation obligatoire d'une tierce partie ainsi qu'atténuer les coûts des contraceptifs aiderait.

En second lieu, il est nécessaire de rendre l'avortement plus accessible. Les politiques régressives ainsi que le récent confinement menacent l'accès à l'avortement en milieu hospitalier, bien que cette procédure médicale demeure un service de santé essentiel. Les décideurs politiques peuvent et doivent prendre de simples mesures dans le but d'éliminer les obstacles non nécessaires aux pilules abortives, qui réduiraient les consultations en dispensaire médical et accroîtraient la liberté des femmes.

Les avortements médicaux sont sécuritaires et de qualité. Cependant, des millions de femmes interrompent elles-mêmes leur grossesse chaque année. Elles utilisent soit une combinaison de mifépristone et de misoprostol, soit ce dernier uniquement. Les rendez-vous en cabinet ne sont donc pas nécessaires. Les femmes cherchant à se faire avorter sont aptes à déterminer si elles répondent aux critères d'admissibilité, à suivre les indications quant aux dosages prescrits et à vérifier si l'avortement a bien eu lieu. Elles n'ont besoin que d'informations précises, du médicament ainsi que des conseils médicaux de soutien, le cas échéant.

La meilleure façon d'élargir l'accès à l'avortement est de permettre la vente de mifépristone et de misoprostol sans ordonnance. Les décideurs politiques devraient à tout le moins faciliter leur obtention grâce à la télémedecine. Ces pratiques restent sécuritaires

et viables tant que celles qui les utilisent soient informées des résultats attendus et qu'elles puissent recevoir des soins post-avortement sans craindre de se faire juger, stigmatiser ou d'être poursuivies en justice. En effet, celles qui gèrent elles-mêmes leur avortement ne devraient pas être persécutées ou sanctionnées.

En cette période de pandémie du coronavirus, l'accès à des soins maternels de qualité est également primordial. Les femmes enceintes font face aux mêmes angoisses que les autres au cours d'une pandémie. Elles doivent éventuellement composer avec la précarité de l'emploi, les pertes de revenus, l'étendue réduite des soins leur étant offerts ainsi qu'avec les menaces pour leur santé. Et puis, elles peuvent être aux prises avec des motifs de préoccupation uniques quant à la santé du fœtus et du nouveau-né.

Dans bien des pays, les réseaux de la santé surchargés ne peuvent assurer aux femmes enceintes le niveau de soins de maternité auquel elles s'attendaient – et recevaient – avant la pandémie. Afin de remédier à cette lacune, les professionnels de la santé devraient accompagner les femmes enceintes pour leur donner une plus grande autonomie quant à leur santé. Ceci en leur offrant des renseignements et des outils adaptés comme la télémedecine, les formations en ligne, les visites à domicile par des sages-femmes ou autres prestataires, un soutien psychosocial ainsi qu'un plus vaste dépistage médical.

Ces mesures feront en sorte que les femmes pourront mieux évaluer leur état de santé, déceler des symptômes classiques et les signes de complications et mieux déterminer quand recourir à des soins médicaux. Pour obtenir ces soins, elles doivent être en mesure de se déplacer dans les établissements de santé, même là où le confinement est imposé. Il faut donc leur procurer le transport d'urgence ainsi que des équipements de protection individuelle, tant pour elles que pour les personnes qui les accompagnent.

Qui plus est, les décideurs politiques doivent aussi encourager les initiatives qui démedicalisent les naissances. En effet, les accouchements accompagnés à domicile pour les grossesses à faible risque, la présence assurée de sages-femmes, les maisons de naissance reliées à des services de troisième ligne et les visites à domicile pour des soins prénataux font partie des moyens d'effectuer des accouchements dans des conditions moins dangereuses pour les mères, mais aussi pour les prestataires de soins. Plusieurs pays ont préconisé l'institutionnalisation des soins bien que la démedicalisation des accouchements soit avantageuse dans de meilleures circonstances et pas seulement en temps de crise.

Il faut se garder de promulguer des mesures impulsives. Ce serait revenir en arrière que de limiter ou d'interdire la présence des conjoint-es ou doulas pendant l'accouchement. Ce serait également une pratique régressive de séparer les nourrissons des mères qui ont ou auraient contracté la COVID-19 ou d'entraver les premiers contacts peau à peau, notamment pour l'allaitement. L'Organisation mondiale de la santé a d'ailleurs exhorté les professionnels de la santé à ne pas adhérer à de telles pratiques lorsqu'ils prodiguent des soins aux femmes enceintes, aux parents et aux nourrissons. Cet élément est crucial afin de prévenir une hausse des violences obstétricales et des conséquences encore plus néfastes pour les femmes et les nouveau-nés.

Les instances des pays qui ne mettent pas fin à ces restrictions risquent de fragiliser leur réseau de santé, qui ne pourra plus combler les besoins de santé universels. À long terme, investir dans l'autonomisation des patientes renforcera les réseaux de santé et la qualité des soins. Bref, grâce aux campagnes de sensibilisation et aux programmes de soutien, les femmes peuvent combler elles-mêmes leurs besoins en santé sexuelle et reproductive. Néanmoins, il faut absolument que les décideurs politiques leur donnent les moyens et les outils pour y parvenir.



## ARTICLE

## ARTICLE

# Coronavirus Pandemic Worries BRICS

By Kester Kenn Klomegah\*

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has held an extraordinary meeting of BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) via videoconference as part of important events planned this year after Russia took over the chair-ship from Brazil.

The BRICS Foreign Affairs Ministers who took part in the meeting included Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar represented India; Ernesto Araújo Foreign Affairs Minister of Brazil; Wang Yi, State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China and Ms. Grace Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa.

The ministers reviewed the impact of the current global crisis provoked by the outbreak of COVID-19 on the system of international relations and agreed that there is no alternative to using both bilateral and multilateral forms of cooperation, unite behind efforts without any hidden agenda, in finding a collective response to the challenges and threats posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

The meeting exchanged in-depth views on possible joint measures on how to contain COVID-19 and deal with the financial, trade, economic and social consequences of the pandemic. They discussed important issues related to developing a five-way cooperation, including the calendar of events for Russia's BRICS Chairmanship in 2020.

"We believe that it should become a very good reinforcement for our countries' economies when they're coming out of the crisis stage and resume economic operations," Lavrov noted during the meeting.

The international community should unite to ensure the most positive outcome of efforts in tackling the crisis, but acknowledged that such efforts are being undermined by sanctions imposed on some countries, and suggested that the sanctions should be lifted or removed.

In the opening speech, Lavrov emphasized the priority in dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak, protect people's lives and health as well as the global economy. "The need to uphold multilateral principles and rely on international law in formulating solutions to current cross-border threats is an urgent challenge. We are convinced that it is very important to strengthen the solidarity of BRICS countries," he said.

The BRICS heads of state adopted a decision a couple of years ago to expand cooperation in the fight against infections and the joint production and use of vaccines, according to Lavrov, and suggested "BRICS has to accelerate the implementation of this initiative."

Cooperation on countering infectious diseases has long been a priority for BRICS. For instance, the final declaration of the 2015 BRICS summit in Ufa, Russia, contains instructions by the leaders to jointly work on managing the risk of disease outbreaks, including the current new coronavirus.

"We are concerned about growing and diversifying global threats posed by communicable and non-

communicable diseases. They have a negative impact on economic and social development, especially in developing and in the least developed countries," the 2015 BRICS declaration adopted in Ufa, Russia. It was the Seventh BRICS Summit, held under the theme "BRICS Partnership - a Powerful Factor of Global Development" under the chair-ship of Russia.

That declaration further stated: "In this context, we commend the efforts made by the BRICS countries to contribute to enhanced international cooperation to support the efforts of countries to achieve their health goals, including the implementation of universal and equitable access to health services, and ensure affordable, good-quality service delivery while taking into account different national circumstances, policies, priorities and capabilities."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi echoed Sergey Lavrov's call for unity and solidarity. In an official statement released by the ministry, Wang said that the BRICS should "stand firm by multilateralism, by the UN-centered international system" and "champion the approach of consultation and cooperation."

"Through joint efforts, we will safeguard the legitimate rights and interests and space for development not just for ourselves but also for all other emerging market and developing countries," Wang Yi said.



With its rapid spread in many parts of the world, COVID-19 has put lives and health of people around the world under grave threat, seriously disrupted the global economy, and posed severe challenges to BRICS, the minister said, while acknowledging further that "as representatives of major emerging countries with global influence, BRICS countries must act in the interest of the well-being of humankind, and stand by justice and equity."

Wang Yi, however, proposed the following:

First, uphold multilateralism and improve global governance. The sudden onslaught of COVID-19 reminds again that BRICS interests are, closely entwined and the future. A challenge that respects no border and makes no distinction of ethnicity has only made global governance more important, not less, building a community with a shared future for mankind.

China's strategic assessment is that COVID-19 will not change the theme of the times which remains peace and development; it will not cut short the historical trend toward multi-polarity and globalization, and still less will it deter humankind from its firm pursuit of civilization and progress.

In a time of crisis, BRICS must stand firm by

multilateralism, by the UN-centered international system, and by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. BRICS needs to sustain coordination in the UN, the G20 and other multilateral frameworks to keep up secure and smooth functioning of global industrial and supply chains, and defend the multilateral trading regime with the WTO as the cornerstone.

BRICS should continue to work for making development the centerpiece of the global macro policy agenda, and expedite the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Second, BRICS should come together in the spirit of partnership to combat COVID-19. Under the personal leadership and direction of President Xi Jinping, the Chinese government and people have fought a people's war against COVID-19. China has acted according to the principle of shoring up confidence, strengthening unity, ensuring science-based control and taking targeted measures.

As the virus hits more countries around the world, China is doing everything it can to help those in need. In spite of substantial demand at home and growing pressures to meet foreign orders, China has provided a large amount of medical supplies to fellow BRICS countries, and facilitated the purchase of such supplies through commercial channels.

Going forward, China is ready to step up the sharing of information and experience with BRICS countries and conduct joint research and development of drugs and vaccines, respecting each other's sovereignty and national conditions.

Third, BRICS should uphold unity and coordination to forge a powerful synergy. President Xi Jinping stated that the virus is a common enemy of humanity and can be defeated. Living in a global village, no one could stay safe when others' houses catch fire.

Likewise, in fighting COVID-19, victory can only be secured when

the virus is brought under control in all countries. China has been a strong force behind international anti-epidemic cooperation because its own experience has made it fully empathetic with other peoples suffering from similar difficulties.

As countries battle the disease in light of their own situations, China called for mutual understanding and respect for these efforts, and sharing and learning from each other's experiences. The global community should never be distracted in its collaborative response by finger-pointing or the blame game, allow new tensions and divisions to be created as a result of politicization or stigmatization.

In view of the weaknesses and inadequacies exposed during this crisis, BRICS needs to enhance global public health governance, make it a higher priority on the international agenda, and work together to build a community of health for all.

Fourth, China will work with all BRICS members to support Russia's Chairmanship. China also supports Russia's initiative to formulate a Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025.

On his part, Indian Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar noted

**TO BE CONT'D**



# Sirleaf, others enjoy freedom

By Winston W. Parley

The Criminal Court in Monrovia has quashed and dismissed a writ of ne exeat publica used by prosecutors to prevent former President Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf's son Charles E. Sirleaf and other Central Bank officials from leaving Liberia in granting government's request to drop charges against four of the officials.

In the ruling Tuesday, 19 May, Judge Yamie Quiqui Gbeisay also ordered that the criminal appearance bonds filed by defendants Sirleaf, Dorbor M. Hagba, Joseph Dennis and Richard Walker be returned to them with immediate effect.

The Court in August last year ordered the officials and their former boss, Central of Liberia (CBL) former Executive Governor

Joseph Dennis was CBL's Deputy Director for Internal Audit.

However, prosecutors last week nolle prosequi (drop charges against) Mr. Sirleaf "with prejudice," and nolle prosequi Hagba, Walker and Dennis "without prejudice," but what happened to \$16 billion local currency which prompted the defendants' indictment still remains a mystery.

In dismissing the indictment, Judge Gbeisay says the prosecution which charged and indicted the defendants, having elected to nolle prosequi them, the court is left with no other alternative but to grant the request of the State.

"While this Court [realizes] that this case is public interest, the alleged millions of dollars [involved] is for the Liberian People, and as such they are eager to see its

Court "C." The outcome from the hearing before the Chambers Justice did not please Weeks as Judge Dixon's recusal was not overturned.

Mr. Weeks subsequently broke away from the rest of the defendants who accepted the Justice's decision and fled to the full bench of the Supreme Court while Sirleaf, Hagba, Walker and Dennis returned to the lower court to continue with their trial under the next assigned judge.

Having seen his compatriots walked as free men, the Supreme Court notes that Mr. Weeks, through his lawyer, filed a joint stipulation of withdrawal and abatement in which he agreed to withdraw the appeal announced to the court and accepts Justice Kaba's ruling in the certiorari proceedings.



Mr. Charles Sirleaf



Ex-Governor Milton Weeks

Milton Weeks to file LD\$1,058,000,000 bonds each, which when combined totaled LD\$5,290,000,000 after a new indictment for money laundering had been added to the previous charges.

All five were indicted on 4 March 2019 for economic sabotage, criminal conspiracy, criminal solicitation and money laundering for their alleged roles in Liberia's alleged LD\$16bn scandal that rocked the country throughout 2018 and sparked local and international investigation following protests here.

The billions Liberian dollars scandal emerged at the CBL when Mr. Weeks was CBL's Executive Governor; Mr. Sirleaf, CBL's Deputy Governor for Operations; Dorbor M. Hagba, Director of Finance Department and

outcome, this court cannot produce evidence for the State even if it were glaring," Judge Gbeisay rules.

In a related development, Liberia's Supreme Court has sent down a mandate to the Criminal Court "C," ordering the lower court to resume jurisdiction over defendant Milton Weeks' case and proceed in keeping with law.

The Supreme Court's mandate follows Mr. Weeks' withdrawal of his appeal filed before the full bench of the Supreme Court, indicating that he now accepts a ruling made by Associate Justice Yussif D. Kaba from the hearing of a petition filed by all five defendants for a writ of certiorari.

The five defendants had gone to Chambers Justice Kaba following the recusal from the case by Judge A. Blamo Dixon then presiding over Criminal

# VP Taylor identifies

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Madam Taylor that the materials received will be evenly distributed among radio stations in the county.

He at the same time used the medium to crave the

support of Madam Taylor for struggling media institutions for broadcast equipment in order to keep them running.--

Edited by Winston W. Parley

# LISGIS vows transparency

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environment sensitive National Statistical and Spatial Database in Liberia.

Mr. Smith also disclosed the team will look at structures, whether they are temporary or modern structures, zinc or mud hut, noting that some people live in containers, while others live in mud houses.

The Steering Committee of the COVID-19 Household Food Support Programme (COHFSP) early this week announced there would be delay in the distribution exercise for few weeks due to several issues beyond its control.

The Committee had earlier set 23 May 2020 as the commencement date for the distribution.

However, Committee Chairman Professor Wilson Tarpeh, remains optimistic the targeted food distribution to COVID-affected households would begin as soon as budgetary and financial procedures are completed.

Professor Tarpeh further clarified in a press release that the food assistance programme won't be rolled out by 23 May as initially planned, primarily because the budget confirmation process by the Liberia Legislature requires careful, consultative, and legal ramifications that cannot be done within a day or two.

President George Manneh Weah presented a US\$25 million stimulus package to the 54th Legislature after he declared a State of Emergency and 14 days lockdown in initially four affected counties: Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba and Grand Kru.

The Legislature, thru a Joint Resolution, approved and extended the State of Emergency to 60 days, but instructed that the food distribution should cover all 15 counties, a decision that has rendered the government financially stranded. -Editing by Jonathan Browne

# Welthungerhilfe targets

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plans to drill a borehole and repair the isolation unit, which was constructed by Welthungerhilfe during the Ebola outbreak in 2014.

At the same time Welthungerhilfe clarifies that the distribution of handwashing kits in Grand Gedeh County and the renovation activities at the Rally Town Hospital in Grand Kru County are supported with funding from the German government and the European Union, saying that it is not the initiative of an individual as is being speculated in social media and other media platforms.

"Welthungerhilfe's initiatives are to support the Government of Liberia's COVID-19 response during this difficult time through different pillars at the national IMS. Welthungerhilfe donated three used vehicles (2 Renault saloon cars and a hard-top 4x4 Toyota Landcruiser) to scale up surveillance and contact tracing."

The release further

discloses in coming days, Welthungerhilfe will support the airing of approved jingles in all five counties in the southeast through the Risk Communications Pillar of the national IMS.

Since the declaration of state of emergency by the Government of Liberia, Welthungerhilfe, formally German Agro Action (GAA) has distributed over 6,000 handwashing kits to communities in Montserrado and Margibi counties.

Besides, it has renovated a 52-room dormitory at the Fendell Campus of the University of Liberia, to be used by the Ministry of Health as a COVID-19 quarantine facility.

Welthungerhilfe will also equip the facility with household items for use by quarantined persons.

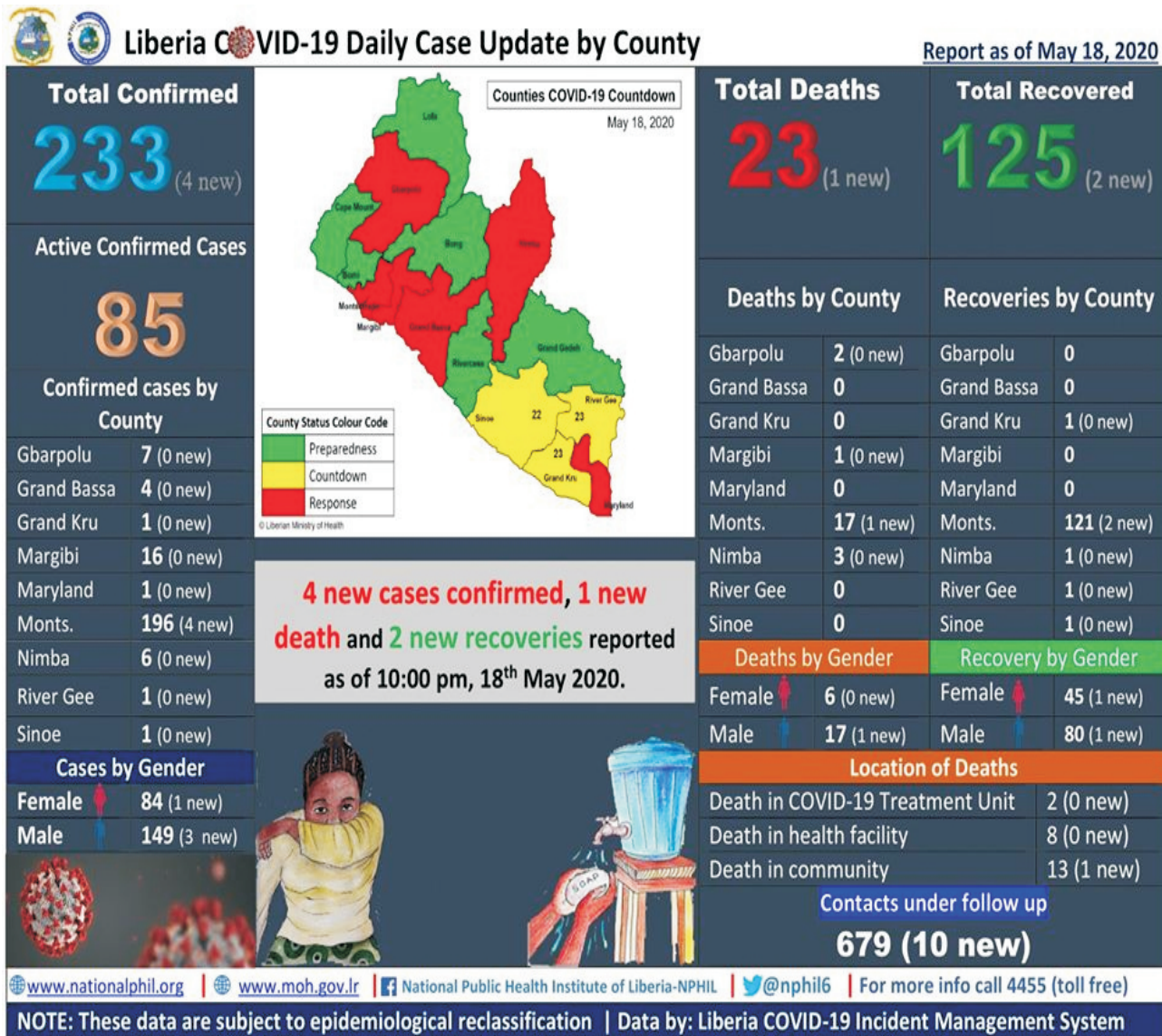
As a long-standing partner of the Government and people of Liberia, Welthungerhilfe is committed to support the fight against the spread of COVID-19 in the country. -Press Release

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# Covid-19 cases update as of May 18, 2020



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# Six positive coronavirus tests in Premier League

There were six positive tests for coronavirus across three Premier League clubs on Sunday and Monday, as the top flight prepares to resume in June.

The players or staff who have tested positive will now self-isolate for seven days.

Burnley said assistant manager Ian Woan had tested positive.

A total of 748 players and staff from 19 clubs were tested. The remaining club

did their tests on Tuesday so will be included in Saturday's results.

Squads are starting non-contact training from Tuesday.

The Premier League has been suspended since 13 March because of the Covid-19 pandemic, with 92 fixtures remaining.

## Coronavirus and sport - Premier League players return to training

The league had previously identified 12 June for matches to possibly start again, but



there is now an expectation  
this will need to be pushed  
back.

"The Premier League is providing this aggregated information for the purposes of competition integrity and transparency," it said in a statement.

"No specific details as to clubs or individuals will be provided by the league and results will be made public in this way after each round of testing."

Clubs were permitted to

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