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MARKET BUYING AND SELLING RATES
LIBERIAN DOLLARS PER US DOLLAR

DATE	BUYING	SELLING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 02, 2022	LS\$151.6604 /US\$1.00	LS\$153.5514 /US\$1.00

These are indicative rates based on results of daily surveys of foreign exchange market in Monrovia and selected cities of Liberia. These rates are collected from the Central bank, commercial banks, parallel market and the license forex bureaux. The rates are not set by the Central Bank of Liberia.
Source: Research, Policy and Planning Department, CBL

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Crusade deaths hit 31

-As Redemption Hospital and Cora Clinic discharge several



P11

Worshippers at the January 19 crusade



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Continental News

Coup fears as gunfire erupts in Guinea-Bissau

At least one person is said to have been killed in the capital of the West African state of Guinea-Bissau amid fears of a coup attempt.

Gunfire erupted near a government building in Bissau where President Umaro Cissoko Embaló was thought to be attending a cabinet meeting.

Soldiers have reportedly

detained the president and his ministers.

West African regional leaders condemned what they called a coup attempt and urged troops to return to barracks.

One of the poorest countries in the world, the former Portuguese colony has seen nine coups or attempted coups since 1980. If confirmed, this would be the fifth military coup in the past year in the region of West and

Central Africa. Just last week, there was a coup in Burkina Faso.

Struggling with a massive foreign debt and an economy that relies heavily on foreign aid, the country has also become a transshipment point for Latin American drugs, leading it to be dubbed by some as Africa's first narco-state.

While Mr Embaló won the

December 2019 presidential election, he faced a last-minute stand-off with parliament before taking office the following February.

A reporter on the ground, Alberto Dabo, told BBC News that unidentified heavily armed gunmen had attacked the government palace while President Embaló was meeting Prime Minister Nuno Gomes Nabiam inside.

He said that two people had been killed and, according to "reliable sources", the president and all the members of the government were still inside the palace "in the hands

of" the attackers.

A security source who did not want to be identified told the BBC that gunmen in civilian clothes had opened fire and a police officer had been killed.

The military had regained control of the situation and it was now "calm", he said, but he added that the whereabouts of the president and prime minister were unknown.

Condemning the violence, the West African regional group Ecowas said it held "the military responsible for the wellbeing of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló and members of his government". BBC



Umaro Sissoco Embaló was elected president in 2019

Woman applauded after giving birth on flight

A pregnant woman who unexpectedly gave birth on a plane flying from Ghana to the US was met with "shock and applause" from those around her. The new mother, who gave her name as GG, gave birth prematurely to a baby boy on board the flight on 29 January.

A Ghanaian doctor converted the plane's business class area into a temporary maternity unit and delivered the baby.

The woman from Ghana had been expecting to give birth later in February, according to an eye witness.

Journalist Nancy Adobea Anane was on the flight from Accra. She told BBC News Pidgin

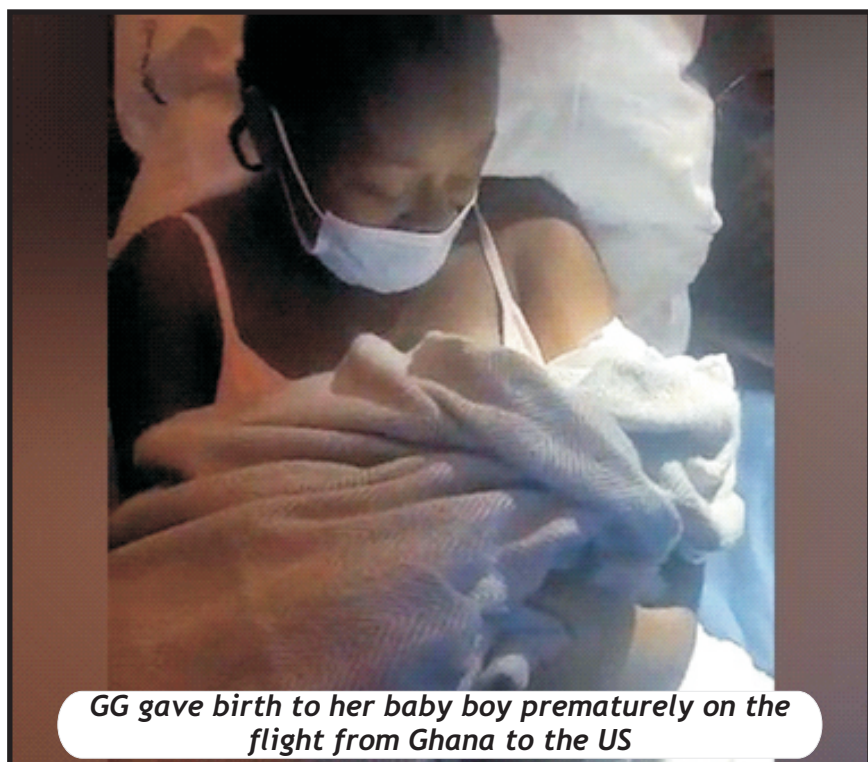
of the initial confusion among passengers when an on-board announcement was made.

"Most of them heard the call for assistance from medical personnel but didn't know what was going on," she said. "I became anxious for the safety of the baby and mother, and the possibility of a detour for an emergency landing." Having heard the request for help Dr Stephen Ansah-Addo, who practises in the US, set about delivering the baby.

"Myself, a nurse and the flight attendants... took [the mother] slowly through the process and she delivered a beautiful baby boy," Dr Stephen Ansah-Addo said.

Ms Anane recounted how the baby came within 45 minutes of the birth process starting. "Her delivery was quick, like 30 to 45 minutes" and was followed by "screaming and the familiar cry of the baby".

Paramedics met the new mother and baby upon landing in Washington where they received further medical



GG gave birth to her baby boy prematurely on the flight from Ghana to the US

Kenya extradites British murder suspects



Kenya has extradited two British nationals to the UK where they are wanted on suspicion of murder. The men were arrested last week in Nairobi's upmarket Kilimani area, the Directorate of Criminal Investigations said.

Kenyan police said an international arrest warrant had been issued against them in connection with the fatal stabbing of a 16-year-old boy,

identified as Alex Smith, in the London suburb of Camden back in 2019. The UK's Metropolitan Police say they believe one of the two arrested fugitives carried out the actual stabbing.

The other suspect is alleged to have been riding in one of two stolen cars involved in the incident.

Two other men are already serving their sentences in the UK for their role in the murder. BBC BBC

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care. Giving birth in the air is rare but not unheard of.

In January a Canadian doctor helped to deliver a baby on an overnight flight from Saudi Arabia to Uganda.

According to the UK's National Health Service, the chance of going into labour is naturally higher after 37 weeks

of pregnancy, so some airlines won't let pregnant women fly after this point.

It adds that flying while pregnant isn't generally harmful to a mother and baby, but any health issues or pregnancy complications should be discussed with a midwife or doctor before flying. BBC

EDITORIAL

The sharp criticisms from Weah's 5th SONA

PRESIDENT GEORGE MANNEH Weah is perhaps still digesting sharp criticisms from the opposition that greeted his Annual Message delivered last week Monday, 24th January 2022 before the 54th Legislature. Criticisms and direct challenge to the President's speech from the opposition Unity Party, Liberty Party and the Alternative National Congress provide an opportunity to dissect various aspects of the address and separate facts from falsehood.

THE OPPOSITION UNITY Party debunked the administration's claim to ownership of current road projects across the country, arguing that it envisioned and consummated most of those projects during its 12 years in power. There is no doubt that the UP administration under former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf negotiated most, if not all, of the major infrastructure projects before leaving office, so when President Weah brags about infrastructure development, he should accord credit to his predecessor.

SIMILARLY, THE OPPOSITION Liberty Party thinks President Weah has no reason to brag about achievements about his administration that is riddled with corruption and incompetence. The LP instead, called on Mr. Weah to do more for the people of Liberia.

THEN ON MONDAY, January 31, 2022, the opposition Alternative National Congress thru its leader Mr. Alexander B. Cummings laid bare, the President's speech, discrediting with facts, almost everything said about the economy and state of the Nation.

THE REACTIONS FROM members of the opposition bloc do not only provide balance, but they expose gross inaccuracies deliberately passed on to the unsuspecting and impoverished citizenry by the President for political gains.

LEADERS SHOULD BE careful about their public utterances and speeches because they have a way of boomeranging, sometimes negatively with unimaginable consequences. As it is usual, the Annual Message is intended to report on the overall outlook of the State, including development achieved for the past year and for the President to present his legislative agenda for the coming year.

BUT WHEN ISSUES are exaggerated or are deliberately fueled with lies for whatever motives, it would be but a while when truth comes stepping in to dispel the wrong perception created.

THOSE WRITING PRESIDENT Weah's speech should be very circumspect in what they put out to the public because like the late Jamaican Reggae Superstar Bob Marley sings, "You can fool some people some time but you can't fool all of the people all of the time."

PRESIDENT WEAH SHOULD take these criticisms as helpful instruments of democracy that promote a progressive society. It is the duty of both the opposition and civil society to checkmate the government of the day for democracy to thrive.

We call on the President to take these criticisms in stride and move ahead with his governance, for he needs critics to strengthen his leadership in order to govern well.

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COMMENTARY

By Peter Cunliffe-Jones, Laura Zommer & Noko Makgato, Will Moy

How Fact-Checking Can Win the Fight Against Misinformation

JOHANNESBURG - According to fact-checkers at the Washington Post, US President Donald Trump has made more than 13,000 false or misleading claims since his inauguration. It is no wonder some people doubt that the fact-checking of politicians' claims is an answer to the problems of this misinformation age.

When politicians and journalists from Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia met at the Global Conference for Media Freedom in London in July, they acknowledged that the rise of misinformation has contributed to declining public trust in politicians and the media. But effective solutions have not been forthcoming. When Europe's political and business elite met the same month for the conference Les Rencontres Économiques d'Aix-en-Provence 2019, they, too, saw few options for renewing trust.

But that does not mean that there are none. As the leaders or founders of fact-checking organizations in Africa, Latin America, and Europe, we know that our work can play a powerful role in countering the effects of misinformation and restoring faith in reliable sources.

Fulfilling this duty requires, first and foremost, a comprehensive understanding of the challenges we face. Most of the world's almost 200 fact-checking organizations operate on the assumption that presenting the public with corrected information will generally convince them to update a false view.

Not surprisingly, most academic work on fact-checking has aimed to test this assumption. The results are promising. While nobody could claim that presenting people with correct information guarantees that they will adjust their views, repeated studies have shown that fact checking helps the public revise their understanding of claims, even when the finding contradicts a firmly held belief.

But simply publishing fact-checks is not enough. For starters, even with the greatest resources it would not be possible to trace all those who have seen the misinformation being corrected and put our fact-check in front of them. And there is simply too much misinformation circulating online and in public debate to fact-check every false claim made.

That is why, beyond identifying and correcting important misinformation, fact-checkers must engage with politicians, the traditional media, social-media platforms, and other relevant institutions to reduce the supply. This means reaching out to public figures to request on-the-record corrections, lodging complaints with standards bodies, and providing training to media organizations. It also means working with tech companies to find ways to prevent the wider circulation of misinformation,

including across international borders.

At the same time, fact-checking organizations should not simply focus on tackling false information, but also on identifying sources of reliable information and pointing their readers and followers to them. And we should work with schools and other educational platforms to help teach people to identify false or misleading claims. This is the approach taken by our organizations, and as small and under-resourced as they are, the impact is already apparent.

For example, in January, Ibrahima Diouf, the economist in charge of writing the manifesto for one of Senegal's major political parties, Parti de l'Unité et du Rassemblement, told a University of Dakar researcher that, because of the Africa Check team's work, writers of political-party manifestos paid more attention to the accuracy of their figures.

Similarly, in South Africa, Febe Potgieter-Gqubule, the general manager of the ruling African National Congress, declared in a public meeting that Africa Check "plays an important role" in keeping political parties and their leaders accountable. A few months earlier, the South African Police Service officially revised the national crime statistics, following an Africa Check intervention, admitting that the data were worse than they had initially reported. Reducing the supply of misinformation by engaging with those in power works.

At the same time, in Argentina, the fact-checking organization Chequeado has created the country's first program to teach critical thinking and news literacy skills to young people. The results of this effort to inoculate the young against the harm caused by misinformation mirrored those of a 2016 study, which showed a huge leap in the ability of school-age children in Uganda to distinguish good and bad health information after being taught similar skills.

Finally, effective fact-checking requires efforts to improve public access to reliable information. In the United Kingdom, for example, Full Fact has worked with the Office of National Statistics not only to open up its data to a wider audience, but also to ensure that it is delivered in a form the public will understand.

While we shouldn't underestimate the scale of the threat posed by misinformation and declining trust, or the complexity of their causes, the problem is not nearly as intractable as some seem to believe. By addressing not only the symptoms of misinformation and mistrust, but also the systemic problems that underlie them, fact-checking organizations, media, government, and business can resist these worrisome trends.

O-PED

By Shlomo Ben-Ami

Trump's Perfidious America

TEL AVIV - US President Donald Trump's abrupt decision to withdraw American troops from Syria, clearing the way for a Turkish offensive against the Kurds, is an unconscionable betrayal of a strategic ally. One would expect such disloyalty from a fascist or otherwise dictatorial regime. And yet, today, it is the United States - a global leader with supposedly high ideals - that has emerged as the world's perfidious empire.

Trump's cavalier abandonment of the Kurds - America's most loyal and effective allies in the war against the Islamic State (ISIS), who until last week shared military outposts with US soldiers - is but the latest in a long series of devastating betrayals by his administration. He set the tone for his presidency by withdrawing the US from the Paris climate agreement, shamelessly placing the financial interests of America's fossil-fuel tycoons above the existential interest of the rest of humanity.

Trump also renounced the Iran nuclear deal and reinstated sanctions, even though Iran had complied with the agreement's obligations (and continued to do so for another year). Even America's European allies are not safe: not only has Trump repeatedly lashed out at NATO allies; his administration is now imposing trade sanctions on up to \$7.5 billion worth of European Union goods. The US would, Trump recently boasted, undoubtedly win a trade war with the EU.

Europe also stands to lose from Trump's abandonment of the Kurds. If, in the ongoing chaos, the thousands of ISIS prisoners held by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces escape - as some already have - America's estranged European allies will suffer. Yet Trump is unconcerned. "Well, they are going to be escaping to Europe, that's where they want to go," he remarked casually at a press conference. "They want to go back to their homes."

America's unreliability as both a global leader and ally or partner is no longer in doubt - and countries are adjusting accordingly. India, for example, is pursuing closer ties with China and Russia, after a decade of ever-deeper relations with the US. (The Kurds, it is worth noting, scrambled to make a deal with Russia, further strengthening the Kremlin's regional influence.)

Meanwhile, America's East Asian allies are weighing their options for mitigating the North Korean threat, in which Trump has apparently lost interest. Trump has shrugged off the North's repeated tests of short-range ballistic missiles - which threaten Seoul and Tokyo, not New York or Washington, DC - declaring that he is not "personally" bothered by them.

Now, South Korea is attempting to reconcile with the North, while Japan raises its defense budget to record levels. Meanwhile - in yet another vote of no confidence in the US - Taiwan seems increasingly inclined to reconcile with China.

Saudi Arabia, too, is adapting to Trump's perfidy. Immediately following last month's attack on Saudi oil installations - claimed by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, but widely blamed on Iran itself - Trump hinted at military action. But Saudi Arabia knows better than to bet on US loyalty.

In fact, the US withdrawal from Syria came shortly after it moved its Air Force command and control operations out of the Gulf region, where they had been based for almost four decades, further reinforcing expectations of a more comprehensive US departure from the Middle East. That followed Trump's refusal to respond with force when Iran downed a \$150 million American drone and impeded navigation in the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz.

Now, in what could be the mother of all diplomatic revolutions in the region, a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement seems to be in the offing. The other Gulf states would most likely join any such agreement.

The US itself is also desperate to get Iran to the negotiating table. Trump would surely laud a new nuclear deal as a major victory, even though it would probably represent little improvement over its predecessor, much like the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement did not improve upon the North American Free Trade Agreement. Trump may proclaim himself a master of the "art of the deal," but, compared to the Iranians, he is an apprentice negotiator.

Iran's regional posture is strengthened further by the fact that Israel - the US ally that is perhaps least able to handle a betrayal - remains utterly in Trump's thrall. To be sure, Trump has thrown his support behind Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, and has expressed his support for discussions on a formal US-Israel defense treaty. But if Iran decides to retaliate for Israel's repeated attacks on its military installations in Syria and Iraq, there is no guarantee that the US will stand by its ally. After all, like the Kurds, Israel did not "help [the US] in Normandy" - apparently a necessary precondition for US loyalty. (Trump didn't mention, of course, that his own father did not help the US in World War II, either; he avoided service, just as his sons did during the Vietnam War.)

As for Turkey, Trump has threatened to "destroy and obliterate" its economy if it does anything in its war on the Kurds that he considers "off limits." He then sent a bizarre letter warning Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan not to "be a tough guy."

But why would Erdogan listen? Didn't he get away with acquiring Russian-made S-400 missiles over Trump's supposed objections? And has Trump not already handed him the prize of his dreams: a green light to slaughter the Kurds of northern Syria? Not surprisingly, Erdogan reportedly threw the letter straight into the trash.

US President Theodore Roosevelt advised foreign policymakers to "speak softly and carry a big stick." Trump seems to be doing just the opposite. Add to that his ignorance of history and geopolitics, his blind belief in his supposedly "great and unmatched wisdom," and his apparent disregard for the lives of anyone outside his inner circle, and the global danger that America's 45th president poses can hardly be overstated.

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OPINION

By Erika Mouynes,
Meghan Lopez

Rethinking Migration in Latin America

Migrant waves in Latin America are growing and will continue to cause humanitarian crises across the region until the root causes of displacement are addressed. The worsening situation demands a new compact to coordinate and intensify the efforts of donors, governments, and aid organizations.

PANAMA CITY - Most countries in Latin America have a long history of receptiveness to migration. But an unprecedented surge in 2021 in the number of people being displaced by political unrest, economic instability, violence, pervasive inequality, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other factors means that many governments' efforts to protect migrants are falling short of the intentions embodied in their policies.

One of the most worrying features of the current migration situation in Latin America is the gap between each country's intentions as expressed through their migration policies and their abilities to provide displaced people with the protections they need. This is usually linked to insufficient financial and technical support from the international community.

Countries across the region are going to incredible lengths to manage the current migration crisis, prioritizing programs according to what their limited resources allow. But the variation in approaches is contributing further to the movement of people because migrants and asylum seekers tend to go wherever they can gain the most security for themselves and their families.

Another problem is the lack of long-term solutions. Consider the recent crisis involving Haitians, both those heading for the US-Mexico border and those stuck in southern Mexico: many of the thousands of Haitians who traversed Panama in 2021 had previously sought safety in South America following the devastating 2010 earthquake, but were unable to find long-term security.

Some migration pathways are historic, representing routes that people have used to flee danger or pursue new opportunities for many generations. But humanitarian crises and the migration waves they produce have been mounting. In Panama alone, the number of people crossing the Darién Gap rose from 6,500 in 2020 to 124,875 in the first 11 months of 2021 - almost a twentyfold increase.

Governments and international organizations with local civil society must devise a more effective, collaborative, people-centered strategy for managing these crises. Recognizing its own role along the migration route, Panama has stepped up its efforts to provide migrants with medical attention. People passing through receive basic medical aid and are tested for COVID-19 and other illnesses.

Many migrants and asylum seekers arrive in the country malnourished and injured from the perilous journey through the Darién Gap, a dense jungle that interrupts the Pan-American highway between Panama and Colombia. There, they encounter disease, deadly animals, and a treacherous landscape. Women and children, in particular, are vulnerable to violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and extortion by criminal groups. Even more disturbing, one in every five migrants in the region is a child, and 80% of them are under the age of five, a crucial period for their long-term development.

No single country can manage this issue on its own. The situation demands an international initiative to monitor migration flows and provide care for displaced people as they cross through Latin America. We need a system in which every country shares responsibility for protecting people on the move, including the provision of basic goods such as medical care, food, psychosocial support, and security. Panama has been shouldering this burden in Darién, but as the number of migrants continues to increase, a multi-country response becomes more urgent by the day.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has long advocated policy frameworks (or compacts) to aggregate resources for refugee and migrant care. The idea is to bring together donors, host countries, and development and humanitarian organizations to create systems that are capable of meeting these vulnerable populations' needs. Within these frameworks, host governments commit to long-term, inclusive policies for protecting displaced populations. In return, donors and financial institutions pledge long-term financing to support implementation.

This "compact" model has already been implemented in Jordan, with support from the World Bank. It could provide an initial framework for improving conditions for migrants across Latin America. As a first step toward that goal, national governments should focus on coordinating and harmonizing their migration policies. Mechanisms exist to help donors and host countries forge agreements on concrete financing commitments, burden-sharing, cross-border policy harmonization, and the provision of security, documentation, education, employment, health care, and pathways to citizenship. But much more attention and funding will be needed to realize the promise of these agreements.

To prevent future crises, we need to address the root causes of migration, not least violent conflict, COVID-19, climate change, systemic inequality, and the lack of economic opportunities in source countries. That means not only creating jobs and implementing development programs but also delivering effective humanitarian responses and supportive protection policies.

The challenge is to break the self-perpetuating cycle of migration and displacement by creating a safe and secure environment both for those who have attempted to rebuild their lives elsewhere and for those who have returned to their countries of origin. For example, the 100,000-plus asylum seekers and migrants from Haiti who are currently living in South America should be given the opportunity to settle there permanently, so that they are not forced to keep moving.

With the number of displaced people crossing Latin America increasing rapidly, Panama and the IRC are calling on governments, humanitarian organizations, and multilateral institutions to act together. We must protect vulnerable people and work toward a world where they can seek meaningful opportunities in their own countries or elsewhere, in full compliance with international standards and immigration laws. Most migrants and asylum seekers today have no such choice.

If the international community does not devote more resources to caring for migrants along their journeys, their problems will simply grow worse, and humanitarian crises in countries across the region will become more frequent and severe. We must break the cycle before it spins out of control.

ARTICLE

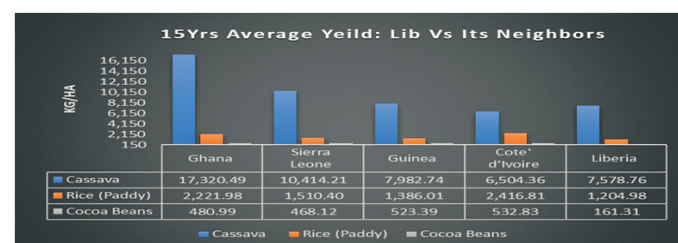
ARTICLE

Liberia Abandons Agricultural Transformation to NGOs: Hundreds of millions spent, but farm productivity falling, and farmers' losses and food insecurity rising

By: **AMBULAH MAMEY**, *International Agricultural Development Practitioner*

Key Messages:

1. Liberia still produces less than half (0.2) cup of rice per Liberian, per day after spending hundreds of millions on projects to be self-sufficient in rice production.
2. Almost half of a billion (437.02 million USD) accounts for financial flow to Liberia's agriculture sector- specifically the crop-subsector between 2018 and 2022.
3. The African Union has consistently ranked Liberia "NOT ON TRACK" to transforming its agricultural sector. Liberia failed 22 of 24 progress indicators in AU latest report.
4. 96% of farmers in Liberia relied on informal market as the main source of seeds, fertilizers and other inputs because agricultural market is not functional. The World Bank says Liberia is the worst place for farmers to operate their business.
5. Cocoa, farmers in Liberia received 69.79% less average yield/hectare than farmers in Cote' d'Ivoire, 69.22% less than farmers in Guinea, 65.6% less than farmers in Sierra Leone and 66.6% less than farmers in Ghana. Rice farmers are experiencing almost the same.
6. No poor country in the world has ever reduced poverty without increasing agricultural productivity. If Liberia should move out of poverty, it must prioritize the transformation of its agriculture sector and improve agricultural productivity!!



7. Liberians must sit up, shine their eyes, and begin to demand real sustainable results from stakeholders in the agricultural sector- especially NGOs and the Government. Liberia produces less than half (0.2) cup of rice (its staple food) per Liberian, per day. But on average, a Liberian need a little over 1 cup of rice per day. The rice per capita deficit is happening after decades of multiple donor and government projects- costing hundreds of millions of United States Dollars- that promise to make the country self-sufficient in rice production. Most recently, from 2018 to 2022, almost half of a billion (437.02 million USD) accounts for financial flow to Liberia's agriculture sector- specifically the crop-subsector. This amount does not include financial flow to other subsectors including a 40 million committed to the fishery subsector and several other millions spent on "improving" Liberia's agricultural sector by an army of NGOs deployed across the country. Of the 437.02 million, 145.9 million (33%) was committed before 2018, but only 18.6 million was spent before 2018; leaving the remaining 127.2 million available for the current Administration to spend. The 437.02 million is in the form of grants 172,118,287.9 (39%), FAO's projects 7.84M (2%), Government of Liberia's budgetary support to agriculture 19.01M (4.35%), loans that Liberia will repay with interest, 185.6 M (42%) and 52.4 M (12%) from other sources including beneficiary and private sector contribution to donor projects, and the Government of Liberia's indirect support that includes tax waivers.

Data are scarce in Liberia, and when they are available, they tend to be incomplete. Hence, the data collated and presented above- may not be the most accurate but present a good picture of agricultural spending and commitment between 2018 and 2022. Anecdotal estimate has it that- before 2018- over a billion was spent to make Liberia self-sufficient in rice production. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Bank, African Development Bank (AFDB), USAID, and FAO were and are currently the major donors or lenders. There is also an "army" of agricultural NGOs working to improve Liberia's agriculture sector.

Except three of the current projects that are scheduled to

last for 4-6 years, funds from these organizations are spread across short-term (2-3yrs) projects, implemented in piecemeal across Liberia. The projects are designed a bit differently with unique acronyms to match, but all project work practically towards the same goals: to enable smallholder farmers improve productivity and increase production and to improve agricultural markets. The projects also seek to increase farmers' income, reduce poverty, and food import and improve food security and nutrition. For example, the AFDB and the Global Agriculture and Food and Security Program (GAFSP) say their "Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Enhancement and Commercialization Project" and "Smallholder Agriculture Development for Food and Nutrition Security (SADFONS) are being implemented to "Increase farmers' income through crop intensification, value addition and market development and to improve food and nutrition security and reduce poverty; respectively. The World Bank says its "Rural Economic Transformation Project (RETRAP)" is aimed at "increasing productivity and market access for farmers and agri-enterprises" while IFAD's Tree Crop Extension Projects have been seeking to improve the incomes and climate change resilience of smallholder cocoa producers.

Short-term agricultural loans, grants, and projects promising pathways to food self-sufficiency, and poverty alleviation have old footprints and not new in Liberia. The AFDB's first agricultural project was implemented in Liberia in 1968 and it sought to increase rice production. Later in 1977 the FAO entered Liberia and has been working to revitalize the agriculture sector. IFAD came in 1981 with its first smallholder rice seed project to increase rice production and has not left- except during the war. But previous and current interventions- costing billions of dollars- have not been able to transform Liberia's agriculture to deliver what the country desperately needs and what its agricultural sector holds the key to provide: strong economic growth, food, and nutrition security and sustained rural poverty reduction and jobs for urban youths.

NOT ON TRACK to Agricultural Transformation: 15 years of Poor Agricultural Productivity, Low Production, Increased Rice Import, and Poor Nutrition Outcome

After decades of spending billions to transform Liberia's agriculture, the following facts ought to make Liberians sit up, pay attention, and begin to demand accountability from NGOs and the government. Since 2017 (the year the African Union began tracking its members' progress towards a transformed agricultural sector) Liberia has been consistently ranked "NOT ON TRACK" to transforming its agricultural sector. On the AU's latest scorecard, Liberia failed 22 of the 24 indicators of progress; including, 0 out of 3 points for its capacity to engage in evidence-based agricultural intervention, 1.3 out of 8.25 points for farmers' access to fertilizers, seeds, and other inputs, 0.58 out of 10 points for farmers' access to finance and 2.38 out of 10 points for public expenditure on agriculture and 1.69 points out of 3 points for food security and nutrition.

The "NOT ON TRACK" is consistent with many situations in Liberia and the following highlights of the agricultural input market- especially for seeds and fertilizers- are revealing. Agricultural Input Markets are among the first set of structures required to ensure the adequate supply of improved inputs (seeds, fertilizers, insecticide, and technology) to farmers, to boost productivity on their farms and increase production. But in Liberia, the market remains largely informal, disorganized, and hence, continuously failing to provide the quality and quantity of farm inputs the farmers need.

Up to 2017, about 96% of farmers in Liberia relied on the informal and unregulated market as the primary source of inputs. This informal market features traders from neighboring countries who supply mostly counterfeit/uncertified seeds, and fertilizers that contribute to low production quantity and poor quality that has kept many farmers in recurrent financial losses, and food deficit after months of hard labor. The number of farmers that use certified seeds in Liberia for the major crops (including rice and cassava) is just 8,137 (4%) of the approximately 203,442 farmers because the input market is nonfunctional and there is less attention directed to developing and enforcing policies that increase confidence for private investment. The dire situation with Liberia's agricultural market is further explained in the "Enabling The Business for Agriculture (EBA)", a World Bank study that examines to what extent governments make it easier or harder for farmers to operate their businesses. The EBA ranks Liberia the worst (101 out of 101 countries studied) in its overall 2019 ranking; revealing that fragile countries, including Haiti, Mali, Sudan, and Iraq, scored better than Liberia in the overall ranking for enabling agricultural business. On a scale of 0 to 100 for registering fertilizers and supplying seeds, Liberia scored 0 for registering fertilizers and 7.4 for seed supply. Something very disturbing about the World Bank's EBA report is that Liberia's

miserable performance is reported after another unit of the World Bank, USAID, AFDB, the Swedish Government and other NGOs have spent at least 200 million on no less than six projects (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) that are focused- in a significant part or whole- on "developing agricultural market", reforming agricultural markets", "improving market access for farmers and agri-enterprises".

These poor outcomes are further revealed in the trend and status of the productivity and production of major crops in Liberia, food imports and its attendant cost, and nutrition outcome -especially food related non-communicable diseases. For the past 15 years (2006- 2020) the average yield per hectare for rice, cassava, and cocoa farmers in Liberia were significantly lower than their counterparts in neighboring countries (See Figure-2).

Figure-2: Source- Computed using FAO Data

Cocoa, farmers in Liberia received 69.79% less average yield/hectare than farmers in Cote' d'Ivoire, 69.22% less than farmers in Guinea, 65.6% less than farmers in Sierra Leone and 66.6% less than farmers in Ghana. Rice farmers in Liberia received 50.2% less average yield/hectare than farmers in Cote' d'Ivoire received; 13.1% less than farmers in Guinea, 20.2% less than farmers in Sierra Leone and 45.8% less than farmers in Ghana. Rice is Liberia's staple food, and almost every past and current leader in Liberia (President, Senator, Representative)- has promised to make Liberia self-sufficient in rice production. But after 15 years of uninterrupted peace and spending billions to increase rice production, Liberia remains a food deficit country with a 15 years (2006-2020) average rice (milled) production of 181,411.13 metric tons; 568,588.87 metric tons or 68.17% less than the 750 thousand metric tons Liberians demand every year. At the current average production (181,411.13 MTH) and the current population of 5.058 million, Liberia's rice value chain provides less than half (0.2) cup of rice per Liberian per day. On average, a Liberian consumes over 1 cup of rice per day. Instead of taking bold but evidence-baked action to increase rice production and address the per capita rice deficit, Liberia finds comfort in importing rice. As the population grows, the rice deficit increases, and the import quantity and cost to import rice grows. Over the last 15 years, rice import has gone north: from 210 thousands metric tons in 2006 to approximately 400 thousand metric tons in 2020; costing Liberia at least 200 million on average.

The stark underperformance of the sector is influencing diet related non-communicable diseases and other poor nutrition outcomes among Liberians as many revert to inadequate or low-quality food because of the unavailability and unaffordability of their required diet. Except for child wasting and stunting, Liberia is either off course or experiencing worsening conditions for the remaining 11 global nutrition targets. Particularly stark is Liberia's limited progress towards reducing diet-related non-communicable disease.

Do We Still Need the Army of NGOs and Short-Term Multilateral Projects to Transform Liberia's Agriculture?

The state of agriculture in Liberia could be worst without the NGO and multilateral projects, but Liberia's agricultural sector will not get significantly better by relying on NGOs and multilateral projects as we do now NGOs have very important roles to play. They are good at diagnosing and "treating the symptoms" of agricultural development problems but have no good record of "curing" those problems. Liberia's chronic agricultural development problems need urgent cure, and because the country's policy makers' longstanding conviction in NGOs' and multilateral short-term projects has proved naïve, it is time for a structural reorientation of the approach to agricultural transformation.

Such reorientation demands a lot; but to begin, Liberians needs a strong showing of their government in the agricultural sector as a strategic and major participant with predictable interventions and as an effective enabler of private capital flow and functional agricultural markets. "Political will" must be manifested in increased agricultural spending, but only on evidence-informed, outcome-based, and impact focused interventions that are intentionally designed to be rigorously assessed for progress, challenges, and new lessons. Obviously, the current purchase and untargeted distribution of mineral fertilizers to farmers- without knowing the nutrient needs of their soil- is not one of the interventions.

TO BE CONTINUE NEXT EDITION

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

LACE is run by President Weah and crony

-Cummings
By Lincoln G. Peters

The Political leader of the Alternative National Congress Mr. Alexander B. Cummings says the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE) is run by President George Manneh Weah and his

crony, and that projects of the institution are also fronts to steal state funds and launder money through numerous no-bid contracts, opaque process and inflated costing.

Speaking in a news conference on Monday, January 31, 2022 at his office in Congo Town, behind Cuttington University graduate school, Mr.

Cummings said Liberians would have congratulated President Weah and his government for roads and houses he pointed to in his State of the Nation address.

But "Until it has been realized that some, if not all of these projects are also fronts to steal state funds and launder money through numerous no-bid contracts, opaque processes and inflated costing."

He cites as an example, the Popo Beach Project that was first estimated at US\$800,000 to build 50 two-bedroom units, or USD16, 000 per unit. Mr. Cummings notes that now, the government is saying the project will cost US\$3 Million to build 89 units or US\$33,700 per unit.

According to him, the Liberia Agency for Empowerment (LACE) is run by President Weah's crony, and its budget has been increased by US\$10 Million, adding that this is shameful and the stealing is disgraceful.

Critiquing President Weah's 5th Annual Message



▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10

Complete misrepresentation of facts

-CSOs on Weah's Annual Message

By Lewis S. Teh

Five leading Civil Society Organizations here have described President George Weah's recent State of the Nation address as a complete misrepresentation of the facts.

The National Civil Society Council of Liberia, Naymote partners for development, Integrity Watch Liberia, Institute for Research and Democratic Development and Accountability Lab Liberia in a news conference Monday, January 31, 2022 said President Weah's address was marred by high level of inconveniences and misrepresentation of facts, something they describe as embarrassment to the state.

In a statement read on behalf of the group, the head of the CSO council of Liberia, Madam Loretta Popekai said they were saddened, and deeply concerned with the high level of inconsistency and misrepresentation of facts in the President's speech, adding "Our concerns are infrastructure, we are highly concerned about the President's report on infrastructure

accomplishments as stated in the address."

She says the council did follow up to ascertain the facts, but they are dismay that most of the reported projects and their addresses were not factual, pointing that in Bong County President Weah reported 100 housing units being completed, but verification shows that only 10 housing units were identified.

According to her, President Weah also reported that 100 housing units are under

completion in Nimba County, but their verification shows that less than 15 units were identified, while in Gbapolu count, the President reported the completion of a 100-bedroom hospital, but their verification shows the project is still ongoing, reaching about 90 percent.

Madam Popekai continues that market buildings in Salala and Gbarnga were similarly reported to be ongoing, but interestly none of those

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10



New Kru town is restless

-Rep. Dixon Seboe

By Lewis S. Teh

Montserrado county district#16 Representative Dixon Seboe says the people of New Kru town would not rest until investigation into the January 19, 2022 stampede that left 29 persons, including women and children dead, and dozens others admitted in hospitals is completed, and those found culpitable face the law.

The stampede occurred as Christian worshippers returning from a Church crusade at the D. Twe sports ground in the municipal borough were reportedly attacked by criminals.

Speaking to State broadcaster ELBC Tuesday, 01 February in Paynesville outside Monrovia, Rep. Seboe

him to decide right now, saying "Our focus now is to memorialize our people following that the usage of the field will be decided by the governor's office or LFA."

Founded in 1920s, the Borough of New Kru town is a township located on Bushrod Island in district # 16, Montserrado County.

The victims were among thousands of other worshippers who trooped to the stadium for the healing and salvation crusade which was being hosted by renowned Liberian Apostle Abraham Kromah.

Apostle Kromah, who has been nicknamed "More Grace", is the Founder and General Overseer for the World of Life Outreach Mission International (WLOMI) located in a Monrovia suburb of New Georgia Estate.



said though he does not accuse anyone for now, anybody the Police will bring forward as suspect should be dealt with, according to law.

"We need to draw line between the disadvantaged youths who are call zogoes, and common criminals to ascertain the facts about what took place, though we're calling on the police for speedy investigation, but again our people have to exercise restraint and stop making unnecessary statements", he adds.

When asked whether the D. Twe field will still be used for crusade activities, the district lawmaker says that is not for

He is regarded for his spiritual ability to perform miracles during crusades, revivals and divine worship services.

The stampede occurred around 9PM when news broke out that the disadvantaged youths, who were armed with knives, machetes and other deadly weapons overpowered and armed robbed the first group of worshippers that made their way out of the field shortly after the end of the crusade.

President George Weah has called for full-scale investigation into the incident after he declared four days of mourning immediately following the tragedy here.

Editing by Jonathan Browne

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS

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EU commends LNBA for making justice more accessible

The Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Liberia, Ambassador Laurent Delahousse has commended the Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) for its important role to make Justice more accessible to all Liberians, as dictated by Liberia's Constitution.

Delivering a keynote address at the Ministerial Complex in Congo Town during an induction ceremony of LNBA's officers-elect on Friday, 28 January 2022, Amb. Delahousse said the LNBA contributes to familiarize Liberians with the Rule of Law.

"Your organisation is also playing an important role in monitoring the integrity, independence and transparency of the legal system in Liberia in view of restoring public confidence and trust in the system," he said.

"Seen by an alien such as I, the rapport of Liberians to the concept of Justice reveals something that I would qualify bordering a "culture and economy of litigation", which is uncommon to many of us Europeans, at least to me as a Frenchman," he added.

The EU Envoy to Liberia expressed a hope to be wrong

when he has the feeling that the political debate is, sometimes, at present, "happening more in court over legal arguments rather than in the communities over electoral manifestos."

Amb. Delahousse noted he he guessed that it is a cultural trait, the product of Liberia's history and maybe special links to the United States.

"But what is more important is that the legal system proves effective in the interest of the citizens at large," he continued.

He used the occasion to sincerely thank LNBA's immediate past president Cllr.

TiawanGongloe and his team for the important work carried out by the Association to facilitate access to justice for all Liberians and for being an active and critical voice in the public debate.

Amb. Delahousse also commended the personal example set by Cllr. Gongloe in striving both, to protect the financial interest of the LNBA budget in carrying out his duties as well as to promote freedom of expression and internal democracy within the Bar Association.

He suggested that respect

for Human Rights and Democracy are the best principles of government to improve people's lives and to ensure that no one is left behind.

He said development, democracy and respect of Human Rights go together, adding that Human Rights are not second to development; their promotion cannot wait for the improvement of people's lives.

"Democracy and Human Rights work. Those who tell you otherwise are wrong, because ultimately Humans want freedom, respect and a say in their government," the EU Envoy continued.

He said the Rule of Law is not only about civil law, that law specific to each nation according to its own history, but it is also about jus gentium and international laws such as those governing Human Rights.

"We consider it our joint duty as citizens of free societies to speak up - together - when the democracy, Human Rights and fundamental freedoms we enjoy are at risk elsewhere."

He stated that Human Rights are universal, they

apply the same everywhere, from the local village to the global community.

Amb. Delahousse indicated that they belong to every Human, they are consubstantial to the birth of every new baby wherever in the world, Liberia, Europe, America or China.

He argued that this is not interference in the affairs of other States, but it is an act of faith in and respect of the universal values enshrined in the international legal corpus of the United Nations.

"And I am humbled to note, in President George MannehWeah's own words, as spelled out this Monday in His Excellency's Annual Message to Congress, that "Liberia will remain a pillar of democracy on the African continent, availing its willingness to remain a part of the global coalition in defence of democracy in the world," the EU Envoy said.

He commended the leadership of Liberia in contributing to defend and restore peace, security, stability, democracy, and constitutional order, through ECOWAS, in its Sister Republics Guinea, Mali, and now Burkina Faso.

"The European Union and its Member States stand at your side in this endeavour," Amb. Delahousse noted.



Economy is stable on paper

-DPPL disagrees with President Weah

By Ramsey N. Singbeh, I n Margibi county

The organizing chairman of the Democratic People's Party of Liberia (DPPL) Rev. David G.B. Kiamu says President Weah's claim that

the economy of Liberia is stable is far from reality, noting "The economy might be stable on paper but in reality, you know that's not true."

Commenting on the President's statement in an interview with reporters in

Kakata, Margibi County over the weekend, Mr. Kiamu said President Weah should define what he meant by the "economy is stable" when he delivered his Annual Message on 24th January to the 54th Legislature at the Capitol.

The DPPL executive thinks the Weah government interpreted economic stability in its own terms, wondering if the ordinary people in the country are not feeling the pinch of the economy.

Addressing the nation on Monday, January 24, 2022, while commenting on the state of the Liberian economy, President Weah said: "Despite the challenges of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy grew by 3.6 percent from negative 3 percent in 2020, and growth this year is expected to be 4.7 percent, through increased agricultural and public investments in social compact program."

The President continued that in nominal value, the Liberian economy expanded

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DPPL Chair Rev. David G.B. Kiamu

by more than US\$300 million in 2021, and that inflation was reduced to less than 6 percent in November 2021, from 13.1 percent in December 2020.

"Based on the Report that I have just made to you, I can state categorically, and with confidence, that the State of our Economy is stable and growing, and that the State of the Nation is Peaceful and Strong!" Mr. Weah said.

But Mr. Kiamu disagrees: "He said one thing that ok, the economy is stable and they

interpreted that in their own terms but you the ordinary people on the ground, do you see money everywhere, do you have access to money, are you not feeling economic pinch? Things are difficult."

The Democratic People's Party of Liberia (DPPL) is one of the newest political institutions in the country that was certificated in November 2021 by the National Elections Commission joining the dozens of parties here. **Editing by Jonathan Browne**

Français

L'opposant Cummings envoiedes fléchettes au président Weah

Pour le leader de l'opposition, Alexander B. Cummings, la description de l'état de l'économie libérienne et de la République faite par le président Weah est non seulement manifestement fautive, mais aussi insensible, offensante et déconnectée de la réalité.

Disséquant le message annuel du président à Monrovia le lundi 31 janvier 2022, exactement une semaine après que ce dernier s'est adressé au peuple depuis les locaux du parlement libérien en session conjointe au Capitole, M. Cummings, leader politique de l'Alternative National Congress (ANC) adit que le président a échoué et espère maintenant tromper les Libériens.

Selon lui, depuis que le président Weah a pris fonction en 2018, la croissance économique nette du Libéria est de ZÉRO. Et que l'économie est toujours morose et la corruption est endémique.

"Après avoir promis de

créer un million d'emplois", note-t-il, "le chômage reste supérieur à 80 %, le chômage des jeunes est plus élevé qu'en 2017 et le taux de change est élevé, tandis que les prix des produits et des denrées alimentaires sont plus élevés aujourd'hui que lorsque le président Weah arrivait au pouvoir ».

Le chef de l'ANC a poursuivi en disant que la croissance économique libérienne est la plus lente de l'Union du fleuve

Mano à ce jour, que le gouvernement continue de faire des dépenses inutiles et que, dans le nouveau budget, il dépensera plus d'argent pour acheter et entretenir de nouvelles voitures pour les législateurs qu'il n'en dépensera sur tous les collèges communautaires, les établissements de formation, le système scolaire consolidé de Monrovia (MCSS), les hôpitaux

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 9



Coup d'État au Burkina Faso: la junte reçoit des représentants des partis politiques

La junte a rétabli et amendé la Constitution qu'elle avait suspendue le 24 janvier. Ce lundi 31 janvier 2022, alors que des émissaires de l'ONU et de la Cédéao étaient à Ouagadougou, le MPSR a mis en place un acte fondamental destiné à assurer la continuité de l'État, en attendant

l'adoption d'une charte de la transition. Et ce mardi, la junte a reçu les représentants des partis politiques.

Des représentants des partis ont été reçus au palais de Kossyam, dans le cadre des concertations initiées par la junte, depuis plusieurs jours. Le président du MPSR, Paul-Henri Dambia, les a invités à faire preuve de responsabilité et de

retenue, et à accompagner la junte dans ce processus ; à accompagner et à apporter leur contribution, si nécessaire.

Ils veulent être dans l'apolitisme jusqu'à la fin du processus, et feront appel aux individus qu'ils jugeront utiles d'

appeler, commentait Achille Tapsoba, leader d'une branche du CDP, le parti de Blaise Compaoré, à la sortie de cette réunion. En clair, le président du MPSR met les partis politiques sur la touche, au moins temporairement, il leur fait comprendre qu'ils ne sont plus au centre du fonctionnement politique, mais qu'ils doivent soutenir le processus en cours, au nom du patriotisme et de l'unité nationale.

À la question de savoir si les partis politiques se tenaient disponibles pour participer à un éventuel gouvernement de transition : « Ce n'est pas d'actualité », a répondu un participant à la mi-journée, à la sortie du rendez-vous.



Éditorial

Le message de réconciliation de Weah est un paradoxe

Prononçant son 5e message annuel à la nation le lundi 24 janvier devant le parlement libérien, le président George Manneh Weah a exhorté les Libériens à ne pas permettre à la politique de diviser la nation au point de la détruire. C'est pourtant exactement ce que le président est en train de faire.

M. Weah permet à la politique de fermer ses yeux sur la réalité. Ce pays est tellement divisé que le raisonnement parmi les Libériens comme un seul peuple ne compte plus.

Le président a mené de manière décevante son entourage, les responsables du parti au pouvoir, à lancer la célébration du bicentenaire du Libéria sur l'île de la Providence à Monrovia sans inviter le bloc de l'opposition et la communauté religieuse. Il a accusé les organisateurs du programme. Les 200 ans d'existence du Libéria en tant que pays n'appartiennent pas exclusivement à une administration de six ans, mais à tous les citoyens, quelle que soit leur affiliation sociale, économique, politique et religieuse, ils doivent donc être impliqués.

Lorsque le président Weah ignore constamment les supplications des habitants de Lofa pour que leur sénateur élu, Brownie Samukai, prenne son siège au Sénat et restitue l'argent des soldats qu'il a dépensé à des fins officielles, enfin que ce comté soit pleinement représenté sous son administration, on ignore alors ce que c'est qu'une véritable réconciliation à l'entendement de ce gouvernement?

D'autres peuvent faire valoir que la question du sénateur élu Samukai est une affaire judiciaire et que le président ne devrait pas s'y mêler. C'est à juste titre; mais la vraie réconciliation va plus loin que de simples paroles, surtout lorsque les citoyens sont à genoux, implorant la grâce présidentielle.

L'administration se sert de la justice pour s'en prendre à des ennemis présumés. Mais il ferme les yeux sur les actes de corruption endémique commis depuis le plus haut sommet de l'état jusqu'à l'Autorité portuaire nationale, en passant par la Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation, la Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission et d'autres organismes publics sous sa surveillance en raison du népotisme et du clientélisme.

En tant que chef de l'État, le président n'a ni convoqué une réunion avec l'opposition ni sollicité leurs points de vue et perspectives sur la question de l'État. Il semble plus intéressé à lancer des moqueries et à aller en studio pour produire de la musique qu'à unir les Libériens. Mais c'est lui qui appelle à l'unité.

Les citoyens des comtés de Lofa, de Bong et de Nimba sont frustrés car ils n'ont pas la possibilité de s'asseoir dans une assemblée publique avec le chef du pays pour exprimer leurs griefs. Mais paradoxalement ce même président demande aux Libériens de marcher dans la paix en permanence.

La route vers la paix, la réconciliation et l'unité est comme un chemin triangulaire où toutes les parties doivent s'unir pour discuter. Hélas, le chef de l'État se tient loin dans sa zone de confort et envoie une branche d'olivier.

Une véritable réconciliation exige un esprit ouvert, un cœur à l'écoute et de la sincérité pour que la guérison nationale ait lieu. Le discours doit s'accompagner d'actes concrets.

Français

L'opposant Cummings envoi des

JFK et Jackson F. Doe.

«Le président Weah et son administration cherchent à dépenser plus d'argent pour acheter des voitures pour 103 personnes, au lieu de construire des centres de santé abordables pour des centaines de milliers de Libériens.

Il a indiqué qu'en quatre ans, le président a emprunté plus de 600 millions de dollars américains et qu'en 2018, la dette nationale était de 1,039 milliard de dollars, mais qu'aujourd'hui, elle a atteint 1,690 milliard de dollars. Au lieu d'améliorer l'avenir des enfants libériens, l'administration Weahne fait qu'aggraver la situation du pays en accumulant des dettes inutilement.

« Nous nous félicitons des appels du FMI, de la Banque mondiale et de la CEDEAO à restreindre la politique massive d'exonération fiscale du Libéria. Nous exhortons le gouvernement à donner suite à son acceptation par des actions diligentes, car les exonérations fiscales du Libéria sont abusées, le gouvernement du président Weah a accordé des exonérations aux législateurs et à ses copains », a-t-il dit.

Le président Weah a signalé à l'Assemblée législative que le nombre d'entreprises commerciales et d'entreprises agroalimentaires a augmenté de manière plus que significative, passant de 77 en 2021 à 164 en 2022, alors qu'il existe désormais des concessionnaires de machines agricoles, avec des pièces de rechange et des ateliers.

Il a détaillé que le ministère de l'Agriculture a développé, négocié et signé, avec le ministère des Finances et de la Planification du développement, de nouveaux projets clés évalués à plus de 73 millions de dollars américains. Le président Weah a ajouté que le projet de transformation de l'économie rurale de la Banque mondiale (RETRAP), qui vise à étendre le projet en cours de transformation des petits exploitants et de revitalisation de l'agro-industrie, STAR-P, a été développé pour une valeur totale de 55 millions de dollars américains.

Mais M. Cummings dit que bien que le Libéria soit doté de l'une des terres les plus fertiles d'Afrique pour la production agricole, le gouvernement Weah n'a pas réussi à réaliser des gains

durables et des investissements substantiels dans l'agriculture, indiquant que cette année, le président Weah a budgétisé ZERO DOLLAR pour le Fonds agricole, et en fait, pour les trois prochaines années, le Fonds agricole recevra ZERO DOLLAR.

Il a fait savoir que le gouvernement a confié le secteur agricole à des organisations non gouvernementales et à des projets de donateurs, ajoutant : « Nous n'avons pas encore vu de croissance économique en dépit de l'injection de millions de dollars dans ce secteur. Le bureau du président Weah a même plus d'argent dans le budget que l'ensemble du ministère de l'Agriculture.

Il a poursuivi en disant que le gouvernement dirigé par Weah n'a pas seulement échoué à gérer l'économie, il a également échoué sur les questions de sécurité nationale, de prestation de services, de lutte contre la corruption et de consolidation de la démocratie. « Vous n'avez pas besoin que je vous dise que la sécurité du Libéria est faible, notre pays est un point de débordement pour les drogues nocives et un foyer pour le blanchiment d'argent et le trafic d'êtres humains. Ces crimes internationaux nuisent à l'image et à la réputation de notre pays.

Il a rappelé que l'année dernière, le président Weah a demandé aux Libériens d'installer des vidéos de surveillance dans leurs maisons, et à ne pas compter sur son administration pour leur sécurité et leur protection. Ce qui est pourtant le plus important de tout président et commandant en chef. Par conséquent, les crimes ont augmenté dans les rues et les communautés, tandis que les citoyens sont livrés à eux-mêmes.

M. Cummings a promis que s'il est président, le trafic de drogue au Libéria et l'utilisation du Libéria comme point de débordement pour la drogue, prendront fin. Il s'est engagé à procéder à la réadaptation, la formation professionnelle, aux réformes pénitentiaires et à créer des opportunités de réintégration pour les Libériens, et à restaurer la réputation du pays dans le monde en luttant contre le blanchiment d'argent et la traite des êtres humains.

Pour lui, le Libéria n'a fondamentalement pas de leader. « Le président Weah serait en quarantaine, c'est ce qui semble expliquer pourquoi il dit ridiculement que les rues, les plages et les communautés urbaines qui sont infestées de crimes sont "pacifiques" ».

COMMENTAIRE

Par Peter Cunliffe-Jones, Laura Zommer & Noko Makgato, Will Moy

Comment le décodage peut remporter le combat contre la désinformation

JOHANNESBOURG - Selon les décodeurs du Washington Post, le président des États-Unis Donald Trump s'est livré depuis son investiture à plus de 13 000 déclarations fausses ou trompeuses. On ne peut guère s'étonner que certains, dans ces conditions, émettent des doutes sur les capacités des décodeurs du discours politique à répondre aux questions soulevées par ce nouvel âge de la désinformation.

Lorsque responsables politiques et journalistes d'Europe, des Amériques, d'Afrique et d'Asie se sont retrouvés à la Conférence mondiale pour la liberté des médias, qui s'est tenue à Londres, au mois de juillet, ils n'ont pas caché que la diffusion croissante de la désinformation contribue à la défiance envers les élus et les médias. Mais les solutions efficaces ne se bousculent pas. Les Rencontres économiques d'Aix-en-Provence, en 2019, qui réunissaient les élites politiques et économiques, quelques jours plus tôt, autour du thème « renouer avec la confiance » partageaient ce constat.

Cela ne signifie pas que les solutions n'existent pas. En tant que dirigeants et fondateurs d'organisations spécialisées dans le décodage de l'information, en Afrique, en Amérique latine et en Europe, nous savons que notre travail peut jouer un rôle important dans la lutte contre la désinformation et la reconstruction de la confiance dans des sources fiables.

Pour remplir cette mission, il faut d'abord bien comprendre la nature des enjeux. Les 200 organismes de décodage ou équipes de décodeurs de par le monde travaillent, pour la plupart, en partant de l'hypothèse qu'en fournissant aux citoyens des informations exactes, ils les conduiront généralement à réexaminer leur point de vue lorsque celui-ci s'est auparavant fondé sur de fausses informations.

Comme on pouvait s'en douter, les travaux de recherche sur le décodage tentent presque tous de démontrer cette hypothèse. Les résultats sont encourageants. Si personne ne peut tenir pour certain qu'en fournissant aux gens des informations exactes on les entraînera à réviser leur point de vue, les enquêtes successives ont prouvé que le travail des décodeurs aide les citoyens à reconsidérer la façon dont ils comprennent ce qu'on leur affirme, même lorsque les conclusions contredisent des croyances fermement enracinées.

En revanche, la publication d'informations vérifiées et décodées n'est pas suffisante. Quand bien même on disposerait de tous les moyens souhaitables, il demeurerait impossible d'évaluer l'ensemble des cas où la désinformation a pu être corrigée et où les gens ont eu accès à son décodage. Il y a par ailleurs trop de désinformation circulant sur les réseaux et dans le débat public pour qu'on puisse seulement imaginer pouvoir contrôler chaque affirmation inexacte.

C'est pourquoi, outre l'identification et la correction des contre-vérités les plus flagrantes, les décodeurs doivent travailler avec les responsables politiques, les médias traditionnels, les réseaux sociaux et d'une façon générale avec les acteurs de la communication afin de réduire les émissions d'informations fausses. Cela signifie solliciter les personnalités publiques pour qu'elles corrigent publiquement leurs erreurs, déposer

plainte auprès des instances compétentes et former les acteurs médiatiques. Cela signifie aussi travailler avec les entreprises du secteur technologique afin de trouver les moyens qui permettront de stopper la circulation de la désinformation, par-delà les frontières.

Dans le même temps, les structures qui se chargent du décodage ne doivent pas se contenter de cibler les fausses informations, mais compléter leur action en labellisant les sources fiables et en orientant vers elles leurs lecteurs et leurs abonnés. Et nous devons travailler avec les écoles et les plateformes pédagogiques pour les aider à former les gens à la lecture de l'information et à l'identification des affirmations trompeuses. C'est ce que font nos structures, et si petites qu'elles soient, si faibles que soient leurs moyens, les effets se font déjà sentir.

Ainsi au mois de janvier, Ibrahima Diouf, l'économiste chargé de la rédaction du programme économique du Parti de l'unité et du rassemblement, l'une des principales formations politiques sénégalaises, affirmait-il à un chercheur de l'université de Dakar, que les auteurs des programmes des partis politiques accordaient désormais, grâce au travail des décodeurs d'Africa Check, plus d'attention à l'exactitude des chiffres qu'ils citent.

De même, en Afrique du Sud, Febe Potgieter-Gqubule, l'une des dirigeantes de l'ANC, le parti au pouvoir, a-t-elle déclaré, lors d'une réunion publique, qu'Africa Check « joue un rôle important » dans la responsabilisation des partis politiques et de leurs dirigeants auprès des électeurs. Quelques mois plus tôt, la police sud-africaine avait revu ses statistiques de la délinquance, à la suite d'une intervention d'Africa Check, et admis que les chiffres étaient moins bons que ceux qu'elle avait auparavant fournis. Il est donc possible de réduire les émissions d'informations fausses en travaillant avec les pouvoirs publics.

En Argentine, Chequeado a créé le premier programme d'enseignement à la lecture et à la critique des informations auprès des jeunes. Les résultats de cette initiative visant à vacciner la jeunesse contre les dégâts causés par la désinformation font écho à ceux d'une enquête menée en Ouganda auprès de jeunes gens scolarisés montrant qu'après une formation du même type leur capacité à distinguer les informations vraies et fausses quant aux programmes de santé et à leurs succès avait fait des progrès spectaculaires.

Enfin, pour être efficace, le décodage demande qu'on facilite l'accès des citoyens à une information de qualité. Ainsi au Royaume-Uni, l'association Full Fact travaille-t-elle avec le Bureau national des statistiques non seulement afin d'ouvrir à une plus large audience les données de celui-ci mais à les présenter sous une forme aisément compréhensible.

Si nous ne devons pas sous-estimer l'ampleur de la menace que font peser la désinformation et la perte de la confiance, ni nous méprendre sur la complexité des causes, le problème n'est pas aussi difficile à résoudre que certains semblent le croire. En luttant non seulement contre les symptômes de la désinformation et de la défiance, mais aussi contre les problèmes systémiques qui les sous-tendent, les organismes de décodage, les médias, les pouvoirs publics et les entreprises peuvent résister à ces évolutions inquiétantes.

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Rail multi-user clause

of the population. The EU also wonders if the new deal MDA is compatible with its objectives of promoting good governance and sustainable development in Liberia. The Union questioned its Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) of any awareness of the controversies surrounding

the ArcelorMittal MDA being raised with the Liberian authorities. The Senate is yet to pass on the MDA since the approved version by the lower House was sent there for concurrence. This may be so due to the debate arising from the multi-user clauses within the MDA. State and Presidential Affairs Minister Nathaniel F. McGill commenting on the debate during a press conference last week said Government owns the

railroads but other companies wishing to use the assets will have to contribute towards the expansion project just as AML. SOLWAY and other potential companies such as HPX which have interest in using the rail have opposed no objection in contributing towards the expansion project but want the ambiguity surrounding the multi user to be cleared.

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LACE is run by President

delivered to Legislature recently, the former CPP Chairman disclosed that few months ago, the government spent millions on the Bushrod Island road, using concrete pavement, but notes that to his surprise, another bid has been announced for the same road.

democracy is under stress and threats. Over the last four years, President Weah has sought to undermine the rule of law and rollback good governance practices. Political interference and executive overreach in the justice system continued, beginning with the politically-motivated impeachment of Justice KabinehJa'neh up to and including the political persecution of formidable opposition leaders on trumped up and false charges", he notes.

because the preferred vehicle broke down along the way." He says only the failed leadership of President Weah will benefit if Liberians should give up on the need to change the direction of the country, urging, "We must never give up - we must never lose hope!"

He says as the bid was being announced, the project had already been given to a company owned by a stalwart of the ruling CDC, noting that the real interest is not to develop the infrastructure but to steal from the Liberian people.

The opposition leader continues that peaceful protests and assemblies are being teargassed, resulting to violence, arrests and wounding of peaceful citizens.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cummings says Presidential and General Elections scheduled for October will mean a lot to Liberia's future and Liberians will have the chance to choose a new direction for their country.

Cummings laments that as a result, "we continue to see issues around conflict of interests, poor planning, no value for money, and low-quality engineering associated with infrastructure development under President Weah."

He says President Weah and his administration are yet to realize that peaceful assemblies are inherent guarantees and ingredients for functional democracies while judicial independence is indispensable to the consolidation of democracy and growth of the economy.

"We must not become complacent nor let ourselves get disengaged or uninvolved. As we continue to see, not only will we continue to live with the consequences of the incompetent and corrupt leadership of our country if we fail to change it, but we can all be assured that things will only get increasingly worse", Cummings warns.

He explains that the National Road Fund (NRF) is being mismanaged, considering the hardship bad roads continue to pose to the movement of people, goods and services, adding that it is unacceptable that the NRF continues to be abused by the government.

However, Mr. Cummings discloses that despite best efforts by the opposition, it has to be admitted that as currently constituted, the Collaborating Political Parties (CPP) may not make it to 2023. "But you, the Liberian people, collectively will make it to 2023. The CPP may have been your preferred vehicle for change but the need to change ought not to end

He reminds that after four years of failures, President Weah is hoping Liberians can all forget how he and his officials prioritized getting themselves rich overnight while they connived and deceived to keep Liberians poorer and divided.

"We call for an immediate audit of the NRF. Audit now, or be audited later. Do the right things now, or answer for the wrongs later. Our cherished

"As with all failed leaderships, they are looking to make more promises, take no responsibility, and siphon

Man, 27 commits suicide in Ganta City



By Thomas Domah/
Nimba County

A 27-year-old motorcyclist has reportedly committed suicide in Jacob Town, Zone 4 Community in Ganta, Nimba County.

Victim Abraham Dukuly, a father of two children was on Monday, 31 January discovered hanging in an unfinished building.

Reason behind the alleged act was not made public, but family sources told reporters that prior to the incident, the deceased, identified as a

Crusade deaths

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discharged," he said. "We also understand that the police [are] coming up with their investigative report, but we hope they do that urgently because we need [it], said Rep. Seboe.

Medical Clinic Mr. Sedwon Bestman said on 25 January 2022, they discharged 32 patients who were admitted to the clinic from the stampede in New Kru Town.

He noted that losing 31 people is not something easy and he wants to make sure all those in connection to this are punished.

According to him, during the night of the incident, nine people were admitted at the clinic by several members of Apostle Abraham Kromah's Church and additionally, three persons were rushed at the clinic the next morning, bringing the total number to 12 at the clinic.

He thanked all those that stand with the district during the mourning period, adding that they will make sure that justice is served.

The Cora Medical clinic OIC explained that the additional 19 persons were sent by Rep. Seboe.

Health authorities in New Kru Town from Redemption Hospital and Cora Medical Clinic on Tuesday confirmed that they have discharged approximately 48 survivors from last month's stampede at a crusade organized by Apostle Abraham Kromah, commonly known here as More Grace.

Also speaking, Redemption Hospital Medical Director, Dr. Williamata S. Williams-Gibson confirmed that they had 16 persons admitted to the hospital and they were undergoing treatment.

Speaking in an interview with this paper, the Officer in Charge (OIC) at the Cora

But Gibson noted that they all have been discharged and are currently at their respective homes and very sound medically.

Complete misrepresentation

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projects has started. "This we think is a disservice to the people, we are aware that the state of the nation address is a constitutional responsibility mandated by Article 58 of the Constitution, and for official of government to mislead the President to report malicious information to the nation is a crime that must not go unpunished, and we condemn this act in the strongest term" she says.

She CSOs are disappointment over national security threat posed by the growing numbers of vulnerable youths, often referred to as zogoes in the country

Madam Popekai says President Weah failed to lay out clear strategy to addressing the menace, reiterating the population of zogoes poses increasing threat to the peace and security of Liberia. **Editing by Jonathan Browne**

Malian national, exhibited strange behaviors such as leaving home early in the morning and returning lately.

and six, near the border with neighboring Ivory Coast.

Police in Ganta have launched an investigation into the incident.

Majority of the cases are as a result of domestic quarrels, including women accused of involvement in extra-marital sex.

NimbaCounty has recorded more than 20 suicidal cases since 2021 to present. Most of the incidents occurred in electoral districts four, five

Last year, a local journalist in district# 8 joined the suicide list by allegedly taking his own life. **Editing by Jonathan Browne**

Rail multi-user clause chokes AML?

Despite repeated clarifications by ArcelorMittal Liberia (AML) that its third proposed Mineral Development Agreement (MDA) does not seek exclusive control of the country's two major infrastructures - the railroads and the Port of Buchanan, clauses with the proposed deal say otherwise.

On page 7. 2(B) of the AML MDA, it states that "in consideration of the

million dollars (US\$20,000,000.00) being made no later than 30 days after the (ratification of the) third amendment, the second payment twenty-five million dollar (US\$25,000,000.00) being no later than 9 months after the date of the first payment and the third ten million dollars (10,000,000.00), being no later than 9 months after the second payment."

But ArcelorMittal has

and Environment, in its resolution indicated that Article 3 of the proposed Amendment called for the company to have exclusive rights over the country's railroads and the Port of Buchanan, something the committee argued is seen as a completed monopoly of the government's two major infrastructures.

The House' Committee further went on to urge the Government to take ownership of the railroad, Buchanan Iron Ore Port and related Infrastructure. It further recommended that these infrastructures be structured, regulated, expanded and managed on a non-discriminatory multi-user basis for the benefit of all eligible applicants within the country.

Both the EU and the US Ambassador here have expressed some concerns as well over the exclusive rights clause within the MDA.

EU High Representative Josep Borrell was questioned about the agreement in last month.

The EU Parliamentarians' concerns followed reports suggesting that the new ArcelorMittal MDA is shrouded in secrecy.

Thus, the EU has raised

questions over the possibilities of corruption, the potential creation of rail monopoly and the involvement

maintained that its proposed agreement, the third to its initial MDA signed in 2005 does not seek any exclusive rights to the use of the state-owned infrastructures.

Although the House of Representatives passed on the MDA last year, it did so with a resolution.

The House's Joint Committee on Investment and Concession, ways, Means & Finance, Judiciary, Lands, Mines & energy

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confirmed exclusive right of the Concessionaire to complete the additional railroad capacity expansion pursuant to this subparagraph 2 above, the Concessionaire shall pay to the Government a nonrefundable amount of fifty-five Million Dollar (US\$55,000,000.00). The payment shall be made in three installments the first being payment of twenty

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society in the continuous disrespect and denigration of girls and women; I find the publication of the alleged discussion to be an error of judgment which in itself has the effect of enabling and fueling such reprehensible behaviors of men disrespecting women.

This certainly does not excuse the alleged disrespectful and privately invasive discussion by a husband of his wife, which I find to be disgraceful and offensive.

Cummings Chief

In our response to the President's SONA, I spoke about the need to cleanse the soul of our nation. As leaders, and especially as men, on issues of gender and equality of women, which stains the nation's soul, it falls upon all of us, especially men, to be good examples for those younger than us who look up to us, beginning in our own families.

We must always show the highest consideration and respect for women and girls, especially our wives.

I can only hope that the alleged discussion, by our now President, as revealed in the book about his wife is not true. If it is, it is unacceptable, distasteful and a bad example, which should not be tolerated."

Crusade deaths hit 31

By Lincoln G. Peters

Montserrado County District #16 Representative Dickson Seboe says the number of victims who died following a stampede at a crusade last month in New Kru Town has hit 31.

Health authorities initially

Copper Street in New Kru Town died at his home several days after the incident, and another child who people walked on so badly, died in the same New Kru Town.

Meanwhile, Representative Seboe reported that 49 victims who were at Redemption



confirmed 29 deaths, but Mr. Seboe told state broadcaster Tuesday, 1 February 2022 that the death toll has risen to 31 so far.

According to representative Seboe, the new deaths included three children.

He narrated that one of them called Patrick from

Hospital and Cora Clinic have all been discharged.

"We had about 49 persons that were injured and they have been undergoing medical treatment at the Redemption Hospital and Cora Clinic in New Kru Town, but they all are

▶ CONT'D ON PAGE 10

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Cummings Chief of Staff resigned



Mr. Isaac Vah Tukpah

Mr. Isaac Vah Tukpah, the Chief of Office Staff to Alternative National Congress (ANC) political leader Alexander B. Cummings has resigned his post following the publication of excerpts of a book purported to be a biography of President George Weah. Mr. Cummings had asked Tukpah to step aside after excerpts of the book, which purported to give personal

explicit account of the president were being circulated on social media. The ANC Leader: "This morning, I asked for and received the immediate resignation of my Chief of Office Staff, Mr. Isaac Vah Tukpah. This is despite the fact that a book which is the object of my concern was written long before Isaac joined our team. Since joining the team, Mr. Tukpah has served with diligence and professionalism, and I have come

to respect and admire his work. My decision was not taken lightly because I value Isaac's works and contributions. However, the standards of alternative leadership for our country that we have set for ourselves, now and in the future, are particularly higher than the usual, and we are determined to maintain it. It means we must stand with all those who are right, when they are right, even if they are not our friends, and refuse to stand with those who are wrong, even if they are our friends and workmates. I will continue to do so because this is the example of the quality of leadership that our country desperately needs to change course, and improve the lives of Liberians. The book, co-authored by Mr. Tukpah, reveals an alleged discussion by a husband, Mr. George Weah of his wife. The revelation of the alleged discussion exposes a deviant behavior in our

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