

# *Country Analysis*

## *COVID19 Incidence and Resource Management in Liberia.*



# *Introduction*

This research seeks to assess, investigate, and understand the overall response of the Government of Liberia with respect to her COVID-19 Interventions in the country. It also goes ahead to carefully critique the Government's response to COVID-19, allocation, disbursement, and expenditure of COVID-19 resources as well as ascertain the various constraints, challenges and obstacles to an effective response to COVID-19 in Liberia.

The research as a component, will support the overall COVID-19 Transparency and Accountability Project - CTAP which is to elevate the conversation around ensuring proper accountability and transparency of funding and finances donated to the fight against COVID-19 during this Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

While this research is just the first phase of the project, some of the assumptions made from documents obtained and information gathered will be further validated in the next phase of our research.



# *I. Background of COVID-19 incidence and government policy response in the country*

## *A. Country Context and Political Economy*

Liberia is the only Black state in Africa that was never subjected to colonial rule and is Africa's oldest republic. It was established on land acquired for freed U.S. slaves by the American Colonization Society, which founded a colony at Cape Mesurado in 1821. In 1824, the territory was named Liberia, and its main settlement was named Monrovia, which is the present-day capital.

Liberia's independence was proclaimed in 1847, and its boundaries were expanded. The country enjoyed relative stability until a rebellion in 1989 escalated into a destructive civil war in the 1990s that did not entirely cease, until 2003.

Liberia suffered two major civil wars between 1989 and 2003 that killed well over 400,000 thousand people. Still fragile from the war, the country was hit

eleven years later by the Ebola virus epidemic in 2014, which lasted till 2015. A developing country struggling to recover from the devastation of years before and engulfed in massive social and economic difficulties was Liberia that COVID-19 entered to wreak further havoc.

Liberia's uneven economic performance over the last four decades has primarily been driven by the twin shocks of two civil wars and the 2014 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak<sup>1</sup>. For a quarter-century, Liberia's two civil wars caused widespread loss of life, destroyed vital infrastructure, and suppressed economic growth. After that, Liberia entered a period of sustained economic growth with an average annual growth rate of 7.4 per cent between 2004-2013.

<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 - ITUC-Africa." COVID-19 - Response from Liberia Background Liberia suffered two major civil wars between 1989 and 2003 that killed well over 40.

However, the 2014 EVD outbreak, coupled with a sharp decline in global prices for iron ore and rubber disrupted Liberia's economic recovery. The real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate slowed to 0.7 per cent in 2014, zero per cent in 2015, and the drawdown of the United Nations mission pushed the economy into recession in 2016. The macro-economic situation has continued to deteriorate.

In 2019, both inflation and exchange rate depreciation remained high (30 per cent), primarily due to sustained growth in monetary aggregates, and the economy is estimated to have contracted by a further 1.4 per cent driven by falling demand, as indicated by the evolution of taxes and bank credit. The impacts of the

shocks were compounded by the transition to a new political administration in 2018, as the relative inexperience of the incoming administration increased policy uncertainty and weakened economic management.<sup>2</sup>

On December 31, 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health and Health Committee of Hubei Province, China, issued the "Notice of Pneumonia in Wuhan" after 27 cases had been reported. On January 7, 2020, a China CCTV News Release said that an expert group had preliminarily identified the "viral pneumonia of unknown cause" as a new type of coronavirus (CoV). The WHO's Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus, declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern on January 30 2020, after the number of cases increased within a week.

By this time, there were confirmed cases in 18 countries, excluding China. On February 11, 2020, the WHO announced a name for the new coronavirus disease: COVID-19. On 11th March 2020, the WHO's Director-General said that the institution was "deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the disturbing levels of inaction", and concluded that "We have therefore assessed that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic". By 25th January 2021, there were over ninety nine million confirmed cases and over 2,131,166 deaths in 185 countries.<sup>3</sup>

Over 4,148,866 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 Pandemic have been recorded in Africa.<sup>4</sup> The virus has now spread to every country in the continent since the first case was confirmed in the region 14 weeks ago. Despite crossing this threshold, the pandemic, which has struck with such devastating force in different parts of the world, appears to be taking a different pathway in Africa. Case numbers have not grown at the same exponential rate as in other regions and hitherto, Africa has not experienced the high mortality seen in some parts of the world.

<sup>2</sup>"FRONTLINE/WORLD . Liberia - No More War . Facts | PBS."  
<https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/liberia/facts.html>.

<sup>3</sup>"Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis ...." 26 Mar. 2020.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7178153/>.

<sup>4</sup>"COVID-19 — a timeline of the coronavirus outbreak | Devex."  
<https://www.devex.com/news/covid-19-a-timeline-of-the-coronavirus-outbreak-96396>.

African governments have made difficult decisions and were quick to impose confinement measures, including physical and social distancing, which will have significant socio-economic costs. These measures, which along with contact tracing and isolation, expanded or increased hand washing have helped to slow down the spread of the virus.<sup>5</sup>

However, not the same can be said about Financial and material resources being used up in the fight against COVID-19 on the continent. Since the end of 2013, the Ebola virus disease has been ravaging the economies and people of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea-Conakry, infecting over 20,000 people by the end of 2014.<sup>6</sup>

The disease also spread to Nigeria, though it was quickly contained. An estimated \$1 billion in international

public and private aid was disbursed to these countries to try to stem the epidemic. Unfortunately, corruption played a key role in the outbreak, spread, and slow containment of Ebola in these affected countries. Hence, Corruption poses particular challenges to the health sectors of fragile states like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria and Guinea – states that are extremely poor and suffer from weak institutions and/or conflict.<sup>7</sup>

As of the time of the conduct of this research, Liberia had recorded over 2,042 cases, over 1,899 have recovered and 85 deaths. With the aforementioned, it is unfortunate that there have been widespread allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and misappropriation of funding given to the fight against COVID-19 in Liberia.



## *B. Background on COVID-19 index case*

The first case of COVID-19 in Liberia was confirmed on March 16, 2020. The infected person was a government official returning from Switzerland. He admitted to having violated the screening protocols, which had been instituted earlier, when he arrived at the country's international airport.

The second case was confirmed on March 17 and the infected person was a close contact of the first case. The third case, also involving a returning traveler, was confirmed on March 20. Following this, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs declared a national health emergency on March 22, 2020.<sup>8</sup>

## *C. Government policies in practice*

In Emergency situations, there is an increased risk of mismanagement and misappropriation of available funds and resources, which deprives people living in poverty and exclusion of the support they are entitled to. The government has various structures in place through its Incident Management System and its Special Presidential Advisory Committee on COVID-19, as well as its Executive Committee on Coronavirus that are all responsible for coordinating the overall response of the Government of Liberia.



The NPHIL (National Public Health Institute of Liberia) was established soon after the EVD crisis and – in line with requirements of the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR) – is responsible for detecting, preventing, and responding to disease outbreaks and health. Before Ebola, Liberia’s laboratory system could only test for three diseases.

This has increased to more than 10, including yellow fever, Lassa Fever, EVD, cholera, meningitis, and measles. Interventions by international organizations have helped to bolster the COVID-19 Intervention in Liberia. For example, the World Bank’s Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement Program (REDISSE) – Phase 2 (P159040) supports Liberia’s efforts to enhance its disease surveillance and response systems, thereby also contributing to the region’s ability to

respond to epidemics and emergencies. REDISSE II was approved on March 2, 2017; became effective on July 27, 2017, and the anticipated closing date is August 31, 2023.

The project development objectives (PDO) are: (i) to strengthen national and regional cross-sectoral capacity for collaborative disease surveillance and epidemic preparedness in West Africa; and (ii) in the event of an eligible crisis or emergency, to provide immediate and effective response to said eligible crisis or emergency<sup>9</sup>. In Liberia, REDISSE is implemented within the One Health approach to ensure that the human-animal-environment interface is addressed in strengthening Liberia’s disease surveillance systems. This has seen Liberia lead on innovations to enhance the modalities of implementation of the One Health



<sup>5</sup> "Effectiveness of isolation, testing, contact tracing, and physical ..." 16 Jun. 2020. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(20\)30457-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(20)30457-6/fulltext). Accessed 26 May. 2021.

<sup>6</sup> "2014-2016 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa | History | Ebola (Ebola ...)" <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/history/2014-2016-outbreak/index.html>. Accessed 26 May. 2021.

<sup>7</sup> "Ebola threatens economic gains in affected countries | Africa Renewal." <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2014/ebola-threatens-economic-gains-affected-countries>. Accessed 25 Mar. 2021.

<sup>8</sup> "Liberia's index case refused COVID-19 quarantine, his worker now ..." [https://www.africanews.com/2020/03/17/liberia-s-first-coronavirus-case-involves-official-returning-from-swiss-trip//](https://www.africanews.com/2020/03/17/liberia-s-first-coronavirus-case-involves-official-returning-from-swiss-trip/)

<sup>9</sup> "More Support to Boost Liberia COVID-19 Response." 9 Apr. 2020.

approach by working across sectors and establishing an active, functional regional One Health platform. Liberia also developed a National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) and conducted a partner mapping exercise to support an integrated approach to financing One health activities.

The new project was designed to complement the REDISSE project. This project focused primarily on the GOL's efforts to respond to the current COVID-19 pandemic, while REDISSE II continued to address issues related to sustainability, and One Health.

### *Declaration of National Health Emergency*

On March 21 2020, the Minister of Health, Wilhelmina Jallah, declared a national health emergency. The declaration was based on the country's Public Health Law, which accords the minister the authority to declare as an infected area any part of the country that "appears to be threatened by, any formidable epidemic, endemic or communicable disease" and to make rules for, among other things:

- Removal of persons suffering from a communicable disease and those who

have been in contact with such persons;

- Removal of corpses;
- Regulation of hospitals used for the reception of persons suffering from a communicable disease and of observation camps and stations;
- The compulsory medical examination of persons suffering or suspected to be suffering from communicable disease;
- Registration of residents in an infected area;
- Restriction of residence in or movement from or to an infected area. (Public Health Law § 14.2.);
- Flaunting any rules so made is a crime, on conviction, punishable by a fine, a custodial sentence not exceeding one month, or both. (§ 14.6.).

In the declaration, the Minister designated two of the 15 counties in the country, Montserrado (where Monrovia, the capital, is located) and Margibi as infected areas, imposed a 21-day lockdown on such counties, and:

- Closed all schools;
- Closed all bars, night clubs, bars, casinos, cinemas and other

entertainment venues;

- Closed public and private beaches;
- Closed places of worship;
- Barred all gatherings involving more than 10 persons, including weddings and funerals;
- Closed business that provide personal care services, including barbershops and salons;
- Limited the number of persons who could enter into a bank to five people at a time;
- Limited the number of persons that could ride on public transportation vehicles at any given time;

- Suspended all commercial flights except cargo, chartered or special flights;

- Ordered supermarkets and large stores to only allow ten persons into their premises at any given time;

- Suspended street hawking. (National Health Emergency Declaration sections 1-10 and 14).

The declaration stated that the movement of persons in and out of the two designated counties were discouraged and imposed mandatory hand washing with soap and clean water at all homes and all public and private establishments. (sections 13 & 15).





*According to the country's 1986 Constitution, the president may declare a state of emergency "only where there is a threat or outbreak of war or where there is civil unrest affecting the existence, security or well-being of the Republic amounting to a clear and present danger." (Articles 86.)*

## *Declaration of National State of Emergency*

In response to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, on April 8, 2020, President Weah, in consultation with the leaders of the country's bicameral legislature, declared a three-week renewable national state of emergency.<sup>10</sup>

According to the country's 1986 Constitution, the president may declare a state of emergency "only where there is a threat or outbreak of war or where there is civil unrest affecting the existence, security or well-being of the Republic amounting to a clear and present danger." (Articles 86.)

The Constitution also states that: "The President may, in consultation with the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, proclaim and declare the existence of a state of emergency in the Republic or any part thereof. Acting pursuant thereto, the President may suspend or affect certain rights, freedoms and guarantees contained in this Constitution and exercise such other emergency powers as may be necessary and appropriate to take care of the emergency, subject, however, to the limitations contained in this Chapter

[including a provision barring the President from suspending the Constitution or abrogating the legislature.] (Articles 86 & 87.)"

The power of the president in this regard is subject to legislative oversight in that his declaration lasts only seven days unless upheld by the legislature. The Constitution states that:

"The President shall, immediately upon the declaration of a state of emergency, but not later than seven days thereafter, lay before the Legislature at its regular session or at a specially convened session, the facts and circumstances leading to such declaration.

The Legislature shall within seventy-two hours, by joint resolution voted by two-thirds of the membership of each house, decide whether the proclamation of a state of emergency is justified or whether the measures taken thereunder are appropriate. If the two-thirds vote is not obtained, the emergency automatically shall be revoked. Where the Legislature shall deem it necessary to revoke the state of emergency or to modify the measures taken thereunder, the President shall act accordingly and immediately carry out the decisions of the Legislature". (Articles 88.)

<sup>10</sup> "Liberia Government Measures to Contain the Spread of COVID-19 ..." 5 May, 2020. <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2020/05/liberia-government-measures-to-contain-the-spread-of-covid-19/>. Accessed 31 Mar, 2021.

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The legislature reportedly approved the president’s declaration and extended the state of emergency to 60 days.

*During a state of emergency, in addition to the Constitution, the Executive Law authorizes the president to impose specific restrictions aimed at dealing with such emergencies. This law states that whenever there occurs any insurrection, riot, rebellion, lawless violence, or natural disaster sufficient to create an internal emergency, the President is empowered, to the extent necessary to deal with such emergency” and, among others, “to declare in effect curfews or requirements for compulsory vaccination, evacuation of dangerous areas, quarantines, or other police measures.” (Articles 3.3.)*

## Restrictions and Enforcement

In his April 8, 2020, state of emergency declaration, the president announced a number of restrictions, which unlike the minister of health's national health emergency declaration are nationally applicable. The president put all 15 counties in the country under quarantine until further notice. He barred all persons from travelling between counties except for movement between Montserrado and Margibi counties, which are under quarantine as a single unit.

The president also imposed a fourteen day stay-at-home order starting April 10 on residents of Montserrado County, Margibi County, Nimba County, and Grand Kru County. On April 24, On the advice of health professionals, the president extended the stay-at-home order's application period (by additional

two weeks) and geography (to all 15 counties in the country).

During this time, residents may leave their homes only to procure food or health items, an activity limited to one person per household for a maximum of one hour, so long as the person does not venture out of his or her local area. Anyone in public must wear a face-mask.

All non-essential businesses and government offices will remain closed. Government offices deemed essential, including the Ministry of Finance, the National Port Authority, and the Liberia Broadcasting System, will operate with "skeletal staff." In addition, the following are deemed essential and will continue their work:

- Persons and entities engaged in the production, distribution, and marketing of food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, and medicine;

**PRESIDENT WEAH DECLARES A PENDING STATE OF EMERGENCY TO CURB SPREAD OF COVID-19 AS LIBERIA RECORDS 31 CASES. BUT DID THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IGNORE SOME CONCERNING ISSUES?**

# THE LOCKDOWN AND ANXIETIES

COVID-19 CASE UPDATE		
17 new cases confirmed as of 04:00 pm, 8 <sup>th</sup> April 2020		
Total confirmed cases		
31		
Total Active Cases	Total Recovered	Total Deaths
24	3	4
Total Suspected Cases		
10		
For more info call: 4455 (toll free)		
<a href="http://www.moh.gov.sl">www.moh.gov.sl</a>   <a href="https://twitter.com/SLMWH">SLMWH</a>		

**STATE OF EMERGENCY**

her announces, under this State of Emergency, that all 15 counties in the Republic of Liberia are quarantined from 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 10, 2020, until further notice. Movements between counties are strictly prohibited. No person shall be permitted to enter or leave or in any way cross the borders of any county into any other county, except for Montserrado County and Margibi County which are quarantined as a single unit." — President George Weah, Republic of Liberia

- ⊗ Persons and entities engaged in environmental and sanitation activities;
- ⊗ Members of the security forces assigned to lawful duties;
- ⊗ Essential staff of electricity, water, telecommunications, banking, and hotels;
- ⊗ Fuel station attendants.

Persons designated as essential staff were exempted from the stay-at-home restrictions to the extent they limit their movement between their places of work and residence. All businesses permitted to operate during this period were to close by 3:00 p.m. daily. The president also authorized the armed forces to enforce his stay-at-home orders, which the Constitution permits so long as they remain “in subordination to the civil authority and the Constitution” (Constitution of Liberia § 86.).<sup>11</sup>

The Government, in coordination with the United Nations (UN), Donor Partners, the Ministry of Health and the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) put in place the National Multi-sectoral Response Plan (NMRP) to COVID-19.<sup>12</sup>

As it remains uncertain on when COVID-19 will be controlled amidst the

many unknowns, coupled with the high operational costs to sustain the response and limited national resources, the Liberia National Incident Management System on August 27 2020, convened its second COVID-19 IMS Health Donors conference via zoom to present the LIBERIA COVID-19 Reduction Strategy.

The five months (August –December) strategy is aimed at aligning and integrating Liberia’s ongoing response activities into routine health services to enhance efficiency and sustainability of the response activities in the country.

The key response pillars: Community Engagement and Risk Communication, Epidemiological Surveillance, Case Management and Psychosocial care, Laboratory Services and Infection Prevention and Control and WASH in health facilities will strengthen the on-going response of COVID-19 and access to universal Health Coverage. The response pillars will be supported by a strong coordination, advocacy and partnership platform.

Since Liberia confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on 16th March 2020, there has been much attention to COVID-19 response at the detriment of routine health services.



<sup>11</sup> “Liberia Government Measures to Contain the Spread of COVID-19 ...” 5 May, 2020, <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2020/05/liberia-government-measures-to-contain-the-spread-of-covid-19/>.

<sup>12</sup> “Liberia National Incident Management System (IMS) Unveils Five (5 ...)” 4 Sep. 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/liberia-national-incident-management-system-ims-unveils-five-5-month-s-covid-19>.



## *II. Pattern of COVID revenue and expenditures*

### *A. Patterns of COVID-19 donations in the country*

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, there were a series of donations made to the various institutions that were responsible for fighting COVID-19. Hence a dedicated tracking strategy driven by some key activities will be used to track the funding donated to the Government of Liberia by Donors, and Partners in response to fight the COVID-19 outbreak in Liberia. Specific forms were developed to facilitate the tracking process especially around Data and Information consolidation.

These tracking forms captured information of the institution making contributions/interventions to the Government as well as key institutions receiving the contribution/support. The other tools developed will be to track the level at which the contribution/support has been utilized or expended. There were four

different patterns of donations in Liberia towards the fight against COVID-19:



## *B. Government budget allocations, reallocation/adjustment, as a result of COVID-19*

On May 25, the Liberian Senate approved the recast budget and concurred with the House of Representatives for passage into law the proposed recast COVID-19 Budget for the fiscal period 2019/2020 to the tune of US\$518,000,000 (Five Hundred and Eighteen million United States Dollars).

This signified that it agreed to the executive's proposal in the draft recast budget and reapportioned more than US\$32 million in the current 2019-2020 national budget.

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 went into operation effective June, 2020.<sup>13</sup> Government allocated US\$2.27 million for medical supplies and Emergency Response specifically to county administrations:



<sup>13</sup> "House passes recast national budget | The New Dawn Liberia." 19 May. 2020. <https://thenewdawnliberia.com/house-passes-recast-national-budget/>.

### *C. Specific government programs initiated to cushion the effects of COVID-19;*

As far as the Government of Liberia (GoL) response on the pandemic was concerned, the Government of Liberia developed a preparedness and response plan with support from development partners and activated the National Incident Management System (IMS), using the International Health Regulations response framework, initially with 10 Pillars and now evolved into 19 Pillars, which is driving the response under the central command of the Minister of Health as the incident manager and a National Response Coordinator, appointed by the President.<sup>14</sup>

These activities saw the involvement of partners and donors supporting in whatever way possible to support the Government's response plan. Some of these institutions included the World Bank, African Development Bank, WHO, UNICEF, the City Alliance and other institutions. Notably, since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, Cities Alliance Liberia has shifted part of its country operations to supporting the Liberian government's containment measures through the provision of sanitation stations and through advocacy campaigns. Cities Alliance, with the support of Comic Relief, donated 150 hygiene wash stations to the City

Corporations of Monrovia and Paynesville. Such hygiene stations, allowed for people to wash their hands, are key to limiting the community spread of the virus. With clean, affordable, and running water in short supply in many of the cities' public spaces and slums, the city corporations had appealed for support to assist citizens to observe basic hygiene practices.<sup>15</sup>

Through UNICEF's cooperation with the Ministry of Education, an estimated 992,768 children (486,456 girls, 506,312 boys) from preschool up to secondary school have benefited from the radio-based lessons aired during the reporting period. UNICEF has provided support for the development and radio airing of risk communication/health promotion messages and radio/paper-based lessons for the over 1.4 million children (preschool to secondary school) currently out of school due to the pandemic.

UNICEF is providing technical support in the development of lesson scripts and providing technical assistance to guide teachers on how to support and evaluate the alternative learning process for children (Radio lessons). In response to the Government's decision to commence education for 41,000 Grade 12 students, UNICEF is working closely with the Ministries of Education and Health to ensure that educational and hygiene supplies are available and safe school protocols are in place.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "UNICEF Liberia Covid-19." 15 Jun. 2020, UNICEF Liberia Covid-19.

<sup>15</sup> "Liberia: Capacity Building in Waste and Water ... - Cities Alliance." 12 Mar. 2021. <https://www.citiesalliance.org/newsroom/news/results/liberia-capacity-building-waste-and-water-management>.

<sup>16</sup> "UNICEF Liberia Covid-19." 15 Jun. 2020, UNICEF Liberia Covid-19.

### *D. Palliative measures put in place to protect the poor and vulnerable to cushion the impact of COVID-19*

The Liberian President's State of Emergency Letter to the National Legislature, President Weah requested the National Legislature to re-appropriate US\$ 25 million from the FY 2019/20 National Budget for COVID-19 Household Food Support Program (COHFSP), to be implemented by the World Food Program.

The president in that letter promised to appoint a National Steering Committee to provide oversight and prescribe rules for the COVID-19 Household Food Support Program (COHFSP). When the president did the appointment, it was as follows:

Membership of COHFSP's National Steering Committee composition was as follows:

1. Ministry of Commerce and Industry- Chair
2. Ministry of Agriculture – Co-Chair
3. World Food Program---- Secretary

4. Ministry of State
5. Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
6. Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs and Tourism
7. Ministry of Justice
8. Executive Committee on Coronavirus
9. National Security Council
10. Two representatives from Civil Society
11. Two representatives from the CPP
12. Two representatives from Other Political parties
13. Two representative from the Christian community
14. Two representative from the Muslim community
15. Two representatives from the Youth and student community
16. One representative from Women Groups
17. One Representative from the Coalition of Political Parties Women of Liberia

18. Representative from United Nations Organizations

19. Representative from the International Monetary Fund

20. Ministry of Gender, Children & social Protection

21. One Representative of Disabled Community

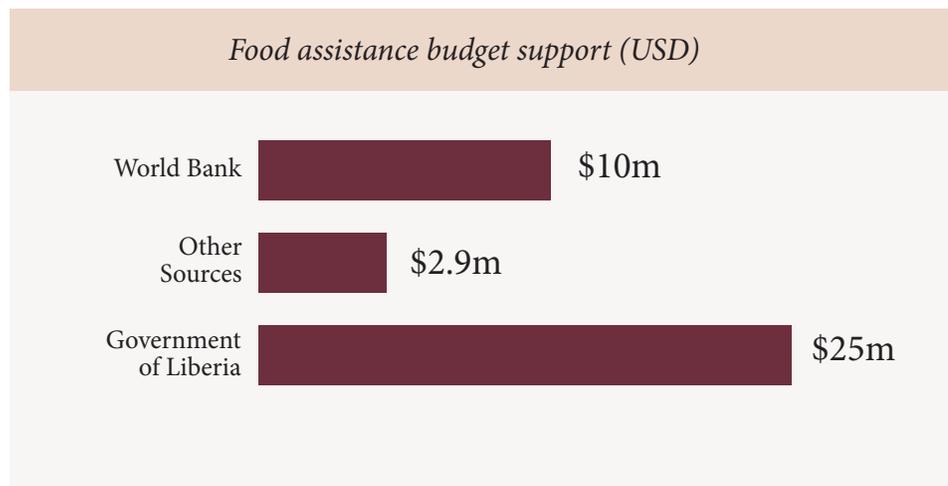
22. Representative from the World Bank

Our research uncovered that the legislature approved a US\$25 million stimulus package to provide food for vulnerable communities in collaboration with the World Food Program, offset loans to vulnerable traders, and paid utility bills for some households, among other things.

However, the COVID-19 National Steering Committee admitted doing a poor job of delivering relief packages, blaming bad roads and other factors.<sup>17</sup>

As of January 2021, WFP and partners provided 3,084 metric tonnes of staple food commodities to 243,140 beneficiaries (48,628 households) under the Government-led COVID-19 Household Food Support Programme (COHFSP).

The COHFSP aimed at assisting the most vulnerable households affected by COVID-19 prevention measures in Liberia. The support for the COVID-19 Household Food Support Programme (COHFSP) came from the following sources:



<sup>17</sup> "AD420: Liberians laud government's COVID-19 response but claim ..."  
<https://afrobarometer.org/publications/ad420-liberians-laud-governments-covid-19-response-claim-unfair-distribution-relief>.

Following earlier delays, WFP and partners continued to accelerate the COHSFP implementation in January with food commodities being distributed in 11 of the 15 counties.<sup>18</sup>

### *E. The procurement and contracting policies followed or suspended, as well as the availability of data on procurement;*

With interventions from the World Bank, a Liberia COVID-19 Emergency Response Project - Procurement Plan was developed to guide the execution of resources and ensure that procurement of goods and services are consistent with with paragraph 5.9 of the “World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers” (July 2016) (“Procurement Regulations”).

The Bank’s Systematic Tracking and Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) system will be used to prepare, clear and update Procurement Plans and conduct

all procurement transactions for the Project. This plan specified in its preamble that:

*“The Bank’s Standard Procurement Documents: shall be used for all contracts subject to international competitive procurement and those contracts as specified in the Procurement Plan tables in STEP.*

*National Procurement Arrangements: In accordance with paragraph 5.3 of the Procurement Regulations, when approaching the national market (as specified in the Procurement Plan tables in STEP), the country’s own procurement procedures may be used. When the Borrower uses its own national open competitive procurement arrangements as set forth in the Public Procurement and Concessions Act, 2010 of the Republic of Liberia, such arrangements shall be subject to paragraph 5.4 of the Procurement Regulations and the following conditions.”<sup>19</sup>*

Please see Appendix for link to full procurement plan.



<sup>18</sup> “COVID-19 pandemic | World Food Programme.” <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/covid-19-pandemic>.

<sup>19</sup> “PROCUREMENT PLAN (Textual Part) Project information: Cabo ....” <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/368291558614480009/text/Cabo-Verde-AFRICA-P165267-Social-Inclusion-Project-Procurement-Plan.txt>.

## *F. Plans of government in acquiring vaccines; what is being said about it and what commitment is being made*

Liberia received 96,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses shipped via the COVAX initiative, a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO. The arrival of the vaccines in Liberia is part of the historic step towards achieving the goal of equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally, in what will be the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history.

This delivery is part of a first wave of shipments that will continue to different countries in the coming days and weeks. In addition to the vaccines, Liberia also received 97,000 syringes and 600 safety boxes that will be used for the administration and disposal of immunization waste.

The arrival of the 96,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), marks the first batch of vaccine shipped to Liberia by the COVAX initiative as part of its unprecedented efforts to deliver at least 2 billion doses of the vaccine globally by the end of 2021.<sup>20</sup>

## *G. Transparency and accountability framework set up for COVID-19 revenue and expenditures, website, report releases, information sharing in the news, etc., and the effectiveness of each of these frameworks*

Amidst this global health emergency of international concern, multinational institutions, NGOs, INGOs, Governments, Development partners are contributing millions of dollars to the fight against COVID-19.

Not taking lessons learned from Ebola—that killed over 11,000 persons in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone—the opportunity to bypass standing procurement protocols was taken, leading to failure to adequately account for every single dollar contributed to the fight against these diseases. A good percentage of African governments have weak Public Finance Institutions (PFIs) and they are easily bypassed by corrupt officials, especially when emergency funds are allocated to respond to emergency situations.

<sup>20</sup> "WHO Africa 96000 Doses of COVID-19 Vaccine Arrives in Liberia..." 6 Mar. 2021. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/96000-doses-covid-19-vaccine-arrives-liberia>.

## Stakeholders - Roles & Responsibilities

<i>No</i>	<i>Names of Institution/Stakeholder</i>	<i>Relevance to the CTAP</i>
1	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning	Have information on Finances around the Covid-19 response
2	Ministry of Information, Culture & Tourism	Confirm various information coming from Government
3	Public Procurement Concession Commission	Have information on Covid-19 procurement
4	National Public Health Institute of Liberia	Have information on Covid-19 overall response
5	Ministry of Health	Have information on Covid-19 overall response
6	National Water Sanitation and Hygiene Commission	Have information on Finances around the Covid-19 response
7	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Have information on Covid-19 Dead Body
8	Monrovia City Corporation	Have information on Covid-19 Solid Waste Management
9	Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Have information of National Food Distribution
10	General Auditing Commission	Supervision over Audits
11	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission	Supervision over Corruption related activities around Covid-19
12	Internal Audit Agency	Have information on internal Audit framework around proper financial accountability and transparency

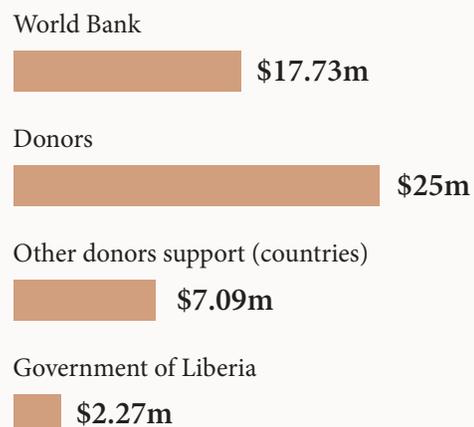


### *III. Impact of COVID-19 spending on social sectors such as health, education, WASH, and agriculture.*

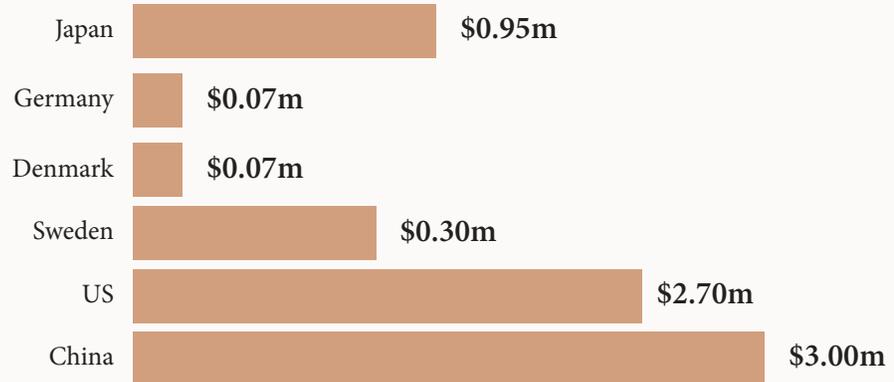
During the Pandemic, the Health sector was hardly hit with patients not infected by COVID-19 finding it difficult to access health services. Hence, The World Bank approved a US\$7.5 million International Development Association (IDA) financing to help Liberia respond to the threat posed by the Coronavirus outbreak.

The financing which consisted of a US\$3.75 million grant and US\$3.75 million concessional IDA credit, was intended to strengthen the Government of Liberia's immediate capacity to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak and in the longer-term, strengthen its response to disease outbreaks and emergencies. This complemented ongoing support provided through the Second Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement (REDISSE II) project which made available up to US\$9.5 million for the response.

#### *Health sector budget support (USD)*



*Other As indicated above Countries includes:*



*\*US = Grant + medical supplies*

Additional resources and funding received by the Government of Liberia were as follows:

1. Liberia's Finance and Development Planning Minister, Hon. Samuel D. Tweah Jr. has disclosed that the World Bank is expected to provide US\$15 million under contingency funds to aid Liberia in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Hon. Tweah made the disclosure late Thursday evening, March 19, 2020, during the first regular COVID-19 update by health authorities in the country. Minister Tweah said the Bank will provide an instant US\$1.5 million as the initial amount, while the remaining funds are expected in the weeks to come. He added that the Government of Liberia has initially provided US\$500,000 hundred thousand as support to the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak.

2. The European Commission on Friday, December 18 2020, announced the mobilization of €84.26 million in

support of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in four African countries including Liberia, Benin, The Central African Republic, and Sierra Leone. This was part of Europe's engagement towards her African partners to make it possible to achieve these two key objectives." The new EU funds will benefit the fight against coronavirus in the following countries: Benin (€46.56 million), Central African Republic (€14 million), Liberia (€8.7 million), and Sierra Leone (€15 million).

3. The Executive Board of the IMF at a meeting on Friday, June 5, 2020, approved the disbursement of SDR 36.2 million equivalent to US\$50 million or 14 percent of quota under the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF) to Liberia to help address the emergency financing needs stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. The Government of Liberia and USAID, on May 22, 2020, signed Six Hundred-forty million dollars (US\$640

million), Development Objective Grant Agreement (DOAG). The agreement is intended to foster self-reliance by spurring private sector-led economic expansion through a focus on catalyzing reforms and cultivating a healthy, productive, and educated workforce.

The agreement is a five years' program that runs from 2019 to 2024 with three (3) bilateral Development Objective Assistance Agreements namely Market-driven, inclusive economic growth supporting increased job creation; Effective and inclusive governance catalyzed through reforms and greater accountability and Foundation for growth strengthened through a healthy, productive, and educated population.

5. The African Development Bank's Board of Directors approved a UA38.15 million (US\$53.25 million) multi-country grant to The Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone in the form of direct budget support to bolster efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in the three West African countries.

The grant from the African Development Fund (ADF), aims to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in The Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone – known collectively as the GLS countries – by providing budget support to help fund each country's COVID-19 crisis response. The multi-country grant comprises an ADF grant of UA5 million and a TSF grant of UA5 million to the Republic of Gambia; an ADF grant of UA10.15 million to the

Republic of Liberia; and an ADF grant of UA18 million to the Republic of Sierra Leone.

## *Impact on Education*

To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Liberia, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and partners worked to establish practical distance learning and wellbeing options for learners at home. Radio lessons were developed and aired on several stations. The MoE established the Education in Emergency (EIE) Technical Working Group which comprises education and humanitarian sector partners. Education sector partners have aligned their programming to contribute to the emergency response, including reprogramming of funds initially earmarked for regular development programs.

The Ministry is actively communicating with partners in order to strengthen coordination mechanisms and is seeking technical and financial support from them to respond to this pandemic. The MoE has developed its own sector response plan aligned to the National COVID-19 Response Plan. The overall estimated cost of the Liberia Education in Emergency COVID-19 Response Plan<sup>21</sup> was put at US\$32,311,190.22. Of this amount, the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Education benefited from a US\$7 million COVID-19 grant support from the Global Partnerships for Education

<sup>21</sup>"National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Liberia - Food and ...."  
<http://www.fao.org/3/cb2114en/CB2114EN.pdf>.

through UNICEF.<sup>22</sup> It specifically supported the following:

Distance education platforms through radio, TV, SMS, online learning, and printed materials;

Early childhood education curriculum and materials;

Teaching and learning materials including for catch up classes and accelerated education programs;

Psychosocial support to teachers, students and parents by establishing a help desk- and through disseminating messages via radio stations and talk shows;

Health, well-being and nutrition for students, teachers and parents;  
Child protection and care by initiating a program to prevent abuse and exploitation, especially for girls;

Gender-sensitive WASH facilities for vulnerable schools;

Health kits for all schools and developing school health and well-being protocol;  
Accelerated learning based on revised school calendar;

Community mobilization guidance for schools with a focus on back-to-school campaigns.



<sup>22</sup> "Education in Liberia | Global Partnership for Education," <https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/liberia>.

It is also important to note that these initiatives are based on the Ministry of Education's COVID-19 response plan.<sup>23</sup>

In 2020, UNICEF appealed for US\$18 million to respond to the COVID-19 in Liberia. As of the end of July 2020, the funding gap is 42.1 per cent for the COVID-19 Humanitarian Action for Children. So far against UNICEF COVID-19 HAC in Liberia, UNICEF has received US\$8.89 million in new funding including US\$1 million from DFID, US\$100,000 from the Government of Sweden, US\$100,000 hundred thousand from the Government of Canada and US\$622,066 hundred thousand from the World Bank, in addition to US\$7 million from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Based on donor approval, the office has reprogrammed US\$2,145,735 for COVID-19 response.

In late March 2020, the UNICEF office in Liberia received a GPE grant of US\$70,000 hundred thousand to support the Ministry of Education with airing radio lessons and purchasing radios to allow vulnerable children to have access to the programs. In fulfillment of the President's pronouncement to provide honorarium as a stimulus package to private schools teachers across the country, the Ministry of Education continues the effort to ensure that all bonafide Private-school teachers receive their share of the designated US\$1 million.

To date, the Ministry has concluded the application processes which lasted for three (3) months beginning October 12, 2020, and ended January 12, 2021. The

process required Private-school administrations/authorities to submit names, contacts, National Identification Number (NIN), and schools' previous payroll via an official email address to the Stimulus Package Task Force headed by the MoE with support from the Ministry of Finance, Development & Planning and Civil Service Agency (CSA).

The payroll was requested to authenticate that these teachers were offering services to the school prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as the contact numbers were used as payment medium for disbursement using LonestarCell/MTN mobile money and Orange Money, respectively.

As a result of the applications received by the Taskforce, the Ministry in collaboration with the MFDP with support from the CSA has completed three separate batches accounting for approximately 5000 verified private-school teachers. The records show that many schools submitted incomplete information that denies the Stimulus Package Task Force from effecting payments.

Payments are approved only when a teacher's name is submitted by its employer with the appropriate information as stated above and more importantly, with a NIN which is the only tool used to verify and remove those teachers who are already on GoL payroll. Notably, teachers paid by GoL who received salaries during the COVID-19 are not eligible for the Private-schools stimulus package.

<sup>23</sup> "UNICEF Liberia Covid-19," 31 Jul. 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/media/82496/file/Liberia-COVID19-SitRep-31-July-2020.pdf>.

Furthermore, the Taskforce requested that Private-school teachers whose names were submitted by their respective schools but have not received payments should contact the Ministry on 1416 or visit the Communications Division of the Ministry of Education. the communication should be sent between now and before April 12, 2021, to verify any discrepancies which may be reasons for payments not disbursed.

Finally, the Ministry confirmed that a total amount of US\$45.00 is paid to each Private-school teacher as the honorarium package. These payments are meant to be made every Wednesday as corrections or completed information are shared by those concerned. April 12, 2021 is considered the cut-off point at which time, payment window will be closed. School Administrators and Teachers were encouraged to provide the right information and in full compliance with the above instruction to access the funds<sup>24</sup>

## *Impact on Agriculture*

The COVID-19 outbreak demonstrates both how health and food systems are linked to one another, and how local food systems are linked to global systems. High rates of urbanization and the globalization of trade and travel have contributed to the spread of the virus across countries. Lockdowns and movement restrictions within countries and across borders have disrupted national and local food and agricultural output and input markets and have caused sharp reductions in overall

economic activity globally. In poorer countries, disruptions have further exacerbated the fragility of systems (including agrifood systems) and livelihoods.

The food distribution system in Liberia is heavily dominated by small, independent transporters. The movement restrictions imposed during the SoE have significantly affected the link between agricultural product/food producers and consumers. Imports of food were also impacted by the transport restrictions. According to a Public Service Announcement by the Ministry of Transport, transport and movement restrictions of commercial and non-commercial vehicles have disrupted the entire supply system (Ministry of Transport, 2020).

On May 8, Liberia's Executive Committee on Coronavirus (ECOC), and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) launched an agriculture transport permit system, the Movement and Control Service (MOCO). This allows farmers, food producers, processors and sellers to use a mobile phone-enabled platform to obtain cross-county passes for transporting their food products during the lockdown.

The MoA's county coordinators report that lockdown restrictions on farmers are easing as they initiate the farming season (MoA, 2020a). In most counties, farmers are carrying out land clearing and preparation, while in others, they have already started planting (MoA, 2020a). The Department of Customs introduced procedures to facilitate trade and exchange with neighbouring

<sup>24</sup> "Ministry Of Education Moe Liberia Org - Christine Gauthier." <http://www.beta.christinegauthier.com/cgi-bin/file.php?article=ministry.of.education.moe.liberia.org&code=2d8f284e88bbbed530a02aa20daf2dd71>.

countries, which included: i) measures to facilitate the cross-border movement of relief and essential supplies, including food; ii) measures to support the economy and sustain supply chain continuity through economic stimulus; iii) measures to protect customs staff from COVID-19; and iv) measures to stop the import of fake drugs and other uncertified medical supplies, including testing kits (MoA, 2020b). Civil society organizations (CSOs) and human rights activists have called for the borders between Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea to be reopened to transborder economic activities in early September; these exchanges were an important source of livelihoods for many families living in the most remote parts of Liberia.

The MoA, CSOs, county farms and some private service providers were supporting local food distribution and home delivery. Producers from farms in northern and central Liberia as well as local farmers (those producing for and supplying to their own villages) are facilitating the supply of fruits and vegetables, oil palm, and poultry to their communities and local markets through phone orders and home deliveries (MoA, 2020b). Small-scale producers and farm owners have been encouraged by the government and CSOs to liaise with service providers to use digital technologies that link farmers to markets and to sell their produce in urban areas as well as in their own communities.

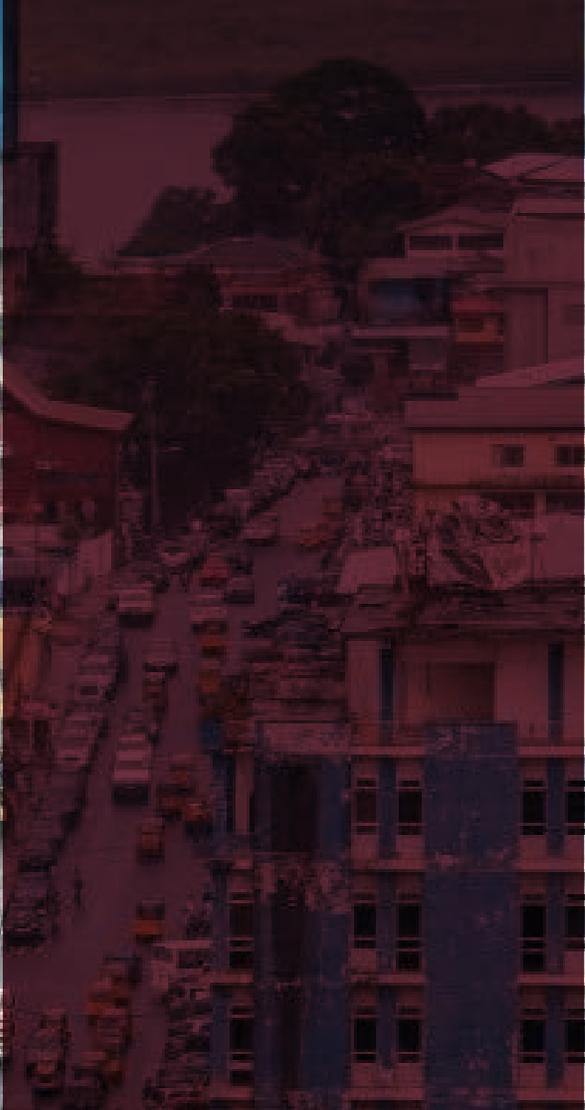
A rice seed voucher scheme was launched in June of 2020 under the USAID-funded Feed the Future Liberia

Agribusiness Development Activity (LADA). The project aims to distribute quality rice seeds to 1500 rice farmers in Bong, Nimba and Lofa Counties. Access to seeds and equipment. The MoA and relevant stakeholders and partners have developed a joint COVID-19 Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihood Response Plan to face COVID-19 impact. Drawing on its regional and district agriculture coordinators, the MoA has started to collect data on rice stockpiles in all districts to facilitate the purchase of rice seed under the emergency food security response plan.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has made significant progress in the procurement cycle of basic agro equipment, inputs and seeds covered under its World Bank's funded Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC) to mitigate food security shocks. The MoA will expedite the local purchase of tools, equipment and seeds to support farmers during the upcoming planting season.

The government and its development partners have reprogrammed many ongoing projects and activities to address the challenges of COVID-19, by providing seed and other inputs, capacity building and purchases of produce from farmers. Despite border closures with neighbouring countries, local farmers are now exploring cross-border cultural ties to bring in vital agriculture inputs and tools, which are scarce along Liberia's border towns.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> "National agrifood systems and COVID-19 in Liberia - Food and ..."  
<http://www.fao.org/3/cb2114en/CB2114EN.pdf>.





## *IV. Advocacy*

The COVID-19 pandemic has been without a doubt the most pressing issue throughout much of 2020. Across the world, as infection rates and deaths rose, the effects of the pandemic were felt across all sectors of society. Medical services have been overwhelmed, businesses have been shattered and governments have struggled to deal with the crisis. Across the length and breadth of the African continent, civil society organisations (CSOs) have not been spared.

The emergence of COVID-19 served to worsen already fragile economic and social conditions in many African countries. As the COVID-19 situation intensified in Liberia, CSOs began building coalitions to ensure that they do not wait for the end of a crisis, but begin engaging government from start to finish, using accountability safeguards in emergency situations.

Research has clearly shown that emergencies provide significant opportunities for the misuse of public resources, as oversight is reduced to increase the



speed of the response and impunity can become a normalized culture. This requires CSOs, particularly those involved in advocacy, to promote accountability and speak out against corruption in all aspects of governance, which should be even greater during emergencies. This is critical to ensure resources reach their intended targets, and also to prevent the loss of colossal sums of money to corruption. The intervention will have been much more transparent had the Government of Liberia taken the following into consideration:

- Ensure that institutions leading the community engagement Pillar of the responses increase the awareness on social distancing in disadvantaged neighborhoods, markets, prisons, orphanages, and residents of vulnerable youths in Liberia;
- Ensure that people with disabilities are not neglected but always granted access to health facilities;
- Ensure the Audit and Investigation of reported cases of corruption surrounding the execution of COVID-19 resources;
- Ensure robust inclusion of civil society in monitoring the response plan, raising awareness and implementing measures to alleviate the economic impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable groups by incorporating them into various technical working groups and committees coordinating the overall response strategy.

The COVID-19 crisis is global and has a massive impact on all countries in areas such as public health, employment, economic growth and social protection. The crisis requires urgent actions by governments, and it can sometimes be difficult to balance this carefully with accountability, transparency and integrity.

We know from previous pandemics and disasters that emergency situations can lead to basic control systems being suspended or bypassed, combined with weakening of accountability systems and

oversight. This can cause increased levels of waste, mismanagement and corruption at a time when government resources are under pressure.

As a respected oversight institution, institutions like the Internal Audit Agency (IAA), the General Auditing Commission (GAC), the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and the Public Procurement Concession Commission (PPCC) can play a key role in the different stages of a crisis like COVID-19 in Liberia. In this regard, audits of past crises – such as the Ebola Crisis, can provide key lessons to audit in the context of the coronavirus crisis.

In general, and always within their mandate and practices, it is understood that the actions of Integrity Institutions can be grouped into the following roles:

- Implement audits adapted to the current context;
- Provide advice on critical rules and regulations;
- Conduct real-time procurement audits to verify whether funds are being used in the right way and for the right purposes;
- Make explicit the persistence of the Integrity institutions oversight responsibility over national public accounts – despite the crisis – and its consequent role of general supervision of the administration of the crisis by

the Government. This can also generate a deterrent effect on those who see the crisis as an opportunity to violate regulations and controls, contributing indirectly to safeguarding government and donor funds;

- In terms of audit topics, they can audit the implementation of new regulations and programs, such as infection control or economic stimulation, and thereby contribute to effective government actions. This can help identify potential cases of fraud, waste and abuse of public

funds, counter misinformation, and build greater trust between citizens and government during a national emergency; and,

- Finally, already with the proper focus of performance auditing, the Integrity institutions can evaluate the economy, efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness of the use of funds and the national response to this situation. It goes without saying, that these reports can contribute to vertical and horizontal accountability, as well as for identifying lessons for the future.

# Acronyms

ADF African Development Fund	LADA Liberia Agribusiness Development Activity
CCTV China Central Television	LACC Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
CEPI Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations	MFDP Ministry of Finance, Development and Planning
CERC Contingency Emergency Response Component	MoA Ministry of Agriculture
COHFSP COVID-19 Household Food Support Program	MOCO Movement and Control Service
COVAX COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access	MoE Ministry of Education
CPP Collaborating Political Parties	NAPHS National Action Plan for Health Security
CSA Civil Service Agency	NGO Non Governmental Organisation
CSO Civil Society Organizations	NIN National Identification Number
CTAP COVID-19 Transparency and Accountability Project	NMRP National Multi-sectoral Response Plan
DFID Department for International Development	NPHIL National Public Health Institute of Liberia
DOAG Development Objective Grant Agreement	PFI Public Finance Institutions
ECOC Executive Committee on Coronavirus	PHEIC Public Health Emergency of International Concern
EIE Education in Emergency Technical Working Group	PPCC Public Procurement Concession Commission
EVD Ebola Virus Disease	RCF Rapid Credit Facility
EU European Union	REDISSE Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement Project
GAC General Auditing Commission	SDR Special Drawing Rights
GAVI The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations	SII Serum Institute of India
GDP Gross Domestic Product	SoE State of Emergency
GLS The Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone	STEP Systematic Tracking and Exchanges in Procurement
GOL Government of Nigeria	TSF Transition Support Facility
GPE Global Partnership for Education	UN United Nations
HAC Humanitarian Action for Children	UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
IAA Internal Audit Agency	USAID United States Agency for International Development
IDA International Development Association	WASH Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
IHR International Health Regulations	WFP World Food Programme
IMF International Monetary Fund	WHO World Health Organisation
IMS Incident Management System	
INGO International Non-governmental Organization	
IPF Investment Project Financing	

# Appendix

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