



National Health Workers' Union of Liberia

(NAHWUL)

An Affiliate of the Liberia Labour Congress (LLC)

Adjacent EXSECON PLAZA
Telecom Community
Paynesville, Liberia

President: Joseph S. Tamba
Gen. Sec.: George Poe Williams

(All Correspondence to be addressed to the General Secretary)

Contacts:
Email: nahwal231@gmail.com
Cell.: +231 886 624 707/777049431
+231 886 660 856/776094253

COVID-19 UPDATE - LIBERIA **March 23, 2020**

On 16 March 2020 President George Manneh Weah announced to the Liberian people and the world at large that Liberia had recorded its index case of the current global pandemic of COVID-19. According to a Public Service announcement from the desk of the Information Minister, Eugene Lenn Nagbe, the case was registered on March 13, 2020 thus the Ministry of Education had mandated all schools included institutions of higher learning to suspend classes for one week as of Tuesday, March 17 subject to further assessment of the situation.

An adult male returning from Switzerland on Friday, March 13, 2020 was tracked at the Robert International Airport to have had fever and was thus of public health concern as he was coming from a country of the Coronavirus outbreak. His laboratory result later confirmed him positive thereby placing Liberia, epicenter of the Ebola Crisis in 2014, on the COVID-19 Pandemic Map. In a national address, President Weah said Mr Nathaniel Blama, who served as Director of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), refused to conform to the regulations into place at the airport and went home.

Contact tracing and testing proved one of Mr Blama`s Domestic Workers, Johnny Philips, to be positive of COVID-19 on 17 March 2020 marking the second case in Liberia. Mr Blama has since been suspended from his position in government by President Weah. Three days later the country recorded its third COVID-19 positive case, this time a 63-year-old female, who is residing in Italy but is currently visiting back home was reportedly seen interacting with another Liberian female friend.

Until then and even now, the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health continues to reassured the public of its preparedness to handle the global pandemic calling for calm amongst the population while at the same time calling on everyone to follow the precautionary measures in place for the safety of all. Contact tracing and testing of all contact persons continue while those contact persons who tested negative are undergoing special quarantine awaiting their second test in seven days.

Meanwhile, the workers` union attention had been drawn to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in a relatively short time and was constrained to speak out given the emphasis of preparedness as is being guaranteed by the health authorities in Liberia compare with the prevailing circumstances on the work floor. NAHWUL through its deputy secretary general, comrade Deemi T. Dearzrua, cautioned citizens to follow the precautionary measures as announced by WHO and the Liberian Health Authorities, noting that beyond preventive measures there is absolutely nothing the health system

“Injury to ONE, Injury to All”

could do regarding treatment plan due to the fact that for a while there had been no Essential Drug, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), electricity, running water, Oxygen and many other supplies and logistics in the system making it incapable to respond adequately to the care of COVID-19 patients. NAHWUL equally pointed out the exclusion of the union`s representatives in the planning of the response strategy of the COVID-19 in the same manner as did the past regime which led to the death of over 200 health workers during the 2014-15 Ebola Crisis. NAHWUL called on the Government of Liberia and her partners for workers` inclusion in strategic planning, refresher trainings for frontlines workers, adequate supply of PPE, Essential Drug across the country among others.

Within 24 hours of the union Press Conference, The Ministry of Health released a Declaration of National Health Emergency of 16 golden rules which was climaxed by the statement, “Official information and communication on the COVID-19 virus shall only be announced by the MOH/NPHIL and MICAT. All citizens, residents and visitors are required to abide by these rules. The Ministry of Justice, as head of the joint security, shall enforce these rules without prejudice”.

While the union of the frontlines workers in the combat against this global virus outbreak welcomes the government`s efforts to call its citizens and residents alike to order in observance of the precautionary measures, it totally differs with the harsh and intimidatory ending note of the declaration. NAHWUL sees this as not only intended to curb spreading of misleading information by unscrupulous people, but also to muscle the workers from speaking out against bad working conditions during the crisis which her members note with grieve concern will have fatal repercussion as was the case of the Ebola Crisis in 2014. NAHWUL vows to never again witness its members go to the slaughter house and will thus remain constructively engage and never compromise the safety of its members.

In solidarity



Deemi T. Dearzrua

Assistant Secretary General, NAHWUL

