



## NEWS SITUATION TRACKING for Liberia

Vol. 01



<b>Location:</b>	Monrovia, Montserrado – Liberia
<b>Issue:</b>	Outbreak of Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) in Liberia
<b>Date:</b>	March 16 – 31, 2020

### COMMUNITY PROFILING

### CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS

### INCIDENT PROFILING

#### Population:

Liberia's population is estimated at 5.6 million<sup>1</sup>. The Greater Monrovia area is home to about 25% of Liberia's population<sup>2</sup>.

#### Basic Demography and Geography of Hotspots:

Liberia is located along the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Guinea. It shares borders with Sierra Leone in the West, Guinea in the North, Cote d'Ivoire in the East.

Liberia's Capital, Monrovia is currently the hotspot of the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). All of Liberia's neighbours have recorded a number of confirmed cases posing a risk to cross border spread of the disease.

#### Ethnicity:

Liberia has 16 indigenous ethnic groups accounting for 95% of the country's population<sup>3</sup>.

#### Significance of the State:

Liberia has a larger portion of the upper Guinea forest and also endowed with natural resources including gold and dialond deposits in at least 90% of the 15 sub-political divisions of the country.

#### Direct Actors:

The people of Liberia

#### Affected Persons:

Residents Barnesville, Paynesville and Central Monrovia .

#### Interested Actors:

The Incidents Management Team (IMT), Ministry of Health (MoH), National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Liberia National Police (LNP), National Disaster Management Agency, Armed Forces of Liberia, Ministry of Education & National Commission on Higher Education, World Health Organization (WHO), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Diplomatic Missions accredited near Monrovia, Liberia Council of Churches, National Muslim Council of Liberia, trhe Media and the National Civil Society Council of Liberia.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by a severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). This disease was first discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei, China. The World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 declared the disease as a "Pandemic".<sup>6</sup>

Since the outbreak, the virus has spread across the globe with more than 1,270,000 confirmed cases reported in over 180 countries and regions as at April 5, 2020. The pandemic has claimed the lives of more than 69,300 people, with more than 259,800 recoveries worldwide (as at April 5, 2020)<sup>7</sup>.

Liberia announced its first confirmed positive case of the COVID-19 on Friday March 13, 2020 involving a Liberian who returned home form an official trip to Switzerland. Since then, the country has recorded 13 confirmed cases with 3 deaths and 3 recoveries (as at April 5, 2020)<sup>8</sup>.

As at date, the IMT is following up on 259 cases under observation on a routin basis, while 59 high risk cases are quarantined at the 14<sup>th</sup> Military Hospital in Lower Margibi County.

<sup>1</sup> Source: "World Population Review" <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/liberia-population/> (Accessed 4/04/2020)

<sup>2</sup> Liberia National Pouplation and Housing Census 2008: www. Source: "World Population Review" <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/liberia-population/> (Accessed 4/04/2020).

<sup>3</sup> Source: Liberian History up to 1847, Dr. Joseph Saye Guannu (Accessed 4/04/2020).

<sup>6</sup> WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 – 11 March 2020". World Health Organization. 11 March 2020. (Accessed 11/03/2020).

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6> (Accessed April 1, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

**Economy:**

**Currencies:** USD

**GDP:** US\$3.22 billion

**GDP per capita:** US\$541.30 (62%)  
(All World Bank figures)

**Politics:**

Liberia has a multi-party democratic system with more than 19 political parties. The Government is modeled on the Government of the United States of America and has three distinct branches (Legislature, Executive and Judiciary).

**Religion:**

**Christianity:** 88.5% (Protestants, Catholic, other Christians) (2008 NHP census)<sup>4</sup>

**Muslim** 12.2%,

**Traditionalist** 1.7%, other faith 0.6 (2008 NHP census)<sup>5</sup>

**RISK ANALYSIS**

- The COVID-19 preventive measures and lockdown directives by the Government is intended to limit the spread of the virus in the country. However, the measures also have devastating and long term effects on the economy, business, employment and educational system. The youth and the elderly of the population are the most vulnerable to the pandemic. With a young population (63 per cent less than 25 years and 32.8% is 10-24 years old), mostly comprising ex-combatants who face formidable challenges including limited access to employment, housing and stable sources of income. The pandemic and its aftermath would have a considerable impact on their socio-economic wellbeing<sup>9</sup>.
- Given the trends in the spread of the disease in the country and the weaknesses in healthcare systems already affected by the Ebola crisis in 2014 – 2016, the risks of increased cases have the potential to overwhelm the capacity of the existing health systems. This would further aggravate the challenges in healthcare delivery to populations across the country.
- The spread of the virus would also expose the Government to undertake unbudgeted health and security spending with consequences on the already fragile economic and security situation in the country.
- The current situation also heightens fear and anxiety among the population that could degenerate into tension and public disorder. Similarly, the handling of the pandemic could stimulate existing political tensions with potential to turn violent, targeting security operatives, health care workers and other first responders in the fight to stem the transmission of the virus.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.commisceo-global.com/resources/country-guides/ghana-guide> (Accessed 4/04/2020).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> UNFPA Liberia

- Enforcing the lockdown measures could also lead to violations and abuses of human rights as well as potential to increase sexual and gender-based violence, especially against women and girls.

## RESPONSES

- The Government declared a “National Health Emergency”, lockdown and other preventive measures to stem the spread of the virus. The Ministry of Health, in accordance with Title 33, Chapter 14 of the Liberian Code of Law as revised, known as, the Public Health Law, declared Montserrado and Margibi Counties as infected areas where travel in and out were discouraged for an incubation period of 21 days in an effort to contain and further prevent the spread of the virus<sup>10</sup>.
- All commercial flights were suspended, public gatherings discouraged, bars, night clubs, casinos, entertainment centers, betting centers among others ordered closed, while hand washing in public places and homes made mandatory.
- A mandatory 14-days quarantine measures instituted for persons coming into Liberia. Citizens have been advised to stay home to cut down on the spread of the virus and safe their respective families and friends.
- Churches, Mosques, religious centers, and other places of worship ordered closed in observance of preventive measures;
- Ministry of Education suspended all academic activities in Liberia with immediate effect.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Government through the Incidents Management Team (IMT) ensure that those quarantined at various withholding centers are well taken care of in an effort to reduce level of disenchantment from individuals;
- The Government should also increase its efforts in strengthening multisectoral and multilateral coordination collaboration with neighbouring countries, and various in-country stakeholders to sustain the fight against the deadly COVID-19 pandemic;
- The IMT and security agencies to ensure monitoring and enforcement of the 16-counts declarations to prevent the further transmission of the deadly COVID-19 in Liberia;
- The Ministry of Health and National Public Health Institute of Liberia should prioritize the protection of vulnerable groups, especially the elderly, physically challenged and women, by providing them food, hand washing and sanitizing materials.
- Civil Society Organizations and other INGOs should support and intensify social mobilization and community awareness in the fight against the pandemic in Liberia.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: A public declaration released by the Ministry of Health on Saturday, March 21, 2020 (Accessed 4/04/2020).