



OFFICE OF THE FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

THE EXECUTIVE MANSION
MONROVIA, LIBERIA

Office of the Director of Press

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Press Release

**Message delivered by H.E. Mrs. CLAR MARIE WEAH
First Lady of the Republic of Liberia and Ambassador of Merck Foundation “More Than a
Mother”
at the Merck Foundation First Ladies Initiative – MFFLI - VC Summit held 18th May 2022.**

My Dear Sisters, Your Excellencies African First Ladies, Chairman of Executive Board of Merck – Prof. Frank Stangenberg-Haverkamp. CEO of Merck Foundation- Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

Warmest greetings from our family in Liberia, President George Manneh Weah, my husband and all the wonderful people of Liberia who join me at this moment in appreciating the Merck Foundation whose interventions in Liberia are making a constructive difference. It is my prayer that you and your families are safe and healthy.

As we commemorate another anniversary, I truly appreciate our partnership with Merck Foundation and acknowledge their smart and serious strategies to provide specialty training for our local doctors, even before this global crisis, so that they can provide the quality healthcare required by our people in the near future.

I am pleased to be part of Merck Foundation’s Prestigious platform again this year, particularly as the Ambassador of Merck More Than a Mother in Liberia which has me totally immersed in our mandate as espoused by the Merck Foundation to empower infertile women through access to information, education, health and the imminent change of mind-sets. Moreover to empower our girls in education through Merck Foundation’s unique programs which Liberian girls are beneficiaries.

Nothing gives me the greatest joy than to underscore my partnership with your Excellencies First Ladies, to work together to make a significant impact in our countries and the whole world through our strong platform, Merck Foundation First Ladies’ Initiative. It is our role as First Ladies to establish such strong and longterm partnerships with organizations such as Merck Foundation and to capitalize on this opportunity to improve access to quality and equitable healthcare solutions for our communities.

Our Summit this year, though virtual, gives me a deep sense of personal interconnectedness that gives me that level of comfort to share our experience and outcome of our joint programs of strengthening the public healthcare capacity, supporting girl education and breaking infertility stigma in Liberia and the rest of Africa.

During the last couple of years, when the world was battling with COVID 19, we realized more than ever the importance of strengthening our healthcare. We also realized that we need to continue working hard to advance and build healthcare capacity to ensure our people’s access to equitable and quality health care.

We are glad to report that in Liberia, Merck Foundation programs have strongly pushed to help support the continuous building and improving our healthcare capacity by providing effective training for our healthcare providers at all levels through the offering of scholarships in various specialty areas such as:



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Diabetes, Cardiovascular Preventive, Sexual and Reproductive care, Respiratory care and Acute & Intensive care, Oncology and Fertility Specialists and Embryology Training. Such intervention by the Merck Foundation here in Liberia is being historically recorded in the annals of Liberia, something we do not take lightly.

I am thankful for our partnership with Merck Foundation. It has been very helpful to the people of our nation.

In Liberia, we will, in tandem with the Merck Foundation and as the Ambassador of Merck More Than a Mother, work closely with our supported healthcare professionals to empower infertile women through access to information, education, health and change of mind set. Moreover, to address critical social and health issues like empowering girls in education, stopping GBV, ending child marriage, ending FGM, prevention and early detection of diabetes etc.

We were quite elated to have launched Merck Foundation “More than a Mother” Awards and “Promoting Healthy Lifestyle Awards” for media, filmmakers, musicians and fashion designers. This is a very unique initiative to encourage our young talents to address important and critical social and health issues of our communities.

We have celebrated winners of past editions and look forward to celebrating this year as well.

I am particularly thankful to Merck Foundation and my dear sister Dr. Rasha Kelej for providing Sanitary Napkin Production Machine and raw materials for Liberia under the “Hygiene Management of School Girls” and “Educating Linda” program that I started in Liberia last year. After providing the training required to start operating this machine, we will be able to provide thousands of good quality Sanitary pads to our schoolgirls, ensuring good menstrual hygiene for them so they can continue their education without interruption. This program will prove very beneficial for our girls and their empowerment through education, and I am very passionate about this initiative. However, due to our context and the volume of requests and urgent needs, we truly seek a deeper level of support for our programs here in Liberia and seek your warm and generous understanding.

As we continuously strive to break the infertility stigma and emphasize family values of love and respect, I must say that the 30,000 copies of the three children’s storybooks, “Marpeh’s Story”, “Educating Miatta” and “Make the Right Choice”, that were distributed to our schools, helped tremendously.

On behalf of the people of Liberia, we welcome the long-term partnership with Merck Foundation to strengthen our health care capacity and support girls’ education. Again, seeking urgent additional support cannot be overemphasized as we remain ever more grateful to all of you and the Merck Foundation.

Thank you, Merck Foundation, for hosting us today, I am very happy to be here and be part of this beneficial platform and programs.

I am very excited and looking forward to meeting you all in person during the Annual Conference of Merck Foundation – Merck Africa Asia Luminary in November.

Until then, stay safe and stay healthy!

Thank you!