

SPECIAL REMARKS

By

Honorable Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor

Vice President of the Republic of Liberia

at the

Learning and Dissemination Event

Of the

USAID-SPONSORED MATERNAL & CHILD SURVIVAL PROGRAM

(Human Resources for Health Projects)

Millennium Guest House

Tubman Boulevard

Monrovia, Liberia

Thursday, September 13, 2018

***Honorable Members of the National Legislature Present;
Minister Dr. Wilhemina S. Jallah of the Ministry of Health;
Other members of the Cabinet Present;
USAID Chief of Party, Marion K. Subah;
Physicians, Surgeons, and Other Medical Practitioners;
Officials & Representatives of our Health Institutions;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Representatives of our Development Partners;
Our Good Friends of the Press;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:***

I feel it a great honor to form a part of this event today, particularly as this focuses on an anomaly that women have continued to suffer. It is impossible for me to restrain my excitement in the good heart that you, our compassionate partners, have shown in this bothersome area that is plaguing our female population.

The gravity of the challenged nature of the health situation we as a nation have adequately underscores the high relevance of the nature of the Learning and Dissemination Event that we launch here today. Yes indeed, the United Nations has established that globally maternal mortality has fallen by 37% since 2000.

It is however noted that maternal mortality ratio--the proportion of mothers that do not survive childbirth compared to those who do--in developing regions is still 14 times higher than in the developed regions.

We should thus acknowledge that we have a far way to go, though Liberia at some point did register some modest gains in this sphere. For, here we are still stuck with a country that is burdened with a staggering over 1,000 maternal deaths for every 100,000 births.

This has unfortunately relegated us to such an unenviable classification as one of those countries carrying the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. It is only prudent that we brace ourselves to confront this behemoth of a challenge to exorcise this evil malaise that persists in bedeviling our forward march as a nation.

And so, that we are here today in a concerted effort at doing something to help enhance our health care delivery system, specifically to improve the chances of maternal and child survival, should speak loudly to the fact that we are setting our priorities right.

For this, I should applaud the generosity of the American people, through the United States Aid for International Development, for sustaining the Maternal and Child Survival Program. Strengthening our frontline health workforce, especially focusing on pre-service education for Midwifery and Medical Laboratory Technician institutions is for me such a worthy and welcome undertaking.

I also appreciate you, Madam Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health Family, for stepping forth into a productive partnership of this sort that goes to impact our health sector. I should, in equal measure, extend our deep gratitude to other participants in this enterprise, for this useful collaborative effort in an area of so dire need.

I urge all of you to stay the course as I in the same breathe assure you of the blessing of H.E. President George Manneh Weah, as well as my specific interest and support, to this worthy effort that goes directly to meaningfully impacting the lives of our people.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Partners;

We as a nation stand out as experienced victims and thankful survivors of the punishing consequences of a broken health system. The onslaught by the Ebola Virus Disease—which came from our blind side--and its intensity exacted such massive toll on this nation, was such a rude awakening that left us ever alert and in perpetual motion, is search of more viable and sustainable health care delivery system.

The after effect of this devastating scourge sent us rallying and marshalling all partners and resources to construct a system to fill the colossal void that had this country at such incalculable risk.

In this frantic quest to render our health system potent and sustainable, we were able to mobilize resources, assemble our best minds in the trade, and generate partners support to evolve what we now have as the ***Investment Plan for Building a Resilient Health System in Liberia 2015 to 2021.***

A resilient health system has been often defined as the capacity of health actors, institutions, and populations to provide appropriate health services, prepare for and effectively respond to crises; maintain core functions when a crisis hits; and be informed by lessons learned during the crisis and reorganize if conditions require it. This Plan carries ambitious, but realistic projections as to where we want to be in the three plus years.

But long before the end date of that Plan, we have witnessed the ushering in of a new Administration, with the leadership of His Excellency Ambassador George Manneh Weah. This Government carries a burning desire to uplift the general and particular situation of the population. Contributions such as this health sector strengthening program therefore goes to help our hands in uplifting the sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

No doubt a weak health system makes for one critical area that continues to pin the poor and underprivileged down, barricading them away from becoming productive and participating citizens.

What we launch here today goes to the basics of the framework for tackling some of these health challenges that have besiege the poor people for so long. You therefore are, in full force, lending the Government's pro-poor initiatives a great deal of help by strengthening service delivery in maternal and new-born health.

Your broad aim of ***strengthening the capability and resilience of Liberia's frontline health workforce to address second order impacts from the Ebola crisis while strengthening pre-service training of midwives and laboratory personnel***—is vital and squarely on target. Imbedded in this approach is a focus on two critical cadres that will ensure provision of quality, safe and respectful services.

One key strand of your germane objectives is to decrease maternal mortality by increasing births in clinics and births attended by skilled birth attendants (midwives) and to strengthen existing maternal health services, community networks and include new service points. These go to the nerve of unshackling our underserved populations from this inhibiting phenomenon of maternal and child mortality.

We are thus in the right place this morning and for the right purpose. I urge you to press forward with this and similar endeavors, in our concerted national effort to bring relief to our people and lift our country onto a loftier and enviable level.

As I close, therefore, let me convey from His Excellency Ambassador George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, and in my own name, as Vice President of this great Nation, all our best wishes for a successful execution of this program, to the glory of God and the benefit of our people. With that much to share, let me again thank and congratulate you for this venture which carries so much potential for strengthening our health care delivery system.

May God bless the works of our hands and guide our nation.

Delivered on Behalf of the Vice President By:

Mr. Anthony V. Kesselly
SENIOR POLICY SPECIALIST
Office of the Vice President