



# THE FACT CHECK



N E W S L E T T E R

- HOME THE PRESIDENT THE VICE PRESIDENT THE FIRST LADY MOS SPEECHES MAJOR ISSUES MEDIA CENTER CONTACT US
- PRESIDENT'S DAILY ACTIVITIES AU-HLC LINKS CAREER OPPORTUNITIES SPACOC RESPONSE UPDATES

## President Weah Names New LAA Managing Director

Wednesday, 4th May 2022

**Monrovia, Liberia** -The President of the Republic, H.E. Dr. George Manneh Weah, has appointed Mr. Darlington T. Karnley as Managing Director of the Liberia Airport Authority (LAA).

Mr. Karnley was appointed on Wednesday, May 4, 2022.

The new LAA Managing Director presently works at Boeing America's leading aircraft manufacturer as Avionics Tech Specialist Manager, managing all installations, inspection, adjust, or repairs avionics equipment, such as radar, radio, navigation, and missile control systems in aircraft or space vehicles.

He is also an Aviation Maintenance Technician in Airframe and Powerplant.

Mr. Karnley, comes to the portfolio with a rich background in the field of Aviation and is a graduate in Aviation Management from the Aviation Institute of Maintenance in Philadelphia.



- ### MEDIA CENTER
- Press Releases
  - Statements
  - Briefings
  - Gallery
  - Videos
  - Audios
  - Conversation with the President
  - Bids & EOs
  - Talk With The President
  - Executive Horn
  - Features

## Fact Checking Credentials of Darlington Karnley – Liberia Airport Authority Managing Director-Designate

**Paynesville – Monrovia –** On Wednesday, May 4, 2022, President George Weah nominated Mr. Darlington T. Karnley as Managing Director of the Liberia Airport Authority (LAA). In a Press Release, the Executive Mansion stated that Mr. Karnley has “a rich background in the field of aviation and is a Master’s Degree Candidate in aviation management from the Aviation Institute of Maintenance in Philadelphia”.

Following the pronouncement, social media became flooded with variety of claims about Mr Karnley’s credentials. Some Facebook users claimed they were fake and refuted the information published by the Office of the President. Some criticized the President for

appointing an individual, who they claimed, lacks the basic credentials to manage the country’s airports. In one post by Liberian youth activist Martin K. N. Kollie, he wrote: “The credentials of Weah’s nominee for Airport Manager are FAKE. Darlington Karnley is a FRAUD. Aviation Institute of Maintenance (AIM) in Philly does not offer any degree. It’s a trade school like MVTC. Why GMW can’t check b4 [before] nominating” Local Voices Liberia Fact Checking Desk carefully reviewed the website of the Philadelphia’s Campus of AIM and found that the branch of AIM in that state does not offer any course in Aviation Management as claimed by the Executive Mansion.

Continue on page 5

### MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

When we started the fact checking desk operations back in June 2021, we knew we were entering unfamiliar territory. For all the fact checkers and myself, journalism had been our vocation – a profession we have tried to master. But fact checking is a bit more difficult. In fact, there’s a fine line between fact checking and journalism. We are gradually advancing in this new terrain. It is our conviction that we can help the public consume credible information.

In the information ecosystem, social media is a double-edged sword. It can be used to effectively communicate or market, but it can also be used to rapidly spread misinformation and disinformation. Even the mainstream media is struggling to grapple with the threat social media poses, but the mainstream also elevate misinformation.

Since June 2021, we have tracked over 146 claims (statements that cast a certain doubt and have to be fact checked) and have produced over 50 fact-checked reports. It is difficult to fact check all the claims we come across, that’s why we have embarked on a media literacy radio program to help the public cultivate the culture of verifying or fact checking information they come across.

As always, the information we consume impacts the decision we make and we are optimistic that the more we fact check, the more we will curb the spread of misinformation or disinformation.

Our team is committed to continuing fact checking in Liberia, and we are optimistic that your support will enhance the work we do. Thanks to European Union for co-financing the Liberia Media Initiative.

Regards,  
Alpha Daffae Senkpeni  
EDITOR



The LVL Fact Checking Desk is part of the Liberia Media Initiative (LMI), co-financed by the European Union. This dedicated portal was created and maintained with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of LVL and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.”



# Liberia's First Fully Functional Fact Checking Agency

- Thanks to the European Union funded Liberia Media Initiative

**Paynesville** – Liberia now has a fully functional fact checking agency, the very first – thanks to European Union funded Liberia Media Initiative (LMI).

The Fact Checking Desk tracks, verifies contentious claims circulating in Liberia and publishes fact-checked reports. The desk is operated by Local Voices Liberia Media Network, a network of mainly rural Liberian journalists established with the support of Internews in 2014 during the Ebola crisis.

At a well-attended formal launch of the Desk on 31st March 2022 in Monrovia, deputy head of Mission of the European Union Delegation to Liberia, Anders Arvidsson, said LVL Desk will further institutionalize fact checking in journalism in Liberia

and bring information and facts closer to the Liberian people. “My team in the EU Delegation and myself are proud to hear that both the newsletters and website have been steadily growing over the last months. More than 20 radio stations have been broadcasting the work done and the level of detailed and professional information and facts continue to surprise us.”

Setting up the Fact Checking Desk and building skills and capacities

The Desk was set up in June 2021. Alpha Daffae Senkpeni, LVL's executive director, praises the added values that the fact checking Desk has brought to his organization. “Now, people call us fact checking giants of Liberia. This means so much to our reputation.”

“

There was initially a lack of skills and capacities to verify facts. Even well-experienced journalists required training in fact checking. Setting up the Desk required building the skills and capacities of journalists through a reputable organization with technical and practical know-how in fact-checking journalism.

Africa's foremost fact-checking organization, Africa Check, supported and advised on the development of a training manual on fact-check and verification tools, conducted a training-of-trainers for newly recruited journalist staff of LVL, serving as Fact-Checkers at the central LVL Checking Desk.

For Alpha, the ToT and mentoring were an eye-opener. “The training broadened our understanding of what fact-checking is.” According to Grace Gaie, one of two women f



act checkers at the central LVL Fact Checking Desk. “The training was very, very interesting. It was educative as well. It opened my mind to many things ... that we didn’t know before.”

Increasing Number of Liberian Fact Checkers LVL’s staff are now not the only ones with knowledge and skills in fact checking. After the Africa Check training, LVL had better internal capacity to roll out its own round of training. In June 2021, the group trained 19 journalists across the country, comprising of 11 women who support the desk as mobile fact checkers. They report to the central Desk information, rumors and misinformation they collect in their individual communities – and then the central desk does the verification and communicate facts back to communities– and publishes on different channels.

The number of Liberian journalists with new or increased knowledge in fact checking will significantly increase with more training and mentoring by Africa Check and LVL.

Fact checking, a new phenomenon

Though fact-checking journalism is not unique to Liberia, it was recognized by both Grace and Alpha as “a new thing” and “a new phenomenon” in Liberia.

For Malcolm W. Joseph, executive director of the Center Media Studies and Peacebuilding (CEMESP), a regular reader of LVL’s fact-checked contents. “Fact-checking is a new development; and I think it provides an opportunity to be able to verify and cross-check information as they appear in the media – whether it is in the newspapers, on radio, or even now, on social media.”

Publishing, broadcasting, livestreaming facts

Out of over 200 claims, Local Voices has published close to 75 fact-checked reports. The stories are on a dedicated portal on LVL existing website. Functions on the portal are continuously being improved to enhance audience interactions. “We track wide range of claims,” says Alpha. “We track claims concerning the COVID-19, claims concerning the vaccines of COVID-19, and we fact-check claims that involve politics,

economics, social issues.”

In addition, LVL produce a 45-minute media literacy radio show called Know The Facts broadcast on 20 radio stations; a Facebook livestream interview known as Facts from the Expert; and in-person Public Forums on Fake News, Rumours, and Hate Speech.

The Results: Big Success in disrupting the disruption of fake news

In April 2022, LVL received an invitation from Africa Check to become a signatory to the International Fact Checking Network.

CEMESP director believes the institutionalization of fact checking is a major achievement of the LMI project. “I can surely say without that this is a success story, and we need to build upon it and improve. It is new. It has not sunk well into our context. But gradually, everybody will get to understand it and appreciate fact-checking.”

# LISTEN TO THE FACT CHECK RADIO SHOW ON ECOWAS RADIO 91.5 FM EVERY SUNDAY @ 5PM



Our research also found that the AIM does not grant bachelor's and master's degrees in Philadelphia. This means, the Philadelphia Campus is basically a vocational training institution. The programs offered at the school include, Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT), Aviation Maintenance Technician Avionics (AMTA), Maintenance Technician, Professional Aviation Maintenance Certification online course and Unmanned Aircraft Systems.

According to the AIM website, it currently has 14 aviation maintenance schools that are accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) in 11 states across the United States of America. Below is a list of the various campuses:

- Atlanta, Georgia – Metro
- Charlotte, NC
- Chicago, IL
- Dallas, Texas – Metro
- Fremont, California
- Houston, Texas
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- Kansas City, Missouri
- Las Vegas, Nevada
- Norfolk, Virginia
- Northern Virginia
- Orlando, Florida – Metro
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Teterboro, New Jersey

Does Mr. Karnley work for America's leading aircraft manufacturer? We also checked.

Meanwhile, in the release, the Executive Mansion also stated that “the new LAA Managing Director presently works at Boeing, America's leading aircraft manufacturer as Avionics Tech Specialist Manager, managing all installations, inspection, test, adjust, or repairs avionics equipment, such as radar, radio, navigation, and missile control systems in aircraft or space vehicles”.

When we checked, Mr. Karnley name did not appear on any list of employees at Boeing – the world's leading aircraft manufacturer. Considering the position (Avionics Tech Specialist Manager) mentioned by the Executive Mansion that it claims Mr. Karnley occupies at the company is an essential staff position which the company labels as “key employees”.

But a review of Boeing's key employees listing did not find Mr Karnlay's name enlisted.

We also reviewed the Boeing Zoominfo Directory – where the names and titles of all the company's current 93,558 employees are listed – but Karnley's name was not found.

## CONCLUSION

Based on our research, we conclude that the claim made by activist Martin K.N Kollie and others that the credentials of President Weah's nominee for Liberia Airports Authority Manager Director is fake is mostly correct. And that the Executive Mansion statement about Mr. Karnley's credential is incorrect. Mr. Karnley is not a master's degree candidate in aviation management at the Aviation Institute of Maintenance in Philadelphia because the school does not offer bachelor's or master's degrees as claimed by the Executive Mansion.

We also conclude that the claim by the Executive Mansion that Mr. Karnley works as Avionics Tech Specialist Manager at Boeing is incorrect. Mr. Karnley's name could not be found on the company's employees' directory.



[www.localvoicesliberia.com](http://www.localvoicesliberia.com)

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# Fact Checking Minister Trokon Kpui's Statement about Source of Funding for Invincible Sports Park

**Monrovia** — Mr. Trokon Kpui, the Minister of States Without Portfolio who oversaw the construction of the Invincible Sports Park project, claims that 60% of the cost of the project was provided personally by President George Weah.

Speaking when he appeared as a guest on the April 5th edition of The Spoon Talk, Minister Kpui claimed that 60% of the fund was provided by President Weah and added that the rest of the funds for the project were made available by the National Port Authority, Liberia Maritime Authority, and the National Social Security and Welfare Corporation. He disclosed that the project costs a “little over” US\$2 million.

Said Min. Kpui: “The President funded this project 60% and the rest came from NPA, NASSCORP and Maritime”.

The park, which is located within the vicinity of the James Spring airfield (airport) in Monrovia, was dedicated to the public on Friday, April 15, 2022.

But a review of Annex 4 of the Draft National Budget of 2022, which is the Public Sector Investment Plan, shows that an allocation of US\$500,000 was made for the Invincible Sports Park. The fund was placed under allotment made to the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs.

This means, the National Budget also funded the construction of the Invincible Sports Park with US\$500,000 although Minister Kpui did not mention the 2022 National Budget as one of the sources of funding for the project.

National Budget						2022
ANNEXES						
Annex 4: Public Sector Investment Plan						
Code Sector/Ministry/Project	FY2020-21 Actual	FY2021 SP. Budget	FY2021 SP. Outturn	FY2022 Budget	FY2023 Projection	FY2024 Projection
<b>01 Public Administration Sector</b>	<b>500,000</b>	<b>1,991,247</b>	<b>1,991,247</b>	<b>13,920,000</b>	<b>11,136,000</b>	<b>8,304,800</b>
101 National Legislature	-	-	-	3,600,000	2,880,000	2,304,000
056300 Legislative Engagement and Public Accessibility	-	-	-	3,600,000	2,880,000	2,304,000
<b>102 Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs</b>	<b>500,000</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>350,000</b>	<b>5,200,000</b>	<b>4,160,000</b>	<b>3,328,000</b>
000800 Renovation of the Executive Ma	-	-	-	4,000,000	3,200,000	2,560,000
072000 Invincible Sports Park	-	-	-	500,000	400,000	320,000
102400 Humanitarian Outreach	500,000	350,000	350,000	700,000	560,000	448,000
<b>108 General Services Agency</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>	<b>960,000</b>
058200 GOL Vehicle Mobilization Scheme	-	-	-	1,500,000	1,200,000	960,000
<b>109 Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs &amp; Tourism</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>	<b>960,000</b>
058200 Bi-Centennial Celebration	-	-	-	1,500,000	1,200,000	960,000
<b>114 Liberia Institute of Statistics &amp; Geo-Information Services</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,000,000</b>	<b>800,000</b>	<b>640,000</b>
104200 National Population Census -	-	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,000,000	800,000	640,000

## Conclusion

The allocation of US\$500,000 in the National Budget of 2022 means that 25% of the fund for the project was provided by the 2022 National Budget considering that the cost of the facility is being put at US\$2 million. This contradicts the statement made by the Minister of State Without Portfolio that the Invisible Sports Park was 60% funded by President Weah with the rest of the funding provided by State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) like NPA, LMA, and NASSCORP.

Based on the facts culled from our research, we conclude that Minister Kpui was incorrect about the total source of funding for the construction of the Invincible Park.

**Join our Listener Club and help us improve our work in curbing the spread of misinformation. Be a part of our online community.**

**Send us a WhatsApp message (+231777432042) of any claim you want us to fact check.**



# Image Check:

**President Weah Did Not Consecrate Restoration Baptist Ministries' Bishop - Video Footage Shows**



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**Paynesville** – Bishop Gardea Joseph Johnson and Bravo to Archbishop George Manneh Weah for the ordination. Since 1847, none has achieved what you did today. God Bless Liberia”.

Meanwhile, Local Voices Liberia Fact Checking Desk has carefully reviewed the video footage of the coronation ceremony to authenticate the individuals that officiated the coronation of Bishop Johnson.

The video, which was obtained from a livestream of the ceremony by Vision TV, showed 13 bishops performing the religious procedure. They were Archbishop Emmanuel Musa Jatau, Archbishop Isaac Winker, Bishop J. Allen Klayee, Bishop Timothy Kume, Bishop Justice Itomo, and Bishop Moses Joseph.

Other bishops were Bishop Wolo Belleh, Bishop Nathaniel Zarway, Bishop Elijah Peter, Bishop Cephas Reeves, Bishop Momo Bracewell, Bishop G. Abraham Powell and Bishop P. Mnaseseh Conto.

### How the Coronation Happened?

In the video, the 13 bishops can be seen surrounding Rev. Johnson as one of them, Archbishop Jatau of the Faith Hill Prophetic Ministries headquartered in Niger, performs the consecration, ordination, and anointing of the clergyman. Rev. Johnson can be seen on his knees during the proceeding.

Archbishop Jatau then raised his voice and said: “I, therefore, pour this oil on you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”. He then raised a bottle of the anointing oil and poured it on the head of the Rev. Johnson.

After anointing him, Bishop Jatau asked all the other Bishops to stretch and point their hands at the newly ordained Bishop and offer prayers for him. Following the prayers, the Bishop Jatau then asked his colleagues to gown the newly ordained Bishop.

### Was President Weah Part of the Coronation?

At the two hour and thirty-second minute (2:32) of the video, Bishop Jatau can be seen calling on President George Weah to present the newly ordained Bishop to the congregation of the Church.

President Weah presented a sword to the newly ordained Bishop and held his left hand, raised it three times, congratulated him and presented him to the rest of the church amid loud applause by the congregation.

During the coronation rite, President Weah, his wife, Madam Clar Weah and Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor were seated in the congregation. The footage shows that the President did not participate in the ordination and coronation of Bishop Johnson.

## Conclusion

Based on a thorough review of the video footage of the ceremony by our fact checking desk, it was established that President George Weah was not part of the team of Bishops that performed the religious rite during the Coronation of Bishop Joseph Gardea Johnson.

Therefore, we conclude that the claim by some Facebook users that clergyman Johnson was ordained by President George Weah is misleading.





# What Did Representative Saah Foko Actually Say About Pushing Lawmakers ‘to be Corrupt’

**Paynesville** – FrontPage Africa, in a April 20, 2022 publication, reported that Montserrado County’s District #9 Representative Frank Saah Foko told a church congregation in Monrovia that request for personal assistance from lawmakers is one of the factors breeding corruption mainly among members of the Liberian legislature.

In the story, the paper quoted Rep. Foko as saying: “Let’s forget about too much personal help when we put people in leadership because this thing can push your leaders to be corrupt. This is why we still have more corrupt leaders in power most especially so when it comes to the legislature because sometimes our friends in the legislature look for money just to please you.

“In the end you will push me to steal; to be corrupt. It’s about time that we push our leaders to do projects. We should push our leaders to make the right decision that will have a trigger down effect on our lives and our children’s lives”.

However, the lawmaker has since denied the statement attributed to him in the story, claiming that the newspaper misquoted him. He said the context he spoke in was wrongly presented in the publication. He made the refutation on OKay Morning Rush.

Said Rep. Foko on Okay Fm: “What I said is that, If I should please those 300,000 plus letters that I got on my desk with personal assistance, that means you should be pushing me to be corrupt. It means you are pushing me to get money from where I shouldn’t get money from.

In order to remain who I am and that good leader, it means that you should understand that things will happen but will happen gradually.

“That was what I presented and not to change it the other way round. So, what they are trying to do now is to incite my colleagues against me and also incite the public to use me now as a person who is justifying that the government is corrupt because one of the officials is saying that yes, ‘we are corrupt because people come to us so we have to steal to give them money”.

But a review of an audio recording of the lawmaker’s statement when he addressed a church congregation on Sunday April 17, 2022, shows that he made the exact same statement published by the newspaper. LVL Fact Checking Desk analyzed the audio using digital tool to determine if it was doctored but found the recording to be authentic.

Mr. Foko made the statement at a program marking the official closing of the Chosen Vessel Church of Jesus Christ’s weeklong conference held at Lakpazee, Sinkor.





Said Rep. Foko in the recording done at the church program: “Let’s forget about this too much personal help when we put people in leadership, because this thing can push the leader to be corrupt. Because sometimes, imagine this church alone, imagine everybody in this church tomorrow morning coming to my house for me to help them personally, you really think it’s possible to help everyone here personally at the same time?”

“So, what happens in the end is you will push me to become corrupt. You will push me to steal only because I want to please you to remain in power. This is why we still have more corrupt leaders in power, most especially when it comes to the Legislature. Because sometimes our friends in the Legislature go and look for money just to please you because this is what we want.

“So, it is about time that we should push

our leaders to do projects; we should push our leaders to make the right policy, to make the right decision that will have a trigger down effect on our lives and our children’s lives. If your leaders make the right decisions, the problems in this country are not from the President. The people to solve the problems in this country are the people from the Legislature.

“If the House of Representatives and the House of Senate make the right decision, Liberia will be a better place overnight. You can have the best President in the world coming to serve as President; Liberia will not change if the Legislature does not make the right decision

“There are 73 Representatives, there are thirty Senators, there is one President and there is one Vice President. No matter what dreams the President can come with, if the Legislature does not support the dream of that President, that President will not

succeed. Imagine the park that my brother was just talking about, imagine if President Weah had taken that to distribute that money to individuals, Liberia in that position was still going to be the same.”

## Conclusion

A thorough review of the audio recorded at the church program by using a software found the audio to be authentic. there was no trace of the audio been doctored. This means the quotation attributed to Rep. Foko in the FrontPage Africa report is the exact same words contained in the statement he made during the church service. Therefore, we conclude that the quotation is a direct representation of what the lawmaker said during the church conference as reported by the newspaper. We find the attribution to be correct.

# Fact Check: Screenshot of Tweet About Elon Musk Buying Liberia is Fake

Monrovia – A screenshot of a purported tweet claiming to have been made by the world’s richest man Elon Musk is being spread on Facebook in Liberia. It claims that Mr. Musk is “bout to buy Liberia”. The tweet surfaced following his purchase of Twitter on April 25, 2022.

A screenshot of the purported tweet shows that it was made on April 26, 2022, at 2:26pm. It reads: “Now I bought Twitter. I’m bout to buy Liberia as well I love the cassava leaves and palm butter”.

This screenshot was also shared by Moriah Yeakula, a popular political figure and social media user in Liberia, on April 28. Her post generated dozens of comments made in jest about the topic of buying Liberia.

But did Mr. Musk make any tweet of sought? LVL checked and found that no such tweet was ever made by the world’s richest man about Liberia.

What did we Find?

A careful review of Musk’s official Twitter account since his US\$44 billion takeover of the tech company shows that he made 24 tweets from April 25 to May 1 – this period includes the time the purported tweet was made. However, none of his tweets carried a message about buying Liberia as claimed in the screenshot making rounds on Facebook.

Throughout our search for the purported tweet on Musk’s Twitter account, we did not find any comment and did not see any notification that a tweet was deleted from Mr. Musk’s account.

What Did Mr. Musk Say?

The attribution of false tweets to Mr. Musk since his acquisition of Twitter has prompted his subtle reaction. One tweet falsely attributed to Musk claimed that he was going to buy a popular



fast-food company. The inscription on the false tweets attributed to his Twitter account reads: “Now I’m going to buy McDonald’s and fix all the ice cream machines”.

But On April 28, 2022, Mr. Musk also shared a screenshot cautioning his followers. He tweeted: “Listen, I can’t do miracles ok”. The screenshot he tweeted about his purported plan to purchase McDonald was also never made by him.

## Conclusion

Based on our review of the screenshot claiming that Elon Musk wants to buy Liberia and a careful search on Mr. Musk’s twitter account where we found no such tweet, we conclude that the tweet is false. It was likely created as a meme but may also be used to mislead users of Facebook.



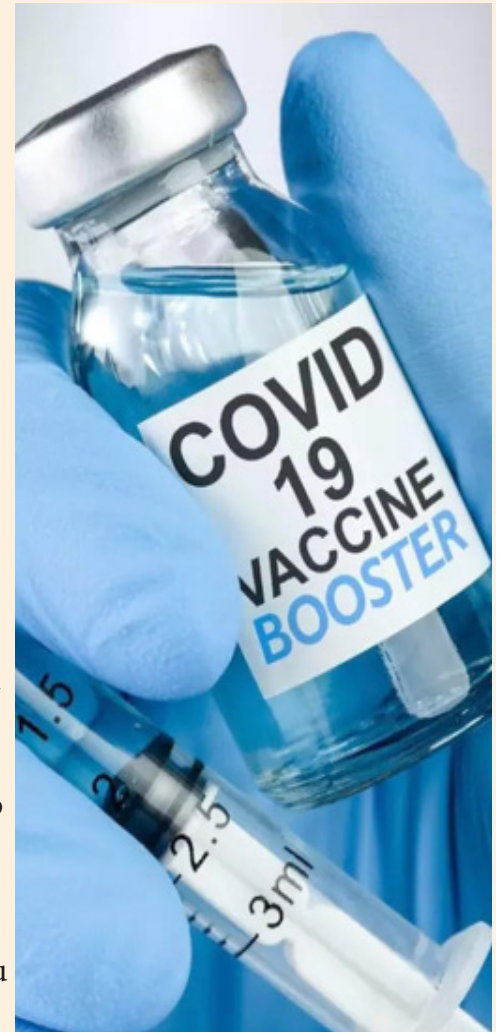
*Mr. Musk has, in a subtle way, tried to refute false tweets attributed to him*

# Explainer: What To Know About Covid-19 Booster Shot

**Paynesville** – A booster shot is an additional dose of the Covid-19 vaccine that is recommended by the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization and here in Liberia by the National Public Health Institution of Liberia (NPHIL) for people who are 12 years old and above. It helps further boost their immune system against the coronavirus virus disease.

The UK National Health Services also states that “a booster dose of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine helps improve the protection you have from your first two doses of the vaccine,” adding that it gives “longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from COVID-19”. This means, a person who is fully vaccinated and then takes a booster shot is less likely to get seriously ill when he or she contracts Covid-19.

Also, the World Health Organization recommends booster dose to be administered to a vaccinated population that has completed the primary dose of the vaccine. A primary dose is the first shot or series of shots a person is required to take as immunization against the virus. For example, if you have already taken your two doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine (primary dose) or the single dose of the Johnson & Johnson (primary dose), then you are qualified to take a booster shot. Please note that you must complete your primary shot(s) and ask health authority when you will be qualified to take a booster shot before getting one.



The WHO adds that “the objective of a booster dose is to restore vaccine effectiveness from that deemed no longer sufficient”. Because all COVID-19 vaccines’ antibody level can gradually decline, scientists say booster shot helps to enhance the antibody level in the vaccinated person.

#### When to Get a Booster Shot

The CDC now recommends booster shot to be taken five months after the completion of the primary series of Pfizer vaccine for people who are 12 years or older. This means, a person is allowed to take a Pfizer booster shot five months after taking the primary does of the Pfizer vaccine. For those who have already taken the primary shot of the Moderna vaccine, you can take the booster shoot at least six months later but must be 18 years old or above to be eligible.

Meanwhile, those who have taken their primary shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and are 18 years old or above can also take a booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, which the CDC suggests are “preferred in most situations”.

This means, you may be given a different type of booster shot (vaccine) than the primary one you took. For example, if you took Johnson & Johnson vaccine as a primary vaccine, you may be given a Pfizer vaccine. Also, the UK health authority states that “Most people will be offered a booster dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or Moderna vaccine” even though their primary vaccine was a different brand of vaccine.

“This means your booster dose may be different from the vaccines you had for your 1st and 2nd doses. Some people may be offered a booster dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine if they cannot have the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccine,” the NHS states on its website.

#### Can Booster Shot Protect You Against Omicron?

Data show that COVID-19 boosters help broaden and strengthen protection against the Omicron variant and other variants. Researchers in the UK have found that booster shot provides up to 80% protection against the Omicron variant. The study also found that booster shot can restore antibody levels to their peak values—providing more robust protection against Omicron.

Additionally, scientists have stated that “the best defense against all viral variants that cause COVID-19 is a full dose of a vaccine followed by a booster shot several months later”.

#### Is Booster Shot Available in Liberia?

In Liberia, the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) has said that the Booster Shot is available and is encouraging people to take the shot three months after being vaccinated with the primary shot(s). So, if you have taken your two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, you have to wait for three months before getting the booster shot; also, if you have taken the single shot of the Johnson & Johnson, you will also have to wait for three months before taking the booster shot.

NPHIL has also announced that Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca booster shots are now available in the country and can be taken at the John F. Kennedy Hospital in Sinkor and the GSA Compound on UN Drive in central Monrovia. Like all health authorities, NPHIL has continued to emphasize that vaccination is one of the best measures to protect against severe disease, hospitalizations, and death from COVID-19.



# Facts from the EXPERTS

Calls for more people to get vaccinated against the coronavirus pandemic continue to echo all over the world.

In Liberia, there are ongoing efforts to vaccinate at least 70% of the population before the end of this year. Meanwhile, this effort has faced some glitches including misinformation which has created some level of vaccine hesitancy in the country. Despite these challenges, the government of Liberia and partners continue to ensure that the jab is available for people across the country while also communicating the significance of taking the vaccine.

Adolphus Clarke is the head of the Vaccination at the Ministry of Health. In an exclusive interview with LVL Fact Checking Desk, he shares with us some very important facts about the ongoing Covid vaccination process in the country.

**Question: What makes vaccines very important for the protection of people against Covid-19?**

**Mr. Clarke:** Vaccines are meant to do two things to our body system. It trains your



Liberian Researcher, Dr. IB Nyei, a fellow at the Center for Democracy and Development

body systems to be able to recognize foreign substance that you will call threat and train your body on how to combat that threat or foreign substance that the body is confronted by.

So, when that happened, three things will happen – the vaccine will reduce or prevent the severity of the disease, it reduces hospitalization, and then reduces death. So, when you get vaccinated, there is a likelihood that you don't come down with the disease. In the event for you to come down with the disease, the severity will be far minimum compared to when you are not vaccinated thereby reducing your chances of going to the hospital. Therefore, hospitalization will reduce and subsequently death will reduce because you wouldn't die given the fact that you're protected, or you received protection against said disease.

**Question: What are various categories of vaccines that are available against Covid-19?**

**Mr. Clarke:** In the formation of the whole virus vaccine, scientist or microbiologist, pharmaceutical company will adapt to technology, technology one is where you attenuate the micro, technology two is where you inactivate or kill the micro. So, an example of a whole virus vaccine within the immunization program will be polio. We have two types of polio, we have the oral, the inactivate and the IVP. Under the category of vaccine formulation, we have what we refer to as virus vector -- it is when you take the harmless virus to communicate the genetic information of a particular vaccine. So, AstraZeneca COVID 19 vaccine falls under the category of what we refer to as the virus vector vaccine. In the development of

the vaccine, you look for a messenger, something that will carry the message to your immune system so it will be able to recognize that threat and then alert your fighting cell or white blood cell to be able to combat foreign evictor or substances in the body.

So, in that case, under virus vector vaccine type they often refer to as the chief conveyer or chief messenger that serves the magnetic information about a particular virus is being communicated through. So, when you look at the COVID 19 vaccine, there are several vaccines that fall under the category of virus vector. One of such is the AstraZeneca, the Johnson and Johnson – those are all virus vector COVID-19 vaccines based on their category.

**Question: What are the various brands of vaccine we have in the country?**

**Mr. Clarke:** In Liberia, we started officially on April 1, 2021. We started with AstraZeneca, August 5th, 2021, we added another vaccine which was Johnson and Johnson, and this year January 6, 2022, we started the administration of Pfizer vaccine. So, as of April 1, 2021, to January 6, 2022, we have had three types of COVID 19 vaccines in country. Even though as of December 31, 2021, we ran out of stock of AstraZeneca, so now the two types of vaccines available now are J&J and Pfizer.

The Pfizer vaccine falls under a category of DNA. We call it nuclear acid. Under nuclear acid there are two types, they are DNA, and RNA. So, Pfizer and Moderna are RNA [vaccines], that is why when you talk about messenger RNA based vaccine has been developed, you talk about Pfizer and Moderna. So, these are the vaccines we have.

The mRNA is Pfizer, and then you have the DNA or what you called the rapid nuclear acid messenger, and you have the DNA.

**Question: So, J&J and AstraZeneca are in the same category?**



Mr. Clarke: Yes, they are vector virus. If you want put them under which category of vaccine type are they; so, somebody asks, 'we know you have Johnson and Johnson but which category they fall under'? Is it virus vector? Is it nuclear acid? Is it protein based? Or is it whole virus? It's important to know where they fit.

**Question:** *Just to talk a little more about that, what's the importance this category – placing the vaccines in category. Does this mean that one is effective than the other or if a person takes the other one it might have more side effects?*

**Mr. Clarke:** I wouldn't say one is more effective than the other because you will be creating a war in terms of vaccine supremacy, and that could lead to misinformation in terms of people having preferences why they want a particular vaccine. All the vaccines are all good!

Manufacturers will determine which technology they want to use in terms of developing a particular vaccine, but the resounding message is all the COVID-19 vaccines are good and safe and produce the same effect which is to train your body immune system to recognize threat, and to combat threat and by doing so it tend to reduce the severity of the disease, hospitalization, and death. Those are the catching messages.

**Question:** *You talked about vaccine supremacy – when people feel that certain vaccine is superior to the other and spread-out misinformation, then you see lots of people going for certain vaccine and trying to ignore the other. How grave is this kind of situation and what will you say to the public relative to limiting that perception of vaccine supremacy?*

**Mr. Clarke:** What I like to tell people is that all of the vaccines are safe and effective. They have what we called dosing interval. Some vaccine obeyed a two-dose schedule that when you take one, you have to come back over a certain time period for the second to be fully protected, while some vaccine you take it one time and it gives you that protection.

So, in this case we witnessed what people who received the J&J took one shot. People who received AstraZeneca have received two doses to be fully vaccinated so you have to come for the first shot, 8 weeks later you go for your second shot.

For the Pfizer, you also have to take two shots – you take the first shot and 28 days later you come for the second shot. So, it depends on the development of the biological substance in the case of the vaccine in terms of how many doses you need to get full protection.

**Question:** What can you tell us about the vaccine uptake in the country?

**Mr. Clarke:** So, from April 1 to February 22, 2021, as a country – we have been able to vaccinate 1,132,821 (one million one hundred thirty-two thousand eight hundred twenty-one) persons. Of those number of persons who have been fully vaccinated are 1,015,942 (one million fifteen thousand nine hundred forty-two) persons -- meaning that those who completed the two doses schedule and people who took the single dose the J&J. So, you see the difference between those who are vaccinated and those who are fully vaccinated. We still have 15,000 plus persons who are still due for their second dose.

For the J&J, we have been able to vaccinate 933,121 (nine hundred thirty-three thousand one hundred twenty-one)

persons; AstraZeneca 82,790 (eighty-two thousand seven hundred-ninety), and Pfizer is 31,000 (thirty-one thousand).

**Question:** *How do you measure the total number of vaccinated people in the country with the milestone that WHO has set for country like ours?*

**Clarke:** So globally, irrespective of the size of your country or economy -- each country is to achieve 70% mark by June 30, 2022. Liberia is desirous as a country to achieve this milestone come June 30, 2022. We have a difference of 2,239,532 (two million two hundred thirty-nine thousand, five hundred thirty-two) persons to be vaccinated between now and June.

We have asked all of our county health teams to share with us the strategies on how to get the 70%, but more to share the budget or operational cost we receive from all of the counties, we will be working with the 15 counties to ensure that by June 30, we can achieve the 70% benchmark that is WHO global target.

For the African continent, the target set is by December 31, 2022 – all countries should reach 70% even though WHO is saying June, but the African continent is cognizant of some of the challenges within some parts of the continent, [and] the continent is saying look, 'for us we want to reach 70% December 31, 2022'. We are ambitious as a country to say look, 'let's aim for the WHO target so that by the time we shall reach December 2022 we will be above what the African continent is requesting and that will be telling our own success story and what other countries in the sub-region can learn from Liberia.

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