



THE FACT CHECK



N E W S L E T T E R

IN THIS ISSUE

OBJECT OF EXPENDITURE	Actual	SP Budget	SP Outturn	Budget	Provision
0000 - OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER	1,070,400	1,071,400	1,070,411	2,074,415	1,073,408
21 COMPENSATION OF EMPLOYEES	773,410	646,303	646,303	646,303	646,303
21100 Basic Salary - Civil Servant	65,730	408,761	408,761	408,761	408,761
21106 Basic Salary - Elected Officials	0	245,540	245,540	245,540	245,540
21110 General Allowance	340,800	0	0	0	0
21116 Special Allowance	366,880	0	0	0	0
22 USE OF GOODS AND SERVICES	296,990	425,097	424,608	1,428,112	747,105
22100 Foreign Transportation of Travel	2,241	14,610	13,719	18,000	12,138
22102 Foreign Travel-Daily Subsistence Allowance	4,961	14,709	14,987	24,449	13,536
22103 Foreign Travel-Incidental Allowance	280	16,342	16,222	15,500	8,188
22104 Domestic Travel Means of Travel	13,000	7,234	7,285	8,885	20,541
22105 Fuel and Lubricants - Vehicles	127,500	63,955	63,462	103,000	22,217
22102 Fuel and Lubricants - Generator	11,193	25,957	25,425	38,001	20,456
22102 Stationery	4,960	7,488	7,448	8,148	4,800
22104 Printing, Binding and Publications Services	6,000	3,000	2,980	38,388	9,600
22107 Subscriptions - Local	19,000	13,000	14,899	14,239	7,516
22109 Entertainment Representation and Gifts	0	0	0	9,500	5,845
22109 Operational Expenses	65,000	200,000	198,605	1,141,992	0
24 NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS	0	0	0	40,000	0
24201 Transport Equipment (vehicles)	0	0	0	40,000	0
Total	1,070,400	1,071,400	1,070,411	2,074,415	1,073,408

Is Representative Yekeh Kolubah Right About Budgetary Allocation to Speaker Chambers' Office? - Page 4

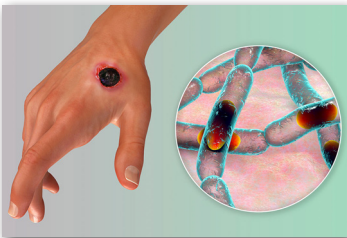
Agencies & Ministries that are allotted the most share of the 2022 National Budget	Budgetary Allotment	Percentage of the Budget
Agency of Amnesty	\$192,284,114	18.3%
Ministry of Finance	\$64,383,500	6.1%
National Legislature	\$61,200,940	5.8%
Ministry of Health	\$59,912,898	5.7%
Ministry of Public Works	\$47,879,689	4.5%
Ministry of Education	\$46,303,274	4.4%
Ministry of Justice	\$31,466,971	3.0%
National Elections Commission	\$30,324,864	2.9%
Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs	\$18,860,268	1.8%
Ministry of Defense	\$18,860,268	1.8%
Ministry of Internal Affairs	\$17,000,000	1.6%
Ministry of Lands	\$11,076,724	1.0%
Liberia Electricity Corporation	\$10,360,116	1.0%
National Security Agency	\$11,000,709	1.0%
Respective Protective Services		
Liberia Agency For Community Empowerment		

Source: Ministry of Finance - Budget - mfp

Fact Checking Claims about 2022 Budgetary Allotments to Legislature, President Weah, Ministry of State & First Lady - Page 5



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Explainer Anthrax Virus: What You Need to Know - Page 10

Does Liberia Have the Highest Gasoline Price in Africa?



Monrovia – Amid public concerns about the hike in the price of petroleum products following the Liberian government’s announcement of new pump prices, many Liberians have taken to Facebook claiming that the country has the highest pump price of gasoline in Africa.

On June 8, 2022, the government issued a press release stating that “US\$0.80 cents will be added on to the current retail price of gasoline, thus increasing the cost from US\$5.10 to US\$5.90. Diesel will now be sold at the pump price of US\$6.90 from its previous price.”

This prompted several Facebook posts from many, notably the Secretary General of Unity Party, Mo Ali, who claimed that the price increment in Liberia the highest gasoline pump price in Africa. His post carried a list of countries and their respective prices of gasoline. The countries are Sierra Leone US\$4.35, Guinea US\$5.00, Ivory Coast US\$4.56, Ghana US\$4.93, Togo US\$3.88, Benin US\$3.73, Rwanda US\$5.00, Lesotho US\$5.10, and Tanzania US\$4.86.

But when Local Voices Liberia Fact Checking Desk checked, we found that in Sierra Leone the Petroleum Regulatory Agency on June 9, 2022 announced new prices of petroleum products at 18,000 Leones per liter with the previous price at 12,000 Leones. Given the exchange rate (13,152.84 Leones to US\$1) issued by the Bank of Sierra Leon. This means a gallon of gasoline is sold for US\$5.47 and not US\$4.35 as claimed in the many Facebook posts.

Con't on Page 3

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Liberia's First Fully Functional Fact Checking Agency

- Thanks to the European Union co-funded Liberia Media Initiative



Anders Arvidsson, Deputy Head of Mission, European Union Delegation to Liberia

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 fact 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 issue s.”

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.”



www.localvoicesliberia.com

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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

Gasoline Price Con't...

In Ghana, we found that as of June 7 a gallon of gasoline is now US\$5.69. Our finding was based on GOIL Company.

GOIL Company Limited – a petroleum company which the Ghanaian government owns the highest share. A liter of gas in Ghana is sold for 10.10 Cedi and with the current exchange rate (7.14 Cedi to US\$1) set by the Bank of Ghana this means one gallon is US\$5.69 USD and not 4.93USD as claimed in the social media post.

In Ivory Coast, the government announced increment in the price of gas to 735 FCFA per liter. Given the current exchange rate (627.00 FCFA to US\$1) by the Central Bank of West African States of which Ivory Coast is a member state, a gallon of gas costs US\$4.91.

The Rwanda Utilities Regulator Authority on June 9, 2022 announced new prices of petroleum products bringing the price of gas to 1,460 Frw for one liter of gas. Using the June 10, 2022 exchange rate (1,013.01 FRW to US\$1) of the National Bank of Rwanda, one gallon of gasoline costs US\$5.76.

For South Africa, the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy announced new prices of petroleum products which came into effect on June 1, 2022. The new price shows that 1 liter is sold for 23.94 Rand which is put at US \$5.98 based on the exchange rate (16.00 Rand to US\$1) of the South African Reserve Bank.

The Seychelles Petroleum Company Limited on June 14, 2022, out the price of gasoline at SCR24.1 (Seychelles Rupee) per liter, and considering the June 13 exchange rate (14.00 SCR to US\$1) provided by its Central Bank – a gallon costs US\$6.88.

CONCLUSION

Based on our research, it is known by the data provided that Liberia, like many African countries, has increased the price of gasoline in recent weeks. However, based on the information reviewed relative to prices in other countries, we found the claim that Liberia has the highest price of gasoline on Africa to be incorrect. South Africa's US \$5.98 per gallon, Morocco US\$6.91, Seychelles US\$6.88, Cape Verde US\$6.98, and Central African Republic at US\$9.28 are all prices higher than the US\$5.90 price for a gallon of gasoline announced by the government of Liberia. The claim that Liberia has the highest pump price for a gallon of gas in Africa is incorrect.

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



Is Representative Yekeh Kolubah Right About Budgetary Allocation to Speaker Chambers' Office?

211110	General Allowance	349,800	0	0	0	0	0
211116	Special Allowance	356,400	0	0	0	0	0
22	USE OF GOODS AND SERVICES	298,990	371,103	368,608	1,403,122	741,185	1,515,360
221101	Foreign Travel-Means of travel	7,741	15,825	15,719	28,650	15,134	30,942
221102	Foreign Travel-Daily Subsistence Allowance	5,991	16,709	16,597	24,469	12,926	26,426
221103	Foreign Travel-Incidental Allowance	280	16,342	16,232	15,500	8,188	16,740
221104	Domestic Travel-Means of Travel	15,000	7,234	7,185	38,885	20,541	41,995
221401	Fuel and Lubricants - Vehicles	127,790	63,895	63,465	60,610	32,017	65,458
221402	Fuel and Lubricants – Generator	51,193	25,597	25,425	38,801	20,496	41,905
221602	Stationery	4,995	7,498	7,448	8,148	4,304	8,800
221603	Printing, Binding and Publications Services	6,000	3,003	2,983	18,288	9,660	19,751
221907	Scholarships – Local	15,000	15,000	14,899	14,229	7,516	15,367
222105	Entertainment Representation and Gifts	0	0	0	9,550	5,045	10,314
222109	Operational Expenses	65,000	200,000	198,655	1,145,992	60,000	1,400,000
31	NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS	0	0	0	45,000	0	0
312201	Transport Equipment-Vehicles	0	0	0	45,000	0	0
	Total	1,070,400	1,017,406	1,014,911	2,094,425	1,400,000	1,400,000



Page snap of the National Budget

Paynesville – Montserrado County District #10 Representative Yekeh Kolubah on Tuesday, May 24, 2022, appeared as a guest on the OK Morning Rush, a popular talk show on OK FM 99.5MHZ in Monrovia.

While stressing the need to audit the House of Representatives during the live interview, Representative Kolubah claimed that the government of Liberia allocated US\$2,300,000 in the 2022 National Budget for the office of the Speaker Bhofal Chambers. He also claimed that US\$200,000 was placed in the Budget for the purchase a vehicle for the Speaker.

Said Representative Kolubah: “Most often I call for the House to be audited. Has the House been audited? The manner in which we are carrying ourselves; the House needs to be audited. When the House is audited, then the Liberia people will know how much money they gave to Yekeh for District #10 and he ate the money”.

He continued: “When Honorable Bhofal Chambers was not speaker at the time, he called for the House to be audited. But our Speaker’s Budget is \$2,300,000 (two million three-hundred thousand). They put two hundred thousand in the Budget for our speaker car. Look, the House needs to be audited”.

Local Voices Liberia Fact Checking desk carefully reviewed

the current 2022 National Budget and found out that US\$2,300,000 was not allocated for the office of the Speaker. In the 2022 National Budget, the allocation made to the office is US\$2,094,425.

We also checked the 2022 budget but did not find a US\$200,000 allocation for the purchase of a vehicle for the Speaker. A review of Page 8 of the instrument shows US\$45,000 allotment for ‘Transport Equipment-Vehicles’ for the Speaker’s office. On the same page, another allotment of US\$60,610 was allocated as ‘Fuel and Lubricant’ cost for the Speaker’s vehicles.

CONCLUSION

Based on our research, we conclude that the claim made by Representative Kolubah that the Budgetary allocation for the office of the Speaker is US\$2,300,000 is incorrect. The allotment made to the Speaker’s office in the 2022 National Budget is US\$2,094,425.

After a careful review of the instrument, we also found out that there is no allotment of US\$200,000 to the Speaker’s office for the purchase of vehicles as claimed by the Montserrado County lawmaker. The two allotments relating to vehicles in the Speaker’s Office Budget include US\$45,000 for ‘Transport Equipment’ and US\$60,610 for ‘Fuel and Lubricant’.



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Fact Checking Claims about 2022 Budgetary Allotments to Legislature, President Weah, Ministry of State & First Lady

Monrovia — On May 13, 2022, popular political figure Moriah Yeakula and youth activist Martin K. N. Kollie made separate Facebook posts claiming that various allotments in the 2022 National Budget were made to lawmakers, President George Weah, First Lady Clar Weah, and the Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, Nathaniel McGill.

Ms. Yeakula and Mr. Kollie claimed that the offices of the President, the First Lady, the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs and lawmakers are the “biggest beneficiaries” of the 2022 National Budget.

Ms. Yeakula wrote to social media: “The budget has passed, and the biggest beneficiaries are the 103 lawmakers who got 64 million, George Weah- 5 million, his wife 700k (\$700,000) and Prime Minister McGill office – 20 million. But the Police Training Academy got 165K. Liberians open ur [your] eyes oh.”

Mr. Kollie also posted to Facebook: “This fiscal year 2022, you (President Weah) alone have US\$5,453,000 while your wife, Clar Weah has US\$700,000 in our National Budget. Wow.”

Did the pair get their facts right about these allocations in the 2022 National Budget? We have checked the budget.

First, note that the total estimated resource envelope of the approved 2022 National Budget is US\$786.6 million – this amount, when compared to the previous budget, has an increment of 38.1%.

Page 39 of the instrument shows that the Legislature is allotted \$64,383,920, which is an increment of \$10,393,084 in the FY2020-21 budget that had an allocation of \$53,990,836 of the Legislature.

The Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs has an allocation of \$20,324,844 in the 2022 budget approved by the Legislature.

This means, the Ministry of States gets \$2,059,368 more than what was allocated in 2020/201 budget. This allocation also shows an allotment of \$5,453,000 for the President’s office – this is US\$2,098,509 more than what the President’s office was allotted in the 2020/2021 fiscal year.

Agency / Ministry	Budgetary Allotment	Percentage of the Budget
Ministry of Finance	\$152,394,114	19.3%
National Legislature	\$64,383,920	8.1%
Ministry of Health	\$61,000,942	7.7%
Ministry of Public Works	\$59,912,898	7.6%
Ministry of Education	\$47,679,485	6.0%
Ministry of Justice	\$40,381,274	5.1%
National Elections Commission	\$23,468,571	2.9%
Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs	\$20,324,844	2.5%
Judiciary	\$18,980,928	2.4%
Ministry of Defense	\$18,695,921	2.3%
Ministry of Internal Affairs	\$18,543,008	0.023%
University of Liberia	\$17,600,000	2.2%
Liberia Electricity Corporation	\$17,000,000	2.1%
National Security Agency	\$11,076,724	1.4%
Executive Protective Service	\$10,350,116	1.3%
Liberia Agency For Community Empowerment	\$11,686,799	1.4%

Source: Ministry of Finance - Budget - mfdp

Meanwhile, a further check of the budget to determine the exact allocation made to the office of the First Lady shows that there is no specific budget line assigned to her office. We also reviewed the Budget Code 103 and did not see any reference to the Office of the First Lady.

However, the summation of the two budget lines (Lawmakers and the Ministry of States) is \$84,708,764 – which is 10.65 percent of the entire budget. This joint total is the second

highest allocation next to the allocation made to the Ministry of Finance, which is 19.3 percentage.

CONCLUSION

Based on the details we gathered from each budget line in the approved 2022 National Budget, we conclude that the claims made by Ms. Yeakula and Mr. Kollie about the allocation made to the Legislature and the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs including the Office of the President are correct. This conclusion is based on a careful review of the 2022 National Budget.

However, claims made by the pair about allotment made to the Office of the First Lady is incorrect since there is no budget line assigned to Madam Weah in the instrument. We also conclude that based on a review of all the allocations to various institutions in the approved 2020 budget, the Legislature or Ministry of State for Presidential are not the biggest beneficiary of the budget as claimed by Ms. Yeakula. The Ministry of Finance and Development planning carries the highest allocation — \$152,394,114 which is 19.3%.

Did Cllr. Gongloe Get Facts Right About Liberia's 'Doing Business' Ranking?



Screenshot of Cllr. Tiawan Gongloe's Facebook post

Paynesville – Liberian politician and human rights lawyer Cllr. Tiawan Saye Gongloe claims that Liberia currently ranks 175th in the “Ease of Doing Business” index compiled by the World Bank. The 2023 Presidential aspirant made the claim as way of bemoaning the “unconducive business environment” in the Liberian economy.

Wrote Cllr. Gongloe on May 11: “We need a government that works with businesses & entrepreneurs to promote the economy. Liberia is currently ranked 175th in ease of doing business. My government will ensure businesses are supported as they are the backbone of

this country. It's time the government served its people.”

The presidential aspirant's claim was not backed by more details, but a research done by LVL Fact Checking Desk by reviewing the World Bank's ‘Ease of Doing Business’ 2020 report, shows that the Liberian economy is currently ranked 175th amongst 190 economies in the world. The 2020 report is the latest report.

Ease of Doing Business 2020 is a report published by The World Bank intended to ‘Compare Business Regulation in 190 Economies.’ The Doing Business

Report targets reforms implemented by countries to ease constraints in doing business based on how the regulatory environment is conducive to business operation and stronger protections of property rights. Economies with a high rank (1 to 20) have simpler and more friendly regulations for businesses.

The 2020 report shows that doing business in Liberia has deteriorated slightly compared to the previous report which ranked the country 174th in 2019 and 172nd in 2018. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Togo, Bahrain, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Kuwait, China, India, and Nigeria are the economies with the most notable improvement in the 2020 Ease of Doing Business report. Only two African economies (Togo and Nigeria) made it to the top 50 in the latest report.

However, the process of compiling the report to do the ranking has been criticized. In 2021, the World Bank announced that it would be discontinuing the ‘Doing Business Report’ following accusations of irregularities, data manipulation, undue influence, and unethical behavior by some World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff.

CONCLUSION

Based on the details in the 2020 Doing Business Report, we conclude that the claim made by Cllr. Tiawan Saye Gongloe on social media that Liberia has been ranked 175th in the world is correct. A review of the World Bank's ‘ease of doing business 2020’ report by our fact checking desk revealed that Liberia's economy was ranked 175th among 190 economies in the world. It is also keen to note here that the World Bank announced that it was to discontinue the Doing Business Report. Since this pronouncement by the Bank, there has been no new report released.

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.



This and all previous publications of the Fact Check Newsletter can be found at the office of Local Voices Liberia, SKD Boulevard, Paynesville City, Montserrado Co., Liberia



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Liberian Passport

What's the Liberian Passport's Global Ranking in the Henley Passport Index?

Paynesville – In the wake of recent developments surrounding the Liberian passport, a video, which has accumulated over 9,000 views on social media, contains information about the rating of the Liberian Passport. This video has also been published on a Facebook page named Liberia Review and Report.

The Facebook page belongs to “a media company that reviews everything about Liberia and report daily, weekly and monthly”. The video, which has also been shared over 300 times, list a number of countries that a Liberian passport holder has visa free entry or visa upon arrival status.

The video producers relied on data from the 2019 Henley Passport Index and claimed that Liberia is ranked 96th in terms of travel freedom with access to 47 countries and territories. But LVL Fact Checking Desk found that the 2019 Henley Passport Index ranked Liberia 93rd and not 96th as claimed in the video. The Index also shows that the Liberian passport enjoys travel freedom to 48 travel destinations and not 47.

According to the Henley Passport Index, its Global Passport Index is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association. It adds: “In order to create detailed visa lists for all 199 passports in our database, the Henley & Partners research team uses publicly available and reliable online sources to cross-check each passport against all 227 possible travel destinations”.

Meanwhile, the latest Henley Passport Index released in 2022 ranked the Liberian passport at 95th out of the 199 passports and has access to 49 visa free destinations. Liberia’s visa free destinations in the 2022 Henley Passport Index includes Ecuador, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Barbados and a host of other nations that can be found by selecting Liberia in the “My Passport” section on the website.

CONCLUSION

Based on a careful analysis of the 2019 Henley Passport Index which was cited as reliance in the trending online video, we found that the Liberian passport in 2019 was ranked 93rd with access to 48 visa free destinations and not ranked 96th with 47 visa free access as claimed in the video.

Additionally, the 2022 Henley Passport Index, which is the latest data released by Henley and Partners, places the Liberian passport at 95th with access to 49 visa free destinations.

Fact Checking Accreditation of Nairobi Aviation College



Nairobi Aviation College

Paynesville – President George Weah on October 13, 2021 appointed madam Edwina M. Collins as Deputy Commissioner designate for International Vessel Registration at the Liberia Maritime Authority. Eight months following her appointment, Madam Collins, on June appeared at the Liberian Senate for confirmation.

Ms. Collins had told the Senators in a livestream hearing that she's a student of maritime management at the Nairobi Aviation College. She also claimed to be a prospective graduate of Master of Arts in Gender and Development Studies at the Kenyatta University also in Nairobi.

Collins' credential was later criticized by Liberians on social media, amongst them youth activist Martin K. N. Kollie. In a Facebook post, he urged the Senate "not to confirm Deputy Maritime Boss – Ms. Edwina Collins", claiming that she "Lied about her credentials in Maritime Management". He further claimed that the Nairobi Aviation College is "a quasi and fake trade school in Kenya".

Local Voices Liberia Fact Checking Desk fact checked the claim made by Mr. Kollie that the Nairobi Aviation College is "a quasi and fake school in Kenya". Is the College accredited by the Kenyan Government?

We checked the website of the Commission for University Education (CUE) in Kenya and did not find Nairobi Aviation College on the list of accredited institutions. The CUE is the government body responsible for the advancement of quality university education including regulating and accrediting universities and other higher educational institutions.

When contacted via email, the CUE directed our fact checker to the Technical and Vocational Training Authority (TVETA), where we found that the Nairobi Aviation College is among TVET institutions that are accredited by the government. TVETA is responsible to accredit vocational institutions in the East African nation.

CONCLUSION

Based on our research, we conclude that the claim made by activist Kollie that the Nairobi Aviation College is a "quasi and fake trade school in Kenya" is incorrect. The school was accredited in 2018 by the Kenyan government. The Nairobi Aviation College offers an 18 months Diploma in maritime management.

False: Zimbabweans are not Selling Toes Due to Hardship



Paynesville – For the past weeks, social media platforms here in Liberia and across Africa have been flooded with claims that Zimbabweans are selling their toes for huge sums of money. One of the social media posts made by a popular Liberian sports journalist, T. Kla Wesley, Jr. on May 31, 2022, claimed that "people in Zimbabwe have started selling their toes due to the high cost of living and failure for the government to create jobs."

The post, which generated 716 comments and 169 shares, claimed that "the big toe is being bought for US \$40,000 dollars while the smaller one is being bought for US \$20,000." Another post by a Facebook blog named Morning Gees, reads: "Nigerian man, known as Kayode Shobiye had traveled Zimbabwe to sell his toes. Report says that the big toe is sold for US\$40,000 and the small toe is sold for US\$20,000. Kayode has sold all of his toes from one of his feet. After selling his toes, the Nigerian man purchased luxurious cars. In total, Kayode had gotten US\$120,000 N\$48million."

Elsewhere, another Facebook account Zambian News also posted a video with text: "in Zimbabwe, people have started selling their toes for thousands of dollars."

WHAT WE FOUND?

After coming across these claims making rounds on social media, Local Voices Liberia Fact Checking Desk decided to verify. We carefully followed credible news media reports in Zimbabwe and social media posts on the issue and found the claim to be false.

News reports in Zimbabwe disclosed that Police in the country were investigating possible trafficking of human body parts, following reports that people are selling their toes in exchange for riches to people who use them for ritualistic purposes, Bulawayo 24, an online news claimed.

LocalVoicesLiberia Fact Checking Desk reviewed a number of posts, photos, and videos. These comments depicted that Facebook users were making jokes and jest out of the information. Although there is no credible media outlet that has provided evidence of people trading their toes for money in Zimbabwe, a local Newspaper, H-Metro claimed in its May 31, 2022 edition that a "Dealer confirms toe trade". However, an initial fact check by Fact Check Ghana found that the online news did not provide any further evidence about the claim.

The Zimbabwean government announced that the claims were a hoax

and are being spread to tarnish the country's image, Nigerian online platform, Paradise News reported on June 8. It quoted Zimbabwe Minister of Information, Kindness Paradza as saying: "As a government, we researched the issue, and we realized that it is false. These social media reports are aimed at tarnishing the country's image".

PRANKSTER ARRESTED

The man who said he was buying human toes claimed that he was making a prank – an act meant to deceive another person or persons. On June 7, 2022, David Kasege was arrested and was sent to court in Harare — the capital of Zimbabwe. Keseke, who has been charged with "criminal nuisance", said claimed that he was "drunk and joking" when he made the claim, according to News24 – a major news online news in South Africa.

CONCLUSION

After a careful review of all the posts, photos and videos making the rounds on social media, and relying on credible news media, we conclude that there's no evidence supporting the viral claim that Zimbabweans are selling their toes for cash due to high cost of living. We conclude that the claim is false and that the man who said he was buying human toes was a prankster.

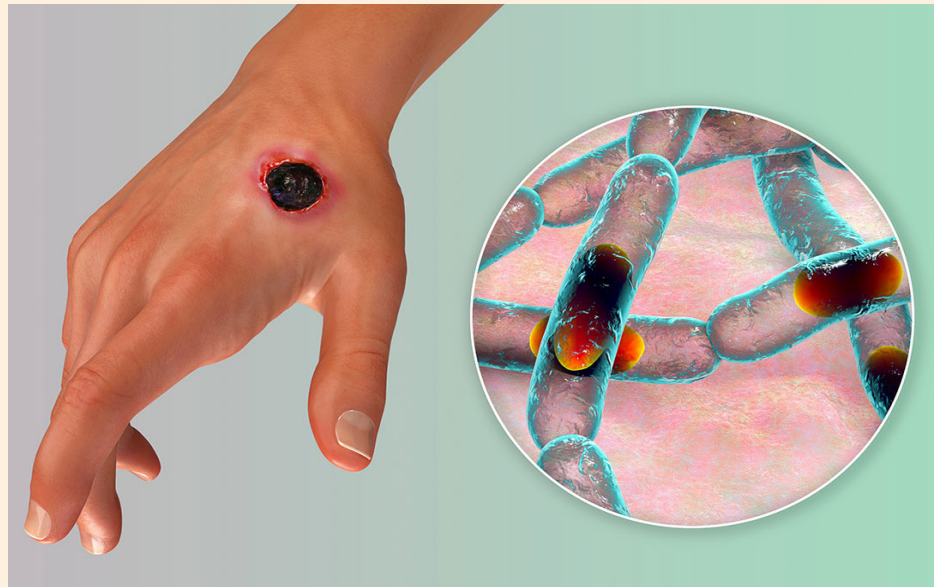
Explainer: Anthrax Virus: What You Need to Know

Paynesville – The announcement of an outbreak of Anthrax virus by the government of Sierra Leone on May 16, 2022, alerted several public health officials in the region including those in Liberia. However, it is important to know some basic information about the virus itself. In this explainer, we will tell you what the virus is, mode of transmission, and means of treatment.

Anthrax is a virus or infectious disease that is transferred from animals to humans. It affects human directly or indirectly from infected animals. It is a serious infectious disease caused by gram-positive, rod-shaped bacteria known as *Bacillus anthracis*. This occurs naturally in soil and commonly affects domestic and wild animals around the world.

According to the World Health Organization and the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention Anthrax is primarily a zoonotic disease caused by a bacterium called *Bacillus anthracis*.

Humans generally contract the disease directly or indirectly from infected animals, or through occupational exposure to infected or contaminated animal products. However, the WHO suggests that Anthrax in humans is not generally regarded as contagious, although rare records of person-to-person transmission exist.



WHAT IS THE MODE OF TRANSMISSION?

According to CDC, people get infected with anthrax virus when spores get into the body. When anthrax spores get inside the body, they can be activated and the bacteria can then multiply, spread out in the body, produce toxins, and cause severe illness.

This can happen when people breathe in bacteria, eat food or drink water contaminated with bacteria, or get spores in a cut or scrape in the skin. One can get sick with anthrax if they come in contact with infected animals or contaminated animal products.

SYMPTOMS OF ANTHRAX

The symptoms of anthrax depend on the type of infection a person is experiencing. It may take anywhere from one day to more than two months for symptoms to appear. All types of anthrax have the potential, if untreated, to spread throughout the body and cause severe illness and even death.

Some anthrax symptoms, according to CDC, are cutaneous Anthrax on the Arm — a group of small blisters or bumps that may itch Swelling can occur around the sore. A painless skin sore (ulcer) with a black center that appears after the small blisters or bumps Most often the sore will be on the face, neck, arms, or hand.

Others are, Nausea and vomiting, especially bloody vomiting, Diarrhea or bloody diarrhea, headache flushing (red face) and red eyes, stomach pain, fainting and swelling of abdomen (stomach).

TREATMENT FOR ANTHRAX INFECTION

Doctors have several options for treating patients with anthrax, including the use of antibiotics and antitoxin. Patients with serious cases of anthrax need to be hospitalized and may require aggressive treatment, such as continuous fluid drainage and help breathing through mechanical ventilation.

For people who have been exposed to anthrax but do not yet have symptoms, certain antibiotics can be used to prevent illness from developing, according to the CDC.

ANTIBIOTICS

All types of anthrax infection can be treated with antibiotics, including intravenous antibiotics (medicine given through the vein). If someone has symptoms of anthrax, it is important to get medical care as quickly as possible to have the best chances of a full recovery. Doctors will select antibiotics that are best for treating anthrax and that are best for the patient based on their medical history.

ANTITOXIN

When anthrax spores get inside the body, they can be “activated.” When they become active, anthrax bacteria can multiply, spread out in the body, and produces toxins—or poisons. Anthrax toxins in the body cause severe illness. After anthrax toxins have been released in the body, one possible treatment is antitoxin. Antitoxins target anthrax toxins in the body. Doctors must use antitoxin together with other treatment options.

PREVENTION OF ANTHRAX

Anthrax is rare, and most people will never be exposed to it. There is a vaccine licensed to prevent anthrax, but it is only recommended for routine use in certain groups of at-risk adults (for example, some members of the military and laboratory workers).

Antibiotics can prevent anthrax from developing in people who have been exposed but have not developed symptoms. Antibiotics work in two main ways – by killing the anthrax or by stopping the anthrax from growing. When the anthrax can't grow anymore, it dies. Two of the antibiotics that could be used to prevent anthrax are Ciprofloxacin and Doxycycline.



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 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



Adolphus Clarke is the head of Vaccination at the Ministry of Health

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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