The National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and partners are responding to Lassa fever outbreak in the country.

On August 22, 2019, the Bong County Health Team notified NPHIL and MoH of Lassa fever outbreak following the confirmation of one case from Suakoko District. The case deceased, was a 30-year-old male and Laboratory Technician; a health worker who worked at Phebe Hospital and a resident of Phebe Airstrip, Suakoko District.

Similarly, on August 24 & 25, 2019 respectively, the National Public Health Reference Laboratory confirmed two additional cases of Lassa fever infection in a 46-year-old male and a 14-year-old female; both residents of Suakoko Town, Suakoko District, Bong County.

Additionally, the Grand Bassa County Health Team on September 3, 2019 notified the National Public Health Institute of Liberia and the Ministry of Health of a Lassa fever outbreak following laboratory confirmation. The case patient, deceased, was an eleven (11) year-old female and a resident of Biabia Camp, District-# 3-A &B, Grand Bassa County.

“Nimba, Bong and unto Lofa is considered the Lassa fever belt. But seeing cases from outside this belt is an issue of concern. At the sametime, if health workers who have been trained to take care of others are infected, then that escalates.”

- Dr. Francis Kateh

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The International Health Regulations (IHR) and National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) self-assessment and implementation review has ended with a call for the managers of the country health sector not to be complacent despite the progress made. The review meeting was held from August 13-16, 2019 at the Golden Gate Hotel, in Paynesville City, Montserrado County.

The meeting was intended to document Liberia’s progress since the conduct of the Joint External Evaluation of the International Health Regulation (IHR) in 2016 and prioritize NAPHS for 2020.

The National Action Plan for Health Security is a plan developed through a consultative and multi-sectoral engagement with involvement of International Partners including the World Health Organization (WHO), United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (USCDC), USAID, on behalf of the Government of Liberia to comprehensively address the threats to public health security in Liberia.

During the four-day deliberations, participants reviewed Liberia’s National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) implementation, progress and challenges; conducted a midterm self-assessment scorecard and used the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) 2.0 indicators to identify key Benchmark actions to implement in 2020 based on existing capacity levels and map key actions based on available and anticipated resources. With support from partners, Liberia supports IHR as a commitment to ensuring harmonious implementation of the Regional Disease Surveillance System Enhancement (RIDESSE) Project and also in furtherance of One Health ideals.

Results from the self-assessment saw improvements in eight technical areas; Antimicrobial Resistance, Zoonotic Diseases, Immunizations, Laboratory, Surveillance, Reporting, Human Resources, and Points of Entry. At the same time, lower scores were seen in five technical areas, primarily in the ‘Respond’ areas; namely; Biosafety and Biosecurity, Emergency Response Operations, Linking Public Health and Security Authorities, Medical Countermeasures and Personnel Deployment, and Risk Communications.

NPHIL’s Director General, Cllr. Tolbert Nyenswah thanked the Government of Liberia and partners for the support to the sector, and called for more at all levels.

In response to the outbreak, MOH, NPHIL, WHO, US-CDC and partners are providing technical, financial, and logistical support to the District Response Teams. No epidemiological link has been established between these cases. However, there is a likelihood for these cases to be linked based on history of the source of infection.

Although Lassa fever is not new to Liberia, it is a deadly viral disease that requires urgent attention. The disease is spread by rodents or rats and through close contact with affected persons. Health authorities are advising the population to take the following public health measures:

- Keep your environment clean;
- Cover your dishes to prevent rats ‘pu-pu-uing or pee-pee’ on them;
- Cover food and drinking water in tightly-closed containers to prevent rats from reaching them;
- Do not eat rats because you could get the sick by coming in contact with their blood, urine or feces ‘pee-pee or pu-pu’;
- Do not dry food in open places where rats can reach;
- Avoid body contact with affected persons and endemic zone; and
- Visit a health facility immediately when you feel sick.
The Second Annual Emmet A. Dennis Scientific Conference has ended in Monrovia with a call for policy and national decision-makers to ensure that research is used to inform national development. Delivering the keynote message at the close of the conference, the honoree, Dr. Emmet A. Dennis informed the participants that most of the developments that are carried out in Liberia are not research-driven. This he said: “Is due to the lack of proper research to guide our national developments. Too often we do not make the right decisions to undertake our national development initiatives.” He emphasized the importance of scientific research and admonished young scientists and Liberian students to be focused and get involved especially for a world that is becoming more scientific.

In her opening speech, Vice-President Jewel Howard-Taylor paid tribute to the men and women in the health sector who have and continue to make sacrifices to move the health sector forward in spite of the many challenges. She said as Liberia builds her health systems to withstand shocks: “We may not be able to stop diseases from starting but we should be able to prevent it from spreading and killing our people.”

She registered her appreciation to Dr. Emmet A. Dennis, President Emeritus of the University of Liberia, in whose honor the Conference has been organized for his hard work, diligence, commitment and sacrifices. Vice President Howard-Taylor encouraged the youth and up-coming public health scientists to take advantage of the conference in order to acquire as much information as possible and use the opportunity of the ‘Ted-Talk’ to gain confidence for their life journey. She however stressed that if successes can be achieved by others around the globe, you (youth) too can definitely be a part of the innovators and creators of our future.

At the end of the 3-day conference, awards were presented to the three best oral presenters. They included Emmanuel Ghartey; winner, Dash Kwayon; first runner-up and Jacob Timmah; second runner-up. For the poster presentation, Lydia K. Seepoe came first, followed by Sumor Lamax Flomo and Youhn Konway second and third place respectively.

The conference took place from August 27-29, 2019, at the Millennium Guest House and Suites located on 5th Tubman Boulevard, Monrovia.
The people, and the Actions

Dr. Mosoka Fallah addresses MICAT Weekly Press Briefing ahead of Scientific Conference

Dr. Maame Amo-Addae speaks at MICAT Weekly Press Briefing ahead of Scientific Conference

DG Nyenswah briefs VP Howard-Taylor

H.E. Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor, VP, Republic of Liberia, delivers keynote address at 2nd Annual EAD National Scientific Conference

A cross-section of delegates at the 2nd Annual EAD National Scientific Conference posed for group photo

Cllr. Tolbert G. Nyenswah, DG, NPHIL makes remarks at 2nd Annual EAD National Scientific Conference

Jim Desmond, EcoHealth Alliance, raps on “Zaire Ebola virus disease” discovery in bat - Nimba County, 2018

Dr. Desmond Williams, Country Director, US CDC reaffirms US Government’s support to Liberia’s health sector
The people, and the Actions

“I am glad this is not postmortem, I am alive to see a conference named in my honor,” Dr. Emmet A. Dennis

“The gains we have made in a short period reflect the collaborative efforts of our Government and partners,” DG Nyenswah

“Your beginning does not define your end,” Ms. Miatta Gbayan tells her story

“When you see a problem, you can be the solution”, Dr. Mosoka Fallah speaks on maternal and new born deaths.

“We wanted to give hope to the people, and that’s what we did,” Dr. Soka Moses shares his experience in the ETU - 2014 Ebola response

STORY OF MY LIFE, sharing their experiences in a TedTalk like presentation at the 2nd Annual EAD National Scientific Conference

“The successful hosting of this second conference is because of you, thank you for being a part.”
Mrs. Lily Sanvee-Blebo, NPHIL

Mrs. Faith K. Whesseh announces names of awards winners
DG Nyenswah, right, presents award to Dr. Emmet A. Dennis, left.

Dr. Emmet A. Dennis appreciates delegates and organizers for the successful hosting of the 2nd edition of the EAD National Scientific Conference

Dr. Ophelia Weeks, (Left), presents ‘Best Poster Presenter’ award to Mrs. Lydia K. Seepoe, (Right).

Dr. Desmond Williams, (Right), presents ‘2nd Best Poster Presenter’ award to Mrs. Sumor Lomax Flomo, (Left).

Dr. Kumblytee Johnson, (Left), presents ‘3rd Best Poster Presenter’ award to Mr. Youhn Konway, (Right).

Dr. Mosoka Fallah, left, presents ‘Best Oral Presenter’ award to Mr. Emmanuel Gharkey, right.

Dr. Mariatu Turay-Rohde, left, presents ‘2nd Best Oral Presenter’ award to Mr. Dash Kwayon, right.

Dr. Herbert Kazoora Brain, left, presents ‘3rd Best Oral Presenter’ award to Mr. Jacob Timmah, right.
German Non-Governmental Organization, Lebensbrucke International Deutschland (Lifebridge International Germany) has donated an ambulance to the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL). The Mercedes Ambulance with capacity of 14500km, is valued at approximately $60,000.00 (Sixty-Thousand United States Dollars).

The donation is a result of discussion held between the head of the organization Madam Petra Windisch de Lates and the Director General of the National Public Health Institute of Liberia Cllr. Tolbert G. Nyenswah when she visited Liberia in March this year.

This latest donation forms part of DG Nyenswah’s continued lobby for assistance from international partners and organizations for the smooth operations of the Institute.

During an inspection of the ambulance on the compound of NPHIL located in Oldest Congo Town, the Deputy Director General for Technical Services Dr. Mosoka Fallah commended the German organization for the kind gesture. “This ambulance will help to further boost the response capacity of NPHIL,” he noted.