NPHIL Dedicates Water Lab

The National Central Environmental Health Laboratory has been dedicated. The dedicatory ceremony was held on November 15, 2019 in Congo Town, Montserrado County. Performing the ceremony, the Liberian Senate Committee Chair on Health, Gender, Women and Children Protection, Dr. Peter S. Coleman Commended the Acting Director General of the National Public Health Institute of Liberia Dr. Mosoka Fallah for ensuring the completion of the projects.

According to Dr. Coleman, the testing of water and food is very essential to the growth and development of an individual, and admonished the National Public Health Institute of Liberia to ensure that water and food that are produced in Liberia are properly tested and certified before they are allow to be sold to the public. “When I was Minister of Health, the testing of water and food was some of the issues we initiated and promised as a Government we will do”, he noted. The Grand Kru County Senator furthered, “now that this dream is a reality, I want to cautioned you, particularly, those who are responsible for testing to ensure that the right thing is done and do not compromise standard”, he averred.

“Water is the source of life, but can also be the source of death if not tested and treated properly”.

- Dr. Mosoka P. Fallah

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Stakeholders in the health sector and Local Government Officials ended a Two-day after action review meeting on Lassa Fever Outbreak in Gbarnga City, Bong County. The review meeting was held from November 13-14,2019 and primarily looked at an in-depth review of the response action taken during the outbreaks in Grand Bassa, Bong and Margibi Counties. During the review meeting, participants identified gaps as well as lessons learned during the response.

According to the participants, logistics, finance and the delay of specimens results from the National Reference Laboratory were some of the challenges experienced during the response. They called on authorities at the National Public Health institute and the Ministry of Health to mitigate these challenges.

Straight adherence to the protocols on best practices and procedures as well as the political will to compel compliance for regular cleaning of the communities were some of the lessons learned during the Lassa Fever Outbreaks. The participants promised to ensure best practices in future outbreaks and called on the local government authorities especially at the districts level to work along with the communities for the improvement of hygiene and sanitation. Poor sanitation and hygiene were the contributing factors identified for the outbreaks of Lassa Fever at the communities’ level. Participants attending the review meeting include County Health Officers, County Surveillance Officers, Partners, County Superintendents, pillars lead as well as others that were involved in the response.

The Acting Director General of the National Public Health Institute of Liberia Dr. Mosoka Fallah commended the partners, particularly UNICEF for the support to the project.

He said NPHIL is mostly involved into response than prevention and as part of his plan as the acting boss is to change it around. “The more we prevent, we save the Government cost and reduce the impact on the economy”, he disclosed.

According to Dr. Fallah, “water is life when it is properly treated”. He called on the public particularly water producing entities and food peddlers to take advantage of the testing facilities that the Government of Liberia has build.
Stakeholders in the health sector and others collaborating actors celebrated on November 23rd 2019 One Health Day as well as a week awareness on Antibiotics. The day was celebrated with emphasis on Antimicrobial Resistance but specific focus on Antibiotic Awareness. The aim was to increased awareness of antibiotic resistance and to encouraged best practices among the general public and policy makers to avoid the emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance. The Dean of the School of Pharmacy Dr. Ezekiel Halli in his keynote address attributed the misuse and over use of antibiotic in Liberia to the lack of national prescription policy. According to Dr. Halli, in keeping with international best practices, the purchase of medication is based on prescription. Unfortunately for Liberia, the keynote speaker indicated is the opposite. This he further noted is one of the factor responsible for Antimicrobial Resistance. He also disclosed that unethical behavior sometimes demonstrated by some health workers with respect to drugs prescription is another factor. He called for collective efforts in creating awareness to combat this problem.

Earlier, Mr. Sonpon Sieh, Coordinator of the One Health in Liberia in a brief presentation pointed out that the OHCP is organized to effectively achieve its mission with strong administrative and technical support. It sits under the office of the Vice President of Liberia and hosted by the National Public Health Institute of Liberia. According to Sonpon, the One Health Concept is a holistic vision to address complex challenges that threaten human and animal health, food security, poverty and the environments where diseases flourish.
On November 19, 2019, Liberia joined the world to commemorate World Toilet Day. The commemoration of the day was held under the theme: “Leave no One Behind”. World Toilet Day is an official United Nations International observance day on 19 November to inspire action to tackle the global sanitation crisis. It is also an annual global event organized by the UN Water to raise awareness of the crucial role that sanitation plays.

On Monday, November 19, 2019, stakeholders representing various institutions from the water and sanitation sector of Liberia as well as students marched from the Bong Mines Bridge located on the Bushrod Island to the sound of the Arm Forces of Liberia Marching Band, and paraded the main street of the Borough of New Kru Town up to the D. Twe Memorial High School for the official indoor program. Given an overview of open defecation in Liberia, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the National WASH Commission Amb. Bobby Whitfield said the problem of proper sanitation and the elimination of open defecation is related to the safety of drinking water, the proper application of hygiene habits and waste water management.

According to Amb. Whitfield, with over 2,000 rural and peril-urban communities having embraced a self-promotion strategy, Community Led Total Sanitation out of nearly 17,000 communities, there is a lot of work to be done. But as the Chinese adage puts it, “the journey of 1,000 miles begins with the first step,” he indicated. There are critical roles for urban authorities, City and Municipal Councils as well as businesses, restaurants, parking stations, markets and entertainments centers, he also pointed out. In a special message delivered, Public Works Minister, Mobutu V. Nyenpan reiterated the Government of Liberia commitment to ending open defecation by 2025 in Liberia. According to Minister Nyenpan, open defecation is a serious thread not only to the people and communities but to the nation as a whole. He admonished Liberians to develop good sanitation habit so that the next World Toilet Day, the statistics can change. He praised the partners for their support to the Government and people of Liberia.
A one-day advocacy meeting on the incorporation of the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) training into pre-service curriculum was held on Friday, November 22, 2019 in Monrovia.

The meeting brought together pre-service institutions in the country, including health regulatory institutions to brainstorm the incorporation of IDSR training course into pre-service curricula of all health institutions.

The goal is to foster a culture of sustainability and ensure a consistent and constant supply of well-trained workforce ready for the implementation of IDSR and the International Health Regulation (IHR) in Liberia. When accepted and incorporated, the training will provide students with a critical foundation of knowledge and skills, and develop their competence to practice in the real world.

The meeting was organized by the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH), with support from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Speaking at the opening session, NPHIL’s Acting Director General, Dr. Mosoka P. Fallah, praised partners for their continuous support to the sector. He stressed that incorporating the IDSR training into pre-service curriculum will prepared students better in detecting diseases at all levels. He said understanding the IDSR guideline will further keep students protected as they practice in the real world.

Also speaking, US CDC Country Director Dr. Desmond Williams stressed that the IDSR is also helpful in patient care because it contains useful guidelines that assist clinicians in diagnosing or making a suspected diagnosis. Dr. Williams said the tool also provides clinician the skills to take the appropriate Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) measures in an effort to prevent the spread of disease.

At the same time, WHO Representative (WR), Dr. Mesfin Zbelo called on participants to see the incorporation as a means of further strengthening the country’s surveillance system. He reaffirmed WHO’s continuous support to Liberia’s health sector.
The people, and the Actions

[L-R]: Dr. Monday/WHO, Dr. Zbelo/WHO, Dr. Fallah/NPHIL, and Dr. Williams/US CDC at the IDSR one day advocacy meeting

Pre-service stakeholders at the IDSR one day advocacy meeting

Pre-service stakeholders at the IDSR one day advocacy meeting

Build-up to the parade, One Health Day Celebration and World Antibiotics Awareness Week 2019

Stakeholders at the build-up to the parade, One Health Day Celebration and World Antibiotics Awareness Week 2019

Students joined the grand parade, 2019 One Health Day Celebration and World Antibiotics Awareness Week

The grand parade, 2019 One Health Day Celebration and World Antibiotics Awareness Week
The people, and the Actions

- The indoor program, 2019 One Health Day Celebration and World Antibiotics Awareness Week
- Stakeholders at the 2019 One Health Day Celebration and World Antibiotics Awareness Week
- Lassa fever response: Partial view of Bea-Bea Camp, LAC, Grand Bassa County
- Stakeholders at the 2019 One Health Day Celebration and World Antibiotics Awareness Week
- Stakeholders at the 2019 World Toilet Day, New Kru Town, Bushrod Island, Monrovia
- Students at the 2019 World Toilet program, D. Twe High School, New Kru Town, Bushrod Island
- Delegates at the 2019 Lassa fever After Action Review Meeting, Gbarnga, Bong County
- County Tour: Grand Bassa County Health Team, Community Leaders/Residents and partners at the dialogue meeting
The Acting Director General of the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) Dr. Mosoka Fallah as head of a high power delegation ended a tour of three counties in the Lassa Fever belt of the country. The counties were Bong, Margibi and Grand Bassa. During the three days’ tour, the delegation dialogued with the people at the community level so as to find out what is responsible for the increase in the number of Lassa Fever cases in these counties.

The delegation visited Phebe Airstrip in Suakoko District in Bong County, Baypopu Town in Margibi County, Bea-Bea Camp in the concession area of the Liberia Agriculture Company (LAC) and Compound Three in Grand Bassa County. These areas are considered hot spots of Lassa Fever Cases.

During the dialogue, poor sanitation, congestion of houses, lack of waste disposal sites and consumption of rats were the overriding problems raised by all of the communities. The delegation further discovered that poor sanitation and hygiene is responsible for the invasion of rats in almost all of the homes in the communities visited. The NPHIL Boss assured the communities that all of the problems raised can be resolve if they work along with the NPHIL and partners to address their plight. “With your cooperation and support and the involvement of our partners, we can overcome this problem”, he noted. World Health Organization Country Representative to Liberia Dr. Mesfin G. Zbelo emphasized the importance of coordination. According to Dr. Zbelo, coordination was very effective during the Ebola outbreak and called on stakeholders to do the same with Lassa Fever.

The WHO Country boss also spoke about the need to strengthen surveillance. “The more we do good surveillance, the early we will detect the cases”, he indicated. For his part, the Country Director of the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention Dr. Desmond William told the people in Margibi particularly that Lassa Fever is not a new disease and has been around in Liberia for a long time now. He said the wave of the spread of the disease in recent time is a serious concern.

In addition to the dialogue meeting with communities, the delegation also visited the Phebe, Rennie and LAC Hospitals as well as the Isolation Facilities in these hospitals.