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[Home](#) > UMass Medical Team meets Presiden Sirleaf

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Embassy of the Republic of Liberia in the United States , Wed, Jan 18, 2012

PRESS RELEASE

University of Massachusetts Medical Team Calls on President Sirleaf

(MONROVIA, LIBERIA – January 18, 2012): A delegation from the University of Massachusetts on Wednesday paid a courtesy call on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at the Foreign Ministry in Monrovia.

Congratulating the President on her inauguration, the head of the medical team, Dr. Marcellette Williams, expressed delight that the University of Massachusetts has been able to partner with the Tubman National Institute of Medical Arts (TNIMA)

and the John F. Kennedy Medical Center. She said the University will continue to support the educational initiatives of the government by providing the means through which young medical practitioners can be educated. Dr. Williams who is also Senior Vice at the University of Massachusetts, stressed the need for health care, which can serve as a foundation for the economic empowerment of women.

According to an Executive Mansion release, the UMass official disclosed that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided a grant of US\$7.3 million to fund the redevelopment of the curriculum and faculty in biological sciences to strengthen pre-clinical programs for individuals interested in health careers.

Under the grant, the University of Massachusetts and the University of Indiana will work with TNIMA and the University of Liberia in a partnership that will develop the first publicly funded Bachelor's program in nursing. The program will also involve the exchange of professors in anatomy and biochemistry. A Liberian pediatrician, supported under the program, is already in country, serving as a faculty member at the A.M. Dogliotti School of Medicine at the University of Liberia. Dr. Marshall heads the Pediatric Division at JFK. "Our long-term goal is to build a sustainable program to train Liberians that will then take the program forward," Dr. Williams added.





Welcoming the delegation to Liberia, President Johnson Sirleaf

said she was delighted about the partnership with the University of Massachusetts and the collaboration with the University of Liberia. Some progress has been made in the health sector, the President said, but there is still more to be done, to get JFK to the standard of being a referral hospital and to improve the other hospitals that can be a place of first call, like Redemption.

Human resources have been one of the country's biggest constraints, the President said – “having people with the skills and training to be able to take over the services.” She said she was delighted that some of the skilled professionals have begun to return, but acknowledged that the numbers may never be enough. “That is why training here is important until we can build that critical mass of people.”

The President said the rural areas also need attention because they are host to the bulk of the country's population, especially those with low incomes. Free medical services need to be rendered to them as much as possible, or at low cost, she said. The HEARTT Program and what you are doing in training will make a big difference and really enhance some of the efforts that we are making, President Johnson Sirleaf told the medical team.

The University of Massachusetts, which, through volunteers of HEARTT – the Health Education and Relief Through Teaching, headed by Dr. Adama Sirleaf, has been collaborating the University of Liberia and Cuttington University College, as well as the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital, to help provide medical services and train Liberian health workers. The delegation was accompanied by Dr. Sirleaf and Dr. Marianne E. Felice, a professor of Pediatrics and Obstetrics at the University of Massachusetts.

Signed: _____
President

Cyrus Wleh Badio

Press Secretary to the

Source URL (modified on Jan 19 2012 - 4:41pm):<https://liberianembassyus.org/in-the-news/umass-medical-team-meets-presiden-sirleaf>