

REMARKS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

AT

THE FIRST TRANSITION PROGRAM

OF THE

AT-RISK YOUTH DETOXIFICATION AND REHABILITATION CENTER

BOYS TOWN, MARGIBI COUNTY
LIBERIA

JANUARY 11, 2023

The Dean and Members of the Cabinet;

The Executive Director of the Liberia Drug Enforcement;

The Superintendent of Margibi County

The Town Chief of Zorkpah Town;

Other Officials of Government here present;

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

The United Nations Resident Coordinator; and the United Nations Agencies in Liberia;

Our International Partners, especially the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund;

Heads of other International Organizations and Non-Governmental Agencies here present;

Members of the Business Community;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to be here today to participate in this program marking the first transition of some of our at-risk youth from this Detoxification and Rehabilitation Center which was recently opened by my Administration here at Boy's Town in Margibi County.

You will recall that in June of last year, I launched a National Fund Drive for the Rehabilitation and Empowerment of the At-Risk Youth of Liberia, under the theme:

“RECLAIMING OUR YOUTH FOR A BETTER LIBERIA”

At that time, I indicated that we had established the goal of raising approximately US\$13.9 Million United States Dollars for this noble cause, with assistance from our Development Partners, including the United Nation System, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the IMF, and the Diplomatic Corps, as well as the prominent members of the business community.

As a Government, we have made an initial contribution of One Million United States Dollars to kick-start the Fund Drive, and we intend to provide an additional Two Million United States Dollars to be appropriated within this year's budget to support this program.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

What you have witnessed here today is a manifestation of the seriousness that I attach to this program, and a demonstration of my personal commitment to rehabilitate these young people, and fast-track their return to society as productive citizens.

Funds are being raised under the Fund Drive, and other facilities are now being prepared to deal with the vast majority of these At-Risk youths, which some estimates suggest number more than 130,000. These programs are designed to orientate, rehabilitate, and build their capacities over the long term, through skills-based vocational training, as well as economically empowering them through jobs and business opportunities.

However, because I am a “TALK & DO” President, I have taken this personal initiative to put together a transitional program for the first group. I made a visit to the Invincible Park one day and saw many of them hanging around the Park. Many of them were not in the best of health. Many of them had problems with their teeth, their eyes, and other illnesses. And I was so moved by their plight that I collected all of them that day and sent them here to be taken care of.

Today, during this Program, you have seen the very positive results of this initiative. They were given appropriate medical care, including the necessary dental and eye treatments. They were put through an effective detoxification program, from which they have all benefitted. And they were made to attend various training programs that would give them some basic skill-sets.

And here they are before you today, proud graduates of this First Transition Program, poised and ready to return to normal life with confidence, and with assurance that they are appreciated, and can now claim their rightful and respected place in our Civil Society.

Please let us all stand and give them a big hand of applause for this great transition and transformation.

FELLOW CITIZENS, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Let me renew my commitment to improve the lives of the young people of Liberia...all of them, not just the youths that are at risk. As a youthful leader of this country, it should come as no surprise to anyone that I hold them very dear and very close to my heart. Today, we are seeing the first step in a journey of a thousand miles. But it is a significant first step, because it is the proof that we can

make a significant change in their lives and livelihoods, if only we can combine political will with passion, and apply it with compassion.

To the new graduates, I say Congratulations, and offer you my heartfelt best wishes for a new and productive life. Go forth from this program with your heads held up high, and make Liberia proud of you!

I thank you.