

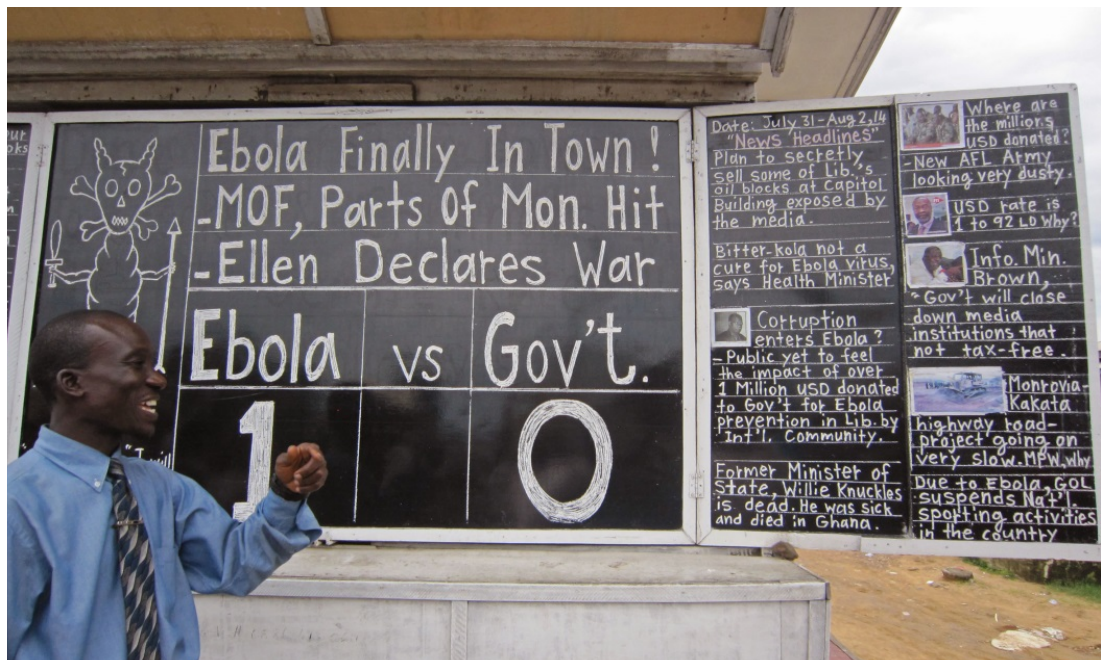
MEDIA MOGUL: Alfred Sirleaf

In the wake of Ebola, Liberia's "Daily Talk is about keeping everyone in the system on their toes and aware of what is happening."

US foreign aid works best as a tool in the hands of the right local leaders—those who stand up for accountability, make demands of government, and get results.

During the Ebola crisis, the news is not just bits of information. The news has become a matter of life and death.

Alfred Jomo Sirleaf has been at the forefront of making sure people have this crucial information. Since he founded *The Daily Talk* in 2000, the 41-year-old inventor, father of three, and high school graduate has been on a personal mission to provide free news on local, national and international issues to his fellow Liberians.



Alfred Sirleaf, founder of The Daily Talk, gives comment on current events in Liberia - including the deadly Ebola outbreak - via a blackboard newspaper on a white plywood shack on Tubman Boulevard, one of the busiest intersections in Monrovia, Liberia in July 2014. AP Photo/Jonathan Paye-Layleh

Every morning, with just four other staff and very little and inconsistent funding, Sirleaf checks in via text with "eyes and ears" correspondents, or over 200 volunteer citizen journalists across all 15 of Liberia's counties. They scour over a dozen newspapers, radio reports, international media, and government websites. Sirleaf

then decides which three to four stories and headlines will appear on the shack's "front page," and writes them up with weatherproof chalk.

Sirleaf writes in Liberian English, a pidgin or vernacular that is readily understandable to people, and tapes up photos he has printed out from the nearby Internet café to illustrate stories. He has also devised a system of symbols that enables people who don't read well to know what today's main story is about. For example, people see a broom to signify "cleaning house" and know that embezzlement is in the news. A metal hubcap signifies a story about the "iron lady" of Liberian politics, Liberia's Nobel Prize winning President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson (no close relation to *The Daily Talk* founder) who passes by the shack every day in transit from her home to her office at Liberia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Liberians gather around The Daily Talk shack in Monrovia. On average each day, 5,000 people read The Daily Talk to consume their news – more people than those that read Liberia's most popular website. AP Photo/Jonathan Paye-Layleh

"I started in April...covering Ebola when it was still at the border, near Guinea," says Sirleaf. "I was scoring the government on its health care facilities, response to the epidemic, communications to the public, lack of preventative systems, etc.

Sirleaf's work—before, during, and after Ebola—is fueling active citizenship so that people are able to turn to politics and debate, rather than armed conflict, in the face of adversity.



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