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Policy Seminar on Youth Development and Job Creation

Sustainable Jobs and skill training for youth are essential

On October 17, 2012 the National Democratic Institute (NDI-Liberia) organized a policy seminar for legislators on youth development and job creation. The seminar addressed upcoming priorities of the House Committee on Youth and Sports and the House Committee on Labor.

Over the past six months, NDI Policy Seminars for legislative committees of the 53rd Legislature have focused on decentralization, gender responsive budgeting, and Elections Law reform.

In his welcoming remarks to the youth policy seminar **NDI's Resident Senior Director Aubrey McCutcheon** reminded the 125 participants of why children and youth are at the core across every pillar of Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). *"According to the PRS, posted on the Executive Mansion website, Liberia's youth have spent more time engaged in war than in school textbooks in schools are scarce, only one for every 27 students 40% of children are growth-stunted because of poor nutrition and the majority of girls have their first child before the age of 18 because of forced early marriages or rape".*

Keynote speaker, **Vice-President Joseph N. Boakai**, strongly underlined the urgency of tackling youth unemployment in Liberia: *"failure is not an option", he said.* He argued that it is necessary to build capacity in every community *"to create sustainable job opportunities, by initiating community based projects or income generating projects"*. The Vice-President asked the audience to *"pin our probing eyes"* on issues such as how the *"government can motivate private companies to take up their corporate social responsibilities to create more opportunities for youth"*.

NDI secured the participation of a regional expert, **Dr. Charles Brempong-Yeboah, a**

former MP and former Deputy Minister of Manpower, Youth & Development of Ghana. He shared examples of very concrete employment and entrepreneurial projects such as mobile cell phone repair units and others, and encouraged Liberian youth to *"change their mind-set from seeking white collar formal employment to cultivating an entrepreneurial attitude that will see them start their own businesses."*

The Liberian **Minister of Youth and Sports, Tornorlah Varpilah**, highlighted the empowerment of 5,000 youth by June 2013 through job creation, agriculture and vocational training. The Minister also announced plans to create *"a national task force to implement a program to address the problem of street youth in cities, beginning with Monrovia"*.

Representative Lester Paye, Chairman of the House Committee Youth and Sports, reflected on the presentations of the minister and NDI's international expert. According to him *"skill training of young people is essential to enhance their opportunities. There is a huge need for professional youth services"*. He warned against a youth policy that simply stays on the shelf.

Isatu Ville of the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) warned that Liberia *"is getting into danger"* because, she believes, there is no adequate youth policy. *"There is bad governance and no proper allocation of natural resources. We always hear that youth are the future, but it is always the world of tomorrow and never of today"*.

Representative Christian Chea, Chairman of the House Committee on Labor, asked for more details on youth programs allocated in the National Budget. *"The details of these programs are not specified. It is therefore difficult to state how these will be implemented and by whom"*. He is in favor of involving youth in the work of the Legislature, by inviting them to plenary and committee meetings.

If you wish to receive a report of the seminar by e-mail, with the full text of the presentations, please contact Nannoh Seekey: nseekey@ndi.org.



*From left to right:
Vice-President Joseph N. Boakai;
Participants;
Isatu Ville of FLY.*

Liberia's LBO studies parliamentary budget offices in Uganda and Kenya and the budget process of the U.S. Congress

To learn from other African parliamentarian budget offices, NDI organized and sponsored a mission for four senior Legislative Budget Office (LBO) staff members to Uganda and Kenya to exchange views with their counterparts and

Upcoming events:

- Legislative drafting training for staff
- Advanced website training for Press and Public Affairs Bureaus

observe best practices. At the same time, two other senior LBO staff visited the U.S. Congress, at the invitation of the House Democracy Partnership, to observe budget research and analysis together with legislative staff from Colombia, Lebanon, Kosovo and Indonesia.

In Uganda and Kenya the LBO staff learned how their counterparts analyse the budget and empower lawmakers to scrutinize and oversee the budget and hold the executive to account. Julius Caesar, director of the LBO, was very enthusiastic: *"We learned a lot from our colleagues about how to improve our work and support the Legislature and its members in using the budget as the most important tool the government has to improve the living conditions of the people of Liberia."*

The LBO opened in May 2011 and advises the Liberian House and Senate and their committees on all issues concerning the national budget, as well as other matters such as fiscal implications of pending legislation. The LBO staff is composed of economists, analysts and fiscal experts. With the modernization of the Liberian Legislature, the increasing demands for legislative oversight of executive branch, and the importance of the National Budget for the welfare of the Liberian people, it is necessary that the skills of LBO staff continues to keep pace with international standards.

- Training for staff of the new Committee Support Service
- Policy Seminar on Affordable and Adequate Housing

Legislative Spotlight Radio Program

Every Wednesday

Truth FM – 96.1

11:00 am – 12:00 noon

14 Nov: Budget Performance

21 Nov: Concessions and Social Impact

28 Nov: Elections Law Reform



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