

CSOs are Monitoring the Legislature of Liberia | Upcoming Events in May | 20 CSOs participate in Legislative Engagement Workshop

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CSO representatives toured the Capitol Building during the workshop.

20 CSOs Participate in Legislative Engagement Workshop

From March 26 – 28, NDI organized a legislative engagement workshop for over forty CSO members representing twenty organizations from across Liberia. The workshop, aimed at

and CSOs, as both groups work for the common good of the people. He called upon the participants to be active in engaging and sharing concerns and ideas with lawmakers. Senator Jewel Howard-Taylor and Representative Bhofal

building the capacity of CSOs to engage policymakers, was conducted as part of NDI's civil society program funded by the Embassy of Sweden.

The topics of discussion during the workshop allowed CSOs to better understand the structure of the Liberian government and the different roles of the legislature (lawmaking, oversight and representation), and to identify ways in which CSOs can broaden collaboration with lawmakers. Guided by two former Representatives, Edwin Juah and Regina Sokan Teah, the participants toured the Capitol Building and observed sessions of the House and Senate. The former legislators, both of whom worked as CSO activists prior to serving in the 52nd Legislature, highlighted the significant contributions CSOs made during their tenures as lawmakers. Among other examples, they pointed out the Security Sector Reform Working Group's contributions to improvements in the recruitment processes of the Armed Forces of Liberia.

In another session, participating CSOs were able to engage directly with current legislators. In sharing his experiences at the Legislature, Representative Samuel Gayah Karmo underlined the importance of building a strong relationship between

Chambers discussed at length their roles as lawmakers and emphasized the need for CSOs to help strengthen the capacity of the legislature to fulfill its oversight function. All three legislators emphasized the need for the democratization process in Liberia to contribute to the social development of the country.

The workshop culminated in a role-play exercise, which offered participants an opportunity to act in the role of legislators based on lessons learned during the workshop. As part of the exercise, participants watched an Al Jazeera interview of President Sirleaf on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) before discussing in small groups their proposed legislative course of action to improve the WASH sector. The ideas and interventions the CSOs generated through the exercise included a call for the establishment of a central governmental authority to streamline WASH service delivery as well as a measure to increase budgetary allocation to the sector.

In late April NDI will reconvene the same CSO activists in a second workshop to deepen new skills, focusing on tools and methods for community organizing and effective legislative engagement.

lawmakers



More Liberian CSOs to Monitor the Performance of their National Legislature

Beginning with the current session of the Legislature, for the first time NDI will provide technical and financial assistance to enable a broader field of CSOs to monitor legislative proceedings and the performance of legislators on specific policy issues. Two Liberian CSOs will now be active in this field: the Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD) and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC). Through their work IREDD and JPC seek to raise citizens' awareness of lawmakers' performance and provide other CSOs with evidence for legislative engagement and advocacy. Both nonpartisan legislative monitoring groups will rely upon the increasing openness of the House and the Senate and the efforts of those bodies to provide citizens with access and information. In separate communications, IREDD and JPC formally informed the House and Senate about their activities.

NDI's monitoring partners will specifically monitor and report on the performance of legislators and the Legislature in the following areas:

- attendance of individual lawmakers and their participation in plenary sessions;
- each legislator's lawmaking and oversight initiatives;
- performance on legislation related to human rights, on bills designed to improve water, sanitation and hygiene, on bills to promote women's empowerment and gender equality, and on bills to improve natural resource management;
- availability of lawmakers to their constituents in their districts and

- counties; and
- the Legislature's efforts at openness, transparency and accountability.

Additionally, reports will provide information about the voting patterns of political parties in the Legislature.

Both IREDD and JPC will share their findings with the public through regular newspaper publications, report cards or briefs, community leaflets, and radio programs, including the NDI-funded Legislative Spotlight weekly broadcasts and JPC's programs on Radio Veritas. IREDD will also publish reports on its website. Reports will also be shared directly with legislators, government officials, media outlets and CSOs.

NDI will work to connect IREDD and JPC with the existing worldwide network of parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs). In collaboration with others, NDI has undertaken extensive global work with PMOs in recent years. NDI will offer those connections to strengthen the capacity of IREDD and JPC as monitoring groups in Liberia. (Please see the website www.OpeningParliament.org)

Upcoming Events in May

Monday 5th of May

Time: 8:30am – 1:00pm

Venue: William R. Tolbert Joint Chambers, Senate Wing, Capitol Building

A public oversight hearing convened by the Senate Committee on Public Corporations and the Senate Committee on Public Works and Rural Development to examine the conditions of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and to recommend appropriate legislative action toward improvements. CSOs, various ministries and agencies will deliver testimony. The following CSOs are scheduled to testify: the Liberia CSOs WASH Network; student groups; WONGOSOL Liberia; the CSO Consortium on Natural Resource Management; the National Union of Organizations of the Disabled; and Water Aid.

Friday 9th of May

Time: 8:30am – 1:00pm

Venue: William R. Tolbert Joint Chambers, Senate Wing, Capitol Building

A public legislative hearing convened by the House Committee on Agriculture

and Forestry on a bill to establish “The Liberian National Standards Authority”. In addition to government officials and business associations, the following CSOs are scheduled to testify: the Liberia CSOs Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Network (WASH); the Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA); the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL); OXFAM; and the Swedish aid NGO known as PMU InterLife.

Wednesday 14th May – Friday 16th May

Gbarnga

NDI skill-building workshop for invited CSO advocacy partners on Concession Agreements and Social Development Funds.



Every Wednesday and Thursday

Legislative Spotlight Radio

The NDI-sponsored Legislative Spotlight radio program is broadcast live on Truth F.M. 96.1 every Wednesday at 11:00 a.m. The show is rebroadcast every Thursday at 11:00 a.m. on Radio Veritas 97.8 F.M. Look out too for the magazine version on community radio stations in all 15 counties.

Please tune in!!!!



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