Subscribe   Share ▼   Past Issues   Translate

Meet Paul Binkley, NDI's new Resident Director | NDI CSO partner gets UN Consultative Status | Social issues monitored in the Southeast by Citizen Observatories

<u>View this email in your browser</u>

NDI-Liberia E-Newsletter
Working for democracy & making democracy work
Number 30 | June 2015

NDI Conducts Trainings with Citizen Observatories in Southeast Liberia

Education Tops SEWODA's Citizen Observatory Monitoring List

In June, NDI and its advocacy partner the Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA) held 3 two-day training sessions with Citizen Observatories in Southeast Liberia. Southeast Liberia is composed of Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Maryland, Grand Kru and Sinoe Counties and is notably lacking basic infrastructure and social services. The Observatories, comprised of local residents from Grand Kru, Maryland and River Gee Counties, were established last year by SEWODA to track and monitor social service deliverables and advocate for legislative interventions from lawmakers to improve social conditions in the region. However, their work was thwarted last year by the Ebola outbreak.

Grand Kru

The Citizen Observatories began again in May. The training for each of the three Citizen Observatories (12 members each) was meant to help them:

- better understand the roles of legislators;
- strengthen their skills on a number of issues related to their legislative monitoring work, such as how to collect data;
- use this data to generate evidence-based monitoring reports;
- use the monitoring report as an effective tool for their lobbying and advocating activities; and
- development of realistic workplans to engage lawmakers to make interventions on the outcome of a citizen observatory reports.

Helen Torh-Turo, SEWODA National Coordinator, opened the River Gee training and underlined that legislative advocacy of Civil Society Organisations like SEWODA should be based on facts and evidence. According to her, the Citizen Observatory, is one of the best ways to gather those pieces of information. "*Most times, we only meet our lawmakers and request personal benefits and it is as wrong as when the lawmaker is doing nothing. That has to stop*", Turo stated. "*We need to engage in meaningful discussion with our lawmakers that will address some of the community needs*." The River Gee Observatory will monitor the quality of education in public elementary schools, the implementation of County Social Development Fund and the quality of health facilities.

River Gee

The Grand Kru County Citizen Observatory presented a report of their observation activities from last year, which covered the quality of elementary public schools, the challenging security situation in the county and the land disputes as a consequence of the palm oil concession that was given to Golden Veroleum Liberia. Their work is however not yet completed. The training was well received. The key lesson learned was that evidence based monitoring is an important tool for legislative advocacy; it stimulates lawmakers to take legislative action.

More work has to be done: Francis Charlie, a Citizen Observatory member

stated, "*we did our best to contact those leaders responsible to address the issues we monitored last year.*" Charlie's group was able to get the attention of lawmakers, who increased the deployment of police officers in the county from 6 to 22, to address security challenges the citizen observatory report outlined.

Maryland

The Citizen Observatory from Maryland identified the following social issues to be monitored: water sanitation and hygiene facilities, the implementation of the County Social Development Fund and the quality of education in public elementary schools. The Maryland monitoring group had already investigated the quality of water and hygiene facilities in some communities. In New Harper they observed '*that this community, with a population of 15,000 persons, has two private hand pumps and no public hand pump. There are seven community latrines; three are closed and four are open for community use. All of the wells were not constructed with cavers. The people are drawing from the wells and at the same time defecate in the surrounding bushes*.' The Citizen Observatory will continue this year to monitor the WASH-facilities in 15 communities and present their findings to lawmakers and county authorities.

Paul Binkley: NDI's new Resident Director in Liberia

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs welcomes Dr. Paul Binkley as the new Resident Director in Liberia. He succeeds Aubrey McCutcheon, who ended his service in July 2014.

The new NDI boss has managed large programs and projects within higher education and international development over the last 20 years. He completed the Human Performance Improvement certificate and recently co-published the third edition of the book "Student Federal Career Guide."

From 2013-2014 Paul Binkley worked in Monrovia as the Education Human and Institutional Capacity Development Advisor with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Prior to that, he was Director of Career Services at The George Washington University's (GWU) Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration. Binkley also explored worldwide the opportunities for the Trachtenberg School alumni to further develop their professional skills and helped to establish the George Washington Career Centers Network

"Liberia is full of potential and I know by helping Liberian people find their political voice, we could help them reach their potential. That is why I am so excited to return to Liberia."

He completed a doctorate in higher education administration at GWU in 2012 and focused his research on how student involvement impacts alumni giving. He completed a Master's degree in Foreign Affairs and Diplomacy at the University of Kentucky's Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce. His Bachelor's degree is from St. John's University of Minnesota.

Over the last few years, Binkley has also served as an observer of elections in such countries as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Macedonia, and Ukraine. He spent several weeks in Kosovo and Iraq working with faculty, students, and government officials on higher education programs.

Binkley is originally from central Minnesota and has lived in the Washington, DC, area for over 15 years.

NDI CSO partner gets UN Consultative Status

The Citizens United to Promote Peace & Democracy in Liberia (CUPPADL), an

active member of the CSOs WASH Network, has received a special consultative status from the [Economic and Social Council](#) (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN). This status will enable CUPPADL to engage actively with ECOSOC, as well as with the United Nations Secretariat and UN programs, funds and agencies in a number of ways.

Prince Kreplah, Chairman of both CUPPADL and the WASH Network, is delighted with the opportunity and said it will help create a corridor for his organization's annual program activities profile to be elevated globally. "*When you're recognized by the UN, it means you can be invited or consulted in every global planning and decision making processes*."

With this status, CUPPADL/WASH will begin submitting annual reports of its program activities which will be reviewed by ECOSOC and published on international websites.

Legislative Spotlight Radio

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!!!!

Facebook   Website   Email   Instagram   YouTube   LinkedIn   Google Plus

SWEDEN

This publication and the activities described were made possible through the generous support of NDI's donor partner the Embassy of Sweden. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of NDI's donor.

unsubscribe from this list   update subscription preferences