



NDI-LIBERIA E-NEWSLETTER



*Working for Democracy and Making
Democracy Work*

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Director's Welcome

NDI works together with the national Legislature to implement its Legislative Modernization Plan. The Plan was adopted by the Senate and House and sets a course for "making the Liberian Legislature 21st Century compliant" through more effective representation, lawmaking and oversight.

With this E-mail newsletter we are happy to share a few highlights of our activities with Legislators and their staff, the Executive branch, civil society and international organizations. In partnership we are all motivated to work for a better democracy and to make democracy work!

Aubrey McCutcheon, Resident Senior Director, NDI-Liberia

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Upcoming Events

- LBO/NDI workshop for lawmakers on how to review the State Budget (13th of June-tbc).
- LBO/NDI hearing for Civil Society Organizations on the State Budget (22th of June-tbc)
- Policy Seminar on Gender Budgeting (27th of June)

Policy Seminar on Decentralization

In May, NDI held its first policy seminar for legislators. The goal of these seminars is to strengthen lawmakers' work in specific policy areas and to stimulate discussion between them and other key experts and actors. The seminar was dedicated to the Decentralization Policy of the government. Is it a good idea to have elections for authorities of the fifteen counties and to decentralize power and financial resources to them? Around sixty motivated persons listened to presentations by Deputy Minister for Development Planning *Tiah Nagbe*, Governance Commissioner *Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae*, Senator *J.F. Whitfield*, who chairs the Senate Committee on Internal Affairs and Governance, and two experts:



Jonathan Koffa and Gloria Scott.

A stimulating and in-depth discussion followed the expert presentations. Many questions were raised and critical contributions were made, such as the relation with the constitution, the powers of the elected county bodies and the risk of an increase of fraud and corruption. The policy seminar made clear that more discussion, clarification and consensus are needed on key issues that will face the Legislature.

If you would like to receive by e-mail the Reader with background information and the Summary Report of the seminar, please send an e-mail to NDI-Liberia.

Skill-Building with the LIS

In April, NDI conducted two days of workshops for 27 staff of the Legislative Information Service (LIS) on preparing Microsoft PowerPoint presentations and on conducting research through the internet. These training were part of the LIS' self-initiated month-long training entitled: "Quality Lawmaking, Representation and Oversight Assumes Informed Knowledge". Both training exercises prepared staff in areas such as PowerPoint slide preparation, research tools and techniques, research methodology, skill enhancement in e-libraries, introduction to policy making and building electronic repositories, amongst others.

Objectives for NDI's Ongoing Activities

- Enhancing the quality of the Legislature
- Strengthening the skills of the staff
- Updating information technology
- Improving the media, public outreach and public knowledge
- Stimulating transparency, accountability and efficiency

A Stronger Staff Makes a Stronger Lawmaker

In April, NDI organized six days of workshops to further strengthen the staff of members of the House and Senate. All Resource Officers and Chiefs of Office Staff were invited. The participants, both new and returning staff, learned from each other as well as from their colleagues serving in central administration and NDI's consultants. They discussed how Members' staff and central staff can work together to better serve the Legislature and its members. The workshop covered techniques for reviewing bills, preparing for hearings, analyzing policy, contributing to the effective use of the legislature's oversight powers, representing constituents, working with civil society organizations, and working with the press.

Deputy Speaker *Hans Bachue* underlined that capacity can always be increased; that each of us can always improve upon our abilities. To paraphrase remarks by Representative *Edwin Snowe*, a stronger staff makes a stronger lawmaker.

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