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NDI-Liberia E-Newsletter

Working for democracy & making democracy work

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CSOs' WASH Network meets with President Sirleaf

On September 16, 2013, the Liberia CSOs' WASH Network met President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and presented the "[Keep Your Promises](#)" petition. The petition has been signed by some 18,000 Liberians, among over one million signatures of ordinary citizens worldwide, who desire to see their governments prioritize improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene.

When delivering the group's petition to President Sirleaf the WASH Network Chair, Prince Kreplah, said the petition seeks to ensure that every government commits itself to a vibrant WASH sector. According to Kreplah, the emphasis of the petition is *not* to request the President to make new promises, but to *keep* the promises already made and to ensure that they are discussed and maintained in the post-2015 development framework at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The group further informed the President that although some steps have been



Prince Kreplah (WASH) presents the "Keep Your Promises" petition to the President.

monitoring WASH issues, and she promised to lobby the UN General Assembly to prioritize WASH in the agenda of the post Millennium Development Goals, and to maintain the targets established earlier by the High Level Panel Report. According to the Network, she also assured them that a National Water Sanitation Resources Board would be established upon her return to Liberia after the UN meeting.

taken by the Liberian government a lot more still needs to be done. They pointed out that the allocation of US\$1.5 million for rural water supply has been the only tangible show of political will to pursue the rights of rural dwellers to water. But the group criticized the fact that the allocated money has never been spent and that the current national budget allocates not one single dollar for this purpose.

President Sirleaf thanked the group, especially as a voluntary body

Finally, the CSOs' WASH Network reports that President Sirleaf proposed regular meetings with civil society, to get feedback on both WASH commitments and implementation. She attributed slow progress on WASH to a shift in priorities and she urged the technical department on WASH at the Ministry of State to revisit the national policy. According to the WASH Network, the President also agreed that successful achievement of only five deliverables out of seventeen does not signal sufficient progress for Liberia.

CSOs' WASH Network Releases Observations on Sanitation in Monrovia

A group of Liberian journalists under the banner of the "[WASH Media Network of Liberia](#)" has raised an alarm about the country's poor state of sanitation. The group, otherwise known as the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Reporters and Editors Network, is a member of the Liberia CSOs' WASH Network, one of NDI's CSO advocacy partners.

According to the WASH Media Network, floods have taken over most slum communities in Monrovia, uncovering garbage, causing feces flow into dwelling places, and contaminating wells and the water supply. They name Clara Town, the Samuel Kanyon Doe Community, the Topoe Village Community and parts of Jamaica Road, among other affected communities.

One of the group's major advocacy objectives is to lobby the national government to allot budgetary support for the improvement of water, sanitation and hygiene services in Liberia. For more information please follow [this link](#).



A public toilet in West Point, Monrovia. Eighty five percent of houses in Monrovia and its environs lack toilet facilities.



A rubber tree, the source of Liberia's largest export, worth just under \$200 million a year, or roughly 40 percent of Liberia's exports.

The CSO Consortium on NRM meets with NOCAL's Newest Board Member

In a bid to foster civil society input to policymaking in the oil sector, select members of the CSO Consortium on Natural Resource Management (NRM) held an acquaintance meeting with the National Oil Company of Liberia's (NOCAL's) newest board member, Jackie Khoury, in mid-September.

Jackson Speare, Coordinator of NRM, informed Madam Khoury that the proposed oil and gas bill now pending before the National Legislature would benefit from civil society input in order to ensure openness in the oil and gas sector in future years. NRM is one of NDI's CSO advocacy partners.

In August, the Liberian Senate passed the oil and gas bill and forwarded it to the House of Representatives for action, but the House recently tabled it until their return in 2014.

The CSO Consortium on NRM argues that the nation's oil and gas sector requires a vibrant regulatory policy that compels concessionaires and government to manage agreements and resources in a transparent way and for the benefit of all people in Liberia. NRM argues that the Senate did not adequately solicit public input before passing the bill, and NRM is contemplating ways to increase citizen input on the topic at the Legislature.

National and Community Radio Program to Connect Citizens and Legislators

Communication between lawmakers and citizens is an essential part of every

lawmaker's representational role in the Legislature. It is for this reason that NDI will resume the interactive radio program known as *Legislative Spotlight* (LS). The program will include legislative news, call-ins, and interviews with lawmakers, focused on important issues facing the Legislature. As before, citizens will be invited to share their views with lawmakers and to discuss legislative goals, achievements and performance.

The Legislative Spotlight program will air weekly in English on Monrovia-based commercial stations, followed by monthly programs (called *the LS Magazine*) in colloquial English and vernacular languages aired on community radio stations in all 15 counties.

LS has evolved to reflect the goals of NDI's newest program supported by the Embassy of Sweden, which are to support the Legislature's efforts to further involve civil society and to build the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) for legislative engagement and advocacy. But the program builds on the successful shows that NDI initiated in past years with support from USAID. The program will now often include Liberian CSOs that are working to engage and support the legislative process in pursuit of policy goals.

The LS program will resume as the House and Senate pick up their duties for the third session of the 53rd Legislature, following their current constituency break.

Watch this e-newsletter for announcement of the dates, times and radio stations.



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