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NDI-Liberia E-Newsletter

Working for democracy & making democracy work

Number 19 | December 2013

NDI's Fifth Skill-Building Workshop Focuses on How to Scrutinize Bills

One crucial skill needed by civil society groups conducting legislative advocacy is the skill to scrutinize bills pending at the National Legislature. That is why some 30 civil society activists in late November joined a two-day interactive workshop on the subject. The workshop was organized by NDI, with funding from the Swedish Embassy. Most participants had already attended NDI's earlier workshops on legislative processes and citizen lobbying.



Participants take notes while others listen during the workshop

Legislature's Perspective.

Assistant Labor Minister for Labor Standards, Rosetta Jackollie, used the pending *Decent Work Bill* to teach participants about the drafting process, typical interactions between ministries and the Legislature in the process of shaping policy and law, and potential points of access and influence for CSOs. Jasper Cummeh of AGENDA, Action for Genuine Democratic Alternatives, gave a civil society perspective on analyzing bills and making evidenced-based interventions at the Legislature.

On the second day of the workshop NDI's CSO advocacy partners scrutinized specific bills within their fields of interests and planned advocacy strategies with lawmakers.

The civil society organizations (CSOs) in attendance are now gearing up to more effectively engage lawmakers in the next session of the Legislature, which begins in January of 2014. Together these groups are acquiring skills in influencing the content of specific bills, targeting key committees, and building alliances of like minds to influence policy and law. At the workshop, they benefitted from guidance provided by staff of the Legislature and the Ministry of Labor.

During the workshop, CSOs examined pending bills that will affect human rights to water, sanitation and health, the social, economic and political rights of women, and the rights of communities to participate in decisions about peaceful and environmentally sustainable management of their county's natural resources, including decisions about how revenues are used.

The Legislative Drafting Service of the House of Representatives was represented by Andrew Jaye, who led a session on *Drafting and Processing of a Bill from the*



Charles Lawrence (National Program Officer for Democracy and Human Rights, Embassy of Sweden) highlights the importance of a stronger civil society in Liberia's emerging democracy.

The CSO Consortium on Natural Resource Management (NRM) worked on the New Petroleum Bill, the Liberia CSOs Network on Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) focused on the Executive Order to establish the National Water Supply and Sanitation Commission, and the Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA) examined the pending Gender Parity Bill and the draft Domestic Violence Bill. Stay tuned to this e-newsletter as the work of partners continues when the Legislature reconvenes.

SEWODA Identifies Volunteers for Citizen Observatories

To empower citizens to monitor government deliverables toward social development, the Southeast Women Development Association (SEWODA) has begun to identify observers ahead of its Citizen Observatories. According to Helena Torh-Turo, SEWODA's National Coordinator, observers will be trained in January and later deployed in Grand Kru, River Gee and Maryland counties, in

both rural districts and county capitals.

WASH Conducts Training for Activists from Seven Counties

Following its participation in NDI skill-building workshops throughout 2013, the CSO WASH Network recently conducted three days of training for its activists from seven counties. The training took place in Monrovia and brought together over 25 water, sanitation and hygiene activists from Montserrado, Margibi, Bomi, Grand Kru, River Cess, Gbarpolu, and Maryland counties.

According to Price Kreplah, the network's National Coordinator, the overall objective was to enhance skills of its key members to better enable them to engage ordinary citizens on water, sanitation and hygiene and policies affecting their communities. Building further



Rev. Christopher Toe, National CSO Council of Liberia, makes presentation at WASH partners' training

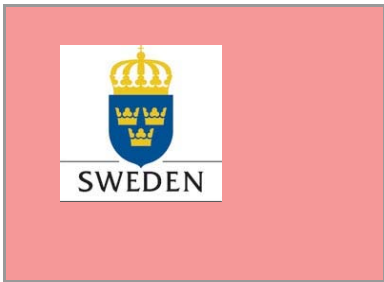
upon the work conducted with NDI, WASH's training included how to build a lobbying and media campaign strategy, preparing testimony for a legislative hearing, an introduction to monitoring the national budget on WASH issues, and tips for engaging lawmakers and the legislative process.

Legislative Spotlight Hits the Airwaves

Communication between lawmakers and citizens is crucial in the development of Liberia's democracy and citizens have the right to be informed and to give their opinions on pending bills. Toward those objectives, LMDI (the Liberia Media for Democratic Initiative) recently re-launched the Legislative Spotlight radio program, which has come to be known for its reports from legislators and its vibrant policy discussions with citizens. The weekly one hour show is followed by

a monthly program in Liberian English and call-ins with legislators in vernacular languages on community radio to reach diverse listeners throughout the country.

Legislative Spotlight will be broadcasted on Truth FM 96.1 every Wednesday at 11:00am.



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.

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