

**NDI-LIBERIA
E-NEWSLETTER**
*Working for Democracy and Making
Democracy Work*



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NDI policy seminar on Gender Responsive Budgeting

Address effectively the needs of the poorest and the powerless

On June 27 NDI organized in cooperation with the Women Caucus of the Liberian Legislature, a policy seminar on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). It was a special event, which started with the installation of the fourteen members of the Women Caucus. Around 150 people enjoyed the celebration of the installation and –most of them- the following seminar.

The chairwoman of the Women Caucus, Josephine Frances, criticized the low representation of women in the legislature, the media and civil society organizations. She expected the Women Caucus to generate new energy for training women to be involved in the Liberian society.



Left: President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf speaks.
Middle: Women Caucus Installation.
Right: NDI country director Aubrey McCutcheon has a small talk with the president.

Special guest of the policy seminar was Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia. She emphasized in her speech that empowering women through the budget is an on-going process. *'More women are educated as a teacher, have access to land, loans and technology. Women leaderships have been increased. But there is still a lot to do in this field.'* She defended the gender quality of the presented draft National Budget, but invited the lawmakers *'to tell us what you missed in the budget regarding gender-issues'*.

Mariam Fofana, Chair of the Gender & Child Development Committee of the House of Representative emphasized the importance of GRB and the role the legislature has to play *'in ensuring that the resources available are utilized in a transparent, responsible and accountable manner for maximum benefit to all.'*

International expert Dr. Jacinta Muteshi-Strachan from Kenya gave an impressive introduction on GRB, which she described as a tool to increase allocations to gender equality. But, as she emphasized strongly in her presentation, it has to focus on *'the participation of poor women and men in planning and budgeting policies (...) to address effectively the needs of the poorest and the powerless.'*

Senator Peter Coleman told the audience what he was missing in the National Budget. He argued that *'a lot more resources need to be allocated to the empowerment of women in our rural communities as this will improve the economic condition of the family and the larger society.'* He criticized the *'very little allocation to immunization of our children, the most cost effective public health initiative that is reducing child mortality.'*

Annette Kiawu, Deputy Minister of Gender and Development, explained that the executive is working on collecting all necessary data *'in order to implement specific programs that reflect needs of men and women, boys and girls differently. Such as programs for a successful continuation from primary to secondary schools.'*

Senator Jewel Howard-Taylor finished her contribution with recommendations: *'the Legislature needs a strategy for gender mainstreaming. The Legislative Budget Office must provide gender analysis of all budgets to assist legislators get an effective check on programs intended to reduce gender gaps.'*

Upcoming Events

- Budget Summit House of Representatives (12 and 13 July)
- Training in writing policy papers and summarizing Bills for staff of Lawmakers and Legislative Information Service (17-25 of July)



Training the skills of the Press & Public Affairs Department

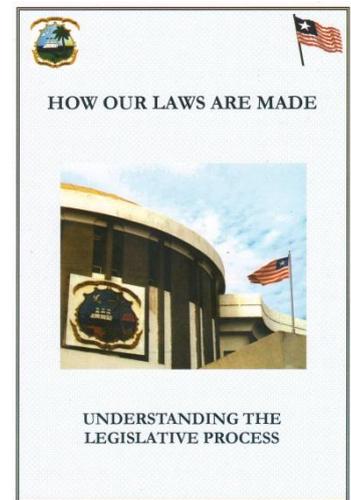
NDI organized a three day training for staff of House and Senate. The aim of the training was to enhance their skills in photo-editing, audio clipping and the art of clearly writing web articles and press-releases. This is important, because there is a growing wish of the Legislature to be transparent and accountable. NDI assists the Legislature in this by developing the website of the Legislature, training the staff and the supply of computers. The participants were impressed by the material taught and were –as they said- more familiar with the topics that were addressed, that inspired them to explore new opportunities to acquire knowledge.

Take a look at [the website of the Liberian Legislature](#) and discover what is happening on Capitol Hill!

How our laws are made

Recently the brochure 'How laws are made' was published in 1000 copies. NDI sent every parliamentarian three copies. In the accompanying letter we wrote:

The manual is intended to provide an overview of the steps a bill goes on its way to becoming law. As we often see when NDI visits you in your offices: many citizens have an appointment with you to discuss matters that have to do with your parliamentarian work. This manual can be helpful to explain to them how the legislative process works. This process has been designed to give all sides an opportunity to be heard and share their views. This manual can be helpful to explain this cornerstone of democracy.



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