



SYNERGY

Official Newsletter of the Governance Commission

Vol.2 No. 8

www.governancecommissionlr.org

August 2015



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
MONROVIA, LIBERIA

**NATIONAL CURRICULUM ON CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
FOR GRADES 1-12**

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MOE)
AND
THE GOVERNANCE COMMISSION (GC)

LIBERIA EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SERVICES (LEDSS, INC.)
Consultants

Approved: July 1, 2014

ONE PEOPLE, ONE NATION, ONE POLICE, UNDISRUPTABLE DEVELOPMENT



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President Sirleaf Launches National Curriculum on Citizenship Education

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on Monday August 24, 2015 launched the National Curriculum on Citizenship Education for Grades **One** through **Twelve** at the Centennial Pavilion on Ashmun Street. The National Curriculum on Citizenship Education is a project of the Strategic Road Map for National Healing, Peace Building and Reconciliation.



In her remarks the President noted that the Citizens Curriculum is not simply a deliverable or an achieved output but also an indispensable tool for enhancing reconciliation by forging a common identity and common aspirations through citizenship education.

President Sirleaf making remarks at the launch of the National Curriculum on Citizenship Education

President Sirleaf commended the Governance Commission and the Ministry of Education for working together to produce this Curriculum. She observed that the project started with Dr. Othello Gongar when he served as Minister of Education and completed on the watch of Minister Etmonia Tarpeh. *“I want to thank them and their staff for this initiative. I also want to thank the Minister of Finance and Development Planning who secured the resources to support the project.”*

The production of the National Curriculum on Citizenship Education completes the first phase of government’s efforts to elevate citizenship education in schools in Liberia. According to President Sirleaf, Liberians *“now have to use the curriculum to produce the needed textbooks and to train teachers. As we have produced the curriculum on citizenship as a wholly Liberian project, so also should we produce the three textbooks required under this curriculum”*.

The President called on the Ministries of Education and Finance, and the Governance Commission to secure the required resources to begin the textbook writing project in order to have them completed within a year. In conclusion, President Sirleaf said she expects the teaching of Citizenship Education to be strengthened as government commences introducing the new textbooks in Liberian schools by 2017-2018.

“I hope that by the 2017-2018 school years, Citizenship Education would form an integral part of the curriculum of every school in Liberia. It is with this expectation that I now launch the National Curriculum on Citizenship Education for Grades 1 through 12.”

Presenting the National Curriculum on Citizenship Education earlier to President Sirleaf at the Flag Day Ceremony, Governance Commission Vice Chair Elizabeth Mulbah recalled that on July 1, 2014, the Commission and the Ministry of Education, working with the Liberia Educational Development Support Services (LEDESS, Inc.) completed the project with full funding from the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

The completion of the Citizenship Curriculum is the first in a series of educational activities in fulfillment of implementing the outcomes of the National Roadmap to Reconciliation under Vision 2030 adopted at the 12/12/12/ Gbarnga Conference; a task assigned the Governance Commission (GC), Ministry of Education and tertiary institutions. The National Historical Committee is expected to lead documentation on Liberian history rewriting and production of textbooks.



GC Vice Chair Elizabeth Sele- Mulbah presenting National Curriculum on Citizenship Education to President Sirleaf during the Launch

Prior to Gbarnga 2012 conference, the Ministry of Education and the Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE) discussed the development of a citizenship platform as inscribed in the 1986 Constitution and the teaching of the Constitution in all Liberian schools. Commissioner Mulbah gave credit to the Liberia Educational Development Support Services (LEDESS Inc.) headed by Mr. James Fromayan and Mr. Jacob Tarlowoh for putting together a team of highly experienced and efficient Liberian Educators to complete the National Curriculum on Citizenship Education. Senator Commany Wesseh [then of CEDE], Former Education Ministers Othello Gongar and Etmonia Tarpeh, and Education Specialist Roselyn Swaray, were all commended for their contribution to the project.

Availability of resources has been a major hindrance to the completion of the Citizenship Education Curriculum project and other related projects of the Commission. Against this background, Commissioner Mulbah hoped that needed resources will be made available to support the implementation of the next phase of the project -contracting of technicians, writing and production of textbooks suited for grades 1-12.

According to Commissioner Mulbah, the future, though filled with uncertainties can be made brighter if and when we Liberians commit ourselves to serving as, “One People, One Nation, United for Peace and Sustainable Development.” She assured of Governance Commission’s commitment to contributing to making Liberia a society that appreciates its diversity and builds from it a common sense of identity, citizenship and patriotism.

“We also thank the Minister of Finance and Development planning who despite budget constraints remained committed to the support of this project all the way to its completion and the printing of 10,000 copies for the Ministry of Education’s use. Our thanks also go to the numerous teachers who participated in workshops and trial sessions during this project.”

The below chart represents the Citizenship Education Curriculum and topics to be taught in Liberian schools (according to Grade levels).

| # and Grade Level | Theme-Issues |
|-------------------|--|
| | Acknowledgement |
| | Introduction |
| | Citizenship Education curriculum and its use in Liberian Schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Place of Citizenship Education in Schools b. Goals of Citizenship Education c. Scope and Sequence d. Evaluation Guide e. Structure and Organization of the Curriculum |
| Grade 1 | Self-Identity |
| Grade 2 | National Identity |
| Grade 3 | Citizenship |
| Grade 4 | Democracy and Governance |
| Grade 5 | Family and Population |
| Grade 6 | Natural Resources and Development |
| Grade 7 | Democracy and the Rule of Law |

On Christian State debate, Sawyer challenges Critics

Dr Sawyer has challenged critics to show proof that the 1847 Constitution declared Liberia a Christian State. He told reporters at a MICAT press briefing on August 20, 2015 that this issue,



Dr. Sawyer speaking at a MICAT press briefing

being one highly contentious, should be handled with care. It can be recalled that declaring Liberia a Christian State led to demonstrations and counter demonstrations at the National Constitution Conference earlier this year in Gbarnga with some delegates abstaining from the vote while others walked out. Using her presidential prerogative, President Sirleaf has therefore decided not to support the Conference’s decision on declaring Liberia a Christian State (as presented in the CRC report).

Dr Sawyer agrees that the issue is contentious: “and so as the committee categorized this issue as a contentious issue in its report to the president, the President’s review of the report and her submission to the Legislature comes down against the advancement of preposition designating Liberia a Christian state. Her position is supported by the Constitution as it now stands where it states that **while Liberia is founded by people who were grateful to God and who were themselves enjoying the blessings of Christianity they did not inscribe in the Constitution**

that Liberia shall be a Christian state.” Dr Sawyer noted that in fact they made it clear that there shall be freedom of religion, and that all religion shall have an opportunity to conduct their affairs once they are not incompatible with laws of the country and once they do not infringe on the rights of others or against public good and safety.

It's a misconception. The 1847 constitution did not establish Liberia as a Christian state and a misreading of the 1847 constitution. *“Those saying so are wrong. This is a misreading of the Constitution, and a disservice and mis-education of our people.”* Sawyer challenged anyone with physical evidence to come forth, and invited newspapers to investigate and publish the full text of the 1847 Constitution and show where that Constitution established Liberia a Christian state. Dr Sawyer emphatically repeated that the 1847 Constitution did not declare Liberia a Christian state.” He noted that the current constitution of 1986 also does not declare Liberia a Christian state.

Constitutional amendments

Dr. Sawyer also elaborated on the recent submission of President Sirleaf's proposals for Constitutional amendments/reform to the House of Senate, Liberia's National Legislature on August 13. The document listed 25 proposals mainly coming out of the Constitution Review Committee's report on the National Conference held in Gbarnga Bong County earlier this year. These reforms are in line with the overall direction of broadening the base for participation, and more inclusiveness of our local people in our development agenda. The Constitution review process requires the holding of a Referendum after the Legislature may have acted on the proposals, and that referendum should take place at least a year after the Legislature would have acted upon the proposals. It can be recalled that the Constitution review process started some two years ago and involved Liberians both at home and abroad. The process ends with Constitutional reforms/amendments by the end of 2016, before the holding of national elections in 2017.

The Presidential proposals include:

- Reduction of the Presidential term of Office from 6 to 4 years;-
- Reduction of the Senatorial term of Office from 9 to 6 years;
- Reduction in the term of Office of Representatives from 6 to 4 years;
- Non- Negro race will not become citizen of Liberia;
- Dual citizenship should be accepted in Liberia;
- Dual currency should be abolished in Liberia;
- Superintendents, commissioners, mayors, and chiefs should be elected;
- Women should have access to equal economic and social opportunities;
- Liberia is not a Christian State. (Visit GC website for details of the President's submission letter to the House of Senate – www.governancecommissionlr.org)

Earlier at the MICAT press briefing, Dr Sawyer discussed Liberia's development agenda, categorizing it in what he described as “dimensions. *“There are two broad dimensions to*

development agenda in Liberia. One has to do with how we expand the physical infrastructure of our country such that we have more access to, for example, roads so that the economy can become robust as a result of trade, and value added to our natural resource endowments that we have.”

According to Dr. Sawyer, the whole program of County development includes the construction and/or rehabilitation of ports, bridges, roads, and dams constitute that full range of issues he refers to as hardware - the infrastructure within which development takes place – “*that generates power that links communities – that provides the basis for agricultural development. The next is what is described as software – the governance issues – issues having to do with the human capacity building – the kind of governance infrastructure that together with the hardware we’ll get results. So that the Liberian people will be the beneficiaries of the development process. So our work at GC has been mainly to coordinate a sizeable sector of institutional development in the software package.*”

Dr. Sawyer maintained that building the governments arrangements that go hand in hand with the expansion of economic development is imperative. He said “*we cannot use our roads effectively if we don’t do something about the governance infrastructure. Road networks cannot be centralized in Monrovia. So too are other public services such as obtaining driver’s or marriage licences. So the governance infrastructure is very important in complimenting the physical infrastructure in terms of development – making inclusive institutions which govern us in an incremental manner.*”

Dr. Sawyer’s presentation at the MICAT press briefing was on **Inclusive governance and establishing decentralization and local governance. He recalled the Community Forestry Act in 2008/2009, the decentralization policy promulgated by President Sirleaf in 2012, and the Land rights act as all measures that assures of inclusive governance and promotion of local ownership in Liberia.**

“You may recall the passage into law of the community forestry act in 2008/2009 which gave local people access and ownership rights to forest in their community – a major breakthrough in inclusive governance and promotion of local ownership. So also is the establishment of the county development fund earlier by this government. We know there’s been problem here and there but establishing such a fund with local people forming their own local institutions to determine what type of activities they want to put their resources in is a step closer to inclusive governance and management though these are not perfect structures they are developing incrementally.

You can also recall the decentralization policy promulgated by the president in 2012. This policy brings together the administrative, physical and the political elements of inclusive governance which assure that public services are being pushed to the counties, districts, townships and then the cities. That policy is now being incrementally implemented. As at now we have under consideration the passage of the LGA, an act that will establish the basis for ensuring that local communities have some limited powers for taxation that include local ordinance and local arrangements, their local county councils can be established and make decisions on their development agendas. The LGA also clarifies boundaries for administrative jurisdictions. The LGA is in its final stages of review by the President to be submitted in due course to the National Legislature.

Land rights act – for the first time recognizes various categories of land including community land where local communities own their ancestral land, individual land, public land and government. These are all clearly identified and assures of tenure, ownership and rights. The land rights bill is currently before the Legislature awaiting passage into law. Its passage into law is another major step forward in the development of local communities – giving access to property for local people.

In order to fully achieve Inclusive governance and establishing decentralization and local governance in Liberia, both Articles 54 and 56 of the present Constitution have to be amended, and the Local Government Act, LGA, passed into law and implemented throughout Liberia. The Constitutional amendment process has already begun and could be completed before the end of 2016.

Lawmakers and others Debate County Development Fund (CDF)

The Governance Commission recently held a Roundtable on the relevance/importance of County Development Fund. The roundtable was held on Friday August 21, 2015 at the James Fromoyan Hall at the National Elections Commission in Sinkor. The event was graced by legislators from both houses of Representatives and Senate.



Setting the basis for the discussions was the presentation made by Commissioner Yarsuo Weh- Dorliae, head of GC's Political Law Reform Mandate Area otherwise known as Decentralization. The presentation was on the theme *“Local Development Financing in Liberia: Legislating Sustainable Budget Systems for Decentralized Governance.”*

[Dr. Weh-Dorliae presenting GC case study at the CDF forum](#)

The Governance Commission took on the study in order to understand the management arrangements of the County Development Fund (CDF), its local decision making processes and implementation challenges across the fifteen (15) counties. House Speaker Alex Tyler had made repeated calls for the Legislature to approve appropriations for direct district impact projects using the CDF.

The CDF is captured in the budget law as a source of funding to:

- a). Facilitate post-war infrastructure development in all counties based on identified projects;
- b). Serve as a source of funding for local government service delivery to be managed by local officials under the decentralization program.

In addition, the GC study recommended that:

- ▶ The Legislature supports good governance by ceding participation in the management of the CDF, and leave same entirely to county administrations (a recommendation to which legislators have countered); and
- ▶ The Legislature should establish an **Electoral District Impact Fund (EDIF)** to be managed specifically under direct supervision of legislators.

This GC research includes a combination of Desk studies, interviews, field visits and focus group discussions with county officials; Use of the internet to explore common practices in Africa and Asia (India, Kenya, Nigeria); Relevant documents including the Budget Law of 2012/2013, Reports of the Auditor-General of Liberia and related policy documents; and Interviews conducted with 8 superintendents, a former Minister of internal affairs; and Focus group discussions held with county officials in three counties.



Hon. Boima fahnbulleh making remarks at the forum

However, legislators attending the Roundtable criticized GC for not including lawmaker(s), past or present, in its study adding “*this omission renders this study partial, lacking a holistic picture to what it hopes to achieve*”. The Law makers noted a number of issues they believed could have helped enrich the GC study if only they (lawmakers) had been included in the research. These include:

1. That the Executive branch of government (Finance Ministry) does not always provide the CDF in a timely manner, and as such gives the impression that the legislators have received the CDF but have either used them for selfish reasons, divided/shared the money among themselves or delaying dispensing same;
2. Denied that County Legislative Caucuses are in constant disputes with local county officials such as Superintendents over county development funds, there by either suppressing or undermining county development; Legislature has oversight responsibility;
3. Denied that lawmakers lack vision/projects to impact county development and are reluctant to include local people’s participation in local county governance.

It is however important to note that every attendee of the Roundtable agreed that local development financing is critical to accelerating service delivery and economic development of rural communities, as well as promoting citizens’ participation. According to the report, since 2006, there have been two principal sources of local development financing in Liberia. These include:



Hon. Muna Pennoh Youngblood discussing the CDF

a. County Development Fund (CDF) and b. Social Development Fund (SDF).

- ▶ The SDF is limited to counties that host concession companies, while the CDF gives each county a budgetary allotment to support local development projects. The CDF is allocated on an equal basis regardless of population, county size and level of development. This financial equality strategy has been contested by critics in several quarters who believe that county size, population and needs should be taken into consideration in terms of how county development funds are disbursed or provided by national government for county use.
- ▶ The **CDF** and **SDF** provide valuable financial resources which when managed in accordance with international common good and practices can facilitate infrastructural development through participatory local development planning and monitoring, and the delivery of basic services in rural areas.

Management Structure of the CDF/SDF

The current local county management structure of the CDF/SDF includes three teams:

1. **The County Council** – comprises representatives of traditional communities, districts, municipalities, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Fiscal Management and the legislative Caucus. This team is the highest decision making body on matters of development and management of the County.
2. **Project Management** – this is a three member committee elected by the County Council to among other things, identify and cost projects, oversee and coordinate implementation of approved projects.
3. **Project Monitoring Team** – includes local residents appointed by a community targeted for a project. This team coordinates the planning of activities on projects, processes documents to relevant and concerned citizens expected to participate in the project’s implementation process.

Proposed New Management Structure of the CDF/SDF

1. **The County Council** – to include representatives from electoral districts, three other members including 1 female, 1 male and 1 youth. This team is the highest decision making body on matters of development and management of the County.
2. **Project Management** – this includes the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Development, Assistant Superintendent for Fiscal Affairs, and MACs. Their responsibilities, among other things, include identifying and costing projects, overseeing and coordinating implementation of approved projects.
3. **Project Monitoring Team** – includes local residents appointed by a community targeted for a project. This team is tasked to monitor the implementation of projects activities in targeted communities.

Research participants made several recommendations that could initiate resource generation for the support of county development in Liberia. These include budget law amendment, CDF distribution formula, and the electoral district impact fund (EDIF).

1. Amendment of the Budget law includes:

- a. Restructuring management of the CDF such that the Legislature cedes its role in the implementation of the Fund to local authorities;
- b. Reorganize the CDF such that its current implementation mechanism so that the involvement of Project Management Committees and county legislative caucuses are nullified.
- c. Ensure that new implementation mechanisms are aligned with the structures of county administration as proposed in the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance;
- d. Authorize management of CDF, SDF and all funds accruing to each county under control of the **County Council** and the **County Administration**, and maintain ad hoc **Project Monitoring Teams (PMT)**.
- e. Members of the County Administration, district commissioners and members of county legislative caucuses should not participate in the process of selecting members of the revised County Council. Instead, the citizens should assemble in town hall meetings at the district centers and select their representatives based on a broad based, inclusive and participatory process.

2. CDF Distribution Formula

The Legislature should approve a general formula for the Redistribution of the County Development Fund. The purpose of setting aside special development financing fund is to support local projects that benefit the local populations.

- ▶ **The current practice by which the legislature allocates an even amount of \$200,000.00 to all counties undermines development in many areas.** CDF should not be allocated on an equal basis because more people live in some counties than others, and the demand for services is greater in counties where more people live. Also county population size and development should be considered;

3. Electoral District Impact Fund (EDIF)

The Legislature proposed to set up a special fund, **the Electoral District Impact Fund, EDIF**, (annually per electoral district) to support direct district development in legislative constituencies. Therefore the Governance Commission in keeping with its mandate conducted a study to provide policy advice.

To enhance understanding of the management and accountability arrangements, the ways in which such a program can be either integrated into broader county development plans or mutually exist with the County Development Fund, Social Development Fund, and/or other local development financing opportunities, **the Commission studied 27 countries engaged in similar constituency development programs.** Findings include that:

- a. The annual percentage of the national budget allocated for such Fund depends largely on the status of the economy at the given time or fiscal year. Generally, in economies experiencing high economic growth, the EDIF often consists of an amount of not less than 2.5% of the national budget.

- b. For Liberia, it is recommended that a **ballpark figure of US\$50,000.00** per legislative constituency be set aside in each budget year as EDIF.
- c. That the Electoral District Impact Fund be administered by a governing board called the **Electoral District Impact Fund Board (EDIFB)**.

The **Electoral District Impact Fund (EDIF)** provides an alternative that targets delivery of basic social services in remote rural legislative constituencies under direct supervision of the legislators. GC therefore recommends that EDIF be operated initially as a pilot project. For example, the EDIF can be piloted on a 6-year pilot basis following which it is reviewed for progress, challenges and the way forward.

The Chairman on the House of Representative's Committee on Good Governance and Governance Reform, **Hon. Larry P. Younquoi**, also made a presentation at the Roundtable on the topic '**Role of County Legislative Caucus in implementing the County Development Fund: Opportunities and Challenges**'. Contrary to the allegations of corruption, Representative Younquoi noted that the current management arrangement of the County Development Fund's implementation is well organized and transparent. He said the County Development Fund implementation process is being undertaken under the auspices of LACE, (the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment) under the Legislative Support Projects arrangement between the 53rd National Legislature and LACE. Lawmaker Younquoi told participants that as far as implementation of the CDF is concerned reports from LACE indicate that significant progress has been made in most of the counties – although such development varies from county-to-county. The Lawmaker therefore recommended that the Governance Commission table its recommendations on the CDF/SDF for when the current draft Local Government Act is passed into law, adding *“the Commission can then use the LGA as a legal instrument to propose amendment to the current budget law.”*

The third presentation of the Roundtable was on **“Strengthening the County Administration in the Implementation of the County Development Fund”** by Bomi County Superintendent **Hon. Samuel F. Brown**. Mr. Brown countered Lawmaker Younquoi's presentation by describing the current management arrangement of the County Development Fund as problematic, thereby negatively impacting its implementation nationwide.

The CDF was first introduced in Liberia by President William R. Tolbert, Jr., but did not gain the desired momentum of impact. The Fund was re-introduced in Liberia by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as a result of budget surplus of 1 million United States Dollars after budget review in 2006. According to Superintendent Brown, based on the surplus, President Sirleaf then announced that the amount would be used by county administrations for development projects in each county. Buttressing the Commission's research report, Mr. Brown noted that the current management arrangement of the Fund and the budget law need to be changed in order to produce the desired outcomes.

Superintendent Brown pointed out that the passage of the Local Government Act, LGA, is critical to empowering county administrations, and also serves as a legal instrument for citizens

to take ownership of development initiatives in their communities, districts and counties. He concluded with the following recommendations:

- That the Governance Commission, GC, provides the legal framework that will propose laws for the sole management of the CDF and the SDF in order to maintain accountability and transparency in the implementation processes;
- That the implementation of the CDF and SDF be taken care of by county based administration (County Legislators should not be players and referees at the same time);
- That the Code of Conduct be used as an instrument to guide the activities of public officials, etc.
- That the CDF and SDF should not be used by any elected official of government to fulfill campaign promises made during elections;
- That management team's capacity be built for the effective implementation of the CDF/SDF; and
- That strong political will is required for county administration to be in control of the Fund.

Lawmakers were divided on some aspects of the GC report and agreed on others. Many complained that the GC report still needs updating to include the perspectives of past and present lawmakers, a perspective that could richly enhance and give flavor to the research.

Participants also called for an expansion of the research to include investigation into other factors that are slowing implementation of the CDF and SDF, and corruption in the management of the CDF/SDF at the county level. The plenary identified other issues affecting the management of the CDF and local governance, and recommended possible solutions to improve local participation in both governance and implementation of the CDF.

National Symbols Review Project supports National Identity

Former Ambassador and current Chairman of the National Symbols Review Project Advisory Board, Wesley Johnson says the National Symbols Review Project will ensure national identity but the project is in dire need of funding. The Symbols Review Project is a semi-autonomous



Ambassador Wesley Johnson

government initiative affiliated with the Governance Commission as part of its deliverables. Its mandate is to conduct a comprehensive examination of Liberia's national symbols (the Liberian national flag, national anthem, Seal, and all national awards) to determine the extent to which they represent the cultural breadth and historical depth of our national experience. It seeks to afford the nation an opportunity to develop and affirm meaningful presentations of Liberia's past, present, and future, recognizing that should Liberians decide to

retain some or all of the existing symbols the process of making that determination will itself be constructive.

One purpose of the symbols review exercise can be summarized as an attempt to advance a national conversation on Liberia's national identity with emphasizes on the belief that what unites us as a people is far greater than what divides us. A Project implementation team has, overtime, substantively worked reviewing these national symbols.

This symbols project has become necessary because "Liberia is facing a crisis of identity"; a dichotomize nation being descendants to triple or more heritage – African, Islamic, and Western; contested history; and yet to establish who we are as a nation – a people united on a set of ideals or a federation of ethnicities? Liberians are equally cognizant that the 14 year civil war further divided us as a people.

The Governance Commission stresses that *"a sense of national identity is therefore necessary to enable individual Liberians transcend self or ethnic group absorption and commit to the common good: "Without it, Liberia can neither reconcile nor genuinely pursue the lofty goals of vision 2030 - One people, one nation united for peace and sustainable development" which is crucial to Liberia's reconciliation process.*

The long term goals of the project include:

1. Building national cohesion across population groups while reflecting the diversity of Liberia's people;
2. Promoting optimism for the future of Liberia; and
3. Promoting an accurate national narrative for Liberia;

The primary objectives of the symbols review effort is Liberian's self-determination in the formation of national symbols. In other words - to offer Liberians an opportunity to make a



(L-R) Amb. Kaba, Hon. A. Ngafuan, Cllr. G. Johnson, VP J. Boakai and Dr. E. Dunn

conscious choice about the symbols that represent them and their country. The exercise is expected to enable Liberians shape how we view ourselves and how others view us for generations to come.

It is also important to note that our history (records of conflicting events/dates, divisiveness and violence) necessitates that great caution be taken when determining those symbols that are most appropriate to the realization of the national vision in order to enhance peace and unity among the people.

Public Awareness and Out Reach

Following the launch of the Project in 2014, various project components and implementation modules were developed, operationalized and an operational structure created - the Advisory Board - with membership from all segment of the Liberian society. President Sirleaf appointed the Advisory Board. Subsequent to the National Symbol Project's launch and the establishment of its institutional framework, the Project's implementation team carried out numerous public awareness activities to heighten understanding of the symbols review process and its significance to national unity, reconciliation, and post war renewal within the content of Vision 2030. As you may already know, prominent among these outreach activities was the holding of the Paynesville City Hall well-attended 2012 symposium on the theme "Reviewing Liberia's National Symbols to renew National Identity". Engaging in a national conversation on the relevance of Liberia's symbols to her past and future represents an opportunity to affirm or develop meaningful representations of our past, present and future. Such public interactions are necessary because changes to be made especially under this project, like any other national efforts, depend on information the public provides.

Budget, Finance and Funding Requirements

A budget of US\$1.8M budget was submitted to the Liberian Government for funding of the Symbols project for two years (2013/2014 fiscal period) but Government provided US\$150,000.00 as seed money to jump start its work. Said amount was used to establish a skeleton staff of four on an ad hoc basis with modest remuneration to operationalize the project for the first six months. 64 % of the seed money equaling US\$96,000.00 went toward operational expenses while 36% of the funds equaling US\$54,000.00 remained as book balance. Financial statements/records depicting project's expenditure and balance have since been submitted to the Finance Ministry.

Another budget of US\$1.025M covering 2014/2015 was submitted to government and is under consideration. Grant proposals have also been submitted to international partners and awaiting probable positive results. The Governance Commission Civic Engagement and National Visioning Mandate Area has been involved with building synergies with public institutions engaged in similar activities and building partnerships while adhering to its own guidelines.

Recommendations

The National Symbols Review Committee Project secretariat has put forward several recommendations including the need for fresh ideas to be brought to the table on the project, serious fundraising programs to be considered, and office space provided for the Project. Meanwhile, the National Symbols Review Committee Project has been turned over to the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, MICAT, to carry on. GC however remains a significant partner in ensuring that the project yields the intended results.

Legislature holds Workshop on Modernization Plan

The National Legislature held a workshop on August 28, 2015 at the Golden key Hotel in ELWA, with the general goal being validating its Modernization Plan to make the Legislature compliant with the needs and realities of the 21st centuries. A number of activities have already been covered and a few still underway or about to be implemented to assure the full achievement of the goals in the Plan.



L-R Hon. Ford, Dr.Adamulu, Sen.Grupee, Mrs.Blay, Sen.Wesseh, G.Doe-Sheriff, Cllr.Cherue, Sen.Tambge, Hon.Saywa-Dunah

The Modernization plan is made up of five pillars. Each pillar has a general goal and a specific objective outlined in the plan of action. The five pillars and general goals (as stated in the Modernization plan 2009-2013) include:

1. **Constituency Representation** with the general goal being “to strengthen constituency representation”; the specific objective is “to establish mechanisms for constituency contact”;
2. **Law-Making** with the general goal being “to enhance the law- making capacity of the legislators”; the specific objective is “to establish periodic training, exposure and orientation programs for lawmakers”;
3. **Legislative Oversight** with the general goal being “to enhance the functioning and efficiency of the plenary of both Houses and the performance of their respective Committees”; the specific objective is “to improve the protocol for floor management and appropriate logistics and funding for hearings”;
4. **Staffing** with the general goal being “to improve the professional capacity and efficiency of staff”; the specific objective is “establish periodic and targeted training, exposure and orientation programs for possible staff restructuring, and providing them with technical assistance in research and bill drafting”;
5. **Work Environment** with the general goal being “to make the work environment of the Legislature conducive to efficient performance”; the specific objective is “to introduce modern facilities, information management systems, and create adequate work space and a conducive environment”.

Discussions at the workshop noted various challenges faced by lawmakers while in the service of their people and efforts being made to address them. Lawmakers claimed that most of the problems/issues raised by their constituencies relate to economic empowerment. Montserrado **Senator Geraldine Doe Sheriff** commented on constraints faced by lawmakers, describing them as “double edged swords (blades), noting “our people are impoverished”.

“Because of the level of our impoverishment, our people have no alternative but to turn to us. “

Senator Sheriff emphasized the need for legislators to work as a team and collectively identify their priorities. *“If we are a team then we should set our priorities in the order of ranking, and we have to ensure that our people understand who their law makers are, what their jobs or term of reference dictate, and find out what the people expect of their law makers.”*

She disclosed that the legislature, for instance, failed to empower the Legislative Information Service, LIS, the arm of the legislature responsible for information dissemination thereby undermining their capacity to adequately inform the public about legislative mandates, functions, and responsibilities to the people/county or explain to them, how and why laws are made.

The Montserrado County Senator reminded lawmakers that as the peoples' representatives, the gavel of authority rests with them (lawmakers). Senator therefore urged her colleagues to prioritize issues at the national budget and at different developmental levels for maximum and quicker impact.

In a related development, Senator Sheriff says there is mounting fear that international partners may get weary of Liberia soon if, “the right thing is not done”. She therefore called on lawmakers “to ensure that budget allocation be reprioritized to bring about development and the right mindset about our job as legislators.” She concluded by recommending the need for a full joint sitting of the Legislature to make this reprioritization work”.

The 6 year Modernization Plan has a projected budget cost of US\$28,402,280.00 and is divided into five Phases:

Phase 1 Certification of elected lawmakers by the National Elections Commission in December, 2005; Activities leading up to and the formal seating of the 52nd Legislature, election of its officers and restoring of the Constitution in January 2006; Inauguration of the President and Vice President; Confirmation of Cabinet Ministers and Justices of the Supreme Court Bench; and preparation of the Modernization Plan.

Phase 2 Includes the editing of the of the draft Modernization Plan by the Joint Legislative Joint Committee (JLMC) to ensure that it captures lawmakers' shared vision as articulated during several consultative workshops and retreats;

Phase 3 Involves the presentation of the edited version of the Plan to a Consultative Roundtable of Lawmakers, officials of Executive Agencies, heads of Civil Society organizations, and international donors for validation;

Phase 4 Includes the validated version of the Plan which was then submitted to plenary of both House of Representatives and Senate for debate and adoption, and a letter was then sent to the JLMC informing that body about the adoption of the Plan's implementation by the Legislature.

Phase 5 is the implementation phase of the Plan. The JLMC, at this phase is expected to establish the appropriate mechanism for collection, disbursement, and accountability of all funds and contributions received in support of the Plan.

The JLMC will be working with relevant government institutions and donor partners to ensure the full implementation of the Plan within the five year timeframe which ends 2015 (this year). Institutions working alongside the JLMC include the leadership of the legislature and President Sirleaf expected to organize, facilitate and mobilize donor support for the Plan; **Governance Commission**(expected to assist in the development and implementation of programs that ensure citizens appreciation of the modernized legislature); **Ministry of Internal Affairs** (expected to help clarify appropriate local government structure for legislative constituency contact and consultation);**Ministry of Finance** (expected to advice on financial management system and financial management autonomy of the legislature); and **National Elections Commission**(expected to collaborate with the legislature to design and implement educative and informative programs to increase public understanding of the relationship between electorates and the elected). Other public and private institutions to collaborate efforts in the implementation of the Plan include Liberia Electricity Corporation, Water and Sewer Corporation, Liberia Women Initiative, Liberia National Student Union, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Center for Transparency and Accountability among others.

Dr. Amos Sawyer served as Keynote Speaker at the August 28 retreat held at the Golden Key Hotel at ELWA. Dr. Sawyer urged Lawmakers to recruit professional staff, “on a bases of merit,” to work on the various Standing Committees.

“We want to recommend that, for each of your standing committee you might want to recruit on the



bases of merit and professional, a professional who will become the chief of office staff of that standing committee, like you've done with your budget and finance committees; there is a professionally staffed public accounts committee, professionally staffed information

GC. Chair. Dr. Amos Sawyer speaking at the Legislative Modernization Retreat

Dr. Sawyer recommended the need for major standing committees such as those on the Judiciary, and education, that legislators should consider including other legislators who are themselves eminently qualified or have diverse skills and experience by building within those committees at least one significant, one highly trained professional.

“For instance, when the Minister of Education or Health meets with the Standing committee on Health we know that this committee has an eminent medical doctor as chair of that committee.

Dr. Sawyer also put forward several recommendations which he felt could help the Legislature be more compliant with modernization in the 21st century. These include:

Less wrangling but improved coordination between the Legislative and Executive branches of government; Sometimes the wrangling gets a bit too much and stands in the way of law making and law implementations;

That Lawmakers find within their budget money to hire specialists, not those with the usual two/three weeks trainings organized by partners, but real professionals who will help do talking points, advice on professional issues;

a. In view of staff capacity, that legislators take a second at the prevailing system of committees and see if there is a need for rationalization, for it is within the legislature's domain to rationalize; further rationalization to enhance human capacity and support for the legislature so that the effort is more cost effective.

b. Passage of the Millennium Challenge Account (costing close to \$257 million - a good amount of this money is expected to go toward strengthening Liberia's hydro capacity/repair of the Dam); and

c. The passage of the Land Rights bill, the constitution amendments, - issues that provide for the software part of the peace that will protect the hardware that are being put into place. Roads, the hydro.

Dr. Sawyer again appealed to the legislature for the passage of the Land Rights bill. *“My urgent appeal through this committee, because I see you have here other important issues to discuss like UNMIL drawdown, EBOLA after math and etc... is that you please consider those pieces of legislation, the Constitutional amendments and the Land Right Law as major pieces that contribute peace to good governance and security.”*

Interactive session

The Legislature's Modernization retreat emphasized that body's efforts at coping with present day realities, ratifying previous wrongs, and assessing legislative achievements and challenges. They were reminded about the three cardinal functions of the legislature which include to make law, have oversight and representation. They were encouraged to evaluate the work of the 52nd Legislature overtime including whether the laws that they made were where from an informed

background, or with the help of trained manpower, capacity and facilities, and the recourses, if not, then there is the need to review and correct them.

The Legislature identified some of their challenges as being a weak research/resource department. This department is expected to help legislators but lack of information and trained personnel to adequately perform pose major challenge to the effort. Senate President Pro-Tempore, Armah Jallah therefore pledged his commitment to the building and improvement of staff capacity at the Legislature.

"We need to assign members to committees base on their individual expertise and knowledge. We have heard all the speakers on their individual findings on the modernization plans of its challenges, pitfalls and gains, we must discuss a way forward."

a. **The Legislative Journal** lacks effective regular reporting tools; the Legislative Journal is the official record, and citizens don't have access to the journal. Senator Jallah noted the need make the journal active. According to the Senator, there is a law on when and how the journal is supposed to be published (sixty days after sessions close, the legislative journal should be published).

b. **Voting records** – Senator Jallah said Voting records are not properly filed within the system and therefore difficult to locate. Citizens accuse law makers of not voting in favor of constituency needs/interests, and there are usually no records to prove what issues and how they had voted while in office, especially on how lawmakers voted on issues such as the budget.

c. Several senators spoke on and debated the issue of Representation and contact with constituency, at the county, party and community levels for effective interactions. They recommended that citizens from different constituency groupings meet with their representative and engage them on issues of importance; the need for every legislator to have a constituency office that is budgetary, not self-sponsored.

Reaching out to the constituency

For his part senator Thomas Grupee disclosed, as a challenge, the fact that the legislature lacked an official legal counsel. He went on to note that rural constituencies and those of the urban areas are not the same. Senator Grupee said efforts are being made in rural Liberia toward tackling the issue of citizens' engagement using the social development funds to fund the exercise, and have already started building district offices in various constituencies.

Senator Grupee also identified lack of communication nationwide as a major challenge to citizens' engagement.

"We started by going around from clan to clan and later I had to build a radio station in a constituency for people to have access to information around 2006- 2010. ELBC could not reach there. Beside UNMIL radio, at that time, was not covering everywhere anyway. How do you get people to know that we are on

recess or what happening in Monrovia? Our session is not covered or partially covered and not broadcast in its entirety. So I think we should have ELBC and LNTV to cover the entire session and broadcast it, and at the same time relay to local community radios around the country so that we can reach to the people”.

Nimba County Senator Thomas Grupee recommended that gasoline distribution among lawmakers be done in a manner that takes into consideration distances that lawmakers travel to reach their counties. He wants those whose counties are farther to receive more than those closer to Monrovia.

“I take my constituency for example, I come from Nimba County and my colleague is from Monrovia, Montserrado County, the issue is that we are not covering the same distance to reach our counties so why are we given the same amount of gasoline? Let us rethink the process. I learnt that in other countries they do such distributions in accordance to your distance because insufficient supply of gasoline for traveling purposes can impede your work or reach-out”.

Though the Retreat is over, Lawmakers are still discussing strategies aimed at improving the general output of the Legislature to meet present day realities.