

News from The Carter Center

THE
CARTER CENTER



Welcome to our second newsletter from The Carter Center in Liberia. This forum is to help our friends stay informed of our work and that of our civil society partners as we continue to support the government's implementation of the PRS. We welcome all questions and suggestions.

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Helping to Educate Traditional Leaders on the Rule of Law

The Carter Center, in partnership with Liberia's Ministry of Internal Affairs, the National Traditional Council and the Ministry of Gender and Development, is conducting workshops for Liberia's local leaders on how to strengthen the rule of law and expand the role of women in local governance in each of the country's fifteen counties between January 27th and the end of April 2009.



A scene from last year's traditional leader training in Zwedru.

The workshops will train officials at the county, chiefdom, and clan levels in key elements of the rule of law and principles of good governance, including discussion of leadership, culture and tradition. Particular attention will be given to new laws protecting and expanding women's rights and to bringing the voices of traditional leaders, women, and youth together to strengthen local governance decision making and problem solving.

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Government Launches Unit to Prosecute Sexual and Gender Based Violence Cases

On February 27th, the government launched the Ministry of Justice's new Sexual and Gender-based Violence Crimes Unit (SGBV Crimes Unit). In order to bolster the capacity of the new unit, the Ministry of Justice hosted a workshop from January 21-23rd to train county attorneys on how to prosecute Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) cases as part of the effort to abet the work of the new SGBV Unit established within the Ministry of Justice. The training

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Centre for the Study of African Economies to Conduct Evaluation of Carter Center Programs

The Carter Center has asked the Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE) at Oxford University to conduct an evaluation of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission's Community Legal Advisor program implemented in partnership with the Carter Center. JPC Community Legal Advisors represent a novel approach to resolving local

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Legal Working Group Constituted

UNMIL Legal and Judicial System Support Division, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and the Carter Center have convened a group of Liberian legal experts to comprised a Legal Working Group (LWG) to analyze the framework governing the dual legal system in Liberia. While the LWG will be an independent group that will govern itself, its work is rooted in and complementary to the overall reform process.

The Carter Center is located four compounds east of the Mamba Point Hotel and our Project Manager, John Hummel, can be reached at 06 452 022. We also have field offices in Harper and Gbarnga.

Current Civil Society Partners

- Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC)
- Bong Youth Association (BYA)
- Modia Drama Club
- Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA)
- Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL)
- Traditional Women United for Peace (TWUP)
- Crusaders for Peace
- Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children's Hope (SEARCH)
- Lofa Youth for Progressive Action (LOYPA)
- Flomo Theatre Company



Community Legal Advisors Felecia Jallah and Flah Cooper on the road. The JPC began implementation of mobile legal aid clinics on February 9th. More on this in the next issue.

TCC's Access to Justice work is or has been supported through grants and other support from Humanity United, UNHCR (through the UN Peace Building Fund), OSIWA, DfID, Irish Aid, and UNMIL LJSSD.

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"Following a successful series of regional workshops with the National Traditional Council last year, we are delighted to expand our partnership with The Carter Center to begin a national program to provide gender sensitive capacity training to government officials at all local levels," said Minister of Internal Affairs Honorable Ambulai Johnson.

Workshops have been held in the Southeast region (the counties of Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee, Grand Gedeh, and Sinoe) in January and February, and are will start in the Central region (the counties of Lofa, Nimba, Bong, Rivercess, and Grand Bassa) in March, and the Western region (the counties of Gbarpolu, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, and Montserrat) in April.

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was funded by UNHCR and the Carter Center coordinated the team of government and international partners to facilitate. Using a new SGBV prosecutor's handbook developed by the government, Carter Center and other stakeholders as a reference, the training was designed to provide an introduction to a victim-centered approach to sexual assault and abuse cases, highlighting particular areas of concern in these cases from reporting through trial.

One theme emerged during the workshop: it is crucial to build relationships and work with health professionals and police officers to effectively prosecute sexual assault and abuse cases. The director of the Duport Road Clinic for rape survivors shared her frustrations with ineffective prosecution. She said that she had never been contacted by the prosecution to talk about a case, and she expressed her willingness to help with investigations. The Chief of the Women and Children Protection Services similarly shared some of their constraints and frustrations at LNP, even as she pledged to coordinate better with prosecution.

Trainers not only urged prosecutors to reach out to health professionals and police, but they provided an opportunity to do so within the training. Six WACPS police officers from around the country were invited to participate. In practical exercises based on a real sexual assault case study, county attorneys worked with the police officers to decide how to respond to the victim and report, obtain and evaluate evidence, determine which crimes to charge, and draft an indictment. By all accounts, the handbook and the training have been a success. The Carter Center and other partners will continue to work with the Ministry of Justice to provide specific training for the prosecution of these very sensitive cases.

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disputes through medication and advocacy; but the potential impact of this approach must be rigorously measured to determine if the program is achieving its goal of improving access to justice. CSAE brings a wealth of experience in assisting both NGOs and governments in gathering data to provide an empirical picture of the relative successes and failures of various projects and policies.

With the assistance of the Liberian Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), CSAE has designed a state-of-the-art survey to capture baseline data on our program. In September they conducted a household survey in Maryland and Grand Gedeh and are currently running a similar survey in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba counties. The household survey measures the ways in which people resolve disputes, their socio-economic condition, and their knowledge of the justice system. After the survey, a sample of these villages will be visited by our partner organizations who will educate people on the rule of law, and by our Community Legal Advisors, who will mediate small-scale disputes, provide advice on navigating authority, and advocate. When CSAE returns to Liberia later this year, they will return to the villages and measure the impact of our programming. This information will be useful not only to us, as we strive to deliver the best possible services to Liberia, but to the government, who can use CSAEs empirical data to calibrate policies.



Bilal Siddiqi of CSAE explains his study to

Activity Tracker

Training for prosecutors of the SGBV Unit, January 21-23.

Traditional Leader Training in partnership with the National Traditional Council and Ministry of Internal Affairs in Grand Kru County, January 25-26.

Traditional Leader Training in Maryland County, January 29-30.

Traditional Leader Training in River Gee County, February 2-3.

Traditional Leader Training in Grand Gedeh County, February 6-7.

Traditional Leader Training in Sinoe County, February 10-11.

Training for civil society partner organizations, Gbarnga, February 23-27.

Carter Center Staff in Liberia

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On the Air

The Carter Center sponsors weekly radio shows on Star Radio:

Wednesday, 11:00am; Saturday,
3:30pm –
Rule of Law Hour

Friday, 3:30pm –
County Attorney Half Hour

