

Initiative for Peacebuilding National Workshop in Liberia

Gender cluster

Workshop to Enhance Civil Society Participation in the International Colloquium (26 February 2009, Monrovia)

A one-day workshop was conducted by International Alert as part of the Initiative for Peacebuilding, funded by the European Commission, to encourage greater participation of civil society actors, particularly women, in the International Colloquium on Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Peace and Security, held 7-8 March 2009 in Monrovia. Gathering over 30 members of the NGO community from cross Liberia, this workshop discussed Colloquium themes and reached consensus on key advocacy messages to be raised by participants at the Colloquium. The format of the workshop included overview presentations by experts, small group discussions, and plenary sessions.

Colloquium themes, presenters, key advocacy messages are listed below.

Women's Leadership (*Dr. Evelyn Kandakai, University of Liberia*)

- Women in leadership should promote other women to be in leadership and set good examples as a model for others
- Government and society should help women to be more independent, vocal and self sufficient
- Government should provide educational opportunities for women so as to strengthen their capacity to be decision makers at all levels

Economic Empowerment (*Mr. Cammue O. Makor, Jr., Community Empowerment Program*)

- Raise awareness about the impact of cultural, religious and traditional barriers on women's full economic participation
- Reinforce the national education priority for women/girls and provide an incentive package including internship and apprenticeship programmes
- Create a national policy to reduce restrictions on credit for women- e.g. collateral and payment duration
- Improve health education and delivery services including family planning
- Programs & policies should be "child friendly," meaning they should be sensitive to the needs of women with children

Climate Change (*Mr. Sebastian Tiah, OXFAM*)

- Governments should comply with international protocols on climate change and act now to reduce green house gas emissions
- Governments and donors should involve civil society and communities on climate change issues (mitigation and adaptation)

- Governments and donors should develop and support "climate friendly" farming practices and appropriate disaster response strategies
- The Government of Liberia should improve monitoring of compliance with reforestation regulations and build the capacity of the Forestry Development Authority

Migration (*Mr. John Saah Nyumah, Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission*)

- Governments should improve information on illegal migration and migration laws for sending, receiving and transit countries
- Governments and the private sector should create an attractive environment to prevent illegal migration through better education and job facilities
- Governments, INGOs, and donors must address the special cases of women repatriating after the conflict

Millennium Development Goal 3 (*Atty. Deweh Gray, Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia*)

- Donors and INGOS should support local CSOs to build a vibrant and strong women's movement
- The Government of Liberia should harmonize existing laws, nullify hinterland regulations that violate women's rights, and strengthen enforcement mechanisms on gender equality laws
- Governments and donors should support the provision of paralegal training for women community advocates, particularly outside capital cities
- Women CSOs should improve coherence among groups and involve churches, traditional elders, men and community leaders in the protection and promotion of women's rights.

UNSCR 1325 (*Ms. Stephanie Broughton, International Alert*)

- Governments should encourage women to act as community mediators and peacebuilders, allowing them to fill in the gaps in services, particularly in rural areas
- Governments should investment more in the security sector, building more police stations, courts and other facilities in rural areas as well as recruit and equip more security and justice professionals, particularly women
- Government must actively reduce corruption in the security sector, particularly ensuring that those accused of sexual and gender-based violence are adequately investigated and prosecuted
- Donors and government should support local women's organizations, particularly in rural areas and encourage women to run for local government positions
- Governments should expand public awareness campaigns on national human rights and equality laws to ensure that people know their rights