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Yale Law Students discuss Report on Concession Reform for Liberia

The Governance Commission on Wednesday January 11, 2017 held a stakeholders validation meeting to discuss a report titled “Governance of Agricultural Concessions in Liberia: Analysis and Discussion of Possible Reforms. The meeting was held in conjunction with the Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Law Clinic of Yale University, the USA. The meeting was held at GC’s office in Sinkor.

It can be recalled that GC had reached out to the Yale Law Clinic to conduct an independent research on possible framework on agricultural plantation regulation for Liberia. The Law Clinic was in Liberia last August (10-15) and held numerous consultations with Government’s Concessions regulatory institutions, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations, Concessionaires, and three communities near Sime Darby (between Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties) to gather data on the current concession laws of Liberia with a plan to identify and put forth recommendations that address within this sector.



This first draft of the report highlights gaps identified in our laws as they relate to writing Concession agreements and recommendations as to how to address these gaps, taking into consideration best/applicable practices.

Some of the daunting issues identified in the report include but not limited to:

- Inability to enforce land rights policy;
- Poor demarcation of land;
- Community dissatisfaction with crop and land compensation rates;
- Procedural shortcomings in violation of free prior and informed consent (FPIC); and unenforceability of MOUs between Concessionaires and communities.

The Yale Law Clinic report’s recommendations include, among other things:

- The need for the passage of the Land Rights bill currently before the Legislature into law; the Land Rights Act, when passed into Law, will address majority of concerns relating to land disputes in Liberia, and therefore the need for its urgent passage.
- Adopt ministry practices enforcing the land rights policy;
- Outline a procedure by which communities are assisted in valuing and receiving appropriate compensation for land and crops;
- Address past violations of property rights of community already dispossessed of their land among others.

Earlier, Commissioner Othello Gongar of the Governance Commission warned Liberians to be mindful of how we award land for concession purposes so that we do not find ourselves in a situation where we run out of land to grow our own food. Dr. Gongar noted that Liberians need not rely on others to feed our families for this perpetuates poverty.

Stakeholders at the meeting included representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Labor, Justice, Finance and Development Planning,, Land Task Force, Governance Commission, NBC, FDA, CSOs among others.

The Yale team also met with students of the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law at the University of Liberia main Campus on Capitol Hill on Thursday where they discussed the report’s methodology, findings and recommendations. The meeting was very interactive and all were proud of the Liberian Law School students’ participation. The discussions were equally enlightening to the Yale Team.

Governance Commission Chairman Dr. Amos Sawyer, at the final debriefing at GC on Friday January 13, 2017 said he hopes the relationship between the Yale Law Clinic and the University of Liberia Law School will continue closer collaborations for mutual benefits.

This Yale Team comprised a Professor at Law Hope Metcalf and four graduating seniors of the University – Elizabeth Leiserson, Alyssa Yamamoto, Aisha Saad, and Katherine Munyan.

LIPA Graduates 453 Professionals Including 10 from GC

Ten employees of Governance Commission completed a two – month intensive training in seven of the ten disciplines at the Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA) on January 27, 2017. The ten GC employees were among 453 professional staff nominated by their respective government Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (MACs). The graduates were awarded certificate for successfully completing a two month -intensive training in six disciplines at the Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA).



The ten GC employees and training include:

Name of Employee	Discipline	Awarded
1. Mohammed Konneh	Human Resource and Performance Management	Certificate
2. Tenneh Suah	Human Resource and Performance Management	Certificate
3. Ruthie Dolley	Internal audit	Certificate

4. Felicity Smith	Internal audit	Certificate
5. Edwin Tarr	Monitoring and Evaluation	Certificate
6. Lewis M. Marwolo	Monitoring and Evaluation	Certificate
7. Sekou K. Kamara	Public Financial Management	Certificate
8. Varney Kemokai	Computer Applications	Certificate
9. Jonathan Y. Sirlie	Public Policy Analysis	Certificate
10. Varney Kromah	Procurement	Certificate



Youth and Sports Deputy Minister for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Keynote Speaker Rufus Neufville urged the graduates to prepare use the knowledge acquired to enhance and enrich their job performance. Minister Neufville also cautioned them against the practice of corruption, reminding them that corruption is public enemy number one in Liberia.

Quoting Frederic Bastiat, a strong advocate of classical liberalism and economics of Adam Smith, Minister Neufville said “When plunder becomes a way of life for a group of men in society over the course of time they create for themselves a legal system that authorizes it and a moral code that glorifies it”.

Neufville noted that the essence of the training was to fight corruption which has become deeply rooted in our society, and promote integrity and transparency at all-times.

Earlier, LIPA’s Director General Oblayon Nyemah said the capacity building training was intended to enhance staff performance and bring about overall capacity improvement in their places of work. He urged the graduates to serve as highly skilled professionals in their respective ministries, agencies, commissions, and the private sector, prepared to contribute to sector development and nation building processes.



For her part, LIPA’s Deputy Director General for Training, Mrs. Jarso Jallah-Seygbe told the graduates to make use of the knowledge and skills acquired during at LIPA ensure the overall achievement of work in their ministries, agencies and commissions. She emphasized that the training exercise was part of governments’ effort to strengthen institutional capacity and employees’ performance in dealing with the many challenges at the work place.

The three other LIPA trainings were Project Planning Management, Banking and Finance, and Public Sector Management.