



USAID | LIBERIA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Democracy & Governance: Rule of Law

While needs are vast, USAID made a strategic decision to focus on creating a demand for justice through the inculcation of a culture and respect for human rights and increased access to justice.

Accomplishments:

- Established a legal aid clinic in the Louis Arthur Grimes Law School at the University of Liberia to assist in providing free legal services to indigenes; students become interns and serve in government, specifically the public defenders office and with NGOs (ongoing);
- USAID trained nearly 900 trained mediators in three counties as part of a national mediation training program;
- Established a victim/witness support centre in Congo Town to serve as a focal point for a referral service network of NGOs that provide medical, psychological and legal services to victims; two victim support officers are being recruited; and
- Provided sub-grants and capacity-building to NGOs committed to promoting a culture of human rights in Liberia.

Plans/Current Priorities:

- Assist with drafting of mediation legislation and advocacy activities through a task force of local CSOs and elected officials, and will support public activities designed to raise awareness of mediation's benefits and to ensure passage of the legislation.
- Provide advanced mediation training to a core group of trained mediators; provide specialized training in sectors including labor, local government officials and the police;
- Continue to receive and fulfill requests for mediation training made by local and international NGOs and governmental agencies;
- Review and update the existing training materials to meet the needs of the diverse groups of mediation training participants, particularly traditional leaders in isolated rural areas;
- Provide pro-bono support to the Government of Liberia's law reform initiatives;

- Establish two Legal Advice Centers outside Montserrado County to provide free legal advice and information and legal representation for the accused and victims; place recent graduates of the Law School at the Legal Advice Centers; through Legal Advice Centers provide training to the police, paralegals, and community leaders to broaden their understanding of the law and the formal judicial process;
- Médecins sans Frontières has requested that USAID work with its partners to develop standard guidelines for handling medical certificates (especially for rape victims); Christian Children's Fund requested USAID to collaborate on a quick-reference guide on GBV offences for use by the police, court officials, prosecutors and defense counsel;
- Through the victim/witness center, in partnership with other organizations involved in the prevention of gender-based violence, develop and deliver victim-sensitization training to members of the Judiciary, the Liberian National Police, court officials, prosecution authorities and public defense counsel; and
- Make sub grants to NGOs seeking to provide legal support for indigent clients, mediation, prevention of gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, and justice.

Partners:

Our key partner is the American Bar Association. Other donors include the US Department of State through INL, and UNMIL.

Challenge:

The Chief Justice and Ambassador Booth agreed to explore the possibility of establishing a judicial training institute to provide continuing legal education to all legal practitioners within the justice system. Differences in capacity levels and approaches to responsibilities are hindering progress when only certain types of personnel are trained.