



## DASU Newsletter

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**Cross-Section  
of Participants  
at the DASU  
Project Launch**

## VP TAYLOR EXTOLS ITALIAN GOVERNMENT

In a special remark, Isaac Kiba on behalf of the vice-president of the republic of Liberia, Jewel Howard Taylor extolled the Italian Government on the occasion marking the official launch of the Disability and Start-up project funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

According to Kiba, the vicepresident described the project as a *demonstration of the Italian Government’s deep commitment* to working as partners in *supporting the most vulnerable in society and in fostering sustainable development in Liberia*. The project was officially launched on **July 25, 2018** at the Corina Hotel in Monrovia and brought together scores of local and international NGOs including government officials as well as the project beneficiaries. The project is being implemented in *Bong, Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties as well as Monrovia*. *The general objective of the project is to reinforce the role of Disabled People Organisations in the socio-economic development processes and in the fulfillment of the rights of people with disabilities in Liberia*. The National Union of Organisations of the Disabled, NUOD and the National Commission on Disabilities, NCD serve as local partners to the project. In Italy, RIDS and DISEI are also affiliate partners.

Mr. Kiba on behalf of the vice-president called on the Italian Government to *forge a long standing partnership with the government of Liberia to overcome the neglect and exclusion people with disabilities face* in Liberia.



ITALIAN AGENCY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT  
COOPERATION



## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES RESEARCH THEIR OWN ISSUES

At least 12 persons with disabilities have undergone an intensive residential training for an Emancipatory Disability Research. The **Emancipatory Disability Research** is an initiative of the DASU project. It focuses on **gaining insights about specific aspects of daily lives of Persons with Disabilities in Bong, Nimba and Grand Gedeh** counties. It looks at the challenges they face and their **strategies for overcoming those challenges**.

The training was held at the Angel Hill Guest House in Gompa City, Nimba County between the period October 29-November 2, 2018. The technical consultant of the research, Dr. Sunil Deepak served as facilitator for the training. Dr. Deepak is an expert in Emancipatory processes and has had an appreciable experience working in the disability sector. The Emancipatory Disability Research is the first of its kind in Liberia especially involving persons with disabilities as researchers. It is hoped that the outcome of the research will be used to **improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities as well as make informed policy decisions** to affect the lives of persons with disabilities in Liberia.



Researchers at the training held in Gompa City, Nimba Co.

**EMANCIPATORY DISABILITY RESEARCH: HIGHLIGHTS AND MAIN ISSUES**  
Watch out for an exclusive in our next Issue...

## SOCIAL BASELINE STUDY ASSESS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

AIFO-Liberia and the University of Florence, Department of Economics Management in Italy is conducting a baseline study with focus on **sector players, the regulatory framework and to determine the level of participation of People with Disabilities** in Liberia. The objective of the study is to analyse current practices in Liberia that fit inside the wide spectrum of Social Economy organisations and organisations that work to support them. The results will be essential to design training

## DPOS IT TRAINING RECOMMENDS

An Institutional Capacity Building Training was held for a total of (38) leaders of Disabled People Organisations (DPOs) between October 22-25, 2018 in Gompa City, Nimba County. The general focus of the training was to **strengthen DPOs capacity to promote the rights of persons with disabilities**. An international consultant and global disabled advocate, Giampiero Griffio and a local media consultant, Kpanbayezee Duworko facilitated different sections of the training. Topics covered were related to the SDGs, UNCRPD, Communications and Networking, Liberia Legislations on Disability etc. At the end of the training, several recommendations aimed at strengthening Disabled People Organisations and improving gov't policies for persons with disabilities were put forth. Among other things, the participants recommended that NUOD and DPOs raise awareness at community level and should constitute an

advocacy committee at local level to promote their actions. The participants also recommended the mainstreaming of disability in gov't policies to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The recommendations will be further discussed in the next NUOD congress. Discussions will also ensue between NUOD and NCD for further actions.

courses on inclusive business as part of the DASU project. Chiarra Chirrimi of the University of Florence in Italy and Jacob Jallah, local consultant are leading the study in 3 counties of the DASU project which includes Bong, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and the city of Monrovia. Banks, Cooperatives, Self Help Groups, Micro-Finance Institutions are all being targeted to gather information on the aforementioned issues. The study result is expected to be out in December, 2018.

## “WORK IN UNITY” NUOD URGES MEMBERS

Speaking at the official launch of the Disability and Start-up project, the president of the National Union of Organisations of the Disabled, Naomi Harris called on members to **unite rather than competing between themselves**. Naomi furthered that the results of the DASU project can only be achieved when member organisations hold together noting that with unity, more can be achieved. She also expressed thanks to the Italian government for the support noting that AIFO has been a long standing partner for the rights of persons with disabilities in Liberia. The struggle for representation across different disabilities has been lingering with physically challenged, visually impaired and deaf persons segregating against one another. **Naomi wants for all categories of disabilities to work together**. The DASU project is working along with at least 9 Disabled People Organisations in Bong, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Monrovia. The organisations include; SAPRO, G-77 in Nimba County, Nimba Disabled Community, Grand Gedeh Disabled Association, Christian Association of the Blind, Liberia National Association of the Deaf, Cultivation for Users Hope, G-77 in Bong County and NUOD respectively.



Naomi Harris, President of NUOD

## EDITORIAL: BREAK-DOWN BARRIERS ON DISABILITY

BY Staff Writer: Luther Sangar Mendin

The state role in any democracy is to help break-up barriers so that people can entirely participate in their communities, for the advancement of society and for the fulfilment of their potential. It is the responsibility of government to provide for all of its citizens, persons with disabilities as no exception. Although there have been some steps by the government of Liberia in addressing issues related to disabilities ranging from the establishment of a commission on disability, the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the introduction of a social protection program at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, government still has to do more in breaking down the barriers and stigmatization people with disabilities face so as to transition to self-independence. Persons with disabilities can fast track the process towards inclusive and

sustainable development and for the SDGs to be fully realised with its promise of “**Leaving No one Behind**”, government must step up efforts to remove all physical, social and economic barriers thereby creating a society that provides real opportunities for all with persons with disabilities forming a key part. An employment policy that takes into account persons with disabilities will also go a long way in addressing stigma and marginalisation people with disabilities face in Liberia. Inclusive education programs also needs to be instituted in all public and private institutions. In as much as we call on the government to help break-down barriers on disability, it should also be made clear that the citizens in general are also cardinal in ensuring that stigma is not experienced by people with disabilities. In fact, the citizens should serve as a key support arm in this regard. The citizens should stop shunning people with disabilities and calling them all sorts of name, they should desist from providing charity to people with disabilities and tap into their potentials. Until this is done, persons with disabilities will continue to be left on the margins of society.



# PICTORIAL REVIEW

# OF MAJOR ACTIVITIES

2018\_29\_Oct\_EDR Consultant Sunil Deepak engages one of the researchers in person of Gabriel Soh from Nimba County



2018\_July\_24\_Lib\_Monrovia\_ Exceeding\_Hotel\_DPOs Diagnostic Study\_Workshop Participants



AIFO-Liberia Country Director, Silvia Poggioli engages the media after the DASU project launch



2018\_July\_\_Members of Group of 77 pose for photo at the office of NUOD in Bong County after a Baseline study engagement



2018\_Sept\_14\_Social Baseline Survey Consultants Chiarra and Jacob pose with Wuo's Town SHG



2018\_July19\_NimbaCounty\_Sanniquellie Self Help Group meets with AIFO Country Director, Silvia Poggioli



2018\_July18\_Life is Good Self Help Group Chairlady Abigail Gonkernue makes special remarks as part of diagnostic study meetings

2018\_July18\_NimbaCounty\_04 Group of 77 members pose for photo with Sunil and Silvia during diagnostic study mission



2018\_July17\_Gbernga\_02\_SAPRO\_NUOD-Office\_Bong



Oct26\_AIFO-Liberia\_Office\_Ramp\_Inauguration\_Group Photo with Partners

2018\_Oct\_25\_Cross Section of IT Training Participants Oct26\_AIFO





## COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As I write this, it's hard to believe that the Disability and Start-Up project (DASU) is marking 6 months of existence. So much has already been achieved! Our Disability and Start-Up newsletter aims at enhancing internal and external communications: to highlight our achievements; to outline how AIFO and its partners are collaborating to improve the lives of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in Liberia; as well as to provide "food for thoughts" in the editorial space.

I hope that this will also be a good way to inaugurate a new culture of communications and advocacy in the Country Office. We are hoping to make this newsletter informative, interesting and relevant and that you feel there is something in it for you. We also anticipate that you will feel stimulated to participate in our discussions and debates. Moreover, if you have something you would like to share in the next edition, please make contact with AIFO Liberia Communication Officer.

I take this opportunity to thank our valued partners, whose continued effort is permitting DASU to achieve so much in so little time, and the Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) we work with and for, as our reciprocal continuous learning is giving birth to original thinking and practice.

A special thanks goes to our funder, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) whose confidence in our work inspires us to extend best practices in all we do.

*Warm regards and happy festive season!*



**Silvia Poggioli**  
Country Director  
AIFO Liberia

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

3rd of December marks Int'l Day of Persons with Disabilities. The Day is not just an observance for a day but it brings forth a feeling of empowerment and facilitates the person with disability to fulfil their dreams in every walk of life. In observance of the day, **AIFO-Liberia** Country Director and Chairperson of the Alliance on Disability, **Silvia Poggioli** made special statement on behalf of the alliance. The alliance is a conglomeration of INGOs, NGOs and sector ministries working with and for people with disabilities in Liberia. The celebration was organised by NCD, NUOD, UNDP and partners

with the national theme: "creating a level playing field for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in Liberia." The program was held at the Lutheran Church Hall in Monrovia. Several recommendations aimed at creating a level playing field for the empowerment of persons with disabilities were highlighted in Silvia's statement. Please follow this link to access the full statement: <https://aifoliberia.org/2018/12/03/international-day-of-people-with-disabilities-guest-speech-by-silvia-poggioli-alliance-on-disability-chairperson/>



## "MAKE PUBLIC BUILDINGS ACCESSIBLE" EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM CALLS ON LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT

As AIFO-Liberia inaugurates its office ramp project, the European Disability Forum has called on the government of Liberia led by President George Weah to ensure that all public and private buildings are made accessible to persons with disabilities especially those in wheel chairs.

Giampiero Griffo, a board member of the forum said people living with disabilities like any other individual can meaningfully contribute to societal development once they are provided the opportunity and space to showcase their talents. He made the assertion during the dedication of a ramp constructed at the offices of the Italian Association Amici di Raoul Follereau- Liberia Office in Sinkor, Monrovia. The ramp was constructed with funding from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation as part of the Disability and Startup project which is currently being implemented in Bong, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and the city of Monrovia. Giampiero, who recently visited Liberia as part of an Institutional Training for heads of Disabled People Organisations under the Disability and Startup project said his visit was intended to provide capacity building training to disabled people organisations in other to empower their members.

For her part, the Country Director of AIFO-Liberia, Silvia Poggioli described the dedication of the ramp at her institution as a first step taken to achieve the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. According to her, in the absence of a ramp, persons with disabilities wouldn't have the opportunity to access her office especially those in wheel chairs and even those using crutches. She also supported the call for government to ensure smooth accessibility of public and private buildings including banks, hospitals, offices, among others.

Meanwhile speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Tonieh Wiles, Commissioner of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights and Naomi Harris, President of the National Union of Organisations of the Disabled, also a local partner to the Disability and Startup praised AIFO and the Italian Government for the initia-

tive and called on both government and private institutions to follow suit.

*"I Just want to thank AIFO and the Italian government for taking the initiative to start the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which Liberia ratified. These are some of the things that we should be doing, living by examples. Every government building should have ramp and should be accessible for persons with disabilities and for persons with disabilities to enjoy their rights".*

**Tonieh Wiles**, Commissioner,  
Independent National Commission on Human Rights

Accessibility remains a major barrier for persons with disabilities in Liberia ranging from utilisation of public transportation, access to universities, reading equipment for visually impaired persons among many others. Accessibility is one of the key principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and a "vital precondition for effective and equal enjoyment of different civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights by persons with disabilities". **Article 9 of the UNCRPD sets out an obligation for state parties to ensure that persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, information and communications, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public. Moreover, Article 5 of the UNCRPD which is focused on Equality and non-discrimination states that all signatories to the convention shall prohibit all discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantee to persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination on all grounds.**

The government will need to enforce the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that will ensure that all public and private structures including learning and informational materials are made accessible for persons with disabilities in Liberia as they also constitute a significant percentage of the population of Liberia and are also right holders.

## VOICES FROM THE FIELD



**Nenlay G. Doe-Nimba County**

**Nenlay Doe** has been in wheelchair since she was 6 years old because of a severe form of malaria. Notwithstanding, she has been very instrumental in championing the cause of people with disabilities in Nimba County, one of Liberia's 15 political sub-divisions. She has been an active beneficiary of AIFO since 2013. She is currently the head of the Sanni-quellie Self Help Group established by AIFO and was quite recently elected as president of the Nimba County Disabled Community. **Mrs. Doe** believes that with AIFO support, she was able to gain so much confidence from her colleagues and is now at the forefront of disability issues in the county. **Nenlay** was also recently hired as Community Worker for the DASU Project.

## COMING UP IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!!!(MARCH 2019)

- Voices from the Field-We'll highlight voices of beneficiaries after almost 1 year of the project..
- Emerging Issues from EDR- We'll feature engagements from EDR researchers and highlights of main issues....
- Baseline Study Outcome - We'll present an overview of the social and economic baseline study outcomes and recommendations thereof...
- Institutional Training Outcomes - Follow up engagements of the IT training will be highlighted and many more...



*dal 1961 con gli ultimi*

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## DASU PROJECT PARTNER DETAILS

**AIFO-Liberia: (Implementing Agency)** AIFO- Liberia is a professional non-profit health and development organization that enables opportunities for persons affected by leprosy, persons with disabilities, women, children and members of poor and vulnerable groups, through focused healthcare, education and economic empowerment initiatives in Liberia with the aim of providing a better quality of life and creating large scale positive change.

<https://aifoliberia.org/>

**NUOD: (Local Partner)** The National Union of Organizations for the Disabled (NUOD) is the "Umbrella" federation of all Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) in Liberia. The Union was founded and formally registered with Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 28 October 1995 as a non-profit corporation in accordance with the not-for-profit corporation act of Liberia, 1977. NUOD promote and advocate for the protection and social inclusion of all persons with disabilities in Liberia. <https://www.facebook.com/NationalUnionOfOrganizationsOfTheDisabled/>

**NCD: (Affiliate Entity)** The National Commission on Disabilities is an independent entity that was established by an act of legislation in 2005. The commission oversees all issues related to disabilities on behalf of the government of Liberia.

**RIDS:** RIDS stands for the Italian Network on Disability and Development. It is a network formed in Italy to promote the issues related to disability and the world over. <https://www.facebook.com/RIDSnetwork.org/>

**DISEI:** School of Economics and Management (DISEI), University of Florence in Italy. DISEI supports the economic activity of the DASU project through training and research. <https://www.disei.uniupo.it/>



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