

## **Liberian Female Journalists Demand More Voice**

Female journalists in Liberia have called for more stakes in the managing and directing of media institutions in the country. They want institutional policies that would encourage “women leadership” in the media.

The call was contained in a resolution adopted in Monrovia recently by forty participating journalists of a Leadership Training Workshop for Female Journalists in Liberia organized by the Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP) and sponsored by UNESCO.

The group also called for equal working opportunity for all at every media institution in Liberia; and urged the Press Union of Liberia (PUL), Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP), and other media related NGOs in the country to always provide the forums for both male and female journalists to discuss issues surrounding the local media.

The group in the resolution however called on female journalists in the country to “rise up to the challenges” of assuming greater responsibilities in their work.

The workshop held under the theme “Preparing Women for Leadership Roles in the Media”, was aimed at helping to improve the “performance of the Liberian media towards firmly implanting the media in the democratization of Liberia”.

Speaking Monday July 30<sup>th</sup>, at the opening of the workshop, CEMESP Executive Director Malcolm Joseph said given the low level of women participation in decision-making in newsrooms, it has become imperative to organize training sessions in preparing them for leadership role at various levels of the media.

Mr. Joseph lamented that of the more than 20 newspapers in the Monrovia area, there are hardly any women in the top management with similar situation in the electronic media except for few leading the sales and advertising efforts.

According to the CEMESP Executive Director, issues about women empowerment, children welfare, poverty eradication, can better be presented by women journalists.

Also speaking at the opening session, TRC Commissioner Massa Washington urged the participants to “prepare themselves for position of responsibility and creativity in the media, not in conflict with or imitation of masculine roles but impressing their own genius on their work and professional activity”.

She noted that the will power to assume leadership at any media institution in Liberia must firstly be encouraged by female journalists themselves.

Madam Washington lamented the seemingly unprepared postures of female journalists in the country to accept the mantle of authorities at their institutions. “How many of us want to be managing editors of newspapers or station managers without worrying about the burden that accompanies these leadership positions?” she asked.

She urged the participants not to “limit themselves to the position of only receiving and transferring calls during talk shows” but to “start setting the agenda” for these talk shows. “Do not leave the hard part of the media job to your male counterparts, you must rise up to the challenge”, she emphasized.

Madam Washington encouraged the female journalists to draw their inspiration from the President of Liberia, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf-the first woman to become president in Africa.

UNESCO, the sponsor of the workshop was represented at the opening by the Administrative and Finance Officer at its Liberia Office, Mr. Francis K. Gray who proxied for UNESCO Liberia Officer in Charge Dr. Ahmed Fereg.

The workshop discussed: Media Women in Democratic Societies, Women in Media and Leadership, Reporting Gender and Development Issues, Balancing Family and Work, and Managing Change, Media Law and Ethics, News Writing, Interviewing techniques, among others.

It was facilitated by Mass Communication Lecturer at the University of Liberia Madam. Weade K. Wureh, Deputy Information Minister for Technical Services, Mrs. Elizabeth Hoff, Mrs. Davidetta Browne Lansanah of the UUMIL Gender Unit, WIPNET Coordinator, Lindora Diawara , Inquirer Newspaper Managing Editor Phillip N. Wesseh, Radio Veritas Station Manager Ledgerhood Rennie, and University English Language Professor Richard Clarke Sr.