



The European Union (EU) is a longstanding partner and friend of Liberia. The EU has supported Liberia since 1973 through different channels. The EU supports Liberian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) by reinforcing their role as local governance and accountability actors for meaningful and structured participation in policy dialogues and development processes.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN LIBERIA?

The involvement of CSOs in development processes is essential as they are closest to the people on the ground. CSOs engagement is important as they can ensure that policies reflect the needs of citizens and that policy making is transparent and efficient. They are an important counterpart, bringing diverse voices to the table and holding government accountable for its policies and budgetary decisions. In Liberia, a majority of CSOs are based in Montserrado Country, where they also have easier access to technical and financial resources in comparison to CSOs operating in rural areas of Liberia. The CSO sector is however continuously evolving.

A CSO is expected to play multiple roles: they are important sources of information for both citizens and the government; they monitor government policies, such as by asking questions about how money is and should best be spent; and they advocate on behalf of the people they represent.

HOW DOES THE EU SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY IN LIBERIA?

In Liberia, the European Union supports CSOs to strengthen their skills and capacities. The aim is to help them become credible governance actors and to deepen their civic engagement in domestic policies.

More specifically, the EU support to CSOs focuses on:

- * Improving CSOs technical and organisational skills to better perform their roles,
- * Strengthening their collective voice and advocacy capacities.

Civil society is envisioned to take on a role in which they engage actively in policy development and propose relevant solutions corresponding to the needs of Liberian people. The actions' focus is to enhance CSOs' capacities to participate in policy formulation and implementation. Increased CSO participation in policy and decision-making processes will enable transparent and inclusive representation, both at local and national levels.

The EU funded projects provide tailor-made mentoring and training to develop and strengthen CSOs skills, and in parallel financial support via grants to carry out development activities and advocacy actions plans.

WHICH PROJECTS IS THE EU FUNDING IN LIBERIA IN SUPPORT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS?

Since 2019, the EU has been supporting the **Supporting Effective Advocacy in Liberia (SEAL)** programme. The SEAL programme engages several community-based and mid-level CSOs' as well as the National Civil Society Council of Liberia, in Montserrado and in the southeast.

The SEAL programme aims to improve the internal control systems and organisational skills of CSOs' and the National Civil Society Council of Liberia. The programme aims to strengthen CSOs' capacity in advocacy, policy dialogues and public accountability, as well as improving their networking and coordination skills.

The **Spotlight Initiative** is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations. In Liberia, the programme focus on reducing the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by, among other, supporting local CSOs' and women's organisations. Through the programme, women's rights groups and civil society organisations strengthen their skills to better design and monitor projects on gender equality, and increase their networking and advocacy skills to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG).

The **"Enough! Empowering women, girls, boys and men to take positive action in ending SGBV in Ghana, Liberia and Mali"** project is a regional project working to create an enabling environment for women, girls and boys to know and exercise their rights to end sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In Liberia the project is implemented in Sinoe, River Cess, Grand Gedeh, Margibi and Montserrado counties. It supports eight Liberian CSOs' with small grants and capacity building training to enhance their skills to more effectively advocate for change of discriminatory gender norms and practises, and to influence policies to prevent and respond to SGBV.

The **Securing Land Rights for Women and Rural Communities in South-eastern Liberia** project aims to empower women and rural communities to secure their land rights as per the 2018 Land Rights Act. It will do this by strengthening the capacities of CSOs to promote equal participation and access to land rights for women and communities. This will include working with traditional leaders and local authorities to carry out gender sensitive and inclusive land-use decision making and planning, and use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

To promote inclusion, the **"Voice for Inclusion and Civil Society Empowerment (VOICE) - Disabled People Organisations stepping up for people with disabilities rights in Liberia"** project seeks to improve the socio-economic status of Liberia's deaf and hard of hearing (HOH) community by strengthening CSOs' capacities, particularly Disabled People's Organisations, to empower people with disabilities (PwD). The project focus on enhancing PwD and CSOs't policy and advocacy skills to ensure that the rights and needs of people with disabilities are addressed by policymakers at local and national levels. In addition, the project aims to increase PwDs employment prospects by improving their technical and vocational skills.

In the forestry sector, the **Strengthening the Capacity of the Civil Society for the implementation of the VPA** project strengthens the role of CSOs' in forest governance processes ensuring their participation in the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) framed within the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) programme. The VPA agreement was signed between Liberia and the EU in 2013. Its aim is to ensure that timber and timber products exported from Liberia are legal. The project focuses on building the capacities of local CSOs' to ensure that Liberian forests are well managed, to ensure both government and communities benefit adequately from logging, and that the whole process of forests exploitation is monitored.



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