



LIBERIA

SNAPSHOT

Networking Event Strengthens Reconciliation Processes in Liberia

Connections forged among participants in reconciliation processes across Liberia



Cross-sectoral working groups creating bylaws



Community forum members discussing reconciliation processes

“Knowing that there are other community members out there doing the same work as I am makes me more motivated to continue.”

-Angelina Yeke, Community Forum Member, Bonlah, Nimba County, Liberia

The first-ever Community Forum networking conference in Liberia last fall brought together representatives from each of the 11 active Community Forums in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties. INL’s Mitigating Local Disputes in Liberia Program (MLDL) has been establishing these grassroots community groups to identify and resolve brewing conflicts and report potentially destabilizing security concerns up the chain to the district, county, and national level decision makers. Although Community Forum members are not paid, they play a vital role in the Government of Liberia’s security policies and plans. The forums ensure that rural communities have the opportunity to discuss and report their concerns at monthly meetings and to propose solutions.

The three-day conference allowed for a lively exchange among Community Forum members from different parts of Liberia. Participants discussed how best to address security threats facing their various communities. They also gained insight from each other on how to construct bylaws, hold leadership elections, mediate community conflicts, and most importantly, ensure their own sustainability after US Government funding ends. This was the first time that community members participating in the reconciliation process across Liberia were brought together to meet and exchange views.

Some participants were members of Community Forums that had already been meeting for three years (since the start of MLDL Phase I) while others were members of Community Forums just beginning to hold meetings under MLDL Phase II. Mature Community Forum members shared valuable lessons learned. Members of the Dubuzon Community Forum (established in 2013) gave a live demonstration of how their meetings are run, stressing the importance of developing an action plan for each issue raised. They also shared their view that meeting more than once a month may be advisable when there is high tension in the community

Participants exchanged contact details and promised to call one another should they need advice on how to resolve a difficult situation. “Knowing that there are other community members out there doing the same work as I am makes me motivated to continue,” said Angelina C. Yeke, a member one of the newest Community Forums in Nimba County, in Bonlah town.