

# International Senior Lawyers Project

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### **Volunteer Lawyers Export Legislative Skills to Liberia**

NEW YORK, NY, July 21, 2009 –

Liberia, a small country in western Africa, is making a serious effort to rebuild and move forward following a brutal civil war that destabilized the country for well over a decade. On June 27th, Rebecca Lennahan, a former Deputy Director of the Office of Legislative Legal Services in the Colorado General Assembly, traveled to Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, as a volunteer with the International Senior Lawyers Project (ISLP), a New York based NGO that provides pro bono lawyers of the highest caliber to assist civil society organizations and developing country governments around the world in their efforts to advance human rights, equitable economic development and the rule of law. Lennahan and her fellow volunteer, Robert Mansell, an environmental mining lawyer from Toronto, Canada, were selected to conduct a legislative drafting workshop requested by Liberia's Ministry of State for Finance, Economic and Legal Affairs.

A country of 3.5 million, Liberia is working hard to revive a mining industry that ground to a virtual halt during the war years and to encourage transparency and accountability in the extractive industries sector. The government therefore finds itself with a large and urgent legislative agenda, but few experienced drafters. Lennahan and Mansell's task was to draw from their extensive experience to create a one-week workshop that would give an overview of the legislative drafting process, along with more specific elements pertaining to natural resource law, for members of the Liberian Government with responsibility for drafting and reviewing pieces of legislation.

Collaborating long-distance between Littleton and Toronto proved surprisingly easy for the two lawyers. Lennahan handled most of the drafting topics and Mansell addressed mining and forestry issues as well as the concession process. When they finally met in Monrovia in June, the pieces fell into place. The workshop, which built upon ISLP's previous projects in Liberia, was attended by some 20 government officials in various government ministries and received glowing reviews. The two were impressed that nearly all their Liberian colleagues stayed through the last session on the last day of training. "The topic was ethical considerations for drafters," said Lennahan, "and the small group format generated some of the most animated and free-ranging discussion of the week."

While Lennahan noted the hardships Liberia continues to face following years of conflict, she is optimistic following her visit. "We had a really successful workshop. While Liberia faces huge challenges, we were struck by the talent, the work ethic, and the positive attitude of the people we met. I'm so glad I had the chance to make a contribution to their progress."



*Rebecca Lennahan, a retired Deputy Director of the Office of Legislative Legal Services at the Colorado General Assembly, and Robert Mansell, a retired Canadian environmental lawyer, with members of the Liberian Government at a workshop in Monrovia on legislative drafting.*