



**ANNUAL REPORT
2021**

Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding

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FORWARD

The idea behind an annual report from the standpoint of Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding, CEMESP, is accountability and transparency driven. It has always been a footprint of our institutional modus operandi to open up on what we have done in the preceding year so that clients and stakeholders in the public and private domain can be on the same page with where we have left and where we are headed.

Without much perambulation, we must state that the year ended was loaded with actions, programs and projects that are attuned to our strategic plan. This is in spite of the fact that we were caught up in the pandemic of COVID with restrictions in travels, among other things.

Freedom of expression and media rights as mainstay of our mandates suffered immensely in the circumstance and that put us in the challenging position to rise up to the occasion in tackling issues of fake news around the containment of COVID 19.

How to balance freedom of expression and responsibility to hold the sanctity of truth telling has been a dicey issue for us as an institution. This meant we were supposed to be creative and innovative otherwise our advocacy would be unsuccessful and would've landed us in uncharted areas.

In the preceding year we did a lot. We have been very active in risk communication to deal with fake news. We continued our documentation of attacks on freedom of expression and promoted the application of freedom of information as a tool to hold duty bearers accountable. We did projects that linked media to environmental protection and sanitation as such intervention became of essence in the context of contributing to public health at time when workforce in garbage collection had whittled down, and there was need to create adaptive conditions for the populace to become less vulnerable to waste disposal inadequacies. We did a lot in research and knowledge management especially in promotion of digital rights.

Most of those projects require continuity to harness the gains and leverage further support from our partners in consolidating gains as the country prepares for election and even respond to the post COVID 19 resilience building. It has been a learning process in new skills and way of doing things. We are grateful to the array of partners for trusting us to work with them and contribute to the development aspirations of the government and people of Liberia.

In humility we must admit that we have been on top of things and that is evident in the outcomes of what we have achieved in the past year to win the confidence of our constituents. Our project implementation portfolios have expanded as the specifics are self-evident to showcase in the ensuing pages. And we are embracing the New Year with the zest and passion to do more.



Malcolm Wleemogar Joseph

Executive Director, CEMESP

December 31, 2021

ABOUT CEMESP

The Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding (CEMESP), is a media and peace building non-governmental organization that seeks to strengthen the work of media institutions and human rights organizations to promote peace building efforts through networking and capacity development. CEMESP was established in 2003 to respond to the challenges confronting professional media practice, free speech, and a conflict-sensitive media landscape.

Vision

CEMESP envisions a peaceful and democratic Liberia guided by the principle of equality and respect for the rights of all citizens.

Mission

To promote democratic tenets through free media, freedom of expression, peace, and participatory governance.

Core Values

- ✓ **Freedom** – a society where every person enjoys freedom including freedom of association, freedom of expression , and right to peaceful protest;
- ✓ **Tolerance** – an environment wherein the right of all to express themselves freely while at the same time demonstrate tolerance for dissenting views of others;
- ✓ **Accountability** – an institution wherein every individual takes responsibility for his/her actions;
- ✓ **Transparency** – an organization that discusses issues in a participatory and open manner and provides stewardship for donors’ resources.

Where We Work

CEMESP works across all fifteen Counties of Liberia with the head office situated in Monrovia.

Our Staff

Our staff comprises a core group of eight (8) full time employees from diverse backgrounds including media & Communications, law, project management, advocacy, policy analysis, financial management and administration. Combined, our staff has over 30 years work experience in the NGO sector – Media capacity development, community engagement, conflict mitigation, research and training.

Based on need, from time to time, CEMESP makes recourse to its database of pre-qualified consultants to provide guidance and support in strategic spheres of the work we do.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

A record 26 FOI Requests filed to Public institutions

Journalists who received training under the Liberia Media Initiative project were able to file in request for Information to at least 20 public institutions including the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), Forestry Development Authority, Ministry of Health, Environmental Protection Agency, Liberia Airport Authority, Ministry of Defense, Liberia Civil Aviation Authority, the Liberia Revenue Authority, Liberia Electricity Corporation, Public Procurement & Concessions Commission, Paynesville City Corporation, Monrovia City Corporation, etc.

From the stated twenty requests filed, only five have been responded to during the reporting period. This can be seen as a modest development and represents relative progress compared to previous FOI Law usage compliance engagements.

First Ever Report Released on Procurement Transparency of Digital Technology Systems in Liberia

CEMESP through the African Freedom of Information Center (AFIC), embarked on a research that among other things interrogated: the integrity of Digital Technology System including procurement processes, data protection policies, and access. The research was the first of its kind in the Republic of Liberia. Findings from the study provide a relevant information to improve the use of DTS in Liberia.

Reactivation of Freedom of Information Hubs in Bong, Grand Bassa, and Bomi Counties

The FOI Hubs were established as focal points to brainstorm and generate information-representing request ideas from each region. From these hubs the ideas generated were processed and filed to specific entities. Then the Independent Information Commission is copied for tracking and action purposes. Those hubs have been dormant for several years due to funding and resource challenges.

With support from CEMESP through Internews-Liberia Media Initiative (LMI) Project, the Independent Information Commission reactivated three regional FOI hubs in the Western region (Bomi), Central and Northern region (Bong), Eastern region (Grand Bassa). Coordinators have been assigned to each of the reactivated hubs and are receiving monthly stipend for the period of nine months as specified under the grant agreement.

Fourteen Counties' Information Officers Capacity Enhanced to Manage FOI Requests

CEMESP conducted a training for fourteen (14) Counties' Information Officers (CIOs), with the exception of River Gee County whose CIO was not available for the event. This capacity development initiative was intended to further strengthen information officers on the processing and documentation of FOI requests within the counties. As a result of those activities, counties are receiving requests for information more frequently. While we cannot account for how those requests have been handled, the project will remain engaged with requesters (mainly journalists) to assess the nature and frequency of the responses.

PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

CEMESP seeks to promote media transparency and human rights, institutional strengthening and peace building through its 7 strategic pillars: Media and Conflict sensitivity; Media and elections; Access to Information; Media and Gender; Media Litigation; Legislative Advocacy and Policy Reform in the media center; and Institutional Development. Under each pillars are targeted solution oriented projects, developed to respond to critical media and peace building challenges.

During this reporting period, CEMESP implemented several projects under our different strategic pillars but with intense intervention on Pillar 3 (Access to Information) & 7 (Institutional Development). These are described below:

Pillar 7: Institutional Development – Improving institutional and human resource capacity

AFIC Government Procurement of Digital Technology Systems in Africa Project

This project was sponsored by Africa Freedom of Information Center (AFIC). It was designed to support CEMESP conduct a research on the government of Liberia procurement of Digital Technology Systems (DTS). Among other things, the project sought to understand the procurement of digital technology such as artificial intelligence, facial recognition, and digital identity in Liberia to promote accountability in the use of public fund. The study aimed to gauge public awareness of digital technology system in Liberia. It also sought to assess public perception on the government's expenditure on DTSs and evaluate perception regarding the legal frameworks that govern government procurement of digital systems, privacy regarding data collected by the systems, and the use of such systems. Findings from this research was documented and disseminated through media outreach while advocacy engagements were held with key policy makers and regulators to address discrepancies and initiate reforms.

Findings from the research highlighted the following:

- That there is no clear budget line for the purchase of digital equipment
- There is no policy that exist currently in Liberia on the acquisition and use of Digital Technology Systems (DTS)
- There is no law or policy on the protection of personal data gathered by DTS
- Majority of respondents of the research thinks the bidding processes for the procurement of DTS were not transparent (i.e. they were neither advertised nor opened in the presence of bidders).

A full report of this research that includes recommendations to improve the procurement and use of Digital Technology Systems in Liberia was released in August 2021. Link: <https://cemespliberia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Government-Procurement-of-Digital-Technology-Systems-DTSS-in-Liberia-1.pdf>

Integrated Public Financial Reform Project (IPFRP) II

This initiative was supported by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), to conduct a situational analysis of three countries – Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda, on the nexus between tax reform and service delivery in health and education. The project was designed to stimulate policy discussions around issues of power theft, tax reform and service delivery in the health and education sectors. CEMESP in fulfilling the project objectives, conducted the following:

- A comparative situational study;
- Held a one-day validation of situational analysis report;
- Developed and aired radio messages in English and local languages in Grand Bassa and Montserrado Counties;
- Held stakeholders’ dialogues; and
- Hosted weekly radio talk shows and conducted audience survey

Pillar 3: Access to information: Increasing knowledge among citizens on the use of the freedom of Information (FOI) to request public information

Using Access to Information to respond to fake news syndrome around Covid19

With support from IFEX, CEMESP used the FOI request filling mechanism to access information to correct misinformation and fake news. The project inspired behavior change messaging to foster civic cooperation in the Covid-19 vaccine roll out in Liberia. The project sought to dispel fake news about Covid19 based on hope-based messages about



the safety and efficacy of Covid-19 vaccines. As a result of this intervention, Liberia saw a high rise of vaccinations from March 2021 to October 2021. Key actions that led to this dramatic change in behavior toward the Covid-19 vaccination included:

- The development of scripts and recording of jingles in local dialect about the safety and efficacy of the Covid-19 vaccine
- Disseminating pre-recorded messages among community radios in Montserrado, Bong, Lofa, Margibi, Grand Bassa and Nmba
- Weekly radio talk shows held to discuss FOI requested messages and information tracked for verification using expert opinions

Liberia Media Initiative (LMI) Project

CEMESP received a sub-grant from Internews Europe. This was a grant from the European Union to implement a project on access to information using the Freedom of Information Act of 2010 as an advocacy tool. The project sought to work closely with the Independent Information Commission (IIC) to provide capacity building and technical support to reactivate its information hubs in three sub-regional counties – Bong, Grand Bassa, and Bomi. The project enhanced IIC to develop its first annual state of the FOI report since the establishment of the Commission. While supporting the IIC, CEMESP also trained Journalists and Public Information Officers on the use of the FOI to investigate and access public information. Those activities further strengthened media institutions and individuals to effectively implement the FOI Act and as a result, there has been twenty-six (26) FOI filing requests to several public institutions including the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), Forestry Development Authority, Ministry of Health, Environmental Protection Agency, Liberia Airport Authority, Ministry of Defense, Liberia Civil Aviation Authority, the Liberia Revenue Authority, Liberia Electricity Corporation, Public Procurement & Concessions Commission, Paynesville City Corporation, Monrovia City Corporation, etc. Despite the many requests submitted, only five has been responded to leaving more work to be done on sensitization and compliance with the FOI Act.



The project is a two year grant award. We look forward to next year to continue engagements with relevant stakeholders to take this effort further.

Advocacy, Awareness, and Journalist Training Project (UNOPS Cities Alliance)

The project was initiated to create robust awareness on Climate resilient solid waste management practices using the 4Rs – reuse, reduce, recycle and recovery in slum communities. CEMESP collaborated with Community Based Enterprises (CBEs), Community Leaderships, Secondary Schools, and the City Corporations (MCC and PCC) to conduct clean-up campaigns and awareness in urban slum communities. These activities did not only increase public awareness on environmental waste management, it also improved city ordinance through community outreach. The project also trained journalists to develop investigative reports on climate resilience and waste management challenges with concrete plans to resolve those challenges in the future.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2022

- ❖ CEMESP has won a five year grant with INTERNEWS commencing in 2022 to provide capacity development support to media institutions including journalists to advocate for reforms in the media sector. The initiative is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the project titled – Liberia Media Activity (LMA). Meanwhile, our INTERNEWS Europe project (Liberia Media Initiative) continues in 2022
- ❖ We are relocating our office from Benson Street to 19th Street Sinkor. This is to move in a space large enough to accommodate our growing staff amidst many projects.
- ❖ We are looking to build a stronger network with partners in 2022 especially Media Institutions, FOI implementing bodies, the National Legislature, CSOs, and Donors. A more sustainable approach to achieving access to information and freedom of expression is through collaborative partnership with all stakeholders involved in the sector.

OUR FINANCES

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Statement of Comprehensive Income (Revenue Vs. Expenditure) in 2021

REVENUE AND EXPENSE STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2021 - DECEMBER 31, 2021

	REVENUE SOURCES (GRANTS/ DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS)	AMOUNT (USD)
100	Brought forward/B/F	\$ 1,895.00
105	IFEX-International Freedom of Expression Exchange	\$ 19,975.00
106	Internews Liberia-USAID	\$ 11,400.00
109	BRITISH EMBASSY	\$ 14,125.00
110	Africa Freedom of Information Centre-AFIC	\$ 12,509.00
111	Cities Alliance/UNOPS	\$ 82,490.00
112	Non-State Actor Secretariat/MoFDP	\$ 12,000.00
113	MFWA	\$ 9,336.00
114	Internews Liberia-Europe	\$ 56,822.40
115	HIVOS	\$ 9,736.00
120	Other Income	\$ 7,708.00
	TOTAL REVENUE (GRANTS/DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS)	\$ 237,996.40
	LESS EXPENSES:	
200-0	PROJECT/PROGRAM COST	
200-1	Catering-Workshop meal and dinner	\$ 27,235.00
200-2	Stakeholder/Community forum	\$ 10,880.00
200-3	Transportation/travel/vehicle Rental	\$ 28,660.00
200-4	Fuel/Gasoline	\$ 2,580.00
200-5	Lodging/ Accommodation	\$ 14,344.00
200-6	Hall Rental	\$ 10,825.00
200-7	Stationery/Materials (Workshop)	\$ 8,215.00
200-8	Printing/Production	\$ 14,535.00
200-9	Field Assessments	\$ 1,600.00
200-10	Professional Services/Consultancy/Facilitators	\$ 14,803.00
200-11	Planning meeting	\$ 3,675.00
200-12	Project follow up/monitoring	\$ 1,860.00
200-13	Radio, Television program & Talk shows	\$ 26,550.00
200-14	Newspapers publication/supplements	\$ 2,625.00
200-15	Communication	\$ 1,118.00
200-16	Newspaper supplies	\$ 510.00
200-17	Water	\$ 325.00
200-18	Other Direct Cost	\$ 2,800.00
	Total Project/program Cost	\$ 173,140.00
300-0	EQUIPMENT	

300-1	Equipment-Computers, Printers, Projector, etc	\$ 10,036.00
	Total equipment cost	\$ 10,036.00
400	PERSONNEL COST	
400-1	Staff salaries	\$ 30,780.00
	Total Personnel Cost	\$ 30,780.00
500-0	ADMINISTRATIVE COST	
500-1	Office Space (Rent)	\$ 4,800.00
500-2	Communication & Postage	\$ 1,810.00
500-3	Stationery and supplies	\$ 2,240.00
500-4	Internet Subscription	\$ 1,325.00
500-5	Repair & Maintenance (Equipment)	\$ 2,540.00
500-6	Fuel/Gasoline & Lubricants	\$ 2,210.00
500-7	Publication of Annual Report	\$ 840.00
500-8	Utilities (Water & electricity)	\$ 1,250.00
500-9	Furniture & Fixtures	\$ 875.00
500-10	Taxes	\$ 1,870.00
500-11	Office security Guard	\$ 1,200.00
500-12	Bank Charges	\$ 1,675.00
	Total Administrative Cost	\$ 22,635.00
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$ 236,591.00
	TOTAL BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD	\$ 1,405.40

Note: This Income and Expenditure Statement covers the period January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021

PHOTOGRAPHS



CEMESP ED remarked at one of the FOI fellows training workshop



Cross section of Public Information Officers of Gov't Institutions at one of CEMESP & IIC Freedom of Information trainings in Monrovia



CEMESP along with Pipeline community volunteers Dispose of waste during the Resilient Solid Waste Management Project

OUR PARTNERS



Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

UNDEF

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