

LUNAR's GOOD GOVERNANCE  
& EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE  
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Introduction

For decades, Liberians in the United States, like most other immigrants, have endeavored to stay close to their roots. They've done so, among other things, by organizing and joining organizations that focus almost exclusively on issues related to Liberians and Liberia. In the seventies those organizations were few and were concentrated by and large on the East Coast of the United States. In recent times, particularly during the last decade and a half, however, Liberian organizations have mushroomed across the United States and can now be found virtually in every state. The numerical growth of these organizations was matched by their diversity. Today, active Liberian organizations in the United States include county organizations, district organizations, sectional (tribal) organizations, alumni associations, and Liberian community organizations. Some Liberian professional groups have also begun to organize. Recently, for example, the Liberian Engineers were formally organized and held their first convention in 2008.

Some of these organizations provide very valuable opportunities for group endeavors that benefit not just the organizations' USA members, but also their compatriots back home in Liberia and Liberia in general. These organizations also provide a platform from which their members can contribute to various dialogues back home in Liberia as well as become active participants in the socio-economic and political development of their country. The Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA), for example, was very vocal about injustices in Liberia during the 1970s and championed the cause of ending the Liberian civil war during the 1990s. Many of these organizations, particularly the county organizations, became the life lines for many Liberians back home during the civil war, and some, especially the alumni associations, are now actively involved in the reconstruction of Liberia.

Despite the successes of some organizations, in general most keen observers of Liberian organizations in the United States agree that these organizations are underperforming, to put it mildly. Disputes abound; elections are almost always acrimonious and divisive; meetings, often time long and winding, many times focus on issues peripheral to the real goals of the organizations; and allegations of mismanagement, lack of transparency, and bad governance are rampant. As a result, instead of investing the lion's share of the organizations' meager resources of money and time to further the goals of the organizations and aspirations of their members, the resources are often spent on resolving unabated conflicts. This state of affairs not only makes these organizations unattractive for external support which is crucial to their success, but even prevents them from mobilizing significant financial resources from their frustrated memberships. But

perhaps more importantly, the underperformance of these organizations, and perhaps other Diaspora Liberian organizations, particularly as it relates to governance, has serious negative implications for the creation of the new Liberia for which most of these organizations advocate.

Liberians in the United States without exception desire to see their organizations move from the current state of perpetual conflict and suspicion to where they (the organizations) can begin focusing on the real problems of their members and raising up future leaders of Liberia for whom good governance is first nature. It is in furtherance of this desire that the current conference on governance is being organized. The **Good Governance & Effective Leadership Sustainability Conference** is being organized by LUNAR as a collaborative effort with Liberian umbrella organizations, including ULAA, COLOSUS, and County organizations, to discuss and debate the issue of good governance in Liberian organizations in the United States, with the goal of determining ways and means of actualizing good governance practices within Liberian organizations in the United States on a sustainable basis.

#### Conference Goals and Objectives.

The conference will be organized around results from a survey being conducted by LUNAR. The survey (see attached) is targeting various Liberian organizations (local, regional, alumni associations, ethnic, etc.) and their members. Results of the survey will be used to firstly identify major issues which negatively impact good governance in Liberian organizations operating in the United States, and secondly assist conference delegates to build consensus on sustainable means of dealing with these conflict issues as a way of promoting good governance. The goals and objectives of the conference are summarized as follows:

1. To identify challenges to actualizing good governance practices on a sustainable basis in Liberian organizations in the United States
2. To discuss good governance “best practices”
3. To build consensus on solutions for resolving good governance issues in Liberian organizations in the United States

#### Who is Being Invited:

The LUNAR **Good Governance and Effective Leadership Conference** is an invitation-only event. The conference is being planned for senior and top management as well as chairmen of board of directors, policy makers, and professionals involved in governance issues within Liberian organizations in the United States. The conference will offer an excellent opportunity to candidly and objectively discuss the issue of good governance by people who have firsthand experience with this issue.

### Conference Structure

The conference will feature a keynote speaker who will set the tune for the deliberations, drawing heavily from results of the LUNAR survey. The rest of the conference will be organized around focus groups. The number of focus groups will depend on the number of participants but will be at least two. Each group will be given a set of issues arising from the LUNAR survey to brainstorm/strategize about. Each group will then report to plenary their conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations will be discussed by plenary and agreed-upon recommendations made part of the conference document. The final conference document, “**Good Governance Sustainability Protocol**”, will consist of a summary of challenges to actualizing good governance practices within Liberian organizations in the United States, specific actions which have been agreed upon and to which each delegate/participating organization will commit to promoting good governance, and agreed upon means for assessing progress.

### Conference Financing

The conference will be financed by LUNAR but each participating organization will be requested to make a contribution as a way of taking ownership of the conference and the ultimate success of the outcome. The funding details will be discussed and agreed with participating organizations. These organizations will also be given an opportunity to contribute to the final format and content of the conference as part of the final planning process.

### Conference Time and Venue

The **Good Governance and Effective Leadership Conference** is being planned for August 1, 2009 in the City of Chicago, Illinois. The venue of the event in Chicago as well as the conference program will be made available at a later date.

### About LUNAR, the Conference Organizer

Liberians United for National Reforms (LUNAR) is a non-partisan, political empowerment organization whose mission is to encourage and support the development of democratic institutions and values in Liberia, as well as promote checks and balances in government, the rule of law, and respect for civil liberties in Liberia. The organization is registered as a non-profit in the State of Maryland, USA and an NGO in Liberia. Please see the enclosed brochure for information about LUNAR. For more details, please visit us at [www.nationalreforms.com](http://www.nationalreforms.com)