



## Johnsonville Township Commissioner Embraces Land Conference



Commissioner Bettie speaking at the one-day Johnsonville Land Conference.

Highlights of the conference included remarks from the Director General of Center for National Documents and Records Agency (CNDRA), Hon. P. Bloh Sayeh; Atty J. Adams Manobah, LLA Commissioner for Policy and Planning; and Executive Director Stanley Toe, with the LLA; and Amy Bruins, Acting Chief of Party, LGSA. The officials expressed their firm commitment to ensuring that the government's land reform agenda for peace, security, and economic development is enhanced through public participation and adherence to the process.

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Land continues to be a big issue in many parts of Montserrado County, particularly in the Johnsonville area. There have been numerous cases of people wrongly occupying land, fighting over land ownership, and double sales of land and encroachments. These disputes in many instances have led to major injuries and in some cases, the loss of lives.

The Township Commissioner of Johnsonville, Hon. Melvin Bettie, expressed frustration in how much of his professional time is occupied by mitigating land cases. According to Hon. Bettie, "Over sixty percent of our time in this office is devoted to land cases that come here. Every day people are fighting for land when they shouldn't be. We have been trying hard to see how we can put systems in place to just end all the noise over land because it is painting our township in a truly ugly way."

In response to many of the issues that Johnsonville continues to suffer over land, in early August, 2017, the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) and its partner, USAID's Land Governance Support Activity (LGSA), hosted a one-day Land Conference in Johnsonville. The event brought over 135 land stakeholders in the township of Johnsonville, including local government officials, land administrators, land owners and dealers, women and youth representatives, community leaders, and residents as well as the media.

Commissioner Bettie expressed his joy during the conference. "This gathering alone is a great success, and I am very happy and thankful to the LLA and LGSA for prioritizing my township, Johnsonville. To even get all the stakeholders together has been a major challenge for me as someone will always not be available when the others are ready. But today, you have succeeded and that makes me happy." Commissioner Bettie.

Hon. Bettie feels the conference was timely and very important, especially in these times, where there are so many disputes relating to land in the township, and it keeps mounting pressure on the township authority.

He praised the high level of involvement and participation on all the community's leaders, whom he said are the first point of call when there are issues in the communities.

Participants recommended several actions after the group discussions. Some of the recommendations included setting up a community land task force and opening and land deed registry at the Commissioner's Office.

The Commissioner said he is excited to work with all the local leaders in Johnsonville Township to ensure that these recommendations are met if they will solve the land issues the township is facing.