

UL, LISGIS Launched for the First Time Bachelor of Science Degree in Statistics

The Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and the State-run University of Liberia (UL) on Thursday, March 11, launched for the first time in Liberia a Bachelor of Science Degree in Statistics at the University of Liberia.

The Statistical program at the University of Liberia is supported by the World Bank under the Harmonizing and Improving Statistics in West Africa Project (HISWA).

Speaking at the UL's Launch, LISGIS Director-General Prof. Francis F. Wreh lauds the University of Liberia for the partnership to establish for the first time an undergraduate degree in Statistics.

Prof. Wreh said, under the HISWA project, capacity building is a major component to the development of Liberia.

He added that for this reason, the University of Liberia, which is a state-owned university, has been identified to spearhead the component.

"The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University of Liberia and the Liberia Institute of

Statistics and Geo-Information Services signaled the beginning of the partnership, he said.

Within the partnership, both institutions are expected to work together to build the capacity of the National Statistical System (NSS) of Liberia, the LISGIS boss stated.

LISGIS DG said there has been the quest for a degree in Statistics since the establishment of the University of Liberia, first as Liberia College in 1862 and then as a full-fledged University in the 1950s.

“The collection, analysis, dissemination, and integration of adequate statistical data for development are one of the age-old problems in Liberia,” Prof. Wreh stated.

The LISGIS Director-General says prior to and after the civil war in Liberia (1989-2003), the issue of statistics in the country has been of concern to the Government, the development partners including the International Community. He added that very limited and scanty data were being generated to create room for planning and policymaking.

“Liberia had independence in 1847 but its first national census was held in 1962 (115 years), after which censuses and surveys have been held at irregular intervals,” he said.

Prof. Wreh added: "There was no statistical training institution until the certificate in statistics (CEST) program was established

in 1980; a statistical act establishing the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) was lately legislated in 2004; the establishment of an undergraduate degree program is happening now in 2021.”

Also speaking at the launch, the coordinator for the HISWA PROJECT –LIBRRIA, Mrs. Joyce Nyenpan Ngafuan disclosed that the Harmonizing and Improving Statistics in West Africa Project is a World Bank funded project that has been rolled out in six (6) other countries in the ECOWAS region. In Liberia, HISWA is being carried out within the framework of the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS II) which was formulated by LISGIS with the support of development partners covering the period from 2017-2021. Still elaborating on the NSDS II, Mrs. Ngafuan said, the NSDS II is a continuation of the NSDS I, which run from 2008-2012. She further stated that the overriding objective of the NSDS I was to rebuild statistical capacity and strengthen coordination across the agencies responsible for collecting data. Considering the importance of statistics to national decision making and due to limited budgetary allocation to conduct relevant statistical studies , the regional statistics project endeavors to bridge this data gap by providing funds for the conduct of routine surveys and censuses to produce timely indicators and to strengthen the capacity of the National Statistical System through the establishment of a Statistical Degree Program.

Also speaking, the president of the University, Dr. Julius Jolokon Sarwolo Nelson Jr. praised LISGIS for partnering with the University of Liberia to develop a program that will seek the need for the development gap that will contribute to the forward march of Liberia.

“Today, LISGIS and the University of Liberia are launching this bachelor in Statistics is the fruits of this renewed partnership as we go forward to the future,” Dr. Nelson said.

The UL President also called on recent graduates and also individuals wanting to attend the university to explore the area of Statistics to help fill the gaps for population data collection that will contribute to decision-making in Liberia.

Adding up, the Chairman of the Mathematics Department at the University of Liberia Mr. Michael Gboneh said the country is confronted with immense human resources capacity gaps especially in mathematics and other mathematics-related fields as such the study of statistics is essential.

“The purpose of the programs is to train students and researchers to carry out evidence-based research on extensive observations and experiment; collection and analysis of data in laboratories and social, economic, and public systems and organizations and to derive inferences about the behavior of such systems,” Gboneh said.

According to Gboneh, before a student can obtain a degree in Statistics, one must have completed 18 credits of General Education Courses, nine credits of Elective Courses, 82 Major Compulsory Courses and 18 Mathematics Courses totaling 127 credits hours.

“The program will offer up to at least 20 scholarships at the Master's and PhDs' level. A modern computer lab fully air-cooled with 76 desktop and internet will be established to enable students to analyze data, build models, develop software and perform other computing processes,” Gboneh said.

Also, for her part, Naomi Flomo, the only female student studying Mathematics at the University of Liberia said while in High School, she desired to pursue an undergraduate degree in statistics but was disappointed that the program was not offered by the University of Liberia and other universities in and around the country.

That plan later on, changed and she took an alternative by pursuing a degree in General Mathematics at the University of Liberia. She added that Mathematics is the mother of statistics.

Flomo added: “My advent to this program has now brought closure to my longing for a degree in statistics.”

She said one cannot solve problems in politics, agriculture, Economic, Engineering, Business, and Health without the use of statistics.

“This program is a dream that comes through for many students at the University of Liberia,” student Flomo said.