

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Conference 2013



H.E. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf addresses MSME conference participants
Photo Credit: MoCI

Theme: “From Vision to Implementation Together: Buying Liberian, Building Liberia”

“I am proud to open Liberia’s first Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) conference. Wherever you look in Liberia, commerce and MSME are at the heart of our country’s private sector. They make a significant, but often unaccounted for contribution to our economy: Local traders ensure that daily essentials are available, even in the most remote part of River Gee; local welding shops create jobs and provide training; and women enterprises generate economic opportunities for themselves, their families, and their local communities through catering, textiles and handicrafts.

I believe that MSMEs can be the vehicle to ensure that jobs, income and development are spread throughout the country, but they must be supported and strengthened, and support to them must be coordinated”

The First ever National Conference on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) was held in Monrovia from April 24th–26th, 2013 under the theme: From Vision to Implementation: Buying Liberian, Building Liberia.

The Conference and Trade Fair was organized and hosted by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry with support from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), USAID Liberia, Building Markets, SIDA, Business Startup Center (BSC) Monrovia, Liberia Better Business Forum (LBBF), The Market Place and Lonestar Cell MTN.

More than 800 attendees including participants, speakers, moderators and small businesses attended the three days conference from various national and international public and private institutions and small businesses from across the country:

In a brief remark, the President of Liberia, H.E. Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf stressed Government's continuous commitment to the growth of the MSME sector and made three pronouncements in support to small businesses within the country:

1. **The Liberia Innovation Fund for Entrepreneurship (LIFE) initiative**, that will be managed by the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI), is intended to benefit small businesses that demonstrate the ability to innovate primarily in the sixteen (16) sectors designated by the investment code for Liberian business to 'have long term competitive investment to improve their access to finance.
2. **One-time waiver of Tax Clearance** Procedure for the fiscal year to enable small businesses to get goods and services without showing the Tax Clearance.
3. **Compiling of MSME Directory** for qualified MSMEs to be shared with all cabinet members with core directives to ensure that government exercises their commitment of the 25% procurement of goods and services from Liberian owned businesses.

Winners of this year awards were **Ms. Geneva Garr** for the **Most Responsive to Customers Award**; **Ms. Angie Meekie Howard** for the **Most Growth Potential Award**; **Ms. Elfreda Mason** for the **Most Exhibit Award** and the **Most Innovative MSME Award** going to the only male of the night, **Mr. Dwalu Z. Norris**.

The objective of the National MSME Conference and Trade Fairs was to highlight challenges faced by local small businesses while showcasing their potential to supply the market with some necessary made-in-Liberia products and services.