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Liberia: Visiting I-help Liberia/LIMANY Science delegation inspires students at UMU, UL and WIS with local materials for experiments

Jun 15, 2009

by Michael Kpayili / Staff Writer



Dr. Adam Cohen works with the Liberian Women In Science and Technology The I-Help Liberia Science delegation visiting Liberia on Friday and Saturday extended their lecture session at several institutions and organization in Monrovia with practical explanation and physical test displayed before students and teachers attending the session.

On Friday June 12 the visiting Science delegation demonstrated amazing fact to the Liberian Women in Science and Technology at the Ministry of Education. Also participating in the kitchen science experiment were Hester Williams-Catakaw, Deputy Minister for Instruction, and Theophilus Ndorbor, Acting Director for Science.

Here are excerpts of the lecture series at the Ministry of Education by the visiting science delegation, Dr. Adam Cohen and Ben Rapoport: "We have found that Liberian students and teachers often feel that the science education in this country is limited by lack of availability of high-tech equipment, so we demonstrated a way of extracting DNA, the genetic material of life, using only equipment commonly found in the kitchen: A fruit, soap, salt, and rubbing alcohol. DNA extraction is a procedure performed in biotechnology laboratories all over the world."

The team later visited the United Methodist University and met with the Coordinator of the Department of Science education Mrs. Etonia Davis and Science students at the University where the two institutions discussed issues relating to Science education.

After the meeting with students and teachers at the United Methodist University, the team went to the market and showed Sam, a vendor selling limes, how to turn his limes into batteries. These lime-batteries aren't strong enough to power your mobile phone or your flashlight, but they operate on the same principle as a commercial battery. Thus the lime batteries are a useful teaching aid. Sam then showed the lime

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batteries to other vendors. It makes the visiting Science delegation very happy to see the knowledge they brought spreading throughout the Liberian population.

"You can construct a battery from a lime yourself (many other fruits and vegetables can be used as well). Just take a lime, insert a nail in one part of the lime and a piece of copper wire in another part of the lime. There are many ways to demonstrate that the lime battery generates a small amount of current. One way is simply to touch both pieces of metal to your tongue at the same time. If you do, you will feel a gentle shock as the small current flows through your tongue. (It is important to remember that when you finish this experiment, you should not eat the lime.)"

On Saturday, the I-Help Science delegation visited the Fendall Campus of the University of Liberia. They met with Dr. Korli Korheina, Dean of Science at the T. J. R. Faulkner College of Science and Technology at the University of Liberia and were joined by Theophilus Ndorbor, Acting Director of Science. Together they discussed several strategies for developing science research programs for Liberian students and teachers, and for encouraging American scientists to visit Liberia to train science teachers and perform their own research in Liberia in collaboration with Liberian scientists. They also met with members of the Departments of Chemistry, Electrical Engineering, Mathematics, and Biology, and with students from all of those departments.

The team later spent the afternoon with a group of Chemistry students discussing initiatives they could take to improve their scientific educations at the University of Liberia, and to spread and elevate science education in Liberia. The students were very excited to work together, and several students volunteered to lead initiatives for mentoring primary and secondary school students interested in science, as well as to lobby University of Liberia alumni to contribute to science education at the University through financial contributions as well as through job and internship opportunities.

The two Harvard trained Science Experts were able to teach teachers and students how to do DNA extraction with the group Women in Science and Technology at the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Adam Cohen and Mr. Benjamin Rapoport are currently in Liberia as guests of the iHelp Liberia Project and the Liberian Mandingo Association in New York (LIMANY) to conduct series of Science lectures to teachers and Students within the Liberian School System with the hope of building their interests in the areas of Science. Their mission to Liberia was based on inspiration given them by their former High School Science Teacher Mr. Asumana Jabateh Randolph.

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Dr. Adam Cohen works with the Liberian Women In Science and Technology



Dr. Adam Cohen and Mr. Benjamin Rapoport of Harvard meet University of Liberia Dean of Science, Dean Korheina at the Fendall Campus.



Dr. Adam Cohen discusses science with the Dean of Science at United Methodist University, Dean Davis

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