

Consolidated Legislative Report 2015



Promoting Legislative Accountability and Responsiveness

1. Executive summary

This consolidated report represents twelve months of monitoring and data collection on the performance of members of the Liberian legislature as well as the functioning of the legislature. The report is a continuation of the Institute's initiative at promoting political accountability and increased citizens' oversight in Liberia nascent democracy. Launched in 2006 with initial funding from the National Endowment for Democracy, the legislative monitoring project has stimulated profound public interest – serving as an important tool for citizen's evaluation of the performance of the legislature as an institution and its members. In the last years, the report deliberately emphasized lawmaking and representation function of members of the legislature with ultimate objective to document attendance and the extent to which legislators advocate for their constituents. In this edition, the report largely focused on the oversight duties and functions of members and the legislature as an institution overseeing and authorizing the appropriation of state resources for public goods. The report documented the legislature's committee systems, committees' structural composition and examines the extent of committees' effectiveness. Key findings during the period are as follow:

- The legislature has been weak in the exercise of its statutory mandate in compelling Government Agencies and Ministries to submit Quarterly and Annual Budgetary performance reports on a regular basis. Noticeably, the exercise of this function has been marred by sporadic tendencies without any evidence of pursuing this valuable function as a matter of legislative responsibility.
- Legislative committees are structurally weak, opaque, lack organizational disposition and allow personal political and economic interest to supersede duty and responsibility to country. This is manifested in the manner in which the legislature makes self-serving budgetary appropriations. For example a Ministry of Finance and Development Planning proposal to earmark \$3 million for staffers capacity building was rejected by legislators and the appropriation was rather requested to be allocated towards legislators' personal "capacity allowance" (USAID Evaluation Report, 2014). In FY2012/13, an allocation approved from \$20.5 to \$34 million in the name of reform was rather converted for legislators' personal wealth leaving out purported reform to support Legislative Budget Office and Legislative Information System.
- The well-intended purpose of assessing nominees' competence, capability to serve and integrity to manage public portfolio during confirmation hearing has lost its value essence miserably. The persistence confirmation of nominees with proven lack of competence after even been rejected by a specialized committee has often beclouded the image of the Senate. For example, the Peter Kerby scenario and many others who also did not pass public and senate scrutiny but were later awarded confirmation.
- Committees systems and their manner of structural composition is driven by either partisanship, political interest and not on the basis of competence and knowledge. This has undermined the functionality and productivity of not just committees but the legislature as an institution. The weakness in the manner and form committees function is exemplified by the

lack of experience and qualifies staffs to support the work of specialized committees. The legislature successive appropriations in the last two years lack budget line to support the strengthening of committees and the development of staffers.

- The current state of corruption, waste and abuse of state resources can in large part be attributed to weak oversight over the executive by the legislature. The legislature's continuous silence or blind attention to ministries and agencies statutory responsibility to submit quarterly reports on their expenditure is tantamount to aiding and abetting the squandering of the Liberian people's money. In the year under review, only few Ministries were made to submit quarterly report.
- The legislative research and legal drafting capacity is weak. Not only is the staff deficiency in this area, the institutional facilities are lacking. The archive section is in complete disarray. For example, the legislative library is not effective and there is neither a system nor technical capacity to track bills as they move through the legislative processes.
- The Legislative information Services remains below standard. There are serious problems maintaining and circulating the legislative journal, which is the official record of deliberations of the institution. Since the returned and closure of the Legislature in 2015, there was no Legislative Journal publish by the Legislature (the House of Representatives and the House of Senate)
- The legislators' capacity to research and introduce people-centered bills remains a challenge. Majority of the result-oriented bills introduced at the legislature come from the executive or members of the public.
- There are limited mechanisms in the Legislative offices to ensure legislative consultation or feedback interaction with constituents. Although the Standing Rules of both Houses of the Legislature designate Fridays of each week as "constituency day" many lawmakers used these times for other activities at the expense of their constituents.
- Legislative recess periods have been grossly under-utilized. It is during these periods that legislators are expected to report back to the constituents on their previous sittings and generate their legislative agenda for the ensuing year. However, almost every lawmaker returns from recess without a single well-documented constituency-informed legislative agenda.
- Tracking a lawmaker's decision on any particular agenda item still remains a challenge as the voting machine provided them is not been utilized.
- Punctuality problem still permeates the entire legislature. Most sessions started late, at times an hour or more late. This was in violation of rule #2 of both Houses which put the starting time at 10:00am on every session day (Tuesday and Thursday).

- There is no uniform and/or predictable framework for the recruitment of legislative staffs neither is there any set policy for staff training and capacity building for legislative staffs
- There were a total of 73 plenary sessions held at both houses of the legislature. Five senators attended majority of the sessions held, they include: Sen. Francis S. Paye of Rivercess County, Albert D. Chile of Grand Kru County, Sen. Commany B. Wesseh of Rivergee County, Sen. Daniel Flomo Naatehn of Gbarpolu County and Sen. J. Milton Teahjay of Sinoe County. Conversely, . On the contrary, another set of five Senators also attended the least number of plenary sessions; those Senators include: Sen. George M. Weah of Montserrado County, Sen. Nyoblee K. Lawrence of Grand Bassa County, Sen. Henry W. Yallah of Bong County, Sen. Joseph N/ Nagbe of Sinoe County and Edward B. Dagoseh of Grand Cape Mount County.
- Similarly five members of the House of Representatives attended majority of the sessions held. Those Representatives include: Hon. Maryland M. Karwor of Grand Bassa County, Hon. Garrison Yealue of Nimba County, Hon. Robertson N. Siaway of Grand Bassa County, Hon. Ben A. Fofana of Margibi County, and Hon. Alfred G. Jaweh of Rivercess County. While a similar five members got the lowest in plenary attendance; they are: Hon. Tokpah J. Mulbah of Bong county, Hon. Emmanuel J. Nuquay of MargibiCounty, Hon. Saah H. Joseph of Montserrado County, Hon. Eugene F. Kparkar of Lofa County and Hon. Isaac B. Roland of Maryland County.
- Five Senators got the highest in plenary participation; those Senators include: Sen. J. Milton Teahjay of Sinoe County, Sen. Alphonso G. Gaye of Grand Gedeh County, Peter S. Coleman of Grand Kru County, Albert T. Chile of Grand Kru County and Sen. Francis S. Paye of Rivercess County. At the House of Representatives, there were five Representatives who got the highest in plenary participation; those Representatives include: Hon. Larry P. Younquoi of Nimba County, Hon. Thomas Fallah of Montserrado County, Hon. Gabriel B. Smith of Grand Bassa County, Hon. Bhofal Chambers of Maryland County and Hon. Garrison Yealue of Nimba County.
 - On the contrary, there were five Senators who got the lowest in plenary Participation; those Senators include: Sen. George M. Weah of Montserrado County, Sen. Jim W. Tornlah of Margibi County, Prince Y. Johnson of Nimba County, Sen. Henry W. Yallah of Bong County and Sen. Sando D. Johnson of Bomi County. At the House of Representatives, another five Representatives got the lowest/worst in plenary participation; those Representatives include: Hon. Tokpah J. Mulbah of Bong, Hon. Adam B. Corneh of Bong County, Hon. Roberson N. Siaway of Gran Cape Mount County, Hon. Alfred Juweh and Hon. Roland Opee Cooper.
- There were a total of four hundred and nine (409) communications recorded at the Legislature (the House of Senate and the House of Representatives) and other actors outside of the legislature during the year under-reviewed.

- There were 409 communications during the period and of this number, 279 or 68.2% came from the House of Representatives and 130 or 31.78% came from the House of Senate. Of the 279 came from the House of Representatives, 24 of the 279 came from the President of Liberia while 13 of the 279 came from the House of Senate and 42 of 279 came from the Public and Government Ministries & agencies. Of the 130 communications that came from the Senate, 24 came from the President of Liberia while 10 came from the House of Representatives and 6 came from the Public and Government agencies

II. Background

In January 2015, IREDD received renewed support from the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in continuation of its legislative performance assessment project which aimed at promoting greater legislative openness, transparency and accountability through its Legislative Monitoring Project. Over the past nine years through this project, IREDD has made significant contributions by enabling citizens’ to gain access to data on the performance of their political representatives in the legislature, promote citizens’ oversight and helped electorates make informed choices in electing their representatives. From a mere legislative monitoring project that reports on presence and absence of legislators at plenary sessions in the last nine years, it has now been elevated to a top-notch flagship project that combines ICT innovations and traditional information dissemination methods thus creates the platform for real-time access to “Eveready” legislative information, instructive oversight atmosphere for citizens’ over their representatives while serving as a vehicle for legislative openness and political accountability.

Overall, the objective of the project is to promote transparent and effective legislative committee processes in ways that make the legislature accountable and efficient in performing their lawmaking, representation and oversight responsibilities. With this broad objective in mind, the project specifically seeks the following objectives: promote legislative openness, responsiveness, and accountability by individual members of the legislature and as an institution; 2) create the platform for citizens to gain access to real time performance data on their representatives; 3) stimulate wider civic consciousness and responsibility among the citizenry to actively participate in democratic dialogue and discussion with their legislators; and 4) monitor, collect data and publicize the performance of members of the legislature to enhance openness and political accountability

During the period under reviewed, IREDD monitors tracked and documented activities leading to the resumption of the 53rd legislature amid Liberia’s deadly Ebola shock, the reconfiguration of the leadership of chambers, plenary sessions and committees’ activities. This report largely focused on the oversight duties and functions of members and the legislature as an institution overseeing and authorizing the appropriation of state resources for public goods. The report documented the legislature’s committee systems, committees’ structural composition and examines the extent of committees’ effectiveness.

Methodology

The data collection approach entails assigning four monitors at the Legislature with two assigned at each Chamber of the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate. IREDD Monitors attend regular session with Legislators on Tuesdays and Thursdays and compare data with clerical staffers of the offices of the Chief Clerk and the Secretary of the Liberian Senate.

The report card also took note on the oversight responsibilities of each lawmaker, taking into consideration the number of letters written to request explanation on budgetary allocation from government ministries and agencies. The report card further conducted detailed assessment on the performance of lawmaker by combining their three primary and fundamental functions.

The data contained in this report card are divided under three separate but coordinate segments—Representation, Lawmaking and Oversight. Under the columns of representation, the report card deals with each lawmaker, county/district, attendance in plenary sessions, with specifics on the number of time each lawmaker was present, absent, excused, late, sick and distant, participation in plenary debates, as well as those lawmakers that left session before the close of plenary. The column of lawmaking deals with bills sponsored by individual lawmaker, bill introduced, votes on specific bills, and other relevant issues that required legislative enactment.

Limitation

While IREDD is committed to producing an objective, transparent, and non-partisan evaluation of legislative performance, the Report unfortunately could not capture every aspect of lawmaker's performances. Readers should beware this limitation while assessing the report.

First, because IREDD strives to remain an objective observer of the legislature's activities, none of the measures in the Report assesses the relevance or quality of contributions made by lawmakers. Bills sponsored, Committee reports and all other indicators are based on the quantity of contributions made by those lawmakers and not necessarily quality or relevance. Failing to maintain this impartiality would make it impossible to produce a purely objective evaluation. Similarly, our measures do not reward or penalize the particular positions lawmakers take on any issue. We do not assign a grade for these positions or claim that either perspective is superior or inferior.

Second, there are areas in which the data available to use are incomplete, making it difficult to produce a comprehensive report. First, some of Legislature's work is not captured in official records. Lawmakers' effort to lobby for ministries or promote local development projects is also often informal and unverifiable. Even votes in plenary sessions go unrecorded at the House of Representatives, the fulfillment of a section in the budget law that calls for Ministries and Agencies to make quarterly report on allocation received is not working and the archives of committee reports with signatures are poorly maintained and disseminated. In all of these areas, improved records would help us make our measures more precise.

In addition, some session is well documented but is conducted behind closed doors, and thus the public, including IREDD research team, has got no access to such records. This situation is serious for the Senate which is quick in calling for secret session to take crucial votes on critical national issues. We could not determine, for example, which lawmaker first raised an issue in a party caucus meeting since parties' caucus is secret. We were therefore unable to include participation and influence at these conferences in this report.

The constitutional requirements of certain lawmakers, such as the President Pro-tempore, Speaker and Deputy Speaker, make them inherently incomparable to other lawmakers and prevent them from participating in the daily debate and fulfilling other duties that all lawmakers normally perform. The unique circumstances of individual lawmaker are infinitely varied and may affect their performance in any number of ways. For example, others may take advantage of worthy opportunities to travel or otherwise work on behalf of their constituents at the cost of committee or plenary sessions. In each of these cases, we have attempted to collect data that would allow us to take these differences into account. In some cases, though this is simply not possible, as data are not available (excused absence lists, for example).

The Report should not be taken in isolation, nor interpreted as encouragement to support or criticize any particular Lawmaker rather for what it is accurate and objective information on many of the activities that lawmakers perform on behalf of their constituents, and indeed of all Liberians.

Data presentation and analysis

■ Representation

Plenary attendance

- Plenary attendance has improved at the Legislature. There were three (73) sessions held during the period under reviewed, with seventeen (17) Senators attending majority of the sessions. However, five senators recorded the highest attendance marks during the period. They are: Francis S. Paye of Rivercess County, Albert D. Chile of Grand Kru County, Commany B. Wesseh of Rivergee County, Daniel Flomo Naatehn of Gbarpolu County and J. Milton Teahjay of Sinoe County.
- Similarly, five members of the House of Representatives recorded the highest attendance marks during the period; they include: Hon. Maryland M. Karwor of Grand Bassa County, Hon. Garrison Yealue of Nimba County, Hon. Robertson N. Siaway of Grand Bassa County, Hon. Ben A. Fofana of Margibi County, and Hon. Alfred G. Juweh of Rivercess County.
- Conversely, five Senators got the lowest in plenary attendance at the Liberian Senate; they include: George M. Weah of Montserrado County, Nyoblee K. Lawrence of Grand Bassa

County, Henry W. Yallah of Bong County, Joseph N. Nagbe of Sinoe County and Edward B. Dagoseh of Grand Cape Mount County.

- At the House of Representatives, there were five Representatives who got the lowest in plenary attendance; they include: Hon. Tokpah J. Mulbah of Bong county, Hon. Emmanuel J. Nuquay of Margibi County, Hon. Saah H. Joseph of Montserrado County, Hon. Eugene F. Kparkar of Lofa County and Hon. Isaac B. Roland of Maryland County.

Absent

Absent is the Legislative aspect where Legislator does not attend plenary session without an official communication to plenary stating his or her reason of therefor. **There** were four Senators who got the highest in Plenary absent, they include: Jewel H. Taylor of Bong County, Henry Yallah of Bong County, Nyonblee K. Lawrence of Grand Bassa County and Prince Y. Johnson of Nimba County. At the House of Representatives, three members got the highest Absent: They include: Hon. Tokpah J. Mulbah of Bong County, Hon. Emmanuel Nuquay of Margibi County and Hon. Saah Joseph of Montserrado County.

Distant

Distant is a situation where a legislator travels to his or her Constituency to participate in constituency meeting/ Dialogue or has traveled on an official legislative duty, for example; ECOWAS Parliament Meeting and African Union Parliamentary meetings. Sen. George M. Weah of Montserrado County got the highest distant time at the Senate. Sen. Weah and Sen. Johnson are senators that represent the Liberian Senate at the ECOWAS Parliament. At the House of Representatives: Hon. Hon. Malai G. Gbogar of Gbarpolu County, Hon. Jeremiah Koug of Nimba County and Hon. Mariemu B. Fofana of Lofa County Got the Highest in plenary distant times.

Excuse/Sick

Excuse is a process where a legislator officially writes plenary indicating reason of his or her absent during plenary session. There were three (3) Senators who got the highest absent times at the Liberian Senate; they include: Armah Z. Jallah of Gbarpolu County, Edward B. Dagoseh of Grand Cape Mount County and A. Marshall Dennis of Grand Gedeh County. At the House of Representatives, two Representatives got the highest excuse times: They include: Hon. Charles K. Bardly of Rivergee County and Hon. Samuel G. Woleh of Nimba County.

Sen. Joseph N. Nagbe of Sinoe County recorded the highest sick excuse time. Senator Nagbe officially wrote the Liberian Senate plenary indicating his poor health condition and asking plenary to grant him excuse to seek advance medication in the United States of America. Copy of the Communication was also sent to IREDD.

Plenary Participation

Plenary debate or participation is a legislative process where legislators have the opportunity to articulate the views and aspirations of their constituency and proffer concrete issues and recommendations to plenary for action.

- Five Senators got the highest in plenary participation; they include: J. Milton Teahjay of Sinoe County, Alphonso G. Gaye of Grand Gedeh County, Peter S. Coleman of Grand Kru County, Albert T. Chile of Grand Kru County and Francis S. Paye of Rivercess County.
- Similarly, five Representatives got the highest in plenary participation; they include: Hon. Larry P. Younquoi of Nimba County, Hon. Thomas Fallah of Montserrado County, Hon. Gabriel B. Smith of Grand Bassa County, Hon. Bhofal Chambers of Maryland County and Hon. Garrison Yealue of Nimba County.
- On the contrary, five Senators got the lowest in plenary Participation; they include: George M. Weah of Montserrado County, Jim W. Tornnlah of Margibi County, Prince Y. Johnson of Nimba County, Henry W. Yallah of Bong County and Sando D. Johnson of Bomi County.
- At the House of Representatives, five Representatives got the lowest in plenary participation; they include: Tokpah J. Mulbah of Bong, Adam B. Corneh of Bong County, Roberson N. Siaway of Gran Cape Mount County, Alfred Juweh and Roland Opee Cooper.

Lawmaking

Bill sponsored at the Legislature

- During the period under reviewed, five (5) new bills were sponsored by Sen. George T. Tengbeh of Lofa, Sen. Albert D. Chie of Grand Kru, Sen. Daniel F. Naatehn of Gbarpolu County, Sen. Armah Z. Jallah of Gbarpolu County and Sen. Jewel H. Taylor of Bong County
- At the House of Representatives, Hon. Numene T. H. Bartekwa of Grand Kru-District # 2 introduced the highest at the House of Representatives. He introduced three (3) bills
- Seventeen (17) Representatives introduced new bills during the year; they include: Hon. Johnson Chea, NDC, River Gee County, Hon. Prince O.S. Tokpah of Nimba-District, Morris Waylee-District # 2 Grand Gedeh, Numene T. H. Bartekwa of Grand Kru-District # 2 and Edward Karfiah of Bong-District # 5 Alex Grant of Grand Gedeh County, Bhafal Chambers, Henry Fahnbulleh, George Mulbah of Bong county Emmanuel Z. Pennue of Grand Gedeh County.

Bills Passed

- Twenty seven (27) new bills were passed by the the Liberian Senate during the period under review. Of the 27 bills acted on, 7 bills were passed into law, 6 was sent to the House of Representatives for Concurrence, 5 bills were concurred with from the House of Representatives and 9 bills were sent to the President for approval.

- The House of Representatives received forty two (42) bills. Of the 42 bills, 21 came from the executive branch of Government, 7 came from the Liberian Senate, and 14 came from members of the House of Representatives. There was one joint resolution passed by the Liberian Legislature.

Bills in Committee Room

- During the period under review, our research recorded a total of eighty seven Bills in committee room. Of the 87 bills in committee room, 50 or 57.47% came from the Liberian Senate and 37 or 42.52% came from the House of Representatives.

A. Petitions

There were six (6) petitions recorded during the period under review. The chart below gives a description of the petitions:

No	Name of Writer	Date Read	Nature of Communication	Status
001	District # 6, Bong County	January 27, 2015	Craving for speedy investigation with action taken in accordance with House's Standing Rules	Read and forwarded to Committees on Rules, Order and Administration, Claims and Petition and Judiciary
002	Movement for the Restoration of Accountability and Transparency in Liberia (MORAT)	February 5, 2015	Petition asking the House to revoke the existing Consultant Contract between Mr. Roland W. Morris and the Government of Liberia in order to grant relief to the Intellectual Property System	
003	Monrovia Consolidated Schools System Teachers Association	February 12, 2015		Read and forwarded to Committees on Education, Internal Affairs and Public Works
004	Battlefield	February 12, 2015		Read and

	Community #00249			forwarded to Committees on Claims & Petitions, Internal Affairs and Public Works
005	The Independent Civil Society Network of Liberia	June 2, 2015	Petition requesting the Honorable House of Representatives' consideration of its three recommendations	Read and forwarded to Committees on Claims & petition, and Ways & Means. Copies to distributed to members
006	Federation of Motorcycle Transport Union of Liberia	June 9, 2015	Petitioning the Honorable House of Representatives for national budgetary appropriation to support the newly organized federation in Liberia	Read and forwarded to Ways and Means Committee

Oversight Responsibility

The oversight power of the legislature has its foundation in article 1 of the 1986 Constitution which states: “All power is inherent in the people. All free governments are instituted by their authority and for their benefit and they have the right to alter and reform the same when their safety and happiness so require. In order to ensure democratic government which responds to the wishes of the governed, the people shall have the right at such period, and in such manner as provided for under this Constitution, to cause their public servants to leave office and to fill vacancies by regular elections and appointments¹.” The people of Liberia delegated significant portion of this power to the legislature and empowers said body to provide thorough oversight over the other two branches of government. Article 34 of the 1986 Constitution explicitly enumerates the power of the legislature in exercising its oversight role. Prominent amongst those powers are: to levy taxes, duties, imposts, excise and other revenues, to borrow money, issue currency, mint coins, and to make appropriations for the fiscal governance of the Republic, to constitute courts inferior to the Supreme Court, including circuit courts, claims courts and such other courts with such prescribed jurisdictional powers as may be deemed necessary for the proper administration of justice throughout the Republic; to approve treaties, conventions and such other international agreements negotiated or signed on behalf of the Republic; to regulate trade and commerce between Liberia and other nations amongst others. The legislature exercises its oversight through various means but particularly through the different leadership and standing

¹ See chapter 1, article one, 1986 Liberian Constitution (structure of the state)

committees. It is against this background that the Institute for Research and Democratic Development is researching and monitoring the efficiency of legislative oversight. We research and report on the following: communications from individual lawmakers specifically related to their oversight duties, committee report with signature, budget performance report from line ministries and agencies, confirmation proceedings, appearance of officials from the executive, amongst others.

Communications

Legislators, consistent with Constitutional checks and balances, have oversight over Government Ministries and agencies via legislative committees. The committees exercise their right to cross-check the performance report of those Ministries and Agencies. By this the public through their representatives are kept abreast of how funds are allocated and expended. The exercise of this legislative responsibility is often expressed by individual lawmaker's request for explanation from Ministries and Agencies on budgetary allocation they received from the national coffers and/or by writing an official communication/letter to plenary through the office of the Presiding Officer on the conduct of the management of a particular government agency.

- There were a total of four hundred and nine (409) communications recorded at the Legislature and other actors outside of the legislature during the year under reviewed.
- Of the 409 communications, 279 or 68.2% came from the House of Representatives and 130 or 31.78% came from the House of Senate. Of the 279 came from the House of Representatives, 24 of the 279 came from the President of Liberia while 13 of the 279 came from the House of Senate and 42 of 279 came from the Public and Government Ministries & agencies. Of the 130 communications that came from the Senate, 24 came from the President of Liberia while 10 came from the House of Representatives and 6 came from the Public and Government agencies
- Five lawmakers wrote the highest communications at the House of Representatives. They include: Hon Bhofal Chambers of Maryland County, Hon. Samuel G.Kogar, and Hon. Johnson T. Chea of Rivergee County. Hon. Munah P. Youngblood of Montserrado County, and Hon. Numene T. Bartekwa of Grand Kru County.
- Similarly five Senators wrote the highest communications at the Senate. They: include: Daniel Flomo Naatehn of Gbarpolu County, Geraldine D. Sherif of Montserrado County, Peter S. Coleman of Grand Kru County, Oscar Cooper of Margibi County and George Tengbeh of the ruling Unity Party, Lofa County.

Committee reports

Much of Legislature's work is conducted in committee sessions, where bills are reviewed and amended, budgetary decisions are made, and important oversight duties are performed. Legislative committees are the nerve or epic center for any workable legislature, the level of competence and loyalty brought on board by legislative committee members determines how effective a given legislature would be. The rules of both houses (Lower and upper) of the Liberian Legislature require, unless otherwise mandated by plenary, a committee which receives a bill, petition, communication or any legislative instrument to report back to plenary within two weeks upon receipt of said task. However, legislative committees at both the senate and the House of Representatives appeared to be very weak. They are not only found withholding legislative instrument for more than two weeks notwithstanding their own rules but in most cases they also allow said instruments to dust on the shelves of their various leadership and standing committees for years without any action.

This consolidated report highlights two hundred and thirty five (235) committee reports from quarterly Legislative performance assessment reports of the Legislative monitoring project during the year 2015. These reports highlighted recommendations on the confirmation of Presidential Appointees, the passage of Bills into law, committee public hearings and matters relating to legislative work. An examination Of the 235 Committee reports indicated that 120 or 51% came from the Liberian Senate, while 115 or 49% came from the House of Representatives.

The following committee reports have claimed the Institute's attention:

1. Senate joint committee on Lands, Mines, Energy, and Nature Resources & Environment report on the Liberia Electricity Act 2015 recommended that in addition to its role as the transmission system operator and the national grid company, the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) should continue to be involved in the power generation business. It further stated that from the effective date of the proposal, LEC should be considered to be automatically licensed provisionally to engage in power generation, transmission, distribution and sale of electricity. The three committees further recommended that the regulatory functions should rest with the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy (MLM&E) for a period of two years from the effective date of the law which will allow time for the European Union-sponsored capacity building project in the Department of Energy at the Ministry to be implemented. The Government of Norway, the committees disclosed, also has a capacity-building project with the MLM&E in the electricity sector, and will help to train the staff of the Liberia Electricity Regulatory Commission (LERC).
2. Report from the Senate Committees on Commerce, trade & Industry and Judiciary, Claims, Petitions & Human rights on an Act to repeal an Act adopting a new copyright law of the Republic of Liberia approved march 20, 2013 constituting title 24 to be known as the Liberia intellectual property Act 2014;

3. the House of Representatives Committee reports on Commerce, trade and Judiciary, Claims, Petitions & Human rights on An to ratify the Banjul Protocol on Marks of the African Regional Intellectual Property organization and an Act to ratify the agreement on the creation of the African Regional Intellectual Property organization, An Act to ratify the Swakomund protocol on the protection traditional Knowledge and expression of Folklore (ARIPO)

4. Report from the committee on social security, Pension and Insurance surrounding the National Social Security and Welfare evolves a Mandate from Plenary of the Liberian Senate to have its standing committee on Social Security, Pension and Insurance Probe issues surrounding the operations of the National Social Security and Welfare Corporation (NASSCORP). The findings of the committee focuses on Plans for educating employees who pay their social security fees intent of the country Ebola Crisis and what is the status of the benefits and educational programs NASSCORP has putting in place. According to the Committee report, they held meetings with NASSCORP Director General and they have been informed that there is plan for education of the Public and the issue relating to Ebola Crisis victims.

5. Report from the Committee on Lands, Mines, Energy, Nature Resources and Environment, Public Corporations and Ways, Means, Finance and Budget progress information on Legislative Hearing on NOCAL relating redundancy plan of some of its employees. According to the committee report, NOCAL has agreed to its plan and stated that it is facing huge financial difficulties and some of the Companies are pulling out of Liberia. Additionally, the committee members said, NOCAL Leadership has told them that it has huge amount of Employees, most of them not needed at this stage of the oil program; from 25 personnel in 2008 to about 188 personnel today; very huge payroll and other exorbitant employees, Board and HTC benefits and very huge corporate social responsibility (CSR) Program. The committee report was received by plenary and action was taken in executive. Report from the Committee on Foreign Affairs recommending to the Honorable House of Representatives to concur with the Liberian Senate for the ratification of “An Agreement for the Establishment of Africa Corporation” signed by all African head of States in Abuja, Nigeria. Report from the Committees on Ways, Means & Finance/Development Planning, Judiciary on “The Loan Agreements between the Republic of Liberia and the (i) Europe Investment Bank US\$ 27,300,000.00, (ii) Saudi Fund for Development US\$ 20,000,000.00, and (iii) Arab Bank for Economic US\$ 10,000,000.00” Development.

Committee Public Hearings

IREDD Research recorded nine (9) public hearings at the Legislature on the following Legislative Instrument:

1. The Liberia Immigration Service Act, 2015;
 2. The Liberia National Police Act, 2015;
 3. The Domestic Violence Act of Liberia, 2014;
 4. The Millennium Challenge Account-Liberia Draft Act
 5. Liberia electricity Act
 6. Land Act of Liberia
- The Joint Committee on Lands, Mines, Energy and Natural Resources and Judiciary, Claims, Petitions & Human rights Public hearing on a draft Land Act regarding ownership of lands in Liberia brought together various stakeholders within the land sector and civil society organizations was held at the Capitol Building Monday, August 10. The Act was submitted by the Executive to the Liberian Legislature and subsequently forwarded to the Committees of the Legislature to conduct hearing and advise the body for speedy action. The Act is aimed at addressing some of the problems that are associated with land crisis in Liberia, including land tenure, administration, and communal ownership and, among others, protected lands.

International Parliamentary Representation

- A number of senators were elected to represent the Liberian Senate at International Parliament. Those Senators include: Montserrado County Senator Amb. George Manneh Weah and Nimba County Senator Prince Y. Johnson both of whom have been elected as Liberia Special Representatives to ECOWAS Parliament. River Cess County Senator Dallas Gueh has been elected to join Bong County Senator Henry W. Yallah to represent Liberia at the Pan African Parliament.
- Also elected was Grand Bassa County Senator Jonathan L. Kaipay who joins Senator Geraldine Doe-Sheriff as Liberia Representatives at the Inter Parliamentary Union. At the House of Representatives. Those Representatives attending international Parliamentary meetings include: Hon. Haja Siryon of Bomi County and Hon. Jefferson Karmon of Sinoe County both represent the House of Representatives at the ECOWAS Parliament. Hon. Eugene F. Kparkar of Lofa County represent the House of Representatives at the African Union Parliament.

Confirmation Proceedings-Liberia Senate

In compliance with its oversight responsibility, the Senate received over 80 nominations from the president for confirmation. Our ability to track confirmation of Government Officials was hindered by secret confirmation and confirmation hearing of the nominees. IREDD makes substantive effort to obtain information on confirmation proceedings but could not obtain comprehensive information on confirmation due to the situation of secrecy at the Liberian Senate in confirming Government Officials.

National Fiscal Budget 2015-2016

The Liberian Legislature passed into law the National Budget for Fiscal Year 2015/2016 in the amount of US\$ 622,743,420 million. Both Chambers reached the decision during Wednesday, July 22, 2015 1st Special Sitting based on recommendations from the Joint Committee on Ways, Means, Finance and Development Planning and Public Accounts and Expenditure of the Honorable House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate. An initial draft budget of US\$ 604,040,520 was submitted by the Executive to Legislature on the 2 of June 2015. Following series of budget hearings on the revenue and expenditure components of the Draft Budget an additional revenue of US\$1,876,100 was realized while amount brought forward from FY 2014/2015 is US\$2, 179, 000 and total adjustment core revenue US\$ 612, 743, 420. Additional Revenue from Budget hearing A. Adjustment–Tax Revenue \$ 9,371,202 B. Adjustment-non TAX Revenue 1,247,302 C. Adjustment grant 10,000.00 Additional brought forward from FY 14/15 10,579.000 Total adjusted core Revenue 612,743,420 Contingent Revenue 10,000.000 NOWEGIAN FORESTRY GRANT 10,000.000 TOTAL Adjusted revenue for 2015/2016 622,743,420

Staff orientation

A one day orientation workshop was held on February 17, 2015 with the project’s stakeholders. The Workshop brought together the 6 Monitors assigned on the project, support staff and the clerical staffs of the legislature to review the new project, data collection methodologies and to develop indicators. Specifically, the workshop used the review from the previous project to develop data collection strategies and indicators for the new project. Lesson was shared among project stakeholders and the insight of the legislative clerical staffs was highly incredible and rewarding. The workshop was used to introduce the Institute’s new web-based application and to solicit participants’ insight towards the finalization of indicators for the tracking. The Workshop was facilitated by IREDD Executive Director Mr. Harold Aidoo and Co-Facilitated by Joseph Cheayan-Research, Legislative research supervisor. During the workshop, Legislative Monitors were taught basic techniques and strategies of engaging committee heads to enable them disclose committee meeting and venue and the specific interest of issues from the committee meeting.

Legislative Policy Dialogue

On July 8, 2015, IREDD held a one day Policy Dialogue at the Corina Hotel in Sinkor, Monrovia-Liberia. The Legislative Policy Dialogue which brought together civil society Organizations (CSOs), legislators, international Non-Government (INGO) Representatives and stakeholders was held with the objective to deepen citizens and CSOs understanding on the Liberia legislative processes and to also provide the platform that allows legislators to voice out critical issues affecting committee effectiveness and transparency at the legislature. It was also intended to narrow the gaps between CSOs and legislators relative to accessing legislative committee meetings and other critical issues of citizen’s interest. Speaking at the Dialogue was a panel of senators and representatives. Speaking on challenges facing the Liberian Legislature, Sen. Thomas Grupee of Nimba County and chairman on internal affairs highlighted key issues relating to logistical and technical problems. According to him there are twenty (26) committees

both standing and statutory in the senate. All of these committees received no funding from agencies over which they exercise oversight function. He mentioned the committee on Internal Affairs, Good Governance and Reconciliation to have adopted a work plan that among other things suppose to tour the country sorting out views of citizens for participatory legislation on matters pertinent to Liberia development agenda. Additionally, he said in **quotation** **“Committees Leadership needs to explain to citizens how bills that are passed affect them; Decentralization is a good step to good governance. However, without funding of programs that educate the citizenry on the need for their involvement in the legislative process, bills passed are subject to misunderstanding”**. The Senator further disclosed that Legislative Budget Office (LBO) which helps in analyzing budgets by coming up with a guard that aids in formulating budgets and the legal department that is also responsible in analyzing legal issues at the Legislature is understaffed and has one legal practitioner. According to him specialty and expertise are needed to handle specific tasks in overcoming those challenges facing the Legislature.

Number of legislators that spoke at the dialogue raised serious concern relating to difficulties in attending committee meetings due to the fact that one Legislator is represented on more than two committees and some committees have the same meeting time thus making it difficult to attend all at the same time.

Relative to committee effectiveness, Sen. Oscar Cooper said in quotation: **“Committee effectiveness is very essential to the functioning of the legislature. However, the lack of interest by some members who do not like the idea of being placed on particular committees makes it very difficult to reach a decision on certain matters when meetings are poorly attended”**.

The Legislators also attributed some of the challenges to lack of independence in doing its work. According to them, the lack of independence of the Legislature makes it difficult to execute their constitutional functions of representation, lawmaking and oversight. Additionally they said committees are to “exercise continuous watchfulness” over all executive and judicial activities going on in the country. But the lack of independence of committees over these matters makes it difficult for constitutional and administrative decisions to be taken as committees are unable to track expenditures by the executive in the absence of audit reports. They also point out the culture of electorates voting out sitting lawmakers for new ones is one thing that needs to be addressed so as to avoid inexperienced Legislators at the Legislature.

There also comments and remarks from special invitees including Civil Society Representatives present at the Policy Dialogue.

Challenges and Lessons

Challenges

The operational practices within the legislature grossly remain opaque despite enormous government and international partners' commitment to its Modernization Plan. Bill tracking system, information on committees' meeting and publication of committees' deliberations is characterized by non-transparent practices. As a result, access to committees' meeting schedules, minutes and bills tracking is often treated like a privilege rather than a responsibility to the public. Additionally, there is a long running problem of stationery and malfunctioning of key office equipment such as copiers and printers within the secretariat pool of both chambers of the Legislature. This has served as a constrained to obtain key legislative instruments from the legislature.

Lessons Learned

Despite these gaps, there is often some level of willingness among staffs to be noticed as contributing to the democratic growth of the legislature. Amid mix reaction from legislators in their interaction with project staffs, key clerical staffs do remain committed in helping IREDD's researchers overcome information secrecy and other acts of obstructionism. Understandably, the data collection can often be resisted by powerful politicians but there is often alternating reaction kind of reaction from legislators depending on how he or she was rated by the report. For us, this pattern of reaction signifies absolute reliability, trust and quality of the data.

Conclusion

Despite the opaque operational disposition of the Legislature particularly the work of oversight committees, the quality of engagement and cooperation established with key clerical staffs of both chambers was highly helpful in gathering this report. Lack of access to committees' minutes as well as the legislature's lack of commitment to bills tracking systems further complicates monitoring efforts and data collection. However, there remains high prospect for improved data collection environment as public awareness becomes heightened and citizens' demand for accountability continues to gain momentum with time.

The value of the report can greatly be appreciated if the report is regularly distributed to all stakeholders via communities Town Hall Meetings and Focus group discussions. The Monitoring continues to make impression at the Legislature and it is also important that citizens have access to the performance of their Legislators and understand what is taking place at the Legislature. Why it is true the media provide publicity about the report but citizens need firsthand information. Based on the monitoring, it is also important to engage Legislators to empower their staffs who are responsible for key decision making within their offices, a robust and effective Legislature depends on the strength of it workers.

We would like to re-emphasize our previous recommendation as follows:

- Lawmakers should begin to make use of or explore available opportunities for capacity building in order to help their staffers engage in research that would inform their legislative works especially on public policy formation, law research, amongst others.
- We still maintain that membership in the National Legislature should be a full time job. At the moment we have observed a number of Legislators who used their absence from plenary sessions to engage in private services of their professional careers at the expense of their legislative responsibilities and functions. Some abandoned sessions or legislative work to teach at public and private schools, while some ran their private law offices at the expense of their official functions and duties.
- The leadership of the Legislature should demand or press for efficiency and productivity from legislative committees. If possible, the leaderships of those committees, including standing Committees should be restructured to reflect the knowledgeability, effectiveness and willingness of committee members to execute their assigned task.
- The Legislature should make sure that quarterly performance reports by government ministries and agencies benefiting from national budget are produced. This is upheld by the state's budget law which is a product of the very Legislature. This will help the public cross-check the level of accountability and transparency measures used by public officials in handling taxpayers' funds.
- The Legislature should review its standing rules on secret sessions in view of making legislative deliberations, particularly the workings of Legislative Committees, more transparent and participatory. Furthermore, they should review their standing rules on attendance so as to penalize lawmakers who are in the constant habit of leaving session after roll call and those that continued to gain strength in lateness.
- Despite relative improvement in the way legislative offices cooperate with our researchers in providing needed information, we still maintain there is a need for the transformation of the legislative modernization commitment which seeks, among others things, to enhance information flow to the public by reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks.