

JANUARY-DECEMBER 2014

Consolidated Legislative Report

IREDD Consolidated Annual Report: January – December 2014

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“Promoting Legislative Accountability and Responsiveness”

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This consolidated report of the Legislative Report Card covers the period January to December, 2014 and it is sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). The Legislative Performance Monitoring Project is meant to provide Liberian citizens with accurate, objective, and comprehensive information on the performances of their elected Legislators.

The Institute for Research and Democratic Development and the NDI intend to contribute towards greater transparency and democratic accountability in Liberia. The report focuses on three areas: namely, representation, lawmaking and oversight. In these areas the Lawmakers, have traditional mandate to execute their formal responsibilities in the interest of their constituents and the country.

A. Plenary Attendance

During the period under review a total of 122 plenary sessions were held at the Legislature. The members of the House of Representatives convened all of the 122 plenary sessions while the Liberian Senate held 121 sessions.

1. Absent -Of the total of nine hundred and twenty two absences recorded at the Legislature, Members of the Senate accounted for 198 while Members of the House of Representatives accounted for 724.
2. Distant- The plenary of the Liberian senate recorded a total of 100 distant times during its 121 sittings held while the House of Representatives experienced 653 distant times.
3. Excuse- This reporting period recorded a total of 98 excuse times at the senate while the House of Representatives witnessed 254 excuse times

4. Participation -During this reporting period, there were a total of 3135 participation times in the Senate and 3416 at the House of Representatives.

B. Lawmaking

Our research recorded two hundred- forty two (242) Legislative Instruments during the period at the Legislature. One hundred and fourteen (114) Legislative instruments were recorded at the House of Representatives while one Hundred and twenty (128) eight legislative instruments were also recorded at the Liberian Senate.

1. Bills in Committee Room-IREDD research have recorded the total number of 119 Bills in Committee room at the Legislature. Of the 119 bills, 47 have been deposited at the House of Representatives and 72 at the Liberian Senate.
2. Bills passed into Law -The Institute for Research & Democratic Development (IREDD)`s research recorded the total number of one hundred nineteen (119) Bills passed into law by Legislative committees.
3. Petitions-Our Research recorded the total number of four (4) petitions from Citizens of Liberia to the House of Representatives and there was no record on petition at the Liberian Senate.
4. Resolutions - Five joint resolutions were passed into law by the 53rd Legislature.

C. Oversight Responsibility

Legislative Oversight is reflected in the following Legislative instruments:

1. Communication-There were one hundred and fifty six (156) communications recorded during the period? Of this 156 communications recorded, Seventy (70) or 44.87% came from the Liberian Senate, while eighty six or 55.12% of the 156 Communications came from the House of Representatives respectively.

2. Motions- During the data collection period, IREDD research tracked three hundred and seventy two (372) Legislative Motions from the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate. Of the 372 Motions, 217 or 72.84% came from the Liberian Senate while 155 or 41.66% came from the House of Representatives respectively.
3. Committee reports- During the reporting period, our research recorded one hundred and ninety eight (198) Legislative Committee reports from the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate. Of the 198 Committee reports, 108 or 54.54% was recorded from the Liberian Senate while 90 or 45.45% of the 198 came from the House of Representatives.

II. BACKGROUND

Liberia has made great strides in creating a political and social environment conducive to democracy in recent years, but there is still much to be done. Although the constitution of Liberia and the Access to Information Act of 2009 ensure the right of access to information and protect citizens' right to hold their government accountable, most Liberians still find it difficult to follow the activities of government. With 75% of the population illiterate, Liberia faces exclusive challenges in maintaining an informed citizenry. In order to effectively hold their leaders answerable, all Liberians rural and urban, literate and illiterate must know who their Representatives are and how well they have performed. They must know what decisions have been made on their behalf and how their tax money was spent. The Legislative Scorecard Project provides critical legislative information, thereby strengthening them to monitor their elected representatives and to make informed choices. The Scorecard is distinctive in that it offers objective, reliable, and transparent measures of how Members of Legislature perform in plenary sittings and Legislative committees, as well as in their constituencies. By disseminating accurate, objective, and comprehensive information about the Performance of each of Legislators, the Institute for research & Democratic development hopes to help further greater lucidity and ultimately create democratic accountability in Liberia.

The Performance Scorecard has been improved based on the useful feedback we received from Legislators and the public over the previous years. We have advanced the Scorecard strategies, diversified the data collected, added information on committee meetings, and other new measures, and eliminated extraneous measures. The grades contained herein do not reflect a biased agenda and no personal politics have swayed the scores assigned to individual Legislators. Indeed, the scores are based on publicly available data collected systematically over the course of the quarter and can be checked and replicated by any individual wishing to do so. The Legislative Performance Scorecard focuses on three arenas in which Legislators perform their duties as advocates for the interests of their constituents and the country: plenary sittings of Legislature, committee work, and activities in Committee rooms

Plenary Sittings: Legislators are obligated to attend plenary sittings. These meetings provide members with an opportunity to present the views of their constituents, raise new issues, and debate the challenges facing Liberia. For this reason, the Scorecard takes into account Lawmakers attendance and debate during plenary debates. It provides information on the positions they take and the topics on which they focus.

Committee Activities: Much of Legislative work is conducted in committee meetings, where bills are reviewed and amended, budgetary decisions are made, and important oversight duties are performed. An approach that focuses on what happens in plenary sittings alone runs the risk of not giving enough credit to Legislators for the activities they undertake behind the scenes. To reflect this work, the report provides information on committee meetings and reports data on the attendance and participation of Lawmakers in committee meetings. However, accessing committee meetings is a difficult situation at the Legislature; our researchers have been finding it difficult to access committee meetings. Therefore, this report contained only reports from committee made during plenary deliberation and no information on participation of lawmakers during committee meetings.

Plenary Participation: Plenary participation is one of the legislative aspects the Institute for Research & Democratic Development (IREDD) takes into account in its legislative performance assessment score card activities. Our Researchers evaluate each Legislator on his or her input as relate to plenary discussion; however, we do not evaluate the quality of the debate but take notes on the Individual Lawmaker comments on each legislative Agenda.

Communications: Communications are letters written by Individual lawmakers and are read during plenary sittings, these communications highlight critical issues relating to the country, most especially to his her district.

III. METHODOLOGY

The Method of the Report card is based on the standard legislative Report Card Methodology. IREDD's Monitors are assigned to both Houses and attend regular and special sittings with Legislators on Tuesdays and Thursdays and attend committee meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays. IREDD assigned two monitors at the House of Representatives and two at the Liberian Senate with the objective to collect accurate and creditable data during plenary deliberations. IREDD's monitors regularly visit the offices of the Secretary of the Senate and the chief Clerk of the House of Representatives to compare data on plenary attendance, participation and to obtain hard copy of Legislative Agenda including communications and committee reports. Prior to the deployment of monitors at the Legislature, IREDD developed a comprehensive data-capture form that each monitor uses to collect daily data; that the form covered all the report card developed and approved indicators.

Performance report disaggregated by Individual Legislator

The performance section summarizes the Performance of each Legislator for plenary attendance, Communications, Bill Introduced and participation. In essence, each component carries equal weight. Because this is not the only way to combine the sub-components, we encourage

constituents and Readers to examine each part of the aggregate when they assess the performance of their Legislator.

Data Limitation

While IREDD is committed to producing an objective, transparent, and nonpartisan evaluation of legislative performance, the Report Card unfortunately could not capture every relevant aspect of lawmaker's performances as far as their primary responsibilities are concerned. Readers should keep a few caveats in mind when assessing the data reported here.

First, because IREDD strives to remain an objective observer of the legislature's activities, none of the measures in the Report card assesses the relevance or quality of contributions made by lawmakers. Attendance, participation, bills sponsored 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. For example, our effort to measure constituency activities is hindered by a lack of data on offices, staff, meeting minutes, and local visits, which the Legislature does not collect. 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 work 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.

Finally, we recognize that each lawmaker's situation is different, which may make any attempt to compare the performance of all lawmakers imperfect. 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 Card should not be taken in isolation, nor interpreted as encouragement to vote for or against 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

IV. FINDINGS

A. Plenary Attendance

Rule two (2) and Rule (10) of the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate respectively mandate members of the legislature to attend regular plenary session for the conduct of daily legislative affairs. In fact the attendance of members of the Legislature is mandatory as said body cannot conduct regular plenary business and/or take any legislative decision thereof unless it has two-third of its members or quorum present in plenary (see article 33 of the 1986 Liberia Constitution).

During the period under review a total of 122 plenary sessions were held at the Legislature. . The members of the House of Representatives convened all of the 122 plenary sessions while the Liberian Senate held 121 sessions respectively.

There were five Representatives who almost attended all of the 122 session held at the House of Representatives. Those Representatives include: Hon. William Dakel of Montserrado County, Hon. Mary M. Karwor of Grand Bassa County, Hon. J. Byron Brown of Grand Bassa County, Hon. Edward Karfiah of Bong County and Hon. Stephen Kafi of Margibi County while there were five (5) Senators who also attended almost all of the 121 session held at the Liberian Senate. Those Senators include: Sen. Fredrick D. Cherue of Rivergee County, Sen. Matthew N. Jaye of Rivergee County, Sen. Henry Yallah of Bong County, Sen. Joseph Nagbe of Sinoe County, Sen. Alphonso Gaye of Grand Gedeh County respectively.

Conversely, five (5) Representatives got worst attendance during plenary session of the reporting period. Those Representatives include: Hon. Worlea S. Dunah of Nimba County, Hon. Alfred G. Koiwood of Gbarpolu County, Hon. Solomon C. George of Montserrado County, Matthew G. Zarzar of Sinoe County, Hon. Jeremiah M. McCauley of Sinoe County. Five (5) Senators of the Liberian Senate got worst plenary attendance. Those Senators include: Sen. Mabutu V. Nyenpan of Sinoe County, Sen. Joyce M. G. Sumo of Montserrado County, Clarice A. Jah of Margibi County, Sen. Lahai G. Lassanah of Bomi County and Sen. Sando D. Johnson of Bomi County.

Absent

The Senate had a total of one hundred ninety eight (198) absent times while the House of Representatives had a total of 724 absent times respectively. Senators Sando D. Johnson of

Bomi County got the highest absent time, he was absent 14 times and was followed by Senator Joyce Musu Freeman Sumo, and she was absent 12 times. At the House of Representatives, Hon. Worlea S. Dunah of Nimba County got the highest absent and was followed by Jefferson Kanmoh of Sinoe County; both were absent 21 times respectively.

Distant

Distant has been defined as a situation where in a lawmaker travels either within or out of the country for official Legislative duty or constituency matters with a official letter of excuse to plenary¹ The plenary of the Liberian senate recorded a total of 100 distant times during its 121 sittings held while the House of Representatives received 653 distant times. Senator Mabutu Vlah Nyenpan got the highest distant times at the senate. He was pronounced distant 23 times while Hon. Solomon C George got the highest distant times in the House of Representatives. He was pronounced distant 20 times.

Excuse

A lawmaker is considered excused when he or she leaves session and notified plenary. This reporting period recorded a total of 98 excuse times at the senate while the House of Representatives witnessed 254 excuse times. Senator Gbezonga M Findley of Grand Bassa County got the highest excuse times at the senate; he was excuse 15 times while Hon. Alfred G. Koiwood got the highest excuse times at the House of Representatives. He was pronounced excused 20 times.

B. Participation

Participation in plenary debate is one of the most crucial and important functions of a lawmaker. This is by such means legislators are given the opportunity to voice out their personal and/or constituency opinion on critical national issues in open plenary debate. This also allows the

¹ See legislative modernization plan 2013

public, especially legislative monitoring bodies, the avenue to evaluate the performance of legislators as to who says what, how and why. Assessment of the performance of individual legislator relative to the number of times he or she participates in open plenary debate is informed and guided by the standing rules² of the Senate and House of Representatives which give every legislator an equal opportunity to speak on each and every agenda item.

During this reporting period, there were a total of 3135 participation times in the Senate and 3416 at the House of Representatives. IREDD research recorded five best senators in Participation. Those senators include; Senator Fredrick D. Cherue of Rivergee County, Sen. Peter S. Coleman of Grand Kru County, Sen. Isaac Nyenebo of Grand Gedeh County, Sen. Joseph Nagbe of Sinoe County and Sen. Alphonso G. Gaye of Grand Gedeh County respectively. While there were five best Representatives in participation, the five Representatives include: Hon. Francis S. Paye of Rivercess County, Hon. Jeh Byron Browne of Grand Bassa County, Hon. Prince Moye of Bong County, Hon. Larry Younquoi of Nimba County and Hon. Edward Karfiah of Bong County.

Conversely, five (5) Senators got the worst participation. Those Senators include: Sen. Clarice A. Jaye of Margibi County, Sen. Theodore Momo of Gbarpolu County, Sen. Lahai G. Lassanah of Bomi County and Matthew N. Jaye of Rivergee County. At the House of Representatives, five Representatives got the worst participation. Those Representatives include; Hon. Samuel Worleh of Nimba County, Hon. Mambu Sonni of Grand Cape Mount County, Hon. Solomon George of Montserrado County, Hon. Robertson Siaway of Grand Bassa County and Malai Gborga of Gbarpolu County respectively.

C. Lawmaking

Article 34 of the 1986 Liberian Constitution vests the power to make laws for the proper democratic governance of our country in the hands of the members of the legislature. It is by this legislative function laws, rules and regulations for the governance of our country are made,

² See rule 14 section 2 of the Liberian senate standing rules

contracts bidding the Republic of Liberia and other sovereign nations are ratified and international treaties and protocols are domesticated. The effective functioning of government functionaries are greatly informed by the types of laws or legal framework of such government. Our research recorded two hundred- forty two (242) Legislative Instruments during the period at the Legislature. One hundred and fourteen (114) Legislative instruments were recorded at the House of Representatives while one Hundred and twenty (128) eight legislative instruments were also recorded at the Liberian Senate. Our research also recorded eleven Representatives who introduced Bills at the House of Representatives. Amongst the eleven (11) Representatives, there were three Representatives who introduced the highest. Those Representatives include: Hon. Moses Kollie of Lofa County, Hon. Johnson Chea of Rivergee County and Hon. J. Byron Browne of Grand Bassa County, they all introduced two bills each. While at the Liberian Senate there were three Senators who introduced new Bills at the Liberian Senate. Those Senators include: Sen. Joyce M. F. Sumo of Montserrado County, Sen. Jewel H. Taylor of Bong County and Sen. Armah Z. Jallah of Gbarpolu County. Each of them introduced one Bill.

1. Bills in Committee Room

IREDD research has recorded the total number of 119 Bills in Committee room at the Legislature. Of the 119 bills, 47 have been deposited at the House of Representatives and 72 at the Liberian Senate.

i. Origins of Bills in Committee Room

House of Representatives

Total Number of Bills in Committee room at the House of Representatives		47
1	Number of House Bills in Committee Room	25
2	Number of Senate Bills in Committee room at the House of Representatives pending for concurrence	15
3	Number of Executive Bills in Committee Room at the House of Representatives	7

Liberian Senate

Total Number of Bills in Committee room at the Liberian Senate		72	
1	Senate Bills in Committee		18
2	House of Representatives Bills at the Liberian senate Committee Room		20
3	Executive Bills in Senate Committee Room		34

ii. Bills Passed into Law

The Institute for Research & Democratic Development (IREDD)'s research recorded the total number of one hundred nineteen (119) Bills passed into law by Legislative committees. Some of the Bills include financing agreements, loan and international treaties sent by the President of the Republic of Liberia. Of the 119 Bills passed by the Legislature, 63 or 52.94% were recorded at the House of Representatives and sent to the Liberian senate for concurrence. Of the 119 passed into Law bills record at the Legislature, 56 or 47.06% were passed by the Liberia senate and sent to the House of Representatives for Concurrence.

iii. Summary of Legislations passed by the Legislature

House of Representatives

Total number of Bills passed into law by the House of Representatives		63	
1	Executive Bills Passed by the House of Representatives	15	
	Senate Bills Concurred with by the House of Representatives	9	
	Executive Bills concurred with by the House of Representatives	8	
	House of Representatives Bills passed	31	

Liberian Senate

Total number of Legislative instruments passed into law by the Liberian Senate	56	
Executive Bills Passed by the Liberian Senate	12	
House of Representatives Bills Concurred with by the Liberian Senate	13	
Executive Bills from the House of Representatives concurred with by the Liberian Senate	9	
Liberian Senate Bills passed	22	

iv. Petitions

Our Research recorded the total number of four (4) petitions from Citizens of Liberia to the House of Representatives and there was no record on petition at the Liberian Senate.

v. Resolutions

Five joint resolutions were passed into law by the 53rd Legislature.

D. Oversight Responsibility

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.

1. Communications

There were one hundred and fifty six (156) communications recorded during the period. Of this 156 communications recorded, Seventy (70) or 44.87% came from the Liberian Senate, while eighty six (86) or 55.12% of the 156 Communications came from the House of Representatives respectively.

There were five (5) Senators who were very proactive efficient in writing communications at the Liberian Senate. Those Senators include: Sen. Geraldine Doe Sherif of Montserrado County, Sen. George Tengbeh of Lofa County, Sen. Oscar Cooper of Margibi County, Sen. Alphonso Gaye of Grand Gedeh County and Sen. Cletus W. Wotorson of Grand Kru County. At the House of Representatives, there were five Representatives who were actively involved in raising critical issues through communications. Those Representatives are: Hon. Bhofal Chambers of Maryland County, Hon. Thomas P. Fallah of Montserrado County, Hon. Edwin M. Snowe of Montserrado County and Hon. Gabriel Smith of Grand Bassa County.

2. Committee Report with Signatures

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.

Rule 49 and 48 of the both houses 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. During the reporting period, our research recorded one hundred and ninety eight (198) Legislative

Committee reports from the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate. Of the 198 Committee reports, 108 or 54.54% was recorded from the Liberian Senate while 90 or 45.45% of the 198 came from the House of Representatives.

3. Legislative Motions

Every Legislative issue or bill that is officially discussed in plenary session based on the motion made by a Senator or Representative and seconded by a Senator or Representative and subsequently accepted by majority members of Senate or House of Representatives seated during plenary session. Every Senator or Representative has the opportunity to raise his or her hand to be recognized by the Speaker and the President Pro-Tempore of the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate or the Presiding officer of the day's session. During the data collection period, IREDD research tracked three hundred and seventy two (372) Legislative Motions from the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate. Of the 372 Motions, 217 or 72.84% came from the Liberian Senate while 155 or 41.66% came from the House of Representatives respectively.

At the Liberian Senate, there were Senators who very engaged in moving motions for the discussion of Legislative issues or agenda. However, we also noticed that of those Senators there five who were very effective and efficient in moving motions. Those Senators include: Sen. Isaac W. Nyenebo of Grand Gedeh County, Sen. John A. Ballout of Maryland County, Sen. Oscar A. Cooper of Margibi County, Fredrick D. Cherue of Rivergee County and Sen. Edward B. Diagoseh of Grand Cape Mount County. At the House of Representatives, there were many Representatives who were engaged in moving motions but with five Representatives being very proactive and effective in moving motions. Those Representatives include: Hon. George Mulbah of Bong County, Hon. Tarwoe Waylee of Grand Gedeh County, Moses Y. Kollie of Lofa County, Hon. Bhofal Chambers of Maryland County and Hon. Edwin M. Snowe of Montserrado County.

4. Legislative Committee Public Hearings

i. **Open Public forum on National Petroleum Act**

A two day public consultation on validation of the Draft Petroleum Exploration and Production Act Of 2013 and the National Oil Company (NOCAL) Act from December 5-6, 2014 at the Monrovia City Hall, Republic of Liberia. The forum was part of an effort by the Legislature to adopt a new petroleum Law that will govern the Oil and Gas sector of Liberia. According to the organizers, , the forum was in furtherance of the reform process initiated by the Government of Liberia in 2012 to ensure that the country's emerging oil and appropriate laws and policies that will enhance the country's chances of achieving optimal benefits from its assets are put in place. At the open Forum, the Legislators said, the Forum was also intended for the Legislature to scrupulously examine the New Oil and Gas Law especially engaging the inputs of Liberians across the country. This was the third and final phase of the Legislature to reform the Petroleum Law of Liberia for the subsequent passage of it into law. The two days public hearing forum brought together several participants from the Civil Society and petroleum lawyers, student groups, private citizens as well as petroleum experts.

ii. **GAC Audited Reports**

The Joint Public Account Committee (PAC) of the Legislature held series of public hearings on the Audited Reports of the Auditor General of three Ministries and two State owned enterprises.

The hearings on the Audit Reports brought to light many issues, ranging from procurement and administrative malpractices, fraudulent activities, non-functional internal audit systems and internal control lapses by senior public officials of government. Some of the Public hearings attended on the matter by REDD Researchers highlighted critical issues affecting the procurement process of Liberia and according to some of the experts invited to the hearing, they said, Liberia procurement system is not working for improve governance but instead enriching many Government officials.

The Joint Public Accounts Committee public hearing report on the Auditor General's audit include Roberts International Airport (January 1, 2006 December 31, 2007) and Ministry of Education (Free & Compulsory Primary Education – July 1, 2006- June 30, 2007).

Others are the Ministry of Gender & Development (2006/07 & 2007/08), the National Port Authority (landed Property-2006/07 & 2007/08) and the Ministry of Justice (management of the Prison System in Liberia-2008/09 & 2009/10).

“This process is an ongoing one and we want to use this opportunity to inform all those in positions of authority and trust, that this national perception of corruption being business as usual will no longer be tolerated,” Senator Dagoseh opined. “The Public Accounts Committee will do that is necessary to end this culture of corruption and impunity and together we can stamp out corruption and misuse of public funds by officials of government.”

The perusal of the Audited Reports from the Auditor General of the General Auditing Commission (GAC) was in compliance of the constitution mandate to provide oversight over the expenditure of all public sectors and public funded institutions. According to the Liberian Senate Committee Chairman on Public Accounts, Sen. Edward Dagoseh said, the public hearing were intended to gather the public views and concerns on the long time report implementation and the Legislature to use the findings to engage the president for implementation.

5. Legislative Agriculture Break

The 3rd Session of the 53rd Legislature officially came to an end on December 18, 2014. The Constitution of Liberia provides opportunity to the Legislature of Liberia to recess every year in August but this break was not actualize this year due to the unbearable Ebola situation. Therefore, the Legislature adopted a joint resolution in August to enable them have extra-ordinary session to help address the Ebola situation in Liberia

E. General Observation(s)

During the year, we could not obtain information on legislators' efforts to request quarterly performance report from government ministries and agencies that received budgetary allocations from the national budget as prescribed in the budget law. One could speculate that this is either because much effort was not made by the lawmakers to obtain the performance reports or because such information was treated with secrecy. This tendency creates a room for limited accountability and transparency in those ministries and agencies.

There was serious punctuality problem during the entire reporting period. Most sessions started late, often an hour or more. This was in violation of rule #2 of both Houses which put the starting time at 10:00 a.m. on every session day (Tuesday and Thursday). As observed during the year, regular plenary sessions were not only starting late but also a number of lawmakers were recorded late (those who came in after roll call).

The tradition of "Secret Legislative Sessions" continued throughout the whole year, virtually obscuring the transparency and accountability commitment of the National Legislature. What is becoming to be known as the "Secret Session Syndrome" appeared to be more prevalent in the Senate. This is the tendency where the lawmakers take behind closed doors critical national decision-making processes in an apparent bid to evade public monitoring and observation of how subsequent decisions of the secret deliberations are arrived at; who took what stance and why. Though authorized by the rules of both chambers, most of the secret sessions held by the Legislature, particularly the Senate, were void of state security justifications consistent with best legislative practices.

V. Conclusion

Despite continuous challenges in the data collection process of the Legislative Score Card; IREDD monitors remain engage with the Legislators in promoting greater transparency and accountability within the Liberian Legislative Governance Era. The more Legislators are engage, the better open space citizens will have in engaging their Legislators. Based on the research

findings, it suggests that Legislative Staffs and Legislators themselves need intensive training in order to improve Legislative effectiveness in policy analysis and implementation.

VI. Recommendations

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 knowledge ability, 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.

Finally, despite relative improvement in the way legislative offices cooperate with our monitors in providing needed information, 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.