

For Mismanagement of Funds Parliament Frowns at Councils Sector Heads

Continuing its oversight investigation of Councils around the country, Transparency and Accountability Committee has expressed dissatisfaction with Tonkolili District Council, as with other Councils visited in the north.

Committee members expressed disapproval of the Council's sector Heads' management of funds for the implementation of projects within the Agriculture, Education, Health, Library and other devolved sectors. Probing into their activities, the Committee observed that sector heads lack the capacity to put documentations in place and that funds given to them are mainly expended on Administration.

In Koinadugu District Council, CA and sector heads were arraigned before the Committee, covering Education and Library, Agriculture and other devolved sectors. The Agriculture sector with huge allocations was unable to defend billions of Leones allocated to them for 2016. The Committee observed that Councilors working with the Agriculture sector are not even involved in the agricultural activities of the District. As a result, Chairman Kamanda and colleague MPs observed that lots of resources are going down the drain.

At Kono District Council, the CA and Sector Heads briefed the Committee, Outlining challenges involved in the execution of projects. But from the Committee's findings, only 30% of funds were used on projects implemented, whilst 70% are misrepresented in related activities. The Committee continues its investigations to the South-East on Councils' activities.

Parliament Investigates Councils on Finances and Project Implementation

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Transparency and Accountability, Chaired by the Chief Whip of Parliament, Hon. Claude Kamanda, has commenced a spell of oversight investigations with visits to Local Councils. The purpose is to ascertain projects implemented by councils and finances expended on projects on behalf of the local communities. The public hearings attracted community stakeholders and Councils Sector Heads.

At the various Councils, Chairman Kamanda outlined the role of the Committee, noting the responsibility of Councils for the development of their Districts. He also acknowledged the need for the Councils to involve the general public in their programmes and activities.

First visited was the Kambia District council, where the Chief Administrator, Alhaji Alhaji Bangura appreciated and commended the work of the Transparency Committee, but noted that 2014 and 2015 were the most challenging years for the District Councils in terms of project implementation, due to the outbreak of the Ebola virus.

Finance Officer Mohamed Osman Turay briefed MPs on monies allocated to the Council by the central government for the fiscal years 2014, 2015 and 2016 allocations.

Committee Members however, frowned at the Finance and Procurement Officers for presenting what they termed misleading figures on monies and projects implemented for the District.

Also at Port Loko District Council, the Committee engaged Council Officials on resources and projects implemented in the District.

After each sector head had submitted their report, the Committee observed that accounting figures presented were also misleading and recommended that Port Loko District be stood down so they could redo their accounting management properly.

At Bombali District, the CA and Sector Head, while briefing the Committee on their activities and projects, pleaded with the Committee to see the need for central government to support the Council with adequate funds in order for them to actualize their projects.

The Committee also visited Makeni City Council, where sector Heads covering Education, Agriculture, Health, Youth and Sports and the Library were unable to account for huge sums allocated by the central government to implement projects.

In the Committee's deliberations, it was recommended that sector heads pay back monies they could not account for or face the Anti-Corruption Commission for further investigations. Probing continues in other councils in the coming weeks.

TAC PLANS TOUGH ACTION AGAINST SECTOR HEADS

Freetown, 27th June, 2016.

Parliament's Transparency and Accountability Committee (TAC) has promised to recommend tough action against sector heads in the Local Councils, who are not implementing government's projects. The TAC has been focusing on a host of challenges surrounding Local Councils' financing and projects. As the Committee continues its oversight review of Councils, Members have identified the frequent transfer of councils core staff, ineffective functioning of ward Committees, own source revenue mobilization, multiple bank accounts, and conflicts between chiefdom councils and local councils, among other issues.

At **Kenema District Council**, MPs engaged Sector Heads and Council Officials, on the education sector Report, where accounting figures and project documentations were said to be misleading, whilst documentation from the **Kenema City Council** was seen as a total disappointment. Meanwhile, the Committee has commended **Kailahun District Council's** library and social welfare activities but was displeased with their work on education, water sector and agriculture, noting the presentation of misleading figures on projects carried out.

At **Bo District Council**, the TAC was very pleased with both the District and City Councils and commended them for a job well done on projects implemented and funds disbursement on project activities.

At **Pujehun District Council**, Committee members were not impressed with the activities of the Agriculture Sector, library and health.

The Committee has promised to recommend tough actions against sector heads who are not implementing government projects. Its hearings continue in the next two days in Bonthé and Moyamba District councils.