



REPORT

of

**the Parliamentary Committee on Works,
Housing and Infrastructure,
on**

**its Joint Inspection Exercise with the Sierra
Leone Housing Corporation (SALHOC) on the
state of OAU Villas**

**PRESENTED BY: HON. KOMBOR KAMARA
CHAIRMAN - WORKS, HOUSING AND
INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

**THIRD SESSION OF THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

FEBRUARY, 2015

Report of the Committee on Works, Housing and Infrastructure on a Joint Inspection Exercise with the Sierra Leone Housing Corporation (SALHOC) on the state of OAU Villas

1. INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, the Parliamentary Committee on Works, Housing and Infrastructure embarked on oversight working visits to the OAU Villas managed by the Sierra Leone Housing Corporation (SALHOC) from the 18th February to 4th March, 2015 with the aim of obtaining first-hand information on pertinent issues relating to their states and report to Parliament.

2. MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, Sections 93 and 95 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, Act No.6 of 1991, vest the following powers in Parliament:

Section 93(2) states: "In addition to the Committees referred to in sub-section (1), Parliament shall appoint other Committees which shall perform the functions specified in subsection (3)."

Section 93(3) says: "It shall be the duty of any such Committee as is referred to in subsection (2) to investigate or inquire into the activities or administration of such Ministries or Departments as may be assigned to it, and such investigation or inquiry may extend to proposals for legislation."

Section 93(6) states: "For the purposes of effectively performing its functions, each of the Committees shall have all such powers, rights and privileges as are vested in the High Court at a trial in respect of:-

(a) enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmation or otherwise;

(b) compelling the producing of documents; and

(c) the issue of a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad."

Section 95 States: "Any Act or omission which obstructs or impedes Parliament in the performance of its functions or which obstructs or impedes any Member or offer thereof in the discharge of his duties or affronts the dignity of Parliament, or which tends either directly or indirectly to produce such a result shall be a contempt of Parliament."

The Committee on Works, Housing and Infrastructure is one of the Sessional Select Oversight Committees in Parliament, established under Section 93(2) and provided with the above powers to perform the functions specified in Sub Section (3).

3. COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members of the Committee are:

1. Hon. Kombor Kamara Chairman
2. Hon. Tamba Entochema Ebba Deputy Chairman
3. Hon. Rosaline J. Smith
4. Hon. David Johnson
5. Hon. Albert Deen Kamara
6. Hon. Abdul Salaam Kanu
7. Hon. Sheku Sannoh
8. Hon. Sahr Tengbeh
9. Hon. Ibrahim Martin Bangura
10. Hon. Jusufu Barry Mansaray
11. Hon. Bashiru Silikie
12. Hon. Thomas Solomon Segepoh
13. Hon. Mima Yema Mimi Sobba-Stephens
14. Hon. Andrew Victor Lungay
15. Hon. Sahr Fatorma
16. Hon. PC Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III

Augustine Sesay - Committee Clerk

4. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ceiling	The overhead interior lining of a building.
Coping	A finishing or protective course or cap to an exterior masonry wall or the like.
Corporation	Means the Sierra Leone Housing Corporation.
Defray	To offset the maintenance costs incurred by tenant or bear the expense.
Dilapidated	To cause or allow a building to fall into a deplorable state or disrepair, as by misuse or neglect.
Evict	To force occupants to leave a villa, usually with the force of the law behind the Corporation.
Landscaping	To improve the appearance of an area of land by planting trees, shrubs, or grass, or altering the contours of the ground.
Refurbish	To make a villa neat, clean, or complete, as by renovating, re-equipping, or restoring.
Remedial works	Remedial works are intended to correct or improve faulty areas.
Squatters	People who settle on land or occupies property without right or payment of rent.
Villa	The Country's OAU estate

5. ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SIERRA LEONE HOUSING CORPORATION

The Sierra Leone Housing Corporation was established by an Act of Parliament in 1982 to complement the government's efforts in addressing housing problems in the country. They are responsible for Low Cost Housing Estate, OAU Village Estate and Seven Battalion Barracks.

Since the National Commission for Privatisation (NCP) was set up, SALHOC has legally disengaged all relationships with the Ministry of Works, quoting Section 10 of the NCP Act as their legal instrument. SALHOC only has functional relationship with the Ministry of Works and the Ministry of Lands as and when the need arises; for instance, when they wish to engage in construction works.

The Sierra Leone Housing Corporation's broad mandate, under the 1982 Act, is concentrated on four main activities:

1. estate Development;
2. estate Management;

3. mobilisation of savings and the operation of the Mortgage Scheme; and
4. training in the production and use of local building materials, and basic building construction.

Within its estate portfolio, the Corporation manages the OAU Village, the Kissy Low Cost Estate and the Goderich Estate. The Kissy Low Cost Estate has been mortgaged to the sitting tenants. The two remaining sources of revenue for the Corporation are the OAU Village and the Rifle Range estate [7th Battalion]. The OAU Village is the only Estate that is currently generating revenue for the Corporation. Revenue from the Rifle Range Estate [7th Battalion] is not regular and therefore unreliable. As at now, the OAU Village, which is estimated to be generating about 85% of the Corporation's income, is the backbone of the Corporation's source of income.

5. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION EXERCISE

Request for documentations

The Committee requested for documentary information relating to;

- update of payment of rent;
- housing challenges faced by the Corporation;
- a list of all tenants of OAU villas; and
- proposals of the Corporation.

Conducted tour

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, the Committee, with the technical support from senior officials of the Corporation, organised a conducted tour to all OAU villas. A total of fifty eight (58) villas and the banqueting hall (Old School) were physically inspected in order to assess their state. During the exercise, pertinent questions related to villa Number, name of tenant, condition of the villa, status of rent payment, and challenges were considered by Committee members.

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporation's Assets

SALHOC, having been mandated by law to provide housing for the people of Sierra Leone, manages the Banqueting Hall (Old School), B2-8 King Harman Road and OAU Villas.

Banqueting Hall (Old School)

The Banqueting Hall, occupied by Mr. Mohamed Kallon, has been in a dilapidated state with its entire ceiling in very bad state. The occupant, according to the Corporation, had expressed desire to purchase the freehold of this property, but had accrued rent for a period of two (2) years. During the inspection exercise, the Committee learnt that part of the property was sublet to a religious organisation, in the person of Pastor Chris.

The Committee recommends that documentary evidences on the rent agreement and correspondences between the Corporation and Mr. Kallon be provided to the Committee for further action.

B2-8 King Harman Road

Initially, the Corporation had a total of sixty (60) OAU villas, but that number had now been reduced to fifty-eight (58). The two (2) villas together with some piece of land were swapped for the property B-28, the former Chinese Chancery, situated at King Harman Road.

The Government agreed to pay rent for the property which is currently occupied by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, beginning from January, 2009. Currently, the Committee noted that no payment had been made.

Therefore, the Committee recommends that payment of rent accrued by the Government for Property B-28 should be expedited without any further delay by the appropriate authorities.

OAU Village

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, the Government of Sierra Leone negotiated huge loans with the IMF and World Bank for the construction of sixty Moorish Villas on the slopes above Hill Station, Freetown, where all heads of states who attended the OAU Summit in 1980 were lodged.

The Sierra Leone Housing Corporation was established by an Act of Parliament in 1982, to complement government's efforts in addressing housing problems in the country. The Corporation is responsible to manage Low Cost Housing Estate, OAU Village Estate and Seven Battalion barracks.

The Corporation formally commenced operations in November, 1982 with the statutory mandate to take over and manage all housing estates owned by the Government of Sierra Leone.

The Committee noted that occupants of these estates comprised:

- Sierra Leone Government Officials;
- Eligible Sierra Leoneans;
- Foreign Nationals; and
- Men of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

Water supply

Access to an improved water source does not give an indication about whether water supply is continuous at the OAU Village. Some tenants collected water in containers. Those who can afford it install water tanks on their villas.

Therefore, the Committee recommends that SALHOC and the Ministry of Water Resources be summoned to a joint meeting of Parliamentary Committees on Works, Housing and Infrastructure; and Water Resources in Parliament to address the issue of water supply at the OAU Village.

Villa Identification

There is no form of identification on all the villas. This makes it very difficult for an individual to be able to trace the number of a particular villa.

The Committee recommends that the Corporation designs a unique way of identifying the villas, as against their numbers.

Permanent structures erected by tenants

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, during the exercise, the Committee noted with dismay that some tenants erected permanent structures illegally within the limited space around the villas. This act was done without seeking the approval of the Corporation.

In view of this, the Committee recommends that all structures that were illegitimately erected by tenants should be demolished forthwith.

Request by tenants to defray maintenance cost

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, the Committee learnt tenants, mostly government officials, owed the Corporation millions of Leones, which had not been recovered over the years. Some tenants renovated their villas without seeking approval from the Corporation. Instead of paying their rent, the tenants requested that the cost incurred on the maintenance of those villas be defrayed by the Corporation.

The Committee resolved that all tenants affected should be summoned, together with the Corporation to a meeting with the Committee in Parliament.

Dilapidated state of some OAU Villas

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, the Committee also noted that some of the villas inspected were in a bad conditions. The Committee even observed that there were minor cracks on the walls and leakages on roofs. Many of them had not been painted for years, while some of the facilities were in a deplorable state. However, few tenants have been able to take good care of the villas and their facilities.

For those tenants who are up-to-date with their rent payment, the Committee recommends that the Corporation should expedite maintenance of their villas without any further delay.

OAU Estate Rent Status as at 30th April, 2015

The Sierra Leone Housing Corporation has liquidity problems and continues to experience difficulties in collecting rent from tenants who are occupying the OAU Village. Most tenants initially occupied the OAU Villas with no tenancy agreement with the Corporation. Each Villa, over the years, attracted a rent of Le15, 000,000.00 (Fifteen Million Leones) per annum. Negotiations for 2015 rent were ongoing with an increase to **Le 18,000,000.00 (Eighteen Million Leones)**. Total rent due by tenants currently occupying the villas as at 30th April, 2015 amounted to **Le 1,317,726,579.70 (See breakdown in the table below)**.

The Committee is aware of the fact that some tenants are up-to-date with their rental payment and therefore applauds their efforts, but encourages those with arrears to settle them within the next couple of months after this report had been laid on the Table of the House.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the general perception of people over the years about the OAU estates has remained unchanged. To some people, the Estates are still seen as Government property, even though there is a change in status following the enactment of the Sierra Leone Housing Corporation (SALHOC) Act of 1982.

The Committee is of the view that failure by tenants to honour huge contractual debts to the Corporation could be seen impossible for it to fulfil its mandate in terms of developing new estates and maintaining the existing properties from its resources.

The Committee therefore recommends that the OAU villas and the Banqueting Hall be sold, so that the proceeds could be used to develop new estates.

**Sign: Hon. Kombor Kamara, Chairman
Chairman, Works, Housing and
Infrastructure**



MARCH, 2015

ANNEX: PHOTOS ON INSPECTION EXERCISE



Figure 1. Committee members inspecting the Banqueting Hall (Old School)



Figure 2. Back View of Old School Building in dilapidated State



Figure 3. Committee Members engaging tenants on the state of villas



Figure 4. Villas in dilapidated state



Figure 5. Permanent structures erected by tenants



Figure 6. Squatters around OAU villas



Figure 7. Refurbished villas by tenants



Figure 8. Refurbished villas by tenants



Figure 9. Committee Members cautioning tenants for undertaking massive construction works without the approval of the Corporation



Figure 10. The Committee engages the Minister of Youth Affairs on the challenges and state of his villa