



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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13th July, 2024

PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE PROBES COUNCILS

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Local Government and Community Affairs on Saturday 13/07/2024 concluded its serial probing of various Provincial Councils at the Bo City Council. It could be recalled that the Committee had earlier probed other councils in other districts.

The Chairman of the Committee, Hon. Musa Fofana in his serial statement, said the oversight tour was their Constitutional mandate, in light of checks and balances on Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) that are executing Government programmes and projects for the people. According to him, they as Members of Parliament, must ensure that MDAs account for their various activities.

In his statement, the Opposition, Whip, Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara said they were going to probe the various councils on pertinent issues based on project implementation and on behalf of the people. He assured them that, they would not witch-hunt anybody and advised the witnesses to work in the interest of the State.

During the investigation at Bombali District Hall, outskirts of Makeni City, on Friday 12/07/2024 the Committee observed that the New Port Loko City Council do not have enough projects like their counterparts and had only implemented the European Union-sponsored project amounting to Le1.2 billion old Leones for the construction of ten stores. The Committee observed that own sources revenue generation was slow, mining companies' operations in the City jurisdiction were not

complying with statutory payment of taxation and three markets' daily dues and other own sources were not sufficient to carry any tangible projects.

The Committee discovered that the Council was slow to implement the Government budget allocation on projects.

The Committee Members learned that Kono District Council was receiving funding from Mining Companies and the Government. The Council was implementing community connectivity road projects with support from the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) and the Road Maintenance Fund (RMFA). It was sadly observed that Chiefdom Administrations were collecting local and properties taxes, an unfortunate situation that was only peculiar to Kono.

Makeni City Council, it was discovered by the Committee that some devolved sectors like their counterparts in Kono District Council were utilizing more Government budget on administration than service delivery for beneficiaries. That Council was delaying transfer or effect Government-allocated budget to devolved sectors to implement projects.

There were three markets in Makeni City and an outsourced contractor was collecting daily dues making an onward payment of three thousand five hundred Leones to the Council daily.

Amongst various Local Councils, the Committee observed that grants received from the Government were exponentially increasing annually and therefore, their development projects must march up with the trend of receipts.

On Saturday, 13/07/2024, the committee continued probing of Local Councils in the Southeast regions, at the Bo City Council.

Many issues and concerns were observed. For instance, it was discovered that Bonthe District Council had 57 revenue strengths classified into taxable and non-taxable revenue. The projection of own sources revenue for this year is NLe1.7 million with heavy reliance on mining companies, but since last year, one of the mining companies, Vimetco has not complied. That Property tax in cadastral amounts to 600, including 5 mining companies, and still working on statistical data. The minimum cost for the housing rate was Le10 per year. The middle class is Le80, and the maximum is Le 85 to Le90.

However, it was observed by the Committee that, most of the projects implemented by the Council were not tangible and convincing to the taxpayers, except for the support to NPSE pupils facilitation including lodging, transportation and feeding.

The Committee resolution includes their visit to Bonthe to ensure improvement and reports on the cadastral system, look at RMFA road projects, a list of road contractors, mining companies and NGOs and what they are implementing, and the district development coordinator.

For Moyamba District Council, it was observed that their cadastral system was not accurate and were using a manual system and rely on revenue generation from mining companies. It was revealed that there is a conflict between the Council and Chiefdom Administrations over the collection of taxes. The Council confessed to the Committee that they do not have the manpower to work effectively at Chiefdom levels because of bad terrains. The Council it was discovered lacks mobility, but were implementing a huge rice cultivation project.

For Kailahun it was discovered that there was no income only expenditures for 2024 and no information about the cadastral properties system. It was observed that Chiefs were collecting market daily dues and the Council's major own sources were the evacuation of goods, tax collected from power saw was shared between the Council and Chiefdoms. The Committee observed that there

were inconsistencies and discrepancies in the collection of revenue and that the Council was lackadaisical in the collection of own source revenue.

Probing Bo District, it was observed that the property tax cadastral system was working but obsolete. There were problems with incorporating the new properties, including signatories and/or intend to overhaul the system. It was revealed that Bo District had 5,000 properties, including one belonging to the City Council and intended to do a general assessment, in light of their recent negotiation with the City Council.

The Council, it was revealed, received 40% shared taxes at some Chiefdom levels and plans to expand operations in other Chiefdoms. It was observed that the massive transfer of Council staff members would not only undermine development, but also relegate inspiration. The Committee was satisfied with the Bo District Council but asked them to change the dynamic of revenue generation and also emulate from other Councils.

Bo City Council, it was revealed that twenty

Three thousand properties were in the City and in 2019 a firm, Forward Sierra Leone was hired to do property assessment and the current Deputy Minister of Energy who also doubles as a drone expert has decided to redo property cadastral assessment. According to the City Council, 7,000 businesses are registered and licensed.

The Committee raised concerns over their mismanagement of the waste garbage dumping site on the road to Yeile around the KCK axis.

The Committee advised the Council to diversify their revenue mobilization.

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