

EDUCATION & PREVENTION DIVISION 2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Research & Prevention Unit

The Research Unit is responsible, among other things, to conduct anti-corruption research to ascertain trends in corruption control globally, which helps to inform program development and intervention of various mandate areas of the Commission. The Prevention Unit is charged with the responsibility to innovate ways to prevent the likelihood of the occurrence of corruption.

During the reporting period, the Prevention had resigned which left a vacancy in the Division. However, for the purpose of ensuring continuity in the program delivery of the Unit and the Division at large, the position and functions of the Prevention Officer were subsumed into the position and functions of the Research Officer, and was renamed the Research & Prevention Unit run by the Acting Research & Prevention Officer.

The Unit prepared and resubmitted revised implementation plan and budget for the Youth Opportunities Project (YOP) based on observations and comments shared by the Bank's Task Team Leaders. Further, in pursuit of its mandate, the Unit jointly conducted Institutional Corruption Risk Assessment at Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) and Liberia National Police, respectively.

The assessment reviewed systems, procedures and processes, as well as internal control mechanisms that offer opportunities for corruption, with focus on high risk public institutions.

The scope of the risk assessment exercises included headquarters and outstation offices of the assessed institutions and covered six counties, including Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, Rivercess, Margibi, Bong and Nimba, Maryland and Grand Gedeh counties.

The Public Financial Management Reform Project Phase II is funded by the African Development Bank through the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Ministry of Finance & Development Planning (MoFDP).

The Research Officer was retired on 30th October and the vacancy created by his retirement is yet to be filled. It is noteworthy to mention that the vacancy for

Prevention Officer was filled in July this year and he contributed significantly to the success of IACD 2021.

Please refer to risk assessments reports for key findings

COMMUNITY RELATIONS UNIT

The Community Relations Unit of the Commission is charged with the responsibility, among other things to undertake anti-corruption community engagements and sensitization campaigns geared to educating the public about corruption and the benefits of its eradication. Critical to function is to garner public buy-in and participation in the fight against corruption.

During the reporting period, the Unit organized a an anti-corruption dialogue in observance of International Anti-Corruption (IACD). The event brought together stakeholders from public institutions, including tertiary institutions and the Business Community

The IACD observance was held at the Corina Hotel in Sinkor, Monrovia with a dialogue on the theme: Reducing Corruption in the Private Sector As a Drive for Enhancing Economic Development. The roundtable availed the space for business representatives in Liberia to engage in a participatory dialogue on measures and tools for preventive and responsive efforts to combat corruption consistent with the government's National development policy, the PAPD. The roundtable, among other things informed businesses about the various national and international anti-corruption instruments regulating the business environment; highlighted measures and tools to improve integrity and transparency in business; encouraged linkages between businesses to promote collective action; built synergies and alliances with the business community in the fight against corruption; and increase public awareness and sensitization campaigns on the effects of corruption.

More than fifty (50) participants from government, business community, civil society, academia and the Media attended the one-day dialogue

Additionally, the Unit in collaboration with the Liberia Institute for Public Administration organized and training twenty (20) investigators and other staff of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission in Financial Crimes Investigation. The Training was rolled out in two batches of ten (10) trainees at LIPA's new headquarters along the Robertsfield Highway. The two-week long training was funded by the African Development Bank under its Public Financial Management Reform Project Phase II.

The vacancy that was created by the promotion of the Community Relations Officer to Executive Director was filled in July this year. The new Community Relations Officer contributed greatly to the successful observance of IACD 2021.

ASSETS DECLARATION & VERIFICATION UNIT

Assets Declaration & Verification Unit is responsible to receive, scan, store in both electronic and hard copies declared assets of public officials, as well as randomly verify a percentage of all assets declarations in keeping with law.

During the reporting period, the unit received, scan and stored in electronic and hard copies assets declarations of public officials and other civil servants who have procurement, tendering or licensing responsibilities.

The Unit verified the assets of One Hundred (100) public officials and employees of government that declared assets during the 2017 assets declaration cycle. The verification exercises were organized in two phases, with a field verification period of twenty-eight (28) days. The first phase of the exercise lasted for fourteen (14) days. The assets verification exercises were conducted by an inter-agency team comprising Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, Liberia Revenue Authority, General Auditing Commission.

As a way of facilitating the verification exercises, the Unit received logistical support from the African Development Bank Project, including fourteen (14) visitors chairs, two (2) Fireproof Cabinets, one (1) forty-two-inch flat screen television and assorted stationery and supplies. The logistics have improved the unit's logistical capacity to receive and seat many declarants at the same time as well as keep declared assets of public officials in safe custody.

In furtherance of its core function, the Assets Declaration & Verification Unit obtained Access Right to Government of Liberia Payroll through a collaboration with the Civil Service Agency. This right comes with two major benefits: 1) enabled the LACC to establish a baseline of all positions in government that are required by law to declare assets, and 2) it empowers the LACC working in collaboration with CSA to enforce sanctions for assets declaration non-compliance.

PROJECTS UPDATES

WORLD BANK PROJECTS:

Youth Opportunities Project (YOP)

The Youth Opportunities Project has elapsed, with over Eighty Thousand United States Dollars not used due to covid-19 disruption. No extension was given by the World Bank for the implementation of the Project. The project comprised two components: Productive Public Works (PPW) and Household Enterprise (HHE). The PPW which was primarily implemented in rural settings supported rural residents' agriculture and food security activities. The HHE which empowered youth to work together to establish and operate small and medium business enterprises suffered serious setbacks, as many youth groups who received project funds absconded with it. As a result, the project was largely unsuccessful in inculcating youth with business skills and enhancing their economic empowerment.

Liberia Social Safety Net Project (LSSNP)

The Liberia Social Safety Net Project is an interagency collaboration between the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection and the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission. The project provides livelihood support to vulnerable households/families through cash transfer to the poorest of the poor.

The role of the LACC in the project is to raise awareness among project beneficiaries, with the goal of preventing corruption and ensuring the project achieves its development objectives. Essentially, the LACC is a third-party monitor to the LSSN Project. The Commission monitors the integrity of the enrolment of beneficiaries into the cash transfer program, as well as tracks information about the project among residents of the project communities.

The LACC team made two field monitoring visits to Grand Kru and Maryland counties and submitted report.

In keeping with the Memorandum of Understanding between MoGCSP and LACC, the LACC is responsible to recruit a civil society organization to monitor the project

and ensure that anti-corruption mechanisms are mainstreamed in the implementation of the project while the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection is responsible for the implementation of actual project activities.

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection appropriated One Hundred Fifty Thousand United States Dollars in support to the LACC's role. Portion of the fund was used to facilitate the two field monitoring visits; a little over 120K is in the project account to finance the monitor component of the LSSN Project. The project is being implemented in Grand Kru, Maryland, and recently its scope was expanded to include Bomi County.

The Liberia Social Safety Net Project (LSSNP) runs up to 2023. However, the implementation modality requires the LACC to carry out its third-party monitoring of the project through a civil society organization. The National Civil Council of Liberia (NCSCL) was vetted/selected by the Commission to implement the project. The Commission subsequently made a submission to the Bank on the NCSCL capacity to implement the project, as well as its track record relating to accountability. The submission is still with the Bank while the budget and implementation plan for the project are pending submission. It is anticipated that paperwork for the project will be finalized between now and early 2022 and resumption of actual project implementation will begin in the first quarter of the new year.

The Bank will review all paperwork and thereafter issue No Objection to contract the NCSCL or otherwise depending on its findings from the review exercise.

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK PROJECT:

The Liberia Anti-Corruption has almost completed implementation of all approved activities under the Public Financial Management Reform Project Phase II. With the exception of Public Education (printing of billboards and Anti-Corruption Community Engagement. Community Engagement activities were reprioritized to cover local and foreign trainings, risk assessment and observance of International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD). A portion of the project funding was used to train Twenty (20) staff of the LACC, including ten (10) investigators who benefitted from training in Financial Crimes Investigations.

As support to institutional capacity development, the Bank through the Project procured twenty (20) laptop computers and ten (10) desk top computers. This logistical support to the commission has significantly addressed the constraint of defective computers, which oftentimes impeded efficiency and effectiveness in performing project activities, core functions of the commission as well as assigned tasks that contribute the smooth operation of the LACC.

Challenges and Recommendations

While we laud these achievements, we are notwithstanding, not negating the fact that the Division is faced with daunting challenges and constraints. Key among these challenges are: unreliable internet; lack of needed logistics and power outage

Unreliable Internet

It is a known fact that the Commission has unreliable internet service. This gap impedes workflow, effectiveness and efficiency. It makes it difficult, if not impossible, for staff to share work with their colleagues, supervisors, and even oversight commissioners for their review, comments and inputs. As a result, the burden of internet availability has shifted from management to staff, who have to purchase and use personal internet data to meet work schedules and deadlines. This is demotivating, and has the potential to dampen morale and negatively impact overall productivity. The Division therefore implores management to consider this matter as a grave concern.

Lack of Operational Fuel

Obviously, the Division is experiencing difficulties in the execution of its mandate without operational fuel. As indicated earlier in this report, the Division coordinates the AfDB Project, and as a result, it has to shuttle from time to time between the LACC offices and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. We are oftentimes constrained to underwrite the cost of movements on behalf of the LACC to ensure that we implement the project in a timely fashion.

Going forward, we recommend that thoughtful consideration be given to this matter. Inasmuch the staff have commitment to deliver on assigned tasks/responsibilities, management should endeavor to facilitate all project related movements and calls to gather updates on projects from the Project Management Unit at MoFDP

Power Rationing

This situation started with power outage and later resulted in power rationing. We are aware though, that this situation is not solely in the purview of management as national government itself is financially constrained. However, productivity hinges on basic prerequisites, one of which is regular and stable electricity. The rationing of current, two hours each day, reduces man-hour per day, which in turn affects overall monthly and annually outputs.

The Division recommends that management should identify innovative ways to salvage this challenge, and thereby boost employees' morale and productivity.

