POST PROJECT EVALUATION
FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND

UNDEF Funded Project / UDF-14-591-LIR
Using Access to Information to Foster Open Expenditure and Budget Transparency in Liberia

14 December 2018

Project Area
The evaluation was carried out in Monrovia, Montserrado County with a day visit to Tubmansburg, Bomi County. In total the project targeted ten counties; Bomi, Montserrado, Lofa, Grand Cape Mount, Bong, Nimba, River Cess, Sinoe, Grand Bassa and Grand Gedeh.

Executive Summary

This project, implemented by Liberia Media Center between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017 across ten counties of Liberia, was able to raise citizen awareness of the need for improved transparency and accountability particularly at the local level. Key to this was the use of community radio stations who, through hosting programmes and the anti-corruption champion desks, were key in educating citizens and encouraging more robust debates around corruption. However, whilst those who benefited from the projects trainings or attended the outreach activities are now better informed about corruption the project was unable to have a significant impact in changing government approaches to transparency and accountability.

Tackling corruption can have significant benefits in improving service delivery and the project was therefore relevant in the issue it sought to tackle and, for the most part, in the use of media and civil society to undertake the campaign to do so; given their relative political independence. Ongoing allegations of corruption in government highlight the continued relevance, with outgoing president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf publicly admitting in 2015 that government efforts to tackle corruption were falling short. Interventions that targeted improved understanding of citizens have empowered local communities and community radio stations. This medium provided an extremely effective platform for knowledge sharing. Despite some efforts to engage elected local and national officials through consultative dialogues the project found it difficult to establish sustainable links between them and better informed citizens.

Geographical and technical challenges caused delays to the project, with the difficulty in sustaining the online ICT platform limiting its effectiveness. Nonetheless, the trainings were tailored to the local context, well attended and participants benefited from the chance to apply learnings through the issuance of small grants. County level anti-corruption champions offered a valuable, local focal point for the continuation of community awareness raising, which also benefited from the projects use of local debate and organizational structures to drive community participation and knowledge creation.

The production of newspaper stories and radio shows were clear examples of the project delivering on promised outcomes. Greater citizen engagement with local fund allocation issues were also a notable success of the project. However, the way in which the successful delivery of these outcomes showed the projects impact could have been more effectively captured if an end line attitudinal survey had been conducted to compare and contrast data gathered by the projects detailed baseline.

This UNDEF funded grant created greater public awareness, and ensured enhanced publicity, of corruption issues in Liberia but the project was unable to change the legal framework or force government officials to offer greater transparency and financial accountability to citizens. Whilst the project has ensured that many more citizens and media outlets now have the knowledge to pursue much needed improvements to the anti-corruption environment,

sustaining the projects momentum without financial support, particularly in the case of media, will be a challenge.

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I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Over a period of 24 months between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017 Liberia Media Center (LMC), delivered a project to enhance the fight against corruption in Liberia through greater accountability and fiscal transparency in the public sector. Funded by UNDEF it aimed to improve the anti-corruption environment in Liberia through the advancement of public sector accountability, fiscal transparency, the equitable distribution of resources and broad-based participation in governance, decision-making and development. It was implemented in ten of Liberia's 15 counties - Bomi, Montserrado, Lofa, Grand Cape Mount, Bong, Nimba, River Cess, Sinoe, Grand Bassa and Grand Gedeh - at a total cost of US$200,000, with a further US$20,000 reserved for UNDEF monitoring and evaluation.

Activities included the production of a baseline study (carried out across the ten counties) to ascertain citizen perceptions of corruption; training for CSOs, CBOs, community radio stations and print media journalists on anti-corruption issues; the award of small grants to selected beneficiary groups and individuals; the establishing of anti-corruption desks and champions in each county; 30 community outreach and awareness events; the establishing and maintenance of an online Public Sector Investment Tracking Portal; and the production of bi-annual "cost of corruption" reports. They were designed to deliver the projects overall objective - to promote increased citizen-led engagement on anti-corruption issues by empowering the media, civil society and grassroots organizations to contribute to tracking government expenditure and engage on corruption issues at both the local and national levels - to be achieved through three specific outcomes.

1. Increased media coverage and visibility of corrupt practices and acts of government expenditure at the national and local government levels.
2. Increased citizen engagement in dialogue advocacy and redress on corrupt practices by national and local government.
3. Increased public awareness, community knowledge and understanding of government expenditure, corruption issues and communication channels through the use of ICT.

This evaluation found the project to have made important interventions in raising community interest in, and awareness of, corruption issues at the county level. The use of different media platforms, and in particular community radio stations, provided significant added value to the projects reach and enhanced its engagement with citizens. Furthermore by training and supporting journalists financially to report more rigorously on corruption the project produced stories that explored important local issues around corruption. However the lack of consideration given to the risks of campaigning against, or reporting on, corruption was a notable omission.

Anti-corruption champions offered a focal point to increase citizen-led advocacy. More direct engagement with local county officials, with the goal of bridging the gap between them and citizens, would have further enhanced their impact. More consideration could also have been

given to ensuring that the knowledge obtained by those who attended the trainings or were part of the community activities was shared and sustained beyond the project cycle either through the creation of local networks or by better linking the project to other anti-corruption initiatives. The ICT platform aimed to provide an online repository of information but technical challenges severely limited its impact.

The project's objective of promoting increased citizen engagement on anti-corruption issues has, for the most part been realized, particularly in interactions at the county level. However better documentation of impact would have made the increases, targeted in all three project outcomes, more quantifiable. But increased engagement has not impacted on the overall anti-corruption environment at the national level which, in terms of legislation, remains broadly unchanged from the start of the project. In fact the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and General Auditing Commission (GAC) both received reduced funding in the 2018/19 budget. Signs of more transparent and accountable processes in discussions around the spending of the County Social Development Funds point to the projects impact at the county level. Sustaining this pressure for accountable and transparent government will be key, but will be difficult without the financial support of the project.

The evaluation presents a number of recommendations based on it findings. Three are outlined below:

1. Strengthen dialogue mechanisms between citizens and local governments. County sittings offer a platform to build a better mutual understanding and facilitate a more cooperative working relationship between citizens and elected officials on transparency and accountability issues.
2. Create an anti-corruption champions network, using the group function on WhatsApp, to allow individuals to share experiences, knowledge and learn from each other.
3. When designing a project that seeks to measure its progress by "increasing" knowledge and changes in attitude, tools to capture that information, like endlines, need to be an integral part of the project plan.

The evaluation also presents a number of lessons learned. Three are outlined below:

1. Community radio is key in raising community level awareness and engaging citizens in debates around corruption issues due to high levels of local listenership. This is further enhanced when programmes are conducted in local languages.
2. ICT platforms are likely to be more effective if in-house capacity exists to resolve technical challenges.
3. LACC and GAC lack political and financial independence to push the anti-corruption agenda within government. County level government structures offer the best avenue for improving fiscal transparency and accountability.

II. PROJECT CONTEXT

(i) Development context

Liberia has made impressive progress since the end of a decade long civil war in 2003 but an array of governance challenges persists. Public sector corruption was identified by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as "public enemy number one" shortly after she took office as president in 2006. In 2008 the anti-corruption reform process got underway with the creation of the LACC and greater independence being given to the GAC. In 2009 Liberia enacted the Extractives Industries Transparency Law, which aimed to promote and ensure transparent financial management and public procurement. Furthermore, in 2010, Liberia's Freedom of Information Act was passed which, in theory, provides all persons the right of access to public information.

Progress was initially promising. Having been ranked 138th in Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perception Index in 2008, Liberia had jumped to 75th by the time the 2012 edition was released. However, progress has stalled, and even gone backwards, with the 2017 TI Corruption Perception Index ranking Liberia 122nd. Recognition of the ongoing challenge posed by corruption was forthcoming from Johnson-Sirleaf. In a 2015 address to the nation she noted that it was "systemic and endemic...continuing to permeate every fabric of the society...serving as a major impediment to national development". Johnson-Sirleaf has herself been accused of nepotism in appointing several members of her family to key government positions. But on a more institutional level questions have been levelled at the ineffectiveness of LACC, which has managed just a handful of convictions in over a decade of operation, and of GAC, whose detailed and incisive audit reports are routinely ignored.

George Weah, elected president in late 2017, has promised to continue the fight against corruption that Johnson-Sirleaf publicly admitted she was losing before leaving office. In his inaugural address Weah stated his belief that "the most effective way to directly impact the poor, and to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor is to make sure that public resources do not end up in the pockets of government officials". But nine months into his presidency the LACC remains underfunded, reliant on donor support to pay salaries, and citizens are waiting to see the promised change with unproven allegations against members of the new administration's already a major talking point among Liberians.

Citizens have long taken a dim view of their elected officials when it comes to corruption. A 2013 survey by Afrobarometer found that 83% of Liberians perceive "some", "most" or "all" local government councilors to be corrupt. With similar figures for those within the office of the president and the legislature. A similar picture was painted by LMC's 2016 baseline survey. 73% of respondents agreed with the statement that "corruption is very high at the government level". Without readily available information to keep track of government expenditure promised through mechanisms like the County Social Development Funds (CSDF) and with a lack of effective institutional mechanism - LACC does not have an office outside the capital - the role of media, civil society and citizen themselves in demanding accountability is vital.

Liberians are aware of the corruption and lack of transparency in society but the challenge, which this project sought to address, is in holding elected officials to their promises of reform through increased transparency in the decision making processes, both at national and county levels. The role the media can play was exemplified in August 2018 when local reporters uncovered that a shipment of printed Liberian dollar banknotes, worth over US$100 million, had gone missing from the port. Sparking an investigation which remains in progress.

(ii) Project objective and intervention rationale
Over a period of 24 months between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017 the LMC, delivered a project aimed at using access to information to foster open expenditure and budget transparency in Liberia. The project was designed with the aim of promoting citizen engagement on anti-corruption issues by empowering the media, civil society and grassroots organizations to track government expenditure and engage with corruption issues at the local and national levels. It was implemented in ten of Liberia's 15 counties at a total cost of US$200,000.

This evaluation will look to understand how the project activities contributed to raised awareness among citizens on the issue of corruption and its impacts on development. The project assumed that greater public understanding and input into the anti-corruption and transparency campaign would yield results and enhance the fight for greater transparency and accountability at both the national and county level. This hypothesis will be tested in this evaluation in assessing how far LMC got in delivering three key project outcomes:

- Increased media coverage and visibility of corrupt practices and acts of government expenditure at the national and local government levels
- Increased citizens engagement in dialogue, advocacy and redress on corruption by national and local governments
- Increased public awareness, community knowledge and understanding of government expenditure, corruption issues and communication channels through the use of ICT

Training - of journalists, civil society organizations and community-based organizations (CSOs and CBOs) - was a key component of the project. By empowering these groups to be better informed about corruptions impacts and equipping them with skills to convey the issues to the wider public through the print media and highly popular community radio platforms, LMC aimed to improve not only citizen awareness of corruption but inspire a willingness to engage in efforts to prevent it. Through weekly radio debates, SMS polling, hosting town hall meetings and running 30 roadshows in the ten counties the projects continued engagement aimed to improve the anti-corruption environment by delivering greater citizen driven accountability and transparency in governance and development processes.

This evaluation will seek to offer an analysis of how much impact the project was able to have in this regard. It will also seek to understand where and why challenges emerged and to offer

some suggestions and recommendations for improving related interventions, in similar contexts, in the future.

III. EVALUATION APPROACH

The field visit component of the evaluation was carried out in Liberia between 21- 26 October 2018. The project took place across ten of Liberia's 15 counties but due to time constraints and logistical limitations, most notably poor road networks, the evaluation was limited to just two counties: Montserrado, home to the nation's capital Monrovia, and Bomi. In an ideal scenario the evaluation would have sought to visit at least five of the ten counties but in selecting Montserrado, an urban center where other key project activities had taken place, and Bomi, a more rural county, the evaluator was able to gather a sense of how the project worked and impacted in two different areas.

Semi-structured interviews were the main approach used for this evaluation. Questions drew on both the UNDEF Operation Manual guidance and context-specific queries developed by the evaluator (**see Annex 1**). Key stakeholders interviewed included officials from LACC, local government employees, representatives of CSO and CBOs, journalists, community radio presenters and members of the LMC team who worked on the project in evaluation, research and project management roles. Where it was not possible to interview individuals in person efforts were made to conduct interviews by telephone or email. A full list of the interviews conducted is provided as **Annex 3**. Efforts to hold community-led focus group discussions in the two counties were unsuccessful due to logistical and financial constraints.

To complement the field visit, the evaluator conducted a desk review of relevant project documents. This included the mid-term and final narrative reports, a milestone verification report, the baseline perceptions survey carried out as part of Output 1.1, the training manual developed for Output 1.2, three "Cost of Corruption" briefs produced as part of Output 3.4, as well as relevant contextual materials such as recent media coverage of corruption issues. However, there were some constraints and limitations to the evaluation process that should be acknowledged:

- Only two women were formally interviewed as part of the project evaluation. All LMC staff interview for this evaluation were male and even representatives interviewed who were working for, or on, women's issues were on the whole men. This could limit the understanding of how the project was experienced from a gender perspective. To have avoided this scenario the evaluator should have requested LMC to ensure a degree of gender balance in the CSOs/CBOs selected to be interviewed.
- The short duration of the field visit, and lack of available funds meant that the evaluator was not able to hold focus group discussions with citizens who were listeners to the community radio shows or readers of the newspapers where trained journalists had their stories printed. Instead the evaluator relied on looking at some of the SMS polls

conducted as part of project and managed to informally speak with citizens in Monrovia during the visit.

- Limiting the evaluation to just two of the ten counties meant that the evaluator had to rely on LMC staff and desk reports to understand how the project was implemented and impacted in the other eight counties. Whilst the two counties selected were chosen to be representative this approach may have meant that some of the nuances between counties experience of the project was not captured in the evaluation.
- Accessing materials produced by the project online was limited by the non-functional nature of the ICT platform and the infrequent uploading of print media stories produced by newspaper to online sites.
- A list of the type of stakeholders the evaluator sought to interview was shared with LMC ahead of the visit, so that they could arrange for the relevant individuals to be interviewed. However, this approach opens up the possibility that there was bias in their selection process. Furthermore, respondents often wanted to present the project in a positive light because they felt as though a good review would led to more funding opportunities in this area in the future. The evaluator kept in mind these possible biases when carrying out the work.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

(i) Relevance

Corruption and a lack of government transparency is widely recognized to be a continuing problem in Liberia. Therefore, the project sought to engage with an issue that not only has implications for governance but for human and social development. Coming at the end of the Ebola outbreak, and with presidential elections scheduled for late 2017, it covered a critical juncture in Liberia's post-war development.

A baseline questionnaire, given to 900 respondents across the ten counties where the project would operate, highlighted that government corruption was seen as rife, with 73.3% of respondents agreeing that corruption is very high at the government level. However almost 60% did not have an understanding of government efforts to tackle corruption; 48% were not at all familiar with the content of the budget or the details of government expenditure; and 47% agreed with the statement that the budget is not accessible. This data points to the relevance of the project in its ambition to foster accountability and transparency through greater information sharing. It is also worth noting that whilst awareness of corruptions existence pervades, there is a gap, according to one respondent, in understanding the consequences corruption has on the delivery of basic services. A gap that this project aimed to address.

The project was operational in ten of Liberia's 15 counties. The five counties not selected to be part of this project were excluded on logistical grounds. Extremely poor road networks meant that a field visit would have come at a significant financial and time cost and so the decision was taken to select the ten most accessible counties. Whilst a nationwide awareness raising campaign would have been preferable, LMC relied on pre-existing relationships with

community radio stations in those counties which did not benefit from project activities, to try and reach beyond the ten targeted counties. This was done by encouraging them to use the radio platform to discuss stories that had been produced by journalists trained as part of the project. It was also noted that community radio stations network coverage often extends beyond county borders. Even though the impact of this is hard to assess the project should be commended for recognizing the importance of reaching out to communities across the country.

The project sought to engage with key stakeholders in order to ensure that all relevant actors were brought on board. Although efforts were made to meet with LACC and GAC as the project was being designed, both played a peripheral role in its implementation with engagement limited to occasional meetings with journalists in an effort to build better working relationships. This limited the projects relevance at a national, institutional level to some extent, although a LACC official did note that it "rarely got prosecutions" and other respondents cited is limited influence with government. The evaluator agrees that main project partners - journalists, community radio stations, CSOs and CBOs - were the most relevant stakeholders to ensure that citizens were better informed and engaged in the project.

CBOs and community radio stations were particularly crucial in the delivery of outreach activities. 95% of respondents to the baseline survey listened to radio at least once a week highlighting the crucial role it plays in sharing information at the community level. The station manager at Radio Bomi noted that "community radio plays a pivotal role in discussing issues directly affecting the community". With another respondent noting that "in empowering community radio stations, which are community owned and run, you are really empowering the community". The project was also very strategic in its use of local structures such as *ataya* bases - gathering points for local youth to drink tea - and okada (motorbike taxi) unions to facilitate discussions in a way that was community led. However, these are often male dominated spaces and more thought could have been given to using, or building, similar structures where women were more prominent. In fact, the overall commitment to ensuring gender balance in the selection of training beneficiaries and anti-corruption champions was lacking and did not appear to have been a serious consideration.

The use of local language was a key component of the outreach activities and helped ensure that education was less of an entry barrier. On field visits, LMC selected team members with knowledge of local languages to lead the awareness activities. When this was not possible the LMC team worked with the community radio stations to identify local community leaders who would act as translators. However, the relevance of the project would have been enhanced

further if representatives from local government had been more involved in the project. Accounting for the expenditure of the annual $200,000 County Development Fund (CDF), awarded to each of Liberia's 15 counties, should have been a key advocacy focus. Efforts were made to invite county officials to take part in trainings and to appear on radio talk shows, but the project did not do enough to facilitate improved interactions, through a structured mechanism.

Specific awareness raising highlighting the importance of 'county sittings' - where the CDF budget is publicly discussed among key stakeholders - would have been welcome, alongside discussions with local county officials as to how it could become more participatory for all citizens. In Bomi it was noted by both local officials and CBO representatives that 'county sittings' had been better attended since the inception of the project. But more could have been done to try and solicit partnerships with county officials aimed at offering citizens the chance to use their newly acquired knowledge to push for greater transparency and accountability.

Finally the projects efforts to incorporate the internet, through the development of an online resource portal which was beset by technical challenges, was not the most relevant way to engage with an online audience. Efforts to engage citizens on transparency and corruption issues online would have been better served through engagements on social media - in particular WhatsApp and Facebook. Although not as widely influential as community radio, these apps are used by young, urban Liberians and are becoming increasingly important, and relevant, in shaping citizen debates.

(ii) Effectiveness
The trainings given to community radio reporters and journalists focused on improving the quality of investigative journalism in the country by clearly explaining the principles of how to corroborate evidence, raising the importance of writer impartially and balance in a story and how they can gather information, through mechanisms such as Freedom of Information requests. A key learning that was conveyed in an interview in Bomi county was that it was important "to listen to communities...not only to find out what money was received but how it was spent".

The training of 100 staff of community radio stations, across the ten counties, and 20 journalists was complemented by small grants that were issued to 30 community radio stations representatives (US$50) and US$100 to each of the 20 journalists, with further income provided on a quarterly basis to support reporting. Whilst this initiative was welcome in that it offered the newly trained individuals the chance to try out these skills in practice some interview respondents questioned whether more significant or sustained grants would have been more effective. Nonetheless in Bomi County one interviewee highlighted how the money had enabled them to produce a story which has led to the suspension of, and ongoing investigation into, the actions of the county accountant. In Lofa county, two officials in the education department were fired after an embezzlement scandal that was uncovered by journalists using the LMC grants.

Acknowledgement was forthcoming from journalists and LMC staff members alike that many media institutions in the country are financially and politically constrained. They also noted that there was a high turnover of individuals at both media institutions and community radio stations (where staff are often volunteers). This could limit the effectiveness of the training in that the skills learned would not be transferred to their replacements. To avoid this, the project could have implemented a training of trainer's approach to empower community radio stations to train all staff and even local reporters on the key tenets of investigative reporting with follow up coaching and mentoring provided remotely by LMC experts.

A similar approach was adopted with the training of 40 CSO representatives from 11 Monrovia based organizations and 102 CBO members from 9 counties. Montserrado county, home to the capital city, was not included as the CSO training had already covered this area. This training, whilst drawing on similar themes to that given to journalists, focused more on advocacy strategies and how awareness around transparency and accountability could be generated and sustained among communities. For CSOs grants were also awarded, each of US$500, to apply the learning in practice.

Although LMC did a good job in selecting CSOs working on different sectors and issues which pertain to corruption (security, education and health were just three areas covered) the small size of the grants limited the effectiveness of this approach. Each recipient had to provide a proposal for how they would spend the money but there was no effort by LMC to monitor the impact or effectiveness of these small grants in achieving their stated objectives. Allocating a larger portion of the budget to grants or reducing the number of grants given, but increasing the size of each grant, would have likely led to more effective results. Additionally grants to CBOs, working in closer proximity with communities at the county level, should have been offered to further embed the awareness raising initiatives.

Ten anti-corruption desks, each with up to five trained anti-corruption champions, hosted by the community radio stations, served as an effective link between key stakeholders and the community. In Bomi, an anti-corruption champion interviewed reflected on how he had been given the nickname "the anti-corruption Mayor". The "champions" provided regular telephone reports to LMC, however written reports, or transcripts of the conversation, may have enabled the grantee to better document their role and effectiveness. So too would have been the formulation of a network - facilitated by a platform such of WhatsApp - of anti-corruption champions so that they could share their own experiences among peers.

The projects narrative reports detailed the number of individuals trained, workshops held and newspaper stories produced but more could have been to document their effectiveness in contributing to the overall outcomes and objectives. Several of the targets set in the project documents results framework (indicators 1.2, 1.3 3.1 and 3.2) all aimed at a percentage increase of citizen awareness but whilst there was a baseline survey done to assess attitudes, no endline was planned for, or undertaken, to measure this.

Over 500 SMS polls, taken throughout the country during the project, each with several hundred respondents could have been used more effectively to highlight the ways the project changed attitudes, but the evaluator found no evidence that these had been comprehensively documented or used to shape the projects development. Efforts to share these polls with government officials only resonated during the election campaign period; at other times they routinely ignored them.

The effectiveness of the project was also impacted by a failure to properly account for risk either fully enough, or in some instances, at all. The risk mitigation framework outlined in the project document did not rate any of the nine risks identified as high but issues such as attrition in the media industry were cited by several respondents as being a significant challenge to the project's effectiveness over time. Technical challenges relating to the online portal, the physical risks that journalists and civil society activists might be exposed to in investigating corrupt practices and individuals, as well as the challenge of effectively engaging with the state, and state structures, working to tackle corruption, should have been captured in the initial risk assessment.

(iii) Efficiency
According to the financial utilization reports which were independently verified by a national auditor, the budget was fully accounted for, with each line spending exactly the amount estimated. A line for miscellaneous expenditure of US$1,500 was also spent in full, in the main to account for fluctuating conversion rates between the US and Liberian dollars for elements of the project where local currency was used. However, the LMC team did note that accessing some of the more remote areas during the rainy season to deliver project activities had higher travel cost implications that initially budgeted for. In these instances, the budget for project activities was used or efforts were made to reduce travel costs to other counties. Generally, the challenges of accessing difficult terrain were well managed and drew on the grantee's experience of working across the country.

The high costs of outreach activities reflected the challenge of access. Whilst it was important that LMC visited each county in order to deliver trainings and establish anti-corruption champion desks the project could have improved its efficiency had regional implementing partners, perhaps the community radio stations themselves, been empowered financially to carry out some of the community awareness programmes. An additional cost-saving measure, that could have freed up funds for expenditure elsewhere on the project, would have been to increase the use of remote mentoring. The anti-corruption champions were in monthly contact, by phone, with the LMC team and a more wider use of this approach would have improved the efficiency of the projects implementation.

Outreach and awareness raising activities faced some delays in the first year of the project. The rainy season (May to August) made roads to counties where trainings of CBOs, CSOs and community radio journalists were scheduled to take place impassable. These were rescheduled for September 2016. Project delays had knock on implications, with the small grants component

for community radio's, journalists and CSOs only properly initiated in the second year of the project. This delay did not have a significant impact on the outcome give the size of the grants (maximum of US$500) meant that activities were only normally limited to one day or investigate reports that were concluded over a period of a few weeks. However, with the grants component making up 10% of the project's total budget more could have been done to ensure that the money given to the beneficiaries was spent in line with their proposals through rudimentary financial reporting requirements. This would have also helped to better understand the impact the grants had in helping to achieve the projects outcomes.

Some project outputs were not completed or faced significant obstacles. The evaluator was only able to access three of the proposed four cost of corruption reports produced under output 3.4. As noted in the narrative report the online anti-corruption database, which aimed to hold details of at least 100 corruption cases faced a number of challenges. Initially the public launch of the platform had to be delayed for technical and political reasons, after the individual who was set to launch the platform became embroiled in a corruption scandal. Securing the case details proved to be a challenge, with only 32 uploaded, before a crash of the LMC server took the platform offline. During the evaluators visit to Liberia the platform remained offline, with LMC staff noting that they neither had the internal expertise or capital to contract external experts, to get it up and running again. This means that the repository of information which LMC collected was offline for a year of the project. IT training of in-house capacity, rather than the use of an external expert, would have been more effective in ensuring the functionality and sustainability of the ICT platform.

The project required continuous and frequent engagement with an array of key partners from CBOs and CSOs to community journalists and even local government officials. On the whole this was done effectively and efficiently with the trainings reaching, in all but one instance, the number of individuals targeted. Here LMC was able to draw on an extensive network of media partners to not only assist with delivering some of the trainings but in identifying the individuals who would benefit and utilize most, the knowledge gathered from the training. Efforts to engage LACC and GAC in advance and at the start of the project were commendable and important even if their involvement was difficult to sustain for political reasons outside of LMCs control. However more could have been done to coordinate this project with other donor funded ventures addressing similar themes. This includes the Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia's "follow the money" campaign and online budget analysis portal and the five-year USAID funded Liberia Accountability and Voice Initiative (2015-2020).

(iv) Impact
Quantifying impact on projects that focus primarily on awareness raising is not always easy as the knowledge obtained may not always be used immediately. The projects lack of an end line survey, to assess how the initiatives to increase and improve engagement with issues of corruption transformed the level of understanding and awareness, was an oversight in its design.

It limits the ability of the evaluation to make evidence-based statements on some of its targeted impacts. Especially given the detailed baseline carried out and the percentage increases in terms of awareness it sought to achieve in the results matrix.
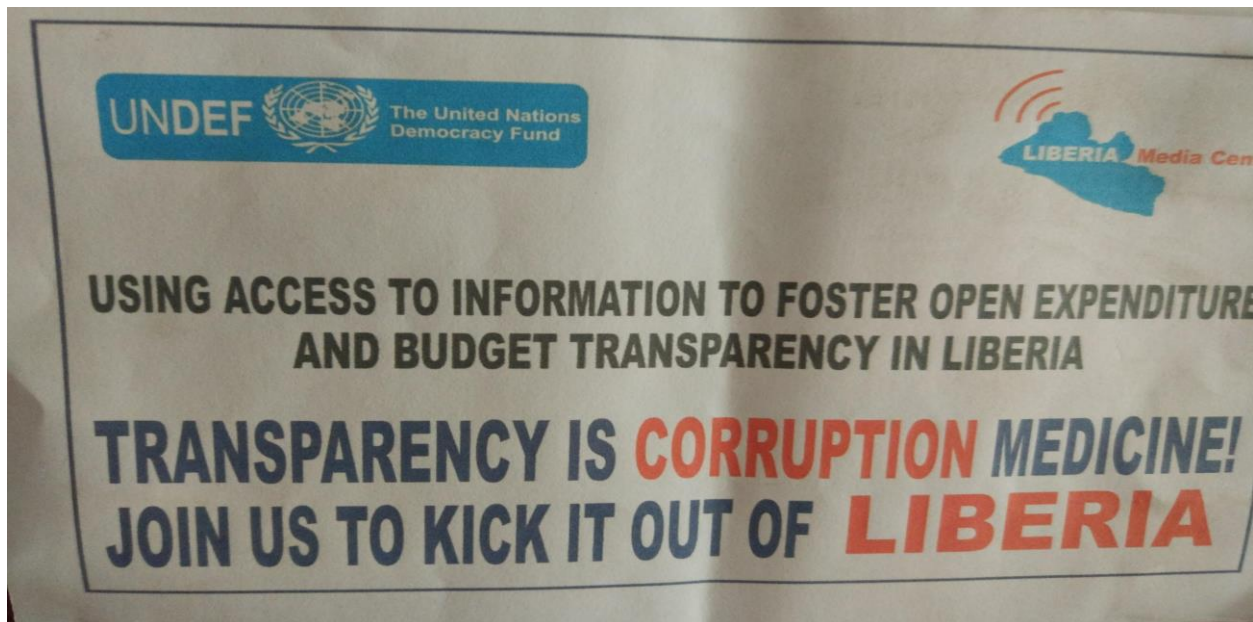
The project clearly had impacts in improving citizen engagement and interaction at the level of county government. The evaluator visited Bomi County where several examples were given of newly empowered journalists and radio producers using their skills to report on corruption issues and put pressure on local officials to explain expenditure and be more transparent. According to LMC staff the project recorded similar successes in other districts across the country. But the project could have done more to think about how its impact could have been documented more effectively.

Creating a resource, online, of the project's impact, in terms of stories produced, would have enabled a more thorough assessment of their impact than simply recording the number of stories written (45) or uncovered by radio-led investigations (74). The 30 community-level awareness events did not try and ascertain how many people were reached by the activities; listenership figures for community radio's, if available, would have given an example of the potential reach of the project; monthly written reports from anti-corruption champions and details of SMS polling could have been used in the "cost of corruption" reports; and where communities were successful in improving transparency in fiscal accountability case studies of why and how would have enhanced the understanding of what was replicable in other counties.

The recent uncovering of missing Liberian dollars from the Central Bank of Liberia shows the impactful role that media reporting can play in raising awareness of corruption in Liberia.

Documenting the investigations written for this project more thoroughly and ensuring that they were stored in an easy to access format, would have enabled an evaluation of their longer-term impact on the corruption environment. The cost of corruption reports was a clear effort to do this, and the fact that at least one edition was reprinted, shows that there was appetite for the information being produced. However, it could have resonated more by focusing more on county level corruption dynamics, not national and regional ones.

The project had lofty ambitions for its national impact. The target for outcome 3.3 "at least 5 concrete policy steps initiated by the authorities over the project lifespan" was not met. The government made some efforts to empower the Internal Audit Commission and an LACC amendment bill was tabled in 2016 but it subsequently faded from view. Given that the majority of the projects resources were devoted to awareness raising and enhanced knowledge among citizens and media, this expected outcome seems disconnected from the project activities. There was limited advocacy directed at policy change and even if there had been it would have been difficult to link any government reform processes on corruption to the LMC project specifically.

However, LMC, as a co-convenor of the 2017 televised presidential debate, ensured that one question for the prospective aspirants was around how they would tackle corruption if elected to office. In general, the issue was one of the most discussed during the election campaign. However, George Weah, who was elected president, did not attend the debate, though his party, did make several commitments to tackling corruption if they were to be elected to office. Now that they have been more aware citizens may be in a position to hold him to account. One respondent noted that at the county level officials seeking election became much more responsive to citizen demands and suggested that this could be exploited to secure promises on improved budget transparency and accountability, which could subsequently be used to lobby officials when in office.

Whilst citizens, as a result of the projects training and sponsored reporting, are more aware of corruption and have shown a renewed interest in advocating for greater transparency in government expenditure, there is a risk that their demands will continue to be ignored by the government; at both national and county levels. Therefore, a potentially negative impact of the project is a more aware citizenry that lacks the avenues to push for incremental change of the system. The project trained CBOs, CSOs and journalists on how to make freedom of information requests as granted in the 2010 FOI Law (with mixed success) and sought to encourage citizens to engage local county officials at 'county sittings' to improve fiscal transparency. However, establishing structures to increase and encourage dialogue between elected officials and citizens on the issue of corruption would have better ensured a continued impact from the newly acquired awareness of citizens. Allowing them to apply consistent pressure on elected officials to be more transparent.

(v) Sustainability
Sustainability was recognized as being an ongoing challenge facing media and civil society in Liberia in interviews for this evaluation. LMC staff were candid in acknowledging that in the

context of Liberia, where a lot of CSO projects remain dependent on donor funding, it remains a challenge to have projects that follow on from one and other. LMC does a lot of awareness raising on a wide variety of topics, from corruption to healthcare. It is difficult for it to set the agenda as to what areas it wants to work on and as such projects are difficult to sustain outside the funding cycle.

The lack of resources over a longer time period was also a challenge acknowledged by those working in the media. Journalists interviewed for this evaluation spoke of the financial difficulties of finding funds to support investigative reporting and the risks involved to their personal safety and to the newspaper or radio which may be sued for libel. This lack of resources to investigate stories is replicated at the county level and so whilst journalists, through the projects training, have the skills to undertaken investigative reporting a lack of resources has the potential to undermine its sustainability. This is particularly true when it comes to corruption stories as journalists can be susceptible to bribes themselves given that many earn less than US$200 a month.

Nonetheless by working with established, and well-listened to, community radio stations which are likely to be a mainstay of the community in years to come and utilizing local debate structures - such as *ataya* bases - the project ensured that some of the key messages will continue to exist beyond the project. In Bomi one weekly radio phone-in debate, "What's on your mind" is now increasingly focused on corruption issues, even though the project has come to an end. Similarly, the anti-corruption champion interviewed continues to be seen as a resource among community members. He noted that he was continuing to do what he could even though he was no longer paid by the project. The awareness of communities, particular in some of the more remote counties, has been enhanced significantly to the extent that they are asking a lot more questions of their elected officials. And LMC is now working on a project to support the development of business plans for community radio stations across the country, making them more self-sustaining and potentially providing the kind of additional capital required for investigative reporting.

However, utilizing a training of trainers approach would have furthered the reach of the messages and skills being taught; documenting, either digitally or in paper key anti-corruption messages and stories (something that the project tried unsuccessfully to do) that could have served as a learning/e-learning resource at the conclusion of the project would have been a valuable repository of information for years to come. LMC could have also done more to utilize their membership of both the Open Government Partnership and Liberian National Integrity Forum to pursue national advocacy and to partner with other civil society led initiatives around anti-corruption. Identifying a roadmap for improved engagement with government officials, ministries and institutions or improving citizen awareness of the new governments key electoral promises to improve transparency and accountability. Building on the work of the anti-corruption champions, small community led anti-corruption structures could have been established by the project - at minimal cost - to ensure communities continued to discuss and strategize ways to enhance transparency and accountability beyond the end of the project.

(vi) UNDEF added value

Although the project primarily targeted improvements to the quality and transparency of governance structures in Liberia, the impact that improvements in accountable expenditure can have for the delivery of basic social services and economic opportunities is significant.

Awareness raising of the importance of increase transparency and accountability is not an area that the government appears keen on funding. In an interview with LACC officials they noted that the budget allocated for 2018/19 was barely sufficient to cover salaries, let alone outreach activities. CSOs like LMC have an important role to play in drawing attention to these issues. One that they can only play with the financial backing of international partners like UNDEF..

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) Conclusions

1. Phone-in programmes on community radio stations are a key way of ensuring improved citizen awareness and engagement at the county level.

2. The lack of an end line survey, to complement the findings of the baseline reduced the ability of the project to ascertain its effectiveness and impact.

3. Grants awarded as part of the project to CSOs and journalists were an excellent way of building on the training with practical experiences. However, the size of the grants were too small.

4. Citizens awareness of the issues around corruption, transparency and accountability were increased but structures to facilitate better engagement with government officials remain lacking.

5. Knowledge obtained through the projects training was formally limited to participants.

6. The projects use of an array of communication strategies to engage citizens (SMS, print media, radio) was effective but online platforms could have been explored more.

7. A lack of political will at the national level for tackling corruption has inhibited the impact of anti-corruption initiatives.

8. The engagement with LACC & GAC did not provide a significant amount of added value to the successes of the project.

9. ICT challenges, limited the impact of the Public-Sector Investments tracking portal.

10. Anti-Corruption champions provided significant impetus to the project and were a key focal person for community members when raising concerns.

11. The ways in which information developed and shared throughout the project could be used after the funding ended was not given sufficient thought.

12. Poor road networks caused some delays to the project and meant that travel costs comprised a significant portion of the budget.

13. Project risks were not properly captured in the initial assessment.

14. The project did not consider gender sufficiently in design, implementation or impact.

15. The County Sittings used to discuss the way the County Development Fund was to be allocated provided an excellent opportunity for citizen engagement.

(ii) Recommendations for UNDEF

1. Support community radio stations to develop business plans so they can become more financially self-sufficient and sustainable.
2. Use social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to instigate debates and share information regarding transparency and accountability, particularly among urban youth.
3. Support the building of in-house ICT capacity so that IT challenges experienced by grantees can be resolved with limited financial implications.
4. Whilst physical visits are important at the start of the project, follow up visits could have been as effective, but less costly, if local implementing partners had been used (in this instance community radio stations) or greater weight given to telephone mentoring and follow up.
5. Set requirements to ensure gender balance in training workshops and disaggregate data collected for baseline surveys by gender.

(iii) Recommendations for the grantee

1. Fewer, but larger, grants would have allowed journalists more scope for the uncovering of larger corruption stories and more impactful CSO initiatives. CBOs should also have been given grants to run small initiatives at the county level.
2. When designing a project that seeks to measure its progress by "increasing" knowledge and changes in attitude, tools to capture that information, like endlines, need to be an integral part of the project plan.
3. Strengthen dialogue mechanisms between citizens and local governments. County sittings offer a platform to build a better mutual understanding and facilitate a more cooperative working relationship between citizens and elected officials on transparency and accountability issues.
4. Use a training of trainers approach to increase those reached by the training. Use training material to provide free lectures to journalism students at leading universities in Liberia and other journalism diploma granting schools.
5. Given that both the LACC and GAC have no physical presence in Liberia's counties and

the focus of community engagement was primarily on CSDF, more focus on engaging county government officials through trainings would be strategic.

6. Make citizens/CSOs/CBOs aware of election campaign promises made by leading political figures on transparency and accountability and encourage citizens/CSOs/CBOs to use those promises to lobby for change.
7. Create anti-corruption champions network(s), using the group function on WhatsApp, to allow individuals to share experiences, knowledge and learn from each other.
8. Use community radio stations anti-corruption desks as resource centers. Replicate the repository of information available in these settings, online.
9. Ensure that the wider operational context of the project is captured in any risk assessment, with special emphasis on ensuring that risks are considered not only to the implementation of the project but to the projects beneficiaries (investigating corruption places journalists at risk).
10. Encourage county governments to broader access to these 'county sittings', with the eventual goal of moving towards a participatory budgeting approach.

Conclusions	Recommendations
Phone-in programmes on community radio stations are a key way of ensuring improved citizen awareness and engagement at the county level.	Support community radio stations to develop business plans so they can become more financially self-sufficient and sustainable.
The lack of an end line survey, to complement the findings of the baseline reduced the ability of the project to ascertain its effectiveness and impact.	When designing a project that seeks to measure its progress by "increasing" knowledge and changes in attitude, tools to capture that information, like endlines, need to be an integral part of the project plan.
Grants awarded as part of the project to CSOs and journalists were an excellent way of building on the training with practical experiences. However, the size of the grants were too small.	Fewer, but larger, grants would have allowed journalists more scope for the uncovering of larger corruption stories and more impactful CSO initiatives. CBOs should also have been given grants to run small initiatives at the county level.
Citizens awareness of the issues around corruption, transparency and accountability were increased but structures to facilitate better engagement with government officials remain lacking.	Strengthen dialogue mechanisms between citizens and local governments. County sittings and project management committees offer a platform to build a better mutual understanding and facilitate a more cooperative working relationship between

	citizens and elected officials on transparency and accountability issues.
Knowledge obtained through the projects training was formally limited to participants.	Use a training of trainer's approach to increase those reached by the training. Use training material to provide free lectures to journalism students at leading universities in Liberia.
The projects use of an array of communication strategies to engage citizens (SMS, print media, radio) was effective but online platforms could have been explored more.	Use social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to instigate debates and share information regarding transparency and accountability, particularly among urban youth.
A lack of political will at the national level for tackling corruption has inhibited the impact of anti-corruption initiatives.	Make citizens/CSOs/CBOs aware of election campaign promises made by leading political figures on transparency and accountability and encourage citizens/CSOs/CBOs to use those promises to lobby for change.
The engagement with LACC & GAC did not provide a significant amount of added value to the successes of the project.	Given that both the LACC and GAC do not have a physical presence in Liberia's counties and the focus of community engagement was primarily on CSDF, more focus on engaging county government officials through trainings would be strategic.
ICT challenges, limited the impact of the Public-Sector Investments tracking portal.	Support the building of in-house ICT capacity so that IT challenges experienced by grantees can be resolved with limited financial implications.
Anti-Corruption champions provided significant impetus to the project and were a key focal person for community members when raising concerns.	Create anti-corruption champions network(s), using the group function on WhatsApp, to allow individuals to share experiences, knowledge and learn from each other.
The ways in which information developed and shared throughout the project could be used after the funding ended was not given sufficient thought.	Use community radio stations anti-corruption desks as resource centers. Replicate the repository of information available in these settings, online.
Poor road networks caused some delays to	Whilst physical visits are important at the

the project and meant that travel costs comprised a significant portion of the budget.	start of the project, follow up visits could have been as effective, but less costly, if local implementing partners had been used (in this instance community radio stations) or greater weight given to telephone mentoring and follow up.
Project risks were not properly captured in the initial assessment.	Ensure that the wider operational context of the project is captured in any risk assessment, with special emphasis on ensuring that risks are considered not only to the implementation of the project but to the projects beneficiaries (investigating corruption places journalists at risk).
The project did not consider gender sufficiently in design, implementation or impact.	Set requirements to ensure gender balance in training workshops and disaggregate data collected for baseline surveys by gender.
The County Sittings used to discuss the way the County Development Fund was to be allocated provided an excellent opportunity for citizen engagement but can be prone to manipulation and corruption.	Encourage county governments to broader access to these 'county sittings', in keeping with Section 9 of the Budget Law as revised, with the eventual goal of moving towards a participatory budgeting approach.

VI.   LESSONS LEARNED

- Community radio is key in raising community level awareness and engaging citizens in debates around corruption issues due to high levels of local listenership. This is further enhanced when programmes are conducted in local languages.
- Utilizing local structures (*ataya*) bases and local transport union networks ensured that key messages of project became part of community debates and discussions. However, they are often male dominated spaces.
- CSDF's can be a key area for scrutiny of funds for local community development as citizens are more engaged with more local issues that affect their day to day existence.
- Journalists knowledge and skills are further enhanced not just through training but when they have the financial resources to utilize new investigative skills.
- ICT platforms are likely to be more effective if in-house capacity exists to resolve technical challenges.
- Maximizing all communication channels for sharing awareness raising material ensures the greatest reach and impact.
- LACC and GAC lack political and financial independence to push the anti-corruption agenda within government. With their lack of a county presence, local government

structures should be targeted as the key mechanism for improving fiscal transparency and accountability.

- Newspaper coverage has a much wider reach than simply the number of copies printed. Stories are often debate and discussed on community radio stations which have very wide coverage.
- Improvements in transparency and accountability at the county level are not only more attainable than changes to national strategies but they can have more direct, and bigger impact, on citizens lives on a day to day basis.
- Awareness that corruption is going on exists among a significant percentage of the population but the consequences it has on the delivery of basic services is less well known.
- Local government officials are more receptive to listening to citizen concerns and making promises in run-up to election processes. Commitments that can then be used to hold officials accountable when in office.

VII.   ANNEXES

Annex 1: Example evaluation questions and detailed findings

In addition to using the broader questions for evaluation set out in the UNDEF evaluation manual further questions, specifically related to the project in ten counties of Liberia will be asked. Below are some examples that will be used. Different questions will be posed depending on who is being interviewed. This is not an exhaustive list.

Relevance

- → How did you select the counties, the training participants and crucially the anti-corruption community champions for the project? What were the key considerations?
- → How was the training manual tailored to the local dynamics? Did it deliver fresh insights and improve understandings on key issues?
- → What impact did the difficulties of engaging with the Anti-Corruption Commission and other key government stakeholders have on the project? What could LMC have done better to mitigate these potential risks?
- → Why was it important to use different media outlets to share messages (print, radio, SMS etc.)? What languages was the material produced in? And could the project have made more use of social media platforms to advance awareness? If so how?
- → Was the ICT component of the project needed, given the number of mediums already in use and the lack of a connected social media campaign? A comment on the low levels of internet penetration here.
- → Did the risk assessment framework drawn up at the start of the project accurately capture the key risks facing the project? Why was no consideration given to the personal safety risks of people who speak out against corruption?

Effectiveness

- → What did you learn from attending the trainings/workshops and how have you used that new knowledge in your everyday actions in the community? What barriers persist?
- → If you are aware of the radio-phone in debates and discussions tell me about the discussions, you heard.
- → How accurate were the tools used to measure the effectiveness of the project (% increase in awareness) and why was this chosen over a number of people reached approach?
- → Could more have been done to link project beneficiaries with local government or anti-corruption bodies? Or more have been done to explain how they could be interacted with?
- → What has been the most powerful piece of media produced as part of this project and how did it shape a particular investigation or issue?

Efficiency

➔ Did the grant issuing component of the project run without being too much of an administration burden? What were the challenges

➔ How much of an inhibitor was the ICT challenges that the project faced? Both in terms of additional costs but also in relation to time.

➔ Did the lack of an implementing partner impact on the projects efficiency? If so how and what was done to mitigate against this? Given the number of counties covered and the logistical challenges would, in hindsight, an implementing partner have not only improved the projects ability to deliver on time but also increased value for money?

➔ The project failed to deliver some outputs like the full number of cost of corruption reports. What is the explanation for this?

➔ Did civil society organizations and media houses send the most relevant and qualified people to the trainings?

Impact

➔ How have you used the knowledge acquired to improve the anti-corruption environment in Liberia in your community/county?

➔ Have you observed a marked change in attitudes? If so what? And what, in particular, has driven this change in attitude?

➔ How do you see the mid/long term benefits of the project working out now that it has officially drawn to a close?

➔ How do you plan on sharing the knowledge you have acquired on the issue in the future with others?

➔ In the design of the project there seems to be a lack of activities relating to how this new knowledge will actually be applied to reforming government practices and pushing them to commit to greater transparency in the sharing of their budgets etc. Was enough thought given to this component? What more could have been done?

➔ Have you experienced any negative impacts from the project? Such as risks associated with exposing corruption?

➔ In what ways were the cost of corruption reports used to raise awareness at the citizen level but also to advocate for systemic change at the government level?

➔ What analysis was done on the data collected by the community opinion polls? And how standardized were the polls across different communities?

Sustainability

➔ Would a training of trainer's approach have allowed the project to reach more beneficiaries and improve the longevity of the project?

➔ What measures were put in place to ensure that the acquired knowledge can be used to continue to advocate for change now the project is finished?

➔ How is the database to be maintained beyond the life cycle of the project?

➜ Was the issue of corruption discussed and debated in the 2017 presidential election campaign? Were promises made around corruption? how much were they in line with the thinking of this project? And have those political commitments been translated into reality in 2018 so far?

➜ Is there evidence to show how the knowledge which was targeted to specific counties is being spread to communities outside the initial targeted ones. If so how?

➜ How is the role of the anti-corruption community champion seen beyond the end of the project? Are they likely to be maintained?

➜ Any indications of national initiatives or policy developments that this awareness raising project has played a small part in contributing too? Has the new government made firm commitment to improving transparency in the execution of the 2019 budget for example?

➜ UNDEF value added: What other complementary initiatives are being undertaken to push for greater transparency and accountability in government expenditure in Liberia? And how did this project align with those interventions?

ANNEX 2: Documents Reviewed

UDF-LIR-14-591: Project related documents
- Project Document
- Mid-Term Project Report
- Narrative Final Report
- Milestone Verification Report
- Financial Utilization Reports
- Three "Cost of Corruption" briefs
- Baseline study on public perceptions of government expenditure and accountability practices in Liberia

External sources
- Afrobarometer. 2013. *What Are Liberians Saying about Corruption and Trust in Public Institutions in Liberia?*
- Ford, T. 2018. *Ellen Johnson Sirleaf: The legacy of Africa's first elected female president.* BBC News.
- Giahyue, J. 2018. *Weah sworn in as president, vows to end corruption.* Reuters
- Government of Liberia. 2008. *An Act to establish the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission*
- Nyei, I. 2018. *Weah Cautioned Over Tenured Bill.* Front Page Africa
- Sieh, R. 2018. *Reporting the News in Africa: Changes and Challenges to Independent Media.* Chatham House Lecture.
- The Carter Center. *A Citizen's Guide to the 2010 Liberia Freedom of Information Act*
- Transparency International. 2017. *Corruption Perceptions Index: Liberia*

ANNEX 3: Persons Interviewed

21 October 2018	
Arrival, international consultant	
22 October 2018	
Victor Mayue	Project Officer, Liberia Media Center
Francis Brewer	M & E Officer, Liberia Media Center
Klonnious Blamo	Media Officer, Liberia Media Center
Thomas Tiah	Outreach Officer, Liberia Media Center
Jeppelle Page	Finance Officer, Liberia Media Center
23 October 2018	
Commissioner Charles Gibson	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
Representative	Centre for Transparency & Accountability in Liberia
24 October 2018	
Dixon Penie	Association of Community Radio Trainers
Richelieu Alison	Director, Centre for Security and Peace Studies
Akori M Baysah Jnr	Journalist, United Methodist Radio
Representative	Movement for Responsible Citizenship
Mark Mangenfia	Journalist, Women Voices
25 October 2018	
Travel to Tubmansburg,Bomi County	
Zinnah Cassell	Anti-Corruption Champion, Bomi County
Boima Q Sando	Executive Director, Bomi Lifecare and Awareness
Edwin Dahnmoa & Richard Williams	Journalists, Radio Bomi 98.9FM
Roselyn Tokeh	Fiscal Superintendent, Bomi County

Travel to Monrovia	
26 October 2018	
Lamii Kpargoi	The Carter Centre Liberia
Departure, international consultant	

ANNEX 4: Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organization
CSDF	County Social Development Funds
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GAC	General Auditing Commission
LACC	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
LMC	Liberia Media Center
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund