An insight on socio- economic and political trends across Liberia BY LONG-TERM OBSERVERS

Overview

We are back at it and this month, with more exciting news which will be covered under our "A Word from Our Secretariat" section. Make sure to read it!

Long Term Observers report from the counties this month suggest that Liberians should brace themselves for several reports and images of impassible roads as we get deeper into the rainy season. About half of all submissions from the districts find that roads are not maintained. This has been an observable trend from the launch of this newsletter in January to date. Additional submissions follow last month's trend showing that lawmakers have not improved on constituency visits or reporting to electorates. Taken together, we wonder how those lawmakers who have not reached out to their districts can exercise proper representation of their constituency's interest with executive authorities such as the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), the authority responsible for maintaining roads throughout the country?

Bad road condition can contribute negatively to county development as it slows down economic movements, causing burdensome loss of income to already poor people, increases vehicle repair costs and can lead to tragic loss of lives due to avoidable road accidents. We call on the MPWs to begin working on the roads especially in the southern corridor and we also call on lawmakers to urgently exercise oversight of the process.

No:	County	Districts
1	Bomi	1,2
2	Bong	1,2,3,4,5,6
3	Gbapolu	3
4	Grand Bassa	2,3
5	Grand cape Mount	2,3
6	Grand Gedeh	1,2,3
7	Lofa	1,2,3,4,5
8	Margibi	4,5
9	Maryland	1,2,3
10	Montserrado	1,2,3,5,10,15,16,17
11	Nimba	1,3,5,7
12	RiverGee	1
13	Sinoe	1,3

CONTENTS

A Word from the Head of Secretariat

Keen observers of these newsletters would have realized by now what has been a nationwide outlook of the contents of our newsletters. Since January, we have brought you the general uptake of the socio-economic conditions affecting Liberians in the seventy-three districts and made calls on solution holders to take action to ameliorate them. Our readers have told us they want more. We have listened.

In addition to the national picture, beginning with our August Monthly, we will be adding two new focus areas the newsletters: A legislative monitoring section and a county focus article.

What is this all about?

Between legislative monitoring reports, a lot of interactions take place on Capitol Hill that go underreported from a comprehensive analytical outcome-level perspective; in short, how legislative actions at the Capitol impact or will impact people back in their constituency. LEON will take on this each month. For example, part of our legislative monitoring series will be considering county and district-level budget analysis as appropriated by lawmakers and delving into how appropriated budgets are reaching

We Are Adding Legislative Monitoring and County Focus Themes

electorates in terms of projects and programs implementation as determined by the County Sitting. We will also be looking at issue-based legislative performance on oversight and representation.

I am even more excited about our County Focus series. This series will see us take an in-depth look at one trending issue in a county each month narrowing down on its contours from a citizens' perspectives. For example, the recent reported contamination of the Marvoe Creek and Mafa River in Grand Cape Mount County that according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was due to cyanide spillage by the Bea Mountain Mining Corporation. The EPA then advised affected communities to "desist from using and /or consuming anything from the water bodies...or using contaminated water sources for any purpose." In cases such as these and similarly, LEON will be talking to communities to gather how their livelihood have been impacted and investigating whether they have found alternative sources of livelihood.

The county focus reports will be taken into affected districts where lawmakers and solution holders in the executive will be invited to hear from the people themselves. LTOs will subsequently follow-up on agreed upon plans for redress.

We are hoping for an even more exciting newsletter beginning August but more importantly, we are expecting that issues affecting people will be more poignantly brought to the attention of those with the solution.

2. Methodology

The basis of the findings in this report comes from observations of Long-Term Observers (LTOs) assigned across the seventy-three electoral districts of Liberia. In each district, the Liberia Elections Observation Network has recruited one resident whose responsibility it is to periodically move across the district observing the conditions of roads, road repairs, prices of staple consumables, the status of health centers and clinics and other pressing issues in the districts such as lawmakers' interaction with local constituents. LTO findings uploaded weekly to a pre-developed checklist in our data center called ELMO. Data analysts at LEON will clean the data along with LTOs each month and then analyzed the final results for these Monthly Monitors.

4. Trending Economic Activities

This month, we followed these trends:
The Trends:

- District accessibility
- Road maintenance
- Reasons for non-maintenance of roads by Government.
- Inflation in prices of commodities o   Prices of commodities
- Ritualistic killings
- Drug Abuse
    - Gender and drug abuse
    - Drug dealers in the districts
- Lawmakers' activities
- Health related issues
- Active CSOs and CBOs

Month	County	# of checklists	# of LTOs per county
May	Montserrado	17	17
	Bomi	3	3
	Grand Cape Mount	3	3
	Gbarpolu	3	3
	Lofa	5	5
	Nimba	8	9
	Bong	7	7
	Margibi	5	5
	Grand Bassa	5	5
	Rivercess	2	2
	Grand Gedeh	3	3
	Grand Kru	1	2
	Sinoe	3	3
	Maryland	3	3
	Rivergee	3	3
	Total	**71**	**73**

Data show 71 out of 73 monitors nationwide filed in report on social economic activities in their districts for May. Nimba and Grand Kru are the two counties who full number of LTOs did not file in reports.

Fig.1. District Accessibility

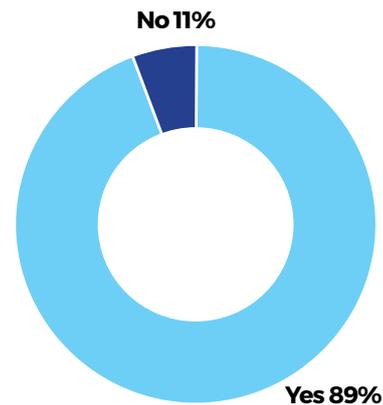**Is your district accessible?**

Fig. 1.0: 89% of our monitors reports filed in indicated road accessibility and 11% inaccessibility.

Fig. 2. Road Maintenance
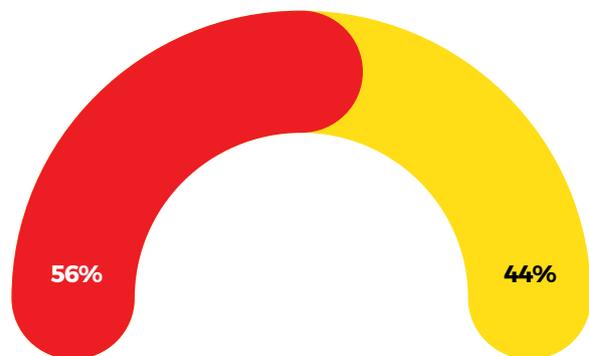
Are the roads in your district being maintained?

Figure 2.0: shows 44% reported YES to maintained roads, with 56% reporting NO.

If your district is not being maintained, what is the reason

29%
Lack of government interest

23%
Lack of representative interest

7%
Lack of community voluntering
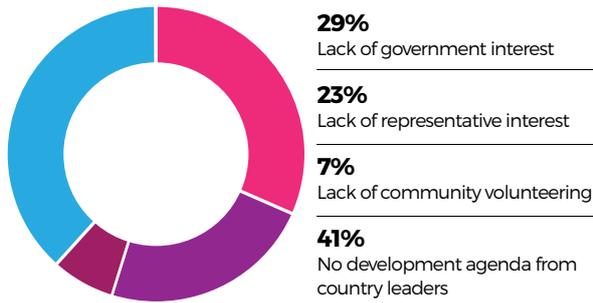
41%
No development agenda from country leaders

Fig. 2.1: 41% reported no developmental agenda as key reasons for no road maintenance, follow by lack of government interest at 29%, lack of representative interest at 23% and lack of communities voluntering for 7% as the lowest.

3. Inflation Around the Districts

Is there inflation in the prices of basic commodities?

No 6%

Yes 94%
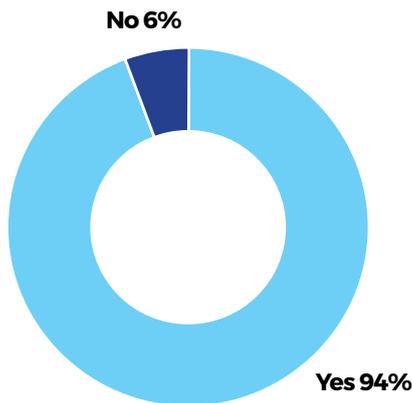
Fig. 3.0: 94% reported YES to inflation in prices of basic commodities and 6% NO.

3.1. Breakdown of Commodities

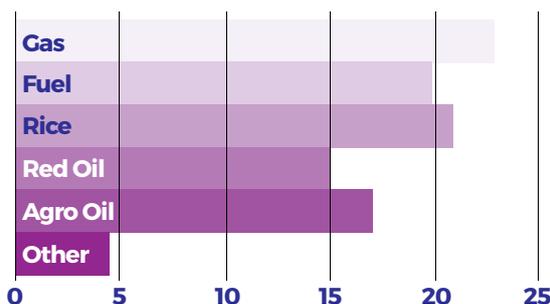**Which commodities prices are high?**

Fig. 3.1: 23% reported high gas price, fuel at 21%, Rice at 20%, Ago oil at17%, Red oil at 15% and others at 4% the lowest.

Fig. 4. Illegal Drug Activities

Are there drug activities in your district?
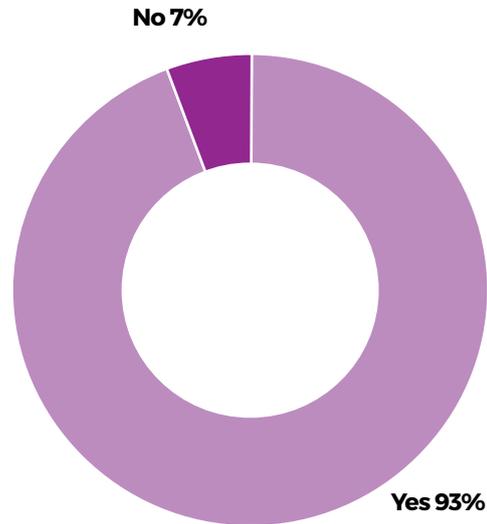
No 7%

Yes 93%

Fig.4.0: 93% reported YES to drug activities in their districts with 7% reported NO.

Fig. 4.1. Illegal Drug Usage Amongst Age Groups

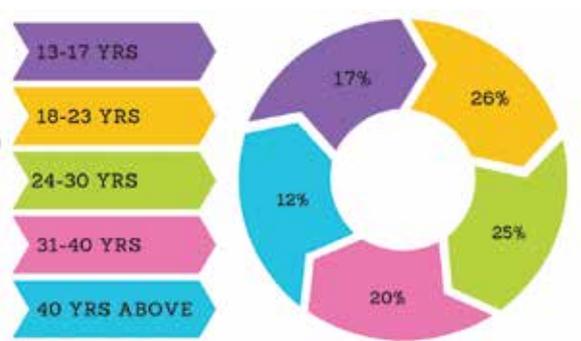**Which age are highly involved in drug activities?**

Fig. 4.1: 26% of the report classified the age 17-23 as mostly involve in drug activities, follow by age group 24-30 at 25%, 31-40 at 20%, 13-17 at 17% and 40+ at 12%.

Fig. 4.2. Gender and Drugs

Which gender is highly involved in drug activities in your district?
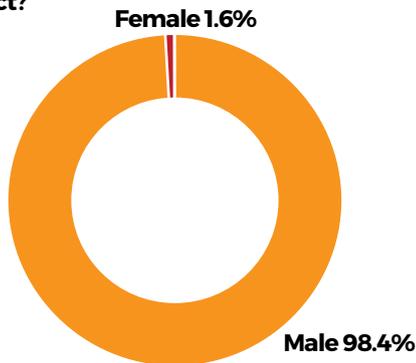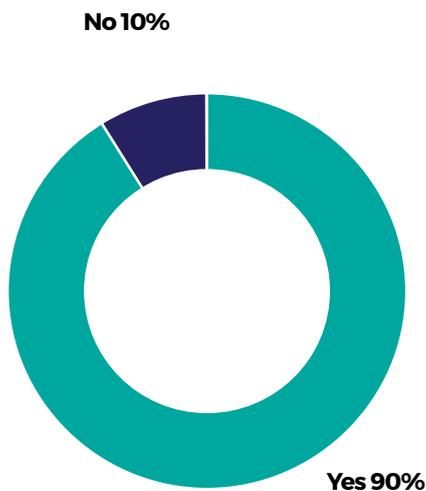
Female 1.6%

Male 98.4%

Figure 4.2: 99% reported male as highly involve in drug activities, with only 1% reporting female.

Fig. 4.3. Illegal Drug Dealers Living in District

Is there a drug dealer living in you district?

No 10%

Yes 90%

4.3: 90% reported YES to drug dealer living in districts and 10% reported NO.

Fig. 5. Ritualistic Killing

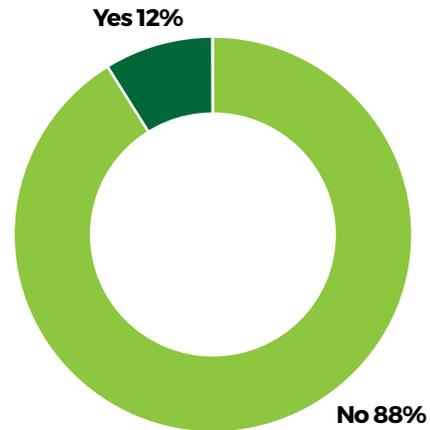**Is ritualistic killing ongoing in your district?**

Yes 12%

No 88%

Fig. 5.0: 88% NO ritualistic activities and 12% YES. Montserrado dist. 1, Lofa dist. 4, Maryland dist. 1, Gbapolu dist. 2, Bomi dist. 2, Rivercess dist. 2, Bong dist. 5 and Sinoe dist. 3) reported ritualistic activities.

Fig. 6. Active CSOs and CBOs in District

Are the active CSOs and CBOs in your district?
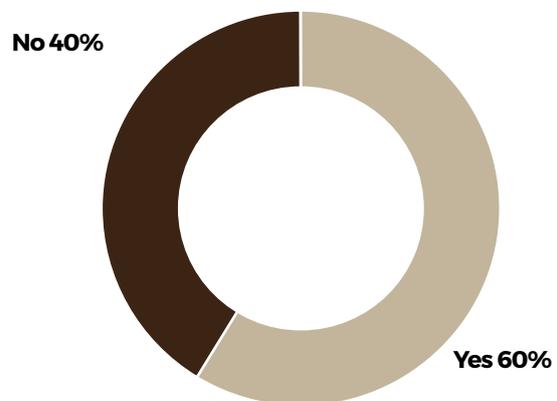
No 40%

Yes 60%

Fig. 6.0: 60% reported YES to active CSOs & CBOs in districts, while 40% reported NO.
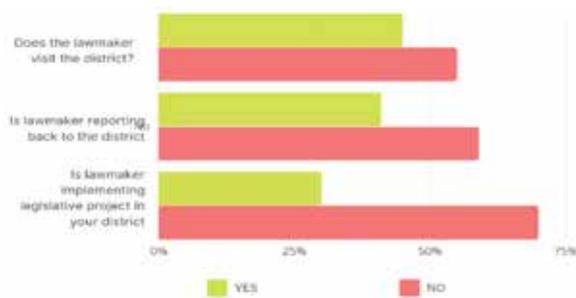
Fig. 7. Lawmaker Activities

Fig. 7.0: 55% reported NO to lawmaker visit to districts, 59% NO to lawmakers reporting back to districts, and 70% NO to legislative project implementation in the districts.
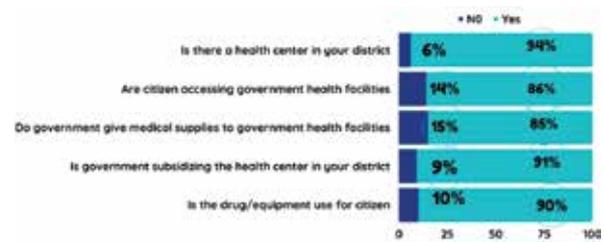
Fig. 8. Health Matters in the District

Fig. 8.0: 94% reported YES to health centers in districts, 86% YES to citizens access to government health facilities, 85% YES to government medical supply, 91% YES to government subsidizing health facilities, and 90% YES to use of drugs/equipment for citizens.

5. Meet Mark Miller: Our Data Man

Mark is a CompTIA certified database administrator who combines as data manager, data analyst and webmaster for LEON. As data manager he creates our data collection tool using the election monitoring software, ELMO to interface with the Open Data Kit (ODK) for data collection. Along with the Carter Center's Project Officer and data specialist, Mark analyzes the data for reporting on findings. As webmaster, he manages our website ensuring that contents are created, files are uploaded, and social media accounts are updated. When work is at its peak, you will find Mark managing three phone calls at the same time to ensure proper data from LTOs are getting sent into the database.

Before coming to LEON Mark worked as data manager with the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information services (LISGIS) from 2008 to 2011 and with the Ministry of Health also as data manager from 2012 to 2014. During the EBOLA pandemic in 2014, he worked with eHealth Africa coordinating and analysing data from four priority labs in Liberia, namely LIBR, ELWA, Phebe, and Jackson F. Doe. In 2017, he joined the Carter Center family under the Democracy Program as a data analyst and transitioned to LEON in 2019 to manage her database.

Mark obtained a BSc. In Software Engineering from the BlueCrest University College in is currently studying statistics online at Brigham Young University, Utah, USA.

LEON says, 'thank you Mark.'

6. Summary and Conclusion

General overview from the counties is sadly reflecting static movement on nearly all the social-economic indicators we have been following. We find no change in reported price increases for basic commodities, legislative responsiveness, illegal drug abuse among young people, and reported ritualistic killings. We are slightly encouraged by increased CSOs and CBOs presence in the districts as reported this month. We hope duty bearers can wake up to the reality around the country and what it could mean for votes on all sides in 2023.

About LEON

The Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON) is a platform of four Liberian civil society organizations, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), Liberia Crusaders for Peace (LCP), Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) and National Union of Organizations for the Disabled (NUOD) with the overall goal of meaningfully contributing to the democratization process in Liberia by providing an avenue for civil society to participate in monitoring and observing elections and democratic processes in Liberia. LEON observed the 2017 and 2020 elections with over 1000 observers and issued statements on pre-election, election day and post- elections activities. In 2019, LEON engaged in monitoring the Legislature with the aim of increasing legislative openness and transparency for better representation that leads to improved social service delivery in constituencies.

LEON has a steering committee comprised of members of the four member organizations and a secretariat of 15 persons including four regional coordinators who will coordinate and oversee the short-term and long-term observers. LEON has a focus on the inclusion of marginalized groups including women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

Under this project, LEON receives funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and technical support from The Carter Center. However, its findings, reports and other determinations are independent of the two organizations and do not necessarily reflect the views of those organization.

WWW.LEONOBSERVATION.ORG 🔍