



POLICY BRIEF



The President Meter Project Liberia 2019



Improving Electoral Accountability

+231770510479

Made with PosterMyWall.com

info@naymote.com



NAYMOTE
EMPOWER, ENGAGE AND EDUCATE
SERVING LIBERIA SINCE 2001



"CAMPAIGN PROMISES MATTER: THEY ARE A FORM OF SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN POLITICIANS AND VOTERS" AND THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE HELD TO ACCOUNT".

Executive Summary:

In a well-functioning democracy, citizens hold their elected leaders accountable for their performance. Nonetheless, when citizens lack information about their elected officials' campaign promises or performance, they cannot monitor and hold their leaders accountable. Providing citizens with information on the performance of their elected leaders allow citizens to identify bad or poorly performing leaders and punish them at the polls, this could force elected leaders to work in line with voters' interests and ensure democratic dividends for good governance.

The President Meter Project is an independent monitoring tool tracking and releasing regular information on the performance of President George M. Weah and the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC)-led government against promises made during and after the election. This policy brief focuses on promises contained in the CDC'S Manifesto, Presidential Priority Projects, Campaign Speeches and Policy Statements made since President Weah inauguration on January 22, 2018, to July 31, 2019, as the 24th President of the Republic of Liberia.

From January 2018 to July 31, 2019, the institution, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development with support from the Open Society Initiative for West Africa has tracked and rated 92 promises, of that number, 6 promises are rated completed, 38 promises are considered ongoing, 15 not rated due to the lack of available information and 33 promises have not started.

Below are the six promises completed by President George M. Weah

- 1. Payment of the West African Examination Council (WAEC) fees for all students who sat the WAEC exams in 2017 across the country.**
- 2. Renovation of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital.**
- 3. Passage of the Land Rights Act.**
- 4. Reduction of salaries for public officials under the Executive Branch of Government.**
- 5. Pavement of the Doe Community Road to Clara Town.**
- 6. The completion of 50 new homes for fire victims in Popo Beach, New Kru Town.**

In February 2018, President George M Weah, authorized a recast of the national budget for fiscal year 2017/2018 allocating US\$9.6m as Pro Poor Projects - see details below. While allocations were made, some promises are completed including the payment of the WAEC/WASSCE fees for all 12th graders for public and private schools in Liberia and the equipment and facilities upgrade of the J.F.K Hospital. The UL digital registration and provision of WIFI in key locations at the main campus, maintaining of traffic lights and construction of new street lights in Monrovia, bringing 400 partnership schools for Liberia teachers onto the payroll and correcting 180 underpaid personnel are considered ongoing while others are not rated due to lack of available information.

NOTE: There are no, or very limited actions taken on promises around accountability and anti-corruption, justice and human rights, physically challenged and senior citizens and decentralization of institutions and systems within 18 months of President George M. Weah in power/office.

5.0 Pro-Poor Projects

High priority projects and initiatives have been identified for funding for initiation and completion in this fiscal year. These come to a total of **US\$9.6m** which has been programmed into the budget accordingly.

Table 7: Pro-Poor Projects for completion in FY17/2018 with estimated costs

Project	GOL
WAEC/WASSE: Pay fees for all 12th graders in public and private schools in Liberia - 9th grade unfunded	1,900,000
Maintain traffic and street lights and construct new street lights in Monrovia	600,000
University of Liberia Digital Registration and provision of WIFI in key locations at the main campus	300,000
Equipment and facilities upgrade for John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Monrovia	500,000
Government-backed credit line to stimulate private sector development	1,000,000
National Identification - Biometric ID issuance leading to payroll clean-up	500,000
Staffing the Education Sector - Fiscal Year 17/18 bringing 400 Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL) teachers onto the payroll and correcting 180 underpaid personnel	400,000
Professional skills development to increase the number of local Liberian experts	500,000
Humanitarian outreach program by First Lady	500,000
Military hospital feasibility study	200,000
RAP for Sanniquellie - Loguatu Road	1,000,000
Repair of NTA Buses	200,000
Road Maintenance	2,000,000
Total	9,600,000

During electoral processes, politicians, especially those from the opposition, ascend to state power based on the rhetoric of “change” and this is not unique to Liberia. President George Weah’s campaign mantra was “Change for Hope” and his campaign promises were derived from his Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) manifesto which contained sixty-five (65) campaign promises. Upon taking office in January 2018 up to 18 months serving as President, he made an additional twenty-seven (27) promises making a total of ninety-two (92).

The twenty-seven (27) promises were policy statements made through public speeches and proclamations. Experience has shown that most campaign and post-campaign promises raise citizens’ expectations, and, in many instances, they are unrealistic and become unachievable. In other instances, citizens do not have the tools or skills to track the implementation of promises in order to hold their leaders to account. Political history has shown that some leaders were voted out of office because of failed campaign promise(s).

A classic example was in 1992 when President George W. Bush was not re-elected because he increased taxes in the wake of a drastic decline in the political-economy of America against a campaign promise made that he would not raise taxes.¹ Campaign promises are governance related and in pursuit of good governance it is important that civil society organizations who are a legitimate voice of citizens hold political leaders to account for their campaign and post-election pledges

¹ <https://www.texasmonthly.com/politics/george-hw-bush-lose-1992-reelection-ross-perot/>

Context:

Democratic theory often suggests that offering voters more information will enhance electoral accountability. If voters make decisions based on politicians' past performance, informing voters about politician quality will enhance the likelihood that well-performing incumbents keep their position and poorly performing incumbents are ousted².

Experience from political history has shown that it is difficult for presidents to keep all promises made. However, campaign rhetoric and promises matter because they set the blueprint of a president's policy agenda if elected. Because campaign promises are a form of the social contract, one way to enforce it is to employ an independent and non-partisan approach to track the progress made by an elected government to increase accountability, transparency and reduce mistrust between the government and its citizens. This is particularly so in Liberia where there has been a prolonged history of bad governance and misrule.

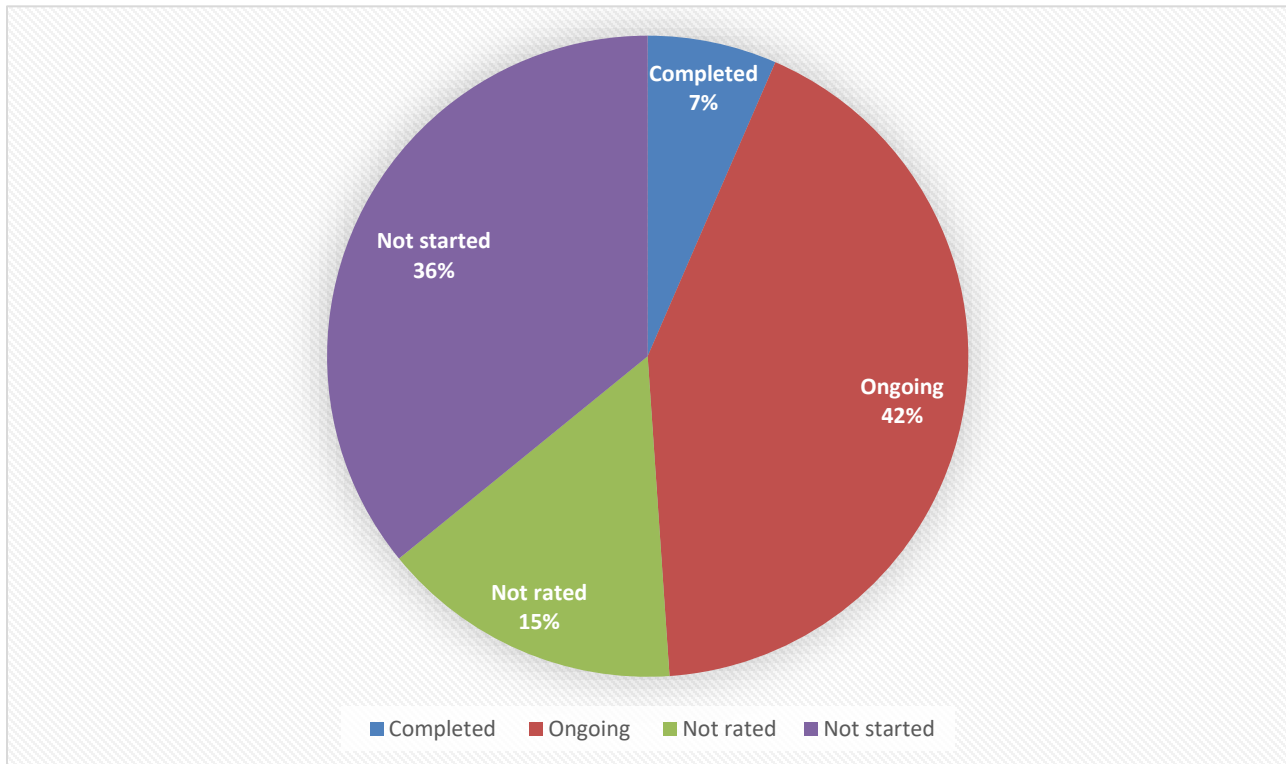
Naymote Partners for Democratic Development's approach in tracking the Coalition for Democratic Change -led government was non-subjective and does not make a judgment on whether their policy agenda is 'good' or 'bad'. The tracking of George Weah's 18 months in power by NAYMOTE has created the opportunity for ordinary citizens to scrutinize the work of their government relative to the promises that were made during the 2017 election and since his inauguration.

This tracking was undertaken against the assumption that citizens care deeply about whether their government has followed through on what it originally promised and provides CSOs the tools to cut through the misinformation that so often plagues political discourse surrounding the state of government. At the same time, citizens often find it difficult to determine whether mentioned promises have been met or not. The tracking tool used by NAYMOTE tackled this problem head on.

Of the 92 promises tracked during the period of 18 months, 6 were considered as completed, 38 promises are ongoing, 33 promises not started and 15 could not be rated due to the lack of available information to assess progress towards implementation. 32 of the 92 promises tracked fall under Pillar One of the Manifesto: "Power to the People", 37 under Pillar Two: "Economy and Jobs", 10 under Pillar Three: "Sustaining the Peace" and 13 under Pillar Four: "Decentralization of Institutions and Systems".

² J.PAL Governance Initiative Africa Policy Outreach Conference: Improving Electoral Participation: Evidence from Randomized Evaluations 2015

Progress Rating of President George M. Weah Performance Against Promises Made within 18 Months



A few months into his administration, the President promised that the construction of roads was his number one priority.³ The road as an infrastructural development requires intensive capital investment. To facilitate this process, the government with the endorsement of the National Legislature, speedily passed into law the Eton and EBOMA loan agreements, in the amounts of \$536 Million and \$420 Million, respectively.⁴ The government was passionate about these loans and the government labeled those who called for 'due diligence' in negotiating the loans as "Enemies of the State". Disappointingly, the President did not provide any information on the status of these loans in his annual message to the nation on January 28, 2019. This is an accountability deficit, a major requirement and principle of consolidating democracy and sustaining good governance.

³ This was a post-election promise to construct a coastal highway from Bassa to Maryland County.

⁴ <http://apanews.net/index.php/en/news/liberias-weah-signs-eton-financing-ebomaf-loan-agreement-into-law>

Policy Alternatives:

Comparatively, Liberia has the longest presidential tenure of office in the West African Region.⁵ The six years period provided for in the Constitution for presidential tenure reduces pressure on a President to make good on his or her campaign and election promises. At the same time, there should be consistent and sustained pressure from CSOs to hold the current government to account.

Option 1: CSOs should develop and engage in a sustained legislative and policy advocacy for the reduction of the six years term for the presidency to four years. This would engender a sense of urgency on the presidency to fulfill campaign and other post-election promises.

Option 2: To engender citizens' trust in the government, no new promises should be made by the government. The President should instead focus on completing ongoing projects in fulfillment of promises made during his first 18 months in office.

Option 3: The government should develop a strategic approach to attract private sector investment as it is the "engine of economic growth and development". Economic growth through private sector investment will contribute to job and wealth creations and this would help in addressing some of the economic challenges faced by the government and achieve some of its promises.

Option 4: In the formulation of the 2019/20 budget, government's recurring costs should be reduced, and the amount saved is reapportioned to respond to and address inclusive public service delivery that is accessible, available and affordable. This would contribute to addressing some of the government's promises.

Recommendations:

Formulate a communication strategy: The government should develop a results-based communication strategy to facilitate a two-way flow of information between the government and citizens.

Future promises should be informed by analysis: Promises are policy statements and they should be informed by analysis based on empirical evidence.

Establish an inter-ministerial coordinating mechanism: The government should consider establishing an inter-ministerial committee to coordinate the government's efforts in fulfilling promises.

Develop a system for tracking promises: The government should develop a monitoring and evaluation system for monitoring the government's promises and link them to the pillars of the Pro-Poor Agenda and its implementation.

⁵ All the other countries in the region have 4-5 years as the timeframe for the Presidency but Liberia has 6 years.