



Ambasáid na hÉireann | An Libéir
Embassy of Ireland | Liberia

Ensuring an Inclusive & Informed Society



First Quarter Report

Gender-Sensitive Legislative Monitoring

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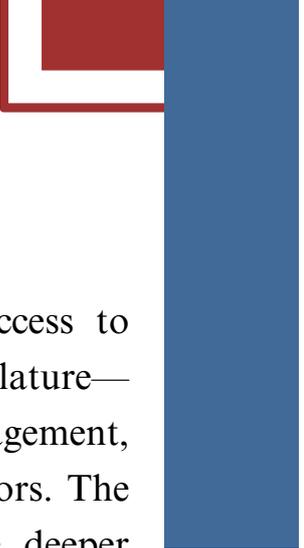
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1.0. Executive Summary

Launched in January 2025, The Gender-Sensitive Legislative Monitoring Project, implemented by InfoQuest Liberia with funding support from the Embassy of Ireland in Liberia, aims to strengthen legislative accountability, inclusiveness, and gender responsiveness within the Liberian legislative process. This final report covers the project's implementation and outcomes from January to March 2025, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and recommendations.

During the reporting period, InfoQuest established formal partnerships with the Legislature, including the Speaker's office and key committee chairpersons, and secured access to plenary sessions. A team of four trained monitors—balanced by gender—was deployed to observe legislative sessions and track gender representation and participation. The project developed and piloted tailored monitoring tools, and a web-based digital platform was completed to enable real-time tracking of legislative proceedings, bill analysis, and gender-disaggregated participation data. This platform is scheduled for launch in June 2025.

Key findings point to persistent underrepresentation of women in legislative decision-making, both in attendance and in active participation during debates. However, women-led civil society organizations demonstrated strong advocacy during public hearings, particularly around environmental justice and public accountability. Six key legislative proposals were subjected to detailed gender analysis, with recommendations issued to strengthen equity, safeguard rights, and promote inclusive governance. These included calls to integrate gender targets in procurement policies, oppose discriminatory laws such as those criminalizing same-sex relations, and ensure gender equity in new educational institutions and local government structures.



Despite operational challenges—including delays in securing full access to committee meetings and ongoing political tensions within the Legislature—InfoQuest successfully adapted its approach through strategic engagement, flexible monitoring, and continued collaboration with civil society actors. The groundwork laid during this period positions the project to drive deeper legislative reform, broaden civic participation, and advocate for policies that address the rights and needs of marginalized groups, especially women, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

InfoQuest Liberia expresses deep gratitude to the Embassy of Ireland in Liberia for its generous support, without which this initiative would not have been possible. The Embassy's commitment to gender equity and democratic accountability has been instrumental in advancing this important work.

2.0. Project Background

Liberia's democratic transition in January 2024 ushered in renewed national focus on inclusive governance, institutional accountability, and sustainable development. The Government's ARREST Agenda—prioritizing Agriculture, Roads, Rule of law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism—provides a roadmap for post-conflict recovery and equitable growth. Central to this agenda is the role of the Legislature, which wields significant influence over lawmaking, policy oversight, and budgetary allocations.

Despite constitutional mandates and international commitments, gender inequality remains a major gap in Liberia's legislative landscape. Women continue to face significant barriers to political participation, while gender-sensitive policy implementation remains inconsistent. The *Gender-Sensitive Legislative Monitoring Project* was conceived to address this gap by promoting a more inclusive and transparent legislative process, informed by real-time observation, evidence-based advocacy, and civil society engagement.

With funding from the **Embassy of Ireland in Liberia**, InfoQuest designed and implemented a program that monitors legislative proceedings through a gender lens, evaluates the inclusiveness of proposed legislation, and supports data-driven recommendations to improve outcomes for women and marginalized groups. This initiative builds on years of civil society work in legislative engagement and contributes to broader national and international goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).



By combining in-field observation, stakeholder engagement, and digital innovation, the project seeks to create a legislative environment where gender equality is not only prioritized but institutionalized—ensuring that policies reflect the needs of all citizens and contribute to Liberia’s long-term democratic and developmental objectives.

3.0. Methodology

InfoQuest deployed a four-member team of trained monitors (two female, two male) who track legislative proceedings using customized tools. Monitors attend plenary sessions, analyze legislative bills, and document gender representation and debates. Data is aggregated monthly and analyzed through both manual and digital systems, with input from partner civil society organizations.

4.0. Key Activities and Milestones

January 2025

- **Engagement:** Formal access was secured with the Legislature, especially the Speaker's office and Health and Education Committees.
- **Training:** Monitors underwent gender-sensitive legislative observation training, supported by manuals and mentorship.
- **Monitoring:** First session observed on January 30. Attendance data highlighted low female presence (6 of 49).
- **Legislation:** The Rivercess Community Development Act was introduced, and gender-specific gaps were flagged.
- **Project Systems:** Internal management, coordination, and evaluation structures were established.

March 2025

- **Monitoring Expansion:** Observed multiple plenary sessions and one public hearing on infrastructure and environmental transparency.
- **Gender Analysis:** Six key bills reviewed for gender implications. Recommendations were made to:
 - Integrate a Sign Language Institute into the University of Liberia.
 - Ensure gender inclusion in local government and procurement frameworks.
 - Oppose criminalization of same-sex relationships.

- **Digital Platform:** The legislative monitoring platform was completed and prepared for launch in May.
- **Civil Society Impact:** Women-led organizations were active in public hearings, especially on environmental justice.

5.0. Digital Platform Development

By March, development of a real-time web-based platform was completed. It includes dashboards for:

- Legislative attendance tracking
- Gender-disaggregated participation
- Bill monitoring
- Public access to session summaries
- Launch is scheduled for June 2025.

6.0. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

A rigorous M&E system has been implemented, incorporating:

- Baseline data collection
- Custom monitoring templates
- Gender-sensitive indicators
- Quality assurance processes

Evaluation frameworks are updated monthly based on field data, stakeholder feedback, and adaptive lessons.

7.0. Challenges and Mitigation

Access Constraints

- Ongoing delays in securing approval for committee meeting observation.
- Mitigated by focusing on plenary sessions and public reports.

Leadership Crisis in Legislature

- Competing speakership claims stalled legislative focus.
- InfoQuest advocated for mediation and dialogue to resolve the impasse.

Platform Development Delays

Interim manual systems were deployed while the digital platform was being finalized.

8.0. Gender Analysis of Key Legislation

As part of its core mandate, InfoQuest conducted a comprehensive gender analysis of six key legislative proposals introduced during the first quarter of 2025. The aim was to assess the extent to which these bills promote gender equity, address the needs of marginalized groups, and align with national and international commitments to gender-responsive governance.

The analysis revealed mixed results—while some bills demonstrate a baseline awareness of inclusivity, others lack critical gender considerations or pose direct threats to human rights and equality.

1. An Act to Establish the Liberia Institute of Sign Language

This bill addresses the educational needs of persons with hearing disabilities by proposing a standalone institution for sign language education. While commendable in intent, the proposal lacks sustainability and integration within existing educational structures.

Gender Implication: Women and girls with disabilities face double discrimination and limited access to education. A segregated institution may further isolate this group rather than promote inclusive development.

Recommendation: Integrate the proposed institute within the University of Liberia or another public tertiary institution. This would foster inclusivity, optimize resource use, and increase visibility and legitimacy of sign language education within mainstream academia.

2. An Act to Establish the Ministry of Local Government

The Act outlines the establishment of a dedicated ministry to oversee decentralization and local governance. It includes a clause referencing gender mainstreaming in line with the 2018 Local Government Act.

Gender Implication: If implemented effectively, the Act has the potential to decentralize gender-responsive governance and amplify women's voices at the county and community levels.

Recommendation: Engage county- and community-based CSOs to monitor gender mainstreaming across local governance structures. Additionally, ensure clear collaboration between the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MGCSP).

3. An Act to Amend the National Investment Commission Act (Section 5)

This amendment mandates foreign concessionaires to procure goods and services from Liberian-owned businesses. However, it omits gender and disability disaggregation in defining eligible businesses.

Gender Implication: Women- and disability-owned enterprises risk being excluded from economic opportunities created through this Act, reinforcing economic inequality.

Recommendation: Advocate for a gender-inclusive procurement policy. Implementation strategies should include quotas or preferential provisions for women- and PWD-owned businesses in line with Liberia's commitment to economic empowerment and SDG targets

4. An Act to Criminalize Same-Sex Practices

This highly controversial bill seeks to explicitly criminalize same-sex relationships, designating them as second-degree felonies.

Gender Implication: The bill threatens the rights, safety, and dignity of LGBTQ+ individuals—especially lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women—who already face widespread stigma and violence. It directly contradicts human rights principles and undermines inclusive governance.

Recommendation: InfoQuest strongly opposes this bill and recommends the decriminalization of consensual same-sex relationships. Instead, the Legislature should adopt rights-based policies that protect all citizens from discrimination and violence, in line with Liberia’s constitutional guarantees and international obligations. This highly controversial bill seeks to explicitly criminalize same-sex relationships, designating them as second-degree felonies.

5. An Act to Repeal the Bomi Community College Act and Establish the Western Region University

This bill proposes to transform Bomi Community College into a full-fledged regional university offering degrees at various levels and promoting regional economic development.

Gender Implication: The expansion of academic programs has the potential to improve access to higher education for women and girls in underserved regions. However, without deliberate strategies, gender gaps in enrollment and participation may persist.

Recommendation: Ensure gender-equity policies are embedded in the university’s founding framework. Scholarships, safe campus facilities, and targeted outreach should be prioritized for female students, particularly in STEM and leadership programs.

6. An Act to Standardize Salaries and Benefits in Public Universities and Colleges

This bill seeks to address salary disparities, inefficiencies, and potential corruption among faculty in public tertiary institutions.

Gender Implication: While the bill appears gender-neutral, it overlooks the gender pay gap and structural biases in promotion and hiring within higher education.

Recommendation: Incorporate gender audits and equity benchmarks into the bill's implementation framework. These should address pay equity, maternity provisions, and gender-sensitive HR practices.

Overall Findings

The gender analysis reveals a recurring need for:

- Stronger institutional integration of gender objectives
- Explicit targeting of marginalized populations (especially women, PWDs, LGBTQ+ individuals)
- Mechanisms for inclusive implementation and monitoring

InfoQuest's recommendations are designed not only to improve legislative outcomes but also to support broader national commitments under Liberia's ARREST Agenda and international frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

By embedding gender responsiveness into legislation from the outset, Liberia can move closer to achieving inclusive governance, economic empowerment for all citizens, and long-term democratic consolidation.

Bill	Objective of the Bill	Sponsors of the Bill	Gender Consideration	InfoQuest Recommendation
An Act to establish the Liberia Institute of Sign Language	This bill seeks to address deficit in sign language education for persons with hearing disabilities.	Hon. Isaac B. Choloplay Wuo of River Gee county	Lacks institutional integration	Embed within UL for sustainability
An act to establish The Ministry of Local Government Act	he Act proposes to ensure that gender is mainstreamed at all levels of the Ministry and in local governments consistent with subsection 6.1 of the Local Government Act of 2018.	President, Joseph Boakai in 2024, In alignment of the Local government Act of 2018	Mentions gender mainstreaming	Collaborate with local CSOs and MGCSP
An Act to Amend Section 5 of the National Investment Commission	The Act proposes to make it mandatory for concessions in Liberia to procure contracts of goods and services from Liberian-owned businesses. The Act however does not consider gender disaggregation. For example, how women and persons with disabilities would benefit from the strategy.	Hon. Austin B. Taylor from Maryland County	No gender disaggregation	Add support for women/disabled-led businesses

Bill	Objective of the Bill	Sponsors of the Bill	Gender Consideration	InfoQuest Recommendation
<p>An Act to Amend the New Penal Code Chapter 14, Subchapter D and Add a New Section 14.80 Making Same Sex Practices A Criminal Offense</p>	<p>The Act seeks to make explicitly criminalize same-sex relationships by making it a second degree felony. For a subsection of society already discriminated against, this would be rather harsh and could encourage stigmatization and increased-violence against persons engaged in same sex relationships</p>	<p>Hon. Momo Siafa Kpoto from Lofa County</p>	<p>Discriminatory, rights-violating</p>	<p>Reject; decriminalize voluntary sodomy</p>
<p>An Act to Repeal the 2012 act creating the Bomi Community college and to establish In Lieu Thereof, the Western Region University</p>	<p>This bill seeks to transform Bomi community college into the western region university which will offer a range of academic programs; bachelors, master and doctoral degrees in various fields. This university also seeks to support economic growth in the western region by producing a skilled workforce in sectors like agriculture, mining, health and other areas and expand educational opportunities for under-deserved population with particular focus on youth and women</p>	<p>Hon. J. Alex Tyler from Bomi county</p>	<p>Targets women/youth</p>	<p>Support with clear gender equity measures</p>

Bill	Objective of the Bill	Sponsors of the Bill	Gender Consideration	InfoQuest Recommendation
An Act to Establish Education Standalization of Salaries and Benefits in Public Universities and Colleges in Liberia	The bill seeks to address issues on the lack of balancing the accurate salary of Teachers who are charge with the responsibility to provide adequate knowledge or education for students, and also corruption and inefficiency.	Hon. Momo Siafa Kpoto from Lofa County	Gender-neutral on surface	Ensure equity in implementation

9.0. Observations & Insights

- Women in the Legislature remain underrepresented in both presence and voice.
- Civil society women are more visibly engaged in advocacy during public hearings.
- Environmental and infrastructure discussions lack gender-specific frameworks.
- Greater formal partnerships with CSOs could enhance legislative gender responsiveness.

10.0 Next Steps (April-June 2025)

- Platform Launch:** Officially introduce the web-based system.
- Advocacy:** Present gender analysis findings to lawmakers.
- Access:** Finalize approval to monitor committee proceedings.
- Partnerships:** Deepen engagement with civil society for co-monitoring efforts.

11.0 Conclusion

The January–March 2025 reporting period marks a foundational phase in InfoQuest’s effort to strengthen gender-sensitive legislative accountability in Liberia. Through formal engagement with the Legislature, the successful recruitment and training of gender-balanced monitors, and the completion of a robust digital monitoring platform, the project has laid essential groundwork for sustained impact.

Monitoring activities revealed persistent gender disparities in legislative representation and participation, particularly among lawmakers. However, the proactive engagement of women in civil society—especially during public hearings—demonstrates the vital role they play in promoting transparency, advocacy, and gender equity from outside formal political spaces.

InfoQuest’s gender analysis of key legislative bills underscores the need for inclusive policy frameworks that reflect the rights and needs of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups. Recommendations put forward align with national development goals and international human rights standards.

Despite challenges such as limited access to committee meetings and the ongoing leadership crisis in the House, InfoQuest has adapted through strategic stakeholder engagement and flexible monitoring approaches. With the upcoming launch of the digital platform and continued advocacy efforts, the project is well-positioned to influence legislative practices, promote inclusive governance, and contribute meaningfully to Liberia’s democratic development.

12. Annexes



13. InfoQuest Website <http://infoquestlr.org>