PRESENTATION ON WORKSHOP ON PARLIAMENTARY AGRICULTURE COMMITTEES ORGANIZED BY CPA AT THE MALAWI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FROM 4TH -6TH MARCH, 2014.

PRESENTED BY:

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1. FUNCTIONS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE IN THE SIERRA LEONE PARLIAMENT

The Agriculture Committee of the Sierra Leone Parliament derives its powers from Section 93 (3) of the 1991 Constitution and the Standing Orders of Parliament (S.O. 70). These functions are as follows:

❖ To investigate or enquire into the activities or administration of the Ministry of Agriculture and all other departments relating to agriculture programmes, food security and climate change issues;

❖ To bring the ministry and its departments to account by requesting them to properly account for the monies allocated to them and to also respond to the Committee’s queries or findings;

❖ To make thorough participation in pre legislative hearings on Bills relating to climate change, land policy, poverty alleviation of rural farmers etc;

❖ To make contributions in approving loans and Agreements for agricultural purposes in the Plenary;
The Committee normally conduct oversight on various agricultural activities carried out by the Divisions of the Ministry, Projects, Development partners, Private Sectors and FBOs etc country wide and report to Parliament for recommendations;

The Committee Members do communicate the views of their constituents and all other stakeholders in Parliament at Committee meetings or in the Plenary;

The Committee do frequently holds meetings with the Ministry and its Departments and Agencies to deliberate on cross-cutting issues relating to food security, gender and youth empowerment in agriculture, deforestation, land policy, climate change etc.

The effectiveness of the role and functions of the Committee are highlighted below:

- conduction of oversight visits at least one (1) trip per Session.

- Helped in the ratification of Loans and Agreements relating the Agriculture sector.

- Scrutiny of budget allocations to the ministry for accountability and transparency.
2. TWO WAYS TO STRENGTHEN THE COMMITTEE IN ITS FUNCTIONS

(a) Parliament should be financially independent

(b) The Committee should be provided with adequate logistical support especially to undertake oversight visit to agricultural areas

(c) Members of the Committee should have mandate to supervise agricultural projects under the devolved functions by MDAs in their respective Constituencies as a representative function of MPs

3. THE COUNTRY'S NEED FOR AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND PARLIAMENT'S EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Agriculture is seen as an integral part of development in the country and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security has been working assiduously to deliver the President's Agenda for Change by embarking on a massive overhauling of the sector to commercialize, privatize and incentivize agricultural development.

In fulfillment of the MDGs and the UN Convention on Bio-diversity, the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with other line Ministries strived to encourage technology transfer to boost agriculture productivity, SLARI (Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute) was established in 2007 by an Act of Parliament. SLARI became an
umbrella organization to generate agricultural research and agricultural technology for the benefit of the farming, fishing, livestock and forestry sectors in Sierra Leone. Currently, SLARI has 7(Seven) established Centers across the country such as the Njala Agricultural Research Center, Rokupr Rice Research Center, Magbosi, Teko etc. SLARI is also given allocation for its activities which is liable to scrutiny and also monitored by the agriculture Committee.

In 2010, the Small Holder Commercialization Programme (SCP) was launched to support small holder farmers in the communities of agricultural production as the country moves towards food security drive. The SCP has effectively delivered the following:

About 192 ABCs in all Chiefdoms in the country, providing services to about 390 FBOs country wide, 265 tractors to support mechanized farming, 23 combined harvesters, 33 rice transplanters, supplied seeds and fertilizers, power tillers etc.

In 2013, Parliament approved the World funded project –West African Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) was launched to promote growth in the rice and cassava subsector through the generation, dissemination and adoption of improved agricultural technology.

Parliament therefore is involved in the agricultural research programmes and especially the Committee on agriculture which is conducting oversight visits to some of these Research Stations. Parliament is also collaborating with the activities of other development partners that are involved in the promotion of agriculture such as IFAD, A4D, and many other private sector
investment companies such as Addax- sugar cane, Socfin - Oilpalm, Gold Tree- oil palm etc.