



GRASSROOTS AGENCY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES (G R A S S)

PROSSER STREET,
LOWER BUCHANAN, GRAND BASSA COUNTY
LIBERIA WEST AFRICA

April 7, 2025

Hon. Karyou Johnson
Superintendent
Robert & Kibly Streets
Lower Buchanan, Grand Bassa County

Dear Hon. Karyou Johnson,

Subject: Strengthening Justice and Accountability: GRASS's Commitment to Prison Reform in Grand Bassa County.

We are pleased to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for your leadership in guiding the team during the visit to the Upper Buchanan Prison Compound and for assessing the general conditions within the facility.

During the visit, we had the opportunity to engage with inmates, prison staff, the county attorney, and the judge. As the organization leading the charge for prison reform in Grand Bassa County, GRASS is committed to implementing short-term, medium-term, and long-term solutions. Our approach is outlined as follows:

- **Short-term** (1 to 6 months): Our immediate focus will be on collaborating with the county attorney, magistrates, and public defenders to address the issue of pretrial detainees. We aim to find effective solutions to this pressing concern.
- **Medium-term** (1 to 2 years): Our second level of engagement will involve working with local communities and their leaders. We will provide practical guidance on how to resolve minor issues before they escalate to the police or the court system. These efforts will contribute to alleviating overcrowding in the prison cells.
- **Long-term** (1 to 6 years): In parallel with our immediate and medium-term efforts, we will advocate for systemic changes, including expansion or relocation of the prison as well as securing the inclusion of the rule of law and the needs of the Upper Buchanan Prison in the County Annual Budget. Additionally, we will engage with the Ministry of Justice to understand the provisions in the national budget for prison activities across the country.

As you know, our county receives \$1 million annually from Arcelor Mittal as part of the Mineral Development Agreement, ratified by Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2006. We must question whether this funding has had a meaningful positive impact on our community. There have been ongoing concerns about the management and governance of these funds, and now, with the Local Government Act providing a legal framework, GRASS firmly believes that all actions must adhere to the law.

Hon. Johnson, we firmly maintain that any actions taken outside the bounds of the law are unacceptable. No one is above the law, and we hope that this matter will receive urgent attention.

Best Regard

K. M. Barley Togba
National Program Coordinator (NPC)