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Conference Report

The Liberian Development Conference,
February 1-2, 2017

“Theme: Engendering Collective Action for Advancing Liberia’s Development”

**CONFERENCE REPORT ON THE
LIBERIAN DEVELOPMENT
CONFERENCE,
DATE: FEBRUARY 1-2, 2017**

DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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Acronyms

AfT	Agenda for Transformation
AYRH	Adolescent and Youth Reproductive Health
AYP	Advancing Youth Project
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIM	Growing Inclusive Market
GoL	Government of Liberia
ICFs	Illicit Capital Flows
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
ICT4D	Information Communication and Technology for Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDC	Liberia Development Conference
LSA	Liberia Strategic Analysis
LATA	Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MFI	Microfinance Institutions
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
NBC	Natural Bureau of Concession
RTTI	Rural Teacher Training Institute
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SRH	Sexual and reproductive Health
SSR	Security Sector Reform
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MSMEs	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UL	University of Liberia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEC	West Africa Examination Council
WASSC	West Africa Senior School Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After 14 years of civil war, the election of the first African woman as the Head of State for two consecutive terms energetically set Liberia on the path of development. However, after 12 years of peace and stability and despite efforts made by the government to put accountability, transparency, good governance, and economic opportunities for all Liberians at the center of its development agenda, the country is still confronted with enormous challenges including corruption, high youth unemployment, weak education system, just to name a few. With the upcoming election in November 2017, USAID/Liberia, the Embassy of Sweden in cooperation with the University of Liberia, thought leaders, and multilateral and bilateral donors, decided to organize the first Liberia Development Conference to disseminate information about key problems, create a platform to discuss potential solutions to Liberia's complex development challenges and stimulate national dialogue, particularly among contesting political parties, in order to move the country forward towards peace, stability and development.

The conference was organized around *analytical papers*, which were written, presented and discussed by a wide range of Liberian development stakeholders. The Agenda for Transformation (AfT), the Government of Liberia's 5-year strategic plan, which sets the groundwork for addressing many of the development challenges served as a reference document for the conference's research. The 17 goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were also taken into consideration in the selection of topics and drafting of papers.

More than 400 stakeholders representing state institutions (Executive, legislature and judiciary), civil society organizations, the private sector, international organizations, development partners and donors attended the two-day conference held at Monrovia City Hall, 1-2 February 2017. In total, 38 papers were presented highlighting national issues. These papers covered the following key issues:

- Private sector competitiveness
- Government services
- Financial sector
- Macroeconomic policy
- Political arena
- Youth
- Transaction costs
- Human security
- Education, health and natural resource management.

The conference was cross-cutting with a mix of plenary and parallel sessions which were chaired by eminent Liberians such as Ministers and other dignitaries from academic, national and international institutions. The President, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf graced the closing ceremony and made special remarks.

Outcome of presentations and discussions

The Conference kicked off with an opening ceremony which featured welcome remarks from Dr. Jonathan Taylor representing the President of the University of Liberia, co-host of the event, special remarks from the US Ambassador Christine Elder, The Charge d’Affairs a.i of the Embassy of Sweden, Ms. Elisabeth Hårleman, The Head of President’s Program Delivery Unit, Dr Clarence Moniba and the Keynote Speaker Dr. Antoinette M. Sayeh, former Liberian Minister of Finance and former Director of the International Monetary Fund African Department, currently serving as a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Center for Global Development.

In his welcome remarks, Dr. Jonathan Taylor highlighted the delight of the University to co-host the event. He also informed the audience about the launch of the Liberian Institute for Policy Studies and Research to serve as a Think Tank to inform public policy and help advance the socio-economic development of the country. The US Ambassador urged all the stakeholders taking part in the Conference to reflect on where they want Liberia to be 10 years from now and agree on innovative approaches to development challenges to engender national debate. The Charge d’Affairs a.i of Sweden emphasized the importance of taking into consideration lessons learnt from the past and future opportunities in the discussions on the way forward. She also reminded the audience to ensure everyone is taken into consideration particularly the youth, women and people with disabilities. Dr. Clarence Moniba reminded the audience of the need to build on past achievements to take the country to a middle-income level. The keynote speaker concluded the opening ceremony by laying down four themes to take into consideration during the conference. These themes are:

- Strengthening Liberia’s resilience to shocks.
- Fighting the deep-seated Liberian cancer of corruption
- Building human capital
- Working to reduce inequalities

The presentations and discussions in plenary and parallel sessions chaired by eminent Liberians from government, academic and international institutions led to the following conclusions:

Private sector competitiveness

In order to increase private sector competitiveness, Liberia needs to put in place transparent institutional frameworks to reduce illicit capital flows (ICFs), which undermine the economic potential of the country. The country should diversify its economy by investing in agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which have a comparative advantage. Concessions must be integrated into value chains so that they are encouraged to produce (and export) more value-added products, e.g. steel products, refined palm oil, rubber boots, etc., directly impacting Liberia’s trade deficit. Existing institutions managing the concessions need to be further strengthened. Moreover, commercial laws reforms, particularly the ones relating to ensuring the speedy resolution and timely enforcement of judgements are needed to boost investors’ confidence and spur economic growth.

Government services

The only way to improve government service delivery nationwide is through the decentralization of administrative and fiscal functions to the local structures. The annual budget preparation for the counties should be initiated at the county level and the professional capacity of government officials should be built to perform their duties efficiently. To ensure everyone's needs are taken into consideration, the government must develop a comprehensive national strategy on inclusiveness, with consensus from all political parties and all sections of society and strengthen monitoring & evaluation mechanisms to enhance policies on inclusiveness. According to the papers presented, corruption greatly prevents citizens from accessing government services and one solution to curb this is to establish a Public Sector Coalition for Ethical Leadership and Integrity which will include National Integrity Forum, Governance Commission and Civil Service Agency. Since there is confusion on what corruption is, there should be a national consensus on definitions of ethics and integrity. Moreover, practical ethical behavior & integrity guidelines should be developed and disseminated and there should be a safe space for public servants seeking support in doing the right thing. Elected & appointed officials, public servants & civil society should also attend integrity & ethics, accountability and responsibility training & forums.

Financial sector

The 17 goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a total of 169 targets covering economic, social development, and environmental protection with the objective of leaving no one behind must be taken into consideration in the drafting of the second Agenda for Transformation led by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP). Since the development of the financial sector is key for the growth of the private sector, there is a need to encourage more specialized institutions, (e.g. mortgage finance), facilitate Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)'s access to finance for market operations and greater transactions in the local currency. The dual currency must be addressed and people need to develop a culture of debt reimbursement. The hydropower needs to be completed to enable businesses to access electricity which will reduce their operation costs. Financial inclusion is key for development to take place. Operationalizing the financial inclusion policy such as mobile money or solar loans is therefore greatly needed. The challenges faced with the Mobile money payment system such as lack of infrastructure, lack of road network connectivity, lack of energy and reliance on gasoline or diesel generators for power, etc. must be addressed. The Central bank of Liberia needs to set up an apex for Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) financing and the human resource capacity building for microfinance and home-grown services (ex. IT) must be strengthened. A national network of MFIs is needed.

Macroeconomic policy

There is a need to conduct domestic revenue mobilization reforms to reduce overreliance on commodity-related revenue. Expenditure rationalization efforts are needed to avoid abrupt cuts in productive capital spending and support the diversification agenda. There should be reforms to improve spending efficiency and trim down untargeted subsidies. Social safety nets targeted to the most vulnerable segments of the population should be preserved. Most importantly, the government needs to come up with a deliberate decision to transform raw materials into finished goods thereby addressing problems such as trade balance, exchange rate etc. In order to respond effectively to the issue of diversification, it is important to know the specific players who are

operating in those sectors, respond to policy inconsistencies and collaborate with companies who have the necessary expertise and can provide the technical support when necessary. Key expenditure planning and management reforms are needed to ensure the link between domestic resource mobilization and robust delivery of public services. There is a need to build an institutional environment of mutual trust and accountability between the public sector and citizenry to promote voluntary compliance, and foster a virtuous cycle of increased growth – enhanced revenues – strengthened compliance. Taxpayer surveys can help pinpoint key rigidities in the tax administration system, and perceptual issues which will need to be factored into tax policy formulation and outreach activities. De-dollarization needs to be gradual and implemented during normal economic times. De-dollarization will also require ensuring that financial regulation encourages intermediation in domestic currency and realigning the monetary policy strategy towards reducing uncertainty about the value of the domestic currency. Deepening local currency financial markets and broadening savings options are other factors contributing to de-dollarization. A well-functioning foreign exchange market backed by an adequate level of official reserves, by ensuring prompt access to foreign exchange is highly needed. De-dollarization can also be promoted by prudential measures that reduce banks’ incentives to borrow and lend in foreign currencies.

Political arena

For true reconciliation to take place, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report and its recommendations need to be resurrected and authorities need to acknowledge its legitimacy and ensure public dissemination. The existing Task Force on TRC recommendations should liaise with the legislature to streamline the recommendations. A link should be made between the social grievances of the pre-coup d’état period. Political decentralization can only be effective by developing a clear legal framework, ensuring that roles and relationships are clearly delineated between levels/tiers of government (i.e. relationship of city mayor to county superintendent; superintendent to Minister of Internal Affairs), rationalizing the existing local structures, clarifying all boundaries, distinguishing municipalities from districts and chiefdom areas. Civil society organizations must mobilize to solicit political commitment for political decentralization reform.

In order to strengthen women’s participation at the political level, the National Election Commission (NEC) should reinforce its supervisory role to ensure that all political parties listing do include 30% of women as required by the election laws. Since, the Women’s Manifesto is a bargaining tool to get women’s issues addressed, the second draft of Women Manifesto should be completed and operationalized. Opportunities including training and skills should be provided for women aspirants; they should also be assisted in fundraising. Capacity building should be provided for media institutions who will assist the development of “gender lens” in reporting and dealing with gender issues. Women’s organizations also need to be trained on technical and political issues so that they can support their fellow women. There should be a Political Forum for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of women’s political participation, including the performance of women as candidates in this up-coming 2017 political process and elections. More importantly, women need to be more proactive and visible in political parties. They also need to strengthen their logic skills and build on the experiences of the Women’s Legislative Caucus.

Given the important role the media plays in the development of the country, the existing law criminalizing speech offenses should be decriminalized. The government's commitment to facilitate access to information by imposing government agencies to make public information available should be enforced. The government should support policy measures to uphold community-owned radio stations as a source of information for the electoral and other civic and development activities - irrespective of their political alignments. Training institutions should be strengthened to enhance the professionalism of journalists. Journalists should diversify their incomes by exploiting niches such as specialized newspapers (e.g. women, youth or agriculture newspapers).

Youth

The National Youth Act or the youth policy document to set the road map on youth development should be passed into a law and implemented throughout the country. Policy strategies need to graduate from emergency recovery short-term projects to sustainable ones. A multi-dimensional approach including education, health, finance, labor is needed to tackle youth unemployment. The government needs to know the employment size, specialization and the skills needed for the job market in-order to match the focus of the nation. There is a need to focus employment generation strategies on manufacturing and agriculture, the two sectors who have the potential to create jobs. The turning point should be the modernization of the informal sector. Mechanisms and laws should be put in place to protect local jobs for Liberians and at the same time encourage trade among nations for economic benefit. Work readiness skills are needed and one way to do this is to engage with the private sector and define with them the skills that will be needed 5 years from now. A new comprehensive, compulsory national youth service program should be designed to enable youth who have completed high school must go through. Coordination, cost effectiveness and improving monitoring mechanisms should be put in place.

For the youth to contribute to community development and political leadership, they need to be empowered and encouraged to vote. A policy is needed for the creative sector for talent development and marketing, entrepreneurship for the arts and culture, and their protection from digital piracy.

There is a need to promote integrated Sexual and Reproductive health (SRH)/HIV services for girls at risk and persons with disabilities in Liberia by capitalizing on political support to establish programs that support adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and advocating for school-based programs that incorporate information on sexual and reproductive health. Families and communities also need to support adolescent mothers. Health systems and health workers need to be trained to respond effectively to the special sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents.

Transaction costs

In order to reduce high transaction costs in Liberia, there is a need to fully implement national policies on transport infrastructure such as the Axle Load Laws, the National Road Fund Authority, the National Port Authority Master Plan and the National Transport Policy and Strategy (NTPS). A national agenda on roads and ports should be created. Taxes on petroleum and petroleum products should be levied. The government should also establish a national road authority under which the roads will be built and maintained. A road fund should be established to collect and manage the funds. A complete inventory including the survey on the condition of all roads and bridges should be conducted. The roads should be privatized by building toll roads and weighbridges. National asset management of transport infrastructure should be put in place and adequate support should be provided for State Owned vocational and engineering institutions that supply technicians and engineers. With regards to sustainable energy, all efforts should be made to harness hydro, biomass and solar resources as they are key to Liberia's energy sustainability. A strategic framework linking action plans with program design, enablers and key stakeholders is needed to move forward effectively. Improvements in trucking and reduction in commodity prices are dependent on the construction of roads that lead to isolated markets. Since the transport sector lacks competition, the government needs to promote new entries in the sector and develop small firms which are already operating in the sector. The price of trucks and maintenance costs should be considered, corruption should be addressed and small firms' access to credit needs to be promoted.

Information, communication and technology for development (ICT4D) can only be a reality in Liberia when electricity is provided in rural areas and technology is integrated in academic institutions; primary, secondary and tertiary.

Human security

A Liberia national strategy on social cohesion is needed to ensure human security. The strategy should take into consideration educational curricula, county differences and make provision for a national secretariat to drive progress and measure it. The national agenda should be developed in each county, with its own nuances. The Palaver Hut system should be complemented with community dialogues. The police and civil society organization (CSOs) should sit together and discuss security issues. The GOL needs to get the police and the county superintendent to analyze security issues from citizens' perspective. A dialogue must be encouraged between community trusted local structures and government structures. For example, women need to be asked what their real security threats are.

There is a need to do more to create change within the customary system. Tribal authority, the duality of laws, and processes associated with culture should be addressed. The country needs to have a more ethnographic understanding of customary law practices. Some traditions need to be transformed. Liberians need to understand what their own system is, before they can strengthen it on the books. Awards should be given to communities that contribute to social cohesion. One important issue is to address impunity; make justice and rule of law independent and empower institutions to hold people accountable. Community colleges should help build social cohesion and reconciliation.

Education

GoL needs to prioritize paying teachers. There is a need to unify around a single education agenda and to put in place a mechanism to use the budget more efficiently. There is also the need to change current approaches to teaching and provide the necessary resources –libraries, laboratories, etc.- that will make schools places of real, invigorated learning. Inclusive Education should be provided at all levels for girls, learners with special needs, youth and adults with no formal schooling. More women need to be recruited as educators and early childhood education should be promoted, fees eliminated and teachers trained. This can be achieved through policy, capacity building, and commitment to reliable budgeting and resourcing in the education sector. The National Policy Framework on Preparation, Recruitment and Retention of only the highly competent teachers, principals and administrators must be implemented. Teaching should be professionalized and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism must be put in place. Strong partnerships with stakeholders nationally and at county levels for input into education policies, implementation accountability and resource generation needs to be put in place. The Ministry of Education needs to promote more shared, democratized approaches to leadership in the Ministry’s functions and be less dependent on donors and partners’ support to ensure sustainability. Free and compulsory Education for all beginning from ECE to grade twelve needs to be ensured.

Health

There is a need to draft a compact for alignment and send it out for input from partners. Universal Health coverage should be introduced and insurance scheme encouraged. A sustainable drug fund should be provided to address the issue of supply. The health delivery service should be developed and a vigorous monitoring and evaluation system should be institutionalized. Internal and external coordination mechanisms need to be expanded. Implementation of laws and policies need to be strengthened at the county level. Free family planning education should be provided at health centers. Youth and advocacy group are needed to support such efforts. More research in the health sector would be helpful.

The reform process needs to involve all stakeholders and not only the Ministry of Health (MoH). Government and all partners must do their part to:

- (1) Build one mutually beneficial and transparent aid tracking and analysis mechanism
- (2) Expand and structuralize existing communication channels
- (3) Remain vigilant as to how aid-funded projects fit into and impact the rest of the health system, prioritizing what can be done and identifying additional needs.

Natural resource management

Companies that are caught doing illegal logging activities should be prosecuted. The country needs to reduce its overreliance on raw material exportation. Board members should be held accountable for mismanagement of institutions they oversee. The government needs to develop the following to improve on natural resource management:

- Opportunities in commercial logging: Increase employment, export earnings and fiscal revenue from the industrial forest sector (FMC concession holders/operators), while also improving the environmental management and long-term sustainability of the sector.
- Opportunities in community forestry: Provide a basis for social and environmentally sound welfare development and forest management in rural areas.
- Opportunities in largescale agroforestry: Increase employment and economic activity in rural areas, export earnings and fiscal revenue from deforestation free palm oil development at industrial-run concessions and smallholder/out-grower farms
- Opportunities in small holder agricultural development: Increasing food security and rural income through more efficient land use while reducing pressure on surrounding forest
- Opportunities in carbon: Benefit from the overlap between Liberian and global interest to manage the forest sustainably by accepting compensation for verified reduction in deforestation, degradation and related emissions
- Opportunities in conservation: Build collective national pride and identity, and a long-term foundation for ecotourism based on a well-managed protected area network with a globally unique biodiverse forest, while protecting wildlife.

There is a need for an evaluation of the partnership agreement to move toward sustainable forest management. Liberia as a country should translate its intention into real actions. There is a need to find alternatives for people living in the rural areas who depend on the forest as their livelihood.

The Liberian Agriculture Transformation Agenda (LATA) represents a decisive holistic move towards transforming Liberian agriculture into a strong economic pillar over the next five years. It focuses on diversification and transformation and concentrates on investment across commodity value chains from inputs to markets, associated with both staples and other high-value crops. The commodities the country has comparative advantage on are rice, rubber, cacao, cassava, oil and aquaculture. To develop these commodities, four key areas need to be considered:

- 1) Value chain to these commodities
- 2) Innovative financing
- 3) Export orientation
- 4) Ensure food security as well as promotion of jobs.

Issues relating to agriculture are not solely the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. It requires a more holistic and multi-sectoral effort.

The closing ceremony was attended by the President, Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. She told the audience she looked forward to the report and suggestions on how to move the country forward.

Next steps

Overall, according to polls and surveys conducted after sessions, the Liberia Development Conference was a success. It was the first time, all stakeholders both governmental, non-government, as well as the private sector gathered to take stock of national issues hindering the development of the country and openly discuss the way forward to build on existing achievements.

Information generated during the Conference has been made available on USAID/Liberia's Knowledge Management Portal (<http://usaidliberiakmportal.com/>). The *Liberia Development Conference Anthology* of the analytical papers will be compiled, printed and widely disseminated. As the Conference Secretariat, Liberia Strategic Analysis (LSA) is hosting a series of post-conference learning events through the end of 2017, that delve deeper into some of the issues and discussions raised during the Conference.

BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE LIBERIA DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

After 14 years of civil war, the election of the first African woman as the Head of State for two consecutive terms energetically set Liberia on the path of development. Liberia has had 12 years of peace and stability and though efforts have been made by GoL to put accountability, good governance, and economic opportunities for all Liberians at the center of its development agenda, the country is still confronted with many challenges. These include corruption, access to basic government services, youth unemployment, and education. With the upcoming election in November 2017, USAID/Liberia, Embassy of Sweden in cooperation with the University of Liberia, thought leaders, multilateral and bilateral donors, organized the Liberia Development Conference. The conference was designed to highlight key issues in Liberia, create a platform to discuss tangible solutions to Liberia's complex development challenges and stimulate a national dialogue particularly among contesting political parties. This dialogue would serve to move the country forward towards peace, stability and development.

METHODOLOGY

The conference was organized around *analytical papers*, which were written, presented and discussed by a wide range of Liberian development stakeholders with support from LSA. Each paper followed a standard format, described below. The Political Economy Analysis (PEA) lens was used to guide the writing process in to produce insightful analytical papers to propose innovative solutions and policies for Liberia's development challenges. Papers applied this approach by analyzing key structural factors within Liberia's context, including relevant organizations and institutions, examining their motivations, the types of relationships and the balance of power between them¹. Authors were provided access to an online platform, the Knowledge Management Portal, designed by LSA which provided analytical work and data collected on Liberia. Each paper was approximately 10 pages and answered the following questions:

1. How can this issue be characterized and why is it important in Liberia's context?
 - a. What structural factors are relevant to this issue (e.g. gender dynamics, demography, geography, geopolitics, social structure, history, culture)
 - b. Which institutions, organizations or actors have an impact on this issue?
 - c. What are the power dynamics at play between these various actors?
 - d. How does this issue impact national peace and reconciliation?
2. What evidence do we have about this issue?
 - a. What are the gaps in knowledge, data and research?
3. What are viable policy options for resolving this issue?
 - a. Do you have a pathway of change for how this issue can be resolved?
 - b. What feasible actions can be taken to support this pathway of change?
 - c. How can Liberians be involved in resolving this issue?
 - i. What role can the youth play in bringing about this change?

LDC GLOBAL AND NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

¹ For more information on applying the PEA approach, see the following publication, available at LSA or on-line: Harris, Daniel. *Applied political economy analysis: A problem-driven framework*. Overseas Development Institute, March 2013.

The conference was aligned with the Agenda for Transformation (AfT), the Government of Liberia's 5-year strategic plan, which ends in 2017. The AfT which sets the groundwork for addressing many of the development challenges served as a reference document for the conference's framework. The five pillars of the AfT, listed below, were incorporated into the topics discussed during the conference.

- I. Peace, Security and Rule of Law
- II. Economic Transformation
- III. Human Development (Education, Health and Social Welfare, Water and Sanitation, and Social Protection)
- IV. Governance and Public Institutions
- V. Cross-Cutting Issues (Environment, Youth Empowerment, Gender Equality, Child Protection)

The conference's vision was also consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The various topics and corresponding papers presented during the conference addressed certain aspects of the 17 SDGs. Several papers focused on issues around poverty reduction, quality education, gender equality, economic growth, infrastructure, and clean energy.

SUMMARY OF PAPERS AND DISCUSSIONS

Day I

Opening ceremony

The Conference started with the opening ceremony which was attended by more than 400 participants representing different institutions including State institutions (Executive, Legislature, Judiciary), civil society organizations (including women, youth and people with disabilities groups), private sector, media, international organizations, development partners and Donors. The opening ceremony featured the following remarks and speeches.

Welcome remarks, University of Liberia

The University of Liberia (UL), co-host of the Liberia Development Conference, gave the welcome remarks. Professor Jonathan C. Taylor, Executive Dean of the UL Graduate School, Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research and Director of Ibrahim B. Babangida Graduate School of International Studies, welcomed participants on behalf of the President of the University of Liberia, Dr. Emmet Dennis. He stated in June 2016, Dr. Anthony Chan, USAID Liberia Mission Director proposed the concept that UL co-host the conference. The suggestion was hailed by the leadership of UL since the objectives of the conference were consistent with UL's own mission to contribute to the development needs of the country. UL faculty were readily involved in the planning of the conference and as authors and discussants. He spoke on the upcoming launch of the Liberian Institute for Policy Studies and Research at UL; the institute will serve as a think tank to inform local public policy. The entity will be a major partner to advance the socio-economic development of the country. In the current period of the transition, there are many challenges, he declared, and there was a need to examine the problems and potential solutions. According to him, the LDC was a continuation of the national dialogue on Vision 2030, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the path to peace, stability and national development.

Special Remarks, US Embassy

The US Ambassador, Mrs. Christine A. Elder, after thanking all those who have contributed to making LDC a reality, encouraged all participants to participate in the discussion. She told the audience she looked forward to a dynamic event, in which practitioners, policymakers, opinion leaders, and entrepreneurs will develop innovative approaches to development challenges and engender national debate. She indicated that development assistance alleviates poverty, but economic development is a rising tide that lifts all boats. Financial resources are generated by inclusive sustained growth and job creation which are maintained by taxes and institutionalized systems that Liberians need to put in place in the long-term. She asked the audience to reflect on the following questions: Where should Liberia be in 10 years from now? Do leaders need a change in tactics, a shift to attracting investment to achieve economic maturity? Donors need accountability for funds and a return on investment. The country is endowed with varied resources, rains, and population but the main challenge is a responsible management of all resources for all citizens including women, girls, and young people. She concluded by saying she looked forward to LDC's conclusions which she described as a historic event.

Special Remarks, Embassy of Sweden

The Chargé d'affaires a.i., of the Embassy of Sweden, Ms. Elisabeth Hårleman shared how pleased she was to be a partner in hosting this important event. She stated that the conference was meant to bring together all actors for reflection. She highlighted the important contribution and role of UL in contributing to evidence-based thinking, solutions, research on politics, natural resource management, etc. She indicated that during the deliberations, it is important to take into consideration lessons learnt from the past as well as opportunities. The country is faced with complex, long term challenges and there is a need for continuous dialogue with everyone on board irrespective of gender, disability or other status. According to her, the country needs to make use of everybody. The youth need to have a greater voice in decision-making at the local and national levels as recommended by the UN Resolution 2250. She ended her remarks by reassuring the audience that international assistance will always be aligned with Liberian priorities, including women's political participation, equal rights and opportunities, power and influence.

Special remarks, President's Program Delivery Unit (PDU)

Dr. Clarence Moniba, Head of the President's Program Delivery Unit informed the audience that the President, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was currently in Ethiopia and regretted not being able to attend the opening ceremony of the LDC. She promised to be present at the closing session. In his special remarks, he indicated that Liberia is a great place for research because of the open society which allows for people to propose a lot of theories and counter-theories. After 14 years of civil conflict, a lot has been achieved but there is still a lot to be done and the need for the country to find better solutions. He reminded the audience that in 2006, the country had \$4 billion of debt, there was no private sector, and unemployment was at its highest level. Education and health services were quasi nonexistent. Now, roads are paved, there is an electric grid, and doctors, nurses, hospitals, schools are in place. There is a need for all Liberians to contribute to the learning and the building process. LDC is a platform which brings intellectuals together, to make Liberia a better place. This year is crucial for the country. There is a need to truly build on the existing foundation, to continue learning from each other and collaborating and work to attain middle income status, security of lands as well as human development. During the Conference, it is important to encourage active participation, share evidence, and learn from one another.

Keynote speech, Dr. Sayeh Antoinette

The keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Antoinette Sayeh, who served as a minister of finance under President Sirleaf in 2006. She started her speech by reminding the audience that the economic picture in the country just after the war was one of utter devastation, with GDP having contracted by 31% in 2003 before beginning its recovery in 2004 and 2005. Per capita GDP stood at only \$163 in 2005, a 90% decline from \$1,269 in 1980. Available social indicators at the time indicated that three-quarters of the population was living on less than \$1 per day, with a third suffering from tuberculosis and about a fourth of infants dying before reaching the age of 5. When President Sirleaf's first administration began, the national budget she helped craft and manage was roughly \$80 million, in contrast to the public debt which stood at \$4.1 billion, more than 700% of GDP. Currently the Ministry of Finance is managing a \$600 million budget and the country's debt, although growing in the last three years, stood at 41% of GDP at the close of 2016. Unfortunately, the devastating Ebola crisis and the quickly succeeding commodity price drop make it difficult to appreciate the progress achieved in the decade since Liberia's first post-war

democratically-elected government took seat. Dr. Sayeh, noted it is important to acknowledge that prior to the Ebola crisis, the country had a 10% reduction in poverty from 64% in 2007 to 54% in 2014. Achieving such a dent in poverty over a relatively short time span makes Liberia comparable to well-performing non-fragile sub-Saharan African states. And though still falling below Millennium Development Goal targets, progress was also made in increasing literacy and primary enrollment rates before 2014 when social indicators deteriorated with the advent of Ebola. Although maternal and infant mortality rates are still unacceptably high, there were concrete improvements. She credited the performance across all of these areas to supportive government policies, donor assistance, a favorable external economic environment, and last but not least, sacrifices made by many Liberians. Despite the achievements highlighted above, she deplored the fact that at least half of Liberia's population is still haunted by food insecurity and unemployment. The Ebola epidemic revealed fundamental weaknesses in the health system, and education quality and outcomes remain very poor. As the way forward, she proposed to consider the following four themes during the conference:

- Strengthen Liberia's resilience to shocks through the pursuit of macroeconomic, structural, and sectoral policies that build buffers and encourage diversification.
- Fight the deep-seated Liberian cancer of corruption by building stronger institutions and demanding greater accountability.
- Build human capital which is central to the country's economic prospects, not just in the skills it can provide the labor force to benefit from new job opportunities, but also in filling the capacity deficits that impede quality public service delivery.
- Reduce inequalities, both to facilitate social and political stability and for sustained growth. Recent work by the IMF on both advanced and low-income countries has shown the clear positive impact that reducing income and gender inequality can have on growth.

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

PANEL I: PRIVATE SECTOR COMPETITIVENESS

Chair: Minister Axel Addy, Minister of Commerce and Industries

Paper I: External Trade and Capital Flows in Liberia – A Concessions Management Reform Perspective

Author: Professor Alfred Tarway Twalla, University of Liberia

The 14-year war left the social and economic situation of Liberia deplorable, with all its development sectors severely destroyed. Following the end of the civil conflict in 2003 and the conduct of two consecutive democratic governments in 2005 and 2011, the government and international partners have been working assiduously to reconstruct the battle-scarred country. Despite all the initiatives to enhance transparency, the country still lacks transparent institutional frameworks to reduce illicit capital flows (ICFs). There is a high level of capital flight due to ICFs from the concession sector, which heightens illicit financial flows (IFFs) outside the country. The country therefore has a high level of economic growth without a sustainable development for its people. Liberia is among several African countries that are major sources of illicit capital flows. These illicit capital flows strip resources from the country that could be used to finance much-needed public services, from security and justice to basic social services such as health and education. ICFs weaken the financial systems of the country and undermine its economic potential. One of the key ongoing challenge is the 100% exportation of raw materials for external trade from 1945 to date.

Proposed policy solutions

- There is a need to encourage production of final products in the country and introduce Growing Inclusive Markets (GIM) mechanism in the concession sector;
- Current and future concession governance should focus on the exportation of finished products in order to stimulate GIM;
- The Government should make proper use of capital from external trade, expand the economy, improve livelihood and reduce ICFs from external trade in Liberia.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Hendrike Braun

Management agreements with concessionaires should encourage the production of final products, ultimately growing an inclusive market in Liberia. Concessions must be integrated into value chains so they encourage production of (and export) more value-added products, e.g. steel products, refined palm oil, rubber boots, etc., directly impacting Liberia's trade deficit. For example, if Liberia were to move towards the production of Ribbed Smoked Sheets, the country would have access to a domestic market valued at approximately \$7.5 million.

In the past, large areas of land were leased out. Today, concessions should be in Special Economic Zones. The government should be proactive, asking questions like: what do **we** want to achieve as a government, and then putting out tenures that match that concept, rather than the other way around. Concession don't necessarily have to be land based, a modern understanding of

concessions could equal value chain investors and be in terms of tax incentives, etc. E.g. Wienco could be a concession because of their value-add activities.

Weak institutions: Not only contracts should be strengthened, but also institutions. It is important to recognize that much has been done to strengthen institutions since 2005, like the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC), Inter-Ministerial Concessions Committee (IMCC), and the National Bureau of Concessions (NBC). Work has been done to improve these institutions, but they need to be stronger. The paper could include concrete suggestions that build and focus on strengthening what already exists. The question should be, what we can add on to these existing measures that is currently lacking. That could be more legal support, or perhaps the option of having NBC paid for through concessions for example. More generally, I would suggest using more evidence, because currently it seems to be more of an inference in certain cases. For example, there is no clear evidence as to why dual citizenship and illicit financial flows are facilitated by concession contracts that lead to the export of raw rather than value-added products. The role of illicit financial flows remains a bit unclear. It could be useful to explain that more in the paper.

Paper 2: A Reformed Commercial Law System- Inspiring Investor Confidence

Author: Kwame Clement, USAID

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

A properly-functioning legal system requires three things. *First*, there must be a body of substantive law that reflects best practices and is perceived as fair. *Second*, there must be personnel skilled in interpreting the underlying rules and issuing well-reasoned legal opinions. *Third*, the system must lend itself to the efficient resolution of disputes and timely enforcement of its decisions. Liberia has made some important strides toward erecting such a system, but there is more work to be done. The country has a Commercial Code in line with international best practices, which provides clear, binding rules of the road, with provisions for sales, leases, mortgages, and secured transactions. There is also a specialized Commercial Court established with unique powers, including the power to compel arbitration, to help ensure speedy disposition of cases. However, there is much to be done to ensure those cases are speedily resolved and the court's judgments are enforced in a timely manner. For development to take place, it is important to reflect on how to ensure fair and efficient resolution of commercial disputes to inspire investor confidence and spur economic growth.

Proposed policy solutions

To ensure fair and efficient resolution of commercial disputes, the following actions need to be implemented:

- Add more judges to the Commercial Court.
- Improve courts' administrative process.
- Provide better trained and compensated administrative staff
- Provide improved internet connectivity
- Enhance system for enforcement of Court's judgment
- Lessen/waive costs attendant to enforcement proceedings
- Eliminate legal challenges that impede enforcement

- Create disincentives for assertions of frivolous legal arguments/claims including stiff fines on parties/lawyers
- Eliminate procedural delays and motion practices that foster delays
- Reform judicial system so that emphasis is on serving consumers of justice and not producers
- Develop competent commercial law bar: broaden commercial law curriculum at law school, create commercial law clinics; develop moot arbitration competition.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Cllr Negbalee Warner

It is not only the legal system that needs to be strengthened. There are also structural problems that must be addressed. Among those structural problems are the cash based economy, the weak documentation system, the low integrity of the corporate and collateral registries. When a judgement is made, it can only be enforced when there is a judgement data. When the judgement data cannot be found, it is impossible to enforce that judgement. About 50% of the enforcement problems are caused by the unavailability of judgement data. The fact that the person sued cannot be found is also another challenge. Another issue that needs attention is the management of appeals. In conclusion, it is impossible to reform the Commercial Court without reforming the entire Judiciary system. However, while waiting for such a reform, the private sector can be strengthened to encourage arbitration to secure transactions.

Paper 3: How Liberia can diversify its economy for inclusive growth through priority value chains

Author: Jonathan Said, Tony Blair African Governance Initiative

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

After the war, Liberia's economic growth has been driven by mining which generates very few jobs. Agriculture only grew 2.8% on average per year between 2005 and 2013, but accounts for about 50% of workforce. Manufacturing, which is also labor intensive only grew 3.6%. The population averaged 3.4% annual growth during the same period². In a country like Liberia, market failures are so large that many markets fail to function effectively. This is aggravated by the political, economic, financial, human and institutional capacities which are too limited to substantively address those failures. The government strategy to respond to these failures has been solely to tackle economy-wide constraints, such as lack of energy, roads, corruption and limited land access. This is important, but it needs to be complemented with a modern, market-based industrial policy.

Proposed policy solutions

The most pragmatic and implementable approach to economic diversification is through the export-oriented development of sectors in which Liberia has a revealed or has latent comparative advantage. To achieve that, it is important to understand the binding constraints to the effective functioning of specific markets in which Liberia can compete with other producers. Moreover, development partners should support the Government and existing strategic private actors to find permanent, localized, workable solutions to those constraints through public-private dialogue

² International Monetary Fund, Government of Liberia, Labor Force Survey, 2010

and collaboration. A conceptual framework for how to identify the sectors that should be focused on has been applied to ten products across seven agricultural and manufacturing sectors and concludes that rubber, oil palm, cocoa and aquaculture make the strongest case for economic diversification. Efforts to improve food security and nutrition need to start from a deeper understanding of the underlying factors that drive them, including the economic merits of various value chains and the role household incomes play, irrespective of the source of that income.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, YoQuai Lavala

If Liberia is to increase its productive capacity, the issue of energy or electricity must be a priority. If electricity is prioritized, diversification can be achieved and value addition can take place easily. The production capacity can also be increased.

PANEL 2: GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Chair: Ezekiah Pajibo, Liberia Law Society

Paper I: Improving Local Services through Administrative Decentralization in Liberia

Authors: George Forpoh, Audra Grant, Yourfee Kamara, Katherine Mark, Ritu Nayyar-Stone, DAI Global

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

The Government of Liberia is undertaking a decentralization effort but face obstacles such as weak governing capacity at the local level, little democratic engagement, and very limited fiscal and political resources. The Government is not providing high quality local services. Though keenly aware of local service needs, the local governments are constrained³ by lack of clear responsibilities as well as funding. Despite evidence that local own-source revenues are associated with less waste and better services, in Liberia, counties have no revenue raising powers, and cities have little. Administrative decentralization initiatives have been initiated, but government structures and lack of functional clarity are impediments. The Local Governance Act was drafted in 2016 and is awaiting to be passed into law by both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Proposed policy solution

- Support mechanism to enhance citizen engagement
- Build local capacity at the county level
- Put in place a new regulatory to give oversight to local government
- Improve local service provision
- Pilot projects to find low cost approaches to improve services
- Increase funding
- Strengthen local government functionalities

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Mr. Botoe Zinnah

It is a fact that the government of Liberia has taken some concrete steps in the decentralization process with the help of donor funding. However, to sustain this, the government needs to increase financial resources in this area. In addition to the solution proposed in the paper there

is also a need to build the capacity of local government administration as well as strengthen the community colleges in the various counties to help build local government officials capacity. There is also a need to develop long and short term programming. The system is overly centralized and greater autonomy in the financial management aspect is needed in the decentralization of government functionalities to improve service delivery.

Paper 2: Inclusiveness, inequality & access to government services

Author: Franklin Dolo, Building Markets

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

Poor access to public services, slow growth and growing inequalities have risen public policy debate in Liberia recently. Currently there is little to no use of key national indicators to map and measure dimensions of public performance and life-quality. Information gaps need to be filled, including on the distributional impacts of policies across different social groups and locations, so that a broader set of existing and new indicators can be identified to inform policy design and reinforce governments' capacity to implement for Inclusive Growth. There is an absence of socially disaggregated information system, lack of research and independent surveys, weak coordination and harmonization mechanism. Plans to increase people's access to public services, particularly in the rural areas, are suffering due to lack of a clear road map, and the setup of an effective monitoring and evaluation system to keep watch on inclusive governance initiatives.

Proposed policy solutions

- Develop a comprehensive national strategy on inclusiveness, with consensus from all political parties and all sections of society
- Mobilize international support and funding for implementation of national programs on inclusiveness
- Build a more professional capacity within government institutions to develop and implement policies on inclusion
- Reduce government centralized and bureaucratic control by devolving administrative and financial authorities from the central government to the local
- Mainstream stakeholder engagement in the entire policy cycle
- Strengthen Monitoring & evaluation mechanisms to enhance policies on inclusiveness.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Mr. Thomas Nah

Most of our laws tend to address inclusion but they are hardly implemented. There is a need to map and streamline the laws, devolve power to citizen and shift from centralization to greater decentralization. There is also a strong need to know to what extent these laws are working, how they can be strengthened and how resources can be used efficiently. Implementation issues need to be critically considered. The commitments taken by the Government of Liberia must be concretized.

Paper 3: Society Relations and Development in Liberia: Problem and Opportunity

Author: Nathaniel Kwabo, CERPS/Liberia

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

Arguably, the relationship between the Liberian state and its citizens has not been one of research interest, not least in the development discourse of the country. The centrality of the state as the main actor has held sway in both the prognosis and prescription narratives of Liberia's political, economic and social development. Development initiatives by the state generally see citizens as end beneficiaries and not necessarily equal participants, thus forfeiting the opportunity to directly court vital social capital needed to shore up real benefits. Development partners have intervened in a bifurcated way; engaging the state and society separately. There is low public trust level due to the lack of ethics as well as a low capacity of public sector workers. What seems to be missing is an understanding of the nature of the relationship - historically a 'sovereign' and 'subject' interaction - and how it may inform development outcomes including effective public service.

Proposed policy solutions

- Increase citizens' participation
- Decentralize public institutions including local government legislatures laws
- Build a culture of public service ethics and code of conduct
- Empower citizens
- Build alliance of reform minded actors to continue institutionalization of accountability and transparency in governance and enhance anti-corruption initiatives.
- Reduce donor visibility. Visibility of donor shows that GoL is relegating its responsibility.
- GoL and civil society organizations (CSO) partnership.
- Organize Public sector reform including the civil service.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Atty. Kanio Bai Gbala

Citizen participation should be analyzed in terms of quality and quantity. It is also important to ask ourselves, when we are talking about decentralization, whether it is a system that is decentralized or the authority. The ones that should benefit from the public service should be clearly determined. Public services should aim at meeting the needs of citizens and not government officials. The flaws in contract negotiations should be addressed and the government pay more attention and find solutions to citizens' problems.

Paper 4: Mainstreaming integrity in public sector administration

Author: Victoria Cooper-Enchia, Chemonics International

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

The results of recent surveys reveal that corruption remains a problem, leaving much to be done to re-build trust in key public institutions. There is a fundamental distrust of Government due to decades of financial mismanagement and abuse of public trust associated with the lack of integrity and ethical behavior in civil and public servants, elected and appointed officials. Legal frameworks to guide behavior have not had a significant impact on corruption in public administration. There is no apparent consistent definition of integrity across Government legal frameworks. Public servants are unsure of what integrity means. There are confused messages

on receiving gifts not considered corruption since the Code of Conduct allows casual gifts up to \$200 and token gifts up to \$250 without timeframe limits. In 2012 National Integrity Barometer survey, employees surveyed considered that their leaders had some responsibility for their own corrupt behavior.

Proposed policy solutions

- The creation of good governance, growth and prosperity in Liberia, where the society and economy have been devastated by civil conflict and decades of financial mismanagement, requires leaders who demonstrate, encourage and enforce ethical behavior and integrity.
- There is a need to establish a Public-Sector Coalition for Ethical Leadership and Integrity with National Integrity Forum, Governance Commission and Civil Service Agency.
- There should be a National consensus on definitions of ethics and integrity. Practical ethical behavior & integrity guidelines should be developed and disseminated.
- There should be a Safe space for public servants seeking support in doing the right thing
- Elected & appointed officials, public servants & civil society should attend integrity & ethics, accountability and responsibility training & forums.
- Perceived impact on growth, development and peace of lack of ethics and integrity should be researched.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Henry Kimber

2017 is a critical year to elect leaders with integrity in the House of Representatives and the Executive mansion. To achieve that, people need to register to vote for leaders with integrity. Many reforms have started but have not been completed. There is a need to bridge the transition to the next government.

SPECIAL SESSION IN PLENARY: FINANCIAL SECTOR

Chair: Dr. Anthony Chan, USAID Mission Director

The panel comprised the following distinguished panelists:

- Honorable Boima S. Kamara, Minister of Finance,
- Mr. Gweh Gaye Tarwo, representing Central Bank Governor, Honorable Milton Weeks
- Dr. Abdoulaye W. Dukule, Secretariat on ECOWAS & The SDGs,
- Ms. Erica Bustinza, FHI 360

Introductory remarks from the Chair

In his introductory remarks, Dr. Anthony Chan, informed the audience that the session was originally designed to focus mainly on the financial sector. However, to ensure linkages between the financial sector and other areas, the session panel was adjusted to include the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank, the Secretariat on ECOWAS and the SDGs and FHI 360.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ECOWAS, Dr. Abdulaye W. Dukule

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expired in 2015 and the SDGs followed and will be in place thru 2030. The SDGs are looking to address root causes of development issues and tackle them to create sustainable growth for countries and lift them out of poverty. The SDGs are a global commitment, to 17 goals, with the aim to leave no one behind. It is important to note that Liberia played a leading role in the development of the Agenda 2030 that was passed and adopted by 194 countries on January 1, 2016 in New York. The Agenda 2030 is not a political program that was put in place by the current administration. It is an UN agreement that 194 countries signed to build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 2030 Agenda forms the new global development framework anchored around the 17 SDGs with a total of 169 targets covering economic, social development, and environmental protection. Poverty eradication is the overarching goal of the new agenda which is taking a more ambitious approach than the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by addressing the unfinished items of the MDGs and meeting the growing challenges of sustainable development. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. Another difference between the MDGs and the SDGs is that, in terms of education, the MDGs focused on quantity (e.g., high enrollment rates) only to see the quality of education decline in many societies. The SDGs represent the first attempt by the world community to focus on the quality of education – of learning – and the role of education in achieving a more humane world. In the SDGs, education should lead to job creation and should commensurate with local needs. In Liberia, we used to talk about how to get all the children in the classrooms but now with the SDGs, we are talking about quality education. There are 6,000 graduates from Liberia's four universities every year. We should be asking ourselves, where do they go? What kind of training do they get? Are these graduates meeting the market needs of the country? Etc.

The development of the SDGs was participatory. Every country and every stakeholder was consulted. Liberia played a leading role in the development process of the SDGs from the beginning and we are proud to have formed part of the high-level panel of the UN that set the parameters of the development growth. We took part in all the meetings that led to the development of the SDGs. In Liberia, we had consultations in 2012 with the media, the private sector, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations and academia. We used the AfT to build up the basic framework of what we called then the HLP (High-Level-Panel) appraisal report that came from the Monrovia meeting. We negotiated with other African countries to reduce plethora of priorities we had to a small framework of five pillars, and those five pillars were adopted in New York and became a part of the SDGs.

The SDGs were made to transform the world but not in the absence of the people who live in the world. It is meant to transform partnerships between countries. Liberians shouldn't look at Liberia as a market place of 3 million people but beyond because you now have access to an open market that goes from Dakar to Lagos. On the African continent, you have a market place of a billion people.

Now transiting to the SDGs, the Ministry of Finance, Development and Planning has been reviewing the AfT1 to inform the development of AfT2. This process is ongoing and I hope that ideas from this Conference will contribute to the process. We need to reflect on the following: How do we work at achieving the 17 goals? Which ones are the most important goals to Liberia? What goals do we need to push forward, and put more money towards once we have aligned with the AfT?

Financial sector and economic growth, Honorable Boima Kamara, Minister of Finance

The Minister informed the audience he was speaking as a Liberian citizen not as a Minister. The government is at a crucial stage as it will be joining the list of countries formulating a new development and planning agenda ensuring no one is left behind. In this process, we need to ask ourselves how we move forward beyond AfT 1, taking into consideration the new economic order set forth in the SDGs. The financial sector lays the groundwork for private sector growth. The current structure of the financial systems is shallow, and needs to be deepened. It is a capital market with an asset size. What can be the anchor of the financial sector? It has to be private sector growth. There is a need to encourage more specialized institutions, e.g. mortgage finance, how contractors can raise capital to build roads, etc. The market needs to be expanded. There are 9 commercial banks, focused on large scale commercial activity. There is a need for more money for market operations. There is a need to allow greater transactions in the local currency. In terms of the infrastructure deficit, the GoL needs to play a critical role to expand mobile money, meet rural needs as well as the needs of civil servants and businesses. Dual currency remains a controversial issue. We need to develop a culture of debt reimbursement. People should reimburse to allow more people to borrow. For the financial sector to play a meaningful contribution to economic development and job creation, it has to be strengthened. We need to build the structure which will drive demand. The country is facing fiscal deficits and there is a need to improve on the management of exchange and interest rates. A Credit Reference Bureau has been established and is accessing businesses but it lacks the necessary capital. More flexibility is needed to facilitate Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)'s access to finance. The middle class needs to grow but this can only be achieved by reducing operation costs of all sectors. The government needs to complete the hydropower plant to facilitate private sector access to electricity which will reduce operation costs.

Finance is important to SMEs. How do we approach this? The Central Bank is the apex for all parts of the financial system. The financial sector is the foundation of the stability of the currency. The Central Bank can only be strengthened by adding value, reducing foreign exchange losses, and reduced reliance on importation.

Mobile Money and payment systems, Erica Bustinza, Project Manager of the Mobile Solution Technical System and Research Project, implemented by FHI 360.

Mobile money has a positive effect on livelihoods and savings. There has been a correlation between financial inclusiveness and GDP growth. Financial inclusion is important because it helps the government to alleviate poverty and enhance transaction efficiency. Mobile money has played a key role in Liberia but is faced with difficulties. Some of the challenges faced with the payment system are lack of infrastructure, lack of road network connectivity, lack of consistent power and reliance on gasoline/diesel generators for power etc. Most of the population doesn't use

electronic payment systems due to the above listed challenges. Operation in the rural areas has not reached full potential. There is a high cost in proving the profitability of some of these services in the rural areas. In rural areas, it is difficult and expensive to move cash around and get to access points. Digital financial service offers a solution to many of these problems. The availability of mobile money helps save time and money. It also helps to prevent teachers and nurses from leaving the classroom, clinics or hospital to receive salaries; which can take two to three days. 75% of MoE employees miss 2 days of school to retrieve their pay, and they use 17% of their pay on transportation to payment points. While they are away, students are not being taught and patients are not being cared for. To address the problem, GoL decided to pilot mobile money. MoE was the first to implement mobile money for salary payments in Nimba and Bong counties. The government of Liberia through MoE and MFDP have signed a memorandum of understanding for the payment of salaries; teachers' salaries are now paid through mobile money. 97% of people in the MoE are benefiting from this pilot trial and have expressed satisfaction. This has been achieved thanks to Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) who allowed payment to be done in both LRD and USD. MOH is also planning to follow suit and arrangements are also on the way for the payment of other fees through mobile money such as passport fee and others. It is important to note that an increase in transactions in the mobile money marketplace reduces the costs of each transaction. The main challenge observed during the process is the availability of liquidity and connectivity as well as illiteracy. The way forward is to promote digital financial literacy. This will facilitate financial inclusion in Liberia.

Questions, comments and suggestions from the audience

- Electronic transfer: how do banks replenish liquidity in the remote rural areas? And what about cyber security? How are people identified in the system in Liberia? Other countries have a unique identifier, like a social security number.
- Innovation can overcome infrastructure blockages. Credit guarantees, that USAID supports, can be applied to these problems.
- MDGs: What has been done with the MDGs?
- We have too many commercial banks, but they are not serving all sectors.

Answers from the Panel:

- Mobile money agents provide liquidity to specific areas, there are two providers. Mobile money providers ensure security to the end user, this includes moving and storing cash, the user fees cover the cost. Central Bank replenishes liquidity to its rural branches. Cybersecurity is a global and domestic concern. GoL needs to strategize against fraud which would be catastrophic in Liberia. Payment systems are being secured. The transfer of cash to branches has guards.
- 2000-2015 MDGs Learning: Everything in the country must be aligned with the Global Agenda. The AfT 2 will be aligned with the SDGs. How can we make people accountable for every dollar in our budget? How real are we at creating sustainable jobs? Livelihoods must be commercial-driven and the GOL should play a leading role. Value addition is the way forward. We must wake up and leverage our competitive advantage in agriculture. Liberia should not be impoverished.

- Dual currency: Economic situation gives us economic instability. We import 90% of what we consume. The dual currency is not the problem. We need to create an affordable environment in which people can grow SMEs to larger enterprises. Liberians need to be leading the change. GoL needs to set a quota in the budget to spend on local businesses, and we need to know what this is.
- Need to deepen beyond commercial transactions. We need investment banks for agriculture and infrastructure, for medium to long term vehicles to enable the private sector to be the engine of growth. MFDP is working on this. And we need to keep the country stable and calm.
- Farmers need a unique identity system that can be used to track people along the value chain.
- The MDGs focused on problems, like AIDS treatment. There were too many silos in their definition. The SDGs are an improved framework for development.
- MFDP Comment: The MDGs were more restrictive. The SDGs take a country approach and are to be home-driven, to do development by the country itself. GOL has a \$600M budget, and shouldn't constantly be looking for foreign investment capital.

PANEL 3: MACROECONOMIC POLICY

Chair: Prof. Geegbae A. Geegbae, University of Liberia

Paper I: Macroeconomic Developments in Sub-Saharan Africa

Author: Alex Deline, International Monetary Fund

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

Sub-Saharan Africa's growth rate has fallen to its lowest within the last two decades from an annual average of between 5-6 percent to a marginal 1.4 percent in 2016. A modest recovery close to 3 percent is projected for 2017 but would depend on urgent actions to address the much-needed macroeconomic imbalances and increased policy certainty in some of the region's largest economies. This has been largely driven by sustained unfavorable world market prices for some of the country's leading commodity exports, and less supportive global environment. The current state of the region economies now reflects one of two in sub-Sahara Africa (commodity and non-commodity exporting countries). Growth in countries with natural minerals continues to decline; while growth among non-commodity exporting countries with sustained investment in diversification expected to remain broadly stable. To attain the 3% growth level, urgent action is needed to address the large macroeconomic imbalances and policy uncertainty in some of the region's largest economies.

Proposed policy solutions

- There is a need to conduct Domestic revenue mobilization reforms to reduce overreliance on commodity-related revenue
- Expenditure rationalization efforts are needed to avoid abrupt cuts in productive capital spending and support the diversification agenda
- There should be reforms to improve spending efficiency and trim down untargeted subsidies

- Preserve social safety nets targeted to the most vulnerable segments of the population

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Mr. Del-Francis Wreh

Sub-Saharan Africa has all the resources it needs and during favorable times, these resources are sold to the western world or our partners. When things are unfavorable, we are unable to support our own expenditure by fully utilizing those resources. Despite all having the resources, we are still unable to support our developmental agenda.

In 2004 and 2006 sub-Sahara Africa, experienced increased growth, with the exportation of raw materials and the high price of commodities during that time, however with the financial crisis of 2008 growth slowed. If we are to see Africa grow economically (including Liberia), we need to transform raw materials into finished goods to address problems with trade imbalances and exchange rates.

Paper 2: Overview of the Macroeconomic Situation in Liberia

Author: Patrick Hettinger, Senior Economist, African Development Bank

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

After years of post-conflict progress, Liberia's economic growth stalled in 2014 when the country faced the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) crisis; at the same time international commodity prices dropped for key exports. The economy contracted by an estimated 0.5% in 2016. Additional growth pressures are coming from the drawdown of the United Nations peacekeeping force and uncertainty before elections in October 2017. Growth will see some support from expanding gold and palm oil production and the impact of gradually improving infrastructure. A modest rebound can be expected in 2017 to around 3.0%, but growth in the medium term is expected to remain below earlier levels. The government is facing substantial challenges in an election year. Increasing the alignment of expenditure with development priorities is critical, but it also will need to finance elections and security when revenue growth is weak. Borrowing space has tightened, so it needs to be more selective with new borrowing. Continuing progress in public financial management will be necessary to improve the efficiency of public expenditure and investment.

Proposed policy solutions

To promote economic diversification and inclusive growth, the government should

- Continue investment in infrastructure with high economic returns.
- Increase its emphasis on improving the business environment, focus on increasing productivity and value-added in agriculture.
- Improve business climate, address constraints to growth and attract investment especially in non-extractive sectors.
- Find the right policy mix and maintain focus on development goals in the lead up to elections and create a transition towards more inclusive and sustained growth.
- Educate and train the workforce in the long run and ensure human capital development
- Continue efforts to improve institutions to address these issues, including coordination.
- Build institutional capacity in the sector; that will be key to sustainability.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Jennifer Tikka

To respond effectively to the issue of diversification, it is important to know the specific players who are operating in those sectors. We also need to respond to policy inconsistencies. We need to collaborate with companies who have the necessary expertise and can provide the technical support when necessary. The result based and crop site should be considered. Rubber might create more jobs. It's all about how we diversify our economy. We also need to focus on supporting the agriculture sector. Prioritize a sector and give more attention to it and see that it is fully strengthened. All these should be documented and the Ministry of Commerce should play a leading role.

Paper 3: Domestic Resource Mobilization Strategy for Liberia

Author: Abigail Urey-Miller, Phoenix Tax & Accountancy Consultants

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

Liberia has made significant progress in recent years in improving its system of tax administration, through the creation of the Liberia Revenue Authority (“LRA”). The LRA has adopted an efficient functional organization structure and has a core team of well-trained and enthusiastic young staff. However, tax policy remains an essential component of the social contract. Tax policies are not developed in close consultation with stakeholders. For a low-income country, high direct taxes such as Corporate Income Tax (CIT)-25% and Personal Income Tax (PIT)-25% constitutes a real barrier to improving compliance. This affects national savings/investment and growth performance. Despite the strong political and administrative will to spearhead Liberia’s developmental aspirations, the LRA faces significant challenges in revenue mobilization and collection. Chief among these challenges are the low levels of tax consciousness and awareness among the public, and the lack of a culture of voluntary tax compliance among taxpayers. Citizens withhold taxes and government is seen as illegitimate because it fails to deliver services. GoL is neither resourced nor accountable.

Proposed policy solutions

- Key expenditure planning and management reforms are needed to ensure the link between domestic resource mobilization and robust delivery of public services
- There is a need to build an institutional environment of mutual trust and accountability between the public sector and citizenry to promote voluntary compliance, and foster a cycle of increased growth – enhanced revenues – strengthened compliance
- Taxpayer surveys can help pinpoint key rigidities in the tax admin system, and perceptual issues which will need to be factored into tax policy formulation and outreach activities.
- Further upgrading of core functional procedures (eg. registration, risk-based audit, returns processing) is a key to next steps.

Paper 4: De-Dollarization in Post Conflict Countries: Policy Issues and Lessons for Liberia

Author: Charles Amo-Yartey, International Monetary Fund

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

Since independence, Liberia’s economy has been either fully dollarized and or highly dollarized. Dual currency has served the country well and has delivered sustained periods of macroeconomic stability after the end of the conflict. The presence of dollar deposits and loans in countries that

suffered high nominal instability in the past has enhanced financial intermediation and helped avoid demonetization. The main problem with de facto dollarization centers on its impact on the demand for money and its implication for the conduct of monetary policy. An important issue in the debate about monetary policy and inflation in dollarized economies is whether the pass through from exchange rate to prices increases under pervasive dollarization. The literature and country experiences show a link between de-dollarization and exchange rate flexibility. The government is currently discussing options to de-dollarize the economy as a means to make monetary policy more effective and reduce vulnerabilities to shocks. Financial dollarization may allow greater integration with international capital markets.

Proposed policy solutions

- Successful de-dollarization involves a combination of: macroeconomic stability, financial market development, and strong prudential regulation.
- De-dollarization needs to be gradual and implemented strategically.
- Credible monetary and fiscal policies along with the development of local currency markets supported de-dollarization in Angola, Cambodia, and Peru
- De-dollarization will also require ensuring that financial regulation encourages intermediation in domestic currency and realigning the monetary policy strategy towards reducing uncertainty about the value of the domestic currency.
- Deepening local currency financial markets and broadening savings options are other factors contributing to de-dollarization.
- A well-functioning foreign exchange market backed by an adequate level of official reserves, by ensuring prompt access to foreign exchange is highly needed.
- De-dollarization can also be promoted by prudential measures that reduce banks' incentives to borrow and lend in foreign currencies.

PANEL 4: THE POLITICAL ARENA

Chair: Prof. Francis Maweah, University of Liberia

Paper I: National Reconciliation in Abeyance

Author: Prof. Elwood Dunn, CERPS/Liberia

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

In the aftermath of the 1980 coup and civil war, Liberia has experienced thirteen years of peace with two successful elections and a third upcoming. Why then are we discussing national reconciliation? Because we have yet to establish a relationship between the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations and our many reconciliation initiatives. The promise of Vision 2030 through the implementation by government and citizens alike remains elusive. Vision 2030 has the potential to heal Liberia but it was left in an abeyance. Lastly, because the government-specific reconciliation initiatives have faced national commitment and leadership challenges, there is no reconciliation agenda.

Proposed policy solutions

The pathways include, though not limited to:

- Reassembling the issues and pointing out the “why” of abeyance.
- TRC Report and its recommendations need to be resurrected and authorities need to acknowledge its legitimacy and ensure public dissemination.
- Vision 2030 needs to be taken to the people with an implementation plan going beyond the government challenging citizens to take ownership of the process.
- Vision 2030 Road map initiative should be aligned to the TRC report. There should be a link to social grievances of the pre-coup d’état period.
- Establish status of constitution review, pointing out challenges and opportunities.
- Justices and lawyers need to be heard.
- The existing Task Force on TRC recommendations should liaise with the legislature to streamline the recommendations.
- Current administration should take steps beyond where the project now lies. Some actions need to be taken in this last year of President Sirleaf.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Eddie Jarwolo

In dealing with the issue of TRC, it is also important to take into consideration the consequences of Ebola. Numerous people were killed during the outbreak, there are orphans with no one to care for them. The country needs to better prioritize reconciliation and decentralize the process; the Peace Building Office is overly centralized. Donor dollars are funding the country’s service centers. There isn’t a GoL budget to support the TRC or decentralization processes. The UK Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General will not always be there to give Liberia funds. , There are economic issues that need to be addressed, people can’t be reconciled without jobs. A large portion of Liberians are illiterate and cannot read the TRC Report. The dissemination must go beyond publishing a report. We have a lot to do to build local ownership. The Agenda for Transformation needs to cover all we are discussing in national programs. There is a need to replace political reforms with genuine policy reforms, and see how the political system can take more responsibility.

Paper 2: Toward Political Decentralization in Liberia

Author: Ibrahim Al-bakri Nyei, Governance Commission

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

Decentralization today is a catchword in development discourse because it is perceived to be an effective mechanism for delivering basic services to citizens in local communities. The decentralization of political powers facilitates processes of participatory democratic governance at the local level. In Liberia decentralization is part of a larger governance reform initiative intended to rebuild the state after fourteen years of war. This is all rooted in the neoliberal concept of good governance championed by international development organizations. Over the last ten years, the government has undertaken numerous initiatives towards decentralization, but with a focus on administrative decentralization for service delivery. Though power is transfer to local actors, security is still fragile. Communities cannot elect their own chiefs and

superintendents and other local officials. Political decentralization is needed to sustain the decentralization reforms, and build a system of participatory democratic governance at the local level. The analysis shows that political leaders in Liberia have divergent views on political decentralization. There is a lack of consensus on the way forward – major political actors differ on scope and timing of decentralization, mainly political decentralization. While there are indications of interest in decentralization, strong political commitment has not been demonstrated giving that current decentralization programs have been pushed and sustained by donor funding. In addition, there are numerous territories overlapping each other and numerous intra-county boundary disputes (between clans, cities, chiefdoms). This makes the future uncertain. Political decentralization will require the mustering of political will to amend several laws and reform the Constitution. Efforts are underway on these, nevertheless at a plodding pace.

Proposed policy solutions

- Develop a clear legal framework for political decentralization, and ensure that roles and relationships are clearly delineated between levels/tiers of government (i.e. relationship of city mayor to county superintendent; superintendent to Minister of Internal Affairs).
- Rationalize the existing local structures, clarify all boundaries, and distinguish municipalities from districts and chiefdom areas.
- Mobilize the civil society to elicit political commitment for political decentralization reform.

Comments and additional recommendations from the discussant, Philippe Accilien

The administrative, fiscal and political decentralizations are linked. The slow pace of constitutional reform, lack of consensus, and confusion over local boundaries are problems. Because service delivery became important, the executive is willing to share responsibility for that with the local level. However, there is a lack of capacity at the local level and as long as the capacity at local level is weak, the elites from urban areas will drive decentralization. We therefore need to give civil society the tools they need to force the sharing of power at the local level.

Paper 3: Women and political participation

Author: Ruth G. Caesar, MAROPNET

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

Women's ability to increase their numbers in decision making processes and leadership roles by participating in political parties in Liberia is weak mainly due to strong male opposition. In the Legislature, women representation is only 11%. Since 2008, no bills in favor of women's issues have passed; there are too few women in the legislature to push these bills through. The institutional capacity of women to coordinate, implement, manage, and fund raise, is too low, as a result they can't run for office. Political parties in Liberia do not promote women. It is thought women do not play a key role, and are not elected into leadership positions. Women who do try to run are often eliminated at the primaries.

Proposed policy solutions

- The National Election Commission (NEC) should reinforce its supervisory role to ensure that all political party listings do include 30% women as required by the election laws.

- The second draft of Women Manifesto should be completed and operationalized.
- Provide opportunities including training and skills for women aspirants and assist them in fund raising as well.
- Provide capacity building for media institutions who will assist the development of “gender lens” in reporting and dealing with gender issues. Work closely with The Press Union of Liberia (PUL), and women media programs including FEJAL, LIWOMAC, MARWOPNET Radio Programs and Women Voices print media.
- Improve the capacity of the Liberia Women Political Forum for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of women’s political participation, including the performance of women as candidates in this up-coming 2017 political process and the elections, and for the domestication of the 2nd Edition of the Manifesto.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Tennen Dalieh

Women are being excluded from the political arena and affirmative action is not the solution. Typically, women in the legislature don’t appeal to male counter parts, they don’t have the same level of experience in maneuvering politics. Liberia has always been a divided society. We need to build on the experiences of the Women’s Legislative Caucus. Political parties can be entry points for women, but they must be active in the parties. Women need to be proactive and visible in political parties. There is a client system; men pay money to be candidates. Women can rise above this bar by being active. The Women’s Manifesto is a bargaining tool to get women’s issues addressed, and engage them in the political process.

Paper 4: Media towards strengthening public participation and democracy in Liberia

Author: Abdullai Kamara, The Carter Center

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

A free media is crucial to strengthening democracy and development anywhere. In Liberia, the 1950s laws criminalizing free speech are still in force. It is still a criminal offence to criticize the President. Irrespective of the number of media outlets in the country, a change in the laws are needed to decriminalize freedom of speech. In addition, journalists need to better comprehend their professional obligations to provide fact based reporting.

There are four media training institutions in Liberia but they are not staffed with properly qualified faculty. The Access to Information Law from 2010 requires a public body to publish all reports, but few institutions follow the law. There are community radio stations that were set up under USAID and donor programs but they need to be better supported.

Proposed policy solutions

- Strengthen the academic study and research of journalism & related training institutions.
- Expand public support for legislation that will open space for media freedom, specifically decriminalize free speech.
- Strengthen government's commitment on the access to information - emphasizing the mandate on government agencies to make public information readily available.
- Make easy and equal access to state-owned broadcast facility a reality, especially through transforming the Liberia Broadcasting System into a public service broadcaster.

- Support policy measures to uphold community-owned radio stations as a source of information for the electorate and other civic and development activities - irrespective of their political alignments.

Comments and additional recommendations from the Discussant, Bai Best

Liberian media can be an enemy to itself. The way we present information says a lot about how we are as a society. Media houses are businesses with rent, fuel, staff and supplies to pay for every week. Banks see media as an unprofitable sector, which makes it impossible to access to credit. There is a need to build a better business case. The President has not been in the forefront of media issues. Arbitration Committees have not been effective. The power of local news is an untapped medium. Local news is regarded as more useful to people than national news. There is a women's newspaper but there are no agriculture or youth newspapers. These niches can make a lot of money. Journalists can diversify and tap into these markets. Politicians are often not worth the media's attention. Media has not reflected the importance of women. The Press Union has a larger role to play.

PANEL 5 : YOUTH

Chair: Honorable Lance Gba-Gonyon, Minister of Youth and Sports

Introductory remarks from the Minister of Youth and Sports

Per population statistics on Liberia from UNFPA, 75% of Liberians are under the age 35 years, 47% are 14 years or younger and 28% are 15 to 35 years. This is expected to double by 2038. The society needs to mentor the youth and develop youth programs. When that goal is achieved, youth development will lead to productiveness. The issue of job creation and how young people match their capabilities to the job market is crucial. Attention needs to be paid to the issue of rural -urban migration. Young people are leaving the village, rural areas and migrating in the city for livelihood. Girls face extra challenges. Liberia has a teen pregnancy rate of 31%. ECOWAS Vision 2020 will open borders and lead to more competition for Liberian jobs from outsiders.

Paper I: Perspective on jobs, livelihood, entrepreneurship and the informal sector in Liberia

Author: Augustine Tamba, Federation for Liberian Youth

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

The high rate of youth unemployment is a threat to national security and in maintaining the stability of Liberia. Over 85% of the youth population are on the street, this has most affected rural, ex-combatants and women, they are most vulnerable to unemployment, per 2010 LISGIS report. This accounts for both formal and informal sector. The Ministry of Youth & Sports vacation job program is a good initiative but the number of applicants are 3x more than the estimated jobs available. Efforts to develop the informal sector are weak but the informal sector has the potential of addressing the problem. According to a World Bank 2015 study, micro, medium and small enterprises (MSMEs) create 4 of 5 jobs in most developing countries. There is tremendous pressure on national government to better address the issue. Many projects are

quick impact recovery. Majority of these programs are implemented like emergency recovery programs without study of its sustainability. When donors leave, the programs end. Most jobs concentrate on the intellectual class and current regime supporters versus non-supporters. Youth stereotypes and discrimination in education and jobs affect youth employment. There is for example a stereotype on current quality of education & lack of capacity to work. More youth are graduating from colleges than 15 years ago, but their capacity is low.

Proposed policy solutions

There is a need to look at the micro and macro levels of intervention.

Micro level: Short run Policy

- Policy Strategies need to graduate from emergency recovery, short-term programs to sustainable ones under relevant Ministries & Agencies

Micro level: Long run analysis

- Encourage value added exportation of natural resources; diversification of the economy; promoting MSMEs and making protectionist policies for local industries

At Macro level

- Encourage joint ventures with Liberians & foreigners.
- Encourage MSMEs to engage in international trade.
- Promoting entrepreneurship.
- Promote massive investment in agriculture. For the long term, there is a need to encourage value addition for export of natural resources. Sustainable investment in agriculture will create job opportunities.
- Promote the micro & macro business enterprises.
- Put mechanisms and laws in place to protect jobs for Liberians and encourage trade

At the policy level

- National youth act or youth policy document created to set the road map on youth development.

Comments and additional recommendations from the discussant, Mahmoud

Johnson

Liberia needs some productive activities most especially capacity building and investment in the private sector. The street cleaning project can prepare young people for the market in the long-term through volunteerism. However, the initiative is a project that is donor driven and a sustainable mechanism needs to be put in place by the government. Another policy recommendation is to engage the private sector. Government needs to know the employment size, specialization and the skills needed for the job in-order to match the focus of the nation. Government needs to educate the young people. The international organization Mercy Corps is implementing a good capacity building for young people by paying for interns to gain experience from the private sector and the Government can learn from such projects and do the same.

Paper 2: Tackling youth employability and workforce development issues in Liberia: a path to employment

Author: Patience Coleman Beyan, Civil Service Agency

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

Liberia's high unemployment rate continues to be a serious concern for development practitioners locally and internationally. Youth unemployment continues despite efforts applied by different stakeholders in addressing these issues. Although there is no doubt that vocational and formal learning has been successful in delivering entry to work programs and are qualifying people for work at all levels; attention needs to be paid to the critical importance of preparedness and the development of key employability skills. Employability is more than achieving higher education. It refers to individual efforts, programs and policies that promote the mastery of new job related knowledge and skills, access to employment opportunities, and support a range of strategic objectives that enhance economic growth and help rebuild post conflict countries. Government policies have focused on the development and accreditation of knowledge and vocational skills vs softer skills and aptitude of employability.

Despite some prospects in the large informal sector in Liberia, little effort has been asserted to modernize or formalize the sector.

Proposed policy solutions

- There is a need for transformation of Liberia employment generation strategies focusing on manufacturing and, agriculture.
- Create jobs and address food security through agriculture which accounts for 70% of the labor force in most low-income countries. Liberia currently imports 50-60% of its staple foods.
- Labor standard reforms and implementation of a minimum wage
- Productive & decent employment should be provided. Ensure that jobs are not only created but that they are sustainable and regulated.
- The Turning point should be the modernization of the informal sector. There is a need to reflect on formalizing jobs in the private sector
- A new Comprehensive -Compulsory National Youth Service program should be designed. Youth who have completed high school go through Compulsory National Youth Service programs.
- Education standards and the performance of education institutions issues should be addressed.

Comments and additional recommendations from the discussant, Denise Clarke-Reeves

Several policies on youth already exist and the solution is not necessarily more policies. What is missing is the coordination of existing youth policies. A multi-dimensional approach to education, health, finance, labor is needed. There are in-school and out-of-school youth and they are needed for different purposes. In the Alternative Basic Education Program implemented by Advancing Youth Project (AYP), 20,000 youth have been enrolled since 2001. 70% of the youth are females

who have on average 3 children, and often have never been to primary school. Some have completed level 3, but less than 30% were able to go for vocational studies. In a recent evaluation study, 175 young people who completed grade 6 needed technical skills. Work readiness skills are needed. There is a need to engage with the private sector and define with them the skills that will be needed 5 years from now. It is important to listen to the youth. In some of the communities in Nimba, Bong and Lofa where AYP activities were implemented, young people are now taking the lead in maintaining the classes that AYP once offered.

Paper 3 : Role of youth in community development & political leadership

Author: Harriette Thomas, President, Young Political Leadership School

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

Youth make-up the majority of Liberia's population. This group is critical to sustaining peace, and improving Liberia's democracy and electoral processes. Despite the end of the war in Liberia, its negative impact continues to be felt on the lives and livelihoods of young people. They contribute to the country's ability to emerge from its history of armed conflict to a nation providing platforms and opportunities for young people to contribute to their nation as young political leaders. Youth belonging to vulnerable or marginalized groups often feel neglected and alienated in their own country, thereby contributing to their migration (legal and illegal) for economic empowerment. Several Civil Society Organization including NAYMOTE supported government efforts by training and deploying volunteers as civic educators, as well embarking upon civic and voter registration campaign through different strategies. Strategies employed included: bus ride activities, using mobile phones to call and educate on participating in the decision-making processes, canvassing, hosting debates among candidates, media engagement as well as collaborating with the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC). 2000 election monitors were deployed during 2014 election across the country.

The Young Political Leadership School (YPLS), a citizens' empowerment project of NAYMOTE, is gradually building and empowering hundreds of young people with leadership and organizational skills needed to respond to these challenges. Initiatives like these need to be supported and sustained.

Proposed policy solutions

- It's important for young people to register and vote wisely during time of elections.
- Attend community meetings, be an active community member, become peacemakers, know your constitutional rights, know your elected leaders, believe and practice democracy, write letters to your representative, engage in national policy development,
- Volunteer in your respective communities and hold elected officials accountable

Comments and additional recommendations from the discussant, Samuel Jacobs

The youth were asked to speak on the role of youth in community development and political leadership. One asked what would be our role in community leadership. Firstly, youth need to fully participate in the national community service, contributing to the development of their communities and helping with the security network in the communities. Politically, youth also have a major role to play in every major political sector in this country. Before elections, youth need to critically examine candidates before voting them into political positions. To USAID and

other donors, the issue of giving young people the information and the ability to contribute in politics is crucial in strengthening the youth to fully participate in local politics.

Paper 4: Rising Together: A roadmap to youth empowerment in Liberia

Author: Lekpele M. Nyamalon, Africa's Life CSO

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

Social, economic, political, cultural, and other factors that have hindered the empowerment of youth in Liberia. Young people lack proper skill sets. The non-traditional skills that youth have (i.e. arts, sports, music, storytelling, drumming) are hard to use for economic empowerment. They are easy targets for radio. They are unable to contribute to their own empowerment. Social constructs, mindset, and peer pressure are factors posing as stumbling blocks towards youth advancement. Young women are severely disadvantaged in empowerment; single mothers are manipulated by politicians, unable to make a stance for themselves.

Proposed policy solutions

- A policy is needed for the creative sector for talent development and marketing, entrepreneurship for the arts and culture, and their protection from digital piracy.
- Enforcement of laws to protect musicians from digital piracy, etc.
- Entrepreneurship training for Arts & Culture
- Increased focus on Technical & Vocational Education as alternative learning platform for youths.
- Clear policy on bridging the Gender Gap
- Policy for Youths with Disability
- Increased opportunities for rural youths
-

Comments and additional recommendations from Discussant, Lawrence Yealue

We need a new orientation. There are educational and mechanical gaps. We need to create change-makers from the arts. There is too much talk, lying; instead we need to take action. We need mentors who will strongly engage with the youth. Teach the mind to be healthy with hope, not anger. There is a need to change the orientation, foster collaboration and build synergy.

Paper 5: Promoting integrated Sexual and Reproductive health (SRH)/HIV services for girls at risk and persons with disabilities in Liberia

Author: Ernee Bee Neeplo, Planned Parenthood Association of Liberia

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

Poverty, gender inequality, early sexual initiation and sexual violence continue to affect girls' ability to make informed choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in Liberia. This leads to unwanted pregnancies and other negative SRH outcomes. Lack of public awareness, sex and reproductive health are taboo topics. There is limited or no research on youth's issues and services and there is a need for evidence on which to develop policy initiatives. Adolescent

mothers need support from communities. Lack of knowledge and public awareness about youth SRH issues. Youth are unable to obtain services. There are very few youth friendly sexual and reproductive health clinics or centers. Public provision of contraceptives almost exclusively target married couples. There is limited research on adolescent and youth reproductive health (AYRH) and the needs of adolescents and youth, particularly among underserved and minority groups. If government prioritizes the sexual and reproductive health of young people and scale up the programs that work, we can transform society.

Proposed policy solutions

- Make good use of the media to provision information and services to adolescents and young people.
- Capitalize on political support to establish programs that support AYRH services.
- School-based programs should incorporate information on sexual and reproductive health
- Families and communities need to support adolescent mothers
- Health systems and health workers need to be able to respond to the special sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents.
- More data collection and analysis is needed to make informed decisions.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Gwendolyn Myers

There is a need for youth and disabled-friendly services and advocacy to make them attractive to young people and trust these services. Providers need to respect young people's privacy and freedom from judgment. Mentorship is needed for both genders. There is a need to build strong relationships with communities and integrate them into existing services. In terms of sustainability, youth service points need to be more welcoming and provide contraceptives. Rape incidence is still high as well as other Gender based violence (GBV) and this is fostered by peer pressure and digital media and need to be addressed. There are five pillars of the UN Declaration which must be considered while taking actions: partnership with young people, investigation into causes of rape in Liberia, actions for integrated reproductive health services and legitimacy. There is a need for coordinated nationwide campaigns and an increase of funds, as well as increased human security, which is a human right.

Questions and recommendations from the audience

- There is a need to pay attention to out-of-school youth i.e. boys who drop out of school in concession areas for mining.
- Recreation facilities and jobs are needed to respond effectively to young people's sexual and reproductive health needs.
- The discrimination in the awarding of scholarships must be addressed.
- Sex education needs to be permitted in law. Youth issues are cross-cutting, how can they be wholly addressed.
- Natural resource management sustainability: what is at stake?
- There is a need to start training young people in work skills and speaking skills from elementary school. The educational model need to be revisited again to make people more independent.

- Another forum like this is needed with the Ministry of Finance, Development and Planning, MOH and Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) to continue the discussion on these subjects

DAY 2

PANEL 6: TRANSACTION COSTS

Chair: Mervyn Farroe, USAID

Paper 1: Transport infrastructure of Liberia: roads and ports

Author: Victor Smith, Alliance Consulting Engineers, Planners & Surveyors Inc.

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

Transport infrastructure is underfunded and lacks the basic policies and trained human resources for the development of the sector which is critical for Liberia's growth. The development of roads will also contribute to the development of other sectors such as agriculture, tourism, mining, health services, education, security and export. Currently only 5.2% of roads in Liberia are paved (657 Km), the country has the lowest amount of paved roads in the Mano River Union Basin. So far government interventions have focused on feeder roads in the counties, paving of city streets. The building of major roads connecting the counties (Monrovia to Gbarnga and up to Ganta/Guinea border; Harper to Kolokien (Phase I) and the National Port Authority Free Port of Monrovia (APM Terminal) have been funded by donors.

Proposed policy solutions

- Levy taxes on the petroleum and petroleum products
- Establish the Roads Fund to collect and manage the funds
- Establish the National Road Authority under which the roads will be built and maintained, develop complete inventory with the condition survey of all roads and bridges
- Privatize roads by building toll roads and weigh bridges
- Put in place National Asset Management of the Transport Infrastructure
- Provide adequate support for State owned vocational and engineering institutions that supply technicians and engineers
- Fully implement the National Policies on Transport Infrastructure such as the Axle Load Laws, the National Road Fund Authority, the National Port Authority Master Plan and the National Transport Policy and Strategy (NTPS).

Paper 2: Sustainable energy for growth

Author: Ritesh Kumar Singh, Tetra Tech

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

Liberia has good potential of renewable energy resources in the form of biomass, hydro and solar irradiation but these have not been harnessed yet. Almost 84% of the primary energy requirement is met by firewood which not only causes higher greenhouse gases but also makes it unsustainable energy option for future generations. Hence there is imminent and immediate need for Liberia to focus on available renewable resources. In recent years Liberia, has taken many steps for adopting sustainable energy options most notable being subscribing to Sustainable Energy for ALL (SE4ALL) Action Agenda as ECOWAS member country. Two action plans namely the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) and the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEP) have been developed which set aggressive targets for renewable energy resources and energy

efficiency. Though, the renewable energy and energy efficiency targets have been set, many institutional and policy gaps remain. Adoption of NREAP and NEEAP is good start but weaknesses and gaps remain at policy and regulatory levels. It is expensive to harness renewable resources and hence energy efficiency in energy generation and use go a long way to ensure sustainable growth.

Proposed policy solutions

- A strategic framework linking action plans with program design, enablers and key stakeholders is needed to move forward effectively
- Along with strategic framework, an implementation structure is essential to achieve the goals
- All efforts should be made to harness hydro, biomass and solar resources as they are key to Liberia's energy sustainability

Paper 3: ICT4D in Liberia from 2007-2016 with the Africa Information Society Initiative Goals of 1996: Strides Made, Challenges Experienced, and the Road Ahead

Author: Dr. Darren Wilkens, Liberia Telecommunications Corporation (LIBTELCO)

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

In 1996 the Africa Information Society Initiative (AISII) set goals that were aimed at building Information Communication and Technology (ICT) infrastructure in Africa to enable the digital connection of every African village to the global information network by the year 2010. Those goals also involved leapfrogging African development through ICTs. About eleven years later in 2007, with a new government in place, Liberia began several initiatives that would give rise to a vibrant ICT sector setting the stage for an ICT4D phenomenon. The amendment of the existing Telecommunications Act to what is now the National Telecommunications Act of 2007, the establishment of the Liberian Telecommunications Authority (LTA), the drafting of the National Telecommunications and ICT Policy of 2010-2015 and, the landing of the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine optical fiber cable, are few of the strides made between 2007 and 2016 in Liberia. All of these strides were part of an ICT4D phenomenon that subsequently created an enabling environment for economic development. Two decades have passed since the enactment of the AISII and many villages in Liberia are still without electricity, lack of access to internet services and other core ICTs is hindering social and economic development

Proposed policy solutions

- Provide electricity for rural areas
- Establish literacy programs to build the capacity of citizens
- Establish Innovation programs and projects
- Integrate Technology in academic institutions (primary, secondary and tertiary).

Paper 4: The Trucking Industry and The Price of Commodities in Liberia

Author: Golvine de Rochambeau

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

In West Africa, land transport prices are among the highest in the world (World Bank, 2009), and many markets are still isolated. In those markets, high transport prices result in high commodity prices and low demand, which impede growth. I surveyed more than 70 trucking companies in Liberia, representing more than 200 trucks. As part of the data collection, I interview both the owners and the drivers of these companies, and followed them in time. Analysis of this data revealed the low quality of roads in Liberia, the high cost of importing vehicles, as well as their maintenance costs that are factors that directly increase marginal costs for these companies and subsequently increase transport prices. However, some lesser known reasons such as high truck maintenance costs, corruption on the road, lack of competition and credit restraints affect transport prices.

Proposed policy solutions

- There is a need to build roads that lead to isolated markets.
- The transport sector lacks competition, we need to promote:
 - New entries in the sector;
 - Develop small firms which are already operating in the sector.
- Three areas of focus need attention
 - The price of trucks and maintenance costs
 - Corruption should be addressed
 - Credit access for small firms need to be promoted.

PANEL 7: HUMAN SECURITY

Chair: Francis Kai Kai, UNMIL

Introductory remarks by the Chair

On July 1, 2016, the Liberian security forces took over from UNMIL. Security sector reform is occurring at an encouraging pace under the national recovery process. The Agenda for Transformation is the latest strategy and its Justice, Peace and Security pillar is being implemented. Now a Liberian Peace Building Plan is being prepared, and UNMIL will be drawing down until March 2018. The political transition will be completed by early 2018. The convergence of these transitions requires stock-taking on human security. We need pragmatic forward-looking pathways. Are we on the right trajectory? Are people happy with their security?

Paper 1: Security sector and trust in community relations

Author: Prof. Debey Sandee, University of Liberia

Problem statement

Liberia has suffered a crisis of confidence in the state's security forces and now seeks a professional army that is regulated by a legal framework established by democratically elected law makers and one that is outside the immediate reach of the President. In other words, the state security forces are intended for the security of the population. The police are one of the

most feared institutions in fragile states, where arbitrary arrest, and corrupt, predatory and abusive behaviors are common. There are gaps in capacity and logistics, and these customary arrangements can cover them. In 2004 there was the first security sector reform under UNMIL. In 2011 there was the Security Sector Reform Act. In a 2013 Human Rights Watch Report it was said that “no money, no justice.” What is important is the three “As”: authority, ability and attitude—the competence and integrity of the police. Each should ask him or herself: “How do I see my work and my status?” The goal of Security Sector Reform (SSR) Act in Liberia is to assure good governance of the security sector. The United Nations defines SSR as ‘a process of assessment, review and implementation led by national authorities that has as its goal the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the State and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law’ (United Nations Security Sector Reform, 2008, Report of the Secretary General).

Proposed policy solutions

- An independent civilian oversight board and security sector support.
- The establishment of the Professional Standards Division (PSD), the LNP’s internal monitoring unit.
- Enhance required support for the security sector to include physical and psychological wellbeing, equipment, and ‘reasonable’ working environment.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Jimmy Shilue

People have their own coping mechanisms. How can we tap into them? Look at the frontiers, for example. In Liberia, the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) experience shows that community and modern forces can be brought together effectively. Security protects the elite. The National Action plan for GBV leaves out the women who are affected. We need to ask women what are their real security threats? We need to look at security from the people’s perspective. We need to encourage discussion between communities’ trusted local structures and modern structures. Finding security is the freedom to walk from farms, to move from home to markets. A security hub is a good structure, but it is seen as a military barracks by the people. We need to be broader about security.

Paper 2: Re-assessing the Predicament of Liberia’s Dominant Statutory System in Addressing Marginalization and Discrimination

Author: Samuel Toe, University of East Anglia

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

Marginalization is exclusion. Discrimination is the infringement of rights. There are two legal systems in Liberia, customary and statutory. One is dominant over the other. Under these parallel legal systems, more people adhere to customary than to statutory law. Statutes accord more rights and protections to the vulnerable: youth, the elderly, the poor, religious minorities, the HIV positive, women and girls, and LGBTQ. We are witnessing long-term tension between the two legal systems. Since 2003, there have been more statutes created for women and girls, there are 16 statutes addressing women and girls’ marginalization. Laws extend new rights and more stringent penalties for GBV. There are challenges: legal rights-based action, simply promulgating a law, is subjected to cultural relativity under the customary system. Limitations

on access to justice: laws are perceived as encroachments on the customary law system. There is strong opposition within customary law. Dowry and women's inheritance law in one system does not change attitudes in the customary system.

Proposed policy solutions

- Law reform and harmonization processes must take keen interest in deeper, but sympathetic, ethnographical and historiographical inquiries in the customary law system in order to adequately comprehend what internal modalities of change exists, as a means of transforming undesirable practices from within, instead of constantly and primarily asserting statutory legal instruments from without.
- GoL and partners must invest more resources strengthening implementation & enforcement capacities

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Prof. Stephen Jubwe

The problem is transforming traditions. How do we transcend the dichotomy? In Liberia's own history, the western system dominates and the educational system is a critical barrier. There is an inherent consciousness of traditional values. We need to understand what our own system is, before we can strengthen what it is on the books.

Paper 3: Building conflict resilience capacities through social cohesion and conflict transformation strategies in Liberia

Author: Aaron Weah, UNMIL

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

Social cohesion and reconciliation are two dimensions of state-society relations, which together form the basis for durable and sustainable peace. Whereas social cohesion is defined as the harmonic relations between multiple social groups within a community, reconciliation is restoring damaged relations between communities, following a conflict. In Liberia, social cohesion was severely damaged during a generation of conflict, and reconciliation efforts are incomplete. The fragility of Liberia's post-war gains puts social cohesion and reconciliation at the centre stage as Liberia prepares for a major transition process. At the forefront of this transition will be the 2017 elections, which will see the first ever democratic handover of political and administrative power from one elected administration to another since 1944. (Dunn, pp.31-39; 2009) The other major change will be the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2018, marking the end of one of the most significant efforts by the international community to rebuild a failed state. The departure of UN peacekeepers will create a new socio-political environment for sustaining peace, which despite 14 years of stabilization and recovery, must tackle the root causes of the country's civil wars, identified by Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (LTRC). Findings on status of reconciliation shows that Liberians are tired of war, but the absence of violence is temporary. Worrying trends: most people (80%) oppose inter-group marriage, 90% would refuse a job in another country; 80% oppose marriage to named ethnic groups (e.g. Mandingos). There is rhetoric rather than true desire for reconciliation. The budget does not have funding for reconciliation. The independent human rights commission is not an adequate response to the scale of the past conflict. We need a long-term approach to be institutionalized.

Proposed policy solutions

- Take advantage of the creation of a Peace Building Plan, as requested by SCR 2333 (2016) and ensure that it captures a partnership between the Government and international community to strengthen social cohesion over the long-term.
- Supporting a Community College curriculum on reconciliation, peace building and social cohesion is critical to adopting practical approaches to reconciliation.
 - It also enables county to adequately respond to reconciliation discourse that are often formulated and trigger from Monrovia.
- Social cohesion and peace building should be programmed through the national budget and not dependent of foreign aid.
- A national secretariat on reconciliation, peace building and social cohesion should be established to fund and support county-level programs.
- Use of evidence to support reconciliation and social cohesion policy formulation and planning: e.g. social cohesion and reconciliation index (SCORE).

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Cecil Griffiths

A Liberia national strategy on social cohesion is needed, to consider: educational curricula, county differences, provide for a national secretariat to drive progress and measure it. The Palaver Hut system should be complemented with community dialogues. The police and CSOs should sit together and the police should invite CSO comments; there should be a national Palaver Hut on police issues. The GOL needs to get the police and the county superintendent to work together. Awards should be given to recognize communities that contribute to social cohesion. Political parties accuse the current leadership of corruption, misuse of public funds. Use ballots instead of bullets to decide who can change the country's direction. Individuals who are in government are the ones who promoted civil conflict. One important issue is to address impunity; make justice and rule of law independent and empowered to hold people accountable.

Paper 4: Microfinance for the poor in Liberia

Author: Tapan Kumarker, BRAC Liberia

Problem statement key ongoing challenges

Microfinance is the provision of non-bank financial services to low-income people. In Liberia 75% of the population isn't bankable, 68% of employment is in the informal sector, 70% of 2013 borrowers relied on nonbank financial institutions. The 20 microfinance institutions (MFIs) available focus on the Monrovia area. In the socio-economic and demographic context of Liberia, microfinance is a worthy development.

Under the Ebola Virus Disease, microloan support stopped, and afterwards, loans could not be recovered. It is very challenging now to get information on the microfinance sector. The cost of operations is very high, and this is reflected in high interest rates. Post-EVD, there has been a liquidity crisis. MFIs rose in Asia and East Africa with donor support. Liberia has little donor support for microfinance.

Proposed policy solutions

- The Central Bank should have a financial inclusion policy; microfinance should be expanded.
 - There is a need to operationalize financial inclusion policy.
- Strengthen human resource capacity building for microfinance and home-grown services (IT, etc.), and a national network of MFIs.
- Diversify products (e.g. mobile money, solar loans) and set up an apex for MFI financing.
 - Donors need to engage on this.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Watchen Bruce

MFIs are bankers for the poor, this is a security issue. The poor at risk will do what they need to do to survive. The Human Development Index states that 84% of Liberians live below the poverty line. An MFI is a nonbank institution. The MFI is the entry point for inclusive finance. The Liberia Development Strategy 2013-2018 of the AfT envisions microfinance as a priority. The capacity of MFIs is too low to compete with commercial banks. The costs of funds for MFIs are high, due to high operating costs. The “mixed market” for MFIs is a stick exchange for them. Only two Liberian MFIs are listed there. We need to build up MFIs’ capacity to report and qualify for being listed. Nimba women are receiving microfinance and they are agents for cell phone companies and receiving funds from agents in the county. Transferring cash to and from Monrovia needs security and support to reduce risks and costs. Help entrepreneurs graduate from MFIs to commercial banks, build their capacity to build financial statements.

PANEL 8: EDUCATION

Chair: Dr. Jonathan Taylor, University of Liberia

Introductory remarks

As the title of the conference depicts, development cannot be discussed without mentioning education. So, education is key to this conference. Education plays a vital role in national development. In the Liberia scenario, education has been a major issue over the past several years. There are a lot of challenges attached to it in terms of where we need to go as a post war country. Those challenges are at all levels from primary through tertiary of this sector. So, we are looking forward from our panelists for a very informative discussion as relates to this sector.

Paper 1: Liberia education sector analysis

Author: Minister Saa David Nyuma, Ministry of Education & Kabira Namit, World Bank

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

There is a 5-fold increase in school enrollments. The data claims 80% of youth under age 13 are literate and that there is a 20% gap in literacy between cohorts. Students are predominantly over-aged, 4 out of 6 drop out by grade 9. Montserrado County is an outlier that skews national data. The male to female ratio of teachers is 8:2. Early childhood education teachers are 50% male and 50% female in Montserrado. There are 33 students to each teacher in Montserrado, but 90 students per teacher outside Montserrado county. 1,892 “ghost” teachers were identified and removed from the payroll; 1,305 new teachers were hired with

these cost savings. Issues needing further attention include the significant share of private and household financing of education at all levels, the growing demand for early childhood education, the quality and relevance of secondary education, and reaching the large number of out of school youth with relevant education.

Proposed policy solutions

- Eliminating early childhood education (ECE) fees.
- Improve access, retention by improving the monitoring capacity of education officers and enhance female enrollment.
- Train qualified teachers
- Improve learning environments, specifically infrastructure
- Linking a clear national policy framework for teacher training institution and accountability
- Implementing clear national policy for retention of the best principles and education administrators.
- Give leadership and classroom management training. Have the Inspectorate do spot checks. Establish partnerships for out-of-school youth training

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Nisha Makan

6,600 schools still have no teachers, 7,000 teachers are unpaid. There is a need to unify around a single education agenda and to put in place a mechanism to use the budget more efficiently. GoL needs to prioritize paying teachers. Liberia is one of the lowest ranking countries in Africa when it comes to government education spending. The Ministry of Education needs to map and merge schools that are close together. Donor help is needed to achieve this but they cannot do it all, GoL needs to take ownership of these processes. Recent graduates can be used to teach in lower classes and remote areas for less salary. Private partnership schools are better staffed and supervised. There is no time to waste. All of Liberia's development depends on the education system.

Paper 2: Pathways for change in education: Underpinning national development through transforming the preparation of teachers and educational leadership

Author: Assistant Minister Advertus Wright, Ministry of Education

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

There were a lot of improvements seen in the education sector. Enrollment in secondary school improved; about 80% of youth enrollment between the ages 15 -24 has been achieved. However, there were disparities between the enrollment in rural vs urban areas. Female literacy has improved per findings from the Household survey report from 2014. Montserrado county has the largest number of qualified teachers but access, equity and, quality of education has declined. Issues needing further policy attention include the significant share of private, household financing of education, the growing demand for early childhood education, the quality and relevance of secondary education, sector infrastructure needs, disparities in system inputs and outcomes, and

reaching the large number of out of school youth with relevant education. There is a need to make the budget reliable and available, providing real incentives to professionals, especially for rural areas, including health and guidance counselors. There is very little transparency in the system and there needs to be stronger educational leadership. If we have a strong leadership, it helps to drive the quality of education in the system.

Proposed policy solutions:

- A national agreement to move the system from providing basic literacy and numeracy to a system that creates critically thinking students
- Adapt our approaches to teaching and provide the necessary resources –libraries, laboratories, etc.
- Recruit more women in the teaching field. There is an ongoing “B” certificate pilot project at the Kakata Rural Teacher Training Institute. The project dedicated 40 of the seats to female teachers but only 25 were recruited.
- Promote a shared, democratized approach to leadership in the Ministry’s functions.
- We need to implement free and compulsory Education for all beginning from ECE to grade twelve
- Principals should be trained on leadership on schools administrative management.
- Create independent supervisory body that will do site visits and monitor schools

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Kirsty McLaren

Quality education reduces inequality, this is true in developed and developing countries. Teachers are the core of education and therefore need to be supported. We are not only looking at the teachers but the quality of education and its practice. Teachers don’t just need the skills but support on instructional leadership, and access to opportunities for professional development. One of the challenges is that it is difficult to build up the profession when the quality of education is lacking. It makes it seem overwhelming at times but it isn’t something that we can’t afford to deliver. An education that aims at critical thinking, the ability to contribute to national development and community should be promoted. Decentralization seems to be the solution. If we look at the challenges in early childhood education, its quality reduces daily and it has a long-term impact not only on learning outcomes but it affects secondary school and income outcomes. This has been observed in developed and developing countries.

Paper 3: The advancement of women through formal education for sustainable economic development in Liberia

Author: Professor Victoria Kasselie, University of Liberia

Problem statement and ongoing key challenges

For many years, the people of Liberia suffered the brunt reality of: war, corruption, inequality and most recently the Ebola epidemic. As a result, a significant portion of the male population were killed and incapacitated leaving women as main providers for families. Today, more than half the country’s population is female and women comprise 54% of the labor force in both the formal and informal sectors. In agriculture, it is estimated that they produce 60% of produce. Despite the high percentage of women’s involvement in the work force, majority are less skilled and

therefore earn lower incomes, that are insufficient to sustain families and educate their children. The percentage of uneducated women in Liberia is significantly high coupled with evidence of gender, inequality, discrimination and violence towards women. The education of women doesn't benefit women alone, but the nation at large. Issues such as girls' education need special attention, sustainable economic growth improves livelihood for all members of society.

Proposed policy solutions

- GoL to higher prioritize education. The country will not move forward if education isn't better prioritized.
- The Ministry of Education can promote dialogue with line ministries regarding specific initiatives that will improve women's economic empowerment. This can be facilitated by addressing female education challenges and, improving vocational training. More emphasis is needed to improve female education and integrate gender issues into the reform of the vocational training system.
 - Increase offerings in areas of agriculture, forestry and engineering; and encourage recruitment of young women
- We need to put emphasis on the secondary education because of the developmental stage of a child. From K-2 to 12 grade, if they are not well developed, you will not have a good student at the tertiary level. That is the reason why concentration is placed on the high school down the line.
- The RTTIs need to be better staffed and trained. There has been gaps in monitoring & supervision of these institutions, and they play a crucial role in the education received by rural communities.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Morris L. Ken

Formal education helps women take care of and support her family. When one educates a woman, you have educated a nation. Formal education advances a woman's ability to contribute to a better society. It creates the mechanisms for her to go into politics and advocate for other women and the needs of her community. Women have not been given the chance to exercise their full potential; with education women are given opportunity.

PANEL 9: HEALTH

Chair: Dr. Mosoka Fallah, Refuge Place International

Paper 1: Mutual Accountability: The challenges of coordinating aid in Liberia's health sector

Author: Jennifer Ljungqvist, JLQ Consulting

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

When the Ebola Outbreak exposed the cracked foundation of Liberia's health system it raised a serious question: Why was the sector still fragile, struggling to respond to the crisis, despite the large amount of post-war dollars invested to strengthen the system? With a growing pool of partners and limited resources to track aid, the Ministry of Health (MOH) faced complex coordination challenges that strained its ability to effectively develop Liberia's healthcare system. A substantial amount of work has been done by both government and partners to more

effectively coordinate through committees, task forces, the multi-donor Health Sector Pool Fund and the International Health Partnership (IHP+).

Still, at a system-wide level, identifying who is investing where, when, how and why continues to be a challenge. Just over 50% of all health partners identified, responded to MOH's resource mapping exercise for fiscal year 2015/16 and a significant proportion of aid is still managed off-budget. All this blurs each stakeholder's 'big picture' understanding of how their efforts complement the larger system. This in turn has led to some partners duplicating efforts, aid replacing domestic investments and a focus on disease-programs over integrated support systems.

Proposed policy solutions:

- Government and all partners must do their part to together:
 - 1) Build one mutually beneficial and transparent aid tracking and analysis mechanism,
 - 2) Expand and structure existing communication channels,
 - 3) Remain vigilant as to how aid-funded projects fit into and impact the rest of the health system.
- Prioritize what can be done well and what needs to be done
- Expand internal and external coordination mechanism

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Minister Yah Zoila

The issue of Health Financing is a very serious problem in Liberia. Coordinating aid is critical. The health system has no national platform for transparency and accountability. Donors own the regulations. There is a need to draft a compact for alignment and send it out for input from partners.

Paper 2: Effective and Sustainable Health Financing in Liberia

Author: Sjoerd Postma, Management Sciences for Health

Problem statement

The health system in Liberia is characterized by low levels of funding, underdeveloped health services infrastructure, a shortage of both human resources for health and essential medicines, and limited administrative and management capacities. Equal access to affordable and quality health care thus remains limited. However, as Liberia continues to recover from the effects of the Ebola crisis, the Government of Liberia remains strongly motivated to build a more resilient health system. The major problem that has developed in the sector is a dependency on donors. To develop a stronger health system, GoL has identified strengthening its health financing system as a priority in its Investment Plan for Building a Resilient Health System. A major component is creating universal health coverage in Liberia. This system would allow Liberians to access quality healthcare and still provide financial protection through risk pooling and a purchaser provider split. This would be a new mechanism for strategically purchasing health services in Liberia.

Proposed policy solutions

- The reform process need to involve all stakeholders and not only MoH, identify a health reform multi-sectoral “change” team
- Continued LHEF concept development
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Development of evidence base
 - Identification of sub-committees for specific policy areas
- Health budget resource allocation revision
- Decentralized public financial management strengthening
- Continued health service delivery strengthening
- Improved quality in public sector
- Improved stewardship of private sector

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Dr. Alfredmy Chessor Samukai

Universal Health coverage should be introduced and insurance scheme encouraged. A sustainable Drug fund should be provided. The health delivery service should be developed and a vigorous monitoring and evaluation should be institutionalized.

Paper 3: Most effective health interventions for development

Authors: Elizabeth S. Mulbah & Dr. Jallah M. Kennedy, Governance Commission & Roads to Health

Problem statement and key ongoing challenges

To produce a resilient society, members must play their roles based on equality and respect. This begins primarily with the family unit; healthy families propel long-term development. Family planning enables equality, and is one of the most effective tools for national development. Women have limited autonomy about their health and other social issues despite their pivotal role in society. Despite improvements, cultural, religious, geopolitical, and other systemic factors have continued to limit women rights. While family planning should be shared decision-making between partners, women are not full participants despite bearing the burden of pregnancy. To elucidate the roles of women, we outlined their roles utilizing the SDGs. We have recommended three pathways – community, regional, and national to help guide the change of involving women in family planning as not only a health issue, but a long-term development tool. Using cultural sensitivities and improving national policies that involve all levels of the society including youth, peer support, and international institutions can make the pathways feasible to lead to sustainable development in Liberia.

Proposed policy solutions

- Prioritize local based programs
- Provide free family planning education in local communities, schools, churches etc.
- Increase literacy and health care services paid through significant community inputs
- GoL should design and enforce laws/ legislation that discontinues harmful cultural practices in marriage relationships
- Increase women’s representation in teaching and, counseling

- Increase WASH mandate

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Anju Puri

There are serious health service issues in Liberia, especially with health service delivery for women. Laws and policies are weak and donors have limited support for implementation at the county level. More advocacy is needed for family planning in country, there is still resistance in local communities. Further research on the impacts of family planning in Liberia is necessary, there has not been much in depth study in country.

PANEL 10: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Chair: Harrison Karnwea, Forestry Development Agency

Paper I: Forestry concessions in post war Liberia

Author: Silas Kpanan' Ayong Siakor, Inclusive Development Consulting

Problem statement

The forestry sector has undergone tremendous change over the last decade. There have been reforms in laws and regulations. Currently there are efforts to strengthen law enforcement. However, overall governance remains weak within the forestry sector and civil society organizations are not heavily engaged in the sector. The expectation that the reforms would lead to Liberia using timber revenue for “legitimate purposes for the benefit of the Liberian people, including development” has not materialized. In recent years, government response to illegal logging activities has been reactive rather than proactive.

Progressive policy and legal reforms are critical first steps towards improving forest governance, but they are not enough on their own. Political will and the capacities of stakeholders to play their respective roles are key factors that can have positive influences on reforms. Legal reforms, political will and strengthening the capacities of stakeholders must go hand-in-hand to have the desired positive impacts on forest governance overall.

Proposed policy solutions

- Companies that are caught doing illegal logging activities should be prosecuted.
- Reducing over reliance on raw materials exportation.
- The President and the Legislature should ensure that the FDA and the oversight institutions entrusted with the nations forests and forest resources are held accountable for mismanagement of institutions they oversee.
- Civil society, especially the media, should challenge FDA when it acts contrary to the goals and objectives of the forestry reform.
- Recruit new and appropriately skilled staff to serve in the convening and facilitation roles within the FDA.

Paper 2: Liberia forest sector brief

Authors: Abraham Guillen & Arlid Skedsmo, European Forest Institute & Government of Norway

Problem statement

There is a rising momentum in forestry reform, drawing international recognition and support to the national process. The improved regulatory environment and managerial capacity in combination with international support is expected to increase opportunities for rural employment, income and welfare, while contributing to climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation of global significance. There are still major challenges with deforestation and forest degradation risking sustainable forestry and economical- social environmental development. There is still unregulated logging for the local market, the conversion of forest to agricultural plantations, unsustainable industrial logging and unregulated charcoal production. There is still great opportunity in increasing sustainable harvesting and domestic value creation for export market and generating employment and tax revenues. Well managed community forestry and efficient mills can help meet local demand and, create employment using sustainable methods.

Proposed policy solutions

- Continue path of patient policy reform, while strengthening enforcement and institutional capacity
- Reinvest more GoL funds in enforcement, sustainable forestry and staff skills development from FDA's captured revenues
- Capture innovative revenue opportunities (e.g. compensation for verified reductions from reduced deforestation and degradation)
- Develop opportunities in commercial logging: Increase employment, export earnings and fiscal revenue from the industrial forest sector (FMC concession holders/operators), while also improving the environmental management and long-term sustainability of the sector.
- Provide a basis for social and environmentally sound welfare development and forest management in rural areas.
- Increase food security and rural income through more efficient land use while reducing pressure on surrounding forest
- Build collective national pride and identity, and a long-term foundation for ecotourism based on a well-managed protected area network with a globally unique forest and biodiversity while protecting wildlife

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Tinatua Calvin Kollie

There needs to be an improved understanding of the value of the forestry sector and the ecosystem in general. Liberia has depleted their forest at an alarming rate, currently the rate of depletion is exceeding the rate of regeneration; forest lost stands at 7% and, from 2010-2015, Liberia lost at least 15% of its forest flora and fauna. There is a need for an evaluated partnership agreement moving toward sustainable forest management. There are lessons to learn: The Voluntary Agreement can help with reform. Looking at people living in the rural areas whose

livelihood depends on the forest, how do we incorporate them in the conservation of the forest and provide them livelihood that doesn't require destruction of the forest.

Paper 3: Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda (LATA): Transforming Liberia through agriculture, agro-processing & manufacturing

Author: Dr. Moses Zinnah, Minister of Agriculture

Despite political and socio-economic differences, there is consensus that agriculture is the mechanism to transform Liberia into a middle-income country. Agriculture is the most effective means of reducing poverty and ensuring economic growth and development; the majority of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. The agriculture sector is an untapped investment opportunity in Liberia. Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda (LATA) is a three-year program aimed at diversifying the country's economy and reducing its vulnerability to external shocks, as experienced from the global financial crisis resulting from the decline in the country's traditional resources and aggravated by the Ebola crisis. LATA is the new policy framework and vision for developing agriculture and agribusiness, directly supported by H.E. Madam President. It represents a decisive holistic move towards transforming Liberian agriculture into a strong economic pillar over the next five years.

Policy going forward

- The current strategy is to concentrate investment across commodity value chains from inputs to markets, associated with both staples and other high-value crops. It focuses on diversification and transformation.
- LATA strives to build up the agricultural sector as well as adopt a supportive industrial policy. Improving business climate and external competitiveness could play an important role in increasing export diversification in Liberia.
- Efficiency should also be increased through better access to markets and technology, cheaper imported inputs, as well as more competition with import. The commodities the country has comparative advantage on are rice, rubber, coco, cassava, oil palm etc. To develop these commodities, four key areas need to be considered:
 - 5) Value chain to these commodities
 - 6) Innovative financing
 - 7) Export oriented
 - 8) Ensure food security as well as promotion of jobs.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Dr. Walter Wiles

Agriculture has to be done as a business. Discuss issues on the total value chain. Where can students at the university go for employment? Action is needed and timing is an important factor, especially with the constraints placed by raining season. There are partnership opportunities with NGOs and donors, identify and utilize those resources. We need to move in a positive direction. Progress is needed in producing finished material vs. exportation of raw materials.

Paper 4: Rural land use and land productivity in Liberia

Author: Ali Kaba, Sustainable Development Institute

Problem statement

With a tropical climate, plenty of rainfall, and large untapped land resources, Liberia is on the frontline of what has been described as large scale land transactions in Africa. The country has seen an increase in concession based land transactions between the state and foreign entities. These concessions require large tracts of land, often located in rural areas, which has implications on rural land use and management systems. At the same time, reports suggest cases of food and tenure insecurity, unemployment, and associated social tensions within and around these concession areas. Not surprisingly, since 2006 the government initiated a series of land rights and benefit sharing reforms. However, these reforms have often neglected rural land use and management regimes. There are lot of tensions within the forestry sector, particularly among rural dwellers, within the fifteen political subdivisions of Liberia.

Proposed policy solutions

- Large scale commercialization. Food security is a matter of concern and the government should develop the agriculture sector to prevent rural communities to be dependent on the forest as a means of livelihood. The development of the agriculture sector will enable the rural communities to use the land located in their local communities.
- What the land reform is talking about is sustainability of our land. Making rural dwellers to form part of the land reform policy. Another way forward in addressing land issues in Liberia is the government making use of the existing technology such as land information system which has been used in other countries. Liberia should graduate from mere ordinary paper and move toward an advance technology.
- Communities should be educated in knowing the value of their land. If they do not know the value of their land, it could be given away for little or nothing to investors.

Comments and additional recommendations from discussant, Alex Teaway

How do the rural people use the land: poaching, shifting cultivation? Understand how the local people view land: for the dead past generation, for the present generation and for the future generation. We need a way to resolve land disputes in rural communities. The GoL should cancel all existing forest concessions until rural tensions can be better addressed. Community Rights law and Community Participation Law, and demarcation of land are going to be very important. GoL should use GIS and remote sensing systems to document land to better advise communities on the appropriate use of communal lands.

CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony was attended by the President of Liberia, her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The ceremony consisted of, the US Ambassador, the Charge d’Affaires a.i of the Embassy of Sweden, the Country Representative of the African Development Bank, the University of Liberia, the keynote Speaker, and lastly USAID Mission Director, sharing highlights and key lessons learnt from the conference.

Remarks by the Embassy of Sweden Charge d’Affaires, a.i Elizabeth Harleman:

There has been extraordinary networking, lively and open discussions on challenges the country faces and the way forward. The private sector has been involved in the development of abstracts and discussions, and their support will contribute to the development of the country. Key takeaways from the conference and issues to be addressed are: incentives to decentralize, the need to merge traditional and statutory systems, involving the traditional systems, pay teachers more the farther they go to teach, focus on gender and participation of women who make up half of Liberia.

Remarks by World Bank Country Manager, Larissa Leschchenko: The conference was very important, thanks to the organizers for the topics. Takeaways: Unleash the potential of youth, who need to get a proper education. It is all about Liberia and in it is in the hands of Liberians to address the severe challenges. Donors want to see a dramatic shift, not just incremental changes, e.g. in access to power, productivity, and integrating into global markets. The World Bank is prepared to work with the country to face the challenges.

Remarks by the Keynote Speaker Dr. Antoinette Sayeh: Dr. Sayeh had takeaways geared towards moving forward: Cross-checking priorities due to constraints, more role for the Central Bank and MFDP; Tensions on handing over to the election winner: How to ensure the retention of reforms, to guarantee they remain in place and; How to better leverage donor support, while Liberia owns the results?

Remark by the University of Liberia President Dr. Emmet Dennis, represented by Dr. Jonathan Taylor: The Liberia Institute of Policies and Research at the University will be a resource.

Remarks by USAID Mission Director Dr. Anthony Chan: The conference has been a big success. It has been planned for the last 8 months. There have been lively discussions of the challenges. Our appreciations and thanks go to the Ministers, the University of Liberia, the partners, the Mayor, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and USAID Staff.

Remarks by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf: The President noted she wants to see the University of Liberia continue to take a role in these kinds of studies. She commented on the satisfaction of participants with this conference, and thanked the authors for their work on the papers. She recommended that we get the grass roots involved using simple language for future conferences. She sees this as a first step to get everyone involved in policy issues. Let’s see what we can do to participate more. She went away enthusiastic and forward to the follow up actions.

OUTCOME OF THE OPINION POLLS

During the two-day conference, polls were conducted after each session to capture what participants learnt from the session as well as overall feedback. The comments from the polls were displayed in the hall for all participants to read throughout the day in real time. Comments from participants are located in the Annex, as well as the conference agenda.

Next steps

From the onset, LDC has been designed to be the first step in an ongoing process aiming at creating a platform to facilitate discussions on issues affecting the country. Information generated before and during the Conference will be made available online via USAID/Liberia Strategic Analysis (LSA)'s Knowledge Management Portal. An anthology with all the papers will be published and widely disseminated. Learning events will be organized to deepen discussions on some of the issues raised during the Conference.

CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORKSHOPS

Overall, per the surveys conducted after sessions, majority of participants and panelists, agreed the Liberia Development Conference was a success. Day 1 of the conference had 316 registered participants and Day 2 had 282 registered participants. It was the first time, all stakeholders both governmental, non-government as well as the private sector gathered to take stock of national issues hindering the development of the country and discuss openly the way forward to build on existing achievements. To improve on future large scale conferences, the following lessons learnt have been drawn by the organizers:

Early distribution of invitations

To ensure all key stakeholders are informed about and attend the conference, it is important to finalize and send out invitations at least 10 days before the event. One key lesson learned is the importance of personalizing the invitations and make the conference relevant to invitees. Reminder calls and emails are also vital to help invitees save the date.

Registration process

Having the tablets for the registration was a great idea. However, volunteers handling the tablets needed more time to master the tool and speed up on the process. The lessons learnt is to train young volunteers at least two weeks ahead and give them time to practice entering all the necessary data (name, institutions, email addresses, phone numbers). Keeping accurate data on participants is essential for post conference activities.

Coordination of media coverage

Although, the conference had some media coverage, a greater coordination with experts in communication such as USAID Communication experts as well as other implementing partners working with the media can get a greater involvement of media institutions to keep the whole population updated on the event.

Sign language interpreter

For future Conferences, it is important to take into consideration those specific needs such as sign language interpretation, translated documents in Braille, ramp for physically challenged people, to ensure everyone feels included.

Making the program lighter to give more time for discussion

One of the major complaints from participants was the limited time for discussions. Future conferences need to ensure more time is allocated for discussions, either by reducing the number of topics and panels or adding more days to the conference.

Invite youth from the High Schools and the Universities to attend the session on youth

For future Conferences, it is important to invite young people from high schools and universities to attend the session on youth. Given transportation constraints, arrangements should be made by the organizers to facilitate their movements. This will ensure their voices are heard and help increase their participation in decision making processes.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: DAY I LIVE POLLING RESPONSES

“The goodness of this conference is that all the issues are real.”

“Always on time, the environment alone tells you that this is a conference to be a part of.”

“This conference is very organized, in the senses that the Hostess are aware.”

“Topic like Human Security, Analyzing the Educational Sector are all good.”

“Other participants are saying that most of the discussion by our presenters were not centered around education to build up the human capacity.”

“I liked the private sector development discussions. It's nice that the conference has so many topics for different interests.”

“The session was very interactive. There were so many good presentations but we, Liberians, need to put them into action to bring Liberia development.”

“Some Participants are saying that the Conference and the presentations are good especially on De-Dollarization, but how can we imply it? As for the policy makers, they feel that it will not be in their interest.”

“The conference was great and the most interesting thing I heard was women’s participation in elections.”

“All the policies we discussed were good, but what about the political will to implement?”

“Discussion was fair and the reality came out. We got to know that Liberians are now thinking about a way forward to get their country to develop.”

“The Government of Liberia can only get more funding from International Partners if they account for the finds they have already received. How can people keep giving you money for development when all you do with it is to take care of yourself?”

“This conference is great but it did not give chance to the participants to explain in depth.”

“All the macroeconomic policy discussions were great. The government is moving in the right direction but I wish we had started on these things sooner (buying local produce to stimulate the local economy, empowering Liberians). But enforcement is still weak”

“The role of media is crucial because it plays an intermediary role for information dissemination to everyone.”

“I hope to see tangible and practical change, I hope to see good results”

“The conference is eye opener to everyone. Given the actual content of microeconomics on what is happening to the market of our country and the issues to attack that will help.”

"The media is a mirror of society." How our media functions says a lot about who we want to be as a society.”

“A big part of media strengthening is not just promoting "freedom" but strengthening research capacity of journalists through education.”

“The financial sector session was amazing. It gave me hope.”

“There were a lot of good inputs to the government services discussion - great information for addressing decentralization, corruption, local governance. This makes us think creatively!”

“I am citizen of Liberia but I've never been able to talk to many of the government ministers. This conference gives me that opportunity.”

“The government services panel created a space for cross-fertilization of ideas. The key challenge is: with so many priorities, how do we prioritize?”

“This is impressive! Well organized and informative.”

“Dr. Sayeh reflected on where Liberia was 12 years ago before the Agenda for Transformation - we cannot go forward without first looking backward, and she set that platform for us.”

“The US Ambassador’s speech was very comprehensive.”

“It was good to see University of Liberia students volunteering!”

“The tablet registration was great!”

DAY 2 LIVE POLLING RESPONSES

“The presentation on Education Sector Analysis was splendid. More data sets than qualitative narratives”

“I'm happy that it was organized but my problem is there wasn't a presenter from any of the rural areas and there were no disabled persons among the presenters and gender equality was not in place, as there were more man presenting and fewer women, which was not good for such conference.”

“Problem identification happens to be one of our fundamental problems in Liberia. We are inclined to go after the symptoms rather than the problems.”

“My question is, how will the findings of this conference being implemented?”

“Presenters should go beyond just providing recommendations and provide comparative data on how the recommendations have impacted other societies. A lot of the recommendations are just restatement of what have already been stated in the past.”

“The government should see this initiative as welcoming and make an effort to continue the same, even if at a less elaborate level. Carrying out such activities on a periodic basic would nurture and cultivate an interest in research and provide evidence base to problem-solving.”

“One of the panels talked about conflict and three of our ethnic groups in Liberia. Especially the Mandingo when it comes to tribal marriage and culture. I really enjoyed this portion of discussion, we really need work on some of those beliefs.”

“The conference and the presenters are all well-organized with interesting topics but if there is any upcoming event like this again, additional time should be taken into consideration.”

Day I: Wednesday, February 1, 2017

7:30-8:30	Breakfast and Registration Location: Patio Garden	
8:30-10:00	Opening Ceremony in Plenary Location: Theatre	
8:30-8:40	Conference Welcome: University of Liberia President, Dr. Emmet Dennis	
8:40-8:50	Special Remarks: US Ambassador, Christine A. Elder	
8:50-9:00	Special Remarks: Embassy of Sweden Chargé d’Affaires A.I., Elisabeth Hårleman	
9:15-9:40	Keynote Speaker: Dr. Antoinette M. Sayeh, Center for Global Development & Former Director of the African Department, IMF	
9:40-9:50	Conference Directions & Overview of Day I Agenda (LSA)	
	Parallel Session I	Parallel Session II
10:00-11:50	<p>Panel 1: Private Sector Competitiveness Location: VIP Lounge</p> <p><i>Chair: Minister Axel Addy, Ministry of Commerce</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Trade and Capital Flows in Liberia – A Concessions Management Reform Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Prof. Alfred Twalla, University of Liberia ○ Discussant: Hendrike Braun • A Reformed Commercial Law System- Inspiring Investor Confidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Kwame Clement, USAID ○ Discussant: Cllr. Negbalee Warner • How Liberia can diversify its economy for inclusive growth through priority value chains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Jonathan Said, Tony Blair African Governance Initiative ○ Discussant: Yoquai Lavalá 	<p>Panel 2: Government Services Location: Ballroom</p> <p><i>Chair: Ezekiah Pajibo, Liberia Law Society</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Local Services Through Administrative Decentralization in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Ross Worthington, DAI Global ○ Discussant: Botoe Zinne • Inclusiveness, inequality & access to government services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Franklin Dolo, Building Markets ○ Discussant: Thomas Nah • Society Relations and Development in Liberia: Problem and Opportunity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Nathaniel Kwabo, CERPS/Liberia ○ Discussant: Atty. Kanio Bai Gbala • Mainstreaming integrity in public sector administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Victoria Cooper-Enchia, Chemonics International ○ Discussant: Henry Kimber

12:00-12:45	<p style="text-align: center;">Special Session in Plenary: Financial Sector Location: Theatre</p> <p><i>Chair: Dr. Anthony Chan</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberian Minister of Finance, Boima S. Kamara • Central Bank Governor, Milton Weeks • Secretariat on ECOWAS & The SDGs, Dr. Abdoulaye W. Dukulé • Mobile money and payment systems - Erica Bustinza, FHI 360 	
12:50 – 1:50	<p style="text-align: center;">Lunch Location: Patio Garden</p>	
2:00-3:50	<p>Panel 3: Macroeconomic Policy Location: VIP Lounge</p> <p><i>Chair: Prof. Geegbae A. Geegbae, University of Liberia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macroeconomic Developments in Sub-Saharan Africa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Alex Deline, International Monetary Fund ○ Discussant: Del-Francis Wreh • Overview of the Macroeconomic Situation in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Patrick Hettinger, African Development Bank ○ Discussant: To be determined • Domestic Resource Mobilization Strategy for Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Abigail Urey-Miller, Phoenix Tax & Accountancy Consultants ○ Discussant: Gweh Gaye Tarwo • De-Dollarization in Post Conflict Countries: Policy Issues and Lessons for Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Charles Amo-Yartey, International Monetary Fund ○ Discussant: To be determined 	<p>Panel 4: The Political Arena Location: Ballroom</p> <p><i>Chair: Prof. Francis Maweah, University of Liberia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Reconciliation in Abeyance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Prof. Elwood Dunn, CERPS/Liberia ○ Discussant: Eddie Jarwolo • Toward Political Decentralization in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Ibrahim Al-bakri Nyei, Governance Commission ○ Discussant: Younger Johnson-Nah • Women and political participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Ruth G. Caesar, MAROPNET ○ Discussant: Tennen Dalieh • Media towards strengthening public participation and democracy in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Abdullai Kamara, The Carter Center ○ Discussant: Bai Best

4:00-6:00

Plenary Session
Location: Theatre

Panel 5: Youth

Chair: Minister Lance Gba-Gonyon, Ministry of Youth and Sports

- Perspective on jobs, livelihood, entrepreneurship and the informal sector in Liberia
 - Author: Augustine Tamba, Federation for Liberian Youth
 - Discussant: Mahmoud Johnson
- Tackling youth employability and workforce development issues in Liberia: a path to employment
 - Author: Patience Coleman Beyan, Civil Service Agency
 - Discussant: Denise Clarke-Reeves
- Role of youth in community development & political leadership
 - Author: Harriette Thomas, President, Young Political Leadership School
 - Discussant: Samuel Jacobs
- Rising Together: A roadmap to youth empowerment in Liberia
 - Author: Lekpele M. Nyamalon, Africa’s Life CSO
 - Discussant: Lawrence Yealue
- Promoting integrated SRH/HIV services for girls at risk and persons with disabilities in Liberia
 - Author: Ernee Bee Neeple, Planned Parenthood Association of Liberia
 - Discussant: Gwendolyn Myers

Day 2: Thursday, February 2, 2017

7:30-8:30	Breakfast and Registration Location: Patio Garden	
8:30-9:00	Special Remarks: President of the Republic of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	
	Parallel Session I	Parallel Session II
9:00-10:50	<p>Panel 6: Transaction costs Location: VIP Lounge</p> <p><i>Chair: To be determined</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport infrastructure of Liberia: roads and ports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Victor Smith, Alliance Consulting Engineers, Planners & Surveyors Inc. ○ Discussant: Juanma Garcia-Sanchez • Sustainable energy for growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Ritesh Kumar Singh, Tetra Tech ○ Discussant: Dorboh Jallah • ICT4D in Liberia from 2007-2016 with the Africa Information Society Initiative Goals of 1996: Strides Made, Challenges Experienced, and the Road Ahead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Dr. Darren Wilkens, Sahara Technology ○ Discussant: Kwaku Agbesi • The Trucking Industry and The Price of Commodities in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author : Golvine de Rochambeau ○ Discussant: Valerie Vencatachellum 	<p>Panel 7: Human Security Location: Ballroom</p> <p><i>Chair: Francis Kai Kai, UNMIL</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security sector and trust in community relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Prof. Debey Sandee, University of Liberia ○ Discussant: Jimmy Shilue • Re-assessing the Predicament of Liberia’s Dominant Statutory System in Addressing Marginalization and Discrimination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Samuel Toe, University of East Anglia ○ Discussant: Prof. Stephen Jubwe • Building conflict resilience capacities through social cohesion and conflict transformation strategies in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Aaron Weah, UNMIL ○ Discussant: Cecil Griffiths • Microfinance for the poor in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Tapan Kumarker, BRAC Liberia ○ Discussant: Watchen Bruce

<p>11:00-12:50</p>	<p>Panel 8: Education Location: Ballroom</p> <p><i>Chair: Dr. Jonathan Taylor, University of Liberia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberia education sector analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Minister Saa David Nyuma, Ministry of Education & Kabira Namit, World Bank ○ Discussant: Nisha Makan • Pathways for change in education: Underpinning national development through transforming the preparation of teachers and educational leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Minister Advertus Wright, Ministry of Education ○ Discussant: Kirsty McLaren • The advancement of women through formal education for sustainable economic development in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Prof. Victoria Kasselie, University of Liberia ○ Discussant: Morris L. Ken 	<p>Panel 9: Health Location: VIP Lounge</p> <p><i>Chair: Dr. Mosoka Fallah, Refuge Place International</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual Accountability: The challenges of coordinating aid in Liberia’s health sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Jennifer Ljungqvist, JLQ Consulting ○ Discussant: Min. Yah Zoila • Effective and Sustainable Health Financing in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Sjoerd Postma, Management Sciences for Health ○ Discussant: Dr. Alfredmy Chessor Samukai • Most effective health interventions for development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Authors: Elizabeth S. Mulbah & Dr. Jallah M. Kennedy, Governance Commission & Roads to Health ○ Discussant: To be determined
<p>1:00-1:50</p>	<p>Lunch Location: Patio Garden</p>	

<p>2:00-4:00</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Plenary Session Location: Theatre</p> <p>Panel 10: Natural Resource Management</p> <p><i>Chair: Harrison Karnwea, Forestry Development Agency</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry concessions in post war Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Silas Kpanan’Ayoung Siakor, Inclusive Development Consulting ○ Discussant: Dr. Cecil Brandy • Liberia forest sector brief <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Authors: Abraham Guillen & Arlid Skedsmo, European Forest Institute & Government of Norway ○ Discussant: Tinatua Calvin Kollie • Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda: Transforming Liberia through agriculture, agro-processing & manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Dr. Moses Zinnah, Ministry of Agriculture ○ Discussant: Dr. Walter Wiles • Rural land use and land productivity in Liberia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Author: Ali Kaba, Sustainable Development Institute ○ Discussant: Alex Teaway
<p>4:00-4:30</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Conference Closing Plenary Session Location: Theatre</p>
<p>4:00-4:30</p>	<p>Closing Address: <i>Dr. Anthony Chan, USAID/Liberia Mission Director and Development Partners</i></p>