Republic of Liberia

DRAFT

National Decentralization Implementation Plan (NDIP)
Phase I: 2013-2017

Establishing Effective and Accountable Decentralized Governance System in Liberia

30 November 2012
# Table of Contents

Forward .................................................................................................................. 3  
Executive Summary ............................................................................................... 4  
Acronyms ................................................................................................................ 6  
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................... 7  
   1.1 Background and Context .................................................................................. 7  
   1.2 Linkages to the National Development Framework and Strategy ................... 7  
   1.3 Policy Objectives, Principles and Values on Decentralization ....................... 8  
   1.4 Methodology .................................................................................................... 9  
   1.5 Outline of the Decentralization Implementation Plan ................................... 10  
   2.1 Communications and Civic Education ............................................................... 11  
   2.2 Political Decentralization .................................................................................. 13  
   2.3 Institutional and Human Resource Capacity Development ............................ 16  
   2.4 Fiscal Decentralization, Financial Management and Accounting ................ 18  
   2.5 Compliance, and Social and Economic Protection ......................................... 20  
3. Implementation Strategies for the Decentralization Plan ..................................... 26  
   3.1 Approaches for Implementing the Decentralization Plan .................................. 27  
   3.2 Strategic actions earmarked for 2013 ............................................................... 28  
   3.3 Institutional arrangements, roles and responsibilities ..................................... 28  
   3.4 Partnership arrangements, roles and responsibilities ...................................... 30  
   3.5 Process for consultation, monitoring and harmonization of interventions ........ 34  
   3.6 Arrangements for financing NDIP .................................................................... 36  
   3.7 Capacity building and institutional development .......................................... 36  
   3.8 Development of infrastructural capacity ......................................................... 36  
4. Institutional Framework for the Decentralization Implementation ......................... 36  
   4.1 Government Institutional Framework ............................................................... 37  
   4.2 Donors and Development Partners .................................................................. 40  
5. Sustainability Factors ............................................................................................ 43  
   5.1 General Assumptions and Risk Factors ............................................................ 43  
   5.2 Capacity Building and Policy Issues ................................................................. 44  
   6.1 Funding Arrangements ..................................................................................... 45  
   6.2 NDIP Priority Activities Funding .................................................................... 45  
   Annex 1. NDIP Budget ............................................................................................ 46  
   Annex 2. NDIP Priority Activities and Action Matrices ....................................... 47  
   Annex 3. .................................................................................................................. 54
List of Figures

Figure 4. Structure of National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat .................. 24
Figure 1. Proposed structure of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to support decentralization implementation ................................................................. 29
Figure 2. Consultative Framework for Decentralization .............................................. 34
Figure 3. Capacity Building Framework ..................................................................... 44

List of Tables

Table 1. Strategic Actions in 2013 ........................................................................... 28
Table 2. Line ministries & agencies and their respective roles .................................. 30
Table 3. Line ministries & agencies and their respective roles cont’d. ................. 31
Table 4. Line ministries & agencies and their respective roles cont’d. ............... 33
Forward
To be determined...
Executive Summary

Since independence in 1847, successive governments of Liberia have made frantic efforts at incorporating the rural territories of this country into the national body politics. In an attempt to accomplish that objective, Liberian governments have taken various measures including administrative restructuring of the country over the years, but the state continues to be a unitary state with all governance and administration centralized in Monrovia under the control of the central government. As a highly centralized governance system, the popular participation of the people has been hampered. The centralized institutions in Monrovia continue to provide some basic services to assessable parts of the interior counties with little or no inputs from the people of the counties.

As a consequence of our recent post-conflict experience, the Government of Liberia (GOL) has decided that the way forward for rural development is to allow the people of rural communities to participate in the governance and administration of their own communities. The motivation is therefore to decentralize authority and power from Monrovia to the counties.

Toward this objective, in January 2011, GOL launched the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance which aims at systematically providing guidance to the process of decentralizing power, authority, functions and responsibilities from the central government to local governments. The Liberians will then be empowered at local levels to actively participate in the political, economic and social transformation of the country. The national decentralization policy provides that all administrative institutions in the counties be revised, restructured and harmonized to implement a responsible and responsive system of governance and public administration and to ensure accountable, sound and lawful management of local resources. The policy further provides for the establishment of administrative agencies in each county under local authority.

The process through which this policy evolved involved the participation of major stakeholders who recommended the introduction of a decentralized governance system by formulating the policies, legal framework, articulating the necessary administrative structures, systems, mechanisms, holding grass root and local government elections, undertaking institutional and human resource capacity building, and widespread sensitization of the population on the administrative and legal aspects of a decentralized governance system.

As a result of the recommendations emanating from the policy development process, the formulation of Liberia 5-year National Decentralization Implementation Plan (NDIP) is focused specifically on addressing pertinent issues within the prevailing post-war situation, and hence capable of entrenching a decentralized governance system and democratization in the country.

The NDIP is divided into six main chapters, plus relevant annexes and tables appended. The first introductory chapter provides the background and context in which this plan is being developed and highlights the dismal background of Liberia emerging from a bitter and brutal civil war and the urgent need for reconciliation and peace building. It further provides linkages to the national policy development framework and strategy on how government’s development agenda is intertwined to strengthen good governance and reduce poverty nationwide. It also expounds the objectives, principles and values pursued by government through decentralization. This chapter further discusses the methodology and approaches
utilized in drafting the document which includes the consultative and participatory process that culminated in a nationwide evaluation of the process.

The second chapter highlights the major components of NDIP. This chapter articulates government’s overall vision and major implementation strategies for moving toward rapid, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development. This plan presents the current situation, rationale, objectives, expected outputs, strategies and priority activities. The five programmatic components are communications and civic education; political decentralization; institutional and human resource capacity development; fiscal decentralization, financial management and accounting; compliance, and social and economic protection.

The third chapter addresses the implementation strategies to be adopted, clearly spelling out the guiding principles, recommended approaches to adopt, institutional arrangements, and the roles and responsibilities of various national stakeholders. It further suggests the possible financial arrangements to be made including direct local government development support through Common Development Fund (CDF) or any convenient and cost-effective alternative arrangements for studies, research, and capacity building programs, direct operational funding of institutions involved in NDIP as well as co-financing arrangements between development partners and government.

The fourth chapter presents the institutional framework for decentralization implementation. This chapter discusses the government institutional framework as well as engagement with donors and development partners.

The fifth chapter addresses the sustainability factors of NDIP which include general assumptions and risks, capacity building and policy, and crosscutting issues.

The sixth chapter presents the funding mechanisms for the NDIP from 2013 to 2017. It projects the desired budget to support the capacity building of CDF to strengthen its efficiency and effectiveness, the operational budget needed to establish and make operational the NDIS as well as for technical expertise needed to undertake the relevant studies, research and capacity building activities. It also includes the budget needed for local governments development budget support.
**Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBL</td>
<td>Central Bank of Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>County Development Agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDCC</td>
<td>County Decentralization Coordination Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDF</td>
<td>Common Development Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Civil Service Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDCC</td>
<td>District Decentralization Coordination Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDP</td>
<td>District Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSU</td>
<td>Decentralization Support Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAC</td>
<td>General Auditing Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GC</td>
<td>Governance Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOL</td>
<td>Government of Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMCD</td>
<td>Inter-ministerial Committee on Decentralization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Act of Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIPA</td>
<td>Liberia Institute for Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACs</td>
<td>Ministries, Agencies and Commissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Ministry of Internal Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOF</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDIP</td>
<td>National Decentralization Implementation Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDIS</td>
<td>National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEC</td>
<td>National Elections Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDF</td>
<td>Social Development Fund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

The vision of the Government of Liberia (GOL) is to be responsive to the popular desire of citizens to participate in national affairs. As such, the present focus on decentralization in Liberia stands out as a critical turning point in governance arrangement and democratization endeavours. The evolving process toward decentralization has involved consensus building between national stakeholders on the relevance and usefulness of decentralization to national development agenda; and the determination on the part of key actors to design plans and strategies for its achievement. The government’s decentralization program is articulated in the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance launched by the President of Liberia on January 5, 2012. This landmark policy demonstrates this government’s commitment to involve its citizens in national affairs and local governance through a gender-sensitive, participatory, accountable and decentralized governance system. Liberia 5-year National Decentralization Implementation Plan (NDIP) is crucial to the attainment of this national vision.

The major features of the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance are the following:

- Political Decentralization: The local government elections of county councils, superintendents, administrative district commissioners, city mayors, township officials and chiefs.

- Fiscal Decentralization: Revenue sharing or the transfer of financial resources to local government institutions consistent with the functions to be transferred and performed at local levels of governance and the establishment of appropriate public financial management capabilities at sub-national levels of governance.

- Administrative Decentralization: The establishment of the required institutional and human resource and infrastructural capacities at sub-national levels (county, district, chiefdom, clan, city and township) for the provision and management of public goods and services and reporting relationships among levels of governance.

These provide the rationale for the development of decentralization implementation plan. GOL has demonstrated its commitment to deepen democratic governance by creating and strengthening local institutions of political, administrative and fiscal governance and in doing so, increase the participation of local people in political, administrative and economic governance, particularly where these have to do with the delivery of public goods and services such as education, health care and other services which have long been provided through highly-centralized institutions based in Monrovia.

1.2 Linkages to the National Development Framework and Strategy

The process of decentralization is already underway and has made some significant progress as follows:

- GOL approved and launched the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance, formulated and validated following extensive nationwide public consultations, debates and dialogue.

- Drafting of a comprehensive Local Government Bill is in progress and expected to be submitted to the Legislature by February 2013.
• The Cabinet approved a 10-year strategic framework to implement the decentralization policy and a detailed Liberia 5-year Decentralization Implementation Plan (2013-2017).

• The establishment and operationalization of County Development Offices and County Statistics & Information Offices in all 15 Counties. These are providing critical capacity for local level data collection and management, enhanced planning and monitoring, and support to local coordination function including the County Development Steering Committee.

• A network of over 300 staff distributed in the 15 counties, gathering data to track national and local development strategies such as Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and County Development Agendas (CDAs).

• Construction of 14 of 15 Administration Buildings housing County Administrations.

• Sector deconcentration matrix completed for major line ministries reflecting the Government’s commitment to deconcentrate all relevant functions from Monrovia to counties and districts within a 3-year period as a way forward for devolution; significant progress has been made by the ministries of Health, Education and Agriculture.

• Implementation of a 2-year capacity development plan for the Ministry of Internal Affairs leading to setting up of technical divisions for decentralization implementation, training and capacity development, community driven development, internal audit, and monitoring and evaluation. County staff received basic training in Public Financial Management supported by manuals, and County and District leadership underwent training in leadership skills.

• The county governments and communities have access to over USD$40 million for local development, underscoring the government’s commitment to promote decentralization under various development funds such as County Development Fund, Local Development Fund and Social Development Fund.

• Participatory planning and budgeting piloted in 9 counties/districts under the Local Development Fund and district planning guidelines formulated, and

• Several county, district and sub-district structures such as the County Council (being modified to mirror the County Legislative Assembly in the Decentralization Policy), County Development Steering Committee, Project Management Committee, District Development Committee, and Project Management Team are in place to strengthen decentralization and local development.

Ongoing sector reforms that need to be directly linked to decentralization include:

• Civil service reforms

• Public financial management reforms

• Public sector reform involved with the revision of existing mandates and functions of MACs

All of these reforms are intended to facilitate an efficient and effective movement of civil servants, functions, and finances from Monrovia to local governments in the counties and districts throughout the country.

1.3 Policy Objectives, Principles and Values on Decentralization

The 2011 National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance emphasizes that Liberia shall remain a unitary state with a system of local government and public administration, and that
the county will be the principal focus of the devolution of power and authority. This plan is guided by that goal and the following policy objectives. The broad objective of decentralization in Liberia is to foster sustainable political harmony, inclusive socio-economic growth, as well as rights-based and gender responsive development. The central government seeks to bring planning and decision-making closer to the people by devolving political, administrative, and fiscal powers to local governments.

The specific objectives of decentralization are to:

1. Clarify the status, roles and relationships between levels of government and various actors in order to strengthen their full participation in and contribution to local governance;

2. Enhance the administrative, institutional and human resource capacity development of local government and other stakeholders to ensure quality delivery of public goods and services;

3. Enhance the sensitivities, responsiveness and capabilities of local governments and make them accountable to local people;

4. Accelerate effective and efficient service delivery and poverty alleviation by developing and strengthening local development planning, monitoring and management capacity and providing access to national and local resources through fiscal decentralization;

5. Improve funding and financing management of local government;

6. Promote participatory democracy and accountability through strong and more vibrant stakeholder involvement in local governance and elections of local government;

7. Promote gender equity and rights-based orientation to local level development aimed at ensuring equitable distribution of the nation’s resources and inclusive decision-making in a more wholesome process of development and democratic governance;

8. Clarify and strengthen the roles, responsibilities and relationships between key non-state actors such the media, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and traditional authorities in local level development and local governance;

9. Streamline, harmonize and coordinate development partner interventions to ensure optimal use of donor resources for local level development and local governance; and

10. Facilitate effective policy coordination and collaboration for smooth and effective devolution of political, administrative and financial authority from the central government to the local governments.

1.4 Methodology

This plan is derived from years of preparatory nationwide consultations, discussions and dialogues which benefited from the comprehensive inputs of all national stakeholders. Firstly, beginning in 2007, several regional and national consultations were held that led to the production of the national decentralization policy by the Government of Liberia (GOL) through the Governance Commission (GC) in January 2011. In addition, the GC
commissioned a number of studies which illuminated and clarified various aspects of decentralization within the Liberian context. Over the years, a national consensus was reached by the government ministries and agencies and the July 10, 2012 resolution of traditional authorities which encouraged the President of Liberia and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to proceed with the implementation of decentralization. This was a convincing indication that the implementation phase of the decentralization process will benefit from the willing participation of an overwhelming majority of the population. As a result, NDIP is prepared against the background of a national consensus on the need to proceed with the implementation of decentralization.

The drafting of NDIP has paid particular attention to the national policy on decentralization, various studies commissioned on decentralization in Liberia, stakeholders’ consultations on decentralization, the decentralization implementation strategy and policies developed under the guidance of GC, as well as study tours and review of various decentralization implementation plans from several African countries. Using these as guide, the plan takes into consideration the interrelationships between competing political actors and administrative agencies at the national, regional and local levels, the resource management needs and challenges, and governance concerns of transparency and accountability.

1.5 Outline of the Decentralization Implementation Plan
After the presentation of the country context and national decentralization policy in this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 presents the five main programmatic components of Liberia five-year Decentralization Implementation Plan (2013-2017). Chapter 3 outlines the implementation strategies for decentralization plan, while Chapter 4 explains the institutional framework for decentralization implementation. Chapter 5 discusses the sustainability factors and risks. Chapter 6, in turn, examines the funding mechanisms and costing for NDIP. Annex 2 presents the five key components and related outcomes, outputs, targets, priority activities, estimated total costs, implementation timeframe and responsible implementing partners.

In light of the broad and specific objectives above, NDIP is a five-year well-planned and structured decentralization plan which articulates government’s overall vision and major implementation strategies for rapid, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development. This plan presents the current situation, rationale, objectives, expected outputs, strategies and priority activities for the following five (5) programmatic components:

1. Communications and Civic Education
2. Political Decentralization
3. Institutional and Human Resource Capacity Development
4. Fiscal Decentralization, Financial Management and Accounting
5. Compliance, and Social and Economic Protection

Each programme component is directly linked to a specific policy objective. This is considered crucial as Liberia shifts the focus of participatory democracy and delivery of public goods and services from the central government to local governments and the people. This plan will be implemented for a period of five (5) years from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2017. The timeframe is Year 1 (January 2013 to December 2013); Year 2
Policy-makers, planners, designers and implementers of decentralization in Liberia shall seek to achieve improved democratic governance, enhanced transparency and accountability, and more effective and efficient production and delivery of public goods and services. This is consistent with the affirmation that all national stakeholders must be able to assess the extent to which decentralization will likely be achieved across the country in the coming years. A number of studies have affirmed that decentralization embraces different concepts, forms and combinations which must be carefully analyzed and understood across countries, within any given country and even within sectors.

2.1 Communications and Civic Education

2.1.1 Current situation
At present, there is no systematic gathering, organization, management and dissemination of information or coordination of communication flow. At best, patterns of communication and information exchange are sporadic, disorganized and weak. In this state of affairs, planning and the organization of public expenditure on regional and local development is difficult. Communications and Civic Education will lead to a better understanding and coordination of the activities to be performed and the relevance of communications and information dissemination to the implementation of decentralization nationwide.

2.1.2 Rationale
GOL has an ardent desire to provide public awareness and sensitization to all national stakeholders about the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance, Local Government Act of Liberia 2012, etc. for decentralization implementation and how the country will be altered under a decentralized governance system. Of great importance is the fundamental need to sensitize citizens on how decentralization implementation will promote good governance and delivery of public goods and services. Communications and Civic Education is further expressed by the government’s commitment on the extent to which citizens’ awareness, knowledge and understanding among national stakeholders enable each group to play an active role and own the decentralization implementation processes more inclusively, effectively and sustainably. The promotion and dissemination of civic education materials and sharing of information at both the central and local levels is vital for the success of decentralization implementation.

As a consequence, an important element of Liberia’s decentralization programme is to engage in an intensive exercise to sensitize citizens and the general public including communities and local government officials on the new governance paradigm which builds upon transparency, accountability and inclusion. Carrying out the civic education sub-component under Communications and Civic Education will necessitate the printing and dissemination of decentralization policy, NDIP and other relevant documents and engagement with civil society organizations and other stakeholders nationwide; and the recruitment of consultants, development of working relationship with local media and CSOs and the organization of palava Hut (Peace Hut) discussions nationwide. This will result in the dissemination of decentralization policy and NDIP, the growth of informed citizens and residents nationwide, the achievement of national CSOs buy-in and the construction of a communication strategy...
for the effective use of the electronic and print media (i.e. production of newsletters, brochures, billboards, flyers, stickers, website, etc.).

In order for legislative work to proceed successfully, it must be informed and educated. Hence the knowledge base of legislators at the national and regional levels will be crucial for the effective implementation of decentralization. The organization of communication and information will play essential role in this regard. This will require a proper, two way coordination of communication and information flow in the legislative engagement process.

1. The regular gathering and transmission of information to a national agency from units mandated with the implementation of decentralization at the clan, district and county levels.
2. The central processing and dissemination of information by that national agency with the relevant mandate to sectoral units through reader friendly publications, use of the print and electronic media and other useful and appropriate means.

The inclusion of civic education, legislative engagement, inter-sectoral communication, and local government information management will be significant for the achievement of decentralization. They will allow for better planning, coordinated action, improved cooperation, easy assessment and rapid development. While legislative engagement will focus on facilitating the work of informed and educated electoral bodies in central government and around the country, inter-sector communication will aim at regular and robust information exchange and experience sharing. Moreover, local government information management will allow for the systematic gathering, organization storage, dissemination and usage of information as will be needed in the decentralization implementation process.

2.1.3 Objectives
The primary objective of Communications and Civic Education component is to enhance and deepen public awareness, knowledge, understanding, participation and ownership among key national stakeholders regarding their roles and responsibilities under a decentralized governance system. Each stakeholder group must get involved fully in the processes of achieving an inclusive, effective and successful decentralization implementation programme. Each citizen will therefore have a better understanding and appreciation of the benefits of decentralization on local development.

2.1.4 Expected outputs
The outputs below will be expected from the Communications and Civic Education:
1. Liberians understand the benefits of shared governance and their duties and responsibilities
2. Political consensus exists to support shared governance and to build political and parliamentary endorsement of deconcentration and decentralization reforms
3. Enhanced Legislative understanding for policy enactment and effective oversight of decentralization program; and enhanced understanding political parties of decentralization
4. Leadership and senior civil servants of MACs sensitized to coordinate the decentralization, financial, public sector and civil service reforms and to be consistent with the national decentralization policy and implementation plan and the sector decentralization strategy as related to their respective sectors.
2.1.5 Strategies
1. Use of local media, community radio stations, schools, universities, community colleges, civil society groups, sporting events, community-based and faith-based organizations
2. Production and dissemination of decentralization materials, jingles, brochures, flyers, posters, drama groups and local town criers to bring awareness and sensitize general public on decentralization implementation
3. Extensive use of diversity of local vernaculars (simple *Liberian English and sixteen indigenous languages*) on community radio stations and in simple publications nationwide
4. Facilitation of the staging of civic education programmes consistent with respect to the diversity of traditional values and cultural norms

2.1.6 Priority activities
The priority activities and actions of Communications and Civic Education will comprise the following:
1. Develop a comprehensive and functional communications strategy
2. Design, produce and disseminate communication materials (audio, video, etc.)
3. Set up local government information centers at schools, churches, mosques, etc. at district, chiefdom and clan levels
4. Conduct workshops and town hall meetings with emphasis on gender, youth, elderly, physically challenged or disadvantaged persons, minority groups (abinos) participation
5. Organize workshops and study tours for senators and representatives on decentralization policy and implementation issues
6. Provide technical support for legislative public hearings on decentralization
7. Organize workshops and study tours for political parties and students
8. Organize workshops and study tours for local leaders and traditional authorities such as superintendents, district commissioners, chiefs, zoes, physically challenged, etc.
9. Conduct periodic retreats on decentralization and related reforms for the leadership and senior civil servants of MACs on inter-linkages of decentralization reforms and coordination issues of national and sector decentralization
10. Provide technical support and training to Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) and Decentralization Support Units (DSUs) to...

2.2 Political Decentralization

2.2.1 Current situation
At present, so much power is exercised by the central government and its functionaries, although small amount of power is delegated to local government authorities. But the prerogative and discretion exercised by central government in the delegation of political, administrative and fiscal functions leads to the conclusion that Liberia is highly centralized. According to the national decentralization policy, all powers, authority and functions in the following areas shall be exclusively reserved and exercised by the central government for the protection of national sovereignty. They are:
1. Judicial power and administration of justice system
2. Auditing
3. Elections
4. Foreign Affairs
5. Industrial Property
Further, the national decentralization policy provides a framework for the local government structure and administration. The policy also states that citizens of each county shall have the power to elect the superintendent, administrative district commissioners, paramount chiefs, clan chiefs, mayors and members of county councils granted city charters. Currently, the Liberian Constitution provides for election of mayors, paramount chiefs and clan chiefs while the election of superintendents, administrative district commissioners and members of county councils requires a constitutional amendment.

More importantly, parts of the national decentralization policy contradict the current constitution such as the election of certain local government officials (i.e. superintendents) which are not provided for in the constitution. Most local government positions are currently subject to appointment by the President. Also, the current legal framework makes no provision for sharing of revenues between the central government and local governments, as well as the permission of local governments to collect taxes and fees to support local administrative and development activities. Therefore, a legal framework defining the establishment, mandates and functions, powers, restrictions, and reporting relationships of central and local governments will become key to the successful implementation of decentralization. In order to be effective, such legal framework will need to be consistent with the established policy guidelines and avoid or guide against any potential overlaps and duplications. The rules and regulations must clearly define the administration, conduct, planning and financial management of local governments.

Political Decentralization seeks to improve transparency and accountability as well as to strengthen checks and balances. The process of decentralization will have to itself be transparent, participatory and accountable to all citizens. This will be accomplished through the implementation of the Rights to Information Act, the influence of local pressure groups, formal bottom-up planning processes, periodic community budget and expenditure meetings, and citizens feedback and opinions through call lines, community radio stations, television and town hall meetings.

2.2.2 Rationale
The basic features of the 2011 National Policy on Decentralization and Local Government are enshrined in the 1986 Liberian Constitution. Other supporting legislations to repeal the local government law constituting Title 20 of the Liberian Code of Laws revised and to establish in its stead a new Title 20 to be known as the new Local Government Act of Liberia 2012, and to amend Chapter 25, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), of the Executive Law, and Chapter 4, Administration in the county area, of the Aborigines Law of 1956, to sustain the national decentralization policy of Liberia. The national decentralization policy was developed to promote participatory governance and decision-making at the county, district and sub-district levels. The existing government policies, procedures and legislations governing public administration and the delivery of public goods and services in general and the line ministries and agencies in particular were developed with administrative deconcentration in mind rather than sector devolution and delegation.
The decentralization policy is not intended to cover the Judicial Branch of the GOL. The rationale for this provision is to enhance the rule of law and the neutrality of the judiciary as the final interpreter of the law in the administration of justice. Accordingly, the Legal and Regulatory Framework is intended to create an enabling legal environment for a smooth and effective implementation of decentralization in Liberia. Therefore, all current policies, laws and regulations conflicting with the national decentralization policy must be identified and reformed in order to achieve a supportive legal environment for the implementation of decentralization in the unitary state. The process will entitle a complete review of mandates and functions of line ministries and agencies, formulation of Local Government Act, legislative enactment and national constitutional referendum.

Consequently, the new Local Government Act of Liberia 2012 must provide the enabling legal environment for effective and efficient implementation of decentralization and the devolution of certain political, administrative and fiscal powers and institutions from the central government to local governments. The government recognizes that the passage of LGA and national constitutional amendments are crucial first steps for this implementation of decentralization in the country.

2.2.3 Objective
Political Decentralization is designed to affirm the government’s commitment to perfecting the unity of the country by providing equal opportunity for all citizens to engage in local governance by devolving certain political, administrative and fiscal powers from the central government to local governments. The primary objective is therefore to develop and promote a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework that will guide and facilitate the decentralization implementation process.

2.2.4 Expected outputs
The expected outputs of Political Decentralization are as follows:
1. Local Government Act finalized and processed for submission to Legislature
2. Mandates and functions of MACs and state-owned enterprises reviewed to align with decentralization program
3. Civil service reforms aligned with decentralization
4. Criteria established for municipalities, districts, chiefdoms and clans to rationalize and restructure them to ensure economic viability and sustainability

2.2.5 Strategies
1. Promote a legal and regulatory framework that ensures that local government elections are consistent with the provisions of the Liberian constitution and the national policy on decentralization and local governance

2.2.6 Priority activities
The priority activities and actions of Political Decentralization are as follows:
1. Finalize draft of Local Government Act
2. Organize research on emerging policy and legal issues arising out of implementation of decentralization
3. Draft, validate and submit decentralization-related acts and amendments to the Legislature
4. Review and research ongoing legislations to ensure that they are consistent with LGA
5. Engage relevant MACs to conduct functions review
6. Harmonize functions, functionaries and finances progressively for deconcentration and decentralization as a follow-up to the functional review
7. Engage Civil Service Agency to harmonize civil service reforms with functional review of MACs
8. Engage stakeholders to establish model county civil service system
9. Engage Legislature and stakeholders for support and approval of local government rationalization criteria
10. Establish new boundaries for municipalities, districts, chiefdoms and clans as per the approved criteria
11. Engage stakeholders on the rational of the demarcation exercise
12. Demarcate city wards before municipal elections

2.3 Institutional and Human Resource Capacity Development

2.3.1 Current situation

The GOL is willing and committed to empowering people and local communities through decentralization and sector devolution of certain political, administrative and fiscal powers and functions. The Decentralization Implementation Unit at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Decentralization Implementation Support Units within relevant line ministries and agencies need to be strengthened through a successful decentralization implementation process. This will require an effective and efficient capacity building process consistent with the 10-Year Liberia National Capacity Development Strategy and done in collaboration with training services providing institutions such as the Liberia Institute for Public Administration (LIPA), the University of Liberia and research institutions.

Further, the local government structures and administrative positions will be defined and identified consistent with assignment of functions, roles and responsibilities for the formation of effective and efficient local civil service. This process will coincide with Civil Service Reforms to ensure that any new and/or devolved positions are in line with new structures, functions and procedures for state modernization under a decentralized governance system. A plan must be formulated for the smooth transfer of staff positions from central government to local governments as well as for training and/or retraining of the current and new civil servants. Vital rules, systems, processes, procedures and supporting manuals must be put in place for local governments and for the election of local government officials. Finally, well defined roles and responsibilities and the reporting and standard operational procedures of each layer of government must be articulated within the civil service reforms.

2.3.2 Rationale

The three levels shaping capacity development initiatives in Liberia are human, institutional and the enabling environment. The lack of adequate human and institutional capacities presents a significant challenge in the implementation of decentralization in the country. Activities regarding the capacity development of national and local governments require institution strengthening, systems establishment, processes and procedures; and training/on-the-job training of staff. The pace and progress of the decentralization programme will largely depend on how best and how quickly this single most important challenge is addressed. The major components of a capacity development programme are to prepare local governments for efficient and effective service delivery and for the central administration to strengthen its planning, monitoring, coordination and technical support and oversight
functions under a decentralized governance system. Additionally, local governments require sufficient investment in basic infrastructure, utilities and services in order to fulfill their new roles and responsibilities as well as their own M&E systems that will complement that of the central government. The construction and maintenance of paved, feeder and farm-to-market roads enabling access to and from county headquarters and districts are major components of the capacity building effort. Basic infrastructure and physical facilities such as office space should be made available for county, district, municipal and chiefdom administrations. The administrative offices of counties, districts, municipalities and chiefdoms should also have the physical infrastructure and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to access the Internet and communicate with central government.

2.3.3 Objectives
The primary objective of Institutional and Human Resource Capacity Development is to enhance the capacity of local governments’ political and administrative institutions consistent with the implementation of their respective roles and responsibilities under a decentralized governance system and to initiate policies that will strengthen the capacity of the private sector in the counties. GOL acknowledges the urgent need for capacity building and professional staff development for personnel managing the key institutions that will be responsible for the decentralization implementation process.

2.3.4 Expected outputs
The expected outputs of the Institutional and Human Resource Capacity Development are as follows:

1. Institutional and operational capacity of MIA strengthened to coordinate MACs and support county and sub-county structures to implement decentralization
2. Institutional and operational capacity of county and district administrations strengthened to implement decentralization
3. Human resource capacity at MIA strengthened to implement decentralization
4. Human resource capacity at county government and other local structures strengthened to implement decentralization
5. Human resource capacity of traditional authorities strengthened to handle boundary harmonization and land tenure issues at community level first
6. Capacity established at GC for monitoring and evaluation of shared governance under the decentralization implementation program

2.3.5 Strategies
1. Development of the requisite institutional and human resource capacities for responsive decentralized governance system and effective service delivery at all levels

2.3.6 Priority activities
The priority activities and actions of the Institutional and Human Resource Capacity Development are as follows:

1. Undertake profiling and re-documentation of staff of MIA and local governments and structures
2. Restructure staff at MIA and local governments to strengthen implementation of decentralization
3. Develop an operational database of staff
4. Conduct assessment and surveys to formulate long-term local capacity development strategy for decentralization implementation
5. Conduct regular monthly meeting
6. Organize periodic progress review retreats every 6-month outside of Monrovia
7. Provide regular Cabinet briefings
8. Provide technical and secretariat support to IMCD
9. Provide technical support to DSUs at MACs and to county administrations
10. Provide technical support and training to traditional authorities to handle boundary harmonization and land tenure issues at community level first
11. Prepare technical studies and research materials to inform emerging policy decisions and implementation issues
12. Procure ICT and transport equipment for MIA, GC and county administrations to include equipment and operational costs
13. Review and revise existing operational manuals
14. Formulate administrative and managerial procedure manuals and guidelines for county governments, districts and sub-district structures
15. Provide technical and logistical support to conduct regular coordination meetings of sector ministries and agencies at the counties and districts under county superintendents and district commissioners respectively
16. Construct XX number of county administrative complexes to house relevant line ministries and agencies
17. Establish ICT infrastructure for VSAT and other cost-effective media for Internet services
18. Train XX number of staff in local government administration
19. Develop incremental training modules to support structured training and on-the-job-training as per the long-term local capacity development plan
20. Formalize and conduct induction and orientation training procedures for the political leadership, officials and staff
21. Organize specified training for senior level leadership
22. Organize demand-driven and performance oriented training to MIA and MACs staff to implement decentralization consistent with the long-term local capacity development strategy
23. Organize demand-driven policy-related training to harmonize emerging decentralization, public sector and civil service reforms

2.4 Fiscal Decentralization, Financial Management and Accounting

2.4.1 Current situation
Liberia is a highly centralized unitary state where the central government uses its power, authority and mandate to solely manage fiscal and monetary policies as well as controls all public resources and performs the crucial functions of public financial management, accounting, expenditure and procurement. The central government has a primary responsibility for equitably distributing public resources to local governments. At present, nearly all local governments have very weak public resource base without a proper mechanism put in place for the management, collection and distribution of revenue at local levels. As a result, local governments are highly dependent on the central government for funding of local development initiatives.
2.4.2 Rationale
The Fiscal Decentralization, Financial Management, and Accounting is a key component of the national decentralization policy under which the central government will transfer revenue to local governments. Local governments are expected to raise financial resources to fill existing gaps in the fulfillment of their mandates as well as have discretionary powers for managing public expenditure at the local level. Specifically, the central government is to establish an adequate and reliable revenue base for each county government and grant local governments the authority to set and collect taxes such as properties and licensing and operating permits for local businesses.

As the primary tax collector, the central government must establish a sustainable and recurring programme of direct revenue sharing with local governments. In the first year, an initial lump sum grant shall be distributed and shared in equal amounts to all county governments; but thereafter, all funds, grants, and revenues allocated by the central government shall be distributed to county governments in accordance with a clear and transparent formula-based inter-government fiscal transfer system that takes into account population sizes, governance practices, natural resource base, backwardness and deprivation of area and the people, and other underlying factors to be defined in the LGA.

Each county government shall use the revenues collected locally from properties, permits, licenses, fees and concessions, as well as its share of nationally collected taxes, to operate its own personnel and budget system in compliance with national laws and regulations of MOF and CSA. For these reasons, local governments will need significant support in local financial management, fiscal operations, setting up county treasuries to support the development of relevant capacity to manage local revenues, county revenue mobilization and management, assessment of local revenues and tax base, training in real estate tax assessment and valuation (systems and procedures), and training of county personnel and budget officers. Of great importance is the immediate need for the central government to embark on policies that will stimulate commercial activities in the counties where there are no commercial banks. This will automatically attract the commercial banks to the counties. Accordingly, CBL needs to formulate policies to encourage commercial banks to open branches in the counties for provision of banking services and facilitation of fiscal decentralization and financial management.

2.4.3 Objectives
The primary objective of Fiscal Decentralization, Financial Management and Accounting is to establish and promote efficiency, accountability and transparency in the financial management, fiscal operations and utilization of public resources.

2.4.4 Expected outputs
The expected outputs of Fiscal Decentralization, Financial Management and Accounting are as follows:

1. County governments strengthened to formulate county development plans based on participatory planning and community-driven approaches
2. County governments strengthened to formulate county budgets
3. Internal audit and oversight functions of the county governments strengthened
2.4.5 Strategies
1. Facilitate the financial empowerment of local governments through fair and equitable sharing of public resources for effective service delivery
2. Enhance internal capacities of local governments to raise and manage their own resources

2.4.6 Priority activities
The priority activities and actions of Fiscal Decentralization, Financial Management and Accounting are as follows:
1. Finalize district development planning guidelines
2. Formulate and validate county development planning guidelines
3. Update county and district development agendas based on participatory processes
4. Establish county and district database to support local level planning and feed into national database
5. Formulate local budgeting guidelines
6. Train local government budget and finance officers in local government budgeting procedures
7. Restructure and train county councils to understand budgeting process
8. Review and revise guidelines for all development funds at the local levels including CDF, SDF, LDF, etc. and harmonize them to evolve uniform financial, management and procurement procedures consistent with the national procurement and financial management act.
9. Establish Internal Audit Units in all counties as per the LGA
10. Provide training and technical assistance to support compliance and oversight services to county administrations

2.5 Compliance, and Social and Economic Protection

2.5.1 Current situation
In this post-conflict era, anti-corruption measures and enforcement mechanisms, gender equity, human rights, protection of youth and women rights, protection of vulnerable and physically challenged persons, people living with HIV/AIDS, social inclusion, peace-building and conflict sensitivity, and the environment and sanitation are major cross-cutting issues that must be addressed within a decentralized governance system. All of these cross-cutting issues still remain evasive which presents a serious challenge for Liberia and its people. As a result, the Social and Economic Protection component seeks to make an impact by positively addressing these relevant issues throughout the decentralization implementation process at local levels.

2.5.2 Rationale
Anti-corruption measures and enforcement mechanisms, gender equity, human rights, social inclusion, peace-building and conflict sensitivity, women, children, youth, elderly, people living with disabilities and HIV/AIDS, and the environment and sanitation are the most significant cross-cutting issues that affect the livelihoods of Liberians and socio-economic well-being of local communities. For these reasons, the Social and Economic component is designed to encourage line ministries and agencies to work in close collaboration with the respective local government officials and institutions in order to fully address these cross-cutting issues within the context of decentralization implementation process. In this light, the ultimate goals of empowering local communities and their people will eventually achieve
good governance, poverty reduction and quality service delivery at local levels. Capacity building will further strengthen the skills, knowledge and understanding of gender concerns, and rights-based approaches and needs. It is anticipated that the central government and local governments will work together to infuse and mainstream relevant cross-cutting issues into all aspects of the implementation of decentralization at local levels.

### 2.5.3 Objectives
The primary objective of the Compliance, and Social and Economic Protection is to enhance the sensitivity and capacities of local government in order to better manage anti-corruption measures and enforcement mechanisms, gender equity, women, children & youths, elderly, peace building & conflict sensitivity, the environment & sanitation, people living with disabilities and HIV/AIDS.

### 2.5.4 Expected outputs
The expected outputs of the Compliance, and Social and Economic Protection are as follows:

1. Local governance and local development are progressively made responsive to gender concerns and address the needs of weaker segments of society
2. Anti-corruption measures (systems and enforcement mechanisms) established and functional at county, district and community levels
3. Capacity established at GC for monitoring and evaluation of shared governance under the decentralization implementation program and other ongoing public sector and civil service reforms
4. Capacity for concurrent monitoring and evaluation of decentralization implementation established at MIA and county governments
5. Capacity of public, citizens’ group and civil society organizations strengthened to undertake participatory monitoring and to assume the role of watch-dog functions
6. Coordination mechanism in place for GOL, donors and UN for information sharing and compliance

### 2.5.5 Strategies
1. All relevant cross-cutting issues must be given serious consideration in decision-making, local development planning and budgeting for the implementation of decentralization process.

### 2.5.6 Priority activities
The priority activities and actions of the Compliance, and Social and Economic Protection are as follows:

1. Finalize district development planning guidelines
2. Formulate and validate county development planning guidelines
3. Update district and county development agendas (CDAs) to establish district and county database and feed into national database
4. Provide training and technical support to strengthen the capacity of women, youth and weaker segments of the society to participate in to implementation of decentralization, compete for elected positions and participate in civil service recruitment
5. Support compliance to gender-friendly and physically challenged specifications and standards for all local infrastructure development
6. Identify media and develop contents and formats for public display and outreach
7. Provide an enabling environment for public, citizens’ groups and civil society organizations to access and respond to information
8. Establish mechanisms for regular dialogues and follow-up with the public, citizens’ groups and civil society organizations on matters related to corruption
9. Provide an enabling environment to strengthen public awareness and outreach, development and administrative information dissemination, recording, compilation, cataloguing and follow-up actions on all corruption charges with accountability, and checks and balances
10. Encourage public, citizens’ groups and civil society organizations to assume watchdog functions transparently and objectively
11. Engage public, citizens’ groups and civil society organizations to guide on formulation of systems and procedures for access and services systematically prone to corruption
12. Develop ethics training manuals
13. Conduct periodic training for select public officials (finance, procurement, human resource, etc.)
14. Provide ethics awareness to all civil service staff and the public including their whistle blowing functions
15. Provide technical support to strengthen GC’s dynamic website and ensure that policy studies and research reports and all other relevant documents are available for dissemination, review and comments
16. Provide training and technical support to strengthen the M&E Unit at GC
17. Develop local governance indicators amenable for measuring major governance factors such as level and degree of deconcentration/decentralization, citizens’ participation, resource sharing, peace and security, rule of law and access to justice, quality and accessibility of services, level and degree of corruption, etc.
18. Develop a framework and methodology for monitoring local governance every 6-month
19. Organize scientific field surveys and studies to gather citizens’ perceptions on major governance factors and collect relevant data to capture progress made, emerging opportunities and local governance challenges
20. Prepare, validate and disseminate Annual Local Governance Report
21. Provide training and technical support to strengthen the M&E Unit at MIA and county governments
22. Develop a management information system for local governments and periodically update same on MIA’s website
23. Finalize the locality directory collecting geographical coordinates and available facilities and map them to development a dynamic atlas for Liberia for local level planning by objectively identifying needs and gaps
24. Collect and periodically update information on all projects implemented by the local governments as a major tool to monitor the progress of all projects including CDF, SDF, LDF and others to identify and address
25. Provide training and technical support to organize public forums at county, city, district and clan levels as that the public, citizens’ groups and civil society organizations have access to information and organized discussions and debates and engage local government policy, developmental and other issues affecting lives of local people
26. Provide training and technical support to the public, citizens’ groups and civil society organizations in participatory assessment, district-level planning and monitoring
27. Provide technical support to county and district administrations as well as other local development organization to organize periodic meetings and dialogues with the public and citizens’ groups on development progress, prospects and challenges.
2.5.7 National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat (NDIS)

To ensure effective compliance and quality assurance of NDIP, the National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat (NDIS) shall be established in MIA and shall coordinate, facilitate and support the capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of NDIP. NDIS will consist of a small but highly competent and robust entity which will be directly set up under the MIA structure. Its functions, however, shall be directly guided by the Chairperson of NDSC. As such, it shall function as the NDSC Secretariat and shall be responsible for organizing ordinary and extra-ordinary meetings of the NDSC whenever necessary.

The NDIS Coordinator: There shall be appointed an NDIS Coordinator who will direct its activities. In matters of a technical nature, the Coordinator shall consult with the Minister of Internal Affairs. In addition to the general role of the NDIS, the NDIS Coordinator shall have the following specific responsibilities.

- Provide liaison with line ministries and agencies focal points, donors, and development partners in planning their sectoral decentralization processes. He/she shall also be responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the sectoral decentralization process nationwide.
- Provide day-to-day management of the NDIS.
- Communicate M&E results to all actors in the decentralization process.
- Facilitate building of a communication network for the exchange of information within the decentralization process.
- Ensure that the NDIS offices are adequately supported to facilitate its function.
- Serve as liaison officer for soliciting, acquiring, and managing technical support from donors and other agencies and short-term consultants.
- Serve as Secretary to the NDSC.
2.5.8 Structure of National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat

Figure 1. Structure of National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat

2.5.9 Monitoring, Evaluation and Policy Development Team
The NDIS team will be supervised by the NDIS Coordinator within the MIA. Its functions will focus on monitoring performance in terms of whether the standards agreed upon in the work plans are being implemented. It will also focus on whether the needed resources are being provided in timely fashion and whether expected outputs are being realized, the objectives set are being achieved, and whether performance activities are making any impact on poverty reduction. It will also determine the need for policy review and determine the need for repeating successful activities nationwide.

In addition, the team will monitor and document any bottlenecks hindering effective information flow and make recommendations for improved community participation and empowerment of various structures at all levels.

Specific duties of the Team shall include the following.
- Ensuring that all actors in the decentralization process account for funds entrusted to them
- Ensuring that there exists operational coordination and harmonization mechanisms between MIA and other development partners
- Liaison with existing M&E mechanisms to develop effective monitoring tools
- Monitoring and advising of NDSC on whether the outputs of the program are sustainable and whether they have an impact on poverty reduction
- Facilitating the building capacity of local M&E teams
- Development of an objectively identifiable impact indicators checklist
- Promotion of results-based approaches to program management

2.5.10 Documentation, Information and Communications Team
In the implementation process, it will be essential to establish an electronic database of all experiences, practices, interventions and approaches. Such a database will create a learning
environment for all actors of the process, including ministries, donors, project staff, civil society, private sector and the various levels of administration. For appropriate networking and information exchange, the database should include past, ongoing and future interventions. The information contained in the database will assist in identifying who is doing what, where, when and in which sector. Such information will help in collaboration, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and planning processes.

The Documentation, Information and Communications Team will be supervised by the NDIS Coordinator. In addition to its general functions, the team shall also be responsible to:

- Ensure information networking with key policymakers and development partners
- Develop regular information and communications linkages with all actors for monitoring purposes
- Ensure that a decentralization database is created and regularly updated
- Maintain an inventory of decentralization documents and reports and have them properly catalogued, and regularly updated

2.5.11 Capacity Building Coordination

The rural counties have been denied participation in decisions that affect them. Likewise, the capacities of the rural areas have been left in a most deplorable condition. To implement decentralization, the requisite capacities must be developed in the rural areas. Government is nonetheless committed to installing a viable local decentralized governance system. To accomplish this goal, capacity building is a significant foundation of decentralization. Without building the requisite local capacities, the counties will be unable to assume the administrative roles devolved to them. Primarily, a comprehensive series of capacity assessment exercises must be conducted to determine the overall capacity shortfalls nationwide.

In order to ensure that capacity building is prioritized in the decentralization process, the Capacity Building Coordination Team will be placed under the direct supervision of the NDIS Coordinator. It must be emphasized that in order to become sustainable, capacity building at all levels must become the cornerstone of decentralization in Liberia. The team will work closely with all departments of MIA and other capacity building actors (LIPA, CSA, UL, CUGS, Consultants) in conducting capacity building needs assessment.

Other functions of the Capacity Building Coordination Team are as follows:

- Advise MIA on capacity building matters at the national and local levels
- Ensure that the national capacity building guidelines are developed
- Ensure that guidelines and toolboxes of stakeholders at all levels are harmonized
- Coordinate all capacity building interventions that are geared towards efficient and effective implementation of NDIP
- Report and publicize the capacity building interventions and outputs to all relevant stakeholders periodically
- Make sure that the CBBF funds are expended efficiently
- Collaborate with relevant partners in developing and facilitating the implementation of a sustainable capacity building plan in response to the capacity gaps identified from the capacity building needs assessment conducted
- Ensure that there is a comprehensive national decentralization training program with appropriate training modules and make plans for its nationwide implementation
- Develop, reproduce and distribute brochures and guidelines on capacity building to all actors
- Design and facilitate the implementation of training programs and training topics to trainers and develop a network of trainers specialized in decentralization to conduct continuous training in decentralization
- Develop the capacity of actor institutions to facilitate and coordinate their capacity building interventions at all levels
- Monitor capacity building interventions and make recommendations for the implementation of capacity building programs
- Ensure that capacity building interventions incorporate gender and youth, HIV, and environmental sensitivity in capacity building programs

2.5.12 Follow-up and Feedback
There is a need for regular follow-up of the implementation process to ensure that it is progressing according to plan and to address hurdles being encountered and make appropriate interventions before it is too late. MIA officials and NDIS should undertake periodic supervisory field visits to the local governments and other partners to monitor how they are implementing the program. Likewise, they should ensure that periodic reports are submitted to MIA and stakeholders from actors and utilized information provided to them for decision making. NDIS must follow-up and verify information contained in reports regularly.

2.5.13 Impact Assessment
A major goal of decentralization is to reduce poverty nationwide. NDIP must therefore have a positive impact on reducing poverty. To assess the impact of this process, national indicators such as food insecurity, lack of income, lack of income generating opportunities, lack of productive assets, poor health, poor housing, lack of basic assets and poor social status will be utilized as guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation process. Key indicators for political, administrative and fiscal decentralization are also imperative.

2.5.14 Common Development Fund
A Common Development Fund (CDF) will be established for the provision of budget support to the development programs of local governments. Respective districts will identify and prepare their projects. The county officials will validate the technical contents of their plans. Once the District Development Plan (DPP) is officially validated by the relevant structures, the CDF funding will be provided. Local governments will however need to develop the necessary capacities to manage their budgets and provide adequate auditing services as a prerequisite for managing CDF funding. CDF will ensure that performance indicators are designed for local governments that will qualify them for various levels of budget funding and responsibilities.

3. Implementation Strategies for the Decentralization Plan
Even though Liberia has been a unitary state since its establishment, the concept of decentralization has been practiced over the years. In the process of extending service delivery to the counties, ministries and agencies (i.e., Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Education) have undertaken sector-wide measures to extend improved service delivery to many counties and districts. In addition to and in collaboration with these government efforts, the donor community (including USAID, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, EU, WORLD BANK) has complimented government’s efforts at improving service delivery to local communities by
implementing projects aimed at providing services to local communities. Projects implemented by donors have included building of schools, hospitals/health centers, feeder roads, delivery of primary health care and the implementation of scores of capacity development projects. These efforts from government and donors coupled with extensive consultations have provided valuable inputs and experiences that have laid the foundation for the formulation of the Decentralization Policy. This wealth of experiences from earlier interventions will provide the basis for developing the strategy for the implementation of the Decentralization Plan.

3.1 Approaches for Implementing the Decentralization Plan

The decentralization plan shall be implemented using a combination of the following two approaches, namely, the nationwide and capacity ladder approaches:

3.1.1 Nationwide approach

In utilizing this approach, devolution will be implemented throughout the counties and districts in a uniform way. A standard level of service delivery will be coined and applied to all counties and districts. Even though this approach will pose a level of risk in case of failure, politically, it will present itself as satisfying the conditions for equity.

3.1.2 Capacity ladder approach

Under this approach, the actual implementation of devolution will be applied based on assessment of the degree to which the designated capacity to perform the functions devolved to the local institution will have been attained. Once a district attains the designated capacity, it will readily assume the responsibility for execution and administration of the functions and resources devolved. Accordingly, those districts that increasingly make the required improvements will have the opportunity to have their status upgraded. Conversely, those districts that perform poorly will be required to put in place measures to facilitate the performance of their functions and added measures to build their capacity will be instituted. This approach will provide incentives to stronger districts and motivate the weaker districts to develop their capacities and assume added responsibilities.

3.1.3 Methods of implementing approaches

The nationwide and capacity ladder approaches will be implemented using the participatory, consultative and incremental methods.

3.1.3.1 Participatory and consultative method

As the basic goal of decentralization is to facilitate the participation of local communities in the planning and management of their socio-economic and political affairs, implementation must provide local communities the opportunity to participate in the management of their affairs. Local stakeholders must be identified, consulted, and duly encouraged to participate in all programmes affecting their communities. To accomplish this, all structures developed to steer and manage the process must do so through the consultative and participatory processes.

3.1.3.2 Incremental method

Local communities must be allowed to “bite what they can comfortably chew.” Central government must not be seen as dumping untimely power, functions, responsibilities and resources on local communities. Devolution of power must be planned, gradual and based on incremental transfer in order to avoid unnecessary failures. Local communities must slowly
be brought into handling their political and economic power and the accompanying responsibilities and resources as they gradually develop the capacity to do so.

3.2 Strategic actions earmarked for 2013
Success in the implementation of the Decentralization Policy from 2013 forward will to a large extent depend upon the level to which the below strategic actions earmarked for 2013 are attained. It would be necessary to have the following actions accomplished to some appreciable extent during the first year of the five-year decentralization plan. NDIP is to be reviewed periodically, therefore it will be necessary to commence with those strategic actions that are critical for 2013. (List not conclusive)

### Table 1. Strategic Actions in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>STRATEGIC ACTIONS IN 2013</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Complete and adopt the 5-year NDIP</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communicate the 5-year NDIP to stakeholders</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Passage of proposed Local Government Act</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Deconcentration of Central Government functions</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Develop and implement a functional mechanism for the transfer of funds from the Ministry of Finance to councils.</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mobilization of financial and other resources for 5-year NDIP</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Plan and conduct sensitization and awareness activities</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Devolution of authority from Central Government to local governments</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Establish and make operational the National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat (NDIS)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Continuation of sector devolution in all ministries</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Finalize sensitization of all identified stakeholders to an extent that will allow their effective participation in the commencement of NDIP implementation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Develop and implement functional structures for community participation in decision making and planning process</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Established devolution task force in 3 levels of Government</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Established an operational monitoring and evaluation system for assessing progress made in NDIP.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Institutional arrangements, roles and responsibilities
To effectively implement NDIP, it will be necessary to establish appropriate structures at each level of government system and have them properly harmonized. The structural arrangements and the roles and responsibilities of levels of government and institutions involved will be clearly defined, so as to avoid operational issues that may delay the implementation process. The following will constitute the governmental levels and structures that will be involved in the implementation of NDIP.

3.3.1 National level
The implementation of the decentralization plan will allow for the exercise of greater power and more resources by local governments. But Liberia will remain a unitary state and the amount of power to be exercised by local authorities will be determined by and coordinated
with central state structures. Even though central government institutions will continue to provide supervision, local governments will enjoy substantial control and autonomy.

3.3.1.1 The President and Cabinet
The President shall constitute a Ministerial Steering Committee on Decentralization (MSCD). Comprising key sector ministries, the MSCD will provide the direction, monitoring, and controlling of the decentralization implementation plan. The MSCD shall be cheered by the Minister of Internal Affairs and will meet quarterly to discuss issues related to the decentralization implementation process. The Ministry of Finance will be considerably involved in the work of the MSCD.

3.3.1.2 Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee on Decentralization
Each sector ministry shall establish an Inter-ministerial Technical Committee whose responsibility will include planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the decentralization program of the respective ministry. The IMTCD shall convene quarterly to review progress in the implementation of decentralization and will be cheered by the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs who bears direct responsibility for the decentralization process.

3.3.1.3 Structure of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
To effectively coordinate the activities of all institutions acting in the decentralization process, the MIA will be responsible for the implementation of the NDIP. It will work in collaboration with the Governance Commission to accomplish this responsibility. To facilitate the successful accomplishment of its mandate, it will be necessary that the MIA establish appropriate structures.

In order to render MIA capable of fulfilling this role, the below will constitute the structure of the MIA.

Figure 2. Proposed structure of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to support decentralization implementation
3.3.1.4 Sector Ministries
Each sector ministry will be responsible for decentralization of its functions and for eventually devolving them to county administrations. To accomplish this, a Decentralization Support Unit (DSU) will be established in each sector ministry and agency. The DSU of the sector ministry/agency will be responsible for the implementation of the decentralization process in that particular government institution.

3.4 Partnership arrangements, roles and responsibilities

3.4.1 Central Government Ministries and Agencies involvement
The central government and its sector ministries and agencies are responsible to drive the entire decentralization process with support from national stakeholders and development partners.

3.4.2 International partners and stakeholder involvement
Since the platform of the MIA has local government and decentralization in its attribute, Government will ensure the development and coordination as well as the implementation of the 5-year decentralization program and provide periodic guidance through the MIA, which is responsible for local government and decentralization. To be successful, the program will require assistance from development partners. However, it is essential that such assistance be well coordinated if it is to be effective. Below is a table of various stakeholders outlining their respective roles in execution of NDIP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTNER</th>
<th>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2. Line ministries & agencies and their respective roles
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</th>
<th>Mobilization of regional and international cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Ministry of Finance/Economic Planning** | ▪ Mobilize financial resources needed for local development and timely release central government support to CDF  
▪ Ensure that sector objects are coherent with those of vision 2020 and PRS  
▪ Ensure that international standards of accountability and audit are adhered to  
▪ Provide the standards and norms required for financial management  
▪ Approve the financial budgets of counties |
| **PARTNER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** | ▪ Provide guidance in formulating relevant sectoral decentralization policy and strategy at the local level  
▪ Ensure that devolved and delegated functions are harmonized with those of the national infrastructure sector strategy  
▪ Provide sectoral technical support in infrastructure development and capacity building to decentralized entities  
▪ Revise infrastructure sectoral strategies and legal frameworks as the decentralization process progresses |
| **Ministry of Internal Affairs** | ▪ Provide guidance and framework for implementation of decentralization for all stakeholders  
▪ Chairperson of the NDSC  
▪ Coordinate institutional and technical capacity building of local governments through NDIS  
▪ Mobilize resources for the implementation 5-year NDIP  
▪ Ensure implementation of the 5-year NDIP and linkages and harmonization of good governance initiatives in sectors/clusters  
▪ Monitoring and advising on the implementation of the decentralization process through NDIS |
| **Ministry of Public Works** | ▪ Provide guidance in formulating relevant sectoral decentralization policy and strategy at the local level  
▪ Ensure that devolved and delegated functions are harmonized with those of the national policy on environment protection, resettlement and land use  
▪ Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities  
▪ Revise sectoral strategies and legal frameworks as the decentralization process progresses |
| **Ministry of Lands, Mines & Energy** | ▪ Provide guidance in formulating relevant sectoral decentralization policy and strategy at the local level  
▪ Ensure that devolved and delegated functions are harmonized with the national development strategy of the health sector  
▪ Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities  
▪ Revise relevant sectoral strategies and legal frameworks as the decentralization process progresses |
| **Ministry of Health & Social Welfare** | ▪ Provide guidance in the formulation of health sector decentralization policy and financing strategy at the local level  
▪ Ensure that the devolved functions are harmonized with the national development strategy of the health sector  
▪ Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities to implement the policy and strategy  
▪ Revise relevant sectoral strategies and legal frameworks as the decentralization process progresses |

**Table 3. Line ministries & agencies and their respective roles cont’d.**
### Ministry of Education
- Ensure that the devolved functions are harmonized with the national development strategy of the education sector
- Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities to implement the policy and strategy
- Revise relevant sectoral strategies and legal frameworks as the decentralization process progresses

### Ministry of Commerce
- Guide the formulation of private and public sector involvement in trade, commerce and cooperative policies at local level
- Ensure that devolved functions are harmonized with the national development strategy on privatization and investment
- Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities for implementation of the sectoral policy
- Revise sectoral strategies and legal framework as the decentralization progresses

### Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Guide the formulation of sports, youth and culture sectoral decentralization policies and implementation strategies at local level
- Ensure that devolved functions are harmonized with the national development strategy
- Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities for implementation of sectoral decentralization policy and strategy
- Revise sectoral strategies and legal framework as the decentralization progresses

### Ministry of Gender & Development
- Guide the formulation of sectoral gender mainstreaming policy and financing strategy at local level
- Ensure that devolved functions are harmonized with the national development strategy of women empowerment and gender mainstreaming
- Provide guidance for appropriate affirmative action for gender mainstreaming
- Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities
- Revise sectoral strategies and legal framework as the decentralization progresses

### Ministry of Labor
- Guide the formulation of labor and public service sectoral decentralization policy and implementation strategy and local level
- Ensure that devolved functions are harmonized with the national development strategy and labor policies
- Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities for implementation of sectoral decentralization policy and strategy in the public service
- Revise sectoral strategies and legal framework to ensure that labor practices and procedures in the public service are harmonized at all levels as the decentralization process progresses
- Ensure that necessary resources for the successful implementation of the public service reconfiguration program are mobilized

### Ministry of Justice
- Provide guidance in the formulation of relevant sectoral decentralization policies and strategies in relevant fields and ensure efficient and effective monitoring of their implementation
- Facilitate the integration of the ongoing justice sector reforms within the overall reform process of Liberia
- Facilitate the capacity building activities and interventions in the justice sector nationwide
- Ensure that the necessary resources for the successful implementation of the public service reconfiguration program are mobilized

### Ministry of Agriculture
- Guide the formulation of relevant sectoral decentralization policy and financing strategy at local government level
- Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities
- Ensure that devolved and delegated functions of the Ministry are harmonized within the national strategy framework of the vision 2020 and PRS priorities
- Ensure that relevant sectoral strategies and legal frameworks are revised as decentralization process progresses
Table 4. Line ministries & agencies and their respective roles cont’d.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTNER</th>
<th>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism | ▪ Provide guidance in the formulation of an information sector decentralization policy and financing strategy at the local level  
▪ Provide guidance in the formulation of relevant sectoral decentralization policies and strategies in relevant fields and ensure efficient and effective monitoring of their implementation  
▪ Provides coordination for the inter-ministerial committee public relations functions.  
▪ Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities |
| Ministry of Postal Affairs                   | ▪ Guide the formulation of relevant sectoral decentralization policy and financing strategy at local government level  
▪ Provide sectoral technical support and capacity building to decentralized entities  
▪ Ensure that devolved and delegated functions of the Ministry are harmonized within the national strategy framework of the vision 2020 and PRS priorities  
▪ Ensure that relevant sectoral strategies and legal frameworks are revised as decentralization process progresses |
3.5 Process for consultation, monitoring and harmonization of interventions

3.5.1 Consultative Framework for Decentralization

Figure 3. Consultative Framework for Decentralization

3.5.2 Consultative process
It is essential that all sectoral interventions of donors and development partners be coordinated and harmonized. To accomplish this objective, periodic meetings of focal points and/or forums will be encouraged and facilitated. Such meetings will enhance the planning, monitoring, evaluating and advising on the progress of decentralization implementation.
3.5.3 NSCD Meetings
The Ministerial Steering Committee on Decentralization shall meet at least twice yearly for financial management and programme review. The technical documents for deliberation shall be prepared by NDIS in collaboration with the technical departments of MIA and focal points/forums. A decree from the President will spell out its functions. All stakeholders in the decentralization process will be represented at the steering committee either by the forum or the representative of focal point persons. As soon as the cabinet approves NDIP, NDIS shall become functional. Meetings of NDIS will be convened by the Chairperson. The following shall constitute the attributions of the NSCD:

- Study and coordinate the activities of stakeholders in the implementation of decentralization through NDIS and technical forums and focal points
- Make sure that all national reform programmes are integrated into the implementation of decentralization
- Review progress of NDIP and challenges encountered and decide the way forward
- Establish guidelines for developing institutional capacity for programme implementation
- Maintain effective monitoring of the decentralization process to ensure that it adheres to its mission, mandate, and objectives so that the schedule of activities is strictly observed
- Provide guidance on all matters related to the functioning of NDIS and the implementation of the 5-year NDIP.
- Provide government advice on matters related to the decentralization policy and processes

3.5.4 Donors Technical Forum
MIA will guide the functioning of the donors’ forum in collaboration with the representative chosen by the donors. The forum shall be convened at least twice yearly in the 2nd and 4th quarters of the fiscal year. It shall be chaired by MIA. The primary objective of the forum will be to share experiences and discuss the progress of decentralization. It will provide the framework within which donors and government form a common ground on operational mechanisms and the development of common interventions and approaches.

All recommendations of the forum will be submitted to NDSC for review and consideration and possible reorientation. During donor forum and other focal point meetings, NDIS will be in attendance and will ensure that all recommendations arising from them are implemented.

3.5.5 Line Ministries/Agencies, DSUs and County Focal Point
Each ministry and county will designate a focal person to follow-up the decentralization process. These focal persons will constitute a forum that will meet quarterly and will ensure that the decentralization process is executed harmoniously in all of the sectoral ministries and counties. All recommendations from this forum will be submitted to NDSC for acceptance and orientation; and to NDIS to ensure that they are implemented.

DSUs in the ministries and counties will be strengthened and empowered to follow up decentralization of services in the various sectoral ministries. They will ensure that the decisions of the NDSC are implemented and will work in collaboration with the NDIS to ensure that the implementation of the NDIP is coordinated.
3.5.6 Civil Society Forum
The Civil Society Forum shall meet at least three times a year, with MIA in attendance to discuss how they can support the process more efficiently. This forum will facilitate the harmonization of all civil society interventions in the decentralization process. NDIS will be in attendance at all Civil Society Forum meetings and will follow-up to ensure the implementations of all recommendations. MIA will convene all meetings of the Civil Society Forum in collaboration with its leadership.

3.6 Arrangements for financing NDIP
Attempts should be made to make the arrangements for financing the NDIP as flexible as possible. These arrangements will include, but not be limited, to the following sources:
1. Direct local government development support from CDF or other support mechanisms of Government.
2. Direct operational funding of institutions involved in the NDIP process
3. Co-financing arrangements between development partners and government for programme components.

Regardless of the financing arrangement employed, it should be formalized through a memorandum of understanding signed between GOL and the financing parties or between the concerned parties with full participation of the MIA, the Ministry responsible for decentralization in order to make it easier to fulfil its coordinating, monitoring and advisory roles.

3.7 Capacity building and institutional development
Decentralization implementation requires that all institutions – sector ministries, agencies of government, local government authorities – involved in the process possess the capacity to play their respective roles. To do this requires that agencies of government having the attributes for capacity development and institutional development must be fully prepared to assume the mammoth tasks ahead of decentralization.

Civil Service Agency, Liberia Institute for Public Administration, public and private academic institutions of higher learning, and technical and vocational education training (TVET) institutions must play significant roles in ensuring that the requisite human resource capacity of Liberia is adequately developed to meet the challenges of the country in decentralization implementation ahead.

3.8 Development of infrastructural capacity
Decentralization implies the devolution of authority from the central government to the county administrations. To do this, the county governments must have the capacity to accommodate the new roles that they are expected to assume. Primarily, they must develop an infrastructure that can accommodate the new structures, corps of officers, and the service delivery functions being devolved to them.

4. Institutional Framework for the Decentralization Implementation
The GOL has remain focused on the implementation of the national decentralization program by setting up the necessary institutional framework for effective and efficient policy making, coordination and initiation of plans to oversee the implementation of a sustainable
decentralization process. Moreover, these developments have remained sensitive to ensuring the participation of the people in activities concerning their development. The government administration addresses the leadership responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the people by reconciling their political, managerial, and financial accountability, and poverty alleviation and equitable economic development.

The functionality of the system of institutional framework and the inter-governmental relations is one of the most critical successes factored in the implementation plan of the national decentralization program in general and in the performance of institutional arrangements. The principles of intergovernmental relations refer to an ‘institutional framework’ for the national government that enables, supervises, supports and integrates the activities of the national government into local government. Different levels of government cannot operate in isolation. The activities of Central Government will have to be aligned with the activities of local governments. This means that local government will take policies and programs of Central Government into account but also that Central Government will take into account the policies and programs of local government. The element of choice entails that the choice and preference exercised at local level must be channeled upwards through the local government units known as administrative cells. This principle requires horizontal and vertical integration of planning so as to achieve bottom up development.

The institutional framework will primarily deal with the ongoing challenges as they relates to the full implementation of the decentralization plan through the harmonization of all the participating sectors based on experiences gained by various sectors.

4.1 Government Institutional Framework

The GOL is committed to the National Decentralization Action Plan (NDAP), of which a special Technical Advisory Committee has been appointed by the President to coordinate and support the many functions and roles of the various sectors engaged in the implementation process. The Technical Advisory Committee which is one of the stakeholder arrangements of government (with the responsibility to coordinate and advise the president on national policy issues in its institutional framework) will keep the President abreast of the current programs and policies of the implementation process. The committee will conduct further research and make recommendations to the President on the national scope of the implementation programs.

The Legislative Framework

As part of the legislative process, the Legislature will have the responsibility to promulgate laws to guide the legal process on decentralization. A clear legal framework is necessary for making appropriate institutional arrangements for public sector responsibilities and for the implementation process. The laws should cover legislation for the government, state enterprises and for regulating and/or monitoring of the external engagement of the private sector. The legislation has to be supported by regulations and procedures which set out the explicit roles of the different agencies involved in all stages of the implementation cycle. Legislation covering the issue of government will guarantee (typically by the MIA) on behalf of the government, the criteria and procedures for approval and monitoring.

4.1.1 Nation Level

Once the structural arrangements of the stakeholder functions are clear, the effectiveness of the Decentralization Action Plan will, to a large extent, enhance the many operational issues
and avoid delays. The structures in this plan evolve around many key institutions of government and a coordinating secretariat headed by the MIA that will facilitate the Decentralization Action Plan by coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the process.

The Cabinet
The Cabinet is the highest forum that ensures the success of the National Development Policy Objectives of Government, and also enhances the national vision focusing on government commitment to good government by making the implementation of the decentralization plan a priority. The Cabinet will coordinate the Implementation Plan on Decentralization and undertake the following:

- Identify obstacles and potential conflicts impeding the implementation and the operation procedures of the decentralization process of government;
- Advise on plans and strategies on the decentralization and local government reform;
- Advise on the maintenance of close working partnership with all stakeholder groups;
- Formulate information database for the acceleration of the decentralization process; and
- Work with all actors who form the key institutional framework for the implementation of the national action plan.

The Inter-ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralization
The development of management tools, such as the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and policy lies within the purview of the Inter-ministerial Coordinating Committee of government, with the MIA as the Chairman. The latter serves as the policy working group basing on reports from Inter-ministerial Technical Working Groups which are made up of heads of the decentralization support units and the National Secretariat with specific responsibilities to leverage assistance to the task of decentralization.

The Inter-ministerial Coordinating Committee work in consultation and collaboration with the Decentralization Inter-ministerial Technical Working Groups (IMTWG) to devolve functions of the line ministries to local government by undertaking a new mandate and to implement those functions that fall within their respective mandates, and by given a statutory status that compell local authorities and give them the basis for their activities and decision-making.

The Inter-ministerial Technical working Group
The Inter-ministerial Technical working Group (TWG) is the coordinating mechanism that receives and review reports from the National Decentralization Support Units, which are made up of heads of line ministries within the decentralization program. In order to clearly articulate a more structured Action Plan of government, membership to the TWG shall be drawn from the relevant line ministries involved in the implementation of the decentralization process. Inter-ministerial Technical Working Groups work under the mandate of the Inter-ministerial Technical Committee to ensure the realization of planned activities through supportive relationship with the National Secretariat. The ministries shall be chaired individually or jointly with principal mandates from the Inter-ministerial Technical Committee. The National Secretariat will work to coordinate the functions of the TWG and the various groups on planning and policy formulation.

Decentralization Support Unit (Line ministries)
The decentralization support unit new approach to planning has been developed in response to the decentralization agenda. The scope of planning has expanded and it is increasingly seen to
be an important management tool for many aspects of decentralization by leveraging the benefits of these processes and ensuring that the desired outcomes are achieved. Planning at the level of the DSU will also ensure the following:

- The co-ordination of activities across sectors;
- The efficient distribution of resources;
- Facilitating pro-poor outcomes;
- Providing tools for analysis and implementation;
- The creation of an enabling environment for development activities; and
- The management of change by the DSU and the continuous providing of guidance in the event of change.

The National Decentralization Secretariat and responsibilities

The National Decentralization Secretariat is a working group focused on coordinating the implementation of the Five Year Action Plan through which the structural framework of government is managed. The Secretariat will coordinate all administrative work of the government institutional policy arrangements and management by which communication will be directed for Ministerial approval.

The MIA will retain the services of a Director and other support staff who will coordinate the affairs of the Secretariat. The secretariat will facilitate greater coordination of the decentralization program, explore sources of internal/external funding, lead out with report writing on the implementation status and serve both the administration and Working Groups on Decentralization. It will also provide regular feedback on progress as the Action Plan progresses as well as coordinate the ongoing strategic action plan. In focusing on a detailed agreed upon priorities, The Secretariat will work with the coordinating bodies to define tasks to be undertaken, monitor and evaluate achievements over the five year period during the implementation of the Action Plan (which will be built on a national decentralization system) and have responsibility to provide regular data to all stakeholders.

4.1.2 County Level

County Decentralization Coordination Committee

The County Decentralization Coordination Committees (CDCC) will work along with the implementing partners and the international community in the sensitization and coordination of the Decentralization Action Plan to ensure donor coordination and the efficient and effective use of budget support to the decentralization program. The CDCC will further work to improve development operations, transparent systems, procedures and practices at both the county and district levels. The county level programs will also acquire and manage the relevant documentations on decentralization and coordinate, monitor and guide the implementation phases. The CDCC will successfully advocate for efficient and effective implementation of the decentralization program at the district levels and in all sectors.

The County levels will continue to stimulate and build the conscience of the local populations to assure quality and transparent communication and information plans at the lowest levels. These groups will facilitate the preparation of a sequential plan for the decentralization of functions by relevant ministries and prepare the ministries and the local government for the devolution process with success indicators. However, the decentralization Action Plan will be become successful to the extent to which the county governments will take over the roles that are legally decentralized to them and the efficiency and effectiveness with which they will perform these roles and responsibilities.
County Decentralization Coordinator
The County, through the Superintendent, will hire and maintain a county coordinator who will facilitate the work of soliciting, acquiring and managing of international and national technical assistance in the area of decentralization. The Coordinator will ensure:

- the integration of the decentralized sector polices into local development planning;
- assist in mobilizing resources for the local government;
- facilitate the standardization and organization of training and other capacity building initiatives in each county; and
- Coordinate the mobilization of resources for community development and monitor the use of funds at the local levels.

4.1.3 District Level
The District supports urban, economic and demographic development, builds the capacity of the sectors to provide better services to the population as included in the district development plan. The District Action Plan is prepared by the District Development Committee.

District Decentralization Coordination Committee
The District Decentralization Coordination Committees will comprise of all district structures of local government as enshrined in the National Policy on Decentralization and local Governance to ensure that a democratic culture is sustained, and that civic education remains a continuous activity within the decentralization process. The district administrative office will coordinate the work of the coordinating groups and ensure that a sustainable framework and mechanism between and among the districts and county government institutions for coordination and harmonization is maintained.

District Decentralization Coordinator
There shall be a District Coordinator on decentralization to facilitate and coordinate all policies, programs and plans on the implementation of the National Action Plan on the implementation of the decentralization program. The office of the coordinator will provide relevant information to stakeholders at the district level, and provide mechanisms to encourage donors to give budget support to the needs of the local initiatives.

The coordinator will also facilitate the functional linkages of each institution at the district level and have a clear coordinated capacity building program with annual rolling programs for the decentralization action plan that is district focus towards the community levels, and to monitor and evaluate the development programs.

4.2 Donors and Development Partners
The decentralization agenda is closely related to the concern of the international development agencies/donors that are interested in promoting good governance. Good governance is seen to be a key contributing factor to the achievement of the National Decentralization Action Plan in the implementation process. One of the key governance capabilities identified is the operation of all the stakeholders to serve in a collective manner to provide technical and business support of each component of the strategic action plan. The donors’ main interest will be to facilitate:

- technical and financial assistance;
- support for capacity building;
• training and policy formulation;
• monitoring and evaluation to ensure full compliance;
• coordination and the harmonization of procedures and approaches;
• close monitoring of the implementation process to provide needed advice to the various working groups at the national and local levels;
• organization of consultative forums with administrative authorities both at central and local levels, to debate on issues to facilitate local development;
• act as a catalyst of development initiatives and propose appropriate action to the government;
• consult the population in order to provide needed services to represent and protect their interest, and
• get involved in all phases of development from the conception to the evaluation phase.

4.2.1 Nation Level
The national actors which form the key institutions for the government national Decentralization Plan include the various levels of (cell) administrative bodies and its coordinating development partners, including the civic society organizations (CSO), donors and the private sector.

There is a hierarchy in the GOL institutional framework. The Cabinet Committee is the highest level of policy formulation and decision making with oversight responsibilities to:
• oversees the collection of basic data and information from the Inter—ministerial Technical Working Groups for further analysis and utilization;
• link the national government administration with that of the community development objectives;
• harmonize basic statistics from population problems, coordinate their aspirations, prioritizes them and transmit the issues which are beyond the level of that cell;
• develop policies, programs and strategies at the national level;
• mobilize required resources for the implementation of the decentralization program; and
• build the capacity of the administrative bodies charged with the implementation of the decentralization implementation plan

4.2.2 County Level
The County coordinates and promotes the national government decentralization programs and links them to other sectors to promote harmony and good social behaviour. The county also sensitizes the population to implement government programs and ensure proper management of government resources; and coordinates government programs at the county and district levels and oversees the provision of basic community services. The County also harmonizes all the data collected from the field and transmit same for policy development and coordination.

4.2.3 District Level
The District prioritizes urban, economic and development programs, and ensure that each sector in its jurisdiction has the capacity to provide better services to the population as articulated in the District Development Plans (DDP). The district also coordinates and provides analysis of vital statistics regarding the socio-economic development of the population, and promotes transparency and prudent management of all public and private
resources. In addition, the District enhances the social welfare of the population and mobilizes other resources that promote community development at all times.

4.2.4 Private Sector, Civil Society and Community-based Organizations
Directly or indirectly, the Private sector, civil society and community-based organizations are involved in community development mainly through public infrastructure programs (i.e. rural and urban roads and sewerage), whether initiated by Central government or not, and also stimulate population and community support to enhance socio-economic development. Obviously, they will:

- promote sensitivity to the importance of implementing decentralization;
- encourage and facilitate community participation in the implementation of the decentralization action plan;
- serve as a forums for awareness and needs assessment exercises;
- institutionalize development communication;
- Energize public-private partnership engagement;
- support and advise government on improving coordination including the harmonization of interventions; and
- organize and participate in consultative meetings with all stakeholders at different levels.

These sectors also provide financial support to community initiatives through the system of micro-financing and build viable microfinance organizations. They produce goods and services necessary for the implementation of programs, projects and community actions.

4.2.5 Public-Private Partnership
The Private sector is involved in community development mainly through providing public infrastructure. The collaborative approach of the public and private sectors engenders the overall development strategy of the urban and rural communities, which promotes transparency and enhances partnership in the conception, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development projects.

Public-private partnership creates local employment for the people and increases mutual accountability in the implementation of public works by instituting checks and balances. This level of partnership enables the coordinating bodies to foster community development and increase awareness at the levels of administrative structures.

Consultative Process and Framework, Monitoring and Harmonization of Interventions.
The ultimate objective of decentralization is to entrench good governance through empowering the local communities to participate in a comprehensive and coordinated leadership for institutional policy management. This is embedded in a structural framework of the GOL to include:

- The role of the Legislature in the passage of appropriate laws to strengthen the decentralization action plan;
- The approval by the Executive and pronouncements to harmonized the work of the various sectors;
- The Supreme Court review and concurrence on resolutions of conflict due to the promulgation of legal disharmony; and
- The interrelationship of the various sectors in monitoring and evaluating interventions in support of the national plan on decentralization.
From the point of view of local government autonomy, it is important to assess *the degree* to which other spheres of government can interfere in local government’s legislative powers for monitoring, intervention and evaluation. The system of legislative powers and the principles that determine which law prevails in the event of inconsistency is a key indicator of local government autonomy.

5. Sustainability Factors

5.1 General Assumptions and Risk Factors

5.1.1 Assumptions

The growing optimism that this NDIP will be successful is based upon the following general underlying assumptions:

1. That government has the political will to maintain its commitment to the decentralization process and continue to regard it as a key poverty reduction strategy.
2. That the civic and political situation of the country will remain stable to allow a decentralized governance system to be entrenched.
3. That government will continue to be successful in using dialogue with donors as a strategy for obtaining high donors cooperation for resource mobilization for the decentralization process.
4. That capacity of the central and local government will be adequately built and sustained during and after the decentralization program.
5. That the local governments and the people will embrace the concept of decentralization and not find it contrary to their traditional and cultural norms of governance.

5.1.2 Risk Factors

5.1.2.1 Political Will and Commitment

Although risks exist at the moment, there is a high degree of political will and commitment from all levels of government. As the decentralization process progresses, there may develop misgivings and reductions in commitment due to conflicts in the acceptance of the methodology and reluctance from some levels of government to accept the realities of decentralization. On the other hand, if there were a change of government, the succeeding administration must be committed to this process.

5.1.2.2 Staff Dedication to the Decentralization Process

The risks also exists that if members of the cadre of dedicated staff running the process should leave from any of the actor institutions, continuity would be disrupted resulting to the disappearance of institutional memory and history. Capacity of individuals at critical institutions should be so built that staff are readily available from within to replace those that may leave.

5.1.2.3 Government Dependency on External Funding

GOL realizes that its present dependency for funding the decentralization program through donor support poses a major risk. Local governments must be empowered through direct transfers of funds by the central government and strategies for mobilizing local revenue. If local governments become dependent upon donor funds, their autonomy will be undermined.
It will also undermine central government policies and strategies whenever there are unpleasant international relations issues with donors.

5.1.2.4 Lack of Commitment to Sector Devolution and Deconcentration

Some line ministries and agencies may not be fully committed to administrative decentralization and sector devolution. This will constitute serious management issues that do not support community priorities. Likewise, sector ministries with egocentric and/or corrupt staff may be reluctant to relinquish their power and/or economic bases to deconcentration or sector devolution. The way forward will be to empower the DSUs within sector ministries and at the county and district levels. MIA must be vigorous in guiding the devolution process and taking advantage of efforts to support the decentralization initiatives of successful line ministries and agencies.

5.1.2.5 Drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is gradually phasing out of Liberia. This places a serious burden on the institutional and human capacities of both central and local governments of the country. A comprehensive exit strategy is needed to address the crucial gaps in peace & security, service delivery, quick impact projects, etc. to be created upon the exit of UNMIL.

5.2 Capacity Building and Policy Issues

In order to successfully implement decentralization, capacity building must be approached as an integrated whole whose components are so inter-related that they cannot exist as individual units. All actors of the capacity building process –individual, institutions, and the environment – should be considered as inseparable and intertwined into one system with one mission, goal and objective. With this vision of capacity building, efficient and effective linkages can be made among the individual and team needs, the institutional needs and the environmental needs. It is this holistic approach to capacity building that should be utilized in decentralization implementation.

The diagram below depicts the holistic approach to capacity building necessary for decentralization implementation.

**Figure 4. Capacity Building Framework**

A key aspect of the Liberia’s decentralization program is the framework that will be put in place to provide financial support for the implementation of the policy. The fiscal decentralization component of the implementation plan, which is discussed in a separate section of this document, describes the institutional reforms that the government must implement for sustainable local government financing. This section of the plan largely focuses on the cost for program activities during the first phase of the policy implementation and the funding modalities that will exist prior to a fully functional fiscal decentralization program.

6.1 Funding Arrangements

For Liberia’s decentralization program, two broad funding arrangements are worth distinguishing from the onset. The first funding arrangement relates to the modalities that will be put in place to fund the operational and development activities of local government units. Projecting the cost of this aspect requires a clearer understanding of the roles of local government units, which the LGA and the deconcentration plan will seek to do. With limited knowledge of these roles, it is not possible at this stage of the process to estimate the cost. Therefore, we can only discuss the modalities in broad terms, deferring the actual cost and revenue sources for the near future. Key components of these funding sources will be inter-governmental fiscal transfers, local revenues, donor/NGO support, local borrowing, and public private partnership arrangements.

The second aspect deals with funding for the establishment and consolidation of a decentralized governance system in Liberia. This aspect covers the activities that will be undertaken by the government and its partners in establishing institutions and systems, building the capacities of these institutions, and communicating the ideals of decentralized governance. The NDIP program cost and financing framework will focus largely on this aspect.

6.2 NDIP Priority Activities Funding

It is estimated that the NDIP: 2013-2017 will cost US$ 50 million, as detailed in Annex XX. Various arrangements will be put in place to mobilize and manage the funds for this phase.

6.2.1 District Government Funding

GOL will clearly express its commitment to the NDIP budget under the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) process, which is a three year budgeting regime. The management of funds under this arrangement will follow the government’s revenue laws.
Annex 1. NDIP Budget
Annex 2. NDIP Priority Activities and Action Matrices
Annex 3.