DIAGNOSIS NOTE FOR LIBERIA

IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA THROUGH NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

UN-HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums
DIAGNOSIS NOTE FOR LIBERIA | IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA THROUGH NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AMLOGAL</td>
<td>Association of Mayors and Local Government Authorities of Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA/LCP</td>
<td>Cities Alliance / Liberia Country Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>Community Based Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEPA DUA</td>
<td>United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration Department of Urban Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Community Rights Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVD</td>
<td>Ebola virus disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDA</td>
<td>Forestry Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEPTIWUL</td>
<td>Federation of Petty Traders and Informal Workers Union of Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLUPS</td>
<td>Federation of Liberian Urban Poor Savers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2B-ESP</td>
<td>Getting to Brest Education Sector Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoL</td>
<td>Government of Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPAC</td>
<td>Improved Primary Waste Collection in Poor Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRISE</td>
<td>Improving Results in Secondary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KYC</td>
<td>Know Your City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGAs</td>
<td>Local Government Authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGL</td>
<td>Local Government Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISGIS</td>
<td>Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLA</td>
<td>Liberia Land Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWSC</td>
<td>Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Ministry of Internal Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MME</td>
<td>Ministry of Mines and Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPW</td>
<td>Ministry of Public Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>National Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDMA</td>
<td>National Disaster Management Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFRL</td>
<td>National Forestry Reform Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHA</td>
<td>National Housing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHC</td>
<td>National Habitat Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUA</td>
<td>New Urban Agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUP</td>
<td>National Urban Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPD</td>
<td>Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET</td>
<td>Stop Ebola Transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDI</td>
<td>Slum Dwellers International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOT</td>
<td>Strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TST | Technical support team
---|---
UCLG-A | United Cities and Local Government Africa
UN-Habitat | United Nations Human Settlements Programme
WASH | Water, sanitation and hygiene
YMCA | Young Men’s Christian Association – Liberia
I am delighted to present to you the Diagnosis Note for Liberia, a key document to advance Liberia’s National Urban Policy (NUP). This Diagnosis Note analyses issues identified at the feasibility phase and aims to better inform the subsequent formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases of the policy. Prepared by a team of national and international experts, it has analysed urban trends in Liberia, identified priority opportunities and challenges and proposed key areas for consideration for national urban policy formulation.

Responding to SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat has supported National/Sub-national Urban Policy development in over 55 countries worldwide, all aimed at supporting sustainable urbanization through the integrated and holistic development of urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.

Since 2015, with the financial support of Cities Alliance, UN-Habitat has supported Liberia’s Government to develop its National Urban Policy through a participatory process. The overall goal of the policy is to accelerate Liberia’s national development agenda and reduce poverty. The policy will also be an additional tool for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 11, in Liberia.

Developing the NUP for Liberia is helping the coordination of different sectors, establishing incentives for more sustainable practices, and spurring an integrated system of cities and towns. The policy process emphasises strengthening urban-rural linkages and equitable resource allocation, reducing urban and territorial disparities within and among regions, and promoting institutional collaboration and policy coherence.

We look forward to supporting the national urban policy development process in Liberia until it is completed.

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif

United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN-Habitat
The urban population in Liberia was reported at 51.62% in 2019, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources. Liberian cities are urbanizing at a fast rate through population growth. United Nations’ projections show that by 2050, Liberia’s urban population will have almost tripled to 6,689,000. With this current trend, the need for infrastructure, housing, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources, among others will be increasingly concentrated in urban areas. Currently, more than 40% of Liberia’s urban population lives in the Greater Monrovia area, with an estimated 70% of Greater Monrovia’s population currently living in slum conditions.

Liberians are getting more and more attracted to urban settlements because of the many opportunities that it provides. 30 years ago, we had more people living in rural settlements than urban areas, today many wetlands in Monrovia and its suburbs are getting occupied by people who have migrated from rural settlements around the country to the capital city (Monrovia) seeking land to build. Apart from Monrovia, other primary and secondary cities across Liberia are also experiencing rising urbanization.

During the past few years, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Urban Department) the National Habitat Committee (NHC), and the Technical Support Team (TST) for NUP has been working closely with UN-Habitat, under the umbrella Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme (CA-LCP) to develop a National Urban Policy for Liberia. The importance of developing a National Urban Policy for Liberia is to first evaluate the current urbanization opportunities and challenges, thereafter formulate long and short term solutions to leverage on opportunities and mitigate possible challenges for a better and prosperous future. NUP enables the development of an urban vision and plan for Liberia and provides the best opportunity for achieving resilient and sustainable urbanization. Internationally, the NUP has been recommended as a tool for the implementation and monitoring of global urban agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework. This development will form part of series of plans leading towards the goals of Vision 2030, and will further aligned our national plans Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity And Development (PAPD) with the African Union Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly goal 11.
As we look forward to this unique process of developing a vibrant National Urban Policy for Liberia, we anticipate the fullest support, collaboration, coordination of all stakeholders to engage relentlessly and above all take ownership of the process so as to ensure the sustainability of a promising urban development framework for mama Liberia. We are very grateful to UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance Country Programme, all Ministries and Agencies, Civil Society Organizations, Youth Groups, Women Groups, Disabled Groups and all other National and international actors that provided technical support during the Diagnosis Phase II. Specifically, we want to acknowledge the significant contributions made by UN-Habitat’s, Policy, Legislation and Governance Section and Cities Alliance for underwriting majority of the cost associated with this process. Finally, I extend gratitude to His Excellency President George Manneh Weah for his relentless commitment to a sustainable national development for a prosperous Liberia.

Hon. Paulita CC. Wie

Deputy Minister of Urban Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs
On behalf of the Cities Alliance, it gives me great pleasure to provide a short Foreword for this Diagnosis Note for Liberia.

Like so many cities, societies and countries in Africa, Liberia is changing. In addition to its recent history of civil war, the Ebola crisis and now the COVID-19 pandemic, Liberia in the process of being transformed by major demographic and structural changes. Rapid population growth, internal migration to, and between cities, are all placing new strains on the country, its resources, and its institutions. More importantly, as evidenced by outcomes in other countries, properly managed these changes can offer important new opportunities for Liberia and its residents, who continue to demonstrate extraordinary resilience and resourcefulness.

This Report offers evidence and an analysis of these changes which we hope will be useful to the citizens of Liberia, and to local and national governments alike. Undertaken by UN-Habitat as part of the Cities Alliance’s Liberia Country programme, we hope it makes a valuable contribution to Liberia Vision 2030, itself an important contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I would like to thank UN-Habitat for their hard work in preparing this Report and, in particular, to the Government of Liberia, which has been such a wonderful partner within whom to work.

William Cobbett

Director, Cities Alliance
COUNTRY PROFILE: KEY FIGURES AND FACTS

5.058 million
Total Population (2020)

US$2.1 billion
GDP (2000)

1.2 %
Annual GDP growth rate

US$440
per capita distribution

With the support of Cities Alliance and UN-Habitat, the Government of Liberia is in the process of developing its national urban policy (NUP) through a five-phase process:

Every step in the process involves research through desktop reviews and consultations on the demographic, governance, socio-economic, and environment conditions currently facing Liberia, providing preliminary policy recommendations for further analysis in subsequent phases. The Liberia NUP process was launched in 2015 at the first National Urban Forum and has already moved from the feasibility to diagnosis phase. The diagnosis includes this national diagnosis report which provides the urban, institutional and stakeholder context for the subsequent phases of the NUP. Results from the feasibility phase of the NUP direct the diagnostic phase to focus on land and housing, system of cities (governance), economy and capacity building, and infrastructure and basic services as immediate issues and challenges to be addressed.

The diagnosis phase of the NUP began in 2018 and includes the convening of one national and two regional consultative workshops with corresponding reports; the drafting of two regional diagnosis notes, the drafting of the National Diagnosis Report, the convening of a joint technical support team (TST) and National Habitat Committee (NHC) meeting to review the National Diagnosis Report, the convening of a validation workshop to finalize the diagnosis, and the convening of a capacity building workshop on policy making and corresponding report.
This diagnosis note is a summary of the National Diagnosis Report. The NUP diagnostic study undertook an analysis of urbanization trends to assist in the identification and prioritization of issues and challenges to be addressed in the Liberia NUP and is captured below.

Liberian settlements are urbanizing rapidly. United Nations projections show that by 2050, Liberia’s urban population will have almost tripled to 6.7 million, with 68.2 per cent of people living in urban areas\(^1\). Between 2010 and 2020, urban populations grew from 1.9 million to 2.6 million and basic services in cities are substandard and rarely available; opportunities lie in understanding the resulting issues and the increase in service demands. From the SWOT analysis in section 1.2, weaknesses and threats lie in the inability of municipalities to plan and prepare for urban growth (due to revenue and other capacity issues) and similar challenges faced by the government slowing the implementation of the Local Government Act of 2018. Strengths and opportunities lie in advances like the Pro-poor Agenda for Transformation, Liberia Vision 2030, and decentralization possibilities in the Local Government Act of 2018.

Principles of the NUP provide the basis for future urban documents, plans and actions. The Liberia NUP principles are equity, environmental sustainability, poverty reduction, subsidiarity, and participation. The overall policy goal of the NUP, in line with Liberia Vision 2030, is to bring an end to poverty in all its forms and dimensions, by ensuring equal rights and opportunities across socioeconomic lines, cultural diversity and urban spaces.

The Liberia NUP process has been developed as a tool for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 11. Policy themes of the Liberia NUP are urban legislation including land governance, socio-economic development, municipal finance, decentralization, environment, resilience, and climate change.

Projections indicate the need for the Liberian Government to facilitate and manage urbanization through the provision of support for local government and investments for socio-economic development. Further, support for spatial planning activities, inclusive governance practices, an increase in the enforcement capacity of city and national police and the encouragement of the development of local economies should be prioritized.

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Among policy elements, this diagnosis prioritizes capacity building to support the formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation phases of the NUP. Local governments have inadequate human and financial capacity to successfully implement the NUP and will require continued cooperation, collaboration, capacity building and support to achieve this objective, as has been provided during the NUP development process.

Proposed financing and planning tools for implementing the NUP, once formulized, have been listed in the Local Government Act of 2018 and additional tools may be adopted when needed. The formulation of the Liberia NUP is expected to take place in 2021, followed by implementation and monitoring and evaluating over the remainder of the decade.
OVERVIEW OF URBANIZATION
1. OVERVIEW OF URBANIZATION

The United Nations defines urbanization as the increase in the proportion of a population living in urban areas; and the process by which a large number of people become permanently concentrated in relatively small areas, forming cities. Using this definition, Liberia is urbanizing rapidly due to immigration and high fertility rates, posing a range of challenges and opportunities.

1.1 URBANIZATION, ADMINISTRATIVE URBAN HIERARCHIES, AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN LIBERIA

Liberia is in Western Africa and has a land area of 42,999 m² (111,369 km²) including 43.3 per cent in forest. The population of Liberia in 2020 was estimated at 5.058 million, of which 51.6 per cent are urbanized. Liberia’s GDP in 202 was US$2.1 billion with a growth rate of 1.2 per cent and per capita distribution of US$440.3. Agriculture is the main economic activity in Liberia, comprising 72.5 per cent of gross value added and employing 43 per cent of the population. In contrast services made up 46.9 per cent of employment but only 15.6 per cent of gross value added. The urbanization rate in Liberia was 3.4 per cent in 2015.

Liberia is organized into a hierarchy of cites and 5 regions, each with 3 counties with a capital city. The settlement hierarchy levels are primate, primary, secondary, tertiary, rural towns, and villages, based on population thresholds.

Many Liberian cities are designated county capital cities, serving as local government headquarters and commercial centers in each of the country’s 15 counties. Other cities were established by acts of legislature with specified requirements, such as a minimum population of 2000 people.

County governments are headed by Superintendents and city government by Mayors. These LGAs operate independently and, besides Monrovia which falls under the supervision of the President, are all answerable to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In previous legislature, the provision of basic services was not specified as a basic requirement and the need for infrastructure and basic services such as electricity, water, healthcare, education, communication, commerce and industrial activities continues to grow with the population of urban centers. LGAs function as extensions of the national government.

Greater Monrovia is considered a primate city although it is more accurately a census district comprising of the city of Monrovia, the city of Paynesville, eight townships and one borough. With a population exceeding 1.3 million people, representing nearly 29 per cent of the national population, Greater Monrovia is the hub of the administrative, economic and transport activities in the country. These activities are fueled by the country’s busiest port, Monrovia Freeport, and the two neighboring airports: Spriggs Payne in Monrovia and Roberts International Airport in Margibi County.


There is no legal status for the Greater Monrovia area and therefore no administrative structure. As one of the two chartered cities within the district, the city of Paynesville has noted the disparity in support and recognition from the national government and international partners compared to the city of Monrovia. Specific complaints include the inaccessibility of independent city data for planning purposes and the disproportionate distribution of resources.

Next in the ranking are the primary cities Buchanan, Gbarnga and Ganta with populations between 40,000 and 100,000. There are seven secondary cities with population between 15,000 and 40,000: Voinjama, Foya Kamara, Kakata, Harbel, Zwedru, Pleebo and Harper. All other settlements are tertiary rural towns, or villages with populations below 15,000.

MAP 1. Hierarchy of cities in Liberia

![Hierarchy of cities in Liberia](image)
While it is possible to categorize the cities into a hierarchy based on estimated size, detailed city-specific disaggregated population data is not readily available. However, the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services (LISGIS) collects data for political districts, which often have conflicting borders with municipalities, and provided the following population projections for capital cities of counties. While some of these cities, such as Bensonville and Bopolu, do not meet the 2018 minimum criteria for a city charter due to populations below 10,000, they are automatically cities by virtue of being capitals of counties, as discussed further in Section 1.1.2.

**TABLE 1. Projected 2020 county capital cities populations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CAPITAL CITY</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>Grand Bassa</td>
<td>Buchanan</td>
<td>24,685</td>
<td>25,560</td>
<td>50,245</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Montserrado</td>
<td>Bensonville</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>465</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margibi</td>
<td>Kakata</td>
<td>16,780</td>
<td>17,828</td>
<td>34,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>Bong</td>
<td>Gbarnga</td>
<td>20,879</td>
<td>22,834</td>
<td>43,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lofa</td>
<td>Voinjama</td>
<td>7,609</td>
<td>7,660</td>
<td>15,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nimba</td>
<td>Sanniquelle</td>
<td>5,613</td>
<td>6,241</td>
<td>11,854</td>
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<td>North Western</td>
<td>Grand Cape Mount</td>
<td>Robertsport</td>
<td>1,791</td>
<td>1,724</td>
<td>3,515</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bomi</td>
<td>Tubmanburg</td>
<td>7,384</td>
<td>7,192</td>
<td>14,576</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gbarpolu</td>
<td>Bopolu</td>
<td>1,549</td>
<td>1,363</td>
<td>2,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Eastern A</td>
<td>Grand Gedeh</td>
<td>Zwedru</td>
<td>12,564</td>
<td>12,785</td>
<td>25,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rivercess</td>
<td>Cestos</td>
<td>1,262</td>
<td>1,127</td>
<td>2,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sinoe</td>
<td>Greenville</td>
<td>6,420</td>
<td>6,348</td>
<td>12,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Eastern B</td>
<td>Grand Kru</td>
<td>Barclayville</td>
<td>1,583</td>
<td>1,525</td>
<td>3,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>River Gee</td>
<td>Fishtown</td>
<td>1,801</td>
<td>1,765</td>
<td>3,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Harper</td>
<td>12,056</td>
<td>11,962</td>
<td>24,018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Liberian cities and their surrounding regions have varying attributes that drive their economy and contribute to population growth. All five regions rely heavily on agriculture and trade, while the counties of Sinoe, Maryland and Sanniquellie have additional support from the mining sector. In addition to general agriculture and trade, Margibi has additional economic support from the Firestone Rubber Plantation. In Grand Gedeh, the economy is supported by trade and mining activities.

The cities of Fishtown, Barclayville, Ganta rely only on trade. Gbarnga city is a central transit location in Liberia. It creates a vibrant local economy which serves the whole country and is a viable transit location for agriculture goods from Lofa and Nimba counties. This economy is also fueled by Cuttington University and Phebe Hospital located in nearby Suakoko. Foya's economy is growing due to agricultural production and trade links with neighboring Sierra Leone and Guinea. Voinjama's main economic activity is agriculture and it is the largest and most populated city in Lofa County.

1.1.1 The regions of Liberia

The five Liberian regions are South Central, North Central, North Western, South Eastern A and South Eastern B. Each region is further divided into three counties (states) creating a total of 15 counties. Each county has a capital city, secondary cities, townships (towns) and other settlement types.

The South-Central Region is composed of Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Margibi counties and is home to the national capital city Monrovia. The South-Central Region is the most densely populated as 44 per cent of the population lives on 12.6 per cent of the country’s land mass. Montserrado County is the beneficiary of most of the country’s resources because it is the location of Liberia’s central government and home to almost half of the nation’s population.

The North Central Region is the only land-locked region and is historically referred to as the “Breadbasket of Liberia”. It contains Lofa, Bong and Nimba counties and shares borders with Sierra Leone, Guinea, and the Cote d’Ivoire.

The North Western Region is comprised of Grand Cape Mount, Bomi and Gbarpolu and is being considered as a focus for tourism development due to its natural beauty.

The South East Region A is composed of River Cess, Sinoe and Grand Gedeh counties, while South East Region B is composed of River Gee, Grand Kru and Maryland counties. Together, these regions contain 52.4 per cent of Liberia’s forest cover4.

4 Protected Area Network http://www.liberianfaunaflora.org/where-we-work
MAP 2.  County capital city map

MAP 3.  Map of Liberia divisions and counties
1.1.2 Liberian System of Government

Liberia has a unitarian government system in which the central government plans and implements all activities, controls all government financial systems and is the sole decision maker. Over the years, the government has unsuccessfully attempted to develop the entire country from the central government in Monrovia; local government authorities are answerable to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and local government leaders are appointed by the president.

The Local Government Act of 2018 addresses the concentration of powers in the national government, including the establishment of democratic processes, greater fiscal autonomy, and decision-making subsidiarity, as detailed below in Box 1. However, many of the changes included in the Local Government Act have not been implemented and the powers to be devolved not yet determined.

**Background:**

In November 2018, an act was passed to repeal the previous Local Government Law and replace it with the Local Government Act of 2018.

The Liberian Government’s primary goal is to institute participatory governance and to devolve certain administrative, fiscal and political powers and functions from the central government to local governments in line with the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance.

The law recognizes the centralized system of governance which has inhibited full citizen participation and hindered Liberia's democratization, slowed socio-economic development, and led to a lack of meaningful participation and ownership of development activities.

**Objectives of the Act**

- To give effect to the country’s National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance
- To ensure democratic participation in, and control of, decision-making by citizens
- To create and establish democratic, political, administrative and fiscal structures in local governance
- To ensure sources of revenue in support of local government administrations and operations.

Challenges of implementing the Act: It has been two years since the passing of this law and it has not been implemented nor is there awareness of the contents. Examples of capacity challenges have been expressed with respect to the following aspects of the Act:
Chapter 1.4: Application of the Act:

The Local Government Act of 2018 shall apply to all local government structures and functions herein devolved from central government to local government as contained in the Administrative Procedure Manual published by the minister responsible for local government, except that said manual shall conform to this Act and those functions that are exclusively reserved for the national government.

An Administrative Procedure Manual has not been published and functions to be devolved to local governments are yet to be determined. The opportunity exists to strengthen local governments through the development of an effective and realistic Administrative Procedure Manual. However, the delay in publishing this is due to the lack of capacity in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Chapter 4: Financing Local Governments:

Revenues of counties, cities, townships and boroughs shall be comprised of revenues collected from their own sources, transfers from the central government, Social Development Funds and grants from external sources such as multilateral and bilateral development partners. Own-source revenues have been expanded to include real property tax and property income tax, which may provide financial resources needed to fund city activities. However for the first 10 years, 2019-2029, revenues from real property taxes shall accrue to the county to be distributed among the component local governments according to a formula to be established by the Local Government Fiscal Board.

The central government through the Liberia Revenue Authority will continue to collect these taxes on behalf of local government and are to prepare a financial report for the Ministry of Finance before funds are transferred to their respective county governments, to be then transferred to sub-county local governments in accordance with the formula established by the Local Government Fiscal Board.

This is a top-heavy process which has not yet been initiated. For the financial system to be effective, there must first be established a Local Government Fiscal Board. This is an opportunity to ensure local governments are properly funded.

The Local Government Act also sets out new minimum criteria to obtain a city charter, including the increase of population requirement to 10,000 inhabitants and minimal provision of basic services such as water and electricity. Existing cities that do not meet these criteria by 2025 will be relegated to town status, which requires a minimum population of 5,000. Another issue addressed in the Act is that other than fees collected for services provided, local government has limited powers to collect revenues limited their capacity to implement urban policies.

Land tenure systems, governance and administration have been restructured in the Liberia Land Rights Act of 2018, of which many are unaware. The law, if implemented, is meant to provide land security through tenure to many who now feel threatened by the likelihood that they will be removed from the land they occupy.

This law is to be administered by the Liberia Land Authority (LLA), a new and underfunded national institution mandated to regulate all land in Liberia. Local governments have no jurisdiction over land matters.

City-specific disaggregated population data is not readily available. However, the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services (LISGIS) collects data for political districts, which often have conflicting borders with municipalities. Upon request, LISGIS provided the following population projections for capital cities of counties. While some of these cities, such as Bensonville and Bopolu, do not meet the 2018 minimum criteria for a city charter due to populations below 10,000, they are automatically cities by virtue of being capitals of counties.

1.2 SYNTHESIS OF THE SWOT ANALYSIS OF URBANIZATION OF LIBERIAN CITIES

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of urbanization of Liberian cities is populated from data obtained from stakeholder consultations which took place at both the national and regional levels.

The analysis assists in prioritizing NUP principles developed in line with the NUA, the SDGs, the Government of Liberia's Vision 2030 and the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

Listing and linking strengths, weaknesses and threats reveals immediate opportunities to be gained by building upon and using strengths to turn weaknesses and threats into opportunities. For example, decentralization through the devolution of powers and financial support (opportunity) can be achieved through the implementation and expansion of the Local Government Act of 2018 (strength).

5 The requirements in the Act are: A population of 10,000 people; Basic essential utilities for proper human settlement – electricity, pipe-borne water system, sewage service; Waste collection and disposal Educational services, particularly primary to secondary schools; Health services, including clinics, and/or health centres; Sports and recreational facilities; Zoning into demarcated wards; Cemetery; Streets and transportation infrastructure; Transportation services and communication infrastructure; and Business services including financial services and shops; and hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality facilities.
This would lead to strengthening weaknesses and reducing threats through actions that result in the increased capacity of municipalities to prepare for urban growth, awareness of the Local Government Act of 2018, and capacity of local governments to generate revenue. Thus, paving the way for:

- affordable decent housing reducing the proliferation of slums and disorder
- the provision of infrastructure and basic services
- law enforcement reducing urban disorder
- sufficiently staffed local governments
- increased access to educational and economic resources and sufficient resources to implement the NUA, SDG 11, Vision 2030 and the PAPD.

**TABLE 2. SWOT analysis of urbanization of Liberian cities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Existence of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)</td>
<td>• Limited to absence of urban planning knowledge, documents, activities reducing the ability of municipalities to prepare for urban growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Existence of Liberia Vision 2030 calling for Liberia to reach middle-income status</td>
<td>• No information on or implementation of the new Local Government Act among local government authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development</td>
<td>• Limited ability of LGAs to generate revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decentralization aspects of the Local Government Act of 2018.</td>
<td>• Limited knowledge of environmental issues and climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Existing citizen participation with city government</td>
<td>• No provision of affordable decent housing causing a proliferation of slums and disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Willingness to learn about environment and climate change</td>
<td>• Insufficient infrastructure and basic services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability of LGAs to pass city ordinances to govern their municipalities</td>
<td>• Inadequate of law enforcement capacity contributing to urban disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agriculture and Sales &amp; Services as employment sectors</td>
<td>• LGAs insufficiently staffed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Young population and population growth</td>
<td>• Limited educational and economic resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rich cultural heritage</td>
<td>• Insufficient resources to implement the NUA, SDG 11, PAPD or Vision 2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Natural resources – forests, minerals, water</td>
<td>• Limited coordination between urban-related agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regional borders</td>
<td>• Limited availability of land in urban areas for the provision of open green spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partnerships with international organizations such as Slum Dwellers International, YMCA, ULCG_A, UN-Habitat, Habitat for Humanity, Cities Alliance, European Union, and the World Bank</td>
<td>• Poor transport connectivity of municipalities and poor communication between local governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• City Development Strategy for Greater Monrovia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Opportunities

- Devolution of powers and financial support through the implementation and expansion of the Local Government Act
- Existence of higher education institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organization.
- Cities Alliance Country Programme to support local authorities in Greater Monrovia.
- Formalizing informal employment to improve work environment and contribute to local government revenue.
- Work with LLA and MPW to begin data collection and planning activities.
- Develop long-term spatial plans for regions and urban centers.
- Diaspora Liberian community.
- Young, growing population.
- Rich cultural heritage.
- The development of the NUP.

### Threats

- Haphazard development and sprawl of slum settlements.
- Spread of health issues due to poor sanitation and waste management.
- Limited emergency response systems in place.
- Worsening state of poverty.
- Growth in unemployment.
- Increase in crime, with emphasis on gender-based violence.
- Reduced human rights, regarding safety.
- Ethnic conflicts, tribalism.
- Reduction of provision of infrastructure and basic services.
- Land insecurity.
- Food insecurity.
- Increasing divide in urban-rural linkages.
- Poor transport linkages.

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1.3 The Urbanization Opportunities

No country has reached middle-income status without urbanization. Urban population growth accompanies growth in economic activity, social and cultural interactions and environmental and humanitarian impacts, and the increase in these contributes to the national economy.

Liberia has been urbanizing since the middle of the last century, a process that is expected to accelerate through to the middle of this century.

According to the United Nations, in 2018 Liberia’s urban population was 2.5 million or 51.2 per cent of the total population. Projections show that by 2050, Liberia’s total urban population will have almost tripled to 6.7 million and represent 68 per cent of the projected national population.6

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The sharp increase in urban migration between 1981 and 1990 coincides with the leadership term of Samuel K. Doe, the first head of state and first president with no American-Liberian heritage. Prior to his administration, urban areas were populated mostly by the descendants of American slaves, while tribal groups populated villages and other rural areas. The transfer of leadership from American-Liberians coincides with massive migration to the Greater Monrovia area.

High fertility rates are one of the major drivers of population growth in Liberia, increasing the demand for employment, housing, and social services. Although high, fertility rates have decreased over the years, from a peak of 6.9 children per woman over her lifetime in 1981 to its lowest in 2018 at 4.3. The downward trend indicates a continued reduction in fertility rates resulting from social interventions, such as the introduction of a planned parenthood program. In addition to high fertility rates, immigration and in-migration also contributes to population trends.

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Experiences from other countries show that continued population concentration and growth can bring collective knowledge, capital, and multidimensional resources together to endow cities with the capacity to mitigate and be resilient to emerging challenges, such as future outbreaks of diseases. If well managed, urbanization can enable a nation’s development potential.

1.4 THE URBANIZATION CHALLENGES

Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 83.8 per cent living below the poverty line (USD 1.25 per day) and 94 per cent of the employed making less than USD 2.00 per day. Low incomes coupled with low agricultural yields leaves Liberia vulnerable to food insecurity. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were fears of limited food supplies due to the closure of all ports of entry. Liberia imports more than 50 per cent of its staple food (rice and other cereals) requirements.

Managing urbanization trends in Liberia requires an inclusive process that reviews and revises how cities and human settlements are planned, implemented, and governed. The opportunities or urban dividends arising from these activities include the improvement of the quality of life in urban areas through the adoption of the interlinked principles outlined in the SDGs and the NUA.

With support from Cities Alliance, Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and United Cities and Local Governments-Africa (UCLG-A), the Federation of Liberian Urban Poor Savers (FOLUPS) and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), Liberia (Liberian SDI Affiliate) embarked upon a Know Your City (KYC) campaign to profile and map informal settlements in the Greater Monrovia area. The aims were to generate valuable data for city planning and community upgrading, and to ensure the urban poor are part of urban policy making and implementation process. Priorities identified by community members (Box 2) include sanitation & sewerage, water & drainage, housing & tenure, electricity, community halls and health facilities.
Given Monrovia is the most developed city in Liberia, these issues are likely to be priorities for all Liberian cities.

**TABLE 3.** Know Your City reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MUNICIPALITY</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>LEADER</th>
<th>SLUM COMMUNITIES’ PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barnesville</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Water &amp; drainage, sanitation &amp; sewerage, electricity &amp; healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Sanitation &amp; sewerage, water &amp; drainage, health clinic, community hall, road network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo Town</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Sanitation &amp; sewerage, water &amp; drainage, housing &amp; tenure, electricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dixville</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Water &amp; drainage, sanitation &amp; sewerage, electricity, health clinic, community hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garnersville</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Water &amp; drainage, sanitation &amp; sewerage, housing &amp; tenure, electricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garwolohn Town</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Water &amp; drainage, sanitation &amp; sewerage, electricity, education, housing &amp; tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnsonville</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Water &amp; drainage, sanitation &amp; sewerage, electricity, community hall, health clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monrovia</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Water &amp; drainage, sanitation &amp; sewerage, hosing &amp; tenure, education, electricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Georgia</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Water &amp; drainage, electricity, sanitation &amp; sewerage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Kru Town</td>
<td>Borough</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Water &amp; drainage, sanitation &amp; sewerage, waste disposal &amp; management, housing &amp; tenure, health clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paynesville</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Sanitation &amp; sewerage, water &amp; drainage, electricity, community hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Point</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Health clinic, water &amp; drainage, sanitation &amp; sewerage, safety infrastructure (street lights, etc.), education, sea erosion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valuable data have been provided as a result of the KYC project, allowing for informed and inclusive planning to upgrade these communities. Due to funding limitations, this exercise does not include all informal communities in Greater Monrovia, however, a trend can be found in identified priorities. Better water drainage and access to sanitation and sewerage infrastructure are the overall priorities of these communities.

Unfortunately, there is no community or municipal-level data for those outside Greater Monrovia, therefore, expanding this exercise to communities in the five regions will allow other local governments to plan and prioritize activities in an informed manner.
Liberia has had two major viral outbreaks in a five-year period; the Ebola virus outbreak of 2014 was followed by the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. Meanwhile, the country continues to fight persistent diseases such as Lassa Fever, malaria, and tuberculosis. Diseases that are transmitted through human contact are especially threatening in densely populated urban areas. As of August 2020, 70.6 per cent of COVID-19 cases were in Montserrado County, where Monrovia is located and the most densely populated county in Liberia. As a result of the Ebola virus experience, the public health system was strengthened with contact tracing and hand washing protocols, which enabled Liberia to react quickly to the first known Covid-19 (Corona virus) in March 2020.

The Ebola virus outbreak in 2014 exposed the vulnerability of Liberia’s healthcare system regarding urban resilience and disaster response. The virus spread rapidly throughout Liberia and into densely populated urban centers because of continued cross-border mobilization, cultural burial practices, and the poor state of public health systems. Political instability and civil unrest disrupted rural communities which relocated to urban areas for their perceived access to protection and emergency services. Between 1989 and 1997, Liberia experienced severe civil war violence; population patterns of both urban and rural areas fluctuated, and many rural dwellers migrated to urban areas for presumed safety and the provision of services. The pre-war population density of Montserrado County, where Monrovia is, grew from 676 per mile2 (to a post-war density of 1,540 people per mile2 between 1984 and 2008). The population trend reversed during the most violent years of the civil war – 1990-1997 – when urban areas experienced the most violence and many infrastructures were destroyed (Figure 1). After the 1994 Akosombo Peace Conference, which resulted in ceasefire and a shared interim government, there was renewed population growth.

The capacity to provide infrastructure and basic services for the densely populated urban centers is inadequate and services such as security, healthcare, education, sanitation, electricity, and transportation are limited due to a lack of availability and unaffordable costs.

11 National Public Health Institute of Liberia. Available at: https://www.nphil.gov.lr/liberia-statistic-on-covid-19/
IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA THROUGH NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

LIBERIA’S NUP FORMATION
2. LIBERIA’S NUP FORMATION

2.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE LIBERIA NUP

The purpose of the Liberia NUP is to provide national-level guidelines to direct planning and/or development activities in the urban environment. The audience of the NUP is Liberia’s policy makers, national and local governments, development partners, professionals and practitioners, academia, civil society, and community leaders.

**BOX 2. NUP definition**

A NUP is a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate, government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development in the long term.

*Evolution of National Urban Policies: A global Overview (UN-Habitat & Cities Alliance, 2014)*

The approach to develop the Liberia NUP has involved the review of documentation and stakeholder consultations, National Urban Fora, National Habitat Committee, Cities Alliance Country Programme, and the most recent available national statistics.

2.2 THE LIBERIA NUP OBJECTIVES

The Liberia NUP objectives stem from various contributions:

- National Urban Fora
- Review of national strategic documents such as Liberia Vision 2030 and Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)
- Global policies committed to by the Liberian Government such as:
  - New Urban Agenda (NUA) of the 2016 United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III),
  - 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 11: to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable),
  - Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) and
  - Istanbul Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries (2011-2020).
The NUP objectives were identified through the ongoing NUP development process and are aimed at resolving challenges in the urban environment. These objectives, are:

1. The SWOT analysis revealed the strength of the existing Local Government Act of 2018 and the opportunity to devolve powers and provide local government with additional financial sources through the implementation of the law.

Objective 1 of the NUP, therefore, is to support government to strengthen the role of cities in the local, regional and national economy, support an enabling environment for cities to better manage urban growth, reduce poverty and reap urban dividends, thus increasing the contribution to the national economy in accordance with Liberia’s decentralization policy.

2. Each weakness and threat listed in the SWOT can be reduced by following the principles, goals and ideals of the New Urban Agenda, the SDGs, Vision 2030 and the PAPD. However, the local government agencies do not have the capacity to develop and implement plans embodying these principles, goals, and ideals.

Objective 2 is to build local government capacity to ensure that the NUP is used as a tool for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and SDG 11, and to compliment and operationalize Liberia’s Vision 2030 and the PAPD.

3. Limited coordination and collaboration between urban related agencies were noted as a weakness to urbanization in the SWOT, while the development and implementation of the NUP offers an opportunity to coordinate all urban actors and activities.

Objective 3 is to coordinate the work of different sectors, establish incentives for more sustainable practices, and spur a balanced system of cities and towns through strengthening urban-rural linkages and equitable resource allocation, in compliance with the Liberia Vision 2030 and the PAPD.

4. The absence of urban and regional planning and the poor coordination and collaboration between local governments are weaknesses has led to territorial disparities. Urban centers are growing and developing, while smaller neighboring settlements are not. Planning on a regional level would be beneficial to ensure equitable growth in regions.

Objective 4 is to reduce urban and territorial disparities within and among regions through institutional collaboration.

5. Each of the weaknesses in the SWOT contributes to the threat of worsening poverty in urban areas. The main goal of Liberian national strategies is the eradication of poverty.

Objective 5 is to reduce poverty through the integration of urban considerations into national development policies and the development of sustainable and resilient Liberian cities, as established during the 2019 National Urban Forum.
2.3 THE LIBERIA NUP PROCESS

Liberia is developing its national urban policy through a five-phase process: 1) feasibility, 2) diagnosis, 3) formulation, 4) implementation, 5) monitoring and evaluation. Each step in the process involves research through a desk review and consultations on the demographic, governance, socio-economic and environment conditions of Liberia, providing preliminary policy recommendations for further analysis in subsequent phases. Once validated, this report is the final output of the diagnosis phase.

FIGURE 3. The NUP process in Liberia

2.3.1 The feasibility phase

The feasibility phase of the Liberia NUP (see Box 3) concluded in 2018 after the completion of consultative meetings with stakeholders and the convening of Liberia’s first National Urban Forum. These activities, in addition to a desktop review, resulted in the drafting of the following policy documents.

1. Policy Note for Liberia, Implementing the New Urban Agenda through National Urban Policy (2018)\textsuperscript{14}.


\textsuperscript{14} Available online on: http://urbanpolicyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Policy-Note_20180514_3.pdf

\textsuperscript{15} Available online on: https://unhabitat.org/books/a-national-urban-policy-for-liberia-discussion-paper/
**BOX 3. Liberia NUP Feasibility Phase Activities**

**KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE FEASIBILITY PHASE**

**June 2016:** The National Habitat Committee (NHC) is re-established to serve as the supervision and decision-making body for the NUP process.

**June 2016:** Awareness campaign and stakeholder consultation are conducted on key policy issues to be considered as priority policy areas in the NUP.

**August 2016:** Establishment of the technical support team (TST), which is linked to the NHC, to provide expertise and technical guidance to the policy development process.

**February 2017:** Training and policy dialogues are held with urban actors to strengthen their knowledge on policy-making processes, sectorial policies and legislative frameworks.

**May 2017:** Peer learning and experience sharing for Liberian delegates in attendance at the OECD’s Second International Conference on National Urban Policies in Paris, France.

**April to July 2017:** Three workshops are convened to validate the discussion paper, with urban stakeholders, including local government authorities, community representatives of the urban poor and young urban practitioners.

**July 2017 to 2018:** The drafting of *A National Urban Policy for Liberia, Discussion Paper* and *Policy Note for Liberia, Implementing the New Urban Agenda through National Urban Policy*.

**Sources:**


Outcomes of the 2016-2018 feasibility phase include the proposal of the following focus areas for further discussion in the development of a NUP for Liberia. These areas are identified as crucial gaps in the current urban condition in Liberia:

1. Strengthening small and intermediate cities
2. Focusing on the Greater Monrovia District
3. Encouraging spatial development strategies
4. Restoring infrastructure and basic services
5. Prioritizing education and employment
6. Emphasizing land and housing
7. Recognizing the significance and relevance of environment
8. Reinforcing demographic planning, regulation, and monitoring
9. Promoting jurisdictional coordination and policy coherence
10. Institutionalizing political, financial, technical, and participatory mechanisms

Recommendations for three overarching interventions to be considered for each of the focus areas above are that they should: be forward looking, consider poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues (climate change, gender equality, human rights, inclusivity, etc.).

The 2016-2018 feasibility phase succeeded in its goal of making a case for the need of the policy, identifying relevant data, sourcing support for undertaking the policy and understanding the Liberian context. This phase also resulted in recommendations for the way forward, including proposed outlines for the Diagnosis Report and the NUP, institutional strengthening through the establishment of a National Habitat Committee and the Technical Support Committee and capacity and consensus building through the convening of various consultations and workshops.

2.3.2 The diagnosis phase

The diagnosis phase began in May 2019 with the convening of two regional consultative workshops in the South East and North Central Regions. In November 2019, two national consultative workshops and one national urban forum were held in Greater Monrovia.

The timeline for the completion of this diagnosis report was extended to October 2020 due to delays attributed to the COVID-19 which limited access to government sources and the ability to hold in-person meetings.

2.3.3 Methodology of the Diagnosis Report

This Diagnosis Report is based on information and data gathered during the feasibility and the diagnosis phases. The drafting process spanned a seven-month period from April to December of 2020. Numerous drafts were reviewed by national and local government agencies, UN-Habitat staff and affiliates, Liberia partner programme participants, National Habitat Committee members/Technical Support Team members (composed of all identified stakeholders) and RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia.
### TABLE 4. Methadology of Diagnosis Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRAFT</th>
<th>REVIEW TYPE</th>
<th>DATE COMPLETED</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reviewed by UN-Habitat</td>
<td>May-June, 2020</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Reviewed by International Expert¹⁶ began on July 17, 2020</td>
<td>August 14, 2020</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Presentation to Cities Alliance Programme Partners</td>
<td>August 27, 2020</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Presentation to NHC &amp; TST</td>
<td>September 23, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reviewed by International Expert</td>
<td>October 4, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Diagnosis Report validation workshop</td>
<td>October 22, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Edited by UN-Habitat</td>
<td>October 26, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Editorial Review by International Editor and Experts</td>
<td>November 26, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Presentation of final Note to Government of Liberia</td>
<td>December 2020</td>
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¹⁶ David Crosbie
OVERVIEW OF URBANIZATION
3. LIBERIA’S NUP VISION, GOALS AND PRINCIPLES

Liberia’s NUP goals and principles were developed in compliance with national and international policies and best practices.

3.1 LIBERIA’S NATIONAL URBAN VISION

In 2016, the Liberian Government embarked on a national visioning exercise to reach a national consensus on how Liberia should be by the year 2030. Building blocks were identified during a participatory visioning process and were used to develop the 2030 National Vision. Participants agreed to the following as desirable outcomes for Liberia:

- An economically prosperous people.
- Socially and demographically, a harmonious nation.
- Politically democratic.
- Environmentally a beautiful and flourishing country.
- Culturally vibrant; and
- Technologically innovative.

Based on the above building blocks, retrospective analysis and national consultations, the Liberia Vision 2030 outlines the following multi-dimensional Vision for the future:

- A society of gender equity, empowerment, and opportunities for all.
- A progressive nation reflective of the following elements:
  - Self-reliant, innovative, and competitive private sector-led economy with strong Indigenous presence.
  - People-focused investment policies.
  - A nation that embraces science and technology as an avenue to modernization.
  - Agriculture for food self-sufficiency and security.
  - Healthy, well, and relevantly educated with improved quality of life.

To achieve this vision, the Liberian Government developed the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), succeeded by the Agenda for Transformation and finally the current strategy, the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

The PAPD is built on four pillars:

- Pillar 1: Power to the people
- Pillar 2: The economy and jobs
- Pillar 3: Sustaining the peace
- Pillar 4: Governance and transparency

18 Republic of Liberia (2018). The Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. Monrovia
### 3.2 Liberia’s NUP Goals

The overall policy goal of the NUP, in line with Liberia Vision 2030 and the PAPD, is to bring an end to poverty in all its forms and dimensions, by ensuring equal rights and opportunities, socioeconomic and cultural diversity, and integration in the urban space.

The Liberia NUP has established five goals, strengthening: governance and regulations, citizenship and participation, infrastructure services and housing, economy and finance, and environment and climate change. There is a dire need for attention in each of these areas. Provisions for strengthening each of these areas of concern must be adopted at the national, regional, and local levels.

**Governance and regulations**

The decentralization of powers from the national to local governments is a priority for Liberia. The specific functions to be devolved under the Local Government Act of 2018 are not named or described and are yet to be determined. The act also requires revenue sharing between central and local governments, percentages of which are also yet to be determined. A revenue sharing act is currently being drafted but has not yet included the participation of local government authorities. Effective and democratic decentralization will only be possible with an amendment to the constitution requiring local government elections, which is not currently under consideration.

Strengthening the governance and regulation of local governments in Liberia is critical to ensuring the implementation of the NUP, participation and equitable territorial development.

The spatial distribution of major and intermediate cities and the urban and rural linkages in a region also requires attention. As the populations of capital or major cities continue to grow, smaller cities and towns experience population loss and remain underdeveloped and underserved.

**Citizenship and participation**

Stakeholders, including local government authorities, have expressed concerns about being unaware of the contents of the Liberia Land Rights Act and the Local Government Act, both passed into law in 2018. Citizens are encouraged to communicate their concerns to local government authorities through elected community leaders and as individuals. Community consultation on a national level has occurred occasionally when, for example, the Liberia 2030 Vision was formulated, during the constitutional review process and in the workshops and fora during this NUP process.

Vulnerable groups such as women, youth, elderly and people living with disabilities are not equitably represented or included in governance or decision making.

Communication, transport, and cooperation between municipalities in a specific region and between regions must be strengthened through the practice of urban and regional planning activities. Promoting spatial and regional balance is essential to national development. Ensuring safe spaces for all and incorporating inclusive planning activities will allow for the development of plans that will be accepted by all, making them easily adoptable and implementable.
Infrastructure and services

The inability of local government to adequately provide infrastructure, services and housing has been highlighted as a major challenge. Poor sanitation conditions are linked to the nonexistence of sanitation infrastructure, such as water and sewerage facilities. The Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation (LWSC) is empowered, by an act of legislation, to construct, install, operate, and maintain the supply of safe drinking water and perform all sewerage services to all parts of Liberia. Historically, the LWSC only provided services to the City of Monrovia and parts of neighboring Congo Town Township and Paynesville City. However, these sanitation services have been discontinued due to overuse, damage, and lack of maintenance to the infrastructure and facilities because of population growth and years of civil war. LWSC is currently rehabilitating the White Plains Water Treatment Plant and the pipeline from the plant to portions of the Greater Monrovia area to restore water services, but there are no current plans to restore sanitation services. Each household is responsible for disposing of sewage.

Limited access to affordable and decent housing with appropriate services contributes to poor sanitary conditions. There is limited capacity in local government institutions to plan and ensure solid waste management activities. The planning and delivery of all other infrastructure, services and housing facilities are the sole responsibility of the central government, with little to no input from local government authorities. Communication, transport, and sanitation infrastructures need improvement across the country and do not exist in some settlements. Local governments are mostly not involved in planning or provision of these facilities.

Housing

Contributing to the proliferation of slums, most noticeably in Greater Monrovia, are the years of neglect in the housing sector. The informal sector is the major supplier of housing in urban areas and there is no reference to formal regulations. In 2014, the UN-Habitat Liberia Housing Profile estimated that to fill the housing gaps by 2030, Liberia required the provision of 30,000 dwellings per year, at a cost of USD 225 million per year. Considering the increase in population since 2014, and the stasis of the housing market, it can be assumed this estimate will have increased. The 2019-2020 budget allocation for the National Housing Authority (NHA) was USD 848,876 and has been in decline since 2017.

Between 1962 and 1986, the NHA constructed 1,759 housing units in Montserrado County. In 2012, the construction of 10 units in each of the cities of Buchanan, Voinjama and Sanniquellie were completed. There are no specific policies or legislation to regulate housing development in Liberian cities. The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) uses international building codes not specific to Liberia and without considering affordability or the use of local materials. Construction plans are reviewed for compliance and to be approved, however the MPW does not have the capacity to inspect construction sites for enforcement. Outside of Montserrado County, only one MPW representative is assigned to each county for planning and housing regulation and so construction often takes place unchecked.

Financing housing purchases and upgrading is not currently accessible to the urban poor in Liberia. Loans and credit facilities are extremely costly with short payment terms, making them affordable for only a few. Many homes are built incrementally, based on household income. With funding from the Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme, in 2018 Habitat for Humanity published the Slum Upgrading and Affordable Housing Framework. The objectives of the Affordable Housing Framework are to highlight the constraints that affect low-income households, propose practical interventions at the policy, market and community levels, and to create a common platform for collaboration\(^\text{22}\). There is also ongoing research on the feasibility of fabricating affordable local building materials. Recently, the NHA has made efforts to supply additional affordable housing units, but with minimal financial support these efforts have been sporadic. The NHA still struggles with the challenge of creating an affordable mortgage scheme for the majority, low-income population.

In 2020, the Foundation for Women produced the market research report Housing Microfinance Product Development in Liberia, with assistance from the Terwilliger Centre for Innovation in Shelter. The report sets out the development of microfinance loans for the purpose of home improvements. The research indicates that there is a viable market in Greater Monrovia for such facilities up to USD 500.00\(^\text{23}\). Unfortunately, urban areas in other counties did not participate in the study.

Slum communities continue to develop and grow in urban areas. Housing characteristics in these communities are deplorable. Compliance with building codes, enforced by the Ministry of Public Works, is not affordable for the urban poor. Some city governments have passed ordinances for minimal standards of housing units, including the provision of indoor toilet facilities but both the Ministry of Public Works and the city governments have been unable to enforce these regulations.

Along with the provision of infrastructure, basic services and decent affordable housing are crucial to creating a livable urban environment. Failing to improve the provision and quality of these deliverables may lead to urban areas becoming breeding grounds for poverty and diseases.

**Economy**

Urban poverty is extensive in Liberian cities. The World Bank estimated that in 2018, 70 per cent of Liberia’s population lived in slums\(^\text{24}\). With the support of Cities Alliance and Habitat for Humanity, slum upgrading activities and community data collection are underway in the Greater Monrovia area, but have yet to be extended to other regions in the country. These processes are carried out with the recruitment and involvement of residents, proving training, economic opportunities and ownership of the data and projects. Government data on the urban economy does not account for the urban poor nationwide.


Mapping informal settlements will provide data essential to understanding and improving the living conditions of the urban poor to maximize their contribution to the social and economic environment. Educating local governments on pro-poor policymaking and slum upgrading for poverty reduction is essential to eliminate the common belief that the solution for slum communities is to demolish them.

Monrovia City is Liberia’s example of uncontrolled growth. The capital city has experienced rapid growth in population and at the same time massive deterioration of infrastructure and reduction in its capacity for service delivery, while maintaining expensive rents. This has weakened the city causing many businesses and residents to relocate to neighboring city of Paynesville and suburbs. The development and implementation of city plans to repair infrastructure and improve service delivery would improve the local economy. Local government partnerships with the Liberian Marketing Association, petty trader organizations, transport unions and other organizations can help improve the trade environment and increase benefits through economic returns. Creating a greater metropolitan area from the informal Greater Monrovia composition would also strengthen local governance.

Benefits of the urban population can be reaped through engagement between cities and the private sector in industrialization, tourism, education, and other business activities which can thrive in a dense, well connected population. Many of these activities can be linked to ongoing agriculture and extractive industries to add value to commodities prior to exportation.

**Environment and climate change**

The effects of climate change are evident in the eroding land along coastal communities caused by the rise of sea levels, such as West Point (Montserrado County) and Buchanan (Grand Bassa County). There is also an observed increase in rainfall, which is said to have contributed to flooding in many lowland communities. Those affected by flooding and erosion are usually the urban poor who reside in poorly constructed homes, often built on reclaimed wetlands.

Local governments struggle with waste management and are particularly challenged by the disposal of plastics. The drinking water industry supplies a large part of the population, particularly the urban poor, with water in small plastic sachets and these litter the streets and block drains and waterways in urban areas. Minimal recycling of this grade of plastic has resulted in what has so far been an unresolvable problem for local government authorities. Research into recycling or reusing plastic waste is a component of the Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme (CALCP). The Ever-Green Recycling Institute is testing building materials using plastic waste with funding from the CALCP and technical support from Habitat for Humanity.

There is a general lack of knowledge in Liberia of environmental issues, which must be considered when contemplating development plans. Activities must include components of awareness to include the environment and state of climate change and the effects on land erosion and weather extremes currently experienced in Liberia.
3.3 LIBERIA’S NUP PRINCIPLES

Urban areas need local leadership that has the political mandate and resources to act. The Liberian NUP seeks to ensure that city authorities have the political, financial, and technical mandates to manage the urban environment in accordance with identified principles.

The following NUP principles outline the basis on which all future urban documents, plans and actions are to be based. These principles have been formulated by analyzing Liberia’s urbanization through the SWOT lens, global commitments, national policies, and the objectives and goals of the NUP.

3.3.1 Urban-rural imbalance

Disparities among local municipalities are most notable when comparing the capital city of Monrovia to other cities, regarding infrastructure development, service delivery and housing. Monrovia is the only Liberian city that has had access to water and sewerage services, an extensive road network, a large stock of decent housing units and a zoning law. Development of the city has attracted many urban poor to the area who cannot afford decent housing. West Point, for example, is Liberia’s largest slum community and has existed since the 1950s and reportedly established as a township in 1960. This urban settlement is underdeveloped, while neighboring Monrovia City’s development has peaked without proper planning and is now a built environment with no green space or vacant land for new development. The nearby secondary city of Paynesville has become the major residential city in the Greater Monrovia area, due to its proximity to Monrovia and exorbitant pricing for land and housing in Monrovia.

Recently, many businesses have moved from downtown Monrovia to neighboring Congo Town and Paynesville, 6 and 8 miles (10 and 13 km) away respectively, where real estate is more affordable. The disparities are so wide that many believe Monrovia is the main city and that other municipalities fall under its authority.

In other regions, capital cities are often more developed than their neighbors. Capital cities typically have more conditioned roads, and better access to services and decent housing. Although there are numerous cities in Liberia, many do not have infrastructure and services usually associated with an urban environment. With support from the Cities Alliance Country Programme (CACP), the Association of Mayors and Local Government Authorities of Liberia (AMLOGAL) was established in 2017 to be beneficial to current and future local government leaders and city/town planning efforts.

**Principle 1: Equity**

Liberian governments must readdress the way they plan, finance, develop, govern, and manage, recognizing sustainable urban and territorial development and equity across cities, incorporating urban-rural linkages, and focusing on small and intermediate cities.

Long-term and integrated urban and territorial planning and design, for regional, urban-rural, and intercity linkages and equitable development must become the approach of local government authorities in Liberia. These authorities collaborating through the regional planning process will help alleviate some of the capacity gaps in delivering social services to the citizenry, as there is strength in numbers.
### 3.3.2 Ecological threshold

Knowledge and awareness of the ecological dimension of urbanism is inadequate and many urban leaders and stakeholders have expressed a willingness to learn more about these issues. The cause, effect, and mitigation of climate change in Liberia are not yet mainstream issues at the local level.

Local governments are currently challenged with waste management activities, supervision, and administration. Donors provide project funding, logistics, technical assistance, and capacity building to Greater Monrovia for Waste Management, reducing the disposal of waste dumped in waterways, buried, and burned. Filling in and drying of mangroves and other wetlands for human habitation and sand mining from beaches are ongoing illegal activities with have had negative effects on the environment by causing excessive heat and land erosion in affected areas. Protecting these natural resources has proved challenging to both national and local authorities.

Mitigation of mining activities is also a challenge for local governments, as mining companies often do not restore disturbed land areas after exploration exercises.

### Principle 2: Environmental sustainability

The NUP must promote awareness of local government authorities and all stakeholders on policies for the protection, conservation, restoration and promotion of ecosystems, water, natural habitats, and biodiversity. Local governments must promote sustainable consumption and production patterns to ensure future access to natural resources and be prepared for natural and unnatural disasters.

The adoption and implementation of disaster risk reduction and management plans for the reduction of vulnerability is required to build resilience and responsiveness to natural and human-made hazards, and to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

### 3.3.3 Economic development

The local economies in Liberia’s urban areas are dominated by the informal sector. In 2014, the UN-Habitat Liberia Housing Profile estimated 60% of employment in urban areas to be informal. Although there have been strides toward formalizing these activities, those employed in the informal sector are often unregulated and work in poor conditions.

With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2010 for MCC's Improved Primary Waste Collection in Poor Communities (IMPAC) project, Community Based Enterprises (CBEs) were established as small businesses to provide waste collection service in urban poor communities. During the Ebola virus outbreak, the CBEs played an important role in creating awareness around Ebola, but they are no longer limited to servicing the urban poor and now provide services to most communities in Greater Monrovia25.

### Principle 3: Poverty reduction

The NUP must encourage sustainability, economic growth by leveraging urbanization for physical transformation, high productivity, value-added activities, full and productive employment, decent work for all, and resource efficiency. The local economy must be examined to identify additional sources for revenue generation.

The informal economy could transition into and contribute to the formal economy; if formalized, informal sales and services, such as petty traders and motorcycle transport may be seen as beneficial to local government, instead of a nuisance to be banned.

3.3.4 Governance
There are 3 general categories which include 11 basic principles of effective governance for the full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and other international development objectives, which were developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration. The categories and principles are:

Effectiveness: competence, sound policy making, collaboration
Accountability: integrity, transparency, independent oversight
Inclusiveness: leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, intergenerational equity. (See Annex 1)

The Local Government Act was passed into law in 2018 to affect the national policy on decentralization and local governance. Since the passing of the act, there have been no indications that the law is being implemented. Local governments still operate under the Local Government Act of 1979.

Principle 4: Subsidiarity
The NUP must make recommendations for the successful implementation of the most recent Local Government Act and for additional decentralization measures to strengthen local governance. National and local governments and agencies must collaborate to ensure the proper identification of functions to be devolved to local government.

Support for capacity building must be provided to local government authorities for the successful transition of duties and responsibilities. The Liberian Government has unsuccessfully attempted to develop the entire country from the central government in Monrovia; allowing local governments financial and managerial autonomy will foster economic growth and development.

3.3.5 Social inclusion and participation
As previously mentioned, one objective of the new Local Government Act is to ensure democratic participation in and control of decision making by the citizenry. While this law is yet to be implemented, inclusion and participation has been a major component of urban projects and activities funded by INGOs. Local governance is not as inclusive or democratic. Superintendents of counties, mayors of cities and commissioners of townships are all appointed by the president and are not elected by the citizenry. Without the incentive of pending elections, inclusive governance must depend on regulation. Equal access rights and opportunities in Liberia require improvement. There is an enormous service gap between the urban poor and those in the middle and upper classes.

Principle 5: Participation
Governance must be participatory, allowing all people to enjoy equal rights and opportunities. It should recognize the leading role of national governments and the equally important contributions of subnational and local governments, as well as civil society and marginalized and vulnerable groups (people living with disabilities, women, youth, etc.) in urban governance.
Local governments need to be involved in fulfilling the social and ecological function of land and allow people the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation, and access to public goods and services in areas such as food security and nutrition, health, education, infrastructure, energy, air quality, livelihoods and mobility and transport that effectively links people, places, goods, services and economic opportunities. Local governments must undertake age- and gender-responsive planning to prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible, green, and quality public spaces. Equitable education and economic opportunities must be made available to the youth, women, people living with disabilities and all others residing in urban areas.

3.4 LINKAGES TO LIBERIA NUP AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY

The Liberia NUP directly links SDG 11 and the NUA as guiding principles for the NUP.

3.4.1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In collaboration with the United Nations, Liberia is working to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 11, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, directly correlates to the NUP.

There are six targets to be met by 2030, one by 2020 and three general targets with no deadlines. In the table below, achieving these targets has been scored with either no progress or some progress based on general observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGET</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>DEADLINE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>Ensure access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>Some progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>No progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>Some progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage.</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>Some progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>Significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>No progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>Some progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In agreement with the New Urban Agenda, Liberia recognizes that readdressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed will help end poverty and hunger, reduce inequalities, promote economic growth, achieve gender equality, improve health, foster resilience and protect the environment.

As recommended in the New Urban Agenda, the NUP will account for population trends, composition, distribution, and medium and long-term demographic projections with geographic disaggregation.

In accordance with NUP indicator 11.a.1 for SDG 11, the Liberia NUP supports positive economic, social, and environmental links between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning. The NUP will provide the ability to support economic, social, and environmental links ensuring coherent alignment of sectorial policies at the highest level of government to support sustainable urbanization.

Results from the feasibility phase of the NUP direct the diagnostic phase to focus on land and housing, system of cities (governance), economy and capacity building, and infrastructure and basic services as immediate issues and challenges to be addressed. It is important to note that while there are many commonalities in these sectors across the country, each region and urban area has distinct issues and challenges.

### 3.4.3 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The Sendai Framework advocates for the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods, and health, and in the economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities, and countries.

The NUP, in line with the framework, should include integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation/resilience to climate change/disasters.

### 3.4.2 New Urban Agenda

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SDG Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>Provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green, and public spaces, for women and children, older persons, and persons with disabilities.</td>
<td>2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.A</td>
<td>Support positive economic, social, and environmental links between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.B</td>
<td>Substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.</td>
<td>2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.C</td>
<td>Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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The Sendai Framework outlines seven targets to be achieved by 2030. There are four priority actions for disaster risk reduction. Understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; investing in disaster reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “build back better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. (See Annex 2)

### TABLE 6. Sendai Framework Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REDUCE</th>
<th>INCREASE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global disaster mortality</td>
<td>The number of countries with national and local disaster risk-reduction strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of affected people globally</td>
<td>International cooperation to developing countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct economic loss in relation to GDP</td>
<td>The availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster damage to crucial infrastructure and disruption of basic services</td>
<td>Source: Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.5 Proposed roadmap for NUP development going forward

To ensure the NUP achieves its goals and principles, is compliant with international policies and propels Liberia toward the national vision the entire process is divided into the following three stages:

   - a. Short-term stage (2 years) which includes a desktop study and is expected to accomplish:
     - i. Making the case for the Liberia NUP.
     - ii. Identifying key data.
     - iii. Sourcing financial and political support for undertaking the policy.
     - iv. Understanding the Liberian context.

2. **Diagnosis– current stage (2018-2020)**
   - a. Medium-term stage (3 years) expected to accomplish:
     - i. Analyzing and mapping key actors and stakeholders.
     - ii. Identifying priority issues to be addressed by the NUP.
     - iii. Defining policy vision, goals, and principles.

---

iv. Formulating roadmap proposal (going forward) and strengthening consensus.

v. Assessing the human and financial capacity of key institutions.

vi. Institutional capacity building in policy development.

3. Formulation (2021)

a. Short-term stage (1 year)

i. The drafting and adoption of Liberia’s NUP

ii. Proposing a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework.

4. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (2021-2050)

a. Long-term stage (29 years) expected to accomplish:

i. Reviewing, analyzing, and updating the legislative and administrative tools and structures to ensure implementation.

ii. Drafting an implementation plan:

1. Including a timeline and role delegation with defined responsibilities.

2. Facilitating legal decentralization processes and the devolution of financial and governance power to local governments to ensure capacity for implementing the NUP.

3. Ensuring M&E processes are imbedded in NUP implementation processes.

4. Clarifying the difference between evaluating outcomes and processes.

5. Ensuring the inclusion of institutional learning in all processes.

iii. Implementation and aligning with M&E of the NUP.

iv. Reviewing and updating of the NUP every five years in consideration of relevant internal and external changes.

Figure 8 is the proposed roadmap for completing and implementing Liberia’s NUP from the beginning of the process in 2015 until the first review and update in 2026.
**FIGURE 4.** Roadmap for NUP development

- **2015**
  - June: First National Urban Forum (NUF) - launch

- **2016**
  - Jan: Ebola concluded in Liberia
  - Jun: National Habitat Committee (NHC) - established/ workshop: Awareness & consultation
  - Aug: Technical Support Team (TST) established

- **2017**
  - Feb: Workshop: Training & Policy Dialogue
  - Apr: Three validation workshops for NUP Discussion paper
  - Oct: Liberia General Election 2017

- **2018**
  - Policy Note for Liberia published

- **2019**
  - May: Two Regional consultative/ validation workshops

- **2020**
  - May: COVID-19 in Liberia
  - Oct: Capacity building/ validation workshop - policy making process
  - Nov: Validation Webinar - PSC
  - Final Diagnosis Report presented to government

- **2021**
  - Drafting the NUP for Liberia
  - Drafting the Action Plan for NUP implementation
  - Drafting the Legal Framework for NUP implementation

- **2022**
  - Drafting the Financial Framework for NUP implementation
  - National Urban Forum - validation of the NUP
  - Liberian Cabinet review and approval of the NUP
  - Launch of the NUP for Liberia

- **2026**
  - Review and update of the NUP for Liberia
IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA THROUGH NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

POLICY THEMES

4
4. POLICY THEMES

Policy themes arising from the Liberia NUP process are urban legislature and land governance, socio-economic development, municipal finance, decentralization and environment, resilience, and climate change. These are key thematic areas to serve as pillars for plans and development of all urban areas in Liberia.

4.1 URBAN LEGISLATION

Although city management systems vary, they generally involve multilevel actors; the city mayor and the city council, civil society groups, heads of different communities (zonal heads), and the business community are sometimes consulted for key decision-making processes.

The Zoning Act for the City of Monrovia (1979), an update of previous legislation (1958), is meant to guide the growth of Monrovia and was to be applied to new cities as they were established. Unfortunately, the corresponding zoning map for Monrovia was misplaced during the war and the act was never applied to newly established cities. Currently, the Zoning Law is loosely applied using institutional knowledge of area zones (residential, commercial, etc.). The Zoning Act establishes the position of National Zoning Officer within the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) to regulate land use in the city of Monrovia.

In 2016, Liberia passed the Liberia Land Authority Act, transferring all land-related activities from various central government institutions to the first Liberia Land Authority (LLA). Land cadasters and surveys were to be transferred from the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy and land-use planning and zoning transferred from the Ministry of Public Works (MPW).

Until the passing of the Land Authority Act, the MPW was the only institution mandated to monitor land use, issue construction permits and regulate all construction projects throughout Liberia. The Local Government Act of 2018 requires the establishment of planning bodies within local government structures. As neither the Land Authority Act nor the Local Governments Act have been fully implemented, land-use regulation (zoning) is still under the supervision of the MPW.

Other relevant legislation includes the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia (1986), National Housing Authority Act, an Act Creating the Environmental Protection Agency of the Republic of Liberia (2002) and the Land Rights Act (2018). Local government authorities (LGAs) do not regulate land-use or construction in their respective cities and localities and have expressed concerns about ineffective regulation currently under the MPW. Agency specific duties and responsibilities are not clearly understood with the passing and partial implementation of new laws. Limited planning tools, human resources and legislation have resulted in formal and informal communities with minimal access to sanitary space and basic amenities.


30 For example, as observed during the regional workshops and as reported by workshop participants, over 80 per cent of the current homes in the city limits of both the North Central and the South East Liberia cities have either poor or no sanitation facilities.
LGAs noted that one MPW resident engineer per county is inadequate to regulate all infrastructure construction projects.

Policy for urban legislation must build on the participatory approach currently instituted in city government. Policy changes should include:

1. The involvement of LGAs in spatial planning activities, including land subdivision.
2. The devolution of authority to local governments to make and enforce decisions and plans.
3. Providing cities with financial autonomy to generate their own local revenues.
4. Empowering LGAs to plan alongside national policymakers and develop their respective urban spaces.
5. The drafting of legislation to establish Greater Monrovia as a metropolitan body, with an administrative structure, for planning and development purposes.
6. The involvement of strategic technical partners in urban decision making, i.e. private sector architects, engineers, and planners.
7. Regulatory guides for land sub-division to ensure adequate inclusion of roads, alley and other accessways.
8. Strengthen the regulation of land sales to protect wetlands and other protected areas.
9. Mainstream accessibility regulations to ensure ease of movement in public areas for people living with disabilities.
10. Prioritizing the collection and management of special data.

The Local Government Act of 2018 was developed and passed for these very reasons. Once implemented, local governments will be given more authority and financial independence to initiate an inclusive planning process halting the ongoing sprawl and the encroachment of protected and restricted areas.

### 4.1.1 Land governance

LGAs have a limited stake in land administration as they do not have the mandate or legal authority to administer the sale of land, distribute land, plan the use of land, or subdivide land in urban areas. Through the newly established Liberia Land Authority (LLA), the Liberian Government has assigned each local government a land commissioner and government surveyor to supervise the sale, distribution and plotting of all land. The LLA is also responsible for ensuring land-use plans are developed, adopted, and implemented throughout Liberia and to enforce the Land Rights Act.
City corporations, such as Monrovia and Paynesville (Montserrado County) have passed city ordinances requiring all owners of land in their cities to register land deeds with the Director for Public Lands within the city administrative structure. These cities have also established city planning departments through the city ordinance passage, as authorized by law. However, they are poorly staffed and lack both human and financial resources, and they are unable to digitize spatial information found in deeds or to initiate a planning process for their respective cities.

4.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Policies that promote socio-economic development across Liberia is a priority for the NUP.

In 2011, Liberia passed the Education Reform Act of 2011 to respond to the poor state of the education sector. In 2013, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf described Liberia’s education system as still “in a mess” after all applicants, nearly 25,000 high school graduates, failed the entrance exam to the University of Liberia. In 2016, with assistance from the World Bank, the Liberian Government published the Liberia Education Sector SWOT Analysis and the Getting to Best Education Sector Plan 2017-2021 (G2B-ESP) as means to drive educational reform. In the SWOT analysis, specific weaknesses included educational quality: learning outcomes, quality standards, teachers\(^\text{32}\). Currently, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is developing education related standards through the World Bank funded Improving Results in Secondary Education (IRISE) project. The provision of free quality education remains a challenge throughout Liberia. Local government has no jurisdiction over education matters.


BOX 5. Cities Alliance partnership, capacity building and support

Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme (LCP)

In 2016, after the 2014 Ebola virus outbreak, the Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme (LCP) was initiated at the request of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Monrovia City Corporation. The program aims to mobilize various international partners to provide direct service investments to benefit Greater Monrovia, especially the urban poor and youth, and to support Liberia’s goal to achieve middle-income status by 2030. In collaboration with national and local governments, organized civil society groups and the private sector, the program has three focus areas, to:

1. strengthen the organization and meaningful participation of slum dwellers and working poor organizations in city governance, inclusive planning and responsive service delivery;

2. improve climate-resilient and inclusive urban planning, slum upgrading and incremental housing strategies by investing in community-driven services and affordable housing;

3. Enhance the national enabling environment for resilient and inclusive urbanization that benefits economic growth, local governments and the urban poor.

The program has, so far, resulted in an increased recognition by the national government that developing the national economy requires the development of local economies. This can only occur in efficient and effective cities, building the capacity of the Monrovia City Corporation, profiling slum communities, waste related projects, and improving the informal work environment. Ongoing projects include the drafting of Liberia’s first Urban Development Strategy for the Greater Monrovia area.

With the support of Cities Alliance, the Federation of Liberian Urban Poor Savers (FOLUPS) and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) Liberia published the Know Your City Slum Profile Report for 12 communities in the Greater Monrovia area, providing a baseline for community planning and upgrading. These publications are major contributions to municipal governance as they are the first to provide data on the community level, which may strengthen the urban planning process for profiled communities. By building the capacity of the community members to collect data, this inclusive planning process was used to identify priority interventions for improving the liveability for inhabitants. Additional Cities Alliance support is underway to implement projects in each community.

While Greater Monrovia is home to the majority of Liberia’s urban poor, there is a need to source funding for the expansion of this and other municipal projects to strengthen all municipalities in Liberia.

Source: Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme33.

33 https://www.citiesalliance.org/how-we-work/our-programmes/country-programmes/liberia-country-programme
4.3 MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Through the NUP and the implementation of the act, there is an opportunity to create mechanisms that will build capacity, develop strategies that manage and account for financial resources, including budgeting, procurement, accounting, fund management, financial reporting and auditing, and that are transparent in financial transactions. Strategies such as creating an e-government system with an integrated the financial management tool and ICT technologies for tax collection may be beneficial to municipal finance. LGAs must be empowered to assist the central government with the provision of infrastructure and basic services and access to land and housing, food, transport, energy, healthcare, water, and sanitation.

There is no sustainable framework to financially support local governments. The collection of business registration fees, waste management fees, the collection of fines for violation of city ordinances, the fees paid for the roadside location of signage and the rental of city grounds, when available, are the only means of revenue generation for some city governments. Collectively, all available resources do not cover the recurring costs of salaries, administration, or waste management activities. In fact, city governments do not have financial resources to purchase logistical equipment to enable the collection of fees and fines.

The state of municipal finance is impacting on service delivery. Currently, waste management activities are the responsibility of local governments and is the only activity most municipalities engage in. All the city and town governments are struggling with the cost related to these activities.

The two cities in the Greater Monrovia area are supported to provide waste management services through a grant from the World Bank and counterpart funding from international partners and the Liberian government. Other local governments are unable to provide this service, leading to the burning and burying of waste.

Policy shifts around the financial framework of local government can only be made with the amendment of Liberian financial laws. Current law mandates the central government through the Liberian Revenue Authority as the sole collector of all government taxes. Minimal budgetary allotments are made to local governments to support salaries. One of the objectives of the Local Government Act of 2018 is to create and establish fiscal structure in local governance and ensure revenue sources to support local government administration and operation. By changing the laws and shifting the financial framework policy, enabling local government to collect municipal taxes for real estate and income, city governments become empowered to plan and implement projects to improve the urban centers in the context of the national plan. Since the passing of the act, there have been no indications that the law is being applied.

Through the NUP and the implementation of the act, there is an opportunity to create mechanisms that will build capacity, develop strategies that manage and account for financial resources, including budgeting, procurement, accounting, fund management, financial reporting and auditing, and that are transparent in financial transactions.
Financial autonomy improves a city’s ability to provide improved basic services, employ knowledgeable technicians to staff various city departments, purchase vehicles and other logistics to facilitate activities and train city police to increase enforcement activities. Strategies such as creating an e-government system with an integrated financial management tool and ICT technologies for tax collection may be beneficial to municipal finance. LGAs must be empowered to assist the central government with the provision of infrastructure and basic services and access to land and housing, food, transport, energy, healthcare, water, and sanitation.

4.4 DECENTRALIZATION

A shortcoming shared by many policies is a unilateral approach with poor multi-institutional coordination. Central government formulates nationwide policies to guide principles and plans in thematic areas without major input from local authorities.

The financial and technical constraints that Liberia faces and widespread insufficient capacity among governmental bodies is expected to be a persistent problem in the near and medium future. Resolving these issues requires coordination between institutions (including international development partners) to identify and mobilize scarce resources to achieve mutual urban development goals.

Liberian cities must leverage their statutory legislative, planning and convening powers, and their investment and public procurement capacity as economic levers to draw on the resources they have make economic gains. This will enhance local economic development and jobs creation which will turn around the urban economy. Local governments must demonstrate transparency and accountability in financial management. Revenue sharing should be equitable based on population and needs of all jurisdictions.
4.5 ENVIRONMENT, RESILIENCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Liberia faces environmental challenges. Climate change has caused a notable escalation in heat and flooding. Inadequate waste and sanitation management is causing water and air pollution and failure to enforce ordinances is allowing noise, air, and water pollution. However, it is important to note the limited knowledge of environmental, climate change and resilience issues of the public, which was revealed during regional consultations.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Water Sanitation and Hygiene Commission (WASH), Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME), among others have established national policies related to the protection and use of the environment. These policies must be synchronized with existing environmental frameworks such as the Environment Protection and Management Law, the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction Liberia 2016-2021 and the numerous global frameworks to which Liberia is a signatory. Policies must also have an awareness component to educate both the public and the LGAs. Some local governments have also established an environmental office to maintain a healthy and clean urban environment. However, the efforts of these different institutions are rarely combined, causing short falls and duplications, as with many other sectorial policies.

Liberia’s first National Disaster Reduction and Resilience Strategy 2020-2030 has been completed with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme through the GCF funded National Adaptation Plan (NAP) project, the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), however, it is not yet publicly accessible.

The strategy outlines priorities for actions broadly aligned to three global agendas: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Climate Agreement34. The strategy will guide efforts to proactively prevent and manage disaster risks in order to minimize the loss and suffering caused by disasters. The development of this strategy included national government, international partners and academia, but local government authorities were not involved in or consulted about this strategy, nor were they informed of the strategy development process and the final document has not been shared with LGAs for review or comment.

Urban resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, businesses, and systems in a city to survive, adapt and thrive irrespective of the kinds of challenges they experience. While “resilience” is now emerging in national policy documents, institutionalized resilience is present only in the Paynesville City Corporation, which has established a Resilience Office. Cities can play an essential role as centers of innovation, development and application of new technologies and solutions in the effort to curb, halt, reverse and adapt to the effects of climate change and other shocks and stresses. Box 76 highlights how Liberia gained resilience because of the Ebola virus, which helped when containing COVID-19.

Through embracing resilience principles in policy development, urban planning and project implementation, governments are better positioned to overcome and respond to vulnerabilities and adverse events as they arise. Building resilience requires the consideration of acute shocks, which are one-time, catastrophic events such as earthquakes, drought, floods and day-to-day stresses, such as water shortages, high unemployment and poverty.

Unlike emergency preparedness or post-disaster recovery, by addressing shocks and stresses concomitantly, a resilient plan or policy is better able to build the capacity necessary to overcome acute adverse events and deliver essential functions in both good and bad times to all residents, particularly the poor and the vulnerable.

**BOX 6. Resilience qualities**

**Qualities of resilience reflected during EVD and COVID-19 outbreaks**

Reflective: Individuals and institutions that are reflective use experience to inform future decisions and will modify standards and behaviours accordingly. For example, the lessons learned from the Ebola virus outbreak of 2014 allowed for a more rapid response to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2019.

Resourceful: Resourceful people and institutions can recognize alternative ways to use resources at times of crisis in order to meet their needs or achieve their goals. Using community groups for disseminating messages is a method often used by local authorities in Liberia.

Inclusive: Inclusive and integrated relate to the processes of good governance and effective leadership that ensure investments and actions are appropriate, address the needs of the most vulnerable and collectively create a resilient city — for everyone. Neighbourhoods in Greater Monrovia are organized with leadership structures that interact closely with municipal authorities.

Integrated: Integrated processes bring together systems and institutions and can also catalyse additional benefits as resources are shared and actors are enabled to work together to achieve greater ends.

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The 2018 Local Government Act requires the collaboration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Finance Ministry with local government authorities for planning purposes and to ensure the devolution of powers and institutional financing.

Robust: Robust design is well conceived, constructed and managed, and includes making provision to ensure failure is predictable, safe and not disproportionate to the cause. In response to the Ebola virus outbreak, members of government and civil society formed the Stop Ebola Transmission (SET). SET mapped communities and numbered homes for the purposes of emergency medical response and contact tracing. This system of response is now institutionalized in the National Public Health Institute of Liberia.

Redundant: Redundancy refers to spare capacity purposefully created to accommodate disruption due to extreme pressures, surges in demand or an external event. It includes diversity where there are multiple ways to achieve a given need. The lack of spare capacity has been clearly reflected during Covid-19 outbreak. Shelter in place orders were impossible to enforce as most homes do not have the financial resources to purchase weeks of food, nor do they have refrigeration for long-term storage.

Flexible: Flexibility refers to the willingness and ability to adopt alternative strategies in response to changing circumstances or sudden crises. Systems can be made more flexible through introducing new technologies or knowledge, including recognizing traditional practices. The Ebola virus outbreak required citizens to adopt handwashing at the entrances of all communities and public and private properties, as the new normal.

The resilience dividend

The resilience dividend is a measure of the return on resilience investments, whether it is a financial return, or more qualitative return, such as reduced inequality or increased social cohesion. It is the idea that building resilience realizes benefits in both times of crisis and times of calm. Resilience dividend enables a single investment to deliver multiple positive benefits, returns and to serve communities in both times of crisis and calm. As urban investments are made, especially in resource constrained environments, the resilience dividend should underpin planning and implementation efforts to ensure maximum benefits for all.
POLICY SCENARIOS

5

Liberia, Photo © RNW.org
5. POLICY SCENARIOS

Scenario planning or analysis is a strategic planning method used to develop long term plans amid an uncertain future or when there is a lack of data. The methodology is to identify specific uncertainties of what might happen in the future given varied scenarios or what ifs. In the case of projecting a future (2050) look at urbanization in Liberian cities.

The driving variables of urbanization, considered as forces for change, were identified in the Regional Diagnostic Notes derived from stakeholder consultations. These are issues that are seen to be influential on future urbanization in Liberia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7. Driving variables of urbanization</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Understanding that cities are not static, that they evolve and change, and considering the identified variables as forces of change for urbanization in Liberia by 2050, the following two policy scenarios have been developed as possible actions of public and private actors.

**Scenario 1: Urban policy is not a priority for the Liberian Government**

Scenario 1 asks what will happen if the Liberian Government sees planning for urbanization as less important than they do at present? What if attention to urban planning is redirected to other areas, or if the NUP or other urban development guides are not completed or implemented?
Scenario 2: Urban policy as a priority and a driver of sustainable national development

This scenario asks what if urban policy is prioritized by the Liberian Government, as a driver of sustainable national development? The government would invest more time and support to the urban systems and implement policies for the sustainable and resilient growth of urban centers.

These scenarios were considered in the context of past urban evolution, existing urban conditions, and the projections of continued population growth. We must consider the implications of various interventions to plan the future course of action.

With a reduction of financial support, there will be limited law enforcement causing the level of insecurity to rise with an increase in crime. The infrastructure and costs for transport and mobility will become more of a challenge, due to population increase, lack of infrastructure expansion and increase in costs due to distances and poor condition of infrastructure.

With limited access to employment opportunities, the youth population (18-35 years old) will increasingly enter the informal employment market, with no diversification of the local economy.

Land ownership and planning will enable the levying of land-based taxes, providing a source of funds for the development and delivery of local government services.

The informal employment market will be reduced and formalized to contribute to the local and national economy.

5.2.1 Scenario analysis

The following table provides analysis and comparison of the two scenarios, indicating the benefits for Liberia of prioritizing urban policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY SCENARIO ANALYSIS</th>
<th>SCENARIO 1</th>
<th>SCENARIO 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban policy is not a priority for the Liberian Government.</td>
<td>Urban policy as a priority and a driver of sustainable national development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPLANATION</td>
<td>• Less importance on urbanization than at present.</td>
<td>• Urbanization is pillar for development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Government ignores international and national development policies and agreements.</td>
<td>• Increased investment in urban systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Regression in all sectors of the urban environment expected.</td>
<td>• Policies and regulations adopted for the sustainable and resilient growth of urban centers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Improvements in all sectors of the urban environment are expected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Policy Scenario Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 1</th>
<th>Scenario 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uncontrollable slum proliferation.</td>
<td>- Programs initiated to provide access to affordable housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase in informal economic activities.</td>
<td>- Spatial and urban planning a norm for all cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Environmental degradation due to improper disposal of waste.</td>
<td>- Sites and services constructed at planned community sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The built environment is in chaos.</td>
<td>- Community upgrading projects are increasing and ongoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased lack of basic services.</td>
<td>- Increase in economic productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase in criminal activity.</td>
<td>- Reduction in crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Continued centralized governance.</td>
<td>- Private and public servers provide efficient waste management services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decrease in crime.</td>
<td>- Decrease in crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase in local government duties and authority.</td>
<td>- Increase in local government duties and authority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- No new urban regulations or development plans.</td>
<td>- NUA, SDGs, PAPD and Vision 2030 adhered to in the development of achievable long-term and short-term spatial urban plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No urban governance.</td>
<td>- Local government salaries increased, and corruption penalties are increased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Insufficient access to municipal finance.</td>
<td>- Investments in quality socio-economic programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase in corruption.</td>
<td>- Participatory decision making with increased involvement of women and youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Inefficient use of available resources.</td>
<td>- Additional steps are made towards decentralization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of socio-economic development.</td>
<td>- Encouragement of the expansion of economic activities and an increase in industrial activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decrease in local economies.</td>
<td>- Investment to strengthen law enforcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Continued non-participatory processes to the exclusion of urban youth and women.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLICY SCENARIO ANALYSIS</td>
<td>SCENARIO 1</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban policy is not a priority for the Liberian Government.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### IMPACT OF SCENARIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENARIO 1</th>
<th>SCENARIO 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Slum proliferation</td>
<td>• Slum improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unplanned urban growth</td>
<td>• Planned urban growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase in informal employment and housing</td>
<td>• Formalization of informal employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited access to land and housing</td>
<td>• Increased access to land and housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Little LGA involvement in governance activities</td>
<td>• LGA involvement in governance activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• LGAs cease to have value</td>
<td>• Increased financial and technical support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### UNCERTAINTIES/QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENARIO 1</th>
<th>SCENARIO 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Will there be a reduction in urban-related policies/plans?</td>
<td>• Local Government Act implemented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will budgetary support cease?</td>
<td>• Increase in budgetary support?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduction in infrastructure and basic service delivery?</td>
<td>• Local tax collection?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Authority and financing for affordable land and housing/slum upgrading?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support for local law enforcement?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RESPONSES/ALTERNATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENARIO 1</th>
<th>SCENARIO 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Work to strengthen LGAs (provision of financial &amp; technical support systems)</td>
<td>• Work to strengthen LGAs (provision of financial &amp; technical support systems)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strive to implement laws</td>
<td>• Strive to implement laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engage central government-MIA on opportunities of urbanization</td>
<td>• Expand LGA governance involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 SUMMARY OF BENEFITS: URBAN POLICY AS A PRIORITY AND A DRIVER OF SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The scenario analysis forecasts the following benefits from the prioritization of urban policy by the Government of Liberia.

**Housing and urban form**

Slum upgrading would have been implemented, the National Housing Policy approved with housing standards, and programmes that improve access to finance for land and housing will have been identified.

Spatial planning at the regional and city level will allow authorities to stop unplanned growth and control the areas built on.

**Land governance:**

Land tenure would be clarified as per the Land Rights Act and explained to the population. The Liberia Land Authority will recognize the benefits of including local governments in land administration and management, allowing local governments to implement spatial plans and have access to public land for the preservation of green public space.

**Municipal finance**

Land ownership and planning will enable the levying of land-based taxes, providing a source of funds for the development and delivery of local government services.

Intermediate cities will be better prepared to provide with basic services to a growing population and increase their development. With the implementation of the Local Government Act, intermediate cities will have met the minimum criteria for city status: to provide electricity, pipe-borne water system and sewerage services among others, by 2025. Urban governance will also have improved as a result, as more powers and functions will have been devolved to city government, financial systems will have been put in place and qualifications of city officials will have increased, although cities will continue to rely heavily on central government for financing and budget approval.

**Decentralization**

The built environment will improve with urban planning regulations and activities implemented by local governments. Planning activities will be devolved from the central government from the Liberia Land Authority. However, the centralized government system will continue as city mayors will continue to be appointed by the president.

**Infrastructure**

Connectivity between primary and secondary cities will be improved as new connections are made available, informed by the urban plans. Costs for transport, mobility and communication will have decreased, due to infrastructure expansion and increased efficiencies. As a result, the costs of goods and services in secondary cities will decrease due to lower transportation costs and shorter travel times.

The level of access to healthcare will increase, with proper planning tools to identify gaps in urban areas.

Sanitation infrastructure/conditions will improve, and water will be properly managed through the guidance of a water and sanitation management plan within the urban plan.
The level of solid and liquid waste management will be improved with additional financing and the creation of waste management services. The level of access to energy will have increased due to continued planned investment in energy infrastructure.

**Socio-economic development**

With greater autonomy, city governments will become competitive in attracting private investors to develop the industrial sector. This will increase access to employment opportunities for the youth population (18-35 years old), as well as the wider population.

The informal employment market will be reduced and formalized to contribute to the local and national economy, which will also reduce criminal activities. More investment in urban law enforcement and an increased level of security will also lead to a reduction in crimes.

**Urban legislation**

The availability of public lands and amenities will continue to be lacking as the local government authorities will not have access to public land.
6

Policy Outcomes
6. POLICY OUTCOMES

Urban development in Liberia has occurred organically because of shortfalls in urban policy, population growth and the need for the provision of infrastructure and basic goods and service. As a result of this organic growth, the cities have been unable to provide adequate infrastructure and services to their residents. Local governments have complained about the decision-making processes, which are not inclusive of the LGAs nor their stakeholders.

6.1 PARTICIPATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

To guarantee a more inclusive approach in sustainable urban development, governance and legal considerations must be made to include the inputs from vulnerable populations, such as youth, women, people living with disabilities, the elderly and the extremely poor. If Liberia is to achieve inclusive economic growth and sustainable urban development, it needs an enabling framework to provide coordination among different sectors and ministries, address urban challenges, and maximize the opportunities offered by urbanization, while mitigating potential adverse externalities. A national urban policy (NUP) is such a framework and mechanism for coordination. Liberia has made the first steps toward decentralization and the devolution of authority from central to local government by passing into law the Local Government Act of 2018.

The most desirable outcomes of the scenario analysis in section 5 is scenario 2, where urban policy is a priority and a driver of sustainable national development. For participatory urban and territorial development to be realized in Liberia, the management of urbanization must be keenly practiced with the involvement of local government authorities.

While the law does not mandate political or financial autonomy to local governments, it does provide means for planning and more options for revenue generation. Decentralization is key to the development of Liberia, outside of Greater Monrovia.

Urban centers outside Monrovia have unsuccessfullly attempted to modernize and provide essential infrastructure and basic services. City governments struggle to achieve the most basic functions as it is not prioritized as essential for them to receive a reasonable share of the municipal allotments to manage their cities or to recruit professional city officers. Without administrative and financial autonomy, this will continue to be the case. The inclusion of a reporting system, such as a city report card, available to all urban residents would be of benefit to Liberia and its cities. It will not only provide valuable feedback to local authorities but will also serve as a creative means of data collection for Liberia’s urban areas.

6.2 PROPOSED FINANCING AND PLANNING TOOLS

Considering the limited access to financing and the minimal human capacity in planning, implementing the NUP will require creative financing and planning tools and mechanisms. Initiating regional, urban, and rural spatial planning activities, as will be a component of the NUP, will require partnerships and assistance from the international and the donor community.

1. Own-source revenues are identified as:
   a) Real property tax and income on same, apart from Monrovia.
   b) Business licenses and permits.
   c) Fees and charges for occupation and professional licenses.
   d) Fees and charges for provision of public services provided directly by counties, cities, and townships.
   e) Revenues from rentals of assets and the use of public spaces.
   f) Fees and charges for provision of official documents and services, as delegated by respective ministries and agencies.
   g) Fines imposed by local government authorities.

2. Transfers from the central government.
   a) General fund.
   b) Development fund.
   c) Earmarked transfers for devolved functions.
   d) Earmarked transfers for delegated functions.
   e) Other transfers or revenue sharing as may be required or developed in the future.

3. County Social Development Funds for county government to distribute.

4. Grants from external sources such as multilateral and bilateral development partners\(^\text{38}\).

In accordance with the law, setting up the National Local Government Fiscal Board is a prerequisite to financing local governments.

This autonomous board is meant to provide guidance and acts as a bridge between local, judicial, and executive government on fiscal matters.

Setting up a stakeholder committee is also required for the implementation of the Local Government Act which, with certain powers devolved to the LGAs, would ease the implementation of the NUP.

The Revenue Sharing Act is currently being drafted by the Governance Commission of Liberia and is expected to be shared for stakeholder review in 2021.39

6.3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The implementation of a NUP for Liberia requires a stage implementation, to develop the regional capacities and governance structures that are required to deliver the policy outcomes across Liberia. Table 9 provides a stepped methodology for urban development and policy implementation in Liberia, recognizing that decentralization, participation, and financing tools are fundamental to the NUP.

### TABLE 9. Methodological Framework for Urban Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1 - NATIONAL URBAN POLICY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The adoption of the NUP as legislation</td>
<td>Once complete, the NUP will guide practitioners in the management of the urban environment and set out policies for the achievement of goals agreed to by relevant stakeholders.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 2 - STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The establishment of inter-agency working group to implement the Local Government Act and provide local government with technical and financial support.</td>
<td>The devolution of powers and authority from central to local government is a key activity towards realizing the implementation of the NUP. The ability to generate local revenue is also key.</td>
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<tr>
<th>STEP 3 - STRATEGIES AND PLANS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional, county and city planning bodies be established with inclusive participation from relevant agencies, local government, academia, civil society, women, people living with disabilities, etc. and staffed with appropriate technicians.</td>
<td>Regional plans, in line with national policies and plans must be developed to ensure interlinkages among cities and equitable growth opportunities. Training opportunities should be sought for the increase of municipal technicians.</td>
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</tbody>
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39 Hon George Howe, Governance Commission, Republic of Liberia. Validation Workshop - October 22, 2020
| Short-term strategies developed for each region and each county and each city to be conducted with assistance from relevant agencies. | Short-term strategies must be developed for immediate responses to urgent needs in the region and in individual cities. |
| Long-term comprehensive plans, including spatial (i.e. zoning), economic, social and transport must be developed to guide national growth. These plans must be enacted into law to ensure continuity. | While long-term detailed plans are produced with an abundance of time, human and financial capacity, and wide participation, they are necessary to ensure development is monitored and controlled for favorable outcomes. |
| Property boundaries, ownership status and land-use data must be readily available to planning authorities. | Geographic Information System (GIS) unit must be in each planning body to ensure data is up to date and available. Possible training by LISGIS and shared data. |

**STEP 4-IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

| Previously established planning bodies to establish inspection and enforcement units in their bodies. | Inspection and enforcement units manned with technical and enforcement personnel must be provided with logistics necessary to travel in the jurisdiction under their control. |
7. POLICY PRIORITIES

The proposed priority issues are evolved from the feasibility and diagnostic phase of this NUP process. As a result of regional discussions, data analysis, SWOT analysis and scenario discussions, the following five issues have been identified as priority issues that should be focused on in the NUP. These priorities align with the Liberia National Vision 2030, PAPD and major global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, agreed on by all Member States, including Liberia.

As the disparity between Greater Monrovia and Liberian cities outside of the area is extremely wide, and considering the goal of the Liberia Vision 2030 to realize middle-income status, these priorities were chosen with the aim of strengthening the socio-economic status of small and intermediate cities for the reduction of poverty in Liberia.

1. Strengthening primary and secondary cities
   by implementing integrated, polycentric, and balanced territorial development policies and plans, along with capacity building for municipal governments. Promoting administrative and financial devolution and encouraging connectivity and cooperation between cities and towns, resulting in the efficient flow of goods, ideas and innovation allowing for equitable growth among cities and regions. Such measures will increase the role of cities in enhancing food security and nutrition systems, securing access to sustainable, affordable, adequate, resilient, and safe housing, infrastructure, and services, while reducing urban and territorial disparities. Impartial national development process will enhance “balanced growth countrywide” by the Liberia National Vision 203040.

2. Leveraging Greater Monrovia given its unequivocal significance and contribution to the political, economic, and cultural realms of the country. Emphasis could be on integrated planning for the regional employment and job creation, poverty reduction and urban economy, infrastructure, housing and slums, land tenure and coastal erosion that were identified as massive urban development challenges. The peripheral expansion of Monrovia could be managed in the interests of encouraging higher density and more integrated urban development41.

3. Supporting the introduction of modern spatial planning and urban development practices that use current planning technologies and strategies to guide Liberia’s urban growth, prioritizing urban renewal by collecting and analyzing data for planning the provision of accessible and well-connected public spaces, secure and affordable land and housing, water and sanitation, waste management, infrastructure and basic services, sustainable population densities, environmental mitigation, and compact design and integration of new neighborhoods in the urban fabric while preventing urban sprawl and marginalization42.

a. Acquiring knowledge and capacity for the collection and management of spatial data is essential to initiating local government planning activities.


4. **Prioritizing education, employment, and the local economy** as an ultimate solution to lift people out of urban poverty by empowering them with knowledge, skills, and decent work. This can be approached by improving education attainment, improving, and formalizing informal employment and addressing underemployment, regulating rural-urban migration, eliminating gender inequality and child labor. Additionally, increasing the availability of urban experts is fundamental to ensuring sustainable urbanization across the country.

4a. Knowledge sharing platforms and campaigns should be created for various local sectors on the Land Rights Act, the Local Government Act, the Liberia Land Authority, the EPA, the NDMA and general environmental issues.

4b. Sanitation and hygiene should be part of the curriculum for primary and high schools in Liberia.

5. **Strengthening urban governance** through jurisdictional coordination and policy coherence, the institutionalizing of political, financial, technical, and participatory mechanisms and the implementation of existing laws and policies. City governments will build capacity to formulate, implement, enhance, integrate, manage, monitor, and evaluate public policies for sustainable urban development. Clear roles and responsibilities for all spheres of government and for public participation will be set out and applied to effective and transparent urbanization and urban management, and supporting institutionalized mechanisms for sharing and exchanging data, information, knowledge, and expertise. Private and public partnerships may be strengthened as a practical urban financing mechanism to fill the gap of resource provision.

6. **Disaster preparedness** is key to ensuring continued safety of both humans and the environment. Prevention and managing risks may minimize the loss and suffering caused by disasters. While disaster and resilience policies are being developed by the national government, there needs to be involvement and knowledge sharing at the local government, civil society, and community levels.

7. **Capacity building to support the implementation of the NUP:** The development process of the NUP enlisted the participation of many Liberians (national and local government), international partners (UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance) and local community stakeholders. While the process provided capacity building to the relevant stakeholders as a means for garnering an understanding of the work and formulating their own policy, agencies responsible for urban governance in Liberia still lack human and financial capacity to successfully implement the NUP and will require the same cooperation, collaboration, capacity building and support provided during the development process. Without this support, the implementation process runs the risk of being abandoned due to a lack of essential logistics. It is imperative that the drivers of this process engage in various partnerships to ensure policies are implemented with a methodology that is clearly defined and understood by all stakeholders.
CONCLUSION
The development of the NUP for Liberia, through the coordination of the work of different sectors, is expected to establish more sustainable urban practices, strengthen urban-rural linkages, and encourage equitable resources allocation. It will result in the reduction of urban and territorial disparities within and among regions, and the promotion of institutional collaboration and policy coherence.

To reap the dividends of Liberia’s increasing urbanization, authorities must recognize and maximize the opportunities offered by urbanization. Developing solutions for urban challenges is an opportunity to improve both the city and national systems, for increased contributions to national revenues and for the promotion of peace and development. Recognizing and mitigating potential external challenges can reveal opportunities for sustainable urban development in Liberia. Changing the mindset that most Liberians have of negative impacts of urbanization such as overcrowded cities, to a positive mindset of the economic opportunities of “urbanization” will allow the Liberian Government to plan for future urban densities to increase and harness potential production. Achieving middle-income status has only been accomplished with urbanization and industrialization, which could be aided with high population densities.

Decentralization and the devolution of authority from central to local government in Liberia is essential to the development of cities. While, the Local Government Act of 2018 does not allow for the complete political or financial autonomy of local governments, it does mandate local governments to carry out planning activities and identify more sources for revenue generation. This act must be implemented to strengthen local government authorities to begin the decentralization process and to advocate for additional steps towards decentralization.

NUP policies must include the improvement of urban housing characteristics, specifically for the urban poor, providing a greater understanding of the new land tenure system, improving land governance and administration with inputs from city government.

The system of cities must also evolve through strengthening urban-rural linkages, improving the governance of urban areas, introducing planning practices in urban governance, introducing feasible means of law enforcement, and developing sustainable financial systems for the administration of cities. The 2009 World Bank Urban and Local Government Strategy promotes the system of cities as the means for the integration of national and local policies connecting institutions and Infrastructure. A successful city is constantly changing to focus on the core elements of the city system: making pro-poor policies a priority, supporting city economies, promoting a safe and sustainable urban environment, and encouraging progressive land and housing markets.

National, regional, county, and local governments must collaborate and be empowered to provide infrastructure and basic services, access to land and housing, food, transport, energy, healthcare, waste management and water and sanitation, etc. to residents.

8. CONCLUSION

Urban planning is not currently taking place in Liberia as there is limited knowledge on the benefits of planning, there are too few planning professionals, and there are no urban planning courses at local universities and colleges. This, coupled with the scarcity of resources, makes planning for urban growth challenging. While developing the urban planning sector will take time and unavailable resources, urging academia to add urban planning/local government administration as degree programmes and developing professional certificate programmes for municipal staff are short-term solutions for local governments. Leveraging development partners for assistance in obtaining and applying data collection and management systems, preparing regional, city and town development plans, and land-use technology (GIS) is also recommended.

It is still unclear how local governments will be financed in accordance with the new Local Government Act (2918), however, the current financial system is inadequate to support expected outputs. In the new law, a formula for revenue sharing of property tax and income is to be developed by the Local Government Fiscal Board (not yet composed). Implementation of the financial component of the 2018 Act requires the appointment of a seven-member Local Government Fiscal Board composed of four national government officials and one representative each of all county superintendents, city mayors and township commissioners. Amending this law to include more local representation is recommended.

Local governments can assist the Liberia Land Authority with the dissemination, interpretation, and implementation of the Land Rights Act of 2018. Among the functions to be devolved to local government should be aspects of land administration, particularly for the purposes of land-use planning and taxation. Cities should also be empowered to assist with the delivery of sites and services for the improvement of existing and the development of new communities.

Land and home financing have always been a challenge in Liberia due to the inability of lenders to collect payments. Laws governing banking and lending must be reviewed and strengthened regarding collections to facilitate a mortgage system. The risks of lending are high, which has led to unreasonable interest rates and repayment terms. Increasing access to employment, while building the capacity of human resources, will help improve local economies. Value added industries and the introduction of new industries will also develop the local economy as well as enhance municipal and national finance with an increase in the tax base.

Developing short- and long-term plans for the development of Infrastructure and the provision of basic services, such as transport and mobility, telecommunication, energy, health, water and sanitation, solid waste management and social amenities will guide controlled urbanization in Liberian cities. These plans should be prepared with elements for the conservation of biodiversity and mitigation activities for climate change with recommendations to improve local urban resilience.

The final steps in the diagnosis phase of the NUP process is the presentation of this work to policy makers, capacity building exercises, validation, and the preparation of a consultation reports.

The next stage of the NUP is the formulation phase. When policies are determined, they will be presented to the Liberian Cabinet for adoption. The final phase of the NUP will be the Implementation, monitoring, with ongoing updates for a successful NUP.
KEY REFERENCES


Protected Area Network http://www.liberianfaunaflora.org/where-we-work


## Principles of effective governance for sustainable development

### Preamble

The full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed development objectives will hinge in no small part on a common understanding of the basic principles of effective governance for sustainable development. The basic principles set out below are intended to clarify the governance agenda, taking into account different governance structures, national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. They have been developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration to help interested countries, on a voluntary basis, build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, with a view to achieving the shared vision for the people and the planet embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As basic principles, they apply to all public institutions, including the administration of executive and legislative organs, the security and justice sectors, independent constitutional bodies and State corporations. The principles are given depth and made operational through a selection of commonly used strategies and related practices, which are an integral and evolving part of this work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Commonly used strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>To perform their functions effectively, institutions are to have sufficient expertise, resources and tools to deal adequately with the mandates under their authority</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promotion of a professional public sector workforce</td>
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<td>• Strategic human resources management</td>
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<td>• Leadership development and training of civil servants</td>
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<td>• Performance management</td>
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<td>• Results-based management</td>
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<td>• Financial management and control</td>
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<td>• Efficient and fair revenue administration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Investment in e-government</td>
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<td>Sound policymaking</td>
<td>To achieve their intended results, public policies are to be coherent with one another and founded on true or well-established grounds, in full accordance with fact, reason and good sense</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Strategic planning and foresight</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Regulatory impact analysis</td>
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<td>• Promotion of coherent policymaking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Strengthening national statistical systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Monitoring and evaluation systems</td>
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ANNEX 2: SENDAI FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Chart of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

2015-2030

Scope and purpose

The present framework applies to both small-scale and large-scale, frequent and infrequent, sudden and slow-onset disasters, caused by natural or human-induced hazards, as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks. It aims to promote the full and broad management of disaster risk in development at all levels, as well as risk and disaster reduction.

Expected outcomes

The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in terms of human lives, livelihoods and human health, in the economic, social, cultural, physical, environmental and development impacts on persons, businesses, communities and countries.

Goal

Substantially reduce the number of global annual average global average economic loss and economic damage caused by disasters, and reduce global annual average population and economic damage caused by disasters, all by 2030 compared to 2005-2010.

Targets

- Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, assuming an annual average global death rate between 2005-2010 compared to 2005-2010.
- Substantially reduce the number of people affected by disasters, with a global figure per 100,000 persons below 0.1% in 2030 compared to 2005-2010.
- Substantially reduce disaster damage in critical infrastructure, including health and educational facilities, and to critical cultural property.
- Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2030.
- Substantially improve international cooperation to develop disaster risk reduction strategies, through enhanced cooperation and international support to complement the national actions for implementation of this framework by 2050.
- Substantially increase the availability and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessment to people by 2030.

Priorities for action

- Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk.
- Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk.
- Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.
- Priority 4: Enhancing disaster risk knowledge for effective response, and to rebuild flood-damaged infrastructure.
United Nations projections are that by 2050 Liberia’s population will have almost tripled to 6.7 million, with 68.2 per cent of its people living in urban areas. Like many other countries, Liberia is currently developing a national urban policy to manage this urbanization sustainably, and to leverage the opportunities it brings to accelerate achievement of the country’s development agenda and poverty reduction strategy.

The development of such a policy has five phases; the feasibility phase, diagnostic phase, formulation phase, implementation phase and the monitoring and evaluation phase. Liberia is currently conducting its diagnostic phase, which when completed, it will be followed by the formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation phases.

This Diagnosis Note analyses the issues raised in the feasibility phase: it identifies urban trends in Liberia, priority opportunities and challenges. It also proposes key areas for consideration during policy formulation.

The report is intended to be useful to policy makers and stakeholders involved in Liberia’s NUP development. It also has useful information for other local and national governments involved in a similar process. With urbanization now one of the most pressing development issue, Liberia’s NUP progress so far will be important information for all sectors concerned with urbanization and the future.

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