LIBERIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME:
Towards Decentralization

The Concept

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Acronyms

ACS	American Colonization Society
CBO	Community based organization
CBRP	Community Based Recovery Programme
DC	District Commissioner
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
DDC	District Development Committee
DDF	District Development Fund
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
GEMAP	Governance and Economic Management Programme
GRC	Governance Reform Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LCD	Local Community Development
LDLD	Liberian Decentralization and Local Development Programme
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MPEA	Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RFTF	Results Focused Transitional Framework
PMU	Programme Management Unit
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's and Education Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Mission Objectives

The main assignment was to prepare a draft Concept Paper outlining options that the Local Development Practice has for orienting its future intervention in Liberia. In this regard, the key objectives are to review the following:

- Decentralization and governance policy context
- Current programmes implemented by the international development partners
- Proposed Liberian institutional framework for decentralization
- Draft a series of options for the proposed programme, clearly identifying the pros and cons of each option

In an effort to bring coherence to the concept as outlined, the paper will review the terms of reference against the challenges existing in the overall macro-economic environment, whose complex framework exacerbates the frail capacity of many governmental institutions and their layout, as envisioned for decentralization. This will be the legitimate constraint which the Liberian Government will face as it considers the extent to which decentralization is made a key element in speeding up the pace and character of the reconstruction, as it shifts towards the development agenda. The review conducted is provided in the following pages with the basic themes, listed in the summary of objectives above, addressed individually .

INDEX

1 a.	Introduction and Summary	Page	5
2	National Situation Analysis and Context		6
2 a.	The Main Challenge		
2 b.	An Imperative		7
2 c.	Economic Outlook		8
2 d.	Poverty, Vulnerability		9
2 e.	The Poverty-Gender Nexus		
2 f.	Poverty in the Urban Dimension		
2 g.	Local Capacity Gaps in Poverty Reduction		10
2 h.	Personal Safety		
2 i.	Considerations and Options		11
2 j	Towards A Possible Poverty Reduction Mechanism		11
2 k.	Coordination Gaps: The Basis of LDLD Options		12
2 l.	Public Management: The Local Dimension		14
	Liberia's Brief Historical Background (box)		15
2 m.	Present Political and Administrative Structure		16
3 a	Local Management in the System of Service Delivery		
3 b.	Management		
3 c.	The County		17
3 d.	Statutory District		18
3 e.	Districts		
	Local Government Management Role and Functions (box)		20
3 f.	Cities and Towns		21
3 g.	Municipality of Monrovia		
3 h.	Customary and Traditional System of Service		22
3 i.	The Inter-governmental Fiscal Relationships		
3 j	Partnerships: Local Development Support in Service Provision		23
3 k.	Key Questions for Local Governments reforms		24
4.	The Proposed Programme		26
4 a.	Introduction and Objectives		
4 b.	Decentralization – Definition, Its Considerations		
4 c.	Comments		27
4 d.	Liberia's Past Efforts to Decentralize		28
5.	Rationale and Geographic focus		29
5 b.	The Criteria for Selection		30
	Liberia's Settlement System – map		32
5 c.	The Local Governance Programme Elements		33
5 d.	LDLD Programme Focus		34
5 e.	Rationale for Strengthening the District Coordination Mechanism		
5 f.	Programme Options that Improve Development Co-ordination		35
5 g.	Capacity building in Planning and Financial Management		36
5 h.	The District Planning Process		
5 i	Policy Planning Impacts		38
	Options for Capacity Building (box)		39
5 j	Capacity Building for Financial Management		40
5 k.	Linking Planning to Budgeting		
5l.	The Policy Piloting Implications		41
5 m.	The Institutional Framework		
	An LDLD Institutional Framework (box)		42
5 n.	The Focus		44
	Programme Options (box)		46
5 n.	Coordination and Monitoring		47
	Monitoring and Coordination		48
6.	Financing and Management Strategy		49
6 a.	The allocations		
6 b.	Overall Budget		
6 c.	Programme Management Unit		50
7	Partnership Strategy		51
8 a.	Exit Strategy		52
9	Risks and Potential		

1 LIBERIA'S PROGRAMME FOR DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT (LDLD)

1 a. Introduction and Summary

Over the past fifteen years Liberia has endured a series of intermittent wars. The immediate priority for the government is to focus its efforts and consolidate national peace and unity so as to preserve Liberia's territorial integrity. In the implementation of priority programmes, the government considers decentralization the main focus in speeding up the recovery of economic production, which will facilitate poverty reduction and, in the process, spur the attainment of human development objectives. Over the next two to three years, the government will encourage a wide range of discussions that pave the way for legal reforms, which shall facilitate the adoption of a decentralization strategy, an option that had been under consideration by previous Liberian regimes.

This draft concept paper is the result of a mission on behalf of the proposed United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Their joint efforts are to assist the Government of Liberia strengthen its attempts to streamline local government management. The support aims at speeding up the implementation of a range of community management and development programmes that promote local level planning while addressing the challenge of poverty reduction. The planning process to be developed shall articulate policy options that work towards promoting Liberia's long-term decentralization objectives. Thus, the intention of this concept paper is to provide a range of choices that assist the Government, UNDP, and UNCDF to embark on the formulation of an assistance programme. The assistance shall entail:

1. Outlining the range of issues that amplify opportunities and constraints for Liberia's reconstruction-development prospects, with a focus on the capacity of local governance institutions to address poverty-related questions;

2. Designing a programme that attempts to strengthen efforts in the management of community level development, while taking advantage of the great momentum generated by Liberia's social and political changes

3. Rationalizing a strategy for the formulation and implementation of Liberia's Decentralization and Local Development Programme (LDLD). A joint UNCDF/UNDP local development programme concept, the intention is to outline a range of country assistance efforts to strengthen the system of managing, providing, and delivering community services, with a focus on elements that have the greatest impact on poverty reduction. To this end, the proposed strategy consists of capacity building efforts that move beyond training to strengthening selected aspects of the governance and administration system, relevant elements of the governance process. Some of these may pertain to:
    - Questions of enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of public services, managed by the variety of government's service delivery agents, which in the Liberian case may include Counties, Districts, its cities, towns and/or the level of chiefdoms, with its entire set of clans and communities at the base of each, within the districts.

- The overall intention is to strengthen key aspects of the Government's ongoing efforts to establish and institutionalize the District Development Committee (DDC) concept, with UNDP's assistance and, in the process, enhance its management capacity.

- An ultimate objective of capacity building will be to strengthen local management efforts that work towards the establishment of community action plans that translate into the wider District Development Plan, as a pilot project and, ultimately, inform the proposed County Development Plans. The intention is to make up the sum-total of *processes* that facilitate poverty reduction in local government, in an attempt to improve public management and finance systems.

4. Finally, to outline a framework of programmes and support options that defines the probable elements of the proposed conduit for wider local government management support. It is anticipated that these options will include programmes that enhance support for Liberia's efforts towards the adoption of a decentralization strategy, even as they complement efforts in the reduction of poverty, in a bid to strengthen opportunities that improve rural and urban incomes.

5. Throughout the range of support provided, management of the programme will entail the mainstreaming of gender issues, as a cross cutting question.

The Local Governance Development Project (LDLD) Concept

- Support of Local Government Management - The intention is to focus on improving selected aspects of the system of administering development and its management, with a focus on improving the implementation and management of the DDCs.
- Policy and Programming Innovations - In an effort to strengthen the system of accountability, with a view to improving efficiency in the management of public resources, the proposed programme will extend the DDC concept by piloting the prospects for planning at the district level. The District Planning concept is an aspect intended to ensure that managing public service provision is consistent with ongoing attempts to rationalize public expenditures, given huge budget constraints. In bringing (establishing?) a planning dimension, the attempt will be to highlight the links between national policies, programmes, and projects, with the budget outlook, from various dimensions, to ensure that project implementation is consistent with national aspirations.

- Financing Mechanism - In a bid to install and/or strengthen the existing management system, the LDLD will innovate the launching of the District Development Fund (DDF), to be established within the pilot districts, as the coordinating entity in the establishment of the District Planning efforts.

- Pilot Effort - Three pilot districts will be selected both at the County and Community levels. The latter, with an added dimension of the planning aspect, will test the efficacy of the establishment of the District Development Committees. This is a policy support option, which is intended for wider implementation, with improvements in the institutionalization of the DDCs. The intention is to assist in defining the role and functions of the districts in their capacity to implement a wide range of County Government reform programmes, with a view to rationalizing a system of managing local service delivery, towards Liberia's decentralization.

2 NATIONAL SITUATION ANALYSIS AND CONTEXT

Years of conflicts left the social fabric in Liberia devastated. The necessary economic and social infrastructure was destroyed in the intermittent civil wars, which culminated in the unrest of 2003; that saw the nation fall into a state of progressive anarchy. Massive destruction of government facilities and widespread mayhem within the city of Monrovia made the situation grave, and led to the formal intervention of the international community. It led to the ouster and eventual exile of President Charles Taylor. . The end of 2003 followed with the installation of a two-year transitional government based on an interim power sharing agreement. The peace agreement, brokered by the international community, mandated the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) with the task of reestablishing a government of national unity based on democratic principles. An urgent requirement was the return of the country to normalcy, and in that, the speeding up of the presidential elections. In the events that followed, the UN Security Council resolved to deploy 15,000 peacekeepers to Liberia in an attempt to secure the peace.

2 a. The Main Challenge - A major aspect of the peace agreement was to request the NTGL to adopt urgent solutions to critical issues that had perpetuated internal conflicts. The critical solution being, the call for urgent management reforms, so as to secure the nation's wealth derived from its mineral and timber sectors. In adopting relevant and urgent fiscal reforms, the call was to urge the NTGL to curb government's flagrant budget misallocations and excessive state mismanagement. It has not been surprising then, that the standards of living have dropped drastically over time since per capita growth for 2004 is estimated to have been $118 as compared to $890 in 1980[1]. Previous governments showed no restraint in military spending, a tendency set against an archaic internal budget and management control system. In effect, the peace agreement called for the installation of an oversight element in fiscal management[2]. The intention has been to enforce transparency and shift budget management to ensure that government revenues reflect ongoing policy and budget priorities for social sectors, and ensure that allocations are well managed, to discourage misappropriations that existed in past regimes. Thus, with goodwill and support from its international development partners, the NTGL agreed to implement the major reforms required to strengthen fiscal management and bring Liberia out of the economic mismanagement of its past, through the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP)[3].

2 b. An Imperative - In adopting GEMAP, the intention has been to restore order and efficiency in economic management and, with it, to enforce prudent financial management that deters the past corrupt tendencies of public officials. Briefly, GEMAP is an attempt to inject consistency in the nature of policing state mismanagement that tended to characterize previous Liberian administrations. The programme is based on the implementation of six major technical components, the bulk of which focus on financial management:

a) safeguarding the tendency to misappropriate state revenues across the board,
b) improving budgetary management and procedures,
c) improving procurement,
d) anti-corruption measures,
e) supporting key financial and management institutions, and
f) governance aspects of wide capacity building.

[1] IMF Country Report No. 05/167
[2] UN/S/2005/7445
[3] Government of Liberia, the outline of recommendations in the GEMAP, 2005

In considering its potential local governance impacts, GEMAP's governance questions relate to the central government budgetary management issues that arise in the management of local resources and the provision of local services. Improving expenditure management and its implications on local governance is, thus, an imperative in the attempt to manage vast regions as the reconstruction efforts merge with development goals. The question of local government management, in support of the central government's vision and directives for improving overall fiscal management, will necessitate extending the capacity of local officials at various levels of an already frail administration system

This GEMAP *imperative* is a temporary measure and condition for further assistance to Liberia, as agreed to by the international development partners. To launch the implementation of the programme, it has been necessary to begin adjusting the legal framework in certain aspects of the economy, with the first attempt being made by amending procurement laws. With the newly adjusted Procurement Act, indications are that the implementation of fiscal reforms is officially underway. Although efforts to implement the main GEMAP reforms focus on the Ministry of Finance and its attendant priorities, efforts to manage the yet to surface aspects of local budgets need to be considered, at the earliest, given the ongoing efforts to extend the central government's presence at the County level, initially. Management of the central government procurement regulations, for the short term, will focus on key aspects of the economy, (particularly) its budget management, which ultimately filters down as the government begins to allocate expenditures to the sub-national level. To this end, the rationalization and management of the budget should begin to steer elements of local governance in the proper direction, given that the revision of the Procurement Act provides the space for beginning limited efforts that target strengthening county and district level financial management, in the effort towards decentralization. The Act's approval is, perhaps, the initial legal aspect of a decentralized management function that provides local government an opportunity to begin rethinking their budget management functions and roles, on behalf of the central government, at the lower end of the governance spectrum, in an effort to strengthen monitoring and expenditure control.

While the political will to decentralize has been acknowledged and the government's willingness to work towards decentralization is evident publicly, it is anticipated that for the next two years, local governments will begin the task of capacity building, through the employment of its good governance agenda, in an effort to usher needed changes in public administration and management. In the meantime, efforts to reform the local government management aspects are part of the larger initiatives towards decentralization, even as they are kept at a minimum, in the attempt to effectively monitor and sequence the wider efforts pertaining to its expenditure management aspects.

2 c. Economic Outlook - The current government has been installed against the background of a slow but steady pace of economic recovery, much of this dependent on the large presence of the international community, whose budgetary support for ongoing relief programme provide large injections funding. In effect, the 2005 level of real GDP growth was estimated at about 5 percent, which was by far higher than the estimated 2.6 percent growth in 2004[4]. As the intended reforms are implemented, recovery is expected to maintain its pace with the macro-economic objectives, given the regular checks on inflation, particularly against the presence of a high level of international assistance. The effective management of the economy is intended to have wide benefits in the main sectors of agriculture, forestry, mining, and services. In 2004, the agricultural share of the GDP was 51.9 percent at the national level, where the timber sector made up 11.8 percent, 0.1 percent, services made up 26.8 percent overall.

[4] Country Report on Liberia, No. 05/167. IMF, Washington. 2005.

In general, the overall reconstruction efforts are geared toward improving the macro-economic environment that works to strengthen Liberia's external debt management, which has been in arrears for over two decades, and is officially unsustainable.[5] For the medium-term, the rapid turnaround anticipated with the lifting of timber sanctions for 2006 expected GDP to grow by 17 percent, which will not occur given the slow pace of reforms needed to lift the sanction. Otherwise, the current year's GDP level is anticipated to increase by 4.9 percent. Much of the growth, besides the lifting of timber sanctions, is expected to come from inducements by the large presence of the international community working on relief and humanitarian assistance. The short-term peace dividends are beginning to surface as the major sectors begin to show promise. To ensure that this trend is guaranteed, the extension of the government's physical presence in major rural locations will be a desired boost for further economic progress, as an urgent need in extending safety and personal security to communities. The recent deployment of County Superintendents is testament to this commitment.

2 d. Poverty, Vulnerability - Over the conflict period, an estimated half a million people were displaced, around the region and within Liberia, if not forced to find solace in other places. With the implementation of the peace process, the peacekeeping force installed by the UN in 2003 has made it secure to enable the disarmament of at least 100,000 former combatants[6]. While efforts have been directed in the rehabilitation of community services and basic social welfare, the urgent question of mending the weakened social fabric and its livelihoods is being addressed, slowly but with certain progress. Unemployment is still high with almost half of Liberia's total population of 3.2 million being under the age of 18[7]. Estimates are that 52 percent of the population continues to live in extreme poverty with at least 36 percent living on less than $1 per day, no access to basic health care, education, and other social services[8]. Compounding the situation is the low level of literacy, estimated at about 70 percent. Progress made in reconstruction is substantial but the capacity to implement and coordinate efforts that pertain to long-term poverty reduction at the community level are still frail and haphazard. One of the poorest countries in Africa, Liberia's weak management of public services must address ways in which the state of its public health system can improve its health indicators: infant and under five mortality rates are at 157 and 235 per 1,000 live births respectively, with maternal mortality at 580 per 100,000 live births[9].

2 e. The Poverty-Gender Nexus - While efforts are being made to improve self-programming of poverty reduction by its international partners, the Liberian government has not been able to effectively coordinate the vast efforts. Still, only 35 percent of Liberians have access to safe water and, at that, only 7 percent of the rural population has access to adequate sanitation facilities.[10] More than this, the gender perspective of poverty in Liberia is critical and much needs to be done to provide equally for women's welfare. According to a UNDP review made to strategize an approach for mainstreaming gender concerns, "of Liberia's poor, more than 2/3 are women and girls. Of the youths and adults in Liberia who cannot read and write, 2/3 [are] women. Further, between 10-50% of those that experienced violence during the war, and those who continue to experience violence at the hands of partners, many are adult women and girls. The majority of refugees and those displaced by war and vulnerable to sexual violence, an estimated 80% are women and children. In Liberia as else where in sub-Sahara Africa, 55% of those living with HIV/AIDS are women, and new HIV infections are

[5] The debt to exports ratio was estimated at about 2,600 percent. Statistical Appendix, IMF, Washington, DC, 2005
[6] UN/S/2005/745, December 2005.
[7] UNICEF, Liberia Statistics, 2004
[8] ibid
[9] UNICEF, Emergency Appeal, 2005
[10] UNICEF, Health Indicators for Liberia, 2005.

disproportionately concentrated among younger women who have little education".[11] In brief, a large aspect of poverty in Liberia is gender-based and, thus will necessitate the shifting of priorities, in a bid to better target programmes that improve women's capacity to access income earning opportunities, while creating an enabling environment to provide skills training in a range of areas.

2 f. Poverty in the Urban Dimension - A substantial number of households are still displaced and for returnees, means of making their livelihoods are still dysfunctional. It is estimated that at least 300,000 displaced Liberians have returned home since 2004.[12] Most affected was the large rural population, which made up 80 percent of the total Liberian population prior to the waves of internal strife and displacement. The war triggered the out migration of rural folk to the extent that population levels in cities and towns steadily abated, in effect, affecting the rate of growth in urban areas, estimated to be 3.8 percent,[13] a figure whose impacts are manifested by the growing squalor spread throughout Liberia's landscape. It is estimated that at least 47 percent of Liberia's total population, almost 1.5 million people, currently reside in the urban areas of cities and townships. These conditions have not changed much since UNDP's attempt to analyze the extent of poverty in Liberia in 2001. The analysis was an extensive effort to distinguish the nature of urban and rural poverty, which revealed that more than 50.6 percent of the urban households surveyed in Monrovia were found to fall below the poverty line.[14] Within the remaining urban areas, defined to be any place with a population of 2,000, the proportion of households living in dire poverty, for County headquarters and towns respectively, range from 75.2 percent to 85.5 percent. In the absence of normal communal coping mechanisms, the international community's multi-sectoral support efforts are assisting in diverse labours, with programmes that range from improving farming systems, to roads, to the reconstruction of schools and health centers, to the rebuilding of homes, and strengthening local capacity building efforts.

2 g. Local Capacity Gaps in Poverty Reduction - Various attempts made by the various relief programmes are making inroads and have been partially successful in the extension of humanitarian assistance. As noted in a recent workshop to review the status of programming by international partners working in Community and Local Development, there is a need to strengthen communication and coordination at various levels, across programmes and partnerships, to ensure that such assistance is made long-term.[15] Despite these efforts, there is an absence of a viable institutional framework to base continued support upon, given the long hiatus in the consistent provision of public services at the lower end of the local government management system. The ability to coordinate the vast number of programmes and international development partners, against the existing weak institutional and management capacity remains a major constraint which the Liberian Government needs to address if poverty reduction is going to be successful at the community level. The absence of local government capacity has created a vacuum, filled up by the fledgling presence of the Liberian civil society that has the international community's support. In an attempt to speed up the reform of governance support systems that facilitate community participation, while discouraging dependency on short-term relief assistance, there will be need for long-term, capacity building efforts.

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2 h. Personal Safety – Noteworthy is the lack of capacity for extending the state's presence and legitimate government in distant locations. Some counties have pockets of insecurity, making it

[11] UNDP, Liberia: "Towards Gender Responsive Development", 2005
[12] http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EVOD-6MMJN6
[13] UNICEF, Liberia, Statistics, 2004
[14] UNDP, Liberia Poverty Profile, 2001
[15] Wekwete, Kadmiel, Back to Office Report, Mission to Liberia, April 2006; Workshop's background Paper, Community and Local Development in Liberia, World Bank, Liberia. April, 2006

difficult to extend the implementation of reconstruction programmes, given the absence of a policing system for defense in certain critical locations. It is not surprising that in its attempts to extend its peacekeeping obligations, the UN is limited by the vastness of the landscape and its management and resources required to effectively control illegal markets in the mineral as well as the timber sectors.[16] Although patrols in critical areas are well coordinated and sufficient, there are inadequate efforts to strengthen the policing and military elements, given shortfalls in budgetary support. The current efforts to stem military spending and shift the budget towards social and humanitarian efforts may delay the full enforcement needed to secure distant regions. Given that security is a major issue in vast regions, there is an outstanding question pertaining to community managed policing support options, as part of interim efforts that extend aspects of security management to the local level. Some examples abound in the (African) region, with particular significance in Ugandan attempts to reconcile communities and undertake reconstruction at the local level.

2 i. Considerations and Options

With the above in the background, there is a need to maintain momentum by targeting the implementation of urgent local level reform programmes that are critical to unlocking Liberia's development potential. Some of the solutions are management related, the point of departure for extending awareness of the merits in decentralization, particularly its objectives and vision for the whole nation, given the absence of a roadmap, yet, as an urgent priority that complements and fast-tracks poverty reduction elements, that may address gender mainstreaming throughout the programme. The process towards decentralization may perhaps be designed and rationalized as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy preparatory process. This is the potential milestone of achievement in the process of laying out the features of Liberia's decentralization, a principle that the Liberian government has espoused and is working towards. Thus, in the approach adopted for the extension of UNDP's support to the establishment of the District Development Committees, the proposed programme would have three main components, as a typical UNCDF tool, its Local Development Programmes (LDP): a) support for local capacity building, b) local development fund facility, and c) generate policy level learning capacity.[17]

In preparing support options, the adoption of a programme in which to begin implementing aspects designed to assist current activities, used to gradually enable the process of decentralization, will be viewed against the special circumstances found in Liberia:

- In being set against *the sanctions environment*, there is a need to rationalize the expectations of the long-term programme of decentralization as an all encompassing strategy, with full political backing from the government.
- The capacity to implement the full scale and scope of reforms required to institutionalize decentralization as a priority programme is immense, given the current obligations and priorities which constrain government revenues and expenditure allocations. Hence,
- The need to lower expectations and implement a scaled down scope of support in the ongoing efforts, with a view to merging the extended elements as a new programme within the CBR, if possible.

[16] Global Witness, "An Architecture of Instability: How the critical link between natural resources and conflict remains unbroken", December 2005
[17] Bonfiglioli, Angelo, Local Governance for Poverty Reduction, UNCDF, New York. 2003.

- Another option would be to appraise the emerging but scaled down scope of support the government is set to initiate, in its efforts to coordinate the vast efforts with its partners, with the Superintendents in charge.

2 j Towards A Possible Poverty Reduction Mechanism - Over the reconstruction period, the challenge in Liberia shall be to harness the various relief efforts and attempt to shape and integrate them into long-term local government management efforts. These ought to be initiatives that stimulate the development of the country, with special reference to the living conditions of the poor and vulnerable groups. In addition to clear financial support, the priority would be to set up a network of like-programmes, that fuse thematic issues and concerns which would be addressed as a management issue, with key questions addressed in a coherent approach at the strategic level, through the interim coordination meetings.

Among top priorities:

- Improving access to shelter, health, education, and related infrastructure, as well as other services required to improve social conditions;
- Ensuring household food security and the reconstruction of a fragile agricultural base through concerted efforts to improve rural incomes, especially of the poor farmers, while stimulating productive linkages with the urban sector;
- Strengthening select options for employment creation and income earning prospects at the community level, with a view to creating prospects that address local economic development, with particular reference to developing the extensive natural resource base, as envisioned by the proposed D4D Programme[18].
- Support the *management* of relief programmes as a local government capacity building element, as part of the agenda.

Should the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) be a conduit through which decentralized management of the planning process that prioritizes government's poverty reduction programme then:

- The finalization of the PRSP would culminate in the launch and formalization of the government's decentralization strategy.
- Arising from concerns, related to improving the overall framework for coordination of the varied assistance at the local and community levels, establish a comprehensive and integrated policy framework that enhances the project management and implementation complementarities. This would focus on drawing the vast efforts into components whose different dimensions are jointly coordinated at the County and District levels. In this, the absence of a functional system for delivery of services calls for the implementation of limited aspects of the larger decentralization framework to be adopted, in essence, beginning a process that defines key legal reforms needed to make the planning process relevant in anticipation of management changes in local government.
- The implementation of select aspects of decentralization would entail advancing critical management reforms, carefully synchronized with Poverty Reduction projects.

[18] A UNDP/UNCDF Proposed programme that highlights the links between local economic development for community managed employment creation, income generation and the related potential for mobilizing local government sources of revenues, as a decentralization objective.

This could be made more meaningful, given its potential for enhancing a coherent approach to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable communities, in an effort to speed up urgent priorities. Among these priorities is the implementation of a variety of social programmes and mechanisms, some of which safeguard livelihoods and would require the establishment of specific channels for extending such assistance. In addition, the intention should be to improve the coordination of projects, so as to strengthen synergies and complementarities across sectors and programmes. As the PRSP preparatory process begins, the rationale for decentralization is made more meaningful in justifying the proposed programme, as it's potential for speeding up the implementation of reforms.

2 k. Coordination Gaps: The Basis of LDLD Options - With the Government shifting from post-conflict recovery to implementing its reconstruction and development agenda, there is a need to appraise the requirements for effectively managing the current local management capacity constraints, of which the main issue is its logistics support. As the government takes up the challenge of organizing its local government management and administrative system, the gaps in the provision of support systems for community participation will need to be addressed. Current efforts in this direction focus on unifying economic reconstruction, the rehabilitation of livelihoods with improvements in the governance capacity of local level government, with the ultimate objective being the adoption of decentralization, a principle which the Liberian government has espoused and is working towards. Yet, little effort is made to address the establishment of a temporary coordinating mechanism that would allow cross-sectoral and intra-programme communication. Some efforts would be directed towards establishing platforms which would generate wide public meetings and foras where local officials and the international partners could come together, under the auspices of the County Superintendents, to resolve issues and chart progress. Much could be accomplished, should creativity in the management of these coordinating mechanisms be delegated to the local government, with a division of responsibility in managing certain aspects, as an obligation to the stakeholders involved.

The intention is to facilitate community participation and a greater role in decision-making, while honing the leadership skills of local government officials, even as they set up the coordination mechanism. Among the various approaches utilized, for poverty reduction and community participation programming, when improving the delivery of public services are: the European Union (EU), whose support focuses on the reintegration of the displaced and returnees, the World Bank's, with its restoration of infrastructure and basic services, UNDP's Community Based Recovery (CBR), which attempts to strengthen the institutions that facilitate community participation in decision making and implementation of projects in establishing District Development Committees (DDCs), USAID's Liberian Community Infrastructure Project (LCIP), that supports the DDRR process while focusing on employment generation. Essentially, the international community could assist the Liberian Government's poverty reduction efforts, with a view to establishing a range of platforms and periodic meetings, with the aim of coordinating thematic questions relevant to basic issues, that link to the proposed local planning and implementation capacity building programme:

- Promoting income earning opportunities for the poor through increased employment opportunities in farm and non-farm activities;
- Improving access to basic services for the poor through the rehabilitation and provision of water and sanitation, improvements in health and education services, and rehabilitation of facilities;
- Improving participation by rebuilding the systems of communal consultations and strengthening its coordination and collaboration with the local government management system, thus increasing dialogue for decision making;

- Improving farm incomes, with a view to increasing food security and reducing vulnerability, as an aspect of wider local economic development programmes.

In implementing community level support programmes, there will be a need to carefully consider the coordinating requirements needed for the various activities that address the needs of the destitute and other vulnerable groups. Many of these activities are sector based, along specific objectives, given requirements by partners. In the ensuing, the tendency is to fragment inter-agency efforts and the community's areas of need, without considering the merits of a comprehensive or holistic approach to problem solving. While certain organizations are equipped with the necessary staff resources and know-how, capacity is not equally distributed across the spectrum of stakeholders. To allow the Liberian government the opportunity to strengthen its own internal capacity, efforts should be made to ensure that capacity gaps and assessments are made consistent, in an effort to improve implementation. This will require a review of the existing system of providing social service support programmes and ways found to improve coordination across agencies and within sectors. The LDLD attempts to rationalize the manner in which capacity building of local governments could enhance the coordination of programmes currently being implemented at the district level, in the absence of a viable service delivery and management system.

2 l. Public Management: The Local Dimension[19]

Years of public mismanagement have left the Liberian administration system inefficient and, perhaps, unable to implement reforms needed to steer the envisioned growth. An absence of leadership, its institutional framework and functional capacity, has constrained assistance efforts. In effect, the lack of local government capacity has allowed Liberia's reconstruction and development partners to pursue, by default, their own objectives at the local level given the lack of the institutional capacity. Compounded by an equal absence of coherent attempts to program national development in the past, sector priorities made by each ministry are not implemented with adequacy due to weaknesses in management and a lack of resources. There have been situations when programmed social service allocations towards education, health and public works have been shifted back into the Ministry of State and that of Finance, for budgetary support.[20] Furthermore, the absence of a coherent framework and implementation plan programme for each sector has tended to scatter governance efforts, a situation exacerbated by the lack of local level capacity.

Partly, these public mismanagement questions are those that the international community is willing to attend to, as outlined in the wider reforms, from which key governance elements are drawn. The relevance of such reforms envisioned under GEMAP should be viewed as a management prerequisite for improving financial management performance and work towards lifting sanctions. More than that, this may be the beginning of a governmental attempt to shift expenditures away from military spending and more towards social and economic issues. The sanctions, whose stringent requirements are outlined for the mineral and timber sectors, have tended to deflate the scope of national revenue mobilization efforts. By speeding up the implementations of the recommendations, the international community proposed the temporary establishment of a viable system of accounting for all timber revenues to ensure that these are directed to social and humanitarian needs.[21]

[19] This section extends the scope of issues addressed by the recent Local Government Capacity assessment made by Mittullah, Dr. W., Poe, M. and Haines in the study conducted on behalf of the Liberia Governance Reform Commission, UNDP/GRC, 2006.
[20] UN S/2005/745
[21] IMF Country Report No. 04/84

Given the huge scope of support needed to begin formally adopting decentralization, it may be worth considering a set of urgent but limited efforts, to set in motion the eventual process that installs scaled elements of the strategy. It is against this background that partial aspects of decentralization could be implemented, with a view to unlocking Liberia's existing but dormant potential, given the return of peace and security to the country, even against the weakened state and local government management system.

Liberia's Brief Historical Background

Some historical background in the establishment of the public administration system in Liberia's history is important, in an effort to appreciate its current challenges.

Located in West Africa, Liberia is one of Africa's oldest republics, having gained its independence in 1847. It was established as a colony made up of freed African American slaves, repatriated to the continent on an experiment supported by the American Colonization Society (ACS), with partial support from the various state governments. Land for the purpose of the resettlement was acquired in Sierra Leone from the leaders of the Bassa and Dey people near Cape Mesurado, in compliance with the request of the British colonial government, on behalf of the ACS 1821.[1] From the initial settlement of almost 85 settlers, additional others arrived from a number of states where the state government favored the emigration of freed men to Africa. Later, others freed from Barbados in the West Indies also became part of the settler community. In time, internal expansion of the settlement occurred through interaction with indigenous communities, with whom the settlers inter-married. Management and administration of the colony was under the direction of the ACS, which, at that time, saw it was necessary, to promote the idea of the establishment of the Commonwealth of Liberia, establishing an internal constitution by 1839, albeit in the absence of statehood.

A Commonwealth - The management of the Commonwealth relied on revenues generated from its custom duties levied on trade. This practice was detested by the local indigenous traders and abhorred by the British colonial administration that warned the ACS of its illegal administrative status, and its capacity to levy such a tax, given its private organization status and in the absence of sovereignty. In effect, the Commonwealth of Liberia leadership thought it mandatory to seek its independence, to exercise is full taxing authority, if the settlement was to survive. Thereafter, the Liberian leadership voted for independence by 1846 and in the following year, established itself as the Republic of Liberia, on the basis of its internal constitution, with its Declaration of Independence, a partial replica of the US example. The international recognition of Liberia as a nation in 1847 began swiftly by forging relations with England and France, in the absence of the US government's formal recognition, which later came in 1862 when President Abraham Lincoln saw fit to do so and to assist Liberia with its formal nation building process. Internal management ensued along the lines established by the settlers, replicating ideals normal to the economic and social circumstances of the time, and forging relations with the internal populations, as necessary.

Streamlining the internal administration was a necessary attempt to manage and control dissension, given the tendency for inter-tribal conflicts between ethnic groups. The management was made by the Justice Department, whose Interior Parish unit was responsible for tribal affairs. Eventual social and economic difference led to the creation of an elite class made up of the settlers, with an underclass made up of the local indigenes, as the settlers began replicating their vision of development based on aspirations derived from the US, in Liberia. The development and events of the time eventually led to the dampening of a dream, where, instead, social consciousness split the new nation. "The Americo-Liberians formed an elite class and perpetuated a double-tiered social structure in which local African peoples could not achieve full participation in the nation's social, civic, and political life. The Americo-Liberians replicated many of the exclusions and social differentiations that had so limited their own lives in the United States."[2]

Over time, efforts to exert and retain control over the state and its growing native population, created Liberia's consistent patterns of anomalies in leadership and management of national resources, even as its economic fortunes waned in an attempt to adhere to economic principles of nationhood. By the turn of the century, the inability to pay for its development needs saw the near collapse of the Liberian economy, as it struggled to modernize its agriculture, with particular significance in the wake of the stagnation that followed the pull out of financial support from the ACS. Heavy reliance on loans from its western allies, especially by England and France, and with later support from the US, saw Liberia pull its economic programme back in form.

The Growing Challenge - By the 1930s, however, the government was almost bankrupt and necessitated the leasing of large tracts of land to private US companies in an effort to improve its domestic resource base and establish a reliable revenue base. With time, modest successes in modernizing key elements of the Liberian society, in providing urban-based infrastructure and, in particular, with the arrival of private investments in agriculture, particularly when rubber and timber became major sources of production. Liberia became a model worth emulating in Africa, due to aspirations toward independence even despite its internal social and economic conflicts. President Tubman's election saw Liberia forge itself as a vanguard for change, making development a reality for many by 1944. His election made indigenous Africans aspire for better opportunities and made integration possible for indegenes - he granted them the right to vote and allowed extensive social and economic freedoms by 1946. With newfound economic wealth in agricultural development and mineral resources, Tubman modernized essential aspects of the elite settlements but was unable to provide adequately for the bulk of the population, and its masses in the rural areas remained largely poor and without access to basic needs of water, sanitation, and health services.

In 1949, the set of Rules for Governing the Hinterland, approved in 1943[3] were revised to improve the administration and dispensation of public services. These revised rules outline the basic management of the local government system, made up of counties, districts, and within them, a tribal government system of administration, performing on behalf of the central government. In a nutshell, the essence of Liberia's dual legal systems is a modern and traditional governance system in the administration of public management.

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[1] Library of Congress, History of Liberia, a Timeline, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam004.html.
[2] Ibid.
[3] And managed its affairs on the basis of three sub-divisions: East, West and Southern provinces

2 m. Present Political and Administrative Structure - Liberia is a unitary system of government, managed through the set of modern and tribal (customary) legal systems. Aspects of customary practice are subject to tribal rules, based on an unwritten code of conduct, the universally accepted customary laws that govern social interaction within a tribe. The republic of Liberia, in its unitary state is, made up of an Executive and Legislative branches. The Executive branch of government consists of the President, who is the Chief of State and Head of Government, elected for a six-year term. In the Executive is also the Cabinet of Ministers, which the President appoints. The Legislative Branch consists of a bicameral National Assembly that consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Both have elected officials, where the Senate has 30 members elected by popular vote to serve nine year terms and the House of Representatives has 64 members, elected to serve six year terms. To administer the affairs of the central government on the ground, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) has been mandated to carry out the coordination and supervisory aspects. Its administrative function and role are managed nationally through the local units, Liberia's several layers of governance, sub-divided under two systems: the sub-national levels, whose units of administration may consist of the county and district level, with the rest of its elements being subject to customary law, through the system of Traditional Authority.

3 Local Management in the System of Service Delivery[22]

3 a. Background: With respect to the provision of service to lower levels of governance, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MPEA) is charged with the prescription of national policies that guide the formulation of communities' development aspirations. In the implementation of these strategic policies, the MIA has the responsibility for the administration of public goods and services, through Liberia's system of local governance, given its mandate and responsibilities for supervising the hinterland. MIA is responsible for coordinating the affairs of counties and districts, in conjunction with its system of tribal governance. Where line ministries are concerned, the nature of projects defines the terms of relationships between the County and District ministerial aspects, as defined by each ministry's sectoral outlook, specific to each county and district, and managed by its officers, under the auspices of the County Superintendents, with their District Commissioners.

- Over the past two decades, the progressive deterioration of public management has given rise to gross inefficiencies, given the shortages of resources, departure of qualified staff, and poor logistics. The absence of the national framework for policy formulation and implementation of sector programmes has been absent, to an extent where the ramifications are evident in the spatial inequalities that currently exist

- With the presence of the international community, there has been an attempt to restore the basic provision of urgent humanitarian aid, against the weakened state of the local government and management system of the past. In the absence of a fully functioning local government system, the speed with which international assistance is dispensed has tended to shape and structure evolving programmes of support, to the extent where policy and programming of priority projects may appear inconsistent, given the variety of donor programmes.

3 b. **Management -** By mandate, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs is responsible for a wide range of development planning and the coordination of related questions.[23] Among these will be

[22] Interviews with eminent Liberians on the nature of service delivery at the Local Level; noted significant inputs by the Hon. Maxwell Poe, former Deputy Minister, Ministry of Internal Affairs, NTGL

a responsibility for the formulation of economic planning policies and sector issues, in collaboration with line ministries. Through the sub-national level, the Ministry executes its development agenda through the county and district officials, in conjunction with the MIA, the latter being in charge of the overall administration of local level development. The two, over the years have tended to perform their functions with logistical ease, given the subject at hand. In retrospect, the successive regimes that have attempted to adjust the governance system and mechanisms in place never managed to steer the intended reforms, however deliberate the efforts. In effect, the functional delineation of the two Ministries has been clear, but opaque with respect to the coordination of national policies for development and implementation, particularly with regard to those concerning local governance and management. This constraint perhaps emanates from the character of the existing institutional and legal framework that underpins the system of service provision, in a nutshell, which pertains to the Constitutional question of the state of Liberia itself, that the new government intends to begin addressing, within the next five years.

Where the national political climate is still riddled with unsettled questions that pertain to the mode of approach and methods of development management, there will be a need to consider extending the level of dialogue pertaining to the management of lower level governance institutions, if strengthening the management of community services becomes the priority, as a peace-building imperative. To do this, the government intends to encourage widespread dialogue and to promote the management aspect of local governments as a matter of urgency, in nation -building, in an effort to promote and in that, to consolidate its national unity. In this, there is a need to strengthen attempts at understanding the concept of decentralization, its local management aspects as a matter of urgency in reinventing community development efforts. The existing local level structures, provided for under the Rules and Regulations for Governing the Hinterland, need to be revised, rationalized and strengthened, in the interim, while wider legal reforms are being considered.

3c. The County - For administrative purposes, Liberia is made up of 15 political divisions, called counties, which include: Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe.

- To administer the functions of counties is the office of the County Superintedent, appointed by the President and charged with the responsibility of supervising the government's mandate, as would be expected.

- Among key functions is the coordinating role, where an important purpose is to coordinate development management in all districts under her/his area of legitimate jurisdiction.

- In conjunction with the line ministries concerned, the County Development Superintendent is responsible for the technical aspects of development. Equally important is the Superintendent's role for coordinating the larger County Executive Council and is in charge of the annual County Development Meeting, a platform for reviewing ongoing development efforts.

- The Executive Council within the County is made up of County Commissioners, Revenue Agents, Mining Agents, all NGOs, Commanding Military Officers, Business Community leaders, and Paramount, Clan, and General Town Chiefs. By virtue of its recognition in the

[23] MPEA, Government of Liberia, Planning and Programming For Managing The Reconstruction and Development Agenda, 2006.

Rule on Governing the Hinterlands, the County level is tantamount to being the de-facto local government, pending legal amendments and change in status, as proposed by the government.

- The recent appointment of County Superintendents began the process through which local government management shall be strengthened and their role redefined to accommodate the rapidly changing scenario for implementing the reconstruction and development programmes currently being managed through the array of international partners, with assistance from communities and the frail civil society, made up of a handful of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), based in distant locations.

3d. Statutory District - Below the County level are the 32 statutory districts, among which are: Gbarzon, Konobo (in Grand Gedeh County), Morweh (Rivercess), Juarzon, Kpanyan, Sanquin, Tarjuwon, Jaedae (Sinoe), Dorboh, Buah, Jioh, Jreo, Trehn, Forpoh (Grand Kru), Webbo, Tienpo (River Gee), Karluway, Barvobo (Maryland), Kokoyah (Bong), Diahn Blae, Glakon, Neekreen, Wee, Kpaegbna (Bassa), Gbeh-lay-Geh, Zoe Geh, Sanniquelle Mah, Sacleppea, Tappita (Nimba), Suehn/Mecca (Bomi), Careysburg, Todee (Montserrado). Counties without statutory districts include: Capemount, Gbarpolu, Lofa and Margibi.

- In their functions, statutory districts have been providing a range of services to a set of districts under their area of jurisdiction. Some functions include technical assistance to districts in augmenting the capacity in planning and the implementation of projects, defined on an ad-hoc basis.

- The Statutory District Superintendent is appointed by the President and is accountable to the County Superintendent and functions as a technical arm of the Superintendent's public works office. The Superintendent at this level is charged with the responsibility of assisting the districts to implement their development, on behalf of the County Development Superintendent, responsible for the set of activities defined under each district within a statutory delineation.

- Given the tendency to duplicate its function with the administrative districts, growing concerns intimate the need to revise the set of local government rules pertaining to local governance and to streamline the functions of all districts, in a bid to close the fragmentation of service provision and restore the logical functions of the system of development.

- Questions regarding the relevance of the functions of this level of administration abound given their political and jurisdictional basis. In an attempt to coordinate development, the District Development Superintendent provides technical assistance support, particularly with regard to public works if called upon.

- Some visible functions currently undertaken by the Superintendent, through his own volition, is the coordination of the establishment and functioning of the Ministry's effort to implement District Development Committees (DDCs) within the jurisdiction of the statutory districts. The Statutory District has taken on responsibility for linking the DDCs scope of work to the County.

3e. Districts - At the lower end of the local government system is the district, headed by the District Commissioner, appointed by the President and assisted by a Council of Chiefs, when need be, in consultation with the Ministry's recently established District Development Committee (DDC). The DDCs have been established by MIA, with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its Community Based Recovery Programme (CBRP). Efforts are

underway to institutionalize DDCs as agents for the management aspects of development planning and implementation of community based initiatives at the District level. DDCs have been established to provide:

(1) an organized framework for coordination of recovery and development assistance provided by UN Agencies and other bilateral donors at the community level and,

(2) the basis for local and community members in equally determining priority areas of support and in participating fully at the levels of the project cycle.[24]

Ideally, as the DDCs scope of work evolves, it would be implemented with assistance from its own Statutory District, given the technical nature of its scope of work pending formulation of the community development action plans. These action plans are in the process of being formulated and are yet to materialize from the assembling of potential projects identified by communities across the districts. Within the districts, there is the Council of Chiefs, made up of Paramount and Clan Chiefs, accountable to the District Commissioner, an officer appointed to manage the district.

- The function of the Council varies within a range of ad-hoc issues, but focuses on the management of traditional questions and responsibilities. Besides being responsible for the administration of all government functions and responsibilities within its boundary, a district is empowered by the 1949 Revised Rules and Regulations to supervise, organize, and encourage development of industries while tending to the welfare of the people, among other crucial issues. There are 119 districts in total spread over fifteen counties in Liberia.

- Since the beginning of the reconstruction period, assistance has focused on providing community services, with the bulk of efforts going into humanitarian needs and the rebuilding of infrastructure, while a fragment of the efforts focus on capacity building for district management. To bring a sense of coherence to programming, UNDP's Community Based Recovery Programme (CBRP) is assisting the government in establishing the District Development Committees (DDCs), based at the apex of programming at the lower levels. This is an effort to establish the base of community ownership of programmes implemented by international partners, in a bid to promote a sense of cohesiveness in Liberia's social setting, as suggested.[25] The proposed programme intends to strengthen the DDCs and to extend its functions through the introduction of a pilot capacity building programme designed to support the formulation of District Development Plans, assembled from the community action plans that identify priority projects at the lowest levels.

[24]MIA/UNDP support, District Development Committees (DDCs), 2006
[25] UNDP/World Bank, Community Cohesion in Liberia: A post-War rapid Social Assessment. Social Development Papers: Conflict prevention and Reconstruction, Paper No. 21, January 2005.

- The Statutory District has taken on the responsibility for linking the DDCs scope of work to the County. Despite the flawed mechanism, structure of the Statutory District highlights an attempt to encourage the coherence and convergence of efforts among the two tiers of government. While the government plans to review the system of local government, most believe that there had been a tendency to create ad-hoc local units, which will need to be thoroughly reviewed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT	**ITS RESPONSIBILITIES**
Responsible Agents	**Role and Functions**
Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs	• Responsible for overall coordination and formulation of strategic economic and development policies • Supervises its responsibilities at the County level via its Line Officers at the County/regional levels, in charge of economic planning
Ministry of Internal Affairs	• Charged with the responsibility of conducting and improving local government, via supervision and direction of activities of the political units • In charge of the management and adjudication of tribal law
Counties Chief Administrator: County Superintendent, Appointed Technical Manager – Asst. Superintendent (Development) County Inspector – enforces local management regulations County Cabinet – Heads of Line Ministries Main Coordination Platforms: The County Executive Council, and its ad hoc fora, with an Annual County Development Meeting.	• • Administration and Coordinating of public management in the districts under its jurisdiction. • Monitors compliance with established regulations, supervising all levels of local management • Manages the development budget allocations and approves all district budgets • In conjunction with the line ministries concerned, the County Development Superintend is responsible for the technical aspects of development.
Statutory Districts Head – District Superintendent Administration - District Commissioner Township Commissioner – A Municipal authority Paramount Chiefs – Heads of Set of clans in a tribe Clan Chiefs – Head of Clans General Town Chiefs (in charge of 250 huts within a clan)	• • Each Statutory District has several districts under its technical supervision, its area of legitimate jurisdiction. The number of administrative districts supervised by the SD's range from two to more than four. • Functions as an extension of the County Development Superintendent, with a technical role specific to support a range of ad hoc public works management and related support • Key functions appears to be in the provision of management for infrastructure programmes and projects, in some cases • Provides support to ongoing capacity building of the establishment of the District Development Council (DDC) concept, where relevant • Legitimate functions not well defined.
Districts Head Administrator: District Commissioner Township Commissioner Paramount Chiefs Clan Chiefs General Township	• • Supervises and monitors all administrative matters in the district • Responsible for all development management issues, initiation of projects, as need be, coordination with partners • Adjudicates appeal cases from the paramount Chiefs • DC is the Head of the DDC • Paramount Chiefs, through the Clan and Township Chiefs are responsible for law and order under customary law, with ad hoc responsibilities pertaining to welfare within his tribe, including initiation of development projects
Cities Head – An elected Mayor City Council – Elected Councilors from existing zones in the city Tribal Governor – In charge of Tribal management questions within the Municipality, accountable to the City Mayor, on behalf of the Superintendent	• • Recent revision of Local Government management rules, pending adoption of the decentralization policy, some aspects pertain to: • Cities are to be made into municipal corporations, to have the legal basis for levying taxes, to sue and be sued, as need be • Accountable to he Superintendent

Since the beginning of the reconstruction period, assistance has focused on providing community services, with the bulk of efforts going into the humanitarian and rebuilding of infrastructure, while a fragment of the efforts focus on capacity building for district management. To bring a sense of coherence to programming, UNDP's Community Based Recover programme (CBRP) is assisting the government in establishing the District Development Committees (DDCs), based at the apex of the programming at the lower levels. This is an effort to establish the base of community ownership of programmes implemented by the international partners, in a bid to promote a sense of cohesiveness in Liberia's social setting, as suggested[26]. The proposed programme intends to strengthen the DDCs and to extend its functions through the introduction of a pilot capacity building programme designed to support the formulation of District Development Plans, assembled from the community action plans that identify priority projects at the lowest levels.

3f. Cities and Towns - Liberia's urban settlements consist of the main Municipality (Monrovia) as well as other secondary towns and smaller cities spread over the hinterland. The administrative functions of these areas are directly under the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Department of Urban Affairs. This Department is responsible for the demarcation and all aspects of urban management, as mandated by the Liberian institutional management defined in the Ministry of Internal Affairs functional regulations. There are at least 126 cities and 237 towns. City governance is under the direct responsibilities of an appointed 9 member City Council. The head of the City Council is the Mayor, who is elected by popular vote. On the other hand, a town is managed by the Township Commissioner, appointed by the President. On management issues, the city acts as the Headquarters of the town.

3g. Municipality of Monrovia – The Monrovian municipality is the main local government, the capital city of Liberia, with an estimated population of 1.5 million, albeit designed to accommodate about 400,000.[27] Monrovia is Liberia's largest city as well as its administrative, commercial, communications, and financial centre.

- Its economy revolves around the harbour, which was improved by U.S. forces under lend-lease during World War II. In 1948 the first port capable of handling ocean-going vessels was opened; there are now several ports, including a free port. Main imports include building materials, general cargo and petroleum and exports cover bulk latex, cocoa, coffee, crude rubber, iron ore, and timber. Manufactured goods, potentially, include cement, refined petroleum, food products, bricks and tiles, furniture, and pharmaceuticals.[28]

- The city is legally defined to undertake its semi-autonomous functions, as provided and guided by directives of the Executive branch in government. Under its statutes, the city is mandated to provide waste management services, with minimal control of the mobilization of property taxes and an array of other business taxes, in partnership with the central government. Its environmental management capacity being grossly inadequate, the government's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in control of the city's responsibilities of the environment. In the wake of the recent crises, international partners made extensive efforts to minimize the grave health risk posed by months of uncollected refuse in critical areas. Despite its capacity to generate additional revenues, particularly from

[26] UNDP/World Bank, Community Cohesion in Liberia: A post-War rapid Social Assessment. Social Development Papers: Conflict prevention and Reconstruction, Paper No. 21, January 2005.
[27] Interview with the Executive Assistant, City Government of Monrovia, 2006.
[28] http://www.otal.com/liberia/

its property base and the shipping industry, the city has no capacity to access its share of revenues mobilized by the central government.

3 g. Customary and Traditional System of Service

Chiefdom - The Chiefdom is at the apex of Liberia's Tribal Authority, being accountable to the District Commissioner. At present, there are 215 Chiefdoms, with 476 Clans, across the 15 counties. According to the customary law (Article 21**,** pertaining to Liberia's Tribal Government),[29] each tribe is governed by the Paramount Chief, elected by the Council of Chiefs and Elders, subject to the approval or disapproval of the President.

- In its administrative organization, the tribe consists of clans according to the tribal traditions, and is ruled by a number of Clan Chiefs, supervised by the Paramount Chief. The Clan Chief is elected by members of the Clan, said to have reached maturity and are owners of huts and not delinquent on taxes[30].

- As the coordinating entity for all clans within any tribe the Paramount Chief is the supreme tribal leader. Among the variety of roles he must perform on behalf of the DC would be to enforce tax collection and other forms of government revenues, supervision of road construction, improvement of agriculture and trade, among important functions.

- To facilitate the duties of the Paramount Chief, the Tribal Treasury was established, managed by the Tribal Treasurer, who was responsible for preparing the annual budget of the tribal administration, for submission to the DC. In effect, the Paramount Chief's area of jurisdiction extends to the (customary aspects in the) Towns, through the Township Chief, an appointed official. There are 237 Township Chiefs in all.

3 g. The Inter-governmental Fiscal Relationships

Liberia's protracted war worsened the functions of its local government management system, notwithstanding the cumbersome pattern of its units of administration. The excessive number of small jurisdictions without clearly defined functions necessitates the review of the existing system of management. Since local governance is largely driven by the existing structure of humanitarian assistance initiatives, service delivery is constrained. The inherent existence of fragmented responsibilities and the duplication of functional roles, particularly between the large county and district administrative units, against the elected tiers of lower levels of governance, compounds local governance inefficiencies. The structure of management retains its central government driven basis, while current efforts are geared to shifting the trend towards community approaches.

At present, the country has 126 cities and 237 townships, located within the 119 districts, based across Liberia's 15 counties. None of these are functionally autonomous, and worse, none has access to the existing revenue base, which is under the control of central government, even for the Municipality of Monrovia. The potential for citizen participation in decision-making though existing in the representational units (urban areas), given their ability to elect their own mayors, there is no autonomy. Past attempts to provide for local government units did so until 1980, when MIA had been able to allocate a block grant totaling $50,000, earmarked for development purposes, to County

[29]MIA, Revised Rules for Governing the Hinterland, Government of Liberia, 1949, 2001 (ed).
[30] ibid

offices. The proposed programme is an attempt to begin the process through which the inter-governmental relationships are clarified and financial management questions are addressed.

Partnerships: Local Development Support in Service Provision

The local institutional leadership and capacity vacuum created by the protracted wars in Liberia has reconstituted norms to the provision and delivery of public services to the masses. As the humanitarian crises spread, the speed in responding to calls for assistance in extending social welfare and related reconstruction programmes made it impossible for the transitional government to cope with the good will and presence of the large assembly of its international partners. Much of the assistance has targeted the dire needs of communities[31] across the countries, with specific focus on providing humanitarian aid which has since been transformed into the reconstruction element of support currently in place. Milestones have been reached in providing such assistance on various fronts – helping the displaced in returning to their communities, shattered lives are on the mend with a variety of social reconstruction efforts. Noteworthy, strategically, are:

The European Commission:

- Local Community Development (LCD) – small-scale projects in food security and agriculture, with assistance in micro-enterprises, social services and infrastructure support based in Montserrado, Bong, Margibi, Nimba and Bomi. The total cost of the support is estimated at 8.2 million euros.

- Community Rehabilitation Component - Road rehabilitation and maintenance, community based income generation activities, in addition, capacity building for community management, with additional support for wider specific sector support in education, health, agriculture. Total cost of this component is 5 million euros.

World Bank:

- Community Empowerment Project I (CEP) – community-based projects to refurbish schools, clinics, and a variety of other basic needs such as water and sanitation, health and income earning opportunities; based in Bong, Margibi, Montserrado, Grand Bassa. Total cost of the support is at $1.2 million USD under LICUS.

- Community Empowerment Project II (CEP) – the recently launched 100 Community-based sub-projects to rehabilitate the water and sanitation system, economic infrastructure, schools and clinics. Based in all Counties, programmed assistance is for $6.0 million, TFLIB.

UNDP:

- Community Based Recovery Programme (CBRP) – Assistance in local capacity building, setting up the DDCs, financing micro-projects and micro-enterprise development, besides its assistance to basic infrastructure provision, conflict management and employment creation. CBRP is established in 10 counties – Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Grand Cape Mount, River Gee, Gbarpolu, and Montserrado. The total cost of support is about $6.2 million.

USAID:

- Liberian Community Infrastructure Programme (LCIP) I – Support for the reintegration of war-affected persons, related support process, job creation, school and facilities rehabilitation

[31] The term community is a variable, being the unit of analysis, for any given project. It often relates to the targeted project coverage area, regardless of population size or spatial classification.

for the Ministry's use, and its assistance to artisans. Based in the 8 counties of Bong, Margibi, Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Grand Gedeh, and Lofa. Total support cost is about $35.4 million; with an additional $5.8 million for 150 day plan preparation. Phase II of the programme is under preparation.

- Local Initiated Network for Community Strengthening (LINC) – Linking communities, targeting 70 of them, for enhanced communication and the accelerated flow of information, support for civil-society links. Based in Lofa. Estimated cost is $1.185 million

- Community Peace Building and Development Programme (CPBD) – Social mobilization and economic development, civil society development, community communication enhancement, with a target of 200 communities. Based in Grand Bassa, Margibi, and Montserrado. Cost is estimated to be about $12.4 million.

In recognition of the absence of a coordinating mechanism for local government management, MPEA is in the process of establishing its three technical assistance teams, which are to be based in three selected regions, in support of its proposed planning strategy, to be based at the County level, with partial assistance to the districts. The understanding is that the proposed adoption of Liberia's decentralization strategy will be preceded by an intensive sensitization campaign over the next two years, given the need to restore the basic trust in leadership structures and to demonstrate government's commitment in advance.

The Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs recognized the need for national planning and stated that the government intends to launch the process for preparing a national development framework, based on the scoping of its Long-Term Perspective and National Vision, set to begin within the current phase of its activities. MPEA acknowledged the efforts proposed by the UNCDF/UNDP's joint capacity building LDLD programme and recommended that the pilot capacity building efforts for the establishment of the management of district planning should consider targeting a wider range of districts, phased over time, rather than focus on a set of limited pilot initiatives. These efforts will provide the basis for integrating the County level support programme of MPEA, while bringing coherence to the management of planning at he local and national levels.

3 i. Key Questions for Local Governments reforms:

Albeit the MIA has begun limited attempts to bring some coherence to the implementation of local governance by adjusting certain aspects of the legal provisions (adjusting the statutes pertinent to rural authorities, having been outlined in the Rules of Administering the Hinterland), there will be need to consider wider reforms:

- Streamlining the administration of Liberia's political divisions, so as to bring coherence in the distribution of services – clarifying the role and functions of the settlement system: from counties, districts, statutory districts, reconfiguring the spatial aspects of development by delineating the difference between its urban and rural geographic areas, in the absence of the full legal framework in local government;
- clearly defining role and functions of local government, including genuinely local tasks, such as public security, water supply as well as culture, land use, developmental measures and protection of the environment;
- clarifying the role of the central state administration and the functions of legal authorities, the municipality in particular those having elected officials;

- the larger issue of substantive autonomy with regard to financial issues, in the hope of generating dialogue that speeds up reforms to the management of local resources, in the absence of legitimate transfers and system of revenue mobilization
- considering budget subsidies (block grants, tax transfers) from the central state budget, in the interim, but made more regular;
- the integration of traditional authorities in the local consultation and political decision-making process, particularly to strengthen conflict management and resolve land issues;
- the legal amendments to existing laws.

4. THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME
IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT TOWARDS DECENTRALIZATION

Decentralization is essentially a strategy for rationalizing the distribution of public sector tasks held by the central government[32]

4 a. Introduction

The intention is to gear the UNDCF/UNDP proposed LDLD to enhancing local governance and management, with a view to improving participatory processes that promote the concept of decentralized governance and its application to local management, as an upstream policy objective.

The Objective - Decentralization is a strategy that has been credited with the capacity to improve governance, with particular focus on improving the welfare of the poor, which has been neglected by the absence of basic social services such as water and sanitation, access to health facilities, education, and other services. The project intends to demonstrate that there is a need to consider extending political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization, in tandem, in an effort to improve public service provision and, in so doing, improve the capacity of local governments to respond to challenges posed by poverty. The proposed programme attempts to demonstrate the efficiency of decentralized approaches to planning and management of poverty reduction in:

- Improving efficiency in the allocation of funding – local communities are within proximity of their local government and are best suited to defining their problems. They know what their needs and aspirations are, given their location, relative to the local government's; the distance is minimized between communities and the central government, through the local governance participatory approach;
- Local government capacity to monitor and supervise programmes effectively improves, given the location;
- That accountability is strengthened, since the communities are closer, improving opportunities to confer and dialogue with local managers, and in that, capacity to influence management decisions;
- The ability of the local government to respond easily to demands from the community, enhancing the capacity to rapidly improve the scope and pace of implementation
- The programme will also be designed to enhance the *upstreaming* of policy issues, to influence ongoing decentralization debates by establishing the LDLD Task Force at the highest level of government, with a view to informing a wide audience on programme implementation, providing proposals on major local governance reform issues and enhance the collaboration of the international partners by supporting regular meetings and workshops.

To review the basis of the arguments made, the following considerations are important, given the attempt to define and defend the argument for decentralization, from the sub-Sahara regional perspective.

4 b. Decentralization – Definition, Its Considerations

[32] Cohen, J. and Peterson, S. 1997. Administrative Decentralization: A New Framework for Improving Governance, Accountability and Performance, The Harvard Institute For International Development (HIID), Development Discussion Papers, No. 582.

The complex attempt of shifting the character and management of the provision of public goods and services by government is the process of decentralization, which Rondinelli defines in terms of deconcentration, delegation and devolution.[33] Deconcentration is the term used where the central government transfers its agents to the regions, with respect to managing aspects of public goods, without necessarily transferring the authority to local government, which in some cases make the legal entity responsible. In the absence of fully functioning local governments, with sufficient levels of resources and management capacity, this is the case that appeals to governments. In this scenario, a government ministry may transfer staff to the provincial, county, or district level, in an effort to improve the management of its portfolio of projects in a given region. This tends to be the initial decentralization approach that has appealed to central governments in many developing nations, in the absence of a fully functioning framework for managing its activities in vast rural areas, in some cases, untouched by development. Most governments in the Africa sub-region have made attempts to deconcentrate, with initial efforts that focus on devolving local aspects of the national planning function, given the lack of sufficient or accurate information with which to manage it centrally.

On the other hand, delegation is when central government attempts to shift aspects of its decision-making responsibility to the local governments, while devolution is the transfer of its administrative functions. As decentralization has gained momentum, the complex set of questions it attempts to address has masked the definitions used. In effect, the generic definition of decentralization tends to refer to the complex set of management questions related to aspects pertaining to the assignment of political, administrative, or fiscal functions to sub-national levels of government. How governments opt to manage the set of relevant policy questions that define the range and choice of policies, programmes and projects designed for strategizing decentralization.

4 c. Comments - In considering its efforts to improve public management, Liberia's context reflects the state of mismanagement in other African countries prior to embarking on post-conflict decentralization. Over the last two decades, many countries in the sub-Saharan region began to espouse decentralization for various reasons, but chiefly as a result of the inability of central governments to speed up the pace, pattern, and distribution of economic gains.[34]

- Post independent development efforts tended to focus on the implementation of economic planning policies that were centrally driven, in the absence of fully functioning and effective public management systems, let alone local governments. Economic policy failures began manifesting across the region in various ways: for instance, in the visible and steady increase of urban populations, and, with it, high rates of unemployment, as rural migrants flowed into the few cities that promised prospects in employment.

- Liberia's unemployment level, estimated at 80 percent, coupled with the alarming fact that almost 50 percent of its population is below 18, is consistent with the rest of the region when decentralization became an imperative for governments to consider. However, the visible impacts of poverty in its towns, combined with the neglect of rural areas, led to social discontentment across the rest of Africa, and for governments whose capacity to provide basics such as water, sanitation, health, and education were visibly inadequate, and in some cases, absent altogether, attempts to oust them became formalized into

[33] Rondinelli, Denis, 1981. "Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective: Theory and Practice in Developing Countries." International Review of Administrative Sciences, 47 (2).
[34] M. Charles, 1999. "Macro-Economic Policy Implications on Urban Management in Africa: Critical Issues in a Globalizing World", paper presented to the International Urban Planning Conference, at the University of Pretoria, S. Africa.

military takeovers**.** Out of 54 independent African countries, only six countries have not experienced an attempted a successful coup since they became independent.

- Where the state's management capacity could neither cope with the shifting population trends, against weakened economic production, implementation of the decentralization programme tended to be a major aspect of public service reforms, and for embarking on the variety of economic adjustment programmes. Perhaps, then, the choice to decentralize for most African countries is best explained to be one made in an effort to strengthen the weak states and improve the capacity for delivering public services [35].

- Thus, in considering to decentralize, the success of the approach selected may hinge on the nature of the *trigger* functional deficiency, i.e. any set of questions or the main issue of concern for public management reform, selected to be amended. The initial choice of functions that central government may be willing to assign to the local government depends on the nature of reforms and the depth of capacity to implement the changes envisioned for management improvements. Since decentralization tends to be a long-term process that captures all elements of development management, it is slow to administer, given the management requirements in the changes envisioned. The government of Liberia has acknowledged this and has attested to the idea of raising awareness to begin long-range discussions and dialogue intended to prepare for the adoption of the decentralization strategy.

4 d. Liberia's Past Efforts to Decentralize - The civil unrest experienced in many African countries over the past few decades resulted from discontentment by population segments excluded from accessing basic public services, which culminated in political anarchy. Liberia's critical economic situation stems from the nature of events that *arrested the development* programme the past legitimate regime had in place prior to 1980. At the time, the Tolbert presidency had considered aspects of decentralization that made sense, given the political will. In the mid-1970s, the government restructured the Ministry of Local Government and created its larger role. Then during the same period, President Tolbert, through an Executive Order, established County Development Allocations, to have been made through the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but the mandate was not cleared for implementation, given the beginning of Liberia's civil strife. Most important was the attempt to formulate the nation's first development plan and, with it, the implementation of a partial reform of the Tribal Government system, where the government legally instituted the election of all Chiefs, amending their civil service status by absorbing the position into the government payroll. Later, subsequent regimes would also ponder decentralization, with the last attempt being ex-President Taylor's consideration of potential aspects of revenue sharing between the state and counties. An executive policy pronouncement was made but was never followed through, given the absence of follow through for the decentralization programme.[36]

For Liberia, the vast reconstruction agenda has swiftly catapulted fiscal management reform, as outlined in its GEMAP, and with it, the need to reconsider elevating the focus of reconstruction process management at the lower levels of government. To speed up service provision, enhance poverty reduction efforts, while installing the capacity of central government to administer

[35] Some of the countries that made post-conflict decisions to decentralize, showing encouraging results in economic management and growth prospects, while addressing poverty reduction programmes include Uganda, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, among the most important ones for Liberia's situation.

[36] Noted by a former Minister of Internal Affairs.

programmes at the community level, it will be necessary to revisit the urgent priorities, with options for strengthening service delivery for the long-term. Critical issues are:

- creating efficient interim programme coordinating mechanisms across partners, to closely monitor ongoing activities, at the County Superintendent level;
- strengthening the DDCs' establishment, with a view to integrating the planning dimension in its capacity building;
- the establishment of an inter-ministerial Task Force for Decentralization, to appraise the wide efforts under the guidance of line ministries, under the auspices of the Governance Reform Commission (GRC);
- establishing coordination and facilitation platforms to define and regularize matters pertaining to functions of the various administrative levels, as a pilot in the extension of the monitoring role of County supervision, as extended in the existing Statutory Districts.

In effect, the question relates to capacity building and strengthening the skills of public officials at the county and district levels, in managing local resources. This entry point would essentially coalesce into the design of policies and support programmes that have interactions across the various sectors, with major implications on local officials' capacity to plan and implement projects at the base.

The essence of this concept paper is to briefly outline the sets of urgent questions that may assist the UNDP/UNCDF collaboration in designing a programme that provides assistance which improves the Government's efforts made towards the formal adoption of the decentralization strategy. The proposed LDLD for Liberia will provide the government an opportunity to test a variety of options that facilitate the improvement of local service delivery, while supporting efforts made in institutionalizing the participatory system of governance, which is needed to foster long-term management efficiency by local government.

5. RATIONALE AND GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

5 a. Objective - The proposed programme attempts to illustrate potential management improvements, when local capacity building efforts are channeled appropriately, linking policies to plans with resources. Overall constraints to managing development at the local level are often characterized by weak links between the budget, planning, and implementation. In opting to pilot the capacity building programme, the intention is to build on the experience gained by the ongoing establishment of DDCs and to strengthen capacity and introduce an element of planning into local development management. The pilot will attempt to:

- Establish relevant baseline data for informing the process of formulating the local development plan, assembled from community action plans, to be prepared as a sub-component. The sum total of community action plans will provide inputs for assembling the District Development Plan, which ultimately, is intended for a variety of needs, chief of which is to inform the national development policy and in clarifying local/national budget priorities.

- Put in place a planning process mechanism that also provides a platform for mobilizing participatory methods required in formalizing an approach for institutionalizing decentralized governance and management of the local level.

- Outline profiles of the district's investment potential and capacity, whose detailed sector profiles will guide potential donors and/or investors to the nature of economic development and project finance opportunities/requirements.

- Flesh out potential economic development efforts worth promoting, with a view to catalyzing employment creation, local revenue generating capacity, targeting the natural resource based initiatives.

5 b. The Criteria for Selection - Given the requirements for establishing the aforementioned process for any district, there is a need to set up a programme with which to launch its pilot. With programmed budget constraints, the pilot programme will entail the establishment of a project to install a district-focused planning process in three distinct districts. The results will provide the basis on which to phase-in subsequent districts each year. Districts to be included in the initial test programme will be selected based of the following:

- Economic development potential
  - Level of population, state and extent of welfare, poverty
  - Extent of the natural resource base (agriculture, mining) capacity
  - Employment generation and income earning potential
  - Existing modes of communication

- Existence of a functional DDC, that it is effective, i.e.
  - Effectiveness is defined by the number of meetings held over the past six month period
  - Number of projects identified and are ongoing
  - Member Capacity to attend regularly scheduled meetings
  - Caliber of ad-hoc and in-kind assistance its members

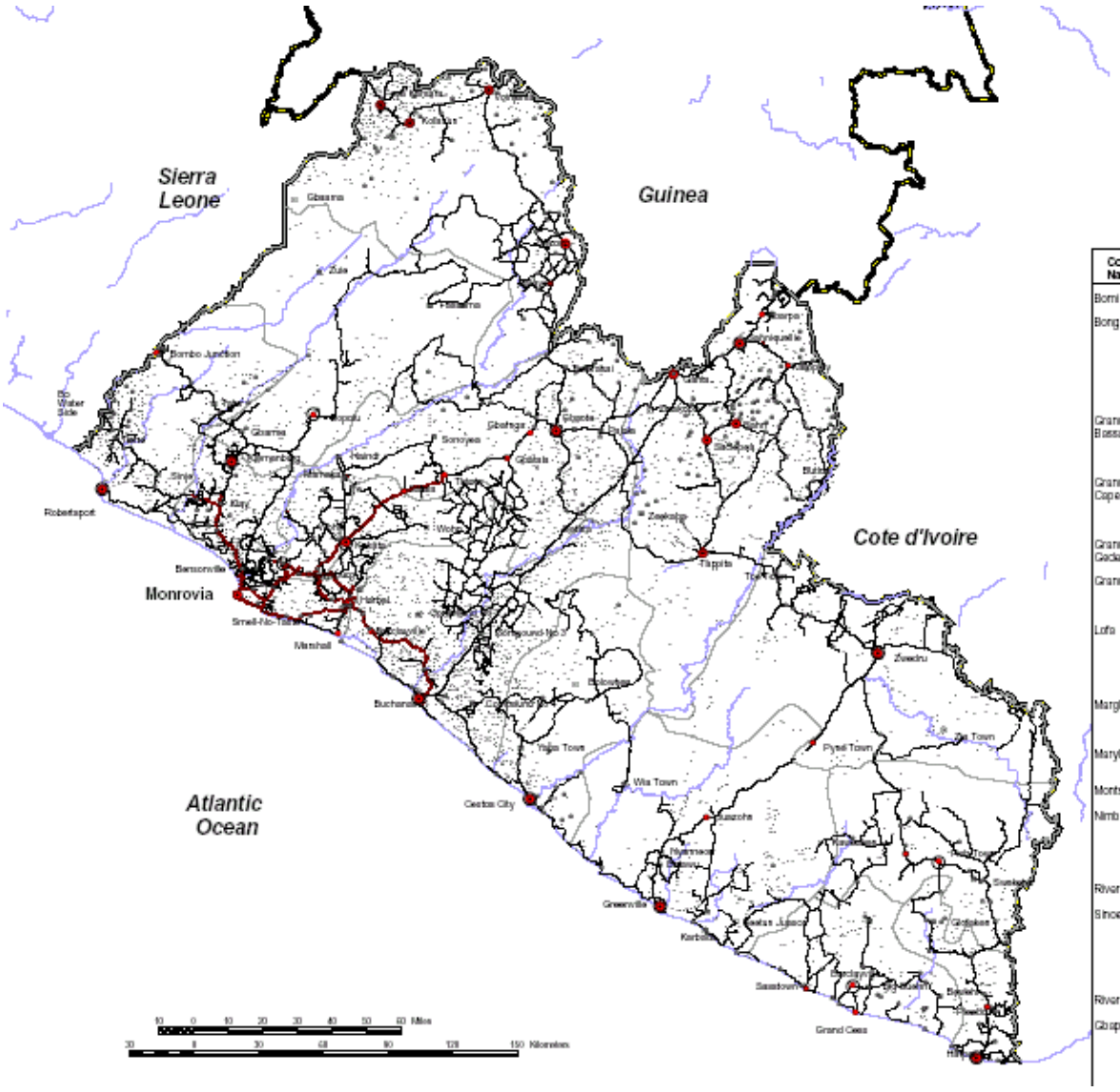
- Management capacity of the district
  - Available staffing capacity
  - Nature of support to the ongoing implementation process
  - Extent to which clans, chiefdoms are involved

- Level of poverty and state of gender balance
  - Leadership of women in key positions
  - Support to major aspects of income generating activities
  - Level and state of poverty
  - Number of widows/orphans, as indicators of poverty

Since the official launch of the DDCs concept document by the Government of Liberia and UN Agencies in July 2005, seventeen (17) pilot DDCs have been restructured in Bong, Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties in line with the revised concept paper. Also, thirty-two (32) additional DDCs have been established in seven (7) more counties – Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Lofa, Maryland, Montserrado and River Gee Counties - making it a total of forty-nine (49) DDCs established in ten (10) counties[37]. The programme intends to establish the pilot in one of the three initial sets of

[37] UNDP, CBR Progress Report, 2006

Counties that established the DDCs, Bong, Nimba and Grand Gedeh. The decision will be made on the basis of ongoing consultations with the County officials.



Settlement and county

County Name	County Capital	District Capital
Bomi	Tubmanburg	Klay
		Mecca Town
Bong	Gbarnga	Haindi
		Gbaota
		Botata
		Palala
		Salala
		Sonoyea
		Gbatala
		Belefanai
Grand Bassa	Buchanan	Owensgrove
		Compound No 1
		Compound No 2
		Compound No 3
		Compound No 4
Grand Cape Mount	Robertsport	Robertsport
		Sinje
		Tiehe
		Tahn
		Bombo Junction
Grand Gedeh	Zwedru	Toe Town
		Pyne Town
		Zia Town
Grand Kru	Barclayville	Geetugbaken
		Big Suehn
		Sasstown
		Bewehn
Lofa	Voinjama	Voinjama
		Foya Kamara
		Kolahun
		Salayea
		Gbaama
		Zorzor
Marghibi	Kakata	Kakata
		Harbel
		Smell-No-Taste
		Wohn
Maryland	Harper	Glofaken
		Pleebo
		Bensonville
Montserrado	Bensonville	Careysburg
		Wohn
Nimba	Sanniquellie	Sanniquellie
		Kamplay
		Zinakopa
		Tappita
		Zeekapa
		Butto
River Cess	Cestos City	Bolowhea
		Yapa Town
Sinoe	Greenville	Greenville
		Wia Town
		Karbada
		Seetun Juason
		Butawu
		Nyanneon
		Kabada
River Gee	Fish Town	Koweaken
		Swekehn
Gbapolu	Bopolu	Bopolu
		Zule
		Fassama
		Palakole
		Gbarma

There is a need to initiate the programme on a limited basis, given the government's outlook on the scope and support for decentralization, conditioned by the transitional macro-economic conditions, a weak fiscal base and, in effect, immense budget constraints. In selecting a set of districts for the initial programme, the following counties may be consulted, given their population levels, geographic locations, and possible economic opportunities, notwithstanding the level of communication facilities to be found: Nimba, Margibi and Bong.

The table highlights the socio-economic profile and population distribution of potential Counties, whose economic opportunities are summarized:

County Economic Potential, Population*					
Counties	**Population**	**No. IDPs**	**Total Districts**	**City**	**Economic Prospects**
Grand Bassa	244,905	11,942	14	3	Mining, Timber, Rubber
Grand Cape Mount	101,675	15,168	4	1	Rubber, Rice, Cassava
Grand Gede	150,000	10,724	11	3	Agriculture, Trade (Ivory Coast)
Grand Kru	70,994	2,224	22	34	Rice, Cassava, Fishing
Lofa	241	37,760	6	3	Farming, Trade is thriving
Margibi	224,418	-	6	2	Rubber Belt
Maryland	107,084	44,036	8	3	Farming, fishing, trading
Montserrado	1,646,421	-	2	6	Industrial, Services, Mining
River Gee	74,783	1,589	12	6	Farming, rice production
Rivercess	63,710	422	7	1	Farming, rubber
Sinoe	111,000	4,468	22	34	Minerals, timber, palm oil
Nimba (Tappita District)	85,000	2,572	20	7	Farming
Total	2,880,231	130,905	134	103	-included are the statutory districts.
*** Source: Derived from UNMIL base, UN/S/2005/745**					

5 c. THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME ELEMENTS

The LDLD will be implemented as a decentralized management effort, which gears to addressing the multi-sectoral, district-based development programmes financed by the Liberian Governments and its international and local partners. This effort is specific to the support the UNCDF/UNDP managed elements it shall provide, with a focus on capacity building to the existing structures for promoting development, in a bid to strengthen overall initiatives that target poverty reduction. Since 2005, UNDP began implementing the DDC concept, outlined earlier, within Liberia's vast regions. Established have been 46 pilot projects that enhance the capacity of coordinating multi-partner-supported programmes at the community levels.

- The pilot outlined in this brief will allow and foster wider participation of communities in development, with a focus to introducing its planning approach.

- The intention is to establish a local financing mechanism that shall test the viability of community resource management, establish their own development facilitation efforts, by putting in place the planning framework that drives the agenda for development. In the process, communities will analyze their own development environment, set their own priorities, through the local governance committees established, as the form of representative structures for steering their own development process.

- This assistance will ensure that communities shall plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their own development projects to which they contribute, to the extent possible and for

which they have to additional solicit support from the pool of potential partners, ultimately, as envisioned in the UNCDF approach, linking local governance programmes with the upstream policies.

5 d. LDLD Programme Focus

In an effort to strengthen the ongoing programme of support initiated under UNDP's CBRP, a recent field evaluation indicated the need to strengthen the mechanism in place. The intention is to extend that support, as part of the pilot phase, with a view to:

- Extending the support to the DDCs and enhance its role to provide for a wider range of community participation, in an effort to consolidate its development co-ordination potential. This involves strengthening the capacity of the DDC by reorganizing its structure, creating a system of coordination platforms that link the DDC management to communities more consistently. A programme management unit (PMU) will be established to manage the implementation of the planning and financial management projects.

- The support will also strengthen the district's capacity as it, in turn, extends similar assistance to the community (County/District headquarters) level: establishing the scaled down PMU and related support, as it implements the its district planning and management programme.

- An element of support is envisioned for the County level, where a scope of work that targets strengthening the financial management and coordination capacity will be established, in a bid to begin reviewing prospects for local economic development. This approach will be made an element of assistance through the establishment of a scaled down aspect of the D4D programme, which seeks to begin addressing the question of local resource mobilization at the County level, while promoting the governance of natural resource management, as an income generation option.

- The UNCDF intends to launch a local development fund, the District Development Fund (DDF) to support the process of planning and financial management, at all levels.

In an effort to install the LDLD and its additional elements of support, the Concept paper will outline a range of options to be added to the CBRP programme, in an effort to provide the existing DDC scope of programmes the vehicle for improving the coordination of activities undertaken by the various partners, in consultation with the County level initiative.

5 e. Rationale for Strengthening the District Coordination Mechanism

The DDC concept is an effort intended to mobilize community participation, as an effort to promote the reconstruction and development management, as it enhances the poverty reduction initiatives at the local level. Given the lack of the necessary local government framework, the pilot programme intends to enhance the existing capacity while minimizing management constraints. The Liberian local governance capacity is weak, as result of inherent institutional constraints:

- The duality of its local governance system – The DDCs are currently hindered in various ways, given the war and its impacts, exaggerated by the existence of the dual system made up of the administrative and representational structures (DDC working on behalf of the County level). Although the elected locations (mostly large rural centres, in Liberia they are the

district capitals, known to be Cities) are constituted on democratic principles, their functions are limited and have no large role to play in service provision and development programming, in the absence of human and financial resources.

- Although the DDC is a recent established institution of the district administration, it also lacks the necessary skills and framework to undertake its envisioned development coordination role and facilitation function.

- Since there is no separation of "the developmental" from a "regulatory" function, the tendency will be to let the development partners, with central government influence, lead the implementation of projects, as existing at present, to the detriment of community aspirations.

- While it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the new central government, its local aspects will not make any major final decision, unless they have access to a pool of resources and management capacity to determine their own agenda;

- There is no unified approach to community participation, as a national strategy, hence the need to establish a viable system of participatory planning and implementation of programmes.

- Liberia's past experience with the lack of accountability and transparency in the use of resources, which has led to the past misappropriation of funds and sole control of funds by line ministries.

- The Government of Liberia is intent on strengthening the management of its development, while recognizing the opportunities available for decentralized governance as a vehicle for speeding up its reconstruction and development programme. Thus, there will be need to establish the base upon which its local governments are established to be better, more accountable and responsive to the needs of the communities.

5 f. Programme Options that Improve Development Co-ordination

In considering to strengthen the DDCs, which in essence function as development coordination committees, the options available need to be reviewed against the following:

Option 1: Full spectrum of local governance support as a continuum, being the most desirable and far reaching one. In this option, the attempt is made to strengthen limited capacity of the County, District and City governance elements, as a set of one programme, with different aspects of capacity building designed at each level. Briefly, the elements of capacity building will feature upgrading financial management skills at all three levels, while the planning programme shall be made to focus on the lower ones.

Option 2: To provide a system through which greater community representation shall be made in existing committees, with added elements of support made to enhance the DDC's functioning, by installing the Community Development Committee (CDD) as an aspect within elected officials in the Community. In this option, the pilot will focus on the two levels: the District and one selected City, the county Capital, as a test.

5 g. Capacity Building in Planning and Financial Management

- The decentralization concept envisages that the DDCs effectively manage, coordinate and to some extent plan all developmental activities, which takes place in the district, with a view to enlisting the support of the County Development Superintendents. Thus, any option selected, designed to positively impact management requires an effectively operating DDC mechanism. However, since the DDC have limited capacity, given their recent establishment, their capacity for planning and management is weak and needs to be strengthened.

- Ultimately, the district development plan is critical and needs attention, given the wide utility, especially with regard to facilitating the coordination of programmes of assistance ongoing, and for strengthening the development management process. The plan will also been an important instrument for attracting potential capital investments. Other additional support areas envisioned will be the capacity to improve the general capacity of district/ council administration, on-the-job training as well as carefully selected training measures shall be designed to improve the planning and management competence of key staff (e.g. the district planner, director of works, treasurer).

- The district planning process will extend this capacity building programme to the Community level, as the LDLD Community approach to local level planning and management, promoting its participatory aspects of management and budgeting. This is expected to initiate the participatory budgeting project at the community level. The elected councilors and traditional leaders shall play an important role in the process and will therefore benefit from specific training measures to be carried out under the project.

- The intended objective is the gradual formulation of community action plans that culminate in the elaboration of the district development plan. These community plans provide inputs for the district plans, as these become the sum total of a county development plan.

5h. The District Planning Process

- The district will be assisted in establishing the planning process and the elaboration of its application methodology. The emphasis is going to be on districts with the potential for planning, since this is the main aspect of the LDLD decentralized local governance programme, having begun the initial set of activities through the DDC pilot under the UNDP's BRCP. The project will establish a replica of its support at the Community level, the basis being a district/county capital.

- Efforts shall be made to link the planning process to budgeting, the intention being to equip the officials with the necessary financial management skills with which to administer the District Development Fund, which finances the project scope, as envisioned. Initial investments will equip the PMU with computing and technical know how in setting up an information management system, which already exists at some level. Additional elements shall support the creation of similar databank networks linking the three levels of governance.

- The intention is to streamline and reorganize of the counties/districts, improve co-ordination with district administrations, in the establishment of the ongoing County Support Programme, managed by the UN system. The County project has been established to facilitate the extension of the

central government at the local level, with assistance in the rehabilitation of facilities, provision of equipment and the implementation of capacity building, as an extension of the initial phase.

- A key element of the district plan will be the involvement of local communities or their representatives in the planning and decision making process. The district plan shall be the major planning instrument in Liberia's attempt to formulate its County level plans, and envisions wide community participation, as it contributes to democratization.

Some features of the planning process will include:

- Its being action-orientated, the prioritization of intervention areas and preparation of concrete project proposals, after cross-sectoral participatory planning is initiated.

- The planning will be based on available data and studies, under the guidance of the district administration, via the DDC's PMU, which shall be responsible for the managing the DDF;

- Establishing the PMU within the County, however, provides the basis on which to regulate the programming of the monitoring mechanism for the LDLD

- The Involvement of NGOs will be adjusted, to provide support to the Traditional Leadership in ensuring that the participatory planning and budgeting system links the district/council to the lowest level of community;

- A training program for district planning will be designed, to include a planning methodology. It will also include facilitation of wide consultative meetings with communities, methods of problem and objective analysis, project formulation, and the preparation of necessary budgets to support the project proposals.

The district planning and budgeting process, briefly, will include:

1. County/District/Community consultations on the plan and its methodology
2. Preparation of a planning Issues Paper which will evaluate major issues that constrain development
3. Surveys and employment of data Collection methods
4. Reviews of potential issues and scope of the project
5. Identification of the needs and priorities through public planning meetings
6. Synthesis of sector problems and potentials
7. Elaboration of County/district/city development objectives and strategy into the plan
8. Holding of consultations to discuss proposed objectives and the plan
9. Conducting budget consultations with stakeholders
10. Formulation of the plan and its budget into a formal publication
11. The Plan's approval by the district and County level
12. Plan implementation

Since funding is still strongly centralized and mainly through line ministries, project proposals resulting from district planning, afterwards, would be included in sector plans and ongoing partners' projects. As the programme evolves, linking planning to budget management becomes a crucial aspect of ongoing efforts to streamline and strengthen capacity, to ensure consistency with ongoing programmes of implementation, updated annually as the government programme requires.

5i Policy Planning Impacts

The project shall seek to inform and influence ongoing national policy reforms, with specific focus on decentralization issues, with pro-poor planning and service delivery questions. It will do so through:

- Establishing linkages with other ongoing projects, with key connections to the MPEA's management of its economic development programme, given the role envisioned in the reforms to the economic planning programme;
- Liaising with ongoing support by the international community in an effort to
- ensure that local progress on pro-poor planning, budgeting and service
- delivery is mainstreamed within the PRSP elements.
- On the basis of the programme implementation's progress, policy reform agendas,
- especially hose that pertain to administrative and fiscal management of the DDF, will be articulated and disseminated.

OPTIONS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

At highest level in Government (Executive Mansion): Set up an Inter-Ministerial Task Force for Coordinating efforts that focus on decentralization, in tandem with aspirations of the GRC, to galvanize the political platform, its TOR: Expediting legal amendments, as need be

The Programming Process

At County, District and City Levels: The Head shall Sign agreement, to show **Commitment**

At County, District, City level, Establish a **Programme Management Unit, Planning Committee**

Establish the MIS at each level, with a view to initiating the database for planning and managing project elements, budgets

Define a development outlook in each level of government, thus:
- Conduct baseline surveys **to establish the social and economic profiles, with reference to:**
- Health, Education, Culture
- Economy, Geography,
State and extent of the location's infrastructure
- Establish funding requirements, budgets over five years

Conduct Workshops and public consultations to discuss findings of the surveys, evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) for the level, list development objectives, and establish objectives of the programme over a given time frame

Action Planning at the city and district level:
Baseline reviews analyzed and workshop outputs generate the dimension of a plan of proposed projects, identified objectives shall provide guidelines in formulating the priorities into narrative reports that outline a brief development aspirations of the city/district, over a given period of time, with budgeted items.

Publish the Plan as the official DDC and/or City Plan, to formalize the direction and priority of development programming;
Implement future projects on the basis of the plan, with annual budget estimates based on the national cycle, with assistance from the District/County Office, with its evaluation and monitoring role

Scope of Capacity Building

County:
Build capacity for Finance and management, Evaluation & Monitoring

District Level:
Establish the Capacity for Planning, Budget and Managing the project - to install the planning mechanism for coordinating the action planning for the City and **District Levels**

City Level:
Install the basic elements for improving community project planning**:**

5. j Capacity Building for Financial Management

Capacity building in financial management takes into account a complete review of the extent of gaps and targets improvements in specific areas, which shall include some of the following:

The County

The County PMU will be the sole entity responsible for the DDF, which shall be the conduit through which elements of the project will be implemented.

- Basic financial management skills in record keeping and fiscal mobilization, given the role County revenue officers possess in the mobilization of national revenues, where necessary
- Existing budgeting arrangements to be strengthened
    - Preparation of budgets I programming/ inputs that link to the central government system of financial management
    - Expenditure management and controls (including procurement)
    - Strengthening the internal audit systems
    - Improving the operations of existing County/District Treasury management

District/Community

. Training will be held for the District and Community financial managers, with a view to establishing the basic guidelines in the management and allocation of resources. The DDF programme will establish ground rules and guidelines for the allocation of resources (detailed later). Part of the training will include:

- Basic financial management skills for programme management
- Establishing norms and standards for use of funds
- Financial reporting and record keeping
- Expenditure monitoring and controls
- Programme Auditing

As the programme implementation ensues, additional training will be provided to extend the range of financial management skills required to fold the DDF management to cover other aspects that link district planning with the government's budget cycle.

5k. Linking Planning to Budgeting

The project will address key issues, among them, the need to reflect budgetary estimates of priorities identified. A major intention will be identify probable projects that could be financed not only through the DDF, but ultimately through the partners' programmed activities, and in the future, the government regular allocations. To do this, efforts will be made to establish planning and budgeting procedures that link projects to major funding available, to reflect the level of available resources, with project priorities vetted from the lowest level of the community. The eventual intention will be to provide an overview of the district and community investment options and plan, prepared within budget limits over a given period of time, established at the outset of the process. Clear consultative mechanisms for the participation of communities will be made, linking the village/township level meetings to the main one at the district.

5l. The Policy Piloting Implications

Among the noteworthy fiscal decentralization policy issues that the project will attempt to clarify is the major question of the assignment of responsibilities between the three tiers of governance addressed by the programme. Noteworthy is that a clarification of local government management responsibilities with respect to its service functions and expenditure responsibilities will be demonstrated. Among critical issues are the following:

- That the district becomes the clear planning and budgetary unit of the government, given its service delivery functions and assigned expenditure management tasks. The project will demonstrate what specific service delivery advantages the district has, given its administrative role.
- It will also inform the government on the level of reforms required to improve district management and capacity, thus define the level of functions to be devolved.
- The programme shall also reflect other critical factors that demonstrate the benefits of investment choices made by communities
- It will also highlight the shortcomings that exist in the management of existing administrative responsibilities, delineating the district from county and community levels.
- In the County's management support designed as a strategic budget unit of central government, its envisioned role in the programme will demonstrate the efficacy of its oversight and monitoring role and define the needed reforms that would enhance the effectiveness of administrative capacity.
- The expenditure management capacity at the County in the LDLD shall also demonstrate the most effective manner in which the planning, budgeting and service delivery management arrangements could be improved under decentralization

5 m. The Institutional Framework - In reviewing the possible institutional framework for the programme, there is need to address the following structural issues pertaining to the potential governance units at the lower level, given the absence of functional local government:

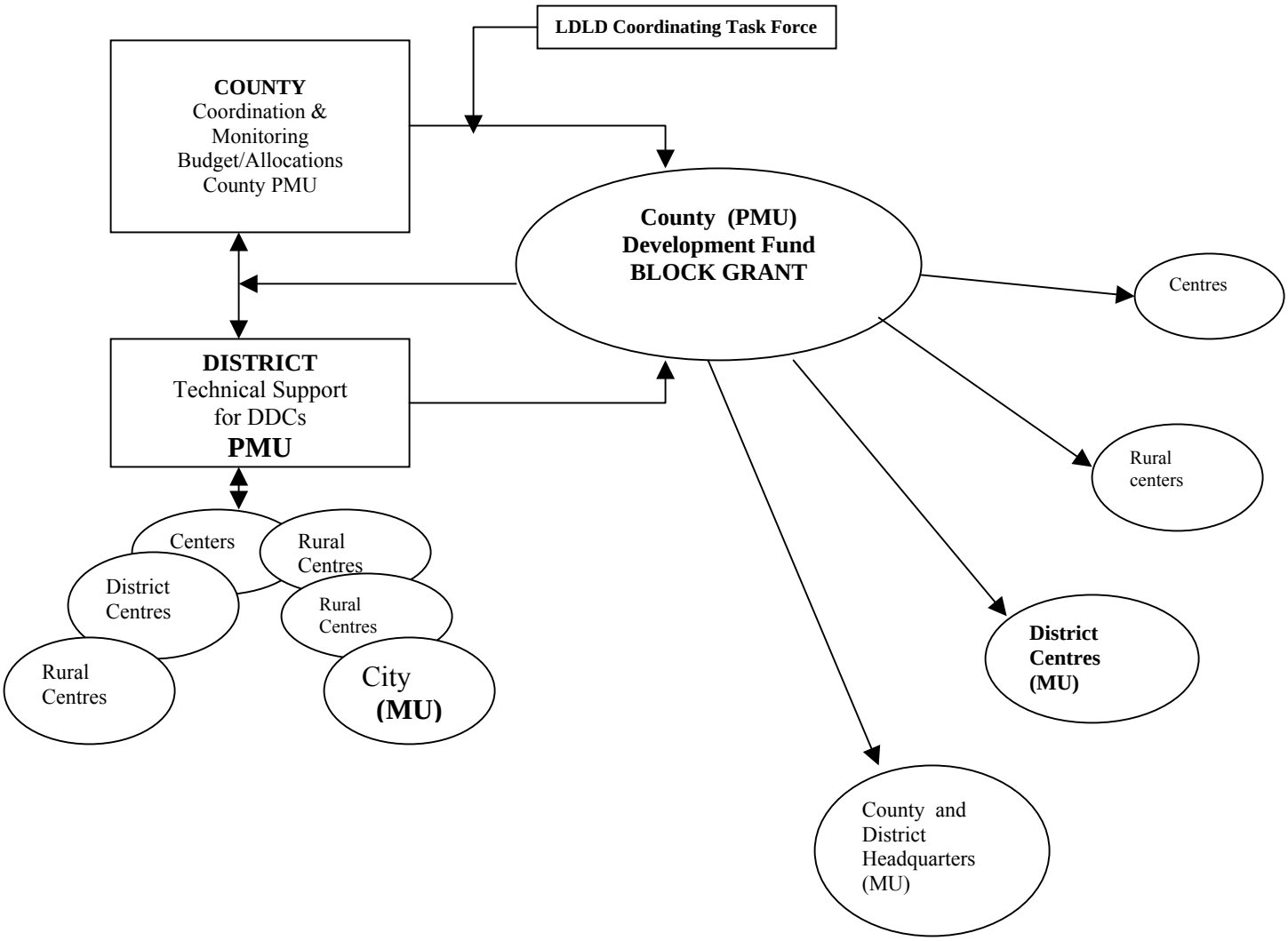
- By strengthening the capacity of DDCs, the effort is intended as an interim measure, to test the efficacy of instituting the planning function at base, with a view to utilizing the results to inform the upstream policies for decentralized governance, on scope of reforms required to install the lower level as a legitimate aspect of local government.

- The representational units of government exist in the designated, Cities, Clans, or Chiefdoms, given that these are units governed by elected Mayors and/or Chiefs. The elected councils will provide an opportunity to test the application of democratic principles of leadership in decision-making. This level may provide insights into the approaches needed to streamline the Traditional Authorities as relevant elements of the programme management units, taking advantage of the extensive networks of clans, which essentially constitute a critical mass for strengthening the management of development.

- Other considerations would be made for including the County capitals, as possible representational units, given their population levels and functional role of Mayors, against

the management responsibilities delegated to the Superintendent by central government; this is in anticipation of the proposed mayoral elections, to be held within the next 18 months

An LDLD Institutional Framework



LDLD Coordinating Task Force

The programme will be implemented under the auspices of the existing BRCP programme currently being implemented by UNDP, with support from its County support officers. At the apex, within the MIA, support will be made for establishing the LDLD Task Force, to be composed of the following:

- Chair – MIA official at the highest level
- Co-Chair – GRC member
- Inter-ministerial members – MPEA, Health, Education, Works, Mines, Agriculture
- Other international partners – to be determined
- The National Programme Manager – to be tasked

The County PMU

Besides the financial management role, the County shall also approve the overall orientations of the project, monitor its implementation, guide and supervise the districts and will receive and analyze the various reports of the project. This level will also analyze and resolve any issues that may arise during the course of project implementation, while ensuring links between central and local level counterparts as it proposes potential solutions to issues that arise. It shall be organized as follows:

- **The Programme Management Unit**
    - Development Superintendent
    - Planning Manager
    - DDF Manager
    - Financial officer
    - Project Engineer
    - MIS officer
    - 3 Administrative staff
    - BRCP Programme Officer in the field – responsible for the daily management of the programme

District – DDC

- Establish the PMU with a Project Support Team, as part of the DDC
    - District PMU Adviser – a UNV officer hired by the programme, to be in charge
    - A Planning Manager – local staff
    - Financial officer –local staff
    - MIS officer – local staff
    - 4 Administrative staff
        - Secretariat support
        - Data management
        - Field Assistant
        - Driver

- **DDC's Executive Committee (Advisory Team)**
    - Made up of local officials (set its ToR)
    - Establish the framework for coordinating:
        - Rationalize the ToRs for the DDC
        - Establish guidelines for its advisory support

- **Community Development Committee**
    - The Mayor, Council level
    - Establish a Programme Management Unit
        - Planning Manager, Adviser
        - Financial Officer
        - MIS unit
        - 2 clerical assistants
        - 1 data management staff

- A Community Advisory Council

- Mayor
- Traditional Authority representative
- NGOs, CBOs, Women's groups

5n. The Focus: County– While an option of support and elements of the current DDC assistance programme at the CBRP is crucial, another choice is to focus partial assistance to Counties. This focus is meant to initiate efforts that gradually phase-in the MPEA's economic planning mandate, devised as part of the governance reforms agreed upon under the NTGL, with assistance from the international community, the MIA and other stakeholders.

- The intention would be to extend the presence of Liberia's government at the local level, with a view to reinstalling its administrative system, which had been eroded. Support for this level by the proposed programme is envisioned in a limited but more probable one, given the need to install the monitoring and coordinating function of the County, in the absence of proper planning mechanisms at the district and lower units of government.

- Such support could be made through strengthening the financial administrative aspects, with a view to merging such efforts with the overall district planning and management efforts that catalyze elements of revenue mobilization for the County, as an option. This approach will establish the framework of work and support for the D4D programme, with its wide links to district planning and income generation[38].

- In locating the DDF in the County and providing capacity building for financial management, the intention is to strengthen the overall coordination and monitoring functions, while assisting the MPEA's efforts to extend its local coverage through the four selected regional support zones, based in County headquarters.

These offices will be entrusted with the task of mobilizing support for government's management and planning functions, coordinating such efforts through the selected County offices, with a view to producing County Development Plans, as a possible output. In effect, the planning process that has been initiated by the establishment of the DDCs will be strengthened and coordinated through the County Development Superintendents. To outline a management system envisioned is necessary, simplified by the unified objective in plan preparation, as a management objective may be the ultimate objective in this support option.

5 k. Focus on the District - The main options in setting up the pilot will be to focus on establishing three districts, with some management variation, in an effort to test the functional responsibility of local elected leaders, versus administrative units of government.

- The approach shall assume that differences exist between local units with elected leaders (Community level) and those with administrative functions (districts; the semi-local governments, given the envisioned role of the DDC in the programme). The efficiency with which each local government manages may be a function of their ability to influence changes in the management of the system of services delivery. The piloting of the community action plans and the district plans shall demonstrate the distinct advantages of one versus the other.

[38] See the D4D programme elements, which will be implemented as part of the county planning and financial management support in this project.

- The DDC will be strengthened by the establishment of a Programme Management Unit, which will comprise the Planning Manager, a Finance Officer and an Engineer, who would be recruited from the local pool of skilled manpower at the district. Short of finding suitable local staff, the option would be to second these officers from respective line ministries, pending the adoption of the decentralization programme. These will be accountable to the DDC Executive Committee, to be established/strengthened with a view to guide technical matters (planning, programming and administration) in the DDC, pending integration with the local community management committees, made up of council members.

5 l. Community Focus (Defined to be the rural city/townships**) -** The elected local leaders are Mayors and Chiefs based in urban areas (defined to be places with population levels of at least 2,000, which make up the majority of Liberia's towns, cities or chiefdoms[39]). These tend to be small rural centers, which in the Liberian context would consist of county and/or district headquarters, the majority of which are home to a large segment of the rural poor and some returnees, given the impacts of war.

- These small centers have elected officials, Mayors, who neither have the resources nor the capacity to coordinate community development efforts, albeit the existence of a democratic local governance framework.

- The intention is to strengthen the capacity of elected officials who, in reality would be best suited to galvanizing community support, given the leadership and popular support. Without resources and management capacity, however, these places cannot perform as would be. A Program Unit will be installed in the Council, with support from the PMU at the district level, replicating its management capacity building. The intention is to enable the formulation of community action plans.

[39] Verified by MIA's, Director of Research and Programmes.

Programme Options

Local Government Level	Support Option	Advantages
County Administration	Strengthen its management and focus on extending the capacity to: - Effectively budget and allocate DDF resources - Monitor and evaluate ongoing programmes implemented by partners in districts - Establish mechanism for coordination	- New initiative, supported by the UN system - Government is seeking partners in this effort - Enhances synergies with district focus in planning - To lessen the current duplication of efforts with districts
Districts	Strengthen the efficiency of DDCs - create the planning and budgeting system, set up the management, build this capacity - formulation of Community action plans, with a view to synthesizing them into the District Plans that provide inputs for the County Development Plans	Supports DDCs capacity building efforts, under the CBRP - district ability to advise the community level is enhanced - effort will consolidate the planning function and narrow the scope of work for community management - it will clarify the functional roles of lower level unit
Community/City	Launch a capacity building programme to strengthen the role of Mayors, Council - install the planning and budget system, outline management arrangements - provide leadership and management skills - strengthen capacity to prepare the scope and range of community priorities, to formulate them into action plans	Provides the opportunity to train lower levels of elected leadership - extends the democratic principles in management, absent elsewhere in local governments - merges aspects of traditional authority, with mainstream leadership training - skills enhanced to all stakeholders, in terms of priority setting

5 n. Coordination and Monitoring

Given that monitoring and evaluation assists in improving programme performance, there is need to establish its basic outlook for the LDLD. The intention is to regularly assess the nature of the support being provided, the extent to which the intended capacity building efforts are meeting their targets and to review the coordination aspects of programme management, with feedback analyzed to encourage specific areas to be strengthened further. Among the key issues will be the establishment of a the:

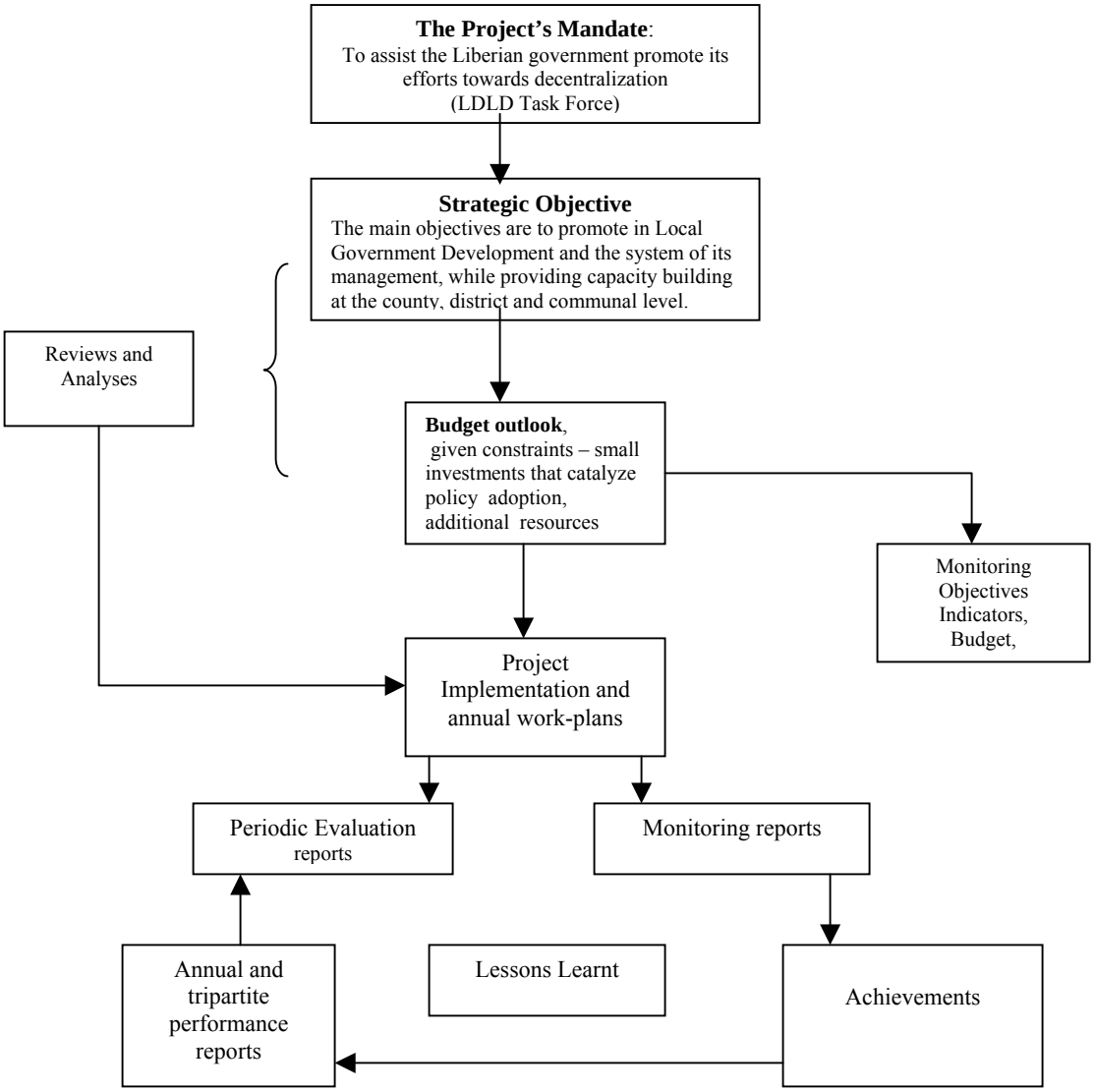
- County based Monitoring and Coordination Task Force, made up of the Superintendent, the DC, DDC Chair, County Executive Council member and a member of the Council of Elders in Traditional Authority[40]. To augment their capacity, membership will be extended to the following, on an ad hoc basis: UNDP, UNCDF, MIA, MEAP, an independent member of the international partners, and an NGO Council member based within the County/or at Headquarters. These will review the appropriate documentation of progress reports made by the specific project and programme managers.

- A set of evaluation meetings and workshops will be held periodically, with the outputs and recommendations made reflected in progress reports. Reviews will entail the evaluation of the planning and management framework and targets on a quarterly basis;

- The programme will establish performance indicators, to be reviewed regularly and updated. Among these will be the tracking of expenditures, monitoring of programme implementation, outputs accomplished over time, and the extent to which project management is consistent with overall objectives. A system of project management information system will establish to facilitate the monitoring and tracking of progress. Quarterly progress reports will be made available to all members of the Task Force.

[40] Public expenditure management is an important vehicle for promoting transparency which participatory management could promote. It is further subdivided between "upstream" issues of budget formulation (including the link to the overall programme's fiscal and macroeconomic framework) and the "downstream" issues of budget execution and monitoring, including procurement and audit, which are questions pertaining to the larger elements addressed in the fiscal reforms undertaken by the central Government. At the programme level, it may essentially provide the platform for shaping the structure of dialogue to enhance the knowledge required for debating issues pertaining to revenue sharing, ultimately.

MONITORING AND COORDINATION



6. FINANCING AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The option in financing this aspect of the programme will entail the establishment of a pilot District Development Fund (DDF), to be located strategically within the County, where the Programme Management Unit shall be located. It is envisaged that this will be a simple block grant, whose allocations could be based on district population levels, the assumption being that the larger the population, the greater its need. Each district will be provided with an equal share, given the complex political and economic situation in Liberia, with a view to financing a package of investment choices, made coherent by the selection of a range of activities with high levels of complementarities.

In an effort to ensure that project investment packages are made coherent, the criteria for the initial allocations will include:

- Clarification of capacity building needs for planning process
- Articulating poverty reduction priorities, through a range of
- The capacity to facilitate of infrastructure and service delivery projects, where necessary
- The availability of necessary staff and support costs by the government

6 a. The allocations Given the role and function of the County and district levels in managing aspects of the capacity building elements, they shall be entitled to a 25 percent share of the total allocation each, while 40 percent allocated to the range of community specific projects at the county/district council level. The community share will thereafter be divided equally, with the intention of financing a range of project investment packages selected.

It is estimated that for the first year, the community development programmes will consist of (1) a management aspect, targeting the preparation of wide Action Plans, as well as (2) the selection of any related activities, to make up the package of investment choices, made on the basis of their synergies and programme coherence. These projects will be financed on the basis of criteria established. It is envisaged that implementation of the community level initiatives could delay, given the wide capacity gaps existing. Guidelines for the execution of the budget for the district planning support will entail the same criteria, with allowances for establishing partial logistic support, with the intent on providing assistance in setting up a facility with the capacity to manage programmes, fully funded by the programme.

Budget Allocations proposed				
	Y1	**Y2**	**Y3**	**Total**
Districts /Counties	300,000	150,000	100,000	**1,550,000**
Communities-sub-district level	-	500,000	500,000	**1,500,000**
Support Costs	90,000	195,000	180,000	**465,000**
Total	**390,000**	**845,000**	**780,000**	**3,415,000**

6 b. Overall Budget

It is estimated that the budget will be made available along the following lines:

- $2 million over the 3 years
- Allocations – for districts, counties Y1 = $1.5 million
  i. Sub-districts Y2 = $1.5 million

ii. Support costs Y1 = $0.5 million

It is anticipated that the programme will be financed at an estimated $3.5 million for the initial three years, during which time it will have been able to catalyze the additional mobilization of follow-up support resources. Possible support is envisioned along the following lines, given the existing partnerships which have complementarities across a range of initiatives, given the large capacity requirements: USAID, with respect to providing additional logistical support in the procurement of computers and setting up a network that facilitates the exchange of information between the here tiers of governance; UNMIL/OCHA, with a view to extending the existing database providing county and district level database management, lessening the tendency to duplicate efforts and waste of resources; WORLD BANK, with its support to the County level, with respect to LDLD proposed assistance to strengthening the management of the County, with possible others. It is anticipated that the launch of the activity itself will garner support and endear itself to the wide efforts attempt to galvanize the management and extension of the civil administrative system.

District type of activities- strategic location- The Planning Project

- Capacity building
- Training
- Logistics- coordination

Community level activities – Community profiles, support to livelihoods

- Community suggestions, based on technical criteria provided
- For example – income generation, establishment of cooperative marketing programmes, or similar income earning efforts
- Options could include the financing of related projects, for example: market sheds, provision of storm drainage within the vicinity of the market and a warehouse to provide storage facilities, etc.

6 c. Programme Management Unit – Objectives: The intention is to establish a Programme Management Unit (PMU), each one at every level, the main one being based at the County level, with smaller sub-units within the District and Mayor's office, to enhance efficiency, in an effort to improve a number of issues, among them to strengthen the existing efforts, with particular links to the UNDP supported CBRP and with assistance to the County Development Superintendent. The functions of he main PMU at he County level will be to monitor and coordinate all aspects of managing the projects at the lower level, with particular reference to the financial management and control of expenditures. The lower level PMUs will be specific to the needs of the two sub-projects, should the option allow the financing of all three. An international adviser will be recruited to manage the programme, based either at MIA and/or MPEA, to provide policy guidance to the merging of local governance management questions with the national policy outlook.

Local staff with a development planning and management skills will be recruited as well, with assistance to the County level support. In addition, a local finance specialist, responsible for the managing the civil society aspect of participatory budgeting will be sought. It is desirable that a local NGO be recruited to ensure that the programme is carefully implemented, with wide functions that generate additional stakeholder support, at the community level, much in the same manner the Development Education Network – Liberia (DEN-L), the NGO, assisted UNDP's CBR project in establishing the Bong County DDCs establishment. There is need to build a strategy for procuring the services of NGOs, with a large sub-contract that catalyzes support from the international partners. This is a much more efficient and cost effective approach while it builds and strengthens the civil society.

6 d. Policy links with the national government, will define the best possible location of contact points within the government- MIA, MPEA, GRC.

- Consistent with government aspirations on decentralization, there is need to place the project at a high level, by establishing a Task Force - The Liberia Decentralization and Local Government Development Programme Task Force, to bring coherence to its programming

- It might be necessary to consider bringing the GRC to Chair the Task Force, with its high profile as the programmes coordinating entity, neutralizing potential conflicts within the government.

- MPEA and the MIA are the two ministries the Programme shall be equally accountable to, equally sharing the responsibility for programmatic oversight and policy guidance.

- Every six months, the project would convene internal management workshops to appraise progress and make adjustments and report to the Task Force;

- Each year, the annual consultative meetings would be held with all international partners to appraise them of progress made and to explore possible areas of collaboration – this will ensure that donors are informed of progress and will provide room for catalyzing possible areas of collaboration with donors, in utilizing the facility by other donors, or even by institutionalizing by replicating the facility.

7. PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

7 A. Programming - Given the gaps in the coordination of service delivery, notwithstanding the management deficiencies in programme implementation at the local level, the LDLD intends to strengthen the CBRP capacity building efforts focusing on building he system of planning and managing development at the district level, supported by UNDP. The establishment of DDCs has been a positive undertaking, but still riddled with capacity problems, as efforts are made to improve its participatory approach to local governance. In addition, as the country prepares itself in adopting a formal programme, there is need to widen the range of options for speeding up the reconstruction efforts, towards decentralization. Most efforts focusing on Community Development have targeted the short-term nature of emergency support, with little less focus on strengthening the capacity of government's management of its service delivery and development functions. The LDLD will seek to encourage the participation of more international partners in developing the relevant skills for managing programmes currently in place. The critical concerns will entail:

- formulating an information and dissemination strategy with which to provide timely management related data to all partners, with a view to informing on critical management issues

- supporting an annual partners workshop, during which time information sharing and collaboration will be encouraged as solutions are sought to bridge the gap between implementation gaps and management needs

- map district-wide capacity and management needs, as a courtesy for all partners, in an effort to raise awareness of management needs with the

intention of purposely redirecting public expenditures towards Community Development

8 a. EXIT STRATEGY

The LDLD is envisioned over the long haul, when he programme merges with the larger efforts of the pending adoption of the government's decentralization strategy. In the event that the long-term management of local government improves, the elements outstanding shall be incorporated into the framework that evolves. It is not possible to gauge what the impacts of the fiscal reforms envisioned will yield under GEMAP, the driving force for implementing the wider decentralization efforts, addressed as part of the risks in managing the complex set of programme elements.

9 RISKS AND POTENTIAL

a. Institutional

- In the envisioned institutional framework, the capacity to establish clear programming arrangements will hinge on the management outlook of the ongoing partnerships. The nature and scope of the work programmes currently evolving at the County and District levels are still questionable, given the large budget short-falls, set against the existing partnership priorities and the changing ministerial functional roles.

- Should the County level support prove to be more flexible to strengthen, then there is need to consider attending to this aspect, to the detriment of the district level.

- Otherwise, there is need to consider extending the support to the three levels of governance suggested, given the programme complementarities across.

b. Financial and Economic

- This programme assumes that there is need to front load the financing of logistics, given the weaknesses existing at all levels. Office accommodation and staffing issues are pending budgetary approvals, even as some local government staff are still awaiting for long-unpaid salaries. Given that the outlook is bleak in terms of the government's ability to finance the major portion of its recurrent expenditures, there will be need to down-size some elements, perhaps, as the situation requires.

- National budget priorities are determined by the performance of the fiscal reforms in place, established to bring some order in the mobilization and allocation of revenues from the major source of national resources. In the event that the implementation of overall fiscal reforms is slow, the capacity of the programme to fuse with he envisioned national governance and its civil service reforms should remain weak. However, there is ample room to shift the programme's focus and to scale down its wide and varied scope of support. In the event that the GEMAP's time-horizon is extended, there may be need to consider adding another dimension to the support, that which scales back elements of support to livelihoods, since this aspect is currently undertaken by a host of partners, and to focus the UNDF efforts towards capacity building to support local government management.

c. Social

- The programme stands in good stead to promote community and social cohesion, since this is the only approach to rebuilding the sense of local government management, and instill a sense of ownership of the development process, at the grassroots.

- Benefits of implementing the local management aspects are envisioned to provide guidance to security management and the extension of the state's presence in distant locations, thereby contributing to the much-needed peace-building efforts in Liberia.

d. Ecological

- In allowing community participation, and the understanding that the potential for adopting the much needed decentralization and associated reforms, communities ability to participate in the management of the local environment will not only provide access to better income earning opportunities, but it could also enhance the much need capacity to provide for its masses wisely.

- Local government reforms will set in motion the process through which revenues accruing from the natural resources (particularly from timber, rubber, and mining sector) available at the local level are shared equally with central government, over time.