

**PROGRAM DOCUMENT DRAFT FINAL April 2013**

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| **Program Title***:* | Liberia Decentralization Support Program (LDSP) |
| **National Implementing Partners:** | Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) &Governance Commission (GC) |
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| **Time Frame***:* | **2013-2017 (revised in 2015)** |
| **Total Program Cost:** | **27,105,000 US$** |

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| **Brief Description:**The Liberia Decentralization Support Program (LDSP), a successor to the Liberia Decentralization and Local Development (LDLD) program and the County Support Team (CST) Program, presents the strategy, results framework and operational modalities for a five-year program of support to the decentralization of political, administrative, and fiscal governance in Liberia. The program is fully aligned with Liberia’s National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance and the Liberia Decentralization Implementation Plan (LDIP) and it is one of the priority areas in the Agenda for Transformation, pillar 4 on governance. The Government of Liberia establishes a modality for coordinated donor support to the decentralization reforms during the project cycle (2013-2017). In support of Goal 1 of the Government of Liberia’s Agenda for Transformation, this program will deliver the following four outcomes: * Outcome 1: Deconcentrated services and corresponding resources managed at the assigned level of government;
* Outcome 2: Service delivery and accountability of local government improved.
* Outcome 3: Legal and Regulatory framework for decentralization is in place
* Outcome 4: MIA is capacitated to lead and implement decentralization reforms
* Outcome 5: Program Management
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**SIGNATURE PAGE**

**AfT Pillar Goal:** **AfT. Pillar Goal IV: Governance and Public Sector Modernization**

In partnership with citizens, create transparent, accountable and responsive public institutions that contribute to economic and social development as well as inclusive and participatory governance systems

**Program Duration:** **April 2013 – Dec. 2017**

**Total Program Budget: 27, 105, 000 US$**

**Current Indicative Contributions from Partners:**

* Government 5,000,000 US$
* Sweden 10,000,000 US$
* EU 6,500,000 US$
* UNDP 2,500,000 US$
* **Total** **24,000,000 US$**
* **Funding Gap (US$)\***

***\*The funding Gap is expected to be filled from the likely contribution of EU funds under the 11th EDF and GOL commitment to the decentralization program.***

**Approved by Government:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ Date**:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/2014

 Minister of Finance, Development and Planning

**Approved by Government:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ Date**:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/2014

 Minister of Internal Affairs

**Approved by Government:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ Date**:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/2014

 Governance Commission

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# 1. Situational Analysis

## 1.1 General background

Liberia is experiencing growing political stability and macro -economic progress.[[1]](#footnote-1)Annual average growth in gross domestic product (GDP) was 6.9 per cent between 2006 and 2010, decelerating due to the global economic and financial crisis in 2009 but forecasted to rebound to around 7 to 10 per cent in the period 2012-2017. This growth record has been underpinned by sound monetary and fiscal policies that have kept inflation in single digits, a US$4.7 billion debt write-off upon reaching the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) completion point in 2010, large inflows of official development assistance (US$513 million in 2009), growing foreign direct investment, especially in extractive industries (with total commitments of US$16 billion since 2006 and an inflow of US$453 million in 2010), and rising foreign reserves. With encouraging prospects for sustainable economic growth and social development, the Government of Liberia (GoL) has initiated appropriate policies and reform agendas including civil service reform, public sector financial management, policy and planning for gender equality and peace building and reconciliation.

Nevertheless, the country still faces a steep climb up from the development setbacks[[2]](#footnote-2) created by almost uninterrupted conflict during the period 1989-2003 and a highly centralized system of governance, which has hampered popular participation and local development initiatives, especially in the provision of public goods and services. This has contributed to the need for greater accountability and transparency in the management of public affairs and led to an historical gap between economic growth and development. The GoL is committed to ensuring greater participation by the Liberian people in their own developmental processes for equitable distribution of the nation’s resources so as to promote shared governance and strengthen local development.

Accordingly, in January 2012 the Government of Liberia launched the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance aimed at systematically providing guidance to the process of decentralizing power, authority, functions and responsibilities from the central government to local governments. This landmark policy demonstrates this administration’s commitment to bring government closer to the people through a decentralized, gender-sensitive, participatory and accountable system of local governance. The policy provides that administrative institutions in the counties be revised, restructured and harmonized to implement a responsible and responsive system of local governance and public administration and to ensure accountable, efficient and transparent management of local resources. The policy further provides for the establishment of administrative departments as part of local government in each county. Liberians will be empowered at all levels to actively participate in the political, social and economic transformation of the country.

Decentralization is central to the ongoing peace building and reconciliation, governance reforms, and poverty reduction program of Liberia. According to the Agenda for Transformation (Poverty Reduction Strategy(PRS) II), the Government of Liberia is “committed to delivering to the Liberian people an improved system of governance that is more localized and more responsive to the needs and aspirations of all citizens throughout the country. The PRS2 focuses on three key investments, which build on the gains of the first PRS and address the socio-political dimensions of growth and development. These areas were highlighted by the President in her inaugural speech when she noted the three main priorities for Liberia in the future: a) infrastructure development, including the rehabilitation and construction of roads, ports, public buildings and hydro-electric facilities; b) investing in people, particularly programs targeting unemployed youth, health, education, creation of social safety nets and national reconciliation; and c) investing in institutions, with special emphasis on the reform of security-related organizations and public and private sector development.

This document presents the Government of Liberia’s program in support of the National Decentralization Policy and Implementation Plan, defining the interventions between 2013 and 2017. It presents the objectives, key results, strategy, and resources required to lay the foundations for political, fiscal and administrative decentralization in the country. The program identifies the expected outcomes, key risks facing decentralization and the delivery of program outputs and activities, and defines the appropriate mitigation and program management measures to ensure success.

## 1.2 Objectives of Decentralization

The National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance,[[3]](#footnote-3) launched by Her Excellency the President in January 2012, represents a sweeping change in the governance structure of Liberia. It plans to establish a local government structure in each of the existing 15 counties and in communities granted city charters, with democratically elected councils and an executive branch with an administrative structure. The policy also envisages a deep devolution of functions and resources to these newly constituted local governments (see Box 1).The superintendent will have the responsibility to propose a county budget and a development plan that needs to be approved by the County Council (CC); some appointments in the administrative structure of the county (according to Civil Service Agency regulations) will be made by the superintendent and confirmed by the CC, as will the levying of all local taxes, rates, duties, fees and fines.

On the devolution of expenditure responsibilities as well as on revenue assignments, the Decentralization Policy needs to be more specific in scope. The document lists a series of areas that are to be reserved to the exclusive competence of national government. In principle, therefore, all other functions, including the provision of services in the human development sectors, are open to decentralization. As for tax revenues, the document explicitly mentions property tax levied on real estate property as a tax base for the county level. It also assigns to the county all licenses and fees collected on local business. All possible sources of funding for the counties will be determined by the National Legislature in a revenue sharing arrangement to be defined and revised as the process of devolution of functions proceeds and deepens. Shared resources allocated to counties will be based on “a clear and transparent formula taking into account adherence to good governance practices and standards.”

The Decentralization Policy also envisages the need for a restructuring of the proliferation of territorial administrative units existing at the moment in Liberia. The desired outcome is that Liberia has 16 cities, being 15 County capitals plus the national capital (Monrovia). The data garnered from the consultations is currently being analyzed and will be implemented under the proposed program.

The Decentralization Policy itself envisages a ten-year window for its full implementation, with the first three years dedicated to deconcentration of services to the County level, constitutional reform, restructuring, empowerment of local government structures and capacity building at the local level. The NPDLG guides that full devolution of powers, including fiscal decentralization, is expected to occur in the remaining seven years.

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| **Box 1. The Proposed Features of Local Government in Liberia** |
| **Elected officials**- County Superintendents- County Council (CC): - two representative per district-two youth representatives county wide- two women representatives county wide- two representatives from the cities- two representatives from the townships- two elders from the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders- District Commissioners**-** City Mayors**-** Township Commissioners- City and township councils- Paramount Chiefs- Clan Chiefs- General Town Chiefs |
| **Administrative structures**- County chief executive officer (Superintendent);- County administrative officer and heads of county administrative departments;- County district commissioners;- County departments to cover the following functions: - District administrative office to include:- Finance - revenue, expenditure, budget; - Planning and development officer;- Administration and personnel; - Health officer;- Public works and utilities; - Educational officer;- Health and social welfare; - Agriculture officer.- Agriculture, natural resources and commerce; - Education, information and sports. |
| **Powers****-** Superintendent supervises administration, prepares annual county development plan and budget, appoints all head of county administrative agencies;- CC approves the budget and county development plan, levies local taxes, rates, duties, fees, licensing and operating permits to local business, approves some appointments of administrative staff by the superintendent, and enacts local ordinances;**-** District commissioner is responsible for the implementation of county policies, assisted by a voluntary advisory board at the district level. |
| **Reporting**Superintendents report to the CC and annually to the President, through the MIA. |
| **Functions**The policy also lists those areas that are to remain at the National Level, which include: Justice; Auditing; Elections; Foreign Affairs; Immigration; Industrial licensing and intellectual property; Money, Bank and insurance; National defense; Natural Calamities; National health, education and water policies. |
| **Resources**- Property tax levied on all real estate property;- Licenses and fees on local business;- Grants/tax shares as established in a revenue sharing agreement. |
| *Source: Draft Local Government Act, 2013* |

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## 1.3 Major achievements

It is widely recognized in Liberia that these objectives require a long-term vision and a whole process of government reform. As a result of the recommendations emanating from the policy development process, a 5-year Liberia Decentralization Implementation Plan (LDIP) has been developed to launch the decentralization agenda based upon the prevailing post-war situation of Liberia, and is hence capable of entrenching a decentralized governance system and democratization in the country.

Based on preliminary work, however, the decentralization process is already underway and has made some significant progress, as follows:

* GoL approved and launched the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance, formulated and validated following extensive nationwide public consultations, debates and dialogue;
* A draft Local Government Act is being finalized for submission to the Legislature;
* A 10-year strategic framework to implement the decentralization policy and a detailed 5-year (2013 to 2017) implementation plan have been formulated following extensive nation-wide consultations;
* County Development Offices and County Statistics & Information Offices are operational in all 15 Counties, providing critical capacity for local level data collection and management, enhanced planning and monitoring, and providing support to local coordination functions, such as the County Development Steering Committee.
* A network of over 300 staff (20% females) distributed in the 15 counties, gathering data to track national and local development progress, including Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS I) and County Development Agendas (CDAs);
* Construction and renovation of 14 out of 15 administration buildings housing County Administrations;
* Sector deconcentration plans completed for major line ministries with significant progress made by the ministries of Health, Education and Agriculture;
* Implementation of a 2-year capacity development plan for the Ministry of Internal Affairs leading to setting up of technical divisions for decentralization implementation, training and capacity development, community driven development, internal auditing, and monitoring and evaluation;
* County staff received basic training in Public Financial Management supported by manuals, and County and District leadership underwent training in leadership skills;
* The county governments and communities have had access to over US$ 40 million for local development over the last five years, underscoring the GoL’s commitment to promote decentralization under various development funds such as County Development Fund, Local Development Fund and Social Development Fund;
* Participatory planning and budgeting piloted in 9 counties/districts under the Local Development Fund and district planning guidelines formulated; and
* Several county, district and sub-district structures such as the County Council (being modified to mirror the County Council in the Decentralization Policy), County Development Steering Committee, Project Management Committee, District Development Committee, and Project Management Team are in place to strengthen decentralization and local development.

## 1.4 Opportunities and Challenges

The process of decentralization is likely to be facilitated by several positive trends and opportunities, but many challenges will have to be addressed and overcome before decentralization can become a reality.

* 1. **Opportunities:**
* **The high level of political commitment, a strong policy framework and ongoing governance reforms** – The launching of the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance by the President and the ongoing public sector, finance and civil service reforms provide an exceptional opportunity for Liberia to consolidate and deepen the decentralization process. Decentralization features prominently as a component of Liberia’s PRS II and Vision 2030.
* **Capitalizing on broad consensus for decentralization** – Widespread citizens support exists for the decentralization policy, resulting from a highly participatory process through which it was formulated, drafted and validated.
* **Building on an existing foundation** – Several government initiatives to operationalize decentralization include improved infrastructure for county and some of the district government administrations, sector deconcentration, fiscal decentralization in terms of various funds for local development, transfer of recurrent budget to county administrations, emerging participatory planning, public financial management capacity at local level through the piloting of a local investment fund, local economic development for service delivery, and a decentralized monitoring of PRS deliverables.
* **International resources and technical expertise** - Financial and technical support is provided by several donors and international partners committed to promote decentralization including the EU, Sweden, World Bank, USAID, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA).
	1. **Challenges**:
* **Overcoming the limited viability of current local governments** – The current distribution of districts and sub-district administrative structures and cities is nonviable and unsustainable. It will be necessary to significantly rationalize the number of administrative structures, which will be challenging, as many different technical, financial and social concerns must be reconciled.
* **Building the requisite human and financial resources and administrative capacity at the local level** requires substantial investment in institutional strengthening, systems and procedures, training and infrastructure consistent with the 10 Year National Capacity Development Strategy. As centralized functions are progressively transferred to the local governments, careful oversight is needed to ensure that corresponding finances and staff are also transferred and inter-sectoral consistency is maintained. In particular, making local government service financially and professionally attractive and ensuring that basic services are available to relocated civil servants will be necessary for county, district and municipal government administrations to function properly.
* **Conducting democratic elections for local government leadership** – Organizing and monitoring the elections required to fill local government positions will necessitate substantial organizational, financial and human resources.
* **Inadequate participation of citizens in local community development decisions** due to the absence of formal functioning mechanisms for such participation. Empowering CSOs to improve their capacities to monitor and communicate decentralization concepts at the grass root level will be critical for their engagement and oversight of government. In addition, local development can be accelerated by organizing, mobilizing and capacitating citizens to participate in voluntary community development initiatives.
* **Lack of appropriate fiscal framework for the emerging local governments** – Systems for intergovernmental fiscal transfers have to be established almost from scratch. The work required for coordination among sector ministries and the Ministry of Finance will be very substantive – both in terms of technical analysis but also in terms of consensus building and transformation of mindsets. Additional work will be required for establishment of local revenue sources, financial management systems and ultimately credit facilities for the most capable local governments. Ministry of Finance has initiated some reform elements.

## 1.5 Lessons Learned from Previous Support to Decentralization

The program strategy draws from past experience both in Liberia and globally. This includes UNDP’s lessons on supporting governance in fragile states recently captured in the Governance for Peace framework.[[4]](#footnote-4) This framework recognizes UNDP’s extensive experience in fragile and conflict‐affected settings, and defines UNDP’s role in fragile environments as a **service provider and source of technical assistance working with both state and society with the objective of reinforcing the social contract**.

CST and LDLD

The program draws on particular lessons from the County Support Team (CST) and the Liberia Decentralization and Local Development (LDLD) programs that were implemented by UNDP with support from Sweden and the EU as a support to the Government of Liberia’s broader development efforts such as decentralization and capacity development of national and sub-national administration for service delivery.

Specifically, CST and LDLD provided strategic policy advice, legal framework, systems and procedures for local governance by:

* + - 1. supporting GoL to establish Liberia’s decentralization policy and its legal framework;
			2. elaborating and strengthening procedures, processes and systems for effective planning and public expenditure management at the county, district and sub-district levels;
			3. launching and supporting county/district development fund, which established a generic framework for planning and managing inter-governmental budgetary transfers;
			4. building capacity of local administration through the construction/rehabilitation of temporary County/District Administrative Buildings to restore state authorities and administration (a) increasing administrative, technical and institutional capacity of sub-national administration to deliver essential and basic services, (b) supporting the new emerging decentralized structure at county and district level, and (c) promoting enhanced financial viability, accountability and management; and
			5. Strengthening County information management, monitoring and data management capacity: (a) supporting establishment and well-functioning of County Statistics and Information Offices (CSIOs) and County Development Offices (CDOs), and (b) consolidating and strengthening capacity of the County Administration to monitor and report on protection incidents and PRS/CDA deliverables.

CST and LDLD led to considerable improvement in the context in which national and sub-national administration functions improved performance and delivery of essential services, state authorities and administration restored, functional county and district administrative buildings where county and line Ministry activities are pushed forward and coordinated, improved county information management and Decentralization Agenda. However, donor and partners had expressed concerns about overlaps in the work of both CST and LDLD and the need for synergy and co-ordination between the two programs. The issue was initially addressed by UNDP through Joint Annual Work Plans (AWP), which compiled and consolidated activities of both programs under one AWP.

Lessons learned over the years in the implementation of both programs/projects are as follows: (a) limited capacity (human and instructional) at sub-national level (b) huge number of sub-national structures and the need for rationalization (c) some overlaps in the activities of CST and LDLD (d) program design continued to focus on early recovery interventions than longer-term resulted oriented interventions.

An evaluation was also recommended to assess the activities, achievements, lessons learned and way forward.

The combined evaluation of CST, LDLD and National Information Management Centre (NIMAC) programs was successfully completed in March 2012 and came out with recommendations for a holistic program that would harmonize UNDP’s support to Government’s decentralization agenda whilst eliminating duplication of activities and optimizing resource allocation. The engagement with Government on this front was very successful, leading to the formulation of concept note on support to decentralization.

## 1.6 Alignment with National Priorities

Within Liberia’s diverse contexts, contributing development partners make every effort to align support to the needs and priorities of national partners; hence the programmatic interventions here have been derived from an analysis of how the development partners can support the key national planning frameworks including the Vision 2030 (PRS II, Liberia Rising - Agenda for Transformation, Roadmap for Peacebuilding, National Healing and Reconciliation) and New Deal. In particular, this program aligns with Pillar IV on Governance and Public Institutions, and is designed to support implementation of Sector Goals I and II.

Further this program aligns with the following key policy documents and draft GoL plans for support to decentralization in Liberia:

* The Agenda for Transformation;
* The National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance;
* Liberia Decentralization Implementation Plan (as revised in 2014);
* Deconcentration Implementation Strategy;
* The preliminary plans from Ministry of Finance for fiscal decentralization;
* Draft Public Sector Modernization Program;
* The National Environmental Policy;
* The National Gender Policy; and
* New Deal.

The Liberia Decentralization Implementation Plan (LDIP) is the GoL’s overall guiding document for implementation of the decentralization policy and the current program presented herein is fully aligned with that GoL document.

The LDIP articulates the GoL’s overall vision and major implementation strategies for moving toward accountable and democratic local governance and rapid, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development.

The decentralization implementation plan is itself derived from years of preparatory nationwide discussions and dialogues. First, beginning in 2007, several regional and national consultations were held which led to the production of the Decentralization Policy by the GoL through the Governance Commission (GC) in January 2011. In addition, the GC commissioned a number of studies that illuminated and clarified various aspects of decentralization within the Liberian context. The drafting of the decentralization implementation plan has paid particular attention to the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance, the various studies commissioned on decentralization in Liberia, stakeholders’ consultations on decentralization, the sector deconcentration plans developed under the guidance of the GC, and the examination of decentralization implementation plans from various African countries. The plan thus takes into consideration the interrelationship between political institutions and administrative agencies at the national, regional and local levels, the resource management needs and challenges, and the central governance concerns of transparency and accountability.

The plan has undergone extensive consultations with and refinement by stakeholders and is pending approval by the Cabinet. The LDIP is intended to be a comprehensive plan for GoL implementation of the Decentralization Policy. However, it is realized that it focuses primarily on the implementation responsibilities of GC and MIA. Other key stakeholders, such as sector ministries such as Education, Health and Agriculture are expected to implement their own sector-specific strategies with guidance from the GC and MIA. In addition, Ministry of Finance (MoF) is in the process of developing a comprehensive approach to fiscal decentralization. The IMF/SIDA Public Financial Management Reform Program supports the Ministry of Finance. The proposed LDSP seeks to align and coordinate all decentralization efforts (administrative, political and fiscal) as a single national decentralization that has all the institutions speaking to each other and working together.

# 2. Objective, Principles and Cross-Cutting Issues

## 2.1 Objective(s)

The long-term objective of governance decentralization in Liberia is defined in the Agenda for Transformation Pillar IV: ***In partnership with citizens, create transparent, accountable and responsive public institutions that contribute to economic and social development as well as inclusive and participatory governance systems.***

This program will facilitate the achievement of this objective through support to Nation-Building and Decentralization as described in Pillar IV Sub-Goal A: *Engage with citizens to ensure equitable, peaceful, transparent and inclusive democratic institutions and enhanced political governance at national and local levels.* As a means to accomplishing this goal, decentralization seeks to bring planning and decision-making closer to the people by devolving political, administrative, and fiscal powers to local governments.

Specific subsidiary objectives related to the transfer of authority and responsibilities from national to local governments in Liberia include the following:

* Enhance sensitivity, responsiveness and capabilities of local governments and make them accountable to local people;
* Accelerate effective and efficient service delivery and poverty alleviation by developing and strengthening local level planning, monitoring and management capacity and providing access to national and local resources through fiscal decentralization;
* Increase equitable distribution of the nation’s resources so as to ensure a more wholesome process of development and democratic governance; and
* Enhance participatory decision-making to engender peace-building and reconciliation

## 2.2. Principles

This Program will be implemented according to the following operational principles:

**Implement the National Policy for Decentralization and Local Government (NPDLG)** *–* the primary mandate of the LDSP is to support the Government of Liberia to implement the NPDLG. As such

Implementation, of the LDSP will be guided by the NPDLG in its priorities, extent and sequence.

**Flexibility:** By and large decentralization is a political process and not an event. As such it will be important in the implementation of this program to build in a flexible approach that can take advantage of changing circumstances and opportunities that may become available from time to time.

**Build on existing gains:** Decentralization is an incremental process that will be achieved by building onto previous efforts and recognizing existing strengths in the system to build upon. LDSP will adopt this approach.

**National Ownership:** While external assistance is often necessary to safeguard human life and dignity during a crisis, as nations transition from crisis to recovery through to development, national ownership is the determining factor for sustainability and continuing progress. The GoL will lead this effort with support of development partners to strengthen local capacities to design and implement nationally-led change processes and governance reforms. To ensure that support can be effective, this program will:

* Clearly assess existing capacities to ensure local systems are not overwhelmed and ownership is not undermined;
* Ensure that short-term initiatives do not undermine long-term capacity development requirements;
* Be attentive to the legitimacy, authority, and capacity of local institutions and their adaptability to reform before investing significantly; and
* Strengthen the capacity of non-state actors to hold state institutions accountable and enhance responsiveness.

**Accountability:** Accountability is a crucial element to effective governance. To this end, the national implementing partners are committed to:

* Be accountable and demonstrate that the work has been conducted in compliance with legal regulations and agreed principles, rules and standards;
* Procure services through approved procurement process;
* Report fairly and accurately on performance and results according to mandated roles and agreed principles, as per LDIP/LDSP documents, annual work plans and budgets.

The development partners are committed to:

* Provide predictable funding according to the agreements made with GoL in support of the Liberia Decentralization Implementation Plan 2013-2017 and annual plans and budgets to be agreed upon between the parties.

**Transparency:** Transparency is widely accepted as the most important tool to combat corruption and lack of accountability.[[5]](#footnote-5) This program will, besides promoting systems for transparency and accountability, also promote ethics and integrity to clarify what is expected from professionals (civil servants) and set-up of monitoring mechanisms to ensure they adhere to their commitments and are sanctioned if they break public trust. Institutional support will be provided to improve administrative procedures in service and contact with citizens are essential for improved transparency and efficiency. At operational level access to information on citizens’ rights and duties in relation to services is important as well as ensuring the inclusion of a broad set of stakeholders in decision-making. This program has a specific output (4.4) linked exclusively to anti-corruption measures underscoring the importance of this crosscutting issue as essential for outcome success.

**Sustainability:** Decentralization that brings about improved and inclusive public service provision and local development more generally needs to be sustainable in institutional, social, financial and environmental terms. To ensure that the decentralization program promotes sustainable change, it will require:

* That local government is participatory, transparent, accountable, and delivers services and development to all citizens in an efficient and effective manner. In this way the citizen–state relationship can be rebuilt and strengthened for the long term.
* Local government needs to have the revenue and expenditure assignments that permit it to address the needs and demands that local citizens and communities place upon it.
* Local government needs to have the capacity to address and shape the environmental impact of local development if the local habitat is to sustain the local communities and their improved development in years to come.

**Conflict-Sensitivity:**Programs that are not designed and implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner, leading to diminishing impact of the interventions, can in some cases contribute to tension and instability on the ground.  Narrowly targeted and centralized investments in core state institutions and functions can unintentionally intensify fragility by aggravating identity-based fault lines and structural risks. Against this background, the LDSP will ensure that interventions:

* Are based on a solid conflict and contextual analysis, identifying the underlying factors of crisis and fragility in a given context;
* Address to the largest extent possible the identified drivers of crisis and fragility;
* Are effectively prioritized and sequenced in order to maximize impact and sustainability; and
* Are closely monitored to be able to take corrective measures early on to avoid potential negative impact.

## 2.3 Crosscutting issues

Crosscutting issues dealt with in the program strategy are identified in the LDIP as central issues for successful decentralization.[[6]](#footnote-6) To ensure that crosscutting issues are integrated in a consistent and meaningful manner a mainstreaming strategy is proposed.

1. **Peace building**

Reconciliation and conflict mediation are central for all activities undertaken in Liberia. Whilst the situation in Liberia today is peaceful, the history of insecurity impacts present activities and how objectives should be achieved. Decentralization is widely seen as a perquisite to avoiding future conflicts; however, the process in itself has the potential to fuel new conflicts, particularly if it does not offer tangible results that the population can relate to and benefit directly from. UNMIL has been a stabilizing force for security and stability in Liberia since 2003 and will be present until 2015, when it is expected to withdraw from Liberia. With the drawdown or reconfiguration of UNMIL, the program recognizes the need to address unresolved tensions in Liberia through a UN Country Team-driven approach that works to build peace throughout all of its activities at national and local level, emphasizing the importance of national leadership and capabilities. All efforts therefore should be made to deliver a decentralized system of government that has room for the participation of all Liberians in all walks of their lives as a tangible dividend of the peace.

The program will work to foster peace building at an institutional level by ensuring that program outputs are sensitive to and supportive of the Government of Liberia’s stated commitments to national reconciliation (Roadmap to Peacebuilding, National Healing and Reconciliation), constitutional review and reform, boundary harmonization and political decentralization. At the programmatic level, the program will work to ensure that peace building outcomes are achieved by ensuring that decentralized governance targets efforts to rebuild the contract between marginalized communities and the state by, for example, enabling inclusive political, legislative and regulatory reform, providing resources for local level peace building activities, and facilitating consensus between communities on county priorities.

1. **Communication and outreach**

A partnership with all communities and citizens of Liberia is of critical importance in the whole process of decentralization. The implementation of decentralization must be demand-driven, reflecting the perceptions, expectations and aspirations of citizens and various segments of the society on the benefits, opportunities and challenges of decentralization, but the government must take its responsibility of creating an enabling environment for shared governance to take root.

Therefore a mainstream approach will be adopted in an effective and extensive communications program will help ensure participation and voice of all citizens at all stages of the implementation process. A deep understanding of the decentralized governance system, the processes involved and the evolution from deconcentration to devolution is essential for its effective functioning. This will require extensive media outreach, town hall meetings, audio, video and visual displays and engaging community elders, traditional authorities, youth and women groups, NGOs and CBOs, minorities and other disadvantaged groups, faith-based organizations, political leaders and civil servants at local and central level, legislatures, the private sector and so on.

1. **Gender[[7]](#footnote-7) and Youth[[8]](#footnote-8)**

Liberia has signed two conventions as regards gender equality, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol.[[9]](#footnote-9) In addition, the Liberian National Action Plan LNAP (2009-2013) on Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325[[10]](#footnote-10) was adopted 2009[[11]](#footnote-11)and the National Gender Policy (NGP) was developed (2009) which is coordinated and in part implemented by the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD).[[12]](#footnote-12)

The National Youth Policy (NYP) was written in 2005, however, the Federation of Liberian Youth is debating a revised policy 2012-17.[[13]](#footnote-13) Children and young people are vulnerable in general, but with particular regard to decentralization they are discriminated in access to power, services and possibilities for work and education. Young boys and girls were deeply affected by the war: an estimated 11,353 children were registered among combatants (today’s youth) and the average age of more than 100,000 combatants was 25.3 years. Their roles extended beyond fighting as young people were used as porters, bush-wives, and recruiters.[[14]](#footnote-14)

In Liberia, gender and youth programming has been strongly associated with direct interventions to address expressions of gender inequalities (e.g., providing support to victims of S/GBV, youth employment, discrimination in access to services, etc.). As Liberia rises and transitions from relief and conflict prevention to long-term social development, initiatives designed to address gender and youth will need to expand their focus to (i) work on the causes of inequalities, such as norms and expectations with respect to the roles and responsibilities of women, men, boys and girls in society, and (ii) analyze the effects of inequalities and how they impact societal development (e.g. socio-economic parameters). The LDSP will support Liberian policy intentions to increase gender and youth equality.

At the institutional level, this program will act as a driving force for organizational excellence by building the capacity of institutions to use and rely on the experience and knowledge of both men and women. This program will address discriminatory behavior and attitudes in recruitment, promotions and salaries; it will also aim to provide a conducive and safe working environment, a greater understanding of gender and youth equality in management, and practical tools such as gender planning. This strategy will promote activities with selected agencies in relation to recruitment and retention of staff, taking both women and men’s needs into account in budgetary decision-making.

Equal participation in public decision-making is particularly emphasized in the decentralization policy and is being further developed in the proposed Local Governance Act (LGA). In line with the Liberian National Gender Policy, the Decentralization Policy seeks to ensure that a gender perspective informs all aspects of the decentralization process. As a first step to facilitating women’s participation in local government, the policy requires that two seats in all County Legislative Assemblies (County Councils) be set aside exclusively for women”.[[15]](#footnote-15) Quotas and support for making these efforts effective is not part of this program as such; however, the GoL, through the Governance Commission and in coordination with UN-Women, has undertaking a study to integrate a gender perspective in the process of national decentralization in Liberia which will inform approaches to gender mainstreaming and integration.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Due to the nature of cross-cutting issues as well as the proposal to do mainstreaming baselines and subsequent strategies, some of the same activities will be mentioned under different outcomes.

1. **Social Inclusion**

Social exclusion refers to processes in which individuals and entire communities of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources. Social inclusion refers to policy efforts designed to ensure that all people are able to participate in society regardless of their background or specific characteristics, which may include: race, language, culture, gender, disability, social status, age, and other factors.[[17]](#footnote-17)Discrimination on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity and HIV/AIDS deprives a majority of the population equal possibilities for institutional inclusion, access to services on equal terms and equal participation in society. Specifically, women and youth are currently under-represented on the concerned County-level decision making bodies with particular reference to the CDF and SDF management committees and the County Council more generally.

There is a risk that the lack of broad inclusiveness of the population and CSOs will transcend into the decentralization process.[[18]](#footnote-18) Therefore, at institutional and operational levels there is a need to ensure non-discriminatory procedures for recruitment and promotion, equal opportunities irrespective of ethnicity, and equality in service provision. This program will (i) train staff to see the benefits of inclusiveness and diversity,(ii) build the capacity of marginalized groups to increase their participation in local government, and (iii) use qualitative focus groups to measure the inclusiveness of the decentralization process. Quantitative indicators disaggregated on sex and age will be used throughout the program.

# 3. Implementation Strategy

As the Government has noted, Liberia is still a fragile, post-conflict nation, which is making a determined effort to transition from recovery and reconstruction to inclusive growth and sustainable human development. The extended conflict in Liberia, which led to the economic and social destruction of the country over a 14-year period up till the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2003, is recognized as having two root causes. The first was the systematic marginalization and exclusion of significant proportions of the population from the political process. The second was an economic crisis that emerged through the 1970s and 1980s leading to increasing impoverishment.

Preventing re-occurrence of the conditions that led to conflict consequently requires a two pronged approach: political reform and economic development.

Furthermore, both the political and the economic strands need to be fully inclusive in terms of geographical and social scope, enabling greater “voice” and space for participation by the citizens of Liberia in political processes and economic development. Decentralization of power, decision-making and government authority and corresponding resources will improve governance over time, increase transparency of government processes, enhance accountability and ultimately result in better delivery of services and the fulfillment of the Government’s responsibilities “to serve the Liberian people, promote democracy and reduce poverty.”

Based upon consultation at the national, county, district and chiefdom levels, there is a consensus that decentralization will contribute first and foremost to a “country led and country-owned transition out of fragility.”[[19]](#footnote-19) As a means to accomplish this, the GoL and its development partners have agreed that a coordinated funding arrangement will provide easy management of financial resources, allowing a more flexible and government-led implementation process. The program will:

* Serve as a mechanism for donor coordination and harmonization in support of decentralization reforms;
* Support GoL leadership of the reform process but at the same time seek to involve a broad range of stakeholders including civil society;
* Work nationwide, while being sensitive to the possible different approaches needed in the different Countie;
* Aim for a flexible and responsive approach to the reform process; and
* Work in an inclusive gender and conflict sensitive manner.

This program views decentralization as an all-inclusive process that imposes itself as the principal focus of governance reform, the designated motor for the coherency of governance and, finally, an important vehicle for collaboration between GoL and its national and international development partners.

The strategy for implementation of decentralization in Liberia has been guided by the NPDLG. Section 6.0 of the NPDLG reads *“the implementation of the NPDLG shall be incremental over a period of ten years. This incremental approach shall include amendment to the Constitution of Liberia to provide for the election of county superintendents and administrative district commissioners. The strategy is to pursue the process of constitutional amendment while simultaneously establishing conditions for successful deconcentration as the first stage of the process of decentralization.*

*Such conditions which include local capacity development, institutional restructuring for economic governance, and empowerment of existing local structures, among others, shall be established within the first three years of the ten-year period of incremental implementation..”*

The NPDLG goes on the assign the responsibility of developing a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of the policy to Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Governance Commission, the Ministry of Finance, Planning an Economic Affairs and other MACs. The LDIP has been developed (although it will need to be aligned with the NPDLG), and out of it the Deconcentration Implementation Strategy has been developed.

In the review of the program the need to align the program more directly with the NPDLG has been highlighted, resulting in a 2-track strategic approach.

1. **Track 1 will be more pragmatic** - responding to the “immediate need for citizens to begin to see some peace dividends” by **prioritizing the implementation of the deconcentration strategy.** It has been correctly argued that attempting to deconcentrate all the 14 deconcentrating MACs at the same time will both too slow, unresponsive and unrealistically costly. Therefore an incremental process that takes the first most critical (the criteria being most basic) **services** to the County level only to be coordinated by the County Superintendent will be pursued. The emphasis on deconcentrating services will deliberately mean that:
	* + - 1. A menu of services from which counties can make a selection of what is most urgent for them, will be developed in consultation with the responsible MACs and the County;
				2. Efficiency in terms of cost and time will be a major consideration. Training of ministry staff currently on government salary and posted to the counties will be encouraged to reduce cost and yet insure sustainability;
				3. Implementation may imply collaboration with more than a single MAC;
				4. A fiscal framework to enable government officials to access salaries in their station will be key to successfully deconcentrate; and
				5. The capacity of MIA to lead in the deconcentration and coordination will have to be fast tracked.

Going forward, therefore the program will invest in **the County as the anchor of delivering services**. Reform will be hinged upon supporting the County Office to have the ability to do its mandated functions – which really comes down to coordination of service delivery with the line ministries. Coordination here is defined to mean pooling both human and logistical resources, a common County platform under the day-to-day operational leadership of the County Superintendent, while reporting into the technical ministries will continue directly for the technical aspects. In the short-term financial resources will be managed by each ministries, (but with the full knowledge of the County Administration) gradually moving to a medium-term plan to have financial resources managed by county administration through the County Treasuries of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

The target is that at the end of 2015, at least in each county a number of basic services in health, education, agriculture, and potentially others (as determined by the needs of each county) will be functional coordinated in all counties managing both the operations and financial aspects and coordinating with the Office of the Superintendent.

2016 and 2017 will see a consolidation of deconcentrated service delivery and an increase of MACs in the Counties in addition to deepening the reach to the districts. However the pace of moving to the districts will be determined by the strength developed at the County level.

1. **Track two (2)** will continue to make preparations for the more devolved local governance anticipated in the 10-year timeline, when local leaders will be elected and able to assume the functions envisaged in the draft LGA. This means LDSP will continue sustained engagement and advocacy to anchor decentralization in legislative instruments at the national level seeking to guarantee a non-reversal on the gains to decentralize as governments change in Liberia, including rationalization of the of the units of local administration. This prong will also focus on supporting professionalizing identifiable personnel to become the career civil service who will manage the local government structures and systems. Coming out of conflict Liberia has seen a proliferation of units of local government like towns, cities and townships.

More specifically, the actual implementation of decentralization will be applied ***incrementally*** based on assessment of the capacity to perform the functions granted to local institutions. The reform process will have three distinct phases:

**January 2015 to December 2015:** This period will be characterized by intense work on establishing service delivery abilities at the County level, in response to the fact that people cannot wait for services to be delivered while the more complex political issues of elections and legal reform are tackled. MIA will invest in developing the capacity for management and coordination of service delivery at the local level which will include financial management, reporting and audit capacities as well as developing and supporting a professional local government/local administrative civil service. The biggest excuse by all higher level of government for not decentralizing is lack of capacity at the lower levels – so essentially in this phase – LDSP will focus on showing successful service delivery under capable management at the County level.

Advocacy will be a big agenda to remove obstacles where they may exist with particular attention to the political and fiscal decentralization especially with respect to the passing of the LGA, the establishment of the county treasuries and the demarcation of the boundary of sub-national units.

**January 2016 – December 2016**: LDSP will facilitate a consolidation of the deconcentrated services as well as increasing the number of services available in the County and where possible expand to the districts. Additionally LDSP will begin to support mimicking of the administrative and political processes of accountability, albeit with appointed officials as a way to expose local administrators, traditional systems and civil society to the benefits of shared governance. Efforts will be made to conclude the legal framework to enable preparation for local elections for county superintendents, district commissioners, city mayors, township commissioners, and paramount, clan and general town chiefs to take place according to the schedule of the constitutional review process.

Advocacy to have county treasuries in all the counties will continue.

**January 2017-December 2017**: The assumption is that by 2017 the Constitutional review and referendum processes will have progressed enough to make it possible to hold elections at the local level. So that in addition to continuing to deepen deconcentration, LDSP will support the conduct of the election of county superintendents, district commissioners, city mayors, township commissioners and paramount, clan and general town chiefs, in terms of information dissemination and dialogue. Once the elected local governments are in place, the gradual and incremental movement towards devolution or shared authority can begin.

Strategically at this point, the new government ushered into power in the 2017 elections will not be able to easily reverse the gains made towards decentralization without going through a constitutional amendment to effect a reversal.

The next 5 years then 2018 – 2023, will be for moving to devolution: the practical transfer of powers, functions and resources to local governments and a more intense period of capacity building of both staff and elected leaders at all levels.

**Who is responsible for what?**

The implementation of the NPDLG is a whole government commitment and all government MACs have a role to play, albeit, some more directly than others. LDSP will support the process of deconcentrating services from the different MACs, to the determined degrees and therefore will most of the deconcentrating MACs are an integral part of the program. The MIA and the GC, though – by virtue of their mandated functions will have the most distinct functions – as follows:-

**The Role of the Ministry of Internal Affairs LDSP:**

The statutory mandate of the MIA is to administer the affairs of local governments; to improve the coordination between the central government in Monrovia and the local governments; and to build capacity for effective decentralization and accountable local governance. It is the Ministry in-charge of the supervision and oversight of the County Superintendents and providing an enabling environment to all deconcentrating units in the Counties, making it the primary implementing ministry of decentralization in the country. For this reason MIA itself has a major responsibility of deconcentrating efficiently if it is going to successful lead and support deconcentration and decentralization, in that order.

Accordingly the NDIS is located in the MIA and is supervised directly by the minister with supporting roles by the four (4) deputy ministers of the ministry.

**The role of the Governance Commission in LDSP:**

The Governance Commission is the government think-tank - the engine of new and innovative ideas for how to attain the Liberia that its citizens aspire for. In this capacity GC has the most comprehensive global understanding of the total functioning of all GoL MACs, separately and together. It has developed superior quality in monitoring and evaluation, tracking implementation towards goals set by the government, civil society engagement, and bringing to the policy making table the opinions of the citizens about the performance of the government. Most important for where the decentralization agenda is at this time, the Governance Commission is well placed and able to identify challenges and advocate for progress where processes may stall.

With this profile therefore, GC will continue to be a vital partner, with the specific roles of:

* Thinking and researching on emerging issues;
* Tracking implementation progress and informing about opportunities and gaps;
* Monitoring and evaluation of the program; and
* Advocacy to move the process forward.

# 4. Funding Strategy

For Liberia’s decentralization program, two broad funding arrangements are worth distinguishing from the onset. The first arrangement relates to the modalities that will be put in place to support the actual implementation of deconcentration of selected services to the Counties. According to the agreements with current donors, UNDP will continue to provide fund management services and the MIA and the Secretariat will guide implementation according to the agreed rules and regulations. Projecting the cost of this aspect of the program requires a clearer understanding of the specific details and extent of deconcentrating particular the services to the Counties. With limited knowledge of these roles at present, it is not possible at this stage of the process to provide the exact cost. Therefore, annually an agreed amount of money from total funds available will be set aside and allocated when the actual cost of interventions is established according to discussions with the responsible line ministries. An efficient allocation mechanism will then have to be developed and applied.

The funding could support the MACs to work out organizational arrangements in the counties with the Superintendents, to establish and equip offices in the Counties, or training to line ministry staff being seconded to the counties for specific tasks, or technical hand-holding for say financial management staff. The program will also support the County Development Steering Committee (where it still exists) or other coordination mechanisms to make them functional instruments of information sharing, developing plans and coordinated reporting arrangements. This strategic **support to the MACs will create a relationship with the MIA for coordination, both at the central and county levels, and with the Secretariat for a coordinated pace of deconcentration across government, thus making it possible to deliver a uniform national programme, which is vital for a country where so much history and strife is based on conflict over perceived or real preference of some over others.**

In addition the LDSP will seek opportunities to leverage value for money by advocating and supporting pooling of resources by county officials and personnel of MACs deployed to the counties.

The second aspect of the program deals with funding for the preparatory steps towards decentralization and finally, devolution governance system in Liberia. The LDSP program cost and financing framework on this aspect will be guided by the implementation strategy and will take advantage of opportunities that become available, for example, if the LGA is suddenly passed sooner than projected, the program would have to support more decentralization efforts. Some resources will be committed to legal reform efforts and rationalization of boundaries of local administration units. The most significant investment will be towards preparing the capacity of the local institutions, starting with the County Headquarters to establish systems, training and functional human resource capacity to manage and coordinate service delivery.

The two aspects discussed above are limited to the supply side of the governance equation. It will be necessary for the program to strengthen the supply side of the equation for democratic governance to take root. Each outcome makes provision for civic engagement and citizen participation and empowerment even during the deconcentration phase to engrain responsiveness, transparency and accountability of the government from the beginning.

The current budget for the first phase of the decentralization program is estimated at US$27 million, which is expected to be funded by both GoL and development partner contributions, as indicated on the signature page.

# 5. Program Outcomes

The Decentralization Policy articulates the broader policy objectives of reform that can be summarized as the establishment of:

* Accountable, inclusive, responsive and democratic local governments through a process of devolution; and
* Effective, efficient and sustainable systems for improved local service delivery.

The intended long-term program goal/outcome is to – in partnership with the citizens of Liberia – create transparent, accountable and responsive public institutions that contribute to economic and social development, as well as inclusive and participatory governance systems.

**The outcome indicators and targets for the LDSP’s long-term goal/outcome are as follows:**

Indicators

Citizens in all counties will:

1. Have access to improved quality of basic public services;
2. have an increased role and participation in the governance of their localities;
3. have an increased role and participation in public service delivery decisions;
4. experience their local government’s responsiveness and accountability to their needs; and
5. experience enhanced notions of shared nationhood and national identity.

Targets:

• Increased access and quality of public goods and services at the County level;

* Improved functional performance of local governments according to agreed performance indicators (score cards to be developed in 2015);

• Functional performance of local governments according to agreed performance indicators (scoring system to be developed during the first year of the program);

• Improved public perception of local governments service delivery and performance as measured by citizens score cards (score cards to be developed in 2015);

• Public perception of corruption in local governments more positive (as measured by surveys completed annually by GC);

* All counties, cities and townships have developed and put in place formal mechanisms and processes for participatory and accountable citizens’ (women and men by broad age-groups) involvement in local level planning, budgeting, allocation of resources as well as local level accountability; and
* People’s perception on level and degree of shared nationhood and national identity among Liberians is increased (score cards to be developed during the first year of the program).
* Legal and regulatory framework for decentralization is in place.

# Outcome 1: Deconcentrated functions and corresponding resources managed at the assigned level of government

Four outputs will be pursued in achieve of this outcome:

**Output 1.1: The MACs of the government of Liberia tangibly and visibly transfer functions, decision making and corresponding resources to the counties according to the deconcentration strategy.**

The ebola epidemic that hit Liberia from February, 2014 was an awakening to the extent of centralization of the government, to the exclusion of most of the people, and how little of any development efforts were going into improving the lives of the people in the villages, especially, but also those in the not so affluent parts of Monrovia. It called to question the 12 years of claims of decentralization and improved service delivery in the villages and of course, the misappropriation of the resources that purportedly were spent to do that. It was glaringly obvious that not only is decision making for all government operations still in Monrovia, but also that all logistics and basic infrastructure is only in Monrovia. The counties did not have a single ambulance, no basic gloves (even as they performed basic medical procedures), and worse, no trained staff to be able to even just recognize the disease. It was quickly visible too that the few maybe capable staff who on paper may have been deployed to some counties were in Monrovia due to lack of basic services like education and health for their families, not to talk about decent accommodation.

Interestingly though, all the 14 MACs that are supposed to provide basic services actually have a presence of some sort or other in all the counties. So what is not working?

Initial research and communication from officials of the MACs reveals that there are three (3) major problems: firstly, while a MAC office premises may indeed exist there is no system of supplies to make any work possible. No papers, no scratch card for telephone, no electricity or transport to get anything done; secondly, and probably most serious staff have to go for 3 to 9 months without any salary and have to find other ways of making a living. Some resort to farming or market business. Collecting any salary means a trip to Monrovia which can take up to 3 weeks at a time before they are paid. In some instances for the staff to get paid, they must pay someone an incentive of some sort. All the time they are away, no service is being provided – imagine if this is a school teacher! The third challenge is that the staff in the counties are not connected to any part of the government out there. They are isolated and try to provide services in a “silo”. The people with any authority to change the situation on the ground are in Monrovia.

LDSP will develop a menu (list) of services that should be deconcentrated, incrementally and then working closely with the mother MACs in Monrovia will support negotiations and provide technical guidance on how to effect successful deconcentration of the selected service. To address some of the challenges LDSP will provide seed money for set-up of office space under the management of the County Superintendent thus answering into the problem of basic supplies and coordination. The program will also have a strong advocacy approach to address systemic issues like salaries and transport. Already both Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the Ministry of Transport are part of the 14 MACs on the program.

Obviously this is an ambitious mammoth task and will be very expensive. What LDSP will devote its activities to provide, is a system of creating a government unit in the counties which can them illustrate success in a coordinated manner. To spread the cost and increase the numbers of services actually deconcentrated successfully LDSP will seek partnership with other UN agencies, donors and NGOs that may be working in the sectors already. For example UNICEF has indicated an interest in registration of births, as a possible area of their interest.

If the program is successful, at the end of 2015 a selected number of services will be present in each of the 15 counties in a functional and sustainable way. LDSP will be responsive to the reality that the counties have different circumstances and needs and therefore different counties may need different services at the end of 2015.

**Output 1.2: Enhanced coordination, sharing and pooling of resources across units of macs at the county level achieved**

To make the services deconcentrated under Output 1.1 sustainable, LDSP will focus on creating “a center of government” in all the counties. Tangibly this will mean strengthening the office of the County Superintendent to be able to coordinate all the service providing units. Coordination will entail shared office space (as preferred where possible), share logistics like generators and vehicles, regular meetings together and eventually a share work plan. Advocacy efforts will be intensified to have each MAC disaggregate its budget to show the amount of money that will go to each county each year so that the county officials know what they have to work and therefore what services are possible. The goal is to have the Ministry of Finance transfer the money earmarked for the County to be transferred directly to the county. Capacity building on public financial management for the county is a priority for LDSP, to make sure that the when funds are transferred they can be managed professionally.
The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning seems to be warm to this idea.

**Output 1.3: Improved infrastructure to support the deconcentration process**

To achieve the desired “center of government” configuration, it may be necessary to invest in refurbishing of office space and purchasing of logistical support. It has been suggested that as UNMIL is drawing down efforts will be made to request them to donate some of their prefabricated buildings to provide additional office space and probably even initial housing for county staff.

The government is interested and committed to finding a more sustainable way of providing long term and sustainable accommodation for county staff. Some suggestions have been made to approach the highest offices in the country to earmark a percentage of the CDF and or SDF funds allocated to each county to construction of the accommodation. If this is achieved, not only will the staff be able to live in their duty station, but also the county can generate some revenue because the staff will be required to pay, albeit a subsidized rate, for living in the accommodation.

**Output 1.4: citizens are informed about the units and services that are now at the county level and of their rights and corresponding duties**

The only valid barometer for service delivery are the people in the communities that the services are supposed to reach. LDSP will maintain a robust information and engagement campaign to make sure that citizens are informed of planned developments and given an opportunity to inform the decisions.

At regular intervals LDSP will conduct citizen perceptions surveys and other innovative mechanisms to benchmark and measure the true impact of the program.

**Outcome 2: Improved service delivery and accountability of local governments**

**Output 2.1:** Capacity for revenue collection, participatory planning and budgeting strengthened at county level;

This output will focus on the preparing the county government’s participatory development systems which have an efficient supply side and a strong demand side. Essentially as the MACs in Outcome 1 are bringing the services closer to the people, the local administration will gain its legitimacy and validity from the citizens if the services are delivered efficiently and transparently. In a coordinated approach Output 2.3 below, will support the development of systems for citizen participation and accountability while this output will support systems to increase the efficiency of the government. Embryonic understanding of the relationship of rights and duties for both government and citizens to collect and to pay taxes in return for services will be begin to be planted.

The top-down planning process and development interventions followed by the GoL have contributed to significant gender disparity, social exclusion and inequalities in Liberia. Community driven participatory planning and budgeting will lay the foundation for a need-based and demand-driven planning and formulation of development programs for the counties, districts, cities and counties progressively, including all available development resources and harmonizing the implementation procedures to promote local ownership and leadership of development and ensure sustainability. This approach to development planning is expected to reverse the past trends of exclusion and promote a gender-responsive, rights-based and inclusive development.

The Decentralization Policy has a strong focus on social inclusion with the objective of bringing more women to the forefront of the emerging decentralization process. The implementation of the Policy provides a window of opportunity to operationalize a rights-based approach to development and to the relationship between citizens and their government clearly sharing rights and duties.

The program will pay particular attention to the participation and inclusion of women, girls, youth and other vulnerable and challenged persons in the participatory processes to give them voice and visibility in development. Though Liberia has signed major international conventions on gender equality and the National Gender Policy developed in 2009 advocates for women’s participation in public decision-making, serious challenges remain in meeting gender equity, human rights, and protection of youth, women and vulnerable and physically challenged persons, including people living with HIV/AIDS. For example, the enrollment ratio of girls to boys in the primary and secondary schools stand at 86%. There is also limited participation by women in political leadership and civil service, particularly at the senior level.

## Output 2.2: Anti-corruption measures (systems and enforcement mechanisms) established and functional at county, city, district and community levels

Systems and enforcement mechanisms for public administration and development programs have been generally weak at the national level, and more so for sub-national structures. The Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission started functioning since 2009; however, the institutional capacity to address corruption and compliance issues at local levels is yet to be established. A Code of Conduct, which binds all public officials in Liberia was passed in 2014. This program will liaise with anti-corruption agencies on develop strategies for local anti-corruption plans for all levels of local government and progressively develop reporting and enforcement procedures.

## Output 2.3: Mechanisms established for monitoring and evaluation of shared governance under the decentralization implementation program and other ongoing public sector (civil service, public financial management) reforms.

The Governance Commission (GC) is mandated to monitor the implementation of public sector reforms and performance of government on an annual basis. In order to assess the quality of local governance, indicators amenable for measuring major governance factors at local levels are to be developed and scientific field surveys and studies need to be conducted to gather citizens’ perceptions on major governance factors and collect relevant data to capture progress made, emerging opportunities and local governance challenges as they relate to participation, social inclusion, stability and security, and quality of and access to service delivery.

In the undertaking the M & E, the GC will work closely with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning which has the statutory mandate for aid coordination and government delivery accountability systems.

## Output 2.5 Capacity of the public, citizens’ groups and civil society organizations strengthened to undertake participatory and performance monitoring, and to carry out watch-dog functions.

Looking at the experiences from the first phase and the monitoring activities of other organizations that feed into the PRS II monitoring (mainly LISGIS and sector ministries), the program will support civil society and community monitoring of decentralization using a combination of a Community Score Cards and a Community Service Monitoring component.

The Community Score Card will consist of structured focal group discussions on the quality of service delivery using a simple questionnaire and scoring system. This can either be applied with ‘mixed groups’ that are broadly representative of the various interest groups in communities, or with selected groups (women, persons living with a disability, youth, elderly, etc.), to assess service delivery from their specific perspective.

The community scorecard will be implemented by local CSOs with appropriate training. The focus will be on identifying local issues, perceptions and priorities, to complement quantitative data on the impact of decentralization. Data collected through the community scorecards will be used in a dialogue between service users and service providers, after the scorecard assessment.

The program will also introduce ongoing monitoring of selected services (not projects) by service users and front line service providers (e.g. Parent-Teacher Associations monitoring the quality of education at a certain school). Monitoring a selected number of services in the participating communities will be done by existing community groups if available (like school boards, health committees, water committees, etc.) and will take place on a regular basis (quarterly, for example) using a set of simple indicators. In order to keep constant track of service delivery improvements, the program will explore the possibility of using mobile phones for data collection.

**Outcome 3: Legal and regulatory framework for decentralization**

Output 3.1: Ensure coordinated formulation of legal framework for decentralization

The Decentralization Policy emphasizes that Liberia shall remain a unitary state with a system of local government and administration, and that the county will be the principal focus of the devolution of power and authority. A number of functions shall be exclusively reserved and exercised by the central government for the protection of national sovereignty. The policy also provides a framework for the local government structure and emphasizes that citizens of each county shall have the power to elect their Superintendents, District Commissioners, Members of the County Council, Paramount Chiefs, Clan Chiefs and Mayors and members of city councils granted city charters. Currently, the Liberian Constitution provides for election of paramount chiefs and clan chiefs; however, the election of superintendents, administrative district commissioners, city mayors and members of county councils likely require a constitutional amendment.

In addition, under the current legal framework, there is no provision for the sharing of revenues between the central and local governments and no permission is granted to local governments to collect taxes and fees to support local administrative and development activities. Therefore, a legal framework defining the establishment, mandates and functions, powers, restrictions, and reporting relationships of central and local governments will become key to the successful implementation of decentralization. In order to be effective, such legal framework will need to be consistent with the established policy guidelines and avoid or guide against any potential overlaps and duplications. The rules and regulations must clearly define the administration, conduct, planning and financial management of local governments.

Major activities supporting the creation of the needed legal and regulatory framework include:

* drafting and passage of constitutional amendments and referendum in order for the elections of local government authorities and county councils to take place;
* drafting and passage of the Local Government Act;
* enactment of statutes to establish 15 autonomous county capital cities and the national capital;
* provision of statutory definition and criteria for the creation and qualification of various categories of local government structures and political sub-division of Liberia;
* conversion of the presidential-appointed positions of Assistant Superintendent for Development and Assistant Superintendent for Fiscal Affairs to the Civil Service positions of Development and Finance Officers; and
* establishment of positions of county administrative officers, sector directors, district officers with civil service qualifications as will be outlined in the Local Government Act.

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

It is envisaged that this program will provide support to assist the Executive in building on the existing Decentralization Policy document to identify key legislative reform priorities and seeking the agreement of the Cabinet on key reform issues. The agreed-upon reforms will then be turned into draft legislation. Throughout this process, the LDSP will support the Governance Commission, in partnership with the MIA, to ensure a participatory legislative drafting process, inclusive of key government ministries, political parties as well as local level government stakeholders, traditional authorities, CSOs and the public.

Consultation on the draft legal framework will be essential to ensuring that it is owned by all of the parties who will be responsible for implementing the laws once they are enacted.

An important area for debate and analysis in development of the legislation is redefining and strengthening the role of the traditional authorities. The roles and functions of traditional chiefs must be defined and strengthened as an intermediary function between traditional communities and the statutory authorities. Chiefs will require training to support the emerging decentralized governance and effective advocacy to statutory authorities on behalf of the traditional community and citizens.

**Output 3.2:** Mandates and functions of ministries, agencies, commissions and state-owned enterprises reviewed to align with decentralization program

Decentralization reforms require not only changes in local government structures, but also an overhaul of the central government ministries as well as some agencies, commissions and state owned enterprises. The LDSP will support GC and MIA to guide wider Public Sector reorganization in a manner that will ensure that reorganized ministries, etc. are “decentralization compliant.” It is realized that the planned Public Sector Modernization Program (led by the Civil Service Agency and GC and supported by Sweden, World Bank and possibly other donors and with expected timeframe 2013-2017) will be the main vehicle for general reorganization and modernization of the public sector.

LDSP will therefore mainly support GC and MIA in providing relevant inputs to the general re-organization process envisaged under the PSM Program. This may include development of guidelines for “decentralization compliance” and modality for continuous review of how the targeted institutions progress towards decentralization supportive structures.

**Output 3.3:** Civil service reforms aligned with decentralization policy and all signed international conventions that ensure equal access to civil service

The Decentralization Policy foresees significant devolution of Human Resource Management (HRM) to the local governments, while simultaneously strengthening principles for good HRM such as performance orientation, merit-based recruitment, etc.

The LDSP foresees two key results: (1) Liberia civil service will be classified into national and local government services; and (2) establishment of a county government civil service.

CSA, through the Public Sector Modernization Program, will take the lead in reform of civil service, while the LDSP primarily will provide technical assistance to MIA to engage in dialogue with CSA and other relevant stakeholders to harmonize civil service laws and regulations with the objectives of decentralizing human resource management as outlined in the Decentralization Policy.

**Output 3.4: Criteria established for districts, municipalities, chiefdoms and clans to rationalize and restructure them to ensure economic viability and sustainability**

A serious challenge to introducing decentralized governance for improved service delivery and poverty reduction in Liberia is the existence of a multitude of local administrative structures and the sparse distribution of population. Many of the district and sub-district administrative structures are too small to be viable and to sustain a basic level of service delivery. Even under fiscal decentralization, most of their revenue will be spent on administration, leaving little for development.

Activities to support this outcome will include:

* Analyses and consultations that will inform the definition of boundary demarcation;
* Status for county capitals will be drafted.

**Outcome 4: Ministry of Internal Affairs is capacitated to lead and implement decentralization reforms.**

This outcome will be achieved through three outputs:

**Output 4.1: Institutional and human capacity of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Monrovia and Counties) built to co-ordinate, lead and support the implementation of the Decentralization process.**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has two (2) very distinct roles in the implementation of all the three stages of decentralization as provided by the Decentralization Policy. In the phase 1 – deconcentration - MIA is obligated to provide coordination of deconcentrated services in the counties through the office of the County Superintendent. MIA, with support from LDSP, will invest in establishing efficient management support offices, with an accountant, a procurement officer, a human resources officer and eventually an auditor, in all the 15 county headquarters. Under the supervision of the County Superintendent the team will form the nucleus of pooling resources of deconcentrating MACs which will in effect, reduce the cost of service delivery. In this first phase too, MIA will develop records keeping and registry systems that make efficient document management possible.

# In preparation for the second and third phases - deconcentration and devolution respectively, MIA will begin to develop a dedicated and professional staff to manage and coordinate local governance and eventually a local government civil service. Towards this priority MIA has already completed a comprehensive re-documentation and re-profiling of all staff of MIA in Monrovia and in all the counties. The results have already been used to retire 900 people who had already exceeded the legal retirement age.

# In addition though, the exercise has provided a clear picture of the abilities, qualification and the gaps of existing staff making it possible to develop and deliver targeted capacity building programs.

# The LDSP recognizes the establishment of this professional local government cadre as a major priority. Negotiations with the Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA) have already started, the strategy being to, first to analyze the data from the re-documentation and re-profiling exercise and then develop the requisite trainings. However it has already been decided that all suitable staff will undergo an Orientation Training which will introduce them to how to manage a decentralized system of governance. Subsequently staff will receive specialized courses to sharpen skills in various areas.

# To further support the staff, LDSP will make every effort to provide learning-by-doing opportunities both in country and where possible in other countries.

# Key activities may include:

# Analyzing of the re-documentation and re-profiling data of MIA staff will be completed and an operational staff database established;

# A long-term capacity development strategy will be developed and implemented. This strategy will include a component of management of change processes with results in focus (management for results);

# Rightsizing of staff and reorganization departments; and

# Improvement of basic ICT systems through agreed ICT strategy, plan and implementation.

As required by the New Deal framework, LDSP in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Monrovia and in the Counties will be implemented through government systems making it possible to build the capacities of both the systems and personnel. In Monrovia the MIA has four (4) departments with specialized responsibilities in directing and implementing the various stages of decentralization.

The department of **Administration** – is key to the ministry’s administrative functions (human resources, finance, procurement, internal audit and training) and provides and will continue to provide all the administrative support to LDSP. Of particular mention is the fact that the program senior finance officer sits in the comptroller and supports the streamlining of processes. This department is the implementer of the LDSP supported re-profiling and re-documentation exercise of the MIA. The department will lead the analysis of this data, delivery of the recommended training and deconcentrating some administrative functions to the County Superintendent. LDSP will also invest in developing in-house training capacity by investing in the training unit of the MIA.

* The Department of **Planning and Research** – up until now the department of planning and research has had the primary oversight of the LDSP, both administrative and technical. With the secretariat now more adequately staffed, this department will now return to the core business of providing technical guidance and coordination to the planning and budgeting processes at both the MIA and the sub-national levels, particularly in the development of County Development Agenda discussed in Output 2.1 above. However the department will continue to play a key technical and coordination role in the LDSP.
* The Department of **Urban Management** - Urban planning, Boundary harmonization, Rationalization of sub-national units, Demarcation of cities and townships and City statutes.
* The **Operations** Department – is the current coordination hub of the ministry and the counties, providing all supplies and logistics to support functionality of the mandate of MIA. Harmonization of CDF, SDF, LDF and other local development funds Formulation of development plans, Supervision of construction& renovations of government buildings.

# Outcome 5: Programme management and implementation

Certain arrangements will be put in place by the program board to ensure effective management and implementation, including: creation of an annual work plan, quarterly and annual progress reports, and mid-term and terminal external evaluation reports.

These arrangements will provide for planned and orderly flow of information and feedback on the progress of the program, allowing for corrective interventions where necessary.

# 6. Summary Budget

The LDSP will provide programmatic support to the NPDLG. The estimated total LDSP budget is summarized below. It is realized that there currently is a funding gap between the resources that currently (as of December 2014)) are indicated as contributions from Development Partners and GoL.

MIA will develop detailed prioritized annual plans for approval by the Program Board,

**Table 2: Summary LDSP Budget (US$)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Total** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
| Outcome 1: Deconcentrated functions and corresponding resources managed at the assigned level of government implemented | 11,090,000 | 1,640,000 | 5,135,000 | 4,315,000 |
| Outcome 2: Service delivery and accountability of local governments is improved | 1,825,000 | 660,000 | 675,000 | 490,000 |
| Outcome 3: Legal and regulatory framework for decentralization is in place | 3,318,000 | 206,000 | 1,741,000 | 1,371,000 |
| Outcome 4: MIA is capacitated to lead and implement decentralization reforms | 1,874,000 | 545,000 | 740,000 | 589,000 |
| Outcome 5: Program Management | 3,761,6000 | 1,282,200 | 1,272,200 | 1,207,200 |
| Total | 21,868,600 | 4,333,200 | 9,563,200 | 7,972,200 |
|   |   |   |   |   |
| Percentage |  100.0  |  |  |  |

# 7. Partnerships

The LDSP takes a unified program-based approach, drawing on the technical expertise, activities and experience of Government, UN, and other development partners (EU, USAID and Sweden) and actors in Liberia to deliver a coordinated and effective decentralization program.

MIA, GC, and UNDP have successfully collaborated in the past few years to support policy framework and overall capacity development of national and sub-national administration in support of the successfully implementation of decentralization and local development agenda in Liberia.

The proposed program will, however, continue to work very closely with the following partners in areas directly related to the achievement of decentralization outcomes:

* The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), supported by the EU, USAID and Sweden to facilitate fiscal decentralization, especially through local financial management including tax and revenue management. MFDP plans are well under way to decentralize Treasury functions, creating County Treasuries in all the 15 counties in support of Fiscal Decentralization, although in a phased program.
* The Civil Service Agency and Governance Commission, with support from the World Bank, Sweden and USAID, in the area of the Public Sector Modernization Program to ensure that the public sector reforms support and are aligned with the decentralization program and to provide the capacity it needs.
* The Ministry of Gender and UN Women, in relation to the Government of Liberia’s National Gender Policy, and implementation of Security Council 1325. To ensure that decentralization supports the mainstreaming of gender equality into governance, in policy and its implementation, and to ensure that decentralization delivers equitable and inclusive local service provision.
* The MFDP with its support to the national capacity building agenda in the context of the 10 year National Capacity Building strategy.
* All line ministries with deconcentrated functions.

In the past, county level collaboration between the Government of Liberia and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been very effective. UNMIL Civil Affairs Officers have supported County Administration including the County Development Office as well as building capacity of county administrations so that they can take over responsibility for development. With the transition of UNMIL anticipated over the coming years, and the phased shift from Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) to National Implementation Modality (NIM), this arrangement will be modified. The decentralization program will support MIA efforts at national and local level to work with UNMIL, in particular to support UNMIL’s planning for an exit from Liberia and its support for national capacity building, as well as working with UNMIL in monitoring progress on establishing national systems and progressing decentralization.

At the county level, the LDSP will work with UNMIL and other partners, to maximize use of UNMIL’s capacities for reporting, mentoring and monitoring. In particular, the LDSP and UNMIL will work to develop county specific transition plans to support a well-managed and smooth transition at county and district levels. As the UN’s specialized peacekeeping presence undergoes transition, UNDP will work closely with all partners to assist in the transfer of security and other responsibilities.

# 8.  Management and Staffing Arrangements

A major point of consensus that has emerged through the review process is that the decentralization process of Liberia needs a champion that can rally all MACs and Superintendents and hold them accountable to a clear and predictable direction. **That champion is Madam President herself.** The effect of this recognition is that management arrangements will work their way from the direct implementation into the office of the President for progress and accountability. A management mechanism that facilities reporting into the President every three (3) has been developed for this program.

**The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Decentralization (IMCD) – chaired by the President**

The IMCD is the highest authority and decision making body on matters of decentralization in Liberia. It will meet two (2) times a year, under the chair of the President. The Minister of Internal Affairs will be the secretary. The membership of the IMCD will be all the 14 MACS with immediate deconcentration functions to the counties. The purpose is to report progress on planned activities and to allow the President to have hands-on monitoring of the whole decentralization process in the country. Where there is a problem, she is the only one that can provide a remedy. The reports will come from the lower level coordination mechanism of the Program Board. Any unsolved or unsolvable issues from the Board will be presented for executive guidance and/or instruction.

Every a year, **one of the IMCD** meetings will be a big event bringing together the all the County Superintendents and other county officials, MACs, traditional leaders and technical experts and partners to facilitate inter-governmental coordination, planning and accountability. Decentralization entails giving, sharing and/or taking of power and resources for the good of the citizens. This forum will be a space for the competing interests to be debated and resolved, a forum from which the nation will define and instruct a uniform pattern and message for the process to be rolled out. As the President takes leadership of the national decentralization agenda, it is potentially a forum that can motivate and create competition and rewards between MACs and counties in the race to some set benchmarks. Competition is a tried and tested way to stimulate local administration to become viable and local development.

 **The LDSP Board – chaired by Ministry of Internal Affairs and jointly with the Chairman of the Governance Commission and the Minister of Finance and Development Planning** – A National Decentralization Program Board (NDPB or “Program Board”) will be established and will meet quarterly. The Program Board will report to the IMCD every quarter.

Invitations shall be sent out not later than one (1) week prior to each scheduled meeting, accompanied by minutes and other relevant materials for the meeting.

The functions of the Program Board shall be:

* Provide strategic advice and direction to the program, and make related decisions;
* Approve program annual work plans and budgets, based on the program’s results and resources framework;
* Provide oversight and monitor progress against the strategic plan during the program cycle;
* Ensure that results are accomplished and program activities coordinated;
* Conduct annual program reviews on the fourth quarter of each year and approve annual progress reports based on funds received, and the resource and results framework;
* Oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the program; and
* Resolve any major challenges that may impede the obtaining of program results.

Membership of the Program Board shall be:

* MIA, Chair
* Governance Commission, Co-Chair
* Ministry of Finance and Development Planning(MFDP), Co-Chair
* Ministries of Education,
* Ministry of Health,
* Ministry of Agriculture
* Ministry of Public Works
* Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA)
* Civil Service Agency (CSA)
* Ministry of Gender and Social Protection
* Ministry of Commerce
* Ministry of Labor
* Ministry of Youth and Sports
* Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
* Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS)

Representatives of the development partners:

* European Union (EU)
* Sweden
* UNDP
* UNMIL
* UN-Women

Other partners will be invited to the program board as required, with a particular focus on international partners supporting aspects critical to decentralization such as the World Bank, Africa Development Bank and the IMF.

**National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat (NDIS)**

To ensure effective compliance and quality assurance of LDSP, the National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat (NDIS) will be located in MIA to provide technical support to coordinate, facilitate and support the capacity building, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the program. NDIS will be located in the Ministry of Interior under the supervision of the Minister of Internal Affairs, who is the Chairperson of Program Board. As such, it will function as the Secretariat to the board and be responsible for organizing regular and extra-ordinary meetings and program related events, in addition to implementation responsibilities.

To ensure integration and sustainability of the program into the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Deputy Minister responsible for Research and Planning in the MIA will have technical oversight of the program.

Consistent with the fact that this program is implemented to move from a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) to the National Implementation Modality (NIM), the administrative and processing systems of the MIA will used in the implementation of the program and the NDIS will administer the program through and with them.

The NDIS shall have the following staff compliment, emphasizing efficiency and technical expertise to move the decentralization agenda forward.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | National Program Director  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  International Technical Advisor  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | National Technical Advisor, (Political decentralization)  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | National Technical Advisor (Capacity Development) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | National Technical Advisor (Gender) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Senior Policy Analyst (GC) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Policy Analyst (GC) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Research Assistants x2 (GC) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | National M&E Specialist  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | National Communication specialist  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | National ICT Specialist |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Admin/Finance Assistant |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Project Assistant  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Drivers (5)  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Office Assistant (1) |  |  |  |

NDIS will coordinate the implementation of the LDSP and as Secretariat of the IMCD work with other decentralization implementing agencies. The NDIS will be responsible for ensuring the results specified in the program document are produced to the required standard of quality and within the specified constraints of time and cost.

**The NDIS Program Director**

An NDIS Program Director will be recruited to direct and manage the Secretariat. The PD shall have a dual reporting arrangement in which administrative oversight shall be with the Minister of Internal Affairs and technical oversight shall be with the Deputy Minister responsive Research and Planning in MIA. In addition to the general role of the NDIS, the NDIS Program Director shall have the following specific responsibilities:

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

**LDSP Technical Committee (TC) –** chaired by the Deputy Minister for Research and Planning MIA

The TC will meet **monthly** and will be responsible for: technical and strategic implementation brainstorming and guidance; reviewing and approving of work plans and budgets prior to submission to the Program Board; ensuring that lessons learnt are incorporated into program operations and suggesting revisions to methods, plans, and management systems. The TC will provide regular reports to the chair of the Program Board through the Program director, recommending any necessary action in the interests of the program. The Secretariat is the secretary to the TC.

**County Decentralization Coordination Committee – chaired by the County Superintendent**

A County Decentralization Coordination Committee (CDCC) will be established and chaired by the Superintendent and will at least **meet weekly**. The membership of the CDCC will be composed of heads of relevant line ministries and agencies or the officer in-charge of the deconcentrated service and partners who are working in the counties. The secretary of the CDCC will be the Deputy Superintendent for development. Reports from the CDCC will be presented to the Program Board by the NDIS. The Secretariat shall also be responsible for keeping the CDCC informed of recommendation and guidance of the Program Board. The CDCC will be represented at the IMCD meetings by one (1) of its members.

The CDCC will:

* work in close collaboration with the NDIS and the program board to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the LDSP;
* liaise with donors and development partners regarding local development initiatives and other technical support at the county level;
* work to improve development operations, transparent systems, procedures and practices in the county level.

**Essentially the CDCC will be the engine of the deconcentration efforts on the ground and as such will be the focus of much capacity building in coordination, management and service delivery.** The CDCC will have a direct relationship with the NDIS and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Its members will have a **dual reporting line in which operationally they report to the County Superintendent and technically and professionally they maintain the line with their mother ministry and/or agency.**

**Decentralization Support Units -** Each decentralization sector agency that is represented on the IMCD will set up an office or a team within its operations with responsibility for coordinating its decentralization program. The office or team is to be called the Decentralization Support Unit or such other name as individual MACs may find appropriate in their structure. The DSU head or team leader shall represent the agency on the Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee on Decentralization at the TC meeting to ensure that the decentralization process is executed harmoniously in all of the sector ministries. All recommendations from this forum will be submitted to the Program Board and to the NDS to ensure that they are implemented.

DSUs in the ministries and counties will be strengthened and empowered to follow up decentralization of services in the various sector ministries and the counties. They will ensure that the decisions of the board and cabinet are implemented and will work in collaboration with the NDIS to ensure that the implementation of the LDS is coordinated.

**Mechanisms for Citizen Participation**

Citizen participation is key to ensuring effective decentralization. The LDSP will encourage broad inclusion in the decentralization process through the following mechanisms:

* **Community Score Cards:** The Community Score Card will consist of structured focal group discussions on the quality of service delivery using a simple questionnaire and scoring system. The scorecards will be used to identify local issues, perceptions and priorities and to complement quantitative data on the impact of decentralization.
* **Community Service Monitoring:** The program will introduce ongoing monitoring of selected services by service users and front line service providers (e.g., Parent-Teacher Associations monitoring the quality of education at a certain school). A selected number of services in the participating communities will be monitored by existing community groups where available, such as school boards, health committees, water committees, etc., and will take place on a regular basis using a set of simple indicators.

The program recognizes gender equality as a necessity for participatory governance and decision-making at local levels and is aimed at fostering social inclusion throughout implementation of the GoL’s decentralization efforts.

# 9. Fund Management Arrangements

This is a GoL program, using a coordinated fund managed approach. The GoL will clearly express its commitment to this program under the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MFEF) process, which is a three-year budgeting regime. The management of funds commitment under the MFEF will follow the government’s revenue laws.

The government and its development partners have agreed that a coordinated funding arrangement will provide easy management of financial resources, allowing more time to be devoted to the implementation itself. The government encourages and welcomes the decisions of partners that have agreed to contribute to the program budget.

**Annual Work Plan and Budget Preparation**: A consolidated annual work plan and budget will be prepared by the NDIS based upon the annual work plans and budgets prepared by the implementing partners in accordance with the program’s procedures, and covering the mutually agreed components of the program, for endorsement by the Program Board.

**Accounting:** The implementing partner (MIA) will account for the income received to fund the joint program in accordance with the financial regulations and rules of the Government of Liberia.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** There will be annual, midterm, and end of program evaluation of the program with the participation of all signatories to the program document and contributing development partners. The monitoring and evaluation will produce an annual progress and results report consistent with the resources and results framework. The report will be discussed at the annual Program Board meeting.

**Audit:** Consistent with current practice, audits of joint programs will be conducted in accordance with the respective GoL and donor requirements.

#

# 10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Program Board will oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the Program. The main objectives of the program’s M&E framework are:

1. To gain an improved understanding of the activities, including their long-term impact, their contribution to state building and peace building, as well as of the context in which the activities are implemented and their interaction processes;
2. To measure progress towards achieving planned outputs and outcomes, based on the indicators and targets laid out in the results and resources framework;
3. To regularly review and update the risk log;
4. To ensure the highest standards of accountability and proper use of funds; and
5. To factor in lessons learned from ongoing initiatives into future programming/allocation decisions to increase the positive impacts of the program on state building and peace building in the target country.

The program will actively pursue cutting edge and innovative approaches to assessment and measurement, including participatory dialogue and perception surveying. In order to do so effectively, the program will ensure an external assessment of the work is completed at the mid-term of the program term. Accordingly, a portion of the program’s budget is allocated specifically to dedicated M&E capacity within the NDIS. The program will likewise place a major emphasis on developing the capacities of national partners in the area of M&E – an essential aspect of ensuring accountability and sustainability.

In recognition of the systemic challenges associated with evaluating governance programming at country level, the global program has presented qualitative baselines in several outcomes. The set of baseline and outcome indicators will be reviewed during the first year of operation, and the program will present more detailed and robust indicators in the second year. The proposed program will also expand assessments and collection of baseline data. As several international actors face the same challenge regarding outcome-level M&E, the Global Program will seek to facilitate coordinated work with all actors in developing indicators for M&E which can be tailored to the particular context and ensure the ownership and capacity building of national authorities in this regard.

## 10.1 Monitoring Interventions

In light of the above-mentioned program management arrangements, the following monitoring benchmarks will apply to the program.

| **M&E Benchmarks/Timeline** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| An ***Issue Log*** will be updated by the secretariat to facilitate tracking and resolution of potential problems or requests for change. | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| A ***Risk Log*** will be regularly updated by the secretariat by reviewing the external environment that may affect the program implementation.  | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| A ***Program Lessons Learned Log*** will be activated and regularly updated by the secretariat to ensure on-going learning and adoption within the organization, and to facilitate the preparation of the Lessons Learned Report at the end of the Program. |  | X |  | X |  | X |  | X |  | X |  | X |
| A ***Quality Log*** will be developed by the secretariat to record progress towards the completion of activities. | X |  |  |  | X |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |
| ***An annual program review*** will be conducted by the Program Board during the fourth quarter of each year to assess the performance of the program. The review will involve key program stakeholders (i.e. national partners, donors, UN agencies, specialized organizations) and will focus on achievements, challenges and validation of annual work plans. |  |  |  | X |  |  |  | X |  |  |  | X |
| ***Updates and briefings*** will be provided by the secretariat on a rolling and regular basis to donor partners throughout the program life-cycle, including **half-year strategic review** and progress evaluation sessions. | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| ***An external mid-term review*** will be conducted by the Governance Commission (GC) to review the successes and challenges of the program’s implementation. |  |  |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  |  |

## 10.2 Evaluations and Reviews

The Project Board will conduct **an annual program review during the fourth quarter of each year** to assess the performance of the program. The review will involve key program stakeholders (i.e. national partners, donors, UN agencies, specialized organizations) and will focus on achievements, challenges and validation of annual work plans.

Updates and briefings will be provided on a rolling and regular basis to donor partners throughout the program life-cycle, including half-year strategic review and progress evaluation sessions.

An **external review** will be conducted to measure success of the program at the middle of 2016. This results and recommendations of this review will be used to inform the direction of a next phase of support to decentralization.

# 11. Risks, Assumptions and Preconditions

A summary of potential risks is summarized in the table below and mitigation measures suggested.

**Table 4: Risks and Mitigation measures**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Risk | Level | Mitigation Measure |
| Decentralization is a time consuming and costly undertaking. Inappropriate sequencing, ad-hoc and partial implementation, weak institutional structures and capacity, among other things, may result in just the opposite of the intended benefits of shared, accountable and participatory governance. | Medium | Formulation of a national decentralization implementation plan strategically and holistically with rational sequencing and embedding conditions to succeed with a strong monitoring component and benefiting from international best practices and lessons learned |
| There is a strong risk associated with a limited political will and commitment to move from policy to implementation. As the program is being implemented, the risk of opposition towards actual and practical devolution will increase in key areas affecting the overall program roll out | Medium to High | The President guides the implementation of decentralization directly.Passing the Liberia Local Government Act under formulation would minimize risk.Implement decentralization in incremental phases according to the NDPLG.Continuous dialogue with GoL to reaffirm commitment throughout the process (key line ministries, MIA, Presidency, etc.)Support to CSO advocacy efforts, for advocacy, monitoring and watch-dog functions.Decentralization annual work plans prepared and shared with all stakeholders (CSO, local administration, line-ministries), targets and timeframes clearly communicate including public meetings at local levels. |
| Poor capacity in the implementing partners, poor financial management performance, failure to meet donor standards for national implementation could result in funds being frozen or denied | High | While maintaining the principle of strong government ownership, it is important that sound financial management – maintenance of financial records, transparent procurement standards adopted and maintained and satisfactory internal and external audits are maintained to secure the integrity of the program and the continuing support of donors. |
| The ability to develop and retain critical human skills and expertise in Liberia continues to be of major concern.  | High | Donors and UN agencies in collaboration with government (MIA and MPEA) supporting a 10 year capacity building plan which incorporates elements of MIA’s 2 year capacity building plan to address short term, medium term and long-term capacity development challenges.  |
| Cross-cutting issues risk not being incorporated strategically in the decentralization process. Tendencies to view gender, vulnerable groups, etc. as add-ons and unnecessary additional costs. In a highly competitive environment for funds the risk furthermore increases that cross-cutting issues will compete for the same scares funds.  | High | A stronger integration of cross-cutting areas of interest into the main components of the program formulation will increase likeliness that cross-cutting issues are taken seriously.Trainings with key implementing government institutions and local administration actors on a continuous basis about what these issues are, how they can play a strategic role in e.g. institutional capacity building, such as staff retention, savings, improved access to quality staff and more informed decision making will ensure a better understanding and implementation.International lessons and experiences will provide valuable insights. |
| Decentralization could introduce the possibility of dissent and division and the emphasis on local participation and priority setting can occasionally slow down the implementation of some top-down development initiatives that are strategic and generally considered beneficial. | High | Adherence to the decentralization policy which clearly states that local governments should fully comply with national laws and policies and that all strategic mandates and functions rest with the national government and only development functions amenable for local level implementation are transferred to local governments. |
| The 2017 elections might usher in new leadership that is not persuaded towards decentralization reforms. | High | Broad based stakeholder engagement to include political parties.Up-scale effort to have a decentralization legislative framework passed.The CTA of the LDSP will attend the UN Constitutional Review Working Group (CRWG) to facilitate information sharing and coordination of activities. |
| Over-staffing of administrative functions and civil service where assignment of functions has not been undertaken rationally | Medium | Dovetail implementation of decentralization with ongoing public sector reforms (mandate and functions reviews, Civil Service Reforms, PFM Reforms etc.) |
| Re-occurrence of civil strife, possibly resulting in a major economic, social and political setback and an ability to re-establish the presence and work of local government in remoter/affected areas. | Low | The political situation is constantly monitored and the political dialogue is open to analyze constructive diplomatic solutions in case of potential crisis, in order to avoid escalation. The President of the Republic, several times reaffirmed her strong commitment to maintain the stability of the country to the benefit of the social and economic recovery achieved so far. |

## 11.2 Assumptions and Preconditions

1. The EVD epidemic does not return.
2. Liberia will remain stable and peaceful and continue on its present trajectory away from conflict and civil war.
3. Government of Liberia remains committed to decentralization reform, improve governance and prudent economic reforms, and professional public financial management.
4. The constitutional referendum is held, establishing the basis for holding local elections by 2017.
5. That the civic and political situation of the country will thereafter remain stable to allow a decentralized governance system to be firmly embedded in the minds of the population and in the institutional framework of the country.
6. That capacity of the central and local government will be adequately built and sustained during and after the decentralization program including qualified staff being recruited or assigned to support the decentralization process at central and local levels.
7. Interest and actions vested in cross-cutting issues as defined by the Government of Liberia (gender equity, Human Rights, youth and women, vulnerable and physically challenged persons, people living with HIV/AIDS, social inclusion, anti-corruption, peace building, conflict sensitivity and environment),
8. The GoL will provide adequate financing for county/districts offices functioning.
9. That government will continue to be successful in using dialogue with donors as a strategy for obtaining high donors cooperation for resource mobilization for the decentralization process.
10. That the role of paramount and other chiefs with respect to local government is aligned with the functions and roles of local councils in ways that are acceptable to the needs of decentralized government and the citizens and communities that they serve and not contrary to their traditional and cultural norms of governance.
1. Government of Liberia, draft Agenda for Transformation, 2012; National MDG Report, 2010; Global Human Development Report, UNDP, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. With a human development index (HDI) value of 0.329 in 2011, Liberia ranked 182 out of 187 countries, reflecting a lack of progress in human development over the long term. Three quarters of the population of 3.48 million is below 35 years of age and most are either unemployed or “vulnerably employed” (78.8per cent). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. It will be henceforth referred to in this document as “the Decentralization Policy” or “the Policy”. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. UNDP(2012) Governance for Peace: Securing the Social Contract [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Liberia is ranked 91/183 on the Transparency International index. According to public opinion polls on corruption people in Liberia see corruption to be particular severe within police (ranked 4.1 out of 5) education (3.8), parliament (3.8), judiciary (3.7), and public officials (3.6), all institutions that are central for the decentralization process in different ways. The poll also shows that 1/2 of the interviewed believe the corruption is increasing, 1/4 that it is decreasing and the last 1/4 that it is unchanged the last five years. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Gender equity, human rights, protection of youth and women interests, protecting the vulnerable and physically challenged, people living with HIV/AIDS, social inclusion, anti-corruption enforcement, capacity building, peace-building and conflict sensitivity and the environment and climate are key issues that must be addressed with a decentralized governance system”, from LDIP 2013-17 (document in progress). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “Gender refers to what it means to be a woman or a man, a girl or a boy, in a given context. Gender is socially constructed and changes and varies over time, culture and geographical location. Gender consequently impacts on the identity, the role ascribed, the possibilities and limitations for what is possible to be or do as a woman or a man, a girl or a boy. Gender is cross-cut by other social variables such as ethnicity, age, class, disability, and religion” Sida (2009): Gender Equality in Practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. According to the Liberian Youth Charter, people are considered youth from 15-35 years of age and people under 35 years constitute 70% of Liberia’s population. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Protocol was adopted in Maputo on 11 July 2003. Entry into force on 25 November 2005. The Protocal is also known as the Maputo Protocol. It was ratified by Liberia 14 of December 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The plan builds on four pillars: 1. Protection of women and children from S/GBV, 2. Prevention of S/GBV, 3. Promotion of women's human rights and 4. their participation in peace processes, as stipulated by the resolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Policy in Brief – The National Gender Policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Liberia’s population is young, with approximately 52.7% of the population under the age of 20 years. The relatively young population, combined with factors such as high rates of teenage pregnancy (32%) and low levels of contraceptive prevalence (11% overall; 7% in rural areas) contribute to Liberia’s high total fertility rate of 5.9 children per woman.WHO: http://www.aho.afro.who.int/profiles\_information/index.php/Liberia:Introduction\_to\_Country\_Context [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Search for Common Ground (2012): Youth to youth: Measuring Youth engagement. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. From the Policy (approved January 2012): 2.1 County Legislative Branch: The county legislative branch shall be called the County Legislative Assembly (CLA). The County Legislative Assembly shall comprise of one (1) representative elected by the citizens of each county administrative district; and the paramount chief of each chiefdom within the county. To ensure gender equity, two positions of members-at-large shall be set-aside exclusively for women. Only female candidates shall be elected to fill these positions**.** They shall exercise the same prerogatives and enjoy the same privileges as other members of the CLA. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The GC is currently undertaking a substantive review and analysis of gaps and opportunities in ensuring that the process of national decentralization is gender-responsive, and harnesses the full potential of women. To effectively implement this objective, the Governance Commission, in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Development, will hire a team of two consultants (one international and one national) to undertake a study, the results of which will facilitate development of a framework for integrating a gender-perspective in local governance in Liberia [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. CIDH (http://www.cidh.es/en/social-inclusion.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. USAID (2012): “An assessment of decentralization and local governance in Liberia” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*.http://www.g7plus.org/storage/New%20Deal%20English.pdf, November 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)