

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA GOVERNANCE COMMISSION



Working Towards A National Vision For Liberia (Socio-Political dimensions)

LRDC Presentation
Wednesday, July 7, 2010

Major Socio-Political Goals of National Visioning

- Consolidate institutions of good governance
- Develop a strong sense of citizenship, unity and cohesion
- Reduce disparities and marginalization and ensure equity through policies of “growth with development”
- Strengthen commitment to moral, ethical and accountable governance as obligation of government, private sector and citizens

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL UNITY

Defining Liberian Identity

➤ What is Liberia and who are Liberians?

- Transcending competing historical identities: “Americo-Liberian” or “Congo” versus “indigenous” or “native” and develop sense of common or shared identity

➤ Developing a new Liberian vision and mission

- Transcend archaic mission of “civilizing and Christianizing”
- Liberia an outpost of American/European civilization or Liberia an integral part of African civilization?
- Develop a vision and mission for Liberia in 21st century west Africa— becoming a middle income country and beyond

Defining the Liberian Identity

(Cont')

- **Developing the psychology (mind-set) for transformation (to middle income status)**
 - Strengthen forward-looking positive self-perception: Liberia as a driver of African development; instead of Liberia as “America’s stepchild”
 - Strengthen sense of national ownership and responsibility: moving from “what do the donors say?”
 - At subnational level, strengthen sense of local and community ownership and responsibility: moving from petitioning government: “what government say?” to “Let us try to do something for ourselves”
 - Taking ownership requires dependence on internal resources (local and national) first; and greater efforts in fighting corruption

• Strengthening National Identity Through Educational and Cultural Policies

➤ Tell the story of Liberia (Liberian history) so as to enhance national identity and unity

- Abandon version of Liberian history as story of conquest of settlers over natives and promote historical interpretation of Liberia as a mosaic
- Appreciate contributions of each piece of the mosaic
- Emphasize commonalities, appreciate and respect diversity
 - emphasize patterns of cooperation as well as episodes of conflicts; treat conflicts as challenges to unity not as conquest to be celebrated
 - Address the Mandingo “outsider” myth of contemporary history
 - Support Liberian authors and others capable of telling the story of the Liberian mosaic

Strengthening National Identity through Educational and Cultural Policies (Cont')

- **Revisit concept of regional multilateral boarding schools as strategy to foster understanding and provide education more efficiently, especially in certain parts of Liberia**
- **Establish national youth service**
- **Strengthening Culture**
 - Review national policy on culture
 - Strengthen institutions to promote cultural heritage:
 - National museums
 - Establish national theatre
 - Establish county-level theatres and museums
 - Teaching indigenous languages

Building Citizenship

➤ **Strengthening the teaching of civics in schools with emphasis on:**

- Rights and responsibilities of citizens, (special emphasis on nurturing efficacious citizens)
- Deepen understanding and appreciation of challenges of governance at local and national levels and prepare citizens for participation in all levels of government through civic education
- Encourage “learning” of citizenship through participation in government at national, county and local levels

Strengthening Unity and Identity through Constitutional/Legal and Political Institutional Change

➤ **Review national symbols so as to strengthen their capacity to enhance unity and national identity**

- Flag
- Seal
- Motto
- Others (national monuments)

Strengthening Unity(Cont')

➤ **Strive for equality of identity and rights of citizenship**

- Transcend dual and unequal rights and status of citizens
 - Abandon use of Hinterland Rules and Regulations
 - Harmonize laws (customary, statutory)
 - Review boundary harmonization to address inequalities among political and legal jurisdictions
 - Improve access to and integrity of the judiciary (with emphasis on justices of the peace and magisterial courts)

Decentralization

- **Enhance democracy and improve access to public goods and services through decentralization (system of shared authority)**
 - Establish constitution-supported system of sub-national and local governance

LIFT LIBERIA THROUGH GROWTH WITH
DEVELOPMENT THAT REDUCES INEQUITIES &
MARGINALIZATION: Building on the Poverty
Reduction Strategy (PRS)

Significant progress has been made in achieving the targets of the four pillars of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. This progress has been noted in the last two PRS deliverables assessment review retreats.

Key Governance Challenges Related to Implementation of PRS:

- **Need to develop or strengthen mechanisms for institutional linkages across branches of government**
 - Legislative—Executive coordination is weak: results in uncertainty in interaction and in intrigues on occasions
 - Need for stable and strong linking institution/process
 - Legislative—Judicial coordination needs to be established: absence of established coordination results in undue judicial intervention which sets bad precedence in emerging democracy
 - Members of Legislature need to develop spirit of compromise and consensus-building and reduce invitation for Supreme Court intervention
 - Need for judicial restraint vis-à-vis intervention in political matters of Legislature

Key Challenges (Cont')

- Executive—Judicial coordination anomalies: results in undue involvement of judiciary in executive responsibility regarding non-jurisprudential aspect of judicial reform; e.g. construction of courthouses, renovation of buildings, running a training institute for magistrates, heading sub-pillar on judicial reform

➤ **Need for stronger inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms**

- Strengthen inter-agency coordination in policy formulation in cross-cutting areas and areas of potential conflict: land, youth, gender and others
- Consider land and labor issues in policy making on plantation agriculture (especially rubber and oil palm production) and food security policy;

Key Challenges (Cont')

➤ **Elevate integrity-strengthening institutions beyond angry disputes with other institutions of governance:**

- Preserve integrity of General Auditing Commission
- Support LACC
- Support GC—act upon recommendations

➤ **Locate Security Sector Reform properly in post-conflict governance and development agendas**

- Proceed faster with implementation of SSR programs as per SSR matrix
- Expand national security dialogue beyond “security agencies”
- Establish/strengthen links between “physical security” and other aspects of human security

Other Issues in Moving Forward

Strengthening bottom-up Approach to Development

- Development policy language-in-use conveys top-down approach to development: e.g.. “deliverables,” “bringing development to the people”
- Need for change of policy language to convey conception of development as partnership between government and people.
- Need for strategy to enhance *public participation* in policy decision-making ; (going beyond refining a communications strategy)

Other Issues in Moving Forward (Cont')

- **Pursue development policies and programs to address structural causes of conflict (i.e. inequities and marginalization), and attain growth with development**
- **Going beyond plantation agriculture to smallholder agriculture**
- **Consider land use and labor implications of rubber, oil palm expansion**
- **Consider land implications of food security policy**
- **Build Liberian business entrepreneurship**

The Governance Commission looks forward to collaborating with all stakeholders in working towards a national vision for Liberia

**THANK YOU
VERY MUCH**

GOVERNANCE COMMISSION, R.L.