



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
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ANNUAL REPORT



2024

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FOREWORD

During the period under review, we carried out critical and essential public services, strengthened local capacity to improve local governance, including capacity of the County Councils; established county development offices in six counties and reformed county service centers by the recruitment of coordinators to replace volunteers. We assessed the infrastructure capacity needs of the Ministry in light of its mandate and took basic steps to address those needs. Overall, we cautiously attempt to implement the strategic goal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs which include, enhancing and ensuring service delivery, strengthening democratic local governance and maintaining peace and fostering social cohesion and protecting and preserving positive Liberian culture and traditions. Leaderships of the counties, districts, chiefdoms and Communities implored efforts towards promoting peace, security and social cohesion which are fundamental for continued stability of the country. Creating sustainable citizens' access to basic services through the county service centers was pursued for the purpose of ensuring conflict reduction and the promotion of human satisfaction and trust building between government and its citizens. In addition, we also focused on improving citizens' participation in local democratic governance through political and fiscal decentralization. Equally so, we cautioned local officials to practice accountable governance, developed skills in relevant areas such as planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, promoting gender mainstreaming, as well as undertook short-term training to improve human capital for responsive local governance.

The Ministry under my supervision is to promote the vision of His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr. – towards this end; we initiated efforts to increase local accountability, efficiency, and democracy. Chiefs were encouraged to work with their elected leaders and public sector administrators – superintendents, city mayors and commissioners to demonstrate accountable leaderships and provide services to the citizens they serve. We took steps to towards strengthening decentralization. We will build on these gains during the next five years under the visionary leadership of the President of Liberia. We believe decentralization is the pathway to improve allocation of resources and to address citizens' needs. It means that an empowered County Service Centers and effective coordination will help government broaden the tax base and increase revenue mobilization. This move promotes our objective for actualizing overall economic efficiency for the people of Liberia. Citizens' participation in the governance of the counties, districts and chiefdoms would potentially strengthen local institutions and respond to critical and diverse needs, including exercising power and control over the efficient utilization of their resources. With the coming into full force of the Ministry of Local Government in the coming months to replace the existing Ministry, propels for generating adequate resources and control to benefit the local people and accelerate their development.



Induction Ceremony of the National Superintendents Council of Liberia.

Reducing conflicts between regions and citizens and central government is critical towards vision 2030. Local problems should be addressed by local solutions. That means we need to put premium on training of chiefs, youth and public sector actors in decentralization. Even political leaders require training in fiscal, political and administrative decentralization – together we need to explore local solutions to the myriad of problems and issues that can be best settled using local knowledge based on our understanding and impact of the problems on Liberians. These are exactly some of the things we have done during the period under review and intend to pursue moving forward. However, there are

challenges that go along with our successes. No doubt, we achieved a lot consistent with our annual work plan 2024, and it was only possible through collective leadership and team work. With the commitment, dedication, hard work and professionalism, we have challenged ourselves and collaborating partners, including Civil Society Organizations to do more during 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is aimed at improving local governance through effective and efficient supervision and coordination. It is poised to adequately manage activities of the 15 political sub-divisions of the country, manages and resolves all tribal matters arising out of tribal conflicts and relationships. It coordinates and implements local government services through various units of County governments established by the Local Government Act of 2018. It oversees the orderly functioning of tribal and municipal governance and formulates rules and regulations to effectuate the implementation of the decentralized governance system. Furthermore, the Ministry is required to ensure applicable rules and regulations including provisions relating to regulating cultural institutions and societies, supervises the elections of paramount, clan and general town chiefs in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including the National Elections Commission. It exercises administrative supervision over Poro, Sande and other tribal societies in Liberia.

In 2024, key objectives adopted by the leadership are: i) Formulate, monitor and implement policies on local governance and provide stronger oversight; ii) Accelerate implementation of selected provisions of the Local Government Act – 2018; iii) Restore the dignity of chiefs, protect and preserve positive Liberian culture & traditions; iv) Foster social cohesion and Unity of the state; and v) Promote coordination and partnership. Related achievements during the period under review - Undertook a Nationwide assessment on operational capacities of county structures to determine policy direction on:

i) County Service Centers; ii) County Councils; iii) County Security Council; and iv) county administrative capacities. Assessment revealed that all these structures were operating at very low level due to lack of resource support, including operational funds. Of the 135 computers supplied in 2015 at the County Service Centers, only 35 was functional, no printers, no internet connectivity, inadequate & unstable power supply, none-paid Volunteer Coordinators, non-efficient service windows. This situation has created trust and confidence issues between the government and citizens. For example, the County Service Center was established to deliver real-time services at affordable rate to the citizens. Unfortunately, citizens were feeling frustrated because it would take them more than three to four months to access birth and traditional marriage certificates, business registrations, import certificates and land deeds. The assessment further revealed limited knowledge gaps of County Council members about their functions, and noted competition between Project Management Committee and the County Council. Inadequate number of security personnel in the counties with extremely limited logistical support was revealed.

The Ministry developed, validated and submitted draft policy on peace and reconciliation to stakeholders, supported the Law Reform Commission (LRC) to develop draft Bill seeking to establish Commission on Peace and Reconciliation. Furthermore, we developed and jointly endorsed Annual Work Plan 2024, and reviewed and cleaned-up Ministry's payroll in collaboration with Civil Service Agency.

Consistent with the Local Government Act of 2018, leadership of the National Council of Chiefs headed by Paramount Chief Arthur W. Dowah was elected and inducted into office on August 10, 2024 by His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr., President of Liberia. The National Council of Chiefs provides advisory support to the national Government on peace and reconciliation. A National Council Support Office was established to enable effective functioning of the National Council of Chiefs. Furthermore, A 15- County Council with quasi - legislative functions was also established to approve county work plans and budgets; promulgate laws and impose taxes for revenue generation. Members of the Council were trained in areas of governance and compliant management process. A week-long workshop was carried out from August 4-9, 2024 in Gompa City, Nimba County to orientate local leaders, including members of the councils. The 15- County administrations

(superintendents, county development officers, county finance officers, county administrative officers, and city mayors), County Councils, and National Council of Chiefs, amongst others benefited from the workshop. Facilitators and resource persons were drawn from the Governance Commission, Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, Liberia Revenue Authority, Civil Service Agency, Liberia Land Authority, and Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, amongst others.

In order to accelerate passage of the Bill seeking to establish the Ministry of Local Government, a four-day joint Legislative Engagement was held from 6-10 October 2024 at the Royal Ambassador Hotel in Margibi County with members of both Houses Standing Committees on Ministry of Internal Affairs, Governance and Reconciliation. The objective was to jointly review, clarify and revise the Bill for its enactment into law. This Bill, if passed into Law, will expand the current portfolio of the Ministry, thereby replacing the current county administrations with local governments and inherently accelerating socio-economic growth and development of the country.

Decentralization constitutes a major enabling factor for the implementation of the Government's ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID). To this effect, the President chaired a Policy-Level Inter-Ministerial Committee Meeting on Decentralization on July 4, 2024 at the EJS Ministerial Complex in Monrovia. At that meeting, the President directed all ministries, agencies and commissions operating at the County Service Centers in the 15 counties to devolve signatories to their respective authorities and personnel based at these Centers for real-time service delivery to the citizens. The President further directed the retention of 40% of revenue generated by the County Service Centers for effective operations of these Centers. In coordination with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, we developed and validated series of policy regulations, including qualification for members of the Local Government Fiscal Board (LGFB). These regulations were printed and circulated by the MFDP to relevant MACs. The regulation provides information on qualification, experience and skills set of persons to be nominated for appointment to the Fiscal Board by the President of Liberia. Also, the Ministry of Internal Affairs supported the development of the Revenue-Sharing Regulations. This process was led by the MFDP and the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA).



We reactivated five dormant coordinating structures, including the Inter-Ministerial Committee Meeting on Decentralization (IMCD), Technical Working Group and Board meeting on decentralization, as well as the monthly county coordination meeting of institutions operating in the counties and regular general and senior staff meetings of the Ministry. Established six County Development Planning Units to track monitor and report on progress, challenges and lessons related to the implementation of the County Development Agenda.

Payroll audit was conducted and findings revealed that more than 350 local chiefs and ordinary staff were not on payroll. There are 550 work force of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, of this number, approximately 15 % was being paid through mobile money but they were not physically reporting to work. Administration took steps to address the issue. During the period under review, the Ministry reactivated its relationship with an inter-governmental body comprising of 35 countries, the African – Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO). AARDO awarded short to medium term capacity

building opportunities that currently benefit five staff undergoing Master’s degree programs at renowned Universities in Asia in relevant disciplines. Short-term programs benefited 10 staff in various disciplines at universities and training institutions in both Africa and Asia.

These achievements were characterized by challenges. For example, 2024 annual budget was very tight which did not allow for the purchase of vehicles for Minister, deputy and assistant ministers, as well as for the general staff. Three office buildings are in bad shape needing renovation and expansion. No suitable conference room and vehicle park. No allocations for electricity, water and cabbage disposal. Inadequate office furniture and equipment create difficulties for increased performance. Operational capacities of the counties are at minimum due to similar challenges at central level, including professionally skilled human resources. Turning around-time to deliver on certain tasks takes forever if not possible.

In terms of lessons learned, operational challenges (logistics, including lack of vehicles for the Minister, Deputy and Assistant Ministers and staff) undermine performance. Long service employees retired in 2021 and those in 2024 have yet to receive retirement benefits which are impacting effective functionality of the human resource capacity of the Ministry. Inclusive planning, ownership and leadership promote sustainability. Inadequate skills set; coupled with lack of needed logistics undermine increased performance, and affect timely delivery of essential services and activities. Regarding recommendations there following amongst others are advanced – strengthen operational capacities of the Ministry through provision of needed logistics, including vehicles, skills development and renovation of Ministry’s infrastructure at both central and county levels.



The President, senior government officials and development partners at the Lunching Ceremony of the AAID and CDA held in Buchanan city, Grand Bassa County

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are incredibly grateful to our development partners for finance and technical support. These include the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), European Union (EU), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the Irish Aid. Others include the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UN Women, and the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). These partners over the years supplemented Liberian government support to implement the Liberia Decentralization Support Program (LDSP).

It will be remised of us if we do not recognize the tremendous coordination support and exchange of invaluable expertise and knowledge provided by the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs (MoS), the Governance Commission and the civil Society Organization, particularly, NAYMOTE and Partners for Democratic Development. Furthermore, we especially acknowledge the contributions of the Technical Working Committee on Decentralization, and the Municipal Governance Committee for the routine follow up and contributions on the consolidation and validation of the National Development Agenda on municipal governance.

We also acknowledge with profound gratitude for the contributions of the Deputy and Assistant Ministers, Directors and heads of specialized Programs for achieving the Ministry's strategic objectives for the year 2024. We are particularly grateful to Deputy Minister Edward Mulbah for the production of this report. Additionally, we would like to appreciate the role of the President of Liberia in the orientation and induction of MIA local elected officials including the National Council of Chiefs. County superintendents and County Development Officers were incredibly responsive in a number of programing areas for which we are exceedingly grateful. Specifically, the female Superintendents of Maryland, Margibi, Bong and Nimba counties kept constant engagement with central office. The male superintendents are equally recognized, particularly Lofa County Superintendent for hosting the entire government and the 60th Anniversary of the existence of the four original counties of Liberia.



We also appreciate the commitment and hard work of certain employees who are always available when called upon. They are goal-getters, they know themselves! We especially acknowledge the remarkable leadership, patience, resilience and commitment of Minister Francis Nyumalin, Sr. He is a great leader.

Finally, we challenge ourselves to continue to work together during 2025 and beyond in implementation of the County Development Agenda, while looking forward to a robust monitoring, evaluation and reporting system of the Ministry consistent with its mandate.

ACRONYMS

AAID	Arrest Agenda for Inclusive Development
ADRV	Alternative Dispute Resolution Validation
CBO	Community-Based Organizations
CCAT	County Capacity Assessment Tool
CDF	County Development Fund
CLAS	Community Livelihood and Agriculture Support
CSA	Civil Service Agency
CSC	County Service Centers
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GC	Governance Commission
GOL	Government of Liberia
GREAT	Governance Reform and Accountability Transformation
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDP	International Day of Peace
IFIMS	Internal Financial Management System
IMCD	Inter-Ministerial Committee on Decentralization
LACE	Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment
LGA	Local Government Act
LIPA	Liberia Institute of Public Administration
LRI	Liberia Reconciliation Initiative
MAC	Ministries Agencies and Commission
MCAT	Municipal Capacity Assessment Tool
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
NCC	National Council of Chiefs
NCCRO	National Concession Conflict Resolution Office
NCCSO	National Council of Chiefs Support Office
NPRSC	National Peacebuilding & Reconciliation Steering
Committee	
ONPA	Office of the National Peace Ambassador
PBO	Peace Building Office
PPCC	Public Procurement and Concession Commission
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Internal Affairs under the supervision and leadership of Minister F. Sakila Nyumalin, Sr. poised to deliver on its promise to the public during assuming Office in April 2024. Amongst other things, the Honorable Minister, working in concert with deputy and assistant ministers, directors and staff promised to promote the vision of His Excellency Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr. to increase local accountability, efficiency, and democracy and develop a vibrant local government system. Together with the team, he committed to restore dignity of the Chiefs which has been eroded since the civil war and cultivate relationships that would inspire accountable leadership and create access to localized services through decentralized system of governance. He also promised to ensure protection and preservation of culture and traditions and ensure participatory leadership towards achieving social cohesion and local development. In view of these promises, the below strategic objectives were set for the period under review:

1. Formulate, monitor and implement policies on local governance and provide stronger oversight
2. Accelerate implementation of selected provisions of the Local Government Act – 2018
3. Restore the dignity of chiefs, protect and preserve positive Liberian culture & traditions
4. Foster social cohesion and Unity of the state
5. Coordination and strategic partnership

The Ministry is structured into five departments and three specialized units. The departments are: i) Direction and Management; ii) Administration and Finance; iii) Research and Development Planning; iv) Operations; and v) Urban Affairs. The specialized

Units are: i) Liberia Peacebuilding Office; ii) Office of the National Peace Ambassador; and National Concession Conflict Resolution Unit. A Section on Gender and Social Inclusion exists that facilitates mainstreaming gender into policies and programs of the Ministry.

In consideration of the above strategic objectives, and given the unique duties and responsibilities of each department, Unit and Section of the Ministry, the below achievements are reported for the fiscal year 2024.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS RELATED TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES INDICATED BELOW:

1.0: FORMULATE, MONITOR AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PROVIDE STRONGER OVERSIGHT

Undertook a Nationwide assessment on operational capacities of county structures to determine policy direction on: i) County Service Centers; ii) County Councils; iii) County Security Council; and iv) County administrative capacities. Of the 135 computers supplied in 2015 at the County Service Centers, only 35 was functional, no printers, no internet connectivity, inadequate & unstable power supply, none-paid Volunteer Coordinators, non-efficient service windows. The Ministry developed, Validated and submitted draft policy on peace and reconciliation to stakeholders, supported the Law Reform Commission (LRC) to develop draft Bill seeking to establish Commission on Peace and Reconciliation. Furthermore, we developed and jointly endorsed Annual Work Plan 2024, and reviewed and cleaned-up Ministry's payroll in collaboration with Civil Service Agency.

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Assessment on capacity of the County Council revealed low technical and institutional capacities and identified that Project Management Committee structures are still in Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, and other places which tend to undermine activities of the County Council. We established the National Council of Chiefs Support Office based on the Ministry. In keeping with the LGA 2028, honorarium supposed to be provided as set by the Law makers but this is yet outstanding. There is a lack of/limited and untimely operational funds. District and county security councils have not met since last three years and are experiencing low operational performance – i.e. inadequate security personnel and logistics; weak coordination, amongst others. Low capacities of county administrations in all 15 counties – skills and knowledge in programming, logistics, operational funds, Political influence and allegiance continue to impact increased performance.



Inter-Ministerial Committee Meeting on Decentralization presided over by the President of Liberia: Held High Policy level Meeting of 17 MACs and partners since 2015; Policy directives issued by the President- 40% of revenue generated by the CSCs remain for operations; devolution of centralized signatories of heads of MACs to the counties to enable real-time service delivery, etc. We developed, validated and submitted draft policy on peace and reconciliation, Supported Law Reform Commission (LRC) to develop draft Bill seeking to establish Commission on Peace and Reconciliation, developed and jointly endorsed Annual Work Plan 2024, reviewed and cleaned-up Ministry's payroll in collaboration with Civil Service Agency.

The Ministry re-launched the marriage certificates with enhanced security features to curb fraud. Realigned roles and responsibilities consistent with functional mandates and expected results of

departments and specialized Units and Sections within the Ministry. We institutionalize weekly seminar for capacity development of staff and a strategy to build additional technical capacities. We formulated draft Policy on Coordination and partnership to enhance effective resource management and prevent wastes and duplication of services. In terms of re-launching the marriage certificates for enhanced security features to curb fraud, some of the certificates currently issued at central office and to be expanded to the CSCs include but are not limited to:

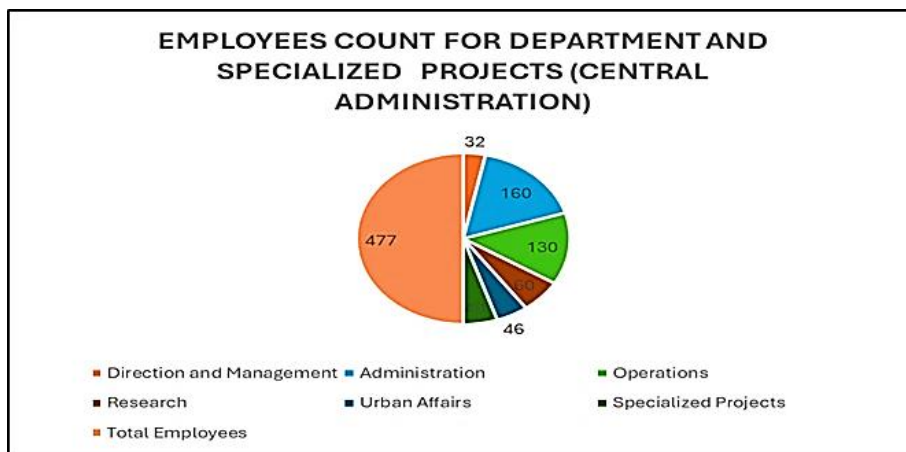
- Proxy Marriages
- Delayed Marriages
- Polygamous Marriages

Other legalities such as:

Divorce	Annotation
Erratum	Certified Statement
Bachelorhood & Spinsterhood certificates	Note-To-File
Authentication	Discovery & non-Discovery
Engagements & Disengagement	

During the period under review, we updated the Human Resource records to include newly appointed officials of 652 and civil servants totaling 659 employees. We also updated basic payroll records and noted 338 presidential appointees who are yet to be placed on Government’s payroll for FY 2024. We took serious action on 439 employees for retirement in 2024. A little over 63 PANS are being processed with sixteen (16) already sent to CSA for payroll processing with more pending, completed the recruitment of 15 Service Centers Coordinators through a competitive process.

Table 1.1: Workforce of the Ministry



The Ministry is forward looking for continuous improvement of policy that supports the Ministry's human resource system. As part of its strategic objective, it championed 13 collaborative and strategic partnership meetings with the Civil Service Agency (CSA) and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) and ensured that a framework of cooperation and coordination is established to deal with personnel management and Basic Payroll issues. The Ministry is committed to the development and diversification of its workforce including creating a platform for continued learning, training, and staff development.

Regarding the Ministry's ICT capacity development, it updated and enforced implementation of its ICT Policy regulations and guidelines during the period under review. We also provided ICT security at all Ministry's facilities across all 15 counties, updated MIA ICT Network Policy in line with its strategic and operational objectives. The IT Unit worked to disseminate and assist various departments to improve technological structures and promoted the development of a secure and reliable environment for using information-communications infrastructure across the country. With support from the IT Unit, the assessment of Service Centers across the country has been successful in helping to plan and draft administrative measures to improve service delivery. Based on the public demand for improvement at various County Service Centers across the country, the MIA look forward to change and ensure that these Centers are strategically important for policy planning and data analysis to meet public needs. The ICT Division installed Anti-Virus, Printer drivers, Windows OS 10/11 Office suites 10, 13 and 16, and initiated Windows update on 5 computers. We maintained and repaired printers, Laptops, Desktop and Power Supplies and Printer cartridges. Additionally, new Computers /Printers were Setup, Desktop, Laptop and Printers were Networked, 3 Router Configurations were done, and Cat 6 Cables to enable internet connectivity were run; thus, restoring internet for Buildings 1-3, and the Help Desk Support was enabled. The ICT Division carried out Troubleshooting on computers to solve related ICT issues. Supported staff in office Suit Applications provided computer specifications for the purchase of new computers and provided security advice to avoid cyber-attacks. The Ministry developed a comprehensive communication strategy to target stakeholders, including government and donor partners, civil society organizations; Community based organization, the media sector and other concerned groups throughout Liberia. We successfully organized four press releases, 20 outreach activities, 7 media engagements, and 4 coordination meetings with the Press Union of Liberia - Inter-News, the UN Women, and national and community radio stations across the country. Active Face-book content management team has been established. The Press and Public Affairs Unit provided technical guidance in the development and implementation of the MIA Communication Strategy and adequately managed Media relations. Progress related to this activity include the holding of "Talk Show" on four Radio Stations across the country, produced MIA Newsletter called the MIA News Bulletin.

We envision a robust Communication Strategy that communicate and ensure that the public and relevant stakeholders are well-informed about local governance activities across the Country. We convened series of dialogues on democratic governance and decentralization involving public, local community, and relevant stakeholders. The strategy further enhanced community and individual participation in local government activities, increased understanding on how local governance is making impact through decentralization of government's programs. A number of community engagements throughout the country that involved local chiefs, elders, and other traditional leaders. There were live-shows including call-in sessions by residents to express opinions on matter of local government and decentralization. Listening survey conducted during the year under review revealed that the Ministry's Radio Program covered the entire country and reached more than 1.2 million people and 250 community engagements. With the involvement of community-based radio stations

across the country, local radio journalists played an important role in relaying citizens' concerns to local elected government officials and MIA Central Administration.

With regard to capacity development, in partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, County Administrative Officers and the Office of the Comptroller at the Ministry implemented fiscal rules and transparent transformative strategies to improve service delivery and to better manage public resources. We conducted quarterly human resources management capacity development, strategic planning, and budgeting sessions with particular focus on relevant staff. We note that through the Information, Communication and Technology, specialized infrastructure information training for 20 employees focusing on the strategic and operational needs of the Ministry was conducted. The Ministry secured and provided opportunities for three short-term international training of staff and four staff for medium-term international training respectively in various disciplines at Diploma and Master Levels. 43 employees were trained by the Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA) and 10 lower staff participated in local training programs facilitated by Research and Development Planning and Urban Affairs. The Unit identified capacity gaps across the Ministry and has put plans in place to provide further training locally and internationally.

The Ministry undertook seven training events across the country in collaboration with partners to equip residents with valuable skills in areas like healthcare, teaching, and entrepreneurship, fostering self-reliance and long-term development. Building capacity in local governance, financial management, and planning has empowered community members to sustain and lead local development projects. This has led to an increased sense of ownership and commitment to local growth and progress. Beneficiaries, such as Local government officials, teachers, healthcare workers, and community members who gain new skills are now contributing to the county's development. Overall, these interventions have led to meaningful improvements in Bomi, Lofa, Rivercess and Grand Cape Mount Counties social, economic, and environmental conditions. By improving access to services, fostering community engagement, supporting local economies, and strengthening infrastructure, these projects have created a more resilient and self-sustaining environment for community residents.

We cultivated team spirit and maintained ethical and friendly work environment. Staff capacity development formed an essential component for enhanced productivity. In collaboration with other departments, secured and provided three international trainings for staff of the ministry and four staff are undergoing vetting process for possible three international training courses.

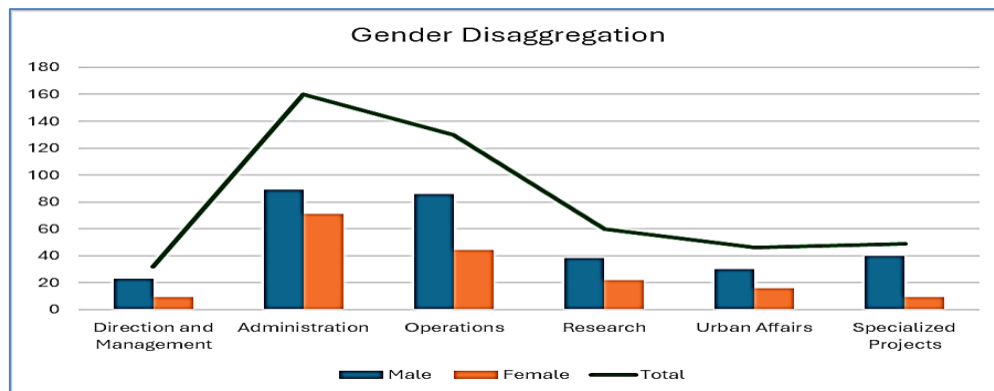
Procurement processes were followed during the period under review. The Ministry's Procurement Unit ensured compliant to the execution of procurement of goods and services based on resources allotted by Central Government through the IFMIS system. This was pursued consistent with the Public Procurement Concession Commission (PPCC) Act of 2010. All procurement of goods and services were done in line with the 2024 Annual Procurement Plan. The Procurement envisioned ensuring timely delivery of goods and services, followed bidding processes and systems for procurement of goods and services through the GOL IFMIS system. In conjunction with the Public Procurement Concession Commission (PPCC) Act of 2010, the Procurement Unit successfully monitored and managed all MIA procurement-related activities and worked with the PPCC on specific procurement processes. The following highlights key activities carried out by the Procurement Unit: i) prepared Annual Procurement Plan; ii) Procurement Plan updated to guard departments on request and delivery; and iii) Prepared Procurement Execution Plan for Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4. The Procurement Unit also updated MIA Procurement policies on management and

facilitated two in-service training for procurement staff. The Procurement Unit also selected and awarded 14 contractors and vendors.

Regarding efficient and effective utilization of financial resources, and in partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, we implemented fiscal rules to improve service delivery and to better manage scarce financial resources. We set up key performance indicators (KPIs) aimed at improving staff performance and work structure. The KPIs helped to improve accountability and efficiency and encouraged staff to deliver based on result-oriented results. In addition, the Ministry ensured effective and efficient allocation and utilization of financial resources in accordance with the MFDP Fiscal Policies, Regulations and Guidelines. The Ministry's performance was informed by the Consolidated Annual work plan and its Operational Work Plan (OWP) to the implement specific programs /project activities. Under the supervision of the department of Administration, the following achievements are highlighted: prepared and circulated MIA Budget Execution Report, developed Financial Management Report, prepared and circulated to senior management the Budget Transportation Status Report, developed Financial Management System, produced Travel Payments Report, produced Spending Plan, organized Bank Reconciliation Statements, reconciled accounts of Specialized Projects and Programs Financial Report. The Ministry invested enormous time and resources to improve staff performance, workflow, internal controls, and fraud preventive measures. Finance Unit reviews all financial statements to ensure there was not any malpractice. The Finance Unit also expanded its outreach efforts by organizing 4 inter-department meetings to provide financial updates. The Unit's reports on financial data were necessary for the formulation of strong internal control systems and standardized bookkeeping and accounting services for the MIA. The Ministry managed and coordinated implementation of MIA administrative policies and activities both at the central and county levels. We achieved excellent organizational performance and ensured effective service delivery through the transformative leadership at the Ministry. Various administrative measures were undertaken to drive substantial transformative change. Four staff participated in two coordination meetings with the CSA and MFDP to ensure updated employee records and basic salary compensation - related issues were resolved.

With respect to mainstreaming Gender and Social Inclusion in the Ministry's programs and policies, Gender Policy was developed and validated by stakeholders in November 2024. Amongst other things, the policy aimed at addressing disparity and inequalities in the workplace. 50 staff members were trained to develop capacity to strengthen, monitor and evaluate project outputs and outcomes and increase knowledge on how to prevent and respond to gender-based violence to advance gender sensitivity planning.

Table 1.2: Gender Disaggregation



During the period under review, the Ministry partially renovated three central office buildings. The building hosting the Minister's Office is in bad shape and requires refurbishing and expansion work including sewage and electrical facilities and conference room. However, Zinc and Ceilings on the roof of the Electrical powerhouse was replaced.

1.2: ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECTED PROVISIONS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT – 2018

1.2.1: UNDERSTANDING SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION AT LOCAL LEVEL

During the period under review, the Ministry, led by its senior management team undertook a comprehensive situation analysis to understand the current state of Liberia's 15 counties and to gather insights into the county's administration development achievements and existing challenges. It was determined that economically, residents rely primarily on agriculture, fishing, and small-scale mining, with key crops such as palm oil and rubber. Despite the Central Government allocating money towards the County Development Agenda, the counties face persistent development challenges, particularly in areas like infrastructure, health, education, and access to basic social services. Additionally, mining, particularly iron ore confirmed that it is historically significant to the economy of Bomi, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount and Bong Counties. The counties have made strides in improving their educational facilities and infrastructure, although challenges remain in access and quality. It was established that citizens in the counties face complexities and resilient challenges of the Liberian society, with the need to balance traditions and culture with the challenges of modernization and development. The overall security situation in the counties proved to be relatively calm and peaceful. Emerging and looming conflicts identified unemployment, land issues and limited access to resources, thus has led to social tensions in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Nimba, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Bong and Grand Bassa Counties. County leaderships see initiatives towards promoting agricultural development and job creation to enable long term stability. Youth-friendly agro-systems, education and employment opportunities provide significant avenue for sustaining peace and fostering social cohesion. The security situation has improved since the 2023 elections but there were still localized incidents of crime or unrest. The presence of community policing and local law enforcement officers is impacting the overall stability.

By supporting local governance structures and facilitating community consultations, interventions have fostered greater transparency and public engagement. Residents now have more opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, voice their needs, and monitor development projects. This has led to more community-aligned development initiatives and empowered local leaders to advocate for community priorities effectively. The Ministry of Internal Affairs engaged the Environmental Protection Agency to address coastal erosion, waste management, and sustainable farming practices, have promoted environmental sustainability. Interventions have led to more resilient coastlines and educated communities on managing resources sustainably. These projects are essential in preserving natural resources, which support livelihoods and protected communities from climate-related risks like flooding and erosion.

Under this Strategic objective, the Ministry conducted orientation workshop for 500 local government officials drawn from County, district and chiefdom on their roles and responsibilities. This workshop ran from - 6-11 July 2024. In addition, it established six-county Development offices in Gbarpolu, Bong, Nimba, Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, Lofa and Bomi and trained 60 staff members (males and females).

The Ministry collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture at county level to train local communal farmers in agro- business management and farming skills in Nimba, Lofa and Bong for economic empowerment. The training targeted Chiefs, youths, and other vulnerable groups. Consistent with LGA-2018, we jointly developed and finalized with MFDP Regulations on Fiscal Board Qualifications for nomination and subsequent appointment of members. We held weeklong Legislative Engagement to accelerate passage of Bill seeking to establish Ministry of Local Government. The Bill was passed by the Upper House awaiting concurrence by Lower house. The weeklong event ran from **9-11 October 2024**.

We finalized the recruitment of County Service Center Coordinators to replace volunteers, and completed digital capacity assessment of 15-County Service Centers and developed capacity development plan. We reviewed the 10-year LGA implementation plan for revision/update that should be informed by the CDA/AAID priorities and then subsequently have it launch in early 2025. We organized municipal governance sector engagements to develop Municipal Development Plan and initiated process of reaffirmation of cities in light of *Chapter xxx* of the LGA 2018. We established city councils and developed draft city ordinances. The Ministry facilitated county-level consultations and the development County Development Agenda in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

We strengthened inter-governmental relations with the MFDP, the Governance Commission, and the Civil Service Agency. Our relationship caused the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMCD) on Decentralization articulated by the Local Government Act of 2018 to be reactivated. We further worked together to implement fiscal decentralization policy with emphasis on the county treasuries. Together with the MFDP guidelines for the preparation of the Municipal Governance five - year development plan was issued. The role of the Governance Commission in achieving this result, especially in light of providing technical guidance in Liberia's governance process intended to address critical gaps by supporting the decentralization process allowing citizens to have access to basic activities was crucial. Together with the MFDP four county treasuries referenced above were set up in four initial counties (Grand Bassa, Nimba, Margibi, and Bong) Counties, which is aimed at ensuring county funds are well managed under the local government structures. Decentralization is the pathway to improve allocation of resources and to address citizens' needs. An empowered County Service Centers will help government broaden the tax base and increase revenue mobilization – this form integral part of our vision at the Ministry of Internal Affairs to promote overall economic efficiency. Citizens' participation in the governance of the counties, districts and chiefdoms would potentially strengthen local institutions and respond to critical and diverse needs, including exercising power and control over their resources. That is the direction we intend to go as a government through a pending Ministry of Local Government. Reducing conflicts between regions and citizens on the one side and central government on the other side is critical towards vision 2030.



Local problems should be addressed by local solutions. That means we need to put premium on training of chiefs, youth and public sector actors. Even political leaders require training in fiscal, political and administrative decentralization – together we need explore local solutions to the myriad of problems and issues that can be best settled using local knowledge based on our understanding and impact of the problems on Liberians. The Ministry inducted 15 County Superintendents and County officials into offices. The induction of these new county officials is in line with the decentralization concept, which took place in their respective Counties. An Annual Work Plan defines clear roadmap for the Ministry to execute its planned activities in light of its mandate.

Revenue generated by County Service Centers

County Service Centers – Despite the challenges reported, county services centers continue to provide basic documentation services related to permits, licenses and certificates. During the period under review, county services centers recorded service provisions to 9,891 service seekers. Of this amount, 3,839 constitute females, while 6,052 were males. In addition to service provision, the CSCs also total of LRD 14,953,047.82 and US 72,620.66, respectively. Below is the matrix of statistics from the service centers.

Table 1.1: Revenue generated in 2024

Year-2024							
No.	County	Male	Female	# of Service	Couple	LD \$	USD \$
1	BONG	601	458	61	14	2,165,438.87	8,864.50
2	GBARPOLU	579	569	41	0	869,075.81	3,857.16
3	GRAND CAPE MOUNT	479	376	13	0	220,000.00	1,005.00
4	NIMBA	0	0	0	0	-	0.00
5	BOMI	0	0	0	0	-	0
6	MARGIBI	1556	632	25	77	4,488,719.24	35,910.00
7	RIVER GEE	445	603	13	12	881,850.00	1,110
8	GRAND BASSA	0	0	0	0	-	0.00
9	LOFA	148	93	28	0	363,000.00	400
10	MARYLAND	273	207	24	3	442,000.00	15,915.00
11	RIVER CESS	0	0	0	0	-	0
12	SINOE	393	71	38	5	1,416,390.00	4,159.00
13	GRAND GEDEH	819	417	74	9	3,101,983.90	1,400
14	GRAND KRU	759	413	13	5	1,004,590.00	0
15	MONTERRADO	0	0	0	0	-	0
GRAND TOTAL		6052	3839	330	125	14,953,047.82	72,620.66

1.2.2: COMMUNAL FARMING SERVICES

The Ministry of Internal Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE/REALISE) for the implementation of component five of the Community Livelihood and Agriculture Support (CLAS) Project in eight counties in Liberia. Through this initiative, we strengthened capacity of Smallholders for Market-Oriented Vegetable Production in Liberia (TCP/LIR/3903). In collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), we officially launched an FAO-funded project with the theme: *Strengthened Smallholders' Capacity for Market-oriented Vegetable Production in Liberia Project (TCP/LIR/3903)*. Also, in collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) we conducted a two-day responsible Agriculture Investment training for forty (40) persons.

1.2.3: HEALTH, EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Bomi, Lofa, Gbarpolu, Rivercess and Grand Cape Mount County Administrations conducted an assessment in 2024 respectively. Development challenges, such as limited access to healthcare, education, and infrastructure, occasionally lead to social frustration, but these issues have not escalated to significant instability. Each county generally enjoys a peaceful environment, although ongoing support for social and economic development is essential for maintaining economic growth and development. Grand Cape Mount County administration has committed to sound fiscal practices and transparency, requesting detailed financial turnovers from the former administration to support development goals. Grand Cape Mount's financial state shows a balance of LRD 226 million in assets, but key social development funds (SDF) and county development funds (CDF) from companies like Bea Mountain Mining Corporation remain untransformed. Efforts to resolve these issues are ongoing, with the administration emphasizing the adherence to the "ARREST" agenda and the Local Government Act of 2018.

The establishment of new healthcare facilities, provision of medical supplies, and deployment of healthcare workers has improved access to healthcare in rural and underserved areas. Communities that previously had to travel long distances for basic medical attention now receive primary healthcare locally, leading to improved maternal and child health, better management of diseases, and increased vaccination coverage. Families, women, children, and elderly residents who now receive timely medical attention in their communities are all beneficiaries.

Legislative and Stakeholder's Dialogue on the passage of the Ministry of Local Government Bill 9-11 October 2024 - During his maiden State of the Nation Address before the Legislature on January 29, 2024, H.E President Joseph Nyuma Boakai, Sr. made a stronger commitment to advancing decentralization and local governance reforms. The President announced a Bill for the establishment of the Ministry of Local Government which will replace the current Ministry of Internal Affairs due to structural and functional changes consistent with the Local Government Act and anticipated local governance reforms which do not conform to the act that created the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Subsequently, the Office of the President submitted the Bill to the National Legislature in early June 2024. When established, the Ministry of Local Government is aimed at advancing modalities to operationalize the Local Government Act of 2018. Specifically, the proposed Ministry of Local Government will have the authority to drive the Government's decentralization program and expand the scope of the Ministry.

Capacity Development Plan: The Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Department of Research and Development Planning developed the County Service Centers (CSCs) Capacity Development

Plan and reviewed its Operational Plan aimed at improving efficiency and effectiveness at the county level.

1.2.4: LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS

The Ministry facilitated several planning and field coordination activities that contributed to the successful development of the 15 county development frameworks. It coordinated and implemented a nationwide assessment of local structures with particular focus on County Council, County Service Centers & county security councils across the 15 counties. The County Development Agenda is the local component of the national ARREST Agenda 2025 - 2029 and was prepared through local participation following a series of district level Development Consultation Meetings that utilized the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method. In this process, local residents across the country managed to identify the critical interventions needed to move toward realizing the SDGs, including paving all primary roads and more secondary roads; and new feeder roads to connect agriculture communities to market; constructing and rehabilitating health facilities with proper staffing and affordable services; and educational services, including high schools in every district headquarters, quality primary education for all, and professional education at affordable prices and a university at least at the county headquarters.

The CDA calls for concrete actions to be taken under the five Pillars of the national ARREST agenda, namely Agriculture, Road, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism. The CDA, however, is currently under development with the expectation of having additional consultations to enable urban and rural inhabitants to identify specific priority projects for action at the district level. The Ministry of Internal Affairs with support from



His. Excellency President Joseph Nyuma Boakai Sr. with development partners and some official of government

the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning finalized the Revenue Sharing Law Regulations and developed and shared draft Regulations for Fiscal Board Qualifications including work planning and reporting templates. As part of strengthening local democratic governance, we developed draft terms of reference for county service center coordinators and facilitated the recruitment of County Service Center Coordinators. In fulfillment of our support to the National Council of Chiefs Office, the National Council of Chiefs Support Office was established and made operational across the country. With support from other bi-lateral partners and donor agencies, we have earmarked several projects to be implemented in line with the Local Government Act of 2018 and the pipelines projects include:

- GREAT Project – US\$5 million (support to digitization services at CSCs)
- UN Women – US\$ 190,000
- UNICEF – US\$ 20,000(Support LGA awareness, birth registration and Harmful traditional practices)
- USAID/LEAD – N/A (Local development and service delivery improved)

- Coordinated Municipal governance sector engagements on the development of the National Development Plan

In 2024, the Government of Liberia support towards community development Initiatives geared towards agriculture, fishing, and small-scale trade have led to increased income opportunities for residents in mainly rural parts of the country. With ongoing training programs initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), several small-scale farmers received agricultural inputs focused on improving productivity in farming and fishing. These interventions have reduced local dependence on imported goods and promoted food security by empowering residents to produce their food.

The municipality water project was installed to enhance the effectiveness of the janitorial service and improve general hygiene at the administrative building. SDI is also working in collaboration with the Liberia Land Authority (LLA), to ensure Customary Land Formalization in rural communities across Lofa County. Another NGO, Fauna & Flora International initiated community land formalization in the Wologizi Protected Area to improve conservation. It also hosted two County Security Council Meetings and monthly WASH Sector Coordination Meetings. Sanitation is a key component of the AAID; hence, the county officials attended a Countywide Sanitation Activity (CWSA) for district and towns for quarterly performance review. CWSA is a USAID-sponsored project involved in sanitation and supporting efforts to end open defecation (ODF). In compliance with the LGA 2018, in June 2024, paramount chiefs, general town chiefs, and sectional chiefs gathered in Voinjama City to elect the heads of the council of chiefs for Lofa County. The positions contested were Chairman, Vice Chairman for Peace, and Vice Chairman for tradition and culture. As provided by the elections result, Hon. Ballah Gbotolu, Paramount Chief of Voinjama District was elected as Chairman; Hon. Jallah Manjoe Paramount Chief of Kolahun District was elected as Vice Chairman for Culture and Traditional Affairs; and Hon. Harris W. Gobalson, Paramount Chief of Zorzor District was elected as Vice Chairman for Peace and Reconciliation.

The United Nations Fund for Population Regional Director for West and Central Africa, Dr. Sennen Hounton in continuation of his visit to Liberia, visited Rivercess County on September 9, 2024, as one of the UNFPA's project counties. The UN Diplomat received a warm welcome and held exclusive meeting with county authority and traditional leaders. He visited the County Health Team compound where several projects funded through the YMCA were toured. The UNFPA has been providing support through the Young Men Christian Association since 2022 to run various programs that will reduce teenage pregnancy through the promotion of basic family planning uptake as well as reduce maternal mortality.

In 2024, several community consultations were conducted in Grand Cape Mount County to identify local development needs. Key recommendations include investment in agriculture, improvements in the rule of law, road infrastructure, educational support, sanitation, and tourism development. Achievements include partnerships with BMCC for workforce improvements and collaborative clean-up efforts in Robertsport. This includes delayed funding transfers and the poor condition of assets, buildings, and infrastructure, necessitating immediate intervention for repairs and renovations. Future goals include finalizing the county's development plan with key partners, improving public facilities, and addressing critical road and healthcare infrastructure. Strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, UNDP, and local stakeholders are also in place to ensure resource alignment with community needs. Future goals include finalizing the county's development plan with key partners, improving public facilities, and addressing critical road and

healthcare infrastructure. Strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, UNDP, and local stakeholders are also in place to ensure resource alignment with community needs.

1.2.5. COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

In Gbarpolu County, Road repairs, bridge construction, and enhanced transport options have connected isolated areas to main towns and markets. These changes have made it easier for residents to access essential services, transport goods, and travel for economic activities. Enhanced infrastructure has also facilitated quicker emergency responses and better support for healthcare and education services, as supplies and personnel can now reach more areas effectively. Beneficiaries: Rural residents, local business owners, farmers, students, and healthcare workers who rely on better roads and transport for daily needs. County Administrative Building and Superintendent Residences

The administrative buildings across the counties are in deplorable conditions including carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electricity, furniture, etc. The renovation of these buildings will give a good facelift to the county seat. The provision of equipment and furniture will serve as a pillow for timely and quality work and service delivery. About 99% of all equipment, including vehicles, computers, printers, and office furniture are all coded but most of them have outlived their usefulness. These materials were issued or supplied during the administration of former president Ellen Johnson - Sirleaf's first term.

In Lofa County, the “Heritage Center” in Vezala has been officially opened and operational. As a way of improving health services delivery to the public, a fact-finding meeting was held with the Tellewoyan and Kolahun Hospital Administration to investigate complaints and mitigate the challenges. Consequently, an intervention was made to resolve the crisis at Lofa County University through dialogue with the University Board, Administration, and Faculty.



1.2.6. URBAN PLANNING PROCESSES

The Ministry through the Department of **Urban Affairs** developed and validated the Draft National Zoning Law of Liberia. Collaborated with various organizations to establish city councils and draft city ordinances. During the period under review focus was on improving urban planning policies, coordinating urban development, and implementing local government urban development policies. A needs assessment conducted during the period revealed a gap in staff qualifications, indicating a need for capacity building to address urban challenges. Urban Affairs department collaborated with various partners on projects such as the Liberia Urban Resilience Project (LURP) and the Local Empowerment for Accountability and Decentralization (LEAD) project. These initiatives enhanced flood resilience, improved urban infrastructure, and led to developing new national zoning laws.

Significant achievements include participation in the National Urban Forum in Ethiopia, capacity development for technical staff, and collaboration with various organizations to establish city councils and draft city ordinances. The department also conducted assessments of water treatment plants and developed monitoring and evaluation tools for urban planning. However, the department annual work plan includes a budget of \$200,000 for FY2024, focusing on training, workshops, and urban development activities. Funding challenges persist, with a need for additional resources to support initiatives. The department faces internal challenges such as budget constraints, insufficient qualified staff, lack of logistics, and inadequate working conditions. External challenges include socio-political issues affecting urban development. Furthermore, the department's future objectives include staff capacity building through specialized training, developing standard operating procedures, conducting citizen engagement, Re-demarcation of cities to align with the 3.5-mile radius and establishing city councils in compliance with the Local Government Act of 2018. The department aims to enhance urban planning and governance through these initiatives

3.0: RESTORE THE DIGNITY OF CHIEFS, PROTECT AND PRESERVE POSITIVE LIBERIAN CULTURE & TRADITIONS



His. Excellency President Joseph Nyuma Boakai Sr., Hon. F. Sakila Nyumalin Sr. Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Development Partners and the Nation Council of Chiefs of Liberia

3.1. COUNCIL OF CHIEFS AT NATIONAL AND COUNTY LEVELS

During the period under review, the National Council of Chiefs of Liberia was fully established and orientated towards promoting and preserving Liberian culture and traditions. The National Council of Chiefs comprised of 15 paramount representing the 15 counties of Liberia. Through an election of the leadership that consists of Chair, vice chair for culture and traditions, vice chair for peacebuilding and reconciliation, speakers and chaplain were inducted into offices on August 10, 2024 at the EJS Ministerial Complex by his H.E. Joseph Nyuma Boakai, President of Liberia.

The National Council of Chiefs Support Office was established and staffed with the initial contractual employees of 9 persons in line with the LGA-2018. In order to promote the principles of human rights and sustain peace and harmony, the Ministry conducted awareness, training and education on harmful traditional practices in Grand Gedeh County. We reviewed, and currently in the process of formulating policy on the practices of poro/sande not to conflict with formal education calendar. The Ministry further held two meetings with Paramount chiefs on strategy to promote best cultural values and principles to foster positive “cultural heritage” of Liberia.

The National Council of Chiefs has, amongst other things, taken steps to protect, and preserve Liberia’s culture and tradition. For example, Paramount chiefs Arthur W. Dowah attended five strategic meetings with different policy makers and stakeholders to devise strategies to promote positive Liberian Culture. Two of these meetings were held with His Excellency, the President of Liberia. Chiefs were encouraged during these meetings to buttress efforts of national government to secure food security by 2029. They were challenged to become active participants of their own development and avoid being manipulated for political activities at the disadvantage of their constituents. The President of Liberia donated one twin-cabinet pickup to ease off the logistical challenge of transportation. Aspirations of the chiefs were captured in the development of the County Development Plan, and promised to be part of the game changing actors. Leadership structures of the chiefs were formed across the country during the period under review in line with Chapter 3 of the Local Government of 2018. Chiefs have begun regaining lost dignity and respect as a result of the civil war.

Over the period, the Ministry of Internal Affairs in collaboration with the Governance Commission, UNICEF and UN Women became the process of reviewing clauses and articles of the 2015 Memorandum of Understanding that restricted the practices of traditional harmful practices. Buttressed by awareness and education in 50 communities in 5 districts in Grand Gedeh County, the Ministry initiated measures to prevent traditional harmful practices and violation of the rights of women and children. It is believed that this approach will contribute to reduction if not elimination of unwanted traditional practices and help restore positive roles in the service of the citizens.

In a related development, the Ministry of Internal Affairs worked with members of the National Council of Chiefs and other traditional leaders in initiating a women-led community-based organization approach to addressing gender equality and empowerment issues. The office responsible for Culture and Customs at the Ministry of Internal Affairs conducted a traditional ceremony for the selection and induction of County and District Culture coordinators. The consultative meeting was held with Traditional leaders in Sonkay Town, Montserrado County and agreed for the government to use the space for a vocational Heritage Center and manage the facilities. Ministry conducted a traditional ceremony for the selection and induction of County and District Culture Coordinators. County Administration, including the 15 political sub-divisions ensured community and traditional leaders and members (marginalized and vulnerable groups) capacities were strengthened to participate, advocate and demand responsive social services. The involvement of CSOs, concerned

and religious groups was crucial in advocating for reforms in legislation and national policies. The County Administrations have worked with these groups and increased awareness in local communities resulting in some behavior changes in which people have preferred to engage elected and appointed leaders and ensure they are accountable to the community.

4.0: FOSTERING SOCIAL COHESION AND UNITY OF THE STATE

4.1. DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND DIASPORA PROJECT

The Ministry through its specialized program, the Liberia Peacebuilding Office (PBO) engage partners for resource mobilization, enhanced governance and information sharing to foster social cohesion and unity of Liberia. The PBO undertook two of six consultations in Grand Cape Mount and Grand Bassa Counties. In addition, a longtime partner (SeeD) in the efforts of enhancing reconciliation and social cohesion through evidence based data worked with the PBO to review draft report of SCORE Wave 4 with key government agencies and international partners. SCORE is a special methodology useful in assessing peace, security, democracy and violent tendencies. The use of this methodology led to evidence based data that informed the design of the PAPD and then to the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID). The Ministry through the PBO conducted political reconciliation dialogues in 13 electoral districts in 9 counties. The counties include Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Bong, Lofa, Gbarpolu, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Maryland Counties). The dialogues brought together 739 stakeholders representing political parties, women groups, youth groups, transport unions, motorcyclists, traditional leaders, and local authorities. Through the dialogues, the communities were guided in identifying conflict issues and formulating lasting resolutions to the conflict issues.

Table 1.4: Number of Peace and Political Dialogues

No	County	Number of Dialogue	Number of Participants
1	Grand Bassa	1	67
2	Grand Gedeh	1	53
3	Nimba	3	170
4	Bong	2	113
5	Lofa	1	70
6	Gbarpolu	2	109
7	Bomi	1	54
8	Grand Cape Mount	1	52
9	Maryland	1	51
	TOTAL	13	739

Furthermore, two of six consultations in Grand Cape Mount and Grand Bassa Counties were held to inform national reconciliation conference in 2025. Using the SCORE methodology, and working in collaboration with the Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD) developed three evidenced-based policy documents to foster social cohesion and unity of Liberia. We revised conflict early warning and response system to respond to 15 early warning challenges.

Monitoring and learning field mission was undertaken to monitor progress and challenges project jointly implemented by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) refer to as the RYWARD Project. CRS, SPDI and PBO undertook participatory monitoring mission to five counties, namely: Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, Margibi, Gbarpolu and Bomi Counties. Also, Plan International supported joint monitoring visit to access progress made by Plan International and local Partners on support to eight Peace Huts in Montserrado, Bong, Lofa and Nimba Counties.

4.2. RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS, PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION

Forging partnership involving Concession companies and County Administrations in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Nimba, Bong, Maryland, Sinoe, Grand Kru, and Grand Bassa forged partnerships with concession companies in their respective communities. The aim of these engagements with the private sector institution was to bolster strategic partnerships focusing on infrastructure development, health, education and livelihood business development. In 2024, Nimba, Lofa and Bong Counties made considerable progress to increase agricultural productivity and economic empowerment that created opportunities for smallholders, youths, and other vulnerable groups. The capacity of local farmers was enhanced through training in business management and farming skills.

Maintaining peace and security across the 15 counties of Liberia marks another great achievement in Liberia’s democratic journey and political transition that saw the transfer of power from one democratically elected government to the next. The Local County Administrations continue to work towards strengthening governance structures and implementing County Development Programs including increasing partnership and collaboration with our Development Partner, Private sector actors and CSOs.

The Ministry operated the Early Warning System that consists of the National Situation Room, the LERN Platform, and 425 conflict early warning monitors across the 15 counties of Liberia. This System enabled data collection and reporting of incidents for analysis and recommendations for policy actions. The LERN Platform, which received data for analysis by a group of expert analysts, has five thematic areas of reporting: 1) Security, 2) Elections, 3) Gender, 4) Governance and Human rights violations, and 5) Health and Environment. For the reporting period, a total of 317 Incidents received were verified, analyzed, and developed into policy briefs that were shared with partners and response actors for prompt actions.

Table 1.5: Incidents Reported By Pbo Field Monitors

No	Thematic Area	Number of Incidents	Percentage
1	Security	141	44.5%
2	Governance and Human rights violations	82	25.9%

3	Health and Environment	47	14.8%
4	Gender	44	13.9%
5	Elections	3	0.9%
	TOTAL	317	100%

The County Security Councils (CSCs) in each county are a guiding principle of Liberia’s postwar national security objectives and continue to play a pivotal role in the national peace-building efforts by ensuring security and peace coordination at the levels of the counties and the districts. The County Security Councils in 2024 coordinated county security activities through a multifaceted platform with government, civil society, and other local stakeholders acting together. The CSCs across the counties were supportive in coordinating physical security as well as disaster and crisis management in Montserrado, Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Maryland and Rivercess Counties that affected several communities. Through the County Security Council platforms, local community residents are actively participating in decision-making processes in the county security sector. Since the establishment of the County Security Mechanism in December 2009, only five CSCs have been launched to date in Montserrado, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, and River Gee Counties. The five CSCs are faced with numerous challenges in financial resources, technical capacity and human resources, which have made it difficult to expand into the remaining ten counties.

The Ministry made significant progress in sustaining peace and maintaining security at all community level across the country. It held public consultations and stakeholder engagements underscoring the need for Liberians to live in peace and harmony. Despite all the peace efforts, let us not forget the root causes of the civil war: corruption, land disputes, inter-intra community and ethnic tensions have not been adequately addressed by the Government of Liberia. The 2023 Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) study revealed from 2016-2022, there has not been real change in the social and economic situation of the country and not much has been done to foster national reconciliation. As a result, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has assessed progress on enhancing good governance and sustaining peace, security, livelihood, and gender equality since the inception of the Joseph N. Boakai, Sr administration. Together with the Peace Building Office, the Office of the National Peace Ambassador and the National Concession Conflicts Resolution Offices, the early warning and response programs in Nimba, Bong, Grand Bassa, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Maryland, Gbarpolu and Bong Counties have bolstered the resilience of residents in communities directly affected by concessions and the joint efforts have contributed to the reduction of conflicts in concession-affected communities and promoted peaceful coexistence.

4.3. INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN LIBERIA’S LOCAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE WAS ADVANCED IN THE APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL OFFICIALS.

Improving gender mainstreaming and inclusion at the county level across political, administrative and technical positions was advanced. Despite there are still challenges with gender diversity and inclusion, the Boakai-led Administration has taken some positive steps towards the inclusion of women in key governmental positions both at the national and county levels. At county level are three

women superintendents and at national level in senior positions are over 15, including within cabinet, SoEs and the Legislature.

4.4. INCLUSION OF LIVELIHOOD AND FOOD SECURITY

Ministry of Internal Affairs released a report on the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE Wave 4) on July 30, 2024. The report informed aimed preparation of Liberia's National Development Plan (NDP), the 15 Counties Development Agendas (CDAs), as well as the Public Sector Investment Plan (PSIP). The Report on Social Cohesion and Reconciliation in Liberia paints a concerning picture of the nation's livelihood security, highlighting significant territorial disparities. It revealed that eight out of ten individuals struggle to provide food for their households, a stark indicator of widespread economic and food insecurity. Nimba County stands out as having the highest levels of livelihood security with an index of 5.0. However, this still means that the rest of the populations living in Liberia's 14 counties face significant challenges in securing food and economic stability. While some counties have experienced mild improvements since 2021, the situation remains dire in others. For instance, Grand Bassa County has reported a significant decline in livelihood security, with scores ranging between 1.5 and 2.0. Maryland and Bong Counties have seen notable improvements in livelihood security since 2021.

The Ministry through the PBO advanced measured for conflict sensitivity analysis on the government's development policies that would help to address the root causes and potential triggers of conflicts in the country, and while building the capacity of peace structures to prevent and amicably resolve conflicts. Through the PBO the Ministry developed initiatives and strategies and facilitated peace building, coordination, and coherence to measure the cumulative impact of peace building in the country. With funding support from a partner (IOM), the Peace Building Office in collaboration with the National Bureau of Concession, the National Concession Conflicts Resolution Office, the Office of the Peace Ambassador, the National Security Council Secretariat, and the Early Warning Technical Working Group intervened in conflicts in Bomi and Grand Cape Mount counties between the Mano Oil Palm, Western Cluster, and Bea Mineral Mining Company and the affected communities in those concession areas.

4.4. PROMOTING HIGH-LEVEL PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Internally, the office managed to lead active engagements with local and international organizations operating within the domain of Peace Building. ONPA was invited to 5 peace building engagements where the Ambassador was represented. Apart from these engagements, the Ambassador received one international guest from Cuba who came to seek collaboration and information sharing on the Lutheran Massacre project her organization is expected to undertake in Liberia. Internally, a comprehensive strategic plan was developed by the Project Coordinator as a blueprint to guide the operational activities for the next year. At the level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, ONPA served on the Technical Working Committee to develop a Concept Note and a draft bill for the establishment of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission in Liberia. ONPA's involvement at the ministry level highlights the importance of the office at MIA in leading efforts meant to unite and reconcile Liberians through policy formulation. Considering the huge task associated with initiating peace and reconciliation activities across Liberia, a significant amount of financial and technical resources is required. As such, it is important to indicate that an increment in the current budgetary allocation to the Office of the Peace Ambassador is needed to launch a nationwide peace and reconciliation process to begin national healing programs.

4.5. ADDRESSING NATIONAL CONCESSION RELATED CONFLICTS

In 2024, funding gaps and a lack of adequate resources impacted the work of the National Concession Conflicts Resolution Office (NCCRO). The NCCRO expanded its outreach and field mission as well as mediation and conflict prevention efforts across the 15 counties of Liberia. The NCCRO noted a shift towards more community-company engagements and people-centered peace-building and social cohesion. During this year's programs, NCCRO provided an opportunity to refocus on concessions conflict resolution in western and southeastern Liberia and renewed collaboration with all project-affected communities' leaders, concession companies and civil society organizations actors across Liberia. To raise awareness and build capacity within the project-affected communities, NCCRO visited 165 communities, in western, central, and southeastern Liberia. During these community visits, the NCCRO Team met with key community stakeholders, religious, concerned, and vulnerable groups.

In 2024, we mediated 12 major cases and amicably resolved 7 cases as compared to 2023 and this is a positive development for NCCRO staff working in remote parts of Liberia. We also provided our concessions conflicts monitoring officers, community leaders and community volunteers with 3 trainings in mediation, conflict prevention and management.

5.0: COORDINATION AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

5.1. COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The Ministry reactivated five dormant coordinating structures, including the Inter-Ministerial Committee Meeting on Decentralization (IMCD), Technical Working Group and Board meeting on decentralization, as well as the monthly county coordination meeting of institutions operating in the counties and regular general and senior staff meetings of the Ministry. Established six County Development Planning Units to track monitor and report on progress, challenges and lessons related to the implementation of the County Development Agenda. Over the period, 28 coordination meetings were held at both county and central levels. At the county level, the meetings focus on peace and security with the presence of staff from different MACs operating in the counties.

Donors and stakeholders providing support to the implementation of Liberia's Decentralization Program met in September 2024. The donor coordination meeting created an opportunity to revamp its regular meetings and to adopt the government's development approach. The meeting adopted actions for all donor support to be aligned with the National and County Development Plans; affirming that no one intervention/ support by donors will be welcomed outside of the Government's National Development Plan and the County Development Agenda.

During the period under review, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and USAID conducted a capacity assessment in three counties namely: Nimba, Grand Bassa and Bong Counties respectively. The assessment used specialized tools called the Municipal Capacity Assessment Tool (MCAT) and County Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT). The capacity needs assessment focused on Planning & Budgeting Domestic Resource Mobilization Service Delivery Management and Administration, Procurement System, Capacity Development, etc. Following these assessments, the MIA is working closely with USAID/LEAD for the actual training and capacity development in the counties which are the project localities of the USAID/LEAD. The Ministry intends to communicate with USAID for replication of the MCAT and CCAT to the rest of the counties. Because the Ministry of Internal Affairs is one of the beneficiaries of the USAID funded Local Empowerment Accountability and

Decentralization (LEAD) Project in Liberia, the USAID/LEAD project seeks to enhance the capacity of Local Government for effective service delivery.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is also a beneficiary of the World Bank-funded Governance Reform and Accountability Transformation (GREAT) project. The Project goal is to enhance access to digitally provided public services, raise tax revenues, and improve the openness of accountability institutions. Emphasis is placed on the digitization of County Service Centers (CSCs), their processes, and capacity development. During the period under review, a Ugandan-based consulting firm, AH Consulting hired by the World Bank, assessed all 15 CSCs to develop requirements and bidding documents for improving the CSC's ICT infrastructure. MIA secured the amount of US\$5 million for an upgrade of the IT infrastructure of each CSC for more improved service delivery. The project will provide the necessary IT equipment, network connectivity, and logistics needed for the digitization of services provided through the CSCs.

6.0. CHALLENGES

The period witnessed many challenges coupled with lessons to draw on for continued operations. These challenges are highlighted below to guide planning for 2025.

6.1. OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

There are no vehicles for presidential appointees, as well as no employee buses. The Minister inherited a vehicle donated by UNHCR for use by the previous Minister. Air conditions, fixtures and office furniture and equipment are either damaged or in fairly working condition. County Service Centers (CSCs) are the practical steps toward decentralization. The assessment report reveals the lack of operating equipment, software and operational funds. Late disbursements of allotments have undermined the effective operations of the County Service Centers. In addition, weak coordination coupled with signatory power based in Monrovia in addition to the challenges outlined above continues to affect efficient service deliveries. The Ministry of Internal Affairs owes the African-Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO) more than US\$160,000 in arrears in annual fees for the last several years. Annual subscription is to the tune of US\$10,000. AARDO provides technical training and education to member states like Liberia. AARDO underscores the need for leaders of Asia and Africa to recognize the need for cooperation among the countries in the field of agriculture and rural development. MIA has suffered from inadequate budgetary support. This has led to several challenges both at central and county levels. Limited trained personnel to run this critical Ministry is a serious challenge. This is contributing to low productivity at the central and the County levels.

Since Liberia's civil wars ended in 2003, Gbarpolu has remained largely stable. Efforts by local authorities and NGOs aim to improve community relations, support sustainable development, and promote peaceful co-existence; especially in regions close to the border with Sierra Leone are underway. The area has strong traditional governance systems, and residents often resolve issues through local leaders and customary practices. Since our inception, we have learned that the core to achieving the ARREST agenda is through timely and clear communication; and timely remittance of funding allotted for programs and projects in the county. Additionally, slow or less logistic support is also a key factor we have learned is undermining development efforts. There is a growing need for the Government of Liberia to improve road connectivity to major towns and villages, as well as rehabilitate major bridges.

6.2. POLICY CHALLENGES

Long service employees retired in 2021 and those in 2024 have not received retirement benefits. This situation is creating motivational concerns for would-be or potential Retirees. There is a slow pace in the passage of the Bill seeking to establish the Ministry of Local Government, thus correspondingly delaying the establishment of local governments consistent with the Local Government Act of 2018.

6.3. GAPS IN TECHNICAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Relevant skills and knowledge in key disciplines required for the effective and efficient operations of the Ministry are low, especially for technical staff. This situation is potentially impacting efficient delivery at the technical level of the Ministry. Newly appointed county administrations are challenged by inadequate skills and knowledge in areas of local government, budgeting, research, reporting and data collection and analysis. Functional skills for effective management of the counties and municipalities are challenging. In addition, county councils, county development planning units, as well as the National Council of Chiefs, are challenged by operational efficiency in terms of skills, office equipment and furniture.

6.4. INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ministry's building has been in bad condition with leakages and unpainted over the last several years. Though some minor repair work has been started by the current administration, a major facelift including renovation and painting as well as expansion is required. The electrical and lighting systems are also a challenge. County administrative offices and superintendents' residences are all in bad shape. City halls in the counties also need repair and maintenance work.

6.5. FRAGMENTATION OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROGRAMS

Fragmented functionalities of peace-building programs, with emphasis on three units more or like implementing the same functions in different spaces, undermine operational efficiency and employ resource waste. For example, in existence at the Ministry are the Liberia Peace-building Office, National Concession Conflicts Resolution Office and the Office of the National Peace Ambassador – all are concerned with conflict resolution matters. To address the current fragmentation of Peace and National Reconciliation programs, the Ministry has embarked on public consultations and stakeholders' engagements on the establishment of the Independent National Commission on National Peace and Reconciliation.

For the period under review, the Office of the Peace Ambassador of the Republic of Liberia was greatly challenged with logistical issues and financial constraints like other specialized units, which impeded the operational activities of the office.

Due to the lack of budgetary allotment from the Government of Liberia for programs and operations, the PBO has relied on support from donor partners to implement program activities. Whenever this support ends, it becomes a huge challenge to fund and sustain programs.

Limited funding to the PBO by the government, to enable it to implement peace building programs has hindered the ability of the institution to fully carry out its mandate.

The shutdown of the LERN Platform due to the lack of funding to keep it functioning and no incentives for monitors across the country to collect and transmit incident reports, has affected the entire Early Warning System thereby leaving communities vulnerable to crimes and other violations.

7.0 LESSONS LEARNED

Inclusive planning and implementation of government-donor-funded projects have offered tremendous benefits in terms of promoting national ownership and leadership, thereby ensuring sustainability. The web based conflict early warning platform identified several violent hot spots across the country but lack the resources for real-time interventions. For example, land and property disputes in Maryland, Sinoe and Grand Kru counties escalated into violence and led to death and injuries. Inclusive planning, ownership and leadership promote sustainability. Inadequate skills set, coupled with lack of needed logistics undermine increased performance, and affect timely delivery of essential services and activities. Operational challenges (logistics, including lack of vehicles for the Minister, Deputy and Assistant Ministers and staff) impede productivity. Long service employees retired in 2021 and those in 2024 have yet to receive retirement benefits thus demotivating future potential retirees. Arrears owed to inter-governmental body (AARDO), undermining staff development and impacting continued low skills set for important service delivery. The huge number of appointed local officials that are not currently on payroll is demotivating factor performances.

7.1. INFRASTRUCTURE

Ministry's building experiencing leakages and unpainted over the last several years, coupled with challenge of poor electrical, water and sewage systems contribute to poor work environment. The lack of ideal conference hall for meetings, County administrative offices, superintendents' residences and city halls in counties need repair and maintenance

7.2. DECENTRALIZATION, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Slow passage for the establishment of the Ministry of Local Government, fragmented peacebuilding and reconciliation functionaries (PBO, ONPA, NCCRO, and NCCERM) is creating high transaction costs for government.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Despite these challenges, the Ministry has made tremendous achievements over the period under review. It has jumpstarted the implementation of its decentralization program, including strengthening the capacities of the local structures such as the County Councils, and the National Council of Chiefs as well as orientation of the 15-Counties Administrations. In addition, a reform including functional decentralization and establishment of local governments backed by legislation is on course. The Bill seeking to establish the Ministry of Local Government is currently being discussed as a result of a sustained legislative engagement by the Minister. Dormant coordination structures related to fiscal, administrative and political decentralization have been reactivated. Elections of county administrative leadership and the National Council of Chiefs were achieved during the period under review. Measures to strengthen the capacities of the County Service Centers, including recruitment of highly qualified personnel and resourcing with needed digital systems, are currently ongoing. The institutionalization of weekly seminars aimed at developing functional operational skills and knowledge of staff at the central level has been instituted. Three staff members have benefited from AARDO's technical training in India. Basic repair and maintenance work on the Ministry's building has taken place, as well as minimal office equipment and furniture procured. Draft Bill is being discussed with relevant government authorities to consolidate peace building programs through the required legislation. Following this will be submission to the Office of the President of Liberia for

appropriate action. This Bill, when passed into law will complement the work of the Office of the War and Economic Crimes Court and consolidate peace.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Accelerate appointment of members of Local Government Fiscal Board to implement the Revenue Sharing Law at decentralized level
2. Appropriate budget to secure vehicles for Minister, Deputy and Assistant Ministers and staff, as well as address arrears to enable implementation of Government' decentralization program
3. Address arrears owed to AARDO to enable development of required skills-set to strengthen capacities of local governments
4. Take actions to conclude retirement and address huge payroll issues of local government appointees
5. Support establishment of Commission on Peace and Reconciliation to address TRC recommendation and prevent huge transaction costs for government
6. Address infrastructure challenges at both central and county levels, including chiefs' residences to create enabling operating environment for productivity
7. Strengthen stronger coordination and partnership to prevent resource waste and duplication
8. Government takes full ownership of the peace and reconciliation programs of the country by supporting programs and activities of the peace building office through budgetary support.
9. Government takes actions to compare development partners to support priority areas of the development agenda of the country instead of the partners deciding which areas they would support.
10. Government supports the establishment of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Recommendation #204), the National Economic Dialogue, and the National Reconciliation Roadmap.