



# Government of Liberia (GOL) Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

## Partnership Policy



# Table of Contents

1.0.	Executive Summary	9
2.0	Purpose: <i>civil society and government engagement matters</i>	9
3.0.	Introduction: <i>opportunities and constraints for better partnership</i>	10
4.0	Guiding Principles and Commitments	12
5.0	Definition of Key Concepts	14
	5.1 Civil Society and Civil Society Organizations	14
	5.2 Governance	15
	5.3 Partnership	16
6.0	Objectives and Actions	17
7.0	Policy Recommendations to Achieve Stated Objectives and Actions	17
	7.1 <i>General Policy Recommendations</i>	17
	7.1.1 <i>Legal Framework</i>	17
	7.1.2 <i>Institutional Arrangements</i>	18
	7.1.3 <i>Operational Guidelines</i>	20
	7.2 <i>Objective Specific Recommendations</i>	
	7.2.1. Objective 6.1: Facilitate an Enabling Environment for the Development of a Viable Civil Society Sector	20
	7.2.2. Objective 6.2: Broaden and Deepen Participatory Governance through the Government of Liberia Partnerships with Citizens and Development Partners that Help to Build a Society that is Both Inclusive and Cohesive	21
	7.2.3. Objective 6.3: Integrate the Role of Civil Society Organizations as a strong, diverse and Independent Development Partner of Government in National Development Processes	22
	7.2.4. Objective 6.4: Promote Multi-Stakeholder Approaches That Amplify the Voices of the Poor and Marginalized People in National Development	23
8.0	Partnership Policy Commitment	24

## List of Acronyms

<b>AfT</b>	Agenda for Transformation
<b>AGs</b>	Advocacy Groups
<b>CBOs</b>	Community-Based Organizations
<b>COOP</b>	Cooperatives
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CTWG</b>	Coordination Technical Working Group
<b>DAD</b>	Development Assistance Database
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FBO</b>	Faith-Based Organization
<b>GAC</b>	General Auditing Commission
<b>GC</b>	Governance Commission
<b>GEMAP</b>	Governance Economic Management Assistant Program
<b>GOL</b>	Government of Liberia
<b>GROs</b>	Grassroots Organizations
<b>iPRS</b>	interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
<b>INGOs</b>	International Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>KUUs</b>	Traditional Work Brigades
<b>M &amp; E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MoF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MACs</b>	Ministries, Agencies and Commissions
<b>MFDP</b>	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
<b>NCSCCL</b>	National Civil Society Council of Liberia
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>NNGOs</b>	National Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>NPO</b>	Not-for-Profit Organization
<b>PMs</b>	People Movements

<b>PPTWG</b>	Government of Liberia Civil Society Organizations Partnership Policy Technical Working Group
<b>PRS I</b>	First Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: Lift Liberia
<b>PRSPs</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
<b>SMs</b>	Student Movements
<b>SUSUs</b>	Traditional Resource Pooling and Mutual Lending Support Associations
<b>TUs</b>	Trade Unions
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>WA</b>	Women's Associations
<b>YCs</b>	Youth Clubs
<b>YGs</b>	Youth Groups
<b>YMCA</b>	Young Men Christian Association
<b>YWCA</b>	Young Women Christian Association

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## **1.0 Executive Summary**

Historically, the Liberian Government and civil society's engagement span many years and have also produced many different kinds of outcomes. Since 2006 the Government and civil society organizations have at different periods renewed their commitments to a new way of engaging each other. Strategically, the role of transnational or international civil society actors in Liberia's development since the 1990s and the shift of donor partners to work through civil society organizations in their home countries have presented opportunities, and also many challenges to the development of a viable national civil society. Institutionally, new kinds of structures and arrangements are required to take into consideration the potential for new national partnerships between the Government and its citizens for deepening and broadening democratic governance in Liberia.

This Government of Liberia Civil Society Partnership Policy highlights the need for an effective and productive partnership arrangement between the Government and civil society organizations. It provides the framework for ensuring that communities are empowered and sustainable and lays the foundation for the development of a Memorandum of Understanding that obligates both civil society and the Government to work effectively as partners to accomplish shared common national goals and country outcomes.

## **2.0 Purpose: *civil society and government engagement matters:***

- 2.1. National documents are replete with the role of Liberian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) furthering national development in partnerships with the Liberian Government and development partners. CSOs like the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Faith-Based organizations (mainly the churches) and other social groups have had more than a hundred years of working with the Government in delivering youth development, agriculture, education and health services. By 1987 it was estimated that one third of the Liberian population attended non-governmental schools and hospitals and were benefiting from civil society's community development programs. For very many Liberians, self-help is not an innovation; it is a way of life. The Liberian civil war changed all of this and brought in a multitude of international actors to assist in humanitarian relief delivery. This change also coincided with the new Aid paradigm that shifted direct support for southern CSOs to CSOs in donors' home countries.
- 2.2. Transnational or international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have since the 1990s become significant actors in assisting Liberia's transformation from relief to recovery and to development thus, they along with Liberian civil society actors hold a vital mutual co-responsibility in ensuring the development of a viable civil society in Liberia, and facilitating a healthy and effective CSOs partnership with the Liberian Government.

- 2.3. The above, however, has been a process with mixed outcomes, and despite the various national NGOs Guidelines since the 1990s, the NGO Policy, the iPRS, PRS I, Reconciliation and Healing Road Map, the Agenda for Transformation (Aft), and Liberia Rising 2030: the national vision in the 2000s, both Civil Society and Government have discovered the need for forging a partnership based more on the exploration and assessment of structures and power that put barriers in the way of civic engagement for better national governance and less on rhetoric, antagonism and confrontation.
- 2.4. Participation in and their contributions to Liberia's national recovery and development by transnational civil society organizations is indeed valuable, very important, and bilateral partners seem prepared to support this level of activity. Therefore, the Government of Liberia, national and transnational civil society organizations as well as donors accompanying Liberia in its transformation must jointly seek out new, bold and better frameworks for partnership to ensure better governance through ownership, harmonization and alignment of mechanisms for regulation, organization and coordination.
- 2.5. The recent national victory against the Ebola Virus Disease shows that when citizens are invited on their own terms and in their own rights to participate in national endeavors, much can be accomplished. Many commentators including civil society and development partners identified the Government's recognition, subsequent declaration that it could not win the fight alone, and the opening of new invited spaces to citizens as 'good practice' for inclusive development. This represent an increasingly vibrant new aspect of the country's growing democracy that implies new relationships between citizens and their government. It is no wonder that as international aid started coming into the country, Ebola case incidents were already declining!
- 2.6. This Government of Liberia and Civil Society Organizations (GOL/CSOs) Partnership Policy draws inspiration from lessons learned from the national victory against the Ebola Virus Disease, as well as from the many years of different kinds of engagements between civil society and Government. The Partnership Policy also seeks to institutionalize a framework for an active productive obligatory engagement between government and civil society that provides the enabling environment to consolidate existing and emerging new spaces into strongly accountable, inclusive and representative, citizens forums to broaden and deepen participatory governance in Liberia.

### **3.0. Introduction: *opportunities and constraints for better partnership***

For the past ten years the Government of Liberia and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Liberia have been exploring ways to find a viable framework for engaging each other.

The drafting of the first NGO policy in 2008 to replace earlier versions of the National NGO Guidelines (1996-2006) signaled renewed resilience at the top of the national government, and at the core of civil society as a precondition for sustaining and expanding processes for better partnerships to enhance national governance.

For the second time now in less than eight years civil society organizations and Government have jointly negotiated a convenient framework on how NGOs and the Government must work together.

3.1. Government recognizes that it needs the support and participation of civil society in the development process and in the provision of public goods, and civil society also understands that it has a pivotal role in strengthening and improving Government's capabilities that cannot happen without the Government's political will.

3.2. The NGO Policy drafted in 2008 and its subsequent implementation is producing mixed outcomes:

3.2.1. The existing partnership between NGOs and Government is highly opportunistic-more rhetorical than substantial. Partnerships are often very unequal, consultation often sporadic, one-off, issue specific and time limited (e.g. constitution review, decentralization policy, PRSPs drafting and implementation, the 'new deal' implementation, etc.), and are sometimes defined solely by official sponsors, which in some cases may have, marginalize vital actors, which decreases civil society representation function and stifles national development efforts;

3.2.2. The current strategy of focusing the policy on a segment of civil society organizations-NGOs at the expense of others does not foster inclusiveness of all civil society actors so as to build a viable, diverse and independent sector, and a strong development partner for Government;

3.2.3. The current policy's emphasis on regulation and control of NGOs misses opportunities for a real shifting of national development narratives and discourses from government to inclusive governance that involves civil society as a valid partner of national development processes in its own rights;

3.2.4. Bilateral donors practice is dominated by their long-standing relationships with their home-country development actors or their representatives in recipient countries as the main intermediaries for funds to southern civil society (Janice Giffen and Ruth Judge, 2010; DIFID commissioned report). Since 1989, Liberia has received significant Aid, especially as a result of national crises such as the fourteen-year civil war and the Ebola Virus Disease.

3.2.5. As donors have also notably changed the objective of their civil society policy to articulate support for the development of strong civil societies in the south as an end in itself (Giffen and Judge, 2010), significant resources and support needed for effective outcomes in the lives of the citizens of Liberia are channeled through transnational or international civil society structures and alliances existing in donor home-countries.

3.2.6. This CSOs partnership policy framework takes note of this fact and seeks to foster a *'single civil society partnership policy framework'* to strengthen national ownership, harmonization, and ensure alignment to country development priorities, strategies and plans.

Transnational CSOs full participation in the National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCCL) is thus, required to assist in developing together the enabling environment for a cohesive and capable civil society in Liberia.

3.3 Transnational or international CSOs are discouraged from competing with national CSOs for in-country funding, but encourage to work with their local partners and develop local capacities to access such funding.

#### **4.0. Guiding Principles and Commitments**

To achieve the purposes and objectives defined within this Government and Civil Society Organizations Partnership Policy Framework, the Constitution of Liberia, and the country's national and international commitments, the following principles will guide the Government of Liberia's development and humanitarian engagement with CSOs:

4.1 The doctrine of *'maximum feasible participation'* of Liberian citizens is considered as a fundamental principle in the governance of the Republic, and a critical indicator of both policy-making and policy implementation. This Government and CSOs Partnership Policy is embedded in this notion and inspires the general agenda for enhancing state and society cooperation "under conditions of equality as to advance the general welfare of the Liberian people and the economic development of Liberia" (Chapter II on General Principles of National Policy, Article 4 and 7 of the Liberian Constitution).

4.2 Since 2008, the Government's commitment to the Paris Declaration and subsequent Aid Effectiveness Agenda outcomes has helped to articulate a Draft National Aid Policy guided by the principles of *National Ownership; Alignment; Donor Harmonization; Managing For Results; and Mutual Accountability*. The Accra Agenda for Action reaffirms the commitments of the Paris Declaration, and consists of four clauses relating to government and civil society partnerships for national development (1) participation of civil society in national policy formulation, (2) creating an enabling environment for civil society's growth and development, (3) the need for civil society's effectiveness (with focus on results), and (4) the need to respect the autonomy of civil society.

4.3 Agenda for Transformation (AfT): the Government stands by its commitment to the principles of inclusive development and partnership with civil society to “help Liberia achieve a higher standard of Living”. The AfT clearly calls for a combined effort of government, civil society, private sector, and the Liberian citizenry to deliver on national expectations, and cites that “success depends on consistent planning, effective coordination, robust implementation, prudent and efficient use of resources, and most importantly, a collective will to succeed”.

4.4 *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*: This 2011 agreement forms the foundation of cooperation for effective development among governments, donors, CSOs, and other development actors.

It guides international efforts to reduce duplication, harmonize humanitarian and development assistance, achieve burden sharing and division of labor, reduce transaction costs, and avoid excessive fragmentation of aid at the global, country, and sector levels. Within the agreement, the principle of *inclusive development partnerships* affirms "openness, trust, and mutual respect and learning lie at the core of effective partnerships in support of development goals," and recognizes the different and complementary roles of all actors. Reiterating the commitments made in Accra, the Busan Partnership recognizes that civil society is an independent development actor in its own right, and acknowledges the importance of supporting an enabling environment for civil society.

4.5 *The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*: Liberia not only supports the “New Deal”, but also volunteers itself as a pilot country for its implementation. At the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, the *New Deal* laid out the principles of *country ownership and leadership, and the advancement of five peace-building and state-building goals (i.e. legitimate politics, justice, citizen security, economic foundations, and revenues and services)*. The *New Deal* also calls for renewed partnerships built on: *country compacts in support of national plans; political dialogue; increased transparency; improved risk management; strengthened country systems for improved service delivery; and greater flexibility and predictability*.

4.6 *Istanbul Principles for Development Effectiveness*: The Istanbul Principles form part of the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness. The below eight principles were developed by and for civil society to assist organizations in achieving greater development effectiveness:

- (1) a commitment to human rights and social justice,
- (2) gender equality and equity,
- (3) people’s empowerment,
- (4) democratic ownership and participation,
- (5) environmental sustainability, transparency and accountability,
- (6) equitable partnerships and solidarity,
- (7) creating and sharing knowledge and committing to mutual

- learning, and,  
(8) realizing positive sustainable change

- 4.7. *The Government* commits itself to all of these principles and recognizes the implications for the role of civil society in the development process. Civil society is seen to have an important role in helping to build national or country ownership, and strengthen the alignment and harmonization of policies and development processes. This is achieved by being engaged in their design and delivery, including participation in discussions and dialogue about those policies, and ensuring that outcomes of these engagements reach grass root communities where they operate, and that communities' voice is amplified in these conversations.
- 4.8. CSOs must be credible, transparent and accountable to the communities they serve, as well as to the Government and development partners since they can also be honest brokers of peace and have a cardinal role in holding the Government to account and ensuring that policy commitments are met.
- 4.9. It is realized that national ownership should mean more than just state ownership, and the Government working in partnership with civil society organizations has a pivotal role in creating the enabling environment to ensure that this happens. Civil society's traditional role of implementation of service delivery activities is also noted.

## **5.0. Definition of Key Concepts**

### *5.1. Civil Society and Civil Society Organizations:*

The concept of civil society in development literature has emerged as an essential factor in promoting development and democracy. Fowler et al. (1996), however, make the point that civil society is not a thing that can be found in the same form in different countries because of the unique contextual socio-economic, cultural, ecological and historical circumstances. Thus, the concept must be seen as flexible to look into specific modes of relationships such as those of the traditional and informal sectors in most developing countries or other non-Western forms of social organizations.

- 5.1.1. The term "civil society" generally represents a social space for groups of values and interests, individuals or organizations to negotiate with each other and with other stakeholders such as governments, or the economic sector. At the same time, civil society organizations are an integral part of society as much as the government and the economic sector. It is a rather wide space of actors falling anywhere between the private sector and the state or the space between the household and the government.
- 5.1.2. However, for the purpose of this Government CSO Partnership Policy, *CSOs are recognized, private, non-profit service providers, self-governing, voluntarily driven organizations and alliances; through which people organize to pursue shared interests, values, beliefs, and objectives in public life.* CSOs are formed

independently of the State but register and are accredited voluntarily under specified laws in order to gain official recognition to pursue purposes that are not self-serving but oriented towards public benefit.

- 5.1.3. The usefulness of this definition lies in a structural and operational description – how civil society organizations are organized, the location of their operations, and how civil society organizations work. As the country moves on in its development journey and the civil society sector continues in partnership with government and other development actors, it will also continue to define itself.
- 5.1.4. Civil Society Organizations are found at the global, regional, national and local levels, and are membership driven working for the benefit or self-help of their members, or are service organizations that work with beneficiaries or clients. CSOs are considered development actors in their own right and may form networks and strategic alliances to scale up their work for greater impact.
- 5.1.5. Further stratification of Civil Society Organizations includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which may be national or transnational, community-based organizations (CBOs), grassroots organizations (GROs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), people movements (PMs), trade unions (TUs), cooperatives (including traditional *susus* and *kuus*), consumer groups (CGs), human rights organizations (HROs), women’s associations (WAs), youth groups (YGs), professional associations (PAs), student movements (SMs), not-for-profit independent media, academic and research institutions. Examples of CSOs include but are not limited to advocacy groups, capacity development and support organizations, rural women’s groups, farmers’ associations, faith-based relief and development agencies, philanthropic organizations, human rights groups, labor unions, youth and students organizations, co-operatives (including *susus*, *kuus* and mutual lending societies), village associations, professional associations, independent research institutes, humanitarian assistance organizations, and the non-profit media.
- 5.1.6. This Partnership Policy constructs a typology of four general categories of mainly ‘third party’ intervening national and transnational civil society organizations, and also considers traditional CSOs intervening on their own behalf, many of whom know self-help not as an innovation but as a way of life:
  - 5.1.6.1. The **Type One CSOs** are civil society organizations that are ‘community CSOs’ and are community-based or grassroots self-help oriented membership organizations providing support to their members. This group of CSOs is organized around practical issues of needs, and maintains a community (identity) or locality focus. Thus, their members and or beneficiaries are usually one and the same. They may be largely non-professional and informal. Traditional, indigenous Liberian CSOs form a part of this typology.
  - 5.1.6.2. The **Type Two CSOs** are national organizations (including NGOs) that may or may not have a membership focus. More often than not they work with and very often on behalf of others. Collectively, these

organizations are engaged in a series of activities including service delivery, advocacy, research, capacity development, governance, support, evangelism, etc.

They are independent institutionalized bodies recognized in their communities to deal with social issues. These organizations may however be regional (working in or across several regions), or national (working in more than one county).

- 5.1.6.3. The **Type Three CSOs** are local organizations with quite similar characteristics of types two and four CSOs respectively. The scope of operation of these organizations may however, be at district and county levels.
- 5.1.6.4. The **Type Four CSOs** are NGOs that work on an international basis but are based in and work from developed countries. These NGOs are usually used by donors as intermediary organizations for channeling funds to national NGOs and thus, are also referred to as 'local donor NGOs' because they provide funds for local NGOs who they refer to as their 'implementing partners'. Type one CSOs, in addition to being local donors, may also be operational at national and local levels (Edwards, 2000; Bennett et. al, 1996). These NGOs are essentially third party interventionists and have grown to become big movers in emergencies, but may also have a development focus. NGOs established in Liberia and also operating in other countries may be considered in this category.
- 5.1.6.5. The definition of civil society however, is subjected to the general criticism that the weakness of the organized voice of the poor is not the greatest obstacle of both civil and political societies, but the fact that the poor are not organized at all, largely excludes them from 'civil society', which is based on organized participation and empowerment activities.
- 5.1.6.6. Therefore, CSOs require State and self-regulations to ensure wider and deeper citizens participation in accountable and transparent ways that will represent and incorporate citizens' concerns, needs and values into national decision-making.
- 5.1.6.7. All civil society organizations are encouraged to register and obtain accreditation from government and membership in the National Civil Society Council of Liberia to benefit fully from this partnership.

## 5.2. Governance

- 5.2.1. Governance is defined as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences" (Governance for

It is “the process whereby *elements in society* wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life, and economic and social development.

- 5.2.2. Governance is a broader notion than government involving interactions between these formal institutions and those of civil society.” Even though governance is often utilized as a synonym of government, but unlike government, it is not characterized by specific structures, but rather as series of procedures and practices, which distinguish it from the traditional forms of government. However, it is important to note that governance does not replace government, but is inclusive of it.

### 5.3. Partnerships

- 5.3.1. Through a series of extended on-going discussions between government and civil society actors and recently through ‘listening meetings’ between civil society actors representing the five National Civil Society Council CSO regions and the government represented by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the Governance Commission, defined *partnership* as a space of diverse but cooperating actors based on binding rules, mutual understanding, trust and respect, as well as seeking shared common goals, values and interests.
- 5.3.2. The central ends of the mentioned collaborative interventions according to CSO voices from the listening consultations are thus, partners working together to reduce poverty, strengthen the delivery of effective and timely humanitarian assistance, and other services, and advance democracy, gender and human rights.

## 6.0 Objectives and Actions

The Government of Liberia through this partnership policy framework for engaging CSOs, seeks a more empowering environment for structured engagement with civil society organizations that are dedicated to strengthening the country’s resilience and development effectiveness. This process includes information sharing, joint capacity development programs, national consensus building dialogues, consultations, operational collaboration, and funding arrangements. To this end, the following outcomes are constructed:

- 6.1 *facilitate an enabling environment for the development of a viable civil society sector*
- 6.2 *broaden and deepen participatory governance through the Government of Liberia partnerships with citizens and development partners that help to build a society that is both inclusive and cohesive*
- 6.3 *integrate the role of civil society organizations as a strong, diverse and independent development partner of government in national*

*development processes, and,*

*6.4 promote multi-stakeholder approaches that amplify the voices of the poor and marginalized people in national development*

## **7.0. Policy Recommendations To Achieve The Stated Objectives And Actions**

### *7.1. General Policy Recommendations*

The following general policy options are to support this Government of Liberia and CSOs Partnership Policy by creating the attention required to improve relationships between the two sectors, reinforce existing roles and responsibilities, and provide a platform from which a more structured obligatory relationship can be developed to effectively benefit communities and citizens by ensuring that this partnership policy is fully implemented at all levels across the country.

#### *7.1.1. Legal Framework*

Laws providing rights and space for civil society organizations to operate in the country abound both in wider international, continental and national legal instruments. A legal framework to fit laws governing CSOs to fit other laws in the wider legal system to sustain an independent, self-regulatory and vibrant civil society sector fully engaged in an appropriate results-based partnership with Government is required.

7.1.1.1. Specific legislation for advancing an enabling environment for civil society to grow and develop should reinforce the freedoms of association and speech thus, making these vital pillars of national democracy real and meaningful in the lives of individuals and civil society organizations.

7.1.1.2. Traditional and modern civil society groups alike should be permitted and encouraged to exist as CSOs and while they are afforded legal protection, the public should also be protected against misconduct and abuse. Legislation to create the appropriate environment requires applicable transparency and accountability rules and mechanisms regarding the use of public funds or donated funds for the public.

7.1.1.3. A core objective of such legal requirement should strive to promote self-regulation of the civil society sector and strengthen the implementation of existing laws like the Freedom of Information Law and Freedom of Association and of Speech Law.

#### *7.1.2. Institutional Arrangements*

The prevailing environment for the development of a viable civil society sector is characterized largely by the rather complex notion of civil society itself. With varied and multiple actors in a changing arena of complicated ideas, operating in fragmented structures, weak coordination, and discretionary opportunistic relationships, between government, donors

and civil society organizations, the design and delivery of national plans and programs have occurred in ways and produced outcomes that would have benefited from a stronger partnership between CSOs and the Government of Liberia.

- 7.1.2.1. Accordingly, the Government of Liberia commits itself to supporting an annual *National Partnership Summit* bringing government and civil society leaders together to review partnership obligations and jointly plan and act on the design and delivery mechanisms and processes including joint planning and implementation by CSOs and the GOL to promote collaboration for viable government and civil society engagements.
- 7.1.2.2. The National CSOs Council of Liberia, the Governance Commission and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, will cause to be created a *GOL/CSOs Partnership Policy Technical Working Group (PPTWG)* to monitor the implementation of this Partnership Policy Framework and support the National Partnership Summit.
- 7.1.2.3. The PPTWG will work with line ministries and the relevant CSOs thematic groups to ensure the establishment of an inclusive *Sector Plans Harmonization and Alignment Platform* that meets quarterly to review coordination, harmonization and alignment mechanisms and their implications for implementation effectiveness.
- 7.1.2.4. The PPTWG is to be comprised of 11 selected thematic leaders of the National CSOs Council of Liberia and the Deputy Minister for Budget and Development Planning, the Assistant Director for CSOs Coordination/MFDP, the Commissioner for Civic Engagement of the Governance Commission, and the Program Manager for Civic Engagement/GC and the Deputy Minister for Planning & Development/Ministry of Internal Affairs respectively. The PPTWG will be chaired by the Commissioner for Civic Engagement/GC and co-chaired by NCSCL.
- 7.1.2.5. The Government of Liberia shall support the NCSCL to design and implement a CSOs Capacity Development Programs.
- 7.1.2.6. The Government of Liberia through the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Finance and Development Planning, Governance Commission and the relevant line ministries shall work with the National Civil Society Council of Liberia to develop a decentralized system for supporting CSOs accreditation at the county level, and the registration of CSOs at both the county and district levels.
- 7.1.2.7. The NCSCL has the obligation to ensure that all of their members NGOs are fully registered with and accredited by the Government

of Liberia and shall do so through demonstrated leadership.

7.1.2.8. An Appeals Board comprising of five primary persons is to be established within this partnership policy framework to support the resolution of grievances arising from the execution of this policy from both the Government and Civil Society Organizations. Local authorities can also submit an appeal to the Board on behalf of affected communities.

7.1.2.9. The Appeals Board shall make its own guidelines and regulations subjected to the approval of the Government and the National Civil Society Council.

7.1.2.10. A decision by the Appeals Board is binding on all parties.

7.1.2.11. The Appeals Board is comprised of five persons: two Board members will represent Government (one GC and one from the MFD); two Board members will come from the NCSC and One (1) reputable individual from the general society mutually agreed upon by Government and NCSC shall serve as the Chair of the Board. Tenure will be a period of two years.

### *7.1.3. Operational Guidelines*

In addition to supporting efforts to provide the proper legislative and policy frameworks, The Government of Liberia places value and prioritizes monitoring implementation of this partnership policy and encourages all parties to respect their commitments. This section sets out to operationalize the Government of Liberia CSOs Partnership Policy Framework through a series of mechanisms and processes providing operational guidelines.

7.1.3.1. Registration and Accreditation rules and procedures for CSOs shall be reviewed and revised consistent with partnership procedures and obligations that ensure participation and ownership and reinforce partnerships considerations of mutuality and equality, contained in this policy.

7.1.3.2. The National Civil Society Council shall update the directory of civil society organizations in Liberia every two years. The Directory shall locate all member CSOs, provide information on areas of specialization, linking them with the various sector ministries, agencies and commissions of Government, the kind of programs and associated cost, as well as participating target groups benefiting from these interventions, among others.

7.1.3.3. The Directory shall serve as an initial point of entry for decision-making on coordination, harmonization and alignment, and of CSOs activities to national development priorities at sector and district levels to ensure a more balanced and inclusive approach to Liberia's development, and

that resources channeled through CSOs support and complement the efforts made by other development actors in all sectors, including the Government and the private sector.

- 7.1.3.4. Within the spirit and intent of this partnership policy, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning along with CSO partners shall develop a Manual of Procedures for Alignment and Harmonization that will serve as a CSO advisory guideline for improved coordination and collaboration between the Government and CSOs.
- 7.1.3.5. The National Civil Society Council shall review, revise and adopt its code of ethics, consistent with the National Code of Conduct and ensure its implementation for the entire membership of CSOs.

## **7.2. Objective Specific Policy Recommendations**

### *7.2.1. Objective (6.1): Facilitate an Enabling Environment for the Development of a Viable Civil Society Sector*

- 7.2.1.1 For over two decades the mode of engagements between CSOs and the Government has remained mainly antagonistic and generally combative. Regulations for promoting effective governance of the civil society sector have accordingly been ineffective, generally selective and highly discretionary.
- 7.2.1.2 However, for civil society to grow and be strong, it must operate in an enabling environment that respects the rule of law, promotes good governance and protects human rights, including freedoms of expression, association and assembly.
- 7.2.1.3 The Government of Liberia commits itself to support an enabling environment for civil society in the country, both in law and practice, leading to policies that are more effective, equitable and sustainable development, and inclusive growth.
- 7.2.1.4 To facilitate this process, the Governance Commission, in collaboration with relevant MACs and the National Civil Society Council of Liberia shall draft a CSO Bill for enactment by the National Legislature.
- 7.2.1.5 The Government of Liberia encourages collective Government to support and resource CSOs in fair and reasonable ways including the establishment of a Civil Society Trust Fund where CSOs are deliberate in helping the Government fulfill development goals.
- 7.2.1.6 The Government shall work with national and local support and development organizations to ensure that CSOs capacity and capabilities to deliver positive outcomes are improved.
- 7.2.1.7 The Government shall also consider improved access for CSOs to State resources and use of State facilities.

- 7.2.1.8 Civil Society Organizations shall ensure that campaigns or advocacy is truthful, honest and supported by evidence including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.
- 7.2.1.9 Civil Society Organizations shall also ensure that their independence is upheld, focusing on the cause(s) they represent, regardless of whatever relationship they may have with the Government, donors, global CSOs alliances or otherwise.
- 7.2.1.10 The Governance Commission and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the National Civil Society Council of Liberia, shall commission studies to strengthen the partnership.

*7.3.1. Objective (6.2): Broaden And Deepen Participatory Governance Through The Government Of Liberia Partnerships With Citizens And Development Partners That Helps To Build A Society That Is Both Inclusive And Cohesive*

7.3.1.1. The Government's commitment since 2006 with a draft NGO Policy and continued intermittent engagements with civil society by Governance Commission and Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to transform the existing relationship with CSOs through this Partnership Policy reinforce its political will to build a better partnership framework to deepen existing spaces for democratic governance. It also opens up new ones to broaden the democratization of public decision-making through civil society and citizens' participation on the one hand, and CSOs willingness to engage government within a more structured and obligatory platform that is deliberate in developing civil society capacity on the other.

7.3.1.2. Legal Framework

In order to strengthen freedom of association and speech, and operationalize the doctrine of maximum feasible participation in policy-making and policy implementation essential for strengthening state and societal relationships enshrined in the Liberian Constitution, CSO laws shall strive to make ownership, registration and accreditation processes for CSOs as easy as those of businesses or other for profit organizations.

7.3.2.2. Representation and participation of Government and CSO partners in decision-making processes at all levels should be obligatory with each of the partner designating its own representatives.

- 7.3.2.3. Direct representation and participation of CSOs on the county development steering committees, as well as the county and social development funds must be ensured.
- 7.3.2.4. The Government and the National Civil Society Council will promote and ensure the broadening of national ownership of policies, plans and programs by utilizing existing CSO networks for wider social mobilization, awareness and dissemination as well as ensuring CSOs commitment to deepen citizens' participation in and feedback on national decision-making processes, especially at the grassroots level through proper accountability and reporting.
- 7.3.2.5. To ensure the harmonization of national plans and programs, the PPTWG shall organize quarterly technical thematic meetings and develop specialized partnership mechanisms and instruments with line MACs.

*7.4.1. Objective (6.3): Integrate the Role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as an Independent Development Partner of Government into National Development Processes*

7.4.1.1. Institutional Arrangements

Considerations from the Revised Draft National Aid Policy and the Listening Meetings from a cross section of civil society organizations leaders throughout the country suggest that strengthening existing frameworks and developing new ones for operational collaboration between civil society organizations and the '*whole of government*' is desirable, possible, and required so that they deliver direct channels for CSOs inputs into policy design and implementation.

- 7.4.2.2. The Revised Draft National Aid Policy points to significant disconnect at the sectoral level due to lack of well-defined, results-based, sector specific strategies and action plans, and points particularly to CSOs as a principal instrument of development partners aid delivery to work with national development actors for better harmonization and alignment.
- 7.4.2.3. This Partnership Policy promotes the strengthening of Government and CSO sectoral relationships that cover such Aid and ensure that it is reflected in sector plans and discussed in sector working groups at the relevant line MACs at national, county and district levels to increase citizens participation in decision-making; reducing the probability of duplication and improve resource allocation and effective performances.
- 7.4.2.4. Focal Points shall be appointed in all line MACs and at county and district levels to improve registration and accreditation processes thus, enhancing access to registration service nationwide, and facilitating sector clearance as well as providing county and district

level data for better planning and CSOs coordination.

- 7.4.2.5. NCSCCL shall establish specialized thematic areas that shall serve as civil society focal points to ensure effective, continuous, coherent and productive sectoral engagements at all levels of government and with other development actors.

*7.5.1.Objective (6.4): Promote Multi-Stakeholder Approaches That Amplify The Voices of the Poor And Marginalized People In National Development*

- 7.5.1.1. The Government of Liberia and the National Civil Society Council of Liberia shall work together to consult and reflect citizens' views in the formulation of policies, programs and systems for service delivery. The process of consultation shall also identify and remove barriers that may prevent citizens' participation in national decision-making.
- 7.5.1.2. Invitations for and the Civil Society Council's participation in these consultations should be timely, allowing time for collecting, analyzing and presenting citizens' responses focusing on evidence-based solutions with clear propositions for desired outcomes.
- 7.5.1.3. The NCSCCL working in collaboration with the Government and other development partners shall develop the capacities of CSOs through the provision of training, technical assistance and logistical support.
- 7.5.1.4. The civil society shall serve as honest peace-brokers between government, the private sector and communities.
- 7.5.1.5. CSOs shall develop and articulate 'exit plans' to allow for deliberate growth and development of the community as an active stakeholder in national development processes.