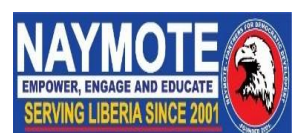




MARGIBI COUNTY RECONCILIATION VISION 2022 AND ACTION PLAN

S. Aaron Weah-Weah, III



Executive Summary

This five-year reconciliation vision and county action plan is intended to complement efforts geared toward achieving peaceful co-existence, enhancing reconciliation as well as promoting development and growth in Margibi County. This document builds on previous reconciliation efforts in the county and encapsulates a detailed strategy to achieve county level reconciliation, sustain peace and promote the adequate management of the county's resources for the betterment of its residents through inclusive citizens' led initiatives. The five-year reconciliation and county action plan was developed through a broad grassroots' consultation across 5 districts in Margibi County. During these consultations, key stakeholders who participated in the dialogues were Local Government Authorities (LGA) officials, representatives of line Ministries and Agencies: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Information, Culture Affairs and Tourism, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education as well as County Service Center's (CSC) Coordinator, Superintendent Office, Commissioners, Paramount Chiefs, Town Chiefs, Clan Chiefs, Religious Leaders, Representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Youth, Students and Women Groups, Media Practitioners, County Business Association (CBA) who participated in series of activities including district level dialogues, townhall meetings, community meetings and a county plenary.

The methodology used during the development of the document saw the establishment of the Technical Working Group (TWG), which was comprised of a membership of five headed by the County Superintendent or a representative from his office, two Religious Leaders (Christian and Muslim), Youth, and Women Representatives. The TWG in consultation with NAYMOTE's County Coordinator planned, organized, and conducted all of the consultations for the information gathering exercises, which led to the development of this document.

To achieve the five-year reconciliation vision and a county action plan, six main strategic objectives were developed as stated below:

1. To promote peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding amongst residents of Margibi County irrespective of their religious, social, economic and political affiliation and/or status;
2. To promote accountability and transparency in the management of the county resources for the betterment of the county and all its residents;
3. To ensure that county resources are well-managed, equally distributed and decentralized across all regions of the county;
4. To increase gender mainstreaming in the development and implementation of county level policies for adequate representation of all sectors of society;
5. To strengthen and/or institute laws and policies that seek to address conflict arising from traditional land use, land ownership/entitlement, sales of land, etc.
6. To increase county residents' benefits of basic social services including, education, food subsidies, healthcare, jobs and job training, community management, running water, electricity, police and fire service, policy research and lobbying etc.

To realize county level reconciliation in Margibi, the need to adequately achieve all six strategic objectives cannot be overemphasized. These strategic objectives seek to place the county on the right trajectory in terms of achieving reconciliation and endeavor to address fundamental factors hindering reconciliation at the county level.

Forward

The Margibi County Five-Year Reconciliation Vision and Action Plan (2018-2022) is an essential document developed through a participatory process. The document carries the needs and aspirations of the people of Margibi County and it's geared toward the attainment of reconciliation and sustainable peace in the county. The participatory decision-making and the public consensus building methodology used directly captured the views of the stakeholders and residents across the county.

It is my ardent hope that this five-year county reconciliation vision and action plan (2018-2022) will be linked to national instruments and frameworks like the National Reconciliation Roadmap, Peacebuilding Plan, Agenda for Transformation, County Development Agenda, etc. to provide the foundation for the development of a national policy on achieving national reconciliation in Liberia.

It is upon this backdrop that I pledge my commitment and support to ensuring that mechanisms for sustained peace in Margibi County are explored. I am proud that the lessons learned from the process of developing this Five Year Peace and Reconciliation Framework (2018-2022) can be replicated by other counties in Liberia.

Finally, this document does not replace previous efforts rather it reinforces previous interventions bringing to bare grassroots and local voices. It is a tool to guide reconciliatory efforts by focusing on the strategic objectives for the adequate management of the process.

I therefore call upon all local and national stakeholders as well as international partners to embrace this document and apply the County Reconciliation Vision and Action Plan (CRVAP) in the development and implementation of state programs geared toward achieving national reconciliation.

Superintendent
Margibi County

Acknowledgement

Naymote Partners for Democratic Development is primarily grateful to the peace loving and resilient people of Margibi County, especially the participants and key stakeholders who despite their differences and other obligations were very committed to the process of developing the County Reconciliation Vision and Five-Year Action Plan.

The institution also appreciates the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), for providing this timely and very important support to our organization to be able to carry out this historic intervention in the history of Margibi County. This support has gone a long way in achieving reconciliation in the county as you will see subsequent sections in this document.

The pivotal role played by the Hon. John Zubbah Buway, Superintendent, Margibi County, cannot go unnoticed. Hon. Buway's leadership and technical support provided a foundation for the intervention, which led to this successful outcome of the project. Naymote remains grateful for your demonstrated transformational leadership.

We recognize the role of our experienced and dynamic facilitator, Atty. Oscar Bloh, who expeditiously facilitated all the meetings and dialogues and stimulated the participants to speak to their issues as was required to help with the development of this document. Without your experience and foresightedness, we would not have reached this point.

Naymote expresses gratitude to all members of the Technical Working Group (TWG), who were instrumental and benevolent in planning and organizing all the meetings and dialogues of this intervention. Without you, our journey would have been long and uneventful.

Last but not the least, we are internally grateful to our hard working staff at Naymote, especially Mr. Osei Gbassakollie, Margibi County Coordinator, and all those who contributed one way or another to make this project a success story. To you we say, a "Big Thank You."

List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

NAYMOTE	National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections
UNMIL	United Nations Missions in Liberia
DDC	District Development Council
TWG	Technical Working Group
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CA	County Authority
CDA	County Development Agenda
GOL	Government of Liberia
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
SAIL	Survivor Aid International of Liberia
CDSC	County Development Steering Committee
CSC	County Service Center
CBA	County Business Association
FLY	Federation of Liberian Youth
SCORE	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Liberian Civil War in 2003, and the holding of the first democratic elections in 2005, which ushered in Africa and Liberia's first female president; reconciliation has been one of the many challenges faced by the post-war nation. Liberia's former president, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, during her last annual address to the Sixth Session of the 53th National Legislature of the Republic of Liberia, January 23, 2017, admitted that despite several achievements made under her leadership during the course of 11 years, corruption and national reconciliation have been some of the many challenges that her government was unable to adequately tackle. The statement by the former Liberian president clearly demonstrated that the need to enhance efforts geared toward achieving national reconciliation cannot be overemphasized.

“Let me say, straight out, two areas have continued to pose major challenges for our administration: corruption and reconciliation.”

*“Our country's long struggle for national reconciliation has its genesis in history. A coup d'état and years of civil conflict exacerbated longstanding divides that have left deep wounds. The methods and motivations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have not helped us to find a way forward to achieve the desired results for reconciliation. Nevertheless, we must continue implementation of the 207 recommendations in the Report, the majority of which have already been implemented. We are a small country, with relationships that cross the divide, and this has enabled us to remain united as a nation. Never must we forget that in union we are strong, and our success is assured. Therefore, we must all do more – I must do more – to heal these wounds, and do so this year, by implementing the Strategic Roadmap which has been formulated for this purpose. I believe that it will serve our nation well to take lessons from the experience of other countries by emphasizing restorative rather than retributive justice¹.” - **Former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf***

As stated above, the significance of this project, which facilitated the development of this Reconciliation Vision and Action Plan for Margibi County cannot be overstated. This effort actually feeds into ongoing national reconciliation efforts across the country. What is unique about this project is that it promotes grassroots approach, which enhances local ownership and commitment. Through the project, local residents and key stakeholders in the county have identified challenges hindering reconciliation and development as well as jointly develop a vision and an action plan to address those challenges identified.

¹ **ANNUAL MESSAGE To the Sixth Session of the 53rd National Legislature of the Republic of Liberia**
: <http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/ANNUAL.pdf>

1.1 Historical Background

Margibi County was founded in 1984 as the 13th county by the People Redemption Council (PRC) government under the leadership of the late President Samuel K. Doe. The County was founded as a result of a merger between two territories, namely: Marshall and Gibi Territories. These two territories were originally part of Montserrado County but were later removed and merged to form Margibi County. The name derives from “Mar” for Marshall Territory and “Gibi” from Gibi District. Marshall Territory was named in honor of former U.S. Chief Justice John Marshall, while Gibi was the name of the pit where the people hid after running away from the invading Mane. Thus literally speaking, Gii = slaves and bii= hole (slave town or slave hideout) near Wohn Town, an unburned farm that was later turned into a town. It is located in central Liberia just about 45 minutes' drive from Monrovia. It is one of the newest counties, created just prior to the civil war².

Margibi County is home to the main international airport and the largest rubber plantation company in Liberia, Firestone. The county also hosts Liberia's oldest vocational and technical high school, Booker Washington Institute, BWI, and one of the two teachers training institutes in Liberia, Kakata Rural Teachers Training Institute, KRTTI. The county's capital is Kakata, the former capital of Gibi territory, was and still the first main thoroughfare for anyone traveling by land from Monrovia to Bong, Nimba, and other counties of Liberia except Grand Bassa, Bomi, and Grand Cape Mount counties³.

Margibi County has a total land area of approximately 2, 866.67 square miles and an estimated 118, 000 acres of land, which is currently being used by the Firestone and Salala Rubber plantations, to list a few. The county is strategically bordered on the North and Northeast by Bong County, on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, Montserrado County on the East, and on the West by Grand Bassa County².

The population of Margibi County is approximately 240,996 with 112,444 constituting 46.66% representing female and 128,552 constituting 53.34% representing males. The County is dominated by the Bassa ethnic group, which represents 48% follow by the Kpelle, representing 44%. The remaining 10% comprised of mostly, Kissi, Krahn, Grebo, Gbandi, Gio, Lorma, Mano, Vai, Gola, Sapo, and others⁴.

Speaking of Religion, 90% of the residents in Margibi County are Christians while 5% are Muslims and the remaining 5% are Animists⁵.

² Margibi County Development Agenda: file

³ The Liberian Journal-Bridging the Gaps of Development in Liberia:
<http://www.theliberianjournal.com/printableVersion.php?rid=528>

⁴ Norwegian Refugee Council January 2017

⁵ Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey, October 2006

1.2 Situation Analysis

Liberia's long walk to national reconciliation is not without several hurdles; however, many of the current challenges faced by Liberia, which are hindering national reconciliation across the country emanate from the assumption that reconciliation is an event rather than an inclusive process; over intellectualizing and academicizing of the process of reconciliation rather than initiating grassroots solutions to address factors hindering reconciliation; and failure to inculcate a holistic and inclusive approach led by the local residents instead of marginalizing the people who are the custodians of the peace etc.

The Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation (2012, p.2) states that “[...], efforts on national peacebuilding and reconciliation stalled due to the lack of coherent strategy and coordination framework” and therefore focuses on coherence of institutions, structures, mechanisms and human resources to support national healing and reconciliation. Nevertheless, in the history of Liberia, reconciliation and resolution are not new phenomenon. Unfortunately, an in depth analysis of those processes is missing, which hampers meaningful lessons learned and evaluation to inform future processes, projects and mechanisms⁶.

Despite numerous efforts in Liberia to achieve national reconciliation, like the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was recommended by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2003 at the end of the Liberian Civil War, Liberia continues to have its fair share of the struggle toward achieving reconciliation. The TRC which was established by an Act on June 10, 2005, conducted a process which left behind mixed feelings and contested opinions.

The Liberian government and her partners have undertaken and continue to undertake several initiatives and developed documents geared towards achieving national reconciliation. Some of the products of these efforts include; the National Reconciliation Roadmap, Peacebuilding Plan, County Development Agenda, Agenda for Transformation, SCORE, National Policy of Reconciliation, and National Conflict Mapping Exercise, etc.

While it is true that there have been several efforts to reconcile Liberia through many national interventions led by the government as well as her international and local partners, reconciliation process in Liberia presents a significant disconnect between policy and implementation. Many of the challenges of reconciliation emanate from the local level. Thus, any strategy that excludes the local residents thereby failing to ensure a critical mass of the public support and political buy-in for the reconciliation process is destined to be fiasco.

⁶ Liberia between Reconciliation Commission and Roadmap – Steps Forward in a Halted Process?: http://kofiannaninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Public-Policy-Brief-Liberia_between_Reconciliation_Commissio.pdf

For example, Margibi County happens to be one of the counties that was left with undesirable aftermaths of the Civil War coupled with social, political, economic, religious, and cultural cleavages and hindrances that are posing critical challenges to achieving reconciliation at the county level. If national reconciliation is to be achieved, we must adopt a citizens' approach solution.

The next section illustrates the grassroots methodology and approach used to gather information needed to develop the county reconciliation vision and action plan.

2.0 INFORMATION GATHERING EXERCISE

The section summarizes the process through which all meta-information was collected and compiled for this document. It further gives the detailed account of the consultations, district level dialogues, townhall and community meetings held with stakeholders and citizens of Margibi County as well as information on the participants and key stakeholders who participated in the discussions that led to the development of the County Reconciliation Vision and Action Plan.

As suggested in preceding sections of the document, previous efforts to achieve reconciliation in Margibi County and across other counties in Liberia have been largely top to bottom approach. As stated earlier, this approach largely excluded grassroots active participation leaving them to be mere participants and spectators of the process.

To shift the dynamics and ratify the missteps that have plagued reconciliation efforts in the county, NAYMOTE implored a citizens' approach whereby local residents were the key organizers, discussants, and drafters of the county reconciliation vision and action plan.

To acquire the information needed for the development of the county reconciliation vision and action plan, NAYMOTE conducted project briefing meetings, district level dialogues, townhall meetings, community meetings, and county level plenary.

2.1 Community Entry/Project Briefing Meetings

In an effort to promote local ownership of the process and increase citizens' understanding of what is at stake and what the county stands to gain as the result of the project, NAYMOTE organized and conducted a project briefing meeting in the county. The meeting brought together local authority officials headed by the County Superintendent, the County Inspector, traditional leaders (paramount, town and clan chiefs), religious leaders, youth and women leaders, media practitioners, and CSO leaders as well as officials from line Ministries. During the Project briefing meeting, in consultation with the participants of the meetings, a Technical Working Committee (TWG) was established. The Technical Working Group (TWG) comprised of a membership of five headed by the County Superintendent or a representative from his office, two Religious Leaders (Christian and Muslim Communities), Youth and Women Representatives. The TWG in consultation with NAYMOTE's County Coordinator planned, organized and conducted all of the consultations, dialogues and meetings for the information

gathering exercises, which led to the development of the County Reconciliation Vision and Action Plan. *Please see chart below for Members of TWG of Margibi County*

MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

No	Name	Institution	Position
1.	Mr. Monibah Namah	Superintendent Office Ministry of Internal Affairs	Administrative Assistant
2.	Rev. Gbarngawoe Zigboe	Executive Member	Margibi Christian Union
3.	Mr. Adama Sumo	Executive Member	Muslim Council of Margibi
4.	Rudolph Permer	Coordinator	Federation of Liberian Youth
5.	Miatta Mulbah	County Officer	Sail Aid International Liberia (SAIL)

2.2 Community Meetings

In an effort to mobilize the community dwellers and preselect districts within the county that were known for conflict, TWG along with NAYMOTE County Coordinator planned and conducted 2 community meetings across the county. During these meetings, like the project briefing meeting, local authority officials headed by the County Superintendent, the County Inspector, traditional leaders (paramount, town and clan chiefs), religious leaders, youth and women leaders, media practitioners, and CSO leaders as well as officials from line Ministries were in attendance. Participants brainstormed and identified 5 districts within the county, which were targeted under the intervention for the district level dialogues.

The districts identified during the community meetings for the district level dialogues were district # 2, 3, 4 and 5. According to the participants during these meetings, the selected districts were known as hot spots and conflict sensitive areas within the county and as such it was very prudent that they were targeted when trying to reconcile the county. Please note that participants from other districts were also invited.

2.3 District Dialogues

In order to access the necessary information needed for the development of the county reconciliation vision and action plan, 4 district level dialogues were conducted across 4 districts in the county. During each dialogue, 40 stakeholders, including commissioners, chiefs, representatives from the teachers association, National Elections Commission (NEC), superintendent's office, members of the Technical Working Group (TWG), political institution leaders, , Ministry of internal Affairs, Civil Society Organizations, Community Based Organizations, school authorities, teachers, community leaders; among others participated in the dialogue.

The dialogues provided stakeholders broad knowledge about the essence of reconciliation and benefits of reconciling. Participants reflected and discussed the history and sources of conflicts in

their districts and county, mapped conflict: current trends, sources and actors of conflicts in the district and county, consequences of the conflicts (political, social, and economic), explored local mechanisms for reconciliation (actors and on-going reconciliation efforts) as well as developed their District Action Plan for Reconciliation.

“for too long we sit in our corners and talk about these same issues, we have not have the time to face each other to say what we are saying today, I want to tell NAYMOTE thank you, I am sure from this project we can settle our differences, work toward those things that will bring development and unity in their communities”. **Alfred Cooper, General Town Chief.**

From the discussions, several issues were highlighted by community residents as sources of conflict in the past that are still affecting various districts across the county. Some issues raised included: corruption and greed, bad leadership, misinformation and hatred, power greed, generational gap, broken culture-disconnect between educated and uneducated, tribal and religious identity crisis, slavery, loyalty and tolerance etc.

2.4 Town Hall Meetings

The TWG organized a town hall meeting where key stakeholders and participants who attended previous dialogues and meetings were invited. During the town hall meeting, the facilitator presented the list of issues that have been identified by the participants during the district level dialogues as factors hindering reconciliation and unity in the county. The meeting provided participants the opportunity to ascertain the issues presented by the facilitator, make corrections where necessary, and additional comments as the discussion was further broaden due to the fact the issues were being placed in categories.

At the town hall meeting, participants were placed in three groups, that is, youth, women and local authority officials/traditional leaders. Members of each group were asked to discuss the issues presented as factors hindering reconciliation in the county and recommend possible actions to address those challenges. It was during the townhall meeting that the recommendations and action plan were developed and presented during plenary.

The town hall meeting was very unique and contributed immensely to the development of the county reconciliation vision and action plan. Stakeholders guided by a facilitator, were able to recommend local solutions to local challenges that have stalled reconciliation process in the past. Amazingly, some of the recommendations and action plan suggested are already being implemented in the county without the support of any national institution. For example, a committee that was setup during the district dialogue in Larkayta to look into conflict arising from political differences after the elections has already started engaging individuals involved. The committee has invited them to a meeting to amicably resolve their differences in the interest of the county. This is a clear indication that when grassroots citizens are involved in these initiatives, they take ownership of the process thereby making it successful and results oriented.

2.5 County Levels Plenary

This was the validation stage following all the dialogues and meetings. During the County Plenary, the TWG invited key stakeholders who participated in the community and townhall meetings, and the district level dialogues. The Superintendent, County Inspector, Commissioners, traditional leaders (Paramount, town and clan chiefs), CSOs and media actors, youth and women group leaders, religious leaders from the Christian and Muslim communities, representatives from the disabled communities as well as local residents who had taken keen interest in the reconciliation efforts of the county were in attendance. At the plenary meeting, the facilitator presented the information gathered during the meetings and dialogues to be validated by the citizens of the county through their sanctioned representatives and leaderships.

During the first session of the plenary, the facilitator presented the issues as identified across the county that were hindering and stalling reconciliation in the county. The presentation was thoroughly reviewed to reflect the views of the county while in some instances, additions, subtractions and clarity were made to the issues identified.

During all the discussions, the facilitator used participatory decision making techniques to ensure that everyone's views were taken into account and that the discussions exhausted the stages in participatory decision making, which included Divergent Thinking-where participants freely disagreed on issues and expressed new ideas; the brainstorming stage-where the issues were narrowed down and placed into categories and group based on similarities and subject matter; and lastly, the Convergent Thinking, where issues were summarized into key points and sorted in categories.

As you will see in the next section of the document, all issues identified and agreed upon as factors stalling reconciliation in the county were captured as presented by the people of the county. They also presented solutions (recommendations and an action plan), which if implemented, would go a long way in reconciling the county and promoting growth and development geared toward achieving the Vision 2022 of the county.

Through the project intervention, it was revealed that Margibi County is currently divided along several lines than ever before in the County's history. The County once home to almost every tribe in Liberia and the gateway to the rest of the Country, especially when traveling from Monrovia is now experiencing challenges that are undermining growth and development. Following a series of engagements and dialogues, which will be discussed in the document later, the below matrix highlights issues identified as factors and effects hindering reconciliation in the county.

3.0 SUMMARY OF ISSUES IDENTIFIED AS SOURCES OF CONFLICT AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MARGIBI COUNTY

NO.	ISSUES RAISED IN MARGIBI COUNTY	EFFECTS ON THE COUNTY
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of accountability and limited citizens' participation in the management of the County Development Funds which is holding back development and the provision of basic social services. -Land Conflicts (double land sales, poor documentation of land deeds, limited understanding of land policies and weak laws for violators) -Division among citizens and some family members due to the election results. - Tension between Youth & Elders -Citizens have malice for each as a result past disagreements on several issues in the past. -Limited access to information on governance and development processes -Limited access by young people to livelihood opportunities and drug abuse among young people, -Harmful/Bad traditional practices for women -Division among political leaders/lawmakers and local authority. -Division among residents of upper and lower Margibi County, Bassa and Kpelleh speaking groups. -Political conflict (disunity among religious leaders, young leaders and county leadership during elections). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Undermining development and increase citizens' lack trust in the government. -Increasing conflicts, discouraging infrastructure development and disrespect for the rule of laws. -Increasing disunity and conflict in the county - Inter-Generational Conflict and disrespect for cultural norms. -Increased misinformation among citizens. -Increase in crime rate and drug abuse among young people. -Increasing inequality targeted at women in society. -Delay in holding county sitting to decide development projects, increase in unfinished projects. -Increasing leadership crisis and underdevelopment in the county. -Upsetting development in the county and poor representation of the people.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Following a brainstorming session, which led to the identification of issues hindering reconciliation in the Margibi County, participants during the County Plenary were placed into three groups (Women, Youth and Local Authorities/traditional leaders) where they jointly developed recommendations to address the issues identified as stated above in the matrix. Recommendations emanating from the groups session are highlighted below in the matrix.

MARGIBI COUNTY PLENARY DIALOGUE

Women	<p><u>Management of County Social Development Funds</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent should be the manager of the County Social Development Funds (CSDFs) • Management team of the CSDF should be inclusive and diversified • Monitoring team should be established to monitor the usage of the CSDFs. • There should be a monitoring & evaluation of all development projects twice a year in the County to assess the impact of the development process (community- County level) • Involve citizens at all levels in the development process through meetings, medias etc. <p><u>Land Conflict</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Land Rights Act should be passed by the Legislature. • Hold discussion with Family Land Owners and Land Administrators to create awareness on the danger of selling land to more than one persons and what the new Law says. • Strong laws to prosecute double land sellers. • Create awareness for land owners and land administrators to register their deeds at the County Service Centers, <p><u>Tension Between Youth and Elder</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a reconciliation dialogue between youth and elders, identify the root causes of the tension and find solution. • Provide timely and accurate information on the development process. • Create livelihood opportunities for young people through skill & vocational trainings. Develop programs to link vulnerable youth to businesses in county, restart the vacation job and cadet programs. • Support the passage of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA). • Strengthen the legal justice system to ensure adjudication of SGBV cases. • Organize regular meetings across the districts to promote peace. • Organize sporting events for youth to foster peaceful co-existence and reconciliation.
Youth	<p><u>County Development Funds</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected officials (Lawmakers) and County Authority should play an advisory role at county sitting and allow citizens decide developmental projects. • Review the budget law and repeal the section that allows (elected

	<p>officials) Lawmakers to select delegate to the county sitting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants to the county sitting should be drawn from municipal government, commissioners, clan and paramount chiefs, CSOs, youths and women groups. • There should be a mechanism put in place to properly vet projects, contracts, contractors as well as monitoring and evaluating ongoing projects. <p><u>Land Conflicts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for the passage of the Land Rights Act. • Strengthen the judiciary to fast track Land conflict related cases. • Get community leaders involved in the sale of LAND. • Invite the Land Authority to hold meetings with Land Owners, Administrators and Citizens quarterly to address some concerns that is leading to conflict in the county. <p><u>Tension Between Elders And Youths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for cultural and traditional practices as well as human rights. • Involve of young people in decision making and provide opportunities for livelihood. • Share information on the County budget and development with young people. • Create awareness on the Freedom of Information Law. • Creation and empowerment of youth through Technical Vocational Education Trainings. • Create awareness to stop Rape/SGBV and conduct speedy trial of rape/SGBV cases • Stop the usage of drugs in communities across the county
Local Authorities, elders, chiefs and traditional leaders	<p><u>Land Conflicts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The registration of tribal land certificate should be given respect and supported. • The passage of the Land Rights Act by the Legislature and Government of Liberia to reduce the land conflict, • Educate citizens on the differences among public, private and customary LAND. • Stop the double sales of Land and multiple Land Administrators. • Improve Land Deed Registration and Record Keeping by the Government of Liberia. <p><u>Tension Between Elders And Youth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase information sharing on development projects in the County to build young people trust in local governance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of Livelihood opportunities for young people and educate young people their ancestors and about the county. • Help develop reconciliation programs to reduce election tension between elders and youth. • Deepen young people understand on Local Government and Local Government Act. • There must be a periodic report and meeting to inform the people of development activities and status of projects. • Every district should have a public high school with train teachers • Report all SGBV related issue. • Division as a result of election tension between elders and youth should be addressed. <p><u>County Social Development Funds</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the County Social Development Budget Law. • Regularization of the county sitting and allow citizens make the decisions about their development. Elected officials (Lawmakers and County Leadership) should only supervise the county setting. • Development projects should come from the District and should be decentralized. • There should be support to the District Development Council (DDC) to hold regular district level meetings, mapped up development projects and develop monitoring tools for all district projects. • The DDC Chairperson should lead the District delegates to the County setting and he/she should present the district plans and project at the County Setting. • There should be respect and awareness on both customary and statutory laws. • Prosecute corrupt officials and address political, social and economic equality by promoting decentralization.
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5.0 MARGIBI COUNTY RECONCILIATION VISION AND ACTION PLAN

In Liberia over the years, the main question of reconciliation has been premised on how villainies in society, especially from the genesis of the nation have been resolved and currently being resolved to adequately handle them and engender changes that fix marginalization, injustice, and other factors that provoke disunity, ramify and acrimoniousness⁶.

Previous efforts of reconciliation/resolution in Liberia highlight the establishment of the recent counties and their subsequent inclusion into the National Legislature. This demonstrates the country's national effort to combat exclusion and marginalization. Another major effort was the Unification Policy from 1964 and the Open Door Policy, which can also be considered as efforts

to solicit greater participation of the people in the political life of the country and access to social and economic opportunities for groups marginalized in the past⁶.

“Nevertheless, events of 1975-79(the rise of political pluralism) and the decades following showed clearly that efforts made to create an inclusive, nondiscriminatory nation still lacked essential basics for a truly coherent state.” - **Liberia between Reconciliation Commission and Roadmap – Steps Forward in a Halted Process?**

While previous reconciliation efforts have excluded grassroots’ ownership of the process thereby using citizens as mere participants, the ardent need to initiate a process whereby locals will lead all reconciliation efforts supported by the government and her partners cannot be over emphasized. The outcome of this project clearly illustrates the willingness of the people to part take in these processes that provide local solution to local problems and the residents of Margibi County are no exception to this truism.

It is within this context that the people of Margibi County, in consultation with their local authorities and key stakeholders, following several consultations, dialogues, and town hall and community meetings held across five districts five or four districts? and a county plenary have suggested the following vision and strategic objectives for the county reconciliation vision and five years action plan.

5.1 Margibi County Reconciliation Vision 2022

- The county is reconciled, peaceful and united in all its undertakings and citizens are the front drivers of the social, economic and political spheres of the county.
- County resources, proceeds generated, and social benefits are fairly distributed across the county; and adequately managed in a way that local leadership are accountable to the people and development projects/initiatives are decided by the people of the county.
- Equal opportunities and basic services are provided for all citizens of Margibi County irrespective of age, gender, religion, social, economic status and/or political affiliation.
- All citizens of Margibi County demonstrate an appreciation of the county’s culture, tradition and history thereby promoting a sense of patriotism..

5.2 County Action Plan/Strategy Matrix

COUNTY ACTION PLAN/STRATEGY FOR INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY RECONCILIATION IN MARGIBI COUNTY

Margibi County Reconciliation Vision 2022						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The county is reconciled, peaceful and united in all its undertakings and citizens are the front drivers of the social, economic and political spheres of the county. County resources, proceeds generated, and social benefits are fairly distributed across the county; and adequately managed in a way that local leadership are accountable to the people and development projects/initiatives are decided by the people of the county. Equal opportunities and basic services are provided for all citizens of Margibi County irrespective of age, gender, religion, social, economic status and/or political affiliation. All citizens of Margibi County demonstrate an appreciation of the county's culture, tradition and history thereby promoting a sense of patriotism. 						
Drivers of conflict	Effects	Actions/Strategies to mitigate drivers of conflict	Responsible Party	Indicators of success	Means of Verification	Timeframe
Lack of accountability and limited citizens' participation in the decision-making process in the management of the County Social/ Development Funds	<p>Development interventions are not sustainable</p> <p>Lack of trust in government institutions.</p>	<p>CSOs and citizens advocate for a change in the current budget law that gives undue authority and influence to the lawmakers in the management of the CSDF.</p> <p>Change the manner and form by which delegates to the County Sitting are</p>	County Authority Line Ministries TWG CSO Council Traditional Leaders Religious Leaders Youth & Women Group Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget law is changed that gives more authority to the local county authorities. Delegates to the County Sitting are selected in a more participatory 	<p>Copy of the revised budget law.</p> <p>Feedback from citizens.</p>	

		recruited.		and inclusive manner.		
Land Conflicts (double land sales, poor documentation of land deeds, limited understanding of land policies and weak enforcement of the Criminal Conveyance Act.	Undermining social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.	Citizens advocate their lawmakers for the passage of the draft land rights bill. Create awareness of the existence of the Criminal Conveyance Act on double land scale.	County Authority Line Ministries TWG CSO Council Traditional Leaders Religious Leaders Youth & Women Group Leaders	Passage of the Land Rights Bill into law. Number of actions taken by the Liberia Land Authority in the enforcement of the Criminal Conveyance Act.	Copy of the Land Rights Act. Media reports Report from the LLA	
Division among citizens and community members due to the election results.	Social cohesion is low and this could undermine the county's development programs	County authorities, traditional leaders, women groups and opinion leaders organizing reconciliation dialogues among the winners and losers of those who participated in the 2017 legislative elections.	County Authority Line Ministries TWG CSO Council Traditional Leaders Religious Leaders Youth & Women Group Leaders	Number of reconciliation dialogues held. Number of commitments made by losers and winners to work together in the interest of the county	Reports of dialogues held Reports of joint actions taken to support the county's development agenda	
Inter-generational tension	Disrespect for positive cultural values by young people	Organize community meetings between youth and elders	County Authority Line Ministries TWG CSO Council	Number of meetings held	Reports of meetings	

			Traditional Leaders Religious Leaders Youth & Women Group Leaders			
Limited access to information on governance and development processes	This limits citizens' participation and create the environment for rumors	County authorities should organize quarterly meetings to provide information to citizens on progress made in the county development process	County Authority Line Ministries TWG CSO Council Traditional Leaders Religious Leaders Youth & Women Group Leaders	Number of meetings held with participants disaggregated by location and gender.	Reports from meetings held. Media reports	
Limited access by young people to livelihood opportunities	Disenchantment and psychological effect on the growth and development of young people.	County development projects should also include agriculture to attract young people.	County Authority Line Ministries TWG CSO Council Traditional Leaders Religious Leaders Youth & Women Group Leaders	Number of young people involved in agriculture activities for livelihood.	Survey conducted.	
Harmful traditional practices against women	Violation of the rights of women and young people	Create awareness on the new Domestic Violence Act in communities	County Authority Line Ministries TWG CSO Council Traditional Leaders Religious Leaders Youth & Women Group Leaders	Number of awareness actions including radio show and meetings	Media log and reports from meetings	

LESSONS LEARNT & BEST PRACTICES

Reconciliation is a very delicate matter and must be treated as such. Earlier in this document, we presented a thesis that despite numerous efforts to achieve reconciliation in Liberia, these efforts have been stalled over and over again due to the fact that the strategies and approaches used in the past have been the top to bottom approach; thereby leaving out the true custodians of the process “The People”.

Based on our experience and findings throughout the development process of this document and revision of previous efforts seeking reconciliation, we have recognized the following as lessons learned and best practices that need to be replicated taking into consideration the context in other parts of the country.

First and foremost, all reconciliation efforts **MUST** be led by those seeking to be reconciled. The people **MUST** be a part of the strategy and approach to achieving reconciliation as well as having the people involved and updated on every planning, organization and conduct of any event designed to achieve reconciliation.

Secondly, all efforts seeking to achieve reconciliation **MUST** endeavor to solicit local solutions to local problems-always giving preference to what the people say they need to be reconciled. Listening more as a facilitator of the process, and empowering the people to get the work done is an asset that cannot be overlooked. Reconciliation at the local level cannot be achieved by imploring national solutions to local problems. Irrespective of the fact that the local reconciliation efforts must be linked to national efforts, the effort **MUST** be led from the grassroots level to the national level. We are cognizant of the fact that national reconciliation conferences, national peace dialogues, etc. have achieved far too little than expected. Consequently, the need to adopt a grassroots (bottom to top) approach as adopted through the development of this county reconciliation vision and strategy/action plan cannot be overstated. Local ownership of reconciliation efforts promote sustainability and long term gains even beyond the project duration as demonstrated throughout this intervention.

Lastly, reconciliation is a process and should not be treated as an event. It takes time to achieve healing after one is hurt. Also, parties involved **MUST** be willing to reconcile and that can be demonstrated by the level of commitment of local actors during the process. As painful as it may seem, if parties who are involved in a reconciliation process are not willing to be reconciled, the facilitator of the process **MUST** return to the basic. That is, caucusing with parties involved to explain why reconciliation is important and outline some of the negative impacts it is having and continue to have on them and their constituency. Fortunately, this was not the case in Margibi as the citizens were committed and took ownership of the process.

CHALLENGES

While it is true that the intervention was very successful and achieved the desired outcome, it was not without hurdles. Through regular monitoring, we were able to identify prevailing challenges and resolve them before they escalated.

One of the challenges we experienced was the over crowdedness at the dialogues and meetings even though they were planned for at most 45 stakeholders. Transportation reimbursement became a major issue as the institution had to use extra resources to accommodate the additional participants who attended the events.

Initially, getting to some local authority officials was difficult but with the involvement of the County Superintendent we were able to have every major stakeholder on board and participating.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the problems with achieving reconciliation in Liberia is that we stop at the talking and the development of documents. Implementation has always been the problem because perhaps the people did not have ownership of the process and they had little or no interest to see it implemented.

The case of this County Reconciliation Vision 2022 and Action Plan was developed by the people and for the people. Our single most significant recommendation will be that the governments, CSOs as well as national and international partners seeking to achieve reconciliation in Margibi County MUST ensure that all the strategic objectives, which are linked to the reconciliation vision in this document are achieved by implementing the actions or strategies to mitigate the drivers of conflict as outlined in the document.

Developed By: NAYMOTE-Partners for Democratic Development

Approved:

Eddie D. Jarwolo
Executive Director/NAYMOTE

I, Hon. John Z. Buway, Superintendent, Margibi County, do hereby affix my signature to this document this 22th day of February A.D. 2018 in the City of Kakata, Margibi County.
