POLICY BRIEF LAUNCH

Strengthening Political Governance and Accountability in Liberia
A Policy Brief on Decentralization and Local Governance

Held at the Governance Commission, 3rd Street, Sinkor-Monrovia
June 1, 2026 from 10:00a.m. – 12:00p.m.

REPORT

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June |04| 2026

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Acronyms

CCs	:	County Councils
CDAs	:	County Development Agendas
CDFs	:	County Development Funds
CDSCs	:	County Development Steering Committees
CSCs	:	County Service Centers
CSOs	:	Civil Society Organizations
GC	:	Governance Commission
GoL	:	Government of Liberia
LACC	:	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
LDSP	:	Liberia Decentralization Support Program.
LGA	:	Local Government Act (2018)
LRA	:	Liberia Revenue Authority
MFDP	:	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MLG	:	Ministry of Local Government
MoI	:	Ministry of Information
NAYMOTE	:	Naymote Partners for Democratic Development
SDFs	:	Social Development Funds
TORs	:	Terms of Reference
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme

1.0 Executive Summary

On June 2, 2026, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, in collaboration with the Governance Commission and with support from the Government of Ireland, launched a policy brief titled "Decentralization: From Promise to Practice, Assessing the Functionality of County Development Agendas (CDAs) and County Councils in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties." The event brought together government officials, development partners, civil society organizations, local authorities, researchers, media representatives, and citizens to discuss the progress and challenges of Liberia's decentralization agenda.

The policy brief assessed the effectiveness of key local governance institutions and mechanisms established under Liberia's decentralization framework, including County Development Agendas (CDAs), County Councils (CCs), County Development Funds (CDFs), Social Development Funds (SDFs), County Service Centers (CSCs), and County Development Steering Committees (CDSCs). The study sought to determine whether decentralization reforms are translating into improved local governance, citizen participation, accountability, and service delivery.

The findings revealed that while Liberia has established a strong legal and policy framework for decentralization through the Local Government Act of 2018 and related reforms, significant implementation challenges remain. The assessment identified substantial funding gaps between county development needs and actual financial allocations. Although county projects generally align with County Development Agendas, limited funding, delayed budget disbursements, procurement planning weaknesses, and inadequate institutional capacity continue to constrain implementation.

The study also found that many local officials have limited understanding of the roles and responsibilities of County Councils and other governance structures, while County Development Steering Committees are often inactive or irregular in carrying out their functions. Procurement transparency remains a concern, with several projects absent from procurement plans despite appearing in development budgets.

To address these challenges, the report recommends increasing county funding, adopting an equitable resource allocation formula based on population and development needs, improving the timeliness of budget disbursements, strengthening procurement systems, enhancing capacity-building programs, revitalizing local governance institutions, and integrating sustainability and climate resilience into county development projects.

Stakeholders at the launch broadly agreed that decentralization remains critical for promoting inclusive development, responsive governance, and improved public service delivery. Representatives from government ministries, agencies, commissions, UNDP, the Embassy of Ireland, the British Embassy, and civil society organizations welcomed the findings and emphasized the need to move beyond policy formulation toward effective implementation and fiscal decentralization.

The discussions underscored the importance of strengthening accountability, citizen participation, transparency, and local decision-making authority. Participants emphasized that successful decentralization requires not only legal frameworks but also adequate resources, empowered local institutions, and sustained political commitment.

The launch concluded with a shared commitment among stakeholders to continue supporting decentralization reforms and to use the findings and recommendations of the policy brief to strengthen local governance and development outcomes across Liberia's fifteen counties. Ultimately, the event reaffirmed that meaningful decentralization remains essential to building a more inclusive, accountable, and citizen-centered system of governance in Liberia.

2.0 Introduction

On June 2, 2026, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, in partnership with the Governance Commission and with support from the Government of Ireland, launched the policy brief titled *"Decentralization: From Promise to Practice, Assessing the Functionality of County Development Agendas (CDAs) and County Councils in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties."* The event was held at the Governance Commission in Monrovia and brought together government officials, civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners, local government representatives, media practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders.

The launch provided an opportunity to discuss the progress and challenges of Liberia's decentralization process and to examine how local governance reforms are being implemented at the county level. It also served as a platform for stakeholders to share views on strengthening local governance, improving service delivery, and increasing citizen participation in development planning and decision-making.

The policy brief presented findings from an assessment conducted in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties. The study focused on the CDAs, County Councils (CCs), County Development Funds (CDFs), Social Development Funds (SDFs), County Service Centers (CSCs), and other local governance structures. The findings highlighted successes achieved so far, as well as challenges related to funding, institutional capacity, procurement practices, and citizen engagement.

The event featured welcome and opening remarks, a presentation of the research findings, a question-and-answer session, and remarks from government institutions, development partners, and civil society representatives. Discussions focused on the need for stronger implementation of decentralization reforms, increased accountability, improved funding for counties, and greater public participation in local governance.

Overall, the launch reaffirmed the commitment of stakeholders to supporting decentralization as a means of promoting inclusive development, responsive governance, and improved public services throughout Liberia.

3.0 Background of the Policy Brief Launch

Liberia's decentralization agenda was introduced to address challenges associated with a highly centralized system of governance, where most decisions, public services, and development planning were concentrated in Monrovia. This often limited citizen participation and reduced the ability of local communities to influence development decisions affecting their lives.

To address these challenges, the Government of Liberia introduced several reforms, including the National Decentralization Policy, the Local Government Act (LGA) of 2018, County Service Centers, County Councils, and County Development Agendas. These reforms were intended to bring government services closer to citizens, strengthen local governance, improve accountability, and encourage greater public participation in development.

Despite these efforts, concerns remain about how effectively these reforms are being implemented. To contribute to ongoing discussions on decentralization, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, with support from the Government of Ireland, commissioned an assessment titled *"Decentralization: From Promise to Practice, Assessing the Functionality of County Development Agendas and County Councils in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties."*

The study examined the performance of key local governance institutions and mechanisms to determine whether decentralization reforms are achieving their intended objectives and to identify areas requiring improvement.

3.1 Purpose of the Policy Brief Launch

The launch of the policy brief sought to:

1. Present the findings of the assessment conducted in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties.
2. Promote dialogue among government institutions, development partners, CSOs, and local authorities on the state of decentralization in Liberia.
3. Highlight achievements, challenges, and gaps in the implementation of decentralization reforms.
4. Share recommendations for improving local governance, accountability, and service delivery.
5. Encourage stronger support for fiscal decentralization and the effective functioning of local governance institutions.
6. Strengthen stakeholder commitment to transferring more authority, resources, and decision-making responsibilities to local communities.
7. Generate lessons and recommendations that can support decentralization efforts across all fifteen counties of Liberia.

The launch ultimately served as a platform for learning, discussion, and collaboration on how to strengthen decentralization and ensure that governance reforms lead to better services and development outcomes for citizens.


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4.0 Opening Session

4.1 Welcome Remarks

Prof. Alaric K. Tokpa
Acting Chairman – Governance Commission

Distinguished representatives of government institutions, development partners, local government authorities, civil society organizations, media executives and practitioners, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Board of Commissioner of the Governance Commission, it is my distinct honor and privilege to welcome you to the Governance Commission for the official launch of this important policy brief, "Decentralization: From Promise to Practice-Assessing the Functionality of County Development Agendas and County Councils in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties."

Before proceeding, I wish to make it clear that the Governance Commission was not involved in the planning of this assessment, nor in the collection and analysis of the data. About a month ago, the Governance Commission completed and released its own assessment of Liberia's decentralization process. Our role today is simply to partner in the launch of a report based on research conducted independently by our partner. It is important to note that some findings may be uncomfortable for certain government institutions or officials. Nevertheless, as a responsible government, we must receive such reports in good faith and, where necessary, take corrective actions to strengthen governance processes. The conclusions and recommendations contained in this assessment remain the sole responsibility of Naymote Partners for Democratic Development and its collaborators.

Today's event represents far more than the unveiling of a policy document. It provides an opportunity for national reflection on one of Liberia's most transformative governance reform processes. The decentralization of government administration, decision-making, and public service delivery. It offers an opportunity to assess our progress, identify challenges, and renew our collective commitment to building a governance system that is responsive, inclusive, and accountable.

The decentralization process was designed to bring governance closer to the people by creating institutional mechanisms that enable citizens to participate meaningfully in public affairs and service delivery. The establishment of County Service Centers throughout the country stands as visible evidence of decentralization in action. These centers have significantly improved access to government services by allowing citizens to obtain business registrations, permits, licenses, and other public services within their counties.

The Local Government Act also established and strengthened key local governance institutions, including County Councils, City Councils, Municipal Councils, District Development Councils, Clan Councils, and Town Councils. These institutions provide platforms through which citizens can engage in governance, articulate development priorities, and participate in decisions affecting their communities.

Of particular significance is the County Council, the highest decision-making body at the county level. County Councils are entrusted with reviewing development priorities, promoting citizen participation, and ensuring that local development initiatives reflect the aspirations and needs of county residents.

The questions explored by this policy brief are therefore critically important.

1. Are County Councils effectively exercising their statutory responsibilities?
2. Are County Development Agendas guiding development investments and resource allocation?
3. Are citizens meaningfully participating in local governance processes?
4. Are local institutions adequately resourced and empowered to perform their functions?

Decentralization is not an event but a process. It is not merely about creating institutions or relocating administrative functions. It is about empowering citizens, strengthening accountability, and building responsive local governments.

The Governance Commission firmly believes that decentralization is not only a governance reform project but also a state-building and peace-building initiative. When citizens feel represented and involved in decision-making processes, trust in public institutions grows, social cohesion is strengthened, and democratic governance becomes more resilient.

The findings emerging from Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties have implications far beyond these three counties. They offer valuable lessons for all fifteen counties and provide evidence-based recommendations that can guide future reforms, strengthen implementation of the Local Government Act, and improve the effectiveness of local governance institutions across Liberia.

On behalf of the Governance Commission, I extend sincere appreciation to Naymote Partners for Democratic Development and its collaborators for their commitment to strengthening democratic governance and citizen participation in Liberia. I also commend county authorities, development partners, civil society actors, and all stakeholders whose contributions made this assessment possible.

As we launch this policy brief today, let us recommit ourselves to a vision that lies at the heart of Liberia's decentralization agenda; a democratic state where governance is participatory, institutions are accountable, and development is driven by the priorities and aspirations of local communities.

Let this policy brief become a catalyst for dialogue, reform, and action. Let it challenge us to strengthen implementation, deepen citizen participation, enhance accountability, and accelerate the realization of the objectives embodied in the Local Government Act of 2018.
Ultimately, the true measure of decentralization's success will not be found in policies or institutions alone. It will be found in stronger communities, better public services, greater citizen participation, and improved livelihoods for the people of Liberia.

Thank you, and may God continue to bless Liberia.

4.2 Opening Remarks and Overview of the Policy Launch

Eddie D. Jarwolo
Executive Director, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development

Eddie D. Jarwolo welcomed participants and underscored the significance of the policy brief launch as a critical contribution to Liberia's ongoing decentralization and governance reform agenda. He noted that while Liberia has made substantial progress in establishing the legal, policy, and institutional frameworks necessary for decentralization, the true measure of success lies in the effective implementation of these reforms and their impact on citizens at the local level.

Mr. Jarwolo explained that the assessment was undertaken to examine the extent to which decentralization structures are functioning as intended and whether local governance institutions are receiving the resources, authority, and support required to fulfill their mandates. The study reviewed key decentralization instruments and mechanisms, including County Development Agendas (CDAs), county budgets, procurement plans, Social Development Funds, County Service Centers, and other local governance structures in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties.

He emphasized that the purpose of the assessment was not to criticize government institutions but rather to generate credible evidence that can inform policy decisions, strengthen implementation, and improve governance outcomes. According to Mr. Jarwolo, evidence-based research remains essential for advancing accountability, transparency, and responsive governance, while ensuring that public policies translate into meaningful development results for citizens.

Mr. Jarwolo further highlighted that the assessment forms part of a broader three-year governance initiative supported by the Government of Ireland, aimed at strengthening democratic governance, accountability, citizen participation, and inclusive development in Liberia. Although the assessment focused on three counties, he noted that the findings carry national relevance and offer valuable lessons that can support decentralization reforms across all fifteen counties.

Reflecting on Naymote's longstanding commitment to governance reform, Mr. Jarwolo noted that the organization has consistently collaborated with government institutions, civil society organizations, development partners, and local communities to promote citizen engagement, public accountability, and democratic participation. He encouraged stakeholders to engage constructively with the findings and recommendations, stressing that collective action and collaboration are essential to achieving the goals of decentralization and improving public service delivery nationwide.

He also informed participants that both a comprehensive assessment report and a concise policy brief had been developed to ensure that the findings are accessible to policymakers, development partners, civil society actors, the media, and citizens. These publications, he noted, are intended to support informed dialogue, policy advocacy, and evidence-driven decision-making at both local and national levels.

In concluding, Mr. Jarwolo reaffirmed Naymote's conviction that informed and empowered citizens are fundamental to building a strong and resilient democracy. He emphasized that citizens who understand government plans, budgets, policies, and commitments are better positioned to participate meaningfully in governance processes and hold public institutions accountable. He expressed appreciation to the Government of Ireland, research consultant, county stakeholders, government representatives, civil society actors, and all partners who contributed to the successful completion of the assessment.

Mr. Jarwolo concluded by expressing confidence that the findings and recommendations will serve as a valuable national advocacy tool to strengthen decentralization, improve local governance systems, enhance the implementation of County Development Agendas, and promote sustainable and inclusive development across Liberia.

5.0 Presentation of Research Findings

Benedict Korlubah - Consultant

Benedict Korlubah thanked participants for attending and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to present the findings of the assessment. He noted that the study focused on evaluating how Liberia's decentralization reforms are being implemented, particularly the effectiveness of County Development Agendas (CDAs) and County Councils in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties.

5.1 Understanding Liberia's Legacy of Centralization

Before presenting the findings, the consultant provided a brief overview of Liberia's governance history. For many years, most government decisions, services, and development planning were managed from Monrovia. As a result, people living in rural areas often had to travel long distances to access government services or participate in decisions affecting their communities. This centralized system led to several challenges, including:

- Limited citizen participation in governance.
- Development decisions being made mainly at the national level.
- Unequal distribution of public services.
- Development gaps between Monrovia and the counties.
- Limited access to opportunities and resources in rural communities.

To address these challenges, the Government of Liberia introduced decentralization reforms aimed at bringing government closer to the people. Key reforms included the National Decentralization Policy, the Local Government Act of 2018, the establishment of County Service Centers, and the development of County Development Agendas. These initiatives were designed to improve local governance, increase citizen participation, and strengthen service delivery across the country.

5.2 Purpose of the Assessment

This study sought to determine whether the commitments made under Liberia's decentralization framework are being translated into practice at the county level.
The research focused on three key questions:

1. Are government funding commitments to counties being fulfilled?
2. Are county resources being used in alignment with County Development Agendas?
3. Are local governance institutions functioning effectively as intended under the Local Government Act?

5.3 Research Methodology

The study examined:

- County Development Agendas (CDAs)
- County budgets
- County Development Funds (CDFs)
- Social Development Funds (SDFs)
- County Service Center allocations
- Procurement plans
- County Council and County Development Steering Committee records

The research also included interviews with government officials, local leaders, County Council members, and other stakeholders.

5.3.1 Theoretical Framework

The assessment was guided by three major theories:

- **Fiscal Federalism**
  This theory examines how financial resources and responsibilities are distributed between central and local governments.

- **Subsidiarity**
  This principle emphasizes that decisions should be made as closely as possible to the people affected by those decisions.

- **Principal-Agent Theory**
  This framework examines the relationship between central government institutions and local government structures, particularly how authority and responsibilities are delegated.

5.4 Key Findings

5.4.1 Significant Funding Gaps Exist

The research found substantial differences between:

- The funding required to implement County Development Agendas.
- The Government's stated political commitments.
- The actual resources reaching counties.

For example, many County Development Agendas require approximately US$10 million or more annually to implement planned projects. The Government's political commitment has generally been estimated at approximately US$5 million per county annually. However, actual allocations received through County Development Funds, Social Development Funds, and County Service Center budgets were significantly lower.

In several cases, counties received less than US$1 million annually against much larger development requirements. *(See table 1 below)*

Table 1: FY2025 CDA Funding Gap Analysis

County	FY2025 Funding Requirement for CDA	GOL Commitment for CDA FY2025	Direct GOL appropriation FY2025 (CDF, SDF, &CSC) CDA	GAP for CDA FY2025 Funding Requirement and FY 2025 Appropriation	Gap Percentage
Bong	$10,250,000.00	$5,000,000.00	$711,016.00	4,288,984	86%
Grand Bassa	$6,475,000.00	$5,000,000.00	$1,211,666.00	3,788,334	76%
Margibi	$9,175,000.00	$5,000,000.00	$371,666.00	4,628,334	93%
Total	$25,900,000.00	$15,000,000.00	$2,294,348.00	$12,705,652.00	85%

5.4.2 Budget Disbursement Performance Is Relatively Strong

The study found that when funds are appropriated in the national budget, disbursement rates are generally high. However, a major challenge remains the timing of disbursements.
Many county officials reported receiving funds late in the fiscal year, often during the fourth quarter. Late disbursement affects planning, procurement, project implementation, and overall service delivery. ***(See Table 2 below)***

Table 2: Gap Analysis for CDA funding with GoL Appropriation for 2025

GOL Appropriation and Disbursement Analysis to Counties					
County	Budget	FY2024 Appropriated	FY2024 Disbursed	FY2025 Appropriated	FY2025 Disbursed
Grand Bassa	CDF	$ 186,666.00	$ 186,666.00	$ 186,666.00	$ 186,666.00
	SDF	$ 1,000,000.00	$ 1,000,000.00	$ 1,000,000.00	$ 1,000,000.00
	CSC	$ 13,333.00	$ 13,333.00	$ 25,000.00	$ 25,000.00
	Total	**$ 1,199,999.00**	**$ 1,199,999.00**	**$ 1,211,666.00**	**$ 1,211,666.00**
Margibi	CDF	$ 186,666.00	$ 186,000.00	$ 186,666.00	$ 186,666.00
	SDF	$ 160,000.00	$ 160,000.00	$ 160,000.00	$ 160,000.00
	CSC	$ 13,333.00	$ 13,333.00	$ 25,000.00	$ 25,000.00
	Total	**$ 359,999.00**	**$ 359,333.00**	**$ 371,666.00**	**$ 371,666.00**
Bong	CDF	$ 186,666.00	$ 186,000.00	$ 186,666.00	$ 186,666.00
	SDF	$ 500,000.00	$ 500,000.00	$ 500,000.00	$ 500,000.00
	CSC	$ 13,333.00	$ 13,333.00	$ 25,000.00	$ 24,350.00
	Total	**$ 699,999.00**	**$ 699,333.00**	**$ 711,666.00**	**$ 711,016.00**

5.4.3 Strong Alignment Between Projects and County Development Agendas

The assessment found that most county-funded projects were linked to priorities identified within County Development Agendas. Approximately 82 percent of projects demonstrated direct alignment with development priorities. The remaining projects were considered enabling activities that supported county administration and governance functions. This suggests that counties are generally following their development plans when selecting projects.

5.4.4 Procurement Planning Challenges

The study identified weaknesses in procurement planning and transparency. While many projects appeared in county development plans, a significant number were not reflected in procurement plans. This raise concerns regarding:

- Procurement compliance.
- Transparency.
- Project implementation oversight.

Researchers also observed that procurement plans were often difficult to access.

5.4.5 Weak Institutional Understanding

One of the most concerning findings involved limited understanding of governance structures among local officials. Many respondents demonstrated confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of:

- County Councils.
- County Development Steering Committees (CDSCs).

- Other local governance institutions.

Some officials were unable to clearly distinguish between the functions of these bodies despite being involved in county governance processes. The research also found that County Development Steering Committee meetings were irregular or inactive in some counties.

6.0 Questions and Answers Session

The question-and-answer session provided participants with an opportunity to engage with the assessment findings and explore key issues related to Liberia's decentralization process. Discussions centered on transparency, funding, local governance structures, procurement practices, and the implementation of decentralization reforms. For clarity and ease of reference, the questions have been organized by thematic areas, followed by the responses provided by the consultant.

- **Political Ownership of County Development Projects**

  Participants raised concerns that development projects implemented through public resources are often publicly associated with individual politicians, who subsequently claim personal credit for their completion. It was suggested that local authorities should play a more visible role in informing citizens that such projects are financed through public funds and belong to the people rather than individual political leaders.

  In response, the consultant emphasized the importance of transparency and public education. He noted that projects financed through County Development Funds, Social Development Funds, and other public financing mechanisms should be recognized as public investments. Strengthening citizen awareness would help promote accountability and ensure a better understanding of how development projects are funded.

- **County Service Center Financing**

  Participants sought clarification regarding funding allocations for County Service Centers (CSCs), particularly whether the assessment included revenues generated from service fees and other internally generated income.

  The consultant explained that the assessment focused primarily on government allocations and resources over which County Councils exercise decision-making authority. Revenue generated directly by County Service Centers was outside the primary scope of the study.

- **Perspectives on Centralization and Decentralization**

  A representative of the Governance Commission observed that the presentation focused largely on the limitations of Liberia's centralized governance system and cautioned against overlooking the achievements made under centralization, including major infrastructure development and institution-building efforts.

  The consultant acknowledged this observation and clarified that the study was not intended to portray centralization negatively. Rather, it sought to explain the historical context that led to decentralization reforms while recognizing that centralization also contributed significantly to national development and state-building.

- **Delayed Disbursement of County Funds**
  Participants highlighted the challenges associated with the late release of county development funds, noting that delays often leave counties with insufficient time to complete projects within the fiscal year. Concerns were also raised about the prioritization of administrative expenditures over development investments.

  The consultant agreed that delayed disbursement remains a major implementation challenge. While county development funds do not necessarily expire at the end of the fiscal year, delays affect procurement processes, project planning, and implementation. The study therefore recommends more predictable and timely quarterly disbursements.

- **Procurement Planning and Compliance**
  Participants requested further clarification on findings relating to procurement compliance and the extent to which county projects were reflected in procurement plans.

  The consultant explained that the assessment measured compliance both by the number of projects included in procurement plans and by the value of those projects. While some counties included a majority of projects in their procurement plans, several high-value projects were omitted, raising concerns about transparency, oversight, and compliance with procurement requirements.

- **Transparency in the Use of Extractive Industry Revenues**
  Concerns were raised regarding revenues generated from mining and other extractive industries. Participants noted that citizens often find it difficult to identify projects funded through revenues derived from natural resources.

  The consultant acknowledged the importance of the issue but explained that the study did not specifically trace development projects to individual revenue streams. Nevertheless, he emphasized the need for greater transparency so that communities can better understand how revenues generated from natural resources contribute to local development.

- **Role of the Governance Commission**
  Participants sought clarification on the Governance Commission's role in advancing decentralization reforms. Discussions highlighted the Commission's responsibility for promoting governance reforms, supporting implementation of decentralization policies, and providing oversight and guidance on the implementation of the Local Government Act.

- **Legislative Influence on County Development Priorities**
  Questions were also raised regarding the extent to which legislators influence county development allocations and project selection.

  The consultant noted that the study did not find direct evidence of political interference in current county project selection processes. However, he acknowledged that legislators historically exercised significant influence through county caucus arrangements. While county governance structures now play a greater role in determining development priorities, continued monitoring remains important to safeguard the integrity of the process.

- **Additional Observations**
  During the discussion, representatives of the Governance Commission indicated that some of the issues identified in the study are already being examined through ongoing monitoring activities. Preliminary analyses have revealed gaps between budget allocations and procurement plans, particularly where high-value projects appear in budget documents but are absent from procurement records. These findings are expected to contribute to future oversight and accountability efforts.

6.1 Key Takeaways

The discussion underscored the need to strengthen transparency, improve procurement compliance, enhance citizen awareness, increase county-level funding, and accelerate the implementation of decentralization reforms. Participants generally agreed that while Liberia has established a strong legal and policy framework for decentralization, significant efforts are still required to ensure that authority, resources, and decision-making powers are effectively transferred to local communities.

7.0 Reactions and Remarks from Stakeholders

7.1 Development Partners

7.1.1 Embassy of Ireland

The representative of the Embassy of Ireland, Godo Kolubah expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the launch of the policy brief and commended Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, the Governance Commission, and the consulting team for undertaking a timely and important assessment of decentralization and local governance in Liberia.

The Embassy noted that the findings provide valuable insights into the realities of decentralization implementation at the county level and reaffirmed Ireland's longstanding support for decentralization as a key strategy for promoting inclusive development, accountability, citizen participation, and effective service delivery. While acknowledging the progress Liberia has made through the establishment of key legal and institutional frameworks, including County Councils and the Revenue Sharing Law, the representative observed that significant implementation challenges remain. In particular, County Development Agendas continue to face serious resource constraints, limiting the ability of local authorities to implement community-prioritized development projects.

Mr. Kolubah further highlighted that the transfer of authority from central government institutions to county-level structures remains incomplete. As a result, many citizens continue to face difficulties accessing government services and are often required to travel to Monrovia, increasing costs and delays, particularly for women and vulnerable groups.

Concerns were also raised regarding the limited implementation of the Revenue Sharing Law, noting that insufficient resource transfers continue to restrict the capacity of local governments to address development priorities effectively. The Embassy encouraged all stakeholders to carefully consider the findings and recommendations of the study and to use them as a basis for strengthening decentralization reforms. The representative emphasized that successful decentralization requires not only strong policies and legal frameworks but also adequate resources, effective devolution of authority, and sustained commitment to decentralization.

7.1.2 UNDP

The representative of UNDP, Eric Boykai expressed appreciation to Naymote and its partners for conducting the assessment and contributing to national discussions on decentralization, local governance, and citizen-centered service delivery. Speaking on behalf of the Deputy Resident Representative, Mr. Louis Kuukpen, he emphasized the importance of evidence-based research in informing policy reforms, strengthening accountability, and promoting meaningful citizen participation.

UNDP acknowledged the significant progress Liberia has made in advancing decentralization through the adoption of key legal and policy frameworks, including the Local Government Act, the National Decentralization Policy, the Decentralization Implementation Plan, and the Revenue Sharing Law. However, it was noted that the primary challenge now lies in translating these policies into effective action through stronger implementation, institutional development, fiscal decentralization, and the full transfer of authority to local governments.

Mr. Boykai highlighted UNDP's ongoing support to Liberia's decentralization efforts through the Liberia Decentralization Support Program (LDSP). This support has focused on strengthening County Service Centers, improving County Treasury operations, enhancing public financial management systems, supporting local development planning processes, promoting citizen feedback mechanisms, and advancing digital governance initiatives.

Despite these achievements, the representative noted that considerable challenges remain. Effective decentralization, it was emphasized, is essential for strengthening democratic governance, increasing transparency and accountability, expanding citizen participation, and ensuring equitable access to public services and development opportunities across the country.

UNDP underscored the importance of empowering local institutions and authorities to effectively perform their functions. Particular attention was drawn to the need for full implementation of the Revenue Sharing Law, which is critical to providing counties with the financial resources necessary to fulfill their development responsibilities and respond to local priorities. The representative also highlighted ongoing collaboration between UNDP and the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) to strengthen local revenue generation. Pilot property tax initiatives in Grand Bassa County have identified approximately 10,000 properties with significant revenue potential, demonstrating opportunities to improve domestic resource mobilization at the local level.

In closing, UNDP welcomed the policy brief as an important contribution to national dialogue and reflection on decentralization. The organization reaffirmed its commitment to working alongside the Government of Liberia, development partners, civil society organizations, and local communities to advance inclusive governance, strengthen local institutions, and support sustainable decentralization throughout the country.

7.2 Government Institutions

7.2.1 Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP)

The representative of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) expressed appreciation to Naymote, the Governance Commission, and all partners involved in producing the assessment. The Ministry commended Naymote for its continued contribution to governance and development discourse through evidence-based research and policy analysis.

The representative noted that studies of this nature provide valuable opportunities for government institutions to reflect on existing policies and implementation practices. While research findings may not always be conclusive, they offer important insights that can inform policymaking, strengthen decision-making, and support continuous improvement in governance processes. Although the Ministry had not yet conducted a comprehensive review of the report, it acknowledged that the presentation highlighted several important issues related to decentralization and local governance. Some of the findings were consistent with challenges already recognized by government, while others would require further examination and analysis.

The Ministry welcomed the report in good faith and emphasized the importance of constructive engagement between government institutions and civil society organizations. It reaffirmed its commitment to reviewing the study’s recommendations and maintaining open dialogue on issues affecting governance and development. Regarding fiscal decentralization, the representative highlighted ongoing government efforts to strengthen financial management at the county level. These efforts include plans to establish six additional County Treasury Offices across the country, which are expected to improve local financial administration and enhance the management of public resources.

The Ministry further noted that the implementation of the Revenue Sharing Law will play an important role in increasing resources available for local development and supporting the broader decentralization agenda.

7.2.2 Ministry of Local Government (MLG)

The Director of Decentralization at the Ministry of Local Government stated that the Ministry does not regard the report in a negative light. Instead, it views the presentation as an important opportunity to reflect on current progress, identify gaps, and strengthen the implementation of decentralization efforts. The Ministry acknowledged that while there may be areas of agreement and disagreement with specific findings, it welcomes constructive feedback aimed at improving governance and service delivery.

It was further emphasized that civil society organizations play a key role in national development by offering alternative perspectives and supporting efforts to strengthen governance, rather than simply criticizing government actions. The Ministry noted that the findings presented provide valuable insights that can help improve implementation strategies, particularly in the area of fiscal decentralization, which remains a major challenge in the decentralization process.

On behalf of the Minister and Deputy Minister, the Director expressed appreciation for the effort behind the study and reaffirmed commitment to carefully reviewing the report and considering its recommendations as part of ongoing efforts to implement Liberia's decentralization agenda.

7.2.3 Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC)

The Executive Director, Mr. James K. Kingsley, Sr of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), speaking on behalf of the Executive Chairperson, Commissioners, management, and staff, expressed appreciation to Naymote and the Governance Commission and all partners for organizing the event. The Executive Director emphasized that decentralization is a key factor in improving public service delivery, noting that citizens should not be required to travel to Monrovia to access services that can be effectively delivered at the local level.

It was further highlighted that one of the critical issues raised by the study is the timely release of resources. Delays in funding were identified as a major constraint affecting projects implementation and the delivery of essential services. The Executive Director of the LACC stressed that if decentralization is to be treated as a national priority, then financial commitments must be matched with timely and predictable resource allocation to support effective implementation at the county level.

7.2.4 Ministry of Information (MoI)

The Ministry of Information expressed appreciation to Naymote and the consulting team for the production of the study, acknowledging the significant effort invested in its preparation. The Ministry commended all stakeholders involved and reaffirmed its readiness to support public awareness initiatives related to decentralization and governance reform. It noted that through national media platforms, community radio stations, and other public information channels, it remains committed to working with partners to ensure citizens are well informed about governance processes and development priorities.

The Ministry further emphasized that public awareness is a critical component of strengthening citizen participation, accountability, and effective governance.

7.3 Civil Society Organizations

7.3.1 Civil Society Partners

Ms. Georgina Coker, General Project Coordinator of the Governance Consortium, speaking on behalf of the Consortium implementing the Strengthening Political Governance and Accountability Project, expressed appreciation to Naymote for leading the initiative. It was noted that a key objective of their work is to enhance citizen participation, strengthen accountability, and improve the management of public resources. The Ms. Coker highlighted that the policy brief directly supports these goals by providing evidence that enables citizens to better engage in local development planning and decision-making processes.

The consortium reaffirmed its continued commitment to supporting efforts that amplify citizen voices and promote stronger accountability mechanisms across Liberia.

8.0 Key Outcomes of the Policy Brief launch

- ✓ Policy brief officially launched
- ✓ Stakeholders committed to reviewing findings
- ✓ Government institutions agreed to examine recommendations
- ✓ Discussions highlighted the need for improved fiscal decentralization
- ✓ Greater attention drawn to procurement and accountability concerns

9.0 Conclusion

Liberia has already made the laws and created the systems for decentralization. Now the real issue is whether money, power, and decisions are actually reaching local counties and communities.

The country has a strong foundation, but putting it into action is still difficult. Counties have plans and structures, but they do not get enough money on time, and coordination between institutions is weak. This slows down development and service delivery. Even so, there is progress and agreement among government, partners, and civil society that decentralization is important. It helps bring services closer to the people, improves accountability, and strengthens unity in the country.

What is needed now is simple, move from promises to action, from plans to results, and from centralized control in Monrovia to stronger local governments in the counties. If Liberia succeeds in doing this, decentralization will not just change how government works, it will improve how people receive services and build stronger trust between citizens and the state.

10.0 Recommendations

1. Shift from flat rate appropriation to needs-based allocation
2. Synchronize earlier disbursement to the counties
3. Operationalize revenue sharing of 40% local revenue retention formula
4. Fast-track technical readiness: invest in advance technical assessments and counties should link every CA priority to a bidding package

5. Publish inclusion registers: mandate that counties publish a procurement inclusion register
6. Publicise formal TORs of the CDSC and County Council
7. Synchronize oversight routines: Institutionalize predictable, quarterly CDSC meetings
8. Ensure staffing sustainability: ensure personnel for new CDA-founded facilities are transitioned from volunteer status to the official government payroll
9. Mandate climate resilience: require climate-resilient materials and elevated designs in all infrastructure contracts
10. Strengthen Fiscal Decentralization and Increase County Funding
11. Ensure Timely and Predictable Budget Disbursement
12. Build Capacity of Local Governance Institutions
13. Fully Implement the Local Government Act (2018)
14. Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, and Oversight Systems


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Vote of Thanks
Joshua D. Cleon
Deputy Program Director, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development

Distinguished government officials, representatives of development partners, members of civil society organizations, county authorities, members of the media, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, it is my distinct honor and privilege to deliver this vote of thanks as we conclude the launch of the Policy Brief on the Assessment of Decentralization Implementation in Liberia.

Today's event has provided an important platform for reflection, dialogue, and collective learning on the progress, challenges, and opportunities associated with decentralization reforms in our country. The insightful presentations, thoughtful contributions, and constructive discussions have reaffirmed the importance of strengthening local governance systems to ensure that decentralization delivers meaningful benefits to citizens across Liberia.

We are especially grateful to the Government of Ireland for its generous support and partnership. Through its continued investment in democratic governance, accountability, and citizen participation, this initiative has been made possible. Your support reflects a shared commitment to strengthening institutions and empowering citizens to actively participate in shaping Liberia's development.

I would also like to recognize and thank the researchers, consultant, and technical team whose dedication and professionalism made this assessment possible. Your hard work in collecting, analyzing, and documenting evidence has produced findings that will contribute significantly to policy dialogue and reform efforts across the country.

To our partners from civil society organizations, community-based organizations, the media, academia, and development agencies, we deeply appreciate your participation and contributions. Your engagement enriches public discourse and strengthens collective efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and responsive governance.

Special thanks go to the county authorities, local government officials, community leaders, and citizens of Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties who shared their experiences and perspectives during the assessment process. The findings presented today are grounded in your realities and reflect your aspirations for more effective local governance and improved public service delivery.

As we leave here today, let us remember that the true value of this policy brief will not be measured by its publication alone, but by the actions it inspires. The recommendations contained in this report present an opportunity for government institutions, development partners, civil society, and citizens to work together in addressing implementation gaps and advancing decentralization reforms that improve the lives of our people.

Naymote remains committed to using the findings of this assessment as a tool for advocacy, dialogue, and policy engagement at both local and national levels. We look forward to continued collaboration with all stakeholders to ensure that decentralization becomes a stronger vehicle for accountable governance, citizen participation, and sustainable development throughout Liberia.

Once again, thank you all for your presence, your contributions, and your unwavering commitment to strengthening governance and democracy in Liberia.

May we continue to work together toward a more inclusive, accountable, and prosperous Liberia.

God bless you, and God bless the Republic of Liberia.


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