

NATIONAL DIALOGUE

“Enhancing Local Governance and Accelerating County Development Agenda (CDA) Implementation in Liberia”



Government
of Ireland
International
Development
Programme



CENTAL



REPORT

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Acronyms

Acronyms	Meaning
AAID	ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development
CDA	County Development Agenda
CCM	County Council Member
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSC	County Service Center
GC	Governance Commission
GOL	Government of Liberia
HOR	House of Representatives
LACC	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
LDSP	Liberia Decentralization Support Program
LGC	Local Government Act
LRC	Law Reform Commission
MACS	Ministries, Agencies and Commissions
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MLG	Ministry of Local Government
PFM	Public Financial Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme



Georgina C. Coker, CSO Governance Consortium General Program Coordinator

1.0 Executive Summary

The National Dialogue on “Enhancing Local Governance and Accelerating County Development Agenda (CDA) Implementation in Liberia” was held on 19 August 2026 in Monrovia. The dialogue brought together representatives from government institutions, the Legislature, county authorities, County Councils, civil society organizations, development partners, the media, and other governance stakeholders to examine the progress, challenges, and opportunities in Liberia’s decentralization process and the implementation of County Development Agendas.

The dialogue recognized that Liberia has made important progress in establishing the legal and institutional framework for decentralization, particularly through the Local Government Act and the revenue-sharing law. However, the implementation of decentralization remains slow. The transfer of functions, decision-making authority, staff, and resources from central government to counties is still limited, making it difficult for counties to fully implement development priorities and provide services closer to citizens.

Participants identified several major challenges affecting CDA implementation, including inadequate and delayed financing, weak coordination among national and county institutions, limited technical and administrative capacity, procurement delays, unclear institutional roles, weak monitoring and accountability, and inadequate County Service Centres. These challenges continue to delay development projects and force many citizens to travel to Monrovia to access services that should be available at the county level.

A major theme of the dialogue was the need to move from plans and commitments to implementation and results. Participants emphasized that the success of decentralization should be measured by completed development projects, improved public services, stronger accountability, and visible improvements in citizens’ lives. They also stressed that citizens must participate not only in identifying development priorities but also in monitoring projects and assessing results.

The dialogue further highlighted the need for predictable and timely county financing, stronger County Councils, clearer roles among county institutions, improved coordination, strengthened local capacity, and more effective oversight. Government outlined plans to accelerate the transfer of appropriate functions to counties, strengthen County Service Centers, establish a Local Government Training Institute, and improve the management and release of resources for county development priorities.

The dialogue resulted in commitments and recommendations for government, the Legislature, county authorities, civil society, development partners, and other stakeholders. The discussions reaffirmed that effective decentralization requires authority, resources, capacity, citizen participation, and accountability at the local level. This report therefore calls for sustained action to ensure that County Development Agendas are properly financed, implemented, monitored, and translated into tangible benefits for communities across Liberia.

2.0 Introduction

The National Dialogue on “Enhancing Local Governance and Accelerating County Development Agenda Implementation in Liberia” was held on 19 August 2026 at the Governance Commission in Monrovia. The dialogue brought together representatives from government institutions, the Legislature, county authorities, County Councils, civil society organizations, development partners, the media, and other governance stakeholders.

Organized by Naymote Partners for Democratic Development in collaboration with the Governance Commission, and the Ministry of Local Government the dialogue was held under the Strengthening Political Governance and Accountability in Liberia Programme, with support from the Embassy of Ireland.

This report presents the key discussions, findings, commitments, and recommendations from the dialogue. It focuses on the progress and challenges in Liberia’s decentralization process and the implementation of County Development Agendas (CDAs), with particular attention to financing, institutional coordination, capacity, citizen participation, service delivery, and accountability. The discussions highlighted that, despite the legal framework for decentralization, the transfer of responsibilities, authority, staff, and resources to counties remains slow. Participants identified limited and delayed funding, weak coordination, inadequate technical capacity, procurement delays, unclear institutional roles, and weak monitoring and accountability as major challenges affecting CDA implementation. The limited capacity of County Service Centres to deliver services was also highlighted.

The dialogue further emphasized the need for greater citizen participation, stronger County Councils, improved coordination among national and county institutions, timely financing, effective oversight, and strengthened local capacity. Participants also discussed practical measures, including the transfer of appropriate functions to counties, strengthening County Service Centres, establishing a Local Government Training Institute, and improving the management and timely release of funds for county priorities.

This report concludes with key commitments and policy recommendations aimed at strengthening local governance, accelerating CDA implementation, improving accountability, and ensuring that county development priorities result in better public services and tangible benefits for citizens.

3.0 Objectives of the Dialogue

The National Dialogue sought to strengthen collaboration among government institutions, the Legislature, county authorities, County Councils, civil society organizations, development partners, and citizens to advance decentralization, effective local governance, accountability, and inclusive development in Liberia. Specifically, the dialogue aimed to:

1. Assess progress and identify challenges affecting decentralization and the implementation of County Development Agendas across Liberia.
2. Examine financing, institutional capacity, coordination, and service delivery challenges affecting county-level development and the effective use of public resources.
3. Promote citizen participation, transparency, and accountability in county planning, budgeting, project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
4. Develop practical recommendations and commitments to accelerate decentralization, strengthen local institutions, improve service delivery, and ensure that county development priorities produce measurable results for citizens.

4.0 Dialogue Methodology and Approach

The National Dialogue used an inclusive and participatory approach to ensure that different groups had the opportunity to share their views, experiences, and ideas. About 60 people took part in the dialogue, including representatives from government ministries and agencies, integrity institutions, civil society organizations, development partners, the media, county authorities, and other governance actors. The discussion was conducted through a panel session, followed by an open question-and-answer period.

Key institutions, including the House of Representatives, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), Law Reform Commission (LRC), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), CENTAL-Liberia, County Officials, and County Council Members (CCM), contributed to the discussion. They shared their experiences and views on how the Local Government Act (LGC), County Development Agendas (CDAs), and public funds can be properly used to improve the lives of citizens across Liberia. Participants were given the opportunity to interact with the panellists by asking questions, sharing practical experiences, identifying challenges, and suggesting possible solutions to improve the implementation of CDAs.

The findings in this report were collected from the presentations, panel discussions, questions and comments from participants, and observations made during the dialogue. The report summarizes the main issues discussed, responses from relevant institutions, key findings, and recommendations provided by participants to help strengthen governance, accountability, and the implementation of development programs in Liberia.

5.0 Proceedings of the Dialogue

5.1 Welcome Statement

*Hon. Alaric Tokpa, Acting Chairman
Governance Commission*

The Acting Chairman welcomed participants to the National Dialogue on Enhancing Local Governance and Accelerating County Development Agenda (CDA) Implementation in Liberia, emphasizing the importance of strengthening local governance, citizen participation, accountability, and public service delivery. He recognized the contributions of Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, the Ministry of Local Government, the Embassy of Ireland, and the Governance CSOs Consortium for supporting efforts to improve democratic governance and decentralization in Liberia.



The Acting Chairman highlighted the Local Government Act of 2018 as an important step toward decentralization and greater citizen involvement in county-level decision-making. The Act provides a framework for County Councils to participate in reviewing and approving County Development Agendas, development plans, and county budgets. He also noted the Government's commitment under the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID) 2025-2029 to promoting transparency, accountability, good governance, and citizen participation.

However, the Acting Chairman identified several challenges affecting local governance and CDA implementation, including delays in development projects, weak coordination among local actors, limited citizen participation in planning and budgeting, inadequate monitoring and reporting, and limited institutional capacity at the local level. The dialogue was therefore presented as an opportunity for stakeholders to openly discuss these challenges and

identify practical solutions to improve local governance, strengthen accountability and coordination, and ensure that development priorities identified by citizens lead to visible improvements in their communities.

Finally, the Acting Chairman emphasized that the success of decentralization should be measured by better public services, greater citizen participation, increased accountability, and tangible development outcomes. Participants were encouraged to engage openly and respectfully and to focus on developing practical recommendations that can strengthen county governance and accelerate CDA implementation across Liberia.

5.2 Overview of the Dialogue

Joshua Dennis Cleon

Deputy Program Director, Naymote

The National Dialogue on Enhancing Local Governance and Accelerating County Development Agenda (CDA) Implementation is a timely national platform for confronting one of Liberia's most important governance challenges: how to translate decentralization laws, county development priorities, and public resources into tangible improvements in the lives of citizens.

The dialogue is convened under the Strengthening Political Governance and Accountability in Liberia Program, implemented through the Governance CSOs Consortium including Naymote, CENTAL and Center for Democratic Governance, with support from the Embassy of Ireland in Liberia. It responds directly to evidence generated through Naymote Partners for Democratic Development's assessment of CDA implementation in Bong, Grand Bassa, and Margibi Counties conducted from April-May 2026. Evidence from the accessed counties shows that significant implementation challenges remain. Structural fiscal gaps, procurement bottlenecks, weak institutional coordination, limited administrative capacity, and delayed budget disbursements continue to undermine the ability of counties to translate development priorities into tangible outcomes. While county authorities have demonstrated commitment and alignment with County Development Agendas (CDAs), progress remains constrained by inadequate resources and weak systems for implementation and oversight.

The central question at this dialogue is how we move from policy commitment to implementation, from plans to results, and from decentralization on paper to accountable, citizen-centered governance in practice. County Development Agendas must become more than planning documents; they must become instruments for delivering measurable development outcomes, strengthening citizen trust, and making local governance work for every county and community.

The national dialogue will bring together key stakeholders including representatives of the Legislature, government institutions, county authorities, civil society, CAAT members, and development partners; to discuss practical ways to strengthen local governance, promote meaningful citizen participation, accelerate the implementation of County Development Agendas, and improve public service delivery across Liberia. Its goal is to strengthen local governance systems and multi-stakeholder collaboration so that county priorities are implemented in an accountable, inclusive, and citizen centered manner. The program is deliberately structured to move from context and evidence to institutional perspectives, practical dialogue, commitments and action.

Today, remarks will be made by the Embassy of Ireland and UNDP, followed by the special statement from the Ministry of Local Government and Liberian Legislature. The program will feature a panel discussion on “Accelerating County Development Agenda Implementation: Fiscal Devolution, Institutional Coordination, and Implementation Readiness. It is expected to assess and document county financing and disbursement challenges, alignment of citizen priorities with budgets and procurement plans, institutional coordination, implementation capacity, and practical reforms needed to improve accountability and public service delivery. It is part of ongoing efforts to advance inclusive, accountable, and responsive local governance in Liberia.

The National Dialogue provides an opportunity for stakeholders to move from diagnosing the challenges to agreeing on reforms that can be implemented, monitored, and measured.

The ambition should be clear: stronger County Councils, better institutional coordination, predictable and transparent financing, meaningful citizen participation, stronger oversight, and county development priorities that translate into visible improvements in public service delivery.

5.3 Remarks

5.3.1 Embassy of Ireland

The Embassy of Ireland expressed its support for the National Dialogue on enhancing local governance and accelerating the implementation of County Development Agendas (CDAs). The Embassy commended Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, the Ministry of Local Government, and the Governance Commission for organizing the dialogue under the Strengthening Political Governance and Accountability in Liberia Programme, supported by Ireland.



His Excellency Gerard Considine, Ambassador of Ireland to Liberia

The Embassy reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to inclusive governance, accountability, sustainable development, and citizen participation. It emphasized that bringing decision-making, public resources, and services closer to citizens is important for strengthening democracy, reducing inequality, and building public trust. The Embassy recognized progress made through Liberia's decentralization reforms, particularly the establishment of County Councils and the County Development Agenda, which provide opportunities for citizens to participate in identifying and prioritizing local development needs.

However, the Embassy noted that the implementation of CDAs continues to face major challenges. These include insufficient funding for county priorities, delayed disbursement of resources to county service centres, incomplete transfer of signatory powers, weak institutional capacity, and poor coordination among relevant institutions. As a result, many development priorities identified by communities remain unimplemented.

The Embassy emphasized that these challenges can be addressed through open dialogue, stronger collaboration, and collective action. Participants were encouraged to focus on practical and achievable solutions rather than only discussing existing problems. The Embassy further called for an action plan that is specific, time-bound, and supported by clear responsibilities among stakeholders.

In closing, the Embassy reaffirmed Ireland's continued commitment to supporting evidence-based advocacy, institutional strengthening, and policy reforms aimed at making decentralization more effective and ensuring that local governance delivers meaningful benefits to ordinary Liberians.

5.3.2 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The UNDP, represented by Eric Boykai, Interim National Program Coordinator/M&E Analyst, Liberia Decentralization Support Program (LDSP), reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Liberia's decentralization and local governance agenda. UNDP commended the Government of Liberia, Partners for Democratic Development, the Ministry of Local Government, Governance Commission, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, and development partners for their continued efforts to bring governance and development closer to citizens.

UNDP emphasized that effective local governance is essential for inclusive and sustainable development. Citizens should not only benefit from development projects but should also participate in identifying priorities, making decisions, monitoring implementation, and holding public institutions accountable.

The remarks highlighted Liberia's progress in establishing the legal and institutional framework for decentralization, particularly through the Local Government Act of 2018 and Revenue Sharing Act of 2021. UNDP has supported these reforms through assistance to County Development Agendas, community consultations, County Service Centres, fiscal decentralization, public financial management, citizen feedback mechanisms, performance management, and service delivery.

UNDP identified the County Development Agenda (CDA) as an important tool for ensuring that county development reflects the actual needs and priorities of local communities. However, effective CDA implementation requires reliable data, adequate financing, strong institutional coordination, effective monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.

The remarks particularly stressed the importance of implementing the Revenue Sharing Act, noting that predictable and fair financial transfers to counties would strengthen their ability to plan, finance, and implement local development priorities. Greater collaboration among national institutions, county authorities, communities, civil society, development partners, and the private sector was also identified as necessary for successful decentralization.

UNDP highlighted three key priorities for accelerating CDA implementation:

1. Strengthening local institutions and capacity so that county authorities have the skills, resources, and systems needed to deliver effective services.
2. Increasing citizen participation and accountability by creating meaningful opportunities for citizens to influence decisions and monitor development activities.
3. Ensuring adequate and equitable financing, including through the implementation of the Revenue Sharing Act and stronger monitoring of resources and results.

The statement also announced UNDP's continued support for capacity building through the proposed Local Government Training Institute, which will provide training in areas such as planning, budgeting, public financial management, procurement, accountability, and monitoring.

Additionally, UNDP noted plans to launch the Local Empowerment for Accelerated Decentralization Initiative, aimed at strengthening local governance, supporting community-driven development, and promoting sustainable natural resource management.

In closing, the UNDP reaffirmed its commitment to working with the Government of Liberia and other stakeholders to strengthen local institutions, promote citizen participation, improve fiscal decentralization, and ensure that County Development Agendas are translated into tangible improvements in the lives of Liberians.

5.4 Special Statements

5.4.1 Ministry of Local Government (MLG)

Edward K. Mulbah

Deputy Minister for Local Government and Decentralization

Ministry of Local Government

Hon. Edward K. Mulbah, Deputy Minister for Local Government and Decentralization, emphasized the importance of decentralization and citizen participation in transforming Liberia's governance system and improving public service delivery. He noted that Liberia has operated a highly centralized system since 1847, with political, administrative, and financial decisions largely concentrated in Monrovia. According to him, this centralization has contributed to unequal development, limited citizen participation, and difficulties in accessing essential services outside the capital.

The Deputy Minister stressed that Liberia is now at an important stage in its decentralization process, with the Local Government Act of 2018, Revenue Sharing Law of 2022, and Ministry of Local Government Law of 2025 providing the legal foundation for transferring political, administrative, and fiscal responsibilities to local authorities. He described these laws as important instruments for addressing the long-standing concentration of governance in Monrovia.

He further explained that decentralization is a key mechanism for accelerating the implementation of County Development Agendas (CDAs) and achieving the objectives of the Government's ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development. He identified improved public service delivery, greater transparency and accountability, increased citizen participation, local ownership, and balanced development across Liberia as major objectives of the decentralization process.

The Deputy Minister acknowledged that some progress has already been made, including the establishment of County Service Centers, functional County Councils, county development planning units, and the deployment of road construction equipment and other capacity-building initiatives across the 15 counties.



However, he identified several challenges that continue to slow decentralization. These include the slow transfer of functions, authority, and resources to local governments; limited technical capacity and infrastructure; the absence of a Local Government Fiscal Board; and the continued influence of the centralized governance system.

To address these challenges, the Government outlined three major actions:

1. High-Level Policy Dialogue: The Ministry plans to convene a high-level policy dialogue with government institutions and civil society to identify central government functions that should be transferred to local governments. A National Steering Committee will subsequently be established to coordinate and oversee the implementation of these functions.
2. Expansion of County Facilities: Government plans to construct a 32-apartment office facility in each of Liberia's 15 counties to accommodate offices of various ministries,

agencies and commissions, County Service Centres, County Treasuries, and co-located UN services. The aim is to bring government services closer to citizens.

3. Local Government Training Institute: Cabinet has endorsed the establishment of a Local Government Training Institute to address capacity gaps and improve the performance of local government officials. The Ministry is working with the University of Liberia's Regional Planning Department and a civil society organization on the proposed legislation and curriculum.

The Deputy Minister also stressed the need to accelerate fiscal decentralization through predictable transfers to counties and districts to support the implementation of priority projects identified in the CDAs. He called for greater local capacity to collect revenues such as property taxes, business licenses, and market fees, while emphasizing that local governments must also receive the necessary powers and resources to manage areas such as primary and secondary education, health, agriculture, land-use planning, feeder roads, water, electricity, sanitation, and social protection.

He encouraged Liberia to learn from decentralization experiences in countries such as Rwanda, Ghana, Kenya, and Indonesia, while adapting relevant lessons to the Liberian context. He also emphasized the importance of transferring qualified teachers, health workers, engineers, planners, procurement officers, and budget officers to counties and districts, with appropriate incentives to encourage them to remain in local communities.

In conclusion, Hon. Mulbah reaffirmed the Government's determination to advance decentralization as a long-term reform process. He called for stronger collaboration among government, civil society, development partners, and other stakeholders to strengthen local governance, increase citizen participation, accelerate CDA implementation, and improve public services for Liberians.

5.4.2 House of Representative

Hon. Hon. Dorwohn Twain Gleekia

Co-Chair of the House Committee on Revenue, Ways, Means and Finance

55th Legislature, House of Representatives

Hon. Dorwohn Twain Gleekia emphasized that the central purpose of decentralization should be to translate government policies, resources, and plans into visible improvements in the lives of ordinary Liberians. Drawing from his experience in the development and enactment of the Local Government Act, he stressed that decentralization should not remain a policy concept but must produce practical results at the community level.

He explained that, for ordinary citizens, decentralization means having access to roads, schools, health facilities, clean water, electricity, agricultural services, bridges, and responsive local government. He therefore argued that the success of decentralization should be measured by whether citizens can identify and benefit from tangible development in their communities.

The statement noted that funding is important but is not the only challenge affecting county development. Other barriers include delayed financing, procurement difficulties, weak institutional coordination, limited technical capacity, and inadequate accountability. He cautioned that increased funding alone would not automatically produce better results if the systems needed to manage and monitor resources are weak.

Hon. Gleekia also stressed that a budget allocation is not the same as development. He called for greater attention to the difference between funds that are allocated, released, spent, and the actual value delivered to communities. He urged oversight institutions to monitor the entire development process, from budgeting and procurement to project completion and the benefits received by citizens.

On citizen participation, he argued that citizens should remain involved beyond consultation meetings. Communities should participate in identifying development priorities, monitoring projects, and evaluating results. He emphasized that genuine decentralization must transfer not only responsibilities, but also authority, resources, citizen voice, and accountability to local levels.



The statement further called on the Legislature, county authorities, civil society, development partners, and citizens to take greater responsibility. Legislators were encouraged to strengthen oversight throughout the development cycle, while county authorities were urged to improve planning, implementation, reporting, and accountability. Where capacity gaps exist, government should invest in strengthening local institutions and personnel.

Hon. Gleekia stressed that Liberia has sufficient policies, strategies, and development plans, but the major challenge is implementation. He encouraged a shift toward results-based governance, where government performance is measured by completed projects, improved services, and tangible benefits to citizens rather than by the amount of money allocated or the number of meetings held.

In conclusion, he called for concrete commitments from all stakeholders, including predictable county financing, stronger legislative oversight, improved county-level accountability, continued civil society monitoring, development partner support for sustainable systems, and meaningful citizen participation. He emphasized that a County

Development Agenda is successful only when it is implemented and produces real benefits for communities, and that the ultimate measure of government performance should be what changes in the lives of ordinary Liberians after policies and plans have been put into action.

5.5 Update on GoL and CSO Consortium Engagement under the Strengthening Political Governance and Accountability Project

The General Program Coordinator, Ms. Georgina Cokar, provided an update on the Governance CSO Consortium's engagement with the Government of Liberia under the Strengthening Political Governance and Accountability in Liberia Project, supported by the Government and people of Ireland through the Embassy of Ireland in Monrovia. The Consortium, comprising the Center for Democratic Governance, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, and CENTAL, is implementing the programme in Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties.

The programme focuses on three key objectives:

1. Strengthening citizens' demand for political accountability in public resource management
2. Increasing citizens' participation in local decision-making
3. Enhancing civil society oversight of revenue sharing between central and local governments.

The Consortium has collaborated with key government and accountability institutions, including the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, Governance Commission, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Liberia Revenue Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, and county-level authorities.

Key achievements highlighted included the localization of International Anti-Corruption Day in December 2025, which provided citizens in the three counties with opportunities to raise corruption and accountability concerns with local authorities. The Consortium also established a Corruption Case Hotline and Corruption Case Tracker to facilitate reporting, monitoring, and public access to information on alleged corruption cases.

More recently, CENTAL, in partnership with the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission and the Office of the Establishment of the War Crimes Court for Liberia, convened a national dialogue advocating for the establishment of a specialized National Anti-Corruption Court, faster prosecution of corruption cases, and stronger transparency and accountability mechanisms.

The update also highlighted the impact of the simplified County Development Agenda (CDA) spearheaded by NAYMOTE. The simplified CDA is increasingly being used by citizens to make evidence-based demands regarding county development commitments. County Councils are also using it as a reference when reviewing project-related allocations submitted by county administrations, thereby promoting greater scrutiny and alignment with agreed development priorities.

In conclusion, she emphasized that accountability, citizen participation, and decentralization are interconnected elements of effective local governance. She reaffirmed the Consortium's commitment to continued collaboration with government institutions, county authorities, civil society, development partners, and citizens to strengthen accountability, participation, decentralization, and implementation of the County Development Agenda.

Key Message: Liberia has the legal framework for decentralization, but stronger implementation, accountability, capacity building, and legitimate local representation are needed.

5.6.2 Demand Perspective

Hon. Whroway Bryant
Superintendent, Montserrado County

The Superintendent focused on the practical challenges affecting the implementation of the County Development Agenda (CDA). He acknowledged progress in participatory development planning but argued that implementation remains slow because of inadequate funding, limited institutional capacity, and insufficient political commitment.

Key challenges highlighted included:

- Lack of political will and national government support for implementing county development priorities.
- Delays or inadequate transfers of development funds to counties.
- Limited staffing and insufficient capacity within county administrations.
- Many positions created under the Local Government Act remain unfilled because of resource constraints.
- County Service Centers are not functioning as effectively as expected, particularly in Montserrado.
- Delays in accessing county development funds affect implementation.
- Weak coordination and unclear relationships between Superintendents, County Councils, and other government officials create institutional tensions.
- Some officials and institutions do not clearly understand or respect the roles assigned to them under the Local Government Act.

He emphasized that the CDA should guide project identification and implementation and that national government must provide the necessary resources and support for counties to deliver on agreed priorities.



Key Message: County development planning is improving, but inadequate funding, staffing, institutional capacity, coordination, and political commitment continue to slow CDA implementation.

5.6.3 County Council Perspective

Chairperson-Grand Bassa County Council

The Chairperson of the Grand Bassa County Council emphasized the importance of coordination between national government, county administrations, County Councils, and citizens in implementing the CDA.

She noted that development planning works better when county budgets and national priorities are properly aligned and when citizens are informed about projects from the planning stage through implementation. Key points included:

- National and county budgets should be properly aligned with the CDA.
- County Councils should receive timely information on projects and available resources.
- Citizens should be informed and involved throughout project implementation.
- Communities should be able to monitor projects and provide feedback.
- Regular dialogue among Superintendents, County Councils, lawmakers, and other stakeholders is necessary.
- There is a need for greater clarity regarding the respective roles and authority of Superintendents and County Councils.
- Regular forums of this nature should continue because they provide opportunities to discuss challenges and find solutions.

Key Message: Effective CDA implementation requires joint planning, timely information, citizen involvement, and stronger coordination among county institutions.

Quita S. Miller- Bong County Council/Finance and Budget

Ms. Quita S. Miller highlighted the progress being made by County Councils in reviewing county budgets and ensuring that proposed expenditures are consistent with the County Development Agenda.

She explained that County Councils review budgets in committee, visit project sites, consult communities, and engage institutions requesting funding before approving allocations.

Key points included:

- County Councils are becoming more involved in reviewing and approving development priorities.
- Budget proposals should be checked against the CDA to ensure that resources support agreed priorities.
- County Councils should conduct regular monitoring visits before and during project implementation.
- Institutions receiving county funds should provide reports on how the funds were used.
- Regular planning and review sessions should be conducted to assess progress and identify challenges.
- Continuous training, public awareness, coordination, respect, and inclusion are necessary for effective County Council operations.

- County Councils need stronger collaboration with Superintendents, lawmakers, district officials, and communities.
- Limited resources remain a major challenge, as many competing sectors and groups seek funding from the same county budget.

Key Message: County Councils can strengthen accountability by carefully reviewing budgets, monitoring projects, requiring financial reports, and ensuring that spending is aligned with the CDA.

Madam Maria Doe-Margibi County

Madam Doe emphasized the need to fully implement decentralization so that citizens can access government services closer to where they live instead of traveling to Monrovia. Key points included:

- Government services should be provided at county service centers. Citizens should not have to travel to Monrovia for services that can be handled at the county level.
- She noted that too many government processes are still concentrated in Monrovia. This makes it difficult and expensive for people in the counties to access services.
- County service centers need the necessary staff, resources, equipment, and authority to provide services effectively.
- Government ministries and county authorities should communicate and coordinate better. County officials should be properly consulted before decisions or projects affecting their counties are made.
- She highlighted delays in approving and implementing county projects. Clear procedures and better coordination between the national and county levels are needed to speed up implementation.
- Where possible, responsibilities should be transferred to county authorities so that decisions can be made closer to the people.
- County development plans and budgets should be properly considered and aligned with national processes so that approved projects can be implemented without unnecessary delays.

Key Message: Decentralization should not only be about policies and plans but should result in real services being delivered in the counties. Government should strengthen county institutions, improve coordination, reduce unnecessary movement of processes to Monrovia, and give counties greater responsibility to respond to the needs of their citizens.



5.6.4 Supply Perspective

Hon. J. Wellington Barchue

Assistant Minister for Development Planning

Minister Barchue emphasized that the County Development Agenda and the national development agenda must be treated as connected frameworks, rather than separate processes. He explained that national priorities should be translated into county-level interventions and reflected in the national budget. Key points included:

- Stronger coordination between national and county institutions is necessary for successful CDA implementation.
- National resources should respond to priorities identified by citizens through the CDA.
- The national budget should serve as a bridge between county priorities and government implementation.
- Government-funded projects should be aligned with community needs and national development priorities.
- Development partners and NGOs should coordinate their interventions with county authorities and the agreed CDA priorities.
- Implementation must focus on measurable results and impact on citizens' lives.
- Existing capacity within counties and government institutions should be better utilized before focusing only on additional capacity building.
- Funding requests should be supported by clear project information and evidence of progress to improve financial management and accountability.
- The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning intends to work with the Ministry of Local Government to strengthen the process for reviewing and approving county funding requests.
- Citizens also have a role in monitoring projects and reporting problems or misuse of resources.

Key Message: Successful implementation of the CDA requires strong coordination, proper alignment of national and county priorities, effective use of resources, accountability, and measurable results.

6.0 Questions, Comments, and Responses

The question-and-answer session provided an opportunity for participants to seek clarification from panelists on capacity, recruitment of county officials, funding, project selection, budget approval, coordination, and delays in the implementation of the County Development Agenda (CDA).

1. Capacity at the local level

- Cllr. Varmah clarified that his reference to a lack of capacity was not intended to dismiss the abilities of county officials. Rather, he emphasized that limited technical and institutional capacity remains a national challenge, particularly at the local level. Some local officials may lack sufficient knowledge of local governance procedures, fiscal management, planning, and budgeting.
- **Need for continuous capacity building**
He recommended regular and sustained capacity-building programs for county authorities, particularly superintendents, council members, and other local officials, to enable them to effectively implement development plans and manage resources.

➤ **Decentralization and local governance**

Cllr. Varmah linked the capacity challenge to Liberia's long-standing centralization of political authority. He noted that decentralization and the strengthening of local governance are intended to bring decision-making and development closer to citizens. However, effective decentralization requires competent institutions and personnel at the local level.

➤ **Review and amendment of existing laws**

In response to the question about the role of the Commission in addressing challenges identified during the dialogue, Cllr. Varmah explained that the Law Reform Commission has a mandate to review laws and identify inconsistencies or conflicts within the legal framework. He referenced his participation in the development of the Local Government Act and has identified provisions that may require review or amendment.

➤ **Legal inconsistencies concerning local governance**

Particular concern was raised about provisions relating to the selection and appointment of traditional chiefs, which may conflict with constitutional principles. Cllr. Varmah suggested that such provisions should be reviewed to ensure that the Local Government Act and other relevant laws are consistent with the Constitution.

➤ **Constitutional gap on decentralization**

He further observed that Liberia's Constitution does not expressly provide a comprehensive framework for decentralization. In his view, this represented a missed opportunity during the constitutional reform process and remains an issue that could be considered in future legal and constitutional discussions.

➤ **Role of CSOs in accountability**

The discussion emphasized that civil society organizations should maintain an independent and critical oversight role even while collaborating with county administrations. Cllr. Varmah cautioned that visible development projects should not create the impression that all governance challenges have been resolved. CSOs should continue monitoring government activities, raising concerns, and promoting transparency and accountability.

2. Recruitment and Capacity of County Officials

Participants questioned how members of County Councils and other county-level officials are selected and whether there are clear recruitment or selection criteria to ensure that qualified individuals are appointed.

In response, the panel clarified that the composition of County Councils is guided by the Local Government Act. Representatives of civil society, women, youth, and other designated groups are selected through processes within their respective constituencies or organizations and formally submitted to the relevant county authorities. The discussion also emphasized that Liberia has capable people, but existing capacity is not always fully utilized. Participants called for better use of available expertise alongside continued capacity development.

3. Relationship Between County Councils and Legislative Caucuses

Participants asked about the relationship between County Councils and legislative caucuses, particularly in relation to the implementation of the CDA.

The discussion emphasized the need for teamwork and coordination among County Councils, Superintendents, lawmakers, district representatives, and other county stakeholders. It was noted that these actors have different responsibilities but must work together to ensure that county priorities are properly reflected in budgets and development projects.

4. Selection of Community Roads and Development Projects

The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning representative explained that the selection of community roads and other projects should be based on available resources, national development priorities, county needs, and the County Development Agenda.

The process involves identifying priority projects within the resources allocated by government and consulting County Councils, since they play an important role in approving development projects. The importance of ensuring that projects selected at county level are consistent with the CDA and national development priorities was emphasized.

5. Delays in Providing Resources to Counties

A major issue raised was the delay in releasing funds for county development projects. Participants questioned whether delays were caused only by counties failing to submit the required documents or whether there were also internal delays within the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

The Ministry explained that funding requests must meet specific requirements before they can be approved. These include:

- An approved procurement plan.
- A work plan or relevant implementation plan.
- A project proposal for new projects.
- Performance and financial reports for ongoing projects.
- Evidence that previous funds were properly utilized.

The Ministry acknowledged, however, that internal administrative delays can also occur and stated that efforts are being made to improve the processing of requests and address individual cases where delays occur.

6. Cash Availability and Government Funding

The Ministry further explained that Liberia operates within a cash-based budget system, meaning that approval of a budget does not automatically mean that all approved funds are immediately available.

Government must consider available revenues and cash balances when releasing resources. Therefore, even where a project is approved, funding may have to be released gradually based on available resources. The Ministry nevertheless expressed its willingness to work with county authorities to reduce delays and improve the timeliness of funding releases.

7. County Council Budget Approval and Monitoring

County Council representatives explained that the budget review process is intended to ensure that proposed expenditures are consistent with the CDA and county priorities.

County Councils may review projects, invite relevant institutions to provide explanations, conduct field visits, and require institutions that received previous funding to submit reports before receiving additional resources.

The panel emphasized that monitoring should take place throughout the project cycle, rather than only after projects are completed. Unannounced monitoring visits were also identified as useful for obtaining an accurate picture of project implementation.

8. Executive Projects and County Priorities

The discussion also addressed concerns about projects initiated by the Executive and whether such projects should be included in county development plans.

Panellists explained that projects such as infrastructure, health, education, agriculture, and other public facilities can fall within the broad development priorities of a county. However, there is a need to clearly distinguish between national/executive responsibilities and projects identified through county-level participatory planning. The panel recommended greater consultation with citizens and County Councils to ensure that major projects respond to genuine county needs and provide value to local communities.

9. Coordination and Teamwork

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the need for stronger coordination and teamwork between:

- County Superintendents and County Councils;
- National ministries and county authorities;
- Lawmakers and county institutions;
- Development partners and county administrations; and
- Government institutions and citizens.

Panellists stressed that County Councils and Superintendents should see each other as partners in development rather than competing authorities. Better coordination would help reduce delays, improve planning, and strengthen accountability.

7.0 Dialogue Findings

The National Dialogue identified several key findings affecting decentralization, County Development Agenda (CDA) implementation, accountability, and service delivery in Liberia.

Decentralization is Progressing, but Implementation Remains Slow

Liberia has established important laws and institutions to support decentralization, including the Local Government Act and the Revenue Sharing Act. However, the transfer of responsibilities, authority, and resources from the national government to counties remains slow. As a result, many county development priorities have not yet translated into visible services and projects for citizens.

Limited Funding and Delayed Disbursement

Inadequate and delayed funding was identified as one of the major barriers to CDA implementation. Although projects may be included in county plans and budgets, the release of funds depends on available government cash and the submission of required documents. These delays affect the timely implementation of development projects.

Capacity Gaps at the County Level

Participants identified limited technical and institutional capacity as a major challenge. Some county officials require stronger skills in planning, budgeting, procurement, financial

management, monitoring, and reporting. The dialogue found that continuous training and better use of existing qualified personnel are needed to improve county performance.

Weak Coordination Among Government Institutions

The dialogue found that coordination between County Councils, Superintendents, lawmakers, national ministries, development partners, and communities remains weak. Unclear roles and overlapping responsibilities sometimes create tensions and delays. Stronger teamwork and regular communication are needed to improve CDA implementation.

County Service Centers Are Not Fully Effective

Participants noted that many government services are still concentrated in Monrovia. County Service Centers do not yet have all the staff, resources, equipment, and authority needed to provide services effectively. This forces citizens to travel to Monrovia to access services that could be provided at the county level.

Citizen Participation Needs to Go Beyond Consultation

The dialogue found that citizens should be involved throughout the development process, not only during planning meetings. Communities should participate in identifying priorities, monitoring projects, providing feedback, and assessing results. This would strengthen ownership, transparency, and accountability.

County Development Agendas Need Better Alignment with Budgets

There is a need to ensure that county priorities identified through the CDA are properly reflected in county and national budgets. Projects should be selected based on community needs, available resources, and national development priorities.

Monitoring and Accountability Need to be Strengthened

County Councils and CSOs have an important role in monitoring public resources and development projects. The dialogue found that monitoring should happen throughout the project cycle from planning and budgeting to procurement, implementation, completion, and reporting. Regular and, where necessary, unannounced monitoring visits can help identify problems early.

Legal and Institutional Gaps Require Attention

The dialogue identified the need to review some existing laws and clarify institutional responsibilities. Cllr. Varmah particularly raised concerns about provisions relating to the selection and appointment of traditional chiefs and their consistency with constitutional principles. The Law Reform Commission was encouraged to continue reviewing laws that may conflict with the Constitution or other legal provisions.

Political Commitment is Important for Decentralization

Participants noted that decentralization requires strong political commitment from the national government. The transfer of functions, authority, staff, and resources to counties must be supported by clear decisions and practical action.

Greater Fiscal Decentralization is Needed

The dialogue found that counties need predictable and adequate financial resources to implement their development priorities. The effective implementation of revenue-sharing arrangements and clearer financial responsibilities between national and local governments were identified as important steps toward stronger local governance.

CSOs Have an Important Oversight Role

Civil society organizations were encouraged to continue working with government while maintaining their independent oversight role. CSOs should monitor public spending, development projects, and government performance and continue to raise concerns when problems are identified.

Development Should be Measured by Results

A major finding was that government performance should not be measured only by budgets approved, funds released, or meetings held. The real measure of decentralization should be improved roads, schools, health services, water, electricity, sanitation, agriculture, and other services that directly improve citizens' lives.

7.1 Key Outcomes

1. Strong stakeholder commitment to decentralization

- Government, the Legislature, Governance Commission, County Councils, civil society, UNDP, development partners, and the Embassy of Ireland reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening local governance.
- Participants recognized decentralization as essential to bringing government decision-making, resources, and services closer to citizens.

2. County Development Agendas need adequate financing

- The dialogue identified inadequate and delayed funding as a major constraint to implementing county priorities.
- Participants emphasized the need for predictable, equitable, and timely fiscal transfers to counties.

3. Need to accelerate devolution

- The slow transfer of functions, authority, resources, and signatory powers from central government to counties remains a major challenge.
- There was broad agreement that decentralization must involve not only the transfer of responsibilities but also the necessary resources, authority, capacity, and accountability.

4. Citizen participation must go beyond consultation

- Citizens should participate in identifying priorities, monitoring implementation, and evaluating results.
- The simplified County Development Agenda was highlighted as an effective tool for helping citizens and County Councils understand priorities and demand accountability.

5. Institutional and technical capacity remains a major gap

- Counties require stronger human, technical, financial, and institutional capacity to plan, procure, implement, monitor, and report on development programmes.
- The proposed Local Government Training Institute was identified as an important response to these capacity challenges.

6. Greater accountability for public resources is required

- Participants stressed that oversight should cover the entire development cycle-from budget allocation and release of funds to procurement, implementation, expenditure, and actual results.
- The distinction between money allocated, money released, money spent, and value delivered was emphasized.

7. Results-based governance should become the standard

- The dialogue called for a shift away from measuring success by the number of plans, meetings, or approved projects.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on completed projects, improved services, and measurable benefits to citizens.

8. Anti-corruption and transparency remain central

- Civil society engagement, corruption reporting mechanisms, the Corruption Case Tracker, and advocacy for stronger anti-corruption institutions were highlighted as important accountability measures.

9. Coordination among stakeholders must improve

- Stronger collaboration is needed among national government institutions, county authorities, civil society, development partners, communities, and the private sector to avoid fragmented implementation.
- Strengthen coordination among local leaders and MACs in the counties

7.2 Key Commitments from the dialogue

Stakeholder	Key Commitment
Government / Ministry of Local Government	Convene a high-level policy dialogue to agree on functions to be devolved to local governments.
Government/ MLG	Establish a national steering committee to coordinate and oversee implementation of devolved functions.
Government/ MLG	Advance plans for county-level government service facilities, including offices for ministries/agencies, County Service Centers, and county treasuries (Construction of 32 room building in the 15 counties)
Government / MLG	Establish a Local Government Training Institute to strengthen county-level capacity in planning, budgeting, procurement, public financial management, accountability, and monitoring.
Government / Ministry of Finance	Advance predictable and equitable fiscal transfers and operationalization of revenue sharing. 15m in the 2026 budget for counties, cities and streets development in the 15 counties Ensure the disbursement of CDA funding in accordance with the PFM Act
Government / LRC	Work with the legislature to address the sessions in the Local Government Act that violate the 1986 constitution.
Legislature	Strengthen oversight of county resources and follow the development cycle from appropriation through implementation and results.

Civil Society	Continue evidence-based advocacy, citizen engagement, monitoring, anti-corruption work, and demand-side accountability.
Development Partners	Continue supporting decentralization, institutional strengthening, citizen participation, fiscal decentralization, and systems rather than isolated projects.
UNDP	Continue support for local governance, fiscal decentralization, institutional capacity, citizen participation, public service delivery, and the proposed Local Government Training Institute.
CSO Consortium	Continue strengthening citizen access to governance information, accountability mechanisms, County Development Agenda advocacy, and oversight of revenue sharing.
All Stakeholders	Ensure that the County Development Agenda translates into funded, implemented, monitored, and measurable development outcomes.

8.0 Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings, discussions, and commitments emerging from the National Dialogue, the following policy recommendations are proposed to strengthen decentralization, accelerate County Development Agenda (CDA) implementation, improve accountability, and ensure that local governance delivers tangible benefits to citizens.

1. Accelerate the Devolution of Functions, Authority, and Resources

The Government should accelerate the implementation of the decentralization framework by clearly identifying and transferring functions, decision-making authority, personnel, and financial resources from central government to county and local authorities.

2. Ensure Predictable and Timely Financing for County Development Agendas

The Government should strengthen fiscal decentralization by ensuring that counties receive predictable, equitable, and timely financial transfers to implement approved CDA priorities.

3. Align National and County Budgets with County Development Agendas

The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Ministry of Local Government, and county authorities should establish a stronger mechanism for ensuring that CDAs are reflected in national and county budgets.

4. Strengthen County-Level Institutional and Technical Capacity

The Government should prioritize sustained capacity development for County Councils, county administrations, and other local government institutions.

5. Clarify the Roles and Responsibilities of County Institutions

The Government should clarify the respective mandates and working relationships of County Councils, Superintendents, county administrations, lawmakers, County Service Centres, and national ministries operating at the county level.

- 6. Strengthen County Service Centres and Bring Services Closer to Citizens**
The Government should accelerate the operationalization of County Service Centres so that citizens can access essential public services without unnecessary travel to Monrovia.
- 7. Institutionalize Citizen Participation Throughout the Development Cycle**
Citizen participation should extend beyond consultation during the preparation of CDAs and include implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- 8. Strengthen Monitoring, Oversight, and Public Accountability**
Oversight should cover the entire public investment cycle, from planning and budgeting to procurement, implementation, expenditure, completion, and results.
- 9. Strengthen Anti-Corruption and Transparency Mechanisms at County Level**
Anti-corruption measures should be integrated into decentralization and county development systems from the outset.
- 10. Address Legal and Institutional Gaps in the Decentralization Framework**
The Government, Legislature, and Law Reform Commission should review existing legislation to identify inconsistencies, gaps, and provisions that may hinder effective decentralization.
- 11. Establish a Results-Based Framework for CDA Implementation**
The Government should develop a national results framework for monitoring the implementation and impact of County Development Agendas.
- 12. Strengthen Coordination Among Development Partners and CSOs**
Development partners and civil society organizations should coordinate their support around national and county priorities to reduce fragmented interventions.
- 13. Develop a Clear Accountability and Follow-Up Mechanism for Dialogue Commitments**
The commitments made during the National Dialogue should be converted into a time-bound action plan with clear responsibilities.

9.0 Conclusion

The National Dialogue on Enhancing Local Governance and Accelerating County Development Agenda (CDA) Implementation in Liberia provided an important platform for stakeholders to assess the progress and challenges of decentralization and identify practical actions to improve local governance and service delivery. The discussions showed that while Liberia has established important legal and institutional frameworks for decentralization, implementation remains slow. Limited and delayed financing, weak institutional coordination, capacity gaps, unclear roles, procurement challenges, and weak monitoring continue to affect the implementation of county development priorities.

The dialogue also reaffirmed that effective decentralization requires more than the transfer of responsibilities. Counties need the authority, resources, staff, capacity, and accountability mechanisms necessary to perform their functions effectively. Citizen participation must also extend beyond consultation to include monitoring projects, providing feedback, and holding local institutions accountable.

Going forward, government and other stakeholders must translate the commitments made during the dialogue into clear and measurable actions. This includes improving county financing, strengthening County Councils and County Service Centres, clarifying institutional roles, building local capacity, improving coordination, and strengthening oversight.

Ultimately, the success of decentralization and the County Development Agendas should be measured by what changes in the lives of citizens: better roads, schools, health services, water, sanitation, agriculture, and other essential services. Sustained collaboration among government, the Legislature, counties, civil society, development partners, and citizens will therefore be critical to ensuring that decentralization delivers meaningful and lasting development across Liberia.



Appendices

Appendix A: Welcome Statement

Appendix B: Overview of the Dialogue

Appendix C: Special Statement-MLG

Appendix D: Special Statement-HoR

Appendix F: Dialogue Pictures



[Liberia Decentralization Stalls Over County Funding Gaps | THE LIBERIAN INVESTIGATOR](#)



ABOUT THE ORGANIZER

Founded in 2001, Naymote Partners for Democratic Development advances democratic governance, political accountability, and inclusive leadership in Liberia. Its President Meter Project tracks presidential commitments, strengthens citizen oversight, and has contributed to government budget allocations supporting the implementation of national commitments. Through YPLS Africa, Naymote has trained and mentored more than 1,330 emerging leaders, while its research, advocacy, and civic engagement continue to amplify citizens' voices and strengthen public accountability. Visit www.naymote.com and www.ypls.org; follow [@naymoteliberia](#) on [Facebook](#) and [@NAYMOTE-Liberia](#) on [YouTube](#).