



NAYMOTE-LIBERIA

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT AND ACTION PLAN

EDUCATE, EMPOWER AND ENGAGE



TRUSTAFRICA

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Youth Participation in Local Governance: A Toolkit of Engagement is a project supported by TrustAfrica and Humanity United, as part of the Liberia Civil Society Initiative.

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To the thousands of Liberians who – since the inception of NAYMOTE in 2001 – have sought to be educated, empowered and engaged in democracy: a profound “thank you!” Through advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement initiatives, NAYMOTE is set to change the course of the democracy-rebuilding process in Liberia. Throughout this journey, the honest dialogues of the Liberian youth have shed light on the challenges of youth participation in the political governance of their country. To the youth of Liberia – who despite their tribal affiliation, geographic place of residence, economic status and educational attainment remain critical partners in the development of this toolkit and the growing work of NAYMOTE – “THANK YOU.” We also thank the Liberian people for their continued engagement, despite the complex realities confronting the democratic process in the country.

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Many of the ideas and recommendations in this toolkit come from the young people of Liberia as well as from the insights provided by community partners globally. However, any errors, omissions or shortcomings in this document are entirely the responsibility of the authors. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the TrustAfrica and Humanity United.

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We hope that organizers find the toolkit useful. We also look forward to receiving additional input from users so that the document can be improved further in the future.

ABOUT NAYMOTE

Established in 2001, NAYMOTE has been the leading grassroots organization promoting democracy, peace-building, human rights, community organizing and civic engagement.

CORE PILLARS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

EDUCATE: strengthen youth capacity to make informed choices and execute those choices to ensure a fair governance process.

EMPOWER: develop what is best in young people: their vision, creative power, and drive to make their society an inclusive, sustainable place for themselves and future generations.

ENGAGE: encourage young people to take on value-added roles to address issues that are relevant to them and that influence real outcomes.

NAYMOTE'S MISSION

Dedicated to strengthening and promoting positive youth and community engagement to support democratic governance and sustainable development

NAYMOTE'S VISION

A Liberian society with strong democratic culture where citizens freely participate in decisions that affect their lives, irrespective of their status

WE ARE:

- **Strengthening** partnerships between community and government;
- **Empowering** community residents to peacefully resolve conflict;
- **Working** to assure a vibrant community through active youth participation;
- **Creating** the platform to discuss problems and build consensus for actions, etc.

We realize that our society is enriched, and better decisions are made, when all members of the community can participate in decisions that affect their lives – this is why it is important that young people have access to decision-making processes.

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FORWARD

Fourteen years of civil war left Liberia severely war-affected, in ruins, and its people disenfranchised. The vast majority of Liberians affected by the war were youths. Many were either witnesses or principal perpetrators of the gruesome atrocities during the civil war. *“When young people are uprooted, jobless, intolerant, alienated and have few opportunities for positive engagement, they represent a ready pool of recruits for group seeking to mobilize violence”*: USAID Youth and Conflict 2005.

The future of Liberia rests in the hands of the youth. Further, the key to a positive future for Liberia is that young people be educated, empowered and engaged citizens. Young people between the ages of 14 – 35 make up 65% of the Liberian population and represent an estimated 59% of eligible voters (2008 Census). Changing the mind-set of the youth remains an urgent and pressing goal. The success of redirecting negative ideology that corrupts the rebuilding process is of much significance. Liberia’s youths will be most affected by change and also have the potential to be the most powerful agents of change. The political and civic consciousness of the Liberian youth remains the key to assisting the advancement of Liberia.

For the last ten years, NAYMOTE has mobilized Liberians to catalyze action for civic engagement in their communities and schools. Through our principles of civic engagement, NAYMOTE seeks to create sustainable and lasting change to enhance the political landscape of Liberia. Encouraging the collective power found in being issue-focused remains instrumental in the improvement of the country.

Through community organizing and civic engagements activities we have empowered youth leaders to advocate for positive change at the local government levels and resolve conflict peacefully; offered technical assistance to contribute to a vibrant community-based organizations; strengthened partnership between youth and local government leaders; and promoted participation among women and disabled persons in the political infrastructure of Liberia.

In addition, we have registered several thousand eligible voters, organized numerous capacity building workshops and have facilitated the appointment of three youth leaders within the local government structures in Bong County. Our advocacy campaign, led in conjunction with the Bassa Youth Caucus, saw the establishment of the Bassa Community College.

We hope you will find the toolkit to be a useful resource that will help promote young people’s participation in decision-making, and encourage the inclusion of youth in local governance practices that sustains effective decentralizing of decision-making processes.

Join us as we continue to serve as agents of change and strive to “Educate. Empower. Engage.”

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ACRONYMS

AFELL	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia
CDC	County Development Council
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CDF	County Development Fund
FMC	Forest Management Committee
FLY	Federation of Liberian Youth
GC	Governance Commission
HU	Humanity United
JPC	Justice and Peace Commission
LINSU	Liberian National Student Union
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MPEA	Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs
MYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
NAYMOTE	National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
NYP	National Youth Policy
TA	TrustAfrica
PMC	Project Management Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNO	United Nations Organization
HU	Humanity United
YC	Youth Council

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Definition of Terms

Authority –The legitimate right to rule or lead that is supported by law (constitution) or any document so desired by leaders.

Administrative Power – Delegated, autonomous power to make workable and binding rules for people within a given geographical area.

Charter – Statement of purpose organization that is binding all members of that organization.

Civic Engagement – Developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make a positive difference in the civic life of our community. “Positive Civic Engagement” means promoting the quality of life in a community, through political and non-political processes.

Community Organizing – A long-term approach in which the people affected by an issue are supported in identifying problems, as well as opportunities, and in taking action to achieve solutions. Community organizing involves bringing people together around a specific common concern or issue, working with them to identify potential solutions and developing an action plan, and then mobilizing other affected members of the community to get involved.

Decentralization Policy – The government of the Republic of Liberia policy that is seeks to spread powers to all areas of the country in order to move government closer to the people for policy development and administrative convenience.

Democracy – A system of government that allows all persons to freely participate in choosing their leaders or representatives.

Equitable Distribution – Equal sharing of government resources including political and economic powers to all people and places.

Exclusion - When some locations or groups of persons are deliberately not allowed to be part of the governing process.

Fiscal Power – Power of a government, granted by its citizens and recognized by law to generate and spend money without outside interference.

Governance – A process by which a government sets policy and manages programs, supports, protects and provides leadership for citizens in a given geographic territory.

Gender Fairness – Treating both the male and female genders the same way without preferring one the other.

Human Rights – The privileges people have that cannot be taken from them.

Local Governance – System of administration at the grassroots level.

Political Culture – The sum total of attitude, behavior and practices of people engaged in politics. A culture could be either highly developed or low interest.

Poro – A male traditional society that is commonly referred to as ‘bush school’ that trains men in various traditional vocations such as hunting, farming, ceramics, weaving, etc.

Sande – A female traditional society that is commonly referred to as ‘bush school’ that trains women in various traditional vocations such housekeeping, gardening, basket making, weaving, etc.

Susu – A traditional saving (finance) club or collective.

Quality Service Delivery – To provide excellent service that meets high standards to people or an organization.

Youth Policy – Special program of the government directed to issues of youth empowerment.

ABOUT TRUSTAFRICA LIBERIA'S PROGRAM

TrustAfrica, an African grant-making foundation, is dedicated to promoting collaboration across the continent in dealing with critical issues of peace and security, citizenship and identity and regional integration. TrustAfrica seeks to sustain positive African initiatives by providing Africa's leading thinkers and institutions with opportunities to set and pursue a constructive African agenda for development.

TrustAfrica began in 2001 under the aegis of the Ford Foundation, where it was first known as the Special Initiative for Africa. Its premise was that Africans need a greater voice in the international donor community as well as philanthropic resources that Africans control. Currently, headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, TrustAfrica provides grant support to over 30 countries on the African continent.



In Liberia, TrustAfrica – in partnership with Humanity United – pioneered the Liberia Civil Society Initiative (LCSI); a novel civil society-strengthening program geared towards building the institutional capacity of local organizations so that they can engage in data-based governance

monitoring and advocacy. The LCSI is tiered around three critical pivots: grant-making, the provision of technical assistance, and the organization of knowledge-generating convening's. Through the LCSI, TrustAfrica has provided over two million United States dollars in grant and institutional support to more than 12 leading civil society organizations in Liberia since 2008. Below are a few of the achievements that can be associated with the intervention of the LCSI:

In 2008, provided support to the Liberia Media Center (LMC) to engage in media development work with journalists from local print and electronic media entities in Liberia. This intervention resulted in the development of Liberia's first Media Assistance Strategy, (MAS) which defines gaps in the Liberian media, as opposed to fostering a donor-created agenda. As a follow-on grant in 2010, LCSI support to the LMC again resulted in the development of another milestone: the Media Quality Barometer (MQB). The MQB provides part quantitative and qualitative assessments of the quantity and quality of selected media institutions.

Grant support to Actions for Genuine Democratic Alternatives (AGENDA) in partnership with CIVICUS has produced Liberia's first civil society index, a stellar research that looks at capacity constraints and local perceptions of Liberian civil society. The research covered the fifteen counties of Liberia and assessed both rural and urban civil society organizations.

Provided support for women's groups, including: the Women NGO Secretariat (WONGOSOL); the Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET); and the United Muslim Women Advocacy and Empowerment Organization (UMWAEO). These groups work to build the capacity of their respective coalitions' rural chapters through the provision of computers and skills-based training needed to use them. Through WIPNET, rural women have been afforded the opportunity to travel to Ghana and obtain entrepreneurial skills in soap-making, basket weaving, etc. In Cape Mount, UMWAEO has provided basic adult literacy training to more than 300 previously illiterate Muslim women.



The Liberia Democratic Watch (LDW) and Liberia Democratic Institute (LDI) have both received support to monitor the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy implementation at the local level. In Grand Gedeh and Sinoe counties, LDI has worked with local organizations like the AMU WULU FORUM to further institutionalize by becoming legally registered and providing trainings on

organization management. Preliminary outputs from the monitoring activities of LDW have been used by relevant government agencies such as the Civil Service Agency (CSA) and indicated County Development Steering Committees to redefine their engagement under the Rule of law Pillar of the Liberian PRS.

Community empowerment organizations such as NAYMOTE-Partners for Democratic Development and Rights and Rice Foundation (RRF) have worked with women and youths



in Bong, Bassa, Margibi and Lofa counties, respectively. In Bong, Bassa and Margibi counties, through NAYMOTE's interventions, with the engagement of youths and local government officials has further solidified the empowerment and

inclusion of youth. As a result, three youths have since been appointed as liaisons to commissioners' offices in Salala, Palala and Gbartala, all districts in Bong County.

The LCSI will enter its second phase in January 2012. This phase will last for three year and will focus on building the skills of partner organizations for effective policy advocacy.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Liberia's post-war challenges are numerous. However, research demonstrates that youth participation in governance promotes grassroots democracy and strengthens the communities' access to beneficial public policy. Youth participation can increase knowledge and skills, improved social opportunities and reward sense of community engagement.

Young people's distrust of, and lack of respect for, the political process is somewhat persistent in Africa. Due to cultural and traditional practices, young people are less likely to sit face-to-face with their elders in a communal gathering and therefore, less likely to participate in making decisions that affect the community. Their opinions and solutions are dismissed because they are "young" and lack incurred wisdom. A major contributing factor to this is the nature of the family arrangements that emphasizes the unequal relationship in favor of the elders who may decide on almost all matters with little or no input from the young ones. Liberia is typical in this regard.

In addition to the cultural limitations on equal participation in self governance, the 14 years of Liberian civil war have further constricted participation in democracy. Many young people participated in the civil conflict and the aftermath, many Liberian youth lost respect for constituted authorities. Further, many youth were left with a "wounded psyche" of hate and distrust of government, authority and the democratic process. Youth saw the inequity in the distribution of wealth, as well as in the allocation of resources and the target safety net infrastructure investments. Those resources and investments generate enormous community benefits, such as Jobs, business opportunities, access to public transportation, and quality affordable housing. We believe that – having witnessed these inequities – young people yearn for increased and ongoing investments in much-needed infrastructure of their beloved country. They believe in their collective voice and passion for change and continue to advocate and hope for seats at the negotiating table.

Despite the hope and historical success of youth globally, the elderly in the local governance process have no faith in the young people to participate in the local political activities. The Addis Ababa Declaration of Youth for African Youths, and the Kakata Declaration of 2005 championed by Liberian youths in conjunction with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are innovative strategies for engaging young people's civic participation.

If this negative trend of political apathy among young people is allowed to flourish, the result could be devastating. Promoting the active political participation of youth is a novel approach that contributes to compliance of the current Human Rights framework and contributes to global peace. As the systems currently stand, the lack of transparent access to the Liberian political infrastructure violates a fundamental principle of the United Nations Human Rights framework. This practice poses a serious challenge for assuring peace and stability in a democratically fragile society.

The government of the Republic of Liberia realizes the important and significance of the deficit in the systems – and the urgency to engage its citizens despite of their tribal affiliation, educational status and socio-economic status. While the needed changes are daunting, the need for improvement has been recognized and acknowledged.

In view of the above, at the local policy level, the Liberian government, as well as international partners, has pledged its commitment to the decentralization policy. This policy is expected to open the country to development opportunities, both political and economical.

Examples of the decentralization policy efforts include: the Addis Ababa Declaration of Youth for



African Youths and the Kakata Declaration of 2005. Thus, there are innovative strategies for educating and engaging young people's civic engagement participation. The Federation of Liberian Youth has designed programs that are expected to ensure meaningful youth participation in policy research, development and implementation. Youth engagement has also resulted in the development of several community based public health and civic engagement initiatives. Among these are:

National Youth Policy Implementation and Enactment; the Girls in Radio Program; Advocacy; Community Cleaning-up Campaigns; Computer Training Programs; HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health Education; Youth Agricultural and Environmental Awareness; Mapping Up exercise; County Youth Secretariat (Youth Networks); Capacity Building; Strategic Planning; Youth Clubs; Youth Leadership Training Programs and Conferences; Membership Meetings; Youth and the Media; Academic and Vocational Educational Awareness. Unfortunately, these programs lack funding for implementation and – in some cases – they lack funding for expansion.

It is clear that there are steps being taken by the government, by young people, and by NGOs to address the challenges that youth face in participating in local governance processes. The identified gaps in Liberian youth participation in local governance and politics generally are gaps NAYMOTE intends to fill. NAYMOTE works to bridge this gap by building knowledge and skills, and by increasing the youths' self-sufficiency relative to the Liberian local governance process.

This toolkit is a guide to assist organizations that serve and advocate for the engagement of youth to develop strategies to increase civic participation. While the toolkit targets Liberian youth, the information contained here is transferable, and especially so to post-war African nations. Experiences shared are strategies that were selected and implemented while recognizing that the chosen approaches and strategies will work best for Liberia and her communities. This toolkit seeks to provide insights and lessons learned during the execution of civic engagement and community organizing principles in a country ravaged by 14 years of civil war. The overview and stories share our success and challenges in involving and empowering Liberian youth to become active participants in Liberia's local governance. The objective is to ensure local government is serviceable, accountable, open, responsive, efficient and participatory. Lastly, this toolkit offers suggestions for where to start, including questions to ask in planning a civic participation effort.

At the “Fifth Africa Governance Forum” held in Maputo in May 2002 on the theme of “local governance for poverty reduction in Africa” strong recommendations for strengthening decentralized governance were made in the following terms:

“For African governments, it is recommended, firstly, that all countries that have not yet legislated for decentralization in their respective laws ought to work toward this. Secondly, in order to promote stronger leadership, accountability and transparency at the local level, African governments need to put in place comprehensive capacity development programmes for good governance that include clear goals and strategies towards the development and consolidation of local government. Thirdly, to avoid the transfer of ‘unfunded mandates’ to lower levels of government, governments in Africa are urged to ensure that sufficient financial resources are transferred to sub-national authorities and that such transfers are based on clear, objective, stable and predictable formulae and not subject to undue discretionary changes. It is, however, agreed that such actions should encourage, rather than undermine, local fiscal effort. Fourthly, local government authorities would benefit from well-conceived and funded management and technical capacities to enable them better play their role as effective service providers and brokers in the area of poverty reduction”.

1.2 WHY AND HOW WAS THIS TOOL-KIT DEVELOPED?

This toolkit was developed after gathering of information from several sources, including three county-wide consultations convened in Bong, Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties that brought together youngsters, leaders, activists and representatives from the Ministry of Youths and Sports, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MPEA). In developing this toolkit, we also interviewed key partners from various Non-Governmental Organizations partners. Desk and internet research further enriched the process, coupled with NAYMOTE’s years of experience from working on youth issues.



The toolkit offers clear and concise information that can be used to positively shape young people’s perception of local governance and other participants’ perceptions of youth. Knowledge provided through this instrument is intended to also boost young people’s awareness and sharpen their day-to-day decision making as participants in local administration.

NAYMOTE premises this work on experience gained from working with youth-related issues over ten years and its recognition that, for Liberia, no similar instrument exists. The 2011 election process and outcomes highlight the need for more intensive capacity building around the political system and structure in Liberia.

1.3 INTENDED AUDIENCE

This toolkit is for young people and their organizations, primarily Community Based Organizations (CBO), Non Governmental Organizations (NGO), and governmental institutions and partners that focus on youth issues in Liberia. The toolkit can also be used for the development and implementation of programs aimed at youth concerns. It is important that people using this toolkit understand the context for involvement in politics in Liberia and apply genuine efforts to adopt participatory approaches to handling youth issues.

1.4 HOW CAN THIS TOOLKIT BE USED?

This toolkit is designed to be accessible so that users can shape their programs to meet the needs of young people at different levels and not just in local government. The toolkit describes a range of



activities to build young people's skills and knowledge; motivate their active involvement in community and local governance initiatives; influence positive public perceptions of

youths; explore avenues for expanding the democratic space; involve youth in decision making; strengthen relations between public officials and with their peers; consult youth on their opinions; respond to the needs of young people through appropriately designed services; and leverage youth innovation to improve local governance.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 YOUTH AND POLICY FORMULATION

NAYMOTE seeks to galvanize Liberian youth to become involved in public service and aims at motivating them to be active and committed citizens – to contribute to the rebuilding of Liberia’s governance structure. NAYMOTE believes Liberian youth can and should be active participants in the development of policies and in the political process. The positive involvement of youth in civic engagement will result in their enhanced commitment to public service.

Initiatives and efforts undertaken by NAYMOTE strive to develop young leaders that can be successful advocates for social and economic justice, and for public policy that affects our community.



Engaging youth in active participation in local government allows them to increase their knowledge about community organizing, leadership skills, legislative campaigns, messaging and social policy advocacy skills. Participants will identify critical community issues and develop effective strategies and organizing campaigns that address the issues.

Liberia’s current political system perpetuates the belief that the political arena is an adult-led institution that can choose whether or not to give young people what they want.

Many leaders within the current system believe that young people have little to trade in return for access to the governing process. This is a belief that NAYMOTE works to challenge, by maximizing the innovation and policy solutions of youth engagement. Liberian youth traditionally have not voted in large percentages, or had access to disposable income and other forms of political currency or leverage. Because of these and other factors, they are overlooked, disengaged and dismissed.

The first step to true engagement is for young Liberians to understand, comprehend, embrace, and leverage their power as citizens so their success does not depend solely on the support of their adult and institutional partners. NAYMOTE’s constituency must become and remain committed to raising awareness for political, educational, social and economic equality of all Liberians in the electoral process. Through community engagement and mobilization, NAYMOTE remains committed to actively engaging, empowering, educating, and increasing the responsiveness of the youth.

2.2 LOCAL EXAMPLE OF YOUTH AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT

The National Youth Policy (NYP) of Liberia was formed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports based on a mandate from the Africa Youth Charter. The Charter mandated that all states develop a policy to respond to the needs of young people. The policy was formulated in partnership with the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) and other civil society organizations. The effort has been criticized by many for the lack of broad based participation of young people. The content and issues in the policy reflect the aspirations of the privileged literate youths the majority of whom live in Monrovia and its surrounding cities. Several critics of the NYP raised the issue of exclusion of young people who cannot read or write, but still have needs that require equal attention.

While literate young people may have the knowledge and skills to formulate policy, they are generally not in the position to articulate the issues confronting their colleagues from the remote parts of the country; thereby, embarking on a process that is exclusive and non-consultative. A situation whereby the majority could not contribute to the policy formulation creates resentment and the lack of ownership, cooperation and support in its implementation. The following strategies can help formulate an all-inclusive youth policy:

- Proper information dissemination to all young people on the importance of their participation in the process;
- Pre-policy wide consultations led by young people held in the official language and local languages on the rationale of the policy and what do young people stand to benefit if the policy is formulated and implemented;
- Youth organizing community dialogues to look properly at emerging issues constructively;
- An open and youth friendly space where different views can be expressed;
- The involvement of disabled/challenged youth, as well as those youth with special needs;
- Peer education by the youth and lobbying of legislators and other policy makers when relevant; and
- The validation of the policy involving diverse young people and policy makers before it is adopted.

2.3 WHY YOUTH MUST PARTICIPATE IN POLICY FORMATION?

The involvement of young people in policy formulation can create the opportunity for participatory democracy and governance. It also creates the avenue for them to exercise leadership and to build their capacity to constructively engage state-run institutions that are charged with the responsibility of implementing government policies. This engagement increases the ability of young people to demand better governance and accountability from policy makers, since policy formulation will lead to implementation of specific projects linked to the policies formulated.

Taken further, other benefits of youth participation include those of technical, pragmatic, educational, human rights, democratic and transformative natures:

Technical reasons

... situations where the requirements of a project demand the involvement of a group of people [eg] ... are required to demonstrate their efforts to involve young people in government decision-making ... Such a stipulation can mean that project leaders include young people primarily so they can have a say.

Pragmatic reasons

... for practical reasons, for example, ... [as] a key source of information [or] ... the specific skills young people have ... will be of benefit to the project ... When young people are involved in a project for pragmatic reasons, it is common for that involvement to be superficial, and not based on shared decision making.

Educational reasons

... where young people have taken leadership roles [reports] often highlight the benefits to those young people and the skills and knowledge they develop as a result (eg Kirby 1999)...

Human Rights reasons

... people have a right to be involved in decisions which affect them. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child makes a strong call for children and young people's participation as a fundamental democratic right ...

Democratic reasons

... young people appear to be uninterested in engaging in the political democratic processes. Governments have also acknowledged the need to increase young people's civics knowledge. ... However, democracy can be seen as a political system for running a country or, more broadly, as an attitude or philosophy that colors relationships between people. ... Participation is a means of such democratization.

Transformative reasons

Intervening to improve children and young people's participation is seen ... as one way of fundamentally improving a whole society [with] ... an explicit agenda of re-including the opportunities for expression that are otherwise removed as the dominant social discourses take precedence. In this way, they aim to fundamentally change society. They are transformative.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A BRIEF COMPARATIVE LIBERIA, SIERRA LEONE AND GHANA

In the West African sub-region, particularly the wider ECOWAS, many countries share similarities in local governance. What follows are synopses of local governance in Liberia and its closest neighbor to the west, Sierra Leone, and Ghana, a close neighbor to Liberia's closest eastern neighbor, Cote d'Ivoire.

Local governance is the exercise of political leadership that brings people to the center of government's development interventions. It is a governmental structure that is created to foster development of communities and towns away from the capital city.

Local governance exists to train and empower people on a grassroots level about governance. Thus, youth learn to participate in the decision-making process in ways that will enable them to grow into leaders in their communities. When youth are involved in local governance, there are several benefits to their communities:

- Peace and stability are increased;
- The negative perception that adults have about young people is changed;
- The frequent and rapid migration to the cities is reduced;
- Poverty is reduced;
- Young people perceive the state as being responsive to their needs;
- The leadership, communication and problem-solving capacity of young people is increased; and
- A culture of participatory democracy and accountability and transparency in the governance process is created and engendered.

3.2 Liberia

Local governance in Liberia has been merely 'political' rather than 'concrete;' that is, developing a set of practical systems and arrangements in pursuit of the common good. The focus on local governance was given more impetus by the administration of President William R. Tolbert, Jr., in the 70's (Charles, 2006). Other leaders who came after him supported Tolbert's effort. After the war, the current administration has renewed efforts to implement the decentralization policy. –Tsike-Sossah (2008) notes that more effort has been on state building and nation building to stabilizing the post-war economy.



The idea of hinterland (outside the coastal) government was orchestrated during the tenure of the second President of Liberia, Stephen Allen Benson, in 1864 (MIA Research and Planning Department, 2011). Through his initiative, the MIA was firstly created and known as the Interior with the Justice Department.

The Interior Parish was transferred from the Department of Justice and set up as separate entity. On January 23, 1868, during the leadership of President James Springs Payne, the Interior Parish was transformed, named and styled “THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR”.

The essence of the local governance concept was to ensure that the tribal people be brought together into union of one political, economic and social limelight under an administrative system of governance. In this regards, the regulations were established to provide adequate protection for all persons traveling through the country. The laws were also structured to protect the traditional societies, Poro and Sande.

The first three political sub-divisions with the leadership of provisional commissioner created were Western Province (Lofa, Bomi, Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and Montserrado Counties); Central Province (Nmba, Bong, Margibi, Rivercess and Grand Bassa Counties); and Eastern Province (Maryland, Grand Kru, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Sinoe Counties).



The Department of Interior was changed to the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Urban Reconstruction in 1972 during the administration of President William R. Tolbert. The Ministry's function was to carry-out development programs. The functions of the ministry were directed to the Ministry of Rural Development in 1981. The same year the Ministry of Rural Development was renamed by Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe's government as MIA. The first sentence in article three creating the MIA states that “Liberia is a unitary state divided into counties for administrative purposes.” Sections A and O of Article 25.2 mandate the Ministry to “Oversee the successful conduct and improvement of local government through supervision and direction of activities of the political subdivision of central government....; Initiating and organizing problems

for rural community development with emphasis on housing to transform rural communities into viable towns.”

The local administration of the MIA is demarcated into political sub-divisions and the largest of such political sub division is the county. Presently, there are fifteenth counties in the country and they are managed by the superintendents.

Accordingly, the next sub-political division is the statutory district. There are thirty-two statutory districts administered by the district superintendents. This is followed by county districts. There are 119 county districts headed by district commissioners. Townships are the next political units. There are 237 townships in Liberia and are headed by township commissioners. In some counties, chiefdom is named after an ethnic family or group that occupied a particular area and it is headed by paramount chief; while clans are headed by clan chiefs. There are 215 chiefdoms and 476 clans in Liberia. The last political sub-division is the city, headed by a mayor/mayoress. There are 126 cities in the country and there is a proposed Legislation to reduce the number of cities in the country. With the exception of the mayor/mayoress and legislators, all county superintendents and

district superintendents; district and township commissioners; paramount and clan chiefs are appointed by the president.

Attempts at decentralization to improve local governance have also been made by the current government. Nevertheless, there are huge institutional and human resource capacity gaps at the county level to ensure that the policy is adequately implemented. Moreover, communities have not been adequately prepared for their participation once the decentralization process gets off the ground. While youth participation in local governance is pertinent to the survival of any democratic experiment, there are challenges that impede their participation. Some of these challenges include:

- Young people's views are not represented whenever issues that have to do with them are discussed by the adult leaders;
- Young people are treated like a homogeneous group with common interests and needs;
- Young people are not consulted, which often results into clash of interests and disrespect;
- Young people lack interest;
- Young people are not aware of government programs at the local level; and
- There is no strong policy thrust for government to be accountable to young people.

While national organizations, such as Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) and the Liberia National Students Union (LINSU), have made their voices heard on policy decisions at the local and national levels, those institutions have had different trends of leaderships. The FLY has been supportive of



the status quo because its foundation was made possible by the government through the Tolbert government's budgetary support in the 1970s.

LINSU, which has been more radical in opposing the establishment, was first organized in 1959 but did not survive until the 1960s because of the machinations of the government of

President William V. S. Tubman, Sr. It was reorganized in 1979 during the Tolbert regime, after which it became aligned with the radical International Union of Students (IUS). After LINSU's reorganization, the Liberian government did not fund the group. In fact, during President Samuel K. Doe's tenure, attempts were made to ban the organization. Thanks to two youthful senators, David Mayongai of Margibi County and Archiebald Bernard of Montserrado County, the ban was averted in the National Legislature. Before the country's civil war erupted in 1989, LINSU had chapters in all the counties, represented by the various county student unions.

After the civil war, many youth organizations have emerged throughout the counties and many of these are vocal on issues that affect youth in the various counties. For example, when talking about participation in development in Grand Cape Mount and Lofa Counties in 2009, 10.8% had no part in making decisions about projects being undertaken by the county administration; 36.4% took some part in the decision making; and 45.8 fully took part (Actions for Genuine Democratic Alternatives, 2009).

Also, many youngsters are in the current government and hold positions of trust that can advantageously sway policy decisions that affect youth, example Ministers of Finance, Public Works and Planning and Economic affairs are all young people.

3.3 Sierra Leone

The Local Government Act of 2004 of the Republic of Sierra Leone has designated units of government called localities, each has a council to exercise authority and carry out functions at a local level (Ade, 2010).



Sierra Leone is composed of four regions; the Northern Province, Southern Province, Eastern Province and the Western Province. The four provinces are further divided into twelve districts, and the districts are further divided into 149 chiefdoms. There are thirteen district councils, one for each of the twelve districts and one for the Western Area Rural and six municipalities, each with a council; Freetown, Bo, Bonthe, Kenema, Koidu and Makeni, (Ade, 2010). This was done to devolve power in the interior and to open the political space for more people to participate in the decision-making process in local governance. In essence, as citizens get more involved in political activities, then administrative, fiscal, and political powers are more diffused and decentralized. The semi-autonomous nature of this political arrangement

breeds a balanced development between the centre and other parts of the country. Significantly, this has, to a large extent, reduced the issue of marginalization.

The Sierra Leone 2004 local government act states:

- Local government is for everyone. Local government is a way for communities to take more direct control over local issues and decision-making to improve health facilities, schools, agricultural production, roads, and quality of drinking water. Local councils have a responsibility to work with citizens to make choices about community needs and the best use of resources. Local government is responsible to everyone, including young people, old people, women, men, persons with disabilities, those who are literate and those who are illiterate.
- Your local council should work with community members to identify the needs of your community. These needs should be prioritized. What is the most important need? Then, your local council should work with community members to identify what assets your community has. The local council can then make a plan of how to use existing assets and community resources to address the needs.

- The community people should: Pay taxes, volunteer to participate in community development projects, Check the notice board, Ask questions and attending meetings.

The Sierra Leone Youths in Crises Centers (SLYICC) works to empower youth to become agents for positive social change through literacy campaigns, advocacy, and civic and human rights education. SLYICC, based in Freetown, promotes peaceful democratic transition through government accountability, free and fair elections, and citizen participation in governance.

The Center currently leads a grassroots civic education campaign and trains young community-based democracy promoters. As part of this campaign, SLYICC works on producing a manual on local-level democratic governance. This project also includes two three-day regional workshops on participatory governance and creation of a network of democracy activists resulting from the workshops; training on democratic governance for representatives of civil society and traditional leadership such as chiefs, administrative officers, heads of secret societies, and local opinion leaders; and workshops for artists interested in promoting civic participation in local governance through music and public performances. SLYICC plans to produce a CD-Rom on district governance in six local languages.

3.4 Ghana

The New Local Government structure of Ghana is made up of a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) and a four-tier metropolitan and three-tier municipal DAs structure. The Regional Coordinating



Council has the Regional Minister as Chairman and his deputies, the presiding member of each DA and the district chief executive of each district in the region, two chiefs from the regional house of chiefs and the decentralized ministries are without voting rights. This political arrangement backed by law has helped to reduce the development differences between the centre and other parts of the country; therefore, creating opportunities for more people, especially youth to actively participate in local governance activities. As more young people get involved

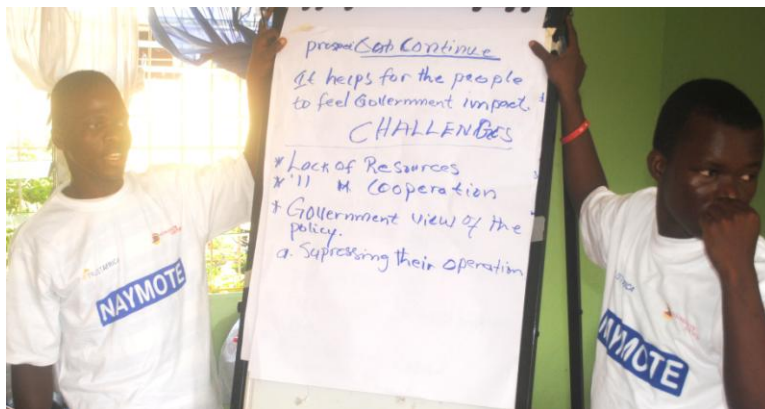
directly in affairs of local governance this affect their well-being, issues of concentration of all powers at the centre which are harbinger of dissatisfaction and frustration are laid to rest. Ultimately, policy-making procedure will be more engaging and more robust.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 IMAGES OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE:

From the three counties consultative meetings and focus group discussions, it was observed that with the exception of those who reported being interested and engaged, young people generally displayed very low levels of awareness and understanding about the role and responsibilities of local government. There also appears to be confusion about the difference between national and local levels, particularly in terms of who represents young people at the local tier. Despite this lack of knowledge about local government, its role or its members, young people still had strong views about the quality of local government and its personnel in their areas. We learned that where young people lack any awareness or contact with their local authorities, they draw on the views of others, such as views of family and community members, or media representations of local government.

Other young people felt that individuals who naturally assumed the responsibility to care about others and were committed to improving the local areas worked for local government or politics. A genuine desire to make a difference was the belief that motivated some of the people who became involved in local government.



The young people who had participated in local government in some way often had very different or much broader views about the types of people involved in local government. These types of experience often left young people feeling that everyone could not

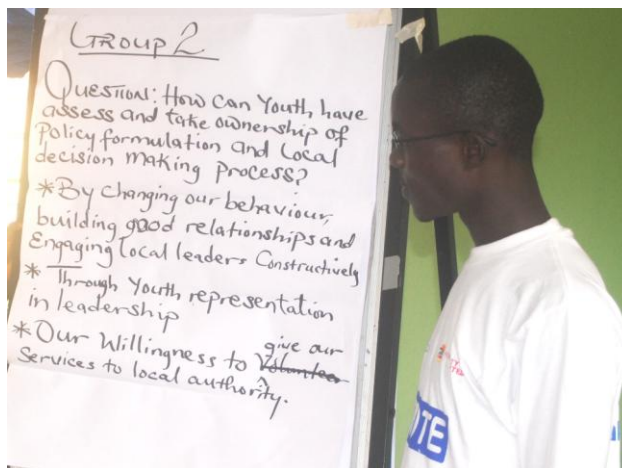
become involved in local government, and that this type of activity was only restricted to a particular type of person. Among all of the young people except the most aware and active in local politics, there was evidence of a lack of clarity as to who was responsible for local government.

Some young people mentioned superintendents, paramount chiefs, city mayors or district commissioners, but others were unsure as to which individuals headed local government. Some of the young people said the ruling Unity Party (UP), secret societies, fraternities like the free mason; and the Poro and Sande societies significantly controlled individuals and decision-making processes or local authorities. It was common for young people to mention their legislators when talking about the person in charge of the local authority.

When responding to inquiries about the types of people that might become involved with local government, it was apparent that they perceived these people to be very different from themselves.

Also, the consistency with which some characteristics were cited suggests the existence of some strong images. Membership to a secret society and age were a recurrently mentioned characteristic. Young people repeatedly imagined individuals who were involved in local government and politics to be 'old' or 'traditionally entrenched,' usually categorizing them as middle-aged and above.

For many, it seemed this view was based on the assumption that only older people would have the life experience and social standing necessary to become involved with local government and to



know what was best for the local areas. As one young person put it, "They've lived more and know what it's about."

Being "professional," "responsible," "rich" or "financially well-off" were other characteristics the young people attributed to those who could be involved in local government. Young people stated that these types of people would think they knew what was best for the rest of the

population and this might prompt them to get involved in local governance.

On the other hand, some of the elderly, particularly traditional leaders, held the view that young people were generally immature and naïve, and careless to be engaged in local governance. Some still felt young people lacked the intelligence and were not knowledgeable enough about politics.

They however, perceived local government as not the place for qualified professionals who had received a good academic education. For many elderly, the possession of academic qualifications puts them out of the consideration for service in the local government. Several considered other options more important and linked to better social class compared to local governance.

But some of the young people felt that the individuals who became involved in local government were people with lesser significance in society. Many young people often harbor a certain degree of scorn for local authorities, believing that local leaders were mostly interested in self serving initiatives and indulged in ill-considered schemes which had had significant impact on their own lives.

Many young people also said that local authorities often felt no need to consult residents, not to mention youth. Other young people said local government programs were “out of touch with the local community.” They named one such “out of touch with the local community” project as constructing a presidential guesthouse in a village with barely passable roads, no clinic, school, or safe drinking water, let alone mention electricity. They also claimed that in the face of several incomplete projects, local officials were more bent on proceeding with new ones and leaving the others abandoned.



Essentially, this perceived unresponsiveness was felt to be because of a lack of consultation about the wishes and needs of the local community. There was a strong view that local government workers need to get out from behind their desks and find out what their people want, as well as finding out firsthand what local problems exist.

The perceived lack of local authority activity around local problems was frequently explained as self-interest and a lack of motivation to help ordinary people. It was felt that local leaders were preoccupied with pleasing their appointers in central government in Monrovia, whom they felt accountable to; local authorities did not care about local problems; otherwise they would have

done more to resolve them. The young people added that local government was perceived to be only interested in doing something if it involved people who were important.

This left many of the young people in Margibi, Bong and Grand Bassa Counties feeling that the local government gave little thought to the implications for the people whom their decisions affected. Despite differing intensity of awareness about local government, young people generally had an extremely poor and negative image of their local authorities and their personnel.

The youth also thought that local government offices appeared often closed; but when they were open, they were difficult to navigate. Young people commented on the bureaucracy involved in trying to get things done. In these circumstances communicating with the local authorities was perceived to be excessively difficult; unmoving and ineffective. A regularly expressed criticism was that 'nothing ever gets done' and it was felt that 'everything they do takes a long time.' There was some suggestion that some responsibility for this inaction lay with local authority staff that were criticized for lacking essential skills.

"Communities with high levels of civic engagement enjoy lower poverty and unemployment rates, higher median incomes and lower violent crime rates" – Matthew Lee, National Science Foundation Award Winner.

The main areas of criticism voiced by the young people included detachment of local government officials. Consequently, it was felt that 'It's their own fault that no-one knows who they are'. Young people did not know whom to approach or how to go about contacting their local leaders, alleging that local officials pretended to be too busy dealing with important issues than to listen to youth.

Young people also commonly indicated that their local authorities tended to focus on 'things that don't really matter. A lack of activity around areas of local life that were perceived to need attention such as the roads, access and quality of education and health care, basic social services and youth friendly facilities for young people, was often cited.

Incompetence was another criticism highlighted. At the consultative in Bong and Grand Bassa, young people emphasized how local authorities purposefully withheld information on the operations of local governance and wasted money on unnecessary projects, employed mostly relatives, made promises which were not kept, made mistakes, and tended not to do things properly and were corrupt.

4.2 SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The young people mentioned different sources of information about local government, although some knew about many more of these than others. The local media/community radio stations were frequently cited as a source of information for news about local authority activities and local politics. Newspapers were cited as not easily accessible source of information. For some the radio stations were felt to be a preferable way to access this information, as it was easier to absorb than newspapers, which had “too much writing and not enough pictures.”

Others however didn’t think that local news provided much detailed information about local government. Some young people said they obtained information about the local authority from coffee/atayee shops.

Yet many mentioned not ever hearing information about local government’s financial allotment or plans for the development of local areas. Some as a primary source of information also mentioned local radio stations on County Development Funds (CDFs), or local investments and concession. Live radio phone-in debates and NGOs were ranked high for letting them in on what was going on within local government.

Some young people were aware of and had participated in sector meetings held regularly among county based functionaries and development partners-United National Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) civil affairs, local and international NGOs, etc. Many hoped for periodic forums where local people could go and discuss issues with their local representatives face to face and where local authorities could give periodic reports and accounts of local resources and authorities. Families and friends were also listed as additional sources of information about local government.

The portrayal of the local authorities and their representatives in the media influenced some young people’s views. Some young people commented that the local news mostly showed the local authority in a negative light. Sometimes, particularly negative stories remained in young people’s minds.

Sometimes young people’s views of local government appeared largely unrelated to the actual qualities or characteristics of their particular local authority, but seemed to be determined by the wider political arena. National media coverage of politics and images of national politicians left

some young people with very negative views about politics and politicians. The belief that local government officials such as the superintendent and district commissioners, who in most cases were elderly people, were imposed on local communities through appointments from central government seemed to have entirely shaped some young people's views about local government and the local authority in the area they live.

The views of family and community members have also clearly influenced some young people. This was evident in the way they mentioned the views of their parents or other people they knew when discussing their images and views about the local authority. Another factor was the level of contact that the young people had had with the local authorities and nature of such experiences gained. Some young people said local government officials are generally evasive and did not value their concerns or participation, and were distrustful of young people's ability to use or manage information properly.

4.3 UNDERSTANDING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The levels of knowledge and understanding of local government demonstrated by young people reflected a whole range of issues, which can be interpreted in a number of ways.

The first was a complete lack of understanding as to whom the local authorities were, where they were based and what it was that they did or were responsible for.

A second and more common response was that the local governing body made decisions for local areas, but there was a lack of clarity about what this involved or meant more specifically. Sometimes young people were conscious of the basic function and role of the local authority, but displayed little awareness beyond this; for example, many young people didn't understand local leaders' relationships to central government.

A third type of response was to connect local government almost exclusively with local service providers.

Lastly, some of the young people displayed a much greater degree of awareness and understanding surrounding the role and function of local government. This higher level of understanding was found among those with higher levels of interest in politics and with higher levels of educational

attainment. Unsurprisingly, the young people who demonstrated the greatest levels of understanding about local government were those who had some constant interactions with their local authorities in some form.

In contrast with the other three groups, young people who were more aware also displayed understanding of the relationship between central and local government. There was recognition that central government had ultimate decision-making authority but some powers had been delegated to the local authority. Local and central government were seen to have different areas of responsibility. Central government dealt with the 'big issues' such as national security and foreign policy, which the local authority then had to implement locally through programs. As one young person put it, "Local government is about breaking things down, taking the big national things and bringing them down to a more local and relevant level."

Youth participation entails the full involvement of young people in the decision-making process in socio-political issues as they affect them in their life in communities where they live. As a people whose future depends on the community, they need the opportunities that would help them contribute meaningfully to the development and the smooth administration of their communities. When they are aware of their right to participate, development and peace will ensue.

Having young people participate in activities related to their well-being in particular, and that of the community in general, will definitely equip them with skills that are rewarding for future endeavors. Working with their peers give young people the opportunity to make new friends and develop group networks that may last over time.

Young people can increase their level of participation through the following:

- Developing a positive mind-set;
- Volunteering to serve;
- Attending community meetings;
- Registering to vote
- Becoming a community leader and community organizer
- Learning to work with others of like-mind;

- Getting involved in debates that concern social and political issues;
- Writing contributions to the legislature on important issues;
- Forming youth councils and electing representatives (not selecting); and
- Getting involved in the decision making process.

4.4 LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN LIBERIA

Discussions about ways to participate in politics reveal that young people generally feel powerless and excluded from the political process. This is perhaps a reason why young people do not participate in local government. Because of both a lack of interest in, and understanding of, local government, young people often do not know how to participate. Even when they are aware of how they can participate, they often see little point in doing so.

Young people may perceive existing methods of participation in local government to be ineffective, as they may not clearly see how participation will impact local decision-making. Some young people cited the types of activities they defined as participation, but found it difficult to explain why they defined them in this way. Unsurprisingly, those young people with the most awareness of local government and politics tended to provide the most sophisticated definitions.

Young people's awareness of ways to engage in local government varied. At one end of the spectrum, young people said they did not know of any ways in which they could take part. These young people were sometimes unable to define what they thought "participation in local government" meant. As it turned out, the more uncertain response was most evident among those young people who had the least understanding and interest in local government. Surveys and focus group discussions were mentioned as a form of expressing views and participating, because the reported findings would express their views. Some young people were aware that views could be expressed via a phone call, visitation and letter to local officials or lawmakers.

Others felt that participation involved more proactive action, although there was variation in opinions as to what this action actually entails. Those young people reported feeling that the word "participation" implied an action which sought to change something, such as influencing the behavior or attitudes of other people or raising awareness. They mentioned believing that

participation required some degree of conscious effort, such as that which might be involved in protesting or organizing a petition. A more exceptional definition was with local activism – there, one young person saw participation as being primarily about “working for ones’ community.”

Some respondents further linked the definitions of “participation” to whether the activity they were involved in had broader implications. Voting was viewed as an example of this type of participation, because respondents indicated their belief that voting had wider implications for their communities. While other young people saw some types of activities such as voluntary work or work aimed at improving the local community as participation in local government, some were less sure and felt this type of activity was “more developmental and about improving the area than about politics.”

A small number of the young people had been attached to local youth clubs such as the “susu”, a traditional finance collective; farming cooperatives known as “COUE”, sporting groups or teams, institutional youth chapters such as the YMCA, YWCA, family planning, religious institutions (churches and mosques) or schools press/civic clubs. Sometimes these involved channels through which young people could express views and communicate these to external bodies which included the local authority. These types of communication were usually facilitated through the leadership structures of those organizations, by prominent residents or community leaders.

A number of young people had attended periodic community meetings relating to a local issue about which they had strong views. Most of the young people participating in local government through local authority sponsored initiatives had attended town hall meetings as part of these. Young people’s views of different ways of participating depended on the perceived possibilities of persuading the local authority to listen and respond to the message being delivered.

Among the ways in which the effectiveness of young peoples’ participation has been gauged is by their potential to generate attention and put pressure on the local authority to implement change. Sometimes judgments as to the potential of different methods to do this varied. For example, some of the young people felt that petitions would influence the local authority or government because they would be worried about losing local support or cooperation if they ignored these.

Other young people were more dubious about the power of petitions to persuade and felt that these did not tend to be very effective unless the petitioners had the backing of known advocacy

groups such as NAYMOTE, the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) and Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL); and huge media support or coverage before the petitions.

Protesting was viewed as a useful method in raising the profile of an issue, but respondents did not generally feel that this was not thought to be a particularly effective way of influencing change. Many young people felt that the government or local authority would be offended and would not want to appear to be pressured to act in a certain way.

For example, in Gbarnga, Bong County, motorcyclists and other youth groups have protested the disappearance or ritualistic killings of their colleagues, but most admitted that such actions have had little, if any, impact on necessitating swift investigations or prosecutions of alleged perpetrators.

The perceived lack of success achieved by national protests such as those associated with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report was mentioned by some young people in explaining their lack of faith in this method. Young people also noted that, to have any hope of success, a protest requires continuity over a long period and a large amount of support from other people and that it was difficult for a single group to influence change by this method. There was also a perceived danger inherent in this method because it might degenerate into rioting and violence. Some young people were not keen on this method because they were worried about being beaten, arrested, jailed, injured or even killed.

Young people's views varied as to the effectiveness of contacting the local authorities. Some young people felt that these individuals "must get hundreds of letters every day" and might not pay these letters much attention. Respondents also indicated that reporting their complaints was not a particularly effective method for young people to use because letters from young people might not be taken seriously and local authorities could easily dismiss the reports as "childish."

On the other hand, many young people thought that with persistence, contacting local authorities could be effective. They believe that if people keep writing letters, press releases and articles, visiting and telephoning local officials "until they are forced to listen," then authorities would take complaints seriously. This might sometimes involve contacting increasingly senior local authority figures until reaching a level where the local government took notice.

Young people also named additional steps that could be taken to increase the efficacy of contacting local authorities, such as contacting the media to harness additional support and increase the pressure placed on the local authorities.

Some thought that methods involving face-to-face discussion and debate were more effective than those which did not. For example, many youth identified attending a council meeting as a fairly effective way of expressing views and influencing decision-making, because attending meetings would offer an opportunity to “raise [your] concerns face-to-face.”

Youth who participate in local governmental decision-making raised the following concerns:

- Domination of conversations by elders, especially when governments approach them to speak about or for young people;
- Young people’s fear about speaking publicly about issues. They mentioned being afraid of judgment;
- Existence of the complex power relationships within society, especially rural communities where diversity is not recognized and women and young people are not included in decision making processes to the extent that uncles make decisions for the family (in the absence of a father);
- Cosmetic engagement of local government with community leaders as well as with young people;
- Shyness of young people in addressing youth or cross-generational issues in front of others;
- Derisive and token involvement of young people in local government programs; and
- Reluctance and untrusting behavior of young people towards local authorities because they claimed that consultations with local authorities have hardly generated any results or impelled any responsive actions

On the other hand, young people also suggested several ideas for enhancing youth participation in local governance were:

- Creating specific posts within local government with responsibility for liaison with young people;
- Employing specific population group workers to liaise with communities;
- Providing outreach activities to “hard to involve” youth groups and individuals (disable and young women);
- Relocating meetings to more “youth-friendly venues”;
- Accessing views of young people through focus groups and meetings within “safe” locations (within services);
- Paying young people to participate as actors in the local governance process;
- Providing appropriate facilities to build young peoples’ skills; and
- Promoting deliberate actions by local authority to enlist youth participation through regular and scheduled initiatives.

PEOPLE:

There are 16 ethnic groups that make up Liberia's indigenous population. The Kpelle in central and western Liberia is the largest ethnic group. Americo-Liberians who are descendants of freed slaves that arrived in Liberia after 1820 make up less than 5% of the population.

There also are sizable numbers of Lebanese, Indians, and other West African nationals who comprise part of Liberia's business community. The Liberian constitution restricts citizenship to only people of Negro descent, and land ownership is restricted to citizens-US DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

Despite the fact that some attempts have been made in including youth in local governance and local government in Liberia, the findings indicate the importance of institutionalize youth participation.

The key gaps highlighted in the findings are:

- Democratizing local governance for equality and effective service delivery;
- Local governance and human rights;
- Local governance and gender; and
- Local governance and decentralization.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To assist in dealing with the four gaps listed above, the following steps are hereby recommended.

5.2.1 BRIDGING THE GAPS IN DEMOCRATIZING LOCAL GOVERNANCE FOR EFFECTIVE, HIGH-QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY

One of the characteristics of democracy and good governance is the effective delivery of social services by the state to its people, a form of social contract. In a post-conflict environment, the consolidation of peace is greatly dependent on the state's ability to provide social services and restore citizens' trust and confidence in state and public run institutions and reconnect citizens to the state. By providing basic services for citizens, a state recovering from years of violent conflict shows dividends of peace.

However, a government's failure to provide basic functions may undermine government's legitimacy in the eyes of citizens. There are three distinct, yet inter-related dimensions of state failure: authority, service and legitimacy. Failed authority makes it difficult to deliver services, which can lead to decreased support among the population that lacks basic services.

At the same time, the lack of accountability and transparency in the management of state resources is one of the factors that lead to state failure. Decentralization itself does not guarantee that resources at county level will be properly utilized for the common good. That is why it is important

for the democratization of local governance structures to ensure check and balances through the participation of diverse actors, including young people in decision-making processes, particularly the delivery of services that are accessible and affordable.

To enhance a favorable democratized local governance process, the following suggestions are offered to aid in increasing young's people participation in demanding quality social service as an inherent product of democracy.

- The processes that lead to the identification and prioritization of development needs of communities require the participation of young people;
- Young people need to have access to information on national and local government policies that include narrative and budget related to the provision of social services;
- Young people skills in budget monitoring need to be sharpened to enable them effectively monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of development interventions; and
- Young people need to build an alliance with other civil society actors in the monitoring of development interventions so that the outcome can serve as the basis for developing a comprehensive advocacy strategy to engage policy makers in a way that focuses on problem-solving rather than a fight.

5.2.2 BRIDGING THE GAPS IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The end of the Second World War in 1948 ushered in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations Organization (UNO). The essence of the charter is to protect people's rights to freedom of expression, association, right to life, etc, without undue interference from the state. According to the Declaration, the state exists to protect the rights of her citizens, in as much as citizens do not exercise these rights unlawfully. Unfortunately, many governments in the world, and especially those in African countries, have violated citizens' rights that they should protect. Where citizens cannot exercise their fundamental human rights, they cannot also participate freely in the political process.

Even after Liberia's civil war has ended, human rights abuses continue to exist, especially in the rural areas where law enforcement agents are few or non-existent. Liberia's history has been marred by the human rights violations of successive administrations. Currently, civil and political rights as compared to previous regimes in Liberia are being generally protected and enjoyed with political discourses marked by diversified and dissenting views. Despite this gain, there is room for improvement.

The following suggestions would help to improve human rights in Liberia:

- The enjoyment of human rights goes with corresponding roles and responsibilities;
- Human rights are indivisible, so the attainment of one form of rights goes hand-in-hand with the enjoyment of other forms of rights. For example, civil and political rights should be enjoyed simultaneously with social and economic rights;
- Understanding due process is a key concept in helping young people to claim their rights;
- Human rights education and adherence to the rule of law are fundamental pillars of good governance and as such educating young people through formal and informal means is important for sustaining the democratic process; and
- Human rights concepts and principles have direct linkage to participation in governance so young people need to see and appreciate the connection.

5.2.3 BRIDGING THE GAPS IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND GENDER

Gender disparities and inequalities remain pervasive at all levels of the Liberian society. Social norms, culture and traditions continue to be a hindrance to women's participation in accessing resources and getting involved in decision-making particularly in rural communities. Mainstreaming gender in governance and democratic initiatives is one of the ways of contributing to sustainable development.

The place of women in contemporary Liberia has changed; women are seen performing tasks almost equally as men, even in areas that used to be exclusively reserved for men. The world has become more gender sensitive and responsive. In Liberia, the example is being demonstrated as the president is a woman, and there are other women occupying various political positions nationwide.

Yet, women remain grossly underrepresented in national politics despite accounting for nearly half of the population.

Though women constitute 49% of the registered voters for the 2011 elections, a male-dominated political culture and limited access to resources serve as obstacles for women who wish to run for elected political office. Children's socialization in their families, communities, and schools reinforces the gender divide. This is one of the reasons why young women are more apathetic and slow to assert their political rights compared to their male counterparts.

Young women, like men, have equal rights. Therefore, they should not be disallowed as result of certain cultural barriers. When both male and female are given equal opportunity to participate in politics at all levels without intimidation, gender disparity and social exclusion will be minimized.

The following strategies would help in mainstreaming gender in local governance in Liberia:

- Young women must get involved in the decision-making process by attending community meetings and participating in student politics. They should make their contributions to meeting's deliberations;
- Youth led organizations, both civil society and umbrella organizations, need to reflect gender sensitivity in all of the work that they do to be credible in advocating for mainstreaming gender in national and local politics;
- The representation of young women and men at the highest level is important when young people engage their policy makers at the county level. This sends a message of inclusivity and breaking away from the past;
- It is important to work with existing youth groups from civil society to carve a gender advocacy strategy that will be used to lobby for certain quotas of positions to be dedicated to women on decision-making structures at the county level, particularly structures that have resource implication such as the Forest Management Committee (FMC); gender discrimination is largely driven by men and therefore programmes targeting men need to be developed to respond to the issues of gender disparity.

When these gaps are bridged, the following will be attained:

- A partnership between men and women will be formed in the implementation of development interventions at the county level;
- Women and men will appreciate the unique values and talents that each of them bring to bear on development as partners;
- A growing recognition by men of the unique values that women bring to the table as development partners;
- Development interventions are more gender sensitive; and
- Women issues are raised and discussed during development meetings and planning.

5.2.4 BRIDGING THE GAPS IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND DECENTRALIZATION

Through the development of the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance and the amendment of certain portions of the constitution, Liberia's government is reconsidering their local governance structure. The Policy calls for reduction of the 148 cities to sixteen (16). The Policy aims to devolve political, fiscal and administrative powers to leaders at the local levels, starting from the counties. It will also make government more responsible to the people whom it serves, and empower them to take charge of their own affairs by voicing their opinion and making contributions on issues that affect them. When the people are empowered to decide how the development of their areas should go, there wouldn't be question of neglect, marginalization and skewed development in areas outside the nation's capital city, Monrovia.

Critical to the issue of decentralization is the management of decision-making processes so that it does not end up with a few people making and implementing all the decisions. When power resides in the hands of a few people, it creates exclusion, a major source of conflict. Mitigating conflict will require the representation and participation of diverse actors at every stage of the implementation process. The following strategies would enhance its success.

- A youth analysis of the decentralization policy will be an important tool to identify the issues that are specifically related to youth to be addressed by the decentralization policy as well as the gaps;
- This kind of analysis will be the basis of developing an advocacy strategy to engage policy makers to address or respond collectively to the gaps through amendments before it is passed into law;
- Engaging policy makers will be done by linking up with other agencies such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Youths and Sports, Governance Commission, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and other youth focused civil society actors; and
- As a way of engendering young people's participation, a series of consultations at the country should be organized and led by young people to rally support for their inclusion on key local governance decision-making processes and structures.

Equally, when young people are given the opportunity to play active role in the decision-making process of planning, implementation and evaluation of local governance projects, especially the ones that affect them, it strengthens the demand side of accountability. This may not automatically lead to the supply of an accountable and transparent system in the implementation of local governance projects.

The below approach will be useful in getting young people to get involved effectively in planning, monitoring and evaluating local projects:

- It will be useful for young people to have a basic understanding of project design, monitoring and evaluation. There are several links on the website on monitoring and evaluation that can serve as resources;
- The exposure to the basics of monitoring and evaluation will be a critical tool for developing indicators to be used for monitoring purposes and assessing benchmarks as contained in the policy;
- Dialogue on the outcome of the monitoring with policy makers will be an important avenue for increased accountability and collective problem-solving; and
- Sustained engagement and dialogue between young people and policy makers will create young people's confidence in the governance process and lead to greater stability.

An experts meeting held in Florence 2004 on Decentralized Governance for Effective and Responsive Service Delivery noted the below as an effective strategies for decentralization, which could be useful for Liberia as we begin our program on decentralization:

- With clear political will and effective management, decentralization can serve as an instrument of democratization, reconciliation, social integration, while at the same time promoting sustainable human development and good governance,
- When civic engagement is built into the process of decentralization, the chances are good that resources would be mobilized and allocated to poverty reduction ends, as well as for the achievement of the millennium development goals,
- Participation of local communities in the decision making process at the regional and local levels is essential for the identification of local development priorities and goals,
- Women play a crucial role in making decentralization successful; at the same time, decentralization represents an opportunity to strengthen women's participation in the governance process,
- Decentralization is instrumental in protecting and promoting cultural diversity which, in turn, enriches participatory and pluralist democracy,
- Decentralization can improve service delivery, especially in the field of health and education, therefore representing an important tool in the fight against HIV-AIDS,
- Forms and modalities of cooperation and partnerships in institutional and capacity building, in training and sharing of experiences need to be given serious consideration in efforts of strengthening local governance and service delivery for poverty reduction.

BEST PRACTICES AND ACTION/TOOLKIT

Advocacy and Policy 101

The success of each issue campaign will depend of your unit's ability to advocate for those issues. Therefore it will be crucial for you to understand the basic of advocacy. Advocacy can take many forms. In this section, we will highlight advocacy's basic elements.

A policy is an intended program action of the government, civil society or the private sector to engender positive change in the lives of individuals and communities. It has a series of stages that culminate in the enactment of a law or series of laws to set the legal basis for implementation and framework for monitoring and evaluation. A policy document directs government action towards a specific area of focus. For example, youth policy is that policy that strictly address issues relating to youths' development and general well-being; as well as strategies on what, how and when the intended action will be achieved. That means the process leading to such policy formulation must be an inclusive one for all youths whom the policy document is meant to serve.

Before advocating for an issue, you will need to determine the strategy for your campaign. One of the easiest ways to map your plan is through a strategy chart like the one below. By completing this chart for your issue, you will be creating a roadmap for your campaign. Anyone involved will be able to quickly understand your purpose and how you will achieve your goal(s). After choosing your issue, fill in this chart as a guide to developing strategy. Be specific. List all the possibilities.

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the purest way to influence outcomes in public policy and resource allocation. Advocacy involves influencing decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions.

Addressing the Advocacy Issue

In order to spread your message to others, you need to articulate your purpose in a short and simple manner. You will have difficulty gaining support if you are unable to explain why you need support.

If you can effectively and briefly answer these five questions, you are well on your way to coming up with a message that is short, clear, and convincing.

- Who are you?
- What is your issue?
- Why do you care?
- Why should they care?
- What specifics or actions are you seeking?

When you have your message together, you can then engage in advocacy work. Included in the toolkit are best practices and suggestions of ways that you can advocate in your community.

These tactics will build public awareness around your issue:

- **Organizing a Town Hall Meeting:** Town hall meetings are important tools to bring the community together to inform residents about important issues, understand where the community stands on the issue, get your message across to the public and the media, identify local partners who can be involved with your activities, and begin to identify and implement solutions to a problem. Town hall meetings can be a response to a recent incident in your community to which you would like to bring attention.
- **Building an Effective Coalition for a Campaign:** The purpose of building a coalition is to build grassroots support for your issue. Building effective coalitions can be vital in bringing about change. The more coalition members are involved in building and affirming the need for change, the more momentum the change process will gather and the greater its impact. In fact, establishing a solid coalition of allies can be the key to winning or losing a campaign.
- **Organizing a Public Hearing in Your Community:** A public hearing is more formal than a town hall meeting (often has the feel of a legislative hearing) and allows for the formal gathering of testimony from advocates, experts, victims, government officials and other key players by a panel of experts. Public hearings often focus on a long-standing issue that will require long-term campaigning advocacy.
- **Organizing a Teach-In:** A teach-in is a session to educate and mobilize the public about a specific issue. Participants of a teach-in are welcome to ask questions and discuss issues so that they can understand the topic clearly.

- **Incorporating New Technology:** The constant introduction of new technology has made advocating even easier. New techniques will allow you to communicate faster and more frequently, creating greater momentum for your work.

In addition, you may consider lobbying as a means of advocating on behalf of your issue. There are the two forms of lobbying:

- **Direct Lobbying:** Direct lobbying is communicating your views to a legislator, staff member, or any other government employee who may help develop legislation. To be effective in your lobbying efforts, you must communicate a view on a “specific legislative proposal.” Even if there is no bill, you would engage in lobbying if you ask a legislator to take an action that would require legislation, such as funding an agency or establishing Civic Education Commission.
- **Grassroots Lobbying:** Grassroots lobbying is defined as working to influence the public to communicate a particular view to their legislator regarding a specific legislative proposal. The first step to a successful communication with your legislator is to know your target audience. Learn as much about his/her background as possible.

How to Build Public Awareness:

Your advocacy depends on your ability to create public awareness around your topic. This means sharing your message in a way that reaches likely and potential allies who will support your cause. This can also include educating individuals who may be unfamiliar with your topic. This section will highlight the methods for creating public awareness.

Planning the Town Hall Meeting

- Identify local partners to work with in planning the meeting. Make sure they represent the diversity in your community. Advocacy organizations who represent other communities are good potential partners.
- Research the issue and how it impacts your community. If there have been reports written or studies done on the issue in your community make sure you are aware of them. Consider including the date of these studies in your talk at the meeting.

- Decide what your goal is. It may be an educational/informative session, or perhaps you would like to invite a local official and ask them to respond to community concerns.
- Once you have your objective, you can determine the format. This can vary depending on your objective. You can have anywhere from 1 - 3 speakers and a moderator. Speakers may be policy experts, media or government officials, local leaders or academics. Well respected speakers will often determine how successful your town hall meeting is. The moderator can either be a member of the local or national government or another well respected member of the community.
- Make sure to invite local media through a press release well in advance.
- Promote the event in your local media and ask partner organizations to also help promote the event.

The Day Of

- Make sure you have enough volunteers to sit at a welcome table and give out press packets to sign in other guests.
- Begin the meeting with a welcome/introduction by you or a spokesperson from one of the partner organizations. Take this time to identify the problem you are meeting about.
- Introduce the moderator and have him/her coordinate the rest of the meeting, by introducing the speakers, keeping time, and coordinating the question and answer session.
- Allow a total of 30 – 35 minutes for the speakers to make statements, and then open it up to questions from the audience.
- Leave some time in case any member of the media is interested in doing an interview.

Debrief

- Two weeks after the town hall meeting, get together with the key partners and individuals from the town hall meeting to discuss whether you have achieved your goals and possible next steps. It is a good idea to get feedback from the speakers and the moderator prior to this meeting.

Pulling Your Coalition Together

It is easier to move legislation or plan events when there are many hands to help. Other coalition members have their own access and relationships and they can use them to accomplish the goal of the coalition. When putting together a winning coalition, there are a few things that must be considered:

- Which organizations can help you build capacity and community-wide support?
- Which organizations are known as an authority on the issues you are working on?
- Make sure partnering organizations are diverse and reach into different parts of the country.
- Engage organizations that have credibility on the issues and have a base of supporters.

Natural coalitions exist in every community and neighborhood. Church groups, community-based organizations, parent-teacher associations and civic groups are examples of already formed entities with active members who share common concerns and may easily join the coalition. The key is to make the groups “partners” with the campaign instead of trying to make them part of the campaign. You may find allies by contacting an organization that has joined your organization or an organization similar to yours on other matters.

TIP: The coalition you assemble should be balanced and representative of the diversity in your community. Know that building a strong, broad grassroots coalition will create a lasting defense against any opposition and/or the current power structure.

Steps for Developing a Voter Education Plan

The following steps should be taken to develop a Voter Education Plan:

- Review local, regional and national civic engagement data.
- Discuss data at civic engagement town hall meeting, trainings and workshops.
- Rank issues according to priority and arrive at a consensus on priorities.
- Identify one issue that the youth will actively address in the upcoming year.
- Divide the list, assigning youth leaders to certain tasks or problems.

Conduct a detailed analysis of the problems by asking the following questions:

1. Who is affected by the problem and how do they perceive the problem?
 2. Who will be in favor of change and who will be against change?
 3. Can you anticipate what steps will probably be taken to initiate the change?
 4. What additional resources will be needed to mobilize and take action?
 5. What will be the best time to take action?
 6. Will you need additional financial support?
 7. Does the group, committee and organization have the necessary skills and resources to move forward alone, or should you collaborate with others?
 8. If you collaborate with others, what is the best way to involve them?
 9. Is there any additional information that you need before taking action?
 10. Are you clear about your objectives? Are they realistic, practical, and timely?
 11. Is your strategy legislative, litigation, political, media, or agitation?
 12. What will be your public relations strategies?
- Make a list of alternative strategies and then the probable consequences of each strategy's desirable and undesirable consequences.
 - Select a plan based on the best outcomes with the least negative consequences. Have a second plan available if the first one does not work.
 - Define goals and set clear timetables for reaching goals.
 - Determine whether your leadership is committed to the proposed action strategy
 - List the tasks that need to be completed in the Action Plan; the individual or group responsible, and the schedule for completion (make sure the assigned responsibilities make the best use of resources and committee member abilities).
 - Submit Plan to organizational partners, funders and youth leaders.
 - Execute your Plan.

VOTER REGISTRATION/CONTACT

Targeting

No matter the campaign, you will not have the money or time to communicate with every single unregistered voter. Targeting helps focus these conversations.

A successful voter engagement effort will have quality conversations base, as well as with a universe of unregistered voters that you target because they are likely to join your nonpartisan voter engagement work.

There are many ways to have direct personal contact with unregistered and low turnout voters. The following information details each method and provides information on how to implement them.

Canvassing: Going door-to-door

The advantages of canvassing (compared to other forms of voter contact) are:

- It is more personal and therefore more effective. Even if the person is not home, you can leave a short personal note at their door (i.e., “sorry I missed you.”)
- Its gives you the ability to provide much more information.
- It provides the basis for more extensive follow-up

Canvassing tips

A good canvass requires good preparation and a strong presence.

Confidence: Don’t be shy about knocking; you are bringing democracy to the doorstep! Think about what would inspire you from someone you greet at the door.

Practice: Make sure you feel comfortable about where you are going and your walk kit. Take the time to look at the script and practice it to make it more conventional.

Know the canvass goals: Have a sense of who you will be talking with, the type of canvass (voter registration, education or get out to vote (GOTV)). In a non-partisan canvass, the persuasion is usually about getting people to turnout and vote.

- Canvass in pairs and stay within sight of each other.
- Bring a cell phone if possible, or enough change for a phone call.

1. IDENTIFY AND REGISTER VOTERS

Consider asking the following questions:

- A. Are you a citizen of Liberia?
- B. Have you ever been registered to vote?
- C. Have you lived at this address for more than one year?
- D. Did you vote in the last elections?
- E. Is there anyone else who is 18 years or older living at this address?
- F. Could we contact them about registering to vote? (Make sure to document their information for a call back if they are not available to speak at the moment).

2. CLOSING THE CALL

“Like I said earlier, our votes are priceless and it’s important we use them. I’d like to deliver some information that will help you get registered to vote in the next elections. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. If we can be of any further information or assistance, please don’t hesitate to contact our office! Goodbye.”

Why target young people in a political process?

- Young people are a huge group, they constitute over 65% of the population,
- Young = new: in a close race, young voters can make the winning difference,
- They are voting: regardless of the long-standing conventional wisdom that adults don’t vote, in the 2005 Liberian elections young registered voters make up 54.6% , this was the highest young voters’ turnout,
- It works: Young adults can be encouraged to register and turn out to vote in a cost-effective ways that fit right into our civic engagement campaign’s overall strategy.

Events & Community Hubs

Work with 2-3 keyed in young people on your campaign to map out where to find the most young people for an event; engage and teach young people about democracy, elections and sign them in on the policy issues.

Way to conduct effective civic and voters' education

- Household visitations/door knocking;
- Face to face engagement;
- Drama/theater/act culture;
- Through information, education and communications;
- Community meetings/forums;
- Transport vehicles engagement/talking to people on the bus;
- Through public address system;
- Visitation on school campuses and holding discussions;
- Public education campaign or outreach;
- Songs on election or democracy;
- Peer to peer engagement;
- Mock ballot exercise/ teaching citizens how to vote
- Through sports and entertainment
- Debates and talk show
- Media campaign and social network

Links to key national institutions

<http://emansion.gov.lr/>

<http://www.moys.gov.lr/>

<http://www.mopea.gov.lr/>

<http://www.mogd.gov.lr/mogd/index.php>

<http://www.mof.gov.lr/>

<http://www.moa.gov.lr/>

<http://www.mpw.gov.lr/>

<http://www.flyliberia.org/>

<http://www.necliberia.org/>

<http://www.goodgovernanceliberia.org/>

<http://www.naymote.com>

Tips for community leader and what will you do?

- You have paid your tax, but are not sure if the money is used for community-based projects. What will you do?
- Your husband has started drinking. Every time he comes home he beats you. What will you do?
- It is time for elections for new government. When you go for voting, they tell you that your name is not on the voters' registration list. What will you do?
- You come to vote at a polling station at 10 am. The polling station is closed and when asking for permission to vote you get the answers: "you don't need to, we did it for you!" what will you do? Who will you talk to?
- The newly elected District Development Committee Chairman turns out to be very aggressive at the town committee meetings. He does not tolerate opinions he doesn't agree with. You are a member of the town committee. What will you do?
- The leader of the country turns out to be very doctoral. Should his/her tribe feel responsible for his behavior and take action?
- You are sick of malaria, but your boss insists that you go to work anyway. If not, you will be fired. What will you do?
- You have been robbed on your way home and all of your money has been stolen. You go to the police, but they ask you to pay something before they will investigate. What will you do?
- The government wants everybody to be educated and has made primary school compulsory. But in your tribe/area people don't consider it important, especially for the girls. What will you do?
- Your children's favorite teacher has been transferred without any reason. What will you do?
- You are student at a school. Every time you try to bring up issues about problems with teachers or administration, the minutes from the meetings are never shared-only if the issues are about problems with students. What will you do?
- Your children in secondary school are asked to donate a rim of paper to the school ever term. Now someone is telling you that the headmaster gives the rims back to the stationary shop in town for selling again! What will you do?
- One of your students is found dead in a lodge. Doctors find out that she was pregnant, but tried to get an abortion. She died from bleeding. Who is responsible and what could have done?- From MS UGANDA

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