

POLICY NOTE FOR LIBERIA

IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA THROUGH NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

A NATIONAL URBAN POLICY FOR LIBERIA: POLICY NOTE

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Initiated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Government of Liberia and the Monrovia City Corporation, the Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme aims to strengthen the organisation and meaningful participation of slum dwellers and working poor organisations in city governance, improve climate-resilient and inclusive urban planning, slum upgrading and incremental housing strategies as well as enhance the national enabling environment for Liberian cities. The Programme is a joint partnership between Comic Relief, Department of Human Settlements, Government of South Africa, Habitat for Humanity International, Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), StreetNet International, United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLGA), UN-Habitat, UNOPS, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), and the YMCA.

Sustainable urban development in Africa is a key priority in UN-Habitat's normative and operational work. In this context, Booyoung Co., Ltd provides financial support over a period of ten years from 2012 to 2021, to support the development of UN-Habitat urban planning projects in African cities and countries. In Liberia, a National Urban Forum convened in June 2015 brought together urban stakeholders to initiate a road map for a National Urban Policy process. In July 2015, President Johnson-Sirleaf launched the NUP process in Monrovia.

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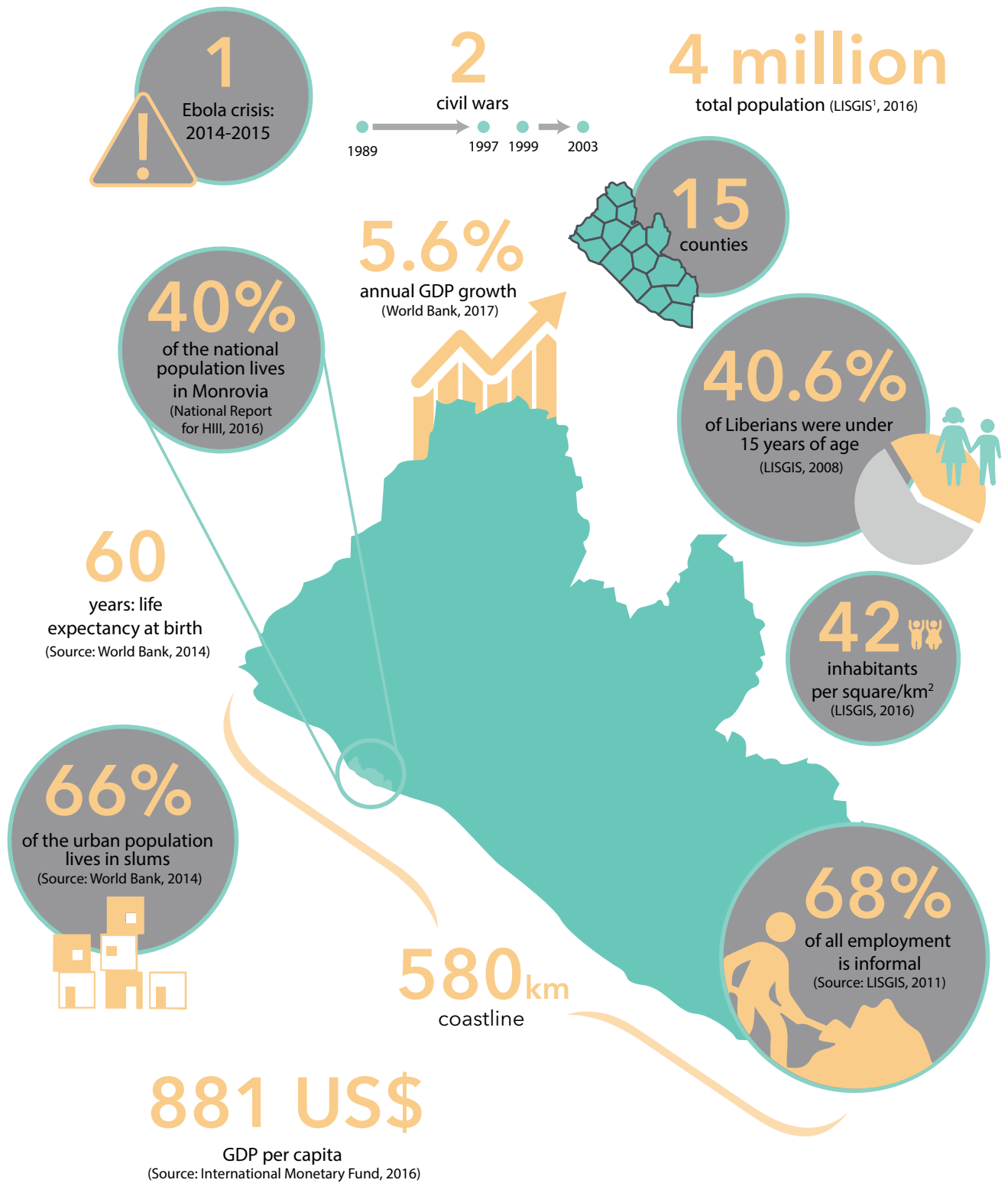
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COUNTRY PROFILE: KEY FIGURES AND FACTS



¹ Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Liberia has recently witnessed its first peaceful transfer of power since 1944, marked by president George Weah's historic inauguration on 22 January 2018 following a successful election. President Weah stressed in his inauguration speech, the need to clarify on fundamental issues including land, and shifting national resources and responsibilities from capital to counties. He also highlighted the importance of equality and unity, pointed out the need to narrow the gap between rich and the poor, and acknowledged the crucial roles that youth and women play. The pivotal importance of United Nations and international development partners in facilitating investments in agriculture, infrastructure, human capital and technology was underlined.

The majority of challenges highlighted by President Weah are rooted in the human settlements of Liberia, pronounced in the context of urbanisation and rural-urban migration. After 14 years of destructive civil conflicts, Liberia's proactive efforts to revive its economy and development are reflected by the improvements and reconstruction taking place in its cities. With a return to democratic rule have come notable progressive strides towards economic recovery, rehabilitation of public infrastructure services, and inclusive governance. There has also been a disproportionate rate of urbanisation and urban primacy; Monrovia, the capital, is home to 40 per cent of the national population and a commercial, international, trade and economic nucleus of the country. As a result, challenges generated by unplanned urbanisation are significant and threaten to impede national development.

If Liberia is to achieve inclusive economic growth and sustainable urban development, it urgently needs an enabling framework to provide coordination among different sectors and ministries, address urban challenges, and maximise the opportunities offered by urbanisation, while mitigating potential adverse externalities. A National Urban Policy (NUP) is such a framework and mechanism for coordination.

A NUP is a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate, government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development in the long term. Developing the NUP for Liberia is expected to coordinate the work of different sectors, establish incentives for more sustainable practices, and spur a balanced system of cities and towns through strengthening urban-rural linkages and equitable resources

allocation. This will not only help reduce urban and territorial disparities within and among regions, but also promote institutional collaboration and policy coherence towards achievement of the Liberia National Vision 2030.

As the United Nations focal point for sustainable urbanisation and human settlements, UN-Habitat has been supporting the NUP development process in Liberia launched by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at the first National Urban Forum in 2015. Since 2016, UN-Habitat has further renewed its commitment to promote NUP as a mainstream tool for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially target 11.b. The ongoing policy development in partnership with the Ministry of Internal Affairs is part of a broader endeavour to support poverty reduction by integrating the urban economy into national development policies and the development of sustainable, resilient Liberian cities.

UN-Habitat suggests five phases for the NUP development process to ensure the quality of to the policy: 1) feasibility, 2) diagnostic, 3) formulation, 4) implementation, 5) monitoring and evaluation. To initiate development of a NUP for Liberia, this Policy Note, summarising the key findings of the feasibility phase and the subsequent Discussion Paper, explains the context in which the policy will operate. The Note is the result of a wide range of research and consultations on the demographic, socio-economic, and physical environment aspects of the country. It also provides preliminary policy recommendations for further analysis in the subsequent NUP development processes.

Different from the encompassing Discussion Paper, the updated, simplified and restructured Policy Note targets at executives to brief on major urban challenges and preliminary policy recommendations for informed decision-making. It also aims to stimulate political support for further diagnostic, policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the NUP for Liberia. To better realize the country's commitment to implement the New Urban Agenda, the Policy Note has been structured in close alignment with the Action Framework for Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (AFINUA), with six main dimensions of NUP on demography, land, governance, sectoral policies, territorial development and jurisdictional coordination (Figure 1).

Development of the NUP for Liberia is designed to complement and operationalise Liberia's long-term

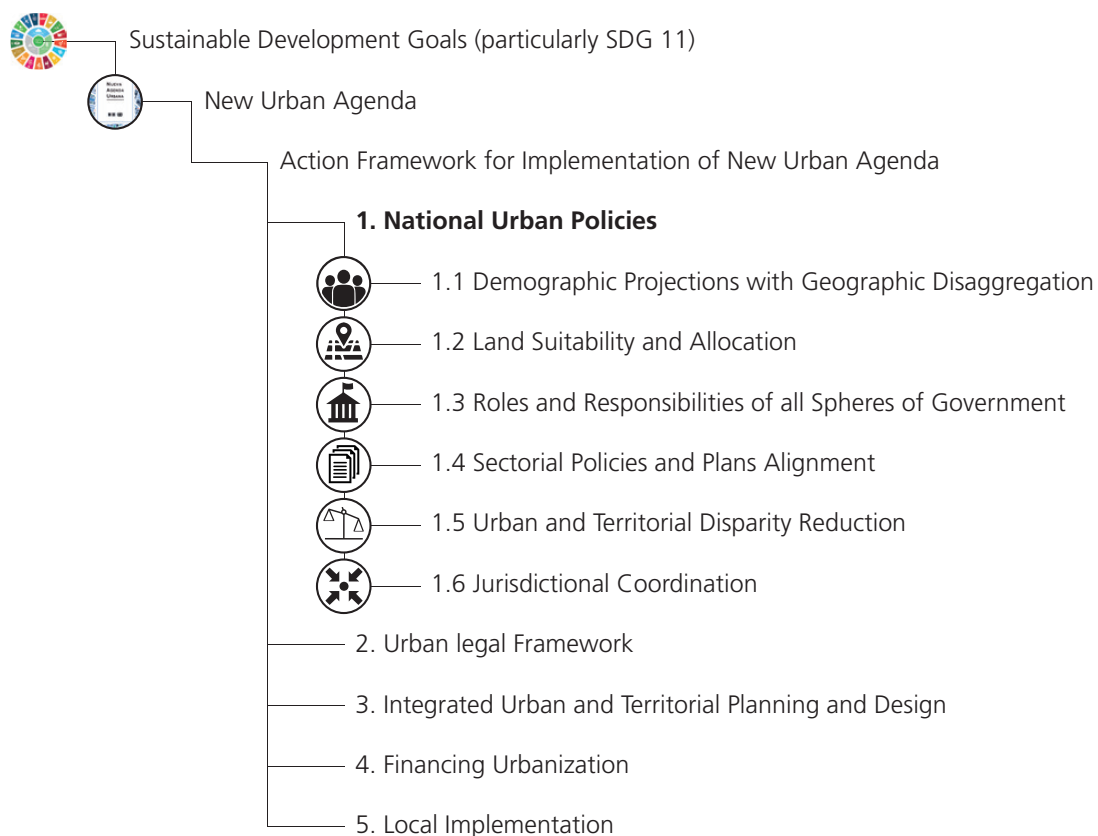
national development framework Liberia National Vision 2030, which seeks to propel Liberia to middle-income status by 2030. It is also expected to help achieve goals set out in the Vision 2030 by creating conditions that will make the desired urban future a reality.

This Note especially emphasises that crafting a NUP for Liberia must directly involve all actors responsible for urban affairs – central government, local authorities, ministries and agencies, civil society, private sector and academic institutions. This participatory spirit resonates with the proposals by major global agendas such as the African Agenda 2063 Framework which advocates, as one of its seven aspirations, development that is people-driven and relies on their potential. Consultations have been, and will continue to be, organised to ensure wide stakeholder participation to safeguard an open, collaborative, peaceful policy-making process.

As a result, ten policy focus areas are proposed to promote a NUP for Liberia that is forward-looking, focused on poverty reduction, and considers cross-cutting issues:

1. Strengthening small and intermediate cities
2. Focusing on the Greater Monrovia District
3. Encouraging spatial development strategies
4. Restoring infrastructure and basic services
5. Prioritising education and employment
6. Emphasising on land and housing
7. Recognising the significance and relevance of environment
8. Reinforcing demographic planning, regulation and monitoring
9. Promoting jurisdictional coordination and policy coherence
10. Institutionalising political, financial, technical and participatory mechanisms

FIGURE 1
Action Framework for Implementation of the New Urban Agenda & National Urban Policies



UN-HABITAT & NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

UN-Habitat is a leader in supporting the development and implementation of NUPs globally, and has developed tools to aid countries with undertaking a NUP. It currently supports 39 countries with the development of NUPs (Figure 2) and manages an active portfolio for NUP development with a budget over US\$ 12 million. In 2015, UN-Habitat joined the Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme, which is an umbrella framework that brings together a network of development partners in the country. One of the programme's three pillars is enhancing the national enabling environment for resilient, inclusive

urbanisation that benefits local governments, economic growth, and the urban poor.² This collaboration has further strengthened the capacity of UN-Habitat as the international partner best positioned to support development of a NUP that fits Liberia's context. This Note is based on review of a wide range of documents. It builds on the national development framework Liberia Vision 2030 and the complementary five-year strategic development plan Agenda for Transformation. This study also draws on the guiding principles of major global agendas such as the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, and the African Agenda 2063 Framework.

FIGURE 2
UN-HABITAT Supporting Countries on National Urban Policy



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