



LIBERIA ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

APRIL 2021

FOREWARD



Liberia economic recovery process has experienced a number of challenges since the Ebola Viral Outbreak in 2014. An economy with an average growth of 7.3 percent between the periods of 2006-2013 and considered one of the fastest growing economies in Africa plummeted to zero percent growth in 2014 as a result of the outbreak. Consistent with the fall in growth rate, an Economic Stabilization and Recovery Plan (ESRP) was developed to rebound growth in the subsequent years. The ESRP which was set out to stabilize the economy and return Liberia to a trajectory of inclusive growth only mitigated the impact of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic. Liberia recorded an average growth rate of 0.4 percent between the periods of 2014-2017. In 2018, the country had its first political transition in about 73 years with high expectations of economic revitalization from citizens home and

abroad.

The government being cognizant of the downward trend of the economy and inherent challenges such as: United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) drawdown, fall in global commodity prices and exchange rate instability, amongst others embarked on the development of a national plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) to tackle the gaps in the ESRP, and deliver the country to positive growth trend. Over the last Two and a Half years, the government has been committed to building on the gains of the past government and strengthening their weaknesses through massive macroeconomic reforms to ensure sustainable inclusive economic growth and recovery. However, in our quest to deliver on a sustainable and inclusive growth strategy through the PAPD, the Corona Viral Pandemic presented an unavoidable challenge to the global economy of which, Liberia is a part. According to the World Bank Global Economic Outlook of June 2020, “the pandemic was expected to plunge most countries into recession, with per capital income contracting in the largest fraction of countries globally since 1870-advanced economies were projected to shrink 7 percent, while emerging markets and developing economies were forecasted to contract by 2.5 percent”. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in January 2021, estimated that the global economy shrunk by 4.4 percent in 2020-indicating the worst economic decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

With the trend of global economic developments, the Government of Liberia is responding to the call for urgent action to cushion the pandemic’s health and economic consequences, protect vulnerable populations and reignite the stage for sustainable growth and recovery through the “Liberia Economic Recovery Plan”. The Liberia Economic Recovery Plan (LERP) seeks to address gaps created in the economy as a result of shocks over the last few years. Unlike the EVD regional epidemic which had an acute impact on both the health and productive sectors of the Liberian economy, early health measures to include the closure of airports, borders and internal lockdown exercises instituted by the government to prevent the spread of COVID-19 had an acute impact specifically on the economy. Consistent with the volatility of Liberia’s economy to global shocks, the LERP prioritizes the development of Liberia’s health and productive capacities, and identify key drivers of the recovery process to include: Health, Education, Commerce & Industry, Agriculture and Infrastructure to mitigate the long-term impact on Liberia’s socio-economic growth and development.

This LERP is the second short-term intervention plan developed in six (6) years to stabilize the economy and resuscitate growth following disruption to economic activities caused by a viral outbreak. These disruptions have seen a stark deviation from the country's medium-term plan (the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)), thus necessitating the government urgent response over the next twelve months while continuing the implementation of the PAPD for the rest of the first term of this administration. Hence, the government solicit the cooperation of all development partners, well-meaning Liberians and key stakeholders in achieving the LERP core objectives, which include: ***providing critical support to the health and related sectors directly dealing with the pandemic to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability; protecting emerging economic recovery after almost two years of macroeconomic volatility by sustaining the gains under the External Credit Facility (ECF); minimizing revenue collapse arising from the economic disruptions wreaked by the pandemic and protect the fiscal space; providing stimulus relief for key sectors hardest hit by the pandemic and those that have the greatest impact on recovering growth; and identifying post-COVID-19 priority investment paths and sectors under the PAPD.***

The full implementation of the LERP is expected to rebound the economy and set the stage for sustainable inclusive growth and socio-economic development. On behalf of President George Manneh Weah and the Government of Liberia, I would like to recognize with gratitude the contribution of key technicians, line institutions of government and development partners towards the development of the short-term growth recovery intervention strategy. We look forward to enhanced coordination as we endeavor to recovery the Liberian economy to a sustainable and inclusive growth trend.



Samuel D. Tweah, Jr.
MINISTER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



I wish to extend my profound thanks and appreciations to our Legislature for their strong support and commitments to the people of Liberia via President George M. Weah who has initiated through the Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Hon. Samuel D. Tweah, Jr., the crafting of the Liberia Economic Recovery Plan (LERP) envisioned to gravitate the economy to inclusive growth.

To all ministries, agencies, and commissions of the government, my earnest gratitude for your immense contributions and cooperation you rendered in designing this national plan. Also, not forgetting civil society organizations that were involved with the different levels of validation. I want to extend a special appreciation to our technical team at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, headed by Assistant Minister James Dorbor Na-

Kulah Sao Sr, Directors Babah S. Conteh and Benedict Y. Harleyson for their tireless efforts in developing this recovery plan from start to end, meant to recover our economy from the economic shocks. Thank you for your sacrifices and expertise provided during the entire process.

I also want to appreciate our Economic Advisory Consultant Asst. Professor Jerome G. N. Nyenka for helping in making the plan climate sensitive through his technical guidance in drafting and finalizing the LERP.

Finally, to our development partners, the NDC partnership and Conservation International, United Nations Development Program, African Development Bank, the World Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development, and all AID agencies, I acknowledge your technical support in mobilizing various stakeholder groups to contribute to this exercise.

I appreciate all your tremendous efforts combined.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Augustus Flomo', written in a cursive style.

Augustus Jonathan Flomo
Deputy Minister for Economic Management
Ministry of Finance & Development Planning

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ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
AEAS	Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services
CBL	Central Bank of Liberia
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
DI	Destination Inspection
DRMS	Domestic Resource Mobilization Strategy
DWA	Decent Work Act
ECF	Extended Credit Facility
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESRP	Economic Recovery and Stabilization Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoL	Government of Liberia
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPC	Infection Prevention & Control
IPD	Import Permit Declaration
LRA	Liberia Revenue Authority
LERP	Liberia Economic Recovery Plan
MSMEs	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MoH	Ministry of Health
NIC	National Investment Commission
NPHIL	National Public Health Institute of Liberia
PAPD	Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
POE	Point of Entry
POC	Precautionary Observation Center
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
IUU	Illegal, Uncontrolled and Unreported
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHP	Wage Harmonization Program

CONTEXT

For the second time in six (6) years, Liberia has prepared a short-term plan to stabilize the economy and to resuscitate growth following disruption to economic activities caused by a viral outbreak (Ebola in 2014 and COVID in 2019). These disruptions have seen a stark deviation from the country's medium-term development plans (the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) in 2014 and the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) in 2019).

In 2014, the Ebola viral outbreak was regional – afflicting countries in the Mano River Union Basin with the exception of Ivory Coast – with a combined contribution to global GDP of less than 0.5 percent. Although the global impact of Ebola was negligible, the economies of these countries were adversely impacted. Of the affected countries, Liberia was the hardest hit with a death toll of 4,810¹ people. The crisis affected every facet of the Liberian society and left the country reeling thus it adversely “impacted household livelihood and welfare across the country, closed schools and hospitals for a significant period of time, led to major delays and cost overruns for projects and created many Ebola orphans².”

Prior to the outbreak, the economy recorded impressive growth rates for a country emerging from a prolonged civil crisis with growth averaging 7.3 percent between 2006 and 2013; growth in 2013 was 8.8 percent with growth projected to decelerate to 5.9 percent in 2014 and subsequently rallying to 6.8 percent in 2015 on account of the planned UNMIL drawdown and a fall in primary commodity prices on the global market. Thus, the outbreak exacerbated the deceleration in growth with the country recording growth rates of 0.7 percent in 2014 down from the projection of 5.9 and 0.0 percent in 2015 also down from the projection of 6.8 percent.

The outbreak exposed the inherent vulnerabilities of the health sector and economy at large and sounded a simple message: that growth though impressive and driven mostly by primary commodity exports with little or no value addition, had not translated into enhancing the human development dimensions of the country as evidenced by a fragile health system that collapsed when people needed it the most. The adverse impact would have been more profound had the Government not crafted the Economic Stabilization and Recovery Plan (ESRP) with the primary aim “to set out the actions that are needed to respond to the Ebola Virus Disease epidemic, to stabilize the economy and get Liberia on the path of inclusive growth³.” The plan set out to recover output and growth; strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability; and strengthen public finances and ensure service delivery.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/history/2014-2016-outbreak/index.html>)

² The Economic Stabilization and Recovery Plan (page 6)

³ The Economic Stabilization and Recovery Plan (page 4)

Garnering significant assistance from the Country's international partners, both in-cash and in-kind, the Government succeeded in containing the viral outbreak; however, the Government has found it difficult to recover output and growth to pre-crisis level and since then the Country has not been able to record an annual growth rate of 3.0 percent with growth averaging 0.4 percent between 2014 and 2017. As a consequence, the Country's ability to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability has been inhibited and the Country's public finances and service delivery capacities have been constrained.

With subdued growth, Liberia began the 2017 election process that coincided with the final UNMIL drawdown, a further slump in the global prices of the country's key commodity exports, falling donor aid and heightened uncertainty. The country managed to turn a corner by holding a successful election with a smooth transfer of power from one democratically elected administration to another – something that had not happened within the past seventy-three (73) years. However, the prolonged electioneering process and other factors previously mentioned hurt growth, with growth in 2018 decelerating to 1.2 percent from the 2.5 percent expected in 2017.

The administration of H.E. George M. Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, responded to this deceleration in growth by formulating the PAPD with two-fold objectives⁴:

- i. To build more capable and trusted state institutions that will lead to a stable, resilient and inclusive nation embracing its triple heritage and anchored on its African identity; and
- ii. To provide greater income security to an additional one million Liberians and reduce absolute poverty by 23.0 percent across 5 out of 6 regions – through sustained and inclusive economic growth driven by scaled-up investments in agriculture, in infrastructure, in human resource development and in social protection.

To achieve these objectives, the PAPD set out to raise the growth rate from a projected 3.2 percent in 2018 to 5.8 percent in 2023. Achieving this goal has been difficult in the past two (2) years on account of significant macroeconomic shocks, characterized by exchange rate instability which has led to the rapid depreciation of the Liberian dollar with its pass-through impact on prices. These instabilities had been caused by large infusions of Liberian dollars into the economy over the previous year and at the same time that the country's net foreign reserve position had been declining. A major feature of the shock was liquidity crisis faced by banks who did not have sufficient Liberian dollars to meet the demand from depositors, creating heightened uncertainty and further undermining the efficacy of monetary policy. The monetary policy tools available at the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) at the time were inadequate to deal with these shocks and would have taken a longer time to develop a robust interest-based monetary framework to help stabilize the economy.

During this period, the fiscal space was constrained by severe reduction in expected budget support, complicating the ability of the Government to achieve many of its broad aims set out in the PAPD. The Government had to resort to some form of fiscal tightening, recasting the national budget to reduce the size of the deficit and rationalizing public spending to redirect resources to the achievement

⁴ The Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (page xii)

of the pro-poor objectives. Savings derived from this process helped finance critical community roads to reduce transportation costs and ease movement difficulties in Monrovia and some county capitals. But major investments in promised roads and electricity infrastructure, the most binding constraints to Liberia's economic transformation, had to await a combination of financing and continuation of on-going electricity projects funded by major donors.

The upshot was that the economic outlooks was still difficult, forcing the Government to ramp up its reform efforts. These efforts aimed to reform the wage bill through a Wage Harmonization Program (WHP) that sought to:

- reduce discrepancies in the wage system and raise the income of some fifteen thousand (15,000) Government workers who were earning low salaries;
- embark on an intense Domestic Resources Mobilization Strategy (DRMS);
- place public financial management on a higher trajectory of effectiveness and efficiency by improving liquidity management to avoid the accumulation of domestic arrears;
- improve governance as a tool in the fight against corruption; and promote green and inclusive growth in an environmentally friendly manner.

The above mentioned interventions constitute key elements of a program the Government entered into with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to restore macroeconomic stability, improve governance and assure a strong path to development through the PAPD. The Board of the IMF approved an Extended Credit Facility (ECF) program in December 2019 with fiscal policy anchored on the debt-stabilizing primary balance, with the aim of reducing the deficit from 5.2 percent of GDP to 2.5 percent of GDP by the first review of the program and to keep public debt over the medium term at sustainable levels. On the monetary front, the policy has been anchored on an interest-rate-based monetary policy framework aiming to reduce inflation induced by the depreciation of the exchange rate, while protecting reserves and enhancing governance and risk management at the CBL.

Reviews of the IMF-supported program showed that the economy was on track to recovery prior to the onset of COVID-19. Growth was expected to resume after the macroeconomic difficulties encountered since 2018. However, these gains were reversed by the outbreak of the coronavirus, which broke out in China in December of 2019 and has since ravaged so many lives and occasioned massive global economic disruptions of the global supply chain of goods and services, constraining trade and commerce and also interrupting travels due to the contagious nature of the virus.

On March 16, 2020, it was announced by the Liberian Authorities that the country had recorded its first case and as at March 16, 2021, the country recorded about 2,042 confirmed cases with 85 confirmed deaths and 1,899 recoveries out of a total laboratory test of 79,684, according to the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL). To contain the outbreak, the Government of Liberia on March 21, 2020 invoked the public health law by issuing restrictive measures designed to enforce social distancing – thus calling for the closure of all schools, night clubs, cinemas, beaches, spas, mosques and churches; banned all street selling and gatherings of more than 10 persons;

restricted admittance into banks and restaurants to five customers keeping a minimal distance of six feet apart; imposed social distancing for health facilities and pharmacies (which are to remain open); and made mandatory the washing of hands with soap and clean or chlorinated water prior to gaining entry at all public and private establishments. In addition, the Government established a hotline to report COVID-19 cases or persons perceived to be exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms.

Although Liberia has not yet seen and is not likely to see the impacts – in terms of the number of deaths – experienced during the Ebola Viral outbreak of 2014, it is the economy that has taken the hardest hit due to the fact that it is a pandemic, with COVID-19 threatening to derail the objectives set out in the PAPD. Macroeconomic fundamentals are expected to deteriorate further if the restrictive measures and the pandemic persist beyond a six month to one-year interval.

As Liberia is a primary commodity exporter and a net importer of finished goods, the persistence of COVID-19 will likely have a larger than anticipated impact on the country. Prolonged disruptions in the global supply chain of critical commodities (petroleum and the country's staple food – rice) will adversely affect the country. These disruptions have constrained revenue performance, which has declined since the onset of COVID-19 while ballooning expenditures especially those geared towards the fight against the virus. Given the already narrow fiscal space, this will increase the country's reliance on foreign aid or budget support to weather the storm over the short to medium term.

This plan endeavors to provide a background of the country, detailing developments in the underlying macroeconomic fundamentals and highlighting the challenges being faced in the presence of the impacts originating from COVID-19 now and over the medium term. The plan further details the socioeconomic impact of the viral outbreak on the Liberian economy. The strategy is to identify sectors that are the hardest hit, analyze the challenges it faced before the outbreak, identify how the outbreak will impact that sector and the agents involved and finally provide mitigation measures.

PRE COVID-19 MACROECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The Liberian economy was projected to rebound in 2020 from the numerous challenges encountered over the course of 2019. Real GDP growth in 2020 was projected to rebound to 1.4 percent up from the slump of 1.4 percent recorded in 2019; with said growth driven mostly by increased activities in both the mining and in the non-mining sectors. Moreover, the rebound momentum was projected to continue in the medium term (2021 – 2024) with growth averaging around 4.4 percent. However, said growth prospects were conditioned upon the policies the Government pursued.

The projected rebound in growth was aided by moderation in the rise in prices of goods and services on the domestic market which occurred as a consequence of the pass-through effect of the depreciation of the Liberian dollar and the adverse impact of geo-political tensions that have increased the global prices of food and energy. As a consequence, inflation (annual average) was been projected

at 21.3 percent in 2020 down from 28.0 percent in 2019. Moreover, further moderation in inflationary pressures was projected over the medium term but to remain in double digits up to 2022 but decline to single digit thereafter. The ultimate adverse impact of this has been the rapid erosion of our people's income thereby inducing unnecessary hardship on our people and constraining the Government's commitment to reducing poverty as stipulated in the PAPD. This also constrains our commitment towards the ECOWAS single currency project.

The rebounding in domestic economic activities coupled with the moderation in the rise in the general price level slightly eased the constraint in the Government's fiscal space by increasing revenue while curtailing the rapid increase in expenditures. Government's revenue and grant as a percentage of GDP for 2020 was projected at 29.9 percent up from 28.2 percent for 2019, driven mainly by increases in both domestic revenue (14.9 percent of GDP in 2020 compared to 14.4 percent in 2019) and grants (15.1 percent in 2020 compared to 13.8 percent in 2019). Total revenue and grant as a percentage of GDP over the medium term was projected to increase gradually and to average below 29.0 percent of GDP.

On the expenditure side, total expenditure and net lending as a percentage of GDP for 2020 was projected at 34.6 percent up from 34.3 percent for 2019; driven mainly by increases in capital expenditure (11.9 percent of GDP of GDP in 2020 up from 11.0 percent of GDP in 2019) despite reduction in current expenditure (22.7 percent of GDP in 2020 down from 23.3 percent of GDP in 2019). Total expenditure and net lending over the medium term was projected to increase at a decreasing rate; thus, averaging around 32.0 percent of GDP.

The slight improvement in the Government's fiscal space has engendered a narrowing of the Government's budget deficit. The overall fiscal balance including grants (excluding grants) as a percentage of GDP is projected at a deficit of 4.7 percent (a deficit of 19.7 percent of GDP) in 2020 down from a deficit of 6.1 percent (a deficit of 19.9 percent of GDP) in 2019. The country's budget deficit is worst without grants. However, financing the gap on the basis of donor grants has proven challenging in recent times on account of donor fatigue and front-loading of donor assistance during the fight against Ebola. Moreover, the completion of most major donor funded infrastructure projects has also contributed to the reduction in aid inflows. The fall in aid inflows has exerted significant financing pressures on the government as it has been constrained to absorb the financing of activities that were previously undertaken by donors.

Despite the projected narrowing of the Government's budget deficit, the country's debt has increased significantly. The country's public external and domestic debts as a percentage of GDP for 2020 are projected at 41.7 percent and 19.1 percent respectively compared to 34.9 percent and 19.2 percent respectively for 2019. Notwithstanding, the growth rebound over the medium term, the public external debt is projected to increase significantly while the public domestic debt is projected to increase at a decreasing rate. Financing the deficit using borrowing has also been a challenge as the country's debt carrying capacity has been constrained on account of the fall in domestic economic

activities. As a result, the country's risk of debt distress has been downgraded from low to moderate. This provides a worrying situation as the Government has relied on contracting debt to finance the implementation of infrastructure project to narrow the country's huge infrastructure gap.

The country's financial sector remains shallow; however, with the launch of the Country's Financial Inclusion Strategy, conditions are projected to improve over time; the M2/GDP – a measure of financial sector deepening/development – for 2020 is projected at 16.7 percent down from 17.1 percent for 2019, thus implying higher efficiency of each supply of money as far as GDP is concerned. Further improvements are projected over the medium term thus averaging around 15.0 percent.

Thus, the rebounding in domestic economic activities both in the near term and in the medium term is being made possible against the backdrop of an increase in financial resources available to commercial banks to be placed at the disposal of the private sector. The credit to the private sector as a percentage of GDP for 2020 was projected at 17.3 percent up from 16.8 percent for 2019. Moreover, due to the improvements in financial monitoring and supervision that has seen a reduction of risks inherent in the financial sector coupled with prospects of increased profit expectations on account of the GDP growth rebound, credit growth was projected to increase by 1.3 percent in 2020 up from a slump of 0.3 percent in 2019. Said momentum was projected to continue into the medium term.

One benefit of the rebounding of the growth in economic activities was the increase in transactions in the country. The velocity of money, the average number of times a dollar changes hands, is projected at 6.0 percent in 2020 up from 5.9 percent in 2019. However, it was projected to remain relatively stable over the medium term at an average of about 6.0 percent. The amount of money commercial banks generate with each dollar of reserve, as evidenced by the money multiplier – a measure of how fast the money supply grows on account of bank lending — was projected at 2.9 in 2020 down from 3.1 in 2019 on account of a rise in the reserve ratio and it was projected to remain relatively stable over the medium term.

Significant improvement in the external sector was projected. The current account balance including grants (excluding grants) as a percentage of GDP over the course of 2020 was projected to worsen to a deficit of 21.4 percent (a deficit of 35.9 percent) up from a deficit of 21.1 percent (a deficit of 35.6 percent) in 2019. However, improvement in the current account balance was projected to continue over the medium term. Improvements in the trade balance was also projected both in the near term and in the medium term. The trade balance as a percentage of GDP for 2020 was projected at a deficit of 13.4 percent compared to a deficit of 14.2 percent for 2019 with said improvements continuing into the medium term on account of gradual increase in exports coupled with slight fluctuations in imports.

Donor aid as a percentage of GDP was projected to increase steadily over the medium term. Grants (donor transfers, net) as a percentage of GDP for 2020 was projected at 14.6 percent up from 14.5 percent for 2019; however, it was projected to increase at a decreasing rate over the medium term

thereby resulting into the emergence of a financing gap both in the near and medium terms. The country's gross official reserves were projected to increase in 2020 to US\$308.0 million up from US\$279.0 million for 2019 and to improve significantly over the medium term, thus averaging over US\$360.0 million.

Given the country's heavy reliance on the rest of the world for over 85.0 percent of the goods traded on the domestic market, and despite the increase in gross official reserves which would ease the constrain on the importation of goods, deterioration in the months of imports of goods and services for both the near term and the medium term was projected to fall below the conventional threshold of 3.0 months. A significant increase in the CBL's net international reserves was projected and this would have eased the constraint the CBL was facing in its ability to meaningfully intervene in the foreign exchange market to stabilize the exchange rate and by extension the general price level.; The CBL's net official reserves for 2020 was projected at US\$54.0 million up from US\$44.0 million for 2019 on account of the implementation of the CBL's new monetary policy framework that has seen the preference of interest-rate based instruments over reserve based instruments. Moreover, the CBL committed itself to reducing its operational cost over the medium term. This significant shift in the conduct of monetary policy was projected to boost reserves over the medium term.

COVID-19 ERA MACROECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Liberian economy was challenged by weak consumption and declining in output, contracting by 2.5 percent in 2019. Due to the COVID-19 effects, growth slumped to 3.0 percent in 2020 from a contraction of 2.5 percent in 2019. The contraction was due to sharp decline in mining & panning activities from 13.2 percent in 2019 to 1.7 percent in 2020, and due to marginal improvement in non-mining activities from a slump of 4.7 percent in 2019 to a contraction of 3.8 percent in 2020.

However, growth is expected to rebound in 2021 to 3.2 percent from a contraction of 3.0 in 2020, driven by major improvement in non-mining from 3.8 percent of GDP in 2020 to 3.5 percent in 2021 and a moderate increase in mining & panning to 1.9 percent of GDP from 1.7 percent. The rebound in growth is conditioned upon government's policies directed toward structural reform, responsible macroeconomic management, positive global and regional outlook, and improved governance. The rebound in growth is aided by improvement in inflation. End of period inflation in 2021 is projected to 8.0 percent from 11.6 percent in 2020. Improvement in inflation is due to moderation in the prices of goods and services on the domestic market and appreciation in Liberian dollar. Further moderation in inflationary pressure is expected over the medium term to single-digit by 2023. The accompanying impact of the moderation will lead to improvement in household income, thereby reducing unnecessary hardship on our people and strengthen Government's commitment to reducing poverty as per the PAPD. This also shows our improved commitment to attaining a single-digit inflation as required in the ECOWAS single currency commitment.

The improvement in domestic economic activities and moderation in inflation have reduced constraints on government's fiscal space with increase in revenue and reduction in expenditure. Government revenue & grant is projected at 29.1 percent of GDP in 2021 from 28.1 percent of GDP in 2020. This driven mainly by improvement in domestic revenue (14.2 percent in 2021 from 13.9 percent in 2020), and moderate improvement in grants (14.9 percent in 2021 from 14.1 percent in 2020). Total revenue and grant as a percentage of GDP over the medium term is projected to average around 28.6 percent of GDP.

Total expenditure and net lending as a percentage of GDP for 2021 is projected at 32.0 percent up from 31.7 percent for 2020; driven mainly by an increase in capital expenditure (10.7 percent of GDP of GDP in 2021 up from 10.0 percent of GDP in 2020) despite reduction in current expenditure (21.2 percent of GDP in 2021 down from 21.7 percent of GDP in 2020). Total expenditure and net lending over the medium term is projected to increase, averaging around 31.18 percent of GDP.

OBJECTIVES OF THE LIBERIA ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN (LERP)

To mitigate the impact of the challenges posed to the economy, the Government is rolling out series of interventions aimed at enhancing the ability of the health sector to meet emerging challenges, recovering output and stabilizing growth, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability, strengthening public finances and ensuring effective service delivery. Thus, the objectives of the LERP are to:

- Provide critical support to the health and related sectors directly dealing with the pandemic to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability;
- Protect emerging economic recovery after almost two years of macroeconomic volatility by sustaining the gains under the External Credit Facility;
- Minimize revenue collapse arising from the economic disruptions wreaked by the pandemic and protect the fiscal space;
- Provide stimulus relief for key sectors that are the hardest hit by the pandemic and those that have the greatest impact on recovering growth; and
- Identify post-COVID-19 priority investment paths and sectors under the PAPD.

THE PATH FOR RECOVERING FROM THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

KEY DRIVERS OF THE RECOVERY PROCESS

The Government anticipates that the recovery process will cover a period of twelve (12) months and the strategy is to intervene on sectors/activities that require immediate intervention to mitigate the long term impact on Liberia's socioeconomic growth and development. These measures are as follow:

- **Health:** Containment of the viral outbreak to give people the confidence to get involved into meaningful economic activities while at the same time enhancing the resilience of the health system to combat other diseases;
- **Education:** improve sanitation and adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures in our schools so as to provide a safe learning environment to prevent the Country from losing the next generation of leaders;
- **Commerce & Industry:** Support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) adversely impacted by the economic downturn so as to protect jobs and income thereby reducing the incidence of poverty;
- **Agriculture:** Support to smallholder farmers, specifically those involved in food crop farming so as to enhance food security; and
- **Infrastructure:** rehabilitation of the existing road network to stimulate economic activities; expansion of the connectivity of the electricity grid and the water grid to improve sanitation in the education and health sectors.

These are short-term interventions that are necessary to get us back on the track of achieving the objectives of the PAPD which is currently being revised as a result of the lessons learned before and during the COVID-19 era.

HEALTH

CONTEXT

The outbreak of COVID-19 has placed a tremendous strain on the country's health system as in addition to the disease it causes, the health system has to contemporaneously cope with the existing levels of non-communicable diseases. This is an enormous challenge as our system cannot cope with the huge volume of patients at any particular point in time due to the low doctor-to-patient ratio (1:15,000 as of 2018), inadequate medical supplies and the lack of medical infrastructure.

There are a total of 931 health facilities in country of which 462 are publicly owned while 469 are privately owned facilities. Of the total facilities, there are 837 clinics, there are 36 hospitals and 58 health centers. As regards the publicly owned health facilities, there are 23 hospitals, 35 health centers and 404 clinics. Privately owned facilities are more than the public facilities in the country, however these facilities are concentrated in the urban settings with more than 70.0 percent of them in Monrovia and its immediate environs. Privately owned facilities include those owned by religious institutions and individual(s). Of the ten (10) major causes of illness, malaria accounts for 45.0 percent, followed by sepsis – a life-threatening illness caused by a body's response to infection. The stock-out of tracer medicines and commodities in public health facilities as of the last quarter (January-March 2020) is 65.0 percent based on the Ministry of Health (MoH) Electronic Logistics Management System for drugs. Meaning only 35.0 percent of public health facility had tracer (key lifesaving medicines).

The major challenges facing the health sector are as follow:

- The public health system is underfunded: this is the overarching challenge in the health sector. Government has been implementing free health care for more than a decade in response to post conflict economic fragility and high level of poverty following the civil war;
- Inadequate workforce, with imbalance skills and shortage of some relevant cadres of health workers and medical specialists, anesthetics, laboratory technicians among others;
- Shortage of essential medicines and medical supplies due to limited budget allocation and disbursement to the MoH;
- Limited infrastructures and essential medical equipment;
- Inadequate funding to Maternal Child and Neonatal Health;
- Inadequate funding to Mental and Neglected Tropical Diseases; and
- Limited support to Research and Monitoring and Evaluation in the health sector.

The emerging issues as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak are as follow:

- High morbidity and mortality rates as a consequence of the viral outbreak and other diseases;
- Increased pressure on health facilities, workforce and medical supplies;
- Increased risk of health worker's infection, loss of community confidence resulting to low service utilization; and
- Inadequate availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical and support staffers.

COVID IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

Some COVID-19 impact targeted responses are as follow:

- Coordination for effective command and control, continuity of operations, management of Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs), Official Communication, Finance, Human Resources, Planning and Administration;
- Cross border surveillance and Community Event Base Surveillance (CEBS);
- Epidemiology/Surveillance (Data Collection and Analysis and follow ups);
- Health Promotion and Communication including Community engagement, risk communication and social mobilization);
- Infection Prevention & Control in health facilities ensuring health workers and patients safety;
- Sample collection, laboratories testing and confirmation;
- Case Management (including Isolation and Referral);
- WASH and proper management of dead bodies;
- Mobilization of medicines, medical supplies and Logistics;
- Support Rapid Response Team; and
- Provision of a stock pile of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and ventilators and other sanitary materials useful for prevention of future outbreaks.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

Some of the mitigating measures to address the challenges facing the sector are as follow:

- **Health financing:** The MoH has developed health financing policy and strategies with clearly sequenced activities from short to long term measures.
 - Reintroduction of the Revolving Drug Funds (RDF) as a means to reduce the financial burden off the shoulders of the poor in the immediate term and to reduce the shortages of medicines and medical supplies;
 - An efficiency study has been conducted and the next step is the development of a resource allocation formula to facilitate evidence based planning and budgeting;
- **Human Resources for health:** given that donor partners are no longer paying personnel cost, the government has taken full responsibility for the health workers pay, with incremental enrollment;
- **Finalization of the COVID-19 preparedness plan in collaboration with partners.** The concentration of the plan include support to health care workers, purchase and rehabilitation of health care equipment, procurement of medicines and other medical supplies, deployment of surge staff to contact tracing activities, border areas, rapid response teams, training of responders, planning, communications and information sharing, staffing and equipping of laboratories, and logistical and supply support.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

For the second time in six years, the Government is being inflicted by a viral outbreak that is threatening to overwhelm our health system. During the Ebola crisis of 2014, the Government attracted massive donor support but the Government failed to create a specialized medical facility to exclusively handle infectious diseases. Learning from our shortcomings in the past, the Government intends to build and equip a specialized medical facility to be able to handle infectious diseases. However, given the constrains on the government's fiscal space, we intend to partner with donors in this endeavor.

To be effective, the collection of surveillance data is expected to be standardized on a national basis and be made available at local, regional and national level. In this light, the Government of Liberia (GoL) through NPHIL is committed to implementing the following:

Short term measures:

- Improve Maternal and Neonatal Child adolescence Health services through training of service providers and the provision of necessary Neonatal Management of Child Health (NMCH) instrument, equipment medicines and medical supplies and infrastructure in nine counties (Montserrado, Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, Margibi & Maryland Counties) (US\$3.0 million);

- Re-introduction of National Revolving Drug Funds (RDF) in public hospitals and health centers across the country as seed fund to commence the RDF, set-up system and guidelines and training across the country (US\$10.5 million);
- Introduction of fees for service at all public hospitals and health centers and build the capacity of selected health workers on fees for service operational manual in all fifteen counties (US\$69,335.00);
- Provide operational support to the national reference Lab. to ensure service maintenance contract for equipment, procurement of lab equipment, consumables and laboratory test kits are place (US\$3.0 million);
- Implement Data demand and used training to improve health planning and programming for evidence based decision making (US\$150,000.00);
- Strengthen Liberia's public health system by providing trainings for public health workers using the Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) (Frontline, Intermediate and Advanced) model while taking into consideration the One Health approach (US\$702,353.00);
- Enhance and expand disease preparedness and surveillance through detection, control and response to public health threats/events (US\$150,000.00);
- Enhance and expand processes and structures to protect environmental and occupational health through the supply of reagents and equipment to improve water quality testing at the national and the county levels (US\$60,000.00);
- Conduct Human Resources for Health (HRH) assessment to inform the development of a comprehensive human resource policy and strategy to elaborate the distribution and re-distribution, production, placement and retention of health workers (US\$450,000.00);
- Build management and leadership capacities at all levels of the health system with focus on the local levels (County Health Teams, District Health Teams, hospitals, health centers and clinics) (US\$1.0 million);
- Support the implementation of the emergency Logistics Management Information System (eLMIS) and other HIS (Health Information System) sub-systems and build capacity to strengthen quantification of essential Medicines (US\$350,000.00);
- Support and strengthen sample transportation systems at the national and the sub-national levels to ensure timely detection to support confirmation of out-break and timely response (US\$1.0 million);
- Establish and strengthen Community Health services provision in the counties; and
- Improve the diagnostic capacities of health facilities especially through effective and standard laboratory system at the primary levels (US\$2.4 million).

Medium term measures

- Strengthen a comprehensive and integrated sustainable public health diagnostic system (US\$200,000.00);

- Strengthen local capacities to continue the production of locally made medical supplies including Alcohol based Hand Rub Solution (AHRS) (US\$1.5 million);
- Conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation and verification of service delivery and program implementation at sub-national to enhance planning and program outcomes and impacts (US\$400,000.00);
- Implement the conduct Service Availability Readiness Assessment (SARA) (US\$350,000.00);
- Expand, conduct, and coordinate public health and medical research in Liberia
- Procure and distribute non-medical supplies/cleaning materials including IPC related to County level (CHTs & Hospitals) (US\$22.0 million); and
- Equip and staff two infectious disease treatment centers in Rivergee and Lofa counties (US\$3.0 million).

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

- Revise the Environmental Social Health Impacts Assessment and integrate ESIA principles and climate change adaptation considerations (US\$150,000)
- Undertake climate vulnerability and risk assessment of the impacts of climate change and vulnerability on human health (US\$35,000)
- Improve public outreach on environmental health issues (US\$25,000)
- Ensure all referral health facilities and large clinics and funeral parlors manage waste generated in their facilities in conformity to the applicable laws and regulations (US\$60,000)

EDUCATION

CONTEXT

Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advancement. In addition, it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution.

In Liberia, there are a total of 5,423 schools in the country of which public schools account for 2,612 (48.0 percent); private schools, 1,486 (27.0 percent); faith-based institutions, 999 (18.0 percent); and community schools, 326 (6.0 percent). The total number of students is placed at 1.42 million of which males account for 726,096 (51.0 percent) while females account for 689,010 (49.0 percent). Moreover, there are 53,363 teachers in the country of which 39,325(74.0 percent) are male while 14,038 (26.0 percent) are females.

As regards institutions of higher learning in the country, we have the following:

- Eight (8) community colleges offering associate degrees;

- Eighteen (18) faith-based higher education institutions offering a combination of associate, bachelor and masters;
- Eight (8) health institutions;
- Two (2) teacher training colleges;
- Fourteen (14) private tertiary institutions offering a combination of associate, bachelor and masters; and
- Two (2) public universities.

The major challenges facing the education sector prior to the COVID-19 outbreak are as follow:

- Lack of mobility to conduct effective Monitoring and School supervision (Vehicles, Motorbikes);
- Inadequate trained teachers at the Junior and Secondary levels;
- Inadequate and poor infrastructure of Secondary School; and
- Inadequate libraries and Science laboratories for Junior and Secondary schools.

The emerging issues resulting from COVID-19 outbreak are as follow:

- Poor sanitation in schools that constrain the reopening process;
- Potentially high drop-out rates specifically among female students;
- Lack of infrastructure to support e-learning program; and
- Loss of jobs and incomes for those employed in the educational sector and also for parents and guardians of school going children.

COVID-19 IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

The COVID-19 targeted responses are as follow:

- Establish a program accreditation task team for each of the five program areas to design and implement accreditation processes;
- Facilitate the establishment of Quality Assurance mechanism in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), develop policy on Financing Higher Education and update/Revise 1989 Higher Education Act;
- Strengthen the implementation of Education Workforce Reform at Central, County and District Levels;
- Provide support for improved functions and accountability at decentralized levels (County & District);
- Strengthen Education Sector Planning, Monitoring, Budgeting & Financing, and adopting the Bottom-Top approach;
- Honor the development of Education Sector Plan; Report, Review and updates of Sector Plan;
- Complete the establishment and make functional three (3) Centers of Excellence;

- Increase access to school-based services through School Health, School Feeding, Counselling and Community Engagement Services at all levels;
- Improve quality delivery of school-based services through the provision of nutritional package, capacity building of teachers, students, school administrators, and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) leadership; and
- Strengthen governance through collaboration, policy implementation, and stakeholders' engagement.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

- Developed Program to Account for Teachers Work time and to Control Absenteeism;
- Established a Center of Excellence for Licensing Teachers;
- Developed and Launched a Three Pathway competence-based curriculum for Grades 1 – 12;
- Developed and Launched a Five Level Curriculum for effective management of Childhood Classrooms;
- Repeatedly conducted intermittent Teacher Training Programs; and
- Established an Accelerated Quality Education (AQE) Program is a teacher's development initiative aimed at enhancing special skills for teachers encountering over-aged students with new methods.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

To mitigate the impact on reduced learning outcomes, the Government intends to introduce remote learning through the use of online tools, radio and television. To address the issue of high dropout rates, the Government is working with the relevant institutions to ease the burden of tuition on parents. As regards the loss of meals, the Government is in discussion with meal providing entities to continue providing these meals in take-away plates for those kids who are within close proximity of their schools.

The following measures are being planned for the short and medium term:

- Delivering Quality Education in the midst of Emergency (US\$7.0 million);
- Facilitate the establishment of Quality Assurance mechanism in HEIs and develop a policy on financing Higher Education and update/revise 1989 Higher Education Act (US\$275,000.00);
- Honor the development of Education Sector Plan, Reports, Review and updates of Sector Plan (US\$390,070.00);
- Increase access to school-based services through School Health, school feeding, Counselling and Community Engagement services at all levels (US\$5.3 million);

- Improve quality delivery of school-based services through provision of nutritional package, capacity building of teachers, students, school administrators, and PTA leadership (US\$300,000.00);
- Strengthen governance through collaboration, policy implementation, and stakeholders' engagement (US\$10,000.00);
- Strengthen the implementation of Education Workforce Reform at Central, County and District Levels (US\$40,000.00);
- Provide support for improved functions and accountability at decentralized levels (County & District) (US\$150,000.00);
- Strengthen Education Sector Planning, Monitoring, Budgeting & Financing and adopting the Bottom-Top approach (US\$50,000.00); and
- Complete the establishment and make functional three (3) Centers of Excellence (US\$447,900.00); and
- Establishing distance learning program to improve learning outcomes (US\$2.4 million).

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

- Develop and include climate change in the programs of teachers training institutes and other educational programs (US\$75,000)
- Include climate change science and practice in the curriculum of secondary schools (US\$60,000)
- Establish knowledge management and research at the Ministry of Education on technology and innovation on climate change (US\$100,000)
- Regulate in close collaboration with the Commission on Higher education and the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure climate change programs are consistent with national climate change agenda and international best practices (US\$20,000)

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

CONTEXT

While access to improved water sources has risen from 62.4 percent in 2000 to 76.5 percent in 2015 nationally, less than 4.0 percent of Liberians benefit from piped water and only 17.0 percent of the population has access to improved sanitation (WHO and UNICEF, 2017). This essentially means that the country missed its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for improved water and sanitation access in 2015. Virtually the entire population of Liberia currently lacks access to safely managed WASH as targeted by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

At current rates, there are significant challenges to attaining the recently developed WASH SDGs by 2030. While comprehensive nationwide data for all aspects of the SDG defined “safely managed” water and sanitation access is not yet available, partial and preliminary information clearly shows the more ambitious “safely managed” access to be very low. For example, while improved water access is above 70.0 percent, improved access on-premises (just one of the “safely managed” conditions) is only 4.0 percent. Adding other safely managed conditions such as water quality and given the reports of high levels water quality contamination in Monrovia, “safely managed water” may be rarer still. The same is true for sanitation. For example, Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) data indicates that 97.0 percent of the population has no facilities for hand washing, as per the newly defined SDG indicators.

Recent estimates produced by the World Bank⁶ suggest that Liberia must invest about 8.3 percent of its current GDP (US\$201.0 million per year in 2015 prices) to achieve SDGs 6.1 and 6.2 by 2030. Water and Sanitation Access to and use of improved sources of drinking water has improved. Access to drinking water is estimated at around 73.0 percent and access to sanitation is estimated at 17.0 percent. About 15.0 percent of the population has access to sanitation and hygiene. In the rural areas open defecation is still the most widespread method of feces disposal with as many as 85.0 percent still practicing open defecation. Only 6.0 percent of the rural population currently have access to improved sanitation. Moreover, open defecation is also a challenge for some urban communities, especially those that reside along the waterfront.

It is estimated that each year, Liberia loses US\$17.5 million due to the poor sanitation; the poorest quintile of the population is almost seven (7) times more likely to practice open defecation than the richest. Additionally, large disparities exist across the country. There are inequalities in coverage. The 2015 MDGs targets for access to improved drinking water sources and improved sanitation are 79.0 percent and 63.0 percent respectively. The targets for rural areas were 67.0 percent access to improved water sources and 52.0 percent access to improved sanitation. An estimated 35.0 percent of existing clinics and schools lack adequate access to water and sanitation facilities, while formal solid waste management services are only available in Monrovia.

Major limitations to achieving sustainable WASH services includes but are not limited to:

- i. Institutional fragmentation;
- ii. Weak legal and regulatory framework;
- iii. Inadequate water distribution and poor infrastructures due to lack of funding;
- iv. Inadequate sanitation services;
- v. Lack of trained manpower;
- vi. Inadequate data (on access to services); and
- vii. Difficulties with planning, resources financing and assessing progress;

⁵ Safely managed water is defined as drinking water from an improved water source which is located on premises, available when needed and free from fecal and priority chemical contamination; safely managed sanitation is the use of improved facilities which are not shared with other households and where excreta are safely disposed in situ or transported and treated off-site

⁶ <https://doi.org/10.1596/K8543>

- viii. Lack of Logistics for Monitoring and Evaluation at Sub National Levels;
- ix. Low base line statistics for access for pipe water and improved sanitation
- x. Lack of established consumer protection policy;

By 2023, the government aims to have equitable, safe, affordable and sustainable water supply and sanitation services for all Liberians. Government has established the WASH Commission and will mobilize resources for water supply infrastructure, provide rural water supply, facilitate supply and financing for water resources management, mobilize communities to fully participate in planning, operation and maintenance of WASH facilities and eliminate open defecation nationwide while enforcing minimum standard WASH packages.

The emerging issues as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak are as follow:

- Poor sanitation in schools that constrain the reopening process;
- Poor hygiene practices across the country;
- Lack of developed WASH Manual for all schools;
- Lack of water quality testing due to the absence of reagents; and
- Lack of proper WASH sector Coordination.

COVID-19 IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

The COVID-19 targeted responses are as follow:

- Clearing of major drainages and improving environmental sanitation at Precautionary Observation Centers (POCs) in critical need;
- Map up solid waste facilities, drainages, water points, public toilet and waste backlogs (dump sites) in critical areas;
- Rehabilitation/construction of hand washing facilities in Schools and health centers;
- Construct hand washing stations at public designations (markets etc.);
- Rehabilitation of broken water points and system in affected communities;
- Point of Entries (POEs), Isolation units and POCs assessment for WASH status or access level;
- WASH and Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) compliance assessment in health facilities in affected communities;
- Upgrading the WASH Sector Website and create a dash board on COVID-19; and
- WASH and IPC compliance assessment in health facilities and in schools in affected communities.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

- Developed WASH guidelines for the reopening of schools;
- Established and developed a tool for WASH in schools Monitoring across the country;

- Developed the National Sanitary Standard Certificate to be issued to all schools in Liberia after monitoring for WASH Compliance;
- Distributed hand washing stations to all public schools in Liberia (senior high schools);
- Reactivated the County WASH structures for proper WASH monitoring and Compliance;
- Reviewed the Liberia Municipal Water Project (LMWP), updated and adopted the water quality testing manual for use pending the development of the National Drinking Water Standards;
- Developed a regulatory tool to track WASH sector financing during the COVID Period; and
- Developed WASH Administrative Regulation for approval by the Ministry of Finance.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

With special reference to the challenges confronting the WASH sector, the below must be considered as a way forward in the short term:

- Hold the Joint Sector Review (JSR) (US\$250,000.00);
- Develop a Comprehensive WASH Regulatory Framework (US\$200,000.00);
- Develop national standards for drinking water; enforce robust regulations on water producing companies, healthcare facilities and private-public facilities; issue national sanitary standard certificate, Water & Sanitation (WATSAN) certificate and establish consumer protection policy (US\$400,000.00); and
- Introduce the Barcode for all locally made WASH Products on the Market (US\$50,000.00).

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN WASH

- Ensure all chemicals, adhesives and additives used in water management are in compliance with the EPML and MEAs (US\$60,000)
- Ensure the process of segregation is central waste collection programs (US\$75,000)
- Construct 5 regional sanitary landfills (US\$500,000)
- Support community-based waste collection system (US\$40,000)

COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

CONTEXT

Liberia is a small open economy that is export-oriented; exports are essentially primary commodities (rubber, iron ore and gold) while imports are mostly manufactured goods and rice – the nation’s staple food; this makes the country susceptible to external shocks. The 2019 direction of trade statistics for Liberia revealed that, as regards trading blocks, Europe is the country’s major export destination accounting for 63.9 percent of export earnings with Asia, North America and Africa accounting for 15.6 percent, 10.1 percent and 4.4 percent respectively.

As regards the sources of Liberia's imports, Asia is the major import source accounting for 59.7 percent of imports with Africa, Europe and North America accounting for 15.9 percent, 14.6 percent and 6.9 percent respectively. On a country-by-country basis, China accounts for 7.1 percent of export earnings but 21.5 percent of imports; the United States of America accounts for 10.1 percent of export earnings but 6.9 percent of imports while the Euro-zone accounts for 0.8 percent of export earnings but 7.4 percent of imports.

Given the importance of trade to Liberia, a slowdown in economic activities in China, Europe (assuming most countries follow the unprecedented action of Italy) and the United States will constrain exports. This has the potential of reducing the already low export earnings the country is generating from its primary commodity exports, while increasing the country's expenditures on imports. The ultimate impact thereafter might be felt via potential shortages of essential commodities on the domestic market. The fall in export earnings coupled with the increase in import expenditures has the propensity to constrain domestic economic activities thereby constraining the Government's fiscal space by reducing revenues while increasing expenditures (especially health related expenditures).

COVID-19 IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

The Government has embarked on an exercise of establishing the actual stock of essential commodities brought into the country to address the issues of potential shortages. The Government is also working, in strong collaboration with development partners, to ameliorate the impact of COVID-19 on Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) with focus on vulnerable traders in the informal sector. The small business support program will facilitate private sector recovery by providing loan repayment, loan extension, and cash transfer services to MSMEs.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

The Government⁷ has suspended the surcharge regulation that imposes additional charge on imported goods that are also manufactured in Liberia. Also, Pre-Shipment Inspection penalties have been suspended. The following measures have been implemented by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI):

- Eradicated the Import Permit Declaration (IPD) and introduced the Import Notification Form (INF),
- Destination Inspection (DI) Project is currently ongoing in collaboration with the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) and the National Investment Commission (NIC), with the aim of reducing container clearance time at the Free port of Monrovia;
- Verification of Conformity (VOC) project is ongoing in collaboration with the National Standards Laboratory (NSL), the NIC and the LRA;

⁷ Based on Executive Order 103

- Electronic Fiscal Device System (EFDS) Cash Registry project is ongoing in collaboration with the NIC and the LRA;
- The Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) presidential mandate to reopen all Air, Sea and Land Borders in compliance with the ECOWAS COVID-19 Guidelines on Trade Facilitation;
- The NIC and GIZ are working on the creation of a Local Content Policy; the National Investment Fund (NIF) of the NIC is working on this document for onward submission to the Economic Management Team (EMT); and
- National Single Window (NSW) project is ongoing in collaboration with the NIC and the LRA.

The GOL through the CBL has suspended temporarily the rule on credits (asset classification and provisioning) to borrowers from businesses involved in cross-border trading, considering the negative impact of COVID-19 on the cash flows of the affected sectors of the economy.

The Government has designed a business support program and a management framework that will support small businesses and vulnerable traders, particularly those in the informal sector. Thus, the Government allocated US\$2.0 million in the Recast Budget of FY2019/20 and an additional US\$1.0 million in the FY2020/21 Budget.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The Government has committed itself to working with importers of essential commodities (rice, petroleum, pharmaceuticals etc.) to maintain an adequate stock of these commodities on the market. Given that most of the commodities traded in the informal sector are imported, the reduction in trade in the formal sector will adversely impact activities in the informal sector. The informal sector accounts for a significant proportion of GDP and employs a significant portion of people; however, there are no accurate statistics in Liberia to quantify the impact of the sector. In support of what needs to be done, the below are highlighted:

- Create a nationwide awareness for informal Sector (SMEs) involved in Value Addition to register with MoCI (Four Regions) (US\$20,000.00);
- Conduct Outreach for ECOWAS COVID-19 Guidelines on the presidential mandate to reopen all Air, Sea and Land Borders (US\$20,000.00);
- Create awareness on Destination Inspection through Meetings, Radio jingles and radio talk shows (US\$10,000.00);
- Conduct stakeholders' engagement on the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) nationwide (US\$10,000.00);
- Conduct workshop for stakeholders engaged with Verification of Conformity (VOC) works (US\$10,000.00);
- Engage stakeholders on developing the National Single Window Infrastructure (US\$15,000.00); and

- National Trade Fair for Small Medium Enterprise (SMEs) both informal and formal Sector (US\$150,000.00).

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

- Improve the system of consumers’ protection by ensuring commodities produced locally and imported are of laid down quality and standards (US\$80,000)
- Develop and decentralize Grievance Redress Mechanism to enable aggrieved consumers seek redress for unwholesome commodities on the market (US\$35,000)
- Explore, adopt and ensure clearer and efficient production practices and technologies (US\$25,000)
- Establish a system for promoting green industries in the private sector (US\$100,000)
- Design a certification system to ensure low carbon emitting technologies for all industries (US\$25,000)

TOURISM

CONTEXT

Tourism has become the fastest growing sector around the world especially in developing countries. At the global level, the tourism industry has grown in leaps and bounds from US\$1.5 trillion in 2015 to US\$2.8 trillion in 2018, accounting for a share in the World’s GDP greater than the automotive industry⁸. When the direct and indirect impacts are taken into account, the impact of global travel and tourism reached US\$8.8 trillion in GDP in 2018, more than the contribution from agriculture, banking, automotive manufacturing and mining sectors⁹.

The potential of Liberia’s tourism sector is enormous as the country is endowed with 350 miles of pristine coastline beach. There are idyllic beaches, washed by some of West Africa’s best surf at low-key resorts such as Robertsport. It also offers a wide range of unique and exciting natural, cultural and historical resources that will, if planned and managed effectively, attract increasing numbers of tourists. The Country has a lush, green, friendly and vibrant land and offers everything from excellent surf spots and shops selling wares by edgy local designers to days spent lolling in a comfy hammock on the edge of the rainforest while listening to tropical birds sing. Then there is the Sapo National Park, the second-largest area of primary rainforest in West Africa. In these dense forests, there are chimpanzees, elephants and Liberia’s famous pygmy hippos – no larger than a Shetland pony. The Country’s unique history as one of those countries where freed slaves from the west were resettled beginning in 1822 coupled with our rich cultural heritage makes it an attractive destination for tourism.

⁸World Tourism Organization (2015); “How Does Travel and Tourism Compare with Other Sectors”, WTTC, 2018

⁹ Ibid

The major projects and investments in the sector prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 are as follow:

- International Trade Centre (ITC) funded project for the development of tourism sector in Liberia with a focus on surfing and selected tourism destinations;
- The development of National Tourism Policy and Masterplan with support from the African Development Bank (AfDB) through the LRA;
- Drafting of Liberia Tourism Authority Act;
- Tourism Human Capital Development for tourism officials on accelerating recovery;
- Restoration and upgrading of tourist sites;
- Design and support program for Tourism MSMEs;
- Reorienting the value chain towards sustainability;
- Growing numbers of hotels, resorts and private tourism operators;
- Mapping and assesment of Liberia Tourism potential;
- Conducting a survey to gather up to date data; and
- Roads Connectivity to access potential tourist sites.

The sector in spite of its potential and impact on the economy, is faced with numerous challenges. The major constraints facing the sector include the following:

- Limited or no budgetary support to the sector;
- Partners reluctance to fund tourism program and project through the Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism (MICAT) because of the wrong perception that by doing so they will be indirectly funding government propaganda;
- Underdeveloped destinations;
- Limited supporting institutional and legal framework and infrastructure including roads and accommodation;
- Underdeveloped and underfunded private businesses;
- Limited Tourism Human Capital Development; and
- Limited coordination.

COVID-19 IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

The following mitigating measures are being planned:

- Developing the critical legal and institutional enablers and framework;
- Ensuring that donors implementing projects in the sector align them with the government priority programs and projects;
- Partnering with private tourism operators and touring company to market and invest in the upgrading of these sites;
- Prioritizing training and human capital development; and

- Establishing the Tourism Working Group that consists of both public and private stakeholders.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The following interventions are being considered:

Short term measures:

- Conducting a nationwide awareness program for the promotion of tourism in Liberia (US\$45,000.00);
- Undertaking a nationwide market research, mapping and assesment of Liberia tourism potentials (US\$70,000.00);
- Designing and supporting program for MSMEs involved with tourism activities(US\$50,000.00);
- Developing mechanism for the collection of data on number of tourists visiting Liberia (US\$35,000.00);
- Developing a Marketing Strategy (international, regional, domestic, thematic, digital) to promote tourism (US\$250,000.00);
- Building the Resilience of Tourism Enterprises to adapt to the COVID-19 mitigating measures, especially safety and hygiene measures (US\$55,000.00); and
- Developing Tourism Human Capital for tourism officials on accelerating recovery (US\$25,000.00).

Medium to long term interventions:

- Restoring and upgrading of tourist sites (US\$1.45 million);
- Implementing a program commemorating the return of free slaves to Africa specifically Liberia (**The Door of Return 2022**) (US\$85,000.00);
- Grading and classifying all/major accommodations in the tourism sector in order to provide a uniform standard in line with the Global Tourism Network (US\$60,000.00);
- Developing an Incentive Program to Stimulate Travel;
- Developing a framework for Public-Private Partnership for Tourism Recovery; and
- Strengthen participation of disadvantaged groups in tourism recovery and development through apprenticeship programs (US\$200,000.00).

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN TOURISM

- Develop guidelines for site selection, setting up and operation of tourism landscapes and centers (US\$46,000)
- Ensure all tourist centers and facilities sited in critical ecosystem types conform with the ESIA procedural guidelines of Liberia (US\$16,000)

- Promote ecotourism and green corridors connectivity in the administrative seat of each county (US\$256,000)

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

CONTEXT

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the growth and development of an economy; serving as the mainstay of the economic system by providing food for the people and raw materials that enhance the activities of other sectors; providing employment opportunities; generating foreign exchange; and contributing to national revenue generation. Agriculture in Liberia is a major sector of the country's economy, contributing 26.3 percent of GDP in 2020. Of the estimated population of 4.5 million in 2019, approximately 1.2 million people are engaged in agriculture, of which 0.5 million are males while 0.7 million are females. The major crops produced in the sector are natural rubber, rice, cassava, coffee, cocoa bean and oil palm.

These commodities are produced on both plantations owned by major concessions and on manor farms owned by Liberians and are exported with little value addition. Rubber production experienced a resurgence in 2019 when the production increased to 65,743 metric tons up from 46,810 metric tons in 2018 representing an increase of 40.4 percent. However, cocoa bean, another major output produced in the sector experienced a slump in 2019 when the production amounted to 11,343 metric tons down from 18,871 metric tons in 2018 representing a decrease of 39.9 percent. Oil palm production in 2019 amounted to 22,140 metric tons up from 18,104 metric tons for 2018 thus representing an increase of 22.3 percent. Cash crops are produced for exports and given the slump in global economic activities on account of the COVID-19 crisis, the Government anticipates a slump in domestic production over the course of 2020 and into the medium term thereby leading to job losses and eventually, a fall in revenue generation.

Rice is the country's staple food and its production in 2019, amounted to 276,421 metric tons which is far below the national requirement of above 600,147 metric tons. This implies that a significant proportion of the country's rice is imported from overseas, with India accounting for 90.0 percent. Similarly, cassava production in 2019 amounted to 723,450 metric tons compared to the national requirement of 755,270 metric tons, adversely impacting domestic flour production.

The lock down measures coupled with the lack of foreign currency earning and, reduction in both remittance inflows and donor aid could adversely impact the country's food security.

The major challenges facing the sector are as follow:

- Vulnerability to shocks (world price transmission): Production shortages exist in all of the major agricultural commodities, resulting to the high dependency on importation of the country's staples;

- Low production and productivity: Structurally, small-scale agriculture production in Liberia is characterized by low productivity and low income, as productions largely take place in remote areas. Some factors contributing to the low agriculture productivity include:
 - Erratic and unpredictable weather patterns due to climate change is altering the farming season and harvest yields and time;
 - Limited access to sources of farming inputs such as improved and climate sensitive seeds, quality planting materials, animal breeds and quality fingerlings as well as poor veterinary services, fertilizers, and agro-chemicals, etc.;
 - Limited mechanization/inadequacy of improved farming technologies needed for efficient food production; and
 - Poor post-harvest management practices/high post-harvest losses (storage, handling, transportation and processing).
- Value chain development to spur manufacturing and services remain limited. The key contributing factors are:
 - Limited policies that promote the conducive and enabling environment for investment into the sector as well as addressing issues of access to agriculture financing (credit/working capital/rural finance) and its associated risk management tools;
 - Unstructured organization of key stakeholders (farmers, aggregators, processors, logistics, etc.) along the value chain; and
 - Underdeveloped markets.
- Inadequacy of agriculture Infrastructure (electricity, road connectivity/farm-to-market, storage facilities, water management systems, agro-processing facilities, etc.) to support farming activities;
- Inadequacy of Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) delivery system;
- Human resource challenges (inadequate technical know-how). Provision of support is required to facilitate various human capacity development, including providing academic and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) training;
- Changing demographics of the country's farming population;
- Limited investment in agricultural research to inform efficient farming practices;
- Illegal, Uncontrolled and Unreported (IUU) fishing in Liberia waters; and
- Cross cutting challenges (access to land, adverse effects of climate change, increasing risk of zoonotic diseases).

COVID-19 IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

The strategic response includes investments and policy measures to mitigate impacts on agricultural livelihoods, enhance their resilience to economic shocks and facilitate faster recovery to lay the foundations for agriculture value chains to generate more and better jobs. A 5-prong strategic approach to mitigate the impacts has been developed and its objectives are as follow:

- a. Monitoring food prices, availability and household consumption: collecting reliable market data; and providing analysis to inform emergency policy responses;

- b. Securing imported cereal supply: ensuring that the country's imported food requirements are not at risk by partnering with importers to ensure continued supply and a strategic build-up of reserves of imported cereals is being considered paramount;
- c. Improving safety of markets and trade: provide Covid-19 preventative information and support to markets, businesses and the agriculture sector to continue operations by developing trade corridors, "food lanes" to ensure movement of food to all parts of the country;
- d. Encouraging increased staple production: supporting smallholders to diversify production and to connect farmers and buyers to improve access to food in the medium to long term; and
- e. Subsidizing agricultural production intelligently: providing subsidies can play a valuable role in supporting vulnerable groups and boosting production and trade.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, the GOL through the CBL has suspended temporarily the rule on credits (asset classification and provisioning) to borrowers in the agricultural sector, considering the negative impact of COVID-19 on the cash flows of the affected sectors of the economy. Moreover, the Government has developed a National Food Security Master Plan with the goal to strengthen national resilience to food security shocks thereby reducing national dependency on food imports and bolster rural employment and livelihoods in the medium term.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The Government commits itself to support the integrated transformation of the sector by boosting productivity, and also by integrating value chain and improving access to markets. In addition, the Government will seek to mitigate the lack of access to finance currently faced by farmers. These interventions will occur through the following activities:

- Creating the enabling environment for the operationalization/implementation of the Food Safety Act, Fertilizer Act and validating the National Rice Development Strategy (US\$1.5 million);
- Strengthening Rice Production and Value Chain (US\$30.0 million);
- Strengthening Cassava Production, Value Chain & Marketing (US\$20.0 million);
- Strengthening Animal Husbandry: Poultry and Swine Production (US\$10.0 million for each activity);
- Oil Palm Production, Value Chain & Marketing (US\$20.0 million);
- Cocoa Production, Value Chain & Marketing (US\$15.0 million); and
- Rubber Production, Value Chain & Marketing (US\$20.0 million).

On the fisheries front, the following interventions are considered:

- Promote WASH activities in fishery communities;

- Develop competent laboratory to improve Fish Sanitary Standards;
- Enhance capacity building: provide technical and administrative support to National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NaFAA), to improve the institution's performance such as improving research capacity, performance planning and assessment, legal support, business support, Sanitary program support etc.
- Ensure the cleaning of beaches;
- Develop industrial fishing ports;
- Promote and improve aquaculture development and production in Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Gbarpolu, Grand Gedeh, and Margibi;
- Develop and strengthen community fisheries management programs in Marshall, Grand Cess, Buchanan, and Robertsport;
- Embark on measures to strengthen Public Private Partnership to secure and increase income smallholder fish farmers in Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Gbarpolu, Grand Gedeh, and Margibi; and,
- Procure and distribute Yamaha motors to artisanal Fishermen, ranging from 6-15hp.

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES

- Accommodate and promote indigenous knowledge in crops production (US\$125,000)
- Conduct climate risk and vulnerability assessments in agriculture value chain (US\$48,000)
- Integrate pest and disease management practices in farming (US\$61,000)
- Replacement of inorganic fertilizers with soil enriching crop production inputs (US\$650,000)
- Enforce regulations on water safety such as motorized boats and life vests for all fishing in Liberian waters (US\$210,000)
- Review and consider reducing the number of fishing licenses issued to foreign fishing vessels (US\$10,000)

FORESTRY

CONTEXT

The forest estate of Liberia is estimated at 4.8 million hectares, comprising two major remaining dense forest blocks: the north-western massif and the south-eastern massif. Liberia is endowed with abundant forest constituting part of its national wealth that provides diverse resources for meeting the nutritional, health and economic needs of the country.

Liberia's forests provide a wide range of significant benefits to its people and the International Community, such as habitat for globally important biodiversity; a range of ecological services,

ecotourism potential, timber and non-timber forest products and significant revenue for the country. The forestry sector has the following:

- i. Relatively high contribution of the sector to the national economy compared to other sectors (10.0 percent);
- ii. Forty-three percent (43%) of the upper Guinea forest zone, the highest forest cover in any single country;
- iii. High species endemism and a biodiversity hotspot; and
- iv. High commercial and economic value of forests.

The Government of Liberia is implementing the National Forestry Reform Law (NFRL, 2006), Community Rights Law (CRL 2009), and National Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management Law (NWCPAML 2012).

In addition, the Community Rights Law with regards to Forestland recognizes customary rights of local communities to access and manage forests for their benefit. This has led to the transfer of management rights of forests to communities.

The sector's vision is comprehensive, thus integrating all aspects of forestry through the 4C's (community, commercial, conservation and carbon) approach. Prior to 1990, the sector has been considered a source of revenue generation by concession holdings and export of round logs and some Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). Less attention was being paid to the potential for job creation and in-country value addition (sawmilling, furniture making, and NTFPs processing so on) through private sector partnerships and enterprise development.

The major challenges are as follow:

- The downward trend of the log market in Asia (over 94.0 percent of timber produced in Liberia are exported to Asian markets with China alone accounting for 75.0 percent of export);
- The infrastructure difficulties have resulted into the low production volume of logs with corresponding result on low revenue generation from the forestry sector; and
- Poor port handling facilities for logs.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

The Government is ensuring an improvement in Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) approaches and plans to bolster the 4Cs policy to increase welfare development, particularly in rural areas, while addressing the threat of deforestation, degradation and depletion of the forest resource.

- **Community forestry:** The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) promoted the involvement and participation of rural communities in decision-making relating to the community-owned forest resources;

- **Commercial Forestry:** The FDA is managing different category of forest utilization for revenue generation; and has officially taken over the management of the Chain of Custody (COC) operations from Société General de Surveillance (SGS);
- **Conservation:** Developing the national Protected Area (PA) network and ecological corridors with strong community engagement may contribute to national pride and identity and provide a long-term foundation for ecotourism focused on the country's globally unique forests and biodiversity; and
- **Carbon:** Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) for long-term revenue generation and payment for verified reductions in GHGs emissions from avoided deforestation represent overlapping incentives for the Government for better forest management.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The following short term measures are considered:

- Initiate Regulation for Commercialization of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) (US\$5,000.00);
- Facilitate NTFPs Survey (rural and urban Liberia) (US\$75,000.00);
- Construct Log Yard at/near the Port of Monrovia (US\$2.5 million);
- Negotiate with Mittal Steel to convey logs from Lofa to the Port of Buchanan (US\$5,000.00);
- Promote the use of energy efficient stove (US\$2.8 million);
- Improve charcoal production by using high-efficiency technologies such as improved kilns and charcoal briquetting (US\$1.2 million);
- Support sawmills to have access to products and create quota system (US\$100,000.00);
- Facilitate trainings of communities in the rudiment of sustainably cultivating and harvesting of NTFPs (US\$650,000.00); and
- Organize communities and link them to NTFPs market (US\$75,000.00).

The below medium term measure is being considered:

- Conduct Gender Analysis on Women in Forestry Businesses/Activities (US\$45,000.00).

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN FORESTRY

- Intensify and sustain forest restoration (US\$43,000)
- Promote agroforestry (US\$31,000)
- Enforce environmental laws and regulations appertaining to forests and game species (US\$32,000)
- Take actions to maintain and increase biological diversity (US\$53,000)
- Expand the carbon sink potentials of the forests (US\$67,000)

- Ensure clear benefit sharing mechanism for resources arising from forest carbon marketing (US\$28,000)

DIGITAL ECONOMY

CONTEXT

One of the primary goals of digital financial initiative is to provide efficient, reliable, secure and cost-effective interbank electronic funds transfer and clearing services to the Liberian banking and non-banking industries that meets international standards. Notwithstanding, the Liberian Payment Ecosystem is an ever-evolving massive and intricate system involving interoperability between banks and other non-banking institutions as new technologies are unveiled. It requires precise regulatory governance and consistent monitoring. This infrastructure comprises the following banking and non-banking institutions and entities indicated below:

- i. Commercial Banks – nine (9)
- ii. Commercial Bank Branches – ninety-three (93) throughout the nation
- iii. Non-bank Financial Services Institutions (formal/informal)
 - a. One (1) Deposit taking microfinance institution
 - b. Seventeen (17) non-deposit taking
 - c. Twelve (12) Rural community Finance Institutions
 - d. Thirteen (13) money remittance establishments
 - e. One hundred sixty-six (166) registered foreign exchange bureau
 - f. One hundred thirty-four (134) credit unions
 - g. One thousand two hundred and seventy (1,270) – Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA).

In its efforts to ensure safety, efficiency and to widen the scope of its oversight, The CBL, with technical assistance from the World Bank, has amended the Payment Systems Act of (2014) embracing payments, clearing and settlement systems and payment instruments and services. This move is intended to accommodate future market trends. Additionally, plans are underway to join member central banks in the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) for the implementation of the Regional Integration of Payment Systems and the Pan African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS).

COVID-19 IMPACTED TARGETED RESPONSE

The following are being considered:

1. Amendment to Payment System Act (2014) is currently undergoing revision;
2. Enforcement of regulatory reforms and full automation of the ecosystem;
3. Periodic scheduled of Public Awareness Campaign (PAC) on the benefits of digitized financial ecosystem; and
4. The introduction of Pan African Payment Settlement System (PAPSS) - a regional payment settlement system that promotes cross-border payments among traders.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

On the monetary policy front, the CBL instituted several policy measures to ease the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the Liberian economy for a period of three months (March 24 to June 24, 2020). Among the following measures:

- The CBL suspended all charges on the Automated Clearing House (ACH), Direct Credit (DC) and Real Time Gross Settlement System (RTGS). Commercial banks were accordingly required to suspend all charges to customers related to these Electronic Payment Channels (EPC). The measure reduced the cost of clearing, payments and transfers for individuals and businesses;
- Mobile Money Operators (MMOs) also suspended for one month all charges to customers for transfer of money from their bank accounts to their mobile money accounts (vice versa). All merchant payment transaction fees (shops, stores, supermarkets, gas stations, general markets, retail outlets, etc.) using mobile money as payment option for goods were also suspended for one month. However, after the expiry of the initial one month, the MNOs extended the waiver of fee for additional two months; and
- The CBL increased the daily transactions limit as well as the monthly aggregate transaction limits for mobile money transactions.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The CBL commits itself to deepening the financial services sector by means of the following activities:

- Regulatory reforms to enhance credit to the private sector, while ensuring the stability of the financial system;
- Strengthen its supervision and monitoring of the financial system to promote a safe, stable and sound financial system; and
- Work in collaboration with financial institutions and the Government in developing a structured financing plan to offer less expensive and more accessible credit to the real sector and MSME sector.
- Promote wider usage of electronic payments and digitization of the Liberian economy in collaboration with key stakeholders.

INFRASTRUCTURE

CONTEXT

Liberia has severe infrastructure deficit in roads, energy, ports, and ICT. This causes additional costs in terms of time, efforts and money for people to access essential social services such as healthcare and education.

Roads: the country's road network is in a deplorable state with a relatively low share of paved roads – about 40 percent of the country's primary road network being paved thereby falling short both in coverage and in quality. Liberia's road network has been identified as major constraint to economic growth and national development agenda developed for implementation and as critical as it is, it must be addressed. Meanwhile, according to data obtained from the National Road Surveyed and sponsored by the National Road Fund (NRF), Liberia has about 12,000.0 km of road network, 771.0 km paved without layout maintenance plan and 11,229.0 km unsurfaced, while rail and sea transportation networks are inadequate or non-existing. Increased urban population, a deteriorated road network due to poor and inadequate maintenance, and the lack of clear and updated sector strategy need to be addressed as well.

Ports: (sea and air), they facilitate trade which is an important factor in promoting economic growth and development. Trade serves as a major source of foreign currency, employment creation, income generation and poverty alleviation. Although the country has four (4) seaports – the port of Monrovia (with a berth capacity of 600.0 meters long), the port of Buchanan (with berth capacities of 334.0 meters and 225.0 meters long for the commercial quay and the iron ore landing quay respectively), the port of Greenville (with two quays of berthing capacities of 180.0 meters and 70.0 meters) and the port of Harper (with berthing capacity of 100.0 meters long) – major economic activities occur at the Port of Monrovia. This heavy reliance on the Freeport of Monrovia has increased the cost of shipping in the country and this has translated into an increased in the prices of basic goods and services on the domestic market.

For airports, the country boasts of two major airports – the Roberts International Airport (RIA) which has been upgraded of recent and the James Springs Payne Airport which is not operational at the moment. With the recent upgrading of the RIA facilities, there has been increase in air traffic which has positive impact on the revenue streams and as such, the Government is committed to further improvement of the RIA facilities. However, the COVID-19 outbreak and the attending measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus has had an adverse impact on the aviation industry reducing the RIA revenue by about 37.5 percent. The airport has since been reopened but with reduced traffic as most airlines have reduced flights while others are yet to resume.

In addition to these, the country has airstrips in the following locations across the country: Harper (one in Rock Town and the other in Fish Town); Zwedru, Greenville, Sasstown, Tapita, Foya, Yekepa, Saniquellie and Voinjama. All of these airstrips remain in dire need of rehabilitation and efforts are being made through a public-private partnership scheme to have them rehabilitated.

Energy: power or energy is a crucial input into all economic activities and therefore rapid economic growth is possible only if adequate power is made available where it has the greatest impact. The country's installed power generation capacity is low as depicted by Table 1, connectivity to the power grid is low and the cost of generating power is high thereby increasing the power tariff. The length of the current transmission network is 123.9 km with 6.0 primary substations.

Table 1: Energy Generation by Source

Production	Source	Type	Capacity (MW)	Status
Thermal Plants	GOL	HFO	18	Online
	JICA	HFO	10	Online
	World Bank	HFO	10	Online
	High Speed Diesel	LFO/HFO	6/44	Online
Hydro	Mt. Coffee	Hydro	88	Online
Trade	CLSG	Import	27	Potential commission date: Q3/Q4 2021

Greater use of electric power increases labor productivity and ultimately contribute to achieving economic growth on a sustainable basis.

ICT: Liberia’s telecommunication industry is dominated by two mobile operators: Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN) Liberia with majority shares owned by MTN Group and Orange Liberia, a local unit of the Orange Group. In addition to these two private firms, there is a government owned firm called the Liberia Telecommunication Corporation (LIBTELCO) which prior to the country’s prolonged civil war, operated fixed lines.

Water and Sewerage: water is a basic resource and a necessity for sustaining life. As such, decline in water quality endangers the health of humans as well as the ecosystem. Clean drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation play an important part in maintaining health; thus the absence thereof affects the poor significantly. In Liberia, despite the numerous water generation plants as evident by Table 2, the demand for water exceeds the supply for water. For Monrovia and its environs, it is estimated that about 400,000 households need water, with each household needing 15 gallons per day, this implies that the daily demand for water is placed at 6 million gallons. Factoring in water demand from the major consumers – Coca Cola Factory, Monrovia Club Breweries and the American Embassy of 12 million gallons per day – puts the total demand for water in Monrovia and its environs at 18 million gallons per day.

Table 2: Water Generation Capacity

Major Plants	Potential Capacity
Monrovia (White Plains)	16 million gallons per day
Sanniquellie	900,000 gallons per day
Voinjama	900,000 gallons per day
Robertsport	600,000 gallons per day
Kakata	600,000 gallons per day
Zwedru	400,000 gallons per day
Buchanan	400,000 gallons per day

Other Mini Plants	
New Georgia Estate	400,000 gallons per day
Soul Clinic	400,000 gallons per day
Bore-holes	
Fish market	300,000 gallons per day
Duport Road	79,251 gallons per day

Source: Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation (LWSC)

The major challenges facing the country's infrastructure are as follow:

- Narrow fiscal space to finance the construction of huge infrastructure projects to narrow the country's infrastructure gap;
- Water: fluctuating water levels, lack of finances to acquire water treatment chemicals, depreciated water treatment pipes and fittings, inadequate logistics and water theft;
- Airports: inadequate port infrastructure, limited energy to power the ports, underdeveloped domestic ports, limited domestic travel carriers, low passengers base amongst others; and
- Energy: low generation capacity, high cost of generating energy and power theft.

COVID IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

Roads: rehabilitation of the road network so as to enhance the movements of persons and goods, reduce the cost and the time of transportation, enhance food security and access to basic social services.

Energy: the major intervention thus far has been towards reducing commercial losses or power theft as evident by Table 3:

Table 3: Major Interventions in the Energy Sector

Issues	Tasks/Intervention
Metering Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Controls & Installation of Split Pre-payment and high quality post-paid meters</i> ❖ <i>Routine CT & whole current Metering Inspections & Audit</i>
Analytics, Monitoring & Control of Customer Database and Network Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Analysis/monitoring of consumption evolution by load & contracted power by customer categories</i> ❖ <i>Disconnections & Normalization of Illegals</i> ❖ <i>IMS (InCMS, DMS/IGEA, ECL & ERP) Enhancements – including NDM & CRM</i> ❖ <i>Implementation of an Asset & Customer Mapping Survey (ACMS)</i> ❖ <i>Ongoing Loss Reduction Studies – in coordination with TATA POWER</i>
Agents Collusion with fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Suspension/Dismissal and persecution of Staff</i> ❖ <i>Change Management & Training; monitoring of Agents and KPI settings</i> ❖ <i>Focus for persecution is now on large/syndicate illegal connections</i>
Buy – In and Regulatory Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Passage of Law on Energy Theft currently being treated as a first degree felony in 2019</i> ❖ <i>Engagements with Regulators to institute the appropriate penalties and the Approval of effective tariff regimes</i> ❖ <i>Stakeholders Engagement & Management</i>
Awareness Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <i>Community Engagements and whistle blowing</i>

Customer Services	❖ <i>Improving Response time through establishment of Customer Charter and Customer Services KPIs to be approved by the Regulator (LERC)</i>
Critical Constraints	❖ <i>Connection materials (especially meters) & logistics</i> ❖ <i>Full Digitization of Meter Reading and Billing Processes</i> ❖ <i>Network Capacity</i>

Water: expansion of connectivity to the national water grid to enhance access to safe drinking water and to improve sanitation across the country.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

Roads:

- To meet the spending needs for road maintenance, the country has introduced fuel levy on petroleum imported into the country by the setting up of a NRF;
- Rehabilitation of the road network in Monrovia and its environs; and
- The Ministry's five (5) years revised Infrastructure Strategy Plan (5-ISP) is in process

Airport:

- The RIA has been reopened to international traffic and the necessary safety and health protocols have been put into place; and
- A revised operational schedule.

Water:

- Expansion of connectivity of about 300 households to the water grid in the following communities: Barnersville, SKD Boulevard, Thinker's Village, Baptist Seminary, Nezo, Kebab and Neclay's Town; and
- Suspension of water tariffs.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Roads:

- Roads rehabilitating and construction (US\$30.0 million);
- Establishing sustainable funding for road maintenance & purchase of equipment;
- Creating institutional capacity for road works;
- Decentralization of Public Works construction works in the counties; and
- Transition the Ministry to Road Authority. This will enable the Ministry focus primarily on regulatory function.

Ports:

- Upgrading of James Springs Payne Airport (US\$6.0 million);
- Developing and upgrading of Greenville Airport, including terminal (US\$3.0 million);
- Developing and upgrading of Harper Airport, including terminal (US\$3.0 million);
- Developing and upgrading of the Voinjama Airport including terminal (US\$3.0 million);
- Developing and upgrading of the Zwedru Airport including terminal (US\$3.0 million);
- Installing of new air traffic equipment (voice recording system and navigation aid equipment) (US\$2,675,300.00);

- Improve power generation solution: power generation (solar plant to produce 5MW Solar Hybrid Power) (US\$18.0 million)

Energy

- Increase electricity access by 30 percent (LEC customer connections/normalization to 2,000 per month or 24,000 per annum (US\$2.0 million).

Water

- Providing water treatment plants with fuel, lubricants and chemicals (US\$1.17 million);
- Upgrading the water treatment plant in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County (US\$108,250.00);
- Upgrading the water treatment plant in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County (US\$128,910.00); and
- Upgrading the water treatment plant in Kakata, Margibi County (US\$136,030.00).

ICT

- Expanding mobile footprint into rural areas.
- Introducing high-speed Internet in urban areas via competitive access to the new submarine cable(s).

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN INFRASTRUCTURE

- Promulgate National Zoning Act (US\$149,000)
- Ensure all infrastructure projects are in compliance with the ESIA procedural guidelines of Liberia (US\$22,000)
- Develop regulation making all structures along the coastline use climate proofing materials for construction (US\$29,000)
- Accelerate and conclude coastal defense infrastructure in Buchanan, Monrovia and Robertsport (US\$12,000)
- Promote diversification of energy sources including renewable energy sources (US\$22,000)
- Invest in renewable energy technology including solar and water (US\$3.0 million)
- Develop and promote the use of affordable efficient energy (US\$2.0 million)

LABOR MARKET

CONTEXT

The foundation and key driver for economic expansion in every economy is a vibrant labor market. Thus, stable employment keeps an economy spiraling up and makes it less susceptible to shocks, thereby allowing it to keep growing even during a time of crisis and retain a high standard of living. Not only does a high unemployment rate mean that more people are jobless and without income, but an unhealthy workforce market would also leave an economy dominated by uncertainty.

The labor force participation rate in 2010 was 62.8 percent, the employment-to-population ratio was 60.5 percent and the unemployment rate was only 3.7 percent. The labor force participation rate in an urban area at 54.9 percent is lower than the corresponding rate in rural areas (71.2 percent). The male labor force participation rate is higher than the female rate (66.1 percent and 59.9 percent, respectively), but the unemployment rate of women is higher than that of men (4.1 percent and 3.4 percent respectively). The vulnerable employment rate – the share of own-account workers and contributing family workers in total employment – is high at 77.9 percent, as is the share of workers engaged in the informal economy (68.0 percent). According to the Labor Force Survey (LFS) results, half the total working population in Liberia in 2010 was employed in the agricultural sector, including forestry and fishing, and a quarter was employed in the wholesale/retail trade. The next largest sectors were manufacturing and education. Over 70.0 percent of the rural working population was involved in agriculture, but even in urban areas, 15.0 percent of workers are engaged in the agricultural sector.

Even though progress is being made to launch the 2016/2017 LFS report, the unemployment rate has been crucially shaped by the shortages of skilled labor, inadequate protection of workers, and vulnerable workers and discrimination. Schools providing basic education have not been able to equip students with the basic skills required in the labor market. Technical education and vocational training centers are not equipping their students with the skills demanded in the labor market. And the universities lack the resources, equipment, and technology necessary to teach students the appropriate methodologies and more modern technology used in the private sector.

COVID IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

Faced with the multiple labor market challenges noted above, and the necessity to align with Pillar II of the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) with internationally accepted norms and standards, the GOL has developed a two-year Action Plan with the objective of:

- **Transitioning to the full implementation of the Decent Work Act (DWA) of 2015:** To address the challenges of inadequate protection of workers and vulnerable workers, curtail bad labor practices and promote social dialogue between employers and workers;
- **Addressing Work Permits Violation and strengthening dispute resolutions:** Delays in resolving labor disputes on a timely basis has created a huge backlog of cases. This has eroded the trust of workers in the GOL as an arbiter of disputes. With this intervention, the Government was able to eradicate this backlog by making adjustments in its service delivery by reducing the response time from 120 days to 90 days to take action, investigate, and give rulings thereby achieving 80 percent of its target;
- **Combating Human Trafficking, Child Labor and HIV-Aids discrimination:** the intent of these programs is to eradicate discrimination and combat Human trafficking and child labor;
- **Creating employment Opportunities and fostering organization of the workplace:** This intervention ensures that workers enjoy the right to organize and join a union of their choosing; and that unemployed people find quick access to job and training opportunities; and

- **Strengthening Labor Statistics:** The generation and publication of labor statistics on a timely basis has been a challenge for the GOL. The only available survey dates back to 2010 and given the changing labor force demographics, said data cannot be used to explain current labor market developments. Hence, this intervention seeks to regularize the generation and publication of labor statistics on a timely basis.

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

The following measure is currently being implemented:

- Implementation of the DWA of 2015;

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

This section unveils interventions that will be undertaken to address the numerous, inter-related challenges which have been identified above.

- Monitor and review labor market policies to ensure compliance with the DWA and to ensure same is aligned with the duties and responsibilities of the office of Research and Statistics and the office of Labor Standards;
- Monitor the impact of legislation through research, monitoring and evaluation aimed at determining the extent to which labor market policies are harmonized with other economic policies and contribute to the objective of creating work opportunities;
- Publish bi-annual labor market reviews and labor statistics reports and integrate market trends in the decision making process;
- Promote occupational health and safety by ensuring straight compliance of health protocol that employers, workers, and visitors must observe to avoid further spread of infectious and communicable diseases;
- Enhance skills development to address labor market challenges;
- Promote stable labor relation by strengthening labor market policies and regulation and also by the timely resolution of disputes;
- Ensure employment equity thereby eradicating discrimination by vigorously implementing the DWA and also work with the National Commission on Disabilities and the National HIV/Aids Commission to conduct a study on the impact of the DWA since its inception;
- Protect vulnerable workers by assessing the full impact of casualization of labor and outsourcing; devising ways of dealing with their negative impact on workers and the economy as a whole; identifying workers in vulnerable sectors and segments and extending protection; and also ensuring the implementation of the Child Labor Action Plan;
- Strengthen the capacity of labor market institution so as to evaluate these institutions, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and effect whatever interventions are required to increase their efficiency and enhance their effectiveness; and

- Strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry by identifying areas of work that need to be strengthened to further increase the effectiveness of the institution in delivering its services.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

CONTEXT

Youth empowerment remains imperative for national and personal development. This is pursued through programs that promote youth education initiatives, youth activism, community decision making, technical and vocational trainings, sports and recreation, and youth employment. Liberia's estimated population is 5.1 million, of which more than 60.0 percent is under the age of 25¹⁰. Progress has been made towards youth development similarly as more is expected and yet to be done. The Covid-19 impacts have given new direction and shifted youth development efforts from the government's initial five-year plan to account for measures that foster recovery.

COVID-19 IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

The targeted responses are directed towards the following programs:

- Adolescent and sexual reproductive health;
- Youth development and opportunity;
- YouthConnekt programs;
- National cadet program;
- National Youth Literacy program;
- Beaches and waterways;
- National youth centers development programs; and
- Social cohesion and National Youth Service Program.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

On the Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) front, we intend to implement the following:

- Provide social and psychological support to young people in the area of adolescent and health reproduction (US\$35,000.00);
- Advocate and disseminate information on the National Youth Policy nationwide through media and partners' engagement (US\$15,000.00);
- Provide business stimulus support package of US\$120 to
 - 1,500 individuals or 300 business groups from Round 2 treatment group;
 - 448 individuals from 61 business groups from Round One (US\$62,000.00);

¹⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/li.html>

- Develop the eCamp Business competition to recruit 500 participants across the country of which 75 winners will be awarded Seed grant (US\$350,000.00);
- Hire 300 formal CADETS to serve as Ambassador for volunteerism and recruit 350 new batch of CADET beneficiaries (US\$162,000.00);
- Continue the provision of literacy and numeracy skills to youths who are considered less fortunate, illiterate and school dropouts, plus those affected by the pandemic (US\$18,000.00);
- Provide 5,000 jobs to youth through the Beaches and Waterways Project (US\$2.0 million);
- Provide funding support to enhance social cohesion activities for 6 months (US\$44,000.00);
- Prepare readiness to re-open Technical and Vocational Training Institutes (US\$761,500.00);
- Provide Youth-on-the-Job Training (US\$295,000.00);
- Capacitate 322 qualified students and map business entities for internship for graduates from the business and domestic support center (US\$61,000.00);
- Conduct sports consultative meetings, assess sports facilities, and prepare for variety of tournaments across the country (US\$422,000.00); and
- Provide administrative and communication support (US\$33,000.00)

GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

CONTEXT

The viral outbreak coupled with the attendant preventive measures being put in place to curb the spread of the virus has had adverse consequences on the welfare of the people – increasing their daily expenditures while reducing and in most instances wiping out their sources of income. This threatens to increase poverty levels that are already high in the country thereby widening the already existent inequality gap. Expanding social protection coverage is central to addressing the social economic impacts of COVID-19. These policies are essential for:

- Ending poverty;
- Ending hunger;
- Ensuring healthy lives;
- Ensuring inclusive and quality education;
- Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls;
- Promoting economic growth and decent work;
- Reducing inequality within and among regions;
- Protecting the environment; and
- Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

Challenges facing Gender, Children & Social Protection:

- Logistical Challenge
 - Inadequate logistics (vehicles, equipment and tools) to support the monitoring and evaluation processes; and

- Human Resource Challenge
 - Low productivity as a result of several unoccupied strategic positions (Women Empowerment Specialist, Gender-Based Violence Specialist, Child Protection Specialist etc.) that are essential to the implementation of the PAPD
- Infrastructural Challenges
 - The lack of stable electricity supply during office hours

MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN

The below measure has already been implemented:

- Created a social registry of 200,000 households of which 30 percent are female headed households.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The following activities are:

- Empowering 375,000 women across 15 counties over the next 5 years (costs US\$8,079,500.00 but US\$3,734,500.00 needed)
- Enroll, retain and ensure that 50,000 vulnerable girls complete primary and secondary school by 2023 (US\$132,000.00);
- Adopt a phased-increase in the number of women in employment in the urban areas; improve access of women to productive resources and opportunities in the agricultural and informal sector (enterprises and trade) (US\$35,000.00):
- Increase the number of women in governance and leadership at the national and local levels to reach a target of 30 percent by 2023 (US\$50,000.00)
- Increase participation of women in peace and security (US\$20,000.00):
- Reduce the incidence of Sexual & Gender Based Violence (SGBV) by 50 percent by 2023 through the provision of appropriate support services and access to justice system (US\$2,203,273.00):
- Provide cash transfers to 10,000 extremely poor and food insecure households and 13,000 individual beneficiaries by 2023 (US\$10,000,000.00):
- Provide disability allowance for 10,000 disabled people;
- Develop a social registry that captures data on 200,000 households of which 30 percent are female-headed households (US\$6,000,000.00).
- Address the inequality gap in the infrastructure sector and basic services (US\$10,000.00):
- Improve gender management of the environment (US\$10,000.00)

ALIGNING NATIONAL CLIMATE AGENDA IN GENDER, CHILDREN & SOCIAL PROTECTION

- Mainstream gender including gender women, youth, children and people with disabilities in planning, decision making and implementation of climate change responses across the landscape of Liberia (US\$20,000)
- Ensure that all climate change research data are disaggregated reflecting the significance of the impacts and response measures for women, youth, children and people with disabilities (US\$56,000)
- Assess and mitigate the impact of response measures on women, youth, children and people with disabilities (US\$99,000)

ENVIRONMENT

CONTEXT

The Environmental Protection Agency, EPA was established by an Act of National Legislature in 2003 as a national authority for monitoring, coordinating and supervising the sustainable management of the environment in partnership with regulated Ministries and organizations and in a close and responsive relationship with the people of Liberia; and to provide high quality information and advice on the state of the environment and for matters connected therewith. The agency is empowered to carry out the following functions:

- Co-ordinate, integrate, harmonize and monitor the implementation of environmental policy and decisions of the Policy Council by the Line Ministries;
- Propose environmental policies and strategies to the Policy Council and ensure the integration of environmental concerns in overall national planning;
- Collect, analyze and prepare basic scientific data and other information pertaining to pollution, degradation and on environmental quality, resource use and other environmental protection and conservation matters and undertake research and prepare and disseminate every two years a report on the state of the environment in Liberia;
- Build the capacity of line Ministries, authorities and organizations through the exchange of data and information, and to render advice, technical support and training in environment and national resource management so as to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively;
- Ensure the preservation and promotion of important historic, cultural and spiritual values of natural resources heritage and, in consultation with indigenous authority, enhance indigenous methods for effective natural resource management;
- Promote public awareness through public participation in decision making and formal and non-formal education about the protection and sustainable management of the environment,

and to allow at minimal or no costs, access to environmental information and records made in connection with this Act;

- Encourage the use of appropriate environmentally sound technologies and renewable sources of energy and natural resources;
- Create categories of fiscal and economic instruments with line Ministries in order to discourage pollution and encourage clean production and minimal generation of waste in industrial processes and at consumer level;
- Establish environmental criteria, guidelines, specifications and standards for production processes and the sustainable use of natural resources for the health and welfare of the present generation, and in order to prevent environmental degradation for the welfare of the future generations;
- Monitor and assess projects and activities including activities being carried out by relevant ministries and bodies to ensure that the environment is not degraded by such activities and that environmental management objectives are adhered to and adequate early monitoring on impending environmental emergencies is given;
- Review sectoral environmental laws and regulations and recommend for amendments and to initiate proposals for the enactment of environmental legislation in accordance with this Act or any other Act;
- Function as the national clearinghouse for all activities relating to regional and international environment-related conventions, treaties and agreements, and as national liaison with the secretariat for all such regional and international instruments;
- Advise the State and participate in the process of negotiating, ratifying or acceding to relevant regional and international environmental agreements;
- Enter into regional cooperation for the management of shared natural resources and the harmonization of environmental laws and standards; and
- Notwithstanding the functions enumerated under sub-section (1), all sectors of the population have the duty to protect the environment, and the Agency may in the performance of its functions under subsection (1) and by published notice delegate any of its functions to a Ministry, Agency, Organization, a Technical Committee or any public officer.

Challenges facing environmental management are as follow:

- Lack of mobile lab and inadequate specialized laboratory; and
- Weak coordination with relevant stakeholders and inadequate public education and awareness

The mitigating measures for the challenges facing the sector are as follow:

- Support the EPA to implement the proposed activities to the fight against COVID-19; and
- Support the EPA to minimize the current challenges

COVID-19 IMPACT TARGETED RESPONSE

The following measures are being considered:

- Strengthen the compliance monitoring laboratory (key lab equipment, reagents and mobile lab) and the Geo-Information Services (GIS) Unit to step up compliance monitoring;
- Deployment of the newly trained environmental inspectors in the counties;
- Strengthen the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and inspectorate units to bring business entities into compliance;
- Ensure roll out of environment communication strategy to adequately inform the public;
- Develop and/or revise key environmental guidelines, regulations, ESIA fees regime and standards;
- Complete the analysis of sectorial policies, laws, regulations, and guidelines for harmonization;
- Train legal practitioners and law enforcement officers in Environmental compliance and Enforcement requirements;
- Natural Resources Management (NRM) capacity building for relevant officials & community leaders; and
- Train environmental focal points from key Ministries, Agencies & Commissions (MACs).

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The following measures are being earmarked to be implemented:

- Reduce woody biomass to 80 percent and increase ecological protected areas by 30 percent by 2023 (US\$180,000.00 but US\$105,000.00 needed);
- Enhance environmental laws enforcement, compliance monitoring laboratory, information dissemination and data management system (US\$254,000.00);
- Promoting governance framework to implement Sustainable Natural Resource Management (NRM) through enhanced stakeholders' participation, cross sectorial cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on natural resource related issues at all levels (partners); and
- Development of a national Green Economy Strategy (partners).

FINANCING THE LERP

In order to implement this recovery plan, there have s to be necessary resources mobilized both from the domestic revenue framework and support from the Country's partners. It is essential that the Government puts in place critical reporting and monitoring systems that track progress and report timely to ensure adequate implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION

COORDINATION WITH THE PAPD

The Liberia Economic Recovery Plan is a short-term complementary implementation plan that seeks to support the recalibration of the PAPD. It highlights or details Government's response to providing critical support to hardest hit sectors due to the viral outbreak; protecting nascent economic recovery and placing the economy on the path towards achieving the objectives of the PAPD; minimizing revenue collapse by providing stimulus relief; protecting service delivery; and undertaking priority infrastructure investment during the post Covid-19 period.

COORDINATION WITH SECTOR SPECIFIC RECOVERY STRATEGIES

The interventions in the LERP are essentially courses of actions that have been designed by relevant sector ministries, agencies and commissions (MACs) across the country. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning will work with all relevant MACs that are crucial to the recovery process in formulating sector policies and strategic plans. Just as with the PAPD, the MFDP will rely on those MACs "to determine how the proposed program/intervention affects issues within their own sectors' purview and how it is likely to affect other sectors' plans, objectives and goals in the future.

