



Integrated Country Strategy

LIBERIA

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

This Integrated Country Strategy begins at an auspicious time for Liberia, as 2022 marks both the bicentennial of the arrival of the first Black American immigrants under the banner of the American Colonization Society (January 7, 1822) and the 175th anniversary of the founding of the republic 25 years later (July 26, 1847). As these dates indicate, our shared history with Liberia goes back to the early days of our own country.

As we begin the third century of this unique relationship, our overarching goal is to support Liberia's progress toward becoming a post-civil war democratic and economic success story. We seek to do this by supporting efforts to combat corruption and official impunity, strengthening government and civil society institutions through targeted assistance, investing in future leaders through bilateral exchanges, driving inclusive economic growth and reducing poverty, and advocating for steps that would create a stable environment inhospitable to transnational crime and other security threats. These objectives are shared by our Liberian government partners. However, sharing objectives is not the same as fulfilling them, which will require a new level of commitment from Liberia's government leaders.

The civil war devastated Liberia's economy, and the Ebola outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic further hurt growth. However, nineteen years after the war ended, it is corruption and misgovernance rather than these historical factors that are most responsible for Liberia's continued ranking as one of the poorest, most underdeveloped countries in the world. This, despite decades of massive donor efforts to help rebuild its post-war economy and democratic institutions.

The United States is the largest bilateral donor to Liberia, with over \$5 billion in bilateral assistance since the civil war ended in 2003. On a per capita basis and adjusted for inflation, that assistance is more than double that of the Marshall Plan's investments in Europe, to say nothing of the additional assistance many other donors have provided to Liberia. While some Liberians have asked whether the United States will provide a Marshall Plan for Liberia, the more relevant question is what has Liberia done with the Marshall Plan-sized assistance we have already provided?

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In addition to receiving enormous levels of foreign assistance, Liberia is blessed with a favorable climate, reliable rainy season, huge agriculture potential, an incredibly rich mineral endowment, a long coastline fronting highly productive fishing grounds, and investors ready to develop these natural endowments – not to mention the second-largest vessel registry in the world. Why, then, are investors not pouring money into Liberia? Why does Liberia remain among the ten poorest countries in the world, nearly 20 years after the civil war ended?

The simple answer is that Liberia's leaders have too often chosen their own personal short-term gain over the long-term benefit of the country. There seems to be an expectation that the international community will always solve Liberia's bigger problems, so the politicians can focus on the here and now. But the reality is this: neither the United States Government nor any other donor is ultimately responsible for Liberia's development, its security, or its future. Those responsibilities lie squarely on the shoulders of the Liberian government. We are proud to be Liberia's primary supporting partner, but without greater ownership by government leaders of their own country's future, it will continue to be a lopsided partnership that bears meager fruit.

Government corruption is a fact of daily life for Liberians and businesses alike. Corruption in Liberia robs citizens of access to vital services, including healthcare, public safety, and education. It degrades the business environment for U.S. interests, subverts economic opportunity, exacerbates inequality, erodes the integrity and independence of democratic institutions, fuels a growing trust deficit between government and society, feeds political division and unrest, and increases national insecurity. In addition to a collateral waste of donor funds, it also discourages Liberians from paying the taxes they should pay as citizens and entrepreneurs, leading to chronic underfunding of government agencies and enabling a culture in which officials take bribes not only for their own pockets but to provide operational support for their agencies.

That is why a key goal in this ICS is to hold the leadership of the government of Liberia accountable. We would not be good stewards of U.S. taxpayers' money, nor would we be good partners to Liberia, if we sat quietly as misgovernance and corruption continued with impunity. Guided by the new U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption, we will support responsible

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governance, bolster Liberians in the government and private sector who are fighting for accountability and transparency, implement programs that build capacity in this area, and call out those who support corruption and malfeasance. And we will work with our international partners in all of these efforts.

Another key goal in this ICS is to help improve the investment climate in Liberia. Liberia is endowed with the raw materials for an outstanding investment climate, but largely because of corruption, its business climate instead ranks as one of the most difficult in the world. Investors are viewed too often not as partners in the long-term development of the country, but as opportunities for exploitation in the service of short-term agendas. Yet without transformative levels of investment, Liberia's economy will never take off.

Finally, this ICS focuses on the people of Liberia: supporting the government's efforts to meet the health and education needs of its people, and to protect and strengthen the human rights of all Liberians.

With this ICS, we inaugurate the third century of our bilateral relationship with Liberia. I am committed to beginning that century with a new chapter based on strong partnership, genuine accountability, and a renewed hope for a better Liberia to come.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Support Liberia's efforts to advance market-driven, inclusive economic growth and to support investment and job creation.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Improve the business environment and increase economic activity to support investment and job creation. (USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Object 1 (DO1))
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Urge the government of Liberia and relevant private and public sector stakeholders to facilitate increased service delivery investments that benefit Liberia's underserved communities.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Promote sustainable development of natural and agricultural resources to increase productivity, promote resilience, and mitigate climate change impacts.

Mission Goal 2: Advance democratic governance, peace and security, and respect for human rights in Liberia.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Through reforms and greater accountability, support effective and inclusive governance for all Liberians regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. (CDCS DO 2)
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Strengthen the ability of Liberia's integrity institutions to make tangible changes in governance and transparency.
- **Mission Objective 2.3:** Improve the effectiveness and professional standards of Liberian military and law enforcement sectors to promote security and protect human rights.
- **Mission Objective 2.4:** Protect the lives and interests of U.S. citizens and facilitate legitimate travel while defending U.S. border security and preventing violations of U.S. immigration laws.

Mission Goal 3: Support Liberia to improve its population's health and education.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Strengthen the foundation for Liberian economic growth by supporting a healthy, productive, and educated population – including those groups like women and girls that typically have unequal access. (USAID CDCS DO3)
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Improve Liberia's ability to prevent, detect, and respond to health security threats.

Management Objective 1: Maintain high ICASS customer satisfaction in housing and residential maintenance.

Management Objective 2: Improve employee and family morale, which will also assist with officer recruiting, through recreational initiatives addressing quality of life for all Mission community members.

Management Objective 3: Build up skills, capacity, confidence, and morale of locally employed staff through increased opportunities for training, professional development, exchanges, and inclusion in community events.

Management Objective 4: Provide training and support to all Mission personnel and families to promote and advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) principles.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Support Liberia's efforts to advance market-driven, inclusive economic growth and to support investment and job creation.

Description | This goal supports the Interim National Security Strategy's priority to reinvigorate and modernize our global partnerships including through assistance to alleviate economic distress and food insecurity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also supports Goal 2 of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Framework to promote global prosperity and support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and opportunity. We will leverage the government of Liberia's commitment to its Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018-2025) in order to advance economic reform that engages vulnerable groups, including women and youth, diversifies the economy by building on the natural resources base; increases private sector investment and supports the achievement of Liberia's commitment to climate change mitigation and adaptation targets.

Objective 1.1 | Improve the business environment and increase economic activity to support investment and job creation.

- **Justification** | The Liberian economy faces many constraints due to a poor business enabling environment, a weak financial sector, poor infrastructure, and low levels of human capital. Economic governance is hampered by high levels of corruption, rent seeking, graft, and weak institutions, all of which combine to deter both domestic and foreign investment and limit economic growth. Liberia consistently ranks very low globally for ease of doing business. Banks, businesses, and international organizations cite construction permitting, cross-border trade, investor protections, contract enforcement, and poor electricity service as top challenges.

The informal sector employs nearly twice as many Liberians as the formal sector, and many of these informal workers are women and youth. Businesses and workers alike face a multitude of barriers to transitioning from the informal sector to the formal

sector including corruption, convoluted and inefficient business processes, lack of access to financial services, limited capital availability, and low management capacity. Moving informal enterprises into the formal economy could potentially unlock substantial capital, provide increased employment opportunities and job security, and increase tax revenue.

Liberia has a competitive commercial banking sector, but access to finance is heavily concentrated in the capital city of Monrovia and is extremely challenging for small and medium enterprises (SME) and rural businesses. There are only 30 bank branches outside of Monrovia, and many of the existing microfinance institutions and networks are undercapitalized and concentrated in the capital. As the 2018 USAID Liberia Country Economic Review bluntly summarizes, “access to financing for households and SMEs is largely nonexistent.” Though mobile money systems and transactions have proliferated in recent years, a lack of interconnectivity between banks and providers in Liberia creates barriers to usage and widespread adoption.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports Objectives 2.1 and 2.2 of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Framework; the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy Development Objective 1, particularly Intermediate Results 1.1 and 1.2; the Economic Security priority of the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality; and the USG Prosper Africa Trade and Investment Initiative.
- **Risks** | Corruption permeates all levels of the economy in Liberia and presents the greatest risk for investors and businesses. Without significant progress by the government of Liberia on anti-corruption actions across the government, as well as improved access to finance, Liberia will continue to face significant constraints to investment and growth.

Objective 1.2 | Urge the government of Liberia (GOL) and relevant private and public-sector stakeholders to facilitate increased service delivery investments that benefit Liberia’s underserved communities.

- **Justification |** Inadequate infrastructure limits economic development in Liberia. The World Bank 2017 Trade and Competitiveness Data 360 (TCdata360) ranked Liberia 123 out of 137 countries in the “Quality of Overall Infrastructure Value,” making Liberia one of the worst countries in the world for its overall infrastructure. Liberia’s road network ranks among the least developed in West Africa, with only 11,000 kms of roads in the entire country. Only six percent of these roads are paved, the remainder are poorly maintained unimproved dirt roads, which are often impassable during the six-to-eight-month rainy season. Liberia’s lack of finished roads limits international trade, restricts access to agricultural markets and tourism assets, and creates market inefficiencies that strangle economic expansion.

Access to electricity ranks second to access to finance as a key challenge for Liberian businesses, according to the 2017 World Bank Enterprise Survey. Only ten percent of Monrovia’s 1.5 million residents have access to electricity through the national grid, while less than five percent of rural residents can access the national grid. This limited access can be attributed to some of the highest energy tariffs in the world, an underdeveloped grid network, and unreliable service delivery. More than half of the electricity generated is not paid for; much of it is stolen through illegal connections to the grid. The GOL has set ambitious goals to electrify 70 percent of households in Monrovia and 30 percent of households outside Monrovia to the national grid by 2030. However, this will connect only 40 percent of the total population. The remaining 60 percent of Liberia’s population will need to be electrified through off-grid energy solutions in the form of mini-grids and standalone systems.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports Objective 2.2 of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Framework; the Economic Security priority of the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality; the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy Development Objective 2 Intermediate Result 2.2; and the USG Power Africa Initiative.
- **Risks** | A significant risk to private sector growth is that corruption, inadequate means for contract enforcement, cronyism, and general mistrust of the government will discourage local and international investment, limit expansion of new and existing businesses, and limit the success and profitability of private sector enterprises. The USG will continue to promote anti-corruption measures through its activities and programs to mitigate this risk.

Objective 1.3 | Promote sustainable development of natural and agricultural resources to increase productivity, promote resilience and mitigate climate change impacts.

- **Justification** | Liberia's economic potential lies in its rich natural resource base. Dense forests covering more than 60% of the country are home to unparalleled biodiversity and present opportunities beyond sustainable forestry including in ecotourism development and carbon market participation. Extraction of mineral resources (especially iron ore and other metals) has long represented a significant portion of Liberia's GDP; however, further development of the sector is possible and the GOL must share returns more equitably to meet poverty reduction goals. Suitable land resources and a favorable climate presents tremendous potential for increasing agricultural productivity to support Liberian food security and agribusiness growth. Liberia's challenge is how to unlock this tremendous natural wealth to expand the economy in a way that is inclusive, equitable, sustainable, and a net positive to the environment.

The forest ecosystems of Liberia are one of the country's greatest assets. However, these assets are not managed sustainably, and threats abound. Liberia lost 1.53 million hectares of tree cover between 2001 to 2018 due to slash and burn agriculture practices, unsustainable and illegal logging, and the expansion of mining and other activities. The GOL generally lacks the political will and capacity to implement effective

conservation programs and the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) is underfunded, lacks qualified staff, and is frequently accused of corruption.

Mining activities represent the equivalent of about 6 percent of Liberia's GDP and are a significant share of foreign direct investment, with iron and gold being the most valuable commodities. However, the government of Liberia does not always transparently share details on new mining concessions, leading to concerns over lax regulatory oversight with respect to sustainability and environmental protection practices. Further, while "artisanal" or small-scale gold and diamond mining provide much-needed income to rural households and workers, the government generally does not access, inspect, and enforce regulations on inland mining operations, creating opportunities for environmentally damaging, unsustainable, and illegal operations.

The Liberian agricultural sector accounts for 43 percent of formal employment and contributed 12.4 percent (\$398.2 million) of GDP in 2019. Over 80 percent of households living in rural areas depend on agriculture for their livelihood yet 18% of Liberians are food insecure. GOL budget shortfalls in the sector have created key policy gaps and left critical services, especially research and extension, paralyzed and ineffective. Most rural farmers lack land tenure and access to inputs and, as a result, productivity is low.

The GOL has set ambitious targets for climate change mitigation and adaptation in their Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). Meeting these targets would make a strong contribution toward combating the impacts of climate change and would grow the Liberian economy by expanding sustainable natural resource management practices and potentially attracting climate financing for development. Nevertheless, achievement of NDC targets is already behind schedule due to the GOL's lack of capacity to regulate and implement policy and to monitor climate mitigation and adaptation actions.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports Objective 1.2 of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Framework; the Climate Change priority of the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality; the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy Development Objective 1 Intermediate Results 1.2 and 1.3; the USG Feed the Future Initiative; and USAID's Biodiversity Policy (2015), Environmental and Natural Resource Management Framework (2019), and Climate Strategy (2022-2030).
- **Risks** | Not achieving this objective will result in lost opportunities to sustainably develop Liberia's natural resource endowment. Political maneuvering and accusations of real or fabricated corruption against ministerial leadership will hamper collaboration efforts and reduce the ability of the GOL to support and follow through with commitments and initiatives.

Mission Goal 2 | Advance democratic governance, peace and security, and respect for human rights in Liberia

Description | This goal supports the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance priorities to revitalize democracy and combat corruption, advance and protect human rights, and partner with allies to counter instability and transnational crime that threaten the security of the American people. This goal also supports the Government of Liberia's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018-2025) with its priorities of Sustaining the Peace (Pillar III) and Governance and Transparency (Pillar IV).

Objective 2.1 | Through reforms and greater accountability, support effective and inclusive governance for all Liberians regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

- **Justification** | Effective, accountable, responsive, and inclusive governance is fundamental to a well-functioning democracy that respects the rights of its people and meets the needs of its citizens. This objective supports efforts to combat systemic corruption and impunity within the government, foster increased oversight and transparency of government institutions and processes, strengthen the capacity of civil

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society organizations and media outlets to exercise advocacy and oversight functions, and engage Liberian champions to push for reforms and protect human rights. In 2021, Liberia was downgraded to the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report Tier 2 Watch List after being removed from the Watch List the year before. A special emphasis under this objective will be to combat trafficking in persons through targeted support to the Government of Liberia (GOL) and civil society actors.

- **Linkages** | This objective reflects the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance priorities of revitalizing democracy and advancing human rights and the U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption Strategic Objective 3.5: Bolster the ability of civil society, media, and private sector actors to safely detect and expose corruption, increase public awareness, and pursue accountability. It supports Objectives 3.1 and 3.2 of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Framework; and the Democracy, Participation, and Leadership priority of the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality. It also links to the State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1 Objective 1.3.2; the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2019-2024 Development Objective 2, Intermediate Results 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3; and the State-USAID AF/AFR Joint Regional Strategy Goal 3.
- **Risks** | Closing space for civil society and media actors in the approach to 2023 general elections. Lack of political will on the part of the GOL to combat corruption. Unsustainable business plans and general lack of revenue for media outlets discourages objective, investigative reporting, and encourages pay-to-play behavior by journalists. Politicization and loss of credibility of integrity institutions with oversight roles. Poor performance of GOL in combating trafficking in persons leading to a downgrade to Tier 3 status and possible suspension of assistance.

Objective 2.2 | Strengthen the ability of Liberia's integrity institutions to make tangible changes in governance and transparency.

- **Justification** | Liberia's integrity institutions include, but are not necessarily limited to, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), the General Auditing Commission (GAC), the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC), the Internal Auditing Agency (IAA), the Governance Commission (GC), the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC), the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives (LEITI), the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA), and the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR).

In addition, a Civilian Complaint Review Board with civil society participation reviews citizen complaints against the Liberia National Police (LNP) and Liberia Immigration Services (LIS). While nominally and legally independent agencies of the Government of Liberia (GOL), evidence strongly suggests that in practice these agencies struggle to fulfill their mandate of holding the GOL accountable because of inadequate government funding and because of political influence aimed at protecting the interests of Liberia's top political and legislative figures and other well-connected and/or wealthy individuals. These realities erode the independence, integrity, and effectiveness of these institutions. Without adequate political protection, support, and finances from their own government, these agencies tend to look for other means and mechanisms to fulfill their role. The purpose for the U.S. Mission engaging in this sector is to bolster the effectiveness, independence, and confidence of these institutions so that they can better fulfill their mandate, particularly as it relates to addressing the rampant corruption in the GOL.

- **Linkages** | This objective directly supports the United States Strategy on Countering Corruption, especially Pillar 3.5 (Bolster the ability of civil society, media, and private sector actors to uncover corruption and push for accountability, growing collaborations and communications with a wide range of partners), Pillar 4 (Preserving and strengthening the multilateral anti-corruption architecture), and Pillar 5 (Improving diplomatic engagement and leveraging foreign assistance). This work also supports and

complements USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy Development Objective 2 (Effective and Inclusive Governance Catalyzed through Reforms and Greater Accountability), and supports Objective 3.3 of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Framework.

- **Risks** | Lack of U.S. Mission engagement in this objective poses the risk of continued erosion of the ability of Liberia's integrity institutions to fulfill their mandate and strengthen Liberia's democracy.

Objective 2.3 | Improved effectiveness and professional standards of Liberian military and law enforcement sectors to promote security and protect human rights

- **Justification** | Peace, stability, and good governance are prerequisites for the long-term success of Liberia's democracy and provide the base for economic growth and justice in Liberia. U.S. assistance will help Liberia become more stable and secure by strengthening the professionalization of security institutions, improving access to formal legal remedies, supporting formal and informal dispute resolution systems, and strengthening citizen-responsive governance. The U.S. Government will support Liberia's efforts to establish effective, accountable, and inclusive governance; eliminate systemic corruption and impunity; and foster a growing economy that protects human rights and benefits all Liberians.

Since the peace accords were signed in 2003, the United States has played a critical role by demobilizing and rebuilding the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and training and equipping the Liberia National Police (LNP) and other civilian law enforcement agencies. The GOL assumed full responsibility for security in July 2016 from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), but continues to have resource gaps and vulnerabilities. The AFL, and to a lesser extent the Liberia National Police (LNP), are increasingly making a positive role in regional stability through participation in peacekeeping missions in Mali and South Sudan. Embassy Monrovia is changing U.S. assistance to the AFL and civilian security agencies from a focus on broad-based force generation to targeted investments designed to enhance critical areas. Programs will continue to be carefully calibrated to

conditions on the ground and well-coordinated with other security sector donors. While Liberia's security agencies have made great progress, continued U.S. assistance is critical to protect U.S. investment in the security sector, consolidate gains, and ensure that malign influences do not weaken the professionalization of the security institutions.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports Objective 3.1 of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Framework which focuses on strengthening accountable, democratic governance. It directly supports the United States Strategy on Countering Corruption; the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security; and the Biden-Harris Administration's Statement of Drug Policy for Year One. It also supports the National Defense Strategy's priority of strengthening alliances.
- **Risks** | The Armed Forces of Liberia and civilian security agencies have long remained underfunded and understaffed, leading to questionable sustainability in provision of equipment and infrastructure. As the 2023 elections approach, so too will pressure to use these forces for political means, as well as demand for already overstretched security forces.

Objective 2.4 | Protect the lives and interests of U.S. citizens and facilitate legitimate travel while defending U.S. border security and preventing violations of U.S. immigration laws.

- **Justification** | A consular officer's fundamental responsibility is to protect American citizens by assisting them overseas and by preventing mala fide actors from entering the United States. In Monrovia, the Consular Section provides the full range of consular services: services to American citizens, non-immigrant visa (NIV) adjudications, and immigrant visa (IV) adjudications, including Diversity Visas and adoption visas. There are an estimated 3,500 U.S. citizens in Liberia; the majority were born in Liberia and naturalized as U.S., with significant numbers of United Nations employees, NGO workers, and missionaries also present. CONS Monrovia supports the activities of other USG sections and agencies in pursuit of the shared Mission Goals by facilitating legitimate travel to and from the United States.

- **Linkages** | This supports Objective 5.2 of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Framework on facilitating legitimate travel to the United States.
- **Risks** | The loss of consular revenue during the pandemic adversely affects the ability of Consular Affairs to adequately fund and staff the Monrovia consular section. An ongoing pandemic restricts ability to perform on-site investigations.

Mission Goal 3 | Support Liberia to improve its population's health and education.

Description | This goal supports the Interim National Security Strategy's priorities of revitalizing and expanding global health security initiatives, preventing disease and improving public health and nutrition, ensuring high-quality and equitable education and opportunities for children and youth, and combating the continuing threat posed by COVID-19 and other infectious diseases with pandemic potential. Liberia's health and education sectors have suffered from years of conflict and crises, and have not yet fully recovered. The current COVID-19 pandemic and its secondary impacts have undermined some of the gains realized in health and education in Liberia through USG investments. We will work to support Liberia to improve the health and education status of its people in order to foster a populace who can drive inclusive and sustainable development. In doing so, we will defend American values and reinvigorate our leadership abroad by preventing the spread of disease and expanding global health security.

Objective 3.1 | Strengthen the foundation for Liberian economic growth by supporting a healthy, productive, and educated population – including those groups like women and girls that typically have unequal access. (USAID CDCS DO3)

- **Justification** | The U.S. Government supports several important public health goals in Liberia including preventing infant, child and maternal deaths; controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic; combating infectious diseases through improving access to and delivery of quality health services, strengthening health systems, improving communities' knowledge of good health practices, and improving access to safe water and basic sanitation. The 2019-2020 Liberia Demographic Health Survey (DHS) identified

some improvement in prenatal, maternal and postnatal care including a significant increase in facility-based deliveries and postnatal care within two days of birth. However, it did not demonstrate a large reduction in maternal deaths since 2013 and mortality among children under the age of one and newborns increased. Around a third of children (30 percent from the 2019 DHS) under five are chronically malnourished or “stunted” which means they will never reach their physical or mental potential. Clinical case management of HIV and TB patients is limited which leads to drug resistance and poor health outcomes. Malaria remains a leading cause of death in Liberia with an estimated 45 percent prevalence among children under five yet only 40 percent of Liberians have access to a bed net to prevent malaria. And as of 2020, only 24 percent of Liberians had access to basic sanitation services, defined as improved facilities that are not shared with other households. Diarrheal diseases, which rank among the top 10 causes of death in Liberia, represent a segment of several diseases of epidemic potential contributing to morbidity and premature mortality in Liberia. Outbreaks of vaccine-derived poliomyelitis (a disease that has been designated for global eradication) continue to occur throughout Liberia, placing growing children at risk for developing life-long disabilities.

In education, the system has not yet recovered from the damage sustained during the protracted civil wars and further erosion during the Ebola and COVID health emergencies. The fallout from COVID-19 is likely to have a greater impact on learners who are from already marginalized groups. Many schools lack teaching and learning materials and are in need of refurbishment and repairs. The GOL still lacks the human and institutional capacity to fund, manage, and oversee the education system.

The 2016 Education Sector Analysis found that 47 percent of the population has no formal education and only 49 percent of primary age children are in school. Learning outcomes at all levels in Liberia remain far below government expectations. While the rate of students who take the West African Senior School Certificate Examination and fail all subjects decreased from 61 percent to 23 percent from 2018 to 2020, only 46 percent passed three subjects and less than 1 percent passed all subjects in 2020. Over-

age enrollment continues to exacerbate drop-out rates in all education levels, negatively affect equity, and increase the need for alternative education programming. More than 74 percent of pre-primary, 82 percent of primary, and 85 percent of secondary school students are over-age for their grades. Additionally, the majority of public school teachers are not capable of passing required competency tests. On a test of basic literacy and math, only 5 percent of teachers passed with a score of at least 70 percent and 44 percent conditionally passed with scores in the 40-69 percent range.

USG programs assist by helping the GOL to improve and sustain quality and equity in education services so all children and youth stay in school and learn, especially marginalized and vulnerable learners such as students who are female, over-age, living in rural communities, and/or disabled.

Public Affairs runs multiple exchange programs that target secondary students, teachers, and students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The number of Liberian students studying in the United States has slowly grown over the years, with notable setbacks (Ebola, COVID), but interest in pursuing a U.S. education has never been higher. Increasing the number of Liberians who study in the United States and return to Liberia will help develop the human capital and expertise needed to address Liberia's many development challenges.

- **Linkages** | This goal reflects priorities three (Health) and four (Education) of the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality and Objective 3.5 (primarily focused on health and education) of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan.
- **Risks** | The most significant risk to investments in Liberia's public health and education and the associated USG and Liberian goals is the country's limited fiscal resources in the national budget to adequately fund and manage the health and education systems, including payment for essential medicines, teaching and learning materials, salaries and operational costs. Poor accountability and weak governance also contribute to a demotivated workforce and frequent stock-outs of essential medicines, certain vaccines, and other key commodities in health facilities. Health worker demotivation is compounded by lack of basic supervision and absence of basic tools to do their work.

Health system clients similarly are deterred when medications and basic diagnostics are unavailable.

In education, long-term underfunding and the lack of a cadre of career civil servants within the GOL due to widespread political appointments at all levels of government continue to constrain the sustainability of USG investments. Insufficient staff, capacity and technical leadership, along with critical deficiencies in financial and administrative systems and significant funding gaps, result in the GOL struggling to provide equitable access to quality education that is necessary to promote the relevant intellectual development of children and youth.

Objective 3.2 | Improve Liberia's ability to prevent, detect, and respond to health security threats

- **Justification |** Through the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), CDC, USAID, DOD, State, and NIH provide assistance to Liberia's health sector to improve its ability to prevent, detect, and respond to endemic or emerging infectious disease threats such as Ebola, malaria, meningitis, Lassa fever, and other Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) priority diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as recent Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) cases in neighboring Guinea, tested the detection and response systems built during Liberia's earlier devastating Ebola outbreak. They also demonstrated areas of capacity, relative to neighboring countries, in terms of coordination and public engagement early in the pandemic, as well as areas of fragility particularly related to contact tracing, risk communication, and timely detection. Over the next four years, CDC, USAID, DOD, State, and NIH will work to improve Liberia's disease surveillance capabilities, strengthen health systems, conduct joint clinical research, improve the health status of all Liberians including the most vulnerable, and jointly support the construction of Liberia's premier public health and research laboratory. Without continued programming in these areas, the significant gains made since the U.S. Government began to implement the Global Health Security Agenda in Liberia may be lost, putting all critical health services at risk.

- **Linkages** | This objective supports Objective 1.1 (strengthening global health security) of the draft FY 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan and also aligns with the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance priority of strengthening global public health systems. The U.S. Government also recently committed to a second five-year phase of action (2019-2024), known as “GHSA 2024.” GHSA 2024 works to accelerate implementation of and compliance with the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005), a legally binding instrument adopted by 196 countries, including the 194 World Health Organization (WHO) Member States, to strengthen country-level capabilities needed to prevent, detect, and respond to health emergencies.
- **Risks** | Global Health Security threats including Ebola, COVID-19 and new spill-over pathogens pose a serious risk to economic growth, governance and wellbeing. Liberia has experienced significant increases in food insecurity, decreases in economic activity, and dramatic declines in immunization rates and health-seeking behaviors as a result of the Ebola outbreak and COVID-19 outbreak. Any outbreak poses a tremendous threat to Liberia’s fragile economy and public health infrastructure and, if not detected and contained early, can quickly overwhelm all systems.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Maintain high ICASS customer satisfaction in housing selection and in residential maintenance.

- **Justification |** Years of civil strife devastated Liberia's infrastructure, including the real estate market, leaving most family-sized residences in Monrovia in ruins and inhabited by squatters. Until recently, new construction targeted the United Nations or NGO population (largely unaccompanied) by building smaller two-bedroom units. Management's challenge continues to be to identify appropriately sized housing that is well-maintained, safe, secure, and functional with easy access to the Embassy and recreational facilities. A lack of local infrastructure capacity forces the Embassy to provide maintenance and utilities for many residential properties. Objective will be achieved by increasing number of renovated residences and enhancing customer service capacity support staff.
- **Linkages |** State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan Goal 4, Objectives 4.2 and 4.4.
- **Risks |** Decreased satisfaction with housing and maintenance could lower morale and lead to recruiting and retention problems in the long term. Adding renovated residences and constantly improving customer service mitigates these risks.

Management Objective 2 | Improve employee and family morale, which will also assist with officer recruiting, through recreational initiatives addressing quality of life for all Mission community members.

- **Justification |** The dearth of local capacity extends to recreational activities as well. Monrovia has limited indoor shopping opportunities and no open movie theaters. Beaches, while beautiful, are prone to crime and face ocean waters into which sewage drains from Monrovia. Offices such as the Community Liaison Office and Monrovia Employee Association (MEA) play key roles in maintaining community morale and well-being.

- **Linkages** | State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan Goal 4, Objectives 4.1 and 4.3.
- **Risks** | Lower morale could lead to recruiting and retention problems in the long term. A full social calendar and safe convenient recreational facilities mitigate these risks.

Management Objective 3 | Build up skills, capacity, confidence, and morale of locally employed staff through increased opportunities for training, professional development, exchanges, and inclusion in community events.

- **Justification** | Due to the decades of civil war, most of the current work force in Liberia received a sub-standard education and may have had limited opportunities for professional work experience. This problem can be addressed through a commitment to provide effective employee training and professional development opportunities to the LE Staff.
- **Linkages** | State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan Goal 4, Objectives 4.1 and 4.3.
- **Risks** | Limited capacity and low morale of LE Staff causes work inefficiencies and could lead to recruiting and retention problems in the long run. A robust training and professional development program in conjunction with full community inclusion mitigates these risks.

Management Objective 4 | Provide training and support to all Mission personnel and families to promote and advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) principles.

- **Justification** | Advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility is a priority for the U.S. Government. Making sure all employees have the proper knowledge and experience to support DEIA principles can be supported through Mission-sponsored activities, training, and regional and global summit/workshop participation.
- **Linkages** | State-USAID 2018-2022 Joint Strategic Plan Goal 4, Objectives 4.1 and 4.3, and E.O. 14035 on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce,

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- **Risks** | Absence of adherence to DEIA principles could lead to resentment, misunderstandings, and low morale in the Mission, plus cause recruiting and retention problems in the long run. A robust training and professional development program in conjunction with full community inclusion mitigates these risks.