President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and dignitaries, during the launch of the Deconcentration Platform.
1. **Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AfT</td>
<td>Agenda for Transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>AWP</td>
<td>Annual Work Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCPR</td>
<td>Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>BFQ</td>
<td>Bill of Quantity</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSC</td>
<td>County Service Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CST</td>
<td>County Support Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Civil Service Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Constitutional Review Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTA</td>
<td>Chief Technical Advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFMOs</td>
<td>County Field Monitoring Officers</td>
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<td>CPU</td>
<td>County Planning Units</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDF</td>
<td>County Development Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNDRA</td>
<td>Center for National Documentation and Registry Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIM</td>
<td>Direct Implementation Modality</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVD</td>
<td>Ebola Virus Disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>GC</td>
<td>Governance Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>GoL</td>
<td>Government of Liberia</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Internet Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Internet Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDSP</td>
<td>Liberia Decentralization support Program</td>
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<td>LDLD</td>
<td>Liberia Decentralization and Local Development</td>
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<td>LDF</td>
<td>Local Development Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>LISGIS</td>
<td>Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>MACs</td>
<td>Ministries, Agencies and Commissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Ministry of Internal Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEC</td>
<td>National Elections Commission</td>
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<td>NDPB</td>
<td>National Decentralization Program Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDIS</td>
<td>National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NIM</td>
<td>National Implementation Modality</td>
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<td>NPDLG</td>
<td>National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
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<td>PSRA</td>
<td>Public Sector Reform Agenda</td>
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<td>QIP</td>
<td>Quick Impact Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFQ</td>
<td>Request for Quotation</td>
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<td>SDF</td>
<td>Social Development Funds</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Sweden International Development Agencies</td>
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<td>TWG</td>
<td>Technical Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNV</td>
<td>United Nations Volunteer</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agencies for International Development</td>
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2. Executive Summary

This consolidated Annual Report covers activities undertaken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Governance Commission as planned in the 2015 Annual Work Plan of the Liberia Decentralization Support Program (LDSP). It highlights progress made towards the outcomes, outputs and the progress towards achieving the targets. The report tabulates the challenges and lessons learned that informed program priorities, and makes recommendations for service improvement and implementation for future progression of the program.

3. Purpose

The LDSP is a five year (2013 -2017) Government of Liberia program designed to support and facilitate the implementation of the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Government. The LDSP deliberately targets decentralization of administrative, political, and fiscal governance in Liberia and its alignment to the peace building and reconciliation processes, Public Sector Reform Agenda, Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), Civil Service Reform (CSR) and the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) under Governance Pillar IV.

The program was signed by the Government of Liberia and donor partners in June, 2013 with a projected cost of US$27 million over a 5 year period. In the fourth quarter of the year in review cost of the program was revised to US$ 18,490,486.74. The programme is implemented to move from direct implementation (DIM) by UNDP to a national implementation modality (NIM) transferring major implementation responsibilities to government institutions, and as such the program utilizes government system, with UNDP as the fund manager. In 2015 the resources that supported the activities of the reporting period were from the first tranche of support from the European Union in the amount of US$1.8 million and the US$400,000 from UNDP.
4. **Overall Objective**

Governance decentralization in Liberia is a subsidiary of Government’s Agenda for Transformation as expressed in Pillar IV which states, “In partnership with citizens, create transparent, accountable and responsive public institutions that contribute to economic and social development as well as inclusive and participatory governance systems.”

5. **Specific Objectives**

The program’s specific objectives are built around the transfer of authority and responsibilities from national to local governments in Liberia as expressed below:

1. Enhance sensitivity, responsiveness and capabilities of local governments and make them accountable to local people;

2. Accelerate effective and efficient service delivery and poverty alleviation by developing and strengthening local level planning, monitoring and management capacity and providing access to national and local resources through fiscal decentralization;

3. Increase equitable distribution of the nation’s resources so as to ensure a more wholesome process of development and democratic governance; and,

4. Enhance participatory decision-making to engender peace building and reconciliation.

5. **Program Strategy**

The strategy for implementation of decentralization in Liberia has been guided by the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance (NPDLG). Section 6.0 of the
NPDLG reads “the implementation of the NPDLG shall be incremental over a period of ten years. ”

This incremental approach shall include amendment to the Constitution of Liberia to provide for the election of county superintendents and administrative district commissioners. The strategy is to pursue the process of constitutional amendment while simultaneously establishing conditions for successful deconcentration as the first stage of the process of decentralization. Such conditions which include local capacity development, institutional restructuring for economic governance, and empowerment of existing local structures, among others, shall be established within the first three years of the ten-year period of incremental implementation.

The NPDLG goes on to assign the responsibility of developing a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of the policy to Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Governance Commission, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and other MACs. In the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) the program is implemented through the four (4) units of the Ministry as follows:

1. **Department of Administration** – is engaged at the highest level with the training of MIA and county staff to increase capacities to be able to implement both deconcentration and decentralization. This department is also leading an analysis of the re-profiling and re-documentation exercise to determine the training needs of the staff, particularly against the job descriptions to be developed in line with the provisions of the proposed Local Government Act (now with the President).

2. **Department of Research and Planning** - is seized with the process of preparing for the conduct of new County Development Agendas (CDA) for all the counties, as they prepare for participatory planning and budgeting, which should become the basis of local governance.
1. **Department of Operations** – is currently the coordinating entity of Counties from the central level government and has a clear responsibility to facilitate the fast-paced movement of deconcentration into the Counties.

2. **Department of Urban Affairs** – takes the lead in the completion of the consultations and advocacy for rationalization of local government units, in preparation for a viable and progressive local government as proposed in the proposed legislation.

**The Governance Commission** is the government think-tank. It is responsible for tracking implementation towards goals set by the government, civil society engagement, and bringing to the policy making table the opinions of the citizens about the performance of the government (see Program Document, p 29). During the period under review, the Governance Commission led the effort in completing the draft Local Government Act and submitting same to the President, in September, 2015. The GC will continue to advocate for the passage of the LGA at the Legislature when submitted by the President.

3. **Funding strategy:**

The LDSP is a large program with an estimated budget of US$18m over a period of five (5) years, 2013-2017; the Program is largely funded by development partners, including, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the European Union (EU), the Swedish Government (SE), the United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

In May 2015 USAID confirmed a commitment of US$15.5 million of which US$1 million was channeled into the UNDP managed basket fund and US$14.5 million will be channeled through a traditional USAID funding contractor over an initial 3 year period with a possible 2 year extension.
In early December, the Government of Sweden and the Ministry of Internal Affairs penned a contribution agreement for 45 million Swedish Krona (which converts to US$5 million) to support the program. As with the support from the European Union, the support from the Swedish Government to the LDSP under the management of the UNDP.

Additionally, during the fourth quarter of the reporting period, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) provided support to the LDSP through the Quick Impact Project (QIP) for the construction of service delivery facilities in the two (2) counties, and the procurement of specialized equipment to facilitate the deconcentration of transport related services and traditional marriage certificates in eight (8) counties through the County Service Centers. The total figure of UNMIL’s contribution is around US$476,406.56.

Finally, Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, has committed US$500,000 in the fiscal year 2015/2016 to the deconcentration efforts as designed in the program document. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is working in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) to channel the resources to specific projects in the deconcentration agenda. The Government will continue to provide other funding through mechanisms, such as, the County Development Funds (CDF), Social Development Funds (SDF), and other decentralization related activities (such as the county treasuries) and other projects across the country.

4. **Summary of Key Achievements in 2015**

1. **Launch of the Deconcentration Platform and the Establishment of County Service Centers (Service Delivery Facilities):**
The year 2015 started on a very high note as the President launched the National Deconcentration Platform in February, in the City of Gbarnga, Bong County. The occasion was opened by H.E. Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and closed by H.E. the Vice President of the Republic. It was attended by an array of high profile government officials, traditional leaders, county officials, and international development partners from the UNDP, the European Union, the Swedish Embassy, the United States Government, the Africa Development Bank and the World Bank. Prior to the launch of the Platform, the MACs were operating in the counties but in “silos” and without the acquiescence of the county superintendents or local officials. The Deconcentration Platform presented the framework for the delivery of basic services to the people at the county level in a coordinated fashion, and strengthened the role of the county Superintendents with respect to MACs activities in their respective counties - the Platform presents the framework for the MACs to collaborate in the delivery of services at the county level under the coordinating role of the Superintendents as the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs).

Immediately after the launch of the Deconcentration Platform, the LDSP began supporting negotiating and developing vital partnerships between and among the government Ministries and Agencies (MACs) to collaborate in moving the services identified in the Deconcentration Platform; the Program supported twelve (12) Ministries1 and two (2) Agencies2 to move a total of 45 services to the counties in two phases - the first phase focused on issuing of “documentation services” such as certificates, licenses, registries, and permits at the county level from common service delivery facilities or, County Service Centers; and the second phase focused on the delivery of the other services, such as, community projects, agricultural extension.

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1 Namely, Ministries of Labor, Education, Gender, Commerce, Health, Internal Affairs, Education and Public Works
2 LISGIS, CSA
services, institutional development, and social services to the people at the county level.

On June 30th 2015, the first County Service Center (CSC) in the country was opened in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, by the Vice President of the Republic of Liberia, making it possible for the people of Grand Bassa and nearby counties, including Rivercess, Margibi, and Sinoe to receive basic government services without making the long trip to Monrovia.

During the period under review, four monitoring visits to the CSC found that from the “supply side” the services provided were categorized in three (3) categories:

1. Services that were fully processed at the County Service Centers
2. Services processes commenced at the Center but documentation sent to Monrovia for completion (signatures); and
3. Services that were started but stalled due to other issues, like in the case of Ministry of Labor, the absence of a tax code or other central government related bureaucratic hurdle.

A quick survey was also conducted to get feedback from service recipients on the quality of service provided - customer service, and their perception of the CSC. The responses gathered from about 100 service recipients indicate that the people are pleased with the quality of services provided and appreciate the CSC because it provides-

1. Easy and quick access to public services;
2. Less costly (because the additional cost of travel to Monrovia, and sometimes the cost of lodging are excluded);
3. Clarity on processes (sometimes in local vernacular); and
4. Speedy delivery of services.
For example, when asked, “What do you like most about the CSC?” 100% of the respondents highlighted, the convenience and the good customer service. On the other hand, when asked about the down-side (what needed to be strengthened or improved at the CSC), 60% of the respondents said they saw nothing wrong with the CSC; 5% said it was too soon to determine; 25% said that the many people did not know about the Center, especially in the districts. And the remaining 10% did not respond to the question.

The monitoring also highlighted the role of the County Superintendent in the delivery of services at the CSC. One of the issues underlined in the Rapid Assessment conducted in February of 2015, on county readiness to deliver services was the fact that even though all the MACs line ministries are present in all 15 counties, they were operating without the involvement of the local administration, and separately from the other MACs. However, the Report demonstrated that under the arrangement at the CSC, the MACs are sharing common resources, under the coordination of the County Superintendent, who chairs the weekly coordination meetings at the CSC.

1. The finalization of the Draft Local Government Act (LGA)

The second major achievement during the reporting period has been the finalization and submission of the Local Government Bill to the President. The Governance Commission, since 2012, conducted series of nationwide consultative meetings with citizens, including civil society groups, opinion leaders, local officials, traditional leaders, students, and other stakeholders, nationwide on the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance. The feedback gathered from the citizens has been incorporated in the Local Government Bill in preparation for the more devolved local governance anticipated in the 10-year timeline, when local leaders will be elected and able to assume the functions envisaged in a decentralized system of governance.
In August 2015, the final draft of the Local Government Bill was submitted to the President, and followed by a presentation to the Cabinet at which time it was observed that the LG Bill overlooked some pertinent issues. For instance, the Bill assumed that a Constitutional Amendment that would permit the election of local government election will take place and would be endorsed. MOJ recommended a position that would allow the LG Bill to pass and be relevant even if the Constitutional Amendment did not happen as expected. The President, therefore, instructed the Minister of Justice to review the Bill and make the necessary corrections. Following the Minister's input, the Governance Commission finalized the draft Bill and resubmitted same to the President.

The draft Local Government Bill provides the legal and regulatory framework for the implementation of provisions in the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance that needs legislative enactment. The Bill provides for the structure of local government, financial management, and devolution of functions. If and when the Bill is passed, it will provide for the full implementation of the Decentralization Policy, except for provisions that have constitutional implications, for instance, election of local officials.

The LG Bill was among draft pieces of legislation discussed in the Cabinet meeting of October 9, 2015, in which the full Cabinet approved the Bill. This is a significant gain by the Program in 2015. The next step now is to advocate for the passage of the Bill.

3. **New Partnership Agreements**

The third major achievement during the year 2015 was the securing of additional funding/support for the LDSP from USAID ($US1m), Swedish Embassy (US$5m), and UNMIL (Appx. US$476,406.56). In 2013, and the first half of 2014, funding challenges resulted in the slow pace of the implementation of Program activities and the achievement of outputs; however, in August of 2014, the EU provided the LDSP with US$4m, resulting in increased implementation of multiple program activities. With
additional support from USAID, the Swedish Embassy and UNMIL, the LDSP will more quickly roll out the implementation of activities and the achievement of its outputs/outcomes.

1. **The analysis of the re-profiling and re-documentation data**

A major task and focus of the LDSP is to provide support to the MIA to build the capacity of its staff so they can lead the decentralization and local governance processes. A starting point to achieve this target is to have a clear understanding of the capacities and profiles of the staff in the ministry. In 2013 through 2014 LDSP supported MIA with significant financial investments to conduct an extensive re-profiling – meaning at the central MIA office, in the counties, districts, chiefdoms, clans and general towns. In October MIA retained a consultant to analyze this data, in other words – find the story that the data tells. The consultant completed the work and provided a report at the end of November 2015, with the following key findings.

**Summary profile: a typical MIA staffs:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>Most likely (85.7%) to be a male.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AVERAGE AGE</td>
<td>Over 50 years of age (average of 52.42 years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>One in three times (31.5%) likely not to have completed grade school; and one in five times (23.2%) does not have a formal education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PROFESSION</td>
<td>Most likely (70.1%) to be a rural farmer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTY OF ASSIGNMENT</td>
<td>Likely to be working in the South Each Region: Sinoe (12.7%) and Grand Kru (11.0%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFICE OF ASSIGNMENT</td>
<td>Assigned either under the Clan chief (32.1%), Superintendent (18.7%), or Commissioner (15.7%).</td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE TENURE IN OFFICE</td>
<td>Has been employed with MIA for about 8.69 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAYROLL STATUS</td>
<td>There are chances (16.5%) of not being on the MIA payroll.</td>
</tr>
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This analysis is a major step toward the development of a comprehensive capacity building strategy in that it provides names of people to be trained, the investment necessary to prepare the person from where they are to where they need to be in order to be able to lead decentralization process and a full picture of the status of each county in terms of staffing needs and gaps.

1. **Status of Progress towards achievement of Outcomes and Outputs**

This section describes the implementation of activities and the achievements of program outputs/outcomes as stipulated in the Annual Work Plan; it demonstrates how indicators were tracked for measuring results.

**Outcome 1: Deconcentrated services and corresponding resources managed at the assigned level of Government.**

This year, the key targets were to identify services to be deconcentrated and begin to proceed with establishing a number of County Service Centers all across the county to assist government improve its capacity to deliver basic services at the local level. Both targets were fully achieved *(Indicators 1.1).*
Output 1.1: Ministries, Agencies, and Commissions (MACs) tangibly and visibly transfer services, decision making and corresponding resources to the counties according to the deconcentration strategy.

**Action 1.1.1:** Conduct a rapid assessment of status of coordinated service delivery in the 15 counties including readiness to “deliver as one” marking the supply side of governance.

The Rapid Assessment was conducted in February - March 2015 in all fifteen counties and report submitted to all stakeholders. The findings of the Rapid Assessment provided data - statistics, facts, descriptions of facilities, county-specific service needs, staff availability and capacity at the county level, and the extent of support (logistics) needed in each county to establish and operationalize the deconcentration process. The findings of the Assessment is being used to guide the implementation and the monitoring of the deconcentration of services to the counties.

Elaborating on events, in February of this year, the Liberia Decentralization Support Program (LDSP) conducted a Rapid Assessment of facilities in counties to determine their readiness to deliver these services. A quick analysis of the data collected was done and a summary report submitted in the same month, to inform the Deconcentration Platform. In April 2015, the data collected from the field was thoroughly examined and analyzed, and a more detailed report was compiled and shared with all stakeholders to guide the strategy of rolling out the deconcentration of services. Key findings from the Rapid Assessment included the following:

1. All counties have Administrative buildings (own or rented) located in the county capital. Out of the 15 Counties 10 (namely Montserrado, Lofa, Bong, Bomi, Margibi, Maryland, Grand Bassa, Nimba, Gbapolu and Grand Gedeh) have buildings that were categorized as “in a fairly good condition” – meaning,
needing minor repairs. The buildings in this category are able to accommodate existing county staff plus the County Service Centre. The remaining 5 Counties (River Gee, Sinoe, Grand Kru, Grand Cape Mount and River Cess) have building that will need extensive repairs, or the construction of an annex/extension to provide space to accommodate the County Service Centre.

2. All Counties Administration offices and MACs operating in the counties are facing logistics challenges (office equipment, computers, motorbikes, vehicles and unpredictable power supply) that have major implication for service delivery; the main challenges being power supply and internet connectivity.

3. All counties are facing challenges relative to staff capacity. There is the pressing need to identify and train locally based staff at the county level to perform specific tasks at the service centers to be established. This is compounded by the fact that there is no standard County Administration staffing guidance and the lack of job descriptions against which to determine who is supposed to be doing what;

4. Superintendents and other key senior officials currently have little knowledge of sector development projects and service delivery in their respective counties;

5. Superintendents and other key senior officials play important roles - they serve as linkages between central government policies and directives, and the local administrations in terms of macroeconomic policies, tax issues, and other support and policies;

6. All counties do not perform key functional operations like procurement, human resources, financial management and monitoring and evaluation.
7. With the necessary capacity and logistical interventions, each county has the potential to play a vital role in facilitating the delivery of deconcentrated services; and

8. More than 73% of county officials mentioned that staff of MACs operating in the counties do not report to the county superintendent office on the status of their operations. Therefore their agendas are not fully integrated with that of the county government practitioners.

The graph below demonstrates that although there is some form of reporting between the two parties (local MACs staff and county superintendents), a large number of county officials are still inadequately informed.

![Fig 3.2: MACs Staff Reporting To The County Superintendent Office](image)

Based on the findings from the Rapid Assessment the MIA and MACs have been working to:

1. strengthen collaboration with the MACs and local officials;
2. provide support to county administrations to improve infrastructure (public buildings) for the deconcentration of services to the counties, and

3. build local capacity to enhance the provision of services to the citizens.

For instance, with respect to coordination issues identified in the Rapid Assessment, the MIA is working with the MACs to ensure that MACs staff at the county level collaborate with the County Superintendents and local officials in their respective counties - the plan is for county superintendents to conduct regular coordination meetings with MACs staff in their respective counties, to ascertain information the MACs activities in the counties and lead the efforts towards the delivery of services at the county level. In this regard, from the findings of the Rapid Assessment, the county Officials identified public buildings in eight (8) counties for immediate renovation to set up County Service Centers to provide documentation services to the public.

With reference to the capacity issues highlighted in the findings of the Rapid Assessment, the MIA is now reestablishing the “In-House” Training Unit and train up to 40 MIA staff in decentralization, as a way of increasing the actors in MIA who are properly informed and active in the decentralization process. The Rapid Assessment Report is attached hereto.

**Action 1.1.2:** Develop in collaboration with MACs, DSUs and other implementing partners an agreed-upon implementation plan and schedule for the deconcentration of needed services from Central to the Counties.

In the first and second quarters, MIA in collaboration with the MACs, developed a plan and a schedule to begin the process of moving the 45 basic services from Monrovia to the counties through the CSCs. The services were divided into two categories/packages-

1. Documentation related services (package 1); and
2. Non-documentation related services (package 2).
It was agreed that Package 1 would be phase 1 and it would be carried out through the establishment of “County Service Centers” providing the following services:

- Proposed service delivery @ the CSC
- Issuance of free birth certificate from age 0-12 yrs
- Issuing traditional marriage certificate & alternative medicine certificate
- Issuing ECOWAS alien work Permit
- Contractors’ Classification & Certification System (CCCS); Zoning & Land use Services certification
- Organize and facilitate data collection and monitoring activities
- Issuing school operation permit, particularly for private schools.
- Business registration and certification
- Registration of motorcycles, vehicles; issuing motorcycles and vehicle license plate, issuing drivers licenses; registration of transport related business (dealership, motor cycles etc)

Subsequently, after the launch of the Deconcentration Platform, using the results of the Rapid Assessment, the following criteria was used to plan the implementation:

1. The availability of a County Administration Building with adequate space to accommodate the CSC with minimum renovations and construction work;
2. The presence of the MACs that are deconcentrating documentation services, with staff already on the ground who can be trained without incurring additional relocation expenses;
3. The size of the population that would benefit from the services;
4. Accessibility, in terms of access by road is a major consideration too;
5. The desperation for access to services is also an important consideration; and
6. The remoteness of the county combined with its strategic location and access to and from other remote places.
A combination of these considerations produced the list of the 8 Counties, namely Grand Bassa, Nimba, Lofa, Bong, Margibi, Sinoe, Maryland and Grand Gedeh. However throughout the course of the year, the implementation plan continued to change due to both seen and unseen factors. Some examples were the:
1. road conditions during the rainy season;
2. availability or lack of potential contractors and other vendors to undertake the work in each County;
3. change of leadership at the Ministry of Internal Affairs; and
4. need to find solutions to the issue of sustainability for the Grand Bassa county service center before proceeding with new ones.

The new schedule takes into consideration the recent arrangements with UNMIL to construct/renovate service delivery facilities through the Quick Impact Program (QIP) in the counties listed above, and to provide specialized equipment for transport and health related services at the CSCs.

At the end of 2015 the implementation plan is targeting, in a more realistic way and with the benefit of experience and more information is targeting Nimba, Lofa, Bong and Margibi to have CSCs opened early in January 2016. The implementation of the non-documentation is expected to commence aggressively in the New Year since the UNVs and mentees who will provide technical support to the Counties will be ready for deployment.

The copy Deconcentration Platform is attached hereto.

**Action 1.1.3a:** Conduct Country Service Centre training for Nimba, Lofa, Bong, Maryland, Grand Gedeh, Margibi and Bomi Counties.
Action underway. A plan and schedule for conducting trainings for MACs' staff who will be working at the CSCs in the eight (8) counties mentioned above have been completed- the trainings will include three (3) staff per county from each of the ten (10) deconcentrating MACs (Health, Transport, Labor, Public Works, Commerce, Education, Finance and Development Planning, Gender, LISGIS, and CNDRA). For the Grand Bassa CSC a total of 33 official received training in Monrovia which provided an opportunity for the staff from the county to receive hands-on instruction by the focal person in their parent MAC. Upon completion of 6 days in Monrovia, the staff returned to the County were they again received hands-on training on the actual specialized equipment for the documents in the CSCs. The aim is to train MACs staff on how to deliver MACs specific service with focus on quality customer service approach.

In preparation for the opening of the additional counties, the lessons learned from this first training have been incorporated into the training of MAC staff who will provide services in the CSCs as they come online.

**Action 1.1.3a (i): Conduct deconcentration training for the services outside the County Service Centre (following the sequence of implementation of the CSCs in Action 1.1.3a).**

This second category of service has not started yet and therefore the training is also yet to begin. The New Year will see training of MAC staff currently deployed in the Counties, but outside the CSCs engage in training to enhance coordination and pooling of resources under the County superintendents.

**Action 1.1.3b: Procure and provide office furniture and service specialized equipment for the 7 County Service Centers as listed in Action 1.1.3a.**

Action underway. During the year, all the required procurement documents for the renovation works in 4 counties (Lofa, Margibi, Nimba and Bong) was completed,
including documents for the supply of specialized equipment for transport related services and devices for the printing of traditional marriage certificates, office furniture and other equipment which would make the CSC operational. Documentation which would cater to supply for Maryland, Grand Gedeh, Grand Cape Mount and Sinoe was also completed in order to get a reduced price for items through bulk purchasing. As iterated, purchases would not be done for Bomi until the building is constructed and handed over.

**Action 1.1.3c**: Procure and provide stationary and office supplies for the 7 County Service Centers as listed in Action 1.1.3a.

Action underway. Simultaneously with Action 1.1.3b all the required procurement documents for the supply of stationery and offices supplies for the specified counties was completed during the year. Namely: Lofa, Margibi, Nimba, Bong, Maryland, Grand Gedeh, Grand Cape Mount and Sinoe. Stationeries and other basic supplies will be provided to the CSCs for the first six months of operation after which it is expected that part of the fees levied for the services will be used to cater for the operational cost off the CSC.

Inset: MIA, UNMIL and NDIS staff diligently reviewing bidding documents for the supply of office supplies, furniture and stationaries.
Action 1.1.4: Commission and conduct citizens perception survey (Benchmarking the demand side of governance).

The Governance Commission conducted the survey this year to ascertain the view of the public on service delivery at the county level. 41 enumerators were dispatched to the 15 counties to complete the exercise from which a draft report is being finalized. The finding of the survey will provide a critical benchmark for the expectation of the citizens as the implementation of deconcentrating deepens and takes root in the Counties. The report is expected to be ready and shared by the end of December 2015.

Output: 1.2: Enhanced coordination, sharing and pooling of resources across units of MACs at the county level achieved.

The Rapid Assessment showed that although in differing degrees and strengths, all deconcentrating ministries are present in all counties but operate in “silos” and without the involvement of the County Superintendent and local officials. The goal therefore this year was to have most MACs in each county share resources, administration and deliver services in a coordinated fashion under the leadership of the county superintendent. To address this, the following actions below was agreed upon and this year, key activities conducted to ensure this enhancement of coordination included:

1. The establishment of the Bassa County Service Center which provides an opportunity for resources to be pooled (generator, stationaries, printers, scanners) and shared between MACs as well as the county administration.

2. Coordination meetings in Monrovia and Buchanan with deconcentrating MACs to build synergies.
To support coordination and pooling of resources, LDSP procured 8 pick-up trucks which were given to Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Rivercess, Maryland, Gbarpolu, Bomi, Grand Kru and Lofa counties.

To ensure that the vehicles were used for the intended purpose and gave the counties the intended leverage, the receiving County Superintendents signed an MOU.
**Action 1.2.1:** Negotiate increased functions for county superintendent with respect to service delivery.

Action underway. High-level discussions/consultations are ongoing between the Heads of MACs and the MIA to strengthen the role of county superintendents with respect to MACs operation in the counties. The aim is to strengthen superintendents' role in the coordination of service delivery and other development programs at the county level. To have all MACs in the fifteen (15) counties working in collaboration with the county superintendents with respect to service delivery. The functioning of the CSC in Grand Bassa has shown that there are many areas in which the coordinating role of the Superintendent needs to be strengthened. For example, while it also speaks to the issue of sustainability of the CSC, there is a serious gap in the lack of financial support to deconcentration which if not address seriously and urgently has the potential to disempower and discourage the role of the Superintendent.

**Action 1.2.2:** Design and deliver training on coordination for county (15) superintendents and other key staffs (regionally).

Action underway. The first part of this training was conducted in February 2015, as a precursor to the launch of the Deconcentration Platform. The plan is to orient the county leadership on the “new way to govern Liberia”. At the end of 2015 the Department of Operations in the MIA Planning is working diligently to establish a regular system of training the superintendents in decentralization and local government. In preparation for 2016, plans to begin the training are at an advanced stage.
The training is will to a large extent provide the opportunity to mimic local governance as envisaged by the Local Government Act, in anticipation of its passing. A report of the first training forms part of the Report of the Launch of the Deconcentration Plan as the 2 events were conducted to support each other.

**Action 1.2.3:** Convene deconcentration working group in each county to facilitate coordination. A deconcentration working group has been established to support the
process to immediately begin to move basic services to the counties. Members comprise technicians from various deconcentrating MACs - Internal Affairs, Education, Health, Gender, Children and Social Protection, Agriculture, Public Works, Finance and Development Planning, Commerce, Posts & Telecommunication, LISGIS, CSA, and Transport, among others. This year alone, a total of five (5) coordination meetings were held by NDIS at MIA. It was agreed that the group would work with county officials to establish “deconcentration working groups” in each county. Already, in Grand Bassa County, the first deconcentration working group has been established. LDSP intends to support Counties to establish similar groups under the leadership of their County Superintendents who will provide overall supervision and guidance to MACs staff at the county level. Minutes of the coordination meetings are available.

**Action 1.2.4:** Conceptualize seeking local government to strengthen deconcentration in the counties.

Action underway. The activities of this Action are now synchronized with Action 1.2.1, following the redrafting of the Results and Resources Framework.

**Action 1.2.5:** Design and implement a mechanism to pair MIA staff with the envisaged local government practitioners in county (see 1.2.4.).

Action underway. Five (5) UNVs have been recruited to be assigned to five (5) strategic (regional) counties early 2016 and have under their mentorship 10 Liberian counterparts. These UNVs and Mentees will work with local officials and the citizens at the county level to implement the decentralization/deconcentration reform agenda. However, prior to this, several discussions were held during the year between MIA and USAID to develop a mentoring program for either staff of the MIA or additional staff to be recruited. The conclusion was that USAID will support the recruitment and
retention of 5 United Nations Volunteers who will be assigned to 5 regions and have under their mentorship a total of 10 mentees.

**Action 1.2.6:** Recruit and assign 5 international decentralization/local government practitioners.

Action underway. The recruitment process for five (5) UNVs to work with county officials on the implementation of the decentralization reform agenda at the county level is completed. The first of the UNVs arrived in the first week of December 2015 and immediately started to provide technical support to the County Development Agenda process in Maryland County, working with the Department of Research and Planning of the MIA. The recruitment of the mentees is underway and is being done by the human resources office of the Department of Administration in the MIA. This process will be completed by the end of December 2016 making it possible for deployment to take effect early in 2016. The UNVs will pair up with Mentees to provide technical support to local officials at the county level to implement the decentralization/deconcentration reform agenda.

**Output 1.3: Improved infrastructure of county service centers to support the deconcentration process.**

**Action 1.3.1:** Upgrade and/or modify infrastructure for improved service delivery in Nimba, Lofa, Bong, Maryland, Grand Gedeh, Margibi and Bomi, (as found by the Rapid Assessment.

Action underway. From the Onset County officials expressed their readiness for the deconcentration of services through the County Service Centers but identified the condition of their admin buildings as crucial to the process. Findings from the Rapid
Assessment indicated that building conditions in the 15 counties varies and that some Admin buildings in the counties, like River Gee, Cape Mount, Bomi and River Cess, needed extensive repairs or an annex to facilitate service delivery and accommodate additional staff; while others, like Bassa, Bong, Margibi, Maryland, Nimba and Lofa etc. needed minor repairs (roof leakages, doors, plumbing, etc.) and regular maintenance to facilitate service delivery. As per the assessment, works proceeded for the establishment of CSC in Nimba, Lofa, Margibi and Bong Counties with renovations already nearing completion. Bomi County on the other hand required a construction of a building because there was no readily available public building to renovate to host the CSC. County officials have already located a site for the building construction to begin, which would be funded through the UNMIL Quick Impact Project (QIPs).

In a related event, a County Service Center (CSC) was opened in Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County this year. The former Telecom building in Buchanan, opposite the Admin Building was renovated and remolded to create an ideal facility for the CSC in that county. Now Buchanan CSC serves as a guide and guard for the establishment of other CSCs in the rest of the counties, including the above mentioned counties. The Vice President dedicated the facility on behalf of the President on June 30, 2015. The citizens are currently receiving services from the Center.
Action 1.3.2: Negotiate cost effective plan for rational use of existing infrastructure and facilities with County admin and sectors in counties.

Action pending. To be conducted in 2016 with clearer understanding of the use of infrastructure in counties.

Output 1.4: Citizens are organized and informed to participate in the deconcentration process.

During the Rapid Assessment in the counties, representatives of civil society were asked the following questions:

1. How would you describe the relationship between the Superintendent and the MACs representatives?

2. Are county officials and MACs useful to you with respect to service delivery?

3. Do you participate in county coordination meetings?

4. What sort of issues do you address together? And
5. What actions do you recommend for improved relationship with the county officials and MACs to improve service delivery?

The answers revealed that only 10% of citizens from civil society were confidently familiar with government processes and services. This underscored the point that all MACs needed to get citizens and CSOs informed and involved in the delivery of services in their localities. As a result, the Program identified several actions and activities discussed below, aimed at increasing the level of awareness and participation of citizens in the implementation of deconcentration and decentralization reform up to 80%, by December 2017.

**Action 1.4.1 Provide training and technical support (1 session each region) to strengthen the capacity of CSOs, women and youth groups to participate in the implementation of deconcentration/decentralization in the Western and Central regions**

Action completed. This year, Governance Commission (GC) conducted this training in three phases. First, there was a 3-day training in April in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, for Civil Society Organizations, including women and youth groups on topics relating to decentralization, policy implementation and advocacy. Thirty-three (33) participants from various CSOs, disaggregated by sex (19 male & 14 females) came from 5 counties in the South East – Maryland, Grand Kru, River Gee, Sinoe, and Grand Gedeh to participate. This first phase in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County was for the Southeastern region of the county. Participants received background information and materials on decentralization, policy advocacy, and the draft LGA.
Similar, a 2nd phase was also held in Gbarnga, Bong County in August for CSOs of the North-Central region. The 3rd phase was done in October in Tubmanburg, Bomi County. These trainings in Zwedru, Gbarnga and Tubmanburg sought to deepen citizens' knowledge about the decentralization Program and what they can do to ensure its success. It is hoped that the training would prepare participants to engage local officials in the deconcentration/decentralization process and participate in the development programs at the county level through consultative meetings and advocacy. The report of the workshops are attached.

**Action 1.4.2**: Conduct 1 Town hall meeting per county to inform of the deconcentrated services (taking into special consideration people with disabilities, women, youth and elders) on service delivery.
Action underway. The first “Town-hall” meeting was held in November this year, in Compound 3-District #3, Grand Bassa County. The meeting brought together more than one hundred (100) participants, representing local officials, traditional leaders, students, and citizen groups (disaggregated by gender, including the physically challenged) to talk about decentralization/deconcentration program at the county level.

“Town-hall” meetings will be held in Grand Bassa, Nimba, Lofa, and Margibi, to inform the citizens on the deconcentration of services to their counties.
The need to organize town hall meetings is important because a baseline survey conducted in 2013 by the LDSP showed that the level of awareness among citizens on the decentralization/deconcentration program nation-wide was low. About 70% of those interviewed demonstrated limited to no knowledge of the decentralization/deconcentration reform agenda. The same survey report identified the “Radio” and “Town-hall” meetings as the two most effective means of communication and information dissemination at the county level.

Similarly, from the Rapid Assessment report, the diagram above illustrates that even though people seem to be aware of some MACs activities, the percentage of those aware is alarmingly insignificant, even for the most popular MACs like Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Education (MoE).

**Action 1.4.3:** Produce, distribute and disseminate 9 bill boards and communication materials (jingles, flyers, etc.) to support service delivery as per communication strategy.
Action underway. 500 flyers were produced and distributed within the course of the year. This year 5 billboards were also erected around the county:

1. Buchannan City, Grand Bassa County - The first decentralization Billboard was erected on Tubman Street, Buchannan City near the LAC-Monrovia Junction;
2. Kakata, Margibi County, near the BWI Campus along the Monrovia-Ganta Highway;
3. St. Paul Bridge, Montseraddo
4. ELWA junction - Paynesville, Monrovia
5. Executive Mansion Road, opposite the University of Liberia Campus, Monrovia.

These billboards are part of the communication strategy of the National Decentralization Program to inform citizens about deconcentration/decentralization, and create awareness to gain support for the reform.

**Action 1.4.4: Support National Consultancy to finalize communication strategy**

Target completed. The Communication Strategy was finalized and shared with stakeholders.
**Action 1.4.5: Call in Radio programs nationwide, targeted to deconcentration of services**

Action underway. Call-Ins programs were done in Grand Bassa as part of the publicity for the opening of the County Service Centre in Buchanan. Specifically, five (5) talk shows were conducted, of which 2 were on ELBC and UNMIL radio (national radio stations) whiles the last 3 aired on community radio stations in Buchanan (Radio Gbehzohn, Radio Dukpah and Radio 1). There was also two additional shows conducted in Buchanan after the opening of the Service Center to reinforce the concept of the CSC.

However, for the rest of the counties, the Call-in radio program was suspended this year because vendors could not provide all the required documentation needed for UNDP’s payment processes. Most of the community radio stations mentioned that they are not required to pay taxes and therefore do not have the requisite documentation UNDP is requesting to qualify as vendors for the program.

**Outcome 2: Service delivery and accountability of local governments is improved**

**Output 2.1a: Capacity for participatory planning, budgeting and managing of development funds as well as revenue collection strengthened with focus on marginalized groups.**

**Action 2.1.1: Conduct tailored gender-budgeting trainings for local administrators and women’s CSOs and community leaders to increase gender integration in the planning and budgeting processes. (Counties to be decided by Gender Advisor)**

Action in progress. A comprehensive concept note has been developed in preparation for this activity. It will be implemented during the various stages of the implementation County Development Agenda, which begin with training of the selected staff who will form the County Planning Unit. Meanwhile, the MIA’s department of Research and Planning and the Department of Planning in the finance ministry are working together
to roll out the first county – which has been slated to be Maryland. Preparations are at an advanced stage and the CDA process is expected to commence in December 2015.

**Action 2.1.2:** Provide technical assistance to all counties to develop 3 year County Development Agendas using participatory and consultative methods. Specific attention to women, youth, and people with disabilities.

In the third and fourth quarter of the reporting period the department of Research and Planning has been working hard to prepare for the commencement of the CDA process. They have developed a strong strategy of working in partnership with the County Caucus and so far are in a viable partnership with the county caucus of Maryland County, led by Senator Brown.

A Step by Step Handbook has been developed and training has been provided to the “Master” trainer who will support the process. The process basically begins with consultations at the Clan level with technical guidance from the MIA and County research and planning offices. Representatives of the clan then come together at the District level, where facilitated process will conclude with district priorities. These then will be taken to a 3 day County consultation in Harper where the county priorities will be identified, based on the priorities of the districts and clans.

It is expected that this first CDA of this process will be concluded early in 2016. The with the benefit of lessons learned, the process will then be simultaneously rolled out nationwide the target being to complete on time to feed the county priorities into the national planning and budgeting process.

Action pending. This development of the CDAs will commence in 2016.

**Action 2.1.3:** Training and/or strengthen the establishment of County Planning Units to lead the CDA processes.

Action underway. This year, the MIA’s Department of Research and Development Planning started the process of engaging stakeholders on the process of establishing
County Planning Units (CPUs) in the counties. The county planner, county budget officer, the regional planning officer from the MFDP and the county inspector, in each county will form the CPU. The role of the CPU is to build the capacity of local officials to carry out county planning and budgeting processes, and ensure compliance with the national standards of planning and budgeting as guided by the MFDP.

**Action 2.1.4:** Conduct annualizing budget conferences in the counties.

Once the CDAs are developed, the next step is to annualize the budget, so that over the 3 year life of the CDA, a clear costed annual plan can embarked up.

**Action 2.1.5:** In partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and LIPA update the County participatory planning manual.

Action underway. The Step by Step Handbook on Participatory Planning has been developed by the Research and Planning Department of MIA. It is expected that additional materials will be made available in the early part of 2016, especially material that guides the CPU staff so they are able to fully comprehend and lead the process.

**Action 2.1.6:** Review County Council’s Structure in Budget Law and recommend alignment with proposed LGA.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 2.1.7:** In partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning establish and operationalize 15 County Treasuries.

Action underway. Though at a slow pace, process relating to the opening of county treasuries continues.
**Action 2.1.8:** Develop Governance Manual for County Council and train County Councils on deliberative issues according to the proposed LGA.

The Governance Commission, working closely with MIA has retained a consultant to begin the very important process of developing a manual to guide the proceeding of County Council as they are envisage by the LGA. The purpose for this exercise at this time is two-fold, firstly in anticipation of the passing of the LGA and the immediate need that will arise to have the Councils formed and quickly capacitated to play their role; secondly and as important even if the LGA does not pass, the manual will be used to guide the proceeding of the county council meeting that are already taking place in all counties, even though they are formed for a completely different purpose. They are however used to “approve” the expenditure plans for the County Development Funds and the Social Development Funds.

**Action 2.1.9:** Strengthen county councils by training and advocacy in oversight and accountability on county affairs.

Action pending. To commence 2016.

**Action 2.1.10:** Negotiate the development of an intergovernmental fiscal system to include revenue sharing formula across government.

Action pending. Once Activity 2.1.11 is completed, the process of negotiating for an inter-governmental fiscal system will begin in 2016.

**Action 2.1.11a:** Conduct an assessment to establish potential sources of revenue for local administration.

Action underway. The Governance Commission has retained a consultant developed and submitted the concept note to begin this activity. The hiring of a consultant to carry out the assessment will be done by the UNDP.
Output 2.1b: Capacity of the public, citizens’ groups and civil society organization strengthened to undertake participatory and performance monitoring, and to carry out watchdog functions.

**Action 2.1.1b:** Provide training and technical support to organize public forum at county, city and district levels on the new LGA.

Action pending. To be conducted simultaneously with Action 2.1.3b

**Action 2.1.2b:** Provide training and technical support to the public, citizens’ group and civil society organizations in participatory assessment, district level planning process and development monitoring according to the new LGA

Action pending. To be conducted simultaneously with Action 2.1.3b

**Action 2.1.3:** Provide technical support to county, city and district administrations to organize periodic meetings and dialogue with the public and citizens’ groups on development progress, prospects and challenges by the new LGA.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

Output 2.2: Anti-corruption measures (systems and enforcement mechanisms) established and functional at county, city, district and community levels

The goal is to have 80% of county officials compliant to the code of conduct and ethics of public servants by December 2017. The Code of Conduct is crucial to promoting anti-corruption practices and accountability amongst government officials.
In attempt to minimize corruption and improve the public perception of local leadership with respect to corruption, below are series of activities which were identified.

**Action 2.2.1:** Increase innovative methods to share details county plans, budgets and periodic report. For example, display notice boards at all county offices.

Action pending. Will commence in 2016 when the mechanism are in place for the general public nationwide to participate in the planning and budgeting processes of their respective county development agendas.

**Action 2.2.2:** Commission radio talk shows for citizens groups, CSOs (representing vulnerable groups) to discuss accountability in service delivery at the local level.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 2.2.3:** Provide training for mid-level county officials to improve transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness in service delivery.

Action underway. On May 28, 2015, the Governance Commission conducted a one-day workshop in Tubmanburg, Bomi County with local government officials on the Code of Conduct given to them. Thirty (30) local government officials from Bomi, Cape Mount, and Gbarpolu counties attended the workshop. The aim was to train county, district and city officials in ethics and code of conduct (e.g. transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness). The officials included, the Superintendents from the 3 counties, development superintendents, district commissioners, City Mayors, Paramount Chiefs, CSOs, opinion leaders and MACs' staff in the 3 counties. The Code of Conduct is a generic legislation that sets standards for the behavior and/or conduct of government officials in the discharge of their public
duties. GC will conduct similar exercise in the remaining counties to ensure that all public officials are aware of and in compliance with the “Code of Conduct.” GC will also monitor the compliance of these officials to the code of conduct and ethics.

**Documentation Attached or For Reference**

*GC report on the Code of Conduct and Ethics training with county officials*

**Action 2.2.4:** Encourage and support public citizens and groups (CSOs) to assume watchdog functions, transparently and objectively.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 2.2.5:** Develop a manual on watchdog functions of communities in Liberia for transparency in service delivery.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 2.2.6:** Print and disseminate the code of conduct of public officials.

Target completed. During the year GC printed and distributed copies of the Code of Conduct to key stakeholders, including 44 officials from Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, and Gbarpolu Counties attending a one-day code of conduct workshop in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, on May 28, 2015.

**Action 2.2.7:** Develop a community engagement handbook for local government officials.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.
**Action 2.2.8:** Develop Local government engagement manual for communities to communicate with local government officials on service delivery issues.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 2.2.9:** In collaboration with the MoE and institutions of higher learning, convene 1 workshop in Monrovia to design a roadmap to integrate decentralization in curricula at all levels of learning.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Output 2.3: Capacity of women and girls to participate in local government as leaders enhanced.**

**Action 2.3.1:** In collaboration with Ministry of Gender and UN Women, support efforts to mitigate the impact of stereotypical and cultural biases that prevent women and girls from participating as leaders in local government.

Action underway. The Gender Advisor is working slowly with the MIA and the Gender Ministry.

**Action 2.3.2:** Support education and information on the role of women and girls in local government.

Action underway. Activities are simultaneous to Action 2.3.1

**Outcome 3: Legal and regulatory framework for decentralization is in place.**
This year, the key target was finalized the Local Government Bill and submit to the President of Liberia through the Cabinet *(Indicators 3.1)*. Both targets were fully achieved, whereas efforts to present the LGA to the Legislature continues, for the passage of the draft law which will allow a large scale-up of activities in 2016. The scale of progress of many activities is dependent on this LGA passage. The intention is to enshrine local governance in the constitution to give people greater authority to manage local affairs and revise the largely top-down control based management system still in place.

**Output 3.1: Ensure coordinated formulation of legal framework for decentralization.**

This output and accompany actions below were proposed because of the need to re-examine the legal framework and the regulations governing local government—particularly the various local government layers, the titles of office holders, their roles and functions. Currently, the Constitution of Liberia, Article 3 (1986), states that ‘Liberia is a Unitary Sovereign State divided into Counties for administrative purposes’. But the Constitution does not mention the various layers of local government nor does it define the powers of Counties. The entire local government system is not designed to initiate and carry out local development and the various layers of local government are not fully playing their roles and functions. The law provides no framework of rights and guarantees for local authorities and citizens. This infers that the balance of power favors central government and local government constantly negotiate from a position of weakness.

**Action 3.1.1: Finalize the LGA for submission to the Legislature**

Target completed. The Governance Commission (GC) in the course of the year hired a legal expert (Councilor Willie Belleh) as lead consultant to provide technical advice
on re-examining the current Local Government Act and draft legal provisions using a participatory approach for final submission to the Legislature for passage.

This draft has since been submitted to Cabinet for review which will allow for subsequent submission to the Legislature. Following the presentation to the Cabinet, the President gave the LGA to the Minister of Justice to review and incorporate the Cabinet concerns. Consequently, the Minister conducted the review and submitted a ten-page document with amendments to the Draft LGA. GC revised the draft LGA to include the Cabinet’s concerns and the final/amended Draft LGA have been resubmitted to the President for submission to the Legislature. This Executive intervention is a breakthrough result which shows commitment to national ownership of the decentralization process, and raises expectation that the LGA will be institutionalized on time to set the pace for the devolution of resources and power to the local layers of government.

**Documentation Attached or For Reference**
- Draft LGA (Nov 2015)
- Ministry of Justice 10-page Comment on Draft LGA

**Action 3.1.2** *(Draft, validate and submit decentralization related acts, rules and regulations to the Legislature)*
Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 3.1.3:** *Provide technical support for Legislative public hearing*
Action underway. As at November 2015, the LGA submission was delayed because the Legislature/House was on recess. In the meantime, to generate massive support for the passage of the LGA when it is submitted to the Legislature, GC continues to make all the necessary arrangements to lead the effort to provide technical support for the Legislative public hearing when the finalized draft LGA is ready for submission to the Legislature.
**Action 3.1.4** *(Engage political parties to make decentralization a key principle in their party platform)*

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 3.1.5:** *Engage the Council of Chiefs on the draft LGA*

Target completed. GC held dialogue with the Council of Chiefs on the LGA, their roles with the local communities and functions as implementers of the judicial system for the indigenous population.

Inset: Participants at the dialogue with the council of chief

**Documentation Attached or For Reference**

*Report on the Engagement with the Council of Chiefs on the LGA*

**Action 3.1.6** *(Adequately provide information to citizens in preparation for the referendum to amend the constitution to facilitate local government elections expected in 2016)*
Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Output 3.2: Public sector and civil service reforms aligned with decentralization policy**

This Output and its accompanied actions were essential because the long years of civil war in Liberia destroyed the human resource management system and the framework of the organizational structure for development. Some claim they are in place, yet these systems are hardly visible. This makes it difficult to ascertain and evaluate the capacity of local government to effectively deliver services because systems are not fully operational on the ground. For instance, there are problems associated with the receipts and payment of salary checks, as a result many county workers are working without being on payroll, and others are abandoning their posts because they are not getting paid regularly. Currently, most personnel are employed without following the right CSA procedures, resulting in many corrupt practices and unqualified persons filling most positions.

**Action 3.2.1: Engage Civil Service Agency and MACs to harmonize service delivery in counties**

Action underway. Various meetings on public sector reform began this year. Particularly between the MIA, CSA, and the deconcentrating MACs to begin work to harmonize service delivery in counties and address most especially the lack of compliance with regulations and standards. But these meetings are yet to be successful in reaching any conclusive agreements. For example, the Civil Service Agency and the Ministry of Finance regulation clearly instructs government ministries, agencies and commissions not to permit a person to commence work till his/her Personnel Action Notice (PAN) is approved and a formal letter of employment is received. But most authorities operating at the local level do not adhere- allowing people to commence work while their PAN and employment letter are being processed.
**Action 3.2.2:** Engage stakeholders (CSOs, legislators) to establish model county civil service system.

Action pending. Engagements with stakeholders to establish a model county civil service system is yet to begin as it is being informed by the scale of progress of Actions 3.2.1, 3.2.3.

**Action 3.2.3:** Liaise with CSA to ensure that public sector reform is consistent with deconcentrated service delivery

Action underway. It is synchronized to Action 3.2.1

**Action 3.2.4:** Provide technical assistance to complete alignment of public sector reform with decentralization policy.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 3.2.5** (Develop local government civil service system in consultation with CSA, MACs, legislators, CSOs, and other interested parties (stakeholders).

Action pending. To commence in 2016 to support the removal of overlapping roles and functions of central and local government officials and bring clarity to the question of ‘where central government stops and local government begins?’

**Output 3.3:** Criteria established and implemented for districts, municipalities, chiefdoms and clans to rationalize and subsequently to restructure them to ensure economic viability and sustainability.

The major target – to include into the LGA the restructuring and rationalization criteria for local government entities/ counties, was fully achieved. *(Indicators 3.3)*. This was a key achievement because currently the roles and functions of the various layers of local government are not clear. The local government system still does not provide an
explicit distinction of entities and most of these entities are not clearly demarcated. For instance, there is no exact criteria that distinguishes Statutory Districts from Counties, except that their areas of jurisdiction are smaller than Counties. Their establishment have largely been political with many not having the required staff and related resources for a Statutory District. There is no clarity on what makes urban and rural urban entities, most of the local government layers referred to as ‘cities’ do not perform the functions cities ought to perform.

Unlike others elsewhere in the world, most cities in Liberia are only undertaking sanitary and cleaning service instead of the functions of service delivery as expected of cities. Services such as security, health, water, transport and education, which should be provided by cities, are provided by NGOs, CBOs, CSO, and line ministries located at the local level, under the direction of the their ministries in central Monrovia. Moreover, many of these places referred to as ‘cities’ or ‘towns’ are considered elsewhere in the world as market centers, rural trade center and villages.

There is therefore the need to justify the use of the concepts of ‘cities’ or ‘town’ for example; by coming up with a criteria. Liberia’s ‘cities and towns’ have the potential to attract investors and intensify development if the entire concept is re-examined. For instance, the development of rural areas can be done without necessarily transforming the rural areas into urban entities. But first, there is need for decision making to rationalize and demarcate the respective jurisdictions to mitigate the establishment of places without following the right technical procedures and avoid administrative problems at large. In this regard, the plan is to:

**Action 3.3.1: Engage legislators across political parties for support and approval of local government rationalization criteria in the proposed LGA (2 events planned).**
Action underway. This year the Department of Urban Affairs at MIA, led an initiative to bring together members of the Sub Committees on Internal Affairs from the Senate and the House of Representatives. Unfortunately, none of the legislators showed up for the meeting. Plans are now underway to engage the legislators again. The meeting was intended to advocate for the passage of the draft LGA taking into consideration that one of the most controversial provisions are those seeking to reduce the number of local government sub units, which the legislators have direct interest and investment in. The target is that by July 2017, the Standing Committees of the House & Senate on Good Governance an on Internal Affairs would support and drive the harmonization of boundaries, public service with the decentralization policy in the Senate and the House of Representative.

**Action 3.3.2:** Establish new boundaries for districts, municipalities, chiefdoms and clans as per the approved criteria.
Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 3.3.3** Restructure districts, cities, chiefdoms and clans providing some minimum services as per the restructuring criteria where needed.
Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 3.3.4:** Draft model city statutes for county capitals consistent with the Local Government Act.
Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 3.3.5:** Validate draft city wards.
Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 3.3.6:** Demarcate city wards.
Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 3.3.7: Erect County mile stones.**
Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Outcome 4: Responsible GoL institutions, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Governance Commission, are capacitated to lead and implement decentralization reforms.**

Due to brain drain and a largely underdeveloped human resource within Liberia, the call for capacity building, reconstruction, re-equipping and retraining for all levels of government cannot be over emphasized. The execution of this Outcome and its accompanied actions are vital especially for key institutions leading the decentralization reform initiative, like the MIA and GC. These two agencies - equally affected by the years of war, require support, nurturing and reorganization in the immediate. GC- to support their role on LDSP as the outcome monitors and policy advisor; MIA – as supervisor of the many layers of local government.

Output 4.1: Institutional and human capacity of MIA (central and county) built to co-ordinate and lead the implementation of Decentralization nationally.

The Ministry needs reorganization and nurturing to improve its ability to provide overall direction of local government. Particularly in the area of Policy development and assisting local government in drafting rules and regulations. The current mandate of the MIA makes it responsible for hiring staff, paying their salaries and overseeing their operations all over the country. But even with this responsibility, the MIA has no capacity to supervise the many layers of local government all over the country. It relies on the government representatives at the local level, who are also few and lack
capacity and the logistic support required for effectively supervision. The following actions below attempted to address the issue.

**Action 4.1.1:** Review existing manuals and develop additional training manuals and modules as per the results of the re-profiling and re-documentation analysis.

In the fourth quarter, while the data from the re-profiling and re-documentation data was being analyzed, MIA advertised a consultancy to review all the existing manuals that were developed with support from the Liberia Decentralization and Local Development program (LDLD). The logic is to determine how much re-writing of new materials will need to be done to cater for the training that will be recommended in the capacity development strategy. Recruitment of the consultant will be completed in January and work is expected to begin immediately.

**Action 4.1.2:** Finalize re-profiling and re-documentation of MIA staff at center, counties, cities, districts and below.

Target achieved. The MIA completed in 2014 its staff re-profiling and re-documentation carried out in the counties. The report will now serve as a baseline and a guide for the analysis of needs which inform further actions like aligning identified job descriptions with the decentralization mandate of MIA and developing the Capacity Development Strategy for MIA. An expert (Mr. Dala Korkoyah) has already been recruited to analyze this report and provide technical advice on the way forward.

**Action 4.1.3a:** Analyze profiling and re-documentation of MIA staff and identify training needs

Action underway. The consultant, Mr. Dala Korkoyah) working in partnership with the Department of Administration at MIA has completed the first draft of the analysis of
the data. Initial indications are that MIA employs a total of 6535 personnel across the country – employed at the central office in Monrovia, the districts, the chiefdoms, the clans and the general towns.

Already, statistics from the consultant’s ongoing work indicates that only 464 staff member have got a college or university qualification (with 15 having master degrees). The data also shows that Maryland – a county with similar geographical size as Margibi County, has a staff total of 523 persons, almost three times the numbers in Margibi which has just 190 staff, while Sinoe (a county with a small population and little economic activity) has a staff complement of831. Sinoe is closely followed by Grand Kru with an amazing 714. The staff numbers form a correlation with the proliferation of sub-county structures that the exercise to rationalize the structures is trying to address. This clearly justifies the need for the restructuring criteria for the control of the establishments of districts, chiefdom and below.

**Action 4.1.3b:** (As part of 4.1.3a- Develop job descriptions for all proposed local government positions as base of benchmarking the training needs).

Action underway. Although the Department of Administration at the MIA completed an exercise for job description with CSA this year, as best practice, more work will need to be done to align the job descriptions to positions prescribed by the LGA – in anticipation of MIA becoming a Ministry of Local Government. This discussion has been started with leadership from the GC and 2016 will see more direct attention and implementation, mostly to get the legislation creating a Ministry of Local Government passed.

**Action 4.1.3c:** Identify and train 40 local government staff to revamp and strengthen the Training Unit of the MIA.
Action underway. The goal is to transform the MIA Training Unit into a resource center and send trainees in the counties as trainers is ongoing. This process has begun with a strategy to first select individuals from MIA’s central office in Monrovia who would receive orientation and coaching through a Training of Trainers / Master Trainers programme in order to train local government staff. There were 26 applicants (first or second degrees holders) from various departments in MIA who went through the interview and selection process. Out of which 10 persons were selected as trainees to be coached to become master trainers and 3 as support trainers.

However, now, the progress of tasks planned for these trainees in 2016 would likely be reliant on some outcomes of the ongoing re-profiling and re-documentation analysis, and a consultative agreement on how to tutor these trainees.

In a related manner, when UNDP organized a workshop on decentralization this year, these trainees were part of the one-week workshop, to strengthen their knowledge in the decentralization reform process. It was facilitated by a UNDP Policy Advisory from New York, Dr. Kodjo Mensah-Abrampa.

**Action 4.1.4:** Develop an operational database of MIA/MACs staff at counties, cities, districts and below.
Continuing discussion in the MIA continue to suggest that given the existence of the database of that was developed during the LDLD, it might not be necessary to actually conduct this activity from the beginning. Rather the LDLD database should be updated and utilized.

**Action 4.1.5: In collaboration with LIPA, organize and deliver professional training for 500 MIA staff (divided into national and county level) for managing local government.**

Action pending. The target this year was to train 75 out of the planned 500 local government officials but it was not achieved mainly because it depended on the completion of the analysis of the personnel data. Now that this has been achieved, the process of writing a capacity development strategy will begin and culminate in the development of a curriculum, which will then permit the professional training to begin. 2016 will be an active year for this activity.

**Action 4.1.6: Train 100 chiefs on their role in local administration.**

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 4.1.7: Professional guidance and orientation to MIA staff at central and local levels on the staff transitions, individuals’ benefits, entitlements, enumerations, volunteered retirement and redundancy to align to intuitional strengthen of the Ministry as are identify within the civil service reform.**

Target completed. The activity has been completed and report submitted, but it hangs in silos/isolation. There is yet to be a follow up action or an attempt which connects/correlates it with the staff re-profiling and re-documentation exercise to advice the overall capacity building strategy for the MIA.

**Documentation Attached or For Reference**

*Report on MIA Personnel Entitlement, Enumeration, Volunteered Retirement and Redundancy Scheme*
**Action 4.1.8**: Facilitate the cost of air travel from Liberia to Egypt for training of 15 local government officials which has been offered by the Egyptian government.

Action pending. To commence in 2016.

**Action 4.1.9**: Develop and implement a local government mentoring program between partners and the GoL using UN volunteers, local administration staff and the mentees.

Action underway. The process of recruiting UNVs progressed this year and they are all expected in the country by 2016. Similar, the recruitment and final selection process of mentees is well underway. The goal is that the implementation of the program in the counties will be supported through a mentoring program between UNV and mentees, while a longer term capacity development strategy of identifying training needs and developing the requisite training in being developed.

Output 4.2: GC capacitated to undertake governance assessment and monitoring strengthened

**Action 4.2.1**: (Provide training to strengthen GC capacity for governance monitoring)

Action pending, to commence in 2016. This M&E training which also includes an on-the-job training would be underway in 2016 to support GC’s role on LDSP as the outcome monitors. It is anticipated that this training would enable GC sharpened its selection of indicators for testing good governance initiatives. Meanwhile, in September this year, a decentralization training was held at Corina hotel as a precursor to the planned governance M&E training for the GC.

**Action 4.2.2**: Develop and test local governance indicators amenable for measuring major governance performance factors such as level of deconcentration and decentralization
Target completed. For the first phase planned for 2015, selected local government indicators were developed and used in the conduction of the “perception survey” in 15 counties this year, to capture citizens’ view of service delivery in their various counties. The indicators developed will help ‘bring to light’ the ratings of major governance factors like the level and degree of corruption, the rule of law and access to justice, peace and security, plus the quality and accessibility of decentralized services so far. It will also echo the voices of CSOs which is key in measuring the “demand side’ of governance. In the next phase planned for 2016, additional testing of other selected governance indicators would be carried out.

**Documentation Attached or For Reference**

- GC draft Perception Survey Report

**Action 4.2.3: Provide training for GC program staff for policy development**

Action pending, to commence in 2016. The need to re-equip and retrain a governance institution that promotes the rule of law and empower local governments and civil society institutions, is important for Liberia’s reform process. Therefore like the MIA, GC also needs to be capacitated to improve its ability to provide policy advice and recommendation to implement fiscal, administrative and political decentralization in Liberia.

**Action 4.2.4: (Increased the bandwidth of GC dynamic website)**

Action pending. This project stalled due to issues with the contractor over the bandwidth payment. It negatively affected the target of having GC reports, surveys and assessments on governance available on line by December 2015. Nonetheless engagements are still ongoing to resolve the issues and proceed with the project in 2016.
Output 4.3: County administration with necessary ICT facilities (software, services) in place

The plan is that by December 2016, 15 Counties will be making reports and sending information through the internet and the e-based real time reporting system. But there was no impressive undertaken in this direction this year, because of inconclusive decisions and a reliance on completion of other required preceding activities.

**Action 4.3.1:** *(Design an e-based real time integrated planning and monitoring system at central and local levels).*

Action pending. It is subject to the completion of the County Development Agenda (CDA) and key Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities.

**Action 4.3.2:** *(Activate the 4 V-SATs installed in Grand Kru, River Gee, Nimba, and Bong Counties under the LDLD, and subscribe)*

Action pending. It has been difficult to commence any action on the V-SATs because of issues of sustainability. This technology is outdated and costly to maintain. The LDSP and MIA are still working to establish the most effective and sustainable way to provide internet connectivity to the counties, especially in view of the implementation of deconcentration efforts.

**Action 4.3.3:** *(Install internet connectivity in Grand Bassa, Nimba, Lofa, Bong, Maryland, Grand Gedeh, Margibi and Bomi)*

Action pending. It has been difficult to commence because of the issue of finding an efficient and sustainable approach to providing internet for the County Administration. The immediate goal however is to provide internet solutions for the soon to be established County Service Centers in these counties; whiles the more long term
approach for the County Administration is been decided. For Grand Bassa County where there is already a County Service Center, staff are currently using internet modems in the interim and engagements are ongoing with internet services providers like Lone Star Corp. and Cellcom telecommunications to provide a more stable internet solution. Discussions have also been held with the Commerce Ministry to explore the possibility of sharing subscription cost with LDSP for the use of its V-SAT for the Grand Bassa CSC.

OUTCOME 5: Program management, support, coordination, and monitoring strengthened

Output 5.1: Efficient and effective support and coordination of the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Government

Target achieved. This year’s target to bring on board the LDSP a Gender Advisor, a National Capacity Development Advisor, Finance Officer, two additional drivers, an Office Assistant, a communication Specialist and ICT Specialist was fully achieved (Indicators 5.1). UN Women Liberia particularly provided the services of a gender consultant, Mrs. Shamistha Bawa to support all programs in the MIA to integrate gender across the board. A major focus of her work will, of course be to support crosscutting gender issues into the decentralization agenda which considers diversified views concerning women and young girls a vital part to the reform process. On the other hand, at the latter part of the year, the ICT Specialist, Mr. Spatecco Smith resigned.

Output 5.2: Capacity for concurrent monitoring and evaluation of decentralization program implementation established at NDI Secretariat government level.

Action 5.2.1: On the job training on M&E for staff at NDIS
Action pending, to commence in 2016. NDIS staff will be trained at the same time that M and E staff of GC will be receiving training (Action 4.2.1); and a similar model of learning by doing will be employed. There is anticipation that the M and E capacity of NDIS will need to be increased in 2016 both in terms of number of personnel and the level of activity to ensure that the program implementation is properly supported at all times. This could help address the challenge of reporting, given the expected increased delivery rate that will result from the increased funding and the spread of activities in the counties (using the UNVs and the mentees- Action 4.1.9).

**Action 5.2.2: Conduct periodic coordination meetings.**

Action underway. Four (4) coordination meetings were held at the NDIS/MIA this year. These meetings have been very useful for information sharing-encouraging deputy ministers, directors and technicians of the various Ministries, Agencies and Commissions to express concerns of their entity during meetings and give briefings to their Principal Ministers on proceedings (see also Action 1.1.2). An important development is that now, all coordinating meetings are chaired by the MIA’s Department of Operations’ Deputy Minister or her designate, to ensure that the department builds and retains its capacity to coordinate decentralization activities at the county level.

**Action 5.2.3: Training for Decentralization Secretariat staff in national implementation process – from DIM to NIM -pending**

Action pending, to commence in 2016. It will be a working session to re-orientate participants on the new UNDP processes under the National Implementation Modality (NIM) framework. Trainees would include GC, MIA and NDIS staff whose jobs involve procurement, M&E, finance and programs related activities.
**Action 5.2.4:** Conduct annual (December 2015), midterm (June 2016), & end-term (November 2017) evaluation.

Action underway. This activity would be used as a tool for measuring performance and planning for activities programmed in 2016.

**Action 5.2.5:** Formal training (international) for M&E staff at the Secretariat on monitoring and evaluation systems

Action pending. This is a combined training with Action 5.2.1(On the job training on M&E for staff at NDIS).
1. **Issues/Challenges/Risk**

1. Delay in disbursement of funds to execute project activities and pay service providers (vendors, contractors);

2. It’s possible that the readily acceptance of certain proposed provisions within the LGA may stall the passing of the LGA by the Legislature. Until an agreement is reached, this would cause the program to suffer a setback because the scale of progress of several activities- with huge budget allocation, relies on the outcome of the LGA;

3. MACs delay presenting a list of required persons (3 per county) to handle their operations in the next batch of CSCs to be opened, because of shortage of capable and qualified individuals in the counties and the inability to bear the transfer cost of the qualified ones based in Monrovia. Inadequate staffing would have a major setback on the early start of training for CSC staff and disrupt many MACs goal of being in all the established CSC;

4. Absence of clear decisions regarding who should manage the day-to-day activities within the CSC and how he/she should be recruited (as seen in the Bassa experience);

5. With respect to the civil service and training component of the decentralization program, there still remains a challenge of the program establishing full cooperation and coordination of activities with the Civil Service Agency (CSA) and the Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA);

6. Bad road conditions in the south eastern part of the country would delay plans to construct, renovate and operationalize CSCs on time in those places;

7. The slow pace of commitment and alignment of budgetary allocations to deconcentration/decentralization activities by the Government;
8. The MIA inability to endeavor to ensure that a portion of government’s allocated fund to decentralization is used to meet the operation costs of the CSCs;

9. Absence of organized and integrated actions to kick-start local socio-economic development;


11. **Lessons Learned**

1. The issue of pre-financing of services by local vendors inhibits the smooth implementation of program activities.

2. The CSC is “work in progress” and as such, require continuous visits and monitoring to ensure that the desired outcome is achieved;

3. De-concentration of affordable services to the counties is essential in the decentralization process.

4. Political processes are unpredictable, and as such, the Program must be flexible and be prepared to adjust and readjust plans and schedules to accommodate the changes (at the institutional and national levels); and

5. Strengthened, consolidated, and coordinated efforts by implementing institutions and development partners will result in effective and efficient program delivery.

6. EVD crisis in the country reinforced the need to not just advance the national decentralization program but to also give some immediate control to local government.

1. **Conclusion**
The achievement of program targets and actions were lower than expected, due to funding issues and other implementing challenges. However, valuable progress in the implementation of certain key activities were registered. The recent completion of the LGA and the inputs by key stakeholders including Cabinet is a fair step towards the implementation of the national decentralization programme but requires commitment to fulfill all others.

2. **Recommendations:**
   1. Continued political will from the government through the Ministry of Internal Affair (MIA) which has county oversight.
   2. Submit the draft LGA to the legislature and passed into law;
   3. Reactivate and strengthen the IMCD;
   4. Strengthen coordination and cooperation amongst key actors.
   5. The sustainability of the CSC is a major issue that should be prioritize by the GOL.
   6. Given the size of the LDSP program, there is need to strengthen the capacity of UNDP to expedite business processes

**Financial Section** (this information will be fully available in early January, meaning that the expenditure figures are estimates):

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