

Liberia Vision 2030

Liberia's new development programme has won acclaim for its inclusive process and realistic planning

The scope, scale and style of the consultations have given Vision 2030 democratic legitimacy

Transforming one of the world's poorest countries into a middle-income economy inside two decades is a formidable undertaking – even tougher for a nation in which civil war is still a painful memory. But Liberia took a significant step towards this goal in December 2012 when it adopted a guiding charter – The National Vision 2030 – at a conference in the central city of Gbargna. “One people, one nation, united for peace and sustainable development” is the Liberian aspiration.

It is a seminal document setting out a developmental framework, formulated through painstaking consultations in 156 districts across the country – and dialogue with the Liberian Diaspora. This participatory process has distinguished “Vision 2030” from past initiatives and secured the involvement of civil society and ordinary Liberians. Gbargna was chosen deliberately over Monrovia to illustrate the new spirit of inclusiveness. Five hundred delegates represented a spectrum of interest groups with a stake in Liberia's future.

Vision 2030 is embedded within a larger strategy for nation building, and the conference also adopted a complementary agenda for social transformation and a roadmap for national healing, peace building and reconciliation. It ended the design phase of the visioning exercise which had begun with asking basic but soul-searching questions, such as: “Where do we come from as a country? Where are we now? Where may we go? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?”

The scope, scale and style of the consultations have given Vision 2030 democratic legitimacy. The candid admission of the endemic social cleavages in Liberian society has encouraged openness and sincerity. Crucially the integrity of the exercise has exorcised the cynicism that previous opportunistic top-down initiatives have bred; and the pessimism linked to the failure of more well intentioned policies.

It is notable that analysts generally agree that the 2030 Vision goals are realistic. Economist Musa Dukally says there are relevant people behind the strategies, and Liberians have been “empowered to make the vision take-off despite enormous challenges. Unveiling the plans for Liberia's vision marks an important milestone, through a strong foundation for holistic strategy. The Vision 2030 is a positive step whose expected outcomes are not impossible to achieve.”

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has warned that a huge task lies ahead. “We as a government cannot alone turn this great ship of state. We need all hands on deck – the private sector, civil society, NGOs, political leaders, different organisations, and all Liberians... This is an opportunity. We have a history of cleavage; we have a history of disunity; we have a history of confrontation. But we also have a history of a resilient people who have time and time again risen above the odds, able to stand tall in the midst of adversity to reach across that divide and promote a country.”

The vision that has emerged embraces the realisation that Liberia's problems are rooted in its social divisions, economic model and governance arrangements – structural and systemic issues that can only be addressed over a longer timeframe; as in the proposed transition from a ‘rentier’ state to a modern economy wired into international markets and serviced by technologically savvy Liberians. The key for realising the vision is the commitment of the Liberian people and the participation of citizens in the process of change.

The next stage calls for a clear strategy for disseminating the national vision throughout the country and the Diaspora. There have already been suggestions that the vision's framework be explained in simpler and more accessible English. An agenda for social transformation, reconciliation and peace building will be aligned with the broader thrust of Vision 2030 so that multiple objectives are effectively addressed.

The visioning phase – by all accounts – has captured the public imagination. Plans for ‘redefining’ symbols like flags to reflect unity, agreeing a common language and enhancing national reconciliation will encourage nation building.

Empowerment and confidence will be shored up by providing opportunities for all, deepening democratic governance and promoting the decentralised ownership of Vision 2030. Individual rights will be extended and entrenched. Education and access to technology is a key focus. By 2030 ‘the youth’ will account for 70 per cent of the population and will be driving transformation. They will be equipped by raising capacity and skills levels.


Economic progress will be delivered through a “developmental state” with “strong capacity, knowledge, legitimacy, credibility and political

commitment” based on democratic, transparent and accountable governance and national institutions. The vision is one of “a successful and sustained process of extirpation from a commodity-based economy to a more knowledge-based economy.” The state is expected to play a major role in redirecting foreign direct investment from traditional extraction to investment in agriculture and manufacturing. The oil industry should make Liberia a key regional player. Securing food sovereignty is a priority.

Effective financial management systems are to be created and the Central Bank of Liberia will be pivotal in sourcing finance, nurturing and encouraging the growth of local manufacturing, industry and agriculture. Within this scenario urgent infrastructure development is presumed to meet energy needs, establish modern communications systems and rehabilitate and extend the road network. There is strong emphasis on technical and scientific training to support the new knowledge-based economy.

Vision 2030 is realistic about the difficulties inherent in implementing such a comprehensive, longer-term

strategy. The “emphasis on capitalisation as the driver of change comes with problems that build tension in society and threaten stability.” The old political and economic orthodoxy may be resistant to change and a new entrepreneurial culture. The iniquities that come with globalisation and trade liberalisation threaten to undermine local production because of its limited capacity to compete. The profit-driven mindset of foreign capital clashes with the protection of workers’ wages and benefits. Not least, Liberia’s dependence on foreign capital will leave it vulnerable to external economic meltdown and the vicissitudes of both capital and export markets.

In Liberia, Vision 2030 is already making a difference. In the next three years 16 communities across five counties will receive electricity for the first time. The ability to pull-together as a people remains a remarkable Liberian resource in trying times. The readiness of opposition leader George Weah to accept the post of Peace Ambassador is a substantial statement of unity. He’s one of the greatest footballers of all time, a continental inspiration and a distinctly Liberian brand. 

Previous visioning exercises in Africa have had a mixed record. Liberia intends to learn from the failures and emulate the successes

Building a brighter future for Liberia and its people



President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf with GVL employees at GVL's Wakefield nursery

The government of President Johnson-Sirleaf has put in place ambitious plans to revitalize Liberia’s economy and reduce poverty.

Since 2010, as a long term investor in sustainable palm oil in Liberia, GVL is proud to contribute to these plans.

We now employ over 2,700 Liberians in our operations in the rural southeast. As GVL expands, that number will rise rapidly. We are building houses, schools and clinics, repairing infrastructure and providing training and scholarships.

By generating long term prosperity, we are determined to honor the trust that the government and local communities have put in us.

