



Creating a sustainable future for think tanks in Africa: the case of Liberia

by

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Introduction¹

1. Liberia, Africa's oldest independent republic, is sparsely populated and abundantly endowed with many valuable minerals and, possibly, petroleum. The country's next constitutionally mandated elections in 2017 could be pivotal, for Liberia's electorate has the unusual opportunity to choose a leader who could initiate a movement towards making it a capable state. Civil society has the responsibility to empower citizens to participate in the process and engage candidates to jointly enhance that probability and ensure that Liberia does not elect a government that remains a family affair with cronies,² repeating the historical tradition. Civil society needs to engage citizens to become aware of their rights and responsibilities, and influence candidates to realize their electoral goals through free and fair elections. Liberia cannot afford to elect persons who will govern like their predecessors, for that will keep it a failed state, the preferred environment of terrorists and organized crime.

2. Liberia is, in 2015, at the cross roads; given that the score of persons who have expressed their intentions to seek the highest office³ are lured, not by the desire to transform governance and build a prosperous Liberia, but by the prospect of acquiring autocratic power that confers virtually unlimited access to wealth, the Center for Policy Studies (CERPS) has designed a Plan to create awareness among citizens to demand accountable leadership that will transform this failed state.⁴ The Ebola epidemic showcased the parlous state of governance⁵ which allowed the disease to reappear and threaten the opportunity for economic

¹The contributions of Nakomo Duche, my CERPS colleague, are gratefully acknowledged.

²Fred van der Kraaij, *Liberia: From the Love of Liberty to Paradise Lost* (African Studies Center, Leiden, The Netherlands; 2015).

³In Liberia, the “big chief” mentality is strong and the president is the biggest chief; s/he has a six year tenure and is the top dispenser of patronage with immense appointment and virtually unaccountable political power.

⁴John-Peter Pham, *Liberia: Portrait of a Failed State* (New York, NY: Reed Press, 2004).

⁵Blair Glencorse and Brooks Marmon, “The Cure for Ebola Is Accountability: Africa's Ebola outbreak isn't just a health care problem. It's also about a crisis of governance.”, 14 August 2014; Foreign Affairs Magazine; <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/14/the-cure-for-ebola-is-accountability/> (Accessed: 14 July 2015).

recovery, even though growth was more likely to continue its tendency to aggravate simmering discontent.⁶

3. The importance of the 2017 elections is reflected in the following:

- The incumbent president will be ineligible for re-election and her political party, in disarray, seems destined to join previous hegemonic ruling parties which never reacquired political power after losing it;
- UNMIL will have departed Liberia whose security challenges seem to be increasing resource and capacity decline, and restlessness in communities that host concessions accelerates;
- During the first post conflict decade, politics has weakened integrity institutions, and foreign travel was considered higher priority than expenditure on education in a society with a predominantly illiterate population. Priority was given to expenditure on foreign self-promotion, and to flashy sports utility vehicles which provided additional compensation for members of the political elite. Streets and roads have become less car-worthy and only official development assistance financed road infrastructure;
- With over 70% of public revenues financing wages, including ghosts, not much is left to spend on capital items;
- Food and nutrition insecurity, despite Liberia having an ecosystem conducive to agriculture, worsened as dependence on foreign aid grew;
- The health system and its administration remain extremely weak. Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs) were prematurely dismantled even though there was a possibility of a recrudescence of the disease and outbreaks of other contagious diseases, such as Lassa fever, measles, etc. The incidence of treatable illnesses such as malaria and cholera has risen;
- With the educational system non-functional and the curriculum irrelevant to building capacity to govern, the ability to manage the development process remains stymied;
- Roads are not car-worthy or are impassable – if they exist at all – leaving parts of the country inaccessible during each year's six-month long rainy season. Because of poor initial quality and lack of maintenance, street pavement in the capital is disappearing;

⁶See Ali Kaba, “Butaw: the Bush Path to the ‘Promised Land’”, 16 June 2015; <http://www.frontpageafricaonline.com/index.php/op-ed/letters-comments/5532-butaw-the-bush-path-to-the-promised-land> (Accessed: 14 July 2015). This article reports demonstrations against concessionaires in all but two of Liberia’s fifteen counties; some have occurred more than once.

- Integrity institutions continue to be weakened by patronage which makes form trumps substance and informal relationships supersede rules;
- Widening and deepening poverty aggravates growing hostilities in communities that host concessions, with reconciliation in the highly polarized society yet to begin.

4. The Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) brought the 1989-2003 conflict to an end, identified poor governance as its primary cause, and mandated the creation of the Governance Reform Commission. The year 2017 could indeed be pivotal because, more than a decade after the CPA, it will be the first year that Liberia will be wholly responsible for its security and for the protection of the civil and human rights of its citizens.

5. However, because Liberia's future need not resemble its past, CERPS, toward de-monopolizing the public policy process and developing a sustainable future for think tanks, proposes an exercise to create joint demand by citizens and candidates for improved governance that will enlarge nationals' share of the pie, create a middle class and create financing sources independent of government. Following this introduction is the context of the exercise. The next section outlines Liberia's major challenges two years before the 2017 elections. Next, we elaborate our Plan to create a sustainable future for policy research institutions in Liberia. The implementation strategy follows. The paper concludes with examples of existing policies the implementation of which CERPS will create demand for.

The Context

6. In outlining an approach aimed at enabling Liberia, described as the “eye of the regional storm” in West Africa⁷, CERPS proposes making Liberia a capable state, a condition that is indispensable to the idea of a sustainable future for think tanks. The 2017 elections are the first since 1990, when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) determined it had the “duty to intervene” in Liberia's deadly conflict. Since then, Liberia has survived, thanks to official development assistance that funded, for example, national and human security. Liberia's gross domestic product (GDP) had declined by an estimated 90% during the years of conflict when large numbers of people fled to neighbouring and other countries, or were displaced internally.⁸ Then the Security Council of the United Nations, by Resolution 1509, established the nearly 17, 000-person strong peacekeeping force, United Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), to replace the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)

⁷International Crisis Group, “Tackling Liberia: The Eye of the Regional Storm”, Africa Report No. 62; 30 April 2003; <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/liberia/062-tackling-liberia-the-eye-of-the-regional-storm.aspx> (Accessed: 14 July 2015.)

⁸“Agenda for Transformation” (2013), the Government of Liberia's medium-term strategy for implementing “Liberia Rising: Vision 2030”.

mission. Annually, UNMIL costs many times Liberia's GDP, a major reason for the rush to elections.⁹

7. The generic Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) that ended Liberia's most recent devastating deadly conflict approved the actions and demands of warring parties, awarding each a virtual fiefdom and control over an economic sector, as well as seats in the unicameral legislature although its Article XVI acknowledged poor governance as a significant explanation for the successive conflicts that lasted over a decade and destroyed the already frayed fabric of the society. Although the CPA mandated the creation of the Governance Reform Commission, later renamed the Governance Commission, it effectively assured continuity of poor governance by failing to appreciate the peculiarities of Liberian history.

8. Liberia was founded in accordance with a 19th century ethos by the non-governmental organization, the American Colonization Society (ACS), whose membership and leadership included influential slave-owners. The ACS sent “black colonialists” to Liberia who established “an outpost of Western civilization” on the “barbarous coast” to “civilize and Christianize” “heathen natives”. The preamble to Liberia's 1847 Declaration of Independence defined “the people” making the declaration as former residents of North America, excluding the autochthons.

9. Liberia in mid 2015 faces challenges rooted in its history. The Society was founded in 1816 by influential members of the American socio-political establishment. The ACS bequeathed to Liberia racism and a class system whose legacy created the highly polarized society of today. The Society's conflicting objectives lay in fear of slave revolts and the concomitant desire to get rid of an increasing number of “undesirable” freed Blacks. The goals of some founders of the Society included creation of a state to be ruled by mulatto¹⁰ offspring of slave owners as a probable forerunner of Cecil Rhodes's colony in southern Africa; before the colony, later described as the “white man's grave”, had been identified, the Society adopted and promulgated its first constitution. All constitutions of Liberia, including the current one, have been produced by flawed processes that denied participation.

⁹The argument was made by Jacques Klein, then the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Liberia; but see Satish Chand and Ruth Coffman, “How Soon Can Donors Exit from Post-Conflict Countries?”, Working Paper No. 141, Center for Global Development; February 2008; http://www.cgdev.org/files/15464_file_DonorExit.pdf

¹⁰The colony was ruled by white agents and later, Colonial Governors appointed by a non-resident Board of Managers who, before independence, transferred political power to an octoroon; by 1870, the “politics of skin pigmentation” led to the formation of the True Whig Party (TWP) by darker skinned repatriates. The TWP first won elections in 1869 but the dark-skinned president was overthrown in 1871. The TWP reacquired power in 1876 and held power until overthrown in 1980 by Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe.

Previous constitutions, for example, the Commonwealth Constitution (1839 to 1847), concentrated power. In that organic law, the colonial governor who was appointed head of government, head of the legislative assembly, chief justice and head of the electoral body by the American Colonization Society's Board of Managers resident in the USA, to which he was solely accountable.

10. Under the independence constitution of 1847, eligibility for citizenship was restricted to “repatriates” from the New World; captives and original inhabitants were eligible for citizenship only after their assimilation, that is, became “civilized and Christianized” as reflected in dress, Western education, worship, etc. Consistent with this outlook, the legislature in 1914 passed a law which, in violation of the doctrine of separation of powers incorporated in the independence constitution,¹¹ authorized the executive branch to exercise legislative and judicial powers outside the Liberia in which the newcomers resided. When the law was contested before the Supreme Court in 1919, Attorney General Hayes argued that the “blessings of liberty” enumerated in the Constitution were not intended for “natives”, but for returnees residing in coastal towns that, needing security, amalgamated their settlements. Even though the Court ruled against the state for the reason only that it sought to assert its independence, custom and politics stalled change; after becoming president in 1944, former Associate Justice William V.S. Tubman signed into law the misnamed “Rules and Regulations to Govern the Hinterland”. Those Rules and Regulation, a replica of the 1914 law ruled unconstitutional in 1919, remain the standard operating procedure of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2015. No surprise, then, that “Liberia Rising: Vision 2030” exercise found state origin and state capacity highly correlated and consistently ranked first and second among 66 variables that have impacted, and continue to impact, Liberia. Liberia scores high when the number and quality of its laws on the books are evaluated, but fails when a careful assessment evaluates the effective implementation of those laws.

Liberia's Challenges in 2015

11. During 168 years of independence, successive hegemonic political parties have kept the society polarized, and the shifting political elite since 1980 has monopolized public policy formulation or outsourced it beyond the country's borders. Liberia's economic growth policy consistently stimulates growth without development.¹² The growth policy has a symbiotic relationship with the political culture.

Toward Creating a Sustainable Future for Think Tanks in Liberia

12. The creation of a sustainable future for think tanks in Liberia is dependent upon improvement in administrative, economic and political governance, strengthening of integrity institutions, developing state capacity, and decolonizing the “big chief” mindset. The rudiments of better governance must first be established. Liberia is a society with no history of autonomous policy research institutions. The citizenry, most of whom are illiterate, needs to demand major improvements in governance as well as perform its responsibilities. CERPS proposes to help spark and steward the creation of such demand, not unaware of the challenges of rising unemployment and an economy in sharp decline without any assurance of an improvement in the prices of the country's major exports. How might CERPS turn these daunting challenges into opportunities? Could prolonged low prices of raw materials lead the

¹¹*Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, 1847, Sec. 14th.*

¹²Robert W. Clower, George Dalton, Mitchell Harwitz and Alan A. Walter. *Growth without Development* (Evanston, IL; 1966).

political elite to recognize the wisdom of reassessing Liberia's traditional growth model that grants concessions on generous terms to transnational corporations although it lacks capacity to monitor and therefore assure compliance? Institutions such as Global Financial Integrity consistently report that large illicit transfers of taxable income to other jurisdictions occur and result from low capacity. Could the high number of lives lost to Ebola, as politics weakened integrity institutions, promote the need for a paradigm change? What might the new model be?

13. CERPS is uniquely aware of the significant challenges rooted in Liberia's peculiar history and the political culture it evolved. Awarding concession grants of large swathes of land without consulting the rural residents of affected communities proximately results in security threats. Given these circumstances, we perceive 2017 as propitious to convert the challenges into opportunities. In 2017, Liberia will elect an all powerful president whose tenure, like those of members of the House of Representatives, is six years, while that of senators is an unbelievable nine years. That the incumbent president is ineligible for reelection is a critical issue to our Plan. Besides, the hegemonic ruling party's internal challenges may ensure, as in the past, that the party's likely loss at the polls may lead to it never regaining political power.

14. To ensure that our ideas are realized, the design pays particular attention to its effective implementation. CERPS proposes to ensure effective implementation by creating awareness among citizens of their rights and responsibilities, relying on an effective communication strategy to create awareness that leads to behavioural change by citizens and candidates. Informal vetting, to be followed by rigorous vetting during the project, commenced before campaigns formally begin, assures high probability of buy-in by citizens and candidates.

Justifications for Our Approach

15. Justification of our approach includes the followings:

- Many persons seeking elective offices have not, and cannot, clearly articulate what public service means; most seek elective positions because public office not only confers status, but creates unlimited access to unearned wealth.
- Traditionally the objective for acquiring political power is seldom to improve governance; candidates preoccupied with power acquisition neglect attention to governing; driving the quest for political power often is access that unlocks all doors, including to wealth. Candidates often fail, or lack the capacity, to articulate clearly focal areas that can catalyze transformation. Enrichment of self is then confused with “developing” the state. In recent times, winners of the coveted prize have taken months to form a government.¹³ Delays in forming a government by a Liberian president-elect are political mainly in the sense of

¹³Most Liberian presidents enter office poor but leave very wealthy. See, for example, Fred van der Kraaij, *Liberia: From the Love of Liberty to Paradise Lost*.

ensuring protection of narrowly defined shifting elite interests. After all, presidents of Liberia are not equals of other politicians in the country; the delays seem better explained by persistent failure to relate campaigns and governance.

- Liberia has a Human Development Index below the regional average. Improving governance through the rigorously selected focal areas is not merely transformative, but catalytic in a Liberia ranked 83 out of 102 in a recent Rule of Law Index and second among countries that lose the most resources to illicit transactions.
- Ordinary citizens and many candidates accept that continuing to govern Liberia as it has been governed throughout its history is unlikely to yield a result different from what now obtains.

The Plan

16. Our Plan is tied to Liberia's 2017 presidential and general elections, pivotal to improving administrative, economic and political governance in Liberia.¹⁴ CERPS first identified focal areas to initiate and drive better governance. The exercise begins with vetting the selected sectors and already made policies for relevance and transformative capacity.¹⁵ CERPS shall lead the process it designed to create joint demand by citizens and candidates for effective implementation of policies already made to drive improvement of governance in focal sectors. An expert communications team will work with CERPS from the beginning. The sectors are the economy (including agriculture), education, health, infrastructure, institutional capacity and security. Reconciliation, like security – a cross-cutting issue – is not regarded as an independent focal sector: but, given that throughout its history, Liberia regularly experienced deadly conflicts¹⁶, security – national as well as of persons – is regarded as a focal sector. The exercise is not intended to develop policy proposals; even a perfunctory examination of reports on Liberia by development partners will confirm the existence of a significant number of acceptable policies and standard operating procedures, collecting dust on public agency shelves. We admit that policies for alternative approaches will be needed in the future in instances such as making the growth model developmental, but consider that what is needed at first is a robust demonstration in the first six months following inauguration of a new government in 2018 of evidence that transformation has begun. Justifying the approach is President Edwin Barclay's lamentation in his *The Lone Star Forever* that Liberia,

¹⁴In the past decade, the Government of Liberia (GOL) failed to implement the provision of Liberia's 1986 Constitution mandating election of some local officials, with the president unlawfully including holders of those positions among her.

¹⁵On inception, the project does not aim at resolving all of Liberia's governance problems; rather, its focus is presumed to possess the capacity to initiate and sustain transformative governance improvement.

¹⁶Jeremy I. Levitt, *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From "Paternalitarianism" to State Collapse*.

“long forlorn”, must be awakened. Barclay's cry has been repeated many times since.¹⁷ In a stupor induced by the political culture, forlorn Liberia is unable and unwilling to implement adopted policies, irrespective of their quality and origin. For this reason, creating the political will to energize policy implementation in focal sectors becomes the first order of business that will be demanded by citizens as well as candidates seeking public office. The process begins with implementation of identified simple policies, and moves on to more complex ones already made. This approach limits potential attacks by opponents of change. Jointly shared demand for effective implementation of policies possesses multiplier effects in interlinked sectors. How do we create the demand for improving governance through effective implementation of existing decisions?

- Create awareness to empower Liberians to know their basic rights and create the will to exercise their responsibilities as citizens.
- This awareness is to focus on the proposition that extreme poverty in a highly polarized, fragile society is not ordained; a new political culture that demonstrably commits to decentralized political power is possible.
- Create awareness through local languages in forums suitable even for illiterate persons by individuals recognized in the community: for, “without direct citizen participation...the legitimacy of political institutions will continue to decline”.¹⁸ That way; we will deserve better politician and take steps to put them in office.
- Demonstrate why and how to minimize patronage in governance.
- Demonstrate how and why a new paradigm for economic policy formulated pursuant to a competent study of an alternative growth model that discourages “predatory investment” and moves towards equalizing access to opportunities and creating a middle class of entrepreneurs.
- Demonstrate the relevance and usefulness of improved regulatory capacity.

17. Perceiving the 2017 elections as propitious because a regime of shifting elite will end, and appreciating the magnitude of the contemplated change and the obstacles to initiating and sustaining it, CERPS will market the exercise in terms of the likely returns in terms of reform by communicating achievable goals candidates for political office can adopt to effect transformation. The process aims at evolving the political will to create and sustain the demand for change.

¹⁷See the valedictory speech delivered by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations at Monrovia City Hall on 30 June 2015.

¹⁸Tom Bentley. “Everyday Democracy: Why we get the politicians we deserve”. (Demos, London, UK; June 2005).

18. Defining a desired electable candidate in terms of his/her disposition to commit to transform Liberia, CERPS first ranks presidential candidates¹⁹ according to their respective past records and ability to identify or recognize prevailing restraints to implementing approved policy decisions. CERPS perceives the creation of an environment suitable for the sustainability of think tanks in the only ECOWAS member state with a 200-year tradition of government control over public policy formulation, and a history of outsourcing the same to international financial institutions. The contributions of domestic thinkers are actively discouraged for fear that their success might undermine conformity. The Plan is to engage citizens and candidates in such a way that demand for a new governance paradigm, antagonistic to waste and abuse, evolves and grows. Today and throughout its history, Liberia has had a seamless, symbiotic relationship among political culture, weak institutional capacity and an economic rent-seeking mentality which makes policy for all social sectors dependent upon concessions and official development assistance. Change will only come about when the people actively demand it.

19. For each focal sector, our team of experts will list the existing policy to be implemented, starting with simple decisions then moving towards more complex policy decisions. The existing policy to be implemented following inauguration of the president will be as follows: immediate, short, medium and long term. Implementation of policy decisions must become visible within 90 days following inauguration. The policy to be implemented within the first 90 days shall not require legislation or even an executive order by the president. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture currently procures and distributes to farmers improved rice seeds. However, the seeds are habitually distributed in June while the planting season ends in April/May, leading to germination rate of planted seeds as low as 20% or less – most are never planted, but eaten. Timely distribution of rice seeds will improve germination and most likely, enlarge the harvest. Contemporaneous with timely distribution of improved planting materials would be the need to develop capacity in government to monitor seed acquisition and distribution.

20. Starting with simple policies, such as timely acquisition and distribution of rice seeds, the next group of policy decisions selected for implementation grows in complexity. By the end of the first year, policies selected for implementation progressively become not only more complex, but their linkages with other sectors become pronounced, requiring greater coordination, hence more institutional capacity.

Implementing the Plan

21. The most crucial and overarching element of our strategy is to ensure effective communication. Experienced communications experts who know Liberia and appreciate the diversity of its regions and cultures shall participate in project elaboration. Rolling the project out shall be in familiar languages. We shall, appreciating the character of the operational

¹⁹There are three branches of government – see Federalist Paper No. 10: yet, appreciating Liberian history, candidates for the Legislature and for other offices will be assessed by reviewing their previous activity and performance and then engaging them to articulate their commitment to catalytic transformation. Being non-partisan, CERPS cannot support a candidate for political office, only support an idea, and by implication, those who subscribe to it.

environment, employ one-act dramas and short films in local languages with community residents playing roles traditionally assumed by the elite. Given low literacy and problems with electricity, we shall minimize the use of social media except in certain urban centers. Highly trained experts with relevant knowledge of local customs who eschew arrogance and know prevailing mentality will communicate the messages. This means that the exercise will be guided by a staff that reflects the diversity of the regions and that are unlikely to be co-opted by the elite. Toward creating the demand for better governance, we shall be proactive in selecting focal sectors and geographic areas. In all of this, we shall consistently remind ourselves that the promotion and protection of elite privilege prevents the creation of a Liberian middle class.

22. With most Liberians illiterate, creating demand for improved governance is, firstly, possible only with an effective communications strategy. The language employed to communicate the idea is important; it cannot be foreign; the forum must be familiar. Second, we shall engage rural and shanty town dwellers who traditionally perceive politics as “those people's (elite) thing or area”; our one-act dramas and short films in local languages by actors from the communities will be used to influence citizens to understand that they have rights and responsibilities. Improved governance will expand the available benefits and their distribution when citizens disavow the belief that their rights and responsibilities are bestowed by benevolent big chiefs. Third, influence candidates for public office to adopt the view that justifying their candidacies for political office is commitment to build a prosperous, inclusive Liberia, not personal enrichment. The exercise begins before, and continues throughout, the electoral campaign. CERPS will not campaign for a candidate, but for ideals that candidates must possess in order to be electable.

23. Our strategy has several tactical components. First, we empower citizens to appreciate that they have power; they hold the sovereign power that governments abuse at their peril, but cannot remove; citizens can retain and exercise their power only through participation: politics is every body's “thing”. How we empower citizens is enumerated under the Plan.

24. Second, empowered citizens, peacefully and through their participation, demand their rights as they perform their responsibilities. To this end, the process assists citizens to develop their ability to assess candidates' capacity and commitment to change, demonstrating that the consequences of governing as before in the old way will not only prevent development, but renew conflict.

25. Third, the exercise engages candidates for public office to buy into it. How? As members of CERPS were involve in designing “Liberia Rising: Vision 2030”, Liberia's long term perspective study with its implementation plan to make Liberia a capable state, CERPS proposes a process to overcome Liberia's historical, cultural and political restraints to govern better.

26. Fourth, CERPS markets the idea to potential funding institutions, and candidates and their organizations, beginning informally with exploratory inquiries. A formal process is initiated when possible interest is indicated. Depending on the potential funder’s prescription, we may submit a written concept note after which we may move on to submit a formal application for funding, together with a budget.

27. Fifth, financing is the most daunting challenge to our Plan. Initial success will be turned into more opportunities that eventually can enhance prospects for funding to lead to a sustainable CERPS. Following selection of the focal areas and vetting, CERPS shall contact pre-identified financing sources to determine their interest in commissioning it to prepare papers which elaborate the approach to improving governance in the focal sector. Funding agencies will, during marketing, be reminded that they had funded more elaborate and costly reports in the past that are collecting dust on shelves. Design faults in any number of those projects include non-participation of citizens which this exercise corrects with assured buy-in by citizens and candidates, thus sustaining their interest to enhance the probability that outcome will not end up on shelves. Funding of commissioned papers overcomes the initial hurdle to sustainability. The second hurdle is then to create a sustainable CERPS. Towards that goal, CERPS shall create a sustainability account into which up to 20% of gross value of any contracts shall be deposited. Funds in the sustainability account shall be invested in real estate to earn income in the future as well as assure a permanent office. In addition, CERPS is actively seeking collaboration with sub-regional think tanks to create and enlarge its capacity to perform larger contracts.

Conclusion

28. To create a sustainable future for think tanks in Africa begins with improving governance. CERPS's Plan and implementation strategy therefore list transformative and catalytic focal sectors, and for each sector, identify existing decisions whose effective, timely implementation is indicative of commitment to effect rudimentary actions indispensable for better governance. The approach is based on the assumption that improved governance is unlikely until interrelated social sectors are not treated in isolation but as elements of an organism. As Liberia's 1960s experiences demonstrate,²⁰ steps to improve public financial management that ignored the monopolized policy formulation process and the agriculture sector had no lasting impact.²¹ The creation of a policy research institution is very difficult in a poorly governed society, given the primary causes of poor governance. The future of think tanks cannot be sustainable when governance is consistently poor. That view explains our goal to begin the creation of a sustainable future for think tanks by transforming Liberia's seemingly insurmountable challenges into opportunities. The creation of a sustainable future for think tanks necessarily begins with uncontested actions that inculcate rudiments essential to better governance. The 2017 elections are perceived as propitious. During the six-year tenure of the next president, the CERPS Plan will attack the basic roots of poor governance. Existing laws and regulations are generally judged adequate to initiate reform: so, by attacking

²⁰Elliot Berg, "Institutional Building and Institutional Decay: A Case Study of Development Budgeting in Liberia, 1964-75", a paper prepared for the Economic Development Institute. (The World Bank 1986). Evidence that the failure continues include the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Plan (GEMAP) (2006).

²¹The referenced experiences include the Special Commission on Government Operations (SCOGO) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Operational experts (OPEX) or "17 Wise men Project". See CERPS Study No. 1, "Public Policy Making in Liberia: An Analytical Overview", a study of the public policy formulation process in Liberia, July 2014.

the roots of systemic poor governance – restraints against implementation of approved policy decisions – beginning with basic decisions whose implementation only requires political will, we initiate transformation.

29. The implementation of policy decisions, already made but not implemented, is categorized into time periods, from the first three months to the end of the presidential term. Simple decisions such as timely procurement and distribution of rice seeds are planned for implementation by gazetting the dates when seeds/planting materials should be distributed to farmers. Effectively implementing that decision creates the need for monitoring and evaluation, thus requiring coordination with other actors. Decisions to be observably implemented by the beginning of the sixth month and thereafter become more complex; by the end of the first year, implementation of increasingly more complex decisions would have begun. The complexity of existing decisions implemented grows and by the end of the fourth year, the impact of implemented decisions would not only be visible but reveal the need for revisiting other existing decisions.

30. Timely procurement and distribution of rice seeds will not impose additional cost – procurement and distribution of seeds and fertilizers are paid for by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations or the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Monitors would focus both timeliness of delivery and ascertain whether timely distribution also curbs diversion of planting materials to senior politicians and their clients. The decision is not only about planting materials but also fertilizers, insecticides, etc. Decisions to be implemented during succeeding indicative time periods grow in complexity and require enhanced coordination.

31. CERPS makes no presumption that the identified sectors constitute the totality of sectors that a government must attend; we do not argue that existing “decisions to be implemented” are the sum total of all a new government would undertake. Our argument is that failure to implement decisions also has high probability of continuing “politics as usual” that is destined to aggravate divisiveness in the Liberian society and probably accelerate the time to the explosion of the “powder keg” on which today's Liberia sits.

32. Creating a sustainable policy research institution in Liberia then becomes possible with inclusive growth and reduced wealth and income inequality. It prepares the grounds toward accepting a new policy paradigm through restating the approach to courting foreign direct investment (FDI). Rather than merchant capital, Liberia would instead seek industrial capital.²² Continuing Liberia's growth model will prevent or undermine investment that brings about industrialization (with value addition) and employment generation. A major consideration in a new policy would create an environment conducive to evolve Liberian entrepreneurs – independent and therefore not requiring patronage. Agriculture would seem

²²Experts agree that neither merchant capital nor official development assistance can develop a country. See William J. Baumol, Robert Litan and Carl J. Schramm. *Good Capitalism, Bad Capitalism, and the Economics of Growth and Prosperity*. (Yale University Press New Haven and London; 2007). See also Stephen Kosack and Jennifer Tobin. “Funding Self-Sustaining Development: The role of aid, FDI and Government in Economic Success”, International Organization 60 (Winter, pp. 205-243; 2006)

the starting point to reduce poverty and stem high rural to urban migration. It is elementary that distribution of planting materials/fertilizers should occur prior to, not after, the planting season as is now the case. Increased output by farmers that is removed to market requires adequately maintained farm-to-market roads. Value addition using simple, appropriate technology would be an incentive to further grow output and improve farmers' income. Policy re-calibration begins with a changed mindset that promotes Liberian entrepreneurs to participate in their country's economy. The requisite changes do not mean rejection of FDI.

33. We illustrate the transformative capacity of our Plan as follows. The timely distribution of planting materials/fertilizers/insecticides contributes to larger crop output that improves food and nutrition security, provided output is removed to market in a timely manner. Removing the surplus output to market requires improvement to infrastructure and possibly creates the need to process some of the output to prevent spoilage. Not only does the process alleviate poverty and reduce migration, it creates demand for expert services and the ability to pay for it.

34. Given Liberia in 2015, identifying an electable candidate is citizens' perception that s/he is capable and committed to competently seeking political office to effect change to administrative, economic and political governance by giving Liberians national identity and making it a capable state. As Edward Wilmot Blyden campaigned fruitlessly, the desired Liberian identity is a synthesis of what is "good" in traditional and imported cultures, merging the two traditions, with both cleansed of divisive elements and denigration. Cleansing would begin with reversing the official narrative of the Liberian experience from being that of conquerors who then embark on assimilating civilized, Christianized heathens.

35. To sustainably initiate interwoven action of citizens and candidates in January 2018, this paper outlines a Plan and strategies to grow demand to transform governance in Liberia. In such an environment, think tanks are more assured of their own sustainability. Although this paper is devoted to addressing the problems attendant to the peculiar political, economic and social history of Liberia, the Plan outlined here can be applied, with appropriate adjustment, to other countries in Africa and elsewhere which have some the same development challenges.