IMANI REPORT: ANALYSIS OF KEY POLITICAL PROMISES AHEAD OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN LIBERIA

INTRODUCTION
Improving democracy in Africa requires going beyond symbolic casting of votes. Emphasis is gradually being put on the quality of political party promises to deliver development. At least Ghana’s 2016 elections taught citizens how to use electoral manifestos as tools for holding political parties to account during their terms in office. Even crucial is examining the feasibility of the promises during elections.

Nowhere in West Africa is this exercise in dire need than in Liberia and Sierra Leone, two countries recently ravaged by prolonged wars and the inevitability of the dilapidated health systems which accentuated the spread of the deadly Ebola disease with fatal consequences. After 14 years of literally being to hell and back, politicians in Liberia need to develop smart policies that will enhance economic freedom by building basic infrastructure, facilitating the growth of small businesses, removing red tape, abandoning corruption and investing in education.

Multiparty systems in Liberia has the potential to promote a stable democracy if political parties are able to identify the issues the nation faces and address them appropriately in their manifestos. However, the true cost of democracy will be lost if voters lack a clear understanding of the promises made by political parties. Undeniably, in an attempt to win political power, electoral manifestos sometimes can be embellished and unrealistic.

In order to promote good governance and democracy in Liberia, it is very relevant for political parties to outline their policies based on pressing issues and provide a comprehensive strategy on ways to address them. The report aims to scrutinize promises made by some political parties in Liberia. In view of that, it attempts to clarify whether political parties provide adequate

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information for voters to make an informed decision on the Election Day. However, it must be emphasised that the report was put together based on the availability of political parties’ manifestos. Therefore the inclusion or omission of a party’s manifesto is not intended to give an upper hand to any party at the expense of the others.

THE ECONOMY

Overview of the Liberian Economy

Liberia’s economy is still frail and faced with numerous challenges. With an abundant supply of tradable natural resources, the country has over the years relied heavily on them to push their economic agenda. However, the recent collapse of commodity prices especially that of iron ore, rubber, gold and cocoa have taken a serious toll on the economy. For instance, in May 2017, total revenue and grants fell short of total public expenditure by 9.3 percent thereby creating a budget deficit of US$4.0 million. Table 1 shows the trend of key commodity prices and revenue performance between 2014 and 2016. Also, the consistent inability to generate enough revenue over years coupled with high expenditure in rebuilding the economy have plunged the country into huge public debt levels of $798.7 million as at May 2017.

Table 1: Liberia’s Total Revenue and Prices of Key Commodities (2014 – 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Revenue ('000 USD)</td>
<td>638,215</td>
<td>548,761</td>
<td>545,574*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron Ore (USD)</td>
<td>114.58</td>
<td>52.11</td>
<td>60.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubber (USD)</td>
<td>274.50</td>
<td>213.50</td>
<td>159.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2 Liberia Economy Spirals (2016), Available at: https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/liberias-economy-spirals/
4 Central Bank of Liberia (May, 2017), Monthly Economic Review. Vol.3. no. 5
5 Ibid
Economic growth has also stagnated over the past three years. From 2014 - 2016, the Liberian economy maintained an average annual growth rate of 0\%\(^6\). In the same period, unemployment rate increased from 3.62\% in 2014 to 4\% in 2016\(^7\). The National Currency, the Liberian Dollar, has also suffered significant depreciation against other major trading currencies, especially in light of falling commodity prices, thereby eroding residents’ confidence in the currency\(^8\). Between July 2015 and July 2016, the Liberian Dollar depreciated by 11.05\%\(^9\). The rapid depreciation has led to the dollarization of the economy where over 80\% of deposits are denominated in US dollars\(^10\). Given the prevailing conditions, resuscitating the economy aside maintaining peace and stability will among other things hinge on increasing investments, robust revenue generation and trade diversification\(^11\).

Tax revenue is an important source of revenue for the Liberian economy. In the past five years (2013 - 2017), tax revenue formed about 77\% of Liberia’s total revenue\(^12\). With an important component of tax revenue being taxes on income, profits and on international trade, the creation of a conducive environment for investments and growth must be key to any political party’s plan to revive the economy. This will include a well-structured tax system, protection of investor interest, comprehensive plans and systems to tackle corruption and most importantly, better ranking on the World Bank ease of doing business index\(^13\). In 2013 just before the Ebola crisis, Liberia ranked 149 out of 175 countries in the overall doing business index\(^14\). The Country currently ranks 174 out of 189 countries in the 2017 ranking\(^15\).

What are the Political Parties Plans for the Economy?

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\(^6\) World Bank (2017) country report on Liberia. Available from:
\(^7\) Moody’s Analytics. Available at: https://www.economy.com/liberia/unemployment-rate
\(^12\) Calculated from Liberia’s annual budget statement from 2013 to 2017.
\(^13\) The World Bank doing business index ranks 190 countries on the conduciveness of their regulatory environment for starting and operating a local firm.
\(^15\) Ibid
Liberians are preparing to go to the polls in a few days to choose a new leader to replace the current President. There are 20 contestants. What are the strategies or plans of the 20 contestants to revive the ailing Liberian economy? Are these plans capable of providing a conducive environment to promote the much needed investment and growth? The section below takes a look at the available manifesto promises on the economy and analyse how those stipulated promises can be a magic bullet for the Liberian economy.

Appendix A provides a list of the economy related promises for 4 political parties in the 2017 elections based on the available information. Four themes are identified in the promises listed below– 1) Addressing the depreciation of the local currency, 2) Job creation, 3) Diversification of the economy and 4) Promoting private sector growth.

**Addressing Currency Depreciation**

The ruling Unity party, and the main opposition party, Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC), have both promised to address the depreciation of the Liberian dollar albeit through different means. The Unity party intends to address the issue of dual currency as a way of curtailing the high exchange rate. It is however not clear whether they intend to dedollarise the economy, in which case whether via a market-based approach or a forced approach, or fully dollarise it. CDC on the other hand promises to stabilize the local currency by enhancing domestic production and exports through prudent management of the macro economy.

**Job Creation**

The main opposition party, CDC intends to create jobs by promoting a vibrant private sector and also by enforcing effective liberalisation programs in accordance with the local content policy in their first year in office. The Liberty party also promises to adopt a labour intensive approach to tackle unemployment challenges by establishing a student service corp and investing in labour intensive infrastructure which will also address the current infrastructure deficit. The Movement for Economic Empowerment like the CDC also intends to create better job opportunities rooted in an expanded private sector including developing the agricultural sector.
Diversification of the Economy

Two out of the four parties listed above have highlighted plans to diversify the economy. The main opposition party intends to develop and implement strategic manufacturing and industrial policies to promote a more diversified, productive and sustainable economy. The Movement for Economic Empowerment (MEE) also promises to restructure the economy in order to reduce the Liberian economy’s dependence on a few primary commodities.

Private Sector Growth

With Liberia’s current rank in the World Bank Doing business index, a lot needs to be done to enhance the business environment. The Movement for Economic Empowerment Party seeks to promote private sector growth by encouraging and protecting foreign investment. CDC also promises to strengthen Liberia’s current legal and fiscal regulations to improve government support services for both local and foreign investors. The CDC again promises to reform business legislation in order to remove red tapes that slow growth in the private sector.

Given the importance of a vibrant private sector to the growth of the Liberian economy\(^{16}\), voters and political parties should also carefully consider the following in their quest to promote a conducive business environment.

1. Regulations that protect investors must be strengthened. Liberia ranked 179 out of 189 countries in terms of protecting minority investors in the 2017 Ease of Doing Business Index. A World Bank survey on investors identified insufficient legal protection of investors as the primary concern to Public Private Partnerships (PPPs).\(^{17}\)

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2. The number of days required to access electricity for business needs to be reduced. Currently it takes an average of 465 days and cost 4066.6 percent of income per capita to get electricity due to factors such long bureaucratic processes. This can greatly hinder investor interest.

3. A robust credit information system is needed to facilitate wider dissemination of credit information aimed at reducing credit risk and to encourage lending. Liberia has zero percent credit bureau coverage and very limited distribution of credit information on both firms and individuals\textsuperscript{18}.

THE HEALTH SECTOR

The progress in the health sector has been mixed. This is partly due to the civil wars and Ebola epidemic over the past few decades. For example, the number of physicians per 1,000 people in the country have dwindled from 0.107 in 1983 to 0.023 in 1997 to 0.014 in 2010. Some health indicators, however, are slowly improving. The neonatal mortality rate in Liberia, which was 39.7 per 1,000 live births in 2002, has steadily decreased to 25.3 in 2013 to 24.1 per 1,000 live births in 2015.

Among the problems that Liberia’s health sector continues to face are a lack of data to adequately shape policymaking, as the World Health Organization has highlighted\textsuperscript{19}, a lack of psychological services especially after the trauma of prolonged war, malnutrition, and poor access to clean drinking water. As well as this, there is an issue of poor access to healthcare services, as an estimated 30% of the population are located more than an hour’s walk away.

\textsuperscript{18} World Bank Doing Business Index (2017), Available at: \url{http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/liberia?topic=getting-credit}

\textsuperscript{19} World Health Organization – Africa Health Observatory. \textit{Liberia: Progress on The Health-Related MDGs - AHO}. Available at: \url{http://www.aho.afro.who.int/profiles_information/index.php/Liberia:Progress_on_the_Health-Related_MDGs}
from any medical services. In the 2016/17 National Budget, government allocated 12.9% of total government expenditure to the health sector; an increase from the previous year’s allocation of 11.7% of total government expenditure.

The 2017 Parties’ Plans

The 2017 election race sees 20 candidates competing for the opportunity to run the country. Among them, few candidates have made promises related to the health sector. The incumbent party, Unity Party, have stated the promise to increase investment to build a robust health system that responds to emergencies. Details on the type of investment, where in the health system this investment will be targeted, or the timeframe for the investment were not stated. The main opposition party, the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC), had five promises relating to the health sector, which mostly focused on increasing access to healthcare. These included legislating a health subsidy program for citizens, improving childhood vaccination coverage, and offering incentives for health professional trainees.

Other parties, such as the All Liberia Party (ALP) stated 14 health and sanitation promises, such as improving the Health Information System (HIS), improving leadership and governance in the health sector, and developing an incentive plan to retain locally trained doctors and attract medical professionals, including from abroad. Another opposition party, the Liberty Party, outlined 8 health-related promises. These included realigning portions of the county development fund and social development for healthcare, and investing in enhancing the capacity of tertiary health institutions through training 1,000 new doctors over 25 years, 10,000 nurses over 15 years and other means.

The Movement for Economic Empowerment party promises on healthcare included setting targets for the training of doctors and specialists, as part of their capacity building program and offering a healthcare system that would be affordable for all and free for the elderly.

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These parties had at least one promise addressing ways to increase access to healthcare, while few had promises addressing quality. Five of the six parties identified access and quality of training medical staff as an issue that needs to be addressed in the next government. The majority of the parties failed to provide figures, methods or further details as to how and when they will implement their promises.

The Focus

Liberia has, in recent times, shown a keenness for improving its health sector, evident in the government’s commitment in 2015 to increase health spending from 4% to 10% from 2006 to 2015 and training over 200 mental health professionals since 2016 to add to the one psychiatrist in the country where an estimated 300,000 people need to seek this service\textsuperscript{21}. While this is commendable, what is needed foremost before implementing any policy changes, such as the suggested by several political parties, is adequate data on the state of healthcare in Liberia. The World Health Organization have highlighted a lack of data as a challenge hindering Liberia’s progress, with ‘latest’ data points collected from 2008 in their 2010 Progress report on Health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)\textsuperscript{22}.

Similarly, the latest data point for the psychiatrists working in the mental health sector per 10,000, according to the World Health Organization, was from 2014, which was before the implementation of certain interventions, such as the training of mental health professionals in 2016, as stated above. Having this data is of particular importance given the context of an estimated 1 in 5 Liberians suffering from a mild to moderate mental health disorder\textsuperscript{23}. This health data, while lacking before the Ebola crises, is especially necessary to ascertain the health situation of post-Ebola Liberia, after an era that saw provision of healthcare coming from many collaborations between the government, international donors and NGOs, such as USAID, UNICEF and the International Rescue Committee. In the 2016/17 National Budget, donor


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid 1

spending on health was $10m more than government expenditure on health\textsuperscript{24}. The foundation of adequate accurate data collection should help to guide political parties on how to coordinate funds and efficiently address health issues, such as the retention of health personnel.

EDUCATION SECTOR

After 14 years of civil war and an Ebola epidemic in 2014, the education system in Liberia does not compare favourably with the education systems in the Africa region. According to UNESCO, in 2015, 62.4\% of primary school children are out of school higher than the sub-Saharan average of 25\%; 20\% of children enrolled in primary school complete secondary school; 55\% of 15 to 25-year-olds are illiterate; the national literacy rate is 47.6\% and teacher absenteeism at 60\% show evidence of a broken education system\textsuperscript{25}. Liberia’s education system has well-advertised troubles, including a shortage of teachers, under-qualified teachers and poor teacher performance, inadequate infrastructure, unequal funding, corruption and the biggest being the lack of capacity according to President Johnson Sirleaf\textsuperscript{26}. In 2012, the government spent only 2-3\% of its GDP of US$3. 7 billion on education, below the 5\% threshold established by UNESCO in achieving Education for All (EFA).

The 2017 Liberian election has education at the apex of issues with numerous promises or proposals from political parties on addressing the access to quality education. The main opposition party, Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) led by George Weah and Liberty party led by Charles Brumskine promise to make education absolutely free from kindergarten to high school, Absorb the West African Examination Council (WAEC) fees for students and upgrade teaching and learning facilities and programs in existing technical education and vocational training institutions with well-equipped workshop and adequate and well-trained teachers. The ruling party, Unity Party led by the current Vice President Boakai, has been silent on its education programme after President Sirleaf, describing it as a mess, opted to outsource public

\textsuperscript{24} Republic of Liberia Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. 2016. \textit{A Citizen’s Guide to The National Budget}.

\textsuperscript{25} UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) http://data.uis.unesco.org/

school education. The burning question is whether H.E. Joseph Boakai, who has thus far remained aloof and reticent on the topic, will continue to outsource the schools or not.

In the midst of the promises made by the political parties, the private sector is absent from the education conversation. This is particularly interesting considering the recent launching of, the Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL), a pilot public-private programme being run by the education ministry and non-state actors in education, aimed at providing every child, regardless of family background or income, access to high-quality education. These schools have been seen as controversial in Liberia, receiving heavy criticism from national teachers’ associations and Kishore Singh, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education on this approach to improving the education system.

Again, 54.8% of the 12,168 K12 (kindergarten to grade 12) schools in the country are non-state owned (Private, mission, and community), suggesting the important role the private sector can play in fixing the broken education system, as promised by the political parties. It will be prudent for the party that wins the Liberian election to engage various stakeholders on the capacity building, finance, technology, programmes and policies in education to help provide innovative ways of addressing the educational challenges. The Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17), which talks about partnerships, will be an important aspect of achieving the goals of education in Liberia.

THE ENERGY & MINING SECTOR

Extractives

The Liberian extractives sector has experienced some growth since the sector reopened in 2006 after the end of the civil war. As at 2014, the extractive industry constituted 15% of Gross


Domestic Product (GDP) and 26% of government revenue. According to Liberia’s Extractive Industry Transparency initiative (LEITI), since its first report in 2009 that uncovered several discrepancies in terms of what multinational companies had paid and what government reported as received, total revenue from extractives increased from US$29 million in fiscal year 2007-8 to over US$148 million by fiscal year 2013-14 of which mining contributed 58%, oil and gas (exploration) contributed 23%, agriculture 14% and forestry 5%.

Several challenges plague the sector concerning the allocation of revenues from the extractives sector. Allocation rules for revenue from extractives are derived from the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) Act which states that revenue collected by the LRA should be paid directly into the consolidated fund (Section 26). All extractive industry revenues therefore go into and are distributed from the consolidated fund. In this case, revenue from extractives are not earmarked for specific developmental projects. Also, it becomes difficult to track the use of revenues from extractives.

To buttress this, the Natural Resource Governance Institute’s (NRGI) Resource Governance Index (RGI) reveals that Liberia performs poorly in mining sector revenue management. The analysis disclosed that there was no numerical fiscal rule for government concerning mining revenues in its national budgeting thus no prompting for adherence in terms of revenue disbursement. Further, there was no requirement for the government to disclose revenue projections or its total expenditure.

Power

Economic growth in Liberia is seriously hampered by the insufficient supply of reliable and affordable electricity. The 14 year civil war in Liberia left in its wake a terribly deteriorated power sector leaving Liberia the challenge of fully reconstructing its power sector. Since the 2006 elections however, the government has taken steps towards reconstruction of the electricity sector with clear developmental goals set out in the National Energy Policy (NEP).
endorsed in June 2009. The functions of the Liberia Electricity Company were restored by 2010 and supply of power was extended to about 2500 people in Monrovia. As at 2011, access to publicly provided electricity in the whole of Liberia was close to 0%, Monrovia, Liberia’s capital city, had an urban access rate of 0.58% of its population. In 2016, access rate had improved to 2% in the country and 6.7% in Monrovia. The general target as indicated by the NEP is to connect 70% of Monrovia to the electricity grid and to provide access to 35% of the rest of the country by 2030.

The expansion of the electricity sector has been hampered by challenges in securing adequate and affordable fuel for thermal generation as well as inadequate infrastructure for generation (thermal and hydro), transmission and distribution. The prices of supplying Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) and diesel are considerably above the regional average as suppliers mark up prices to account for perceived risk of civil instability, poor condition of receiving terminal at the Monrovia port and the lack of international safety standards. Further, as at 2010, there were no facilities to supply HFO and diesel fuel supply facilities were in need of repair or replacement.

The World Bank has however initiated some repair projects.

Critical steps being taken to improve access to electricity include; the rebuilding of the Mt. Coffee hydropower plant, engaging the private sector for the provision of renewable small scale and utility scale electricity generation plants as well as investments for associated transmission and distribution.

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33 Liberia Energy Situation, Energypedia. Available at https://energypedia.info/wiki/Liberia_Energy_Situation
35 ibid
36 ibid
39 ibid
What the political parties are saying concerning energy & extractives

The upcoming 2017 elections presents the opportunity for Liberians to once again democratically select a candidate party which has the overall economic growth of the country at heart. Notably, the 20 political parties vying for the presidency have demonstrated the drive to bring Liberia out of the economic and social malady imposed on it by the civil war.

However, little has been said concerning the leveraging of the energy and extractives sector to achieve socio-economic development of the country. The ruling Unity Party’s main focus is infrastructure development to drive growth and electricity is mentioned as key infrastructure required to support the economy\(^\text{40}\) whereas the Liberty Party has employment and job creation as its priority\(^\text{41}\). The United People’s Party feel strongly about the manner in which concessions in the extractive sector have been handled and are concerned about the lack of efforts to spur value addition in the extractive industry\(^\text{42}\).

The Coalition for Democratic Change acknowledges access to electricity as a vital development driver and places this in the broader context of infrastructure development. It also notes that public investment in public utilities such as electricity is critical for stimulating private investment\(^\text{43}\).

Who wins the vote?

Keeping in mind the potential of the extractives and power sectors of Liberia, this is what we think the political parties can think through and what voters should look out for in terms of leveraging these two sectors for growth and development:

1. A commitment to prudent revenue management in the extractives sector: This will involve formulation of requisite policy that will determine the direction of allocations or earmarking of resource revenue preferably towards development in pro-poor sectors

\(^\text{42}\) [http://uppliberia.org/upp-news-desk](http://uppliberia.org/upp-news-desk)
such as education, health, agriculture and infrastructure development. This will also foster transparency and accountability as it will allow the tracking of the use of resource revenues. Ghana has been able to define the allocation of its petroleum revenues through its Petroleum Revenue Management Act, an example that Liberia could follow.

2. A commitment to formulate targeted policy towards long term industrial growth that would facilitate value addition to natural resources

3. A commitment towards securing fuel supply for thermal power generation in the short to medium term from neighboring countries such as Ivory Coast and leveraging the country’s potential petroleum resources towards power generation in the long term. There should also be a critical look at diversifying sources of fuel for thermal generation.

4. A structured investment plan that would ensure growth and expansion of the electricity network (generation, transmission and distribution) in the long term and in the short term, intensifying the proliferation of mini/micro grids and stand-alone renewable energy systems in urban as well as rural areas.

5. Provision of and following clear timelines for the implementation of the policy recommendations in the National Energy Policy and a commitment to implementation

CONCLUSION

With the scars of a civil war, an Ebola epidemic and 12 years of democratic governance, the upcoming Liberia election provides the litmus test for a new Liberia or the continuation of the status quo. The party that wins, must measure up to the expectations of Liberians for a positive change in their socio-economic conditions.

The paper examined the promises of selected political parties, based on availability of information, and how the promises address the current challenges in the Liberian economy. A few points are noted: there is limited information provided by the various political parties on
their plans for the economy and there is also very little clarity on how the promises will address the challenges of the Liberian economy.

On 10th October 2017, citizens of Liberia will go to the polls to choose a new government. IMANI hopes that political parties in Liberia will make their promises clear and also aim to address the pertinent issues in Liberia. This paper will help to enhance the political environment in Liberia, move political parties to act in the interest of the citizens and help citizens to make more informed decisions to improve democratic rule.
## Appendix A: List of Political Parties Promises

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<tr>
<th>SECTORS</th>
<th>POLITICAL PARTIES</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unity Party</td>
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<td>President Candidate: George Weah</td>
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| ECONOMY | 1. Address the issue of dual currency to the fullest to curtail the high exchange rate in the Liberian market | 1. Stabilize the rapidly declining value of the Liberian dollar by reducing export shocks and the weekly rising of basic commodity prices by stabilizing the currency exchange rate for the longer-term through prudent and disciplined macroeconomic management resulting in an increase in domestic production and exports | 1. Invest in labor intensive infrastructure rehabilitation and development in partnership with the private sector and NGOs. Goal: 100,000 jobs over 3 years (30,000 targeted to former combatants drawn into non-lethal AFL engineering brigades) | 1. Restructure the economy in order to reduce dependence on a few primary commodities. | No concrete promise on Economy |
|         | 2. Develop and implement strategic manufacturing and industrial policies and action plans to invest in rural, coastal, and inner city communities that would consolidate the foundation for a diversified, productive and sustained economy | 2. Establish a Student Service Corp to draw high school graduates and college students into community service. Goal: 3,000 service/teaching/mentoring-type opportunities over 3 years | 2. Change the development paradigm from dependency to self-reliance | | |
3. Undertake financial sector reform to deepen financial markets, promote financial inclusion, enhance regulation of the financial institutions and shift the country’s payment system away from a predominantly cash towards an electronic payments system.

4. Reform business legislation thus eliminating red tape process.

5. Introduce non-discriminatory loan and grant facility to support Liberian-owned businesses to grow and to open up new national income generating business sectors such as tourism, food processing and national airlines.

6. Develop and enforce an effective Liberalization program in accordance with a “local content policy” to be formulated during the first year in office, that would specify a minimum rate for Liberians equity share participation in foreign owned businesses with concessionary agreements, and the involvement threshold for Liberians in the procurement of public goods and services.

3. Encourage and protect foreign investment and ensure mutual partnership for sustained economic growth and inclusive development.

4. Create better job opportunities, rooted in an expanding private sector, including the development of the agricultural sector.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>No concrete promise on Education</th>
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7. Encourage and facilitate equity-based public-private partnership business arrangements for the identification, financing, and management of large business entities that are crucial to the growth and development of Liberia

8. Strengthen the current legal and fiscal regulations to improve government support services for both local and foreign investors in starting and/or operating their businesses, and to ensure efficiency in the collection of government revenue.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Double efforts and resources to reinforce and implement the current national compulsory free education policy and Act; revamp the National Scholarship Program for effectiveness and relevance for development; 2. Reintroduce and expand the school feeding program in public schools;</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Revise current method where high school and college students get 100% of their grades from quizzes and formal tests to include grade opportunities for group projects, field visits, and special projects. 2. Free or low cost Pre-Primary/Early Childhood Development Program (ECD) to make sure that children access the education system early to improve their chances of achieving their full potential.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Invest in training our teachers better, paying them properly and respecting and appreciating them</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. Re-introducing a school bus system in urban areas to enable children to get to school on time</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Absorb the West African Examination Council (WAEC) fees for all students sitting the exams.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Provide adequate support and special attention to vulnerable students with a history of misconduct, learning and physical disabilities and their families to reduce and remove barriers to their full participation in the learning process;</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Review and reform school curriculum to address 21st century development and labour market needs with emphasis on science, technology, engineering, mathematics, language skills, and English competence;</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Initiate a National Consolidated High School System and transform the University of Liberia into a university school system with branches in each county.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Remodel and modernize schools to create a learning environment.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Increase prevalence of Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET) trade schools to create opportunities for the acquisition of appropriate technical/vocational education and entrepreneurial skills training</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Ensure that every school offers transportation for students to get to and from school as well as provide free breakfast and lunch to all students</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Increase wages for teachers and provide appropriate training for all teachers because they are responsible for educating our future.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Strengthen school monitoring and supervision through capacity building in the Inspectorate Division of the Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>System, training of teachers and encouraging the private sector to participate in providing preschool and kindergarten education,</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Establish Schools of Excellence for Science and Technology education in strategic regions of our country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Increase prevalence of Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET) trade schools to create opportunities for the acquisition of appropriate technical/vocational education and entrepreneurial skills training</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEALTH</td>
<td>1. Increase investment in building a robust health system that responds to emergency in the health delivery sector to help boost the health delivery system of the country</td>
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|   | 2. Establish a functional emergency medical service including referral system between primary, secondary and tertiary care, and ensure adequate supply chain of medicines, equipment and laboratory facilities in county hospitals | 2. Invest in enhancing the capacity of tertiary health institutions (i.e., JFK, Jackson Doe, etc.). Liberia’s tertiary medical institutions suffer a perfect storm of negative factors that hinder the provision of adequate services to patients. Chief among these factors is meager supply of quality health workers, doctors, nurses, and allied personnel. Future governments must endeavor to reduce the doctor-to-patient ratio, which stands at abominable numbers currently. The following measures would be helpful:
- Train 1000 new doctors over 25 years
- Train 10,000 nurses and allied health workers over 15 years
- Recruit qualified clinicians from the diaspora
- Improve laboratory and other technical services at tertiary hospitals
- Improve clinic to hospital referral system | 2. Empowering communities, local citizens, so they can be part of the overall system of health care and community development. | 2. Improve conditions for all health workers to enhance retention and provide a better incentive scheme for those in remote areas |
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3. Strengthen Emergency Preparedness and Response mechanisms and institutions (to prevent amongst other diseases, further Ebola outbreaks)</th>
<th>3. Invest in capacity building for healthcare workers, doctors, nurses, and allied health workers. Increase opportunities for medical school graduates to specialize through in-country and diaspora residency. Invest more corporate social responsibility funds for post-graduate medical training. Invest county and social development funds for training doctors. Enhance capacity for training of nurses and allied health workers. In addition, a review of curricula used for training all healthcare care workers is imperative. Future students in medical and nursing must be immersed in the practice of community health. Such emphasis on preventive health is necessary to combat potential epidemics.</th>
<th>3. Promises a sensible healthcare system that will be affordable for all Liberians and free for the elderly so that no patient will be turned away for lack of finances</th>
<th>3. Develop an incentive plan to retain locally trained doctors and attract medical professionals, including from abroad</th>
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<td>4. Improve childhood preventable disease vaccination coverage</td>
<td>4. Realign portions of county development fund and social development for healthcare. Regional, secondary hospitals can benefit from the realignment of portions of county and social development funds for healthcare.</td>
<td>4. Strengthen disease prevention and control.</td>
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<td>5. Support health professionals’ in-service training and career advances with an appropriate scheme of remuneration and benefits payment for healthcare workers based on performance and places of assignment.</td>
<td>5. Develop regime for managing health information/data for research. The prevailing dearth of health data for research is unacceptable. Efforts must be exerted to correct course. The Ministry of Health must assume its proper legal authority and take control of the collection, analysis, and dissemination of health informatics in the country. Currently, major INGOs collect and publish health data with an approved institutional review board system. This needs correction.</td>
<td>5. Expanding and intensifying campaigns against diseases</td>
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6. Establish national mental health administration. Train additional mental health professionals to augment the work of the Carter Center. In addition, it is important to engage cultural myths about mental health in order to de-stigmatize mental disorders. The steps below would enhance quality of care for patients with mental health diagnoses:

- **Advocacy** For people with mental health problems
- **Create a core Liberia works program** that will include Temporary Assistance for citizens with mental health challenges. It may be necessary to means test such assistance to ensure that the most vulnerable obtain access to the program.
- **Training additional mental health clinicians**
- **Include mental health courses in all medical curricula in Liberia**
- **Examine salary structure of mental health clinicians** to make the profession attractive to younger people

6. Promoting good hygiene practices
7. Strengthen social welfare administration. We believe that national government can make significant contributions to the social welfare of her citizens. The following step could be helpful:

- Manage and enforce the regulations governing Social Welfare System.
- License and regulate all social and human service organizations in the country and investigate all complaints and encourage everyone to report suspected violations regarding abuse.
- Modernizing the method of caring for the less fortunate in our society:
  - Improve regulatory regime for Orphanages to Foster Care System
  - Develop Licensing Standards for Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelters
  - Contacts For county Child Abuse and Neglect Registries

7. Improving water and sanitation facilities
| 8. Establish regime for healthcare financing in Liberia. Cost of healthcare continues to accelerate beyond the means of average Liberian. Consequently, patients and families often have to decide medical treatment and other needs. This is an unsustainable reality. Currently, out-of-pocket expenditure constitutes a significant portion of healthcare cost. It is important to consider a well-regulated and accountable national health insurance program. Such insurance program will facilitate universal access to healthcare. | 9. Improve the delivery of health services 10. Improve Leadership and Governance in the Health Sector 11. Reviewing the National Health Policy 12. Developing Policy for Public-Private-Partnership in the health sector 13. Strengthening NGO/Donor Coordination to make them more accountable to Government 14. Improve Health Information System (HIS) | 8. Scaling up effective interventions for the prevention and management of Malaria, TB, HIV/AIDS, EBOLA and other diseases |
| ENERGY                      | 1. Electricity is mentioned as key infrastructure required to support growth | 1. Policies and measures will be put in place to expand and ensure affordable and accessible electricity supply for Liberians | No concrete promises on energy | No concrete policies on energy | No concrete policy on energy |

Source: Compiled from Political Parties websites, Manifestos and Presidential Candidates Speech notes.

About IMANI Center for Policy & Education

IMANI Center for Policy and Education is one of Africa’s leading think tanks, recently ranked second most influential think tank in sub-Saharan Africa, producing high-quality, relevant research. IMANI Center focuses on working with governments, businesses and civil society to share the national, regional and global agenda. For more, visit imaniafrica.org. For interviews, please call + 233 554 309 966