

LIBERIAN PROFESSIONAL NETWORK DIASPORA
POLICY COMMITTEE – LIBERIAN DIASPORA POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS

LPN **Liberian Professional Network**

Engage ■ Connect ■ Support

Liberian Diaspora Policy Recommendations

“The Liberian Professional Network Diaspora Policy Committee is a strategic initiative to help foster dialogue between the Government of Liberia, Liberian professionals living in the Diaspora and friends of Liberia. The committee liaises with LPN members and the Government of Liberia to develop policy recommendations on issues relating to Liberia’s economy, government and the Diaspora.”

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CASA	Congressional African Staff Association
CBL	Central Bank of Liberia,
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOL	Government of Liberia
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LBBF	Liberia Better Business Forum
LPN	Liberian Professional Network
LRDC	Liberian Reconstruction and Development Committee
MOCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
MPEA	Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs
MRU	Mano River Union
NIC	National Investment Commission
ODA	Office of Diaspora Affairs
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
Q&A	Questions and Answers
RAL	Rescue Alternatives Liberia
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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INTRODUCTION

The Liberian Diaspora is a key economic driving force of Liberia, with many Liberians at home still depending on remittances from family members abroad and an increasing level of inward investments. In this sense, it has been said the Diaspora represents the true “middle income” segment of Liberia’s economy. For the Liberian Professional Network (LPN), the Diaspora represents, in effect, the “16th county” of Liberia.

Liberian Professional Network (LPN) is a social impact initiative whose mission is to connect upwardly mobile Liberians and those of Liberian heritage in the United States, Africa and around the globe, harnessing our collective talents to help restore Liberia and embolden our respective lives and common interests.

LPN serves the humanitarian and developmental needs of Liberia by leveraging the expertise and resources of the Liberian Diaspora and other global citizens as well as institutions; working as an organizer, convener and coordinator of Liberian professionals in the Diaspora to mobilize financial, human, and material resources to develop capacity and create sustainable growth within the private sector.

Founded in 2008, LPN has become the largest network of professional Liberians globally, with more than five thousand (5,000) members in every continent with formal networks in New York, Washington, DC, New Jersey, Boston, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Minnesota and Liberia.

With the Diaspora as a significant economic and political body, LPN recognized that there has not been a unified set of recommendations provided to the Government of Liberia (GOL). The Liberian Professional Network Diaspora Policy Committee is filling this gap.

The Liberian Professional Network Diaspora Policy Committee a strategic initiative to help foster dialogue between the Government of Liberia, Liberian professionals living in the Diaspora and friends of Liberia. The committee liaises with LPN members and the Government of Liberia to develop policy recommendations on issues relating to Liberia’s economy, government and the Diaspora.

We are excited about the policy recommendations that the committee has crafted as the first formal recommendations to the Government of Liberia. The committee worked week after week for two months to develop these recommendations. During that period, the committee also met with the Congressional African Staff Association (CASA) to brief them about this initiative and get feedback on how the Diaspora can engage the US congress further.

We would like to thank the committee members, Congressional African Staff Association (CASA), and our members who worked so hard to provide feedback on this document. We hope the government of Liberia considers this positively and understands that the Liberian Professional Network looks forward to partner on implementing these critical recommendations.

DIASPORA AFFAIRS

Office of Diaspora Affairs

As a result of the civil conflict in Liberia, hundreds of thousands of Liberians fled or were forced from their homes to take refuge abroad or in other Mano River Union States. It is estimated that approximately 30-40% of the educated nationals have left and more than half a million Liberians live in the US and other parts of the world.

Through what is commonly referred to as ‘brain drain,’ Liberia has lost a large number of its best trained, most educated and skilled nationals, depriving the country of the doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, managers and administrators it needs to break the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment.

Even more challenging -- which could be a positive for Liberia if a well crafted strategy is implemented -- is the fact that those who were young before the civil unrest are now in their 30s and 40s with great experience, education and technical expertise.

The Diaspora is emerging as a global economic force, providing assistance to establish SME’s, helping to establish new small businesses, and complementing foreign direct investment as advisors and consultants to global private- sector organizations. It was the Diaspora that supported many families in Liberia during the civil unrest, and many still depend on their families for such assistance.

There are many of these Diaspora professionals and experts who are passionate about giving and getting back to the motherland (Liberia) in some way. However, several key issues surface repeatedly as obvious obstacles to any meaningful contributions.

Challenges Facing the Diaspora

Diaspora Liberians, despite goodwill, find themselves hard-pressed to identify concrete actions that would constitute constructive and significant contributions to the nation’s development, especially while they maintain demanding professional and personal obligations in their off-shore domiciles. Some have suggested that Diaspora professionals consider returning to serve in Government; however, it has become obvious that both the GOL & the Diaspora are confronted with significant challenges including:

- Dual Citizenship ban on public service
- Lack of competitive pay (or minimum decrease in annual salary) to maintain families left back in the US or other places
- Geographic separation of Liberian professionals and experts from the epicenter of government
- Financial and other US based obligations of professional Liberians that prevent long-term relocation
- The GOL’s exclusive focus on repatriation and direct public service as the only means of supporting public management & development goals
- Non-coordination, Non-integration & Non alignment of organizations, projects, programs, skill sets, expertise and finances of the Liberian Diaspora to the GOL’s strategic development goals, initiatives & programs

Key Recommendations

- As a first step to accomplishing this goal, the GOL should establish a Office of Diaspora Affairs (“ODA”) as has been done in Ghana, and elsewhere. Creation of an ODA will create value by undertaking the following key initiatives (Promote Diaspora activities, Strengthen embassies abroad, Identify career opportunities for Liberians in international and regional organizations, Deploy or leverage existing web platform that allows Diaspora to connect with other Liberians, Discuss Diaspora concerns, expectations and ideas during outreach visits, Conduct review of current policies and regulations which apply to Liberian residents overseas, Provide opportunities (career, consultancies, mentoring) for Diaspora to contribute to the country development).
- Create temporary technical assistant programs whereby Liberians in the Diaspora can go back home and provide technical/capacity building assistance.
- The GOL should mandate that a higher percentage of direct government programs be converted into performance based acquisition opportunities that will allow strong and qualified Diaspora firms to compete equitably in the GOL acquisition process.
- GOL should mandate that a quota/percentage of contracts be reserved for Diaspora firms that meet clearly defined socio-economic and quality criteria.

Remittance to Investment – Diaspora Investment Fund

The Liberian Diaspora has been growing steadily since the inception of the civil war. With the steady rise of the Diaspora comes an entirely new source of income for families in Liberia. Financial flows from the global African Diaspora contribute 5-10% of the GDP of many African countries and in a few cases over 20%. For example, the percentage of the GDP attributed to remittances for Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, and Liberia are 48%, 38%, and 26 %, respectively.

According to the Central Bank of Liberia, for 2004, 2005, 2006, the net remittances of funds into Liberia, the majority of which originated from the Diaspora, totaled \$139.2 million. Liberia started to report its remittances on the IMF Balance of Payments Statistics in 2006. In 2008 figures shows that inflows from remittance amounted to about \$60 million, not taking into account other remittances like cash that were not reported. An authoritative UN study¹ found that fully 6% of the poorest households small solely rely on remittances from abroad.

The challenge is that the current remittances that are sent to families are immediately consumed for daily use and not invested. This creates a consistent burden on families abroad and becomes an unsustainable method of providing to families at homes. It is also problematic that the major remittance firms, such as Western Union and Money, charge very high fees, an area where regulatory reform by the Central Bank could be beneficial.

¹ Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS), a well-funded joint effort led by the Government of Liberia in collaboration Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS), a well-funded joint effort in collaboration with UN and other international donors. (Government of Liberia & United Nation Children’s Fund, July 2007).

Key Recommendations

The Government of Liberia should work with Liberians at home, the Diaspora and multinational organizations to develop a Diaspora Investment Fund that will provide vehicle for social and SME investment. The fund will provide an innovative approach to leveraging the remittance from the Diaspora to invest in small to medium size businesses in Liberia that would help create jobs and in turn reduce the poverty level.

With the urgent need of capital influx in Liberia, the Diaspora could serve as a vehicle for filling the “Missing Middle” by investing in Liberia with partnerships from the GOL and other multinationals. The fund will be owned and managed by Liberians and will allow Liberians living in the Diaspora to invest in specific businesses and sectors.

The GOL role will be limited to governing, as it should and focusing on the following:

- Provide tax and investments incentives to Diaspora investors in the fund
- Support the fund by leveraging relationships with multinationals, corporate and institutional investors to ensure its launch and governance
- Invest in the fund to provide credibility and trust

Conclusion

There is a renewed and burgeoning sense of hope in Liberia today. While Liberia has made, and continues to make, economic strides by focusing on debt relief, reestablishing its democratic institutions, rebuilding major infrastructures and reestablishing legitimacy as part of the international community, there is an earnest need to ensure the sustainability of Liberia’s rise.

If Liberia is to become a developed country, it must reduce its long-term dependency on international aid. This can be done with the indispensable contributions of the Liberian Diaspora.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Transparency & Governance

Corruption is detrimental for government and for the country in general. Corruption may lead to or manifest itself as, among other things, fraud, embezzlement, bribery and government in-efficiency, such as delays in processing simple administrative procedures. While the Liberian government has taken major steps to eradicate the problem, corruption still persists and the factors that contribute to corruption must be addressed directly.

Among these factors include the obvious benefits of corruption, namely monetary gain. Also, government employees and officials alike may feel pressure to commit corrupt acts because they themselves may be struggling to adequately provide for themselves and their loved ones. Next, the opportunity to engage in corruption exists because government officials and employees, as a result of their status or position of power, are well positioned to commit corrupt acts. Finally, the public mindset must be changed since us as Liberians have, to an extent, come to accept and even expect corruption as just the way government in our country works.

While there are a number of ways to address these and other factors of corruption, below are methods under which members of the Diaspora can get involved and work directly with the country in eradicating corruption.

Key Recommendations

The GOL should support the development of a website that incorporates and promotes reporting, transparency, accountability and enforcement. The website will be run by an independent body with partnership from the GOL and will require participation of those individuals residing in, living in, or visiting Liberia.

The website will act as a strong disincentive to corruption by making the risks outweigh the benefits. This is accomplished by disclosing instances of corruption to the public at large, thereby associating public humiliation with corrupt behavior.

Some benefits of the transparency platform:

- When public officials lose their jobs because they have been found guilty of corruption, a variety of related deterrents to corruption—such as public humiliation, loss of prestige, social standing and income, among others—are simultaneously reinforced. Furthermore, the political turbulence that follows the ouster of high public officers helps increase the standards of public accountability, thereby providing another deterrent to major corruption by others in the future.
- The website places pressure on government employees to refrain from committing corruption and actually perform better by serving as an additional layer of oversight and formally acknowledging individuals that maintain a “clean record” and excel at their job.
- The website minimizes the opportunities for corruption by increasing the likelihood of “getting caught.” This is accomplished by providing a safe and anonymous means by which members of the public can report corrupt behavior; holding government accountable for following up on allegations of corruption; creating unbiased and independent Anti-corruption Officer to investigate or formally report corruption when possible; eliminating instances of personal discretion by encouraging upfront disclosure of certain information and government processes; etc.

- The website challenges public perception of corruption by sending a clear message that corruption is not only unacceptable but also publicly disclosed and publicly reprimanded. Government's participation on the website and timely response to postings also sends a message to the world that it is committed to the Liberian public and to getting its "house in order" for good.

The major challenge would be the risk of false allegations. However, this potential concern is minimized by the fact that the Government of Liberia is given a chance to respond immediately to postings and by the GOL commitment to investigating allegations when possible and providing honest feedback and information. The website administrator will also make every attempt to vet false allegations.

The GOL should also establish a strong independent Office of Serious Fraud and "Whistleblower Protections and Rewards" to provide an opportunity for honest civil servants to report wrong-doing to an independent agency without fear of retribution.

Legal Reform

On June 11, 2009, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf ratified into law the Law Reform Commission of Liberia ("The Commission"), whose job it is to revamp existing laws and serve in an advisory capacity to the branches of government and independent agencies. See Executive Order No. 20 (2009).

The Executive Order only created the Commission to exist for one year without legislative ratification. That year has lapsed. Nonetheless, the Commission continues its work while it awaits legislative approval. The state of limbo in which the Commission currently exists has created a large amount of criticism of the Commission in the public's eye.

In addition, the laws of Liberia have not been updated on a continuous basis due, in large part, to the civil war. Due to more pressing issues, important areas of the legal infrastructure such as the civil sector, criminal procedure, and land use law are in desperate need of renewal.

Challenges

Currently, the Law Reform Commission faces numerous situation and organizational challenges awaiting legislative confirmation. As such, the main challenge facing the Commission is its very existence. Until the legislature ratifies the Commission, its main challenge is its existence. The next significant challenge is the operational organization of the Commission. The aims of the Commission, as outlined in Executive Order No. 20, are jointly and severely daunting tasks, as is deciding which purpose to tackle first. Additionally, the Commission's public image requires repair and legitimacy in the public eye in order to have the necessary public support for its work. Finally, the Order creating the Commission apportions a section of the national budget to fund the activities of the Commission, but the national budget is already underfunded and over stretched.

Solution

The Government of Liberia should seek legally-trained members of the Diaspora and American jurists to facilitate and provide support (intellectual, technological, and data/knowledge transfer).

Benefits

- Americans/Government of United States is challenged to engage with the Government of Liberia in a “sibling” relationship instead of the patriarchal relationship that often exists.
- The creation of a channel for knowledge transfer and technology sharing.
- The significant gaps in the legal infrastructure will be filled by capable, passionate individuals.

Recommendation

The Government of Liberia should create and implement, through the Legal Reform Commission, an annual or biannual opportunity that affords Diasporan Liberians in the legal field the opportunity to assist, support and train and transfer knowledge in a meaningful way. More specifically, the Commission should form a relationship with key American judiciary members to create, fund, and implement a cultural exchange program in which American jurists select one small but significant hurdle to the current legal system. In exchange for board, the American jurists will create and gift a manageable solution to the Liberian judiciary to solve the identified problem. The Diasporan Liberian Community would serve as the conduit and facilitators of exchange programs. The Government of Liberia should also implement a quarterly conference in which jurists convene to discuss procedural, substantive legal issues and are trained in recent judicial decisions and doctrines. Reciprocity provisions, whereby Members of the Bar Associations of the US may, upon passing a Liberian Bar exam, receive the privilege to operate as lawyers in Liberia.

Conclusion

The Liberian government demonstrated a serious commitment to creating a sustainable and secure infrastructure by creating the Legal Reform Commission. However, limited resources and slow legislative arms have stifled the Commission's purposes. Furthermore, with its current status in limbo, the Commission has very limited resources, which cripples its ability to perform effectively. Without overtaxing the limited national budget, the Commission could make use of the Diaspora through but not limited to the recommendations below. If properly utilized, the Commission could demonstrate its efficacy and the need for its work, thus leaving the Legislature no choice but to ratify it.

Prison System Reform

Liberia's prison system is overcrowded and in a state of chaos. According to a report released by Rescue Alternatives Liberia (RAL), the prison system in Liberia is in a deplorable state and needs immediate attention. Even the Auditor General of the Republic of Liberia, John S. Morlu II, has commissioned a performance audit on the prison system under the Ministry of Justice.

From prolonged pre-trial to prisoners not knowing their basic legal rights or how to access and enforce them, the system is in need of a critical restructuring.

Current state of Liberia's Prison System:

- A number of detention facilities in the country are not always accessible to human rights monitoring groups, NGOs and other institutions.
- There are no in-prison rehabilitation programs for inmates and physical activities and general welfare programs are not available.
- Medical facilities and services within prisons and detention centers need immediate attention.
- Prolonged pre-trial detentions contribute to the over crowdedness of all detention centers in the country.

Key Recommendations

- Leverage current seniors at the University of Liberia and other institutions in a legal or law program to "intern" as clerks to the courts, maintaining court records and helping prepare the court for prisoner hearings. This will aid in the lack of staff members.
- Ensure that citizens know their basic legal rights and they can access them. This can be accomplished by printing basic laws and placing them in public buildings and by hosting legal workshops, forums or Q&A sessions across the country.
- Create a Prisoners Fund program and allow prisoners to work on farms (supervised) and a percentage of the earnings will be placed in the fund. This will allow the prison system to generate revenue while ensuring that prisoners who are released are given a start-up check as they enter into the civil life again.
- Leverage the private sector to help create rehabilitation programs so the inmates can be rehabilitated before being released back into civil life.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Foreign Investment in Liberia

Liberia and its government have fully recognized and acted on the need to attract and facilitate private investment and enterprise growth, both from within Liberia, among the Diaspora and from foreign investors. Economic growth has been properly identified as an essential component of the Liberian government's mandates to reduce poverty and high unemployment

Liberia has had some success in the last half-decade of enticing foreign investment in major sectors, especially resource extraction, and in rehabilitating previous investment relationships, such as the case with Firestone. Liberia has also seen the growth of its commercial banking sector through expansion of foreign banks, such as Nigeria's UBA and First International Bank. Mobile-phone companies, dominated by Lonestar and Cellcom, are now among the largest private enterprises in the country.

Monrovia in particular has benefited noticeably from the return of many Liberians and the presence of a sizeable expatriate population associated with the United Nations, other diplomatic and pan-governmental bodies (e.g. World Bank), and hundreds of non-governmental organizations. Liberia is currently a high priority country for such entities and institutions. Therefore, services to such entities and business have flourished, from restaurants and hotels to procurement and importing businesses, to grocery stores and auto rental and sales agencies.

However, Liberia has only had limited success in attracting foreign investors, and more crucially, in successfully shepherding initial interest through to capitalization of projects and funding of investments. Additionally, much of Liberia's Diaspora, which possesses entrepreneurial skills and capital to invest, remain offshore.

Liberia needs to build on its successes in attracting investment and fostering enterprise development, and refocus on attracting the various groups that can be captured to invest in Liberia, build businesses, and increase employment.

The GOL investment marketing efforts have been slowed and to a point where one could think there is no informative strategy to attract foreign investments.

A Review of Existing Web-Based Investment Marketing

The current websites and other marketing efforts are beneficial to advancing Liberia's efforts to attract investment and improve perceptions of Liberia as an investment destination; however, many are out of date, poorly designed and without a firm focus.

The following outlines some critical challenges with the current outreach strategy

- **Lack of Coordination.** There doesn't seem to be sufficient harmonization of marketing efforts, or even the mandates and initiatives behind the marketing language.

- Lack of Interactivity and Engagement. The websites do not engage the visitor to communicate directly with officials within the agency, or participate in a community of like-minded investors or interested parties. This is essential for increasingly the yield of capitalized, realized investments from initial curiosity.
- Failure to Anticipate Specific Interested Groups. All of the current websites make some limited effort to thoughtfully expect certain visitors from certain sectors of industries, but tend to focus on existing, active areas, such as Agriculture, or Mining, and fail to broaden their audience; particularly absent are any programs specifically aimed at harnessing the potential of the Diaspora.
- Lack of Activity/Updating. Many of the government's websites are not sufficiently updated regularly to provide with current, relevant information, which is especially important given the rapid pace of change, improvement and development in government policy, regulation, opportunities and progress on the ground in Liberia. While a positive project, the YouTube video from 2008 is now out of date.

Key Recommendations

- The existing websites and marketing efforts should be revitalized, improved and expanded. This should include a meaningful level of coordination and cooperation between relevant government agencies and ministries. Therefore, it is essential that such an initiative be managed at the highest levels of the executive branch.
- Beyond engaging the MPEA, NIC, MOCI, perhaps even the Chamber of Commerce and Liberia Business Association could be enticed to have a marketing campaign to foster foreign investment and foster Diaspora engagement and repatriation (Other relevant ministries, such as Agriculture, could be involved as well). Separately, the campaign could encourage tourism, and therefore engage the Liberian hospitality/tourism business community as well as the Ministry of Tourism.
- Besides the World Bank and IFC, it might be possible to approach governments on a bilateral level (perhaps even such budding donor countries such as Qatar, Bahrain, and Singapore), to assist specifically with this nation-branding and marketing initiative. Other groups might include branches of the US Government, such as USAID, or the US-African Development Foundation or private non-governmental entities which have encouraged investor interest in Liberia previously, such as the Corporate Council on Africa. Similarly, Liberia should examine hosting perennial investment conferences overseas (Washington, New York, elsewhere) with a similar forum in Monrovia, in addition to making a concentrated effort to target key investment events worldwide throughout the year, in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, China, Asia, and North America.
- The domestic and US-located conferences should focus not only on interest from the general business community, but also organize specific programs and efforts aimed at encouraging investment among the Diaspora.

Private Sector Development

The Government of Liberia recognizes that a strong private sector fuels the economy and has developed and implemented some strategies that are helping ease the growth of the private sector.

One of the most notable initiatives of the government in the area of private sector encouragement is the establishment in 2007 with the Liberia Better Business Forum. The LBBF, with apparent backing of the World Bank, IFC, and IMF, is structured as a coalition between several government entities and private sector, to ease commerce for both foreign and domestic companies.

The LBBF made a determined effort in 2008 and 2009 to improve doing business in Liberia, specifically as measured by the World Bank's annual 'Doing Business In' rankings and report, however there is a room for improvement that could further foster the growth of this sector.

Key Recommendations

- Strong Public-Private Partnership - The GOL should recognize the unique opportunity for the key sectors to adopt public-private partnership (PPP) investment. The PPP approach will provide additional opportunity to facilitate freer flow of factors and deepen market integration. The approach will be promoted and developed in 2 key areas: Policy dialogue and consultations; and investments.
- Create a Business-Enabling Environment - The GOL has acknowledged the key role of private initiative, has identified some of the challenges currently facing the private sector, and to an extent has obtained commitments from the international community to help tackle some of these obstacles however, the following are felt to be priorities that require immediate attention:
 - a) Access to favorable financing
 - b) Affordable infrastructure (energy, roads, etc.) involving private partners
 - c) Capacity building (priority to professionals, technicians, business skills)
 - d) Access to knowledge & technology (joint-ventures, PPPs)
 - e) Access to professional consultation for small & medium businesses
 - f) Access to land
 - g) Efficient, workable legislation and regulation (including in taxation)
- Define an official mandate for the private sector in the development process - Recognition of the private sector role in the development process, both as an individual actor and a partner to increase growth is paramount. Private sector should be officially recognized as key participants in the drafting of strategies and legislation, the improvement of aid effectiveness, and the implementation of development strategies. Furthermore, access of Liberian companies to local procurement must be promoted in order to foster local content in the development agenda.
- Develop effective partnerships between private sector, civil society, government and donors - Genuine partnerships and alliances between the multiple development stakeholders should be encouraged. Examples of innovative, effective alliances can be found

- a) between the private sector and civil society through corporate social responsibility initiatives; NGOs and professional associations that support capacity building and private sector development; collaboration with local communities in a number of private reconstruction projects to guarantee local acceptance, security, and employment generation; and
- b) between the private sector and the State in public-private partnerships, including some successful examples of training institutes, hospitals or energy projects among others.

CONCLUSION

The views of Liberians at home and those in the Diaspora are surprising similar: frustration at a lack of tangible progress that are impacting daily lives and increased perception of corruption. However, the GOL is working even though the road to full recovery is still further ahead.

From curbing corruption to dual citizenship, some of these recommendations only serve as a reminder of what the Liberian Diaspora thinks the GOL should set as priorities. Clearly, the GOL is already working on some of these issues and challenges, Liberian Professional Network is extending a helping hand to partner and implement some of these recommendations.

APPENDIX

Committee Members

Elizabeth-Rose Amidjogbe, *Diaspora Policy Committee Team Member*

Elizabeth was born in the United States and obtained her degree in Spanish and Political Science. Elizabeth then went to Law School at the Rutgers School of Law and is now an attorney at a law firm in New Jersey.

Frank Wallace, *Diaspora Policy Committee Team Member*

Frank is a technologist with experience working on IT acquisitions bid/proposal development. After completing advanced studies in French at the Centre Universitaire d'Etudes Francaises, Frank matriculated to the Universite Nationale de Cote d'Ivoire, Faculte de Lettres, Arts et Science Humaines where he pursued studies in the Humanities and completed a DUELII (Diplome Universitaire D'Etudes Litteraires). Frank then pursued a US Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in Government and International Politics and Foreign Languages (French and Spanish). Frank continued on to complete a Masters in Public Administration (MPA) with a concentration in 3rd Party Governance (the structuring and managing of Public-Private Partnerships for achieving public management goals). Frank is also a PMI certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and Lockheed Martin 6 Sigma Greenbelt. He has worked for the Phelps Stokes Fund, Unisys Corporation and currently Lockheed Martin Corporation as an IT Management consultant in the Office of the CIO (Chief Information Officer) at both the General Services Agency (GSA) and The US Department of Treasury US Mint Headquarters.

Jim Brenner, *Diaspora Policy Committee Non-Liberian Advisor*

Jim Brenner is the founder and CEO of Broad Cove, a company involved with affordable and ecologically-friendly homes in Liberia. After Wesleyan University, where he built his first solar-house, Jim traveled through Asia as a Watson Fellow visiting small-scale village development projects. Then, after earning a degree in public policy from Harvard University's JFK School of Government, he found himself a senior advisor to newly-elected U.S. Senator John F. Kerry, responsible for shaping legislation in international trade, banking and taxation. Later, Jim move into the investment industry, as an asset management executive in State Street's Global Alliance unit, and at AEW Capital Management, where he was a Senior Vice President. Broad Cove allows Jim to utilize his public and private-sector finance skills while pursuing passion for sustainable, grass-roots development. Jim is currently a director of the GSE-listed CAL Bank Limited, of privately-held Ghana Home Loans Ltd, and Ecohomes Liberia Inc., and of the non-profit Overseas Vote Foundation.

Matthew M. Jones, *Diaspora Policy Committee Non-Liberian Advisor*

Matthew M. Jones has worked in Liberia since 2008 as part of Broad Cove Group's Ecohomes Liberia project, an affordable and ecologically-sensitive housing estate outside of Monrovia, Liberia. Previously, Matt was a project manager for Suffolk Construction in Boston, New England's largest general contractor. Matt graduated from the Cornell University College of Arts & Sciences in 2001 with a bachelor of the arts degree in Archaeology and a concentration in architectural design. Matt has also studied architecture at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London and the University Of Pennsylvania Graduate School Of Design in Philadelphia.

Seward B. Cooper, *Diaspora Policy Committee Team Member & Board Member of LPN*

Mr. Cooper is a humanitarian, entrepreneur and marketing expert with almost a decade of experience in the financial services industry in one of America's largest financial institutions where he has worked since 2000 managing client relationships for one of Northern Virginia's largest producing advisory teams. Prior to that, Mr. Cooper served as a lead account executive for a leading public relations firm in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area developing public awareness campaigns and media relations. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications with concentration on marketing and public relations from George Mason University. Mr. Cooper currently serves on the Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board and is a Board Member of the Liberian Professional Network. He was recently appointed to serve on the Smithsonian National Museum Of African Art - African Advisory Committee. Seward is currently pursuing a Masters in Marketing Degree from the Johns Hopkins University Carey Business School and is co-president of the Marketing club.

Taa Wongbe, *Diaspora Policy Committee Team Member & Co-Founder of LPN*

Taa is a seasoned entrepreneur and one of the most sort-after telecommunications consultants globally. Mr. Wongbe is a founding Managing Partner of The Khana Group, an advisory firm that is focus on economic and social development in West Africa. He is also a co-founder of the Liberian Professional Network and ONE Liberia, two of the largest Liberian Diaspora organizations. Prior to focusing on Africa, Mr. Wongbe co-founded Pangean Technologies, an award-winning technology company that provided communications solutions to Fortune 500 companies and was sold after five years of operation to a publicly traded company. Mr. Wongbe's experience has covered a wide range of ICT-related industries. He has also worked with numerous senior management teams at companies like Deloitte & Touche, UBS, Morgan Stanley, EDS, and Cisco on issues of technology and communications strategy, organization performance and process development.

Tanya Debblay-Burrell, *Diaspora Policy Committee Team Member*

Tanya was born in the United States but relocated to Liberia with her family for 15 years before the war. She then returned to the United States where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Informational Sciences at the college of Old Westbury, NY. She went on to work for several financial institutions for the next 15 years working in the areas of Business Processes, Requirements, Data Research and Analysis and Project Management.

Varsay Sirleaf, *Diaspora Policy Committee Government Liaison*

Varsay Sirleaf, Jr., was born and raised in Liberia, West Africa. Upon completing his MBA at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in June 2010, he joined the International Finance Corporation as an Associate Investment Officer in the Agribusiness Division. Prior to Kellogg, he served as a founding partner of SKS Rubber, LLC, a rubber farm management company. Prior to SKS, he was a fixed income banker for Wachovia Securities (now Wells Fargo).

Zoe Cooper, *Diaspora Policy Committee Team Member*

Zoe was born in Liberia and relocated to the US with her family when she was 5 years old and was raised in Providence, RI. Zoe attended the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill for undergrad, where she received her Bachelor degree in public policy analysis. She then attended Boston University School of Law, where she graduated with her JD in May of 2009. Zoe is currently an attorney in the Providence office of Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge where most of her work centers around mass tort litigation and municipal government.

