

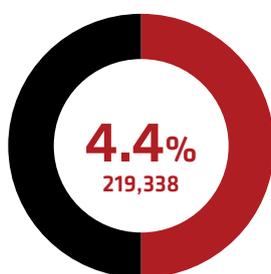


# Diaspora engagement mapping LIBERIA

## Facts & figures

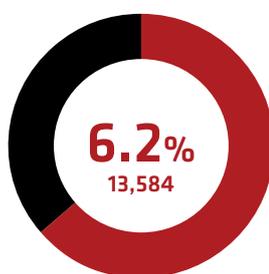
### Emigration

% of emigrants in total population



♂ 49.9%  
♀ 50.1%

% of which in the EU



♂ 63.8%  
♀ 36.2%



**Remittances as a share of GDP: 12.8%**  
**Remittances inflow (USD million): 411**



### Top countries of destination

United States	92,311
Ghana	34,234
Côte d'Ivoire	27,962
Nigeria	21,522
Sierra Leone	9,393



### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>12</sup>



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>3</sup>



No – however, diaspora voting rights have been subject to review

## Draft Diaspora Engagement Policy 2016<sup>4</sup>



This draft policy, developed following a series of consultative events involving diaspora communities held in Liberia and overseas, provides an analysis of engagement challenges and opportunities, as well as guiding principles and policy and programme areas. Its top-line objectives are to build trust with the diaspora and engage them in national development. Its guiding principles emphasise cultural heritage preservation, reconciliation, dialogue and participation. Its five policy and programme areas are:

- 1) Reducing barriers to engagement;
- 2) Increasing investments and remittance flows;
- 3) Transferring human capital and technology;
- 4) Increasing philanthropy;
- 5) Building the institutional framework.

1 *Alien and Nationality Law 1974*. Liberia. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4c591e872.pdf>.

2 Despite the prohibition of dual citizenship in the Alien and Nationality Law of 1974, the Constitution (Article 27) states, "All persons who, on the coming into force of this Constitution were lawfully citizens of Liberia shall continue to be Liberian citizens." Article 28 further states that anyone born to at least one Liberian parent also qualifies for citizenship. A constitutional amendment was adopted by the Senate in 2019 to allow dual citizenship, which is subject to a referendum planned in 2020 See: Karmo, Henry. 2019. "Liberia: Senate Passes Dual Citizenship Bill". *Front Page Africa*, 2019. <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-senate-passes-dual-citizenship-bill/>.

3 Sonpon III, Leroy. 2019. "Liberia: Voting Rights For Diaspora Liberians Under Legislative Review". *AllAfrica*, 2019. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201905200610.html>.

4 Diaspora Affairs Unit. 2016. *DRAFT Diaspora Engagement Policy*. Ministry of State. <http://liberiadiaspora.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Draft-Diaspora-Engagement-Policy-Liberia.pdf>

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2015** ● **The Decent Work Act**<sup>5</sup> allows the state to license private employment agencies, including those that employ Liberians abroad. This is a major development from the previous regime (the Labour Law of 1956), which in principle banned all recruitment of Liberians for employment abroad.<sup>6</sup>
- 2016** ● The **National Migration Policy** states the government's aim to promote an enabling environment for diaspora contributions, while laying out actions to increase competition between remittance service providers, to enhance rural access to formal money transfer services, to hold a referendum on dual citizenship, and to address the return and replacement of skilled nationals.<sup>7</sup>
- 2014**  
∨  
**2018** ● The **Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)**<sup>8</sup> is the latest national development plan and follows on from the Agenda for Transformation (Aft) 2012-2017. The PAPD makes several references to diaspora engagement, though it outlines few specific actions. It underlines the importance of "continuous engagement" [with the diaspora] to facilitate diaspora return to establish businesses and non-profit organisations. It states that the government will "remain open" to diaspora volunteers in education, health, and social services, as well as facilitating family remittances. One specific action included in the PAPD is to diversify the economy by establishing a Private Sector Finance Fund (PSFF) to provide financing to Liberian companies. The diaspora is mentioned as one of several potential partners of the PSFF, which intends to finance companies in road construction, energy, information and communications technology, and water and sanitation. Finally, the PAPD states the government's intention to "deploy passport application centers in regions with high concentration of Liberian diasporas", underscoring the government's intention to allow dual citizenship in the future.

### » Trends & accomplishments

Despite its unique characteristic as a diaspora-founded state,<sup>9</sup> it was not until the inauguration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in 2005 that Liberia began actively mobilising efforts towards engaging its diaspora.<sup>10</sup> President Sirleaf's administration initiated several outreach activities to promote diaspora contributions to national development, which coincided with a steady increase in remittance inflows.<sup>11</sup>

During her 2010 trip to the United States – the Liberian diaspora's principal country of residence – President Sirleaf addressed the diaspora in New York, marking the first formal homage to the country's diaspora.<sup>12</sup> In the same year, the government organised Liberia's first Diaspora Homecoming Forum, which provided the diaspora with information on employment, development and investment opportunities in Liberia, while receiving support from the World Bank to implement the Liberia Will Rise Again Diaspora Engagement Program,<sup>13</sup> an initiative

5 *Decent Work Act, 2015*. Liberia. [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=en&p\\_isn=100329&p\\_country=LBR&p\\_count=53](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=100329&p_country=LBR&p_count=53)

6 *Labour Practices Law, 1956*. Liberia. [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=en&p\\_isn=70656&p\\_classification=01.02](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=70656&p_classification=01.02).

7 ICMPD & IOM. 2016. *A Survey on Migration Policies in West Africa*. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. [https://fmmwestafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/en-A\\_Survey\\_on\\_Migration\\_Policies\\_in\\_West\\_Africa\\_EN\\_SOFT2nd.pdf](https://fmmwestafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/en-A_Survey_on_Migration_Policies_in_West_Africa_EN_SOFT2nd.pdf).

8 Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. 2018. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development PAPD 2018-2023*. Republic of Liberia. [https://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/Pro-Poor%20Agenda%20For%20Prosperity%20And%20Development%20book%20for%20Email%20sending%20\(1\).pdf%20-%20Compressed.pdf](https://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/Pro-Poor%20Agenda%20For%20Prosperity%20And%20Development%20book%20for%20Email%20sending%20(1).pdf%20-%20Compressed.pdf).

9 Liberia was founded in the nineteenth century by freed African slaves returning from the Americas.

10 Reilly, Janet E. 2017. Reaching out to the Diaspora: The Liberian State's Formulation of a Diaspora Engagement Policy. *Africa and its Global Diaspora, African Histories and Modernities*. [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=gc\\_etds](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=gc_etds).

11 Bargblor, Edmund. 2019. Liberians In The Diaspora: Are They The Final Frontier Of Hope For Liberia's Economic Development? *Daily Observer*. <https://www.liberianobserver.com/opinion/liberians-in-the-diaspora-are-they-the-final-frontier-of-hope-for-liberias-economic-development/>

12 Reilly, Janet E. 2017. Reaching out to the Diaspora: The Liberian State's Formulation of a Diaspora Engagement Policy. *Africa and its Global Diaspora, African Histories and Modernities*. [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=gc\\_etds](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1097&context=gc_etds)

13 Ibid.

to establish a government diaspora unit and develop a national diaspora policy.<sup>14,15</sup>

In 2016, the government brought together representatives of diaspora organisations worldwide to discuss the draft diaspora engagement policy.<sup>16</sup> Since then, the government has been slow to operationalise the World Bank-supported Diaspora Affairs Unit or to implement the diaspora engagement initiatives outlined in the draft diaspora policy. However, steps have been taken to map the Liberian diaspora through the government's voluntary diaspora registration initiative. Moreover, after lying dormant for several years, the aforementioned Diaspora Engagement Programme was reactivated in 2018 after the newly-elected President George Manneh Weah underlined the importance of the diaspora in his inaugural address.<sup>17</sup>

## Obstacles



- **Capacity limitations:** while the government has taken gradual steps towards establishing institutional initiatives to support diaspora engagement, initiatives have largely depended on support from international donors. In part due to these capacity limitations, the government has only recently reactivated the Diaspora Affairs Unit and has yet to endorse the Draft Policy on Diaspora Engagement.<sup>18</sup>
- **Persistent divisions on dual citizenship:** Liberian diaspora organisations have long lobbied the government to enact dual citizenship. Despite President George Manneh Weah's support, survey data has suggested that most Liberians support the current restrictions. Some academics have argued that Liberia's unique experiences of civil war, forced displacement and national identity have made it difficult to push through dual citizenship.<sup>19</sup>
- **Investment risk:** Weak legal frameworks, corruption, poor infrastructure, and several legal restrictions on foreign investment have limited the country's ability to attract diaspora investment and the return of highly-qualified diaspora talent.<sup>20</sup>
- **Remittances dependency:** Liberia has one of the highest levels of remittance dependency in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>21</sup> While the high remittance-to-GDP ratio represents a development opportunity for the country, whose remittances have exceeded the government budget and supported the country through previous crises, it also renders the economy vulnerable to external shocks. For instance, remittances fell during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>22</sup>

14 Executive Mansion. 2018. "Liberia Diaspora Engagement Program Reactivated". [https://www.emansion.gov.lr/2press.php?news\\_id=4528&related=7&pg=sp](https://www.emansion.gov.lr/2press.php?news_id=4528&related=7&pg=sp).

15 The programme was scheduled to begin in 2013, delayed first till 2015, and then reactivated in 2018 (ibid).

16 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2016. Consultative Dialogue to Formulate Diaspora Engagement Policy Kickoff in Monrovia. [http://mofa.gov.lr/public2/2press.php?news\\_id=1919&related=7&pg=sp&sub=44](http://mofa.gov.lr/public2/2press.php?news_id=1919&related=7&pg=sp&sub=44)

17 Liberian News Agency. 2018. "Govt. Reactivates Diaspora Engagement Program", 2018. <https://liberiannewsagency.com/2018/05/31/govt-reactivates-diaspora-engagement-program/>.

18 African Union. 2019. *Diaspora Engagement Self-Assessment by Country*. <https://www.giz.de/de/downloads/2019%20Diaspora%20Engagement%20Self%20Assessment%20Report%20ENG.pdf>

19 Pailey, Robtel Neajai. 2019. *The struggles for Liberian citizenship*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/struggles-liberian-citizenship-190128050949269.html>; The Khana Group. 2018. *Two-thirds of Liberians want exclusive citizenship and land ownership laws maintained, study shows*. AfroBarometer. [http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/press-release/Lib%C3%A9ria/lib\\_r7\\_pr2\\_citizenship\\_and\\_land\\_ownership\\_24102018.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/press-release/Lib%C3%A9ria/lib_r7_pr2_citizenship_and_land_ownership_24102018.pdf).

20 U.S. Department of State. 2019 *Investment Climate Statements: Liberia*. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-investment-climate-statements/liberia/>.

21 World Bank. 2019. "Record High Remittances Sent Globally In 2018". <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/08/record-high-remittances-sent-globally-in-2018>.

22 Morris, Aloysius Juwee. 2020. "Opinion: Impact Of COVID-19 On Personal Remittance Flow To Sub-Saharan Africa Evidence From The Mano River Union". KMTV News, 2020. <https://kmtvliberia.com/opinion-impact-of-covid-19-on-personal-remittance-flow-to-sub-saharan-africa-evidence-from-the-mano-river-union/>.

## SPOTLIGHT: effective practices



### MIGRANT RIGHTS + NETWORKS

#### Truth and Reconciliation Commission diaspora project

Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was the first Truth Commission to engage systematically with diaspora members through documented statements and fact-finding interviews of victims, witnesses, and perpetrators. The TRC, which ran from 2005-2009, heard statements from more than 1600 Liberians in the diaspora, with over 20 diaspora witnesses participating in public hearings.<sup>23</sup>

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP + HUMAN CAPITAL

#### Liberian Diaspora Social Investment Fund

The Liberian Diaspora Social Investment Fund was established by the Khana Group and the Liberian Professional Network in order to direct remittances into anti-poverty and job-creating initiatives through direct investment in small and medium enterprises, as well as opportunities for entrepreneurship skills development, including in business skills, accounting, and marketing.<sup>24,25</sup> Using a shared-risk arrangement, 75 percent of the fund came from the diaspora, while the remaining 25 percent came from multilateral organizations.<sup>26</sup>

### NETWORKS + PARTNERSHIPS

#### Liberian Professional Network Diaspora Policy Committee

The Liberian Professional Network, a diaspora-run network founded in 2008 that aims to connect Liberians from all sectors,<sup>27</sup> established the Diaspora Policy Committee as a strategic initiative aimed at fostering constructive dialogue between the Liberian government and the diaspora. The committee presented policy recommendations in 2011 on remittances, investment, transparency, governance and legal reform to then-President Johnson Sirleaf in Monrovia.<sup>28</sup>

### ADVOCACY

#### All-Liberian Conference on Dual Citizenship (ALCOD)

The ALCOD is a network of Liberian diaspora organisations and individuals seeking to bring about changes in Liberian legislation to allow dual citizenship. The network lobbies on behalf of Liberians abroad through meetings with government officials. It also organises annual conferences and the Diaspora Person of the Year award, which celebrates individuals making strides towards the attainment of dual citizenship.<sup>29</sup>

23 The Advocates for Human Rights. 2009. "A House With Two Rooms: Final Report Of The Truth And Reconciliation Commission Of Liberia Diaspora Project". Saint Paul: DRI Press. [https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/a\\_house\\_with\\_two\\_rooms.pdf](https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/a_house_with_two_rooms.pdf).

24 Agunias, Dovelyn Rannveig & Newland, Kathleen. 2013. *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development*. [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/diaspora\\_handbook\\_en\\_for\\_web\\_28may2013.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/diaspora_handbook_en_for_web_28may2013.pdf)

25 Sisko, Christy. 2015. "What Have We Learned About Engaging Diasporas?". Blog. *Chemonics*. <https://www.chemonics.com/blog/what-have-we-learned-about-engaging-diasporas/>.

26 Ibid.

27 "Welcome To LPN". 2020. *Liberianprofessionalnetwork.Org*. Accessed August 4. <http://liberianprofessionalnetwork.org/>.

28 "Liberian Professional Network Diaspora Policy Committee". 2020. *Liberianprofessionalnetwork.Org*. Accessed July 2. <http://liberianprofessionalnetwork.org/index.php/component/content/article/57-frontpage/180-lpn-dpc#:~:text=Liberian%20Professional%20Network%20Diaspora%20Policy%20Committee%20is%20strategic%20initiative%20to,professionals%20living%20in%20the%20Diaspora>.

29 Wiakanty, Simeon S. 2020. *Diaspora Liberians Kick-off Dual Citizenship Campaign in Monrovia*. Daily Observer. <https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/politics/diaspora-liberians-kick-off-dual-citizenship-campaign-in-monrovia/>.

## Annex:

# List of actors

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level:**

#### African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO)

Liberia is a member of the African Union and nominates a diaspora focal point to represent Liberia as part of the AU CIDO Continental Meetings.

- **At national level:**

#### Diaspora Affairs Unit 2010

The Diaspora Affairs Unit was established with World Bank support under the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs. The unit spearheaded the draft of the National Diaspora Engagement Policy, including organising consultations with the diaspora in the United States. Since then, the unit remained largely inactive until 2018, when the Diaspora Engagement Program was reactivated.<sup>30</sup>

#### Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)

The MOFA is responsible for consular assistance to Liberians abroad and for passport issuance. These responsibilities make MOFA a key actor in diaspora engagement – especially if dual citizenship is permitted in the future. In addition, the Focal Point for the Diaspora Engagement of the Office of the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs manages an initiative to allow Liberians abroad to register themselves voluntarily into a government database.<sup>31</sup>

#### Liberia Refugee Repatriation & Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) 1993

The LRRRC is Liberia's lead agency for managing the repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons. Created in 1993, the LRRRC has facilitated the reintegration of returnees.

#### The National Investment Commission (NIC) 1979

The NIC coordinates investment strategies and programmes in line with the government's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development 2018-2023. In 2017, it published the Official Investor's Guide to Liberia outlining the potential and methods for investment for several groups of investors, including diaspora investors.<sup>32</sup>

30 Diaspora Affairs Unit. <http://liberiadiaspora.com/about/>.

31 Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2020. "Registration Of Liberia Diaspora Community". Monrovia: Government of Liberia. Accessed July 2. <http://www.mofa.gov.lr/public2/doc/REGISTRATION%20OF%20LIBERIAN%20DIASPORA%20COMMUNITY%20info.pdf>.

32 National Investment Commission. 2017. "The Official Investor'S Guide To Liberia". Monrovia: National Investment Commission. [https://www.liberia.michaelkoelsch.de/download/liberia\\_investor\\_guide.pdf](https://www.liberia.michaelkoelsch.de/download/liberia_investor_guide.pdf).

## Diaspora organisations in Europe



### **Association Entraide pour le Liberia (AEL)** France 1996

- ☑ **Integration activities**
- ☑ **Development activities**

AEL brings together Liberians residing in France. Its mission is to encourage Liberians and Europeans to invest in education, people with disabilities, orphanages and local associations in Liberia.

### **European Federation of Liberian Associations (EFLA)** Belgium 2003

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

EFLA brings together Liberian diaspora organisations across Europe. It provides a network of support, information-sharing and social activities. EFLA also organises conferences and events to provide diasporans with information on how to support national development activities.

### **United Liberian Association of Belgium (ULAB)** Belgium

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

ULAB aims to support the reconstruction and development of Liberia, to implement humanitarian projects, and to strengthen the connection between Liberia and Belgium. It has implemented projects across Liberia to provide resources for educational institutions. The association has also implemented activities in Belgium to support the integration of local Liberians and to inform them about political developments in Liberia.

### **Liberian Association Holland (LAH)** Netherlands 1988

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

The LAH supports networking among Liberian diaspora members to promote Liberia's cultural and traditional heritage in the Netherlands. LAH also supports fundraising initiatives for development and humanitarian causes in Liberia.

### **Liberian Mandingo Federation in Europe (LIMAFE)** 2017

- ☑ **Integration activities**

The LIMAFE is a union of six Liberian Mandingo organisations in Europe. Among its aims is to represent Liberian Mandingos in Europe (including legal representation), to promote social, cultural and economic relationship between Liberian Mandingos and Europeans, and to represent Liberian Mandingos in Europe in Liberian political affairs.

### Liberian Swedish Association (LAS) Sweden

- ☑ Development activities
- ☑ Integration activities

The LAS promotes Liberian cultural heritage through events and social activities. It helps to connect Liberians with local resources and development activities in Liberia. It has also taken steps to lobby the Liberian government to establish an embassy in Sweden.

### Liberian-German Association (ROOTS) Germany 1993

- ☑ Integration activities

An association bringing together Liberians residing in Germany.

### Union of Liberian Organisations in the UK (ULO-UK) UK 2004

- ☑ Integration activities
- ☑ Development activities

Established to serve as an umbrella organisation of all Liberian associations in the UK. ULO-UK has also engaged in fundraising for development projects in Liberia.<sup>33</sup>

33 Union of Liberian Organisations in the UK. 2018. "Annual Report 2017/18". London: Union of Liberian Organisations in the UK. <https://www.ulouk.com/app/download/16409913/Annual+Report+2017.18.pdf>.

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