

# **National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy**

**Updated and Revised  
2015**

**A Multi-sectoral Strategy for the Government of Liberia**

**Prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture  
Food Security and Nutrition Secretariat  
Republic of Liberia  
June 2015**

# **Republic of Liberia: National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy**

Monrovia, June 2015

**Endorsements** (to be obtained and included after the final draft is reviewed by stakeholders)



## Executive Summary

With the revision and updating of the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS) 2008, the government of the Republic of Liberia declares the commitments it will undertake and the activities that it will put in motion to substantially reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition in the country in the next five years. The Food Security and Nutrition Strategy 2015, based on the first FSNS, is updated throughout and includes a new section on crosscutting and emerging issues that influence the current food security and nutrition context.

Government recognizes that to further its ambitions of stability and development, the nation as a whole and each Liberian household and individual must achieve food security and improved nutrition. Certainly, the Liberian economy rests heavily on the food security and the nutritional well-being of its citizens. By ensuring that all its citizens have reliable physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, government will be laying a strong foundation for not only a prosperous nation, but also a more peaceful and secure nation.

The **key objectives** of the FSNS 2015 are to make certain that all Liberians have reliable access to the food they need and are able to utilize that food to live active and healthy lives. As such, ensuring food security and good nutrition is not a policy choice of government that it can decide to accept or reject, but a right of the citizens of Liberia which the government is obligated to respect, promote, and protect.

Although the strategy encompasses the food security and nutritional needs of all Liberians, it prioritizes the needs of food insecure and nutritionally vulnerable groups in society, including the elderly who have little support, female-headed households, orphans, the disabled and HIV-affected households and Ebola Virus Disease-affected households. In addressing the needs of nutritionally vulnerable households and in working to safeguard the food security and good nutritional status of others, two demographic groups are **targeted** – infants and children under 5 years of age with an emphasis on children under age two and pregnant and lactating women. The period from conception through the first two years of life is crucial in terms of food security and nutrition, as growth failure in a child during this period cannot be fully corrected later in life. Consequently, the **central outcome measures** of whether this strategy can be judged successful are those that establish whether the food and nutritional needs of young children in Liberia are being met. If these needs are satisfied, prospects are good that all Liberians will be properly nourished and food secure.

### **Scope**

The FSNS identifies a set of public goods and services that need to be provided in a harmonized manner in order to establish the conditions under which all Liberians can attain food security and be properly nourished. In implementing the strategy, government will **emphasize consultation with, joint action by, and accountability to communities across the country**. Such an approach is necessary to avoid problems of irrelevance to local realities related to food insecurity and undernutrition, lack of ownership outside of Monrovia, and limited accountability by political leaders and civil servants for achieving the objectives of the strategy. Moreover, particular attention will be paid to the **needs of women**. Women in Liberian society, as in most societies, play central roles in ensuring food security and in improving nutrition as household food preparers and caregivers and as food producers and marketers. It is also sensitive to the **needs of youth**, who have important responsibilities for the emergence of a prosperous Liberia.

The FSNS is a **multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral strategy**. It is neither an agricultural nor a rural strategy, in spite of its formulation being led by the Ministry of Agriculture. Its objectives will be achieved through the joint actions of multiple sectors and agencies of government, working with local and international partners, both in civil society and in the private sector. While the agricultural sector is critical to assuring the availability of food in the country, the participation of several other sectors and agencies is also necessary. Consequently, multi-sectoral coordination will be required to attain the objectives of the FSNS. The institutional mechanisms for doing so are laid out in this strategy.

The basic motivation for government to work towards ensuring that all Liberians are able to properly and reliably feed themselves and are well nourished is simply that these are moral imperatives. Accordingly, food has long been recognized as a **fundamental human right**, spelled out in key international conventions to which Liberia is a signatory. The government of Liberia is the primary duty-bearer with regard to ensuring that rights to food and proper nutrition are fulfilled. As such government will respect and protect those resources by which Liberians have maintained and pursued their own food security and nutrition goals, it will devise new means to facilitate their efforts, and, when their efforts falter, the state will devise and promote safety nets that provide for their food security.

Entirely consistent with this human rights motive, the FSNS has been developed to contribute to the attainment of several **other priorities of government**.

- ◆ It is congruent with the **Agenda for Transformation (AfT)** that was formulated in 2013. While the FSNS contributes to or is bolstered by actions under all four pillars of the AfT, Pillar 2, Economic Transformation, directly supports agriculture, markets and food production and contributes to food security and nutrition and is most closely linked both as a critical input to activities under this pillar and as an output of them.

- ◆ The first FSNS enabled Liberia to make progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal 1, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The Sustainable Development Goals, under development, similarly emphasize eradicating poverty, hunger and malnutrition and this strategy will contribute to continued progress in reducing them. Moreover, food security and improved nutrition also provide an enabling environment for achieving the other goals, while the progressive achievement of those goals will further enhance food security and improved nutrition.

- ◆ At sectoral level, progress is made towards the objectives of policy formulations in agriculture, health and education by the actions to be taken to achieve FSNS priorities. The FSNS is congruent with the policies and strategies of collaborating ministries and acts as a catalyst to the integration of food security and nutrition cross-sectorally.

- ◆ Finally, strengthening of local decision making and implementation processes in addressing food insecurity and undernutrition under the FSNS reflects government's desire to operate in a participatory, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner.

### ***Conceptual framework of food security and nutrition***

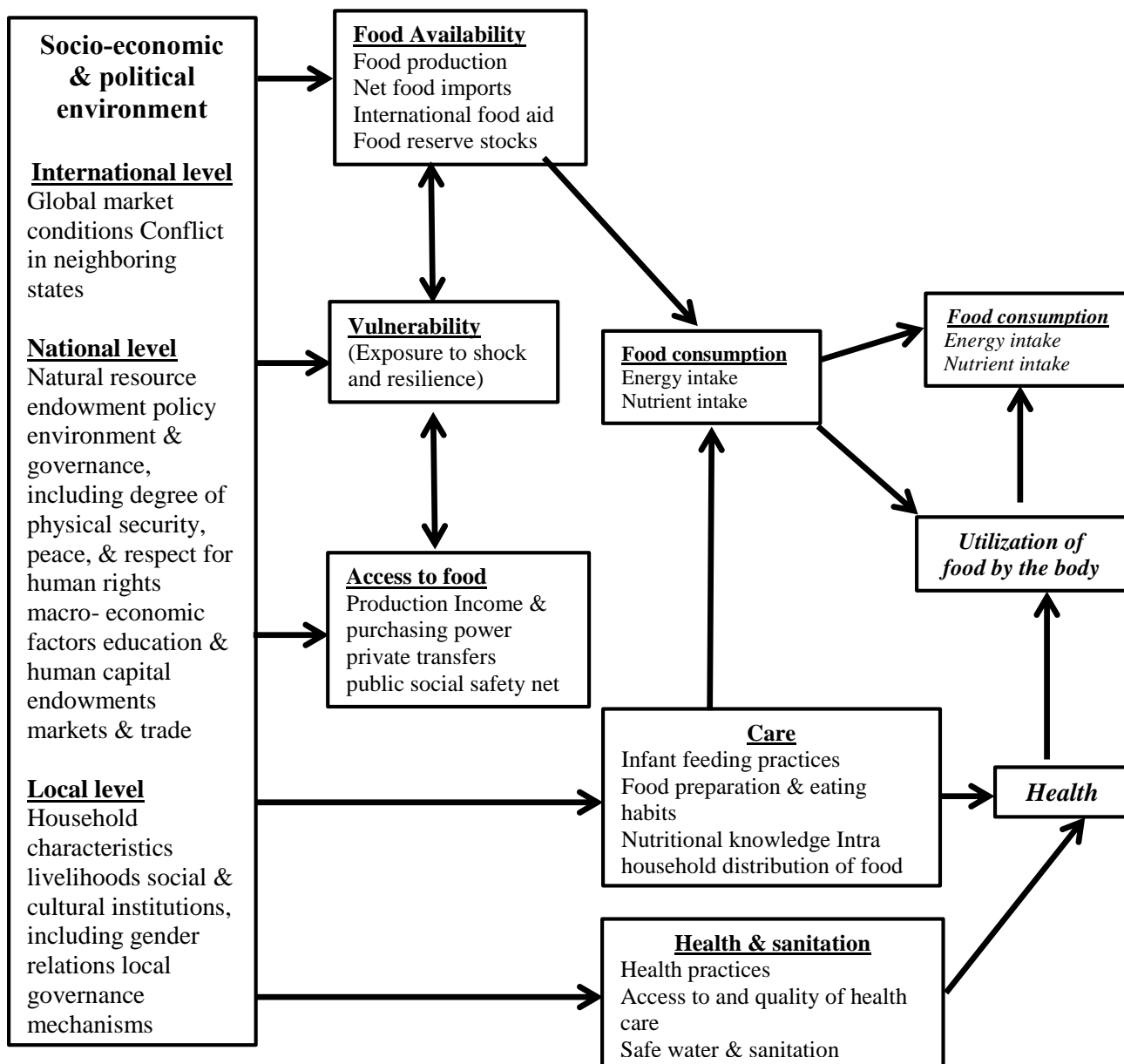
In order to draw insights for policy and action to address food insecurity and undernutrition, four separate dimensions of food security can be described. Food **availability**, **access** to food, and **utilization** of food are the three dimensions which reflect the physical flow of food from production to its use by the body for metabolic processes. The fourth dimension of **vulnerability** provides a future-oriented perspective on food security. A **conceptual framework** on the four dimensions and how they interact to contribute to the nutritional status of an individual is depicted in Figure 1.

The conceptual framework also highlights several **complementary determinants** of food security and improved nutritional status. Thus, the socio-economic and political environment is an important determinant of whether sufficient food is available in a society; the degree to which individuals, households, and communities can gain access to that food; and the level of vulnerability to food insecurity. Moreover, the 'food sector' – the agriculture sector, food marketers and importers, and other institutions that make certain food is available – alone cannot ensure food security and improved nutritional status. Adequate food consumption within the household is dependent upon the provision of appropriate care. No one specific sector is responsible for ensuring that caregivers provide effective care. Similarly, an individual must be in relatively good health to effectively utilize the nutrients in the food that he or she consumes. This requires at a minimum

knowledge of how to maintain proper health, access to good health services, safe drinking water, and adequate sanitation.

In consequence, this FSNS is more than simply an agriculture and food-focused strategy. If food security is to contribute to the improved well-being of all Liberians, the scope of this strategy necessarily extends beyond food alone to nutrition and consideration of how food might be better utilized so that all Liberians can enjoy healthy and active lives.

**Conceptual framework of the four dimensions of food security and how they contribute to the nutritional status of an individual**



(Source: modified from FIVIMS, 1998)

**Priorities for achieving food security and improved nutrition in Liberia**

The priority actions that government will lead to ensure that all Liberians are able to have reliable access to the food they need and to utilize that food to achieve good nutritional status are outlined here. Considerably more detail on each is provided in the full strategy document. However, it should be emphasized that the FSNS has been developed within the context of existing government policies and strategies. Consequently, the

priorities noted here are not comprehensive. Many of the activities that are critical to the success of this strategy are already addressed in these other policy and strategy documents of government.

To **enhance food availability**, the overall orientation of government will be established through the *formulation of a policy statement on rice self-reliance*. A central element of this statement is that national self-sufficiency in rice production is not called for under the FSNS, since there are significant opportunity costs for Liberian farmers to produce rice when it may be more advantageous for them to use their land and apply their labor to produce other crops, using the income realized to purchase rice, whether local or imported.

However, with regard to food production, the FSNS calls for *exploiting all sustainable opportunities for food production by addressing the production constraints farmers face*, including in rice production with particular attention paid to smallholders. Integrating climate-smart agricultural practices is called for along with an emphasis on “nutrition sensitive” approaches to ensure that food production contributes to improved nutrition. In producing food, several priorities are noted, including *diversification of food production* for both nutritional and economic resiliency reasons, *improving post-harvest processing*, and *safeguarding of communal resources* that are important food sources.

With regard to food made available from outside the country, the FSNS calls for a continuation of the mechanisms to *maintain predictable and stable food imports*, particularly of rice. Similarly, the strategy proposes a *strengthening of Liberia’s strategic food reserve mechanisms* so that it can reliably maintain rapid access to adequate stocks of rice and other food. Finally, the FSNS suggests the development of guidelines by which Liberia can *make appropriate use of international food assistance*, whether in support of development or to respond to any future food security crises.

To **improve access to food**, the priorities primarily lie within the realms of, first, enhancing opportunities for **employment** and increased incomes and, second, improving **infrastructure** so that Liberians have better physical access to food. Both of these elements are priorities set in the AfT, so are not considered in detail in the FSNS. The economic growth strategies of the AfT focusing on employment and infrastructure development are central to raising general levels of access to food. In this strategy they are considered in so far as they directly impact agriculture. To increase access to food for all Liberians, six priority action areas under the FSNS are considered – 1.) *enhancing access to employment in the agricultural sector*; 2.) *broaden and secure access to factors of production and productive assets*; 3.) *improve adult literacy for adults and access to education for girls*; 4.) *improving agricultural markets and marketing*; 5.) *improve educational opportunities that integrate nutrition, agriculture and food security*, and 6.) *strengthening safety net programs* to ensure access to food by those in Liberian communities who are least able to obtain it through their own efforts. All of these are integrated closely with parallel initiatives of government, including land tenure and labor market reform, efforts to expand employment opportunities, increasing access to education and vocational education, provision of agricultural services, enhancing the efficiency of Liberia’s markets, and providing for the needs of the most vulnerable.

The priorities established to **promote better food utilization and improved nutritional status** particularly seek to address the enduring high levels of chronic child undernutrition in Liberia. Deficiencies in the provision of quality foods and necessary complementary inputs to food result in stunted children, high child mortality, and, for many Liberians, shortened lives filled with illness and reduced physical and mental capabilities. Most of these priority actions under the FSNS are the responsibility of agencies that lie outside of the agriculture sector. Consequently, it is particularly in addressing nutrition and food utilization issues that the multi-sectoral character of this strategy is most apparent.

To improve food utilization and health and nutritional status, three priority action areas are focused on: 1) reducing malnutrition among vulnerable groups, 2) increasing access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices and 3) reducing morbidity from common communicable diseases. As part of reducing malnutrition,



The MOH will continue to improve the *promotion of child growth* at health facilities. These efforts will be linked with integrated management of acute malnutrition so when wasted children are identified during growth monitoring they can be referred for treatment. Within the health system the handful of *essential nutrition actions* will continue to be taken consistently at all points of contact with young children and their mothers. These include promoting breastfeeding and proper complementary feeding of infants, providing guidance on the proper nutritional care of sick children, the nutritional requirements of women during pregnancy and lactation, and controlling micronutrient deficiencies. In addition, the food and nutrition needs of those affected by HIV will continue to be met.

*Improving nutritional caring practices* requires a broad range of activities that are problematic to address within the institutional structure of government. This is because care is not really a sectoral issue, but a community and household issue that draws upon resources supplied in part by various sectors. Improving caring practices is primarily about reinforcing beneficial local traditional practices and introducing new nutrition knowledge to caregivers and the general public, while ensuring that caregivers have the resources that they need to provide proper care to those who are dependent upon them. The FSNS identifies a range of activities to improve care that are to be carried out by several different sectors and agencies.

There are a range of other issues that will be addressed to enhance food utilization and improve nutrition. The *fortification of foods* with micronutrients, currently underway, will be supported. Moreover, the strategy supports government in monitoring and enforcing their food fortification standards. Similarly, *food standards enforcement* is noted in the FSNS, particularly with regards to the marketing of breast-milk substitutes and food safety. *Dietary diversification* efforts will be undertaken to improve the nutritional quality of food consumed by Liberian households, particularly through promoting the consumption of micronutrient-dense foods – fruits, vegetables, and animal-source foods –to complement staple foods. Government will continue its efforts to promote healthy living environments across the country through *increasing access to safe water, sanitation, and proper hygiene practices*. And, lastly efforts to prevent and treat common communicable diseases, such as, diarrhea, ARI and malaria will be improved through strengthening access to improved facility and community health services.

Steps also will be taken to ensure that **enabling factors** for sustainable food security and improved nutrition are in place. *More human capacity* and expertise both in government and non-governmental organizations in Liberia is needed to implement the strategy – particularly expertise in public health nutrition, in food security and nutrition monitoring, and in food policy analysis. *Research* will be undertaken to improve understanding of the food system, markets and livelihoods and the varied ways in which Liberian households acquire and use their food in order to inform the design and implementation of programs through which the objectives of this strategy will be attained. Finally, *community-level approaches*, particularly community-driven activities, will be supported to ensure that food insecurity and undernutrition is addressed within households and communities across the country so that undernourished individuals are reached.

### ***Institutional framework for strategy implementation***

Based on the challenges faced in implementing the first FSNS, the institutional framework for the coordination of food security and nutrition activities was revised to facilitate better collaboration and coordination. The FSNS institutional framework structural bodies include: A **Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee chaired by the Vice President** will be established bringing together key ministers and two representatives of bilateral and multilateral agencies that are active in food security. Tasks of the Steering Committee are to develop strategic priorities and to plan appropriate responses to crises emerging in the short-term. The Committee will also identify where inter-sectoral coordinated action is needed to address issues related to food insecurity and malnutrition and propose options for taking action. All recommendations of the Steering Committee that are urgent, imply policy actions or have budgetary implications are conveyed to the Cabinet through the Vice President.

The day-to-day activities of the FSNS will be the responsibility of a **Secretariat** that will be reorganized as a semi- autonomous body directly reporting to the Steering Committee Chair, the vice president. The Secretariat will initially consist of five professional staff: an executive officer, a communications specialist, an administrative staff and two food security and nutrition analysts. The Executive Officer of the Secretariat will assist the Chair of the Steering Committee in coordination tasks, lead the Secretariat team in the analysis of food security information and ensure that a database on food security and food security related projects is maintained, that information from relevant external institutions is supplied on time and that food security and nutrition reports are circulated to all stakeholders.

**A food security and nutrition surveillance system** will be implemented based on the one designed several years ago. It will be reviewed and updated by FSN Secretariat staff and shared with the Crosscutting TWG and stakeholders for input. The **food security and nutrition monitoring** functions under the FSNS will be the responsibility of the food security and nutrition analysts of the secretariat with support from Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and development partners.

Analysts at the Secretariat will obtain and analyze outcome data from three distinct sources: line ministries' M&E systems; a household surveillance system; a market surveillance system. The household surveillance system will collect data mostly related to access and utilization. Progress in key food security related outcomes and changes of household economic status will be measured annually. Seasonal trends in consumption and coping mechanisms will be tracked on a quarterly basis, to identify changes in peoples' behavior that could signal an emerging crisis. Data collection and entry will be done by LISGIS under a contractual arrangement with the Secretariat. For the periodic collection of data, LISGIS will rely on County Statistic Units (CSU) that will be set up in the framework of County Coordination and Reporting Structures. The current market information system collecting data on main food and cash crops in markets across the country on a bi-weekly basis will continue and data collected and will be analyzed in conjunction with those from the household surveillance system with the objective of assessing impact of price fluctuations on household food security status over time. Market prices are collected for the main food and cash crops so that terms of trade can also be calculated, and availability of some key items is recorded in order to detect potential scarcity that may signal an incipient crisis.

**A Food Security and Nutrition Stakeholders' Forum** that includes public institutions, the national civil society, international NGOs and bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies that have a stake in food security will be reactivated. The Stakeholders' Forum has consultative purposes only and meets once a year to assess progress on the implementation of the national FSNS. In addition, **four technical working groups** (TWG) will be convened based on the three dimensions of food security along with one devoted to crosscutting issues, chaired by technical line ministry staff and supported by the FSN Secretariat. The TWGs will focus on reviewing the policy, strategy and programming needed to implement the action plan under their respective pillar.

**Technical assistance** will be sought from donor partners to reorganize and expand the skills, mechanisms, and material resources necessary for the FSN Secretariat to function effectively and to enable the food security and nutrition monitoring activities to be carried out. Starting 2017, **financial resources** for the operation of the FSN Steering Committee and its Secretariat will be drawn from the budgetary allocation made to the Vice President's office.

Finally, the FSNS has been translated into an **action plan** so the objectives laid out in the strategy can be effectively managed. In establishing this set of actions, responsibility for each has been assigned to the relevant agency and the means for measuring progress toward the desired results established.

## Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	2
I. Introduction.....	3
II. Statement of objectives, target groups and measures of success.....	4
III. Scope.....	6
IV. Crosscutting and Emerging Issues	
• <i>Crosscutting Issue: Women’s Empowerment and Gender in Agriculture</i> .....	7
• <i>Emerging Issues: Food Security and Agriculture</i> .....	8
○ Migration and urbanization .....	8
○ Climate change and Agriculture .....	8
○ Production of Biofuels.....	9
○ Volatile and high prices of staple foods.....	9
○ Investments in small holder farmers to address food insecurity.....	10
• Emerging Issues: Health and Nutrition	
○ Ebola and other emerging diseases.....	11
○ Obesity.....	11
V. Improved food security and nutrition as development priorities for Liberia	
• Food and human rights.....	12
• The contributions of improved food security and nutrition to reaching broad and sector-specific government objectives.....	12
• Contribution of the FSNS with Ministry of Agriculture Policy and Strategy.....	13
• Contribution of the FSNS with Ministry of Health Policy and strategy.....	14
• Linkage with other Ministries/Government Agencies Policy, Strategy and Plans.....	15
• Linkage of updated FSNS with the current UNDAF.....	16
VI. Conceptual framework for food security and nutrition.....	16
VII. The food security and nutrition challenges in Liberia	
• Availability.....	19
• Access.....	20
• Utilization and improved nutrition status.....	22
• Vulnerability.....	23
• Capacity.....	24
VIII. Priorities for achieving food security and improved nutrition in Liberia	
• Policies, Strategies and Programming to improve food security and nutrition outcomes.....	26
• Enhancing food availability.....	26
• Improving access to food, particularly nutrient-dense foods.....	29
• Better food utilization and improved nutritional status.....	32
• Stability: reducing vulnerability and improving resilience.....	36
• Enabling factors.....	37

<b>IX. Institutional framework for strategy implementation</b>	
• Recommended FSNS Institutional Framework .....	39
• Mechanisms for Linkage and Collaboration with other Countries.....	43
• The Food Security and Nutrition Surveillance System.....	43
<b>X. References.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>XI. Annexes</b>	
Annex 1: Matrix of Priority Action Areas for the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy 2015.....	45
Annex 2: Diagram: Revised Institutional Framework for Implementing the FSNS 2015.....	48

### **Acronyms**

AfT	Agenda for Transformation (2013 Poverty Reduction Strategy)
BCC	Behavior Change Communication
CAAS-Lib	Comprehensive Assessment of the Agriculture Sector in Liberia
CFSNS	Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West Africa States
ENA	Essential Nutrition Actions
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIVIMS	Food insecurity and vulnerability information and mapping system
FSN	Food Security and Nutrition
FSNS	Food Security and Nutrition Strategy
FSNSC	Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee
GOL	Government of Liberia
HIV/AIDS	Human immune-deficiency virus/Acquired immune-deficiency syndrome
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
LDHS	Liberia Demographic Health Survey
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MOH	Ministry of Health
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MOL	Ministry of Labor
MLME	Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MPW	Ministry of Public Works
MYS	Ministry of Youth and Sport
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHSWPP	National Health and Social Welfare Policy and Plan
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

## I. Introduction

Food security was seen as critical to peace, reconciliation, stability, and development to the new Liberian government and highlighted as such in the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy. It was against this backdrop that Liberia's first Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS) was developed in 2008. As a multi-sectoral strategy, developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), it closely linked food security with nutrition, agriculture, education and other sectors and was well structured and forward-thinking. It included a well-designed institutional framework for implementation, called for the establishment of a food security and nutrition surveillance system and was coupled with a multi-sectoral action plan.

Through its Secretariat leadership and staff and committee structures, the FSNS had several important accomplishments. One benefit of the FSNS, was that the work of the Secretariat as well as the strategy itself better positioned the MOA when in the 2008 food crisis occurred and, again several years later when there was a large influx of refugees in Liberia from the Ivory Coast. Another success was the effective role played by the Steering Committee in advocating for the Joint government of Liberia (GOL) and UN Food Security Program. The Secretariat and its staff also played a meaningful role in monitoring the Joint GOL/UN Food Security Program and when resources were available, FSN staff monitor other food security programs. Although the more ambitious food security and nutrition surveillance system hasn't been realized, the Secretariat took the lead on the design and implementation of the Market Monitoring System and has been an active partner in the Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Surveys (CFSNS). Another result was the development of the technical working group which brought together staff from several government ministries and UN Agencies.

On the other hand, there were a number of challenges. The Secretariat was hindered by lack of staff capacity food security monitoring, analysis, programming and monitoring and evaluation. Without this expertise, it wasn't possible to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan for the FSNS or implement the food security and nutrition surveillance system as envisioned. Another constraint was that the institutional framework as proposed was never implemented making it difficult to achieve multi-sectoral results or to be properly funded. Because of lack of funds, as staff left they weren't replaced and staff activities have been curtailed. A valuable lesson drawn was the importance of updating the original institutional framework proposed, which would fostered cross ministerial collaboration and allowed government and donor funding, and ensuring its implementation. This has been addressed in the updated FSNS.

As a number of years had passed since the FSNS's development, and during this time changes have occurred in the Liberian food security and nutrition situation coupled with changes in the global context. As a result, food security, agriculture and nutrition policy and programming best practices have sifted. And as well, revitalization of the Secretariat and its work was called for. To that end a consultant was hired to support the Secretariat in a participatory process to engage line ministries and development partners in the updating and revision of the FSNS strategy, its institutional framework and action plan. The FSNS 2015, based on the first strategy, has been updated throughout and a section added on crosscutting and emerging issues, including topics, such as, women's empowerment and gender in agriculture, climate change and agriculture, volatile and high price of foods and Ebola Virus Disease. An updated institutional framework has been included and along a matrix of priority action areas for the FSNS.

The Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (2015) for the government of the Republic of Liberia establishes the activities that government will undertake and the processes that it will put in motion to substantially reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition in the country. It recognizes that its implementation will require action across several sectors of government in partnership with the non-governmental and private sectors and calls for implementing a revised institutional framework to facilitate the collaboration and coordination required to carry out its ambitious action plan.

## II. Statement of objectives, target groups and measures of success

- *Key objective:* to make certain that food is available and all Liberians are able to have reliable access to the food they need (and prefer) and are able to live active and healthy lives<sup>1</sup>.
  - This implies:
    - That enough food is available at all times in all communities of the country
    - That Liberian HHs can access this food through their own productive efforts; or through the market using income earned through sustainable and productive employment. If these mechanisms fail, Liberians will be provided access to food through both customary and public safety net programs.
    - Food in the household and for each member, can be properly utilized to enhance and maintain the nutritional status of all members
    - That the supply of food in HHs remains constant during the year and over the long-term and that the effects of external shocks are minimized

Given the centrality of food security to national security, economic development, and poverty reduction and the stated aim of the current administration that it will be accountable to the citizens of Liberia as it governs, an additional key objective of this strategy is to ensure that all Liberians share a common understanding of what food security means. *Food security is not a policy choice of government that it can decide to accept or reject, but a right of the citizens of Liberia which the government is obligated to respect, promote, and protect.*

This strategy establishes how the Liberian government and its leaders will fulfill this obligation by progressively and consistently working to achieve food and nutrition security for all households and the nation as a whole. Moreover, by making this clear to civil society organizations and ordinary citizens of Liberia the FSNS provides a framework within which the government can be held accountable when the priorities established here are ignored. The implementation of this strategy will be guided by principles of human dignity and empowerment, transparency and accountability, broad participation, non-discrimination, and the rule of law.

Although the strategy encompasses the food security and nutritional needs of all Liberians, it prioritizes the needs of food insecure and nutritionally vulnerable groups in the country, including the elderly who have little support, female-headed households, orphans, disabled persons and HIV-affected and Ebola Virus Disease-affected households. In addressing the needs of nutritionally vulnerable households and in working to safeguard the food security and good nutritional status of others, two demographic groups are **targeted** – *infants and children under 5 years of age with an emphasis on infants, children under 2 and pregnant and lactating women.*

Under-nutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies, increases the risk of disease and impairs productivity at all stages of life. However, it is particularly harmful during pregnancy and the first two years of life which are periods associated with heightened nutritional needs, and brain development in infants. Malnutrition among women prior to and during pregnancy limits the ability of the fetus to grow. Babies with low birth-weight are 20 times more likely to die than normal weight infants and suffer from poor growth and cognitive development as infants and young children and chronic diseases and obesity later in life.

Even moderately undernourished children are at a significantly greater risk of dying from common childhood illnesses like malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, and measles than are their better nourished peers. Deficiencies in Vitamin A, iron, and zinc reduce the ability of children to resist and fight disease. Children suffering from

---

<sup>1</sup> The following definition of food security will be used in the updated FSNS: Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (World Summit on Food Security, 2009)

chronic malnutrition or stunting, start school later, attend less regularly and perform poorer than their better nourished peers with life-long consequences, such as, lower earnings.

As adults, individuals who were malnourished as children are at greater risk to suffer from chronic disease, including diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. Growth failure during infancy up to two years cannot be corrected fully later, so the consequences of early under-nutrition endure. Moreover, these negative consequences transmit over generations. First, this is because undernourished children will earn less on average than their well-nourished peers, experience a lower standard of living, and, therefore, have fewer resources by which to provide their own children with proper nutrition. Secondly, women who were undernourished as children are more likely to give birth to infants with low birth-weight who thus will face the effects of under-nutrition diminishing their potential from the day they are born. Good nutrition for pregnant and lactating women and their children can break the intergenerational cycle of under-nutrition.

Household dietary diversity, or the number of different food groups consumed, is a good proxy indicator for food security and dietary adequacy. Research indicates that more diversified diets are associated with improved outcomes, such as birth weight, child anthropometric status and iron status. Further, more diversified diets are highly correlated with caloric and protein adequacy, percentage of protein from animal sources, and household income, even in very poor households.

Consequently, the **central outcome measures** of whether this Food Security and Nutrition Strategy for Liberia can be judged successful are those that establish whether the food and nutritional needs of young children in Liberia are being met. If these needs are satisfied, prospects are good that all Liberians will be able to enjoy the chance of living active and healthy lives and to contribute meaningfully to the emergence of a peaceful, secure, and prosperous Liberia. As such, the FSNS adopts a child nutritional indicator based on anthropometry –stunting/chronic malnutrition (low height for age), wasting and underweight and diet diversity – as key indicators of progress towards the objectives of the strategy. In addition, each of the FSNS's objectives will include outcome indicators, such as, the percent increase in national food crop production, percent of national food production consumed as part of total food consumption, percent GDP per capita and percent decrease in population living under the poverty line.

The 2013 Liberia Demographic Health Survey (LDHS) found that 31.6 percent of children aged 6 to 59 months in rural and semi-urban areas were stunted in their growth, while the figure for Monrovia was 27.0 percent. County-level stunting prevalence rates in 2013 ranged from a low of 27.1 percent in Montserrado to a high of 42.6 percent in River Gee. Ten counties showed rates of over 30 percent classified as high prevalence according to WHO standards; and one with a rate over 40 percent—high prevalence by WHO. Generally reflecting the effects of chronic under-nutrition in the child, stunting is linked to reduced cognitive development in childhood. When adults, formerly stunted children tend to have lower economic productivity levels and lifetime earnings, thereby affecting their own income possibilities as well as their contribution to economic growth in society in general.

The 2013 Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey found that 27% of Liberians have low Dietary Diversity with a large differential between urban and rural areas: 2.4 percent in Monrovia and 41 percent in rural areas. In nine counties (Bomi, Bong, Grand Kru, Lofa, Maryland, Rivercess, Sinoe, River Gee and Gbarpolu), over 40 percent of households had low diet diversity. The foods most often consumed are staples, such as, rice (primarily), but also cassava, vegetables and oil. In Monrovia meat or fish is much more readily a regular part of the diet. One of the effects of poor diet diversity, and in particular, low intakes of iron rich foods, such as, meat, fish and beans, is iron deficiency anemia. As a result anemia levels among young children and women of child bearing age are high.

### III. Scope

This strategy, similar to the first version, has been developed to state the priorities of the Liberian government as it acts to ensure that the nation and its people are food secure and properly nourished. As such, the strategy is more than a broad policy, but less than a fully developed action plan. It identifies a set of public goods and services that several sectors and agencies need to provide in a harmonized manner in order to establish the conditions under which all Liberians can attain food security and be properly nourished. In developing the strategy, it is recognized that it will be implemented in the context of limited resources and that the costs of attaining food security and improved nutrition must be sustainable for the Liberian nation, both economically and environmentally.

The strategy does not define the specific mechanisms by which the sectors and agencies are to provide those public goods and services. A separate action planning activity was undertaken, similar to the one used when developing the action plan for the first FSNS. It will include the activities required to address the priorities elaborated in this strategy and the resources needed so that they can be effectively undertaken. This strategy does, in addition, provide detailed guidance on the institutional framework for the coordination of the implementation of the strategy, based on the experience and lessons learned from implementing the first version of this strategy. (See Section IX for specific information on the Institutional Framework for the revised FSNS.) In addition, the mechanisms by which the proposed food security and nutrition monitoring will be carried out are presented.

In planning action to attain these objectives, particular attention will be paid to the stated needs of women. Women in Liberian society, as in most societies, play central roles in ensuring food security and in improving nutrition as food preparers and caregivers and as food producers and marketers. Limits on their access to household resources and on their participation in household decision-making exacerbate food insecurity and undernutrition in many Liberian households. It is also sensitive to the needs of youth, who make up over 60% of the Liberian population and have important responsibilities for the emergence of a prosperous and peaceful Liberia.

Conflict sensitive planning will be utilized in planning activities under the strategy. The FSNS must contribute to mitigating elements of the structural causes of conflict in Liberia – food insecurity itself, but also unemployment, particularly among Liberian youth, and chronic poverty. It will incorporate the means to anticipate and head-off shocks that might ignite or reignite conflict, such as through spiking food prices or major food shortages. It will support efforts to address structural injustices in the allocation of resources necessary to give access to food. Actions planned under the strategy will pay close attention to whether there is any bias or perceived bias in the targeting of these programs along potentially volatile social dimension, be they ethnic, income, geographic, or religious. A key principle in the implementation of the strategy will be “to do no harm”. As such, this fits broader principles of transparent planning at the national and local levels and accountability to all Liberian households and communities for attaining the objectives of the FSNS.

The FSNS for Liberia is neither an agricultural nor a rural strategy, in spite of its formulation being led by the Ministry of Agriculture. Its objectives will be achieved through the joint actions of multiple sectors and agencies of government, working with national, local and international partners, both in civil society and in the private sector. While the agricultural sector is critical to assuring the availability of food in the country and the access of many Liberian households to that food, for all households to attain food and nutrition security, the participation of several other sectors and agencies is also necessary. Moreover, most of the priorities established in this strategy are as relevant to the food security of urban households and rural households pursuing non-agricultural livelihoods as to those engaged in agriculture.

Though it is multi-sectoral in orientation, the FSNS will not supplant existing policies and strategies that govern the operations of the sectors and agencies implicated in the effort to attain comprehensive food security in



Liberia. Rather, it will serve to enhance those policies and strategies, providing additional justification for government and its development partners to devote resources for undertaking activities prioritized under those policies that are critical to attaining food security and improving nutrition. For most sectors and agencies, it is expected that the FSNS will expand the objectives towards which they work and the activities they undertake beyond those featured in their current sectoral policies.

Multi-sectoral coordination will be required to attain the objectives of the FSNS, and the mechanisms for doing so are laid out in this strategy. This coordination will include developing and implementing updated harmonized sectoral strategies for food security (MOA) and nutrition (MOH) along with a strengthening of “nutrition/food security sensitive” components of other sector strategies covering topics, such as, water, sanitation and hygiene, health, employment/job creation, gender, education, social protection and land tenure. The Scaling Up to Address Undernutrition (SUN) initiative underway also employs a multi-sectoral approach and overlaps with this effort, thus synchronizing the FSNS with SUN planning efforts is crucial. Further, putting in place incentives for sectors and other government agencies to work together, and providing a legal framework for the Secretariat to the Steering Committee to enable it to hold government sectors and agencies accountable for implementing programs and activities included in the FSNS Action Plan and providing information on food security and nutrition.

#### **IV. Crosscutting and Emerging Issues**

The role of gender, as a crosscutting issue, influencing food security and improved nutrition has strengthened and developed internationally and also in Liberia over a number of years. In addition, global events, research and other influences have fostered new areas and topics influencing food security and agriculture, such as, migration and urbanization, climate change, rising prices of staple foods, investing in smallholder farmers and production of biofuels. Similarly, there are new health issues, such as, the recent Ebola Virus Disease epidemic and obesity. These topics are covered in this section.

- ***Crosscutting Issue: Women’s Empowerment and Gender***

Empowering women and addressing gender issues is critical to improving food security and nutrition. Research shows that women who are more empowered relative to men, are healthier and have healthier and better nourished children. It has also been shown that when women have access to household income, food security and children’s welfare improves as more money is spent on food, health and education.

The recent LDHS (2014) reports that although most married women are employed (slightly more than two-thirds), only slightly more than half receive cash earnings (57%); and, of these women, half (54%) report jointly deciding with their husbands how to use their earnings and nearly one-third (30%) make these decisions themselves. This data supports the findings that women, for the most part, do not control their income derived from agriculture activities. It also indicates low empowerment among women.

In Liberia, rural women are primarily small subsistent farmers and back yard gardeners, where they are major contributors to the agriculture sector, though often unrecognized, due to the absence of gender disaggregated data. Further, they face gender constraints, such as, lack of access to resources (e.g. education/training, improved seed, land, inputs and tools) and, thus have lower yields.

Available data demonstrates women’s strong involvement in agriculture and under representation in agriculture institutes and among land owners. The MOA Gender Strategy reports that women provide 80 percent of the agriculture labor force, 36 percent of the labor in staple crop (rice and cassava) production and 80 percent of the weeding, harvesting and processing of these crops. In 2010, 20 percent of agribusiness workers were women, and 30 percent of students enrolled in agriculture institutes were women, however, less than 20 percent of extension workers were women in 2011. Women’s individual and joint land ownership

with their partners is low; men normally possess the communal land due to tradition. Only 10 percent of women own land compared to 44 percent for men (MOA Gender Strategy, 2011).

Overall education achievement and literacy rates are low in Liberia, particularly in rural areas and for girls/women. Girls have lower elementary school enrollment rates (21 girls to 23% boys) compared to boys which widens at the junior high (11 to 16%), senior high (9 to 19%) and university levels (1.4 to 3.1%), (Census 2008). This is a barrier to attending training and, in turn, gaining agricultural skills, particularly for women, who reportedly lack such skills.

Women do their agricultural work on top of their roles in childbearing and raising children, food preparation, searching for wood, carrying water and market activities. Reports indicate that women play a large role in the value chain, however, they often do not receive a fair price for their produce/crops. This is primarily due to their vulnerability and lack of knowledge, training and entrepreneurial skill.

To address the gender inequities, a desk review and field assessment was conducted. The results formed the basis for the MOA's *Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender Issue in Agricultural Programs and Projects* (2011) and from its recommendations an action plan was derived (see Section V. for further information).

- **Emerging Issues: Economic, Food Security and Agriculture**

- **Migration and Urbanization**

Over the years, several factors, including the prolonged civil war, better access to goods and services, and greater employment opportunities, have contributed to rural urban migration in Liberia, particularly from rural areas to Monrovia. For some of the same reasons, it has and continues as also a global trend.

For Liberia, still recovering from a prolonged conflict (1989-2003) and the recent devastating Ebola Virus Disease epidemic, and challenged by poor infrastructure and inadequate health and education systems along with diminished agriculture capacity, urban population growth and migration compounds several of its problems. Increased urban population tax the availability of essential commodities, often imported, such as, rice and basic services, such as, sanitation facilities and water. As it is mainly young adults who lack professional skills who migrate, they often contribute to urban unemployment, rather than remaining in rural areas and working as farm laborers and farmers, fueling development through increased agricultural productivity. Programming to promote agricultural production and to encourage and incentivize young adults (men and women) so that they remain in rural areas and farm is needed.

- **Climate change and Agriculture**

Climate change is already negatively affecting Liberia, and will make it even harder to achieve food security as it reduces agricultural productivity and harms the livelihoods of the poor and most vulnerable. There are important uncertainties in the way the global climate will change, magnified regionally and at country levels. For Liberia, models predict relatively uniform increases in temperature across the country, although the increase ranges 1 to 2.5 degrees (IFPRI, 2012). At the same time, the effects on rainfall vary considerably from predictions of a similar pattern of rainfall in the North with increases in the South and along the coast to predictions of decreases in precipitation over nearly all of Liberia (IFPRI, 2012). When the effects of climate change on food production are modeled, a decrease in crop yields in the North, Liberia's "bread basket" and increases in the East and along the coast are predicted (IFPRI, 2012).

Agriculture is, as well, an important driver of climate change. Crop and livestock agriculture globally accounts for about 15 percent of total emissions today. Agriculture also causes emissions that are accounted for in other sectors, such as, industry and transport, including production and transport of fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and from energy consumption for tillage, irrigation, fertilization, and harvest. Land use change, much of which is driven by expansion of agricultural area, adds another 15 to 17 percent. Future income and population growth will drive increases in agricultural emissions dramatically unless low-emissions growth

strategies for agriculture are found and used. Thus reducing the emissions (direct and indirect) from agriculture is critical to slow the pace of climate change.

Irregular precipitation, already affecting agricultural productivity and livelihoods for rural Liberian households is expected to become more serious. This is particularly problematic as irrigation systems are far too expensive for most small farmers. Urban areas are also affected, as the prices of locally produced foods are expected to increase and international food prices rise reflecting lower supplies due to climate change and other pressures.

Agriculture production and management of natural resources in an environment of climate change will become even more complex and, especially considering land and water degradation and increasing population growth. Projected risks will increasingly threaten small scale rural farmers; therefore there is an urgent need to collectively put climate on Liberia's development agenda as one of the means of supporting farmer's effort to adapt to climate change through climate smart agricultural practices (conservation, intercropping, diversification, integrated pest management, etc.). Farmers have developed their own coping mechanisms and Conservation Agriculture. However, farmers alone cannot adapt successfully to climate change strategies that foster community based adaptation are called for. Liberia, as it continues to develop agriculturally can foster approaches that mitigate the effects of climate change, such as, promoting more sustainable agricultural practices, including strategies that make Liberia more food self-reliant.

- **Production of Biofuels**

From 2001 to 2011, biofuel production increased five times from less than 20 billion liters/year to over 100 billion liters/year. Resulting in a large increase in the amount of cropland devoted to growing crops for biofuels. The steepest rise in biofuel production occurred in 2007/2008, alongside a sharp rise in food commodity prices. It has since been substantiated that biofuel demand influences food commodity prices and, in turn, negatively impacts food security. Biofuel production has also been criticized because it does little to reduce and may even increase greenhouse gas emissions.

In Liberia, land concession farms devoted to growing crops for the production of biofuels exist. Growing crops for food and fuel simultaneously can work, but food security must be the priority in agricultural policy, and practiced when considering biofuel projects.

- **Volatile and High Prices of Staple Foods**

After staying at historic lows for decades, higher food prices and volatility between 2007 and 2012, hurt millions of people, undermining their nutritional status and food security and throwing them into poverty. According to the World Bank, the 2010 to 2011 food price increase, alone, pushed an estimated 44 million people into poverty. Evidence shows that high global food prices have had a substantial negative impact on livelihoods, and possibly malnutrition. High prices decrease access to food and lead to a reduction in the diversity and quantity of diets, especially among the poor.

Among the key factors driving the volatile and higher food prices is the higher demands on global food supplies for human and livestock consumption, weather events, such as, droughts and floods, higher agriculture input and transportation costs, trade restrictions and diversion of food stocks for biofuel production. In developing countries, low and stagnating agricultural productivity, a deteriorating natural resource base and weak rural and agricultural infrastructure and markets also contribute to higher food prices.

On the other hand, higher prices are an important signal for producers, many of which who are small struggling farmers, as in Liberia and can act as an incentive to produce more for the market, making more food available while increasing their incomes. But higher prices are also a threat-- most Liberian farmers are net food buyers – spending more on food than they make by selling produce, because many of them face obstacles that prevent them from producing more or getting more of their produce to market.

Liberia, as a food-deficit country, is particularly vulnerable to increasing global food prices. Most of its main staple food, rice, and other commonly consumed foods, are imported. In response to the food price spike in 2007, when the price of rice more than doubled, the GOL eliminated the import tariff on rice and set a ceiling price for rice. The GOL also increased its investment in agriculture, and in collaboration with the donors, UN Agencies and NGOs, increased its agriculture, food security and nutrition programming. At that time, the World Bank estimated that a 20 percent increase in the price of rice caused a 4% increase in the population living in poverty.

Although, food prices have been more stable in the last few years, it is expected that food commodity prices will be both higher and more volatile in the future due to more frequent weather events causing production shocks, increased urbanization alongside competing land and food use for biofuel production. Food prices will also likely be driven up by population growth, increasing global affluence, stronger linkages between agriculture and energy markets, and natural resource constraints. High food prices aggravate food insecurity and malnutrition, however, they are also an opportunity to catalyze long-term investment in agriculture, which helps to boost agriculture production and resilience to climate change and to augment food security.

- **Investments in Small Holder Farmers to Address Food Insecurity**

Smallholder agriculture is practiced by families, using family labor and deriving a large share of their income from farm activities, in kind or in cash. It includes crop raising, animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries. The small farms are run by family groups, a large proportion of which are headed by women, and women play important roles in production, processing and marketing activities. Off-farm activities also play an important role by providing smallholders with additional income and diversifying risk, thus improving their resilience to the shocks that impact on agriculture. Off-farm activities are a common feature of rural economies, and offer opportunities for investments in support of smallholders.

Of the 1.4 billion extremely poor people in the world, an estimated 70 percent live in rural areas and most of them depend partly, or completely, on agriculture and produce up to 80 percent of the food consumed in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Smallholder agriculture, thus plays a key role in food production, and could do more. Further, evidence shows that smallholder agriculture, adequately supported by policy and public investments, has the capacity to contribute effectively to food security, food sovereignty, and significantly to economic growth, employment and poverty reduction.

Specifically small holders are highly productive; they maintain and build soil fertility, select and reproduce seeds and build production and storage infrastructure. Small holder farming is more sustainable (for example, it uses less inputs) and is better positioned than commercial farming to contribute to sustainable management of biodiversity and other natural resources. A recent FAO study of small holder farming found it to be one of the most productive and resilient forms of farming with more than three times more potential to reduce poverty than any other sector.

For these reasons, there is growing consensus that Governments should invest in small holders rather than large companies. This debate is currently underway in Liberia, where farm land is leased to companies to grow crops, such as, oil palm. In some areas this has caused disruptions in livelihoods for small farmers and raised concerns about food security. At the same time, the MOA and others are implementing several large donor-funded agriculture programs with components supporting small holder farmers through technical support, the development of farming and markets cooperatives and infrastructure, such as, roads. There are also efforts underway to increase access to land for small farmers through establishing legal process to ensure land tenure. And, in light of the recent Ebola epidemic in Liberia and West Africa and its catastrophic overall effect on food security and more specifically on food production and marketing, supporting small holder farmers is even more important.

- **Emerging Issues: Health and Nutrition**

- **Ebola Virus Disease**

The epidemic of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Liberia ended May 9<sup>th</sup> when the WHO declared Liberia Ebola free with the last reported case in March. According to WHO, in Liberia, the total number of clinical cases was over 10,000 and confirmed deaths stand at nearly 5,000, though the number is believed to be much higher. The effects of the epidemic reached far beyond the numbers infected and their families. Treating EVD patients weakened and stretched a poorly functioning health system with little, if any, emergency capacity. Tragically, a significant number of health staff died from EVD. And, because the health system's limited resources were devoted to preventing its spread and treating Ebola patients, those sick due to other illnesses went without care and malnourished children went untreated.

The majority of EVD victims are aged between 15-45 years old, more often women and usually an income provider for the family, thus having long term effect on household income. The EVD epidemic also disrupted livelihoods and caused widespread food insecurity among families not directly affected by the virus. Containing the virus required closing international borders, as well as, isolating communities and closing roads and markets for periods of time which disrupted the transportation and sale of food throughout Liberia. In turn, prices of foods and other goods increased and, at the same time, farmers, many who had already suffered from lower harvests due to inadequate weeding and harvest labor, were faced without markets to sell their crops. All of which exacerbated food insecurity. The Southern-eastern counties, less affected by the spread of EVD, suffered much more from food insecurity caused by closing the border with the Ivory Coast and being cut-off from trade.

The emergency capacity of the health sector has been built and thus preparedness to respond to another EVD epidemic or similar disease has been strengthened. Recently a nationwide food security assessment was carried out to understand more about the effects of EVD on food security; preliminary results indicate that households with family members that died due to EVD are more at risk of food insecurity compared to households that didn't lose a family member. A nationwide nutrition survey is planned for this summer to assess any impact of EVD on child nutritional status.

The recent EVD epidemic highlights the need for grain reserves strategically placed in locations throughout Liberia. Ongoing food security and nutrition monitoring, a past plan, never implemented remains a critical need as is government emergency food security preparedness.

- **Overweight and Obesity**

Overweight and obesity, among women is increasing and continues to be a more significant problem than underweight. According to the most recent DHS, 26% of Liberian women are overweight or obese with 9% classified as obese. Older women and those residing in more urban areas are more at risk; 30% of women in urban areas are overweight compared to 22% for rural women. Overweight and obese women are more at risk for poor pregnancy outcomes and developing chronic diseases, such as, heart disease, diabetes and stroke in mid and later life.

## **V. Improved food security and nutrition as development priorities for Liberia**

### ***The "Right to Food" is recognized as a basic Human Right in Liberia***

Why has (and is) food security and improved nutrition a development priority of the government of Liberia? In this section of the strategy are described several of the important contributions that improved food security and nutrition make to the attainment of both broad and sectoral-specific objectives of government.

The basic motivation for government to work towards ensuring that all Liberians are able to properly and reliably feed themselves and are well nourished is simply that this is the right thing to do. Food security and improved nutrition are moral imperatives. We all agree that children should be well fed and nourished so that they survive and develop to their full potential and that women should not die in childbirth due to being poorly nourished. *Accordingly, food has long been recognized as a fundamental human right, spelled out in key international conventions to which Liberia is a signatory. The government of Liberia is the primary duty-bearer with regard to ensuring that these rights are respected, protected, and promoted.*

Freedom from hunger was declared a basic human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was first adopted in 1948 by 48 of the member states of the United Nations at that time, including Liberia. “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services (Article 25).” Two elements of this right should be recognized. First, the right to adequate food is fully realized when everyone is food secure. This component should be realized progressively over time as existing resource constraints are overcome. However, a second element is the right to be free from hunger or, alternatively, a minimal right not to starve. This component of the right should be realized for all immediately.

As children are those most affected by food insecurity and undernutrition, the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child, ratified by the government of Liberia, states that “States Parties recognize the right of the child to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health” and shall act appropriately “to combat disease and malnutrition” through the provision of adequate nutritious foods, clean drinking water, and healthcare (Article 24).

In 2004 Liberia ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. In doing so, the country has accepted an obligation to progressively improve food security and nutrition by the maximal use of available resources, as laid out in Article 11 of the Covenant.

### ***Improved Food Security/Nutrition Contribution to Reaching GOL’s Broad and Sector-Specific Objectives***

#### **Contribution and Linkage of Poverty, Economic Development Policy and MDG/SDG**

In updating and implementing its Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS), the government of Liberia is contributing to the fulfillment of its recognized obligations in this regard. Building upon its commitment to meet these obligations, the FSNS (1<sup>st</sup> version) was congruent with the **Poverty Reduction Strategy (2007)** and its priorities chosen in part using criteria used in determining the content of the PRS. And, in turn, the FSNS (2008) contributed to the achievements of the PRS in the areas of poverty reduction, improved food security, increases in agricultural production and undernutrition.

Both the FSNS and the PRS enabled Liberia to make progress towards the achievement of the **Millennium Development Goals (2015)**, particularly Goal 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, which it is most closely aligned. Although Liberia’s target for Goal 1 is not likely to be achieved, undernutrition indicators declined over the last few years. Underweight reduced from 19 (LDHS 2007) to 15 percent (LDHS 2013). Poverty has also likely decreased, however, data is not available to confirm this. Progress in achieving the other MDG goals (education, gender equality, maternal and child mortality, environmental stability and HIV/AIDS) depend upon and are linked to improved food and nutrition security. Conversely, women’s equality and a healthy and better educated population alongside practices that protect natural resources are integral to improving food security and sustaining these improvements.

The post 2015 MDGs or SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) are under development with 17 SDGs under consideration. Interestingly, because of its lower progress to date, there is greater emphasis on eradicating poverty, hunger and malnutrition in the SDGs. In addition, improving health and well-being, including

improving maternal health and infant mortality and diseases, such as, HIV/AIDS and malaria is continued. While, increasing agricultural production (particularly for smallholder farmers), improving food consumption, protection of the environment and sustainable development are more actively featured as goals. All goals are directly or indirectly linked with the revised FSNS.

In updating the FSNS, harmony with the **Agenda for Transformation (AfT)**, the updated PRS, formulated in 2013, has been an important consideration. Pillar 2, Economic Transformation, directly supports agriculture, markets and food production and contributes to improved food security. Programming under this pillar will improve Liberian incomes through improving infrastructure, strengthen and diversify the private sector, investments in agriculture, while continuing conservative macroeconomic management. Pillar 1 focuses on Security, Peace, Justice and the Rule of Law, a foundation upon which development depends. Human development under Pillar 3, focuses on increasing basic education, expanding youth skills and increasing access to health, nutrition, and social welfare services, as well as, improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene; all are linked with forming a healthier, more educated and skilled population, better prepared for the workforce including agriculture and thus more capable of improving their food security and being better nourished. Lastly, Pillar 4 focuses on governance, building and operating responsive democratic institutions and strengthening civil service and institutions and continuing to clarify rights and responsibilities regarding land ownership and strengthening government transparency and accountability. Pillar 4 similar to Pillar 1 provides the underlying tenets and basis for peace, as well as, economic development. The area related to land rights is particularly germane to agricultural production, including the development of small holder farms.

#### **Contribution and linkage to Agriculture Policy**

At sectoral level, the agriculture sector policy statements are supportive of public action to address food insecurity and improve nutrition. In agriculture, several policy formulations are relevant – the **Statement of Policy Intent for Agriculture** of October 2006, the recommendations of the **Comprehensive Assessment of the Agriculture Sector in Liberia (CAAS-Lib)** in 2007, the **Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS, 2008)**, the **Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (LASIP, 2010)** and the **Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Agricultural Programs and Projects (2011)**.

Liberia's agriculture policy documents, as expected, promote agricultural production, while at the same time they integrate food security and nutrition, to a lesser extent. The Statement of Policy Intent lists first, of its five priorities, 'to improve the nutritional status of the population and to ensure stability of access and availability of food'. Moreover, the formulation of a comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Strategy is explicitly noted in the Statement – the first FSNS, is itself, a manifestation of the priorities established in the Statement of Policy Intent. The FSNS also reflects the priorities for the sector as stated in the CAAS-Lib recommendations. In particular, the FSNS provides added impetus to the achievement of the vision expressed in the CAAS-Lib of a transformed Liberian agriculture in which there is broad-based farmer participation in integrated, productivity-driven cash and food crop systems. Ensuring food security is noted in the CAAS-Lib as a core function of the agricultural sector. As such, a key orientation of the document is 'reducing the real cost of food', an effort that to be sustainable, it is noted, will include not only increased food production, but also improving the competitiveness and efficiency of agricultural marketing systems, providing improved technologies to farmers, and strengthening economic governance.

The **Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS, 2008)**, provides the roadmap for revitalizing and strengthening the agriculture sector. Its objectives focus on the availability of safe and nutritious foods in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the nutritional needs of all Liberians; inclusive and pro-poor growth in agricultural production, including competitiveness, value addition, diversification and linkages to markets; and effective and efficient human and institutional capacities to undertake planning, delivery of services, investments, and monitoring activities, while sustaining natural resources, mitigating risks to producers and mainstreaming gender and youth.

Liberia became a signatory of Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Program in 2009. As part of this agreement, an investment plan, the **Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (LASIP)** was developed and approved in 2010. LASIP, within the context of poverty reduction, is designed to transform Liberian agriculture and maximize agriculture's contribution to national development. Its food and nutrition section goal is to revitalize the food and agricultural sector to contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development, increase employment and income, and measurably reduce poverty. Specifically, the food and nutrition component calls for the development and implementation of a multi-sector nutrition strategy with a program complementing agriculture transformation efforts, including the promotion of the essential nutrition actions and to improve nutritional care practices. Local production and consumption of fruits, vegetables, and animal products to diversity diets is also promoted along with fortified foods with micronutrients and increasing access to safe water, sanitation, and housing. Support for the very poor through productive safety nets, such as, food and cash-for-work, vouchers and school feeding is included. A **Nutrition Country Paper-Liberia (2011)** was developed to support nutrition's integration in the LASIP.

In 2011, the MOA adopted a **Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender in the Agriculture Sector** was developed based on a field study of women and their roles in agriculture. The strategy's goal is to contribute to increased agricultural production and, in turn, poverty reduction through the integration of gender in agriculture programs, policies and plans. Its objectives cover raising the level of gender awareness and sensitivity within the Ministry, increasing women's access to key agricultural resources and services, including gender targets among the MOA's monitoring indicators, increasing women's participation in agricultural research, public services, training and leadership roles in key institutions and farmers' cooperatives.

#### **Contribution and Linkage of the FSNS with GOL Health Policy and Strategy**

The revised and updated FSNS links closely with the strategy and department/division planning documents of its co-chair, the MOH, such as, the **National Health and Social Welfare Policy and Plan (NHSWPP, 2011-2021)**, **Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS, 2013)**, **Essential Package of Social Services (EPSS, 2014 draft)** the **National Nutrition Policy (2009)** and the Department of Social Welfare, Division of Nutrition and Division of Environmental Health annual work plans.

The goal of the **NHSWPP** is to equitably improve the health and social welfare status of Liberians through increasing access and use of a comprehensive packages of quality health (EPHS, 2013) and social welfare services (EPSS), decentralized and delivered close to the community, affordable and based on the primary health care model. Its direct contribution to food security lies with its close linkage with the **National Nutrition Policy (NNP)** and its complementary role in improving food security, and with its delivery of social services to support and strengthen vulnerable populations. And, indirectly through supporting improvements in health status.

The goal of the MOH's **National Nutrition Policy (NNP, 2009)**, is to ensure adequate nutritional intake and utilization for all people, especially the most vulnerable and ensure health and well-being for sustainable economic growth and development. Its objective is to: reduce the prevalence of malnutrition and improve infant and young child feeding through policy, food security, food safety, disease prevention, breastfeeding and complementary feeding, micronutrients, managing acute malnutrition, combatting obesity, monitoring, and communication and enabling multi-sectoral institutional arrangements. It highlights the institutionalization of the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) approach. This year the MOH, Nutrition Unit plans to update the NNP.

A number of years ago, to catalyze a cross sector approach to address Liberia's water, sanitation and hygiene problems, various sector actors participated in developing a **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector Strategic Plan (WSHSSP, 2011-17)**. It integrates the objectives of the PRS and the AFT alongside the agreement of the Liberia WASH Compact and activities to achieve the MDGs. Its goal is to increase access to safe water supply



and sanitation and improve hygiene practices, thereby contributing to improved human welfare through establishing and strengthening institutional capacity to manage, expand and sustain Liberia's WASH services; increase equitable access to environmentally friendly and sustainable water and sanitation services and promote hygiene behavior change at scale; establish information management systems and strengthen monitoring, data collection, communication and sector engagement; and improve sector financing and financing mechanisms. Research has established the role of safe water coupled with good sanitation and hygiene with less communicable disease and improved nutritional status in young children and thus links this sector with improving food security.

### **Contribution and Linkage of the FSNS with Other GOL Policy and Strategy**

The updated FSNS is also connected with the policy and strategies of several other line Ministries and Government Agencies as listed below along with their areas of linkage and overlap.

#### **Government of Liberia Ministries and Their Contributions to the FSNS**

- Ministry of Education: *increasing school enrollment and retention, agriculture vocational training, school feeding, school gardens, home grown school feeding*
- Ministry of Public Works: *construction of roads and bridges linking farmers to markets, well construction*
- Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy: *safe drinking water, land surveys, geological service monitors weather*
- Ministry of Labor: *minimum wage, job training programs*
- Ministry of Commerce and Industry: *regulation of food fortification, regulation of food standards, regulation/tracking of food imports, including rice stocks*
- Ministry of Internal Affairs: *Disaster Management, responsible for putting in place Decentralized Policy and Local Governance Act (2012) and the development of local governance plans and budget support*
- Ministry of Transportation: *studies and reports rainfall patterns, identifying transportation from farms to markets (potential role)*
- Ministry of Finance and Development Planning: *Ministry budgeting related to food security and nutrition and other relevant sectors*
- Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection: *Empowerment of women, Social Welfare and Social Cash Transfer Programs*
- Ministry of Youth and Sport: *youth training and empowerment*
- Ministry of Justice: *Enforcement of laws and involvement in land tenure disputes*

#### **Government Agencies**

- Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS): *conducts surveys and collects relevant nutrition/food security information (e.g. DHS, Core Welfare Indicator Survey, Household Income and Economic Survey (2014) and collects data for FSNS Secretariat (price monitoring)*
- Land Commission: *long-term land policy, land tenure law reform and development of an alternative dispute mechanism*
- Cooperative Development Agency: *Support farmer cooperatives with training and registration*
- Forestry Development Agency: *Management and protection of forests as a resource*
- Environmental Protection Agency: *Management and protection of natural resources*

#### **Linkage of updated FSNS with the UNDAF**

The current UNDAF (2013-2017) includes the same four priority areas as the AFT, 1. Peace, Security and Rule of Law, 2. Sustainable Economic Transformation, 3. Human Development and 4. Inclusive Government and Public Institutions and is designed to support the GOL in realizing the objectives of the AFT. Thus, it is connected directly and indirectly with the updated FSNS.

It also continues the Joint Food Security and Nutrition Program and follows programming principles that support the FSNS. It incorporates a Human Rights Based Approach, including the Right to Food and emphasizes gender equality and women’s empowerment, while mainstreaming environmental sustainability, capacity development, labor and employment and youth empowerment—all important to improving food security and nutrition.

## VI. Conceptual framework of food security and nutrition

The definition of food security that is used for this strategy is that formulated for the World Food Summit in 1996 and reaffirmed in 2009:

*“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”*

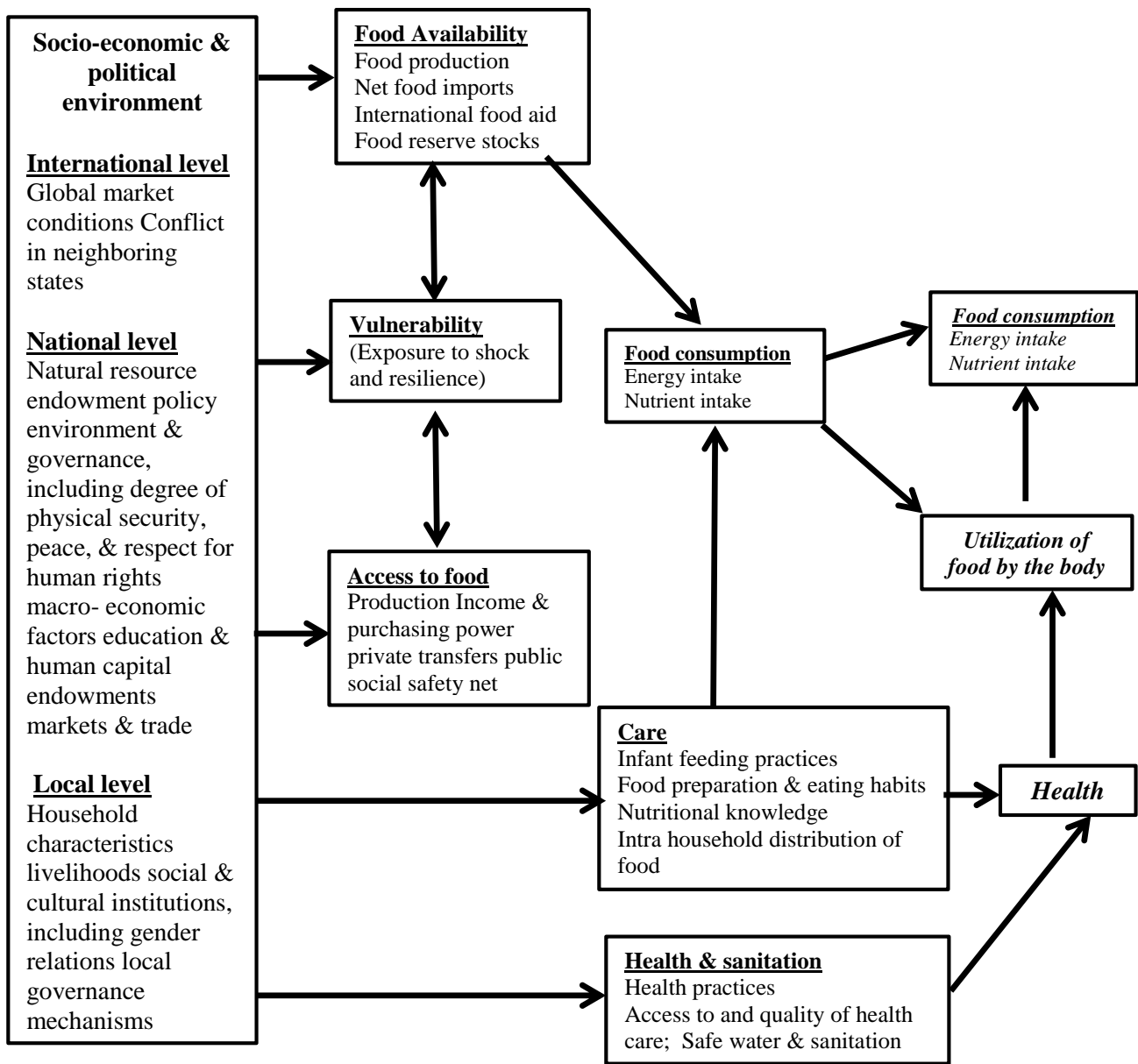
In order to draw insights for policy and action to address food insecurity and under-nutrition, four separate dimensions of food security can be described. Food availability, access to food, and utilization of food are the three dimensions which reflect the physical flow of food from production to its use by the body for metabolic processes. The fourth dimension of vulnerability provides a future-oriented perspective on food security. A conceptual framework on the four dimensions and on how they interact to contribute to the nutritional status of an individual is depicted in Figure 1. More detail is provided here.

◆ **Availability** – For a household or nation to be food secure, there must be sufficient quantities of food available. Such food can be supplied through household production, other domestic food production, commercial imports, or through the provision of international food aid. Moreover, the food available should be sufficiently diverse to provide for balanced diets.

◆ **Access** – Food availability does not imply that all will have access to that food. Access to food is only obtained when households and individuals have the resources necessary to obtain appropriate food for a nutritious diet. These resources may include access to resources for food production through agriculture, hunting, or fishing; income to enable purchase of food on the market; or entitlements to noncommercial public or private food sources. For many Liberian households, access to food is crucially dependent on their purchasing power which is a function of their income, as well as the prices they face for food. Food prices will be determined in part by the efficiency of local food markets.

◆ **Utilization** – When a household or individual has access to sufficient food, his or her food consumption needs can be met. However, food security is not simply to ensure adequate food consumption. Rather it is desired so that the food consumed can contribute to achieving and maintaining the good nutritional status needed so that one can live a healthy and active life. Consequently, the utilization that one’s body makes of the food consumed is a key dimension of food security. Effective food utilization goes well beyond access to food to also require that an individual be able to effectively utilize the energy and nutrients in the food consumed. He or she must be in good health, which is achieved through access to health services, living in a sanitary environment with access to clean water and, for children especially, that they are provided knowledgeable care. **Food security** with adequate **care** and access to essential **health services** and a **healthy environment** are the underlying determinants of good nutrition necessary for children to grow and thrive and for adults to maintain health.

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the four dimensions of food security and how they contribute to the nutritional status of an individual.**



(Source: Modified from FIVIMS 1998)

◆ **Vulnerability** – This dimension highlights the risks to and variability in food security for an individual, household, community, or nation. There are a broad range of factors that can put people and communities at risk of losing access to food – poor agricultural production, loss of employment and other income, market failures, and so on. The degree of vulnerability to food insecurity is determined by the extent of exposure of individuals, households, communities, or the nation as a whole to such negative shocks to their food systems and their ability to cope with and withstand these shocks. Moreover, although not highlighted in the conceptual framework in Figure 1, the complementary underlying determinants of good nutrition – adequate care and access to essential health services and a healthy environment – also are subject to shock and variability in the degree to which they can be adequately provided. Vulnerability is addressed by developing means to avert or mitigate all such shocks – that is, by building resilience.

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 highlights several complementary determinants of food security and improved nutritional status. First, the socio-economic and political environment is an important determinant of whether sufficient food is available in a society, the degree to which individuals, households, and communities can gain access to that food, and the level of vulnerability to food insecurity. Food security and, in particular, nutritional status are defined at the level of the individual even though they are brought about by a combination of individual, household, community, national, and even international factors. Different factors are important at different scales. International prices for the commodities that Liberia produces and for the rice it imports are critical determinants of food availability and access to that food for many Liberian households. Several national level factors within the socio-economic and political environment in Liberia are critical, including the degree to which peace can be maintained, commitments to ensuring human rights are respected, and sufficient human capacity can be built and kept in place. Moreover, the whole range of issues related to macroeconomic management, the dynamism of the national economy, and the efficiency with which markets operate and trade is conducted are critical to improved food security and nutrition. A stable macro-economy is necessary to reduce uncertainty and risk and boost consumer and investor confidence. Macroeconomic management instruments, including fiscal, monetary, exchange rate, and labor market policies, all contribute to shaping the economic incentives encountered by producers and consumers that lead to actions that result in food security and nutrition outcomes at national, household and individual levels.

These and other broad issues, although not directly linked to the key determinants of food security and improved nutrition, necessarily must be supportive if food security and improved nutrition for Liberian households is to be achieved and sustained.

Secondly, the ‘food sector’ – the agriculture sector, food marketers and importers, and other institutions that make certain food is available – alone cannot ensure food security and improved nutritional status. Adequate food consumption within the household is dependent upon the provision of appropriate care within the household. No one specific sector is responsible for ensuring that caregivers provide effective care, but the education and health sectors, among others, make important contributions in this regard. Similarly, complementary inputs from the health and sanitation sectors are required for individuals to be able to meet their dietary needs. An individual must be in relatively good health to effectively utilize the nutrients in the food that he or she consumes. This requires at a minimum knowledge of how to maintain proper health within the household, access to good health services, safe drinking water, and adequate sanitation.

In consequence, this Food Security and Nutrition Strategy is more than simply an agriculture and food focused strategy. Indeed, there is considerable evidence in Liberia that even under conditions of relatively good food availability and access, many children, in particular, are unable to utilize the food they consume effectively and remain malnourished. If food security is to contribute to the improved well-being of all Liberians, the scope of this strategy necessarily extends beyond food alone to nutrition and consideration of how food might be better utilized so that all Liberians can enjoy healthy and active lives.

## **VII. The food security and nutrition challenges in Liberia**

Key indicators of success for the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy are the prevalence in Liberia of chronically malnourished or stunted children less than five years of age and household dietary diversity. Current levels for these statistics were noted earlier. If the needs of all Liberians for food security and proper nutrition are satisfied, households will have sufficiently diverse diets and all Liberian children will be adequately fed, growing well, and with good prospects for enjoying active and healthy lives and contributing to a stronger, more productive, and prosperous Liberia. These statistics provide a good indication of how close Liberia is to achieving this ambition.

The challenges that Liberians face in terms of their food security and nutrition are large, but are by no means insurmountable. This strategy has been formulated to address these challenges. This section provides an empirical understanding of the problems of food insecurity and undernutrition in the country. The four dimensions of food security guide the presentation.

- **Availability**

Food availability in Liberia is relatively good. This is due primarily to relatively open markets to food imports and, also formerly to allocations of international food assistance that have diminished in recent years. Yields of staple crops, particularly upland and lowland rice and cassava, are low relative to their potential and there is considerable room for improving the productivity of food crops in the country. Further, production of fruits, vegetables and animal source foods, such as, eggs, milk and meat, key to improving diet diversity, nutrition and food security are extremely low.

The annual total staple food requirement for Liberia, expressed in terms of rice, is about 490 thousand metric tons of milled rice, based on rice imports and production (MOCI, 2013 and FAOSTAT, 2012). An estimated two-thirds of Liberia's rice requirement was met through imports in 2010. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry reports total rice imports of 203 tons up from 172 tons in 2006 and 136 tons in 2005. While 95 percent of the rice needs of urban households in Liberia are met through imported rice, significant quantities of imported rice also are consumed by rural Liberians.

Food aid donations in 2013, primarily targeted to the food insecure within nutritionally vulnerable groups, such as, pregnant women, infants/young children and school children, were received from USAID FFP and WFP. Over the past few years food assistance has declined significantly until the 2014/2015 response to the Ebola epidemic. These commodities generally consist of bulgur wheat, fortified blended flour, pulses, vegetable oil. Rice is grown and distributed as part of WFP's School Feeding Take Home Ration Program.

Food crop production levels of Liberian farmers are low. Globally, average rice yields in recent years have been about 3.9 tons paddy/ha, while in Liberia rice yields were estimated at 1.4 ton/ha in 2001 (MOA, 2007) and more recently at 1.5 ton/ha (CFSNS, 2010). For West African countries, Liberia's rice production per/ha is among the lowest. Rice production, in Liberia, nearly tripled since the war ended, however, it has leveled off and actually decreased in recent years; this has been attributed to erratic rainfall and the GOL/MOA's inability to replace donor support at their funding decreases (CILSS, FAO, FEWSNET, WFP, GOL, 2013). Problems, such as, limited access to quality inputs (e.g. certified high yielding seed, irrigation and fertilizers), high levels of pests and diseases, limited agro-processing capacity at the smallholder farm level and challenges to maintaining power equipment and high post-harvest losses have been identified. In addition, limited road and market infrastructures creating poor access to markets, land tenure issues, inadequate credit, limited coverage of Extension Agents and competition from cheaper imported rice contribute to poor yields of rice and overall low agricultural productivity.

Cassava is the second most important food crop with 2007 production estimated at 560,000 MT and an estimated 500,000 MT yearly between 2008 and 2012 (FAOSTAT). This corresponds to a rice equivalent of 105,000 metric tons and an equivalent per capita consumption to 49 kg in milled rice per person per year, underscoring the contribution of cassava to the Liberian diet (MOA, 2007). However, given that food security required that "food preferences" be considered and the centrality of rice to Liberian diets and culture and its poorer nutritional value, cassava is not necessarily an adequate substitute for rice. This may partially explain why, cassava, unlike rice production has not increased much since the end of war. In 2008, it was estimated that households on average cultivated 0.5 ha of cassava and yields were estimated to be between 6 and 10 MT/ha on upland farms.

Other food crops such as vegetables and fruits are largely imported as the quantities produced are only slightly higher than when the war ended in 2003 and thus far below requirements. Pulses (e.g. beans, peas), onions,

tomatoes and even peppers are, for the most part, imported. Minimal vegetable production, although increasing, occurs in urban and peri-urban Liberia.

Beyond food crops, livestock production was decimated during the civil war and has been slow to recover. Although the country has an estimated 2 million hectares of pastureland, the livestock sector is relatively untapped accounting for only 14 percent of agricultural GDP (CFSNS, 2010). Chicken remains the dominant livestock kept by households followed by goats. There are some signs of improvement in restocking livestock with 43 percent of households owning some livestock and the percentage of households that own goats rising from 5% in 2006 to 10% in 2010 while pig ownership remained almost static (CFSNS, 2010, 2013). Similarly, Liberia's fish are relatively underexploited. Liberia's coastline and extensive continental shelf hold considerable maritime fish resources--yet fishing is mainly a subsistence activity. Only about 3 percent of Liberia's GDP is generated from ocean fishing and inland and rural aquaculture (CFSNS 2010). Lack of fishing equipment and storage/preservation facilities as well as inadequate knowledge hamper growth in this sector (WFP 2013).

Efforts are underway to raise crop productivity and to diversify agricultural production. Several large agricultural programs (e.g. Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Program, Feed the Future) promoting a competitive and modernized agricultural sector through addressing constraints, such as, inadequate and poor quality inputs, expansion of cooperatives so that small farmers can access credit and shared machinery, lack of established markets, and focused on increasing food crop production (rice, cassava, vegetables) commercially and for small holders. There are also small programs to expand livestock production and improve breeding and to promote fisheries development. Institutions, such as, CARI and the Extension system are being strengthened to provide improved seed and planting materials as well as to provide training in improved agricultural methods and practices.

- **Access**

Households can access food through purchases, own production, or food aid to obtain sufficient and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences. Food consumption, frequency and dietary diversity are good proxy indicators to assess the access dimension of food security. Dietary diversity is highly correlated with household income, calorie and protein and overall diet adequacy, birth weight and child nutrition status, and improved hemoglobin concentration. Based on the dietary diversity measure, the CFSNS (2013) estimated that 41 percent of rural households have low diet diversity<sup>2</sup>. At the county level, in Bomi, Bong, Grand Kru, River Gee and Maryland the proportion with low diversity is closer to half, while in Rivercess the prevalence is as high as 60 percent. In Lofa, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Grand Kru and Maryland counties, more than 65 percent of households have poor or borderline diets. Urban households in Monrovia have much better access to food – here only 2.4 percent have low diet diversity and 61 percent have adequately diverse diets.

Besides rice, Liberians typically eat pastes made from ground cassava, plantain or potatoes with vegetables. On the coast, fish and seafood are consumed while in the interior Liberians eat goat or bush meat—but usually in small portions and not frequently enough. Milk, eggs and pulses are rarely consumed outside of Monrovia. These results imply that any strategies towards improved access to food should focus on improving access to vegetables, fruits, pulses and animal source foods to improve dietary diversity, particularly for the rural Liberians.

Traditionally, access to food for many Liberian farmers is assured through the production of food from their own fields, however, the CFSNS (2013) found that households were net buyers of rice for six months of the year and that Liberia produces only one-third of the rice it consumes. Because it is easy to grow and can be harvested throughout the year, cassava is widely cultivated and used as “food security” crop as it sells for a

---

<sup>2</sup> Diet Diversity is defined as households, over the course of a seven day recall period, consumed foods from four or fewer of the seven food groups.

good price during the lean season and is highly tradable. Nearly two-thirds of cassava producers process or dry it for home consumption and sale. Almost three-quarters of rural households buy food and just one-fifth are able to rely on their own production, while 94 percent of urban households purchase their food at the market (CFSNS, 2013). Efficient food-marketing systems clearly are the principal pillar of urban food security in Liberia. However, these results indicate that most households – not only urban but also rural households – are highly dependent on a functioning market system, particularly during the agricultural lean season.

The market network in Liberia, though improving is still limited, particularly inland, reflecting low population densities and difficult transport and communication conditions. In consequence, simple physical access to food in the market is problematic for many Liberian households –particularly in the geographically more isolated counties – Gbarpolu, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Rivergee, Grand Kru, and Rivercess. The 2007 Liberia market review noted that 81 percent of households have access to weekly markets, however, they have to walk for an average of 2.5 hours to reach them. Just 29 percent of households report having access to daily markets. The CFSNS (2010) reports that the areas with the poorest road networks are the most food insecure and distance has a significant negative correlation with adequate food consumption scores. In addition, the lack of markets is hampering agricultural development since farmers cannot bring their surplus production to market, and hence have no incentive to increase production.

Economic access to *food* is of equal concern. This is a function of the income households earn and the food prices they must pay. Income is dependent upon employment. Overall employment in Liberia is low at 38% (Census 2008) and regular employment even lower. The 2010 Labor Force Survey reports that 68 percent of employed Liberians work in the informal sector without regular wages or benefits. The AFT highlights the growth of employment and output in agriculture, along with small-scale mining and forestry, agro-processing and other industries that produce import-substitutes. Further, it elaborates how development of these sectors, along with commercial and service enterprises, is necessary for GDP growth to translate into poverty reduction through increased employment and private enterprise. It also outlines how public services and infrastructure will be supported by the tax and royalty revenue provided by the private economy and concessions. And, calls for the exploitation of concession agreements so that the Private Public Partnerships will provide infrastructure, workers' training and support smallholders.

Agriculture, including food and cash crops, small holders and casual labors employs 67 percent of the labor force. Most farmers are subsistence farmers with small plots and tenuous land possession. During the past decade rural households with access to agricultural land increased to 88 percent, but more recently it steadily declined to 73 percent (CFSNS 2013). To make ends meet, most rural small farmers have diverse livelihoods. Interestingly, food crop production is the primary income source for slightly more than one-third of rural and less than 10 percent of urban households (CFSNS 2013). Other rural households specialized in one or a combination of livelihoods, such as, cash crop production, salaried employment, palm oil processing, petty trade, casual labor, charcoal production, mining and rubber production. Often, even a combination of rural livelihoods often doesn't provide sufficient means. Food security, wealth and diet diversity were found to be lowest among households engaged in charcoal or palm oil production, mining, casual labor, food or cash crop production, petty trade and rubber tapping (CFSNS 2013). The more food secure livelihoods included salaried and skilled labor, trade and shop owners, more commonly found in urban areas.

Market prices – both the price paid for food and the price that producers receive when they bring products for sale at the market – also are key factors in access to food. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry imposes price ceilings on imported rice at each stage of the marketing chain—importers, suppliers, and marketers. Prices for other foods are unregulated. In response to the food crisis in 2008, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry imposed a temporary suspension of import duties on rice (US \$2.10 per kg/bag). It is still in effect today representing a significant estimated loss of over US\$100 million per annum to import duties; and coupled with Liberia's long-standing policy of encouraging cheap rice imports, it discourages local rice production and promotes reliance on cheap imports. For the principal cash crops, producer prices are

dependent upon world market prices and the availability of local buyers. For rubber, formerly one of Liberia's primary exports, currently local prices are very low, reflecting the low global demand and crash in prices in recent years. The crash in rubber prices contributed to the decline in Liberia's growth rate. However, for cocoa and coffee, the cash crops most widely grown by smallholders, regardless of the level of world prices, local farmers currently earn little from their crops due to insufficient numbers of buyers in local markets. Other crops of commercial interest include oil palm and, for the Monrovia market, vegetables.

Finally, access to food in Liberia is also provided through targeted food assistance programs, more common in the last decade, however, some still exist. For example, the WFP and the Ministry of Education implement a take-home ration to encourage girls to enroll and attend school, in counties designated as having high levels of food insecurity. The rice provided in the take-home ration is grown by farmers' groups trained by WFP; contracts for the purchase of the rice are entered into between the farmers' groups and WFP. WFP also supported a supplemental feeding program for malnourished, pregnant and lactating women and infants and young children in food insecure counties.

USAID supports an agricultural and rural development program with a strong gender, nutrition and health component, in four counties (Lofa, Bong, Grand Gedeh and River Gee) and relies in part on monetizing donor food aid to support its operational activities. Food assistance is also provided as direct support to targeted beneficiaries and their households.

- ***Utilization and improved nutrition status***

The utilization dimension of food security takes into account the availability of and access to food, but also reflects caring practice and health related complementary inputs including access and availability of soap and good hygiene practices. The anthropometric indicators that are the key outcome measures for this strategy integrate these factors as measures of nutritional status.

Trends in the levels of the child undernutrition measures in Liberia have been relatively constant through the years with some recent improvement. Although the measures used are not exactly comparable, the 1976 Liberia National Nutrition Survey found that 24 percent of children under 5 years of age were underweight. The Liberia National Nutrition Survey of 1999-2000 similarly found 26.4 percent of children under 5 years of age to be underweight, 39 percent were stunted in their growth, and 6 percent were wasted and acutely undernourished, not so different from the figures found in the 2007 Demographic Health Survey 19, 39, and 8 percent, respectively. However, the most recent Demographic Health Survey reports significant improvements in stunting, reduced to 32 percent and underweight, reduced to 15% and also a decline in wasting to 6 percent. The recent improvements in anthropometric indicators coincided with reductions in poverty and improvements in food security between 2007 and 2013. At the same time, although still constraints, access to health care, safe water and sanitation increased. Even with the reduction in stunting, at 32 percent, it still one in three children under 5 years of age and falls above the "high" threshold set by WHO.

Several factors related to health and care can be considered as potential determinants of the high levels of chronic undernutrition or stunting found in Liberia:

- ◆ Educational attainment levels of adult women provide a proxy measure for the knowledge of proper nutritional and health care practices by mothers. Though women's educational levels in Liberia are improving, they are still low. Nationally forty-seven percent of adult women and sixty-three percent in rural areas were found to have had no formal education (DHS, 2013). Moreover, for most who attend school, they do not complete elementary school. Only 41 percent of women reported completing elementary school (DHS, 2013).

- ◆ Breastfeeding is the principal source of nutrition for infants in Liberia, as it should be. However, breastfeeding feeding practices, though improving could be further improved. For example, exclusive



breastfeeding should be practiced until an infant is 6 months old. The recent DHS found that 55 percent of infants under 6 months of age were breastfed, an increase from 29 percent reported in 2007 (DHS, 2007, 2013).

- ◆ Compliance with the recommendations for feeding young children (6 to 23 months) solid and semi-solid foods is poor in Liberia and little consistent information has been collected to measure progress. WHO/UNICEF minimum recommendations include the feeding of breast milk twice daily, eating a diversity of foods, including animal-source foods and vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables daily, and be fed a minimum amount of times, depending on age grouping. Eighty-three percent of young children received breast milk or an appropriate substitute in accordance with the recommendations, while only 30 percent were fed the minimum number of times appropriate for their age and 11 percent had adequately diverse diets with only 4 percent of Liberian children age 6-23 months meeting the minimum standards with respect to all three infant and young child feeding practices (DHS, 2013).

- ◆ Access to health services similarly is important to ensuring that children are well nourished. In urban areas, health care is fairly accessible. However, in rural Liberia, 31 percent of households walk of over 2 hours to reach a health facility and longer during the rainy season. Rivercess, Grand and Bong residents face even longer walk on average and in Gbarpolu, 35% have no access to health facilities (CFNS, 2013). And, when one reaches a health facility, it often lacks basic drugs and are often short staffed, more so in rural areas.

- ◆ Household access to and an improved source of drinking, is relatively high at 73 percent, though much lower in rural areas at 56 percent compared to 86 percent in urban areas (DHS, 2013). Little progress in approving safe water access has been made since 2007.

- ◆ In terms of sanitation, 45 percent of households have no toilet facility at all, an improvement over the 55 percent reported in the 2007 LDHS. Still, this represents 24 percent of households in urban areas and 73 percent of households in rural areas lacking any toilet facility (DHS, 2013).

Moreover, the quality of the diets consumed, in terms of protein and micronutrient content, is also an important determinant of nutritional status and, stunting, in particular. As mentioned, evidence from the CFSNS surveys indicates that many Liberian households, lack diverse diets; in both urban and rural areas with poor diet diversity being even more common in rural areas. Further, although improving, evidence of significant levels of micronutrient deficiencies exists. The Liberia National Micronutrient Survey (LNMS, 2011) found iron-deficiency anemia in 59 percent of children aged 6 to 35 months, 33 percent in non-pregnant women, and 38 percent among pregnant women. Thus iron deficiency anemia still represents a severe public health problem, however, significant improvement was reported over the results found by the DHS (2007) and a similar survey from 1999/2000. Further vitamin A deficiency, at 13 percent among children under 5, declined enough in the last decade to fall from a serious to moderate public health problem (LNMS, 2011). Improved coverage of vitamin A supplement and high consumption of vitamin A rich foods may explain this improvement. Between 2007 and 2013, vitamin A coverage in young children increased from 43 to 60 percent. While diet quality and supplement coverage are factors related to micronutrient status, other factors also are likely to be involved, including high parasite loads, most notably malaria and hookworm. Efforts, such as, deworming and malaria prevention and treatment measures among children and pregnant women are also important, and, as well, coverage of these interventions are also steadily improving.

- ***Vulnerability***

Many sources of vulnerability to loss of availability of food or access to food can be identified, including higher levels of pest infestation and damage in farmers' fields or in their stored produce, increased incidence of disease, or localized droughts and floods. However, other important sources of vulnerability linked to food security are market related shocks, epidemics, such as, the recent Ebola epidemic, and, as Liberia experienced in the past, conflict.

Although it been over a decade of peace, Liberia is still recovering from its central source of vulnerability-- instability and conflict. Not only does conflict restrict availability of and access to food, it also affects access to the complementary goods and services needed to properly utilize any food consumed – health services, education, water and sanitation, and so on. Rehabilitation of the agricultural and other sectors are underway, however, constraints, such as, a poor road system and inadequate sanitation are still hindering progress and it will take time to address them. Moreover, food insecurity itself is arguably an underlying source of conflict within the country, motivating conflict over access to the resources needed to ensure access to sufficient food. Thus, ensuring food security will remain a continuing priority for the nation.

Secondly, market related shocks are of concern for the food security of Liberian households. Global changes in prices for the commodities that Liberia produces – rubber, iron ore, cocoa, palm oil, coffee, and so on – are likely to have a direct effect on the income levels and, hence, access to food of households that are dependent for their income upon their production. Similarly, continued changes in the prices of global commodities that Liberia consumes – rice and petroleum, most notably – will have equally severe consequences. Increasing demand globally for food crops – particularly increased demand for the production of biofuels – likely will result in continuing increasing prices for imported rice in the country in coming years. Moreover, the supply chain for imported rice to Liberia is relatively thin and concentrated, since most imported rice comes from overseas, with virtually none from the region. With only a handful of rice importers historically supplying the country, this supply chain has been subject to manipulation in the past. Liberia’s history demonstrates the considerable political and economic risks associated with any sharp rises in the price of rice.

- **Capacity**

While the food security and nutrition challenges considered here have been disaggregated using the four dimensions of food security discussed earlier, one other challenge should be highlighted – the limited human capacity in the country to address these challenges. Since the end of the war, some of the experienced and highly trained Liberians who left the country have returned and others have received (or are in the process of receiving) advanced degrees in institutions outside of Liberia. Further, Liberian agricultural colleges and institutions, such as, University of Liberia and Central African Agricultural Institute (CARI) have strengthened their agricultural training programs. However, building capacity takes time and resources and thus, gaps still exist. For example, there are still too few researchers at CARI and agricultural extension agents at the county level.

Similarly, the Ministry of Health has had to increase and strengthen the capacity of its nutrition staff (in Monrovia and in the field) as well as to train its public health and primary health care in core nutrition functions. These efforts are still underway and will need to continue for some time as most nutrition positions were not filled by degreed and experienced nutritionists. Few teachers and other academics in Liberia have expertise in nutrition and food security, so training programs at all levels give only cursory attention to ensuring that skills are developed to contribute to meeting the food and nutrition needs of Liberians.

Lastly, although FSNS Secretariat and LISGIS with support from WFP regularly carries out a country-wide price monitoring survey, there is considerable need to build capacities for the monitoring and analysis of food security in the country, particularly in ensuring that early warning can be provided of looming crises of whatever sort.

## **VIII. Priorities for achieving food security and improved nutrition in Liberia**

This section are presents the priority actions that the government of Liberia will lead to make certain that all Liberians are able to have reliable access to the food they need and to utilize that food to achieve a good nutritional status necessary to live active and healthy lives. In doing so, it bears repeating that the FSNS has

been developed within the context of existing policies and strategies that govern the operations of the sectors and agencies implicated in these efforts. Consequently, the priorities noted here are not comprehensive. Much of the activities on, for example, enhancing agricultural production or increasing employment opportunities that are critical to the success of this strategy are already addressed in other policy and strategy documents of government. As such, no new strategic orientations on these issues are provided here as existing policy statements are assumed to be appropriate for the purposes of this strategy.

To exploit synergy and achieve better results in improving food security and nutrition, policy, planning and programming that crosses Ministries, UN Agencies, NGOs and the private sector is needed. In addition, adequately funding to support sustainable programs and initiatives in sectors, such as, agriculture, health, education and social protection. Further robust program monitoring and evaluation is important to identify challenges and draw lessons learned, alongside program redesign to improve and apply learning.

The criteria used to identify priority activities are the following:

- ◆ Consolidate gains and avoid backsliding in national and county-level food security status, building on the gains in food security and nutritional status over the last decade.
- ◆ Take action to effectively address any acute food insecurity and undernutrition related suffering as they arise.
- ◆ Focus on equity through delivering services in underserved areas, particularly those with high levels of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty.
- ◆ *Adopt a general preference for undertaking activities that lead to multiple food security outputs across the four dimensions of the conceptual framework and are “nutrition sensitive”.* For instance, expanding production and marketing of nutritious vegetables increases national food availability, broadens access to food through both direct consumption and sales income, and improves nutritional well-being through diversifying diets. *It is also an example of “nutrition-sensitive” agriculture; meaning that dietary gaps and nutrition outcomes were considered when designing the intervention.* Such an effort would be coupled with Behavior Change Communication sensitizing the population on why and how to eat more nutritious vegetables.

Soon after the strategy is accepted by government, considerable attention will be paid to revising the institutional framework for the coordination of food security and nutrition activities and to establishing a food insecurity and nutrition monitoring system. A key element of these efforts will be developing the necessary capacity to undertake these functions.

Once a strong institutional framework and monitoring system is put in place, the focus of activities under the strategy will be on making consistent progress towards the sustainable achievement of the food security and nutrition goals highlighted in the strategy. An important feature of the continuing responsibilities of the Food Security and Nutrition Stakeholders’ Forum will be the regular evaluation of the effectiveness of past efforts undertaken under the strategy and the recommendation of modifications to programs and projects in light of these evaluations.

A summary matrix of the priority action areas proposed in this section of the FSNS is presented in Annex 1, pg. 44. This matrix provides a preliminary assessment for each action of what agencies would be responsible, within what time horizon, and what sort of capacity constraints would need to be addressed.

## Policies, Strategies and Programs

### ▪ Enhancing Food Availability

The priorities for increasing the availability of food and the stability of food supplies in Liberia are categorized by source – national food production and food imports – with an additional element relating to ensuring that the country has a strategic reserve of grain or other staple foods. However, first the overall orientation of these activities is stated.

**Formulate policy statement on rice self-reliance.** The agriculture sector has developed policies, action plans and programs for enhancing broad agricultural production, the interest of the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy is with food production in Liberia – both for consumption by the households that produce it and for distribution through the market. As such, the resources dedicated to agricultural research and extension efforts to enhance food and livestock production is a necessary element of the path to sustainable food security. In particular, continuing to increase the production of rice is of strategic benefit for the country for national security reasons (disruptions to import supplies), economic reasons (opportunity costs of foreign exchange expenditures for rice imports), and as a reflection of the cultural centrality of rice to most Liberians. The government currently spends over \$100 million US annually to import rice to cover huge gaps in domestic production.

Moreover, the CAAS-Lib states clearly that Liberia has an international comparative advantage in the production of lowland rice. Thus, continuing efforts to expand lowland rice production and improve yields by addressing production constraints in order to exploit this advantage are important to the food security of the nation. However, it must be made clear that national self-sufficiency in rice production is not called for under this Food Security and Nutrition Strategy. There are significant opportunity costs for Liberian farmers to produce rice when it may be more advantageous for them to use their land and apply their labor to produce other crops, using the income realized from marketing those crops to purchase rice, whether local or imported. Rather than *rice self-sufficiency*, the aim should be *rice self-reliance* by which Liberia acquires the rice it needs in an efficient and socially justifiable manner. Doing so requires attention to increasing national production of rice, while at the same time ensuring that importation of rice occurs in a transparent and considered manner that safeguards national interests.

A policy statement on government's strategic approach to ensuring rice availability will be prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture based on national policy dialogues on Rice by various strategic stakeholders (government ministries and agencies, private sector, farmers and civil society organizations and development partners) to ensure self-reliance in the nation's staple food that The policy will be widely disseminated and understood by farmers, by rice traders, and by rice consumers throughout the country.

**Formulate policy statements on cassava production and diversification of agricultural production:** Cassava is easy to cultivate and highly productive and traditionally one of the staples in the Liberians diet. It serves as a food security crop because it can be harvested year round, is easily traded and sold primarily during the lean season. Nearly two-thirds of producers process or dry it, indicating opportunities for value-added businesses. Soon new higher yielding varieties of cassava that are bio-fortified with vitamin A will be available. However, as yet, cassava has not been given enough consideration in terms of policy or investment. As part of improving food security, a national cassava policy to increase production and diversify cassava by-products in the commercial sector, along its wide range of commercial value chain, is called for.

Most of the vegetables, fruits, pulses and livestock and animal products consumed in Liberia are imported. Increasing local production and promoting foods that address dietary gaps, particularly among smallholders has the potential to improve food security, while addressing low diet diversity and improving micronutrient status. Secondly, a more diversified food system is more resilient to shocks, particularly those linked to

epidemic crop and livestock diseases or pest infestations. Some programs, diversifying crops and including vegetables and livestock while promoting improved nutrition and more diversified diets are underway. As well, some research on improved vegetable varieties and the introduction of improved breeding stock are also being done. However, more efforts are needed and a national policy promoting “nutrition sensitive” agriculture through the expansion in the production of vegetables, fruits, pulses and animal products, including fish and linking it with increased consumption and more diversified diets would support this.

## **Production**

***Exploit opportunities for sustainable food production, address production constraints.*** Most of the rice produced in Liberia comes from smallholder fields. In order to realize improvements in general welfare and poverty reduction from a more dynamic smallholder farming sector, the food security of the nation should increasingly rely on smallholder production. However, this strategy also calls for increased attention to opportunities for food production from large scale agricultural and mining enterprises. In particular, assessments of the available lowland within these large concessions should continue along with negotiations for arrangements requiring rice and vegetables and legume production on available lowlands. Further, agreements with agricultural and mineral concessions to purchase all rice provided as partial payment to workers from locally produced stocks could further promote use of concessions’ unused lowland for rice production.

There are a range of agronomic issues that constrain food production in Liberia, which can be surmounted. Most of these are already covered in strategy documents of the Ministry of Agriculture, but are also emphasized here. Seed supply, particularly of high yield varieties, still limits production of crops. An effective high quality seed production and certification system is a necessary element for increasing agricultural production in the country. Similarly, increased availability of breeding livestock, such as, poultry, goats, sheep, and pigs is needed. Loss of crops due to animal pests attacking fields and farmers limited knowledge of pest management practices has also been identified as a problem. Inadequate inputs, such as, fertilizers is also a constraint issue, as is the availability of credit for farmers. High levels of wastage of food in storage require increased attention to improved storage and preservation methods. Addressing these production and storage constraints through improved technologies, increased access to credit to enable capital investments in food production and storage, and continuing to support the rehabilitation of agricultural support institutions – including training, extension, research, and cooperatives – is critical to achieving higher levels of food availability from local production.

***Improve post-harvest processing.*** Food availability can be enhanced through increased attention to post-harvest processing. It is estimated that over 25 percent of crops produced in Liberia go to waste due to poor post-harvest handling. Producers bringing rice to the market are not very willing to process rice by hand. In some areas, to process rice, small-scale mechanized mills were provided to farmer cooperatives, however, maintenance and repair often became a problem. Supervision of rice mills and training may help to keep the mills running. In addition, private entrepreneurs making mills available for rent in local areas would enhance market demand for country rice. Establishment of local rice mills should result in more local rice on the market and reduce demand for milled imported rice. Other approaches to improving processing and reducing food wastage in storage will be explored.

***Safeguard communal property resources.*** Finally, local production of food is enhanced through the strategic protection of key communal property resources that are important for food security – forests, rivers, the ocean, and other ecosystems that are important for the production of wild food plants, bush meat, and fish. As government continues to formulate and administer management mechanisms for these natural resources, protection of their role in contributing to the food security of the communities in their environs and to the nation as a whole will continue to be an important objective.

## **Food imports**

**Maintain predictable and stable food imports.** Commercial food imports play a critically important role for Liberia's food security, both as a source of strategically important foods and as a means to widen the nutritional value of the diet. Rice is the most strategic of these imported foods, and to that end, a predictable rice import pipeline is maintained. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) regulates rice imports and maintains data on the quantity of rice imported and amounts in storage and publishes this. To prevent shocks and smooth rice prices, the MOCI requires that rice importers maintain a 6 month supply of rice.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry imposes price ceilings on imported rice at each stage of the marketing chain—importers, suppliers, and marketers. In response to the food crisis in 2008, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry imposed a temporary suspension of import duties on rice (US \$2.10 per kg/bag). It is still in effect today representing a significant loss to import duties; and coupled with Liberia's long-standing policy of encouraging cheap rice imports, it discourages local rice production and promotes reliance on cheap imports. Although there are important social benefits that result from low rice prices in Liberia, particularly for those citizens who rely on the market for all of their food, the food security of all Liberians may be enhanced and made more sustainable if rice prices are relaxed judiciously to motivate increased production. Such a decision by government will be based upon close consideration of all available evidence and in consultation with both rice producers and consumers.

While rice is the most important food import, it is not the only food imported into Liberia. Of note are pulses, vegetables, fruits and livestock and animal foods and condiments imported from Liberia's neighbors. While Liberian farmers are encouraged to increase their production of these foods and to exploit all market opportunities open to them, given the importance of these foods to micronutrient nutrition, in particular, the Liberian government will continue not to limit their importation from neighboring states. Moreover, this stance is in conformity with Liberia's undertakings as a member of the Economic Community of West African States.

## **Strategic food reserve**

**Maintaining availability of food under all circumstances in Liberia,** as in any country, must be planned. A key element of such planning in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa is the establishment of a strategic reserve of staple foods. In 2012, Liberia became a signatory on the ECOWAS Regional RESOGEST (Regional Networking of National Stock Management Companies and Offices in West Africa) Protocol Cooperation Framework, which calls for the ECOWAS member states to contribute to the formulation and implementation of a regional strategy for food security led by ECOWAS and to set up a national food security stock. And, although technical assistance has been offered, no actions have been taken by the GOL to move forward on establishing a strategic food reserve.

Liberia, has ready access to food import markets, however, the food crisis in 2008 and resulting export bans, on top of, high and volatile food prices, which continue, are cause for concern. And, Liberia has enjoyed a relatively benign and predictable agro-climate, although erratic rainfall has affected production in recent years. The recent Ebola epidemic illustrates another example where grain reserves, particularly strategic located in food insecure areas of Liberia would have prevented food insecurity particularly in the areas cut off from trade and larger markets. Thus, it may be that many of the factors that motivate the creation of such reserves in other countries, such as weather-related problems and inadequate access to sources of imported food that historically did not apply to Liberia, now do.

**Strengthen strategic food reserve mechanisms.** Perhaps in part because the risks of severe disruptions to food systems in the country that a strategic food reserve could mitigate have been relatively low, the current strategic food reserve system for the country is relatively informal. Government simply has requested that rice importers maintain in their warehouses in Monrovia a quantity of rice sufficient to cover six months of imports. While this system may have proven to be adequate thus far, more rigorous analysis of how Liberia

can reliably maintain rapid access to adequate stocks of rice throughout the country is called for coupled with recommendations on how best to create a strategic grain reserve.

### **International Food Assistance**

*In the past, international food assistance has constituted an important leg of Liberia's national food security.* However, in more recent years, as food security has improved, food assistance has drastically decreased, and will likely continue to steadily reduce, except when food security becomes threatened by untoward events, such as, the Ebola epidemic. Indeed, one potential indicator of a food secure Liberia is that it does not require international food aid.

Food assistance is a potentially useful resource for addressing inequities and supporting economic development. Food-for-education programs, currently implemented in the food more insecure areas of Liberia, improve children's short-term access to food both to improve learning performance and to encourage higher enrolment and attendance rates. One component of this program, promotes and supports the local production of rice for the Take Home Ration for girls as an incentive to attend school regularly.

Also of critical importance are the food-based nutrition interventions or Mother-Child-Health programs targeted at pregnant and lactating women and young children through supplementary feeding programs in food insecure areas. One of these programs also includes agricultural training and support, nutrition and health education and links with the health system to ensure appropriate treatment and preventive care for pregnant and lactating women and young children and monetizes imported food commodities to fund the program's development activities. Another monetization project also funds agricultural development activities. The Japanese government imports rice that is sold to importers with the revenues used to stimulate rice production through purchase agreements and to develop small farmers' rice processing skills.

Food monetization will be monitored to ensure that its' availability does not undermine agricultural production and that the revenue from sales is used for its intended development purpose. Using these revenues to support the private sector to establish the services needed by small farmers all along food production value chains will be emphasized. As part of this strategy, government will request training and capacity building so that any targeted food assistance programs can be transferred to their respective government agencies. Capacity will also be built in the MIA to support emergency food assistance. Efforts will also be undertaken to promote local production of the foods used in food assistance programs.

- **Improving Access to Food, Particularly Nutrient Dense Foods**

The priorities with regard to increasing the access of Liberians to food primarily lie within the realms of increasing opportunities for secure and remunerative employment and increased incomes for all Liberians and improving transport and marketing infrastructure so that Liberians have better physical access to food. The two are very closely linked, as improved infrastructure will enhance employment and income-earning opportunities, as well. Both of these issues are priorities of the current master development framework of government, the **Agenda for Transformation (AfT)**. The economic growth strategies of the AfT focusing on employment and infrastructure development are central to raising general levels of access to food. Consequently, little is added here to the frameworks established in the AfT for action in these areas. Success in achieving these objectives will provide a range of significant contributions to enhanced food security and improved nutrition in Liberia. Nevertheless, in considering priority actions under the FSNS to increase access to food by all Liberians, three areas are considered – enhancing access to factors of production, particularly for agriculture; improving agricultural markets for both food and non-food produce; and strengthening safety net programs to ensure access to food by those in Liberian communities who least able to obtain it through their own efforts.

**Broaden secure access to factors of production.** The vision of agricultural development in the country described in the Statement of Policy Intent in Agriculture, one of the policy documents for the Ministry of

Agriculture, consists of the “*transformation of smallholder agriculture into a sustainable, diversified, income-generating, modernized, and competitive sector*”. The realization of a dynamic smallholder agricultural sector with such characteristics will ensure access to food for the farming households themselves as well as contribute significantly to that of the non-farm population of Liberia. However, for such a vision to be realized requires that all farmers – men and women, young and old – have secure access to the factors of general agricultural production. In working to progressively realize the rights of all Liberians to sufficient safe and nutritious food, a key duty of the Liberian government is to facilitate without any discrimination sustainable and secure access to those resources and assets that are important for people’s livelihoods, including land, water, forests, fisheries and livestock.

Recently a Land Administrative Policy was adopted that includes mechanisms to facilitate land ownership and to settle land disputes. As the policy is implemented and a new land governance agency formed, ensuring smallholders access to land and that sufficient appropriate land is set aside for agriculture will be priorities of this strategy. They will also continue to address the training needs of small holders through expanded extension services and promote the formation of cooperative societies and nuclear farms in order disseminate production and marketing information, to improve irrigation, and to facilitate the purchase of seeds and fertilizer, rental of machines, marketing, storage, credit and other agriculture related activities. Since improved agriculture technologies are a public good, especially for small-holders, MOA will sponsor research that is relevant to them. The infrastructure needs for transportation will be supported by the MPW. Storage and trucking come from the private sector and cooperatives, which the government will encourage with appropriate regulations. The government will also develop product standards to be at par with those of competing imports and will promote their adoption.

For the rubber, palm oil and small tree crop subsectors, the government will support technical assistance to small producers. Regulations of the plantation side will assure environmental sustainability and proper treatment of workers. The fisheries subsector will focus on community-based resource management, thereby improving catches in a sustainable way. The government will work with private entrepreneurs to develop more efficient processing facilities and improved distribution networks.

Similarly, ***labor market reform is a pressing issue for improved access to food***, as well as for the continued national security of Liberia. A diversified, income-generating, modernized, and competitive agricultural sector will require a well-trained workforce that is able to provide their labor on terms that are beneficial both to themselves and, if working for others, to their employers. While some regulation of agricultural labor markets is needed to ensure that workers’ rights are protected, of equal importance is ensuring that all Liberians receive sufficient education to participate in the economy – particularly in agriculture, but in other sectors as well – in order to achieve the vision of a vibrant agricultural sector within a strong Liberian economy.

These efforts to enhance employment opportunities to improve access to food are particularly pressing for Liberian youth. The success of current initiatives to provide youth with education and skills for employment through traditional education and vocational training programs is critical to the long-term food security of Liberian households. Moreover, youth employment efforts can be linked directly to the provision of public goods to meet many of the food and nutrition objectives laid out in this strategy or simply to increase food production and processing. However, to reverse youth urban migration and to promote engagement in profitable agricultural enterprises will require that they have unmediated access to land, seeds, tools, and technical training – resources that are often provided to older members in the community only – as well as to sources of agricultural financing.

***Ensuring that farmers, old or young, disabled or male or female, have reliable access to improved seeds and animals, to other inputs; and to knowledge of improved agricultural technologies is a key responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture.*** Given their importance for improving food production, raising incomes, and ensuring that more food is available in local markets in the country, these issues are equally salient to



improving the access that all Liberians have to food, whether they are farmers or engaged in other economic activities.

**Improve agricultural markets.** Enhancing access to food also requires continued improvement of markets for both food and non-food produce. Better performing agricultural market systems in Liberia will encourage farmers to produce more food for sale; in turn, improving incomes for producers and traders and reducing costs for consumers. It will also help to promote farming as a livelihood. Continuing to improve road and market infrastructure is a key element of this. High transport costs for food and other produce reduce the general availability of food, while also constraining incomes and limiting the access that many Liberians have to food. Steps to improve physical market structures would also be of value for reducing food spoilage, enabling processing, and improving storage, while also facilitating marketing. Continuing to improve infrastructure is given priority in all government policies and strategies, and this strategy echoes this.

In addition to improving market-related infrastructure, government will continue to support the flow of market information throughout all markets of the country so that producers can trade their produce more confidently and more readily respond to the demands of consumers. Information and communication technologies, such as, cell phone service and radio broadcasting – will continued to be exploited for this purpose.

For cash crop production to enhance access to food by producers, a necessary requirement is that active markets in the cash crops produced be locally accessible to farmers. Although efforts are underway to strengthen cocoa and coffee markets, in most parts of Liberia they remain weak, with very buyers and low prices. More efforts are needed so that farmers realize more income from the production of these crops. Similarly, the large rubber, oil palm, and mining concessions provide potentially important market opportunities for food crops offered for sale by local farmers. Government will continue to work to build stronger linkages between these concessions and local economies, particularly local food economies. There is considerable scope for improving national food availability through farmers responding to the demand for food of the many employees of these enterprises. As these market linkages are strengthened, it is expected to result both in improved access to a greater range and quantities of foods by concession employees and higher incomes for producers.

Finally, the non-farm elements of the rural market economy are critical to a vibrant agricultural sector and agricultural markets. Increased productivity in the farming sector raises per capita income in the household, enabling family members to engage in non-farm activities and contributes to diversification of household livelihood sources and the rural economy. A broader range of livelihood opportunities for rural households result in greater economic resilience for rural communities – agricultural productivity increases coupled with efficient agricultural markets lead to growth in off-farm income opportunities in rural areas which, in turn through a virtuous cycle, sustains investments in improved agricultural productivity in an area.

**Social Protection and Strengthen Social Safety Nets.** A realization of the AFT, was that although significant achievements in terms of increases GDP and government budgets occurred, these gains have been unequal and have not reached a significant proportion of the population. Large numbers of Liberians are extremely poor and remain vulnerable to shocks and stresses, and are unable to access labor markets or the services that they need for productive livelihoods. This represents a threat to continued stability, as well as, to development and economic growth. The GOL has demonstrated its commitment to addressing this through the inclusion of social protection under the Human Development Pillar of the AFT.

In addition, in 2014, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) under the National Social Protection Steering Committee in consultation with key stakeholders and development partners finalized a national Social Protection Strategy and Policy. The strategy calls for a social protection system which protects the poor from the worst consequences of poverty, prevents people who suffer from shocks falling into poverty

and is transformative through responding to the complex and critical needs of marginalized groups while defining minimum standards for changing class relationships. It sets out a Social Protection System including social assistance programs, such as, cash transfers which have been shown to be effective in improving food security and nutrition; social insurance schemes, such as, pensions, and social legislation to protect workers.

Currently social protection expenditures equate to 1.6% of GDP. The vast majority of these expenditures are external donor based and focused on short-term, project based assistance programs, which are primarily delivered as in-kind (food) assistance. Pilot projects such as the social cash transfer program in Bomi and Maryland counties and the Youth Employment Scheme are providing income security and showing promising results. And, a short-term cash transfer program for vulnerable households affected by the Ebola epidemic is under development. Other social interventions, include school feeding and waivers for essential services. However, the need for social protection remains large and multi-faceted and the current protection system faces challenges related to coordination, coverage, costs and capacity.

▪ **Better Food Utilization and Improved Nutritional Status**

The improved, but still high levels of chronic child undernutrition in Liberia suggests that improvements in availability and access to food is not sufficient to address poor nutritional status. A diet comprised of a diversity of foods, including sufficient protein and micronutrient rich foods are also needed to improve food security and nutritional status. In addition, there are other key determinants of food security and aggregate nutritional status. Deficiencies in the provision of necessary complementary inputs to food – knowledge of appropriate feeding and care for pregnant women, infants and young children and the ability and resources to provide that care, public health and primary health care services, safe water, improved sanitation, adequate housing, and so on – result in stunted children, high child mortality, and, for many Liberians, shortened lives that are filled with illness and reduced physical and mental capabilities. DHS and CFSNS surveys provide compelling evidence of the need to go beyond merely examining food in working towards a food secure and well-nourished Liberia.

Liberia recently joined the *Scaling Up to Address Undernutrition* or SUN movement, this will involve forming a Secretariat and developing a multi-sectoral action plan to address undernutrition. A close partnership between SUN and the FSN Secretariat is envisaged and has been fostered through the MOH's and UN nutrition staffs participation in the FSNS Technical Working Group. For the FSNS, several nutrition and food utilization related actions have been selected in collaboration with the MOH Nutrition Division, as priorities for government support. Most of these actions are the responsibility of sectors and agencies that lie outside of the agriculture sector. Consequently, it is particularly in addressing nutrition and food utilization issues that the multi-sectoral character of this strategy is most apparent. Moreover, several of these priorities are interventions targeted at those in the Liberian population who are nutritionally the most vulnerable – the period of “1000 days” is prioritized, which includes pregnant and lactating women and infants and young children up to the age of two years. Proper food utilization and nutritional care for these individuals will provide tremendous benefits over the long term and result in substantial advances in Liberia's human and economic development.

The actions to enhance the proper utilization of food fall under three priority areas: (1) improving the nutritional status of vulnerable groups especially pregnant and lactating women and young children; (2) increasing access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices; and (3) reducing morbidity from common communicable diseases. The following activities fall under the improving nutritional status priority area:

- **Promote child growth.** Government will continue to carry-out infant and young child growth monitoring and promotion. Growth monitoring and promotion includes weighing of infants and young children, comparing their weights to standards to assess whether their growth is appropriate or not, and analyzing the causes of negative deviance in growth with the caregiver in order to address the problems identified.

Such monitoring and promotion activities, provide a critical point of contact for providing needed nutritional interventions to infants and young children and their caregivers. The actions may involve the provision of complementary medical treatment or preventative health care such as deworming, micronutrient supplementation, and immunizations, behavior change communication, or even nutritional rehabilitation, including referring moderately and severely undernourished children to treatment, i.e. Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) programs.

It is particularly in the dialogue between the mother/caregiver and health professionals where the real value of child growth monitoring and promotion activities lies. Consequently, the nutritional knowledge of the health professional involved must be at a high level and practical and she/he must be able to share information in a manner that enables the caregiver to act appropriately. Moreover, the process of identifying actions to be taken to improve the growth of a child should be based upon locally available resources for the caregiver and be sensitive to indigenous medical practices and beliefs surrounding child feeding and care.

- **Save the Acutely Malnourished--Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM).** The MOH Nutrition Division, with UNICEF and NGO support, rolled-out IMAM to all counties, including ongoing monitoring, mentoring and supervision. This program, as integrated, with the primary health care system and the growth monitoring and promotion is identified as a priority activity and thus should be continued with increasing responsibility taken by the MOH Nutrition Division and county level nutritionists.
- **Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA).** Over a number of years, the MOH's Nutrition Division has promoted the *7 essential nutrition actions*, a set of nutrition actions or behaviors that when taken together, make a significant difference in the nutritional status and general well-being and survival of infants, young children, and women of childbearing age and significantly reduce undernutrition related morbidity and mortality. Recently, updated materials have been developed in preparation for roll-out trainings for health care providers, in 6 counties' districts in 2014. NGO partners provide linkages with many communities through trained community health workers across counties and in 2015 the roll-out will continue, while support to the first counties continues. Disseminating the ENA messages and actions is also a priority nutrition action under the FSNS.

These 7 Essential Nutrition Actions are:

1. Promoting optimal breastfeeding.
2. Promoting initiation of optimal complementary feeding at 6 months of age.
3. Nutritional care of the sick child during and after illness to prevent growth failure.
4. Improving women's nutrition, especially during pregnancy and lactation.
5. Controlling anemia in women and children.
6. Vitamin A deficiency control, particularly in young children.
7. Iodine deficiency control.

The ENA will be integrated with other nutrition and health programs and builds on the opportunity provided by the child growth promotion contact with the child and his or her caregiver, as well as any other contacts these individuals have with the health services. The objective of the ENA approach is to consolidate these now separate activities into a systematic, holistic package. As such, they are a component of the Basic Package of Health Services that the Ministry of Health is committed to provide in all clinics and hospitals in the country. Although all opportunities are to be taken to promote these nutrition behaviors, the ENA approach will be promoted especially at five contact points of health service delivery over the lifecycle: (1.) Pregnancy, (2.) Labor, delivery, and immediate post-partum, (3.) Postnatal and family planning,(4.) Immunization and child growth monitoring and promotion clinics, and (5.) Sick child consultations.

- ***Improve care for pregnant women, infants and young children.*** Enhancing caring practices in the household to ensure that all is done so that all members are well nourished is hard to address within the institutional structure of government. This is because care is not really a sectoral issue, but a community and household issue that draws upon resources supplied in part by various sectors. Improving caring practices is primarily about reinforcing good existing knowledge and practices and building new knowledge in caregivers and the general public, while ensuring that mothers/caregivers are empowered and have the resources that they need to provide proper care to their children.

Changing attitudes and practices for improved nutrition is necessary if Liberians are to confront the problems of food insecurity and poor nutrition at all levels of society. Behavior change communication provides information so that caregivers and others are better able to ensure their own good nutritional status and that of the members of their household and community. Such a strategy, including messages, was developed by the MOH Nutrition Division with UNICEF support, based on local research findings on young child feeding and care practices. Campaigns, such as breastfeeding promotion, to disseminate these messages have been carried out and the ENA messages have been tailored based on the research findings. The BCC strategy needs updating and expansion to focus also on promoting diet diversity for all family members through healthy balanced diets focused on locally available and affordable foods.

With regards to resources for proper nutritional care, government will provide key public services to alleviate some of the resource constraints that caregivers face. A major resource constraint to providing good care is time. Efforts are to be made to introduce appropriate, cost effective timesaving technologies for common household tasks, such as rice milling, other food processing activities, or in agriculture.

Ensuring that caregivers have access to the resources they require to provide optimal care also has important implications on how intra-household decisions on resource allocations are made and on gender relationships within society. The primary caregivers for most young children in Liberia are women. However, fathers, when present in the household, often are the primary decision makers on how household resources are used. Consequently, fathers must also be recipients of information on the importance of good caring practices for the well-being of their young children.

More broadly, government recognizes that improving caring practices requires greater empowerment of women within households, within Liberian society in general, and within political decision-making processes from community to national level. The limited access that women in Liberia have to all of the resources they require to effectively care for their young children directly results in higher levels of undernutrition and poorer health for their children and for themselves. The need to effectively address these gendered issues of proper nutritional care in Liberia provides an additional compelling and pragmatic reason for government to continue its efforts at seeking to empower Liberian women socially, economically, and politically. Improving young child and pregnant women's feeding and care practices is a priority action for the FSNS.

- ***Provision of Micronutrient Supplements and deworming medications.*** Vitamin A supplements are currently provided biannually to young children along with deworming medication; this should continue along with vitamin A supplementation for PP women. Iron/folate supplements are provided to pregnant women with high coverage, but with only 20 percent of women taking enough tablets during their pregnancies. A study to assess the constraints to achieving higher supplement intake is needed. Deworming for pregnant women also should continue with efforts to improve coverage. And, as well, intermittent iron/folate supplementation for menstruating women, including adolescent girls is called for. How best to carry out the iron/folate supplement distribution for menstruating women requires research and piloting.

- ***Micronutrient Powder for Young Children (6 to 24 months).*** To address the high levels of micronutrient deficiencies and to improve complementary feeding, in young children, the MOH Nutrition Division with UNICEF support is in the process of piloting micronutrient powders (MNPs) along with counseling and information to support improved complementary feeding practices. Because MNPs are mixed with a young child's food, it presents an opportunity to provide information on appropriate complementary foods and how best to feed young children. An acceptability study and pilot in 3 counties is underway. As the distribution of micronutrient powders for young children is formalized and roll-out, it will become a priority nutrition activity for the FSNS.
- ***Continue the Work of the MOCI, National Standards Lab, MOH and the National Fortification Alliance in fortifying foods.*** The industrial fortification of foods with micronutrients has been used globally as an effective way to ensure that diseases related to micronutrient deficiencies are controlled. In 2012, A National Fortification Alliance (NFA) was formed with NGO support under the leadership of the MOH. The NFA was instrumental in the development of National Fortification Guidelines and in the adoption of new food fortification standards for sugar, wheat flour, salt and cooking oil by the GOL, which went into effect last year. Currently three of the largest importers of flour and cooking oil are successfully sourcing fortified products with no impact on consumer pricing and one local grain mill is fortifying flour. Work continues with the National Standards Laboratory (NSL) in establishing a strong monitoring system to ensure fortification coverage and compliance in line with national requirements. Lastly, options are being explored for in-warehouse fortification of rice. Continuing the efforts in food fortification, monitoring and exploring new options is considered a priority action of the FSNS.
- ***Enforce food standards.*** Food standards enforcement is important for the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy in two areas. The first is the implementation and enforcement of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, which Liberia as a member-state of the World Health Organization adopted in 1981. Breast-milk substitutes (BMS) continue to be made available in Liberia, however, the use of commercial infant formulas needs to be regulated given the risks associated with its use. To protect young infants, legislation which adopts the International Code of Marketing BMS has been drafted and awaits action by the government. Once the Code is adopted it will need to be enforced.

Secondly, food standards relating to food fortification and nutritional supplements are waiting for final approval. They will then be implemented and enforced by the National Standards Laboratory and MOH and MOCI staff. Regarding food safety standards, the government has accepted the ECOWAS food safety standards and is in the process of accepting the Codex alimentarius paving the way for monitoring food safety and enforcement of food safety standards.

- ***Diversify diets.*** Dietary diversification efforts will be undertaken to improve the micronutrient and protein quality of food consumed by Liberian households. Government will undertake campaigns based on research to promote the adoption, production, and consumption of micronutrient-dense and bio-fortified food crops and animal products to complement staple food crop consumption. Of particular interest is substantially increasing the consumption of micronutrient-rich fruits, vegetables, and animal source foods by all Liberians – males and females, children and adults.
- ***Continue to address food and nutrition needs related to HIV infection.*** Although the HIV infection rate is low in Liberia, HIV poses a clear risk to the food security and nutritional well-being of those infected. As an element of its approach to confronting HIV and AIDS, government with WFP support will ensure that Liberians living with the virus will receive proper food and nutritional care to delay the progression of infection to clinical AIDS, prolonging life and increasing their economic and social productivity. Households that have members who are infected with the virus will be supported in their

efforts to provide proper food and nutritional care to extend the lives of those infected and to increase the effectiveness of anti-retroviral drug treatment. Ensuring food security for PLHIV is also a priority activity under the FSNS.

***Under Priority area 2, increase access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices.*** Government with support of the WASH Consortium will continue its efforts to promote healthy living environments across the country. As improving housing is an activity area under the Aft, it is not repeated as a focus area within the FSNS. Hygiene promotion through proper sanitation and safe water has a substantial impact on reducing diarrhea morbidity, undernutrition, and mortality. It also is important to control various worm infections that are widespread in Liberia. Equally important is the development of local safe water supplies both to reduce the time spent in collecting water and to contribute to the development of a healthy local environment.

***Under Priority area 3, reduce morbidity from common communicable diseases.*** One of the action areas is to increase access to primary health care. Health preventive and treatment services, particularly as they pertain to communicable diseases, are critical for reducing undernutrition since young children frequently ill are at higher risk of micronutrient deficiencies and poor growth. Liberians, in some rural areas, do not access sufficient health services, because of distance, and also due to lack of staff and supplies. Strengthening health services in partnership with the MOH and its facility and community health structures, is also priority area of the FSNS, particularly as they relate to the prevention and treatment of common communicable diseases, such as, malaria, diarrhea and ARI in pregnant and lactating women and young children.

These priorities for enhancing food utilization and nutritional outcomes were chosen from current and planned interventions. As the SUN movement garners more support in Liberia, priorities may shift. In addition, as new approaches to improve nutritional status are developed both in Liberia and elsewhere, government will continually monitor the development of these approaches and judge whether they are appropriate for wider application across the country through existing or new projects and programs.

- **Stability: Reducing Vulnerability and Improving Resilience**

Efforts to reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience to shocks that cause food insecurity and undernutrition in Liberia fall within but also go well beyond the scope of this Food Security and Nutrition Strategy. The aim of such efforts must be to reduce the exposure of the country and Liberian households to such risks and to strengthen the means used to cope with such shocks. The sorts of shocks that are of concern were noted earlier – price and market shocks, epidemics and conflict, most notably. However, household-level shocks also are important to consider, including ill health and death among household members, pests and disease affecting agricultural production, loss of employment, and being victims of crime.

The only interventions to specifically address vulnerability or improve resilience is the expansion of the Social Cash Transfer Program, the Social Welfare services described in the ***Improving Access to Food*** section and the National Strategic Grain Reserve and the diversification of food described in the ***Enhancing Food Availability*** section. The successful implementation of this strategy in addressing the priorities noted under the other three dimensions of food security will contribute to increased resilience to shocks to household and national food security. This will be done simply by strengthening the livelihoods pursued by Liberian households and the improved access to food resulting from those strengthened livelihoods. However, within those sets of priorities, those with specific shock avoidance and mitigation elements include assessments of the need for public social safety net programs and a national strategic food reserve and diversification of food production.

Of central importance to reducing vulnerability to food insecurity is the institution of regular effective food security and nutrition monitoring, an area not adequately achieved under the first FSNS. A key element of these monitoring functions will be the provision of early warning of emerging food insecurity crises in the

country; this is partially addressed through the Liberia price monitoring system put in place through the FSNS Secretariat and LISGIS with support from WFP. Periodic donor-funded food security and nutrition surveys have provided important information regarding the evolving food security and nutrition situation.

- **Enabling Factors**

In addition to the actions grouped by the four dimensions of food security listed above, steps also must be taken to ensure that there is sufficient human capacity and expertise to implement the strategy, that research is undertaken to improve understanding of the varied ways in which Liberian households acquire their food, and community-level actions to improve local food security are strengthened.

***Meet capacity needs.*** A key requirement for the effective implementation of this strategy is continuing to build the national expertise and skills in food security and nutrition planning and program implementation in the country. Such expertise needs to be situated both across many sectors within government and among partner institutions in the non-governmental or in the private sectors. These skills include:

- ◆ Public health nutrition skills to undertake nutrition analysis and design nutrition interventions at community and national levels.
- ◆ Food security and nutrition monitoring skills including those required for data collection, analysis, and communication of information.
- ◆ Technical skills in food policy analysis to ensure that food is made available in the most efficient manner possible with equitable access for all Liberians.

Currently within the MOA and MOH, there are very few staff with advance degrees in food security or nutrition. Efforts to upgrade current staff through training programs and opportunities for advanced studies need to continue particularly in the areas of food security and nutrition elaborated in the bulleted points above.

The number of individuals in Liberia with some specialized professional training in public health nutrition, food security monitoring, and food policy analysis is insufficient to provide high quality technical support to government efforts to improve food security and address undernutrition, as well as to non-governmental organizations working with communities across the country. Some staff have taken advantage of foreign universities with strong program on these and related topics; this will continue to be a priority in this strategy. In the longer term, developing training opportunities in these subjects at the University of Liberia will continue. It is important to recognize that government is not solely responsible for developing and providing the capacity needed to implement this strategy. Local and international non-governmental organizations, multi-lateral development partners, and the private sector are potentially important partners in working with government on building staff capacity to implement the FSNS.

In keeping with the priorities for training stated in the national agriculture and health policies and plans, the curricula of educational institutions in Liberia providing sectoral specific training at the diploma level in agriculture and rural development and in health need to be reviewed and upgraded to include degree programs and training on food security and nutrition related topics. Similarly, the health curricula used in primary and secondary schools in the country have been modified to include basic nutrition information, but need to review in order to enhance and include food security information.

***Improve knowledge on household food security.*** While a considerable body of socioeconomic research on components of the food systems and diets of households across Liberia had been built up in the several decades before civil war broke out in 1989, no similar detailed and academically-rigorous research has been conducted since then. With the significant social, economic, and institutional changes that occurred in both rural and urban households and communities in Liberia during the period of crisis and since including the recent Ebola epidemic, there is an urgent need for better understanding of the food system, markets and

livelihoods and the varied means by which households now gain access to food, how that food is distributed within the household, the quality and quantities of the foods eaten, and other elements of the varied food and dietary knowledge and practices of households across the country. Such knowledge is required to inform the design and implementation of effective programs through which the objectives of this strategy will be attained.

Consequently, government will support the undertaking of high-quality academic research efforts to fill this knowledge gap. While government will welcome scientists from global research centers of excellence to participate in such efforts, in order to develop sufficient and sustained research capacity within Liberia, all such efforts are expected to be done in collaboration with researchers and students from institutions within Liberia, most notably the University of Liberia. All resources provided by government for such research will be allocated on a competitive basis using academic peer review to assess the relevance of the research proposed and the suitability of the methods to be employed.

***Strengthen community-level actions.*** To continue to improve aggregate food security and nutritional status in Liberia, change must occur within households and communities across the country – in particular, the malnourished individual must be reached. For sustainable improvements at this level, community-driven action must be taken to address key development problems, including food insecurity and undernutrition. The role for government and its development partners should be to facilitate such action in the communities with which they work. Such an approach is in keeping with the recent government decentralization of its administrative and planning functions with consultation, prioritization, and planning at district and county levels and on the accountability of local authorities to the communities they serve to accomplish results. This approach requires capacity building and support to local government structures so they can support the development of local plans that are responsive to the development priorities that communities establish for themselves, including those priorities related to food security and improved nutrition. Community-driven development has proven especially effective in addressing local problems of food insecurity and undernutrition in developing countries. Of critical importance in such a model of development are the roles played by community volunteers, community health workers, Extension agents and others.

In a number of locations government and development partners are delivering interventions at the community-level in food security, agriculture, health, including WASH and nutrition. Local planning can foster coordination and collaboration between development partners and government structures, staff and volunteers across sectors. This is critically needed to achieve program integration and improve results in food security and nutrition.

## **IX. Institutional framework for strategy implementation**

An institutional framework for the coordination of food security and nutrition activities and the monitoring of food insecurity and undernutrition was established in 2008. However, the originally proposed institutional framework with the Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee (FSNTC) and the Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Secretariat placed under the President's Office was not implemented. Rather the FSN Secretariat was placed within the MOA with responsibilities for convening the FSNTC and the FSN Stakeholder's Forum; this hindered fulfilling its cross-sectoral mandate and led to budget shortfall which limited activities, such as, setting up a food security and nutrition surveillance system.

To address this, the institutional framework needed revision. Information was gathered on similar structures in neighboring countries and consultation meetings were held within the MOA; the framework was also discussed at the FSNS Action Planning Workshops. Consensus was reached around a revised institutional framework. In addition, the Liberia FSNS must provide some mechanism for linkages and coordination with the regional food security and nutrition initiatives among Liberia's bordering countries, West Africa and



beyond. Food security is often treated as a national issue; however it has huge regional and cross-border implications. No country can achieve sustainable food security and nutrition alone - It is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve food security without regional linkages. Therefore, Liberia's FSNS includes a framework for regional partnerships/collaboration.

- **The Revised Food Security and Nutrition Strategy Institutional Framework**

Annex 2, pg. 47, includes a figure depicting the FSNS revised Institutional Framework. The following describes the various bodies within the framework, their roles and how they related to each other.

***Food Security and Nutrition Stakeholders' Forum***

The Food Security and Nutrition Stakeholders' Forum (FSNSF) will be reactivated. The FSNSF will have a consultative role and will meet once a year to assess the progress on the implementation of the national FSNS and make relevant recommendations. The FSNSF will be comprised of public institutions, civil society, international NGOs and bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies that have a stake in food security. It will be convened by the FSN Secretariat and Chaired by the Steering Committee Chair, the Vice President.

***Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee (FSNSC)***

The Steering Committee will coordinate those actions necessary to improve food security and nutrition and advocate for the necessary resources to enable the sectors to carry out those actions fully. To achieve this, it is to have clearly defined authority from government under which the relevant sectoral ministries will be required to report on and account for their food security and nutrition activities to the FSNSC Committee through its Secretariat. Its coordination of the activities of non-governmental development partners will be more indirect and will occur through the existing government mechanisms, such as, the MOA's Agriculture Coordination Committee and the MOH's Nutrition Coordination Committee. The FSNSC will draw its members from the key government agencies and bilateral and multilateral partners whose participation is necessary in efforts to address the problems of food insecurity and undernutrition in Liberia. Information will be shared with the AFT Secretariat and all recommendations of the FSNSC that imply policy actions or have budgetary implications will be conveyed to the AFT Secretariat. However, decisions that need urgent action may be directly conveyed to the Cabinet by the Vice President who chairs the FSNSC. It is envisioned that the FSNSC will initially meet monthly and once activities are underway, it will meet quarterly with other meetings scheduled as needed.

***Within its broad coordination function, the Technical Committee shall carry out the following specific responsibilities:***

- ◆ Develop and maintain a clear understanding of the food security and aggregate nutritional status of different populations across Liberia. This will include monitoring the situation of food insecure and nutritionally vulnerable groups and understanding what actions are needed and by which sectors and partners to most effectively address the risks facing such groups. In exercising this responsibility, technical elements related to data compilation and analysis will be carried out by staff of the FSN Secretariat, initially with support from development partners.
- ◆ Provide oversight on the implementation of the Strategy so that it serves to promote the rights of all Liberians to sufficient food and proper nutrition.
- ◆ Play an active role in policymaking within government, such as ensuring that food insecurity and undernutrition are reflected in the poverty reduction strategy as basic problems of human and economic development confronting the country, as well as in the strategies of those sectors whose activities are central to improving food security and aggregate nutritional status in Liberia.

- ◆ Ensure that the policies and action plans of those public sectors and agencies with clear food security and nutrition-related responsibilities reflect the contribution each is mandated to undertake with regard to reducing food insecurity and undernutrition. Such a function will include working with these sectors and agencies to revise their policies to better emphasize the role of the sector or agency in this regard.
- ◆ Engage in the annual government planning process to ensure that the action plans and budget requests made by public sectors and agencies reflect the contributions each is mandated to undertake with regard to reducing food insecurity and undernutrition so that sufficient resources are allocated to them to permit those actions to be undertaken. The FSNSC is to hold the public sectors and agencies concerned to account for results and ensure that their actions in these areas are carried out as effectively as possible.
- ◆ Assess at least every three years the overall effectiveness of the efforts being undertaken within the country to attain the objectives of the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy.
- ◆ Maintain close relations with Liberia’s international development partners in order to raise supplemental resources for sectoral activities to address food insecurity and improve nutrition.
- ◆ Communicate to stakeholders and to the nation as a whole through briefings, press releases, and public addresses the policies, priorities, targets, and results of the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy.

The **Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee** will be chaired by the Vice President of the Republic of Liberia. The Food Security and Nutrition Secretariat (described in the next section) will staff the FSNSC and support the Vice President. As such, the Steering Committee will report to the President and/or cabinet on the status of food security and nutrition in Liberia and on the effectiveness of efforts being undertaken to address food insecurity and undernutrition.

***The full Membership on the Steering Committee will include the following:***

- The Minister of Agriculture
- The Minister of Health
- The Minister of Education
- The Minister of Commerce and Industry
- The Minister of Public Works
- The Minister of Finance & Development Planning
- The Minister of Internal Affairs (and representative from county administration)
- The Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection
- The Minister of Labor
- The Minister of Youth and Sports
- The Minister of Mines, Lands and Energy
- The Minister of Transportation
- The Minister of Justice
- The Cooperative Development Agency
- The Environmental Protection Agency
- The Forest Development Agency
- The Land Commission
- Bilateral development partners (one representative)
- Multilateral development partners (one representative delegated jointly by  
FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, and the World Bank)

The **Food Security and Nutrition Secretariat**, currently the FSN Unit located in the Ministry of Agriculture, to the Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee (FSNSC) will be reorganized. The Secretariat will become a semi-autonomous body and will directly report to the chair of the FSNSC, the vice president. The Secretariat will purely act as a body that gathers inter-sectoral information, analyses it and reports it to the FSNSC, which

then takes up issues with the cabinet and/or the president. The FSNSC, namely its chair, the vice president will be responsible for ensuring that the Secretariat functions effectively with an executive officer, technical experts, and resources adequate to fulfill its responsibilities.

The Secretariat initially will consist of five professional staff: an executive officer, a communications specialist, an administrator and one senior and one junior food security and nutrition analysts. Placing a senior level nutritionist in the Secretariat will also be considered to ensure that nutrition data and information are properly analyzed and interpreted and that policy and strategy appropriately integrates nutrition. **The responsibilities of the Executive Officer of the Secretariat include:**

- Leading the update of a database on food security and food security related projects and ensuring that it is maintained
- Ensuring that information from Ministries and Agencies is supplied on time and shared with the AfT Secretariat
- Leading the Secretariat's team in the analysis of the information
- Ensuring that reports are compiled and sent to the members of the Steering Committee and Working Groups on time
- Organizing the meetings of the Steering Committee and the annual meeting of the Stakeholders Forum
- Assisting the chair of the Steering Committee in its coordination tasks

At least one of the analysts will be senior technical staff equivalent in rank to the Executive Officer. They will have a close understanding of and experience with the resource allocation and planning processes of the Liberian government, with demonstrated technical expertise in food security and nutrition programming, monitoring, and evaluation. Candidates for the analyst's position preferably should have broad experience within government across several sectors.

The two food security and nutrition analysts will ensure that all monitoring activities are done in a timely manner, data analyzed and reports are compiled. The senior analyst will be responsible for all of the dedicated food security and nutrition monitoring functions under the FSNS and for accurately communicating it. This professional will coordinate the strategic planning and implementation of all food security and nutrition monitoring tasks carried out by LISGIS and will be responsible for the quality of any analyses undertaken by LISGIS or within the Secretariat itself. Moreover, he or she will work with other data providers, ensuring that any data provided is appropriate for food security and nutrition monitoring and is properly documented. Finally, this analyst will ensure that the performance indicators established in the action plan of the FSNS are continually monitored and will draft a yearly progress report and present this to the Steering Committee and Stakeholder's Forum.

This individual will have expertise in food and nutrition monitoring and analysis, with a minimum of five years of experience. Candidates for this position will have obtained a Master's degree in a relevant field, such a food policy analysis, public health nutrition, or statistics. They also must demonstrate quantitative data management and analysis skills, including in the use of spatial data with Geographic Information Systems.

The junior food security and nutrition analyst will be responsible primarily for quantitative analyses of the relevant data and maintaining a public database of all food security and nutrition information managed and archived by the Secretariat. This individual will have expertise in data management and quantitative analysis, with a minimum of two years of experience. Candidates for this position will have obtained a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field, such as policy analysis, statistics, or database management or possess a food, nutrition, or agricultural related degree with significant course work in database management and quantitative analysis.

In the medium-term a communications officer also will be assigned to the Secretariat. This individual would be responsible, first, for ensuring that the priorities of the FSNS are widely understood, both by government officials across the public sectors and agencies and by the citizens of the country, in order to maintain continued political and popular support for government efforts to address food insecurity and malnutrition. Second, the communications officer would establish communication channels extending to county, district, and community levels through which individuals and civil society organizations in Liberia can make known to the Steering Committee their opinions on food security and nutrition priorities and programming, particularly where necessary public goods and services are not being delivered as they should. Such active two-way communication is an essential element in ensuring that the Steering Committee is accountable to all Liberians for achieving the objectives of the Strategy. Third, as the food security and nutrition monitoring activities increase in scope, regular communication of the current food security and nutrition situation in the country using diverse media will require closer attention than the food security and nutrition analysts will be able to provide. This officer would manage the dissemination of this information.

Technical assistance will be sought from donor partners as the Secretariat is reorganized to put in place the skills, mechanisms, and material resources necessary for the Stakeholders' Forum, the Steering Committee, the Technical Working Groups (described in the next section) and the Secretariat to function effectively and efficiently. Financial resources for the operation of the Technical Committee and its Secretariat will be drawn from the budgetary allocation made by government. Resources needed for the meetings of the Stakeholders' Forum and the Steering Committee will be drawn from this budgetary allocation and managed by the executive officer of the Secretariat. Budgetary allocations to the Steering Committee and Technical Working Groups will be classified as a first-claim expenditure within budget guidelines. As part of the approval process for the revised FSNS, the Minister of Agriculture will seek approval from the President and her cabinet. Once approved, the FSNS becomes a working document and the revised framework can be put into place. Legal guidance will be obtained for the establishment of the secretariat as a semi-autonomous body, able to administer its own funds, recruit personnel and procure equipment.

There is no need at the moment to replicate the FSNS planning and decision-making framework at county level, since each line ministry will be responsible for supplying information to the Secretariat. Information from the counties will be provided from the County Development Steering Committees (CSDC) and through the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Also, in each county MOA staff will act as the official contact points of the Secretariat within the administration to serve the national Steering Committee through providing information and by responding to queries on county and other local-level issues. They will also ensure that food security and nutrition related issues are on the agenda at CSDC meetings. Their duties as contact points for the Secretariat will be in addition to their existing duties. No new positions will be created to fulfill these county-level functions.

### **Technical Working Groups**

The Secretariat will staff four technical working groups (Crosscutting issues, Availability, Access and Utilization) chaired or co-chaired by the ministries most directly involved in programming related to the respective working group. For example, the MOH will chair the Utilization Technical Working Group (TWG); the Ministries of Education, Gender, Children and Social Protection and Labor will jointly chair the Access TWG and the MOA will chair the Availability TWG. The Crosscutting Issues TWG will be chaired by the Secretariat's Senior Food Security Analyst and a representative from one of the ministries and will focus on issues such as the monitoring and evaluation of the FSNS, coordination between TWGs, research and other issues that cross sectors and technical areas.

Secretariat staff will develop the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the specific TWGs, outlining the specific roles and responsibilities of each TWG. The TWGs will focus on reviewing the policy, strategy and programming needed to achieve the objectives under their respective food security pillar to ensure they are in place. They

will develop policy and strategy to fill gaps and advocate with the FSN Secretariat and the Steering Committee for the resources needed for program gaps. The TWGs will meet monthly.

- **Mechanisms for linkages and coordination with bordering countries and West African countries**

The Food Security and Nutrition Secretariat is a member of the Mano River Union Food Security Hub, which includes Liberia and its three neighboring countries: Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. The FSN Secretariat relays results from the market price surveys and food security assessments available to the MRU Food Security Hub. In turn, information about the food security situation in the other three countries is shared by the MRU Hub. The FSN Secretariat is also a member of the *Comite permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre le Secheresse dans le Sahel* (CILSS), and staff regularly attend their two yearly meetings and share information on Liberia's annual crop production.

- **Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring Surveillance System**

Shortly after the first FSNS strategy was approved, a food security and nutrition monitoring system was designed. However, it was never implemented; as a result, the FSN Secretariat and other food security stakeholders have become overly dependent on the Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Surveys implemented jointly with WFP every other year for a number of years, but more recently carried out less regularly. The recent EVD epidemic highlighted the pressing need for a food security and nutrition surveillance system to frequently and regularly collect data, including early warning indicators.

A food security and nutrition surveillance system will be implemented based on the one designed several years ago. It will be reviewed and updated by FSN Secretariat staff and shared with the Crosscutting TWG and stakeholders for input. The **food security and nutrition monitoring** functions under the FSNS will be the responsibility of the food security and nutrition analysts of the secretariat with support from Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and development partners.

Analysts at the Secretariat will obtain and analyze outcome data from three distinct sources: line ministries' M&E systems; a household surveillance system; a market surveillance system. The household surveillance system will collect data mostly related to access and utilization. Progress in key food security related outcomes and changes of household economic status will be measured annually. Seasonal trends in consumption and coping mechanisms will be tracked on a quarterly basis, to identify changes in peoples' behavior that could signal an emerging crisis. Data collection and entry will be done by LISGIS under a contractual arrangement with the Secretariat. For the periodic collection of data, LISGIS will rely on County Statistic Units (CSU) that will be set up in the framework of County Coordination and Reporting Structures. The current market information system collecting data on main food and cash crops in markets across the country on a bi-weekly basis will continue and data collected and will be analyzed in conjunction with those from the household surveillance system with the objective of assessing impact of price fluctuations on household food security status over time. Market prices are collected for the main food and cash crops so that terms of trade can also be calculated, and availability of some key items is recorded in order to detect potential scarcity that may signal an incipient crisis.

## X. Selected References

CILSS,FAO, WFP, FEWSET, GOL (2013). Crop Assessment Joint Mission in the Republic of Liberia Report, September, 2013.

FAOSTAT: <http://faostat3.fao.org/home/E>

GoL, WFP and UNICEF (2012). *Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS): The State of Food and Nutrition Insecurity in Liberia*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia.

GoL, WFP and UNICEF (2010). *Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS): The State of Food and Nutrition Insecurity in Liberia*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia.

GoL, FAO, WFP, UNICEF, UNMIL, and WHO (2006). *Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS)*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia.

IFPRI, CORAF, WECARD, CGIAR, CCAFS (2012). West African Agriculture and Climate Change: A Comprehensive Analysis—Liberia.

LISGIS (2008). *2008 National Population and Housing Census*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia.

LISGIS and UNICEF (2013). *Liberia National Micronutrient Survey 2011: Selected Preliminary Findings*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia.

LISGIS, MoHSW, National AIDS Control Program, and ICF International Inc. (2013). *Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS) 2007*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia, 2014.

MOA (2007). *Comprehensive Assessment of the Agricultural Sector—Liberia (CAAS-Lib), Volume 2.2 Sub-Sector Report*.

MOCI (2013). *Commodity Profile: Rice*. Monrovia: Republic of Liberia.

## Annex 1: Matrix of Priority Action Areas for the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy

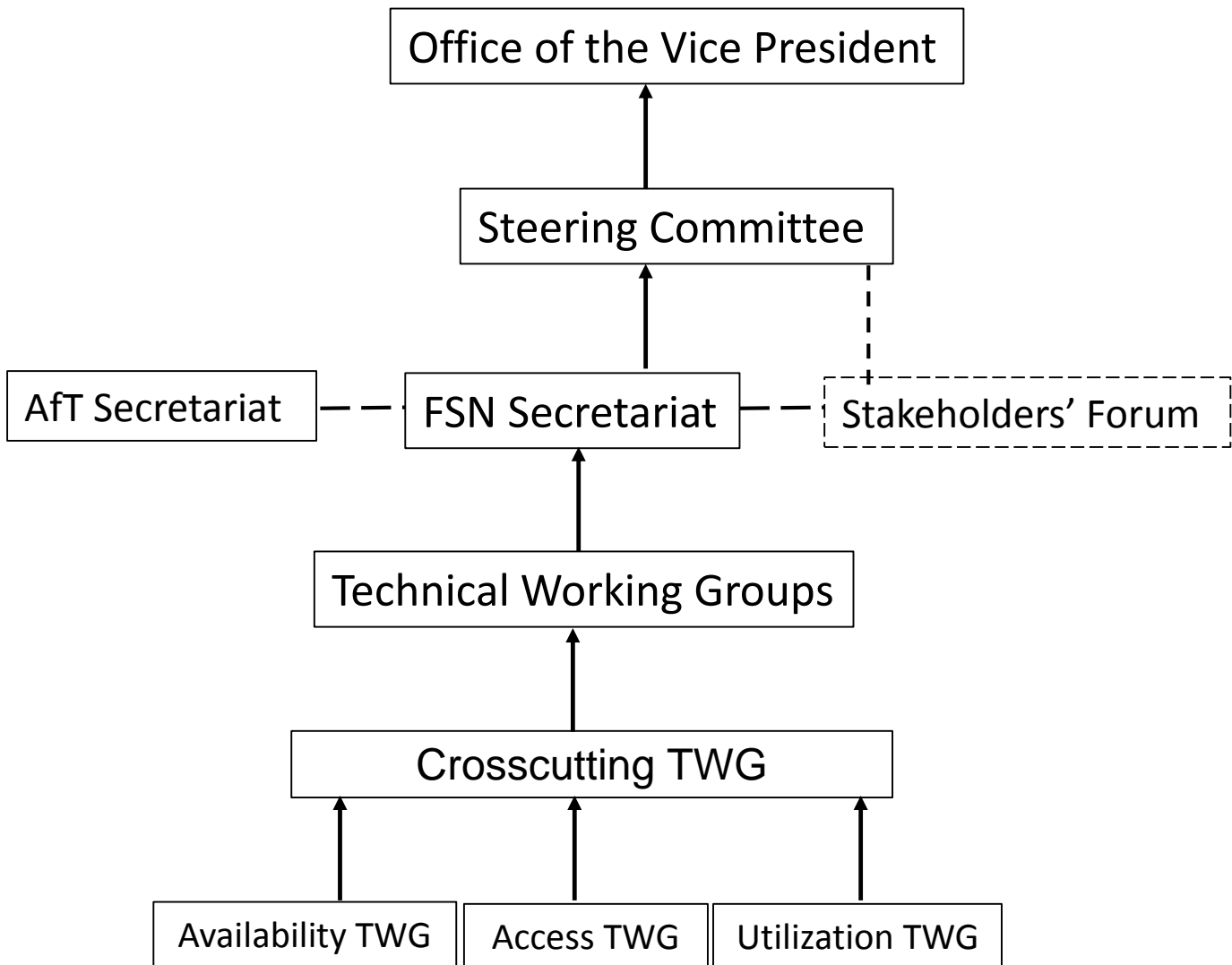
No.	Strategic Priority	Time horizon	Responsible Agency	Other Agencies	Capacity Needs
<b>Overall objective of the strategy</b>					
	All Liberians are able to have reliable access to the food they need and to utilize that food to live active and healthy lives	Throughout	FSNS Steering Committee Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Health	Broad set of government sectors and agencies Civil society and private sector organizations Local & international NGOs Development partners of government	Expand staff and expertise across broad set of sectors. Build professional skills in: public health nutrition; food security monitoring; & food and nutrition policy analysis.
<b>Specific Aims</b>					
<b><u>Enhancing Food Availability</u></b>					
1.	Develop and promote agricultural policy that integrates with nutrition/health and other sectors	Throughout	MoA	MoH, MGCSP, MoE	Expertise in integrated policy analysis; staff training in policy implementation
2.	Exploit opportunities for sustainable food production with emphasis on nutrient dense foods; and address production constraints	Throughout	MoA	EPA, FDA, MMLE, CDA, MYS, MGCSP, CARI, Central Bank, rural banks, credit unions, Land Commission, DoJ, MIA, LISGIS	Expansion of agricultural sector staff and skills, particularly Extension. Seed multiplication services; improved supply. Research on improved HH food storage and preservation. Expertise in integrated land use management
3.	Improve post-harvest processing and storage	Throughout	Marketers, private sector	MoCI, MoA PMU and other Units, CDA	Skills in post-harvesting processing
4.	Diversify food produced to increase availability of affordable nutrient dense foods	Throughout	MoA	MoH; Marketers	Skills in production of new crops and livestock, particularly in nutritious crops with high value
5.	Manage natural resources sustainably and protect communal property resources	Throughout	MIA	FDA, EPA, MoA, MMLE, MoJ, District/community-level authorities, Marketers	Natural resource monitoring skills. Policing and regulatory capacity.
6.	Maintain predictable and stable food imports	Short to Medium	MCI	Rice importers, Rice wholesalers and Marketers, Bureau of Customs, MoA, LISGIS	Expertise in food policy analysis
7.	Make appropriate use of international food assistance and reduce dependence	Short to Medium	MFDP	Development partners providing food assistance NGOs using food assistance; MoH, MoE	Expertise in food security and policy analysis and in food monetization
8.	Strengthen strategic food reserve mechanisms	Short to Medium	MCI	MFDP, MOA, Central Bank of Liberia	Expertise in food policy analysis and in food stock management

No.	Strategic Priority	Time horizon	Responsible Agency	Other Agencies	Capacity Needs
<b><i>Improving access to food (particularly more nutrient dense foods)</i></b>					
1.	Improve access to employment, in the agricultural sector, especially for women and youth	Throughout	MoL	MOA; MYS; MGCSP, private sector	Expansion of job training for youth and women, including agricultural training
2.	Improve adult literacy, particularly for women and access to education for girls	Throughout	MoE	MOA; MoH; MGCSP	Strengthened adult literacy programs and programs to increase girls' school attendance
3.	Improve educational opportunities that integrate nutrition, agriculture, health and food security	Short to Medium	MoE	MOA; MoH	Teacher training with strong nutrition and food security component
4.	Improve agricultural markets and marketing	Short to Medium	MoCI	MoA; Large scale cash crop processors and exporters; Large scale industrial and agricultural firms; Marketers; MoPW; MGCSP; MoT	Expertise in agricultural marketing, private market development; market information systems
5.	Broaden secure access to factors of production, e.g. land, improved seed supply, credit, training	Medium to Long	Land Commission; MMLE MoA, MoL	MIA; District and community-level authorities Marketers and private input traders NGOs working in agriculture and food security CARI	Increased levels of adapted agricultural research. Improved seed supply. Expanded and enhanced agricultural extension.
6.	Strengthen social safety nets	Throughout	MGCSP	District and community-level authorities Development partners and NGOs working in social protection CBOs	Expertise in the design of social protection and social welfare programs including beneficiary empowerment and graduation
<b><i>Better food utilization and improved nutritional status</i></b>					
1.	Reduce malnutrition among vulnerable groups	Throughout	MoH	CBOs; NCC; District and community-level authorities; Development partners and NGOs supporting the delivery of nutrition services	Expertise in training of public health nutrition professionals, including clinical nutrition skills; Expertise in micronutrient deficiency and the nutritional care of HIV/AIDS patients; Knowledge to maximize macro/micronutrient intake through foods; expertise in BCC; Expertise in the enforcement of fortification standards; technical knowledge of industrial food fortification
2.	Increase access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices and proper housing	Throughout	MoH; MPW; LWSC	WASH Consortium; CBOs District and community-level authorities; Development partners and NGOs supporting the delivery of WASH services and housing	Credit for private provision of these services Expertise in BCC
3.	Reduce morbidity from common communicable diseases (e.g. malaria, diarrhea, ARI)	Throughout	MoH	CBOs; District and community-level health structures and authorities; Development partners and NGOs supporting the delivery of primary health services	Strengthened health structures and staff



No.	Strategic Priority	Time horizon	Responsible Agency	Other Agencies	Capacity Needs
<b><u>Enabling factors</u></b>					
1.	Meet capacity needs	Throughout	MFDP	MoE; University of Liberia and other institutions of higher education	Improved knowledge and in BCC, public health, nutrition and food security among professionals; college level degree programs in nutrition and food security
2.	Improve knowledge on household food security and local diets	Throughout	University of Liberia	Other Liberian institutions of higher education INGOs with strong research capacity	Identify and prioritize knowledge gaps, particularly those for which there is evidence of changes
3.	Strengthen community-level action	Throughout	Community and district-level authorities	Community-level organizations; local health structures (CHVs, gCHVs); District Committees and authorities; MIA; Broad range of government sectors and agencies, NGOs/INGOs and organizations working at the community level	Strengthening of the local government structures in health, social protection and agriculture extension; Strengthening local planning and civil society involvement in government structures
<b><u>Establish Institutional framework for strategy implementation</u></b>					
1.	Reconfigure the current structures to implement the FSNS in line with the institutional framework proposed in the updated FSNS	Short to medium	MoA	MoH	Legal assistance on the drafting of any legal instruments for the FSN Secretariat
2.	Establish food security and nutrition monitoring system	Medium	MoA	LISGIS; MoCI; MoH Government and organizations working at the district and county level regularly collecting information pertinent to food security and nutrition monitoring.	Experts in food security and nutrition monitoring and analysis Institutional analysis to define how data will be collected, compiled and analyzed Expertise to establish the skills, mechanisms and material resources necessary to carry out food security and nutrition monitoring and analysis

**Annex 2: FSNS INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK<sup>3</sup>**



<sup>3</sup> It is envisioned that when the President names the SUN focal point and a SUN Secretariat formed that it will be co-located with the FSN Secretariat as there is much overlap between the mission and work of the FSN Secretariat and the SUN initiative.