

GOVERNANCE COMMISSION

POLICY BRIEF



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Policy Brief on the Revitalization of the Liberia National History Project Dialogue Held under the theme: History of the Nation-State: Pathway to Reconciliation, Healing and Peace in Liberia

September 17, 2025

About Policy Brief

I Executive Summary

Liberia's historical narrative has long been fragmented, exclusionary, and contested, contributing to identity conflicts, social division and weakened national cohesion. The Liberia National History Project (LNHP), launched in 2013 under Vision 2030, was designed to address this challenge by producing an inclusive, comprehensive and nationally owned history of Liberia. Despite early momentum, the initiative stalled due to limited political backing and lack of financing.

On September 17, 2025, the Governance Commission (GC) convened a high-level national policy dialogue in Monrovia under the theme "History of the Nation-State: A Pathway to Reconciliation, Healing and Peace in Liberia." The dialogue reaffirmed an overwhelming national consensus on the urgency of revitalizing the LNHP as a nation-building, peacebuilding and reconciliation endeavor.

Providence Island, once a candidate for UNESCO World Heritage status, is no longer eligible due to urban encroachment.

The OAU site in Sanniquellie, Nimba County, has been defaced by war and residential development, disqualifying it as a heritage site and

This policy brief captures the dialogue’s key insights, policy implications, and actionable recommendations to guide the restoration of momentum to the LNHP.

II Policy Problem

Liberia lacks a unified, inclusive national historical narrative that reflects the experiences of indigenous communities, settlers, re-captives, women, youth, traditional leaders and religious institutions. Past state policies, particularly assimilationist and selective unification approaches, privileged some identities while marginalizing others, leaving unresolved tensions that persist today.

The absence of an authoritative, inclusive history undermines:

- National identity and cohesion
- Conflict resolution, reconciliation and healing
- Civic education and curriculum relevance
- Cultural heritage preservation and tourism development

Without deliberate intervention, historical exclusion risks perpetuating mistrust among citizens, lingering grievances and weak national solidarity.

III Context and Background

The **Liberia National History Project (LNHP)** was initiated by the Governance Commission in 2013 as part of Liberia’s long-term development and reconciliation strategy. The project aimed to:

- Rewrite Liberia’s national history using rigorous, multidisciplinary scholarship
- Correct historical imbalances by including pre-settler experiences in the national historical narratives
- Address questions of marginalization



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- Produce revised textbooks and curricula aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations

Although technical groundwork was laid, the project stalled due to lack of funding and insufficient political support. Over a decade, the September 2025 dialogue therefore marked the first coordinated national effort to revive the initiative.

I. Key Insights from the Policy Dialogue

1. **Inclusive History as a Peacebuilding Tool:** Participants emphasized that history is not neutral; it shapes identity, belonging, and legitimacy. An inclusive national history is essential for promoting reconciliation, dignity, and long-term peace.
2. **Identity Conflict Remains Unresolved:** Presentations highlighted enduring labels, *Americo-Liberian*, *Indigenous*, *Congo* and how state symbolism (motto, anthem, honors system) continues to reflect exclusionary legacies.
3. **Government Ownership Is Non-Negotiable:** There was unanimous agreement that the Government of Liberia must lead the LNHP politically and financially, while welcoming technical and financial support from partners such as UNESCO and others.
4. **Heritage Loss Is Accelerating:** Critical national heritage sites, including **Providence Island** and the first **OAU meeting site in Sanniquellie** have been degraded by war and urban encroachment, weakening Liberia's cultural memory and tourism potential.
5. **Broad Participation Is Essential:** Rewriting Liberia's history must be a collective national endeavor, integrating local scholars, diaspora expertise, traditional authorities, youth, women and civil society.

I. Policy Options Considered

Option	Description	Limitations
Status quo	Continue fragmented historical narratives	Perpetuates division and exclusion
Academic-only approach	Limit authorship to elite scholars	Risks legitimacy and ownership
Inclusive, state-led LNHP	Government-led, participatory national process	Requires political will and funding

Preferred Option: An inclusive, government-owned, multi-stakeholder revitalization of the LNHP.

VI. Policy Recommendations

1. Review and Update the LNHP Budget

- The original **USD 5 million** estimate (2013) is outdated.
- GC should lead a realistic cost review process that is aligned with current economic conditions.

2. Diversify and Secure Sustainable Financing

- Government funding must anchor the project.
- Development partners (UNESCO and others), philanthropic and the private sector support should be mobilized.
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3. Convene an Expert Review and Design Workshop

- GC should facilitate an expert meeting to refine methodology, timelines, governance structures, and outputs.

4. Revive the governing structures of the LNHP

- Oversight authority structures should be reaffirmed and given clear lines of responsibility.

5. Establish a National LNHP Steering Committee

- Inclusive representation (academia, youth, traditional leaders, diaspora, CSOs, inter-religious Council)
- Clear oversight, accountability, and coordination mandate.

6. Integrate TRC Recommendations

- Ensure historical documentation aligns with reconciliation, justice, and non-recurrence principles.

7. Digitization and Heritage Protection

- Invest in digital archives and heritage preservation as part of national memory and tourism development.

8. Implementation Considerations

- **Political leadership:** Cabinet-level endorsement is critical.
- **Sensitivity:** The process must acknowledge trauma without reopening wounds.
- **Timeline:** Phased implementation with measurable milestones.
- **Communication:** Continuous public engagement to build trust and ownership.

VII. Conclusion

The revitalization of the Liberia National History Project is not merely an academic exercise; it is a nation-building imperative. By embracing inclusiveness, truth, and collective ownership, Liberia can produce a national history that heals divisions, strengthens identity, and lays a durable foundation for peace.

The September 2025 dialogue demonstrated unprecedented consensus: **Liberia is ready to tell its full story together.** What is now required is decisive leadership, sustained investment, and coordinated action.



**Prepared by: Civic Engagement, National Identity and Visioning (CENIV)
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About Policy Brief

Policy Brief is a newsletter published in print and electronically by the Governance Commission of Liberia. It provides highlights of our public policy dialogues which are a series of engagements among high-level policy practitioners, academics, international partners, civil society leaders, private sectors leaders on policy issues and challenges. This dialogue seeks to strengthen the process of public policy making that reaffirmed the urgency of re-writing an inclusive and comprehensive Liberian history.