Liberia PPD Partnering for Growth

Vaanii O. Baker

A-   BACKGROUND

The private and public sectors of Liberia commit to continuing the public-private partnership known as the Liberia Better Business Forum (LBBF).
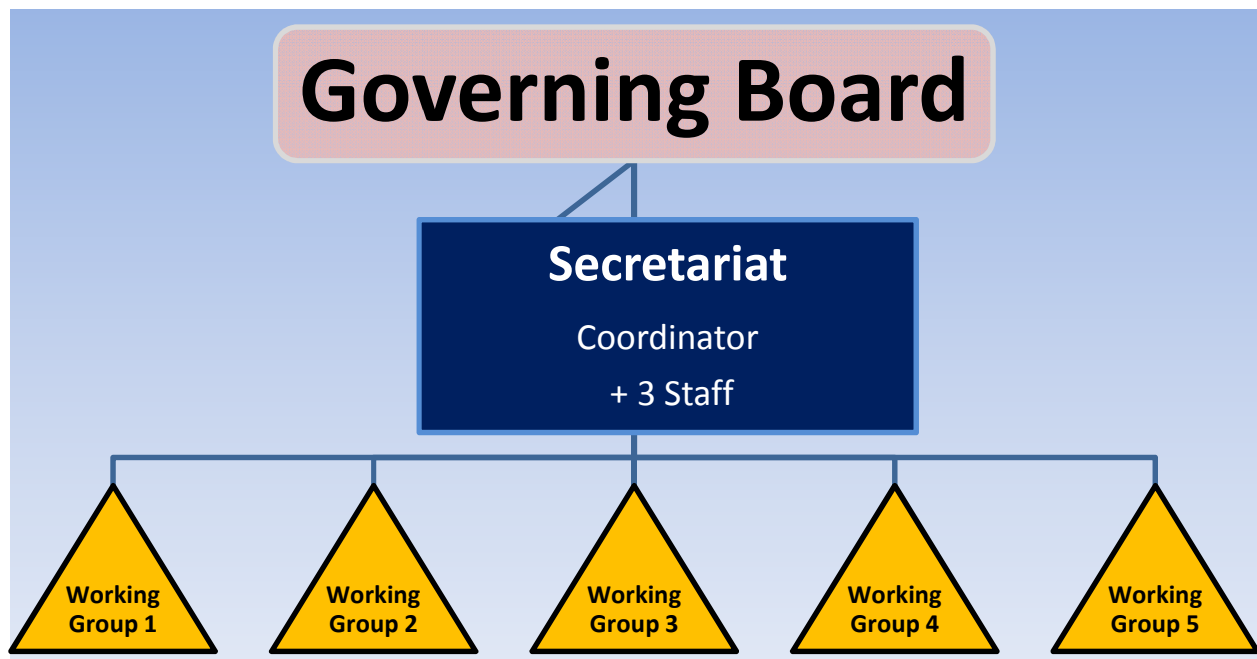
The LBBF is structured partnership that brings together the Government of Liberia (GoL) and the private sector to engage in dialogue aimed at identifying, prioritizing and resolving key constraints to the climate for investment and doing business.

The LBBF operates through issue-specific Working Groups composed of representatives of the public and private sectors which discuss and agree on specific reforms based on technical analysis of viable options. The private sector commits to being a responsible partner with Government to contribute evidence-based recommendations and input.

As has been shown in Liberia and elsewhere, structured dialogue adds value to the reform process because it ensures more informed discussion of problems and solutions and brings all key parties from both sides to the table giving the discussions and recommendations greater legitimacy.

B-   STRUCTURE

The LBBF is led by a *Governing Board*, supported by a *Secretariat* and ensures that regular discussions on reform issues take place through *Working Groups*. The issues selected by the LBBF are based on input from the private sector and supported by research carried out by the Secretariat to better understand the problem and possible solutions. The Governing Board, Secretariat, and Working Groups all have operating guidelines that govern their work.

Governing Board

Secretariat
Coordinator
+ 3 Staff

Working Group 1 | Working Group 2 | Working Group 3 | Working Group 4 | Working Group 5

C- RESULTS

- Government commitment to improve the business environment led by H.E. the President and Business Reform Committee (BRC) to address administrative process reforms
- Revised and approved mandate
  - ✓ Approved new structure
  - ✓ Government and Private Sector co-chairs
  - ✓ Reduced Governing Board from 13 to 8
  - ✓ Agreed upon guiding principles
- Private sector driven focal areas:
  - ✓ Tax Rates/Payment Procedures
  - ✓ Customs Rates/Procedures
  - ✓ Access to Finance
  - ✓ Access to Electricity/Water
  - ✓ Corruption/Informal Payments
- Formation of new working groups around 5 focal areas
- Quick Impact Reforms
  - ✓ Databank of pertinent laws
  - ✓ Document and publicize customs procedures
  - ✓ Document and publicize CBL's $5MM stimulus program
  - ✓ Review transshipment bond requirement of 150%
  - ✓ Tax Clearance procedures
  - ✓ Review business classifications

d- LESSONS LEARNED

- The dialogue needs proper oversight and full engagement of from the Governing Board.

- Local actors must take full ownership of the process
- Issues must be identified and prioritized by the private sector
- Must have operational guidelines for GB and WGs;
- Issue selection criteria and approach to filtering issues;
- Clear support from Secretariat and analytical input
- Frequent update of LBBF's activities to keep stakeholders aware and engaged

Author

Vaanii O. Baker, Coordinator of the Liberia Better Business Forum (LBBF)

The new LBBF Coordinator previously worked for the National Investment Commission (NIC) as Senior Policy Coordinator. He brings to the LBBF a local as well as international background and direct experience in impacting Liberia's investment climate. While at the NIC, Mr. Baker served as the commission's focal point on the revision of several laws impacting the Liberian Economy, and in management, financial, and technical capacities in a number of large international corporations based in the USA.

The LBBF Coordinator Vaanii Baker in an interview with the LBBF news page said "I am extremely excited about the opportunity to bring my experience and expertise to promoting structured, healthy, and productive dialogue between the Government of Liberia and the business community".

According to the LBBF Secretariat, the appointment of Coordinator Baker is a key milestone in the transaction of the forum into its second phase of operations.