



Government of Liberia

National Review Report
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I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Liberia's emerging democracy has evolved since its two major multi-party democratic elections in 2005 and 2011 respectively. These post conflict multi -party elections brought to power for the first and second terms the incumbent President, Her Excellency, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The most important achievement of this period is the maintenance of peace, security as well as development which is crucial to national growth. Policies and programs initiated to accelerate Liberia's development is gender mainstreamed as compared to the past. Additional programs which are women specific have also been initiated and are achieving outstanding results.

Liberian women are marginalized in all sectors and at all levels. Programs targeted to minimize these disparities have been implemented to increase the participation of women and assure their involvement in decision making processes. These range from specialized programs in education to economic empowerment through loan schemes, business development skills as well as adults literacy training and opportunities for employment. Others are empowerment for women's leadership and increased recruitment of women for work in the security sector.

This report sums up the situation of women in Liberia and the commitment of the Government of Liberia to implement the provisions of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Extreme caution has been taken to present the facts. In instances where there have been some shortcomings in implementation, the report provides an opportunity to highlight these gaps with a view to providing additional opportunities to renew commitment and take appropriate steps for implementation.

We are aware it is not feasible to meet all of our obligations under the Convention in one reporting cycle, but we renew our commitment to the improvement of the status of women in all sectors and at all levels and the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women. Towards this end, our country is currently undertaking constitutional review, judicial reform, public sector reform, land tenure reform, as well as other measures to ensure gender parity and equity.

The virtual collapse of the economy, and what amounts to the near withering away of the state due to the 14 years of civil crisis, devastated the country's infrastructure, economy and the corresponding political institutions seemed to have initially make reconstruction impossible. Successive transitional Governments which tried to re-establish the rule of law, and by extension, the promotion and protection of human rights were either too weak, perhaps not totally committed, or seemingly lacked the capacity to carry through.

However, under the current administration, efforts are not only being taken to get the necessary reforms and policies right, as well as the initiation of physical reconstruction of basic and productive infrastructure, but also the restoration of the rule of law, and particularly the protection of the inalienable rights of all citizens.

The Government, under the leadership of Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has, therefore, taken on a more intense and analytical look at the population for the purpose of identifying the most deprived of the citizens, and has come to the conclusion that women as well as girls are an aggregate of the most discriminated against and deprived people in the Liberian society.

To this end, several policies and programs for the purpose of addressing women's rights including the provision of equal opportunities for women regardless of their status have been initiated.

It must not, however, be construed to mean that women's rights are not being trampled upon and that they have gained parity with men. This report, therefore, represents the status of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the initiatives being taken by the Government in collaboration with its Partners and other stakeholders to address women's rights issues during the period under review.

Section One: Overview analysis of achievements and challenges since 1995

(Suggested length: 10 pages)

1.1 Three to five major achievements in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women

- Establishment of rural women structures in 15 counties
- Development and adoption of a National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2009
- Development and Implementation of a National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan
- Enactment of a Children's Law
- Design and Implementation of a Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment Program

1.2 Why are these considered to be the major achievements?

These are considered to be the major achievements because these documents and programs have contributed immensely in highlighting gender equality issues and the empowerment of women, as well as the reform processes in Liberia. Individuals all over the country have been sensitized on gender issues and the need to ensure men and women, boys and girls have equal access to opportunities; in addition women know their rights as enshrined in the Constitution and other regional and international instruments. Women are now participating in political decision making processes and are involved in economic activities to improve their livelihoods and that of their families. Women now have access to literacy and business programs, designed to enable them participate in these activities at their convenience.

What has contributed to this success? Describe measures taken in terms of policies and mechanisms to maintain or build on this success.

1.2.1 The involvement of the communities in the design and implementation of the programs. Civil society organizations and communities' structures play an active part in the sensitization and awareness activities to ensure the target beneficiaries are provided the information and education. In addition, the use of traditional methods, dramas, jingles, street theatres and the media to disseminate the messages have also contributed to the success of the various programs' activities.

1.2.1(a) The establishment of the Rural Women Structures has created a platform for rural women to articulate their concerns, evaluate their accomplishments and devise strategies to tackle challenges they may encounter. They meet regularly in leadership forums and hold an annual conference aimed at strengthening alliances and plan future activities. The establishment of the structures has also increased the women's involvement in the political, social, culture and economic activities in their counties. This has increased rural women's knowledge of their basic human rights under the laws, as well as their participation in local decision making. Under this program, an Association of Women in Cross border Trade has been established and

functions as a bargaining platform to address issues affecting women traders. Through this program, the women have set up village savings loans in their various communities. Members have access to credit at a low interest rate which enables them to increase the volume and quality of their businesses.

1.2.1 (b) The National Gender Policy of Liberia seeks to address gender inequalities and the marginalization of women in Liberia; in addition, it is intended to break away from the cultural and traditional mind set of individuals. The Policy mandates mainstreaming gender in all national development processes; as well as enhances women's and girls' empowerment for sustainable and equitable development; creates and strengthens gender responsive structures and mechanisms, in which both women and men can participate and benefit from development programs on an equal basis.

1.2.1 (c) The National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan focuses on the prevention and response to Gender-based Violence. It recognizes Access to justice as being very critical for the sustainability of peace and development. Other mechanisms that the Government has put into place include:

- a) The establishment of a Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) within the Liberia National Police and other sub stations throughout the country to cater to women and children who have been violated and abused;
- b) The establishment of a Sexual and Gender-based Violence Crimes Unit at the Ministry of Justice to prosecute Sexual Offense cases and ensure the protection of women and children who have been sexually abused;
- c) The establishment of Criminal Court "E" to try sexual offense cases.
- d) The construction and operationalization of Safe Homes to provide protection to survivors of GBV;
- e) The establishment of "One Stop Centers" to provide comprehensive and integrated services to GBV Survivors.

1.2.1 (e) The Education Reform Act of 2011 replaces the Education Law of 2001 and continues to further build on the Girls' Education Policy of 2006 and addresses:

- a) Free and compulsory education for all students in primary school nation-wide;
- b) Recruitment and training of more female teachers;
- c) Providing counseling in schools for girls.
- d) Ensuring and effecting appropriate sanctions against teachers who commit sexual abuse and assault of students

- e) Offering life skills in school to raise the self-esteem of girls so they can say no to sexual abuse; and
- f) Increasing the availability of school scholarships for girls.

1.2.1 (f) The Children’s Law, which was passed in October 2011, is to facilitate the respect, protection, promotion and provision of the realization of child rights in order to make maximum contribution to the survival, development and participation of every child in Liberia. As a matter of principle in decisions and actions that affect the child, the best interest of the child shall be the paramount consideration.

a) What are the country’s three to five major challenges in the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women:

- 2.1 (a)** Inadequate Budgetary allocation to the National Gender Machinery;
- 2.1 (b)** Ineffective implementation of the National Gender Policy;
- 2.1(c)** Inadequate human resource and technical capacity (specialized skills) of the National Gender Machinery;

b) Why are these considered to be the major challenges?

2.1.1 These are considered to be the major challenges because in order to adequately address gender equality and the empowerment of women the National Gender Machinery needs to be strengthened to effectively carry out its Mandate: to Advise Government on matters affecting the wellbeing as well as the development and advancement of women and children. In addition the National Gender Machinery is to coordinate effectively Government-wide gender mainstreaming efforts to ensure that the perspectives of both women and men are central to Policy formulation, legislation resource allocation, planning and outcomes of policies and programs focusing on gender equality, the empowerment of women and the development of children. The National Gender Machinery is to also monitor and report on the impact of national policies and programs on women and children, as well as recommend appropriate measures to be taken in mobilizing and integrating women as equal partners to men in the economic, social, political and cultural development of the country. At the moment, the budgetary allocation to the National Gender Machinery is minimum, which adversely affects its programming.

Describe the strategy (ies) that is (are) in place to address the challenges?

2.1.2 The National Gender Machinery has initiated an Annual Gender Sector Roundtable which brings together relevant stakeholders involved in gender-related activities to discuss and strategize on ways to support the National Gender Machinery to carry out its Mandate. In addition regular policy dialogue is held with the Gender Committees within the National Legislature and creating awareness and conducting training in Gender Budgeting for key Ministries/Agencies, Civil Society Organizations and Policy Makers. In addition, a

Gender Desk has been established in the Ministries/Agencies and Commissions and trained the Focal Points to ensure gender is mainstreamed in their various policies, programs and plans.

- c) What setbacks/reversals in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women have been experienced since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (if different from those already identified in b)?**

What were the major factors that caused the setbacks?

What mitigation measures or other actions, if any, have been implemented to counter the setbacks?

- d) What have been the main constitutional, legislative and/or legal developments in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women?**

The Government of Liberia has constituted several Commissions to ensure women's rights are addressed, among which are: The Law Reform Commission, the Constitution Review Committee, The Governance Commission, Land Commission and the Independent National Human Rights Commission. Currently a review of the 1986 Constitution is going on to ensure it is engendered; also, the Laws are also being reviewed to ensure those laws that have an adverse effect on gender equality and the advancement of women are addressed. The New Elections Law of 2014 mandates that all political parties ensure that their party listing consist of not more than 70% or less than 30% of any one gender. A draft Domestic Violence Act has been submitted to the Cabinet for endorsement, after which it will be sent to the National Legislature to be passed into Law. The draft Domestic Violence Law is in response to the country's commitment to the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which calls on the Government of Liberia to develop and implement a comprehensive legal framework that will address violence against women and children. A new Rape Law has been passed which increases the penalty for rape and a Devolution of Estates Law has also been passed, which provides protection for women married under customary law. The Government has also established Criminal Court "E" to try Sexual Offense cases as well as a Sex Crimes Unit within the Ministry of Justice to prosecute sexual offense cases. In addition, the African Union Protocols on the Rights of Women and Children have been ratified. A Children's Law has also been passed.

What laws and/or regulations remain in place (or have been introduced) that could have adverse effects on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the country?

At the moment Law reform is going on in Liberia and New Laws have been introduced to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

e)What is the approximate share of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women?

Government budgetary allocation to the National Gender Machinery in fiscal year 2012-2013 was United States Dollars, 1,201,013 amounting to 0.178% of the national budget of \$672,050,415. This was increased slightly in fiscal year 2013-2014 to \$1,214,752 United States Dollars representing 0.23% of the national budget of \$520,000,000.

Describe efforts to increase and track national planning and budgetary allocations related to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women, in preparation of development plans and budgets at national, regional/provincial and local levels.

The Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Finance during the 2012/2013 Fiscal Year introduced a Medium Term Fiscal Framework (MTEF), which mandates all Government Spending Entities to formulate their Budgets and ensure that their budgets were gender responsive. Each Spending entity were to also develop a gender budget statement.

F)What mechanisms are in place for regular dialogue between Government and civil society?The Government of Liberia, through the sector. Ministries/Agencies hold regular coordination meetings with relevant CSOs. The CSOs are also placed on specialized taskforces, and Technical and Steering Committees of programs/projects being implemented as well as serve as implementing partners.CSOs/NGOs also participate in the development of national, regional and international reports on the implementation of these instruments/documents.

Do non-governmental organizations, including civil society organizations, women's organizations, academia, faith-based organizations, the private sector and other actors participate formally in the mechanisms established to monitor and implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action?

Yes, the National Gender Forum (NGF) is the mechanism established to monitor and ensure the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It is a multi-disciplinary and policy advisory body to the Government of Liberia on gender issues. It comprises of a range of stakeholders including heads of Government Ministries and Agencies, institutions of higher learning, upper and lower Houses of the Legislature, Gender Committees of the Legislature and UN Agencies. Taskforces were constituted to address each thematic area of the BPFA. Each taskforce is headed by the relevant government Ministry or Agency and is co-chaired by a local NGO or Civil Society Organization and its membership comprises of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, women's organizations, academia, faith-based organizations, and the private sector, while the relevant International NGO and UN Agency serve as Advisors. The President of the Republic of Liberia is the chairperson of the National Gender Forum, while the National Gender Machinery serves as the Secretariat.

If no, what are the main obstacles preventing the establishment of such mechanisms?

g) What main in-country, bilateral, sub-regional and/or regional cooperation is the country engaged in to support sharing of knowledge and experiences in the monitoring and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly?

The Government of Liberia through the National Gender Machinery has not gotten any support to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

What results have been achieved through such efforts and what lessons have been learnt?

N/A

What is the perceived value of the cooperation?

N/A

In what ways could cooperation be improved to strengthen sharing of knowledge and experiences in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action?

Even though the National Gender Machinery has not received any cooperation to support knowledge and sharing of experiences, the Government would appreciate the establishment of such cooperation to accelerate the monitoring and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

h) How, and to what extent, have the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) overall, and in particular the gender-related MDGs, facilitated or strengthened the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action?

The Government of Liberia has made significant strides towards achieving the MDGs by 2015. For **MDG 2**, which focuses on access to universal primary education, the enrolment in primary school increased in 2003 from 37% to 49% between 2008 and 2009; in addition the country is set to achieve **MDG3 on Gender equality** due to the high increase in the ratio of female enrolment in both primary and secondary school. The former increased from 69% to 87% between 2001- 2009, and the latter from 59% to 72% during the same period. As a result, the country was awarded the MDG 3 Award in 2010 for outstanding leadership, commitment and progress in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. This focuses on the girl-child and the economic empowerment of women. Regarding **MDG4**, which is linked to **Women in Power and Decision making** addresses women political participation, the Government has appointed women in key positions. For example, the President is the first elected head of State in Africa and Liberia. In addition, with cabinet of 22 members, 6 are women, which is 31.8%; Deputy Ministers are 85, which is 29.1%;, in the Legislature, women constitute 11% in the House of Representatives, while in the House of Senate is 13%. At the Local Government level, there are 4 women Superintendents, out of 15, which is 27%. At the Supreme Court, out of 5 members, 2 are women, which represent 40%. In addressing **MDGs 5&6**, which is linked to **Women and Health**, the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel increased from 46% in 2001 to 64% in 2011. In addition, several health indicators have improved since 2009. There has been a steady decline due to improved health care delivery. Maternal mortality rate showed a downward trend from 94 per 100,000 births in 2010 to 770 per 100,000 births in 2012. Institutional deliveries by skilled attendants have increased by 15.3%; HIV services have been decentralized to ensure access to prevention, care and treatment. Though the overall HIV rate among women is higher (1.8%) than among men (1.2%), Ante natal Care (ANC) surveillance prevalence has reduced from 4.0% in 2010 to 2.6%, among pregnant women. All these have contributed positively in facilitating and strengthening the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Section Two: Progress in the implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action since 2009

(Suggested length: 25 pages)

- a) **What is the status of progress in each of the twelve critical areas of concern and their strategic objectives, and relevant sections of the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly? Please provide concrete supporting evidence, including statistical data and other relevant sources.**

Women and Poverty:

The Government of Liberia cognizant of the importance of trade in achieving sustained economic growth, developmental goals and poverty reduction has developed several Policies and Strategies, among which are a National Trade Policy which provides a framework for trade liberalization and Liberia's competitive reintegration into Regional and International markets. The Trade Policy seeks to promote a balance relationship between trade liberalization and sustainable development that protects women, youth and the poor, especially those in the rural areas, from the adverse effect of market opening. As women constitute 55.3% of the work force in the informal sector, they are expected to be the main beneficiaries of Policies which enhance trade. Also, a Medium Small Market Enterprise Policy (MSME) has been developed and is being implemented. The Policy seeks to build skills, create access to market, finance and advocate legal and regulatory reforms. In order to protect women entrepreneurs, an Export Strategy was developed and is being implemented. This Strategy seeks to strengthen supply side capacity by promoting value addition and supporting entrepreneurship. As a result, more than 20,000 women who are engaged in trade activities have benefitted as value has been added to their commodities and they are able to access market which has contributed to lifting them from poverty.

Currently, a Social Cash Transfer Program is being implemented; 3,837 households or more than 16,118 individuals from two counties are benefitting. These Households represent extremely poor and labor constrained population. Over 60% of these

households are headed by females. This Program has contributed to 5,844 children benefitting from education grant or school bonuses. In total, 5,335 children are enrolled in primary, while 509 are enrolled in secondary school. These are all geared towards poverty alleviation.

In its efforts to address land issues, which are drivers of conflict, the Government of Liberia, has developed a Land Policy, which provides for access to Land. The Goal of the Policy is to improve the daily lives of all Liberians, eliminate the anxiety and uncertainty the fuel over land rights. Even though the Constitution guarantees that “all persons, irrespective of ethnic background, race, sex, creed, place of origin or political opinion, are entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual”, including land rights, however, the lands of customary communities have been less secure than private lands. As such, the Policy seeks to ensure that lands under customary practice and norms are given protection equal to that of private lands. Moreover, women’s land rights are often less protected than those of men; therefore, the Policy aims to give equal protection to the land rights of women and men.

The Government of Liberia has created the environment for economic independence for Liberian women, through the ability to run profitable businesses, save money and access loans, has helped them bridge the gender gap. More than 4,000 rural women and cross-border trade women have been supported through Savings Loan Associations (SLAs), which are now recognized and supported by the Central Bank of Liberia Loan Extension and Availability Facility (LEAF) to further increase their access to capital at affordable interest rates.

The Rural Women Structure and Women in cross-border Trade Association were established to create an opportunity for women at the local level to participate in decision making on issues that affect their livelihoods. These structures are serving as key entry points for the provision of information, service delivery and increasing their access to financing and skills training, as well as advocate for their members.

Education and Training

The Government of Liberia has made considerable efforts in addressing the issue of education and to ensure access to education, as education is one of the primary methods to lift a population out of poverty towards prosperity and stability. More effective Policies have been developed to increase education for girls in order to add to the human capital.

The Liberian Education Administration and Management Policies outlined in the Education Reform Act of 2011 address policies on Girls' Education, Special Education, School Grants and Scholarships, amongst others. Special Education Policies to address the disparities between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities in the educational system including girls with disabilities.

The Policy on girls' education, developed in 2006, was revised in 2013 to take into consideration present realities and to align with the new Education Reform Act, which advances girls' education at the regional, national and local levels with workable strategies and interventions.

The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), which protects children's right to education, ensures access to quality education. The program was initiated to reach over-aged and out-of-school children and youth. This is particular useful for school dropouts and was used during the recruitment of females in the Liberia National Police.

The National Policy on Girls; education also addresses improving girls' and women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education; it also stresses the development and implementation of education, training and retraining policies for women, especially young women and re-entering the labor market, to provide skills to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic context for improving their employment opportunities.

Sex disparities in the educational system are being addressed by the encouragement of more females to enter the teaching profession. The number of female teachers in the educational system is currently lower than males at both the primary and secondary levels. This is a disincentive to girls to pursue studies in certain areas, particularly the natural sciences and poses hindrances to addressing issues of sexual exploitation and abuse in the sector. To this end, a number of Teachers' Training Institutions have been rehabilitated, staffed and equipped to provide basic teacher training for elementary schools in Liberia. Free tertiary education and stipends are provided by the Government for all students specializing in education as incentives to increase the number of trained teachers in the country.

There is no discrimination against women in all forms of education as a matter of national Policy. More schools are being constructed and renovated to accommodate the ever growing number of school age children both in the rural and urban areas. However, impediments such as lack of trained teachers and technical schools in the rural areas reduce the opportunities for most students to access education. Statistics from the 8 functional technical and vocational Institutions reveal that females make up 30% of the graduates. Junior Colleges have been established in the Counties to meet the demand for higher education. However, there is a need for more technical Institutions to enable students who cannot enroll in the Junior Colleges to have access to technical vocational education.

The Government has recognized the problem of poverty faced by many parents and has accordingly established a scholarship scheme to assist needy students, particularly, young girls and women. This scholarship scheme has been going very well, benefiting students of all sexes. There is also a foreign scholarship program administered by the Government, which is supported by friendly Governments through grants. Prominent amongst the friendly Governments which continue to provide scholarships and grants are the People's Republic of China, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Russian Federation and the USA.

Other scholarships are also provided by some international and local NGOs, such as the the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE/LIBERIA), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Ambassador's Girls Scholarship, amongst others. It is important to note that although these programs are not exclusively provided to girls, special consideration is given to girls due to the large disparity in girls' enrollment and retention in school.

In addition to the traditional and previously administered scholarships in existence, Her Excellency, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, has established The Liberia Education Trust Fund that has benefited 2,029 students, which includes girls to study at various secondary and post-secondary Institutions. In addition, the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Education provided scholarships for girls in the following areas: Science and Technology, Medicine, Engineering and Education. Overall scholarships awarded in these categories are: Secondary-73; Junior College-209 and University-1,345.

As a means to ensuring that girls are retained in school and have access to education, the Ministry of Gender and Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Education has targeted 185 underprivileged and disadvantage girls from 8 counties to enroll at two private boarding schools and one government-run boarding institution.

Female enrolment in primary schools is encouraging. According to recent statistics, out of the 674,534 students in primary school, 316,445 were girls, accounting for 46.9%. At the Junior high school level a total of 138,029 students were enrolled, with girls totalling 61,612 or 45%. Enrolment for secondary schools records 782,049 students, with girls constituting 328,460 or 42%.

Women and Health

Support to health care service delivery is more heavily prioritized by the government of Liberia now as compared to 2009 when it was heavily dependent on donor-funded vertical programs. Moreover, the national government budgetary allocations to the health sector increased over the past three years from 39.8 million in 2010-2011 to 54.9 million in 2012-2013.

The Government of Liberia, recognizing the value of health, has devoted itself to ensuring that every Liberian has access to health and social welfare services, regardless of economic status, origin, religion, gender or geographic location. To ensure access to health care, a 10-year National Health and Social Welfare Plan (2011 – 2021) was developed to respond to health care delivery at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Liberia operates a three-tier system of health delivery services, primary, secondary and tertiary, with the first and second serving as gate-keeper for the next level and is committed to ensuring equity and quality healthcare through the delivery of the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS). Essential preventive and curative care services are provided at each level of the health system – from the community to referral hospitals. The EPHS focuses on eleven priorities: maternal and new born care, maternal and child health services (including child nutrition), community health, adolescent health services, communicable disease control (including HIV and AIDS), mental health, school health, prison health services, sexual and gender-based violence, emergency services, and non-communicable diseases.

SOME GENERAL HEALTH INDICATORS

Life expectancy is generally 46 years; 38 years for male and 41 for female (LDHS, 2007). Several key health indicators have improved since 2009. These include health facility utilization in Liberia which is gauged by Primary Health Care (PHC) head count and the number of curative consultations. In 2012, 82% of 656 functional health facilities in the country reported 4,981,322 visits as compared to 76% of 422 functional health facilities reporting 3,879,958 in 2010. Data representing the number of visits are not disaggregated by sex.

Maternal Mortality

Liberia has a high maternal mortality rate attributed to direct post-partum hemorrhage, obstructed or prolonged labor, complications of unsafe abortion, eclampsia, malaria and anemia (MOHSW Annual report, 2010 & 2012). However, initial figures show a steady decline due to improved health care delivery since the last report. Maternal mortality rate in Liberia shows a downward trend from 994 per 100,000 births in 2010 to 770 per 100,000 births in 2012. Access to skilled maternal care including delivery has increased in Liberia. Institutional deliveries by skilled attendants have increased by 15.3% (64.7% in 2010 and 80% in 2012). According to the Liberia Demography and Health Survey of 2007, eight in 10 mothers (79%) received prenatal care from a health professional (Doctor, Nurse, Midwife or Physician Assistant). In 2012 87% of the first ante-natal clinic (ANC) visits were attended by skilled personnel. Report on access to maternal health services amongst pregnant women in 2012 revealed 1st ANC visit at 87%. Fourth ANC visit in 2012 was 58% compared to 4th ANC visit in 2010 which was 40.9%.

Care given during the post-natal period is currently focused on the mother as compared to the past where emphasis was more on new born care. Regardless of where the delivery occurs, the mother is expected to attend post-natal clinic (PNC) to be examined by trained health workers within 42 days to avoid post-partum complications. However, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare reports a slight decline in PNC visits. 64,962 PNC visits were made in 2010 while 64,597 PNC visits were made in 2012. (MOH&SW Annual reports 2010 and 2012).

In rural Liberia trained traditional midwives are incentivized to refer pregnant women to health centers for deliveries. This is supported by Health care volunteers established in rural communities to assist with awareness and outreach programs on the prevention of home deliveries. These health volunteers are also trained to identify early symptoms of malaria and other diseases for referral to health centers.

Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights

Family planning, teenage pregnancy, drug and substance abuse are infused into the four career subjects of science, math, social studies, and biology in high schools throughout Liberia. Family planning services are available to students through referral to nearby clinics within the school community.

Liberia reported a low contraceptive prevalence rate of 11% and large unmet needs (36%) for family planning (FP) services few years ago. (LDHS,2007). In 2012, 96,755 new users (women of reproductive age 15 – 49 years) were provided FP services as compared to 65,812 in 2010, excluding those who opted for condoms.

STIS, HIV AND AIDS PREVALENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Though the overall HIV rate among women is higher (1.8%) than among men (1.2%), Ante Natal Care (ANC) sentinel surveillance prevalence has reduced from 4.0% in 2010 to 2.6% among pregnant women. All pregnant women attending first ANC visits are routinely offered test for syphilis and hepatitis B.

HIV services have been decentralized significantly to ensure access to prevention, care and treatment for the citizens. To reduce vertical transmission and preserve the health of pregnant women, Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) services has been integrated into 336 health facilities providing ANC as compared to 18 facilities in 2009. Additionally, Anti-Retro Viral Therapy (ART) sites have been established around the country at 46 health care facilities. Since the inception of free ART services, cumulatively the number of females ≥ 15 in care and on ART (excluding pregnant women) enrolled in care amount to 55.3% (5090/8875) while pregnant women in the same category amounts to 434. (December 2012 NACP report). 37% of these women (482/1521) received Anti-Retro Viral prophylaxis to reduce the risk of mother to child transmission of HIV as compared to 32% in 2010.

TRAINED WOMEN HEALTH PERSONNEL

About 470 students are being trained in health care delivery services in Liberia and abroad. Much more are needed to reduce the capacity gap in the health sector. Currently, there are 82 doctors, 308 physician assistants, 1,455 nurses, 645 midwives to care for a population of 3.489,072 million people. Health workers have been trained in specialized skills; 96 health workers trained in Basic Life Saving Skills (BLSS), 115 service providers capacity built in family planning provision, 120 health workers capacity strengthened in neonatal resuscitation, 50 health workers capacity enhanced in Home Based Maternal and Newborn care. Additionally, 54 health workers have been trained in the prevention of obstetric fistula, 198 service providers trained in PMTCT sites in six counties, 32 health workers trained as trainers in PMTCT, 120 CHVs in 2 counties and

10 Social Workers in 5 counties trained in fistula case identification, tracking of client and prompt referral for management; 54 health professionals from 5 counties trained in the prevention of fistula, using foley catheter and pantograph.

PROVISION OF HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Health infrastructure is one of the major pillars of the National Health and Social Welfare Plan. Nationwide, health infrastructures increased by 20.7% between 2009-2010 leading to the reduction of one health facility serving the average population of 8,000 in 2006 to 5,500 in 2010. These figures have been steadily increasing throughout Liberia.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The clinical and psychosocial management of Gender Based Violence is one of the essential pillars inscribed in the national health policy and essential package of health services. Consequently, the national AIDs control program developed an indicator to report on the total number of survivors from penetrative rape receiving post exposure prophylaxis in 72 hours. Further, county hospitals have established SGBV Units and trained health workers to respond to reported cases of rape. To deal with cases of SGBV, one hundred and seven three (173) health workers and 120 health care providers were trained in clinical management of rape. 90 GCHVs have been trained in the referral of SGBV cases, while 325 community members from 12 communities were trained to provide psychosocial services to SGBV survivors and do referrals to health facilities.

Mental Health and the Elderly

The elderly make up approximately 5% of the population of Liberia. Of this number, males constitute 49% or (83,761) and females, 51% or 87,180 persons. About 39% of the elderly live in temporary houses while a small number of 18% live in permanent dwelling. A high proportion of the elderly are disabled due to old age and have sight difficulties. Most of these people live in the rural areas with 58% in Bomi, 5% in Gbarpolu and 2% in Grand Gedeh. There is one government facility to care for the elderly, men and women but the facilities are inadequate to accommodate large numbers. A number of elderly are provided home care by immediate relatives consistent with tradition. It is considered demeaning, in Liberia as in most parts of Africa, to abandon elderly parents and relatives to foster care.

Mental health facilities in Liberia were damaged during the civil war. Though the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has a mental health section, there is only one small psychiatric facility located in Monrovia. It was established by German emergency doctors who operated it from 2003-2011 when their program phased out. The Government of Liberia took over the facility in 2011. This facility has a patient population of 56(31 males and 25 females) who receive treatment for schizophrenia, substance abuse, drug induced psychosis, depressive disorders and psycho-social trauma. Being aware of the gap in mental health service delivery, the Government is undertaking training of mental health nurses who upon completion of their training will be assigned to Health Facilities to provide the needed services.

Violence against Women

To address the issue of violence against women, the Government of Liberia developed and is implementing a National Action Plan for the Prevention and Management of Gender-Based Violence in Liberia. The Plan has five Pillars: Health, Psychosocial, Legal/Justice, Security/Protection and Coordination. The overall goal of the Plan is to prevent Gender-Based Violence in a systematic and comprehensive manner, through a multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional approach and to respond through a holistic care and services to GBV survivors. In addition, the Government's response to the prevailing situation was to institute a strong and effective partnership with all stakeholders involved in GBV service delivery, to improve coordination and collaboration through a one-stop-shop approach. It was in this context that a multi-sectoral and multi-agency National GBV Taskforce was established to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

The Government has also put in place several interventions to ensure GBV survivors receive appropriate care and services. Among such interventions is the construction of Safe homes and training of security and health personnel; to this end, 7 Safe homes have been constructed in seven counties. These safe homes provide temporary protective shelters for abused women and children. These survivors also receive medical care and psychosocial counselling, as well as some form of recreation. When the survivors leave the homes, follow ups visits are made to the survivors to ensure they are able to continue receiving psychosocial services. Additionally training has been conducted for security and medical personnel to respond to GBV cases, taking the rights, health needs, interest and privacy of the Survivors into consideration.

The Government established Criminal Court “E” which is responsible to try sexual offences and the Sex Crimes Unit within the Ministry of Justice to prosecute sexual offenses. Trial screens have been installed in the courts nationwide to ensure GBV survivors are protected and confidentially are maintained during trials.

To support the Government in its efforts, to provide services to GBV survivors, the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL) and the Liberia National Bar Association have established legal clinics where women can receive free legal aid.

The Government of Liberia in continuation of its determination to ensure a free and safe environment for women and children amended the Rape law, which now provides a greater penalty for rape. Also, the Devolution of Estates law was passed to ensure women married under the customary law have the same rights as women married under civil Law.

A Domestic Violence Act has been developed and is awaiting Cabinet endorsement for onward submission to the National Legislature for passage into law. The enactment of the law will assist greatly in addressing violence against women and children. In addition, the development of the Law is in response to the Recommendation from the CEDAW Committee which mandated the Government of Liberia to develop a legal framework to address violence against women and children.

To address trafficking and exploitation of persons, the Government of Liberia is making significant efforts to fully comply with minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking. The Government defines human trafficking as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or means of coercion, by abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a persons of vulnerability, or by the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation”. Human trafficking takes numerous forms; rural to urban and vice versa, as well as trafficking of persons from other countries to Liberia. To this end, a National Anti-trafficking Taskforce has been constituted to combat trafficking in persons. The

Taskforce works through a National Anti-Human Trafficking Secretariat headed by the Ministry of Labour and comprises members of all security agencies and relevant Ministries and Agencies. The Taskforce is responsible to conduct investigations on human trafficking and refer cases to the Liberia National Police and the courts.

A moratorium was placed on child adoption, as it is one of the conduits through which children are trafficked. The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization oversees the parental travel authority for minors travelling abroad and is processed by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. As a means of curtailing trafficking in children, an Adoption Law has been developed and passed by the Legislature; meanwhile guidelines for the implementation of the Law are being developed. The Law provides for the protection of children in welfare institutions, as well as the accreditation to providers for Alternative Child Care..

Women in Armed Conflict

Liberia has moved from a state of emergency into a period of rehabilitation, and now to reconstruction and development, after experiencing a prolonged civil war that was characterized by the devastation of social structure and public institutions, and an absence of judicial and moral accountability. It was a condition that left women particularly vulnerable, and they suffered disproportionately from the effects of war. Some fought and died beside men and boys as combatants, many were left behind to head families they were not equipped to care for, and all suffered. Economic vulnerability, loss of security, and displacement left Liberian women susceptible to acts of violence, especially sexual violence, early marriage, abduction, forced labor, sexual slavery, torture and other human rights violations, and often forced them to engage in illegal or dangerous activities in order to survive.

However, despite the injustice and violations that Liberian women suffered during the war, they emerged as key players in bringing about the end of the conflict. Women united to overcome their traditionally subservient role in Liberian society to demand an end to the conflict and advocate for their rights. Considering the roles Liberian women played in bringing about the peace, they are still critical in ensuring the peace is

sustained. Women must be seen as peace mediators and must be a part of the decision making processes when it comes to peace and security.

Liberian women were actively engaged in the resolution of the civil war in Liberia. Since then, there has been the recognition of the positive contributions of women in peace keeping and security matters. Liberia is building the potential of women to serve in the security sector.

The Liberian National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, which was developed and launched in 2009 provides a framework to strengthen and develop protection, response and prevention mechanisms, programs and procedures to guarantee security for women and girls personally and at the national level as well as promote their human rights. It also provides for developing economic, social and security policies to empower women and girls to participate fully and effectively in Liberia's peace building, reconstruction recovery and development processes at all levels, including decision making.

The Action Plan also aims at strengthening the coordination and coherence of gender mainstreaming activities in Liberia on women peace and security. Specific actionable areas are protection, prevention, participation and empowerment and promotion.

Women and the Economy

Liberia's economy is agriculture-based. Women are major players in the sector, providing 80% of agricultural labour force, are involved in 76% of cash crop production, 93% of food crop production, conduct 85% of all marketing and trading, a vital complement to crop production for income generation, and play a vital role in linking rural and urban markets through their informal networks. Women and men also have clearly defined socio-economic roles in the agricultural sector at the household level. Women play a critical role in the agricultural sector as traders and small scale farmers, representing 56% and 51% respectively in these areas (World Bank & GoL

2010 opcit:1). They are primarily responsible for the production of food crops and the processing of agricultural produce. Women represent 55% of labour in non-communal food crop production and produce 60% of agricultural output and as twice as many women as men 50% to 25% diversify into agro-processing (ibid:1). The sexual division of labour in rural households in Liberia shows that women primarily grow food crops such as rice, cassava, pepper, okra and vegetables, while men's farming activities focus on cocoa, coffee, rubber and palm oil and other income-generating tree crops such as pineapples, bananas, kola nuts, and pawpaw, among others. (GoL, 2012b:10). 22% of cash crop income is produced by men only, with women producing only 5% (ibid::10).

Women's role goes beyond food crop production as they are actively engaged as the main processors of agricultural products for both domestic and commercial use. They also comprise 80% of rural traders and are the key participants in key farm to market networks. The poor road network constrains agricultural production and marketing as transportation of goods accounts for 70 per cent of marketing cost. As a result head portage is the only means of transportation. Storage facilities are rare; those available often lack ventilation and pallets to elevate produce off the ground and costs to use the facilities depend on the quantity of commodities stored. Few markets have system waste disposal, potable water or toilet facilities. Marketing takes place either within structures or open spaces. Some market structures are roofed buildings with concrete floors, with or without walls. Poor storage facilities and inadequate social amenities affect women's earnings and hygiene and make them susceptible to waterborne diseases and other preventable illnesses.

To increase women's access to finance, the Government introduced a number of schemes. These include building women's entrepreneurship program to increase women's livelihoods and create more and better jobs for them. Beneficiaries from this project were three hundred women's groups in rural and urban areas with a membership of 22, 000.

Soft loans were also provided to women to expand their businesses. Loans were given to 3,000 women under the Colloquium loan fund in 2009. To ensure these loans were managed properly, a training center, Traditional Women for Peace Training Center was established to cater to the training needs of beneficiaries. Under the Sirleaf Market

Women Fund project (SMWF) market facilities, wells and warehouses were constructed in various locations throughout Liberia. Women in this project also benefited from a literacy program which trained 500 illiterate women to read and write.

A national rural women's program under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Gender and Development increased the capacity of rural women through the provision of farming implements, seeds, clerical supplies and training workshops. Storage facilities for their agricultural produce were also constructed in 12 counties.

A joint Food and nutrition program to mitigate the impact of domestic price increases, maintain food and improved nutrition for vulnerable homes was introduced by the government of Liberia and partners. The projected beneficiaries were mainly women who represent the majority of small holder producers in the agricultural sector. In 2010, 160 women from Bong, Nimba and Lofa Counties were trained under this program in post-harvest rice processing including, parboiling, drying and milling. Between 2009 and 2010, 12,000 women farmers received farming tools and assorted seeds to improve their production. An additional 30 women were trained in business marketing skills, resource mobilization, communication and group formation and leadership skills.

The Government through the Ministry of Agriculture with support from partners provided technical support to women in the agriculture sector through the following interventions:

- Training of trainers in agro-process. The prime objective of this initiative was to make available women trainers in all counties
- Training of women (rural women) in value change
- The program on food security for the commercialization of agriculture.
- Farmer Field School- it is intended to help women make sound decisions in farming for higher production at lower labour costs (2007/2008).
- The setting up of Agriculture Business Unit within the Rural Women Program

The characteristics of poverty shows that people living in the rural areas are at the extreme end of poverty. The Government through the Ministry of Gender and Development is remedying the situation by increasing the development of social services and is piloting a Social Cash Transfer Program in two Counties to provide cash

to households that are labor constrained and below the poverty line. The Government intends to put in place mechanisms that will scale up the scheme, such as micro-credit, and village savings and loan, amongst others to assist the most vulnerable households improve their livelihood and graduate them from extreme poverty.

Women in Power and Decision-Making

The Government of Liberia recognizes women's role in decision making, unlike in the past. There has been a significant progress on female representation in decision-making. In 2009, a survey conducted by the MOGD on female representation in appointed positions, and it was revealed that of 35 Ministries, Agencies and Corporations (MACs), 26% are headed by females, which represent 36% for Ministries and 19% for Agencies and Corporations. Among the deputy heads, substantially higher percentages (38%) are headed by females, which significantly differ for Ministries and Agencies/Corporations, which account for 16% and 47% respectively.

When analysed the data by categories that reflect the decision making roles, the status differs substantially. Among the assistant heads, one third (34%) of them are females, which again differ substantially for ministries and agencies/corporations (26% and 39%). At directors and supervisors level, 21 percentages of staffs are females, which stand at 14% for ministries and 28% for agencies/corporations (Fig. 6). The status of share of female employees differs substantially by individual MACs in various ranks of staff; some of the agencies standing at much higher of the national average, while others doing much worse.

The participation of women in the formulation of the Government's policy and its implementation, hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government has been to the large extent minimum. This Government has made strides to increase women's participation in government. Women hold senior and junior ministerial positions and are also in key decision-making positions in the public and private sectors.

- There are four female Cabinet Ministers, compared to seventeen male Ministers, constituting 21% of the total Cabinet positions (Youth and Sports, Education,

Public Works, Labour and Gender and Development). Women comprise approximately one-quarter of the President's appointments into positions of trust.

- In local government, women are also very visible. Four of the fifteen county superintendents are women.
- Women feature significantly on Special Commissions constituted in the country. On the National Elections Commission which has seven members, the total number of women is three thus constituting 43% of the total membership of the Commission. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has nine members, 44% of whom (four) are women.

The Government of Liberia has instituted a Constitutional Review Process and a five-member Constitution Review Committee (CRC) was set up in August, 2012 to review the 1986 Constitution and recommend the revisions of all provisions inconsistent with current realities. One of the first activities undertaken by the Committee was to hold a national "women's consultative forum " in April 2013 to solicit the views of women on articles they believe are necessary to be repealed, amended or revised. These views are subject to national consultations to ensure they represent the views of all women nationally and are relevant for inclusion in the constitutional review process. Also, there has been series of women's consultative forums organized by the Ministry of Gender and Development in collaboration with the Constitution Review Committee to ensure that women's input and recommendations are flagged for consideration prior to referendum.

The National Legislature has amended Section 4.5 of the Elections Law to include gender equity in the nomination of candidates and it states: "candidates listing for elected offices shall contain no less than 30% and no more than 70% of any gender". Working in concert with the Gender Division of the National Elections Commission, the new Electoral Law is another strategy to increase women's participation in the electoral process. The proposed amendment to the Law was sponsored by the Women Legislative Caucus (WLC).

During the 2011 General and Presidential Elections, 102 women participated in the process, which included 3 women Presidential Candidates. Even though only 12 women (8 representatives and 4 senators) were elected, the elections marked an increase in the number of women contesting for political offices. It did however register a decrease from 14% to 12% the number of women elected to the Legislature. Currently, the number has increased to 13, with an additional woman winning a by-election. Women now constitute 30% of Cabinet Ministers, while two of the Five members of the Supreme Court Bench are women.

Six out of Liberia's 17 substantive Ambassadors are women. Liberia is also represented by women ambassadors and high ranking Foreign Service Officers in many countries

throughout the world. Women also represent Liberia as full Ambassadors to International Organizations such as the United Nations and African Union.

Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women

National Gender Machinery the Government of Liberia continues to develop Policies and Programs and enact legislations to ensure gender equality. The National Gender Machinery was enacted in 2001 and is responsible for promoting gender equality, women's advancement and children's rights in Liberia. In addition, the National Gender Machinery advises the Government of Liberia on all matters affecting women and children as well as mainstream gender in Government's Policies, Programs and Plans.

The National Gender Machinery also monitors and reports back to Government the impact of national policies and programs on women and children in addition to recommending appropriate measures to be taken in mobilizing and integrating women as equal partners with men in social, political, economic and cultural development of Liberia.

Standing Committee on Gender Equity and Child Development National Legislature: In furtherance of the national campaign for enhancing women's empowerment and children development, a Standing Committee on Gender Equity and Child Development was constituted at the Legislature. Its mandate is to ensure that all matters relating to the advancement of women and development of children are adequately addressed through legislation where applicable, as well as highlighted to form a part of the national agenda.

National Gender Forum serves as the Policy Advisory Body to formulate policy guidelines and ensure gender is mainstreamed in all sectors and forms a part of the national agenda. The Forum is chaired by the President of Liberia and comprises of Heads of sector Ministries and Agencies and other Branches of Government, Local and

International NGOs, Institutions of Higher Learning, and the UN system. The Forum is patterned after the twelve critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA).

The Gender Focal Persons from sector Ministries, Agencies and Corporations head the various taskforces which are in line with their mandate and functions. Also on the Taskforces are relevant Civil Society Organizations, Local NGOs women and youth groups, community leaders and religious and traditional leaders. The UN Agencies and International NGOs serve as Advisors.

Women Legislative Caucus comprises of female legislators who have organized themselves into a body to foster alliance and function in collaboration with the National Gender Machinery and civil society women organizations to advocate for the rights of women and ensure laws that are passed in the Legislature are not bias to women.

Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia is a consortium of women civil society organizations that complement the efforts of the National Gender Machinery to advance the rights of women.

National Rural Women Program was established in the 15 Counties in 2009 through the instrumentality of the Ministry of Gender and Development. The Structure serves as a Forum to ensure rural women's voices are heard and that they are involved in the political, social, cultural and economic affairs of the country.

Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL) comprises of female lawyers who provide services to indigent women as well as advocate for the rights of women and children.

Human Rights of Women

To ensure increased promotion and protection of the rights of women, the Government has established human rights units within the Ministries of Justice and Gender and Development. The role of the Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Justice is to

investigate human rights complaints, take appropriate measures and or recommend cases for prosecution, work with the judiciary and monitor the progress of cases through the criminal justice system. The unit also reports on the implementation of international human rights treaties and conventions involving Human rights.

The Division of Human Rights within the Ministry of Gender and Development is responsible for ensuring the promotion, and protection of women and children's rights. The Division is also responsible to coordinate the implementation of all national, regional and international women's rights instruments, as well as ensure the Reports of on the progress being made in the implementation of these instruments/protocols are prepared and submitted to the relevant Bodies.

The Independent Human Rights Commission was created by an Act of the Legislature in 2005. It is an independent entity charged with the responsibilities of ensuring protection of the human rights of citizens and foreigners in Liberia. It utilizes remedies of habeas corpus, writs of mandamus and prohibition. It also monitors the implementation of all international human rights instruments ratified by Liberia inclusive of the CEDAW, Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women. The ILO convention no. 187 on the worst forms of child labor was ratified within the reporting period.

The Government through the Ministry of Internal Affairs has abolished traditional courts throughout the country. Civil law courts have been established in each county. Due to the spatial distribution of the population, women have to travel long distances to get to the courts, but once there, justice is dispensed equally. Principles of equality with men are enshrined in the Liberian constitution but there are some disparities entrenched in culture, religion and tradition which pose numerous challenges. The Government has also placed a moratorium on the traditional Bush Schools.

Women and the Media

As in the case of most African countries, very few women in Liberia find themselves in leadership positions or are part of the decision-making in the media. There are close to 40 registered newspapers in Liberia and out of that number only one has had a female editor that rose through the rank of news editor and editor-in-chief. There are 52 community radio stations now operating across the country and only two: Liberia Women Democracy Radio, **LWDR** established in 2010 & Radio Cestos established in 2005 have females as Heads.

The parent organization of all media institutions in Liberia is the Press Union of Liberia, which was founded in September 1964 by a group of male journalists. Since its founding, only one woman has headed its five-member leadership in person of the

present Deputy Minister for Culture and Tourism at the Ministry of Information Cultural Affairs and Tourism.

There are two female media NGOs: Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC) and the Association of Female Journalists.

The Government in collaboration with the Press Union of Liberia developed a Media Law which has been enacted by the Legislature. This Law seeks to address gender disparity within the Media. It also includes the Freedom of Information Act, which provides for the right of citizens to request information from those in authority.

The Government of Liberia has collaborated with the Carter Center and the Women NGO Secretariat to carry out an assessment on Women and the Right to access Information in Liberia. The research study aimed at identifying the cultural, structural and legal barriers that women face which impedes access to critical information as well as determine women's information needs and ideas for overcoming obstacles.

Women and the Environment

The Government of Liberia through the Environmental Protection Agency and key stakeholders developed a National Environmental Policy which provides a broad framework for the implementation of national objectives and plans. The Policy aims at ensuring a sound management of resources and the environment, and will attempt to avoid any exploitation of these resources in a manner that might cause irreparable damage to the environment; particularly the Policy will provide for:

- Integration of environmental considerations in sectoral, structural, regional, and socio-economic planning at all levels;
- Sound management of the environment and natural resources;
- Protection and maintenance of human habitats, the ecosystems, and ecological processes essential for the functions of the biosphere;
- Guidance for national action plan and for healthy environmental practices on the national development effort;
- Sustainable development; and
- Common approach to environmental issues.

Despite women's contribution to the agriculture sector, women own less land, and mostly depend on male relatives to access land, making their rights in land more

insecure than that of men. In an effort to address this situation, the Government of Liberia in 2013 developed a Land Rights Policy aimed at giving opportunity to both male and female to own land. There are also other land related laws being developed by the Land Commission such as the Land Administration Law.

The Government also developed a Gender and Climate Change Strategy which seeks to ensure gender issues are captured in climate change mitigations.

The Agenda for Transformation, Liberia's eighteen year National Plan, expects to increase the number of viable community and private-sector forestry enterprises, forest production exports, value-added and employment, including those of youth, women and other vulnerable groups as confirmed by the timber chain-of-custody. The timber chain of custody provides that the community has custody of the forest resources which is harvested by investors or community leaders. This has to be done for the benefit of all concerned, taking into consideration the impact on the environment. This way, natural resources in a community will be for the benefit of all, particularly women who work the land.

The raining season in Liberia generally runs from May to October with the dry season from November to April. There are intermittent periods of mild rains or mild dries. Generally the temperature is tropical, humid and dry with hot days and cool to cold nights. There has been a periodic shift in seasons due to the effects of climate change, which has affected agricultural activities with the farming season starting later than usual due to longer periods of dries in some parts of Liberia.

Establishment of a Land Desk at the National Gender Machinery: The Desk will serve as a mechanism to educate and inform women on the Land Rights Policy and Laws governing land issues in the country. The Desk will also provide guidance to women who are interested in acquiring land and or have problems with land that they have acquired.

The Girl Child

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender and Development developed a Children's Act which was passed by the National Legislature in September, 2011, giving children including "The Girl child" the right to maximum promotion, participation and protection. The underlying factor governing the Act is that the interest of the child is supreme. It cuts across children's right to education, health care, adequate food and water, shelter, clothing, expression and access to information, protection from harmful work, abuse and exploitation, and protection from involvement in armed conflict. It also spells out parental duties and rights regarding their children.

In 2010, 68 Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), comprising of 613 members were established in seven counties. These Committees help to monitor, investigate and report child rights abuses at the community level. 25 supervisors of the CWC and social workers were trained on child protection issues. These social workers and CWCs are to continue the training of the various CWCs in the seven counties. The Government of Liberia continues to involve all stakeholders in the protection of children. The involvement of children themselves is supported by the Children's Assemblies nationwide. These structures across the country have contributed towards advocating for the rights and protection of children.

The Policy on Girls' Education, developed in 2006, was revised in 2013 to take into consideration present realities; and to align with the new Education Reform Act which advances girls' education at the regional, national, and local levels with workable strategies and interventions. These interventions are:

Special Education Policies to address the disparities between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities in the educational system including girls with disabilities.

Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), which protects children's right to education, and ensures access to quality education. It targets over-aged and out-of-school children and youth, as well as school dropouts.

Chapter 2 of the National Policy on Girls' Education states that the Central Government and local authorities shall implement all provisions stipulated in the Girls' education Policy to address social and cultural barriers to Girls' Education as a means to empower girls and women.

Chapter 3 of the National Policy on Girls' Education: Improving Girls' and Women's Access to Vocational Training, Science, and Technology, and Continuing Education stresses the development and implementation of education, training and retraining policies for women, especially young women and women re-entering the labor market, to provide skills to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic context for improving their employment opportunities.

Scholarships are also provided by some international and local NGOs, such as the Liberia Education Trust Fund (LET/Liberia) and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE/LIBERIA), amongst others. The United States Agency for

International Development (USAID) also administers a local scholarship program, called the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship.

The Government through the Ministries of Education and Gender and Development has established an educational program targeting under privileged and vulnerable girls from the rural areas to have access to education. This is a part of the Ministry of Education's Goal of retention of girls in school. The initiative provides for collaboration with two private and one government boarding institutions whereby 185 girls to be enrolled at these institutions.

The Government of Liberia has established an Adolescent Girls Unit within the National Gender Machinery. The Unit was launched in 2010 by Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to demonstrate the commitment of the Government to prioritize issues relating to girls and young women.

Has any of these areas been supported by legal measures, national policies, strategies, plans, programmes and/or projects developed and implemented since 2009? Please provide examples of such measures.

Some of these areas have been supported by the development and implementation of several documents, Policies, Strategies and Programs, among which are the National Gender Policy, National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, the National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence, the Gender and Climate Change Strategy, the Export Strategy, National Girls Education Policy, the Children's Law, the draft Domestic Violence Law, the Environmental Policy, the National Health Policy and Plan, National Social Welfare Policy and Plan, the Land Right Policy, Draft Land Administration Law; among the Programs are: the Government of Liberia and the UN Joint Programs on: SGBV, Gender Equality and Women Economic Empowerment Program (GEWEE), Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Program (EPAG), Social Cash Transfer Program, Establishment of a Women's Land Rights Desk, Establishment of Village Loan Associations, Rural Women Structure and Women in Cross Border Trade Association among others.

Were these measures monitored in the relevant areas? Please provide statistical data and assessments on the results achieved through these measures.

Describe the obstacles, gaps and challenges since 2009 in implementing the critical areas of concern.

Obstacles, gaps and challenges

Despite the multiplicity of players in gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, there are serious gaps and challenges in terms of the availability of human resource capacity to effectively mainstream gender in sectoral policies, plans, and programs. Translating Government's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in Liberia requires capacity strengthening in gender analysis, planning and implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation at all levels.

Gaps:

Although the country has female president, there are still gaps in the low level of women representation in power and decision- making in all sectors of our society. Though government is making efforts to provide opportunities in the areas of employment, education, health and protection, there is still high unemployment rate; high level of illiteracy among women, high maternal mortality rate, teen age pregnancy, prostitution, violence such as, rape and sexual abuse and exploitation of women.

Challenges:

The challenge include the maintenance of decentralization of power and the implementation of policies aimed at eliminating discrimination against women and elimination of cultural attitudes and practices against women.

Were there any countercyclical measures introduced in your country since 2009 to mitigate the consequences of global economic and financial crisis?

No

If so, did these measures incorporate a gender perspective and/or include women as a targeted group?

N/A

Have austerity policies/measures, such as tax increases, cuts in public expenditure, or public sector downsizing, been introduced in your country in the aftermath of the 2007/2008 financial crisis?

Yes. Austerity measures were introduced in the aftermath of the 2007/2008 financial crisis, as the Government of Liberia had to reduce spending in a lot of areas, among which was the downsizing of the civil servants.

If so, to what extent have they affected the critical areas of concern? Please describe the effects of such measures on key indicators, such as participation of women and men in social and economic activity, including education, training, participation in labour markets, unpaid work, access to social protection, access to credit, or entrepreneurship.

N/A

Section Three: Data and statistics

(Suggested length: 5 pages)

- a) **Has a core set of national indicators for monitoring progress in gender equality been established? If so, please provide the indicators in an annex.**

A set of national indicators were developed to monitor the implementation of the National Gender Policy which is the framework for achieving gender equality in Liberia. **(Document is attached).**

Where is responsibility for collecting the data located?

The responsibility for collecting data in Liberia is located at the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS). Various sector ministries also collect information or statistics on matters relating to their sector.

If national indicators have not been established, what are the reasons?

- b) Has data collection and compilation on the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators begun, which was agreed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2013? (The link to the list of indicators is provided in Part III.) Yes, the process has begun. In addition, the National Gender Policy contains the national indicators.

If so, what is the status of data collection and compilation? Please describe plans to improve gender-related data collection and compilation at the national level that have been developed.

The Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services has designed a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), which is intended to ensure data collected is harmonized and is centrally located.

If not, are there any plans at the national level to begin work based on the Minimum Set? Please describe briefly.

N/A

Has data collection and compilation on the nine indicators on violence against women, as agreed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2013, begun? (The list of indicators is provided in Part III).

The information has not been provided to the National Gender Machinery.

If so, what is the status of data collection and compilation? Please describe plans that have been developed to produce these indicators at the national level.

N/A

If not, are there any plans at the national level to begin work based on these indicators? Please describe briefly.

N/A

- c) What processes have been undertaken to collect data on the situation of particular groups of women, such as rural women, older women, women with disabilities, indigenous women, women living with HIV and AIDS, or other groups? Please describe briefly.**

Unfortunately, no process has been undertaken to collect data on the particular groups of women due to lack of resources.

Section Four: Emerging priorities
(Suggested length: 2 pages)

- a) What are the key priorities for action over the next three to five years for accelerating implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and subsequent intergovernmental agreements for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women at the national level?**

- Increase budgetary allocation and logistics for the National Gender Machinery
- Increase human resource capacity in specialized technical skills for the National Gender Machinery
- Improve monitoring and coordination of the National Gender Machinery
- Ensure provision of Technical support and backstopping to the National Gender Machinery

b) What are your country's **priorities and recommendations to strengthen gender equality** and the empowerment of women in the current discussions on **Sustainable Development Goals** and the post-2015 development agenda?

Annexes to national reviews

In addition to relevant information not covered elsewhere, the annexes to the national reviews should contain the following:

- information on the **process of preparing the national review**, including an indication of which Government departments and institutions were involved, and consultations held with stakeholders
- detailed **statistical information**, as applicable, on the overall trends discussed in section one, and on all critical areas of concern discussed in section two
- **case studies/good practice examples** of policies and initiatives implemented in any of the **critical areas of concern**, not included elsewhere
- a list of **policies, strategies, action plans and publications**, with links to their location (electronic copies).

Information of the process of preparing the national review:

The information obtained was provided by the Gender Focal Persons from the sector Ministries and Agencies, consultations with key Partners and the CEDAW report.