

**FINAL REPORT**

# **THE GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA**



## **Beijing+25 National Review Report**

### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fourth Conference on Women and Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**

**June 2019**

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### List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>ABE</b>	– Alternative Basic Education
<b>AfT</b>	– Agenda for Transformation
<b>ALP</b>	– Accelerated Learning Program
<b>ANC</b>	- Antenatal Care
<b>ATI</b>	- Access to Information
<b>AU</b>	– African Union
<b>BCAP</b>	- Behaviour Change Agent Adolescent Programme
<b>BCR</b>	- Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation
<b>BDS</b>	– Business Development Skills
<b>BPFA</b>	– Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CEDAW</b>	– Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CGRs</b>	– Community Grain Reserves
<b>CIP</b>	– Costed Implementation Plan
<b>CSE</b>	- Comprehensive Sexuality Education
<b>CSOs</b>	– Civil Society Organizations
<b>CSW</b>	– Commission on the Status of Women
<b>DEA</b>	– Drug Enforcement Agency
<b>DRR</b>	- Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>ECD</b>	– Early Childhood Development
<b>ECOWAS</b>	- Economic Community of Western African States
<b>EPA</b>	- Environmental Protection Agency
<b>EPAG</b>	- Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and young women
<b>ERCM</b>	- Equal Rights of the Customary Marriage Law
<b>EU</b>	– European Union
<b>EVD</b>	– Ebola Virus Disease
<b>FGM</b>	– Female Genital Mutilation
<b>FY</b>	– Fiscal Year
<b>G2B-ESP</b>	- Getting to best Education Sector Plan
<b>GBV</b>	– Gender Based Violence
<b>GDI</b>	– Gender Development Index
<b>GDP</b>	– Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEEAP</b>	- Gender-Equitable Education and Achievement Program
<b>GERLS</b>	- Girls Ebola Recovery Livelihood Support
<b>GOL</b>	– Government of Liberia
<b>GRPB</b>	- Gender Responsive Planning and Budget Policy
<b>GSSNTSF</b>	- Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce Sustainability Framework
<b>GSSNT</b>	- Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce
<b>GU</b>	– Gender Unit
<b>HDI</b>	– Human Development Index
<b>HTPs</b>	– Harmful Traditional Practices
<b>ICRC</b>	- International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IEC</b>	– Information, Education and Communication
<b>IHP+</b>	- International Health Partnerships
<b>IMF</b>	– International Monetary Fund
<b>INCHR</b>	- Independent National Commission on Human Rights

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**iPRS** - Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy  
**JP RWEE** - Joint Program on “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women”  
**LGBT** – Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans-gender  
**LIC** - Low Income Countries  
**LIHLC** - Liberia International Humanitarian Law Committee  
**LINCA** - Liberia International Humanitarian Law Committee  
**LIS** – Liberia Immigration Service  
**LISGIS** - Liberia Institute for Geo-Information Services  
**LLA** - Liberia Land Authority  
**LLINs** - Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets  
**LNAP SCR** - Liberian National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325  
**LNP** – Liberian National Police  
**LSSN** - Liberia Social Safety Net program  
**LWPF** - Liberia Women’s Political Forum  
**MACs** - Ministries, Agencies and Commissions Corporations  
**MCPR** - Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate  
**MDGs** – Millennium Development Goals  
**M&E** – Monitoring and Evaluation  
**MIS** - Liberia Malaria Indicator Survey  
**MFDP** - Ministry of Finance and Development Planning  
**MGCSP** - Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection  
**MOA** – Ministry of Agriculture  
**MOE** – Ministry of Education  
**MOH** – Ministry of Health  
**MOJ** – Ministry of Justice  
**MOL** – Ministry of Labour  
**MPTF** - Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office  
**NAP** – National Action Plan  
**NDMA** - National Disaster Management Agency  
**NDPs** – National Development Plans  
**NEC** - National Election Commission  
**NEET** - *Not* in Education, Employment, or Training  
**NER** - Net Enrollment Rate  
**NGOs** – Non-governmental Organizations  
**NGP** – National Gender Plan  
**NSSRL** - National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia  
**ONSA** - Office of the National Security Advisor  
**OSC** – One-stop Centers  
**PAPD** - Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development  
**PSL** - Partnership Schools for Liberia  
**PTA** – Parent Teacher Association  
**PWDs** - Persons with Disabilities  
**PYPP** - President’s Young Professional Program  
**RMNCAH** - Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health  
**SCORE** - Social Cohesion and Reconciliation  
**SCT** – Social Cash Transfer  
**SDGs** – Social Development Goals  
**SEA** - Sexual Exploitation and Abuse  
**SEs** – Spending Entities

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**SGBV** – Sexual and Gender-based Violence  
**SOPs** - Standard Operating Procedures  
**SSI** – Security Services Institution  
**SSR** - Security Sector Reform  
**TFR** – Total Fertility Rates  
**TVET** - Technical Vocational Education and Training  
**UN** – United Nations  
**UNDP** – United Nations Development Program  
**UNFPA** - United Nations Population Fund  
**UNICEF** – United Nations Children’s Fund  
**UNMIL** - UN Mission in Liberia  
**UNSCR** - UN Security Council Resolution  
**USAID** – United States Aid  
**WACPS** - Women and Child Protection Sections  
**WASH** - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene  
**WB** – World Bank  
**WCPS** – Women and Children Protection Section  
**WONGOSOL** - Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia  
**WPS** – Women, Peace and Security

## Executive Summary

### I. General Introduction

After the twelve-year rule of Africa's first female President, Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia experienced its first peaceful democratic transition of power in 73 years during the 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections. The recent election brought to power the current President, His Excellency, Dr. George M. Weah. It was the first generational change in national leadership through popular vote since the introduction of universal suffrage in Liberia (1951) and the launch of the National Unification and Integration Policy in 1960. The most important achievement of this period is the maintenance of peace, security as well as development which is crucial to national growth. Liberia has transitioned from a state of post conflict and post-Ebola reconstruction to socio-economic growth and development.

This Progress Report by the Government of Liberia (**GOL**) on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (**BPFA**) is in preparation for the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 64th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This BPFA+25 provides an overview of the major achievements and challenges as well as the emerging issues and opportunities to strengthen gender-responsive actions at the national level and the implementation of global commitments.

Although there have been significant gains since Liberia's last BPFA Report in 2014, Liberian women are still marginalized in all sectors and at all levels. Programs targeted to minimize these disparities have been implemented to increase the participation of women and ensure their involvement in decision making processes. These range from specialized programs in education to economic empowerment through loan schemes, training and opportunities for employment. Other initiatives include empowerment for women's leadership and increased recruitment of women for work in the security sector.

### II. Key Achievements and Successes

Programs addressing gender discrimination in the formal and informal sectors have been initiated by various ministries, agencies and commissions. The Government of Liberia, through

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the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (**MGCSP**), and in collaboration with civil society organizations (**CSOs**), the media and its partners are supporting and encouraging women in promoting, protecting and advocating for women's rights to increase women's political participation. The *Women Empowerment Division* of the MGCSP is responsible for coordinating all women's empowerment and political participation in decision making processes programs at the local and national levels.

Some of the key achievements and successes have been:

➤ ***Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work***

- In October 2018, Liberia launched the *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)* for the period 2018 to 2023. The PAPD is the second in the series of 5-year National Development Plans (**NDPs**) anticipated under the Liberia Vision 2030 framework.
- Through the process of formulating and adopting the revised *National Gender Policy (NGP)* for 2018-2022, gaps were identified from the previous 2009 NGP. For instance, the Mid-term Review (2015) of the 2009 NGP noted that “...*the collection of certain data/evidence and the development of knowledge products are required to support the implementation of some of the provisions of the NGP.*”<sup>1</sup> This process was completed through consultative meetings with key stakeholders to identify achievements, challenges and gaps. The revised NGP seeks to promote gender equality, social economic development; enhance women and girls empowerment for sustainable and inclusive development; enhance gender mainstreaming in the national development processes; create and strengthen gender responsive structures, processes and mechanism for the government in which both women and men participate equally, have access to, control and benefit from the country's resources.<sup>2</sup>
- The promulgation of the Land Act (2018) further reflects a growing space for women's leadership and participation. The Land Act, for instance, provides for strong protection of women's land rights. Furthermore, it enables women to participate in local land management committees. The Land Act also provides spouses with equal rights to

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Liberia. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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participate as members of local land committees which is an important safeguard for women.

### ➤ *Poverty eradication, social protection and social services*

- The *Joint Program on Rural Women Economic Empowerment* (2015-2018) has improved the lives of 3,000 rural women and 100 men through capacity building and other entrepreneurial skill programs in six counties. Although the program was designed mainly to focus on women, (about 95:05 ratio, minimum 95% women and maximum 0.5% men) a limited number of men entrepreneurs are also participating as an adequate strategy to promote development, build trust and engage the community.
- The Government is also engaging girls through empowerment programs such the *Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and young women (EPAG)*, which aims to increase self-development and wage employment and earning among adolescent boys and girls as well as young women and men aged 16-24. The EPAG project has concluded up to four rounds, with over 4,500 persons trained – 4,300 girls and 200 boys – and have been placed into self or wage employments. The project has increased employment by 47% and average weekly earnings by 80%. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection seeks to train and place 10,000 girls and youths by 2020 within the project and with 50% boys and 50% girls to benefit from the project.
- *Education* – Reducing out of school, and increasing retention and completion rates for girls, raising minimum infrastructure standards for boys and girls and ensuring appropriate responses to Gender Based Violence (**GBV**) are major targets under human capacity development. The provision of lifelong learning opportunities on an equitable and inclusive basis will be a special emphasis under the PAPD. Progress has been made in increasing school enrollment, but Primary Net Enrollment Rate (**NER**) in Liberia is significantly lower than rates in Low Income Countries (**LIC**) in Sub-Saharan Africa. On a more positive note, NER was even for male and female students across all academic levels. However, nearly two thirds (61.5%) of schools do not have a library and media centers with computers are virtually non-existent or nonfunctional. Only 58



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percent (58%) of schools have latrine facilities segregated for boys and girls. At higher grade levels, retention of female students is a challenge.<sup>3</sup>

➤ *Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes*

- The Government of Liberia (**GOL**) has committed to a 50% reduction in Sexual and Gender-based Violence (**SGBV**) incidents from the current baseline (2000 reported cases in 2018) by 2023. Strengthening public awareness and access to services including prevention and response through GBV observatories, Women and Child Protection Sections (**WACPS**) case management, and the establishment of safe homes.
- Additionally, the Government has prioritized Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) through the implementation of the *GOL/United Nations (UN) SGBV Joint program*; the development of the *SGBV National Action Plan*; and incorporation of GBV interventions in the revised National Gender Policy and in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection's budget.
- The Government established a *National SGBV Taskforce* comprising of Ministries and Agencies, local and international Non-governmental Organizations (**NGOs**), relevant UN entities and development partners. The Taskforce meets once every month to review progress and share ideas or information on mitigating Gender Based Violence perpetrated against women and children. Also, the Taskforce working alongside the national machinery has developed a *National SGBV Communication Strategy* and communication materials and messages which includes the *Referral Pathway* that sensitizes the population on the prevention, management, care and reporting of GBV cases, as well as the Standard Operating Procedures (**SOP**) that is specific to each county. The Taskforce members periodically undertake joint monitoring of GBV interventions across the country.

➤ *Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions*

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<sup>3</sup> Government of Liberia. Pro-poor Agenda for Peace and Development (PAPD). November 2018.

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- The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the media and its partners are supporting and encouraging women in promoting, protecting and advocating for women's rights, to increase women's political participation. The *Women Empowerment Division* of the MGCSP is responsible for the coordination of all women's empowerment and political participation in decision making processes programs at the local and national levels.
- The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in collaboration with its partners continues to support *gender focal points* in all public institutions through capacity building measures and elevating the *gender focal points* to *Gender Units*. Currently, the Government has established *Gender Units* in all ten (10) security institutions as well as some ministries and agencies. The establishment of *Gender Units* in (10) security institutions including, the Liberia National Police (**LNP**), Liberia Immigration Service (**LIS**), Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (**BCR**), Ministry of National Defence (**MOD**), and in a few other Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; Ministry of Agriculture; the Governance Commission; the Liberia Land Authority (**LLA**); and the National Housing Authority).
- Programs such as the *National Rural Women Conference* is held yearly to bring women from various sectors together to discuss women's agenda and work towards increasing women's political participation and decision making. National Women Consultative Meeting is held annually to review and address all issues relating to women while highlighting their achievements.
- Prior to and during the October 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections, the Ministry collaborated with the Liberia Women's Political Forum (**LWPF**) and political parties to ensure more female candidates were elected to the House of Representatives. As a result of these collaborations, 163 female candidates, including one female presidential and two female vice-presidential candidates were duly registered by the National Election Commission (**NEC**) to contest as candidates in the October 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections. In the National Legislature, women elected as

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Representatives comprise of 12.3% and as Senators comprise of 10.0%.<sup>4</sup> The current Vice-President of Liberia is also a female, Dr. Jewel Cianeh Howard Taylor.

- The development of the *Gender Responsive Planning and Budget Policy (GRPB)* for 2019-2023, is an effort made by the Government to support gender equality and the empowerment of women. It will also assist the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and other spending entities to evaluate the impact of public expenditure on gender equality.

### ➤ *Peaceful and Inclusive Societies*

- 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 has built the potential of women to serve in the security sector by developing the *Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce Sustainability Framework (GSSNTSF)* in 2017, which is to support the *Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce (GSSNT)*. It aims to create a Gender responsive security sector in Liberia by enhancing the inclusion of women's perspectives in reforming the security sector and ensuring that initiatives respond to the needs and capacities of women, men, boys and girls. The Taskforce is chaired by the Ministry of Justice and co-chaired by the Ministries of National Defense and Gender, Children and Social Protection. In addition, Liberia has developed a *National Security Strategy* (2017).
- Most of the security entities have made some progress including the Liberia National Police (**LNP**), the Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (**BCR**) and the Liberia Immigration Services (**LIS**) responsible for the law enforcement, corrections and immigration/naturalizations functions, respectively. These entities all have *gender policies*, functioning *Gender Units* and have made progress in increasing the number of women in their ranks, although the number of women in leadership positions is not yet at the 50-50 mark.

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<sup>4</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (**IPU**). Women in National Parliaments. The situation as of 1 February 2019. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (last accessed 31/05/2019).

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- Furthermore, the 2009-2013 Liberia National Action Plan for the implementation of *UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325* which provided a framework to strengthen and develop protection, response and prevention policies, mechanisms, programs and procedures to guarantee security for women and girls personally and at the national level and promote their human rights was reviewed. A *second National Action Plan (NAP)* is to be passed in 2019 and is set to cover the period 2019-2023.<sup>5</sup> 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.
  - With a goal of 'a more peaceful, unified society that enables economic transformation and sustainable development', the Government of Liberia is committed to compliance with human rights obligations as per treaties acceded. It has set national targets in the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE)<sup>6</sup> index to increase civic trust and co-existence from 52% to 70% and to reduce the index for violent tendencies from 19% to 5%.<sup>7</sup>
- *Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation*
- The *National Disaster Policy, the (EPA) Act* and the *National Disaster Management Act* recognize the important role played by women in development and the burden they carry during disasters. Consequently, all activities implemented by the government and all its partners before, during and after disasters, will proactively and consciously include the participation of women and other vulnerable groups. The GoL has emphasized the importance of having all disaster and recovery needs assessments results show gender disaggregated data/information. In addition, all *Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)* plans, including contingency/preparedness plans, need to have a gender sensitive strategy to meet the challenges of communities.

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<sup>5</sup> UN WOMEN and Government of Liberia. Report on Consultations for Liberia's Second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Consultation Process for Liberia's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Prepared by Carole Doucet. December 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Gender and Security Sector Reform in Liberia. Status Review. 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

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- In 2017, the Government established a National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) to respond to both natural and human-made hazards. The NDMA has a functional *gender department* which mainstreams gender issues.
- The Government of Liberia through the NDMA has taken several steps to demonstrate its commitment to promoting gender equality in the Agency and through its policy and frameworks. For instance, there is the establishment of a Gender Department with the objective to develop policy guidelines and strategies to inform the activities and programs of the NDMA in mainstreaming gender effectively in these interventions at the national and local government levels, and to effectively coordinate and inform the different phases of disaster management from preparedness to recovery.
- In August 2018, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Liberia, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), confirmed through the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) that Liberia had launched the *National Policy & Response Strategy on Climate Change*.

### III. Challenges and Setbacks

- The post-Ebola (2014) recovery process has had an ongoing effect on implementing the BPFA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, "...the economic impact of the 2014 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak was compounded by a sustained decline in global iron ore and rubber prices, which negatively affected exports and new investment in these Sectors."<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, limited resources were allocated for the implementation of gender policies.
- Although the House of Representatives voted for the *Domestic Violence Bill* in 2017, the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) component was removed. Upon the advent of the Weah-led administration, the Executive Branch of the GoL through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, hosted several consultations with Legislators, the Traditional Chiefs and Elders, Civil Society and our International Partners between July of 2018 through June of 2019 to discuss and negotiate on passing the Domestic

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<sup>8</sup> Liberia Common Country Assessment. Primson Management Service & Africa Economic Outlook. Patrick Hettinger- AfDB; Moses Sichei- UNDP and Stanely Kamara- UNDP. 2018.

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Violence Bill. It was agreed that the penalties in the Bill needed strengthening and the Legislators called for a public hearing to listen to testimonies and finalize the Bill for presentation to the Parliament for passage. It is expected that the Bill will be passed without the FGM Component as the government is working with traditional elders and leaders through the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders, to conduct a nationwide survey on the practice of FGM.<sup>9</sup> A meeting was held in June of 2019, whereby traditional leaders and practitioners gathered in Ganta (Nimba County) so as to have traditional community endorse the temporary suspension of Bush schools where the practice of FGM is being practiced, pending the completion of consultations.<sup>10</sup>

- Addressing cultural and gender norms to end the practice of early and forced marriage which can result in *inter alia* health issues, violence and poverty.<sup>11</sup>
- Gathering and disseminating relevant sex-disaggregated data, whose importance is well appreciated, continues to be a challenge that needs to be addressed.
- Building upon and continuing with the peace and security framework, especially from a gender perspective. For instance, there was the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) ‘drawdown’ in peace-keeping mission in 2018.<sup>12</sup> Ensuring continued funding for *sustaining peace* in Liberia will be one such important factor.<sup>13</sup>
- Since 2010, overall human development trends in Liberia showed modest progress. The Human Development Index (HDI) moved from 0.406 in 2000 to 0.427 in 2015 but remains low compared to that of the region (0.525), and ranks Liberia at 177 out of 188

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<sup>9</sup> Government of Liberia. 9th Periodic State Part Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – DRAFT. 2019.

<sup>10</sup> UN Women. Email response (10/06/2019). Information taken from the upcoming CEDAW Report (2019).

<sup>11</sup> Government of Liberia. MGCSP. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017.

<sup>12</sup> The Liberia Moment Event. 23 March 2018. UN Focus Newsletter. Issue 1. January-February 2018. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68173> (last accessed 06/05/2019).

<sup>13</sup> International Peace Institute. Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities. Lesley Connolly and Laurie Mincieli. May 2019. Available at: <https://www.ipinst.org/2019/05/sustaining-peace-in-liberia-new-reforms-new-opportunities> (last accessed 10/06/2019).

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countries, in the low human development category.<sup>14</sup> The Gender Development Index (GDI) is at 0.789 and the Gender Inequality Index (GII) is at 0.649 (2015).<sup>15</sup>

- High maternal and under five mortalities and inaccessibility to healthcare for 29 percent (29%) of the population (largely in rural areas).<sup>16</sup>

### IV. Actionable Recommendations

- Allocate financial resources for the implementation of international, regional and national gender commitments, such as the Liberia’s National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, National Gender Policy, African Union (AU) Protocol, Maputo Plan of Action, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, CEDAW, and Agreed Conclusions from the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).
- Improve baseline information for monitoring and evaluating policies and initiatives undertaken to increase gender equality under the BPFA, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Gender Policy (NGP);
- Strengthen mechanisms to gather and disseminate sex-disaggregated data;
- Strategize ways to sustain and increase awareness/training on Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV); strengthen community structures and promote ownership. In addition, adopt the National Action Plan (NAP) on SGBV and allocate resources for its implementation;
- Continue to encourage additional partnerships with community-based groups, the private sector and organisations to implement strategies that address gender inequalities;

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<sup>14</sup> Liberia Common Country Assessment. Primson Management Service & Africa Economic Outlook. Patrick Hettinger- AfDB; Moses Sichei- UNDP and Stanely Kamara- UNDP. 2018.

“Factors which have contributed to the relative improvement in the country’s HDI were noted as: Liberia’s life expectancy at birth which increased by 14 years, and mean years of school which increased by 1.8 years. However, expected years of school were reported to have decreased by 0.6 years.”  
Ibid. P. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Government of Liberia. Revised National Gender Policy, Liberia (2018-2022). 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Government of Liberia. Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development PAPD (2019 – 2023). 2018. P. 42.

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- Increase the role of women within legal, justice and protection services;
- Adopt temporary special measures to increase the number of women in decision making in public institutions, including security institutions;
- Monitor and evaluate frameworks for measuring national indicators and targets linked to gender equality;
- Continue to ensure changing negative gender norms and stereotypes and working with men, traditional and community authorities; and
- Strengthen and streamline mechanisms for oversight of the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related Women, Peace, and Security Council Resolutions:
  - Given limited resources and the need for increasing effectiveness of initiatives related to implementation of UNSCR 1325, coordination of the various mechanisms for the LNAP and the work of the existing Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce is key to institutionalize the oversight function and monitoring of all related activities on Women, Peace, and Security and Security Sector Reform (**SSR**). This requires the strengthening and streamlining of existing coordination and implementation mechanisms, specifically related to the National Security Sector Strategy and the Liberia National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. This could also include oversight and monitoring mechanisms of the various security sector entities through the Taskforce as it already includes the various security entities within its membership. With commitment from the leadership of the security sector institutions to being self-regulated through the Taskforce body, the need for additional secretariat mechanisms would be unnecessary.<sup>17</sup>

As such, this report summarizes the progress of women in Liberia and the commitment of the Government of Liberia to implement the provisions of the BPFA and SDGs. Data analyses have been carried out prior to this report to provide 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.

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<sup>17</sup> Gender and Security Sector Reform in Liberia Status Review. 2018.



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It must not, however, be construed to mean that women's rights are not currently being held back and that they have gained parity with men. This report, therefore, represents the status of the implementation of the BPFA and the SDGs and the initiatives undertaken by the Government of Liberia in collaboration with its partners and other stakeholders to address women's rights issues during the period under review.

### Section One: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

**The Most important achievements, and progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women over the past 5 years?**

#### **Achievements:**

- Adoption of the Government's development plan, *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)* (2018 to 2023)
- Adoption of the revised *National Gender Policy (NGP)*, which was launched in 2017, and covers the period 2018-2022
- Re-formation of the *Ministry of Gender and Development to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP)* whose function was increased to include social welfare and social protection
- The establishment of *Gender Units* in (10) security institutions including: Liberia National Police (LNP), Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (BCR), Ministry of National Defence (MOD), and in a few Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; Ministry of Agriculture; the Governance Commission; Liberia Land Authority (LLA); and the National Housing Authority)

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- Development of *Gender policies* in 3 security institutions - Liberia Immigration Services (**LIS**), Liberia National Police (**LNP**) and Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (**BCR**) to mainstream gender in all security sectors
- Implementation of the *United Nations Global Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women* (2014-2020)
- *National Rural Women Headquarters* was established in Monrovia (2015)
- The Government of Liberia and the Carter Center-Liberia Access to Information (**ATI**) Program in collaboration with the Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (**WONGOSOL**) carried out awareness in Five (5) counties to increase women's access to information
- The policy for the implementation of the *Children's Law* (2011) is developed and continues to be relevant
- The development of the 2nd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) - to be adopted in 2019 and will cover the period 2019-2023
- The initiation of the Third Phase of the *Joint Program on Sexual and Gender Based Violence* (**SGBV**) by the Government of Liberia and the UN (2018-2023)
- The adoption and implementation of *Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting Policy* (**GRPBP**) (March 2019)
- Initiation of the *Spotlight Initiative to End Violence against Women and Girls* (2019-2022)
- The *Decent Work Act* passed (June 2015) and being implemented
- The Government of Liberia has started the process of amending its *Alien and Naturalization Law* (1973) to bring it into conformity with the provision of the Constitution and commitments.
- The *Land Rights Act* was passed (2018) and being implemented
- The *Local Government Act* (2018) passed and being implemented

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- Submitted Affirmative Action *Bill* (2016)<sup>18</sup>
- *Revised National Action Plan* (2018) for the implementation of the *2005 Anti-human Trafficking Act*. A national referral pathway was adopted in 2017 to protect victims of human trafficking and access appropriate services
- *The development of Girl's Manifesto which was launched in 2016*
- *The revised Women Manifesto in 2017*. The Manifesto, which was initially developed in 2005, aims to ensure that women are aware of aspects associated with elections and how women can use their knowledge and skills to become involved. In turn, it provides the foundation for women to understand and undertake strategies which will include them in the governance of Liberia.
- The establishment of a Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce (GSSNT) in 2017 to mainstream gender into security sector reform and promote women's participation in the security sector
- The establishment of Criminal Court E in two (2) counties (Nimba and Montserrado) exclusively to hear rape cases

Through the process of formulating and adopting the revised *National Gender Policy (NGP)* for 2018-2022, gaps were identified from the previous 2009 NGP. For instance, the Mid-term Review (2015) of the 2009 NGP noted that "...the collection of certain data/evidence and the development of knowledge products are required to support the implementation of some of the provisions of the NGP."<sup>19</sup> This process was completed through consultative meetings with key stakeholders to identify achievements, challenges and gaps. The revised NGP seeks to promote gender equitable, social economic development; enhance women's and girls' empowerment for sustainable and inclusive development; enhance gender mainstreaming in the national development processes; create and strengthen gender responsive structures, processes and

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<sup>18</sup> The Affirmative Action for Equitable Participation and Representation Act of 2016 (known as the Equality Bill): "...the Equality Bill took a different approach and proposed the addition of new, reserved seats in Liberia's legislature for women, youth and persons with disabilities. While the original version of the law passed the Senate established 21 new seats, 15 of which were to be for women, the version subsequently passed in the House and established only seven new seats, 5 of which would be for women. A special committee was convened by the legislature to reconcile the differences between the two bills. It was unable to do so and therefore the law was not in force for these elections (2017)."

The Carter Centre, Liberia, NGO Submission to the U.N. Human Rights Committee, Prior to the Adoption of the List of Issues: 122nd Session. March 2018, Geneva. Page 2 at footnote 3.

<sup>19</sup> Government of Liberia. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017.

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mechanisms for the government in which both women and men participate equally, have access to, control and benefit from the country's resources. The NGP will, in turn, make "...conscious efforts to align the 20 priorities areas of the NGP with the Aft (now, the PAPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)"<sup>20</sup>

In October 2018, Liberia launched the *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)*, its third national development plan from 2018 to 2023. The PAPD is the second in the series of 5-year National Development Plans (NDP) anticipated under the *Liberia Vision 2030 framework*. It follows the *Agenda for Transformation (Aft) 2012-2017*. It is informed as well by lessons learned from the implementation of the *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy 2007 (iPRS)* and the *Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2011)*. The Pro-Poor Agenda is therefore about the people; how to strengthen their capacity to thrive and draw all Liberians living at home and abroad into the national development process. Over the next five years, addressing the basic needs of Liberians for income security, better access to basic services, and greater opportunities for self-improvement in an enabling environment that is inclusive and stable will be at the core of the pro-poor agenda. While one of the aims over the long term remains raising per capita income levels and economic status to a middle-income country as outlined under the *Vision 2030 framework*, the focus over the next five years will be on removing the binding constraints to reaching that goal. In terms of enhancing gender equality, the PAPD entrenches this goal in Pillar 1 "...as a cross-cutting concern leading to more empowered women and girls."<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the cross-cutting considerations of gender in the PAPD, the government has articulated various gender aims as follows:

*Education* – Reducing out of school, and increasing retention and completion rates for girls, raising minimum infrastructure standards for boys and girls and ensuring appropriate responses to GBV are major targets under human capacity development. The provision of lifelong learning opportunities on an equitable and inclusive basis will be a special emphasis under the PAPD. Progress has been made in increasing school enrollment, but the Primary Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in Liberia is significantly lower than rates in Low Income Countries

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Government of Liberia. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)*. A Five-Year National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive, And Sustainable Development. 2017.

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(LIC) in Sub-Saharan Africa. On a more positive note, NER was even for male and female students across all academic levels. However, nearly two thirds (61.5%) of schools do not have a library and media centers with computers are virtually non-existent or nonfunctional. Only 58 percent (58%) of schools have latrine facilities segregated for boys and girls. At higher grade levels, retention of female students is a challenge.<sup>22</sup>

Ending Vulnerability, Gender & Social Inequality – The Government of Liberia (GOL) has committed to a 50% reduction in SGBV incidents by 2023 from the current baseline of 2000 reported cases (2018). Strengthening public awareness and access to services including prevention and response through GBV observatories, WACPS case management, and establishment of safe homes.<sup>23</sup>

Social Cohesion and Peace – With a goal of ‘a more peaceful, unified society that enables economic transformation and sustainable development’, the Government of Liberia is committed to compliance with human rights obligations as per treaties acceded to. It has set national targets in the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE)<sup>24</sup> index to increase civic trust and co-existence from 52% to 70% and to reduce the index for violence tendencies from 19% to 5%.<sup>25</sup>

The establishment of the *National Rural Women Headquarters* in 2015 creates opportunities for rural women to be involved in decision making both at the national and local level. It also provides an avenue where rural women meet to discuss issues for their common good. The headquarters helps in coordinating other structures at the local level as well as to mobilize funds for the operation of the entire women’s rural structure. Agricultural initiatives for economic empowerment are also undertaken within this structure. Furthermore, an annual conference is held wherein women discuss and plan future activities and how they can increase their involvement in political, social, cultural and economic affairs. This has increased rural women’s awareness of their basic human and legal rights within legal frameworks. While no impact assessment has been made of the awareness and advocacy undertaken, rural women’s

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<sup>22</sup> Government of Liberia. Pro-poor Agenda for Peace and Development (PAPD). November 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Government of Liberia. Liberia’s Second Phase National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2023) For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Logical Framework. Draft. Prepared by Nicole Hosein. May 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Gender and Security Sector Reform in Liberia. Status Review. 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

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increased participation in local decision-making bodies demonstrates the impact of such advocacy initiatives.

The implementation of the *Global Joint Program on Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women* has secured rural women's livelihoods and rights in the context of sustainable development and the post Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**), based on four outcome areas: improved food and nutrition security; increased income to secure their livelihoods; enhanced leadership and participation in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programs; and gender responsive policy environments for the economic empowerment of rural women.

Liberia's economic growth has been deeply affected since the Ebola outbreak (2014-2015), with a decline in international prices for rubber and iron ore, its two key exports. After real Gross Domestic Product (**GDP**) growth of 0.7 % in 2014 and 0% in 2015, the country contracted to an estimated -0.5% in 2016. The International Monetary Fund (**IMF**) estimated real GDP growth in 2016 was -1.2%, with an annual inflation rate of 12.5%.<sup>26</sup>

Liberia's economy relies largely on foreign aid and foreign direct investment as well as agriculture, which includes fisheries and forestry and is the primary livelihood to many Liberians providing sustenance for many households engaging in cassava, rubber, rice, oil palm, cocoa, or sugarcane production. Agriculture represents 61.5% GDP in Liberia's economy in which women are major players in the sector, representing more than 50% of the country's farming population. Women constitute 93% of food crop production and 76% of labor for cash crop production, 80% of the agricultural labor force and 85% of all marketing and trading.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the signing of the *Decent Work Act* in June 2015, the country's first labor law since the 1950's, which sets the basic standards for safe working environments and collective bargaining rights for workers in the formal and informal sector. The measure also tries to provide skilled and unskilled workers in the formal economy with standard minimum wages.

The signing of the *Decent Work Act* (2015) ensures that women and men are equal before the law in terms of employment and the increase of minimum wage is not discriminatory across gender.

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<sup>26</sup> Liberia Common Country Assessment (2018). Primson Management Service & Africa Economic Outlook. Patrick Hettinger- AfDB; Moses Sichei- UNDP and Stanely Kamara- UNDP. 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Government of Liberia. Ministry of Agriculture (**MOA**). Gender Analysis Report. 2018.

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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 has built the potential of women to serve in the security sector by developing the *Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce Sustainability Framework (GSSNTSF)* in 2017, which is to support the *Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce (GSSNT)*. It aims to create a Gender responsive security sector in Liberia by enhancing the inclusion of women's perspectives in reform of the security sector and to ensure that initiatives respond to the needs and capacities of women, men, boys and girls. The Taskforce is chaired by the Ministry of Justice and co-chaired by the Ministries of National Defense and Gender, Children and Social Protection. In addition, Liberia has developed a *National Security Strategy (2017)*.

The GSSNT developed a *Sustainability Plan* that was presented to the Ministers of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Justice and National Defense for endorsement. This plan is being used as an advocacy tool for the mobilization of financial resources from Government to facilitate mainstreaming of gender issues into the Security Sector.<sup>28</sup>

The 2009-2013 Liberian National Action Plan for the implementation of *UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325* which provides a framework to strengthen and develop responses to prevention, protection and participation policies, mechanisms, programs and procedures in order to guarantee security for women and girls personally at the national level and to promote their human rights, was reviewed and a *second National Action Plan* is to be passed in 2019. 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 Government of Liberia through the *Spotlight Initiative (launched by the European Union and the UN in 2017)*<sup>29</sup> is aimed at ending violence against women and girls. Under the European Union/United Nations Spotlight Initiative, UN Women will continue to work with the Government of Liberia and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the conduct of an inventory of traditional practitioners in the 5 spotlight counties (Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Lofa,

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<sup>28</sup> UN Women. 2018 Report: Implementation of the Liberian National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325 (LNAP SCR 1325). 2018.

UN Women (Liberia). Email response for additional information. May 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Spotlight Initiative – To eliminate violence against Women and Girls. <http://spotlightinitiative.org/> (last accessed 20/05/2019).

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Grand Cape Mount and Montserrado) with the aim of providing alternative economic livelihood support that should eliminate the practice of FGM since the practice is said to be linked to economic gains. In order to maintain the positive aspect of the culture, the project will establish 4 multi-purpose centers in 4 out of the 5 spotlight counties (Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Nimba, and Montserrado). Additionally, the program will develop an alternative rite of passage program for young women and girls, excluding the aspect of FGM.<sup>30</sup>

Although the House of Representatives voted for the *Domestic Violence Bill* in 2017, the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) component was removed. Following the non-passage of the Bill, several consultative meetings were held involving *inter alia* the National Traditional Council, Members of the Honorable House of Representatives and Senate and Civil Society Organizations. The Domestic Violence Bill is currently in the Committee Room of the House of Representatives as the penalties within the Bill need to be strengthened. It is expected that the Bill will be passed without the FGM Component but with the penalties strengthened. However, the *FGM Task Force* comprising of the FGM Working Group, Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR), CSOs, and the Ministry of Justice Human Rights section Steering Committee under the National Human Rights Action Plan Steering Committee have undertaken awareness programs on zero tolerance on FGM practice and have drafted a Bill seeking to abolish FGM in Liberia. Also, the government is working with traditional leaders through the national traditional council of chiefs and elders to conduct a nationwide survey on the practice of FGM.<sup>31</sup> A meeting is planned later this year whereby traditional leaders and practitioners will gather in Ganta (Nimba County). This meeting is expected to lead to the suspension of the practice of FGM pending the completion of consultations.<sup>32</sup>

The sensitization of policy makers in understanding the issues relating to women's human rights and gender equality as being vital to national development as well as the continuous support from partners, CSOs and the entire population contributed to these successes.

### ➤ Challenges and setbacks

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<sup>30</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Government of Liberia. 9th Periodic State Part Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – DRAFT. 2019.

<sup>32</sup> UN Women (Liberia). Email response (10/06/2019). Information taken from the upcoming CEDAW Report (2019).



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- Results from evaluations conducted in relation to the *Revised National Gender Policy* (2018-2022) reveal a negligible budget for the national gender machinery to effectively address gender inequality in Liberia. For example, according to the report, in the **2012/13 Financial Year**, USD 1,202,013 (0.0178%) of the national budget was allocated. The national budget in 2012/2013 was reported as USD 672,050,417. In the **2013/14 Financial Year**, there was a slight increase of USD 1,214,752 (0.23%) of the national budget. In **2013/14 Financial year**, the national budget was reported as USD 520,000,000. From this allocation, it is not clear how much was spent on research, monitoring, coordination and programmatic interventions. The allocation and expenditure on gender by Ministries Agencies and Commissions (**MACs**) could not be established. As MACs are the implementers of the NGP, it is imperative that gender budgeting is adopted as an approach to track the allocation and expenditure on gender related issues. The evaluation report informed that there are capacity gaps for gender budgeting in the country.
- Furthermore, staff turnover was a setback in building the capacity of Gender Focal Points. When individuals, assigned as Gender Focal Points, are trained most opted to travel thereby leaving the institution to reassign another Gender Focal Point. Most importantly, reassigning a Gender Focal Point every time there is a departure of a staff member results in challenges and setbacks in relation to gender mainstreaming efforts. As such, staff who are appointed as Gender Focal Points to a Ministry must have a thorough understanding of the thematic issues as these relate to gender equality and gender mainstreaming, before they can provide the relevant oversight. In the new era of Revised NGP implementation, it is critical to ensure that the *Gender Units* have staff with expertise in gender and development charged with the responsibility of ensuring the delivery of gender equality results. The Units must also comprise at least three members. Members must have expert knowledge of gender issues as well as the skills for developing programmes that ensure the achievement of gender equality results. Lastly, they must also have the capacity to influence policies and Programme plans within their institutions and sectors.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Government of Liberia. MGCSP. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017.

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- The post-Ebola (2014-2015) recovery process has had an ongoing effect on implementing the BPfA and the SDGs. Furthermore, "...the economic impact of the 2014 Ebola Virus Disease (**EVD**) outbreak was compounded by a sustained decline in global iron ore and rubber prices, which negatively affected exports and new investment in these sectors."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, limited resources were allocated for the implementation of gender policies.
- As mentioned above and in more detail, although the House of Representatives voted for the *Domestic Violence Bill* in 2017, the Female Genital Mutilation (**FGM**) component was removed. Following the non-passage of the Bill, several consultative meetings were held involving the National Traditional Council, Members of the Honorable House of Representatives and Senate, Civil Society Organizations, etc. The Domestic Violence Bill is currently in the Committee Room of the House of Representatives as the penalties within the Bill need to be strengthened. It is expected that the Bill will be passed without the FGM Component but with the penalties strengthened.
- Addressing cultural and gender norms to end, for instance, the practice of early and forced marriage which can result in *inter alia* health issues, violence and poverty.<sup>35</sup> There is no data available on forced marriage as to the percentage of girls affected by the practice but it is mostly practiced in the Muslim community and by some traditional peoples. The law exist but needs to be implemented and enforced. Most of the victims have never been to formal school except to bush or Sande School.
- Gathering and disseminating relevant gender disaggregated data, whose importance is well appreciated, continues to be a challenge that is being addressed.
- Building upon and continuing with the peace and security framework, especially from a gender perspective. For instance, there was the UN Mission in Liberia (**UNMIL**)

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<sup>34</sup> Liberia Common Country Assessment. 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Government of Liberia. MGCSP. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017.

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‘drawdown’ in peace-keeping mission in 2018.<sup>36</sup> Ensuring continued funding for *sustaining peace* in Liberia will be one such important factor.<sup>37</sup>

- Since 2010, overall human development trends in Liberia showed modest progress. The Human Development Index (**HDI**) moved from 0.406 in 2000 to 0.427 in 2015 but remains low compared to that of the region (0.525), and ranks Liberia at 177 out of 188 countries, in the low human development category.<sup>38</sup> The Gender Development Index (**GDI**) is at 0.789 and the Gender Inequality Index (GII) is at 0.649 (2015).<sup>39</sup>

### **2. Which of the following have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country over the past five years through laws, policies and/or programmes? (please check relevant categories)**

- Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice
- Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls
- Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security
- Eliminating violence against women and girls
- Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
- Political participation and representation
- Right to work and rights at work (e.g. gender pay gap, occupational segregation, career progression)
- Women’s entrepreneurship and women’s enterprises
- Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity or parental leave, care services)
- Gender-responsive social protection (e.g. universal health coverage, cash transfers, pensions)
- Basic services and infrastructure (water, sanitation, energy, transport etc.)
- Strengthening women’s participation in ensuring environmental sustainability
- Gender-responsive budgeting
- Digital and financial inclusion for women
- Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience building
- Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes
- Other

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<sup>36</sup> The Liberia Moment Event. 23 March 2018. UN Focus Newsletter. Issue 1. January-February 2018. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68173> (last accessed 06/05/2019).

<sup>37</sup> International Peace Institute. *Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities*. Lesley Connolly and Laurie Mincieli. May 2019. Available at: <https://www.ipinst.org/2019/05/sustaining-peace-in-liberia-new-reforms-new-opportunities> (last accessed 10/06/2019).

<sup>38</sup> Liberia Common Country Assessment. Primson Management Service & Africa Economic Outlook. Patrick Hettinger- AfDB; Moses Sichei- UNDP and Stanely Kamara- UNDP. 2018.

“Factors which have contributed to the relative improvement in the country’s HDI were noted as: Liberia’s life expectancy at birth which increased by 14 years, and mean years of school which increased by 1.8 years.

However, expected years of school were reported to have decreased by 0.6 years.”

Ibid. P. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Government of Liberia. *Revised National Gender Policy, Liberia (2018-2022)*.

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### ➤ Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice

The signing of the Decent Work Act in June 2015 ensures that women and men are equal before the law in terms of employment and the increase of minimum wage is not discriminatory across gender.

The Liberian Government lays foundations for gender equality and equity by conducting the evaluation of the UNSCR 1325 which resulted in developing the second Liberia 1325 National Action Plan. Also, the Ministry of justice plays a key role in scaling access to justice for women with regards to sexual and gender base violence and plays a pivotal role in reporting government's progress in implementing human rights instruments.

Increasing access to justice and information for women and girls is critical for the sustainability of peace and development as it enhances the rule of law and the respect of the fundamental human rights of women. Women's rights under the laws are those basic and fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution and the Act that ratifies the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's right to which Liberia is a signatory.

To increase women's access to farmland, the *Land Rights Act* (2018) was passed to ensure women's rights to land, governance and management in order to increase farming and other livelihoods. Specifically, there have been 8,193 direct beneficiaries (7,233 females/960 males)<sup>40</sup>

The Joint Program on "Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women" (**JP RWEE**) began in 2014 and with the actual implementation taking place in early 2015.

Despite the provisions of the *Equal Rights of the Customary Marriage Law (ERCM)* of 1998, approved and published in 2003, which explicitly bans the 'Compulsory Marriage of Widow to Deceased Husband's Kin' (Section 3.4), recent studies have found that land inheritance by widows is often contingent on their willingness to marry a surviving male relative of their deceased husband, even though this practice is illegal. In the communities from 3 different counties<sup>41</sup> visited for the USAID research, daughters - as compared with sons - seem to rarely

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<sup>40</sup> Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (**MPTF**). JP RWEE Annual Report. 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Pleebo in Maryland County (South East), Zolowee and Ganta in Nimba County (North Central), and Buchanan and Geebeor in Grand Bassa County (South Central).

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receive their inheritance. When daughters inherit land, their rights are often restricted to housing and ‘use rights’ to farm short-term crops. However, despite the legal gaps in the ERCM Law and the Civil Procedure Law recognizing presumption of marriage, if enforced, these laws can offer some protection to women’s property inheritance rights. The lack of awareness of these laws is a great impediment to the attainment of women land and property rights.<sup>42</sup>

The Government has undertaken a review of Liberia’s Constitution (1986) and has agreed on twenty-four (24) propositions including the amendment of articles 8 and 11 to include the definition of discrimination as stated in article 1 of the Convention (CEDAW). However, a referendum to amend the constitution and enshrine the proposed 24 propositions put forth during the constitutional review process of 2016 is still pending.<sup>43</sup>

The *Decent Work Act* (2015) prohibits discrimination with respect to equal opportunity for work and employment and calls for equal pay for equal work as well as providing legal representations for aggrieved indigent clients and to settle disputes between employers and employees.

Additional non-discrimination measures include:

- Small and medium entrepreneurial programs for both males and females;
- Access to microfinance loan;
- Training in business management;
- Civil Service Human Resources Policy Manual (2013) which guarantees merit-based recruitment in the civil service grounded by merits and not by sex; and
- Adoption of the revised National Gender Policy (NGP) (2018–2022) which promotes gender equitable, socio-economic development; enhance women’s and girls’ empowerment for sustainable and inclusive development.

### ➤ **Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security**

In October 2018, Liberia launched the *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development* (PAPD), its third national development plan from 2018 to 2023. The PAPD is the second in

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<sup>42</sup> My-Lan Dodd, J. Duncan, J. Uvuza and al. Women’s Land Rights In Liberia In Law, Practice, And Future Reforms. LGSA Women’s Land Rights Study. USAID/Landesia. March 2018. Pp.37-46.

<sup>43</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.

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the series of 5-year National Development Plans (NDP) anticipated under the *Liberia Vision 2030 framework*. It follows the *Agenda for Transformation 2012-2017 (AfT)*. It is informed as well by lessons learned from the implementation of the *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy 2007 (iPRS)* and the *Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2011)*. The Pro-Poor Agenda is therefore about the people; how to strengthen their capacity to thrive and to draw all Liberians living at home and abroad into the national development process. Over the next five years, addressing the basic needs of Liberians for income security, better access to basic services, and greater opportunities for self-improvement in an enabling environment that is inclusive and stable will be at the core of the pro-poor agenda. While one of the aims over the long term remains raising per capita income levels and economic status to a middle-income country, as also outlined under Liberia's *Vision 2030 framework*, the focus over the next five years will be on removing the binding constraints to reaching that goal. The PAPD also links corresponding goals from the SDGs for 2030 and Agenda 2063 aspirations. In terms of enhancing gender equality, the PAPD entrenches this goal in Pillar 1 and as "...a cross-cutting concern leading to more empowered women and girls."<sup>44</sup>

### ➤ **Eliminating violence against women and girls**

The revised *National Gender Policy (NGP)* (2018–2022), the *Revised Gender Based Violence National Action Plan (2018-2023)*<sup>45</sup>, the *Liberia & United Nations Partnership Framework (2020-2024)*, *The Pro Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity (2019-2023)*, along with other measures initiated by the Government of Liberia, will be critical for eliminating violence against women and girls. Furthermore, the Government of Liberia has implemented various programs and projects to curb violence against women and girls. Also, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) plays a key role in scaling access to justice for women with regards to SGBV and plays a pivotal role in reporting the Government's progress in implementing human rights instruments. According to the Ministry of Health Annual Statistical Report (2018), the lack of

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<sup>44</sup> Government of Liberia. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)*. A Five-Year National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive, And Sustainable Development. November 2018.

<sup>45</sup> National Action Plan for the Prevention and Management of Gender- Based Violence in Liberia (Phase III— 2018-2023), Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Liberia, 2017.

Policy wise, a specific output on prevention of GBV in communities from the third phase of the NAP against GBV specifically provides to work with community structures and awareness sessions for traditional and religious leaders with the objective to increase awareness on GBV legislation amongst traditional justice actors.

Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.

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public confidence in statutory institutions such as the judiciary and the police leads to underreporting of cases.<sup>46</sup>

The current national strategy on SGBV is contained in the Phase III of the GBV-NAP (2018-2023). It is the revised and modified version of previous Phase II implemented from 2011 to 2016 and summarizes the intervening concept points towards the prevention and management of GBV in Liberia. This instrument is in direct response to SGBV across Liberia, building on the successes, improving on the pitfalls and incorporating emerging issues stemming from the implementation in the previous phase. As such, this new phase of the NAP merged GBV interventions into three critical pillars: (1) Psychosocial & Coordination Pillar; (2) Legal & Protection Pillar (which includes a specific output on witness protection); and (3) Health Pillar.<sup>47</sup>

The Government of Liberia, as a *High National Level Target* in the PAPD (2018-2023), has committed to reducing the incidence of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (**SGBV**) by 50% and by the year 2023 through the provision of appropriate support services & access to justice systems.<sup>48</sup>

For the period of 2017, the MGCSP noted that a total of 1,685 cases of gender-based violence (**GBV**) were reported in Liberia. Of these, 69.2% were sexual violence, of which 59.8% were female survivors under the age of 18. Of the 2,105 **SGBV** cases reported in 2018, 60 cases were sent to court with only 1% (6 cases) resulting in conviction of the perpetrators.<sup>49</sup>

A comprehensive analysis of the statistics available at the SGBV Division of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) indicated that the number of reported cases of SGBV have fluctuated over the five-year period 2013-2018. The number of SGBV cases reported sharply decreased from over 2,000 in 2013 to almost 1,400 in 2014. Between 2015 and 2017 reporting increased and fluctuated between 1,400 and almost 1,700. Finally, there was a sharp increase in 2018 to over 2000 reported cases.

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<sup>46</sup> Government of Liberia. Ministry of Health. Annual Statistical Report. 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Government of Liberia. National Action Plan for the Prevention and Management of Gender-Based Violence in Liberia (Phase III – 2018-2023). Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection. 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Government of Liberia. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development* (PAPD). A Five-Year National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive, And Sustainable Development. November 2018. P. 35.

<sup>49</sup> Government of Liberia. Ministry of Health. Annual Statistical Report. 2018.

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The GBV Division of the MGCSP notes the fluctuations can be attributed to several factors. For instance, there was an overall increased awareness on SGBV issues at the community level; within service provision entities (One Stop Centers (**OSC**), Women, and Children Protection Sections (**WACPS**) and GBV Observatories); at the national level; and at the sub-national level. The 2018 increase was due to an increase in reporting of SGBV cases, whilst the sharp decreases in the number of cases reported in 2014 were related to the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak. During this period, health centers focused on managing the EVD and therefore less focus was placed on SGBV issues. Furthermore, the lack of functional referral services, especially in terms of health services, in conjunction with a low level of trust the public had in the health system also influenced overall reporting rates. The gradual increase of cases in 2015 was due to the public regaining their trust in the health sector and reporting cases.

In 2017, over 860 survivors received psycho-social, protection and legal services through the referral pathway (One -Stop-Centers, Referral Hospitals, Police and the Criminal Court “E”).<sup>50</sup>

7 *Safe Homes* (government-managed) have been established in Bong, Nimba, Lofa, River Gee, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties with only 1 being partially functional. Through the Joint Programme on SGBV, 12 *One Stop Centres* have been established in 7 Counties (2,222 survivors of SGBV accessed services in 2018) and they are intended to provide the needed support services to SGBV survivors under one roof.<sup>51</sup>

There was also an increase in awareness raising activities, on SGBV issues, undertaken at community levels.<sup>52</sup>

In terms of addressing the issues associated with survivors of GBV, the NGP notes: “Health facilities remain insufficiently equipped to deal with GBV, and inaccessible to the majority of survivors. Traumatized women and children who are survivors of different forms of GBV are

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<sup>50</sup> Government of Liberia (GoL)/United Nations (UN). Joint program to prevent and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful traditional practices (HTPS), Program Brief, Government of Liberia. 2017.

CEDAW Report (Draft). 2019.

<sup>51</sup> UN WOMEN and Government of Liberia. Report on Consultations for Liberia’s Second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Report on Findings. December 2018.

Gender and Security Sector Reform in Liberia. Status Review. 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Government of Liberia. SGBV Division. MGCSP. 2017.



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confronted with the challenge of inadequate access to appropriate counselling and psychosocial support. The prevalence of GBV including the harmful traditional practice such as polygamy has serious repercussions on women and girls and is also often a cause and consequence of HIV among women and girls.”<sup>53</sup>

Via the MGCSP, ‘*The End Child Marriage Campaign*’ was launched in December 2016. This initiative was part of *16 Days of Activism against GBV* against women and girls. Furthermore, a *national Strategy* was developed and carried out in five counties. It should be noted that the *Act to Establish the Children’s Law of Liberia* (2011), prohibits the marriage of anyone who is under the age of eighteen (18) and prohibits promising/betrothing a child into marriage.<sup>54</sup>

Some additional programs and initiatives include:

a) A DNA machine was donated to the Government of Liberia in 2018 by UNMIL. Three (3) medical doctors were trained as Pathologists to operate the DNA machine. However, efforts are being made for the Pathologists to be further trained in Forensic Pathology to be able to interpret the results emanating from the DNA machine.

(b) A *hotline to report and fast track SGBV cases* was established in November 2016 as a pilot project to provide an opportunity for survivors of sexual violence to report crimes of sexual violence or other crimes. However, many users of the hot line were children and they abused the intent of the hot line thereby leading to the closure of the project. Also, the government established the *National Human Anti-trafficking* hotline to assist victims and potential victims of trafficking. Over 72 alleged human trafficking cases have been reported with only 3 cases prosecuted.<sup>55</sup>

(c) The initiation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase of the *Joint Program on Sexual and Gender Based Violence* (2016-2020) by the Government of Liberia and the UN.

The Joint Programme between the UN and the Government on SGBV (prevention and response) and harmful practices (2016-2020) is in its third phase and will end in December 2019, it includes components on prevention, response, institutional strengthening and advocacy and is implemented in thirty-two (32) Counties. The last Annual report for the period January-December 2018 noted the following key results: 180 traditional leaders,

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<sup>53</sup> Government of Liberia. MGCSP. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017. P. 31.

<sup>54</sup> Government of Liberia. An Act to Establish the Children’s Law of Liberia. 2011. Section four (4).

<sup>55</sup> The Ministry of Labor. Anti-Trafficking Unit Report. 2018.

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female zoes and religious leaders are educated and committed to redress SGBV and Harmful Traditional Practices (**HTPs**) and serve as *Agents of Change* in their communities. In addition, 11 existing Youth Centers in Cape Mount, Montserrado, Grand Bassa, Margibi and Bong Counties are providing youth friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health (**SRH**) services and reaching 8,827 youths, out of which 73% were female while 27% were male. Also, 2,222 survivors of SGBV received services from 12 OSCs.<sup>56</sup>

Under the Government of Liberia/UN SGBV Joint Program, UN Women is supporting the Government of Liberia and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the provision of capacity building training for traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community leaders and members in 4 counties (Nimba, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, where FGM is heavily practiced. These trainings have been an entry point for engagement at community level with traditional leaders to raise awareness on the negative effect of the practice of FGM and its impact on the health and wellbeing of women and girls in communities. UN Women is also working closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Traditional Council of Liberia and have supported the hosting of 3 consultative meetings with Paramount Chiefs, female zoes and traditional leaders in all 11 practicing FGM counties out of which a 20-point resolution was developed which will lead to the eradication of the practice of FGM. Leaders of the National Traditional Council of Liberia have also participated in 3 regional conferences on FGM and Child Marriages and have resolved to ending the practice here in Liberia.<sup>57</sup>

(d) The initiation of the European Union (**EU**)/United Nations (**UN**) *Spotlight Initiative to End Violence against Women and Girls* (2019-2022).

(e) *Behaviour Change Agent Adolescent Programme (BCAP)* for 2016- 2021 pilot project.

(f) Government of Liberia (**GoL**)/United Nations Development Program (**UNDP**)/ UN Women Joint Project- *Strengthening the Rule of Law in Liberia* (2018-2019).

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<sup>56</sup> Government of Liberia. Liberia`s Second Phase National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2023) For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Draft. Prepared by Nicole Hosein. May 2019.

It should be noted that: "...in Monrovia there are only five OSCs with services hardly available on 24 hours basis as the centers are not operational at night and weekends. OSCs are also available in Bomi, Grand Bassa, Bong, Margibi, River Gee and Grand Gedeh counties leaving seven (7) counties completely vulnerable." Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.

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### ➤ Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Following the outbreak of the deadly Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), which devastated the already weakening health system, the Liberian government in collaboration with partners has over the last five years worked to improve the quality of health care as well as maternal and child health services. The Government is committed to ensure that women are fully participating in the implementation of Ebola recovery plans through economic empowerment, access to finance, loan payments, cross border trading, food security and nutrition among others. Currently, the government is providing medical and social assistance for all EVD survivors through the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.<sup>58</sup>

Several policies were developed including the *National Laboratory Policy and Strategic Plan*, the *Health Sector Revised Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (M&E)*, the *Mental Health policy*, *Community Health Program Policy*, *Communication Policy*, *Tuberculosis and multi drugs Resilient Policy and Expansion Plan*. The Government's budgetary support to Health increased from 6.8% in 2005 to 11.7% in 2016.<sup>59</sup>

The Government launched its *National Health and Social Welfare Plan (2011–2021)* and took on a greater share of the health care funding burden from international partners, increasing budgetary allocations from \$39.8 Million United States Dollars in 2010–2011 to \$54.9 Million United States Dollars in 2012-2013.<sup>60</sup>

The Government has established robust disease surveillance infrastructures in 91 districts and improved the capacity of laboratories to diagnose six (6) diseases including Ebola, Cholera, yellow fever, Lassa fever, measles and rabies. The GOL has increased the quality maternal and child health with the establishment of 727 functional health facilities including 37 hospitals, 46 health centers and 644 clinics across the country with 71% of the population having access to health care within 1 hour of walking or within a 5KM radius. There were 16,064 health workers including 10,672 public health workers as of 2016 deployed in the 727 health facilities. More ongoing infrastructural plans include establishing 20 staff housing units for health care workers in the South East, the completion of 13 permanent triages and the construction of 10 new

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<sup>58</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report - Draft. 2019.

<sup>59</sup> Government of Liberia. National Policy and Strategic Plan on Health Promotion (2016 – 2021).

<sup>60</sup> Government of Liberia. Combined Fifth and Sixth Country Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. January 2018.

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clinics. These facilities have been provided with 77% essential basic amenities such as water, electricity, etc. whilst 73% of the facilities have standard precautions for infection prevention and control, 57% of the facilities have basic equipment to provide health service, 42% of these facilities have diagnostic capacity to check for various tests and 44% of the facilities have essential medicines in stock for treatment of common illnesses.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, the ratio of male health workers is 55% while that of female is 45% with 76.8% ranging between the ages 28-52 years.<sup>62</sup>

All these health facilities provide free health services including quality adolescent sexual and reproductive health, labor and delivery, as well as postpartum and newborn care. As a result of establishing these health facilities, women especially in rural communities, continue to receive health care services provided by skilled health care workers.

Liberia's maternal mortality ratio is 1,072 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, with a total fertility rate (TFR) of 4.7 children per woman. In remote areas, infrastructure and facilities in clinics are often lacking; midwives and health workers must deliver babies without any electricity at night. With the installation of solar lighting systems by UN Women and partners, conditions have improved in 26 clinics and five newly constructed Maternal Waiting Rooms across Liberia.<sup>63</sup>

There has been gradual increase in the Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (**MCPR**) for the past five years, from 19% to 31% among people of reproductive age. This indicates that the country is exerting efforts toward the reduction of maternal mortality through the provision of family planning services as one of its key strategies.<sup>64</sup> Data from an Impact Now analysis shows that by increasing the MCPR, or the percentage of women using modern contraception to the five year Costed Implementation Plan (**CIP**) goal of 39.7 percent, there is a potential to save an estimated 3,300 maternal lives by 2022.<sup>65</sup>

However, mothers in rural areas of Liberia are less likely to use contraceptives, receive prenatal care from a skilled-provider; give birth while being attended to by a skilled health care provider; or give birth in a health care facility. In addition, the adolescent birth rate in rural

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<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Health. Joint Annual Review Conference Report. 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> UN Women. News Stories. July 17, 2017. Available at:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/7/feature-maternal-health-gets-a-new-boost-in-liberia> (last accessed 07/05/2019).

<sup>64</sup> Government of Liberia. Liberia National Family Planning Costed Implementation Plan (2018-2022). 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

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areas of Liberia is almost double that in urban areas. About 42% of rural adolescents have begun childrearing, compared with 24% of urban adolescents.<sup>66</sup>

Overall, the proportion of adolescents who have begun childrearing increases rapidly from 5% at age 15 years to 59% by age 19 years.<sup>67</sup>

According to the 2016 Liberia Malaria Indicator Survey (**MIS**), the total age-specific fertility rate among adolescents ages 15-19 is 150 live births per 1,000 women. The rate is higher for rural compared to urban adolescents — 198 compared to 126. This reflects similarities with the national level Total Fertility Rate (**TFR**) data in the sense that rural fertility rates appear to be greater than urban rates. Liberia has a high rate of teenage pregnancies — 33.5 percent of young women ages 15-19 have begun childbearing.

In the last almost 10 years, childbearing among teenagers has not experienced a significant decline, from 32.1 percent in 2007 to 31.3 percent in 2013, and then it rose to the current 33.5 percent. Rates of teenage pregnancy in rural areas is much higher than in urban areas. Generally, "...teenagers residing in rural areas with no or limited educational attainment and part of the lower wealth quintile are more likely to begin childbearing compared to adolescents from urban areas with higher educational attainment and belonging to wealthier quintiles".<sup>68</sup>

Prior to the Ebola crisis (2014 and 2015), Liberia had made major gains in the area of infant and child mortality. The annual reduction rate of about 5.4 percent was the highest in Africa.<sup>69</sup> In order to reduce maternal and newborn mortality and achieve Millennium Development Goal 5, the Government has also developed a roadmap for maternal mortality reduction; adopted the "*Reach Every Pregnant Woman Strategy*"; and made compulsory the reporting of maternal deaths by health workers. In addition, 103,892 pregnant women have received antenatal care (**ANC**) and long-lasting insecticidal nets (**LLINs**) at first attendance. Also, 2.8 Million LLINs have been distributed through a mass campaign.

The Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Health (**MOH**) and other partners, are working to strengthen the country's six (6) midwifery schools. As of 2015-2016 the

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<sup>66</sup> World Health Organisation (**WHO**). Maternal and New-born Health (Liberia). Available at [http://www.aho.afro.who.int/profiles\\_information/index.php/Liberia:Maternal\\_and\\_newborn\\_health](http://www.aho.afro.who.int/profiles_information/index.php/Liberia:Maternal_and_newborn_health) (last accessed 01/06/2019).

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Government of Liberia. Liberia National Family Planning Costed Implementation Plan (2018-2022). 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Government of Liberia. Combined Fifth and Sixth Country Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. January 2018.

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government initiated professional programs to train approximately 75 midwives in order to learn more advanced skills. Also, in 2017 the government in partnership with the Danish Midwives Association upgraded the two-year midwife training program to a three-year Bachelor of Science midwifery program to strengthen the professional development of midwives.<sup>70</sup>

The Government, in 2018, developed the *Liberia National Family Planning Costed Implementation Plan* (2018-2022) whereby gender health issues such as strategies to reduce maternal death rates and teen pregnancies are outlined.

### ➤ **Political participation and representation**

Programs, such as the *National Women Conference*, is held yearly to bring women from various sectors together to discuss women's agenda and work towards involving more women in politics. Prior to and during the October 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections, the Ministry collaborated with the Liberia Women's Political Forum (**LWPF**) and political parties to ensure more female candidates were elected to the House of Representatives. As a result of these collaborations, 163 female candidates, including one female presidential and two female vice-presidential candidates were duly registered by the National Election Commission (**NEC**) to contest as candidates in the October 2017 Presidential and Legislative elections. Currently, women comprise 12.3% of members in the House of Representatives and make up 10.0% of members in the Senate.<sup>71</sup> The current Vice-President of Liberia is Dr. Jewel Cianeh Howard Taylor.

The Government of Liberia, as a *High National Level Target* in the PAPD (2018-2023), has committed to increasing the political participation of women at the national and local levels to reach a target of 30% by 2023.<sup>72</sup>

### **3. Specific measures taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls**

The Government has initiated and implemented policies that prevent discrimination and

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<sup>70</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.

<sup>71</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (**IPU**). Women in National Parliaments. The situation as of 1 February 2019. Available at: <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (last accessed 31/05/2019).

<sup>72</sup> Government of Liberia. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development* (PAPD). A Five-Year National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive, And Sustainable Development. November 2018. Page 35.

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promote the rights of women and girls. Some of the policies are:

- The draft *Bill on Immigration and Nationality Act* of 2016 to amend the Alien and nationality law of 1973 and bring it into conformity with the provision of the Constitution and other legal obligations.
- Land Right Act was passed in 2018 to increase women's access to farmland and increase other livelihoods.
- The passage of the Decent Work Act in June 2015 ensures that women and men are equal before the law in terms of employment and the increase of minimum wage is not discriminatory across gender. It sets basic working standards for safe working environments and collective bargaining rights for workers in the informal sector. The measure also sought to provide skilled and unskilled workers in the formal economy with standard minimum wages.

### ➤ **Women living in remote and rural areas**

The Government supports rural women with the establishment of a *national rural women structure*. The structure is decentralized from the national to the local level. It is based from the grass roots, to the community, to town clan, districts, counties and the national level. Women are organized and have Chairladies at all levels. They participate together with men in discussing issues that affect their communities, town clan, districts, counties as well as at the national level. The national rural women structure is incorporated and legally recognized as an independent entity that can mobilize funds with the support from the government. Leadership of the structure is elected every four years.

Also, the *Peace Hut initiative* was established after the civil war and during the first term of former President H.E Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, providing a safe space for women in rural communities to discuss issues that plague them especially relating to conflict resolution. There are over 36 Peace Huts established across the country, each county elects their leaders which entails President, Vice President, Treasurer among others. Additionally, UN Women through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is supporting more than 16 Peace Huts. At the Peace Huts women mediate problems, run projects and businesses, and advocate for women's rights.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.

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From, up to, 2018 achievements:

- A series of dialogues among Peace Huts members in all 12 targeted communities involving security actors and civil society organizations were held. The dialogues in communities have brought together security actors and the community to discuss issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, drug abuse, illegal movement at the borders, land dispute and health concerns thus fostering accountability among security personnel and strengthening trust between security actors and the community.
- In addition, the capacities of 280 participants from 8 Peace Huts were enhanced in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and resolution. These include: Tiama, Tiapa, Konia and Malema which constitute the old Peace Huts and Yeala, Bo-Waterside, Baraken and Ganta Border community which make up the new Peace Huts.
- As a first step towards formalizing the women's Peace Huts, an Institutional Statute (constitution) was developed and approved by the 36 Peace Huts. This process was supported by the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL) and UN Women and hence demonstrates the first step towards formal recognition as a National NGO. The statute is further envisioned to establish a framework for financial sustainability. AFELL facilitated a National Conference of the National Peace Huts Women of Liberia in Gbarnga, Bong County. At this sitting, women adopted their constitution and voted in a new leadership.
- As a result of the workshop organized by UN Women, a financial sustainability plan for each of the Peace Huts was developed and approved by 36 Peace Huts members.<sup>74</sup>

The Government of Liberia has also enacted the *Local government Act* in 2018 which provides 3 seats out of the 9 County Council exclusively for female in the following categories: 1 representative for women organization, 1 female youth representatives, and 1 female civil society organization thereby creating a balance for gender equality in decision making and eliminating discrimination in terms of political participation and leadership.

### ➤ **Women living with disabilities**

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<sup>74</sup> UN Women. 2018 Report: Implementation of the Liberian National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325 (LNAP SCR 1325). 2018.



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The Government launched a five-year *National Plan (NAP) on Disabilities* in 2018. Specifically, the NAP on Disabilities requires that “...all laws or sections of laws discriminating against persons with disabilities be abolished; that the teaching of sign language be made a required course in all Liberian schools from elementary to college levels and that social security and welfare be provided as financial assistance to persons with disabilities among others.” Additional vulnerabilities are experienced on the basis of both gender and disability, with multidimensional discrimination placing women and girls in a significantly worse position than their male peers. The Government has established a *National Commission for Disabilities* through an Act of the Legislature with an objective to protect and promote the rights of Persons with Disabilities (**PWDs**). In addition, the Revised *National Youth Policy* (2012–2017), and the *Female Youth* (young women and girls) *program* focus on addressing the needs of these target group.<sup>75</sup> The Government also established a *National Commission on PWDs*.

### ➤ **Women living with HIV/AIDS**

Evidence indicates that women are more exposed to HIV infections due to several factors such as biological, economic and socio-cultural realities. However, the most significant factor is the high level of exposure to sexual violence and in particular to rape. The National Health Survey shows trends of a higher prevalence of HIV infection among women and girls as compared to men and boys - 2.4% for women and 1.9% for men. Violence against women including harmful traditional practices against women is both a cause and consequence of HIV. For example, there is early and forced marriage and denying women’s right of access to property on the death of their husband. As a result of such cultural and social pressures, economic dependency (for instance, due to a lack of access to property rights upon the death of their husband), high unemployment rates combined with low education and fear of violence, women are often less able to negotiate safer sex. Also, the Government provides support to the association of women living with HIV/AIDS through training, provision of anti-retroviral drugs among other measures.<sup>76</sup>

In response to the recent Ebola virus disease (**EVD**) outbreak of 2014 and 2015, the Government vowed not to allow Liberia to be affected in a similar way. One strategy was through the development of a *National Investment Plan for Building a Resilient Health System*

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<sup>75</sup> Government of Liberia MGCSP Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. P. 51.

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(2015-2021). The Investment Plan provides an overall framework for restoring the gains lost to EVD and provides health security for the people of Liberia. Additionally, a more focused *National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan* (2015-2020) provides guidance to the national HIV and AIDS response. This includes providing anti natal care, the elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV, and the treatment, care, and support for People Infected and Affected by HIV and AIDS.<sup>77</sup>

#### **4. Has the increasing number of humanitarian crises—caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events—affected the implementation of the BPFA in your country?**

Yes, the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) which affected the socio-economic assets, health and education to name a few. The Ministry of Health reported a total of 10,172 cumulative Ebola cases with 4,466 deaths as of April 2015 in Liberia. Women were disproportionately affected by the EVD due to their role as caregivers. About 75% of cross-border women traders and 200,000 to 300,000 women in small scale artisanal mining, as well as 4,000 women involved in *Village Saving Loan Schemes* lost their livelihood or means of income generation. A World Bank survey conducted in February 2015 reveals that about 41% of household heads who were employed at the inception of the EVD were unemployed at the time of the survey. The World Bank survey also shows that about 43% women who were self-employed, engaged in petty trade and 19.3% women engaged in food processing business lost their businesses.<sup>78</sup>

In July 2015, the Government of Liberia conducted an assessment in collaboration with UN women, OXFAM and other partners on the impact of the EVD on women and men in five (5) Ebola hot spot counties. The assessment was aimed at establishing comparable impacts of the EVD on women, men, boys and girls in Liberia. The assessment also explored women's leadership and participation during the national response, as well as coping mechanisms and perceptions of communities regarding the promotion of early recovery. Four (4) thematic areas were covered during the assessment.

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<sup>77</sup> Government of Liberia. Liberia HIV&AIDS Response Progress Report. 2016.

<sup>78</sup> World Bank Group. The Socio-economic Impacts of Ebola in Liberia. April 2015. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/162381468179333776/The-socio-economic-impacts-of-Ebola-in-Liberia-results-from-a-high-frequency-cell-phone-survey-round-five> (last accessed 07/05/2019).

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These include - livelihood/agriculture, access to health services, water, sanitation and hygiene (**WASH**) and gender-based violence (**GBV**). The assessment concludes that 47% of the EVD cases were reported among women compare to 53% among men.<sup>79</sup>

The *National Post Ebola Recovery Plan* seeks to mitigate the impact of the EVD on the population. The primary goal of the Plan is to revamp the economy and bring it back to the country's medium and long-term development plans. The Government is committed to ensure women's economic empowerment through access to finance, loan payments, savings, cross border trading, employment, access to roads and markets, food security and nutrition, as well as women's income generation schemes. The protection of women and girls from all forms of violence including sexual and gender-based violence also form part of the government's post Ebola recovery strategies. Currently the Government, through the Ministries of Health and Gender, is providing medical and social assistance for all EVD survivors including women and children.

### **5. Five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and programmes?**

#### ➤ **Gender-responsive budgeting**

The development of the Gender Responsive Planning and Budget policy (**GRPB**) for 2019-2023, is an effort made by the Government to support gender equality and the empowerment of women. It will also assist the Ministry of Finance, Development and Planning and other spending entities to evaluate the impact of public expenditure on gender equality. The policy also rests on two critical factors. Namely, that "...entrenched gender biases in planning and fiscal policies formulation have overlooked the gendered differences experienced by the different social groups. Secondly, it has exacerbated the gender gaps both within and between different social groups and contributed to the perpetuation of existing gender inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income."<sup>80</sup> The GRPB plan includes a framework, such as tools and listing relevant stakeholders, for the implementation of policy goals/objectives and expected outcomes/outputs. For instance, developing budgets that ensure a 'gender-fair' allocation of resources and public expenditures. However, since the policy is recent (March 2019), tracking

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<sup>79</sup> OXFAM. Ebola Impact Revealed: An assessment of the differing impact of the outbreak on the women and men in Liberia. Available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/ebola-impact-revealed-assessment-differing-impact-outbreak-women-and-men-liberia> (last accessed 07/05/2019).

<sup>80</sup> Government of Liberia. Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting Policy: *Mainstreaming Gender into Public Financial Management (2019-2023)*. March 2019. P. 10.

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the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women has not yet been conducted.

Furthermore, the GRPB Policy is a guide to use the planning and budgeting processes of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) and the Spending Entities (SEs) as *instruments for advancing gender equality*.

The aim of the Policy is to provide guidance for the identification of new approaches to policy planning and decision-making for allocating and spending public resources from a gender perspective. The GRPB Policy encourages the implementing officials of the Government to look beyond the numbers of the budget and focus on the *gender-specific needs of different social groups*, as well as on the *indicators* that direct resources for implementing programmes for an inclusive impact. As gender-responsive planning and budgeting is dependent on the nature of resource allocation and the quality of implementation to achieve the development targets, there is need for a change. The Policy is a catalyst in this direction.<sup>81</sup>

In turn, there is *Liberia's Public Financial Management Reform Strategy and Action Plan* (2017-2020). The MFDP introduced Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in March 2016 as part of the on-going reforms in the budgeting process. The adoption of GRB is targeted at ensuring that the National Budget will achieve better outcomes for marginalized groups. A *GRB Working Group* was established in 2016. A work plan has been developed to guide its implementation of activities. The Ministry of Health is currently piloting the implementation of GRB. The Ministry's functions and operations make it relatively easy to measure gender output and outcome indicators. For the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18, the Ministry issued a Gender Budget Statement along with selected gender responsive indicators to measure outcomes for specific programs.<sup>82</sup> A high level *GRB Coordination Committee* has been setup recently to ensure a smooth integration of GRB into the national budgeting process.

### ➤ **Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls**

*Education* – The Government of Liberia has cited Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 'Quality Education' to develop a gender responsive training and curriculum; support Parent

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<sup>81</sup> Government of Liberia. Government of Liberia. Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting Policy: Mainstreaming Gender into Public Financial Management (2019-2023). March 2019.

<sup>82</sup> Government of Liberia. Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. Public Financial Management Reform Strategy and Action Plan (2017-2020). 2017.

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Teacher Association (**PTA**); community engagement; and to enforce the teacher code of conduct to respond to Gender-based Violence (**GBV**) or Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (**SEA**) reports.<sup>83</sup>

The Government will provide Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls through the following:

- The ongoing contract signed by the Government and Bridged International Academy, a *Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL)* designed to transform the public education system. Teachers in PSL schools remained on the government payroll; schools remained free to students and the property of the government; and contractors were prohibited from screening students based on ability or other characteristics. The PSL model also injects significant additional external resources into PSL schools. The programme has provided 819 computers to teachers, 68 principal smart phones, 22,000 school uniforms, 139,000 students textbooks, 672 teachers trained to use pedagogy, 3336 new school desks and 20,000 students imparted with life changing education.<sup>84</sup>
- The ongoing four year “*Getting to Best Education Sector Plan*” (2017) to address the most urgent challenges facing the education sector in Liberia. The Ministry of Education will use the **G2B-ESP** to implement a series of strategies, evidence base, and innovative programs to measurably improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning from all students by June 2021. In this framework, the MOE supported by USAID has intervened in carrying out education programs that focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning (especially in early grade reading) and increased equitable access to safe learning opportunities for girls and for youth. USAID is also aiding in the advancement of quality curricula, teaching and management staff, instructional and learning resources, data systems and policy environment essential to providing basic education services to all Liberians.
- Furthermore, a ‘*Gender-Equitable Education and Achievement Program*’ (**GEEAP**) is being modelled and implemented by the Ministry with the United Nations Children’s Fund (**UNICEF**) support in 45 schools. This program provides after school tutorial

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<sup>83</sup> Gender and Security Sector Reform in Liberia. Status Review. 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Bridge International. Available at <https://www.bridgeinternationalacademy.com/upgradedlearninginLiberia> (last accessed 26/06/2019).

Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.

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support to children in grades 7-9, builds the capacity of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and has already formed 67 girls' clubs disseminating life skills information. It also provides Continuous Professional Development on gender-responsive and child-centered instruction.<sup>85</sup>

- The Government of Liberia has also implemented free and compulsory primary, junior and senior education across all government schools, increasing the literacy rate of the country with an overall male literacy level at 77% and women 54% as at 2018.<sup>86</sup>
- The ongoing free and compulsory primary, junior and senior education across all government schools with specific emphasis to reinforce the full implementation of the *National Girl Education Policy* (2011).
- The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Health in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection implemented the *Adolescent, the Sexual and Reproductive Health Right program* that provided education on this issue to girls and young women. The program also targeted and included Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans-gender (**LGBT**) persons. In partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (**UNFPA**), the Division of School Health has developed a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (**CSE**) curriculum built around teaching life skills, including decision-making and negotiation skills, discussions of gender roles and relationships for grades from 3 to 9. The curriculum is now being piloted and planned for inclusion into the national curriculum.<sup>87</sup>
- There have also been discussion and awareness around including sex education in school curriculum as well as ongoing awareness discouraging exploitation in schools and learning institutions.
- The Government, in collaboration with regional bodies such as the Economic Community of Western African States (**ECOWAS**) *Volunteer Program*, have trained secondary school students in helping them choose a career pathway for their future. Also, the Government through the MGCSP and in collaboration with ECOWAS

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<sup>85</sup> Government of Liberia. 'Getting to best Education Sector Plan 2017-2021'. Ministry of Education. Dec. 2016. Pp.83-84.

<sup>86</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report 2019 (Draft).

<sup>87</sup> Government of Liberia. 'Getting to best Education Sector Plan 2017-2021'. Ministry of Education. Dec. 2016. P.178.

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initiated the *ECOWAS Girls of Excellence Scholarship program* that provided scholarships for 50 girls in High school, university and technical vocation schools. So far, 6 girls have graduated from the program.

- The Government in collaboration with its bilateral partnership with United States Aid (USAID) have intervened in carrying out education programs that focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning (especially in early grade reading) and to increase equitable access to safe learning opportunities for girls and for youth. USAID is also aiding in the advancement of quality curricula, teaching and management staff, instructional and learning resources, data systems and policy environment essential to providing basic education services to all Liberians.
- The Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports in collaboration with the Ministry of Education is running a *Technical, Vocational and Educational Training* for both boys and girls.
- The Government through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection initiated the *Vulnerable Girls program* in 2013 and have supported 200 vulnerable girls with 30 at Ricks Institute, 30 at Bromley Episcopal Mission School and 140 at Victoria A. Tolbert Hostel (William R. Tolbert High School in Gbalatuah, Bong County) from rural areas by providing them with educational opportunities. So far, 47 girls have graduated from the program.
- The launch of an innovative mentoring program to recruit and train young leaders through the *President's Young Professional Program (PYPP)*. The aim is to create a merit-based, competitive path to government. Today, over 140 young leaders could be the bulwark of a modern civil service.
- In its efforts to increase access to education for out-of-school children and young people (and reduce overage enrolment), the Ministry also intends to provide quality alternative and accelerated education pathways for overage and out-of-school children and young people through Alternative Education programs comprising 2 main streams: Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) which assists learners aged 8-18 to complete Grade 6; Alternative Basic Education (ABE) which assists older learners (13-38 and up) to complete Grade 6, develop or enhance literacy, numeracy, work readiness and life skills. In this framework, after a gap in funding, the Ministry has launched a new

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Accelerated Learning Program for the 2017-2021 period with USAID support. The new program seeks to increase access to quality education services for out-of-school children and adolescents. The activity will also support communities to improve education for out-of-school learners by offering accelerated learning programs that condense six years of the primary education cycle into three years. Notably, girls and including young mothers, account for the majority of ABE enrolments. In 2015 only, ABE providers have enrolled 10364 students, with 58% of candidates being female. However, ABE is not offered at a large number of schools and its provision is currently limited to six counties.<sup>88</sup>

### ➤ **Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity and food security**

Over the next five years, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) will address the basic needs of Liberians for income security, better access to basic services, and greater opportunities for self-improvement in an enabling environment that is inclusive and stable will be at the core of the pro-poor agenda. While one of the aims over the long term remains raising per capita income levels and economic status to a middle-income country as outlined under the Vision 2030 framework, the focus over the next five years will be on removing the binding constraints to reaching that goal.

The Pro Poor Agenda is in alignment with the Gender-responsive Planning and Budgeting and is committed to the '*equitable provision of opportunities*' to contribute to '*economic inclusion*' for ushering in a '*cohesive society*' and '*accountable public sector*'. The Government will make strategic and well targeted investment in human capital development coupled with efforts to create an enabling environment that will promote the abilities and talents of the Liberian people. Its interventions specifically seek to reduce the level of income and developmental inequalities across various social bands and regions of Liberia to ensure a more equitable distribution of the gains from Liberia's natural endowment and economic growth.

Additionally, the Government will adopt and implement innovative programs with special emphasis on women's access to land and participation in conflict prevention and resolution initiatives especially in concession host communities as well as provide social cash transfer to 10,000 rural household heads in two extreme poor counties. For the next five years the

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<sup>88</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.  
Ministry of Health, Liberia Education Sector Analysis, Republic of Liberia, November 2016, p.161.  
Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.



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government will provide robust support to increase women's entrepreneur enterprises through micro finance loans and access to credit from financial institutions.

With support from the Governments of Sweden and Norway, the *Global Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women* since its inception in Liberia has directly engaged a total of 8,193 direct beneficiaries (exactly 7,233 females / 960 males) and over 31,600 household members that are indirect beneficiaries (29,995 females / 1,695 males).<sup>89</sup>

Also, with support from UNDP, in February 2015, a group of 15 female taxi drivers and female motorbike riders calling themselves "*The Pink Panthers*" was trained by the Liberian National Police (**LNP**) in road safety, self-defense, human rights and personal hygiene. The objective of this group was to take the necessary precautions to prevent themselves from being robbed. The program is planning to set up a revolving fund which will train more women, provide bikes and assist in financial assistance when needed.

### ➤ **Eliminating violence against women and girls**

The Government will increase the number of judges from 2–4 for the *specialized sexual violence court (Court E)* to fast track the prosecution of sexual assault/violence, including abuse of minors especially rape. The government will fully re-operationalize 7 *safe homes* that were abandoned due to the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in 2014 and funding issues. The Government will also provide support and expand the "*One Stop Centre*" for the care and management of SGBV cases.

The One-Stop Centres provide services to survivors of SGBV which include medical examination and treatment, psychosocial counselling, protection, law enforcement, legal procedures, short-stay accommodation facilities and resettlement for survivors.<sup>90</sup>

The Government will continue to support the *GBV National Taskforce* to continue reviewing progress and share ideas or information on mitigating GBV perpetrated against women and children. At the local level, the Government will continue to strengthen existing GBV prevention structures across the country to continue the implementation of appropriate interventions in order to curb violence against women and girls.

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<sup>89</sup> MPTF. JP RWEE Annual Report. 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Liberia Common Country Assessment. 2018. P. 64.

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In furtherance to the implementation of the *National Strategy to end child and early marriages*, the Government will continue creating awareness and sensitizing traditional and religious leaders, elders and community members particularly in rural communities on the harmful impact of child and early marriage on the future of the girl child. Special emphasis will be placed on preventive measures targeting community members including traditional leaders as well as elders in preventing and reporting child marriage cases. Furthermore, the government will raise awareness of rape through billboards, radio broadcasts, and other outreach campaigns.

The Government will work with the national legislature and partners for the enactment of the legislation on abolishing FGM in the entire country as well as the enforcement of the Children's Law (2011) in particular, Section 6 which prohibits harmful traditional practices against children.

➤ **Access to affordable quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights**

The Government of Liberia, in order to provide access to affordable quality health care services, will implement the following:

- Provide adequate supply of essential drugs
- Provide equitable and universal access to comprehensive health services
- Elimination of preventable, communicable and non-communicable disease
- Prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS as well as care and support to HIV/AIDS carriers
- Ensure the construction staff quarters of hard to reach communities
- Provide adequate logistics to match the current needs and challenges
- Ensure the construction of a County Drugs Depot & County Health Team Offices
- Train and employ specialized doctors
- Reduction of maternal and child mortality
- Comprehensive sexuality education programs

### Section Two: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

#### ➤ Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

#### **6. Actions to advance gender equality in relation to women's role in paid work and employment?**

Liberia does not practice occupational segregation in employment process due to practice and policy. However, the gap that exists between gender literacy demonstrates that males are mostly employed formally as a result of their qualifications as compared to women.<sup>91</sup> As mentioned, the Government of Liberia has implemented free and compulsory primary, junior and senior education across all government schools, increasing the literacy rate of the country with an overall male literacy level at 77% and women 54% as of 2018.

Also, women are 24.1% more than men in the informal sector. The reason for this could be ascribed to the traditional and cultural beliefs of the country as women play triple roles such as (production, reproduction and care) making them more likely to be employed informally as compared to men. Additionally, there is no specific policy on recruitment or promotion for women within the civil service. Nevertheless, the Civil Service Agency has a general policy for recruitment for positions. The *Human Resource Policy Manual (2013)* places an emphasis on merit-based recruitment in the service and based on qualification and not on gender.

Moreover, the Government of Liberia has revised and implemented various policies, programs and projects to advance gender equality in relation to women's role in paid work and employment.

Some of the policies and programs include:

- The Decent Work Act (2015) which prohibits discrimination with respect to equal opportunity for work and employment and calls for equal pay for equal work as

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<sup>91</sup> Government of Liberia. Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report. 2014.

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well as provide legal representations for aggrieved indigent clients and settle disputes between employers and employee.

- A small and medium entrepreneurial program for both males and females.
- Access to microfinance loans.
- Training in business management.
- Civil Service *Human Resource Policy Manual* (2013) which guarantees merit-based recruitment in the civil service is grounded on merits and not by gender.
- Adoption of the revised National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2018–2022 which promotes gender equitable, socio-economic development; enhance women’s and girls’ empowerment for sustainable and inclusive development.
- Passage of the Land Rights Act (2018).

To increase women’s access to farmland, the Land Rights Act (2018) was passed to ensure that women have access to land in order to increase farming and other livelihoods. Also, to increase women’s access to finance, several capacity building programmes were carried out through the Ministry of Gender in collaboration with other partners on small business management skills, literacy and numeracy for rural women. For instance, after a literature review was conducted, it was found that the capacity building programme has reached over 5,180 women and men across six of the country’s 15 counties namely: Grand Bassa, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, River Gee and Sinoe.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, the *change stories* narrated by rural poor women indicate that their needs and aspirations, and not to mention their rights, have all been addressed through capacity building measures, awareness raising, literacy and numeracy, conflict management and peacebuilding skills, small business development skills, empowerment in agriculture and many others. Over 5,750 market women were recruited and trained in business development skills, literacy and numeracy as well as in relation to the village savings loan association.<sup>93</sup>

The Government of Liberia, in collaboration with its partners, have initiated the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. The goals of the pro-poor agenda are to build more

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<sup>92</sup> The Joint Program on “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” (JP RWEE). Annual Reports. 2015-2018. Available at: <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00092003> (last accessed 20/05/2019).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

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capable and trusted institution that will lead to stable, resilient and inclusive nation in embracing its triple heritage and anchored on its African identity. More so, it is to provide greater income security to additional one million Liberians and *reduce absolute poverty by 23% across five out of six regions* – through sustained and inclusive economic growth driven by skilled up investment in agriculture, infrastructure in human resource development and in social protection.

In 2018, and as part of Gender mainstreaming initiatives in the security institutions, the first female officer was appointed as the *Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces* of Liberia.

The *National Strategy* for achieving 20% women representation in security sector institutions has influenced the recruitment of women into the LNP, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) and the BCR. As of 2018, there were 29% women in the Liberia Immigration Service; 19% in Liberia National Police; 3% women in the armed forces; 5.88% women held Ministerial positions; 15% women in the LDEA; 7.7% in Judiciary; 21% in Corrections; and 5.4% in the Prosecution service. The Women and Children Protection Section (**WCPS**) of the LNP has 100 female officers out of 190, whilst in the SGBV Crimes Unit, all Victim Support Officers are female.<sup>94</sup>

### **7. Actions taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and promote work-family conciliation?**

Liberia has not yet recognized unpaid care work in her national account. However, there are ongoing efforts with the institutionalization of Gender Responsive Planning and Budget policy and the creation of the gender unit in the department of budget at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to begin recognizing efforts of unpaid care work.

Also, the pension policy is being reviewed with the goal of improving the pension scheme for retirees. More so, widows are entitled to certain percentage of their deceased husband's retired benefits as well as receiving other benefits. In terms of divorce, the Marriage Law states that wives are entitled to settlements which could be the division of properties and cash benefits. However, this varies according to the situation.

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<sup>94</sup> UN Women. An Assessment of Existing Initial Services Available for Sexual and Gender-based Violence Cases. 2018.

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Additionally, the Decent Work Act (2015) in section 20.1 (a) states that an employed woman is entitled on each occasion that she is pregnant, to a minimum of 14 weeks maternity leave;

(b) An employed woman who takes maternity leave shall take a minimum of 6 weeks of leave after the date of confinement;

(c) Any period of leave under this section is to be taken before the presumed date of confinement and shall be extended by the time, if any, between the presume date of confinement and the actual date of confinement and the period of compulsory leave to be taken after confinement shall not be reduced on that account;

(d) An employed woman is entitled to receive from her employer the remuneration she would otherwise receive for her ordinary hours of work during any period of maternity leave.

The Decent Work Act (2015) also addresses paternity leave in section 20.3 (a) the employed father of a child is entitled to 5 days leave without pay at the time of the child's birth, provided that this leave: (i) may not be taken before the mother's confinement; and (ii) shall be taken within the first month after the birth of the child, unless there are exceptional circumstances.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, the Government with support from partners is providing aid in the availability of electricity in poor communities to reduce the time burden for women in the use of productive equipment such as freezers, stoves, micro-wave ovens and many more items.

Also, the West African power pool is providing electricity to neighboring countries which Liberia is benefiting from. Currently, there is a modernizing project of the water pipes in Monrovia and its environs to boost water supply in all communities. In addition, the Government, through the Monrovia transport authority, is providing affordable public transportation to the public both in the urban and rural areas.

As regards to promoting decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers, the Decent Work Act (2015) addresses this under the Equal Protection section 2.4 which states that

(a) All women and men are entitled, without distinction, exclusion or preference to enjoy and to exercise the rights and protections provided in this Act;

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<sup>95</sup> Government of Liberia. An Act to Repeal Title 18 of the Executive Law, Labor Practices Law and to Establish in Lieu Thereof the Decent Work Act. 2015.

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(b) Without limiting the scope of the preceding provision, all persons who work or who seek to work in Liberia are entitled to enjoy and to exercise the rights and protections conferred by this Act irrespective of: i) race, tribe, indigenous group, language, color, descent, national, social or ethnic extraction or origin, economic status, community or occupation; ii) immigrant or temporary resident status; iii) sex, gender identity or sexual orientation; iv) marital status or family responsibilities; v) Previous, current or future pregnancy or breastfeeding; vi) age; vii) Creed, religion or religious belief; viii) Political affiliation or opinion, or ideological conviction; ix) physical or mental disability; x) health status including HIV or AIDS status, whether actual or perceived; xi) irrelevant criminal record, acquittal of a crime or dismissal of a criminal prosecution against them; or xii) personal association with someone possessing or perceived to possess one or more of these attributes.<sup>96</sup>

### **8. Austerity/fiscal consolidation measures, such as cuts in public expenditure or public sector downsizing, over the past five years?**

There has been no downsizing in the public sector over the past five years. However, there have been salary deductions that affected only the Executive branch of government, although there is no gender analysis on these deductions.

- Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

### **9. Actions taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?**

The *United Nations Global Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women* (2014-2020) has improved the lives of women through capacity building and other entrepreneurial skill programs. Although the program was designed mainly to focus on women, a limited number of men (about 95:05 ratio, minimum 95% women and maximum 0.5% men) entrepreneurs are also participating as an adequate strategy to promote development, build trust and engage the community. As of December 2018, about 7,233 women<sup>97</sup> were trained in business management skills, literacy and numeracy in six counties to enable them gain knowledge to manage their businesses and thereby increase their income. Over 750 Rural women farmers were also trained in agriculture entrepreneurship, to organize them into women's agriculture cooperatives. The Government of Liberia installed three (3) Community Grain Reserves (CGRs) in the South-Eastern part of Liberia to equip 1,865 rural

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> MPTF. JP RWEE Annual Report. 2018.

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women farmers in preserving their agricultural produce and to maintain seeds for the next farming season.<sup>98</sup> CGRs are being used to protect women farmers from grain (e.g. rice) production shortfalls and to provide a buffer against unusually sharp price movements at the local level. Thus, the Joint Program has strengthened the resilience of poor households to seasonal food insecurity, economic shocks and natural disasters by establishing women-managed grain “banks” in food-deficit smallholder farming communities.

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in collaboration with the UN Women and Barefoot College in India initiated the Women’s Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Energy Program where 26 women were selected from 16 villages in Liberia to participate in six months of training on building, installing and maintaining solar lamps and panels. A training center was also established in 2017 to train 200 semi-literate rural women in the installation of solar lamps in their various communities to reduce dependencies on expensive and polluting fossil fuels.

The government is also engaging girls through empowerment programs such the *Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and young women (EPAG)*, which aims to increase self-development and wage employment and earning among adolescent boys and girls as well as young women and men aged 16-24. After the success of the first 3 rounds, the project was extended for a fourth round for the 2016-2020 period.

The evaluation of the first round of the program implemented from 2010 to 2011 found that the project has increased employment opportunity by 47% with average weekly earnings of 80% among about 3,500 adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 years old. 1,000 out of the 3,500 beneficiaries were trained and placed on job and in businesses during Round 3 of the project. At the household level, there is evidence of improved food security and shifting attitudes toward gender norms.<sup>99</sup> In 2018, the MGCSP reported that the EPAG project had trained a total of 4,470 adolescent girls, young women and boys ages 16 to 24 years in business development, job skills, nannies/caregivers and early childhood development teacher Aides. Within these trainees, the EPAG project trained 970 girls and 200 boys in Business Development Skills (**BDS**). The project furthered trained 60

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<sup>98</sup> MPTF. JP RWEE Annual Report. 2017.

<sup>99</sup> Franck Adoho, Shubha Chakravarty\*, Dala T. Korkoyah, Jr. and al., ‘The Impact of an Adolescent Girls Employment Program: The EPAG Project in Liberia’, The World Bank & Human Development Network, Policy Research Working Paper 6832, April 2014; 2015 Annual Report, Ministry of Gender, Children and social protection, Liberia, 2016.



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girls in nannies/caregivers and Early Childhood Development (ECD) skills. 54 of the 60 trainees are gainfully employed with various ECD institutions in Monrovia and Paynesville.<sup>100</sup>

### **10. Actions to improve access to social protection for women and girls?**

Women and men face different risks and vulnerabilities, some specific to their gender and others exacerbated by gender inequalities and discrimination. The design and implementation of social protection programs in Liberia address gender-related constraints, including barriers to women's economic advancement. Social transfers are made to women, which improves children's health, nutritional status and school attendance, and can be an effective way of reducing hunger and intergenerational poverty.

Although there are no specific data in relation to gender and social protection, it is evident that Liberian women's opportunities are limited by their primary responsibility for childcare and domestic work, cultural restrictions on their public mobility, gender discrimination in employment, social security measures restricted to the small, male dominated section of the workforce employed in the formal state and private sectors and limited to informal employment where women dominate. While their market contributions have become more important within household livelihood strategies, women are concentrated in informal and labor-intensive work, often face particular risks and vulnerabilities (e.g. health risks, interrupted and insecure employment) and are less likely to have been able to save or contribute to pensions or be eligible to some form of a social safety net to tide over crisis.<sup>101</sup>

The main social protection programs linked to children and which has a significant impact on women are the *Liberia Social Safety Net* program (LSSN) and the *School Meals* programs. LSSN, implemented by the MGCSP with support from UNDP and the World Bank, is a cash transfer program to extremely poor and food insecure households in the counties with the highest incidences of vulnerability.<sup>102</sup> Through the LSSN program, 8.1 million USD will be delivered as transfers to 10,000 households between 2017 and 2021. The transfers will be made to the female member in each household, with the most responsibility for household spending. Based on the economic analysis of the poverty gap and household consumption among extremely poor households, the transfer amount is pegged at between 10 USD and 34 USD per

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<sup>100</sup> Government of Liberia. 2017 Annual Report, Ministry of Gender, Children and social protection. 2018.

<sup>101</sup> Government of Liberia. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017. Pages 47-48.

<sup>102</sup> Namely Bomi, Maryland, Grand Kru, and River Gee.

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month, depending on the size of the household. In parallel to the cash transfer, the project will also develop a *Social Registry* targeted to register 200,000 households in the six counties in its first phase but with the objective of becoming a national household registry.<sup>103</sup>

The other major social protection intervention benefiting children is the *school feeding programs*. Like the LSSN project, these programs are exclusively funded by donors due to limited Government resources. Coverage of the school feeding programs currently extends to 300,000 students in 9 counties, a decline from the 500,000 participants in 2015. It additionally, provides take-home rations to 3,000 adolescent female students.<sup>104</sup>

Furthermore, the Government of Liberia established the *National Social Protection Steering Committee* to enhance coordination, provide policy guidance and program oversight. Through its Secretariat, the Social Protection Steering Committee developed a social protection policy and strategy in 2012 which was adopted by the Cabinet the following year in July 2013. The policy takes a system approach based on a life cycle risks and identifies 3 pillars of the system; Social Assistance for all non-contributory schemes; Social Insurance for contributory schemes and Social Legislation on minimum entitlement and guarantees.

After the deadly Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) struck Liberia and affected thousands of Liberians in 2014, the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) received a grant of 5 million United States Dollars from the World Bank to respond to the negative impact caused by the epidemic crisis on the lives of the vulnerable population, mainly women and girls. The MGCSP directly implemented emergency humanitarian cash assistance, providing top up payments of \$25/month to Social Cash Transfer beneficiaries (effectively doubling the value of the transfers received in normal times) and \$50/month to a further 11,000 households in Bomi, Grand Cape mount, Grand Kru and Maryland Counties. Collectively by December 2016, about 166,000 households were reached benefiting close to 1 million people, with majority of the beneficiaries being women and girls.

While the emergency cash transfers programs played a key role in the EVD response by lending direct support to the families who were hit hard by epidemic crisis, the government also recognized there was a need to build an integrated safety net system with the capacity to

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<sup>103</sup> Government of Liberia, '2018-2023 Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development'(PAPD) - A five-year National Development Plan towards accelerated, inclusive, and sustainable development. 2018. P. 53.

<sup>104</sup> Government of Liberia. '2018-2023 Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development'(PAPD) - A five-year National Development Plan towards accelerated, inclusive, and sustainable development. 2018. P.53.

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increase the resilience of extremely poor households to enable them to respond more swiftly and effectively to future shocks and which would improve efficiency in the use of limited resources for an expanded social protection. Recognizing the importance of having a comprehensive and resilient social safety net system, the government requested additional support from the World Bank and in April 2016 an IDA loan of \$10 million was approved by the Board for a *Social Safety Net* project. The project will assist the government build a safety net system and enhance its capacity to increase the resilience of extremely poor and food insecure households and to respond more swiftly and effectively to future shocks. About 10,000 extremely poor households (including the minimum of 30% female headed households) will be provided with cash transfers in four of Liberia's poorest counties - Bomi, Grand Kru, River Gee and Maryland Counties. Beneficiary households will also be encouraged and supported to have home gardens whilst promoting nutrition. With an addition \$6.4 million grant from USAID, the project will include (a) the development of a unified and comprehensive household Social Registry (**SR**) to house data on both actual and potential beneficiaries; and (b) the installation of an integrated Management Information System (MIS) to enable more efficient and effective delivery of benefits, as well as improve tracking of administrative costs and results for the different Social Protection programs run by various stakeholders.

With support from the World Bank, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, implemented the Girls Ebola Recovery Livelihood Support (**GERLS**) project in three (3) counties, namely; Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa. The cost of the GERLS project was US\$500,000.00. The GERLS Project provided income support to 2,000 adolescent girls and young women who lost their livelihoods as a result of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) crisis in Liberia. Out of the 2,000 beneficiaries, 1,000 were EVD affected girls and young women. The GERLS Project provided life & business skills training, as well as cash grants to support the re-generation or expansion of businesses of targeted adolescent girls and young women. The project also provided mentoring to beneficiaries to guide the growth of their businesses<sup>105</sup>.

### **11. Actions taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?**

Beyond the EVD (2014-2015) recovery initiatives, the Government has established robust disease surveillance infrastructures in 91 districts and has improved the capacity of laboratories to diagnose six (6) diseases including Ebola, Cholera, yellow fever Lassa fever, measles and rabies. The government has increased the quality of maternal and child health with the

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<sup>105</sup> Ministry of Gender and Social Protection annual report 2018

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establishment of 727 functional health facilities including 37 hospitals, 46 health centers and 644 clinics across the country with 71% of the population having access to health care within 1 hr of walking or within a 5KM radius. There were 16,064 health workers including 10,672 public health workers as of 2016 who were deployed in the 727 health facilities. More ongoing infrastructural plans include establishing 20 staff housing units for health care workers in the South East, the completion of 13 permanent triages and the construction of 10 new clinics. These facilities have been provided with 77% essential basic amenities such as (water, electricity, etc) whilst 73% of the facilities have standard precautions for infection prevention and control, 57% facilities have basic equipment to provide health service, 42% of these facilities have diagnostic capacity to check for various tests and 44% of the facilities have essential medicines in stock for the treatment of common illnesses.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, the ratio of male health workers is 55% while that of females is 45% with 76.8% ranging between the ages 28-52 years.

All these health facilities provide free health services including quality adolescent sexual and reproductive health, labor and delivery, as well as postpartum and newborn care. As a result of the establishment of these health facilities, women especially in rural communities continue to receive health care services provided by skilled health care workers. Mothers in rural areas of Liberia are less likely to use contraceptives, receive prenatal care by a skilled provider, give birth while being attended to by a skilled health care provider or give birth in a health care facility.

Around 103,892 pregnant women have received ANC and LLINs at first attendance and 2.8 Million LLINs have been distributed through a mass campaign. In addition, the adolescent birth rate in rural areas of Liberia is almost double than in urban area. About 42% of rural adolescents have begun childrearing, compared with 24% of urban adolescents. The government has also developed a roadmap for maternal mortality reduction and has adopted the “*Reach Every Pregnant Woman Strategy*” which has made compulsory the reporting of maternal deaths by health workers.

The Government is committed to ensure women are fully participating in the implementation of Ebola recovery plans through economic empowerment, access to finance, loan payments, cross border trading, food security and nutrition among others. Currently, the government is

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<sup>106</sup> Government of Liberia. Ministry of Health, Joint Annual Review Conference Report. 2016.

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providing medical and social assistance for all EVD survivors through the Ministry of health and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

The Government is also engaging the EVD survivors through empowerment programs such as EPAG, which aims to increase self-development and wage employment and earning among adolescent boys and girls as well as young women and men aged 16-24. According to an evaluation of EPAG, the World Bank (**WB**) concluded:

“Finally, preliminary cost-benefit analysis indicates that the budgetary cost of the EPAG business development training for young women is equivalent to the value of three years of the increase in income among programme beneficiaries. These preliminary results provide strong evidence for further investment and research into young women’s livelihood programmes in Liberia.”<sup>107</sup>

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Health and other partners are working to strengthen the country’s six (6) midwifery schools. As of 2015-2016 the government initiated professional programs to train about 75 midwives in order to learn more advanced skills. Also, in 2017 the Government in partnership with the Danish Midwives Association upgraded the two-year midwife training program to a three-year Bachelor of Science midwifery program to strengthen the professional development of midwives.

The Ministry of health is also introducing measures to improve workforce performance, such as providing tools and standards, rehabilitating facilities, programming in-service training, improving supervision, establishing open performance appraisal and improving coordination to ensure the delivery of good health services.

Moreover, The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Health and in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection implemented the *Adolescent, Sexual and Reproductive Health Right program* that provided education on this issue to girls and young women. The program also targeted and included Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans-gender (**LGBT**) persons. There have also been discussions and awareness raising in terms of including sex education in school curriculum.

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<sup>107</sup> World Bank. The Impact of an Adolescent Girls’ Employment Program: the EPAG Project in Liberia. 2014. Available at: <https://www.eldis.org/document/A68229> (last accessed 07/05/2019).

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In addition, other progressive health development programs and policies which the Ministry of Health has embarked on include:

- Established one health committee as a coordinated approach/platform to address public health events such as high impact infectious diseases arising at the intersection of human, animal (domestic and wildlife) and environmental interface;
- Established *Rapid Response Teams* in all counties and health districts and support simulation activities;
- The President formed the *Cabinet Committee on Health Financing* in February 2016 to advise on health financing reforms;
- Innovative domestic financing mechanisms have been put in place. A working group on earmarking tax revenue for the health sector has been formed and the feasibility analysis has begun with the goal to accrue additional domestic revenue which begun in 2017/18; and
- Liberia has joined the *International Health Partnerships (IHP+)* platform for increased coordination between government and donors to align resources to the country's health sector priorities.

In 2017, and in co-operation with UN Women under the *H6 Joint Program on Health*, the initiatives of the Government to lower maternal deaths were expanded. With 1,072 maternal deaths for every 100,000 births, Liberia has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. In the remote areas, infrastructure and facilities in clinics are often lacking; midwives and health workers must deliver babies without any electricity at night. With the installation of solar lighting systems by UN Women and partners, conditions have improved in 26 clinics and five newly constructed Maternal Waiting Rooms across Liberia.<sup>108</sup>

Moreover, the MOH developed a specific '*Investment Case for Reproductive, Maternal, New-Born, Child, and Adolescent Health*' for the 2016-2020 period which is an integral part of Liberia's policies and plans to achieve the *SDGs* related to Reproductive, Maternal, New born, Child and Adolescent Health (**RMNCAH**) by 2030. The Investment Case further outlines Liberia's efforts under the *UN Every Woman, Every Child* initiative to end maternal and new-born mortality from preventable causes, as highlighted in the country's policy and regulatory

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<sup>108</sup> UN Women. News Stories. July 17, 2017. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/7/feature-maternal-health-gets-a-new-boost-in-liberia> (last accessed 07/05/2019).

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framework. The strategy and mode of operation of the plan is cascaded through three tiers: facility-based, outreach, and community-based services. The cascade was specifically chosen to provide mechanisms to track progress holistically.<sup>109</sup>

### **12. Actions taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls?**

The prolonged civil unrest and the post-Ebola demise continue to immensely affect the Liberian education system. However, the government in collaboration with its partners continue to work to address education challenges related to access, quality of instruction and improved governance of the education system. The Liberian Government remains committed to providing high quality education for its citizens within her borders and have made considerable efforts in implementing a series of interventions in addressing the education needs of boys and girls. Some of the interventions are:

- In 2016 the Government signed a contract with bridged International Academy which is *Partnership Schools for Liberia* (PSL) designed to transform the public education system. The program has provided 819 computers to teachers, 68 principal smart phones, 22,000 school uniforms, 139,000 students' text-books, 672 teachers trained to use pedagogy, 3336 new school desk and 20,000 students imparted with life changing education.<sup>110</sup>
- In 2017 the Government developed a four-year *Getting to best Education Sector Plan* (G2B-ESP) to address the most urgent challenges facing the education sector in Liberia. The Ministry of education will use the G2B-ESP to implement a series of strategies, evidence base, and innovative programs to measurably improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning from all students by June 2021.
- The Government of Liberia has implemented free and compulsory primary, junior and senior education across all government schools.
- The Government, in collaboration with regional bodies such as the *ECOWAS Volunteer Program*, have trained secondary school students in helping them choose a career pathway for their future - with over 50% adolescent girls participating - as well as

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<sup>109</sup>Government of Liberia, '2016-2020 Investment case for Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health'. Ministry of Health. 2015. P. 12.

<sup>110</sup> Bridge International. <https://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/impact/liberia/> (last accessed 07/05/2019).

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executing awareness programs on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in high schools. The outcome of the program was impactful as students were informed about different career choices and how they could choose a good career path. Also, the Government through the MGCSP in collaboration with ECOWAS initiated the *ECOWAS Girls of Excellence Scholarship program* that provided scholarships for 50 girls in High school, university and technical vocation schools with 6 girls already having graduated from the program.

- The Government in collaboration with its bilateral partnerships, such USAID, have intervened in carrying out education programs that focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning (especially in early grade reading) and increase equitable access to safe learning opportunities for girls and for youth. USAID is also assisting in the advancement of quality curricula, teaching and management staff, instructional and learning resources, data systems and policy environment essential to providing basic education services to all Liberians.
- The Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education is running a *Technical, Vocational and Educational Training* program for both boys and girls.
- The Government through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection initiated the *Vulnerable Girls Program* and have supported 200 vulnerable girls from rural areas by providing them with educational opportunities.
- The Government launched an innovative mentoring program to recruit and train young leaders through the *President's Young Professional Program (PYPP)*. It created a merit-based, competitive path to government. Today, over 140 young leaders could be the bulwark of a modern civil service.

The Government of Liberia has also implemented free and compulsory primary, junior and senior education across all government schools, increasing the literacy rate of the country with an overall male literacy level at 77% and women 54% as at 2018.



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**Table 1** below, shows literacy levels of 88.2% for youth aged 15-19, 69.4% of those aged 25-29 and 53.9% of those aged 35-39. Literacy levels for those aged 55-59 stands at 47.2% while those above 65 years of age is 17.5%<sup>111</sup>

**Table 1**

	Liberia %	Male %	Female%	Urban%	Rural%
Primary	45.5	41.4	50.4	37.2	60.9
Junior High School	21.1	20.5	21.7	20.9	21.3
Senior High School	26.3	29.9	21.8	31.6	16.3
University (Bachelors)	6.8	7.7	5.8	9.7	1.4
Masters	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.6	0.03

As of 2018 overall **primary school** enrolment in Liberia stands at 45.5% (41.1% *males*, 50.4% *females*, 37.2% urban and 60.9% rural). For **junior high school** overall enrolment is at 21.2% (20.5% *males*, 21.7% *females*, 20.9% urban dwellers and 21.3% for rural children. **Senior high school** enrolment rate stands at 26.3% (29.9% *males*, 21.8% *females*, 31.6% urban dwellers and 16.3% rural dwellers). At the **tertiary level** and as of 2018, 6.8% Liberians enrolled for a **Bachelor’s degree** with 7.7% being *males*, 5.8% *females*, 9.7% from urban areas compared to 1.4% from rural areas. For a **Master’s degree** the enrolment rate is extremely low at 0.4%. Of the 0.4%, 0.5 % are *males*, 0.2% *females* and 0.6% from wealthy urbanites compared to 0.03% rural poor. Social status has an impact on Liberia’s education system. Educational enrolment and attainment are directly influenced by social status.<sup>112</sup>

➤ *Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes*

### **13. Forms of violence against women and girls, and in which specific contexts or settings, have you prioritized for action?**

The Government of Liberia prioritizes all forms of violence against women. The priorities of violence against women are as follows:

- Rape;
- Domestic Violence;
- Harmful traditional practices (such as Female Genital Mutilation);

<sup>111</sup> Liberia Common Country Assessment (2018), Primson Management Service.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, pg. 15.

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- Child and early marriages;
- Trafficking in persons; and
- Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (e.g. cyber violence, online stalking).

It should be noted that Cyber harassment has the least priority for the Government. However, this form of violence is gradually being introduced in Liberia. As such, the Government is considering developing appropriate programs to combat its spread among the population and especially amongst young people.

According to the domestic law all forms of domestic violence is punishable by law including rape. Conviction of first-degree rape defined as rape involving a minor, rape that results in serious injury or disability, or rape committed with the use of a deadly weapon is punishable by law, with up to life imprisonment. Conviction of second-degree rape, defined as rape committed without the aggravating circumstances enumerated above, is punishable by up to 10 years in prison. However, the definition of rape in this law does not specifically criminalize spousal rape.

The Domestic Violence Bill (currently in the Committee Room of the House of Representatives) clearly condemns all forms of violence against women, girls and children. According to the bill, “domestic violence” means in general any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, men, or children, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life between parties in an existing or former domestic relationship.

The forms of domestic violence include, but are not limited to:

- (a) “Physical abuse, “meaning any act or threatened act of physical violence to a person, physical violence being any behavior that violates a person’s bodily integrity or health; and
- (b) “emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, “meaning a pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards a person including any behavior that causes emotional damage and reduction of self-esteem, or that harms and disturbs full development, or that aims at degrading or controlling a person’s actions, behavior, beliefs and decisions, by means of reduction of self-esteem, threat, embarrassment, humiliation,

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manipulation, isolation, constant surveillance, constant pursuit, insult, intimidations, blackmail, ridiculing, exploitation and limitation of the rights to come and go, repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy, which is such as to constitute a serious invasion of a person's privacy, liberty, integrity or security, or any other acts that cause damage to the person's psychological health and self-determination, or any series of acts which collectively cause a person to fear for his or her safety and life;

The *Civil Service Human Resources Policy Manual* (2013) describes sexual harassment in the workplace as constituting a type of sex discrimination, that could occur in the work place or at work related events, and defining it as unwelcomed sexual advances, request for sexual favors and other conduct of the sexual nature such as unwelcomed verbal, visual or physical advances that tend to create a hostile intimidating or offensive work environment.

Additionally, the Government has prioritized Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) through the implementation of the *GOL/UN SGBV Joint program*; the development of the *SGBV National Action Plan*; and incorporation of GBV interventions in the revised National Gender Policy and in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection's budget.

As provided by the revised NGP which aims to “*raise awareness on the changing gender roles and the need for gender equality through the use of IEC materials*”<sup>113</sup>, the Government of Liberia in collaboration with partners continue to raise awareness on social norms and stereotypical attitude that leads to gender stereotyping and impedes the advancement of women's right. The target population of the sensitization includes rural dwellers particularly traditional leaders and elders; school authorities, youth groups, government officials and the media. The Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the INCHR conducted a series of workshops in the counties under the National Human Rights Action Plan to create awareness on trial by ordeal as unlawful and a form of torture, targeting especially traditional leaders and complainants.<sup>114</sup> The Ministry of Internal Affairs' county inspectors, with the support of the Human Rights and Protection Section of UNMIL, have also been conducting sensitization activities in the counties targeting traditional actors, including zoes, practitioners and local communities.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022), Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Liberia, 2017, p.73.

<sup>114</sup> Response to list of issues from the Human Rights Committee, Government of Liberia, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018, p.3.

<sup>115</sup> An assessment of Human Rights Issues Emanating from Harmful Traditional Practices in Liberia, UNMIL/UNOHCHR, December 2015, p. 29.

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### 14. What actions has your country prioritized in the last five years to address violence against women and girls?

- Introduced or strengthened violence against women laws, and their enforcement and implementation
- Introduced, updated or expanded national action plans on ending violence against women and girls
- Introduced or strengthened measures to increase women's access to justice (e.g. establishment of specialist courts, training for the judiciary and police, protection orders, redress and reparations, including for femicide cases)
- Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence (e.g. shelters, help lines, dedicated health services, legal, justice service, counselling, housing)
- Introduced or strengthened strategies to prevent violence against women and girls (e.g. in the education sector, in the media, community mobilization, work with men and boys)
- Monitoring and evaluation of impact, including evidence generation and data collection, including regarding particular groups of women and girls
- Introduced or strengthened measures for improving the understanding of causes and consequences of violence against women among those responsible for implementing measures on ending violence against women and girls
- Other

A specialized sexual violence court (*Court E*) was established and has exclusive jurisdiction over cases of sexual assault/violence, including the abuse of minors. The government operated shelters for SGBV victims, victims of trafficking in persons, and others in need of protection.

The SGBV *Referral Pathway Program*, a combined initiative of the government and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), improved access to medical, psychosocial, legal, and counseling assistance for victims. The MGCSP assigned a gender counselor to each county office to increase public awareness of SGBV crimes and refer victims to assistance. Also, the Liberia National Police (LNP) officers received training on sexual offenses as part of their initial training.

The Ministry of Justice, supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), have been working on facilitating reporting and prosecution of violence against women by expanding and decentralizing the SGBV Unit's operations in the country through its establishment in 3 out of the 5 *regional hubs*. The Unit has the mandate to support local judiciary in prosecuting SGBV cases in 8 counties<sup>116, 117</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> Namely HUB 1 (Bong, Nimba & Lofa Counties), HUB 2 (Maryland, River gee & Grand Kru Counties) and HUB 3 (Grand Gedeh & Sinoe Counties).

<sup>117</sup> 2017 SGBV Crimes Unit Annual Report. Liberia. 2018. P.6.

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With further support from UN Women, the LNP reviewed their *Community Policing Policy* from a gender perspective and developed a *gender and community policing manual* and *training materials on gender and masculinities*. These tools will enable and guide the *Community Service Section* in gender mainstreaming. In 2017, the LNP revised its *Gender Policy* with priority areas such as: recruitment and promotion, staff capacity development, conditions of service and gender mainstreaming.<sup>118</sup> Women and Child Protection Sections (**WACPS**) have also been established in all 15 counties to provide support on issues related to child support, juveniles in conflict with the law, and Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). These units are typically staffed by two-three officers both male and female.<sup>119</sup>

The Government established a *National SGBV Taskforce* comprising of Ministries and Agencies, local and international NGOs, relevant UN entities and development partners. The Taskforce meets once every month to review progress and share ideas or information on mitigating Gender Based Violence perpetrated against women and children. Also, the Taskforce works alongside the national machinery to develop appropriate communication materials and messages in sensitizing the population on the prevention, management, care and reporting of GBV cases. The Taskforce members periodically undertake joint monitoring of GBV interventions across the country. Likewise, with support from the United Nations, the Government procured a DNA analysis machine for the MGCSP in order to strengthen efforts and scientifically aid the investigation and prosecution of SGBV crimes. As mentioned earlier in this Report, three (3) medical doctors were trained as Pathologists to operate the DNA machine. However, efforts are being made for the Pathologists to be further trained in Forensic Pathology to be able to interpret the results emanating from the DNA machine.

In compliance with implementation of International Protocols to end child and early marriages, the Government has launched a *National Strategy to end child and early marriages*. In furtherance to the launch of the national strategy to end child and early marriages, the Government is continuously creating awareness and sensitizing traditional and religious leaders, elders and community members particularly in rural communities on the harmful impact of child and early marriage on the future of the girl child. Special emphasis is placed

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<sup>118</sup> UN Women and Government of Liberia. Report on Consultations for Liberia's Second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Consultation Process for Liberia's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. December 2018.

<sup>119</sup> Gender and Security Sector Reform in Liberia Status Review. Submitted by Sue Tatten, Gender and Security Sector Reform Advisor. Final Draft. September 2018.

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on preventive measures targeting community members including traditional leaders as well as elders in preventing and reporting child marriage cases.<sup>120</sup>

In terms of policy, the MGCSP officially launched a campaign in December 2016 to end child marriage in the country within the framework of the African Union (AU) Campaign to End Child Marriage under the theme “*We are children not wives, save us from child marriage*” and supported by a wide range of CSOs. The campaign specifically aims to identify the socio-economic impact of child marriage; promote the effective implementation of AU legal and policy instruments; support policy action; remove barriers and bottlenecks to law enforcement; and increase the capacity of non-state actors to undertake evidence-based policy advocacy. Consequently, the MGCSP with support from UNICEF developed in 2017 a National Strategic framework to End Child Marriage and started its implementation in 5 counties<sup>121, 122</sup>. In addition, Liberia signed in January 2019 the political declaration and committed to the ECOWAS common position against child marriage during a meeting which ended by the adoption of the *ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening Child Protection Systems and its Strategic Action Plan (2019-2023)*.<sup>123</sup>

In the framework of a series of nationwide consultative dialogues on ending teenage pregnancy organized by the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia with traditional leaders and supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), traditional leaders committed themselves in a policy document adopted in 2019 and submitted to the National Legislature. The policy aims to ensuring that girls are given the chance to education without any form of obstruction in the name of tradition and culture and thus to ending child marriage.<sup>124</sup>

Furthermore, the government raised awareness of rape through billboards, radio broadcasts, and other outreach campaigns. International organizations such as The Carter Center and UN Women also engaged the public through awareness campaigns. The Government provides shelter homes for GBV survivors and financial support to assist survivors to seek legal, health and psychosocial services. This financial support is directly provided under the *SGBV Joint Program Endowment Fund*.

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<sup>120</sup> Government of Liberia. 2017. <http://www.micat.gov.lr/index.php/blog/item/5792-gov-t-launches-campaign-to-end-child-marriage.html> (last accessed 07/05/2019).

<sup>121</sup> Namely Lofa, Bomi, Nimba, Grand Bassa and Grand Cape mount.

<sup>122</sup> 2017 Annual Report, Ministry of Gender, Children and social protection, Liberia, 2018.

<sup>123</sup> ‘ECOWAS moves to protect Child rights and prevent Child marriage in the region’, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

<sup>124</sup> UNFPA Liberia. ‘Traditional Leaders in Liberia Commit to Ending Child Marriage’. 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

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The former President H.E Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf issued an *Executive Order* in 2017 to protect women against domestic violence and prohibit Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) of all persons younger than age 18 and persons older than 18 without their consent. The executive order has the effect of law but was only valid for one year (unless ratified by the legislature). Prior to the executive order, the government maintained that a 2011 law protecting children against all forms of violence also proscribes FGM, but the law did not specifically prohibit FGM. The penal code also prohibits causing bodily harm with a deadly weapon. The Government is committed to abolish the practice of FGM. There have been several interventions to halt the practice of FGM, with the Government collaborating with relevant UN entities, the National Traditional Council and the National Working Group against FGM to stop the practice of FGM. To harness this commitment, a proposed Act to abolish FGM has been drafted and shall be submitted to the legislature for enactment. The *Technical Working Group* comprising of key Government line Ministries and Agencies, the National Traditional Council and other relevant CSOs has been constituted to work with the National Legislature for the passing of the FGM Bill. Additionally, the Government is working with the Traditional Council to conduct an assessment to establish the number of Bush Schools and number of persons who have undergone FGM across the country.

The government routinely decried FGM in discussions of violence against women, although there remained political resistance to passing legislation criminalizing FGM because of the public sensitivity of the topic and its association with ethnic groups in various counties.

As part of the *Education Reform Act* (2011) the following are considered as sexual offences (a) sexual coercion, intimidation and blackmail; (b) sexual assault (c) sexual abuse (d) impregnating student and (e) rape and gang rape. In keeping with these policies and laws, sexual harassment is a crime and the penalty is dismissal of any perpetrator. As such any teacher or school administrator accused of any sexual offense shall be suspended while undergoing investigation and if found guilty shall be dismissed, their license revoked and turned over to the justice system for prosecution in keeping with the criminal procedure for Liberia.

The *Decent Work Act* (2015) prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace, but it has remained a significant problem at work and in schools. Government billboards and notices in government offices warned against harassment in the workplace. The MGCSP and the Ministry of

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Education trained school administrators, students, and parents from seven of the 15 counties to identify warning signs and report incidents of sexual harassment and violence in schools.

### **15. Strategies used to prevent violence against women and girls?**

The Government in the last five years has collaborated with partners to create awareness and sensitize the population on the protection and prevention of violence against women and girls. These awareness raising efforts targeted mostly males, parents, traditional and religious leaders, students, youth groups, school administrators as well as government authorities both at the local and national levels on protecting the rights of women and girls to live freely in a secured society void of violence. These awareness raising initiatives are conducted in communities, public places, communities and national radio stations as well as through information education and communication materials distributed nationwide.

The *ECOWAS Volunteer Program* also carried out an awareness programs on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in high schools particularly on grade 12 students.

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of health in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection implemented the *Adolescent, Sexual and Reproductive Health Right program* that provided education on the issue of sexuality, sex education among others to girls and young women. The program also targeted and included LGBT persons. There have also been discussions and awareness raising in terms of including sex education in school curriculum as well as ongoing awareness discouraging exploitation in schools and learning institutions. In addition, The ECOWAS Volunteer Program also carried out an awareness programs on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in high schools particularly on grade 12 students to educate them on SGBV and how to report such cases.

The government has established community base structures including the *Community Welfare Committee*, the *Child Welfare Committee*, the *rural women structure*, *HEforSHE champions*, and *youth groups* to raise awareness and support government and community initiatives to sensitize members of the community to prevent violence against women and girls.

The Government hosts an annual “*All Men’s Conference*” where men including traditional chiefs, elders, zoes and young men are brought together to brainstorm the wave of violence which has been perpetrated against women and girls and how they can contribute to reducing violence against women and girls in their respective communities. Subsequently, men have



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organized *HEforSHE champions* in their communities and are complementing Government efforts to end violence against women and girls.

The *Decent Work Act* (2015) prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace, but it has remained a significant problem at work and in schools. Government billboards and notices in government offices warned against harassment in the workplace. The MGCSP and the Ministry of Education trained school administrators, students, and parents from seven of the 15 counties to identify warning signs and report incidents of sexual harassment and violence in schools.

Although there is a general perception that men are perpetrators of violence against women and girls and nearly all interventions are directed to preventing violence against women, the Government has also considered designing specific interventions for the rehabilitation of male perpetrators of violence against women and girls. As enshrined in the *Domestic Violence Act* under “Rehabilitation and Fines”, perpetrators of violence are required to attend a domestic violence counseling or rehabilitation program.

The Government of Liberia, as a *High National Level Target* in the PAPD (2018-2023), has committed to reducing the incidence of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) by 50% and by the year 2023 through the provision of appropriate support services & access to justice systems.<sup>125</sup>

### **16. Actions taken to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?**

As stated earlier in the Report, cyber harassment is not common in Liberia and as such is the least prioritized issue in relation to violence against women and girls. However, the Government is considering developing appropriate programs to combat its spread among the population especially with youths.

### **17. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media?**

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<sup>125</sup> Government of Liberia. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development* (PAPD). A Five-Year National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive, And Sustainable Development. November 2018. Page 35.

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The Government of Liberia, in collaboration with partners, continues to raise awareness on social norms and stereotypical attitude that leads to gender stereotyping and impedes the advancement of women's right.

The Government has regulations and a code of conduct for media institutions through liaising with the Ministry of Information. The Government has also supported women in the media by donating a building and a vehicle to the *Female Journalist Association*. Furthermore, efforts have been put in place to train community radio staff in the area of SGBV.

### **18. Has your country taken any action in the last five years specifically tailored to address violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination?**

The issue of violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination is not common in Liberia. However, the Constitution of Liberia prohibits discrimination against all persons including people with disabilities.

#### ➤ Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

### **19. What actions and measures has your country taken in the last five years to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?**

- Reformed constitution, laws and regulations that promote women's participation in politics, especially at decision-making level, including electoral system reform, adoption of temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets*
- Implemented capacity building, skills development and other measures*
- Encouraged the participation of minority and young women, including through sensitization and mentorship programmes*
- Provided opportunities for mentorship, training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, self-assertion, political campaigning*
- Taken measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish violence against women in politics*
- Collected and analyzed data on women's political participation, including in appointed and elected positions*
- Other*

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) in collaboration with CSOs, the media and its partners are supporting and encouraging women in promoting, protecting and advocating for women's rights, to boost women political participation. The *Women Empowerment Division* of the MGCSP is responsible for the coordination of all women's empowerment and political participation in decision making processes programs at the local and national levels. Programs such as the *Women Dialogue Conference*, which is held yearly, bring women from various sectors to

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discuss women's agenda and works towards involving more women in politics are being executed.

The Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection with support from UN Women, provided training for 47 female candidates in campaign strategies; message development, mapping, debating and public speaking. Also, 25 women were trained from September 25-28, 2017 in Gbarnga, Bong County, to serve as election observers in 25 selected districts across the country. The training was in collaboration with the Women Peace and Security Institute, with funding from Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center. As an outcome of the Colloquium, a Leadership building platform through Mentorship was established for young women and youth. In this light the Ministry will be training 30 young leaders in leadership skills under the Theme: *Unleashing the Leadership in Young Women and Youth*. Currently, women comprise 12.3% in the House of Representatives and make up 10.0% in the Senate.

The Government of Liberia, as a *High National Level Target* in the PAPD (2018-2023), has committed to increasing the political participation of women at the national and local levels to reach a target of 30% by 2023.<sup>126</sup>

In addition, prior to the passage of the Liberian Local Government Act in 2018, the Government implemented the *Liberia Decentralization Support Program* which provided training for women and girls leadership to participate in local governance. The Local Government Act is also gender sensitive as it exclusively provides 2 out of 7 members local assembly seats for women. In turn, women can compete for the remaining 5 seats.

The Government has undertaken a review of its Constitution (1986) and has agreed to twenty-four (24) propositions including the amendment of articles 8 and 11 to include the definition of discrimination as stated in article 1 of the Convention. However, a referendum to amend the Constitution and enshrine the proposed 24 propositions put forth during the constitutional review process is still pending.<sup>127</sup>

### **20. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through TVET and information and communication technologies (ICT)?**

- Strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership

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<sup>126</sup> Government of Liberia. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development* (PAPD). A Five-Year National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive, And Sustainable Development. November 2018. Page 35.

<sup>127</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report – DRAFT. 2019.

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- Taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls (e.g. free Wi-Fi hubs, community technology centers)
- Introduced regulations to advance equal pay, retention and career advancement of women within the media and ICT field
- Collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis
- Provided support to women's media networks and organizations
- Other

*Please provide details of up to three concrete examples of measures taken, including aims and scope of measures taken, target population, budget, impact evaluations, lesson learnt, and links to further information. Please also provide information about actions for specific groups of women and girls, such as those listed in question 3. Where relevant and possible, please provide data to support your responses. (2 pages max.)*

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) Technical Vocational and Education and Training (TVET) has establish the Liberia TVET commission. For the first time, this commission will coordinate all TVET activities in the country and harmonize various aspects TVET. AS a result, the commission has targeted the increased participation of women in all aspects of TVET. For example, TVET has been modernized in order to make it demand driven. TVET in Liberia is now being positioned to be driven by the labour market. That means, women have been directed into areas in which the potential for the attainment of employment is higher.

Furthermore the MYS/TVET program has facilitated a clear understanding of key barriers to female participation from a gender perspective and analyzed their implications in women's employment and economic empowerment; Ex. BDOTC, 90-95% of our trainees and graduates have been young girls and women trained in various trade shops, and a good number of them have acquired job placement etc.

MYS/TVET provide practical tools and guidance on how to mainstream gender effectively into the TVET institutional structures, systems, programmes and activities in TUMUTU, MVTC, KAVTC, JULIJUAH Vocational Training Center, YATC, YOJT etc. All of these programs, have been considered strongly in the enrollment despite challenges faced by women desirous of attaining vocational education. MYS/TVET has provided information on available technical resources to strengthen the capacity of TVET gender focal points in mainstreaming gender equality concerns

The Government of Liberia, through the Liberia Telecommunications Corporation, LIBTELCO, has embark on mainstreaming and monitoring of a gender perspective in all ICT initiatives. Libtelco has several ICT programs to include **School Connect** which was launched at the University of Liberia main campus; **ICT Female Club**– a flagship program that have been rolled out in various universities across the country. These programs target the general students' population within the various universities across Liberia. The ratio of male and female in the field of Information Communication and Technology has seen a steady increase since the introduction of these programs.

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The Government of Liberia, through the Liberia Telecommunications Corporation has also instituted internship programs and skills building initiatives and youth empowerment programs at several vocational training and high school across the country. The YWCA has been one of the many targeted institutions that has been benefiting from the “ICT for girls’ programs”. This program also attends to young female ICT students “ICT for girls” at the Ministry of Youth & Sports. The BWI and MVTC vocational training programs are also other means that Libtelco is empowering women in the areas of ICT. Students from these vocational schools are considered for internship upon their graduation to further enhance their skills with the necessary practical steps and trainings that are meant to prepare them for their different roles in society.

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**21. Do you track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?**

**If YES, what is the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women?**

The development of the Gender Responsive Planning and Budget policy is an effort made by the Government to support gender equality and empowerment of women. It will also assist the Ministry of Finance, Development and Planning and other spending entities to evaluate the impact of public expenditure on gender equality. However, due to the fact the policy is recent (March 2019), tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women has not yet been conducted.

**22. As a donor country, does your country track the proportion of official development assistance (ODA) that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?**

Liberia, as a developing country, has received foreign aid from many donor countries. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning has a unit responsible for aid coordination and management. The *Aid Policy and Coordination Unit* is responsible for tracking ODA to the Government of Liberia. There is a *draft Aid Coordination Policy* and efforts are ongoing to validate and begin its implementation. Gender Responsive Planning and Budget has been developed which includes tools that enable the government to track the ODA.

**23. Does your country have a valid national strategy or action plan for gender equality?**

Yes, the revised National Gender Policy (NGP) and its Strategic Results Framework (2018-2022) clearly seek to promote gender equitable, social economic development; enhance women and girls empowerment for sustainable and inclusive development; enhance gender mainstreaming in the national development processes; and create and strengthen gender responsive structures, processes and mechanism for the government in which both women and men participate equally, have access to, control and benefit from the country's resources. The NGP establishes linkages between its objectives and the gender outcomes in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In turn, it includes a section which states "...as part of the policy and legal framework to ensure that the SDGs and the gender targets of the SDGs are

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mainstreamed into the NGP and strategies.”<sup>128</sup> Also, a new strategic result framework for the implementation of the revised national gender policy has been developed and validated. The National Gender Policy strategic result framework has been costed. However, currently, there are not sufficient funds to implement some of the programs.

### **24. Action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women?**

Yes, there is a *National Human Rights Action Plan* for the implementation of all international human rights instruments.

Some of the mechanisms to implement international human instruments include:

- *Human Rights Protection Section* at the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; these sections develop specific strategies for the implementation of international human rights instruments. At the MGCSP, the Human Rights section specifically deals with the implementation of all international human rights relating to women, girls and children whilst the Ministry of Justice Human Rights section focuses on the implementation of the broader international human rights instruments especially the *Universal Periodic Review*.
- The 2009-2013 Liberian National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 which provides a framework to strengthen and develop protection, response and prevention policies, mechanisms, programs and procedures to guarantee security for women and girls personally and at the national level and promote their human rights was reviewed and a second National Action Plan to be passed in 2019. 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 Plan of Action 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.

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<sup>128</sup> Government of Liberia. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017. Pages 55-56.

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### **25. Is there a national human rights institution in your country?**

Yes, there is an *Independent National Commission on Human Rights* (INCHR). The INCHR has five Commissioners, with one of the Commissioners having oversight specifically on gender matters, and it established a Gender Unit that deals with women and girls including sexual orientation and disabilities issues. The Commission has a complaint department which hears complaints filed by individuals who feels their human rights have been violated and abused by either the state or by non-state actors for redress. The Commission has also recruited and deployed human rights monitors across the country to monitor human rights violations. The Commission, in turn, creates awareness on stereotypical attitudes nationwide and also promotes the rights of LGBT persons as well as creates awareness on the rights of children and persons with disabilities. The INCHR commits to special measures to ensure Gender equality throughout its structures, programs and policies as enshrine in its *Statement of Compliance and Five-Year Strategic Plan*.

The INCHR initiated the observance of the *International Women Human Rights Defenders Day* and established the *Women Human Rights Defenders platform* comprising of women from key Women's Rights groups.

In addition, the INCHR implemented the "*Palava Hut*" project which came about from the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* recommendation to bring citizens together under the Palava Hut project to deal with past Human Rights violations resulting from the Liberia's conflicts. Women are included in the structure of the Palava hut and make up about 1/3 of the membership.<sup>129</sup>

#### ➤ Peaceful and inclusive societies

### **26. Actions taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?**

In 2009, Liberia became one of the first Countries to domesticate the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) which demonstrated its profound interest in women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. The 2009-2013 Liberian

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<sup>129</sup> Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR). Liberia. <https://inchrliberia.com/index.php> (last accessed 21/05/2019).



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National Action Plan (LNAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 which provides a framework to strengthen and develop protection, response and prevention policies, mechanisms, programs and procedures to guarantee security for women and girls personally and at the national level and promote their human rights was reviewed and a *second National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (2019-2023)* will be passed in 2019.<sup>130</sup>

The second Action Plan was developed as a result of a participatory process. It 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 LNP WPS (2019-2023) also includes a coherent framework for legal, policy, procedural and operational reforms that can address the gender inequities within the security sector. The 5 pillars within the revised plan are: *Prevention, Protection, Participation, Relief and Recovery, and Co-ordination and Accountability*. The LNAP WPS (2019-2023) is aligned to other institutional frameworks such as the PAPD and the Gender Policy.<sup>131</sup>

As the Second LNAP WPS (2019-2023) emanating from the review of the original LNAP 2009-2013 outlined:

“The action plan is based on the seventeen (17) recommendations brought forward at the conclusion of the review of implementation progress of the LNAP 2009-2013. Each recommendation has a number of activities needing implementation so as to achieve the objective and goal of the recommendation. Indicators have been identified to track progress in the implementation of activities toward achieving the desired outputs. The list of activities, indicators and outputs organized in a matrix provides opportunity for robust monitoring and reporting on implementation of this action plan. Achieving gender equality and ensuring the full participation of women and girls in peace building and conflict resolution initiatives requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. No one agency or organization can achieve gender equality alone; hence, a coordinated effort is needed. In recognition of the power of collaboration and coordination in achieving inclusion of women and girls in peace building and conflict resolution and given the current reconstruction drive of the Government of Liberia, several stakeholders were identified for the implementation of the plan. The

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<sup>130</sup> The MGCSP was supported by UN Women to develop the Second phase of the NAP (2019-2023). UN Women recruited a new International Consultant who will finalize the NAP using inputs provided by stakeholders in the Consultative workshops that took place in November 2018.

<sup>131</sup> UN Women. Detailed Note on the Liberian Nation Plan on UNSCR 1325 (LNAP 1325). (2009-2013). 2018.

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implementation of this plan cuts across the executive, judiciary and legislative branches of the Government of Liberia and presents an avenue for broader collaboration between the three branches of Government.”<sup>132</sup>

Some of the achievements in the implementation of the WPS agenda include: the development of the National Gender Policy; the development and approval of the Anti-Trafficking Act; the development of a Policy on Crime Prevention which includes crimes of sexual and gender-based violence; the establishment of Criminal Court “E”; and the creation of the Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce.

Liberians have indelible memories of the atrocities carried out in their communities by law enforcement entities and have managed to rebuild a credible governance system that has brought about peace and stability over the last decade. Despite the progress made, oriented vestiges of a dysfunctional 'injustice' system do remain and are particularly acute with respect to law enforcement and even more so when viewed from a gendered lens. Liberia has an entrenched history of abuse of authority by law enforcement officials that it has attempted to address through police reforms over the last decade.

As the *Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding, and Reconciliation* (2013-2030) notes, there are still barriers to ensuring women’s participation in peace and security processes such as “...weak and inadequate representation of women in national and local decision making processes; insufficient and unequal access to natural and economic resources; strengthening of gender discriminatory relations within the society and family; and a poorly developed community infrastructure, which tends to increase the feminization of poverty and create barriers to women’s participation in all spheres of their public life and activities.”<sup>133</sup>

The introduction of a *Community Policing approach* and recruitment of more female law enforcement officials into the LNP, Drug Enforcement Agency (**DEA**), and other law enforcement bodies have made some inroads in improving citizen confidence and trust of law enforcement although there are still considerable challenges that hinder the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they are obligated to protect and serve. The need for reorientation towards a client-service approach that incorporates community-focused

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<sup>132</sup> Government of Liberia. MGCSP. Action Plan for the Implementation of Recommendations Arising out of the Review of Progress on the Implementation of the Liberia National Action Plan for UN SCR 1325. 2015. P. 3.

<sup>133</sup> Government of Liberia. Liberia’s Second Phase National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2023) For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Draft. Prepared by Nicole Hosein. May 2019.

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service delivery is critical to promote change from militarized and oppressive orientations that has contributed to the destabilization and violence throughout Liberia.

Discussions will continue to take place with justice and security authorities that will address legal gaps in the current justice system, particularly regarding reforms to ensure separation of powers among the Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches of government. Gains have been made in this regard with respect to Peace Huts that have supported dialogue between communities and security sector actors that can enhance stability and peace through a partnership that can benefit all. *Community Justice Teams* that provide mediation support to address community-level disputes have also made a difference in resolving issues within communities before they erupt into episodes of communal violence. The role of traditional authorities in similar endeavors is key to the promotion of peace and security within communities although pervasive gender discrimination remains a challenge to gender-equitable resolution of disputes.

Notwithstanding the issue of separation of powers among the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government, these branches cannot operate in isolation when it comes to community security. Security sector and gender equity programming must reflect this coherence and promote such an approach in its support throughout the country.<sup>134</sup>

The security entities that have made the most progress includes the Liberia National Police (LNP), the Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (**BCR**) and the Liberia Immigration Services (**LIS**) responsible for the law enforcement, corrections and immigration/naturalizations functions, respectively. These entities all have functioning gender units and have made progress in increasing the number of women in their ranks, although the number of women in leadership positions remains low (at or below 10%).<sup>135</sup>

The *National Strategy* for achieving 20% women representation in security sector institutions has influenced the recruitment of women into the LNP, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) and the BCR. As of 2018, there were 29% women in the Liberia Immigration Service; 19% in Liberia National Police; 3% women in the armed forces; 5.88% women held Ministerial positions; 15% women in the LDEA; 7.7% in Judiciary; 21% in Corrections; and 5.4% in the Prosecution service. The Women and Children

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<sup>134</sup> Sue Tatten, 'Gender and Security Sector Reform in Liberia: Status Review', UNDP/UN Women/IOM joint program 'Inclusive Security – Nothing for Us Without Us', 14 Sept. 2018

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Page 5.

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Protection Section (**WCPS**) of the LNP has 100 female officers out of 190, whilst in the SGBV Crimes Unit, all Victim Support Officers are female.<sup>136</sup>

In 2017, the *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia (NSSRL) Implementation Plan Matrix* was formulated by the *National Security Council Secretariat*, with broad consultation with Security Sector Institutions (**SSIs**), UNMIL, UN Women, UNDP, and diplomatic missions. The plan outlines how the various security sector and other institutions will contribute to implementation of the National Security strategy and monitor its progress. The Matrix provides extensive detail on how the government will build trust and reconciliation with the population regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and sex in decision making and to promote political inclusion and equal access to justice. It also promotes the role of the human rights organs to promote non-discrimination and the deepen the human rights culture and adherence to human rights treaties in Liberia. The Matrix explicitly addresses how best to promote gender equity and the empowerment of women and girls through:

- Human Resource policies
- Private Sector engagement
- Gender mainstreaming in every state institution
- Access to Education
- Rights to Inheritance
- Political and socio-economic decision and policy-making
- Increased membership of and strengthened inter-agency gender task force
- Promotion of public intolerance for SGBV, rape, and other violence<sup>137</sup>

The UN is also supporting the Government of Liberia in implementing the LNAP on UNSCR 1325 and strengthening the capacities of gender equality advocates to lead and meaningfully engage in transitional and peacebuilding processes through the implementation of *two Joint projects* titled “*Inclusive Security: Nothing with us without us*” and “*Strengthening the rule of Law*”. As part of the capacity strengthening of security institutions on the implementation of existing gender policies, *55 personnel from the Security Sector* benefited from the *Advanced Course on Women, Peace and Security*.

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<sup>136</sup> UN Women. An Assessment of Existing Initial Services Available for Sexual and Gender-based Violence Cases. 2018.

<sup>137</sup> “National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia (**NSSRL**) Implementation Plan Matrix”. National Security Council Secretariat, Office of the National Security Advisor (**ONSA**). Executive Mansion, Monrovia. 2017. Page 10.

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Institutional capacities across the justice chain were strengthened with a focus on reducing pre-trial detention rates. As such, The UN supported the recruitment and deployment of six additional public defenders in six mostly populated counties in June 2018 aimed at decentralizing access to justice and protection services for ordinary Liberians. The presence of the public defenders in the counties has increased access to justice and is helping to reduce the high pre-trial detention rates across the country by providing free legal representation in court on behalf of poor defendants particularly vulnerable women and girls who do not have the financial means to hire private lawyers.<sup>138</sup>

Also, the *Gender and Security Sector Taskforce Sustainability Framework* (GSSTSF), to support the *Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce* (GSSNT) which was created in 2017, was developed. It aims to create a gender responsive security sector in Liberia by enhancing the inclusion of women's perspectives in reforming the security sector and to ensure that initiatives respond to the needs and capacities of women, men, boys and girls. The *Secretariat* of the GSSNT is now fully operational with a Chair (senior bureaucrat from the Ministry of Justice, and 3 Consultants specializing in gender, communications and administration/finance). The Secretariat is developing the capacity of 40 *gender focal points* from 10 Security Institutions on gender, Information and technology, gender mainstreaming, Project Cycle Management, leadership and Monitoring & Evaluation. Prior to delivering trainings, a capacity needs assessment was conducted.

The GSSNT developed a *Sustainability Plan* which was presented to the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Defense. This plan is being used as an advocacy tool for the mobilization of financial resources from Government to facilitate mainstreaming of gender issues into the Security Sector. As a result, the Ministry of Justice is paying the salary of the financial officer who is in the GSSNT.<sup>139</sup>

**27. Actions taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peace building, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings.**

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<sup>138</sup> UNDP. Progress report on the Joint Project Rule of Law. UN Women. 2018.

<sup>139</sup> UN Women (Liberia). Email response for additional information. May 2019.

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The Government has a *peace building office* under the Ministry of Internal Affairs with support from the UN peacebuilding office. The Government's peacebuilding office has a functional gender unit which mainstreams women's issues within the national peacebuilding strategy.

As part of the NGP, The *Women, Peace and Security Unit* is to coordinate and ensure the full implementation of and regular reporting on the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan with a focus on Protection, Prevention, Participation and Empowerment, and the promotion of women's peace and security issues. The Unit's immediate task is to work with national and international partners to:

1. Coordinate the implementation of the National Action Plan UNSCR 1325;
2. Strengthen collaboration with actors and engender policies across the Ministries, Agencies and Commissions Corporations (MACs); and
3. Increase awareness and lobby at the Legislature and galvanize public support for women's empowerment and protection issues.<sup>140</sup>

**28. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to enhance judicial and nonjudicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?**

- Implemented legal and policy reform to redress and prevent violations of the rights of women and girls
- Strengthened institutional capacities, including of the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms as applicable, during conflict and crisis response
- Strengthened capacity of security sector institutions on human rights and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse
- Increased access of conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women to violence prevention and protection services
- Taken measures to combat illicit arms trafficking
- Taken measures to combat the production, use of and trafficking in illicit drugs
- Taken measures to combat trafficking in women and children
- Other

The Government of Liberia is a State Party to several International Humanitarian Law conventions and protocols including the Kampala and Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocol. As signatory to these international instruments the Government is obligated to ensure the full implementation of said instruments. In accordance with such obligations, the Commission in collaboration with other relevant government ministries and agencies and the

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<sup>140</sup> Government of Liberia. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017. P. 84.

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International Committee of the Red Cross (**ICRC**), is leading the domestication process of the Arms Trade Treaty, Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocols, and the Kampala Convention. This initiative is being implemented under the framework of the Liberia International Humanitarian Law Committee (**LIHLC**) Secretariat which comprises of technical and senior level officials from various government ministries. The LIHLC is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and co-chaired by the Ministry of Justice and the Law Reform Commission while the Liberia National Commission on Small Arms (**LINCSA**) heads the Secretariat.

### **29. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child?**

- Taken measures to combat negative social norms and practices and increased awareness the needs and potential of girl children
- Strengthened girls' access to quality education, skills development and training
- Tackled disadvantages in health outcomes due to malnutrition, early childbearing (e.g. anemia) and exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases
- Implemented policies and programmes to reduce and eradicate child, early and forced Marriage
- Implemented policies and programmes to eliminate violence against girls, including physical and sexual violence and harmful practices
- Implemented policies and programmes to eradicate child labour and excessive levels of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by girl children
- Promoted girls' awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life
- Other

The Government has undertaken several initiatives to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child. Numerous nationwide awareness campaigns have been conducted by government and CSOs on social norms and stereotypical attitudes that lead to gender stereotyping and harmful traditional practices that impede the advancement of the girl child rights. These awareness campaigns are targeted at traditional leaders, rural dwellers, Government Officials, as well as the media, youth groups, students and school authorities. These awareness campaigns are also aired on national and local radio and television stations across the country through jingles and dramas.

The following are some of the initiatives undertaken by the Government:

- The Establishment of the *Adolescent Girls Division* in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, to specifically cater to the issues of girls and to ensure that girls participate in programs that will build their capacity as well as ensuring that girls are enrolled in school and stay in school without facing any form of discrimination.

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*Girls education policy of 2009*, which was recently revised, seeks to consolidate national and international laws to promote girls' education and to advance priorities that will accelerate progress in improving girls' education. Also, the top priorities of the policy is to implement a nationwide awareness campaign to sensitize citizens about the importance of girls' education; strengthen the Ministry of Education's (MOE) capacity for budgeting, financial management, and staff and facilities management in support of girls' education programs; increase budgetary appropriation for education to 25% of Liberia's annual revenue intake; ensure that laws regarding public and private education funds are properly carried out to provide adequate support for girls' education; establish school-based gender monitoring groups in all counties to monitor intimidation, sexual harassment, and school recruitment and retention of girls; and conduct an awareness campaign for teachers and community leaders on the girls' education policy.<sup>141</sup>

- The development of the *Girls Manifesto in 2016* that highlights issues affecting girls and areas that need development such as education and development, sexual reproductive health and harmful traditional practices.
- The setting up of an *Adolescent Girls Advisory Panel* that advocates on girls issues to ensure that their voices are at the Centre of policies that are developed, increase awareness of the needs and potential of girl children, build their capacity through the National Young women and Girls Conference held annually to build their leadership skills, confidence as well as self-esteem.
- The on-going “*Send your Girls Child to School;*” “*No Sex for Grades*” and “*No Sex for Job*” is an initiative to create awareness among rural dwellers to support the girl child to remain in school and reduce stereotypical tendencies and other harmful practices against girls.

In 2015, the Ministry received funding from ECOWAS Gender Development Centre and provided 45 scholarships to 45 underprivileged high school graduate girls to further their college education in the *natural sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, Zoology), as well as Nursing at various universities*. The Scholarship is part of the Government's effort to bridge the gaps between male and female university students studying natural sciences. It is

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<sup>141</sup> Policy in Brief, Liberia, The National Policy on Girls' Education, 2012.



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specifically aimed at promoting young girls from poor families who demonstrate the ability to pursue higher education in the natural sciences and is being implemented in collaboration with the MOE.

The Ministry of Labor (**MOL**) has a functional child labor division that monitors and reports on child labor issues nationwide.

### ➤ *Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation*

#### **30. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies?**

- Supported women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance
- Strengthened evidence and/or raised awareness about gender-specific environmental and health hazards (e.g. consumer products, technologies, industrial pollution)
- Increased women's access to and control over land, water, energy, and other natural resources
- Promoted the education of women and girls in science, engineering, technology and other disciplines relating to the natural environment
- Enhanced women's access to sustainable time- and labor-saving infrastructure (e.g. access to clean water and energy) and climate-smart agricultural technology
- Taken measures to protect and preserve the knowledge and practices of women in indigenous and local communities related to traditional medicines, biodiversity and conservation techniques
- Taken steps to ensure that women benefit equally from decent jobs in the green economy
- Monitored and evaluated the impact of environmental policies and sustainable infrastructure projects on women and girls
- Other

In August 2018, the Environmental Protection Agency (**EPA**) of Liberia, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), confirmed through the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) that Liberia had launched the *National Policy & Response Strategy on Climate Change*. In September 2018, the EPA of Liberia, in collaboration with UNDP, announced a two-day training workshop for capacity building and operationalization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Liberia. Climate change is a cross-cutting development issue that affects every aspect of sustainable development and the entire 2030 Agenda. Liberia's NAPs project will contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals with inputs aligned to SDGs 1, 2, 3,4,5., 8, 13 16 and 17. Therefore, the Government of Liberia considers it important to provide training, awareness and education on

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the SDGs particularly the ones related to the environment, natural resource management, *gender* and climate change.<sup>142</sup>

Also, the Government of Liberia in partnership with its regional organization (ECOWAS) offered scholarships to vulnerable and gifted girls from the slums and rural/urban areas to study in the *sectors of science* (Agriculture, Biology, Chemistry, Engineering and Nursing). Under vocational studies, a scholarship was given in the subjects of automobile, mechanics, electronics, electricity, etc. The program began in 2010 and is still ongoing and has reached over 50 girls.<sup>143</sup>

In 2017, the Government established a National Disaster Management Agency (**NDMA**) to respond to both natural and man-made disaster. By 2018, NDMA established a Gender Unit to guide gender mainstreaming processes in disaster management and response. In an effort to guide gender mainstreaming processes at NDMA, UN Women in 2019 has prioritized the agency has developed a Gender Policy and an Implementation Plan that commits the NDMA to a path in working on gender equality issues and to promote merit and equality. Through the gender policy, NDMA will adopt gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity as a core value and practice in the development of programs, report writing and the development of policy documents in the culture of the Agency.

### **31. What actions has your country taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation?**

- Supported women's participation and leadership, including those affected by disasters, in disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation policies, programmes and projects
- Strengthened the evidence base and raised awareness about the disproportionate vulnerability of women and girls to the impact of environmental degradation and disasters
- Promoted access of women in situations of disaster to services such as relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation
- Introduced or strengthened and implemented gender-responsive laws and policies related to disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation (e.g. disaster laws addressing vulnerability of women in disaster)

Liberian women, as in other developing countries, are traditionally the primary caregivers and following a disaster, are often left caring for sick and injured family members and ensuring the sustenance of their households. Loss, due to disasters in Liberia, is on the increase with grave

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<sup>142</sup> Government of Liberia. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). <http://www.epa.gov.lr/> (last accessed 07/05/2019).

<sup>143</sup> National Coordination Committee, ECOWAS Girls of Excellence Scholarship Academic 2016/2017 Status and Progress Report.

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consequences for development gains and affects the wellbeing, dignity and livelihood of individuals, particularly the most vulnerable groups. In addition, since Liberia has a large coast line that exposes it to the disasters related to sea erosion, storms and other factors, these combined with the usual other hazards such as fire, mud slides, mine collapses, epidemics of infectious diseases, etc. have a devastating impact on women which extends to their household and communities.

In July of 2016, the Government which is a signatory to the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)*<sup>144</sup>, demonstrated a high degree of political will by enacting the *National Disaster Management Act* which paved the way for the establishment of the NDMA. The overall role of the Agency is to coordinate the implementation of the *National Disaster Management Policy* by the different stakeholders. The objective of this policy is to enhance the resilience of affected communities to reduce their risk exposure to disasters and provide an integrated package of support for addressing emergency situations, implementing demand-driven rehabilitation measures and mitigating the risks of future hazards, both natural and human-made.

The *National Disaster Policy* and the *National Disaster Management Act* recognize the important role played by women in development and the burden they carry during disasters. Consequently, all activities implemented by the government and all its partners before, during and after disasters, will proactively and consciously include the participation of women and other vulnerable groups. It is important that all disaster and recovery needs assessments results show gender disaggregated data/information. In addition, all *Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)* plans, including contingency/preparedness plans, need to have a gender sensitive strategy to meet the challenges of communities.

The Government of Liberia through the NDMA has taken several steps to demonstrate its commitment to promoting gender equality in the Agency and through its policy and frameworks. For instance, there is the establishment of a *Gender Department* with the objective to develop policy guidelines and strategies to inform the activities and programs of the NDMA in mainstreaming gender effectively in these interventions at the national and local

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<sup>144</sup> Also referred to as the *Sendai Framework* (adopted in 2015).  
<https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework> (last accessed 21/06/2019).

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government levels; and to effectively coordinate and inform the different phases of disaster management from preparedness to recovery.

Above all, these efforts will ensure that gender is integrated at both the structural and programmatic levels to influence the coordinating role of the Agency in collaborating with stakeholders from different backgrounds for a comprehensive gender-sensitive approach to address the different challenges of disaster management.

### **Section Three: National institutions and processes**

#### **32. What is your country's current national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women? Please name it and describe its location within Government.**

The Government of Liberia continues to promote policies, programs and enact legislations to ensure equality of women and men in the society. The Ministry of Gender and Development was modified in 2014 to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. It is the national machinery for promoting gender equality, women's advancement and children's rights in Liberia. It advises the government of Liberia on all matters affecting women and Children as well as mainstream gender in Government's policies, programs, legislations and resource allocation.

The Ministry 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.

Acting in consonance with the Constitution of Liberia which guarantees fundamental freedoms for all Liberians regardless of race, sex, creed, origin, tribal affiliation, the Government of Liberia's policies and programs reflect its commitment to gender equality and equity. This is evidenced in the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development 2018 to 2023, revised Gender policy of Liberia, 2017, Gender policy of the Liberian National Police, Mental Health policy 2009, and the Vision 2030 national strategy.

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**33. Is the head of the national machinery a member of the institutional process for SDG implementation (e.g. inter-ministerial coordinating office, commission or committees)?**

Yes

**34. Are there formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? If YES,**

Yes

**a) Which of the following stakeholders participate formally in national coordination mechanisms established to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

### **Beijing Declaration and PfA**

- Civil society organizations
- Women's rights organizations
- Academia and think tanks
- Faith-based organizations
- Parliaments/parliamentary committees
- Private sector
- United Nations system
- Other actors, please specify.....

### **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

- Civil society organizations
- Women's rights organizations
- Academia and think tanks
- Faith-based organizations
- Parliaments/parliamentary committees
- Private sector
- United Nations system
- Other actors, please specify.....

Yes, the *National Gender Forum* was established in 2005 and is the highest decision-making body for gender equality. It is chaired by the President of the Republic of Liberia and heads of UN agencies, heads of International Non-Governmental organizations, Heads of higher institutions of learning are also members of the body. It has a *Taskforce* that is based on the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The UN and international Non-Governmental Organizations as well as civil society groups are part of the *Taskforce* with the UN serving as an advisory body for the taskforce. Each of the critical areas is coordinated

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by the sector ministry for instance. The Ministry of Education is the head of the taskforce for women, education and training.

### **b) Do you have mechanisms in place to ensure that women and girls from marginalized groups can participate and that their concerns are reflected in these processes?**

There is the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy 2015-2020 (2015) which seeks to address issues relating to workforce development and human capital through technical and vocational opportunities for youth and *marginalized* groups (including women). A distinction is made between technical and vocational skill and general job and “life” skills acquisition. The latter category tends to include general business skills, socio-emotional skills, literacy and IT skills. There is a growing demand and interest in adding job-skills to technical and vocational skills programs. Job-skills are particularly relevant for the more vulnerable and marginalized groups including *Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)* youth, young women and ex-combatants. Training programs in non-formal and in formal settings tend to focus on these.<sup>145</sup>

While overall enrolment figures suggest a fairly equal gender distribution in TVET education (53% men / 47% women), subjects are somewhat segregated along traditional gender roles<sup>146</sup>, although computer training is popular with both young men and women (51% men / 49% women).<sup>147</sup> The division may be largely driven by social norms and perceptions and highlights the need for further analysis and use of incentives. Moreover, the MOE acknowledges that challenging gender perceptions in TVET and providing incentives for women to opt for traditionally ‘male’ training options is currently lacking. Even when enrolled in training courses in more male dominated areas, girls and women can face barriers, for instance, when the learning environments are de-motivating and do not consider their specific needs.<sup>148</sup>

Furthermore, The LNAP WPS *County Task Forces* ensure that the needs of women, particularly vulnerable and marginalized women, women in agriculture, rural and disabled

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<sup>145</sup> Government of Liberia. Ministry of Education. Getting to Best Education Sector Plan (2017-2021). December 2016.

<sup>146</sup> Government of Liberia. CEDAW Report. Draft. 2019.

<sup>147</sup> Ministry of Health. Liberia Education Sector Analysis. Republic of Liberia. November 2016. p.222.

<sup>148</sup> Republic of Liberia, ‘Getting to best Education Sector Plan 2017-2021’, Ministry of Education, Dec. 2016, pp.197-198.

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women outside of Monrovia are represented. They also serve as a formal entry point for consultation in localization of the LNAP WPS.<sup>149</sup>

Liberia's Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022) includes several measures for marginalized groups such as, *inter alia*, promoting human and women's rights and access to justice, including the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and other marginalized groups; assisting women entrepreneurs who are marginalized in the trade, commerce and industry sector; creating new economic opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, and will begin to break down the barriers facing women and other marginalized groups; enhance security and safety for marginalized women and men in communities; increase the demand for justice among vulnerable and marginalized men and women; and increase capacity among women's groups/NGOs to undertake programs and advocacy on the legal rights of marginalized women and men.<sup>150</sup>

### **c) Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.**

The national machinery which is the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection coordinated multi-national and international stakeholders for the preparation of the national report. Key line ministries and agencies as well as civil society organizations contributed to the preparation of the national report. Technical and financial support was provided by the UN Women while the relevant UN entities provided inputs into the content of the national report.

### **35. Is gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls included as a key priority in the national plan/strategy for SDG implementation?**

Liberia began its SDG implementation in January 2016 and prioritizing 7 out of 17 SDGs. However, the process for mainstreaming the SDGs has been slow. In November 2018, the Liberian Government approved the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018-2023), which is the second in the series of 5-year National Development Plans (NDP)

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<sup>149</sup> Government of Liberia. Liberia's Second Phase National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2023) For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Prepared by Nicole Hosein. Draft. May 2019.

<sup>150</sup> Government of Liberia. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017.

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anticipated under the Liberia Vision 2030 framework. It follows the Agenda for Transformation 2012-2017 (AfT).<sup>151</sup>

### **Section Four: Data and statistics**

#### **36. What are the top three areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?**

- Promulgated laws, regulations, or statistical programme/strategy setting out the development of gender statistics
- Established an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)
- Used more gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects
- Re-processed existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics
- Conducted new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability)
- Improved administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps
- Produced knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers)
- Developed a centralized web-based database and/or dashboard on gender statistics
- Engaged in capacity building to strengthen the use of gender statistics (e.g., trainings, statistical appreciation seminars)
- Other

The NGP (2018-2022) confirms the importance of gathering and disseminating accurate sex-disaggregated data. In the analysis, that outlined the 20 top priority areas for intervention within the NGP, a thorough gender assessment was undertaken for each which provided detailed sex-

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<sup>151</sup> Government of Liberia. Liberia's Second Phase National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2023) For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Draft. Prepared by Nicole Hosein. May 2019.



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disaggregated data to inform gender mainstreaming within the MGCSP and other sectors. Priority area 12, relates to *Gender, Research and Sex-Disaggregated Data*. The data collected in the analysis served as baseline information against which key performance indicators will be monitored and evaluated in ensuring change toward gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>152</sup>

### **37. Out of the following which are your country's top three priorities for strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years?**

- Design of laws, regulations, or statistical programme/strategy promoting the development of gender statistics
- Establishment of an inter-agency coordination mechanism on gender statistics (e.g., technical working group, inter-agency committee)
- Use more gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects
- Re-processing of existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics
- Conduct of new surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics (e.g., time use, gender-based violence, asset ownership, poverty, disability)
- Greater utilization and/or improvement of administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps
- Production of knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers)
- Development of a centralized web-based database and/or dashboard on gender statistics
- Institutionalization of users-producers' dialogues mechanisms
- Statistical capacity building of users to increase statistical appreciation on and use of gender statistics (e.g., trainings, statistical appreciation seminars)
- Other

The Liberian National Police (LNP) is establishing software based on comprehensive and a centralized database on SGBV-related crimes. The data collection system should not only link the various components of the 'formal' justice system but also develop management structures to track judgments of alternative mechanisms as well as decisions of customary authorities. This process will monitor compliance with international and domestic legal standards for non-discrimination and equal protection of the law and enhance the ability of elders' councils or customary authorities to enforce judgments through law enforcement authorities.<sup>153</sup>

Furthermore, UN Women conducted a baseline study of existing services for survivors of SGBV as per the essential service package for women and girls subjected to violence. This

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<sup>152</sup> Government of Liberia. Revised National Gender Policy (2018-2022). 2017.

<sup>153</sup> Quoted from: Gender and Security Sector Reform in Liberia Status Review. Submitted by - Sue Tatten, Gender and Security Sector Reform Advisor. Final Draft. September 2018. Page 35.

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baseline study is key because it informs support provided by UN Women as far as strengthening the capacity of the LNP and service providers is concerned.<sup>154</sup>

### **38. Have you defined a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs?**

The Government through the national statistical house, Liberia Institute for Geo-Information Services (**LISGIS**) has defined a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs. However, plans to define a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs are being discussed.

### **39. Has data collection and compilation on SDG 5 indicators and on gender-specific indicators under other SDGs begun?**

- Development of a centralized web-based database and/or dashboard on gender statistics
- Institutionalization of users-producers' dialogues mechanisms
- Statistical capacity building of users to increase statistical appreciation on and use of gender statistics (e.g., trainings, statistical appreciation seminars)
- Other

NO.

### **40. The following disaggregation are routinely provided by major surveys**

The following disaggregation are routinely provided by major surveys: Geographic location; Sex; Age; Education; and Marital status.

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<sup>154</sup> The essential services package for women and girls subject to violence, by UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP and UNODC. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/12/essential-services-package-for-women-and-girls-subject-to-violence#view> (last accessed 21/05/2019).