

Implementation of UNSCR 1820 in Post-Conflict Liberia

Background

During the prolonged 14 years of civil war in Liberia sexual and gender based violence was a characterizing feature of the conflict. Even after the conflict SGBV continues to be of serious problem facing women and children in Liberia. For example rape is currently the number one crime reported to the Liberia National Police. A recent study conducted in the 15 counties of Liberia indicated that survivors are between the ages of 10 and 19. The overall socio economic situation, has also exposed many women and girls to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). A SEA Evaluation conducted in six counties indicates that the frequency of SEA in communities including schools and entertainment centres is high. The impact of sexual and gender based violence is felt on the society at large but mostly by the survivor.

Approaches and mechanisms to facilitate prevention and response

At the highest levels in Liberia there is commitment and will to eliminate the incidence of sexual violence as evidenced by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's leadership and by the Minister of Gender and UN Senior Management. In a joint effort to curb incidences of SGBV, the Government of Liberia and the UN family have put in place different policy and coordination mechanisms for preventing and responding to SGBV and to sexual exploitation and abuse, for which the Joint Programme on SGBV is the overarching framework.

The Mechanisms include:

1. **The National GBV Task Force (2006)** which is the



coordinating body on the implementation of the National Plan of Action on GBV is chaired by the Ministry of Gender and comprises Local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International NGOs, UN agencies and the Government of Liberia.

2. **The National Plan of Action (NPoA) for GBV (2006)** which is a policy document that employs various strategies and aims to minimize the high rate of GBV in Liberia.

3. **A four year UN /Government Joint Programme on SGBV (2008)** which addresses critical issues reflected in the National GBV Plan of Action through the comparative advantages of UN Agencies, UNMIL sections and other development organizations.

4. **The UN Secretary General 'Zero Tolerance' Policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)** in United Nations peacekeeping Operations.

5. **A Conduct and Discipline Team** established in UNMIL to address conduct related issues including SEA.

Key actions to prevent and respond to sexual violence

1. **The National Campaign on Violence Against Women of July 2005** raised public awareness on sexual violence against women and responded to impunity as a consequence of lack of adequate legislation to punish perpetrators for crimes of SGBV, in particular, rape.

2. **Response to National Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** Government campaign of December 2006 enhanced humanitarian and community based response to increasing incidences of SEA through public awareness raising. An Evaluation on SEA was conducted in 2008 as well as an Inter-Agency field Assessment on SEA to determine the implications of SEA on children and women at the border points.

3. **The Anti-Rape Campaign launched in December 2007** aimed at raising public awareness and to provoke public action to curb the alarming incidence of rape in Liberia.

4. **Criminal Court 'E'** was officially opened February 2009 and a Judge designated to preside over trials of sexual offences and thereby help reduce the backlog of SGBV cases.

5. **Review and Simplification of 4 laws** that protect and promote women's rights (the Penal Code on Rape; Equal rights of the customary Marriage Law 1998; Domestic Relations Law; and Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act).

6. **Strengthening of the Ministry of Justice to Handle SGBV cases.** A SGBV Bureau was established and is managed by a Gender Officer. The Public education unit conducts training and an implementation plan on gender sensitive security sector reform is being developed.



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

- Enabling policy environment in Liberia to combat sexual violence including the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and Draft National Gender Policy both of which reflect SGBV as a critical issue to be addressed.
- Investments being made to curb SGBV are recent, initiatives are still in infancy stage, and need to be considered work in progress.
- Weak capacity and reform processes of the legal, judicial and security sector actors to combat sexual violence.
- Lack of systematized data collection methods to confirm national rates of rape and trends.
- Lack of comprehensive impact analysis of policy frameworks and Programmes to curb SGBV.

7. **Training programmes and materials on SGBV** incorporated in the curriculum for training of the Liberia National Police, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation and Correction officers.

8. **Research on Rape** (2008) determined the prevalence, attitude and behavioral patterns of rape in all 15 counties of Liberia; identification of victim and offender profiles; assessment of reporting rates and challenges to reporting incidents of rape.

What is United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820?

The UNSCR 1820 (2008), deals with the prevention and response to sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, post conflict, and its implications for the maintenance of peace and security.

1. To eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: awareness raising; end impunity and protect civilians in particular, women and girls during armed conflict.
2. To develop and implement appropriate training programmes for all peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel deployed by the United Nations in the context of missions.
3. To strengthen efforts to implement the policy of 'zero tolerance' of sexual exploitation and abuse in the United

Nations peace keeping operations.

4. To take appropriate preventative action: pre-deployment and in-theater awareness training, and other action to ensure full accountability in cases of such conduct involving their personnel.

5. To develop effective guidelines and strategies to enhance the ability of relevant UN peacekeeping operations in addressing sexual violence.

6. To develop effective mechanisms for providing protection from violence in particular, sexual violence, to women and girls in and around UN managed refugee and internally displaced persons camps, as well as in all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and in justice and security sector reform efforts assisted by the UN.

7. To ensure consultation and effective representation of women's civil society in its country-specific configurations as part of its wider approach to gender issues.

8. To support the development and strengthening of the capacities of national institutions, in particular of judicial and health systems and of local civil society networks in order to provide sustainable assistance to victims of sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

9. To consider developing and implementing policies, activities, and advocacy for the benefit of women and girls affected by sexual violence in armed conflict.

10. To submit a report to the Security Council by 30 June 2009 on the implementation of this resolution including recommendations and proposed benchmarks for measuring progress.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening of coordination amongst stakeholder and actors, increased awareness raising, research, rigorous tracking and reporting, development of guidelines for security sector, development of performance monitoring framework and positioning of expertise to measure progress and reporting and the allocation of resources to implement the UN Joint Programme on GBV which can lead to effective response, monitoring and reporting on SGBV in Liberia and to the achievement of UNSCR 1820.