

# Gender Mainstreaming In Peacekeeping Operations Liberia 2003 – 2009

Best Practices Report



**United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)**  
Office of the Gender Adviser (OGA)



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In Peacekeeping Operations  
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## ACRONYMS

CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEP	Community Empowerment Program
CDU	Conduct and Discipline Unit
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DD	Disarmament, Demobilization
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General
ESP	Educational Support Program
GFP	Gender Focal Point
FPU	Formed Police Unit
GAFF	Girls Associated with the Fighting Forces
GoL	Government of Liberia
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
LNAP	Liberia National Action Plan
LNP	Liberia National Police
LWI	Liberian Women Initiative
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoGD	Ministry of Gender and Development
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
NCDDRR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGP	National Gender Policy

OGA	Office of the Gender Advisor
PIO	Public Information Office
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
RC	Resident Coordinator
RR	Reintegration, Rehabilitation
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SRSR	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGTG	United Nations Gender Theme Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UN-INSTRAW	United Nations Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WAFF	Women Associated with Fighting Forces
WCPU	Women and Children Protection Unit
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network





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Special appreciation goes to the eighty seven key stakeholders who agreed to be interviewed and share their insights and knowledge: UNMIL civilian staff and Gender Focal Points, members of the OGA team, and UNMIL uniformed peacekeepers; UNCT members; Liberian women leaders, community members and SGBV survivors; the Ministry of Gender and Development, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of National Defense; and standing specialized working groups such as SGBV Working Group, Gender Task Force, and National Gender Policy Referewnce Committee.

Special recognition goes to the consultant Ms. Kristen Cordell who under the guidance of the OGA worked effectively to gather, collate and analyze the necessary data during the months of July and August 2009.

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Lastly, a special acknowledgement to the UNMIL OGA staff for their consistent efforts and support which has made this report possible.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Office of the Gender Adviser (OGA) commissioned in 2009, the documentation of best practices for gender mainstreaming in the Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia that have proven to promote women's rights and gender equality, covering the period, 2003-2009.

Since the United Nations Mission In Liberia was established under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1509 (2003), the OGA 2004 mandate to mainstream gender in the work of the Mission, has been guided by the DPKO Policy Directive on Gender Equality in UN Peace Keeping Operations, UNSCR 1325 on women, Peace and security and UNSCR 1820 on sexual violence. The promotion and support to gender-sensitive approaches has supported UNMIL's mandate to promote sustainable peace and stability in Liberia.

The 14 years of civil conflict had a devastating effect on women who survived sexual violence and exploitation and abuse and further exacerbated the inequalities they faced even prior to the war. During the conflict, women picketed, galvanized support and mobilized to attend the peace negotiations and are signatory to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) 2003 in which they secured seats in the National Transitional Government. In their continuing desire to ensure their participation in the recovery, reconstruction and development of Liberia they worked to vote into office Africa's first female president and have tapped on her political good will to further gender mainstreaming in the country. This broadened the space for UNMIL OGA gender mainstreaming work in Liberia.

Given the impending drawdown of the Mission, the OGA deemed it essential, therefore, to assess the impact of its work over the last six years to determine the results, and the gains and gaps in gender mainstreaming. Therefore, the objective of this initiative was to identify, describe and present evidence-based best practices among six key areas of the work within UNMIL. The areas include: disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration; the police; advocacy and policymaking; sexual and gender based violence; female peacekeepers and the electoral process. Each of the six sections describes the gender-related best practice element, the results and outcomes it garnered, and identifies keys to success.

The OGA used a two prong approach to documenting the best practices in UNMIL: literature review and interviews held with 87 key stakeholders in the UN system, international organizations, the government of Liberia and women non-governmental organizations and individuals. Eleven focus group discussions with community members were also held in a variety of locations and sectors to arrive at the findings. The meetings occurred both in Monrovia and in the rural counties of Liberia. The criteria used to identify the best practices included: significance of impact; effectiveness and efficiency to achieve gender-related objectives; repeatable procedures that have proven themselves as effective over time; innovation, creativity and originality; partnership for successful learning and capacity development; and informing the experience from the beginning.

The document reviews a variety of experiences from the viewpoint of different stakeholders involved in or affected by UNMIL peace keeping operations. This is characterized by a number of diverse programmatic findings which emerged as best practices:

- **DDRR:** expansion of the criteria for the Liberia’s disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration processes to include Women Associated with Fighting Forces
- **The Police:** a strategy for specific and targeted recruitment of women for the Liberian National Police
- **Advocacy and policy making:** strengthening of non-governmental organizations and government frameworks to facilitate inclusive and sustainable policy making processes with durable and long lasting results for women
- **SGBV:** sensitization campaigns (anti-rape and sexual exploitation and abuse, SEA) and improved response mechanisms against rape and sexual violence specifically, the Women and Children Protection Units and the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Crimes Unit of the Ministry of Justice
- **Female Peace keepers:** improved protection via the visible and concentrated work of women peacekeepers in the country and positive role modeling
- **Electoral process:** connection of women throughout the country to the formalized political process as voters and candidates, through key government and civil society interlocutors

As a composite, programs have had diverse and dynamic results that have made women to feel safer and more secure in Liberia. This has been achieved through advocacy and training, and in some areas, funding at the onset of the Mission, for the setting up of systems and protection mechanisms for seeking redress, recruitment of women in the security sector and in UNMIL, and increasing representation of women in formalized decision making bodies. Through widespread and localized sensitization campaigns and awareness raising, women were better positioned to program around their specific needs and have requested and received funding to implement their strategic action plans. The introduction of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue and from a rights-based approach has broadened gender knowledge amongst the Liberian community, in particular, women who are stimulated to claiming their rights in all aspects of the developmental agenda, including key policy making processes and access to resources. It also has enhanced appreciation for gender inclusive processes and results in Liberia's development agenda.

A number of pragmatic recommendations have emerged based on the experience of gender mainstreaming in Liberia which might be used to guide the UN Mission and system in Liberia and DPKO and its partners on like missions. They include:

- Rely on localized networks and community based initiatives
- Share information through sensitization campaigns composed of localized messages
- Use resource strategically, and where a comparative advantage is present

- Harness both international and national level will to advance gender equality and women`s rights
- Introduce Gender as both a strategic objective and as a cross cutting issue (in the Mission and society)

The success of gender mainstreaming is also attributable to UNMIL (OGA's) effective engagement with national government institutions and civil society organizations, in particular, women's non governmental organizations and networks. This has built partnership and strengthened coordination amongst key stakeholders for capacity building, provision of advice and technical support and strategic allocation and efficient and effective use of resources and materials to main stream gender. UNMILs engagement in the integrated UN approach has yielded coordinated response efforts and decreased the likelihood of a duplication of effort with and amongst partners.

The strong leadership and political goodwill within the Mission and the Government of Liberia on gender mainstreaming and women empowerment has provided the backdrop for the development of these best practices and acted as a crucial advocate and partner on a range of initiatives. UNMIL OGA has contributed many resources and in so doing, has shown its ability to be a major and substantial component and section in any UN peacekeeping mission. In the transition from relief to development the OGA has been highly strategic in choosing its operational goals, working to identify appropriate stakeholders for each task and creating lasting local and national level frameworks for the continuation of this work. However, there is a need to strengthen the OGA offices and their resources across the Missions to be more effective in their role.





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## 1. Background

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The central goal of 1325 was to ensure that the contributions, needs, and priorities of men and women -- (boys and girls) -- would be taken into account in the planning and implementation of peacekeeping operations-- in a manner that creates greater equality and access to resources and benefits for all.

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), was established in 2003-- following a 14-year civil war in the country (1989-2003) under Security Council Resolution 1509 (2003) which incorporates Resolution 1325 stressing the “importance of a gender perspective and women’s participation in peacekeeping operations and post conflict peacebuilding”. The resolution also paid special attention to “addressing violence against women and girls as a tool of warfare and encouraged UNMIL as well as the Liberian parties to actively address these issues.”<sup>1</sup> Subsequent Council resolutions for UNMIL have reaffirmed the original commitment of 1509, including issues of gender-based violence, protection, and sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Security Council Resolution 1509.

2 UNSCR 1836/2008: which welcomed UNMIL’s effort to promote and protect women through continuing to “cooperate with the United Nations country team and civil society in order to achieve further progress in these areas and in particular to combat violence against children and women, including gender based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and recalling its resolutions 1674 (2006) and 1612 (2005), as well as resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security.”

UNMIL has addressed gender mainstreaming both as a cross-cutting and a strategic objective. The mission's Results Based Budgeting Framework provided substantial funding of gender activities as cross-cutting and substantive tasks.<sup>3</sup> In keeping with the Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP), which calls for a multi-dimensional approach to establishing peacekeeping missions, the Office of the Gender Advisor (OGA) has been present and active since the mission's inception.

The OGA has a clearly defined mandate to promote and support gender sensitive approaches to implementation of the mission's mandate in line with the DPKO policy directive on Gender Equality in UN Peacekeeping Operations (2006), UNSCR 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) as well as other international and regional conventions on gender and human rights. Among its responsibilities is establishing the partnership necessary (both inside and outside the mission) to build capacity for gender mainstreaming- including such key tasks as advocacy and awareness raising, training and capacity building, monitoring and advising, evaluation and reporting, and provision of technical advice and support. Implementation of 1325 within the mission has been operationalized by gender action plans throughout its various stages, to follow the priorities of UNMIL and key events (including DDR, elections, and recovery). The most recent framework is the Mission Wide Action Plan on Gender 2009-2011, which takes the impending UNMIL drawdown into consideration and which articulates medium-term strategic results.

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3 An audit conducted by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight (OIOS) in 2007 reported that the mission had moved gender mainstreaming tasks- including integrating a gender balance in police force and attention to women as a vulnerable population from a support task to a substantive task.

The OGA is part of a uniquely integrated UN mission. As co-chair of the UN Gender Theme Group (UNGTG), along with UNIFEM it works with key partners within the UN Country Team (UNDP, UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNICEF and the RC's Office) to coordinate on gender in a strategic way, and supports the Government's and the UN's gender mainstreaming initiatives. The OGA is also a member of the various National Task Forces and Steering Committees, including on SGBV, that support the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) working groups.

## Liberian Women and the Historical Context

The 14-year civil war in Liberia pushed further the limits on women's equality. Instability, insecurity and the resulting economic decline hampered their independence and human rights. Violence against women during this time was normalized, along with a culture of impunity. This led to wide-scale victimization of women which further increased their vulnerability to continuing abuse and sexual violence. Additionally, women lost crucial access to infrastructure systems, economic assets, and education, altering the gender dynamic of society as a whole.

As the country began to emerge from conflict, women reasserted themselves through the peace process. In 1993, the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) brought together women from different social and regional contexts to march in protest at peace negotiations, both at home and abroad. By 2001, when the peace process restarted, the Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET) and the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) had gained considerable constituencies. WIPNET asserted itself as the primary coordinator of a Mass Action for Peace campaign, drawing in women from all walks of life to stage sit-ins at formal peace negotiations.

These women’s groups became influential and representatives of the MARWOPNET which had been granted observer status, were invited to attend the formal ECOWAS negotiations, and became signatory of the peace declaration. The result was a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which reflected the will and intention of women and set quotas for members of the Transitional Legislative Assembly to include women representatives. The Agreement also included provisions for gender balance in elective and non-elective posts. Overall, this was crucial groundwork for the inclusion of women within the country’s post-conflict infrastructure and during a period of instability and insecurity.

The country’s first democratically elected female President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was elected in 2005 through free, fair, and transparent elections that included over 50% female voters. President Sirleaf’s initial Cabinet included five women ministers in strategic positions, 21 women as deputy and assistant ministers, and 28 women in non-traditional executive appointments, including Inspector General of the LNP and Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Liberia<sup>4</sup>.

The Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) was established in 2001 by an Act to Amend Executive Law Title 12 for the Establishment of a Ministry of Gender and Development. The ministry serves as the primary vehicle on all matters affecting the protection, promotion, participation, and advancement of women in Liberia, and coordinates gender mainstreaming efforts. The ministry has many operational systems, which make it particularly adept at considering the needs of women in the country. A team of Gender Desk Officers is situated across Government ministries. Additionally, a rural women’s network brings the work of the MoGD to the county level, where trained

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4 OGA Quarterly Report January to March 2006.

superintendents and county gender coordinators work within the county context to develop gender sensitive programmes and policies. Moreover, civil society networks, developed during the conflict are a second structure for engaging women throughout the country. Groups such as the Women’s NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) provide resources and network opportunities for women on gender issues.

Through their long-standing civic participation and dedication to peace and prosperity, women have solidified their place in the public sphere, although they still face limits in their access to formal education, healthcare, economic opportunities and judicial services. Liberian women leaders successfully launched the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 at the International Colloquium on Women’s Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security held in Monrovia in March 2009. This Action Plan is a medium term plan intended to respond to women’s and girls’ needs and interests in post-conflict Liberia and if utilized by policy makers and planners, it should lead to gender sensitive initiatives and programmes that address these priorities.



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## 2. Introduction

### Objectives and Structure

The overall aim of this document is to capture best practices in gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment in implementing the UNMIL mandate during the 2003-2009 period. The process of documentation is critical as UNMIL has now started a drawdown exercise. The document focuses on the palatable results and best practices that have proven to promote women's rights and gender equality in a sustainable way in post-conflict Liberia. In order to do this, two objectives have been stipulated:

- Identify best practices in gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment among six key areas of work within UNMIL, based on selected criteria.
- Document and present evidence-based best practices in a manner that enhances their use and replicability by other current or future peacekeeping missions.

The best practices section of the report is organized into six chapters for analysis, in line with the mission's mandate and overarching themes. The six areas - **DDRR, the Liberia National Police, advocacy and policy-making, sexual and gender based violence, women in peacekeeping, and the electoral process** - are critical sectors for the work of the mission that have yielded

interim results. Each section includes a description of the **best practice element**, the achieved **results and outcomes**, and identifies **keys to success**.

## Methodology

Data collection for this study was undertaken in July and August 2009 and the analysis and report preparation was done between September 2009 and February 2010. Data was collected in three ways:

**Document Review:** a wide range of DPKO, UNMIL, OGA, UN, GoL and NGO policy, programme and research documents and reports were reviewed. A complete list appears in the Annex.

- Thematic Focus Groups: 11 focus groups with external partners were conducted and centered on the six identified priority themes/focus areas for the study. The focus group discussions were held both in Monrovia and in several locations in other counties. Group interviewees included among others, women leaders, ex-combatants, youth, and female LNP officers.
- Interviews with Key Stakeholders: individual interviews and consultations were held with 87 key stakeholders and informants. Those interviewed included: UNMIL staff (including military and police officers, Gender Focal Points (GFPs), OGA staff, and other relevant civilian section representatives); UNCT members; Government representatives (the Ministry of Gender and Development, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of National Defense); and standing specialized working groups (SGBV Working Group, Gender Task Force, and National Gender Policy Reference Committee).



## Selection Criteria

Six criteria were used to identify best practices. A best practice needed to have:

- Had a significant impact on the overall environment, having resulted in a positive and sustainable change in women's and girls empowerment and rights which was relevant to the country context;
- Demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency in setting and achieving gender-related objectives through effective application of resources;
- Been based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time for large numbers of people;
- Been considered to be innovative, creative and original;
- Made use of partnership for successful learning and capacity development; and
- Been informing the experience from the beginning.

Meeting each of these criteria was not mandatory, but best practices had to meet a majority of them in a meaningful way. A few potential best practices - newer initiatives that have not yet met a majority of the criteria or had a measurable impact - have also been identified where appropriate.



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### 3. Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Inclusion of Women Associated with Fighting Forces

*Resolution 1325 (2000) “encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependents.”*



Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Inclusion of Women Associated with Fighting Forces

A successful DDDR process is a pre-condition to facilitating humanitarian assistance, the restoration of civil authority, and the promotion of economic growth and development. The decision to include women in the process resulted in enhanced equitable access to emerging peace dividends and development assistance in Liberia.



In 2003, UNSCR 1509 advocated for special measures and programmes to address the gender-specific needs of female ex-combatants, as well as the w i v e s a n d

widows of former combatants. However, when the DD process began in 2003, there was a “no weapon, no entry” rule for eligibility, with little attention paid to the needs of women. When the first phase was suspended in 2004, UNMIL began to advocate for a change in the classification of women who could not present weaponry but had been actively involved in the conflict. It was proposed that women no longer be labeled as “camp followers” their original category within the national framework, and to instead elevate them to active combatants, thus making them eligible for DDDR. The definition of ex-combatants was expanded to include not only active fighters (those with weaponry available) but also women who supported the fighters in any other role, including as sexual slaves, cooks, spies, messengers and wives of

combatants. These women were henceforth labeled “Women Associated with Fighting Forces (WAFFs)”.

Operationally, this meant that women would not have to present ammunition in their initial registration, and would be admitted based on their description of their role. This effectively ended the “no weapon, no entry” rule, which had dominated the first round of the DDDR process. This advocacy effectively transformed the DDDR process from a strictly military operation to one which fully considered the needs of the entire community.

However, when the DD process was restarted, only 130 women among 1,789 persons presented themselves the first week – a much lower proportion than expected. Critical steps were thus taken to engage women’s NGOs to enhance the sensitization on the inclusion of women. While they had been shut out early in the DDDR design, women’s NGOs and women leaders became instrumental in identifying issues and resources for women. NGOs, including WIPNET, were engaged in sensitization campaigns involving women in the local population who were provided information about the DDDR process and their eligibility.

As the process continued, community led sensitization campaigns were the main vehicle for identifying and countering rumors that women who participated in the DD exercise would not get married and would not be able to travel outside the country. Ex-combatants in rural community focus groups viewed this campaign as highly useful and strategic. Women from various NGOs traveled with the UN teams to contribute to information sharing and deal with the widespread beliefs that women should not participate in the process.<sup>5</sup> Widespread

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5 Ms. Leymah Gbowee, WIPNET, Liberia “Women Building Peace through Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration” Beijing + 10 Review Conference 9 March 2005.

sensitization through centralized radio programmes in Monrovia complemented localized sensitization.

To sustain this partnership over the life of the DD process, it was essential to involve women's networks for reporting and monitoring activities to address problems of female ex-combatants. It was an approach that worked because, according to stakeholders, the community trusted the NGO networks, and shared their problems with them. Networks, then carried the message they heard back to UNMIL, resulting in redress for the grievances of women.

Advocacy for WAFFs in the DDR process and the accompanying sensitization and awareness campaigns resulted in the inclusion 22,300 women among the 101,000 disarmed and demobilized ex-combatants (as compared to the initial estimate of 3,000 female combatants)<sup>6</sup>. The reintegration phases began in November 2004, under the leadership of the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU), with funds from the Multidonor Trust Fund administered by UNDP and parallel programmes funded by the European Commission and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). By the end of the programme however, approximately 60,000 of the eligible 98,000 ex-combatants had completed the second phase; of that number, 10,000 were females. The final or third phase was extended to accommodate approximately 7,202 demobilized combatants who had not received assistance during the previous phase (2008-2009). Over 22% of the beneficiaries were women, which reflected their overall participation in the DDR programme.<sup>7</sup>

Centrally, UN agencies were organized to facilitate aspects of DDR where they had a comparative advantage. UNFPA was designated to respond to the need for reproductive health and

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6 UNDP, DDR Report.

7 UNDP, DDR Report.

gender-based violence screening and services. UNICEF was tasked to handle the protection of girls in the camps.<sup>8</sup> Meetings between the agencies served to keep those tasked with various aspects of the integration of WAFFs accountable. The inclusive DD process resulted in access by women in that DD process, as well as during later stages of the programme (RR). Integration in the mission planning processes meant that there were resources for women at all stages, including: separate facilities for men and women in cantonment camps (DD); specialized programmes for health and counseling (DD); and gender-centric rehabilitation programmes (RR). The advocacy, attention and resources mandated by widening the definition of women’s eligibility at the outset meant that the process would include them through its later stages. This included assistance in vocational training and formal education and, to a lesser extent, on-the-job training and psychosocial counseling. In many project locations, special training was made available to cater to jobs preferred by women, such as tailoring and cosmetology.

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8 Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General. “Joint Operational Plan.” UNMIL. 15 April 2004.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

### DDRR Keys to Success

- Key policy documents encouraged pre-planning, early attention to WAFFs, and delegation of resources for women
- Inclusive outreach process facilitated by national NGOs (who also acted as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms)
- Resources and attention to communities for receiving ex-combatants
- Attention to UNMIL partners to delegate responsibilities and enhance accountabilities
- Sensitization through networks brought clarity about the process and addressed the social stigmas that were commonly held of ex-combatants.

The early policy mandates for DDRR in Liberia (including the CPA and the NCDDRR guidelines), as well as within UNMIL (UNSCR 1509), gave strong attention to the needs of women and girls. This policy served as a minimum baseline for programme implementation and set up a framework for planning and allocation of key resources for WAFFs. This framework allowed results to be achieved through the effective and efficient use of limited resources to ensure the inclusion of women in the process.

Reaching women through centralized information operations and decentralized NGO networks had the most **significant gender impact - contributing to a positive change impact for girls and women** in the context of Liberia's DDR programme. Stakeholders successful in information dissemination and sensitization identified an inclusive outreach process by facilitating national NGO networks for women in the country.



Focus group and community respondents cited this as key, along with a centralized public information campaign.

Success was also achieved through enhancing the capacity of women's NGOs, making them better able to reach out and communicate with female combatants, and to provide vital services and address issues as they arose. It was the full and sustained engagement of women's NGOs throughout the process that enhanced the role of women, increased their numbers and protected them from exploitation at the various levels in the process.<sup>9</sup> This coordination is cited by a majority of focus group respondents as the motivating factor, thereby increasing trust and promoting women's participation in the DDDR process.

To encourage success these **networks were used in innovative and creative ways - including as** monitoring mechanisms - evaluating the processes, identifying key barriers to women's inclusion and addressing barriers in a manner that enhanced women's participation. The relationship between the women's groups was strong, and NGOs were engaged to create programmes that addressed barriers that women faced, including sensitization campaigns.

These networks also garnered success in working with communities that would receive the women ex-combatants, which was consistently cited by community groups as being of primary importance in enhancing opportunities for skills and income generating activities of ex-combatants.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Douglas, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> OGA, Quarterly Report, March 2005.

**Active and integrative partnerships** with other UN agencies established a coordinated response. A weekly meeting of all stakeholders (UN, NGOs) served as the forum for addressing ongoing issues for women. Without constant coordination, these programmes would have been less successful and key needs within the community would have gone unmet.

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## 4. Security Sector Reform: Recruitment of Women in the Liberia National Police

*Security Council Resolution 1325 calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police, and the judiciary.*

One of the first tasks of the peacekeeping mission in Liberia was to rebuild the security sector by strengthening the Liberia National Police (LNP). To facilitate integration of gender within the LNP, a Gender Policy was developed with support from UNMIL OGA and UNPOL. The 2005 LNP Gender Policy served as the policy framework for securing more gender balance within the LNP workforce via active recruitment and participation of women. The document set a 15% quota for women's participation and describes measures to facilitate improved recruitment and retention of women<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> In 2008, the LNP presented its first Gender Advisory Work Plan, focused on the central goal of integrating gender perspectives into work areas and increased the quota of 15% women (which had not yet been met) to 20%.

This document became a crucial framework for generating sustainable gender mainstreaming in the growing institution. The 15% target was later raised to 20%.



Security Sector Reform: Recruitment of Women in the Liberia National Police

In 2006, the LNP established the Committee for National Recruitment of Women, which included representatives from UNPOL, OGA and relevant ministries. To cater to the women who wanted to join the LNP but were limited because they lacked the proper educational requirements, the committee introduced the Educational Support Programme (ESP). The ESP is a condensed version of a high school diploma that women can complete as a prerequisite for entering the police force. Women between the ages of 18 and 35 who completed at least the ninth grade were eligible to participate in a three month academic programme, followed by three months of police training at the National Police Academy. A one-year pilot programme of 150 students commenced in 2007, followed by two additional classes in 2008, consisting of 110 and 87 students, respectively.

The ESP has enhanced women's participation in the LNP, targeting the 20% quota. While the first 30 classes of the LNP only saw an average of 4 female recruits, classes 30 (2006) and 31 (2007) hosted 25 and 33 women recruits respectively, suggesting a moderate increase as a result of the ESP.<sup>12</sup> However, most impressive are ESP classes 32 and 33, which had 105 and 104 women recruits respectively. Class 34, which is now in the academy, will be the third installment of ESP recruits.

Years	Recruitment Class Number	Number of Women	% Women total LNP
2004-2006	1-29	177*	2%
2006	30	25	-
2007	31	33	5%
2008	32*	105	10%
2009	33*	104	12%
Total		448	12%

\*ESP RECRUITMENT CLASSES

The ESP is having a multiplier effect and has created a fertile environment for sustained and improved recruitment efforts. This is most clearly illustrated by the fact that recruitment for classes 34 and 35 garnered between 40 and 50 women each - even without the ESP programme these classes are still in the academy. Recruiting has also increased through new visibility in rural areas, where women were previously highly averse to joining. Focus group discussants cited the “multiplier effect” of having classes 32 and 33 present in the community, sensitizing women that they too, can join the LNP.

The ESP has also led to an increase in the skills level and knowledge of the women recruited. According to the LNP leadership, those who went through the ESP are more skilled than their female counterparts who did not<sup>13</sup> Moreover, having completed the

<sup>12</sup> This bump was most likely the result of stronger attention by UNMIL in recruiting efforts which started in 2006, as well as the effect of having a full time Gender Office within LNP.

<sup>13</sup> Interview: Amelia Hoka, LNP.

additional training together, professional networks for women officers have emerged, and retention and promotion figures for women are improving rapidly.

A more global outcome has been increased interest in security sector careers overall, including a higher sensitization about forthcoming Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) recruitment and thus, a greater potential recruitment base. Community discussions revealed an enhanced recruiting base for all security sector institutions, not just the LNP. Lateral increases in the number of women have not been confined to the LNP; there are more women in the following bodies: National Bureau of Investigation; Liberia Seaport Police; Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization; Liberia National Fire Service; and, Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

### SSR Keys to Success

- Policy framework to guide gender mainstreaming and women's participation in the security sector
- Strategic use of resources to identify and address barriers to women's recruitment and retention
- Relevant partnerships paired resources of UNPOL, OGA, UNICEF and MoE (Recruitment Committee)

The ESP has been successful because it was a highly strategic application of limited resources in an **effective and efficient manner, which** produced increased output for a large number of women. The programme's unique attention to the specific challenges faced by women made it successful in creating appropriate mechanisms to address the issues.

The ESP represents a **creative, innovative and novel** approach to addressing a difficult issue, through strengthening frameworks that would be best suited for programme implementation. Success has been achieved through the increased capacity for both internal and external mechanisms for gender mainstreaming within LNP. Advocacy for a full time gender officer within UNPOL as well as a Gender Unit within the LNP created capacity and enhanced long-term frameworks.

Past atrocities and corrupt practices, as well as involvement of some former combatants in the ranks, have created a situation that disturbs women. Through the reliance on strategic partnerships, the LNP has enhanced its validity in the community and promoted the ESP and its success. This has improved trust and buy-in of the LNP by the community, especially women. Secondly, through strategic partnership with the UN, NGOs and CBOs, including joint fora for recruitment with female peacekeepers, the **LNP has enhanced its limited resources and taken advantage of a powerful recruiting dynamic.**

The impact of the ESP on increasing the number of women in the LNP has been **significant, resulting in an overall positive change for women in the country context.** Sustained and consistent attention to recruits during the recruitment process - including the ESP programme, academy life, and, finally, as police officers - has effectively mediated key challenges that once curtailed the inclusion of women. However, challenges do remain. The three main reasons for student drop-out were identified as: family and social pressures; pregnancy or health issues; or financial or transportation limitations. If renewed, the ESP should address these challenges.

# Number of Women in the ESP programme at Stella Maris

ESP YEAR	LNP Class #	ESP Initial Enrollment	No shows for ESP	Drop-outs/ Failed ESP	Completed ESP	Additional LNP Female Recruits	Total Sent to Academy	Joined LNP	Drop-outs once in LNP
2007-MAR	32	105	14	9	127	5	111	105	5
2007-OCT	33	104	4	12	82	41	115	104	0
2008-FEB	34	111	0	10	101	31	100	NA	NA

Recruitment and support did not end when the students entered the ESP, but continued throughout the programme. Keeping the students actively engaged proved difficult, as challenges from society, family and logistics regularly arose. However, **troubleshooting by partners to keep women in the programme was dynamic and creative.** Most of the women who complete it stated that the support received from UN counterparts was the reason they stayed in the programme. Creative examples: an add-on course was introduced to assist the handful of students who failed, with two more months of training, after which all passed the final test. Funding was obtained so that a local orphanage could take care of the students`children, free of charge, while they completed the programme.

The ESP recruitment effort has promoted equality for women and girls in Liberia - by providing education, sustainable income, improved security, and a new sense of women`s rights. According to female officers, there has been an increase in livelihoods for women who have participated in ESP and a new inspiration to seek further educational opportunities.



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## 5. Advocacy and Policy Making: Enhanced Institutional Capacities of the Government and National Women's Organizations

*UNSCR 1325 calls on peacekeeping missions to address “the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.”*

As mandated by the Security Council, peacekeeping missions must be implemented in a manner that includes “increase in the participation of women [from the United Nations] at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes.”<sup>14</sup> UNMIL has postured itself to move from the consideration of relief and recovery to capacity for development and strategic rebuilding. The overarching goal for the mission has been to build the institutional capacities of government and NGOs to take the lead in gender mainstreaming through advocacy, policy, implementation and monitoring.<sup>15</sup> This best practice was achieved through four crucial and specific actions: building capacity of institutions within civil society to act as key advocacy

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<sup>14</sup> UN Bulletin A/49/587

<sup>15</sup> Interview, OGA staff



Advocacy and Policy Making: Enhanced Institutional Capacities of the Government and National Women's Organizations

mechanism; training and participatory programmes to promote local level policy inclusion; technical and resource support to MoGD, including the creation of long-term frameworks; and advice and guidance for gender sensitive policy making within government systems.

One of the necessary actions was to **mobilize the participation of women in the local communities through strategic advocacy networks**. In 2006, UNMIL OGA delegated significant resources to strengthening the Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL.) While WONGOSOL already had many involved members throughout the country and had been very active in the peace process, its ad-hoc nature and a lack of a centralized director and location had prevented it from reaching its full potential. Seventy-six women members of WONGOSOL came together in a general assembly tasked with nominating and voting for an institutional board of directors which, in turn, selected a director. This resulted in an expanded network of

gender experts across the country and became a resource for reaching women.<sup>16</sup> Today, WONGOSOL is an advocate for women’s inclusion in the policy-making sphere.

Another step has been **to enhance the capacity of government authorities by providing training programmes and capacity building, technical expertise, and long-term support for the Ministry of Gender**, as the key body for mainstreaming gender with the Government of Liberia. This has been achieved in four ways: training for MoGD staff; training of a core team of gender experts; and provision of technical expertise, and resources for sustainable frameworks. Support for MoGD capacity was especially visible in the lead-up to the creation of the 2006 National Plan of Action on GBV. The plan served as a guiding document for the Government’s response to GBV across the 15 counties, and was developed through the support of the National Task Force on GBV, which included integrated support from UNMIL as well as UN agencies.

*“As long as we determined our priorities they [OGA] have been here to support us.” Minister of Gender, Varbah Gayflor*

Training programmes for ministry staff have been especially useful in establishing and enhancing capacity. According to the ministry this is an essential and fundamental capacity building task that had a multiplier effect for training new staff. Additionally, the establishment of county-level “support teams” made up of a superintendent and a county gender coordinator further engages local women in the community in the MoGD’s formal policy processes.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of strengthening NGO and Government networks, there has been an impact in terms of the ability to **engage and**

16 Interview, OGA staff

17 Government of Liberia, Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2007.

**enable women throughout the country for participation in the policy-making processes.** The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), the Liberian National Action Plan on 1325 (LNAP), the National Gender Policy, and the Truth and Reconciliation process have been influenced by women's voices and concerns.



“The Ministry of Gender plays a key role in supporting gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in the 15 counties”

Networks facilitated a large number of county level consultations for various policies across Liberia and women were mobilized to participate resulting in policy documents that reflect their needs and have a high level of buy-in. In the case of the PRS, widespread training of superintendents created a system in which women could become involved in the consultative process and articulate the issues that mattered to them. In the case of the TRC, a gender-focused report analyzing women’s testimonies and issues was presented to the Commission and serves as a tool for integrating actions necessary for attaining women’s right to remedy and reparation.

Support and guidance has also been provided for gender sensitive policy making within the government, beyond the Ministry of Gender. For gender policy to work, it must be

cross-cutting, and thus not reliant on the skills or preferences of one single entity. To accomplish this, MoGD supported a lateral organization of Gender Desk Officers across the various ministries. Through capacity and infrastructure development, the MoGD has empowered its partners within the various ministries to both coordinate and take on freestanding gender initiatives. Many interviewees cited the coordination efforts as helpful in sensitizing community members to continually consider the needs and interests of women in policy making.

Results have included cross-ministerial coordination, including the Ministry of Education's support of the National Girls' Education Policy (2006); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' support towards the International Women's Colloquium; and the Ministry of Justice's involvement in addressing and responding to SGBV through improved institutional mechanisms. Support for operationalization of gender mainstreaming has been introduced in non-traditional sectors, including security sector reform through an active LNP Gender Strategy (see chapter 2).

Perhaps nowhere was the overwhelming harnessing of political will and leadership so clear as with the March 2009 International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security. Convened in Monrovia, the event was hosted by Presidents Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and Tarja Halonen of Finland, and relied on UNMIL and UNCT resources for central infrastructure, security and technical support for the event's more than 800 national and international participants. The Colloquium focused on five goals, which reaffirmed the necessity for effectively engaging women in peace and security. It showed a high rate of partnership between UNMIL, UNCT and the GoL, in coordinating diverse actors under common objectives.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

The key to success for gender mainstreaming in policy and advocacy has been the comprehensive ability to address **a multi-stakeholder process, which has balanced relationships with the Government (MoGD), women's NGOs and CBOs.** This has connected the actors under the common goal of promoting the rights of women and girls through policy making.

**Building key entry points within the GoL, UN System and Civil Society has been successful at advancing these strategies.** The Government hosts two coordination mechanisms, which act as entry points for work at various levels - the lateral system of Gender Desk Officers across the ministries and a vertical system of County Gender Coordinators. Through building capacity for these entry points, there has been an improved **sustainability for the continuance of a significant impact in the overall policy environment,** namely, introducing gender as a cross-cutting issue and as a strategic development objective.

Entry points are also visible within the UN System. Mechanisms such as the UN Gender Theme Group (UNGTG), the Joint Task Force on SGBV, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) provide strategic coordination for partners within the UN Country Team. As co-chair of the UNGTG, the OGA works alongside UNIFEM to support the Government and the UN gender mainstreaming initiatives.

The second key to success has been harnessing the **existing political will for gender issues in the country.** That increase in political is the greatest promoter of continued attention to issues of women's empowerment and equality. This strategic approach has been **highly effective and efficient in advancing the agenda for women's rights.** Recognizing the political will,

the OGA and UN system has been able to choose its priorities and act where a comparative advantage is present.

The third key factor for success has been the emergence of key leadership in support for gender both within the mission and its partners. The presence of key women leaders (including Government representatives, civil society, and within the UN itself) in Liberia has increased attention to gender advocacy and policy. Results have been achieved by working to advance the will of the leadership on gender to move forward a strategic agenda. Within UNMIL, strong leadership provided by the SRSG and the mission leadership team has encouraged all offices and the military component to take the issue of gender seriously and to advance it as both a strategic and cross-cutting element in peacekeeping operations.

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## 6. Sexual Gender Based Violence: Nationwide Initiatives and Coordinated Responses

*Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) “calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls.”*

*Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) “calls on all parties to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict.”*

Since 2006, UNMIL has participated in the National Task Force on Gender Based Violence, chaired by the MoGD, which acts as the main body for coordination of the national response. A National Plan of Action on GBV, developed in 2006 by the Government, serves as a guiding document for the Government’s response and donor support to address this practice across the 15 counties, setting a timeline for ridding the country of SGBV by 2011.



UNMIL, through the Joint Government/UN Program on SGBV, has introduced two major sensitization campaigns: the Campaign against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2006-2008); and the Anti-Rape Campaign (2007-2008). These campaigns served as the primary vehicle for organizing, developing and disseminating important messages about the rights of women and girls in Liberian society, and constitute the first best practice. Partners have cited the campaigns as key to addressing SGBV through improved knowledge and information sharing, while women in the community mentioned the importance of campaign messages consistently.



Billboard used during the nationwide Anti-Rape Campaign

The Campaign against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) was launched in December 2006 under the authority of the Government of Liberia and the GBV Task Force with support from the UNCT and UNMIL. Its objective is to enhance humanitarian and community-based response to increasing awareness on SEA among the general public. This included increased knowledge about the United Nations' "zero tolerance" policy on SEA, access to reporting systems, and improved understanding about what constitutes GBV and SEA. The Anti-Rape Campaign was developed by UNMIL, in partnership with the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Gender

and Development, to publicize the country's amended rape law and widen knowledge on reporting and responding to rape. NGO partners held sensitization events based on the need of their constituency. Events included: comedy shows, community drama performances, anti-rape soccer games, concerts and dissemination of messages and information through radio stations, posters, T-shirts and billboards.

Together, these campaigns are responsible for improvements in knowledge about SGBV and options for redress. More women in the community know when to report a rape, where to go in the case of rape, what to do, and what to expect. According to Carole Doucet, UNMIL Senior Gender Adviser "in the last two years there has been an increase in the levels of men and women's awareness on women's rights and SGBV as well as reporting of rape cases. At the same time no one has reliable data yet to confirm a decrease in such crimes and cases." In focus groups women discussed their evolution to understanding and knowing their rights as substantial. There are also indications that women in the country are slowly starting to trust the mechanisms for accountability and know where to find them.

The second best practice for combating SGBV in Liberia has been enhancing the infrastructure for improved safety and security of women through targeted programmes. To enhance law enforcement response, the LNP Women and Children Protection Units (WCPU) established from 2005, have provided a resource for women and children who had been left particularly vulnerable by years of conflict. UNMIL and UNICEF assisted in training 15 trainers; since then, over 235 police officers have been trained as Women and Children Protection Officers and spread throughout the 15 counties. These officers, housed at police stations, provide a resource for women in the community who seek redress for SGBV. The recruits at the Police Academy also

receive training on gender and SGBV, preparing them in how to protect women and girls from these crimes.

According to some partners, Women and Children Protection Units have been effective at securing the environment for some women who feel safe and secure reporting to the units and are aware of their presence. Training and capacity building programmes have enhanced the operational ability of the units. Community members, rural and urban alike, cite the WCPU as a good and available resource for their safety. As a result, the units have seen a dramatic increase in the number of women and children accessing their services and an increase in the number of rapes being reported through this mechanism.<sup>18</sup>

A second programming element is focused on redress and judicial posturing. The Ministry of Justice’s SGBV Crimes Unit was established in 2007 to consolidate and speed up the process of prosecuting SGBV cases as well as ensure their appropriate response. The unit is responsible for coordinating the judicial response to SGBV cases from around the country. The unit conducts public education, including training for responders on integrative and collaborative assistance on SGBV, and has created a handbook on provider response. Additionally, a newly renovated Criminal Court “E” has been set up; and it focuses on the prosecution of sexual offences and responds to the backlog of SGBV cases in Montserrado County.

The Crimes Unit has led to improved relationships between responders. Training for responders focused on building relationship between the different groups of respondents and providers. The UNMIL Civil and Judicial Units worked with the SGBV Crimes Unit to create a SGBV handbook and training programmes for the responder community. Multi-stakeholder training for responders has improved coordination and communication between stakeholders. This has been crucial

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<sup>18</sup> Interview: Benetta Warner .

in responder attention to victims. Stakeholders see improved coordination as better response, and the NGOs involved are thankful for the new training resources.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Success in addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Liberia has been achieved by building coordination bodies strategically. By harnessing the political will to address sexual and gender based violence, resources have been delegated to increase buy-in and participation of partners. Additionally, programmes have been designed to make use of **limited resources while still promoting the capacity of long-term frameworks within the national context**. This has increased the **sustainability and efficiency** of programming, and promoted a sense of ownership on the national level.

Results have also been achieved from encouragement by the UN and GoL leadership for the parties to coordinate efforts. This is fundamental to reducing programming duplication and increasing communication between parties. The Joint Government/UN Programme on SGBV, for example, has had a strong effect in establishing and supporting **key partnership through programming activities**. Several networks for service provision have emerged strong, based on the formalization of pathways for responders. Given the large number of service providers (including INGOs and local NGOs) and responders (LNP Women and Children Protection Units), UNMIL is supporting institutions to boost their service delivery initiatives.

The response to SGBV has been highly streamlined by the Joint SGBV Programme and participation as an integrated UN. Led by an Interagency Steering Committee and the MoGD, the programme was created in 2008 to coordinate the response

and prevention programmes through the UN as well as with international and national partners. The programme is set up using the same five pillars of the National Plan of Action, with each pillar operating independently but reporting back to central leadership under a Programme Advisor. It has been a useful introduction to addressing coordination, and illustrates an integrated mission response to alleviating issues of SGBV.

Also extremely influential has been the fact that programmes have been based on strong needs assessment at the outset and are consistently monitored and evaluated. According to the Judicial Unit Focal Point within UNMIL, the diverse working environment creates confusion of the data reported.<sup>19</sup> Investigating the actual situation on the ground is critical. Several new reports have been particularly useful in understanding these complexities, including the cultural implications that are prominent. For example, the Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU) continually monitors its SEA campaign so that key diagnosis regarding trends can be made and addressed. Its work includes a 2008 report to determine the implications of SEA on children and women at the border points.

There are many challenges to addressing SGBV in Liberia. Given the long-standing conflict, as well as cultural norms surrounding sexual and gender based violence, there are limits to the work that the international community can undertake. It is important, however, to remove the excuse of culture or the impact of war for rape and sexual violence trends. Before the war, women in the country were highly empowered. It is, therefore, attitudes, behaviors and discriminatory systems related to accountability, rights, equality, and impunity that promote sexual offences. Hence the response must not be confined by the challenges of location but instead be empowered by it.

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19 Interview: UNMIL Legal and Judicial Focal Point.



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## 7. Women in Peacekeeping: Role Modeling and Enhancement of Human Security

*UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for women's inclusion across peacekeeping missions, urging on mission leadership to "expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel."*

**The deployment of female peacekeepers has recently become recognized as not simply "desirable, but an operational imperative."**<sup>20</sup> This is based on the presupposition that increasing the gender balance within a mission will increase the peace. According to Rachel Mayanja, Special Gender Advisor to the UN Secretary-General, "without women's participation in peace efforts there can be no peace and security."<sup>21</sup> UNMIL has slightly higher than average rates for female peacekeepers and police. Women constitute, on average, 2% of military personnel, 18% of police, 30% of international civilian staff, and 25% of national civilian staff.

Women make up 130 of the 720 UN Police (UNPOL) in Liberia. In 2007, the first all-female Formed Police Unit (FPU), composed of

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20 Strategies for Enhancing Gender Balance Among Uniformed Personnel in Peacekeeping, (March 2006).

21 Mayanja, 2006.

women from India, joined UNMIL. Since then, there have been three consecutive Indian battalions of approximately 112 women (and 25 men) serving in Liberia. Stationed at a base in Congo Town (a suburb of Monrovia), the primary responsibility of the unit is to protect UN staff within the country. This includes serving as



Women in Peacekeeping: Role Modeling and Enhancement of Human Security

guards for UN and local authorities (including President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf), providing security at local events, riot control, conducting night patrols in and around Monrovia, and assisting in building the capacity of local security institutions (including the LNP and AFL). In addition to mandated duties, the Indian FPU implements community outreach projects. Current programmes include providing medical services to the community, adopting an orphanage and school (where they teach dance and self-defense classes), and providing first-aid classes for women.

According to community members, the presence of the female police and peacekeepers in UNMIL has led to **enhanced physical safety and security**. Respondents cite such security-enhancing measures as the FPU night patrols, lighting system, and armed presence as critical. In the words of UNMIL's Senior Gender Adviser, Carole Doucet “ the new and important best practice in the case of the all female Indian FPU is the capacity of a women



only force to effectively implement formal security provision tasks while providing positive role modeling to citizens”.

*“Their presence (female Indian FPU) is our safety.” Focus Group Discussant, Congo Town.*

Of UNMIL’s 10,165 peacekeepers, 168 are female, and they are concentrated within the major troop-contributing nations of Ghana, the Philippines and Nigeria. The largest group of women serves as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> contingent of the Ghanaian Battalion, headquartered in the port city of Buchanan, in Grand Bassa County. The battalion’s 41 women serve in supportive roles, including medical and administrative assignments. Small numbers of women take part in community patrols.

Female peacekeepers of the Ghanaian Battalion have also increased security through new resources for intelligence gathering in Buchanan. Battalion members report that since women have started going on patrols with their male counterparts -- albeit in very small numbers -- Liberian women have become more active in reporting crimes or suspicious activities. This is particularly relevant in Buchanan where there is a sizable Muslim population. Ghanbatt’s female peacekeepers observed that Muslim women in Buchanan often face the double burden of religious and traditional barriers to their interactions with men, and would report only to female officers like themselves.

Female peacekeepers from Nigeria are concentrated in the second largest group and serve in and around Monrovia. The women are spread out among the Nigerian Battalions in the UNMIL, including NiMBATT, NiGCON and GBINOBA. Like their Ghanaian counterparts, they hold supportive roles, which are fully integrated into the work of their particular battalion. In

addition, the women from Nigeria perform outreach alongside their male peers, including free medical service, worship services for the community, and sponsorship of a Sunday school.

Another best practice is UNMIL female peacekeepers contributing to enhancing human security, particularly in the fight against SGBV. Focus Group discussants near the Nigerian Battalion in Monrovia cited the significance of the medical services provided by female peacekeepers as something that helped keep them and their family safe. Research shows that providing medical care and healthcare alongside military operations have been particularly effective in winning local support for keeping the peace.<sup>22</sup> The all-female FPU provides free medical services and clean drinking water for the community (concentrated in highly accessible areas around schools and hospitals). This has created a sense of calm and a reduction in poverty-motivated petty crimes (since people in the community no longer have to compete for scarce resources). The female FPU staff is not shy when they notice changes in the community; they will approach women and men they think might be having a problem at home, should they absent themselves or withdraw from activities. Community members interviewed said these interactions strengthen relationships and promote physical and human security.

It is especially important to highlight the effect of female police and peacekeepers in reducing the instances of SGBV in the community. It is well documented that victims of sexual violence are intimidated by male soldiers; the presence of women alleviates this sense of intimidation and reassures the victim of the benign intentions of the peacekeepers.<sup>23</sup> The all-female FPU has proven to be a resource in the UN-coordinated response to

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<sup>22</sup> Across locations, findings have shown that “female patients in health clinics, thankful for the care received and motivated to support the new order that provided it, have volunteered valuable tactical information.”

<sup>23</sup> Rachel Mayanja, 2006.

sexual violence, and is cited by the community as a deterrent and response mechanism.

The Unit acts as a deterrent for SGBV by keeping the area secure and by establishing strong communication networks with community members. The Unit also provides sensitization mechanisms for educating community members through frequent discussions about preventing rape. Finally, the FPU is a resource for women in the community to report experienced assault.

The FPU has participated in innovative and creative partnerships that have resulted in increased sensitization of Liberian women and girls to take on like roles. A third outcome is increased interest in Security Sector Reform (SSR) occupations for women in Liberia. To promote recruitment within the LNP, the Indian FPU and Nigerian women peacekeepers visited high school-age girls at a college fair on UN Peacekeepers Day. According to UNPOL and the LNP, the event was very successful and LNP officers reported a higher than average number of information forms being requested and returned, and a heightened interest by high schoolers to interact with the unit. Women and girls in the community report the FPU's presence as increasing knowledge about various careers that women are capable of undertaking.

Women also serve UNMIL as civilian peacekeepers, holding the mission's highest post, that of the SRSG, as well as its second highest, the post of Deputy SRSG for Rule of Law. In these roles women provide important mission leadership functions in all mandated areas of peacekeeping operations. Their presence has illustrated to the Liberian community and the international community that women are capable and relevant actors at the highest level of decision making for effective peacekeeping, recovery and development processes.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

### Keys to Success

- Support from SRSG (other mission leadership) and Government (MoGD)
- Visibility and concentration of units
- Independent vision and focus of unit
- Resources (including time) for outreach activities

In addition to formal tasks of security provision, the **significance of the impact** of female police and peacekeepers has been enhanced through the ability to create space for cross-cultural interactions. The all-female FPU has been **creative and innovative** in the activities they want to undertake, and the space and time to undertake them are an important component. The various medical outreach and support activities have promoted the provision of human security and intelligence.

To evaluate whether the increased physical and human security was directly related to the fact that the FPU personnel are women, analysis of other FPU units (predominantly male) was undertaken. The Indian FPU is one of five FPUs in Liberia, three of which are in Monrovia. The other units are comprised of battalions from Nigeria, Nepal, and Jordan. Interviews with staff of the four predominantly male units revealed that they viewed their mission in a more narrow way than the Indian FPU.<sup>24</sup> The all-male FPU, discussed their impact in terms of crime rates for armed robbery and assault, with little attention to the wider provision of human security.

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<sup>24</sup> The phrase predominantly male is used because while the Indian FPU has approximately 24 male members, the remaining four FPUs have an average of 2 women on staff, who work predominantly as medical personnel.

Another key to success has been support from the UNMIL leadership. The mission’s previous and current SRSG fully supported the recruitment and placement of the female FPU and seemed acutely aware of the impact they would make. The leadership supported the Unit by increasing its visibility at international events, drawing attention to their impact to the mission overall. These factors have created knowledge of their presence in the community and elevated security at the same time.<sup>25</sup> The Government has also supported the Unit. The MoGD described the “protection with a female face” as highly effective in ensuring that Liberia moves toward a path of inclusive security.<sup>26</sup>

All-female units were also successful if they had a clear idea of their mission and purpose. Mission and unit leadership encouraged the female units to develop their own outreach activities and to cultivate a greater sense of contribution. As a result, female peacekeepers had a more global outlook in achieving human security than their male counterparts, and utilized resources in an innovative way to increase that security. Female FPU members cite both the safety and the positive role modeling they provide as key motivators for their joining the UNMIL mission. Though they face challenges, they are very aware of their impact on women and girls, and they harbor a strong sense of personal responsibility for continuing this trend.

A final key to success is the level of visibility and concentration of the unit, and the **efficient and effective use of limited resources** to enhance support of the female peacekeepers. The more concentrated the groups of women are, the more successful they are at achieving the outcomes. The FPU’s concentrated efforts in areas of high visibility have increased both the feelings of peace and

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25 Interview: FPU Focal Point.

26 Comments at a wreath laying ceremony, from article in the Analyst titled “Female Peacekeepers Providing Hope for Women Victimized by Conflict” Monday, June 01, 2009.

security but also the attention to the groups and thus their impact on empowerment, role modeling and gender conditions.

Female peacekeepers from the Ghanaian and Nigerian Battalions are included here as a *potential* best practice, not as a best practice. The reason is that these peacekeepers hold supportive as opposed to direct impact roles. This reduces their visibility in the community and the amount of time they can interface with the local population. Despite this limitation, the female peacekeepers have identified a unique opportunity to impact the community through their interpersonal interactions and have used immense energy and personal time to participate in such activities.

*“In Africa, women have never shied away from the backbreaking work of family and home life. However, it has been taboo to consider them powerful. Now that women are driving tanks and using heavy military equipment there has been a signal that women are able to do the difficult things they have really been doing for years.”<sup>27</sup> UNDP Gender Advisor*

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<sup>27</sup> Interview: UNDP Gender Advisor.

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## 8. Elections: Widespread Mobilization of Women's Participation

*Security Council Resolution 1325 specifically calls on the actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, measures that ensure the protection of and the respect for the human rights of women, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police, and the judiciary.*

The 2005 election was a historic moment for women in Liberia. Fifty percent of registered voters were women, with 113 women standing as candidates. The first woman ever in Africa was elected as President. Five women Senators (15%) and 9 women representatives won seats. This was the result of grassroots efforts to connect women and women's NGOs to the electoral process through the MoGD, which served as the central coordinating body. A comprehensive plan for voter and civil education and outreach through localized networks focused on the overarching goal of allowing women to take advantage of their potential and participate fully in the electoral process both as voters and candidates.



“Fifty percent of registered voters in the 2005 elections were women”

National and international NGOs decided that the MoGD was the appropriate mechanism for carrying out civic and voter education campaigns. Empowered by early support and attention by the OGA, women’s NGOs were assigned

to work in specific rural areas, bringing the message to vote for women candidates in a highly localized manner. The Women’s NGO Secretariat (WONGOSOL) proved to be particularly useful during this period, coordinating local NGOs and connecting them with the resources and training available through the OGA. The OGA designed a training of trainers course that was very useful in spreading information about the candidates across the country through NGO partners in various locations. With relevant partner organizations provided by WONGOSOL, the OGA trained 120 women to serve as National Civic Educators. Once trained, educators worked in their communities to conduct door-to-door visits, and hold face-to-face meetings, town hall fora, and briefings with different civil society groups.<sup>28</sup>

This experience has led to increased political sensitization for women. Approximately 5,000 women were reached through training programmes coordinated by UNMIL in collaboration with the MoGD and NGOs. In many cases, these women served as multipliers, sharing the information they received with

<sup>28</sup> OGA Elections Report, 2005.



family members, neighbours, and friends. This represented a major shift in the role of women in Liberian political life, a tipping point that made them a veritable force in deciding the direction of the country.

Because of the centralized sensitization campaigns and decentralized information operations, women were inclined to participate in a highly active and inclusive manner. The National Elections Commission's Civil and Voter Education subgroup was tasked with creating voter programming and messages, and designing and disseminating culturally relevant sensitization campaigns to reach people throughout the country (including women.)<sup>29</sup> UNMIL's Public Information Office brought these messages to life with the production of radio programmes, dramas and jingles, and created billboards and posters that could be used across locations. A range of context specific and culturally relevant messages was developed to reach women in some of the most difficult locations. Focus group respondents describe being reached, on their level, through messages that were resonant and easy to understand.

Finally, UNMIL and OGA interacted directly with female candidates and supplied training, support, and mentoring for women candidates. The training of candidates was conducted by an international consultant through a partnership with the MoGD. Its primary goal was to enhance women candidates' self-empowerment and visibility and prepare them to participate in political leadership and decision-making positions at all levels. Lessons included public speaking, how to engage voters, how to prepare a platform, and how to interact with the media.

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29 Other group members included: IFES, EC Bilateral, UNMIL OGA, Electoral, Civil Affairs and Public Information, Government Ministries, UN Agencies, National and International NGOs, OXFAM, NDI, LCC, Inter-religious council and NEC.

*“Many had never worked in government, many were not politicians; for many it was our first time to participate in the elections and we felt like we were in a dark room. They [UNMIL] provided the light to us; they helped us to have confidence, to stand up on our feet.”* 30 Honorable Regina Sokan Teah

Training programmes meant that women were more likely to stand for elections and actually win more seats than ever before: 113 women were nominated to stand as candidates; 5 were elected as Senators (15% of the Senate) and 9 were elected as Representatives. The training programmes for candidates were very successful and increased women’s confidence to participate in the electoral process. This was the view of women legislators.

Perhaps nowhere is the coordinated impact of UNMIL on the elections more clear than during the month between the first and second (run-off) elections. While substantial work had preceded it, this abbreviated period showed a concentrated effort for all actors to come together in a highly coordinated manner. The subcommittee on voter and civic education facilitated spreading gender-sensitive messages, including the Wake up Early and Vote Campaign. The OGA advocated and lobbied within formalized bodies, both internal (UNMIL’s Electoral Division) and external (National Elections Commission) for critical resource needs, including the highly strategic application of vehicle and fueling resources, without which NGOs would not have been able to get to the rural areas. The composite of these actors was a month-long effort which secured women’s roles in the election and resulted in the election of the first female President in Africa.

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30 Women’s Legislative Caucus FDG, Honorable Regina Sokan Teah, Representative, 10th District.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

### Keys to Success

- Engaging local NGOs and networks (training of trainers created a network for increased sensitization)
- Messages specific to local issues, in a local dialect
- UNMIL/OGA attention to central committees
- Widespread sensitization and empowerment

Results were achieved through engaging local NGOs and networks within the elections process. The partnerships that were formed during this time were the vehicle to mobilizing women during the elections, and were cited by stakeholders as the single most effective way to mobilize women. Women's groups and NGOs became effective actors in advocating for changes in the electoral laws, registration process, civic and voter education. This increased the ownership by women and facilitated programmes that would be well accepted and successful. Because NGOs were responsible for their own approach, messages and tactics were highly localized, constituting a **highly effective and efficient use of resources** to reach a mutually chosen goal.

Creating local-level messages also meant adapting voter and civic education programmes and training programmes to the dates/times accessible to women in a variety of formats, enhancing their success. While methodology varied from party to party, approaches sensitive to women included a campaign that mobilized women to go from house to house, to marketplaces and to schools. Stakeholders across agencies agreed on the success of this approach. Key resource support facilitated every step of the process -- from vehicle to posters to office space for the first Women's NGO Secretariat (WONGOSOL). According

to community members, NGOs **created sustainable results for participatory and diverse civil society networks** to enhance the role of women and girls.

Another key to success was reliance on multi-stakeholder relationships to monitor and respond to problems in the process. Relying on NGO networks, UNMIL could be extremely responsive to problems as they arose, **creating innovative and creative solutions** and implementing through partners on the ground. For example, OGA staff highlighted a scenario in which women were not able to leave work at the market to register to vote. In response, OGA worked with the MoGD and local NGOs to carry out a market-level campaign, which meant providing assistance in the form of staffing for their stalls, thereby freeing them to go register or to vote. The plan was an innovative and creative result of partnering on local-level issues.

*“They [women] benefited more than other elections because it was their own methodology, and it was one that had a great impact for the dissemination of the information we wanted to get across.”* NEC Chairwoman Elizabeth Nelson

A third key to the success was the recognition of critical entry points within the system, including *main* electoral structures. This process promoted greater **sustainability for the overall mission and made the effects visible even after the election**. All work could not take place in the NGO sector, as connecting NGOs with the larger legislative machinery at work in the elections was extremely important to their success. At the policy level, the OGA worked to influence those bodies responsible for the elections, actively attending and advocating within institutional bodies, including the National Elections Commission, UNMIL’s Elections Committee, and the National Transitional Legislative Assembly.

Results were also the product of consistency and advocacy within the Electoral Advisory Division of UNMIL, suggesting that special measures should be taken to advance the role of women as candidates, to continue to call for a level playing field, and to provide technical advice and expertise for engaging women at all levels of the process.



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## Observations and Recommendations

This report highlights some notable progress on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping operations delivered by UNMIL in Liberia between 2003 and 2009. Facilitated by UNMIL and the Office of the Gender Advisor, alongside national and international partners, a number of forward leaning best practices have been successful for mainstreaming gender across sectors in post conflict in Liberia. Described in the preceding six chapters, they include:

- active and expanded involvement of women in the DRR process;
- dynamic recruitment for involving women in security sector infrastructure;
- capacity development of NGOs and Government institutions for engaging in advocacy and policy making;
- nationwide and coordinated initiatives to address SGBV;
- positive role modeling by civilian, police and military female peacekeepers;
- widespread grassroots mobilization of women as voters and candidates in national elections.

These best practices have had significant impact on the overall environment in Liberia, specifically having resulted in a positive and sustainable change in women's and girls' empowerment and rights. First, women live in a somewhat safer and more secure Liberia- as a product of novel awareness and protection mechanisms, improvement in outlets for seeking redress, and presence of women in the national Security Sector bodies and international peacekeeping community. Secondly, women are demanding and receiving increased resources and programs that meet their specific needs, through attention to women at the outset of process novel programs to increase their representation in formalized decision making bodies. Thirdly, women have been sensitized to be aware and empowered in the political and developmental processes and events of their country, through widespread and localized sensitization campaigns, and frameworks for inclusion into key policy processes. Together, these practices have been innovative, dynamic and creative in their approach and have contributed to increased and inclusive peace and stability in Liberia.

As a composite the best practices listed here have been developed through key partnerships, including UNMIL and OGA, which since its inception has used its will and capacity to impact the equality of women and girls, men and boys in the country. Support has come through crucial and forward leaning policies and dynamic leadership. The integration of gender into Results Based Budgeting frameworks, the preference of senior leadership to court the issue in high-level forums has lead to sustained support of mainstreaming throughout the mission. This integration has enhanced the cross cutting nature of gender within the mission and made gender a key part of the majority of activities in the civilian, police and military mission components. From an instructional standpoint this is the mission's greatest achievement.



These best practices were achieved through strategic planning and effective and efficient use of resources. The OGA has contributed many resources including its strategic leadership and expertise and so doing shown its ability to be a major and substantial component and section in any UN peacekeeping mission. In the transition from relief to development the office has been strategic in choosing its operational goals, working to identify appropriate stakeholders for each task and creating lasting local and national level frameworks for the continuation of this work. The use of annual action plans with specific attention to issues has been used to fulfill both the mission mandate as well as fit the country's current issues. By choosing strategic entry points, the office has been able to effectively apply its limited resource and personnel. Through effective coordination and political will the OGA support and facilitation exercises have resulted in a number of outcomes and results that will be rolled over into development work of the UN Country Team and others. This will be increasingly important as the mission implements the draw down phase.

Through the work of UNMIL, the OGA, key national and international partners, gender has also been enhanced into Liberia's national context. As a result the Liberian community has taken on gender as a cross cutting issue and as a development objective. As Minister Gayflor (MoGD) cites an increased attention, which occurs across institutions and personalities: "almost everything we do in this country must have a gender fact. Everyone is conscious, asking why women aren't there. People are now looking. They are very conscious of having women and even when they might not be there the awareness to ask where they are." The fact that this question is being asked shows the immense change in the mindset of the government and community- establishing a pattern of inclusion that is positive.

Upholding the mandate of UNSCR 1325 and gender mainstreaming in Liberia has not been an easy task, given the limited personal and fiscal resources, unstable situation, and a sensitive operational environment for gender issues. Drawing upon the best practices achieved and their impact on women and girls' rights a number of recommendations emerge for DPKO partners and peacekeeping stakeholders working in like contexts and missions. They include:

- Rely on localized networks and community-based initiatives: stakeholders need to use resources to cultivate and develop the skills and networks that exist organically within civil society. These networks can be a vital resource for the mission as well as other key partners.
- Establish and rely on effective leadership of women at all mission levels: having competent and committed women as key mission staff illustrates the importance of gender balance, and sends a message to the community that gender equality must prevail. Backing up women leaders through gender responsive budgeting and gender equitable staffing and staff retention is a vital operational step.
- Share information with the community through sensitization campaigns composed of localized messages: if created in a local dialect, and facilitated at the grass roots level, information campaigns can be very useful in getting the word out to women and girls. Stakeholders should also use these campaigns to draw information back from stakeholders- promoting two-way dialogue between partners.

- Use resource strategically, and where a comparative advantage is present: given the limited resources and time, it is important to identify and act on key priorities in regards to gender. Written plans, with performance indicators, timelines and strategic partnerships will facilitate this recommendation.
- Harness both international and national level will: vast political will for women's issues is a rarity and unique in the Liberian context. However, the roots of political will for gender are present in many environments and taking advantage of such is vital. By identifying key inception points within society the mission and acting in partnership with pertinent governmental bodies, stakeholders can move gender issues forward without political risk or instability.
- Introduce Gender as both a strategic objective and as a cross cutting issue (in the mission and society): gender is no longer but a social issue and has vital security, economic and infrastructure connotations. Steps should be taken to widen the lens of gender in the community and elevate recruitment of women in non-traditional sectors including in security institutions. This will create a sensitization, which will elevate the issue of gender within the community and constitutes a key strategy to build and sustain peace in a post-conflict country.



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