Women, peace and Security in Liberia:

Supporting the Implementation of Resolution 1325 in Liberia

A UN-INSTRAW Background Paper

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The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women promotes applied research on gender, facilitates information sharing, and supports capacity-building through networking mechanisms and multi-stakeholder partnerships with UN agencies, governments, academia and civil society.

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List of Abbreviation

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
ECOMOG	Economic Community Cease-Fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States
GOL	Government of Liberia
LNAP	Liberian National Action Plan
MoGD	Ministry of Gender and Development
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development fund for Women
UN-INSTRAW	United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNMIL-OGA	United Nations Mission in Liberia – Office of the Gender Advisor
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

1. Introduction

Peace is fragile and delicate in post conflict societies and the full recovery from the trauma caused needs time, commitment and patience. After fourteen years of armed conflict (1989-2003) Liberia has managed to establish a full functioning, democratic elected government that is highly committed to human development, equality, and sustainable peace. The only African nation that has a female head of state has proven its political will to move beyond and develop outstanding and gender friendly policies, among them a national action plan implementing Resolution 1325, which will be launched at the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security in March 2009.[1] Nonetheless, the country still faces the aftermath of its armed conflict which resulted in atrocities such as systematic rape, recruitment of child soldiers, and –as a result of these atrocities- the spreading of HIV. The international community and a large range of civil society organizations continues to support the challenges faced by the West African Nation in order to fully implement this new policy document that reflects the hope and ambition of Liberian policy makers.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is one of the international mechanisms of international law[2] that has become a vital rallying point for organizations and individuals around the world. Unanimously adopted in 2000, resolution 1325 was the first Security Council resolution to focus in detail on the negative experiences that women and girls face in conflict and calls for the need to include them into all levels of the peace process. Resolution 1325 also highlights the positive role that women can play in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery - in short, women's role as agents of change rather than as mere victims. The resolution embraces three core dimensions: participation of women in all levels of the peace process, protection of gender-based violence and prevention of armed conflict.

Following these central issues around women, peace and security the Security Council adopted Resolution 1820 on the 19th of June 2008 which directly addresses sexual violence committed against civilians. This resolution builds and is interlinked with Resolution 1325 and has been incorporated by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and is reflected in the Liberian National Action Plan (LNAP) on Women, Peace and Security.

In order to put the obligations outlined in international mandates and legal documents into practice different methods have been adopted by different countries. One of the most comprehensive ways to do so is the development of national action plans that outline and coordinate different responsibilities, timelines, sources and outputs of the different actors involved. In order to create ownership and accountability among those who aim to address issues around gender, peace and security an inclusive and participatory process is essential.

In collaboration with the international community and civil society organizations, the Johnson Sirleaf government has planned to implement Resolution 1325. This includes the promotion and the protection of human rights of all.

This background paper aims to give a short introduction to gender, peace and security issues in Liberia also in close relation to the action planning process that has been led by the Ministry of Gender and Development supported by the international community and civil society organisations.

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[1] More information available at: http://womenscolloquium.org/col.html
[2] According to Art. 51 of the UN Charter Security Council Resolutions translate into international "softlaw" and therefore bind the all UN member states to implement the obligations contained.

2. Historical Overview of The Roots and Outbreak of The Civil Wars and Internal Tensions in Modern Liberia

In 1822 the American Colonization Society,[3] a private organization, initiated the process of sending former slaves from the United States of America to the 36-mile long strip coastline of West Africa. Since the very beginning of this process the formation of modern Liberia was viewed with critical eyes by the black community in the US. It also caused violent tensions between the settlers and the local indigenous population already living there. The colony became home to over ten thousand settlers and freed slaves known as Americo-Liberians who, though constituting just five per cent of the population, dominated the political landscape. The territory became the independent nation of Liberia in 1847 but was only recognized by the United States in 1862.

The early stages of the fledgling nation were marred by economic crises, internal unrest and disputes between the local tribes and the European powers. In addition the discrimination and unequal power relations between the local ethnic groups (such as the Mandingos) and the freed slaves caused further tension on the ground.

In 1960, under Dr. William V.S. Tubman, independent Liberia became a member of the United Nations Security Council and three years later, it became a founding member of the African Union.[4] In 1975, under President William Tolbert, Liberia became a signatory party to the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS).[5] It was under President Tolbert that the infamous rice riots began that resulted in the armed conflict when the Libya-trained National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), entered the country on 24th of December 1989. While the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) tried to respond to the violence, many tribal groups joined the rebels and Liberia's first civil war began, in which thousands of civilians died.

In August 1990 a joint military intervention force, the Economic Community Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), was launched by the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) under Nigerian leadership.[6] Although ECOMOG forces made an effort to impose a cease-fire and initiate peace negotiations, its intervention and objectivity during the armed conflict was controversial as Human Rights Watch reported in 1993:

> *Since the NPFL attack on Monrovia in October 1992, ECOMOG has unofficially aligned itself with two of the warring factions, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), which are themselves responsible for serious human rights abuses. This has raised questions about ECOMOG's commitment to human rights as well as its ability to act as a neutral arbiter of the conflict.[7]*

In 1994 under UN Security Council Resolution 866[8] the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) deployed 368 military observers and associated civilian personnel with a mandate to:

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[3] Lee Fox, Early "The American Colonization Society, 1817-1840", The American Historical Review, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Jul., 1920)
[4] See African Union documents and under : http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAU/FOUNDERS/oau_Founders.htm
[5] http://www.ecowas.int/
[6] "Profile: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)" to be found at: http://www.africa-union.org/Recs/ECOWASProfile.pdf
[7] Human Rights Watch "Waging War to Keep the Peace: The ECOMOG Intervention and Human Rights", Volume 5, Issue No. 6 June 1993
[8] United Nations Security Council Resolution 866, adopted by the SC 3281st meeting on 22 September 1993, see: http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/513/89/PDF/N9351389.pdf?OpenElement

> *monitor compliance with other elements of the Peace Agreement, including at points on Liberia's borders with Sierra Leone and other neighbouring countries, and to verify its impartial application, and in particular to assist in the monitoring of compliance with the embargo on delivery of arms and military equipment to Liberia and the cantonment, disarmament and demobilization of combatants.[9]*

Meanwhile, Charles Taylor, the former Deputy Minister of Commerce under President Samuel Doe (1980-1989), who had been accused of embezzlement in Liberia and who had been imprisoned in the United States of America, escaped, returned to Liberia and became a rebel leader. A large part of the Liberian territory came under Taylor's authority in 1990 and remained so until 1997 when he won the national elections. Supporters of President Samuel Doe and former members of the AFL created the ULIMO in June 1991 but the organization was accused of serious human rights violations and subsequently fell apart due to tribal divisions.

After six years of civil war, the *Abuja Accord* was signed by Charles Taylor in August 1995 and in 1997, he was elected President with 75 percent of the votes. By this time over 200,000 Liberians had died and one million had fled their homes.

In 1999, a second civil war began when the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a rebel group alleged to be supported by neighbouring Guinea, entered Northern Liberia. By 2001, both the neighbouring countries of Sierra Leone and Guinea Conakry had become involved in the armed conflict.

In 2003 Taylor's government controlled only 30 percent of the country as the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MFDL) emerged in the South and by August 2003, following pressure from a variety of sources, President Taylor resigned ahead of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)[10] which was signed at the peace negotiations in Ghana with the support of ECOWAS and a number of former African leaders and Heads of States then in power. Following the signing of the historic agreement, a Transitional Government headed by Charles Gyude Bryant was set up and a United Nations Stabilization Force led by ECOWAS.[11] On 19 September, 2003, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established following the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509.[12]

Liberian women's active involvement in the Liberian peace process already began in 1994 with the conception of a movement for peace. the Liberian Women Initiative composed of women from all walks of life, regardless of their ethnic, religious, educational or socio-economic background. Through parallel negotiation and mediation approaches the women tried to influence the plot of the peace negotiations.

> *"The women of Liberia were fed up with the stalemate in the peace process and believed that by adding their voices, they could move the process forward and bring peace to Liberia. They believed that women are natural peacemakers, being good listeners and skilled negotiators.*

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[9] See UNOMIL mandate at: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/unomilM.htm

[10] *"[T]he Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 18 August reached by Liberia's Government, rebel groups, political parties, and civil society leaders, the Security Council today urged the parties to fully respect the ceasefire and to fully implement all of their commitments under that Agreement, following a ministerial-level briefing by senior officials of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)."* UN Security Council Press Release, SC/7858, 27/08/2003,
http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/sc7857.doc.htm (last visited: 28th of July 2008)

[11] UN Press release SC/7858, "Security Council Welcomes 18 August Liberia Peace Agreement, Reaffirms Readiness to Deploy Un Force by 1 October", Security Council, 4815th meeting (AM), 27 of August 2003 at http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/sc7857.doc.htm

[12] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509, adopted by the SC at its 4830st meeting on 19 September 2003, S/res/1509 (2003)see:
http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/525/70/PDF/N0352570.pdf?OpenElement

> *There had been several peace negotiations held in West Africa and Europe beginning with the first negotiations held in Freetown, Sierra Leone in the Embassy of the United States in July 1990. That meeting had been initiated by the Interfaith Council of Liberia (now called the Inter-religious Council). Subsequently peace negotiations had been held in Banjul, Yamoussoukro (I, II, III, IV) and Geneva.*
> *Initiatives conducted on women peace and security issues before the end of the civil conflict and after included:*
> - *The establishment of more women's organizations involved in advocacy, educational and livelihood activities, including Muslim women;*
> - *The Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Market Women's Fund- Building and renovating markets;*
> - *Campaigns to send the girl child to school;*
> - *Provision of scholarships for women and girls;*
> - *Networking among women groups ;*
> - *Women's involvement in sanitation and waste management;*
> - *Women's involvement in sustainable farming (Rice);*
> - *Increasing the number of women involved in advocacy;*
> - *The establishment of the Women's Legislative Caucus and Women's Chambers of Commerce;*
> - *Involvement of women in security sector reform is increasing (such as community watch teams);*
> - *Involving women in micro finance activities;*
> - *Advocating for the amendment of the penal code laws- rape law, domestic relations etc."[13]*

Civil society organizations such as the Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET)[14] among others were formed from the peace initiatives led by women, which have decisive input in the development of gender policies in post-conflict Liberia. Another initiative has been the Mano River Women of Peace Network (MARWOPNET) that joined to form the women of the Mano River region (Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone) at the focal point of the crisis in Liberia. The voice of MARWOPNET was so influential that the network was invited to peace talks on Liberia sponsored by the West African States (ECOWAS), which were held in Akosombo, Ghana. MARWOPNET was later asked to sign the peace agreement.[15]

Establishing the mission under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Secretary General decided in 2003:

> *to establish the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the stabilization force called for in resolution 1497 (2003), for a period of 12 months, and requests the Secretary-General to transfer authority from the ECOWAS-led ECOMIL forces to UNMIL on 1 October 2003, and further decides that UNMIL will consist of up to 15,000 United Nations military personnel, including up to 250 military observers and 160 staff officers, and up to 1,115 civilian police officers, including formed units to assist in the maintenance of law and order throughout Liberia, and the appropriate civilian component…[16]*

Following organized and democratic elections, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first female President of Africa, was elected on 8th November 2005 and was inaugurated on

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[13] UN-INSTRAW Interview with Etweda Coopers, Monrovia, December 5th 2008.
[14] Visit WIPNETs website at: http://www.wanep.org/programs/wipnet.html
[15] Expert Group Meeting on Democratic Governance in Africa. United Nations. December 2005
[16] S/res/1509 (2003); para. 1.

January 16, 2006. Almost three years into her first term of office, her Presidency is marked by gender sensitive reforms and the absence of armed violence.

3. Gender, Peace and Security in Liberia

Fourteen years of armed conflict in Liberia (1989-2003) have resulted in major institutional destruction including the breakdown of the social fabric and the fragmentation of society. Although Liberia is now in a post-conflict recovery phase, many challenges remain, that if not effectively and urgently addressed, can hinder sustainable peace and development in the country. Such challenges include the reform and reconstruction of the justice sector and the judiciary, strengthening the rule of law, reforming the police, army, border, immigration, corrections and other national security agencies and putting in place transparent, inclusive and participatory public institutions for the promotion of sustainable peace. These are all measures necessary for the establishment of sustainable peace and security, including the promotion of women's human rights, their protection and security and the prevention of all types of violence against women and girls.

In Liberia, during the conflict years, serious human rights abuses and war crimes were committed against civilians and especially against women and girls who constituted the major target of atrocities such as rape, other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. The recovery from the armed conflict and violence experienced and the establishment of a society that will enjoy inclusive peace, human security and gender equality highly depends on the recognition of major challenges and the coordinated planning of activities and initiatives to respond to such. The following sections aim to outline in accordance with the three dimensions of Resolution 1325 the core gendered security issues and the existing initiatives and programmes in place.

3.a. Participation of women in peace and security

Liberia now has an opportunity to change the status quo and to put in place mechanisms and institutions, policies and programmes that can respond effectively to the different needs of men and women and boys and girls living in this post-conflict society. The re-integration and rehabilitation of male and female ex-combatants and the estimated 40 percent of children soldiers, among whom were reputed to be 2000 girls,[17] for example requires strategic thinking, the establishment of effective systems and responding to the existing needs and challenges of the population in a gender-inclusive and gender responsive manner. The equal participation of men and women in reconstructing peace is not only a human right but such inclusive participation also contributes to the effectiveness of peace negotiations and conflict resolution and includes the needs and perspectives of women and girls at an early stage. Thus,

> *"The key message from the women [Liberian Women at a conference organized by UNIFEM in Washington] is that Liberian women are major stakeholders in the post-conflict reconstruction of their country. Mechanisms must be established, within the framework of implementation of the interim poverty reduction strategy, for women's effective participation in the formulation and reform of policies, including land tenure reforms, national security, and education"*[18]

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[17] Amnesty International, "Liberia: The Promises for Peace for 21,000 child soldiers", London, 2004, available at: http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR34/006/2004/en/dom-AFR340062004en.html (last visited 21th July 2008)

[18] UNIFEM, "Liberian Women Articulate Priorities for the Reconstruction of the Country", 12 February 2007, Announcement of Forum on Symposium on Gender and Development in Liberia in Washington DC., available at: http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=557 (last visited 21th July 2008).

Liberia has been an example of good practices in including both Liberian women and female role models from the international community, in institutions and programmes addressing the reconstruction of the country.

For example, within the **UNMIL peacekeeping** mission itself, there has been an extraordinary inclusion of women. In February 2007, an exclusively formed female police unit from India[19] joined the blue helmets in Liberia. It has been reported that their presence is a fruitful addition to the conflict resolution and peacekeeping duties of the mission and that they are providing role models of good practice to the Liberian security sector. The head of the unit, Ms Seema Dhundia, reports that her unit's presence has resulted in an increased number of Liberian women volunteering to join the national security forces.[20] The Secretary-General's Special Representative to Liberia, Alan Doss stated that "we know from police experience around the world that women officers are good at handling potentially violent situations."[21]

The length and complexity of the Liberian conflict destroyed an already problematic institutional structure which now needs to be reformed. Of critical importance to the situation of women and girls as well as men and boys, is the reform of the security sector, which includes a wide range of actors such as the police, army, border management and penal institutions, justice sector among others.[22] The on-going security **sector reform (SSR)** aims to achieve a quota of up to 20 percent women in both the army and the police force. This initiative is supported by President Johnson Sirleaf and these sectors are utilizing gender sensitive recruitment measures to achieve this goal. There remain major challenges to these reforms which come from displaced ex-combatants de-commissioned soldiers and other security actors who have lost their positions due to the reform of the AFL. A recent mapping of women in decision-making positions at the national level in Liberia revealed that although women occupy positions in the public and private sectors, their participation in political leadership and decision-making remains low, with only 14 percent representation in the Legislature, less than one percent (0.8 percent) in the Judiciary, 5.3 percent in government Bureaus and Agencies and 10.3 percent in Ministries. [23]

An assessment conducted in 2008 by the Geneva Center for Democratic Arms Control (DCAF) and the Women Peace and Security Network Africa (WIPSEN) demonstrates a need for increased female recruitment especially in decision making positions, adequate training for female staff, gender sensitive security policies, increased networking between female security sector personnel and civil society organizations, and increased funding and resources to mainstream gender within security sector institutions.[24]

Not only within the security sector but also more broadly, increased capacity and education is needed to **rebuild infrastructure** and the country's potential for development. If current educational disparities persist, girls will remain unprepared and be disadvantaged to compete in the future labour environment, including participation in political and economic decision-making processes. This severely affects the current reconstruction efforts to build a new Liberia based on an inclusive citizenship premised on equality, accountability, empowerment, participation and non-discrimination, as it limits the contribution and participation of women on equal terms.

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[19] "UN Envoy in Liberia commends India, as she welcomes new all-female police unit", 08 February 2008 | UNMIL | PR 10, http://unmil.org/article.asp?id=2656
[20] Hunt Alternatives, "Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action" updated version", International Alert, Women Waging Peace, 2004, p. XI
[21] UNMIL Press release, "UN Envoy Visits headquarters of the female Indian police unit", 23rd of February 2007, available at: http://unmil.org/article.asp?id=2031 (last visited 21th July 2008).
[22] See Ecoma Alaga, "Gender Perspectives on Security Sector Reform Process in West Africa –Case Studies of Liberia and Sierra Leone", DCAF, WIPSEN, 2009.
[23] Mapping conducted by Etweda Cooper, national consultant contracted by UNMIL-OGA.
[24] Ecoma Alaga, "Gender Perspectives on Security Sector Reform Process in West Africa –Case Studies of Liberia and Sierra Leone", DCAF, WIPSEN, 2009.

The equal inclusion of men and women in SSR, **disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR)** and transitional justice mechanisms and processes is important in order to respond adequately to the needs of the survivors of gender-based violence. It is crucial to ensure equal access to services and programmes for men, women, boys and girls and to pay special attention to the most vulnerable. The Office of the Gender Advisor of UNMIL (UNMIL-OGA) like other Gender Units in peacekeeping missions, supports the gender mainstreaming of DDR programmes and the engendering of other SSR initiatives. Yet, despite the effort of the Gender Units in peacekeeping missions, such units, as well as Gender Focal points in peacekeeping missions often remain understaffed due to lack of financial support and political will. As some researchers have highlighted with regards to UNMIL in 2004:

> *"The limited number of female military observers was one of the major challenges to the implementation of the mandate of the Gender Unit. At the time of the research [2004], there were no gender officers outside of the Monrovia area, making it impossible for the unit to monitor violations against women in the rural areas. The fact that civil authority had not been restored across the entire country contributes to hindering the activities of the Gender Unit. In addition, financial constraints and lack of manpower were also cited as reasons for the lack of gender officials outside the Monrovia area."[25]*

Despite the challenges, however, the UNMIL-OGA has contributed to the inclusion of 22,000 women in the DDR programmes funded by the international community, of which more than 13,000 of these have already been re-integrated into different economic sectors. Among those demobilized are 11,780 child soldiers including 2,700 girls.[26]

3.b. Prevention of armed conflict

The prevention of further armed violence depends on a transparent, inclusive, participatory and representative governmental system. This includes free and equal elections and access for all citizens to vote and take part in political activities. The participation of women in this process can feed into sustainable peace by adding a different perspective with an emphasis on social concerns as well as the needs of women and girls. In Liberia, women were encouraged to participate in the electoral process.

Forced urban to rural as well as rural to urban **migration** and migration for safety, shelter and refuge across borders resulted in various negative effects on women's social and economic well-being including the economic viability of women who, in most cases were unable to take their assets with them when fleeing. The large porous borders and the lack of enforcement during the conflict of existing cross-border regulations such as the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Peoples[27], aggravated the flow of refugees and illegal cross-border activities. This contributed to the sexual violence committed against women and girls as the lack of oversight and accountability made it easy for armed groups, criminals and others to move freely between the countries of the region after committing atrocities especially on women and girls.[28] It is therefore important to strengthen border controls between Liberia and other countries in the Mano River Region.

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[25] Festus B. Aboagye and Alhaji M. S. Bah; "Liberia at a Crossroads: A preliminary look at the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the protection of civilians", ISS paper 95, November 2004, p. 14
[26] Outcomes of gender mainstreaming by the office of the gender adviser: UNMIL: 2004-2006, p.1. available at: http://unmil.org/documents/OGA_Achievement_2004_2006.pdf
[27] John Agyei and Ezekiel Clottey, "Operationalizing ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of People among the Member States: Issues of Convergence, Divergence and Prospects for Sub-Regional Integration", available at: http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/CLOTTEY%20and%20AGYEI.pdf
[28] A Situational Analysis of the Women Survivors of the 1989-2003 Conflict in Liberia. A Research Report. Isis-WICCE, The Ministry of Gender and Development and WANEP.

Widespread displacement of communities resulted in the rise of women-headed families with women forced to provide for children, the elderly and the ill under extremely difficult circumstances. In this post-conflict context, as in so many others, the lives of people in communities and especially among the poor, often continue to be conditioned by fear and insecurity. For women in particular, the threat of sexual violence and rape continues.

Access to justice is also critical to preventing further outbreaks of violence in a post-conflict society. Research has shown that "institutional reform, in order to prevent recurrence of grave violations, is an important element of transitional justice. These reforms aim to prevent violent conflicts and human rights crimes, eliminating or transforming [the] structural conditions of its evolution".[29] A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in Liberia in 2005 to investigate "[…] gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as abuses that occurred, including massacres, sexual violations, murders, extra-judicial killings and economic crimes, such as the exploitation of natural or public resources to perpetuate armed conflicts, during the period January 1979 to October 14, 2003; [ ]."[30] In discharging its mandate, the TRC has faced many challenges especially with regards to the inclusion of women in the process.

Destruction of institutions during the war affected all Liberians, but particularly limited the access of women and girls to **education**, health services, justice and economic opportunities. Many schools in Liberia were destroyed during the conflict and this led to the frequent disruption of the educational programmes in communities and contributed to the number of school dropouts among primary and secondary students. Many children lost their parents, grandparents and all relatives. Additionally, social networks of young and adolescent girls were destroyed and fractured as school buildings were destroyed, closed or converted into refugee camps. Many women and girls became heads of households and unable to continue their education, were either forced into early marriage or prostitution.[31] Today, these girls are now part of the statistics of adult illiteracy.

Additionally, in Liberia, despite statutory provisions for the equality of women, **customary law** and practice prevails mainly in the rural and semi-urban areas, severely limiting women's rights, including the right to own property. There are also clear indications that women who break traditional gender norms experience a so-called "backlash"- often through stigmatization and isolation, and at times in violent forms, to make them conform to traditional roles and "rebuild" social equilibrium at the household, community and national levels. All of this compromises the unique opportunity that post-conflict Liberia has to rebuild the nation on principles of gender justice and equality.

3.c. Protection of civilians from gender-based violence

Sexual and gender-based violence has constituted major violations of international humanitarian and human rights law during the Liberian conflicts and has left many communities traumatized. According to reports from the World Health Organization (WHO), interpersonal violence is becoming more socially acceptable. In addition also weapons are more readily available. Studies conducted by the Ministry of Gender and Development, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the World Health Organization in 10 out of 15 counties with a sample of 2858 women and girls in Liberia

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[29] Le DDR et la Justice Transitionnelle, Deuxieme conference internationale sur le DDR et la stabilite en Afrique, RDC, 12-14/06/2007, UN/OSAA, 43p, p10
[30] Article IV a0 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Mandate, Enacted on May 12, 2005, by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly, the TRC Mandate is the Act That Established the Truth And Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia; available at https://www.trcofliberia.org/about/index/trc-mandate (last visited 21th July 2008)
[31] A Situational Analysis of the Women Survivors of the 1989-2003 Conflict in Liberia.pg 60.

indicate that rape accounted for 73.9 percent of cases of sexual violence of those sampled during the years of the civil war, with members of the fighting forces viewed as the main perpetrators.[32] Sexual violence is therefore a major security concern in Liberia that needs to be urgently addressed as reports about sexual violence continues to be reported on a large scale. The exact amount of such atrocities committed remains hidden. Referring to sexual violence during the conflict and in the current post-conflict period, the non-governmental organization Action Aid states that "not only the terrible consequences of this are still felt by many Liberian women today, but violence against women and rape continue unchecked."[33] Although it is reported that rape is the number one crime reported to the police, it is not yet clear to what extent the reporting of such incidences has increased as a result of lobbying and advocacy activities that have made women more aware of their human rights.

For example most of the women and girls associated with the fighting forces (WAFF) were not actual fighters but served as `bush wives` to male combatants, porters, cooks and sex slaves to multiple partners. As a result, many women and girls bore children fathered by various fighters who are now either dead or who take no responsibilities for the children. The consequent *culture of violence* has resulted in endemic domestic violence (physical, psychological and economic violence, sexual abuse, discrimination and marginalization) now an integral part of the fabric of gender relations in Liberia.[34]

Furthermore, the alarming rate of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) also exposes women and men as well as girls and boys to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Women are more susceptible to HIV due to their physiological makeup and therefore require additional attention. Liberia's official HIV/AIDS prevalence among women is 1.5 percent.[35] HIV/AIDS is increasingly regarded as a security issue that can negatively affect social and economic progress. The breakdown of the social structures that resulted from the conflict often mean that women of all ages can become caregivers and caretakers of family members and relatives. This can prevent girls from going to school and women from contributing to the workforce or engaging in political activities. In turn, such limitations weaken the economic and social participation of women into the productive labour force at a time when all members of society are required to contribute to aiding the recovery and reconstruction of the country.[36] Women are also doubly disadvantaged by HIV/AIDS, not just as victims of the infection who are stigmatised, rejected and isolated, but also as care givers of infected family members.[37]

In addition, there are several cases of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) perpetrated by UN peacekeepers and social and humanitarian workers,[38] that urgently need to be addressed.

It is crucial for the security situation in Liberia to respond to these human rights abuses and security threats in a strategic and sustainable manner. Resolution 1325 can assist in these situations and needs to be implemented by all relevant actors ranging from the international community, governmental institutions and civil society organizations on the ground. National Action Plans that take into account different needs and capacities of the

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[32] World Health Organization rapid assessment on GBV/SGBV in Liberia, 2005/2006
[33] Deen, Thalif, "Rape, Gender Violence the Norm in Post-War Liberia", IPS, 7th of May 2007, available at: http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=36833%0D%0D%0D%0D (last visited 21th July 2008).
[34] Government and UN Joint Programme to prevent and respond to Sexual and gender based Violence. Republic of Liberia. June 13, 2008.
[35] Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo/Information (LISGIS)
[36] Ancil Adrian-Paul. HIV/AIDS. Protecting Vulnerable Groups in Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action.2004. London
[37] Final Strategy Paper to Mainstream Gender in the PRS (2008-2011). 29th February, 2008. Unpublished.
[38] UN News Center, "UN probes allegations of sexual exploitation by peacekeepers in Liberia" 29 April 2005, available at: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=14131&Cr=Liberia&Cr1= (last visited: 28th of July 2008)

affected population, if carefully designed, can be significant monitoring tools that facilitate coordination, participation and evaluation of a comprehensive and participatory state response.

4. Supporting the Implementation of Resolution 1325 in Liberia

In collaboration with International Alert, the UNMIL Office of the Gender Advisor and other UN agencies and civil society organisations on the ground, UN-INSTRAW has supported the Ministry of Gender and Development within its process of taking the lead to develop the Liberian National Action Plan (LNAP) for the implementation of Resolution 1325. Different activities such as awareness raising about the resolution and assessing women, peace and security issues in addition to a mapping of the key stakeholders and ongoing activities have contributed to a comprehensive and ambitious policy document.

The UN-INSTRAW project on the implementation of resolution 1325 in Liberia had the following objectives:

- To support the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in Liberia by generating a national action-planning process on women, peace and security issues.

- To conduct a women, peace and security baseline assessment of existing government initiatives, awareness and capacity that will serve as the basis for the action plan.

- To raise awareness among government policymakers and other relevant stakeholders on women, peace and security issues, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

- To build capacity on how to develop and implement a national action plan on women, peace and security in the context of Liberia.

In 2006, UN-INSTRAW published *Security Equality, Engendering Peace: A guide to policy and planning on women, peace and security (UN SCR 1325)*, a tool that aims to support the national and organizational-level implementation of resolution 1325, specifically through the establishment of national coordination mechanisms and the development of NAPs.[39] This guide constitutes a key resource to support the project, which is aimed at generating a national action-planning process on women, peace and security issues in Liberia. A participatory planning process has been key during the complete action planning process.

In order to achieve this, the project has taken into account existing initiatives such as the outcome of the conference "Advancing Women's Human Rights in Peace-Building, Recovery and Development in Liberia", the draft "framework for development of the Liberian national action on the implementation of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security" and aims to embed its activities into the objectives of the recently established steering committee.

By conducting an assessment of the issues affecting women's peace and security in the country and by mapping the implementation of initiatives relating to resolution 1325 engaged in by key actors and other stakeholders, UN-INSTRAW aims to establish baseline data that can be compared to evaluation results and benchmarks formulated in the action plan. The assessment includes an analysis of the, awareness and capacity of

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[39] For more information about INSTRAW's action-planning process for women, peace and security, please see: Valasek, K. and K. Nelson. *Security Equality, Engendering Peace: A guide to policy and planning on women, peace and security (UN SCR 1325).* Santo Domingo: UN-INSTRAW, 2006.
Available online: http://www.un-instraw.org/en/docs/1325/1325-Guide-ENG.pdf

the implementing bodies and will inform the development of capacity building activities for the stakeholders as well as supporting the process of developing, formulating and implementing a comprehensive and sustainable national action plan on resolution 1325.

4.a. Planning for Action on Women, Peace and Security in Liberia

Many policy and programmatic initiatives to implement resolution 1325 have had already taken place in Liberia by a wide cross-section of stakeholders but often such initiatives have not been systematically or sustainably implemented or documented. To redress this, a coordinated and coherent national effort has been put in place in order to ensure effective and full implementation of this ground-breaking mandate. The development of the Liberia National Action Plan has many advantages including:

Awareness-raising: Resolution 1325 has been in existence since year 2000, yet many people both at the national and rural levels do not have an in-depth understanding of it. Developing the national action plan strengthens awareness, increases knowledge, builds capacity and promotes sensitization of the resolution and its mandate to promote women's advancement, thus contributing to prioritizing and placing the issue of women's peace and security at the centre of the national and institutional agendas.

Comprehensiveness: The LNAP aspires to be all-encompassing, ensuring that all relevant issues are highlighted and all stakeholders are targeted. Liberia's NAP will provide the space for a critical and constructive analysis of the peace and security situation of Liberian women. In-depth consultations with a diversity of stakeholders including with developed countries with action plans of their own and post-conflict countries in the process of developing plans, will result in strengthened coordination and mapping of on-going initiatives related to the implementation of the resolution.

Coordination and coherence: The LNAP highlights the importance of the role of the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) as the lead agency for the coordination of activities, policies and programmes at all levels. The LNAP will also provide an opportunity to catalyse greater coordination and consensus among stakeholders around the key challenges for the implementation of resolution 1325.

Ownership: An inclusive and participatory process such as that engaged in for the LNAP that promotes ownership and a sense of responsibility among all stakeholders is critical for its full and effective implementation. Without such ownership, implementation of the plan is likely to fail.

Accountability: The LNAP emphasizes accountability on the part of all stakeholders including government, civil society, the private sector and others. Increased awareness promotes personal and institutional accountability and provides clarity on the responsibilities of each stakeholder that is named in the plan.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting back: The LNAP outlines mechanisms for systematic and strategic monitoring and a rigorous evaluation process which includes reporting time frames, benchmarks and monitoring indicators.

Sustainable resources: Without sustainable resources to ensure effective implementation, the NAP will be ineffective. Such a plan must therefore be accompanied by a dedicated budget to promote and ensure sustainable implementation. The development of the plan therefore provides the opportunity to identify gaps in current funding and to approach donors for additional resources.

4.b. Going through an inclusive and participatory process

Since 2007 the framework for the national action plan was initiated by the Liberian Government, UNMIL OGA and International Alert and was conceptualized at the national conference entitled "Advancing Women's Human Rights in Peace-Building, Recovery and Development in Liberia" in which 300 women from around the country participated in spring 2008.[40] The outcome of this conference has not only been the catalyst for a dialogue on the implementation of resolution 1325 but has also contributed to the drafting of a "framework for development of the Liberian national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security". Increasing the government's capacity to implement such a NAP and embedding the planning process in strategically collected baseline data, enhances its the sustainability and potential success.

In August 2008 an inter-agency team (including with an international consultant supported by UN-INSTRAW and a national consultant supported by UNMIL-OGA) was established and seated in the MoGD. Supported by institutions such as UNDP, UNFPA, International Alert, the Danish Refugee Council, WIPSEN and governmental and nongovernmental actors, the team provided the input included in the LNAP.

The Liberian National Action Plan (LNAP) was developed through a rigorous process of inclusive consultation involving roundtable discussions, bi-lateral interviews and discussions with a number of key stakeholders. These included Government of Liberia (GoL) representatives from key line ministries, the Women's Legislative Caucus (WLC), local authority structures, rehabilitation institutions, national security agencies, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Women's Committee and the Liberian Institute for Statistics and geo-Information Services, (LISGIS). Civil society stakeholders included representatives from, local, community based and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media institutions, religious organizations and others. In addition representatives of the private sector (finance and micro-credit institutions), United Nations agencies, various departments of the UNMIL,[41] as well as members of the donor community were also consulted.

The objectives of the interviews and discussions were to assess issues affecting women's peace and security, and to map women's positions and decision-making power in institutions and agencies. It was also necessary to identify projects directly or indirectly related to the process of establishing 1325 and to raise awareness and promote knowledge of the text and intent of the resolution and the importance of issues affecting women's peace and security. Additionally, the mapping process, supported by UNDP, was designed to identify issues and to highlight gaps that need to be addressed.

The completion of the mapping process was followed by a one-day consultative meeting that brought together over 50 participants to discuss issues emerging from the process and to validate the mapping results gathered from local, international and community based NGOs that are knowingly or unknowingly engaged in projects related to resolution 1325.

Highlighted below are the three overarching goals developed to guide the NAP which aims to:

- Enable women to participate fully and effectively in Liberia's peacebuilding reconstruction, recovery and development processes at all levels, including at the decision-making levels through economic, political and other types of empowerment;

- Strengthen and develop the protection policies, mechanisms and procedures that provide security for women and girls at both the national and the personal levels

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[40] UN News Center, "Advancing women's rights critical to Liberia's development – UN envoy" at Advancing women's rights critical to Liberia's development – UN envoy
[41] A list of the organizations, agencies and institutions consulted can be found in the Appendix.

which also promote their human rights and prevents the perpetration of all types of gender-based violence against them;

- Provide women ,youth and girls the social services, including health, education and social welfare benefits that will support the development and strengthening of their capacities and that will enable them to function as full and equal citizens in the process of uplifting Liberia.

The Plan will focus its priority activities and implementation strategy at the community, national and Mano River Union region levels**. Six** priority areas have been identified as:

- Psycho-social support and trauma management for the reconstruction of women's psyche and holistic reintegration and rehabilitation into Liberian society
- The protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and the prevention of all types of violence against them
- Women's participation and involvement in shelter, land use and climate change issues
- Women's empowerment for inclusion, participation and promotion at all levels of Liberian society
- Coordination, coherence and capacity building
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the implementation status and the progress made in realising the activities set out in the LNAP.

The activities highlighted under the Plan will be priority activities phased throughout the three year period of implementation and outcomes will be designed in short, medium and long-term goals.

The LNAP `living document` that can be adapted according to changes in the Liberian context and its implementation is not limited only to the initiatives it highlights but to additional activities and measures that can be initiated as necessary to the work of the Ministry of Gender and Development. Reporting requirements will be due at the interim period of eighteen months and a final report will be presented at the end of 36 months. Monitoring structures will include an Observatory of NGOs as well as the existing National Steering Committee that will be reformed to monitor the Plan's implementation.

Liberia's 1325 Plan will support the operationalization of policy documents already in existence in the country, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action and the Women's National Action Plan. Additional policies that support the Plan include the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Human Rights Charter, the recently adopted United Nations Resolution 1820 on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/52/231) as well as those contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century" (A/S-23/10Rev.1),.

5. The Way Forward –the Implementation of the LNAP

The Liberian National Action Plan will be launched at the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security on International Women's Day the 8th of March 2009.[42] A variety of national and

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[42] Colloquiums Website available at: http://womenscolloquium.org/col.html

international stakeholders will be present and the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Liberia will enter the next phase: the implementation of its National Action Plan on resolution 1325.

A workshop held by UNIFEM[43] aiming to brainstorm a framework on the implementation of the LNAP initiated the discussion on the required monitoring and implementation process including the prioritisation of performance and impact indicators included in the LNAP. Especially with respect to the unique momentum of the International Colloquium it is essential to aim to guarantee continuity of the implementation process, obtain ownership and create a sustainable sense of accountability to the activities and responsibilities of the different actors outlined in the LNAP.

Some of the further priorities for the successful implementation of the LNAP include:

- Developing and strengthening the capacity of the MoDG to oversee the process and all stakeholders to collect relevant data;
- Create a NGOS Observatory that serves civilian oversight activities;
- Continue to hold the steering committee meetings on an ongoing bases to ensure coordination of the different actors and dynamic exchange of information;
- Coordinate the data collection process that feed into the indicators established in the LNAP;
- Establish review and reporting mechanisms that reflect the work realities of the different stakeholders but also provide comparable information and data;
- Continue to raise awareness about women, peace and security;
- Conduct internal and external evaluation exercises that ensure continuous monitoring of all activities;

It is important to ensure that the dialogue established between civil society, the GoL and the international community during the development of the LNAP continues during its implementation. Coordination and reporting of the different activities is essential to increase the effectiveness and visibility of the efforts made towards gender equality, sustainable peace and security for all, in Liberia.

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[43] "Workshop on Indicators of Peace Consolidation from a Gender Perspective: The Case of Liberia *Including SCR 1325 & SCR 182",* Monrovia, February 19-20, 2009

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