

Security Council Resolution 1325:  
Civil Society Monitoring Report  
2011

# Liberia

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A project of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders

# Republic of Liberia

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## I. Women, Peace and Security Profile

### A. Nature of the Conflict

The country today known as Liberia initially took form as a colony of former American slaves. The Americo-Liberians arrived in 1822, and the colony stayed accountable to the United States until 1847 when it officially became an independent country. From 1847 and 1980, Liberia was ruled by a series of Americo-Liberian presidents in a period marked by gross inequalities between the ruling minority and the predominantly rural majority, which was comprised of Liberia's 16 indigenous ethnic groups.

Tensions in Liberia first came to a head in April 1979 when the Liberian military opened fire on marchers protesting recent increases in imported rice prices. One year after the riots, in April 1980, a military coup overthrew then President William Torbert, placing Liberia under the rule of Samuel Doe, who served as dictator for the next ten years. Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper identifies two broad causes of the conflict—systematic exclusion of significant portions of the population and Liberia's economic collapse. Both of these causes began in the 1970s, but were exacerbated by the Doe Regime.<sup>1</sup>

In 1990, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia led by warlord Charles Taylor, launched their first rebellion against the Doe regime. Between 1990 and 1996, factions formed all over Liberia, each taking hold of different communities at different times. Early in the conflict, one of these factions, the Independent National Patriotic Front, killed Doe. However, their leader, Prince Johnson, failed to rally support as president and fighting continued. Taylor gained control of the territory outside of Monrovia, effectively ruling all of Liberia except the capital city. In 1997, after several attempts at peace agreements, Taylor and the other warring factions finally

agreed to hold presidential elections, which Taylor won in a decisive electoral victory.

For many Liberians, electing Taylor was the only way to bring peace to the country. Unfortunately, other factions continued to fight even after Taylor was elected, and full faction fighting broke out again in 2000. This continued until 2003 when Taylor bowed to international and local pressure, and agreed to leave Liberia for exile in Nigeria.

The 14 year civil conflict resulted in an estimated 270,000 casualties, and countless more displaced, traumatized and without access to basic services. In 2003, after the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Liberia began the process of rebuilding under the Transitional Government. This government stayed in power for two years, until 2006 when the current President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her government took office.

### B. Impact of Conflict on Women

Women endured a large portion of the violence during the conflict. Sexual violence was pervasive during the Liberian civil war. In 2005, the World Health Organization estimated that 82% of women were subjected to multiple forms of violence, and 77% experienced rape.<sup>2</sup>

Women also played a number of different roles during the civil war. As in many conflicts, some women served as combatants, reaching the nominal rank of general in various rebel factions.<sup>3</sup> Many other women's groups played a significant role in the peacemaking process, protesting in Liberia during Taylor's presidency and then again in Ghana during the final 2003 peace agreements. This movement toward peace has become an iconic representation of the role that women can play in conflict resolution internationally, and has been well-documented in a wide range of materials, particularly the movie *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*<sup>4</sup> and is discussed in further detail under Indicator 2.

### C. Relevant Policies

Today, eight years after of the end of the conflict, Liberia is still in the process of rebuilding. The country currently ranks 162 out of 169 on the Human Development Index.<sup>5</sup> The country is currently faced with a rapidly growing population, combined with high poverty rate of 83%, and a number of serious problems, including a low literacy rate and a high rate of maternal mortality.

Population	3.48 Million
Literacy rate	58.9%
Adult Literacy Rate: Females as a % of Males	86%
Gross Primary Enrollment Rate	91%
Female	86%
Male	95%
People living on below \$1.25 dollars a day	83%
Population growth rate	4.1%
Fertility Rate	5.1
Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live	1,200
Life expectancy	55.5

Data according to the HDI Report and the World Development Indicators

2 Omanyondo, Marie-Claire. "Sexual Gender-Based Violence and Health Facility Needs Assessment." World Health Organization. 9-29 September 2005.  
 3 Jones-Demen, Annie 2009 pg 108.  
 4 *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. Dir. Gini Reticker. Fork Films, 2008.  
 5 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

Many members of the international community view Liberia as successful in implementing the four pillars of Security Council Resolution 1325, and with good reason.<sup>6</sup> Liberia is currently home to the first female president in Africa, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a female special representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Ellen Løj, and also boasts an unprecedented female peacekeeping police force from India. While these are clearly commendable accomplishments, there is also a great deal of work left to be done. Women's political representation remains concentrated at the top, and rates of sexual gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse remain high. Although Liberia's overall GDP has increased, there is little evidence of overall improvement, particularly in the lives of rural women.

Liberia was the first country to develop a National Action Plan on 1325. This plan, in conjunction with key gender-related policies including the Gender-Based Violence National Action Plan, and the National Gender Policy, provides guidelines for work around gender equality. The 1325 NAP deals with ten strategic issues, broken down among the four Pillars. In addition, with the support of UN Agencies, the Government of Liberia is also implementing four joint programmes (UNJP), including the UNJP to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Gender Based Violence, UNJP on Food Security and Nutrition, the UNJP on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment, and the UNJP for Employment and the Empowerment of Young Women. Since the creation of the NAP in 2009, the Ministry of Gender and Development has also established a 1325 Secretariat, tasked with implementing and monitoring SCR 1325.

## II. Data Presentation and Analysis

### Methodologies

#### *Desk Review*

The majority of information for this report, particularly the quantitative data was gathered by an extensive desk review of reports and studies conducted by government, international non-governmental groups and other civil society members in Liberia.

#### *Focus Group Discussions*

Three Focus Group Discussions were conducted in different counties in Liberia: Gbarnga (Bong County), Monrovia (Montserrado County), and Tubmanburg (Bomi County). The purpose of these discussions was to provide qualitative data relating to several of the GNWP indicators particularly Indicators 1, 7, 8, 11 and 12. These focus groups consisted of a group of 8-10 active participants and a number of other observers. The participants consisted of members of the GNWP-Liberia organizations WIPNET and WONGOSOL.

Due to financial and travel constraints, focus group discussions were conducted at the end of already-planned WIPNET and WONGOSOL meetings. Invitations were extended after each meeting to the full group, and those that wished to stay then participated. In order to mitigate the time burden of taking part in these discussions, the number of questions used in the discussion was limited to 15. The majority of discussants work either as farmers or as market women, so the discussions were kept to under an hour also to respect these other obligations. In addition to the time limitations, there were also communication challenges. The group was conducted with the help of a translator first from English to Liberian English and then to other relevant local languages--including Kpelle and Gola.

#### *Written Surveys*

Due to transportation constraints, written surveys with the same 15 focus group questions plus 5 additional questions relating to the work of civil society organizations were distributed to members of the Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia. These surveys were distributed, collected by WONGOSOL and then transcribed by the consultants.

#### *Stakeholder Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders including government ministry staff and members of civil society.

### A. Participation

#### **Indicator 1 - Index of women's participation in governance**

In spite of recent advocacy efforts, Liberia currently does not have any quotas or requirements for the number of women participating in politics. At the end of this year's Legislative session, the Gender Equality Bill was tabled, and will be reconsidered again once they reconvene after the upcoming elections. As it stands, all appointments to ministries are made by the president, and all legislative seats are earned through election either through candidacy as part of one of the country's 32 political parties, or as an independent candidate.

#### *Executive/Ministries*

The current president of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is a woman. Unfortunately, the leadership and participation of women is not replicated throughout the system. For example, out of 20 ministers, only 5 are female (25%). It is positive to note, however, the diversity of sectors led by female ministers. The ministries include:

<sup>6</sup> UN-INSTRAW report 2009 "Liberia breaks new ground for women, peace and security" [http://www.un-instraw.org/index2.php?option=com\\_content&do\\_pdf=1&id=853](http://www.un-instraw.org/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=853)

Ministry of Justice and Attorney-General: Christina Tah  
Ministry of Agriculture: Florence Chenoweth  
Ministry of Commerce and Industry: Miata Beysolow  
Ministry of Gender and Development: Varbah Gayflor  
Ministry of Youth and Sport: Etmonia Tarpeh

However, within the ministries, women are consistently under-represented. For example, the Ministry of National Security, includes only 13.4% women (40 out of 298).<sup>7</sup> The Ministry of Justice similarly has 13% women.<sup>8</sup>

#### Legislative

Out of 64 representatives, 9 are women (14%), and 5 of the 30 senators are women (16.7%). Women's leadership in the House is limited, with only 5 female Committee Chairpersons out of 39 (12.8%). The committees chaired by women include:

Committee on Gender Equality and Child Development: Korpu Barclay  
Committee on Commerce and Industry: Haja Siryon  
Committee on Public Works: Victoria Lynch  
Committee on Human and Civil Rights: Kuku Dorbor  
Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia: Regina Sokan Teah

In the Senate 3 out of 32 committees are headed by women (9%). These include:

Committee on gender equality and child development: Clarice Jah  
Judiciary Committee: Gloria Musu Scott  
Budget and Finance Committee: Jewel Howard Taylor

#### Local/Municipal

Municipal government in Liberia is broken down by county and then by district. The counties are governed by Superintendents, and the districts are governed by District Commissioners. Locally, there are currently 6 female Superintendents, out of 15. All Superintendents are appointed by the President. The Superintendents include:

Nimba County: Christania Dagadu  
Montserrado County: Grace Tee-Kpaan  
Grand Kru County: Rosalind T. Sneh  
Grand Cape Mount County: Catherine Watson-Khasu  
Grand Bassa County: Julia Duncan-Cassell  
Bong County: Lucia F. Herbert

Unfortunately, there was no data available on other local municipal staff, including District Commissioners, the appointed local governance directly below Superintendents. In addition to the state staff, local governance structure also includes a parallel traditional leadership system including Paramount Chiefs, Clan Chiefs and Town Chiefs. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, women comprise approximately 5% of this traditional governance structures.

#### 2011 Elections

Since the beginning of the election season, many international and Liberian NGOs have partnered with government and international donors to provide support to aspiring female candidates. For example, the National Elections Commission, UNDP and International Alert jointly held a training of female aspirants. The training was intended to provide women with

7 "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

8 "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

fundraising skills, logistical knowledge and political campaign strategy. Over 400 women participated in the trainings, which were held in five counties throughout Liberia.

Unfortunately, in spite of these efforts, numbers of female candidates remain low. As of 16 August, the number of registered aspirants was finalized. In the Senate, out of 98 candidates, 10 are women (9.8%), and out of 795 candidates in the House of Representatives, 91 are women (13%).

Efforts are also being made to raise awareness among voters. Of those now registered to vote, 877,980 (49%) are female, and 920,279 (51%) are male.<sup>9</sup> The voter registration numbers were not disaggregated by gender during the 2005 elections, so cross-election comparison is not possible at this time.<sup>10</sup>

#### Analysis

Although these numbers appear low, the resounding opinion of women spoken to is that more women are participating in politics now than they were ten years ago, both in government and within their own families and communities.<sup>11</sup>

*"Now women can be representatives, paramount chiefs. Women are taking part in politics now, and they have a President. But at first it was not like that."- Gbarnga, Bong County<sup>12</sup>*

*"The work that women are doing in this county is more than before. For women to come stand among men and to talk, it used to be too hard. The men would put women in the kitchen. But not anymore. The women are there to talk."- Tubmanburg, Bomi County<sup>13</sup>*

That's not to say challenges do not still exist. According to focus group participants, challenges include lack of access to finances, lack of time, and lack of education. Finances, according to National Elections Commission's Gender Officer, Jابه Kawa, remain the primary barrier for female political aspirants.<sup>14</sup> In addition, many women spoken to said that it in many places, particularly outside of Monrovia, there are still significant socio-cultural barriers to women's participation. While, again, the general opinion was that there has been improvement, women are still sometimes barred from participating in traditional governance mechanisms, and are not recognized as figures of authority.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the opportunity to do gender mainstreaming in governance at an accelerated pace may have suffered a setback during the 2011 Elections considering the relatively poor performance of women candidates. The percentage of women in the National Legislature dropped from 14% to 11.8%. The number of women in the Senate dropped from five to four, while the number of women in the House of Representative dropped from nine to eight. Two out of nine women representatives of the 52nd. Legislature were re-elected, meaning seven lost their seats, while six new female members were elected. Of women in the upper house, one re-elected junior senator and three senior senators are joining the 53rd legislature. A total of 33 lawmakers lost their seats in the elections, indicating that the results are not a consequence of a systematic crusade bordering on gender.

#### Indicator 2 - Percentage of women in peace negotiating teams

Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement

Women Signatories: 0%

Women Mediators: 0%

9 National Elections Commission. "Preliminary Report of 2011 Voter Registration Statistics." 14 March 2011.

10 Personal Interview with Jابه Kawa. Monrovia, Liberia. 2 August 2011.

11 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

12 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

13 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

14 Interview with Jابه Kawa. Monrovia, Liberia. 2 August 2011.

15 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

Women Witnesses: 17%

Women in Negotiating Team: 3 women participated in the formal negotiating team, Theresa Leigh Sherman, Mary N. Brownell and Amelia A. Ward.

According to a study from UNIFEM on women's participation in peacemaking, the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement that brought an end to the 14 year long Liberian Civil War involved no women signatories or mediators. 17% of the witnesses were women. Unfortunately, no data is available on the number of women involved in the negotiating team. While these numbers are regrettably low, they are also only part of the story. The movie *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* and other sources document the integral role that women played in achieving peace in 2003.

The Liberian civil war commenced in December 1989, and lasted for over fourteen years. There were over thirteen attempts to end the civil crisis, but they each were met with little success. Women became involved in efforts as far back as February 1994 with the formation of the Liberian Women's Initiative, when women blocked the Roberts International Airport to prevent the warring factions from landing in order to pressure them to engage in peace talks.

In 2003 another round of fighting erupted. The women's peace movement began around this time, when the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) a program of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) initiated an active protest and began advocating for peace.<sup>16</sup> The movement is known for its diversity, joining thousands of women of various ethnic backgrounds, faiths, etc. under the same cause.<sup>17</sup> Identified by the white T-shirts and head-ties that they wore, women held vigils in churches and mosques, protested at Monrovia's City Hall, UN agencies, Embassies, and held daily sit-ins on the Monrovia Airfield as well as other towns in Liberia. They endured difficult weather conditions — sunshine, rain and thunderstorms — and faced armed forces sent by then President Charles Taylor to disrupt the demonstrations.<sup>18</sup> When the peace negotiations began in Accra, the women mobilized both in Monrovia and in refugee camps in Ghana to attend. At one point, the women physically barred parties in the building from leaving until they reached an agreement. These actions continue to inform the actions of women in Liberia today.

Some of the demands made by the women included

- An immediate ceasefire
- No warring faction leadership in the transitional government
- Immediate disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes, including of female combatants
- Deployment of peace keepers
- Elections as soon as possible

*Two of the three awardees of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize are President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and peace activist Leymah Gbowee. The award is a testament to Liberian women's important contribution to peacebuilding.*

### Indicator 3 - Index of Women's Participation in the Justice & Security Sector

#### Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Security Sector Reform has been an ongoing process in Liberia. Regarding gender, the government has set the policy goal of 20% women in the army and the police force.<sup>19</sup> Recently, relevant justice and security sector stakeholders took part in a gender mapping. The report

<sup>16</sup> Sewell, Erica. "Women Building Peace: The Liberian Women's Peace Movement." *Critical Half Bi-Annual Journal of Women for Women*. Fall 2007. Vol. 5 No. 2 pp. 15.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.myhero.com/go/hero.asp?hero=womens\\_peace\\_movement\\_liberia\\_08](http://www.myhero.com/go/hero.asp?hero=womens_peace_movement_liberia_08)

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.myhero.com/go/hero.asp?hero=womens\\_peace\\_movement\\_liberia\\_08](http://www.myhero.com/go/hero.asp?hero=womens_peace_movement_liberia_08)

<sup>19</sup> "Women, Peace and Security in Liberia: Supporting the Implementation of Resolution 1325 in Liberia," International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, March 2009.

has been validated, and was launched at the end of September.

According to the forthcoming report, challenges to involving women in the SSR process include:

- Limited resources available to ensure the effective implementation of gender-sensitive policies
- Limited access to remote areas
- Lack of logistical support in certain security institutions
- Low attendance by senior officers in security institutions to gender-related meetings and trainings
- Limited recruitment of qualified women in various security institutions
- Limited monitoring and evaluating of activities
- Lack of coordination with community-based redress structures

Civil society members also noted understaffing due to the lack of human and logistical resource and a lack of will to ensure the effective implementation of gender sensitive policies as significant barriers to a gender-sensitive SSR process.

#### Women in Military

Out of 2,017 trained soldiers in the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) 74 were female (3.7%). Women are excluded from service in the infantry, but serve in support units.<sup>20</sup> There are currently 6 female commissioned officers out of 97 (6.2%). The AFL's recruitment policy was drafted by DynCorp International, a global government services provider in support of U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives, and is currently being reviewed by relevant government ministries.<sup>21</sup>

	Women	Men	Total
AFL HQ	2 (11.1%)	16	18
Brigade HQ	17 (1.1%)	1,525	1,542
AFTC	4 (3.1%)	125	129
LCG	1 (2.5%)	39	40
AFL Band	5 (9.8%)	46	51
LogCom	45 (19%)	192	237
Total Personnel	74 (3.7%)	1,943	2,017

#### Women in Police

Out of the 3,931 members of the Liberian National Police (LNP), 580 are women (14.8%).<sup>22</sup> Out of 534 senior positions, 34 are women (6.8%). According to Amelia A. Itoka, the chief gender officer for the LNP, all police stations have female officers assigned to them.<sup>23</sup> However, she also notes that female officers can be difficult to recruit to assignments in rural areas outside of Monrovia. This is primarily because of a lack of incentives and adequate facilities for female personnel.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

<sup>21</sup> "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

<sup>22</sup> "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

<sup>23</sup> "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

<sup>24</sup> "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

The LNP also includes the Women and Children Protection Services (WACPS), a unit specifically tasked with addressing violent crimes against women and children. The unit was established in September 2005 through an agreement between UNICEF and the LNP. It has a presence in all 15 counties, and out of 241 officers, one third are women.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Women in Judiciary*

According to Liberia's most recent CEDAW report, women occupy 0.8% of the judiciary.<sup>26</sup> Two of the five Supreme Court judges were women until recently when Gladys Johnson retired. Out of 16 Circuit Court Judges, 5 are women, and women comprise 13% of the total Ministry of Justice staff.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, there is no current data on the local judicial officials, known as magistrates.

#### *Paramilitary Institutions*

Within the security sector, there are also a number of paramilitary institutions that are responsible for achieving the 20% female recruitment goal. Compared to the other security institutions, paramilitary structures are making strikingly good progress. The Liberian Corrections Facilities, for example, has 17% female staff, and with 30% female staff, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) has the highest number of women employees in the security sector.<sup>28</sup> Hopefully the forthcoming SSR report will include more in depth analysis into this trend.

### **Indicator 4 - Percentage of women in peacekeeping missions, disaggregated at all levels**

#### *UNMIL Military Personnel*

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been operating in Liberia since 2003. According to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' (DPKO) numbers, out of 130 Military Experts, only 3 are female (2%), and 204 of the 7,782 troops are women (2.6%).<sup>29</sup>

#### *UNMIL Police*

Out of 445 individual police, 58 are women, (13%), and out of 843 staff in formed police units, 127 are women (15%).<sup>30</sup> The formed police unit staffing includes the all-female police unit deployed from India, which has received a great deal of international attention since their deployment in 2007. It is difficult to evaluate the full impact of this force, as there does not appear to be a formal study available yet.<sup>31</sup> However, members of the police unit and others believe that it sets a positive example for women who aspire to serve in the security sector.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to these officers, there are also 28 currently deployed corrections personnel, out of which 4 are women, approximately 14%.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Additional Liberian involvement in peacekeeping*

According to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Liberia does not contribute troops to any current peacekeeping efforts.

25 UN Focus Vol 7 No 3 March-May 2011 pp 20.

26 Government of Liberia. Initial to Sixth Periodic Review to the CEDAW Committee. 2009.

27 "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

28 "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

29 Department of Peacekeeping, "Statistics by Mission: For the Month of July 2011."

30 Department of Peacekeeping, "Statistics by Mission: For the Month of July 2011."

31 For additional reading on women's participation in peacebuilding, visit <http://www.peacebuilding.no/eng/Themes/Women-peace-and-security/Publications/Women-s-participation-in-UN-peacekeeping-operations-agents-of-change-or-stranded-symbols>

32 "Women, Peace and Security in Liberia: Supporting the Implementation of Resolution 1325 in Liberia," International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, March 2009.

33 S/2011/72 Paragraph 63

### **Indicator 5 - Number and percentage of women participating in each type of constitutional or legislative review**

#### *Land Commission*

6 Commissioners, 3 women (50%)

The Land Commission was established in August 2009, and has a mandate of 5 years. The Commission is tasked with proposing, advocating and coordinating ways to reform the land policy, laws and programs in Liberia.<sup>34</sup>

#### *National Elections Commission*

7 Commissioners, 3 women (43%), including a female Co-Chairperson

The National Elections Commission's role is to administer and enforce all laws relating to elections in Liberia. They act as an independent electoral authority intended to ensure free, fair and transparent elections.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Governance Commission*

5 Commissioners, 2 women (40%)

The Governance Commission was established as part of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003. Its role includes five mandate areas including political and legal reform, public sector reform, civic education, national identity and national visioning, national integrity system and monitoring, evaluation, research and publication. The Commission was created with the mandate to advise, design and formulate appropriate policies to achieve good governance. This includes, for example, overseeing the decentralization process in Liberia.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Law Reform Commission*

3 Commissioners, 1 woman (33%)

The Law Reform Commission was formed in 2009 at the recommendation of the Governance Commission. It is tasked with supervising the law reform process in Liberia. This includes providing advice on the creation of new legislation, discussing how to reform current laws, and oversee the harmonizing of the current laws.

#### *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Mandate ended 2009)*

9 Commissioners, 4 women (44%)

#### *Independence Commission on Human Rights*

7 Commissioners, 3 women (43%)

Read more about the TRC and INCHR under Indicator 9.

### **Indicator 6 - Percentage of CSOs in Task Forces on SCR 1325 and 1820 (out of total TF members)**

#### *1325 Observatory*

In December 2010, the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) invited civil society organizations to apply to become members of the 1325 Observatory. The Observatory is tasked with performing independent monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Liberian National Action Plan from the civil society perspective, which will be done in five of Liberia's 15 counties. They have developed their monitoring indicators and methodology and are currently producing their midterm report.

34 <http://www.lc.gov.lr/>

35 [http://www.necliberia.org/page\\_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=MTAx](http://www.necliberia.org/page_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=MTAx)

36 <http://www.goodgovernanceliberia.org/overview.html>

The Observatory is comprised of 17 members, including:  
 Women and Children in Action for Development  
 West African Network for Peacebuilding, Liberia  
 Montserrado Rural Women  
 Medica Mondiale  
 Aiding Disadvantaged and Traumatized Women and Girls  
 Liberia Returnee Women for Self Empowerment  
 Liberia Women Media Action Committee  
 Servants of All Prayers  
 Liberia Females Law Enforcement Association  
 Action for Community and Human Development  
 Association of Disable Female  
 Logan Town Women Development Association Inc  
 Women Development Association of Liberia  
 Youth for Community Academic Development Services  
 Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia  
 International Alert  
 MUSUNAMA Development and Empowerment Program

In addition to the 1325 Observatory, there are also National and County Steering Committees that are entirely staffed by government. There is also a Technical Working Group comprised of both civil society and government.<sup>37</sup>

The Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Taskforce is another government and civil society joint effort to monitor issues pertaining to SCR 1325 and SCR 1820. The Taskforce meets monthly to gather statistics and discuss current challenges and good practices in addressing SGBV in Liberia.<sup>38</sup>

## B. Prevention and Protection

### Indicator 7 - Number of sexual and gender-based violence cases reported and percentage of cases investigated, referred, prosecuted, and penalized (out of total reported)

#### Legal Definition

The Rape Amendment Act was signed into law in 2005. The law defines rape as follows:

#### Section 14.70

Offense: a person who has sexual intercourse with another person (male or female) has committed rape if:

1. He intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus, mouth or another opening of another person with his penis without the victims consent.
2. He/she intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person with a foreign object or with any other part of the body (other than the penis) without the victim's consent.
3. The victim is less than 18 years old, provided that the actor is 18 years or older.
4. Gang rape: A person has committed gang rape a first-degree felony, if: he or she purposely promotes or facilitates rape or agrees with one or more persons to engage in or cause the performance of conduct, which shall constitute rape.

Implementing this law has proven difficult over the past six years for multiple reasons. An

<sup>37</sup> Personal Interview with Abratha Doe. Monrovia, Liberia. 1 August 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Deddeh Kwekwe 10 August 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

assessment done by the MoGD's Joint Program on Gender-Based Violence identified several challenges in implementing this law and other GBV related services. These challenges include:<sup>39</sup>

- Low rate of prosecution of rape cases
- Excessive pre-trial prison time for accused perpetrators
- Shortage of social workers in health facilities to support GBV survivors
- Fast turnover of staff trained in clinical management of rape
- High number of rape cases being dismissed
- Magistrates trying rape cases which are not under their jurisdiction
- Poor selection of jurors
- Delays in evidence collection and investigation
- Poor linkages in the justice delivery system
- Lack of transportation to convey prisoners to prison

In addition, the law has been criticized for being inconsistently drafted. As consultants for the UNMIL Gender Office, White and James, point out in their gender analysis of laws in Liberia, "We notice with great concern that the law was not well drafted in line with international comparable standards of legal drafting, therefore it tends to have the character of superfluity, sentimentality and redundancy..."<sup>40</sup> Specifically, amendment attempts to be gender neutral in the commission of the act of rape. However, it was not well integrated into the parent law, which uses explicitly male pronouns in reference to perpetrators.<sup>41</sup> In their analysis, White and James also note that this law is a "missed opportunity" as it fails to address marital rape, and does not address a vital inconsistency within larger Liberian legislation that requires corroboration of testimony from the alleged victim to convict.

#### Reported

The MoGD collects data from a variety of sources including the Ministry resources, the LNP, and civil society and community-based organizations. These resources are channeled through the SGBV Taskforce and the GBV Unit of the MoGD. According to Deddeh Kwekwe, the Gender-Based Violence Coordinator at the GBV Unit, the Taskforce meets once a month to discuss challenges and good practices.<sup>42</sup>

As a way of avoiding duplication in tracking cases, the GBV Unit, with assistance from the Norwegian Refugee Council, implemented a referral card system whereby survivors are issued a card at the initial reporting location (e.g. hospital, NGO office, police station), which is then used to track her/his progress through the system without double counting based on misunderstandings, etc.<sup>43</sup>

In 2008, 553 cases of SGBV were reported. In 2009, 532 cases reported. According to the GBV Unit's recent monthly reports, 31 cases of GBV were reported from January to April 2011.<sup>44</sup> The vast majority of survivors of GBV have been female.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, only 49% of survivors accessed healthcare.<sup>46</sup> Further information was not available to the researchers.

#### Investigated

<sup>39</sup> "Liberia National Action Plan Report", The Ministry of Gender and Development, Government of Liberia. October 2010.

<sup>40</sup> White, Seodi and James, Rosemarie. "An Analysis of Laws from a Gender Perspective in Liberia." UN Mission in Liberia. 1 August 2009. pg 22

<sup>41</sup> White and James 2009 pg 22

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Deddeh Kwekwe 10 August 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Deddeh Kwekwe 10 August 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

<sup>44</sup> Monthly Reports, GBV Unit, Ministry of Gender and Development, January-April 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Monthly Reports, GBV Unit, Ministry of Gender and Development, January-April 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Monthly Reports, GBV Unit, Ministry of Gender and Development, January-April 2011.

As mentioned under Indicator 3, the LNP has a unit, the WACPS, dedicated to the protection and prevention of sexual gender-based violence, as well as other forms of gender-based violence and other threats to the safety of women and children. Unfortunately, in spite of many of these officers being very well trained, the unit lacks resources vital to seeing cases through.<sup>47</sup> In a 2009 study, Schia and de Carvalho note that, "Budgets for logistical follow up are not provided for, the equipment provided does not fit the working routines of the LNP, and while the WACPS might function to some extent when looked upon separately, when seen in relation to other rule of law institutions...few efforts are made at addressing the system comprehensively."<sup>48</sup> According to focus group discussions, unless a case is followed up on by the survivor or civil society members, these cases will often not be given the necessary priority to gather evidence and arrest perpetrators. This perceived lack of follow through is reported to be one of the main reasons why women do not report instances of SGBV.<sup>49</sup>

#### Referred

Once the case has been investigated, it is brought to the local magistrate. In many circumstances, the role of the magistrate is to conduct a preliminary hearing to determine whether there is enough evidence to proceed with a trial. If there is found to be enough evidence, the case is then further referred to the circuit courts. However, under the current legislation, the magistrate does not have the authority to conduct a preliminary hearing in SGBV cases. These cases are processed by the magistrate, and then sent directly to the circuit court.

According to the monthly report, 40% of survivors accessed the LNP, but only 22.5% access the courts.<sup>50</sup> This suggests a fairly significant gap between a woman's initial reporting of an instance of SGBV, and carrying that case to the courts. Unfortunately, no additional statistical information was available.

However, interviews and focus group feedback suggest that several obstacles often exist in following up on reported instances of SGBV, including authority exerted by traditional leaders, and improper use of authority by magistrates who will sometimes conduct preliminary hearings.<sup>51</sup> Traditional leaders, including Clan and Town Chiefs, may try to mediate these cases on their own, either due to a lack of awareness of, or a lack of trust in the magistrates and the state judicial system. These decisions are then either challenged or acquiesced to by the survivor and their family, again based on their level of awareness and trust in the legal system.

#### Prosecuted

To date, there is a limited amount of information publicly available on the number of SGBV cases prosecuted. However, as capacity of the justice and security sector and civil society both continue to develop, more efforts are being made to monitor this phase in the process. The hope, particularly in civil society, is that court monitoring will lead to increased accountability, particularly within the police and the judicial system. For example, the Norwegian Refugee Council has recently partnered with the WIPNET program of WANEP to engage in precisely this monitoring.

To pilot the project, WIPNET will begin monitoring in 5 counties, with the hope to eventually branch out to all 15. The purpose of the monitoring is to be able to follow up on sexual and gender-based violence, to know how these cases are being handled in court. To the best of their ability, WIPNET will send two of its members, at least one of whom is literate, to sit in court and follow all of the cases. According to WIPNET Program Director, Lena Cummings, this is a significant improvement on past efforts at court monitoring which were usually limited to the cases that were brought to their attention by community members.<sup>52</sup>

47 Schia and de Carvalho, 2009 pg 9

48 Ibid pg 15-16

49 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

50 Monthly Reports, GBV Unit, Ministry of Gender and Development, January-April 2011.

51 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

52 Interview with Lena 15 August 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

#### Penalized

Information is unfortunately limited as to the number of cases that result in punitive action against the perpetrator. Under Liberian law, a person accused and subsequently convicted of SGBV qualifies for a life sentence. While, on paper, harsher penalties may appear to be a strong and positive statement by the government against the committal of such acts, focus group discussion suggests that the severity of this sentence may act as a deterrent for survivors who are considering reporting their attacks.<sup>53</sup>

#### Analysis

In terms of additional support and resources for survivors, according to Ms. Kwekwe from the GBV Unit, the MoGD currently has access to the Endowment Fund, designed to provide survivors with financial support.<sup>54</sup> However, this funding can only be accessed by SGBV Taskforce members. So far, there is no research on the extent to which this fund has been used to assist SGBV survivors.<sup>55</sup> The government and NGOs/INGOs also have in place a limited number of safe houses for survivors to go and stay to recover, particularly while their cases are being tried. There are currently at least 2 functioning, with plans for the construction of 5 more throughout the country.<sup>56</sup>

Unfortunately, these resources remain inadequate for addressing the issue of SGBV in Liberian communities. The majority of feedback from the focus groups and surveys suggest that while SGBV is still a significant issue in communities, there is a reduction in the number of reported cases, which could be due to the limited access to justice for women.

*Yes. It is a serious problem. We don't have the power to fix it so we refer it to the police and we follow the cases. We don't like it to stay in secret. It used to be a family issue but now it needs to be in public. People need to talk about it.- Gbarnga, Bong County<sup>57</sup>*

There is also a concern for the lack of attention paid to those who survived SGBV as a direct result of the conflict. The World Health Organization's 2005 rapid needs assessment revealed that of the 1216 women spoken to approximately 82% of the respondents were subjected to multiple forms of violence during the conflict. In addition to that, 78.1% of the violence experienced involved sexual touching and 77.4% of respondents experienced rape.<sup>58</sup> None of the women who had experienced violence received medical attention. 81% of those women said this was because the services were not available.<sup>59</sup> Programs like the Endowment Fund have not assisted women dealing with fistula and other physical and psychological complications from these experiences. In fact, the general impression from the focus groups is that many women have gone unprovided for.

53 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

54 Interview with Deddeh Kwekwe 10 August 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

55 Interview with Deddeh Kwekwe 10 August 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

56 CEDAW Implementation Taskforce Meeting, 28 June 2011, Ministry of Gender and Development. Monrovia, Liberia.

57 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

58 Omanyondo, Marie-Claire. "Sexual Gender-Based Violence and Health Facility Needs Assessment." World Health Organization. 9-29 September 2005.

59 Omanyondo, Marie-Claire. "Sexual Gender-Based Violence and Health Facility Needs Assessment." World Health Organization. 9-29 September 2005.

...the government has not paid attention to women who were victims of rape and disease. They do not have access to medication or help for their issues. Medical interventions did not cover all of the counties. They have lots of women who were never treated. And because of our culture women cannot come and say I am sick. Most of the time a woman will not tell a stranger that they are sick. Because it is a stigma to tell that you are sick but they are suffering. - Gbarnga, Bong County<sup>60</sup>

In addition, while the general impression is that more women are going to the police, many survivors still encounter socio-economic barriers to reporting the cases. Some of these barriers include pressure to resolve the issue within the family, lack of education about available options, and lack of transport or finances to travel to the police station to report or follow up on the case.<sup>61</sup>

In light of these challenges and the government's limited capacity, some communities have developed alternative channels to addressing SGBV and other issues. As part of their training programs, for example, many of the women in WIPNET's 23 branches have undergone conflict resolution and mediation training. Many of these branches have also built what WIPNET calls Peace Huts, also known as Palava Huts, where members of the community can come to have conflicts discussed and resolved. To date, there are 17 WIPNET Peace Huts in Liberia. According to Lena Cummings, WIPNET Program Director, the peace huts serve as a space for women to discuss their issues. In communities with peace huts, almost every day the women go there just as you go to your office. Because they are more vocal on women's issues, they have sensitized the community on women's issues and people tend to see them as peacebuilders and peacemakers. If there is a conflict, or issues of violence, they are taken to the peace huts. So far this year, the 17 Peace Huts have mediated a combined 163 cases. Of those cases, 66 were SGBV related, while 97 cases accounted for other forms of violence such as murder, battery, neglect, etc.<sup>62</sup>

### Indicator 8 - Number and quality of gender-responsive laws and policies

The 2009 National Gender Based Violence (GBV) Plan of Action was developed to provide appropriate skills to health and psychosocial providers, reform the legal system, to efficiently and effectively deal with issues of violence; establish outreach services all aimed at reaching out to the survivor. The aim of the Plan of Action is to minimize GBV by the year 2011. The Government of Liberia (GOL) has given the plan a budget of \$15,225,000 for the collaborative effort of government ministries, international non-governmental organizations and the United Nations to implement.<sup>63</sup>

There are no laws in Liberia against the practice of Female Genital Mutilation. However, a recent court case in Monrovia found two women guilty in the high profile Ruth Berry Peal case. In this case, Peal brought a lawsuit against two women from her husband's community, where she lives, for taking her by force and conducting FGM as part of a Gola ethnic ritual, in spite of the fact that she was not Gola herself.<sup>64</sup> The court found the women guilty after a month of deliberations, and the judge cited both the Liberian Constitution and article 4(1) of the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women, which entitles women respect for life and integrity and security of person.<sup>65</sup>

60 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

61 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

62 Interview with Lena Cummings 15 August 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

63 Government of Liberia. National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A multi-sectoral plan to prevent and respond to GBV in Liberia, a Summary. <http://webapps01.un.org/vawdatabase/uploads/Liberia%20-%20Summary%20of%20NAP%20on%20GBV.pdf>

64 Equality Now. "Liberia: Ensure justice in the case of Ruth Berry Peal". 8 July 2011. <http://www.equalitynow.org/node/781> Accessed on 3 September 2011.

65 Equality Now. "Liberia: Ensure justice in the case of Ruth Berry Peal". 8 July 2011. <http://www.equalitynow.org/node/781> Accessed on 3 September 2011.

As cited in Indicator 7, the Rape Law was enacted in December 2005. Since then, a number of awareness campaigns have been launched both by government and civil society to increase knowledge of the Rape Law and the various channels available to survivors of SGBV. Unfortunately, as also discussed in Indicator 7, the law itself was not well drafted or integrated into the parent legislation it sought to amend.

Section 16.3 of the Liberian Penal Law allows for abortion when a licensed physician believes the pregnancy would substantially risk the mental or physical health of the mother, if the unborn child has any serious mental or physical defects, or if the pregnancy resulted from rape. The law has been in place since July 1976. However, very few women know this option is available to them. Additionally, licensed practitioners who are willing to carry out abortions are extremely difficult to find. Additionally, it is worth noting that Section 16.3 does not apply to the prescription, administration or distribution of drugs or other substances for avoiding pregnancy, whether by preventing implantation of a fertilized ovum or by any other method that operates before, at, or immediately after fertilization.

One of the many challenges to enforcing the laws in Liberia is in reconciling the statutory laws with the customary. Liberia officially has a dual legal system, with the customary law being supervised by the Ministry of the Internal Affairs.

This is gradually changing. Legislature, with support from women's civil society groups, has begun passing laws that encroach on this divide. For example, the Act to Establish the Devolution of Estates and Establish Rights of Inheritance For Spouses of Both Statutory and Customary Marriages, also called the Inheritance Law, was passed in 2003. The law defines all marriages, including customary marriages as legal within Liberia. The text reads:

*All customary law marriages shall be legal within this Republic and the rights, duties and liabilities of the customary wife shall likewise be accorded to all customary wives, consistent with and pursuant to the provisions contained in the act adopting a new domestic relations law, known as Title 9 of the Liberian Code of Laws Revised, 1973, which is hereby fully incorporated, as if quoted verbatim herein.*<sup>66</sup>

This means that a women in traditional marriages can inherit her husband's property and keep her children in the event of his death, and gives her the right to draft a last will and testament.

Similar to the Rape Amendment, the Inheritance Law includes inconsistencies that have caused unnecessary challenges in enacting. The primary conflict is regarding the age of consent, which in Liberia legally is 18, but in the Inheritance law is set at 16. Additionally, the law fails to take into account other challenges as they relate to the Liberian context. As a result, the law has seen some resistance, for example from head wives of polygynous relationships who are concerned about what this new legislation means for their marital system.<sup>67</sup>

The 2009 comments from the CEDAW Committee voiced concern over the lack of incorporation of CEDAW into national legislation, and encouraged the development of a more comprehensive legal framework to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women.<sup>68</sup>

In the broader scope of gender-based violence, Liberia also still lacks domestic violence legislation, perpetuating the divide between private and public forms of violence and discrimination against women.<sup>69</sup> In addition, there is also no explicit legislation to address sexual exploitation and abuse in schools, and no punitive system in place for perpetrators.<sup>70</sup>

66 White and James 2009 pg 23

67 White and James 2009 pg 25

68 CEDAW/C/LBR/CO/6 Concluding observations of the CEDAW para 22

69 White and James 2009 pg 37

70 SR Reports 2008 A/HRC/9/15 para 31

In conversations in focus groups, women are generally seen as being more aware of their rights now than ten years ago. Participants in our focus group discussions attributed this primarily to workshops by government, and particularly by civil society, aimed at educating women about particular laws and women's rights. However, access to the text of laws in Liberia still remains a challenge.<sup>71</sup> Collaborative efforts such as the Judicial Institute are assisting in the continued development of the website [liberilii.org](http://liberilii.org), which seeks to make Liberian legislation accessible to anyone with internet connection.

### **Indicator 9 - Number and nature of provisions/recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other transitional justice reports on women's rights**

In June of 2009 the "TRC Final Report, Volume II, Consolidated Report" was released and UNDP printed and distributed 1,500 copies across the nation. With regard to issues on women in conflict, the TRC quoted: "The strong links between transitional justice, development and gender equality have been overlooked and underdeveloped in both theory and practice. Transitions are rare periods of rupture that offer opportunities to re-conceive the social meaning of past conflicts in an attempt to reconstruct their present and future effects...this must include women."<sup>72</sup>

To avoid under-representing women's issues in the drafting of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Gender Policy of the TRC of Liberia was developed to help identify a working concept of 'gender', to map the process for documenting the experiences of women and girls in the conflict, and to ensure the participation of women in the post conflict recovery process. In accordance with this effort, the TRC Act incorporates the following gender-sensitive provisions:<sup>73</sup>

Reaffirms the commitment of the Liberian people to "international conventions and protocols relating to the rights and protections of women and children (Preamble, paragraph 12);

Calls for the Commission to adopt specific measures to address the experiences of women, children, and vulnerable groups (Article IV, Section 4e);

Stipulates that no fewer than four of the nine commissioners be women (Article V, Section 7);

Explicitly states that the TRC shall be sensitive to issues of gender and gender-based violence (GBV) (Article VI, Section 24 and Article VII, Section 26f);

Calls for special programs to enable women and children to provide testimony (Article VII, Section 26o);

Calls for the provision of witness protection for children and women who may experience trauma, stigmatization, or threats if they tell their stories (Article VII, Section 26n).

Women also participated in the TRC's procedures through active outreach, statement taking, public hearings, and research and investigation. Out of the total 198 statement takers throughout the country, 100 were women. By incorporating women into the TRC's procedural process, more women were willing to share their stories with the commission. Of the total 22,000 statements coded, 47% came from women and more than 200 women testified in TRC

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Kathy Ladun 2 August 2011, Monrovia, Liberia.

<sup>72</sup> "Republic of Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume Three: Appendices Title I: Women and the Conflict", The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC). <http://trcofliberia.org/>, June 2011

<sup>73</sup> "Republic of Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume Three: Appendices Title I: Women and the Conflict", The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC). <http://trcofliberia.org/>, June 2011

public hearings.<sup>74</sup>

In its final Findings, the TRC concluded the following, as pertaining to women's rights<sup>75</sup>:

4: All factions engaged in armed conflict, violated, degraded, abused and denigrated, committed sexual and gender based violence against women including rape, sexual slavery, forced marriages, and other dehumanizing forms of violations;

10: All factions engaged in armed conflict, violated, degraded, abused and denigrated, committed sexual and gender based violence against women including rape, sexual slavery, forced marriages, and other dehumanizing forms of violations;

17: The New Penal Code of Liberia will apply as to mercenarism, official oppression, murder, kidnapping, rape, sexual assault, fraud in the internal revenue of Liberia, theft and/or illegal disbursement and expenditure of public money, counterfeiting, and misuse of public money, property or etc.

In its final Determinations, the TRC concluded the following, as pertaining to women's rights were as follows:<sup>76</sup>

3: The massive wave of gross violations and atrocities which characterized the conflict assumed a systematic pattern of abuse, wanton in their execution, and the product of deliberate planning, organized and orchestrated to achieve a military or political objective; disregarding the rights of noncombatants, children, and women, the elderly, disarmed or surrendered enemy combatants, etc.

4: All factions to the conflict systematically targeted women mainly as a result of their gender and committed sexual and gender based violations against them including, rape of all forms, sexual slavery, forced marriages, forced recruitment, etc.

5: Reparation is a desirable and appropriate mechanism to redress the gross violations of human rights and shall apply to communities and individuals, especially women and children, to help restore their human dignity, foster healing and closure as well as justice and genuine reconciliation.

According to the Liberia National Action Plan Report from October 2010, the Ministry of Gender and Development initiated a week long consultation workshop entitled, "Demystifying the TRC Report" where 22 women's organizations came together to review and assess the findings of the TRC report. This workshop was organized by WIPSEN-Africa and the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI).<sup>77</sup>

As required by the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Accra, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) was incorporated into Liberian National Law in 2005 to activate the recommendations of the TRC whose mandate ended on 30 June 2009. The Technical Committee of Civil Society on Human Rights worked with local CSOs to establish a list of seven INCHR commissioners that was confirmed by the Legislature and the President in October 2010.<sup>78</sup> Three of these commissioners are women and one is assigned to focus on issues pertaining to women and children. Although active, the INCHR is slow-moving to

<sup>74</sup> "Republic of Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume Three: Appendices Title I: Women and the Conflict", The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC). <http://trcofliberia.org/>, June 2011

<sup>75</sup> "Final Report Volume 1: Findings and Determinations Summary of Preliminary Findings, Determinations and Recommendations", The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC). <http://trcofliberia.org/>, June 2011

<sup>76</sup> "Final Report Volume 1: Findings and Determinations Summary of Preliminary Findings, Determinations and Recommendations", The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC). <http://trcofliberia.org/>, June 2011

<sup>77</sup> "Liberia National Action Plan Report", the Ministry of Gender and Development; October 2010.

<sup>78</sup> Universal Periodic Review of Liberia, Joint Submission by the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Liberia for the UN Compilation Report, 9th Session of the UPR Working Group 1 – 12. November 2010

establish a functioning team and implementation system. The current focuses of the INCHR include: team recruitment and program organization, assessment of human rights violations in the prison system and in local communities and assessing human rights violations during election season. The INCHR is also gearing up for the implementation of the TRC-recommended palava hut program by organizing steering committees that include members from women's CSOs and women's groups. The INCHR commissioners have participated in TRC/human rights workshops in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone to gain perspective on transitional justice methodologies and the respective human rights status of each country.<sup>79</sup>

Other organizations in Liberia that are focused on issues related to women's rights in transitional justice include some of the following international and local CSOs:<sup>80</sup>

The Transitional Justice Working Group is a coalition of 24 CSO institutions working on democracy, peace building and human rights issues. The Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) are part of the steering committee.

During the TRC process, WONGOSOL organized community discussions on topics related to women's rights in peacebuilding. The conclusions collected from these discussions were incorporated into the final TRC findings and recommendations for women. These findings and recommendations were later simplified for the community, encouraging public participation in the transitional Justice activities.

Additionally, there are a number of International NGOs and National CSOs working directly and indirectly on transitional justice issues as they relate to women. These organizations have made efforts to provide women with access to justice, access to information, institutional reform and memorialization initiatives.<sup>81</sup>

#### **Indicator 10 - Extent to which gender and peace education are integrated in the curriculum of formal and informal education (including early warning)**

The New Education Law of Liberia (2002) states that "The Ministry of Education shall institute and design special programs and policies to ensure gender equity at all levels of school that will bring both sexes in parity and in harmony."<sup>82</sup> In 2005, the Ministry of Education drafted the National Policy on Girls' Education in conjunction with UNICEF/Liberia to address the huge gender disparities still existing in Liberia's formal education system. The objectives were set to ensure equal access to education, to reduce dropout rates, to increase female literacy rates, and to provide incentives for girls for enhanced performance in school. The strategy for implementation of this policy was set for completion in 2015 and included a nationwide awareness campaign, capacity building in schools and learning centers, a budget increase for the Ministry of Education, and an increase in resources allocated to schools.<sup>83</sup>

However, 56% of females compared with 39% of males have never attended any formal school at all and 41% of women, contrasted with 70% of men, are literate.<sup>84</sup> But as of October 2010, The Accelerated Learning Program (APL) initiated by the Ministry of Gender and Development has stated that it has revised curriculum to include life-skills training for girls that encourages assertiveness, protection, hygiene, and some reproductive health. This APL program is just beginning to be implemented in schools nationwide.<sup>85</sup>

79 Personal interview with Frances Greaves of WONGOSOL and Voice of the Voiceless, Monrovia, Liberia. August 3, 2011

80 Personal interview with Frances Greaves of WONGOSOL and Voice of the Voiceless, Monrovia, Liberia. August 3, 2011

81 Personal interview with Frances Greaves of WONGOSOL and Voice of the Voiceless, Monrovia, Liberia. August 3, 2011

82 "National Policy on Girls' Education", Ministry of Education, Government of Liberia. 2005

83 "National Policy on Girls' Education", Ministry of Education, Government of Liberia. 2005

84 USAID Gender Assessment Liberia

85 "Liberia National Action Plan Report", The Ministry of Gender and Development, Government of Liberia. October 2010

In conjunction with the Liberian National Action Plan (LNAP), some programs have been implemented by the Ministry of Gender and Development through the activation of partnership organizations and local CSOs to provide gender and peace education. Some of these programs include:<sup>86</sup>

The Joint Program for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment (JP GEWEE) empowers women and girls through basic education. In 2009-2010, 975 rural women in 9 counties received basic literacy education. In 2011, 1,400 women continue to receive basic literacy training in the same 9 counties.

The Angie Brooks International Center was established in 2009 as a result of the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security to train women in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, mediation and leadership.

The National Rural Women Structure was established by the Ministry of Gender and Development to ensure the education and participation of women on issues related to reconstruction and development.

As was indicated by participants in many of our focus group discussions<sup>87</sup>, CSOs emphasizing women's issues and peacebuilding have provided workshops throughout Liberia that train participants in women's rights and advocacy. Some CSO workshop training projects include the following examples:

Medica Mondiales' work in Liberia aims at increasing the political participation of rural women with peacebuilding and community mediation trainings in multiple counties. Through this program a network of women's groups in participating counties are targeted to receive capacity building on peacebuilding initiatives and to participate in advocacy activities targeting decision makers. The members of each participating women's group received several trainings on women's rights, peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Medica Mondiales has also established palava/peace huts for several of the women's groups in various rural communities in 3 of the participating counties. Additionally, Medica Mondiales has executed a skills training program for more than 120 women in Rivergee, a training for traditional birth attendants to promote safe delivery and reduce maternal mortality, and a training of legal practitioners on human rights issues in the three counties.<sup>88</sup>

WANEP's National Association of Palava Managers: Based on previous experience with the Christian Health Association of Liberia's Student Palava Management Program, WANEP established the National Association of Palava Managers to train students in basic mediation stages and prepare trained mediators to speak to students involved in conflict as an alternative to corporal punishment. This program was supported by the Ministry of Education and activated from 2004-2009 in Upper Montserrado and Monrovia in 20 high schools (targeting 10 students in each school) and in 4 communities (targeting 25 non-student youth in each community). The program trained 400 students/youth in mediation techniques.<sup>89</sup>

#### **Indicator 11 - Percentage of women (versus men) who receive economic packages in conflict resolution and reconstruction processes**

The most updated numbers discovered for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of ex-combatants after the war was found in the March 2005 Secretary General report, which stated that of the 101,495 formally disarmed combatants, 22,370 were women, 8,523 were

86 "Liberia National Action Plan Report", The Ministry of Gender and Development, Government of Liberia. October 2010

87 GNWP Focus Group Discussions held in Bong, Monserrado and Bomi counties. July 2011

88 Rebecca Stubblefield: "Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Liberia", Medica Mondiale Liberia. 2010

89 Personal interview with representative at WANEP, Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011

boys and 2,440 were girls. Each received \$150 from UNMIL.<sup>90</sup> While multiple discussions have confirmed that no other financial packages seemed to have been distributed to women after the war, the Government of Liberia, in conjunction with the LNAP, developed a National Gender Policy (NGP) to establish and develop gender responsive structures that allow both women and men to equally access, benefit from, and manage the country's resources.

According to the Report on the Liberia National Action Plan from October 2010, multiple economic empowerment programs have been initiated by the Ministry of Gender and Development and partners of the government specifically for the benefit of women. Examples include:<sup>91</sup>

The Joint Program on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (JP SGBV) has identified the importance of economic empowerment in efforts towards SGBV prevention and as a result they have established a market women component to their programming that provides market women in two areas in Montserrado with livelihood training.

The Joint Program for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment (JP GEWEE) was launched in 2009 to promote economic empowerment for all women by way of providing education for women and girls and pursuing gender equality in the workplace. It is a part of the broader economic empowerment program. From 2009-2010, JP GEWEE encouraged micro and small enterprise growth when: 3,333 rural business women and market women in 5 counties received micro credit loans to expand their businesses; rural women in 3 counties to develop 7 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), offering multiple business micro loans to all members and cumulatively saving over \$30,000 in 2010; and over 500 women involved in informal cross-border trade worked together to establish the National Association for Women in Cross Border Trade. JP GEWEE's initiatives for 2011 look forward to: establishing Next Level Business Program for Market Women to assist 2,000 market women in 4 counties to receive business skills training, enhancing their ability to access credit, plan, save and grow their business; 1,800 women receiving literacy and business training through community women's groups in 18 communities in 4 counties; providing 900 rural women with training in VSLA to establish 36 new Associations offering savings and micro loan services to members in 6 counties; 3,333 more rural business women and market women receiving micro credit loans to expand their businesses in 4 counties; 60 leaders from the Association of Women in Cross Border Trade to be trained in management, leadership, and the development of their organization; and the construction of 2 warehouses at major border crossings to be used by traders and to be managed by the Association of Women in Cross Border Trade.

The Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls & Young Women (EPAG) is a pilot project under the Joint Program on Youth Employment & Empowerment (JPYEE) that aims to increase the employment and incomes of 2,500 young Liberian women ages 16-27 years over the next 3 years. The EPAG trainings began in March 2010 in nine regions of Montserrado and Margibi Counties. Supported by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and under the World Bank's global Adolescent Girls Initiative, this project is being implemented by the Government of Liberia with financial support from the Nike Foundation and the Government of Denmark and is administered by the World Bank. The Ministry of Gender and Development is leading project implementation and coordination with a team of service providers and consultants, including: American Refugee Committee (ARC), Christian Empowerment and Sustainable Program (CESP), National Adult Education of Liberia (NAEL), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Capable Partners Program (CAP), Ed-U-Care (EDUCARE) Community Empowerment Program (CEP), Liberia Entrepreneurial & Economic Development (LEED). EPAG is working with SBA-GOPA on its impact evaluation. As of June 2011, the project has trained 1250 adolescent girls and young women: 65% of the girls were trained in business development skills. 35% were trained in job skills, including hospitality, professional driving, office and computer skills, professional cleaning/waste management, security guard services, and house/office

<sup>90</sup> "Sixth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia", United Nations Security Council, March 2005

<sup>91</sup> "Liberia National Action Plan Report", The Ministry of Gender and Development, Government of Liberia, October 2010

painting. All participants now have savings accounts with local banks and have been assisted to transitioning to productive employment. Of the 1,191 girls who entered the program, 1,131 completed the training and more than 85% of participants have been transitioned into employment.

The National Rural Women's Structure created a new outlet for women smallholder farmers to produce rice, peanuts, beans and cassava for sale to the World Food Program Purchase 4 Progress.<sup>92</sup>

## C. Promotion of a Gender Perspective

### Indicator 12 - Detailed breakdown of gender issues addressed in peace agreements

Women's participation was addressed in the Accra CPA Peace Agreement with regards to the membership of the organizational bodies built to ensure peace in Liberia. The Governance Reform Commission that was established to promote the principles of good governance in Liberia was required to include women in its permanent membership body of seven. Similarly, the Mandate of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) that was established to manage implementation of the Peace Agreement required that Women Organizations be represented in its membership of 76.<sup>93</sup>

In Article 31 of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, it is made imperative that the NTGL afford special attention to the implementation of a rehabilitation program for the vulnerable victims of war: women, children (including child combatants), elderly and persons with disabilities. A gender balance was made a requirement in the implementation process for these programs.<sup>94</sup>

### Indicator 13 - Number and percentage of pre-deployment training and post-deployment programs for military and police incorporating SCR 1325, SCR 1820, international human rights instruments and international humanitarian law

Just after the end of the Civil War, UNMIL police and UNICEF began working with the Liberian National Police to strengthen its capacity for operational effectiveness with regard to cases involving the protection of women and children<sup>95</sup>. This Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberian National Police was established at the national, county and district levels in conjunction with a Gender Unit at the national level to monitor, advise and report on the implementation of LNP Gender Policy.<sup>96</sup>

Gender-sensitive training has been incorporated into the Police Training Academy's curriculum and specialized courses have been crafted for all supervisors, staff of Gender Affairs Section, staff of Women and Children Protection Section, and Academy training staff. As part of the 2011 Academy training schedule, the Norwegian Refugee Council has held a workshop every month and UNDP has begun a review of all Academy curriculums including SGVB treatment. As of March of this year, 620 women have been trained at the Academy. To incorporate more women recruits, the Ministry of Education has introduced an Accelerated Learning Program for young women who are currently enrolled in school and wishing to join the police force. Some of the current difficulties facing the efficiency level

<sup>92</sup> Rebecca Stubblefield: "Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Liberia", Medica Mondiale Liberia, 2010

<sup>93</sup> "Comprehensive Peace Agreement Between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Political Parties", Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2003

<sup>94</sup> "Comprehensive Peace Agreement Between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Political Parties", Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2003

<sup>95</sup> "Sixth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia", United Nations Security Council, March 2005

<sup>96</sup> "Twenty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia", United Nations Security Council, February 2011

of this training have included insufficient equipment and logistical resources for training facilities, under-trained training staff, and low senior officer attendance to gender-related trainings.<sup>97</sup>

There is no established gender policy or institutionalized gender trainings in the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), although some gender-related issues are incorporated into other areas of training including human rights, child rights and child protection. While women are excluded from participating in the infantry because they are not allowed to fight alongside men, the AFL's general policy on equal opportunities does cover gender issues when it comes to internal promotions. The AFL sexual harassment policies adhere to Liberian constitutional requirements and international norms.<sup>98</sup>

According to the LNAP Strategic Issue 2, the government has acknowledged the importance of strengthening national security to protect the rights of women and girls and the value of establishing extensive institutional reform in the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Liberian National Police (among other security providers such as BIN, Bureau of Corrections, the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission, and etc.). Apparently the first stage has been female recruitment and their elevated education standards. It is unclear what the next steps are, especially within the AFL.<sup>99</sup>

#### **Indicator 14 - Allocated and disbursed funding to CSOs (including women's groups) marked for women, peace and security projects and programs**

A line item in the Ministry of Gender and Development draft budget for the Liberian fiscal year of 2009-2010 indicated a recommended \$10,000 be transferred to non-specified 'women's organization'. And the allocated budget for the 2008-2009 fiscal year revealed that \$0 went to women's organizations. While this line item is allocated in the draft budget, the process of its fulfillment is unclear as a Gender and Development Ministry official confirmed that no funds are actually distributed directly to CSOs. Instead the Ministry of Gender and Development confirmed it supports selected CSOs by recommending them for funding from government partners and international funders.<sup>100</sup>

WONGOSOL is a known network organization for women's NGOs, CSOs, and faith-based organization in Liberia with approximately 80 plus member organizations operating in its network nationwide. WONGOSOL in its formative stage and until present, still receives institutional support from UNMIL's Office of the Gender Advisor, The Global Fund for Women, The African Women's Development Foundation, UNIFEM, ActionAID/Liberia, OSIWA, and ICTJ.<sup>101</sup>

Liberia's National Action Plan indicates that the Ministry of Gender and Development is working towards promoting women's full participation in all conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict recovery processes by supporting many International and National NGOs as well as local CSOs including (as listed in the LNAP Strategic Issue 5) International Alert, Medical Mondiale, Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), UNDP, Women, Peace and Security Network Africa (WIPSEN-Africa).<sup>102</sup> Overall, when asked, local CSOs confirm that they do their own fundraising and don't often see funds coming from the direction of the Ministry of Gender and Development.<sup>103</sup>

97 "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

98 "Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia", Validation Workshop Report. March 31, 2011

99 "Liberia National Action Plan", The Ministry of Gender and Development, The Government of Liberia. 2009

100 "Draft National Budget for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010", The Ministry of Finance, The Government of Liberia. 2011

101 "Liberia National Action Plan Report", The Ministry of Gender and Development, Government of Liberia. October 2010

102 "Liberia National Action Plan Report", The Ministry of Gender and Development, Government of Liberia. October 2010

103 GNWP Validation Session held at WANEP offices, Monrovia, Liberia. August 5, 2011

#### **Indicator 15 - Allocated and disbursed funding to governments marked for women, peace and security projects and programs**

The Ministry of Gender and Development was developed in 2001 to advise national government on issues affecting the advancement of women and the development of children in Liberia. The Ministry was allocated \$1,084,447 of the \$297 million budget (.36%) in the 2008-2009 fiscal year and that allocation was increased to a recommended \$1,185,073 of the \$347 million budget (.34%) in the 2009-2010 fiscal year. Of this amount, the Department of Administration and Management was allotted \$247,354 in 2008-2009 and an increased recommended amount \$285,296 in 2009-2010 to monitor, coordinate and evaluate all Ministry of Gender and Development programs, including: children development, women empowerment, Gender Based Violence activities and the monitoring of safe houses. The Department of Planning and Administration was allotted \$484,189 in 2008-2009, and an increased recommended amount of \$566,301 in 2009-2010 to facilitate programs in gender mainstreaming and child development including gender studies, workshops, seminars, technical meetings, and advocacy programs. The Department of Research and Technical Services was allocated \$352,904 in 2008-2009, and a decreased recommended amount of \$332,786 in 2009-2010 to coordinate the incorporation of gender awareness into development policies and programs. This department works in two divisions that are focused on protecting women and children's rights: Human Rights and Public Relations and Policy.<sup>104</sup>

The Administration Department is responsible for administrative functions within the Ministry of Justice that are focused on the establishment of the gender based violence Unit. This department budgeted \$1,465,678 in 2008-2009 and allocated a recommended \$1,578,403 for the 2009-2010 fiscal year.<sup>105</sup>

#### **Indicator 16 - Percentage of women's representation as peace-builders and decision-makers in media content**

While the election of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2005 set the stage for other prominent female decision-makers to rise to power, the political and public arena remains under-represented by women. From urban to rural settings, under representation for Liberian women begins with lack of access to media. With a 41% nationwide female literacy rate<sup>106</sup> newspapers are not a popularly consumed form of media. Instead, radio is how most female media consumers receive their news. However, a shortage of available radio sets, especially in rural areas, and the tendency of men to dominate control of available sets, leaves women with less ownership of access. Additionally, women are traditionally responsible for managing the family and household labor allowing little time for media consumption and investment in political issues, so even when the radio is on, they are not often listening and participating.<sup>107</sup> Women tend only to participate in radio programs when the topics center on social issues and social programming; drama programs are the most popular form of media consumed by women listeners.<sup>108</sup>

In Liberia, news content typically focuses on political issues with heavy male-centric coverage. A study done by the Liberia Media Center (LMC) in 2009 on the predominance of stories related to women or women's issues in the media showed that out of more than 700 print media articles, 11 were produced by female journalists, and less than one third of news stories on the radio represented women or women's issues.<sup>109</sup> For this study, the LMC randomly monitored

104 "Draft National Budget for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010", The Ministry of Finance, The Government of Liberia. 2011

105 "Draft National Budget for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010", The Ministry of Finance, The Government of Liberia. 2011

106 USAID Gender Assessment Liberia

107 "Media Quality Barometer: Index of Media Performance" Liberia Media Center. November/December, 2010

108 Personal interview with TorwonSlonteh-Brown of UNMIL Radio, Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011

109 "Media Quality Barometer: Index of Media Performance" Liberia Media Center. November/December, 2010

four mainstream radio stations (ELBC, Star Radio (no longer running), UNMIL and Truth FM) and four mainstream newspapers (The Inquirer, The Daily Observer, The New Democrat and The News). According to TorwonSlonteh-Brown of UNMIL Radio, when it comes to women's issues, "[the average Liberian woman] wants to hear about health, school, food, and what the government is doing about providing seed for agriculture. But most of the media institutions don't focus on that."<sup>110</sup> And these topics only become news in mainstream media when the government is doing something specific on the topic, "such as building a school or creating a hospital or a clinic"<sup>111</sup> or when women's rights advocates or organizations are independently attracting attention on issues that matter to women. Unfortunately, women's issues still do not get a lot of positive exposure in Liberian media.

Peter Quaqua of the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) confirmed that women continue to be poorly represented in most of Liberia's consumable media, especially with regard to how they are portrayed in politics. Women are most commonly represented in the news through sensational stories such as political sex scandals.<sup>112</sup> These, when published, are often the most popular news stories and they usually present women negatively. Mainstream news articles and radio reports rarely feature women as interview subjects. And when women are interviewed for their perspective on news, Torwon Slonteh-Brown of UNMIL Radio says most male interviewers tend to humiliate or embarrass the interview subject by "not focusing on the matter at hand" but by finding interest in other topics like the subject's dress attire or her appearance.<sup>113</sup>

The PUL offers the only mechanism for addressing issues of media accountability and this is only in response to extreme cases of misrepresentation. In such cases, statements are written and submitted to the PUL, the government and/or the offending paper. If the offending case comes in conflict with the Press Union of Liberia's Code of Ethics and Conduct the media outlet can be fined, required to print a retraction/apology, or be suspended from the PUL. According to Peter Quaqua, the public attention that comes along with these efforts often causes the victim more harm than good and is often avoided as a result.<sup>114</sup>

In efforts to identify and discuss these and other current challenges facing women in the media, the first National Conference on Advancing Women in the Media took place in November 2010 in Monrovia, led by the Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC) in partnership with the Female Journalists Association of Liberia (FeJAL), the Media Women Center for Development and Democracy (MEWOCEDE), the Press Union of Liberia and Action Aid. It was funded by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) through the Civil Society and Media Leadership Program (CSML), which is funded by USAID. Some of the issues preventing women from advancing in the media arena that were discussed among attendees included:<sup>115</sup>

Only one newspaper has a female owner/publisher and women hold less than 5% of what are considered leadership positions in media.

The salary range for women in media is generally \$50.00 –\$800.00, depending on the news agency but only 0.7% of female media professionals are earning on the higher end of the scale.

Sexual harassment remains a major problem for female media professionals, both in the field and at the jobsite among male bosses and other male colleagues.

110 Personal interview with TorwonSlonteh-Brown of UNMIL Radio, Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011  
 111 Personal interview with TorwonSlonteh-Brown of UNMIL Radio, Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011  
 112 Personal interview with Peter Quaqua of Press Union of Liberia (PUL), Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011  
 113 Personal interview with TorwonSlonteh-Brown of UNMIL Radio, Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011  
 114 Personal interview with Peter Quaqua of Press Union of Liberia (PUL), Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011  
 115 "Mapping the Absent Voices, A Study on Women's Access to the Media and the Media's Role in Promoting Women Voices." Report on the National Conference on Advancing Women in the Media. November 2010

In order for prospective media professionals to combat the issues plaguing women's involvement and representation in media, proper awareness and training are necessary. Most of Liberia's major universities, University of Liberia (UL), African Methodists Episcopal University (AMEU) and the United Methodist University (UMU), are equipped with bachelor degrees in mass communications but the media standards within these majors remain considerably low due to outdated curriculum and low professor proficiency.<sup>116</sup> Presently, there is a rise in available short-term training programs focused on empowering aspiring female journalists and on gender-sensitive reporting. These programs are usually supported by INGO/NGOs and implemented by local partners, some examples include:

Plan Liberia initiates training programs for young girls and women throughout Liberia. Through the projects initiated by Plan Liberia, young girls and women are taught professional skills in media production and journalism.<sup>117</sup>

New Narratives is a one-year-old proficiency-training program for 8 hand-selected female journalists in Liberia. New Narratives seeks to train and empower female journalists to produce influential stories for local and international media outlets alike.<sup>118</sup>

The Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC) runs the Liberia Women Democracy Radio (LWDR), a female-run radio station that seeks to advocate the rights of women and girls by highlighting gender sensitive issues and providing practical training and leadership experience for female journalists.<sup>119</sup>

Female Journalist Association of Liberia hosts internship programs for rural community female journalists, short-term training programs for local female journalists on how to report on special topics, and short-term training programs on effectiveness and efficiency in production for local stations.<sup>120</sup>

IREX works with LIWOMAC on its Women's Media Initiative that has developed the Advancing Women in the Media Strategy, which is aimed at increasing the number of women in newsrooms across the country and ensuring that gender sensitive policies are in place at media outlets. The program also offers scholarships to female journalism students.

IREX is also teaming up with LIWOMAC to create a mobile platform during the elections. With a new outside broadcast van, LIWOMAC, through its radio, LWDR will travel through villages and towns in ten counties to mobilize women's participation in the 2011 elections. This project will travel to multiple communities to discuss women focused issues.<sup>121</sup>

More advocacy for women's rights is needed to influence change in women's active participation and positive representation in the media. Some programs have already been initiated by local and international CSOs to provide accessible multi-media and advocacy campaigns that target women in both urban and rural areas. For example, International Alert produced a simplified version of Resolution 1325 and started radio programs using rural radio stations for creating awareness on the resolution and what it means to the daily life of rural women.<sup>122</sup> The Gender and Development Ministry is currently working to increase national awareness on 1325 and the four pillars of the National Action Plan through a nationwide campaign in radio broadcast, newspapers and outdoor media.<sup>123</sup>

116 "Mapping the Absent Voices, A Study on Women's Access to the Media and the Media's Role in Promoting Women Voices." Report on the National Conference on Advancing Women in the Media. November 2010  
 117 Plan Liberia website: <http://plan-international.org/where-we-work/africa/liberia>. July 2011  
 118 Personal interview with New Narratives representative, Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011  
 119 LIWOMAC Website: <http://liwomacradio.org/about.html>. July 2011  
 120 Female Journalist Association Website  
 121 "Civil Society & Media Leadership Program, Revised Program Description," Submitted to USAID/LIBERIA. February 21, 2011  
 122 Rebecca Stubblefield: "Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Liberia", MedicaMondiale Liberia. 2010  
 123 Personal Interview with Ministry of Gender and Development representative, Monrovia, Liberia. July 2011

In anticipation of the 2011 elections women-based organizations, such as LIWOMAC, WANEP and WONGOSOL, are gearing up to produce radio programs, host workshops and initiate advocacy projects to keep women across the country informed on election issues.

The media's role to give visibility and voice to every citizen, especially women, is more critical now than in any time of Liberia's history. For many decades Liberian journalism favored patriarchy by keeping women and their issues on the margin, and excluding female journalists from leadership positions. The post-war era and emerging democracy present a window of opportunity for reforms to advance women on different levels, including the media sector where gender equality and awareness are still wanting. As often noted, maintaining peace and good governance fundamentally rests on equal rights and participation, which the media must ensure as watch dog of society.

### III. Conclusions and Recommendations

As can be seen by the information included in this report, a great deal of progress has been made since Liberia's Civil War ended almost eight years ago. Women are participating in key senior-level positions in the current government. The Ministry of Gender and Development has taken steps to address sexual gender-based violence through the creation of the Gender-Based Violence Unit, and the SGBV Taskforce. Additionally, the MoGD creation of the 1325 Secretariat and the Civil Society Monitoring Observatory are positive indicators that the 1325 Liberian National Action Plan is being implemented.

However, as this report discusses, significant challenges still exist. Government budget for the MoGD, while increasing, still remains extremely low. Awareness of SCR 1325 in government, among Liberian NGOs and within the general population is also still limited, which makes implementation difficult to monitor. The implementation efforts that can be monitored are slow moving. Efforts like the SGBV Taskforce are improving work around prevention and protection, but rates of SGBV still remain high, and those numbers only include what is reported. There is a complete lack of integration of peace education in the public school curriculum, and women in Monrovia still have significantly more access to services than women who live in the rural areas.

#### Recommendations

1. Government should improve efforts to identify and mentor qualified women for appointed positions in national and local leadership.
2. The government should conduct an evaluation of the progress made in implementing policies and action plans related to women, peace and security issues. This evaluation should take into consideration achievements, weaknesses and opportunities for program strengthening.
3. The Security Sector should continue to work on reaching and exceeding the 20% policy goal of women's participation.
4. Government should rededicate themselves to the implementation of the National Gender Policy, as well as all other gender-related policies including the National Gender Based Violence Plan of Action.
5. The Law Reform Commission, the Legislature and all other relevant government parties should improve the incorporation of the Rape Act and the Inheritance Act into the Liberian Penal Code, especially with regard to the contradictory age of consent question.
6. The development agenda, both nationally and internationally, should prioritize building the capacity of local stakeholders, including female chiefs and other traditional leaders, to monitor and support programs seeking to improve the economic livelihood and participation of rural women.
7. Existing efforts to develop the skills of media practitioners, including women in gender sensitive reporting should continue to be built on.
8. Government and other organizations should work with the Press Union of Liberia and with local universities to design advanced gender educational programs for editor and managers.
9. The government and other organizations should support mentorship and scholarship programs for female journalist including those working at community radios.
10. A code of conduct should be developed in consultation with civil society and all other relevant stakeholders, to address sexual harassment and other forms of gender –based violence in the media.

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## V. Appendices

### Members of GNWP-Liberia

#### **Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia**

Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) is a Liberian Women Network Organization established in 1998 to coordinate the development programs and activities of women. It is a legal organization with Articles of Incorporation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; a Certificate of Accreditation from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs as a Non-Governmental and non-political organization; closely working in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Development to champion the cause of women. WONGOSOL now has the strength of 81 member organizations drawn from three types of membership; Non Governmental organizations (NGOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). WONGOSOL is being supported by Trust Africa, OXFAM, Global Fund for Women, African Women Development Fund (AWDF).

#### **Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET)**

The WIPNET program of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding/WANEP is intended to mobilize women constituencies for peace building throughout Liberia. It is one of the most viable programs and has the widest geographic coverage (10 out of the 15 counties). WIPNET has been very strong in advocacy and general outreach using Radio programming titled: 'The Voices of Women Radio Program'. This program is involved in mobilizing women and building their capacity to increase their participation in the promotion and sustenance of peace and human security. "Women's Peace Activism has become a constructive platform for women groups and associations working and living in conflict situations to form strong alliances to build lasting peace in their communities. WIPNET has been supported by ISIS WICCE, UN women, Trust Africa, Urgent Action Fund, UNMIL.

#### **Voice of the Voiceless**

Voice of the Voiceless is a faith-based women organization working on women rights, governance, democracy, and peace building issues. It was established in 2005 to highlight the plight and concerns of women and girls. Since its formation it has been involved in creating awareness on the various legal instruments (both local and international) that adversely affect the lives of women and girls with the purpose of encouraging them to raise their voices by using these laws in the fight to end all forms of discrimination and human rights against women. Voice of the Voiceless also carries out psycho-social counseling where necessary for victims experiencing trauma as a result of domestic violence and rape. Its outreach includes sensitization and awareness training for women and girls in mushrooming grassroots churches as well as street and abused girls who have been abandoned by parents and guardians and those living in ghettos. Its approaches include one on one engagement, dialogues, peer review and town hall meetings targeting parents, guardians and church and community leaders. Voice of the Voiceless is being supported by Urgent Action Fund, Women Campaign International and membership dues.

#### **Liberia Women Media Action Committee**

The Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC) is a media development organization dedicated to the promotion of women's rights and development in Liberia. LIWOMAC works with a mission to empower grassroots women through media, skills development and advocacy. The organization in partnership with UN Women and YWCA established the Liberia Women Democracy Radio (LWDR FM 91.1), which is the first and only radio station for women to amplify their voices in national debates, and to access information relevant to their needs. Also working with the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), LIWOMAC through a steering committee, organized the first national conference on November 26-27 2010. The first national strategy on the "Advancement of Women in the Media" in Liberia was subsequently launched in April 2011. LIWOMAC's donors include USAID through the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), National Endowment for Democracy (NED), UNDEF, Action Aid-Liberia, Plan International, and UNDP.