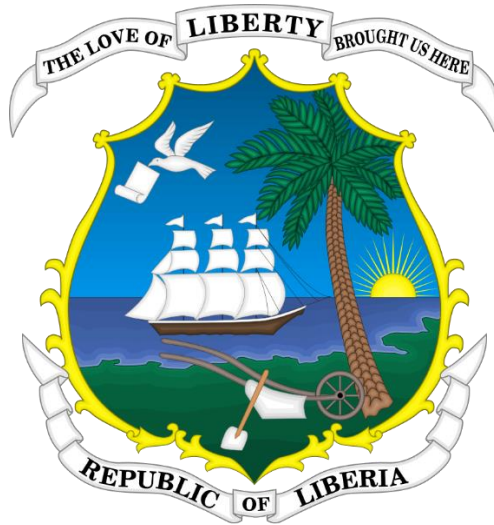


# **Beijing+30 National Review Report**



## **THE GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA**

**30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fourth Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**

### **Liberia Country Report**

**September 2024**

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

**ALP** – Accelerated Learning Program  
**BCR** – Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation  
**BPfA** – Beijing Platform for Action  
**CEDAW** – Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women  
**CEMESP** – Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding  
**CPC** – County Peace Committee  
**CSOs** – Civil Society Organizations  
**CSW** – Commission on the Status of Women  
**DRR** – Disaster Risk Reduction  
**DVA** – Domestic Violence Act  
**ECD** – Early Childhood Development  
**ECOWAS** – Economic Community of Western African States  
**EPA** – Environmental Protection Agency  
**EPAG** - Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and young women  
**EU** – European Union  
**EVD** – Ebola Virus Disease  
**FeJAL** – Female Journalist Association  
**FGM** – Female Genital Mutilation  
**FY** – Fiscal Year  
**GBV** – Gender Based Violence  
**GESI** – Gender Equality and Social Inclusion  
**GEWE** – Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment  
**GGI** – Gender Gap Index  
**GII** – Gender Inequality Index  
**GoL** – Government of Liberia  
**GRPB** – Gender Responsive Planning and Budget Policy  
**GSSNT** – Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce  
**GSSNTSF** – Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce Sustainability Framework  
**IHP+** – International Health Partnerships  
**INCHR** – Independent National Commission on Human Rights  
**JP RWEE** – Joint Program on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women  
**LDEA** – Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency  
**LGBT** – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender  
**LIBTELCO** – Liberia Telecommunications Corporation  
**LIS** – Liberia Immigration Service  
**LISGIS** – Liberia Institute for Geo-Information Services  
**LLA** – Liberia Land Authority  
**LNP** – Liberian National Police

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**LSSN** – Liberia Social Safety Net program  
**MACs** – Ministries, Agencies and Commissions Corporations  
**MFDP** – Ministry of Finance and Development Planning  
**MGCSP** – Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection  
**MOA** – Ministry of Agriculture  
**MOD** – Ministry of National Defense  
**MOE** – Ministry of Education  
**MOH** – Ministry of Health  
**MOJ** – Ministry of Justice  
**MOL** – Ministry of Labor  
**NAP** – National Action Plan  
**NCD** – National Commission on Disabilities  
**NDMA** – National Disaster Management Agency  
**NEC** – National Election Commission  
**NGO** – Non-governmental Organization  
**NGP** – National Gender Plan  
**PBO** – Peacebuilding Office  
**PTA** – Parent Teacher Association  
**RMNCAH** – Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health  
**SCORE** – Social Cohesion and Reconciliation  
**SDGs** – Social Development Goals  
**SEA** – Sexual Exploitation and Abuse  
**SGBV** – Sexual and Gender-based Violence  
**SOPs** – Standard Operating Procedures  
**SSR** – Security Sector Reform  
**TFGBV** – Technology-facilitated gender-based violence  
**TRC** – Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
**TSM** – Temporary Special Measures  
**TVET** – Technical Vocational Education and Training  
**UN** – United Nations  
**UN Women** – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment  
**UNDP** – United Nations Development Program  
**UNFPA** – United Nations Population Fund  
**UNICEF** – United Nations Children’s Fund  
**UNSCR** – UN Security Council Resolution  
**VAWE** – Violence Against Women in Elections  
**VAWG** – Violence Against Women and Girls  
**VAWP** – Violence against Women in Politics  
**WACPS** – Women and Child Protection Sections  
**WASH** – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene  
**WCPS** – Women and Children Protection Section

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**WPH** – Women Peace Hut

**WPS** – Women, Peace and Security

## Section One: Highlights

This Progress Report by the Government of Liberia (GoL) on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) is in preparation for the 30th Anniversary of the Fifth World Conference on Women and the 68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This BPfA+30 provides an overview of the major achievements and challenges as well as the emerging issues and opportunities to strengthen gender-responsive actions at the national level and the implementation of global commitments.

Although there have been significant gains since Liberia's last BPfA Report in 2019, Liberian women are still marginalized in all sectors and at all levels. Liberia's Gender Inequality Index (GII) in 2022 was 0.656, ranking it 161 out of 191 countries, reflecting significant disparities in health, empowerment, and labor market participation between men and women.<sup>1</sup> On the Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) in 2024, Liberia is ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 146 countries with a score of 0.754 with slight percentage points decrease since the previous edition of the GGI. Liberia is one of the lowest-performing countries on the subindexes of educational attainment, where Liberia is ranked 134<sup>th</sup>, and health and survival where Liberia is ranked 125<sup>th</sup>. However, in the GGI 2024 Liberia ranks first globally for the category of economic participation and opportunity. The gender parity in labor-force participation rate is above 95. However, while women are working on a near-equal basis as men, they remain responsible for most of the unpaid domestic and care work. Additionally, the Index does not consider qualitative data such as control over income or gender differences in household expenditure (e.g., disposable income).

Liberia is ranked 161 out of 182 countries on the ranking of women in national parliaments,<sup>2</sup> with women comprising just 10.7% percent of the 103 seats in the Legislature, below the average of 27.2% for sub-Saharan Africa and 19.2% in West Africa.<sup>3</sup> The trend over time is declining, with the numerical representation falling from 14.9% in 2006 to 10.7% in 2024. However there has been some improvement in the Executive Branch at national level where women now hold 30% of 20 ministerial posts, 31% of 62 deputy minister positions, and 26% of 95 assistant ministers. In local government, women make up 11% of statutory positions in 2024, a slight increase from 8.5% in 2017. Women also make up just 8.2% of chieftaincy positions in 2024,<sup>4</sup> also a slight increase from 4.6% in 2017.<sup>5</sup> Although 60% of the Supreme Court Justices are women, the court consists of just five members. Meanwhile, women account for only 6.7% of 15 county attorneys (prosecutors) and 12.5% circuit court judges.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP, 2021. Gender Inequality Index. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indices/GII>

<sup>2</sup> IPU Parline, September 2024. <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/>

<sup>3</sup> IPU Parline, September 2024. <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs, September 2024

<sup>5</sup> UN Women and Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017. Liberia Fact Sheet. Women's Representation in Various Branches and Levels of Government.

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Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains pervasive in Liberia. In 2023, the average of monthly reported cases of SGBV was 267, with a total of 3204 during the year, according to a report by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP).<sup>6</sup> Survivors aged from 0–20 years accounted for 83% – or 2662 – of reported cases. According to the 2019-2020 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS), 60% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence, and 9% have experienced sexual violence. Less than half (42%) of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have ever sought help. Considering there are 2.6 million women and girls in Liberia<sup>7</sup> and that the LDHS found that in the 12 months preceding the survey, 33% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence, and 5% experienced sexual violence, SGBV is significantly underreported. Additionally, the response to SGBV remains a challenge, with survivor support and legal services significantly underfunded. Liberia also has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

According to the GII 2022, Liberia has a maternal mortality ratio of 652 deaths per 100,000 live births. This is classified as a very high rate, as per classification by the World Health Organization (WHO). Access to quality reproductive healthcare remains limited, especially in rural areas. While efforts have been made to improve maternal health services, gaps persist in ensuring that all women have access to safe and affordable care. Although the practice of FGM is declining across generations (55% of 45–49-year-olds have been subject to the practice as compared to 23.9% of 15–19-year-olds), data shows that presently, 38.2% of Liberian women and girls aged from 15–49 are living with the consequences of female genital mutilation and cutting and many more are at risk.<sup>8</sup>

Approximately 86% of women are employed in petty trade or in the agriculture sector.<sup>9</sup> Women account for 80% of the agricultural labor force and are responsible for 93% of crop production. Despite the challenges, there has been a gradual increase in women’s income levels within the informal sector, largely due to targeted interventions such as skill development programs and microfinance initiatives. Despite women’s active participation in agriculture and small-scale trading, women face substantial barriers to economic empowerment, such as limited access to credit, land, and formal employment opportunities. Women also often work under precarious conditions without adequate social protections. The undervaluation of women’s work, especially in caregiving roles, continues to be a major issue, with their contributions to the economy often going unrecognized.

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<sup>6</sup> Gender Based Violence Division of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2023. Sexual & Gender Based Violence Annual Report.

<sup>7</sup> Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), 2022. Liberia Population and Housing Census.

<sup>8</sup> Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and Ministry of Health, 2021. Liberia Demographic and Social Health Survey, 2019 - 2020. Pg.323.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank Group. 2023. “Liberian Women Count: Evidence from a Macrosimulation of the Gender Dividend.” Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice.

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In Liberia, significantly fewer women than men have secondary (27% vs. 37%) or postsecondary (15% vs. 25%) education. Instead, women are more likely than men to have only primary schooling (35% vs. 26%) or no formal schooling (23% vs. 13%). Women are also less likely than men to own certain key assets, including a mobile phone (86% vs. 72%), a radio (74% vs. 54%), a television (28% vs. 23%), a motor vehicle (18% vs. 10%), and a computer (11% vs. 6%).<sup>10</sup>

Programs targeted to minimize these disparities have been implemented to address the twelve critical areas of concern of the BPfA and the relevant SDGs, including SDG5. Programs addressing gender discrimination and inequality have been initiated by various ministries, agencies, commissions, and regulatory authorities. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) is the engine of the GoL's national gender machinery, working in collaboration with other Government entities, civil society organizations (CSOs), the media, and international partners, promoting, protecting, and advocating for women's rights and gender equality. Initiatives range from specialized programs in education to economic empowerment through loan schemes, training, and opportunities for employment, to land, property and natural resource rights, access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights, prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), women's leadership and increased participation of women in the security and peacebuilding.

The revised National Gender Policy (NGP) (2018 – 2022) has been the overarching policy instrument for the Country in the period. The NGP seeks to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), enhance gender mainstreaming in the national development processes; and create and strengthen gender responsive structures, processes, and mechanism for the government in which both women and men participate equally, have access to, control and benefit from the country's resources. Liberia has been implementing its National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP-WPS) and NAP-GBV including the Anti-SGBV Roadmap (2020-2022) and has made gains in implementing Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB) in line with the National GRPB Policy (2019-2023). In the period, the Country has also enacted three significant pieces of legislation which have contributed to Liberia's obligations to adopt legislation to promote women's equal access to land and property inheritance rights (Land Rights Law, 2018), women's participation and representation in local government and development planning (Local Government Act, 2018), and ending violence against women and girls (Domestic Violence Act, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). Critical areas of concern, such as education, economic empowerment, and GBV, were affected. Women who relied on markets and petty trading lost access to income, while others lost jobs. School closures also contributed to an increase in early pregnancies and likely SGBV, though the referral pathway was disrupted so it is expected that many cases were underreported with fewer

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<sup>10</sup> Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 796. *Liberians call for greater government efforts to promote gender equality*. April 2024.



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women and girls accessing clinics and the work of women's rights organizations (WROs) shifted towards Covid prevention and response.

Areas where the country needs the most support include financing for gender equality, and capacity-building, especially in collecting and analyzing gender disaggregated data. The lack of GDD has an adverse effect on evidence-based gender responsive budgeting and development planning, resource mobilization, and advocacy for targeted interventions to advance gender equality and women's rights. It also makes it very difficult to monitor, measure and report on the effectiveness and impact of Liberia's efforts to address the specific needs of women and girls including those from marginalized groups in line with the principle of leaving no one behind. Other major challenges remain entrenched patriarchal norms and inadequate funding for gender equality and women's empowerment.

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

### Over the past five years, what have been the most important priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

- *Improved institutional gender policies, structures and capacities for gender equality and social inclusion in ministries, agencies, commissions, and authorities.*

In line with the Revised National Gender Policy (NGP 2018 - 2022), Liberia has strengthened its national gender machinery, further institutionalizing gender equality in governance institutions and promoting gender sensitive governance. This has been done through the establishment of Gender Units or Gender and Social Inclusion Units in 12 institutions including: Liberia National Police (LNP), Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (BCR), Ministry of National Defense (MOD), and in a few Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; Ministry of Agriculture (MOA); the Governance Commission; Liberia Land Authority (LLA); and the National Housing Authority); National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA). These sector-specific policies aim to promote equal opportunities within traditionally male-dominated fields, such as the military. Strengthening the national machinery will continue to be prioritized for the next five years, including strengthening the implementation of existing gender policies and coordination mechanisms and supporting the institutionalization of gender equality and women's empowerment in more national government institutions and in local governance structures.

Over the last five years, the adoption and implementation of Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting Policy (March 2019) has helped to strengthen capacities and cultivate political will for GRBP over the last five years. However, the budget allocated for the national gender machinery has been limited. For example, in 2022, 3.58 million was allocated to the MGCSP, which represented 0.45% of the national budget of 786.6 million; in 2023, 2.89 million was allocated, 0.37% of the 782.9 million budget; and 2.61 million is currently proposed in the 2024 recast budget, which is 0.36% of the total 721.5 million budget. While the budget for the GRBP Unit at the MFDP and for Gender and Inclusion Units has increased from 380,000 in 2022 to 569,552 in 2024; however, this is for nine ministries, agencies and commissions (MGCSP, MOE, MOA, LISGIS, MFDP, MIA, GC, MOJ, MoH). For example, from this limited budget, it remains unclear what has been allocated to research, monitoring, coordination, and programmatic interventions. Insufficient funding for the national machinery makes it difficult to effectively address gender issues.

In addition to financial constraints, human resource challenges have also hampered gender mainstreaming efforts. Staff turnover, especially among gender focal points, has been a setback. Often when gender focal points are trained, some leave the institution or are reassigned to other roles. This disrupts continuity and undermines progress, as newly appointed gender focal points often lack the necessary expertise in gender equality and gender mainstreaming. It is crucial that

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those appointed to these roles possess a deep understanding of gender-related thematic issues so they can provide the technical expertise required to drive meaningful change.

- *Advancing women's political participation and representation including improved legal frameworks for women's rights and participation.*

Several key pieces of legislation were prioritized, signed into law, and have been implemented in the last five years. These include the Land Rights Act (2018) which recognizes equal rights and equal protection to own, access, and use land, both individually and collectively, regardless of identity, ethnicity, tribe, language, gender or otherwise. This is significant because women's land rights in Liberia have historically been subordinated to those of men, particularly under customary law. The Land Rights Act ensures that women have equal rights in inheriting land, including the right to inherit family land. This provision is critical in protecting widows and ensuring that they are not dispossessed of land after the death of their husbands. Finally, it requires the representation of women on Community Land Development and Management Committees (CLDMCs), specifically the equal representation of women, men, and youth.

The Local Government Act (2018) is one of Liberia's most progressive with respect to women's participation in local development planning and decision making, including guaranteed representation on county councils, district, and town advisory councils (though only specific with respect to county councils and still only about 33%). It also requires women's participation and gender mainstreaming in county and district development plans. Presently, women on average make up 39% of County Council members, and in 2024, the county development agendas (CDAs) are being developed for the first time guided by the LGA, which requires inclusive participation and mainstreaming of gender equality. Challenges in implementing decentralization generally have hampered progress around inclusive local governance, and resource constraints and political issues have contributed to slow and uneven implementation across counties.

With respect to national decision making, the Government and partners attempted to amend the elections law including section 4.5 on candidate nomination. As the current New Elections Law (2014) states that political parties should "endeavor to ensure" and "endeavor to have" no less than 30% of either gender on their candidate listings and in their party hierarchy, very few political parties comply. In 2020 the National Elections Commission submitted to the Legislature an Act to Amend Certain Sections of the New Elections Law (1986). This was passed by both houses of the Legislature in 2022 with an amendment to section 4.5 which said political parties shall ensure and included fines and list rejection in case of non-payment of fines (10,000 for 2023, 15,000 for 2029 and thereafter no option to pay a fine). However, the bill did not receive Executive Approval/Assent, though it did pass the Legislature, which is the first time a mandatory gender quota has reached that far. This was still a setback going into the 2023 elections and, in the absence of a mandatory gender quota, only 2 of 31 political parties, alliances or coalitions included 30% women on their lists. Therefore, the percentage of women candidates remained low (15.5%), and

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the number and percentage of women in the Liberian Legislature remained at 10.7% (11 of 103) in 2024.

In the absence of a strong legal framework including temporary special measures, it has been a significant challenge to improve the numerical representation of women in political institutions. Political parties, and all branches of government remain male dominated, and the numbers of women have generally not reached a significant enough minority to help bring change. Discriminatory social and gender norms, unequal access to education and training opportunities, continue to have a negative effect on the number of women who are interested and able to vie for elected and appointed leadership positions.

- *Improved access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including family planning, maternal health care.*

In the latest Gender Inequality Index (2022), Liberia’s maternal mortality ratio of 652 deaths per 100,000 live births, as well as the adolescent birth rate of 122 births per 1,000 women ages 15–19 is considered “very high” - as per classification by the WHO. 30% of Liberian women have their first child before the age of 18.<sup>11</sup> The GoL is committed to ensuring equity and quality health care through the delivery of its National Health Policy and Plan 2022-2031, that prioritizes reducing gender and health inequities and discrimination<sup>12</sup>. The National Health Policy and Plan 2011-2021 integrates an SGBV component within its Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) and includes sexual reproductive maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health. Moreover, the GoL, supported by development partners, has achieved an enhanced access to services through the development and implementation of a Roadmap for Maternal Mortality Reduction and the Investment Case for Reproductive, Maternal, New-Born, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) 2016-2020, which further underpinned Liberia’s efforts under the UN “Every Woman, Every Child” initiative to end maternal and new-born mortality from preventable causes.

Liberia hosted the 2024 West African Adolescent Girls Summit, focusing on empowering girls and addressing barriers like gender-based violence, harmful practices, and limited access to education and reproductive health services. It is important to note that rural areas of Liberia face the greatest challenges in sexual and reproductive healthcare, often lacking proper infrastructure and electricity. To address this, UN Women and development partners have supported the Government by installing solar lighting systems which has resulted in the improvement of conditions in at least 26 clinics and in five new maternal waiting rooms across Liberia.

Liberia has committed to scale up family planning services and train health care providers and mentors to deliver adolescent-friendly health services, including sexual and reproductive health

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<sup>11</sup> World Bank, 2023. *Liberian Women Count: Evidence from a Macrosimulation of the Gender Dividend*. Policy Research Working Paper 10425.

<sup>12</sup> WHO Liberia, 2023 Annual Report.

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and family planning for both in and out of school adolescents, using a multi-sectoral approach. According to the Public Health Law (revised in 2019) sexuality education is mandatory. A Comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculum built around teaching life skills, decision-making, negotiation skills and gender roles and relationships is in place for students from grades 3 to 9. Sexuality education is treated as cross-cutting, and not as a stand-alone subject, and it is also integrated into extra-curricular programs. Moreover, Liberia has enacted a National Policy on Girls' Education 2021-2026 to facilitate the return to school for adolescent girls whose education was disrupted due to early pregnancy.

Recognizing the enabling role that religious leaders can play in challenging societal taboos surrounding sexual health and rights, the GoL has encouraged the Inter-Religious Council, an organization of Muslims and Christians, to increase their support for sex education. The group has identified “the lack of requisite information on sexuality education, poverty/economic instability, unplanned family life and peer pressure as some of the factors promoting teenage pregnancy in Liberia”. This work is complemented by several awareness activities undertaken by the MGCSP, including training centered on sexual behavior, contraceptive practice, and reproductive health among women, including adolescents.

Service providers in the health system are effectively providing education and counseling to adolescent girls and women of childbearing age to enroll in the appropriate family planning commodities of their choice. Students have access to family planning services through referrals to nearby clinics within their school communities. Several family planning methods are provided by the healthcare system, including oral contraceptives, contraceptive injections, intrauterine devices, and male and female condoms.

- *Promoting women's economic empowerment including support to agricultural value addition and women-owned SMEs, food security and social protections*

Despite comprising most of the agricultural workforce, women in Liberia still face many barriers to participate in rural development decisionmaking due to entrenched traditional and social practices. The Land Rights Act (2018) guarantees women's formal access to and control over farmland for production and livelihoods. This is a critical step towards improving land security and ensuring the productive use of land for poverty reduction. The Gender Desk at the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) further ensures that programs are designed to popularize women's rights and their access to natural resources for sustainable environment. Moreover, the Liberian Law Society (LLS) community project provides free legal services for women who are dispossessed of private and customary land. The GoL has been providing physical access to financial services, capacity-building on small business management skills, literacy, and numeracy for rural women, and trained over 750 rural women farmers in agriculture entrepreneurship for inclusion into women's agriculture cooperatives.

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Liberia has made strides toward its “Liberia Rising 2030” vision. This long-term plan, spanning from 2012 to 2030, incorporates diverse stakeholder perspectives and focuses on comprehensive economic, political, social, and human development, with gender equality as a fundamental pillar. The State Party has shown a strong commitment to enhancing women’s roles in community decision-making and expanding their participation in income generation and employment opportunities across sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and the formal economy. Additionally, Liberia introduced the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS) to tackle key challenges in the agriculture sector. This strategy emphasizes improving risk management and coping mechanisms, with a focus on promoting women’s access to seed production and distribution systems, increasing their involvement with cash crops, and boosting their business skills and financial literacy.<sup>13</sup> In September 2024, the GoL launched the “Liberians Feed Yourselves” Agenda, a comprehensive six-year National Agriculture Development Plan (NADP) 2024-2030 intended to revitalize the agricultural sector, put it at the forefront of the economy, and enhance self-sufficiency in food production.

Since 2009, the GoL has been implementing the Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG), program to address gender inequalities in the employment sector by increasing opportunities and earnings for young women. Participants are trained in business development skills, job, and life skills. After the success of the first three rounds, EPAG was extended for the period 2016-2020. An evaluation of the program showed a 47% increase in employment opportunities. At the household level, there is evidence of improved food security and shifting attitudes toward gender norms because of the EPAG project. After the completion of the four rounds of the EPAG project, nearly 4,500 people (4,300 girls and 200 boys) were trained and placed in self-employment or wage jobs. As a result of this initiative, employment increased by 47% and average weekly wages by 80% (MOGSP, 2021).

Liberia, through the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Program (LASIP), seeks to promote the widespread empowerment of women, with enhanced access to credit, land, technology and market information, and an established and functioning system by which women have access to extension services aligned with their traditional gender roles and receive capacity building to enable their participation in productive and commercial ventures.

Liberia has a low banking penetration rate and low access to formal financial services, with limited access to credit for women. In 2021, 44.30% of women aged 15 or more possessed a bank account, compared to 59.34% of men.<sup>14</sup> Supply and demand actors compound women’s difficulty in accessing credit. Lack of a credit culture and overall repayment rates make it difficult for financial institutions to lend to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially to women, who are considered as higher risk. Other factors limiting women’s access to credit are pervasive harassment,

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<sup>13</sup> Government of Liberia, 2022. 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Periodic Report Under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank, 2021. The Global Findex Database.

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corruption and exploitation which force women to rely on informal lines of credit. The largest microfinance institution in the country, BRAC, focuses on disadvantaged women in rural and urban areas to create self-employment opportunities, build financial resilience, and harness women's entrepreneurial spirit by empowering them economically; with 69,500 clients, BRAC disbursed 19.9 million dollars in loans to clients which constituted 93% women.<sup>15</sup>

The situation of credit facilities in the rural areas is particularly critical. As a result, rural communities continue to use traditional forms of community credit, such as informal "susu clubs", which expose women to a loss of income in situations of crisis, evidenced by the depletion of women's finances during the Ebola crisis. It was highlighted how programs for women in the past have focused on nutrition and food security, neglecting the commercial aspect of agriculture, such as teaching women and girls in the communities, appropriate methods of food preservation and nutrition. Liberia's agriculture policy underscores the GoL's commitment to addressing the issue of food insecurity, exacerbated by the 14-year civil war. The policy recognizes that equal access to land, credit and good infrastructure are essential to promote women's role in food security. Existing legislation on land rights, together with the NGP (2018-2022) are all intended to address these gaps.<sup>16</sup>

Other initiatives for women's economic empowerment include the Joint Program on "Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women" (JP RWEE), implemented by FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP with the financial support of Norway, Sweden, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The program has emerged as a good practice in advancing rural women's livelihoods, rights, and resilience through a holistic approach encompassing social, economic, and political domains of empowerment, including through collaborations with the private sector (e.g. Orange). Additionally, the Lofa Women Weaving Center (LWWC) has trained women in the Northern region of Liberia to produce high quality textiles from locally grown cotton and provide them gainful occupation.

Lastly, the National Employment Policy (NEP) seeks to improve support to women's work forums and business support by developing Inter-Ministerial Rural Women's Empowerment Initiatives to strengthen the institutional capacity of organizations of female producers and entrepreneurs and to provide support services, including skills and business training, credit, and technical assistance. In 2020-2021, the Adolescent Girls Division of the MGCSC significantly impacted the lives of 180 young women and girls by providing Economic Empowerment Training across Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Cape Mount, Nimba, and Montserrado counties. Each participant received specialized training in tailoring, pastry, interior decoration, auto mechanics, or cosmetology, with 36 girls benefiting from

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<sup>15</sup> BRAC Liberia. 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Government of Liberia, 2022. 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Periodic Report Under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

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the program in each county. Additionally, they were equipped with starter kits tailored to their acquired skills, further enhancing their ability to succeed in their chosen fields.<sup>17</sup>

- *Strengthened mechanisms for eliminating violence against women and girls including the passage of the Domestic Violence Act, Anti-SGBV roadmap and ending harmful practices including FGM and child marriage.*

Under the European Union/United Nations Spotlight Initiative, the Government of Liberia and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to conduct an inventory of traditional practitioners in the 5 spotlight counties (Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Cape Mount and Montserrado) with the aim of designing informed programmes for the prevention of FGM, including providing alternative economic livelihood opportunities and skills to replace FGM which was considered a source of income for practitioners.

Integrated, rights-based, and survivor-centered multisectoral essential services to women and girl survivors of violence were accessed by 207,005 individuals from January 2019 to December 2023 and covered healthcare services, psychosocial services, legal services, protection services, and community engagement and empowerment services. The improvement in SGBV service delivery is also linked to the Spotlight Initiative contribution which allowed to produce tools that are currently guiding service providers in managing relevant cases (including a Case Management Policy, a National SOP on case management, and the Integrated Essential service package for SGBV and SRHR); the availability of safe infrastructure (including 12 newly constructed and 10 rehabilitated WACPS facilities, a National Forensic Pathologist Laboratory furnished and equipped, 4 SGBV/SRH Centers, 2 SGBV Specialized Courts, 5 One Stop Centers and 3 Safe Homes); equipment for evidence promotion in service delivery (DNA machines); and the recruitment, training, and deployment of a multidisciplinary team including 121 LNP/WACPS officers to provide these services in Spotlight counties.

Although the House of Representatives voted for the *Domestic Violence Bill* in 2017, the bill did not receive concurrence and died in the 53<sup>rd</sup> Legislature; however, the bill was passed in August 2019 following sustained advocacy and lobbying with the 54<sup>th</sup> Legislature. In 2018 the effort was revived Upon the advent of the Weah-led administration, the Executive Branch of the GoL through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, hosted several consultations with Legislators, the Traditional Chiefs and Elders, Civil Society and our International Partners between July of 2018 through June of 2019 to discuss and negotiate on the bill's passing the Domestic Violence Bill. It was agreed that the penalties in the Bill needed strengthening and the Legislators called for a public hearing to listen to testimonies and finalize the Bill for presentation to the Parliament for submission to plenary for passage. In the end, the criminalization of Female Genital

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<sup>17</sup> Government of Liberia, 2024. 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Periodic State Party Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).



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Mutilation (FGM) component was removed, and the bill was passed and signed into law by President Weah. When the bill passed without the FGM component, government and partners began increasing engagement is working with traditional elders and leaders through the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders (NACCEL) which led to a temporary suspension of Bush schools where the practice of FGM is being practiced. In February 2023, NACCEL declared a nationwide ban on the practice and began county visits to engage with local chiefs and *zoes* (traditional FGM practitioners) on the ban. This sensitization around the harms of the practice through the adoption of the “initiation without mutilation” concept, and the enrollment of *zoes* in alternative livelihood activities conducted in Vocational and Heritage Centers and alternative livelihoods for FGM practitioners *zoes* in four practicing counties to address the root causes of the practice. *Unfortunately, no data is available on changes in prevalence and the practice continues as it is a deeply entrenched cultural practice. Additionally, NACCEL has been replaced with a new structure (the National Council of Chiefs) in line with the LGA and assigned with a new leadership. This means that the Government and partners need to build new relationships and restart advocacy efforts to some extent.*

### **Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programs?**

The Government of Liberia is currently in the process of developing its new national development plan, the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development. At the time of writing, the specific priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies, and programs have not yet been clearly defined. However, it is expected that key priorities already identified will continue to be emphasized. These likely include addressing GBV through the implementation of comprehensive NAPs, promoting women’s participation in governance by advancing gender parity in national and local government, and bridging the gender digital divide to ensure equal access to technology and digital literacy for women and girls. Additionally, the government is expected to focus on transforming the care economy to increase women’s economic empowerment, supporting the integration of women into green economies, and investing in the education and economic opportunities of girls and young women. Further priorities will likely emerge as the ARREST Agenda is finalized, building on ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in alignment with Liberia’s international commitments, including the BPfA and SDGs.

### **Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern**

This section covers progress across the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA. To facilitate the analysis, the 12 critical areas of concern have been clustered into six overarching dimensions that highlight the alignment of the BPfA with the 2030 Agenda. This approach is aimed at facilitating reflections about the implementation of both frameworks in a mutually reinforcing manner to accelerate progress for all women and girls.

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

#### Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

Over the past five years, Liberia has made significant strides in advancing gender equality in the workforce, including informal and non-standard employment, through various initiatives. For example, through the Liberia Women Empowerment Project (LWEP, 2022-2027) funded by a US\$44.6 million World Bank loan, the country aims to empower women and girls in six climate-vulnerable counties across Liberia, specifically targeting 267,200 people in over 750 communities. Liberia is highly vulnerable to environmental degradation and the effects of climate change. Coastal flooding, erosion and sea-level rise pose especially serious risks, also considering that Liberia's coastline includes many of its most densely populated and economically vibrant areas (e.g., the capital city of Monrovia and major port city of Buchanan). The project seeks to advance women's empowerment by addressing social norms and improving access to livelihoods, while building the capacity of national institutions. At the institutional level, the project supports institutional capacity building for the gender machinery in Liberia, providing support to MGCSPP and MoA to enable them to better generate sex-disaggregated data and deliver gender-focused programs in line with GoL policies. To date, 50 key personnel across various ministries and government agencies have enhanced their capacities to support the effective implementation of this programme.

Furthermore, Liberia has shown interest in engaging with the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, launched in September 2021 by the UN Secretary-General, signaling the UN system's collective response for addressing the multiple challenges that threaten to erase development progress aligning with the Global Accelerator, the GoL aims to advance progress towards the SDGs and support the creation of decent jobs, primarily in the green, digital and care economies, and to extend social protection to the poorest Liberians.

The Government of Liberia has ratified and domesticated the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 100 (Equal Remuneration Convention 1951) and the ratification was approved on September 27, 2021. The Convention requires "equal enumeration for men and women workers for work of equal value refer to rate of enumeration establish without discrimination based on sex", thereby providing legal protections and policy framework for equal pay for equal work based on sex. In addition, all women and men are entitled, without distinction, exclusion, or preference to enjoy and to exercise the rights and protections and provided in the Decent Work Act (2015). Non-discrimination in the workplace prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, language, economic status, occupation, sex, gender identity or sexual orientation, and marital status.

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) Technical Vocational and Education and Training (TVET) has established the Liberia TVET commission. For the first

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time, this commission will coordinate all TVET activities in the country and harmonize various aspects TVET. AS a result, the commission has targeted the increased participation of women in all aspects of TVET. For example, TVET has been modernized to make it demand driven. TVET in Liberia is now being positioned to be driven by the labor market. That means, women have been directed into areas in which the potential for the attainment of employment is higher. MYS/TVET provided practical tools and guidance on how to mainstream gender effectively into the TVET institutional structures, systems, programs and activities in Tumutu Vocational School, Monrovia Vocational Training Center, Kakata Vocational Training Center, Julijuah Vocational Training Center, Youth Agricultural Training Center, Youth on the Job Training, etc. All these programs have prioritized female recruitment in enrollment. MYS/TVET has supported the capacity strengthening of TVET gender focal points in mainstreaming gender equality. Furthermore, the MYS/TVET program has tried to address barriers to women's participation in TVET and often strictly applies affirmative action principles, for example, in the Business and Domestic Occupational Training Center under MYS 90-95% of the trainees and graduates have been young girls and women trained in various trades, and many of them have acquired job placements.

Another impactful initiative by Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) in partnership with UNDP is the Livelihood Project, which created income-generating opportunities for vulnerable groups, particularly women, youth, and women living with disabilities. The project not only addressed poverty and inequality but also promoted infrastructure rehabilitation jobs with a gender-sensitive approach, encouraging women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Key achievements of the Livelihood Project include empowering 200 women across 36 communities through a cash-for-work program, distributing US\$125 each in Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, and Nimba Counties. Additionally, 120 individuals, including women and people with disabilities, took part in infrastructure rehabilitation across four counties. The project also supported the textile industry, providing 45 women with US\$1,000 each to boost their businesses. Initially funded with US\$7.8 million, donor contributions raised the total to US\$8.4 million.

To further promote financial inclusion, the Small Business Administration (SBA), in collaboration with UNDP, improved access to finance for self-employed women, particularly in the textile and agricultural sectors. Since 2021, 617 young women and girls received a total of US\$308,500 in small grants ranging from US\$300 to US\$500, while 38 innovative SMEs, primarily led by women, received US\$1.32 million through a competitive business plan process under the Growth Accelerator Program. Additionally, 14 organizations, including civil society and community-based enterprises, were awarded US\$500,000 in grants to support women's empowerment initiatives. Furthermore, 120 women living with disabilities and other marginalized groups participated in infrastructure rehabilitation jobs aimed at income generation, improving sanitation, and supporting rural economic activities in 48 communities across Grand Cape Mount, Nimba, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties.

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Despite these accomplishments, there is a need for additional support in access to finance, capacity building, and modern equipment to ensure sustained growth and competitiveness for women entrepreneurs across Liberia. Expanding these initiatives to more regions and enhancing financial literacy are key to long-term success.

The State Party also recognizes the critical importance of reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work as women and girls carry the burden of this work and it remains uncounted and undervalued. As a matter of practice, advocacy, and awareness interventions on GEWE continually encourage men to take on a greater share of the housework and play more active roles in parenting their children as a means to redistribute household labor. As a means to address this in a systematic way, the MGCSP is planning to assess time spent by men, women, boys, and girls on domestic and care work, as well as establish the monetary value which will underpin evidence-based advocacy to promote greater equality with respect to unpaid care work and improved work-life balance.

### **In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?**

The GoL has taken several steps in the past five years to reduce the gender digital divide. In 2019, a National ICT Policy was adopted. The policy aims to provide universal and affordable internet access, with a focus on reducing the gender digital divide. It includes measures to improve digital literacy and access to technology for women and girls. Targeting women and girls, particularly in rural and underserved areas, this policy has increased internet access among women, though challenges remain in affordability and digital literacy. As part of the implementation of this policy and in line with government youth empowerment initiative, a nationwide “Liberia Digital Transformation Project” has been launched, to train 10,000 youths in digital skills, including e-commerce, software development, digital marketing, and IT management.

Orange Foundation and UN Agencies have invested in the Government’s effort to reduce the gender digital divide through the introduction of digital inclusion for women’s empowerment and the launch of Women Digital Centers. There have been digital teaching and learning opportunities to women smallholder farmers including basic business skills and access to finance through the digitization of VSLAs, significantly improving their economic opportunities. Additionally, the digital centers have graduated around 200 women per year, equipping them with digital skills that enhance their participation in social and economic activities.

In 2023, the UN Women and Central Bank of Liberia project “Digitally Linking Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) for Women economic empowerment targeted 450 women: farmers from fifteen (15) cooperatives in Bong and Nimba Counties. The pilot project seeks to improve financial services, products, and credit by integrating VLSAs with Orange Money, a mobile money platform. Additionally, the project focuses on building digital literacy and

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strengthening and building the capacity of cooperatives on disaster risk reduction to enhance their productivity. The pilot was successful in that it empowered rural women through digital financial inclusion, economic independence and increased knowledge on disaster risk reduction.

### **In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?**

Over the past five years, Liberia's macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment has presented both challenges and opportunities for implementing the BPfA. Economic instability, inflation, and a high debt burden have strained public finances, limiting the government's capacity to adequately fund programs that promote gender equality, including those aimed at addressing the priorities of the BPfA. Liberia has faced significant macroeconomic challenges, including low growth, high inflation, and a reliance on volatile sectors such as natural resources. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated Liberia's fiscal crisis, leading to a further reduction in resources available for gender-focused programs. Women, especially those in informal sectors, were disproportionately affected by the economic downturn, which hindered progress on women's economic empowerment and reinforced existing gender inequalities. The fiscal impact of COVID-19 led to cuts in public spending, including in social sectors critical to advancing gender equality, such as education, healthcare, and women's economic empowerment initiatives. Limited revenue generation and high levels of debt service have reduced the resources available for gender-focused policies, which are critical for BPfA implementation. Austerity measures have sometimes led to cuts in social programs that disproportionately affect women. For example, the 2024 recast budget reduced the budget for the MGCSP from 3.37 million to 2.61 million, citing austerity measures.

Despite these challenges, Liberia has implemented several macroeconomic policies aimed at fostering a more gender-equal economy. The PAPD, launched in 2018 is Liberia's national development plan that sought to address poverty, improve human development, and promote inclusive economic growth. The PAPD includes specific commitments to promote women's economic empowerment through improved access to credit, skills development, and employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas. Liberia has made progress in adopting gender-responsive budgeting practices. Through the MFDP, Liberia has worked with international partners including UN Women to integrate gender considerations into fiscal policies, ensuring that budget allocations address the needs of women and girls, particularly in education, healthcare, and agriculture. However, effective monitoring and implementation of GRB remain limited due to capacity constraints.

Liberia has implemented several programs targeting women's economic empowerment, such as increasing women's access to finance through microcredit schemes and supporting women entrepreneurs. The Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) has been involved in initiatives that focus on improving financial literacy among women and facilitating access to loans for female-led businesses. This includes formalize Village Saving Loan Associations (VSLA) operating in the

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informal economy. This effort links VSLAs in Liberia to the financial eco-system through Orange Money and Mobile Money, which are mostly used by women for savings. In addition, the Bureau of Small Business Administration in the Ministry Commerce and industry in Liberia has focus on improving the participation of Liberia owned Macro-Small Medium Enterprise (MSME), particularly women, in public procurement. The mandate that at least 25% of all public procurement be allocated to Liberia owned MSMEs, with 5% specially designated for Liberian women-owned businesses is a significant step toward enforcing gender responsive policy. This aligns with efforts to promote inclusive economic growth as highlighted in the BPfA.

Liberia has also benefited from international financial assistance and donor support, which has been critical in advancing gender-related programs. Initiatives like the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative have provided resources to address gender-based violence and support women's economic participation, filling gaps left by constrained national budgets. While macroeconomic challenges have affected Liberia's ability to fully implement the BPfA, targeted policies and international support have contributed to fostering a more gender-equal economy. However, sustained improvements will require continued efforts to address structural economic weaknesses and ensure that gender-responsive policies are effectively funded and implemented.

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

#### **In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty and enhance social protection among women and girls?**

The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection is also implementing the Liberia Women Empowerment Project (LWEP) from 2022 – 2027 with financing from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank Group (\$44.60 million). The LWEP aims to improve social and livelihood services for women and girls in targeted communities, foster positive social norms, and strengthen the government's capacity to advance women and girls' empowerment through a "whole community" approach targeting multiple actors and levels. This project has six components. 1) Fostering positive social norms and community mobilization, 2) Enhancing basic services in health and education, 3) Promoting resilient livelihoods through community-led approaches, 4) Strengthening public institutions to advance gender equality, 5) Project management, monitoring and evaluation, 6) Contingent Emergency Response Component, in the event of an eligible crisis or emergency, funds may be reallocated from other components of the project. The Project will be implemented in six counties (Rural Montserrado, Gbarpolu, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh and River Cess), targeting approximately 750 communities and reaching up to 267,200 beneficiaries (70% women). The grant component will directly benefit 36,000 rural women and support the development and financing of 2,700 climate-smart business plans.

Women and men face different risks and vulnerabilities, some specific to their gender and others exacerbated by gender inequalities and discrimination. The design and implementation of social protection programs in Liberia address gender-related constraints, including barriers to women's

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economic advancement. Social transfers are made to women, which improves children's health, nutritional status and school attendance, and can be an effective way of reducing hunger and intergenerational poverty.

The State Party through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has addressed poverty by expanding social protections with emphasis on women and women-headed households. For example, the Liberia Social Safety Net (LSSN) Project, implemented by the MGCSP with support from UNDP and the World Bank, is a cash transfer program to extremely poor and food insecure households in the counties with the highest incidences of vulnerability. Based on the economic analysis and household consumption among extremely poor households, the transfer amount ranges between 10 USD and 34 USD per month, depending on the size of the household. In parallel to the cash transfer, the \$8.1 million project also developed a Social Registry initially targeting the registration of 200,000 households in the six counties in its first phase (2017 – 2021) towards becoming a national household registry. To date, 25,509 households received cash transfers in Montserrado, Maryland, Grand Kru, and Bomi – of this number, 75.1% (19,157) were female cash recipients. In addition, the Liberia Household Social Registry (LHSR) now the Recovery of Economic Activities for Liberian Informal Sector Employment (REALISE) Project (2021-2026) is being supported by the World Bank through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and Ministry of Youth and Sports is providing social protection through cash transfers to poor and food-insecure households for 16,000 beneficiaries in four Counties as well as support the strengthening of the national social protection system. Under REALISE, the first payments have been made to 955 households (814 females and 141 males) in Grand Bassa County, while enrolments of beneficiaries in the other counties are in its final stages. This project will also support the development of a new National Social Protection Policy in which gender equality and women's empowerment will be prioritized.

### **In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?**

In 2019, eight African countries were estimated to have very high maternal mortality rates, ranging from 500 to 999 deaths per 100,000 live births. Among them was Liberia, with 668 deaths per 100,000 live births. By 2020, this number had decreased to 652, showing little improvement.<sup>18</sup> Many adolescent girls in Liberia continue to experience pregnancy, especially those living in poorer communities with limited access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. High risk pregnancies significantly contribute to the already high maternal mortality rate in a country with a health system still recovering from the impacts of Ebola and COVID-19.

The GoL, with the support of specialized UN agencies such as UNFPA and UNICEF, has implement low-tech, inexpensive, and high impact health interventions to improve health outcomes for women and girls. These include developing health sector policies and plans that focus

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<sup>18</sup> Gender Inequality Index, 2022

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on reducing child, neonatal and maternal deaths; improving service delivery, especially in the most hard-to-reach south-eastern counties; and mobilizing communities to look after the health of children and women. With UN support, the MOH has enhanced the procurement and distribution of essential drugs and supplies, improved pharmaceutical storage capacities, and trained health workers to use simple but highly effective techniques to manage potentially fatal complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

In the reporting period, with UN support, the GoL has scaled up the promotion of reproductive health services for pregnant teenagers, maternal and newborn tetanus vaccination, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV services. For example, the National AIDS Control Program and Ministry of Health have increased the number of health facilities providing HIV prevention and treatment for pregnant women, children, and adolescents. At the community level, more than 730 UN-supported community health assistants visit homes in the south-eastern counties, providing lifesaving healthcare to children and women in the most remote and hard-to-reach areas of Liberia.

As a result of the establishment of new health facilities, women can access free health services, including quality adolescent sexual and reproductive health, labor, and delivery, as well as postpartum and newborn care. Mothers in rural areas of Liberia are less likely to use contraceptives, receive prenatal care by a skilled provider, give birth while being attended to by a skilled health care provider or give birth in a healthcare facility. Significantly, since 2020, more than 400,000 individuals received sexual and reproductive health information and services, including family planning; 2,032 SGBV survivors were provided with medical, psychosocial, and protection services. It is estimated that 60,630 unintended pregnancies were prevented, as were 257 maternal deaths, and an estimated 965 child deaths. UNFPA has reported that 84% of women giving birth were attended to by trained birth attendants in 2021.

The MOH is also introducing measures to improve workforce performance, such as providing tools and standards, rehabilitating facilities, programming in-service training, improving supervision, establishing open performance appraisal, and improving coordination to ensure the delivery of quality health services. The GOL through the MOH and in partnership with the MGCSP implemented the Adolescent, Sexual and Reproductive Health Right program that provided education on this issue to girls and young women. The program also targeted and included lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons. There have also been discussions and awareness raising in terms of including sex education in school curriculum. Liberia has joined the International Health Partnerships (IHP+) platform for increased coordination between government and donors to align resources to the country's health sector priorities.

Moreover, the MOH developed a specific “Investment Case for Reproductive, Maternal, New-Born, Child, and Adolescent Health” for the 2016-2020 period which is an integral part of Liberia's policies and plans to achieve the SDGs related to Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and



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Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) by 2030. The Investment Case further outlines Liberia's efforts under the UN Every Woman, Every Child initiative to end maternal and new-born mortality from preventable causes, as highlighted in the country's policy and regulatory framework. The strategy and mode of operation of the plan is cascaded through three tiers: facility-based, outreach, and community-based services. The cascade was specifically chosen to provide mechanisms to track progress holistically.

### **In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?**

Widespread, persistent gender biases and gendered beliefs which permeated the education sector, preventing girls and young women from achieving equality education are being removed. Girls and young women are more likely to stay in school and graduate due to numerous interventions by the Government and development partners. Challenges affecting girls' enrolment and retention in school include lack of school fees and other related indirect costs, safety travelling to school due to long distances, especially in remote rural areas, cultural attitudes toward girls' education, the perceived need for children to work to support families, sexual abuse, and early pregnancy.

The percentage of 6–14-year-olds who are not enrolled in school is between 15 and 20% one of the highest in the world while nearly 33% of preschoolers enrolled in early childhood learning activities, and 54% of students finish their elementary schooling. Many students who attend elementary and high schools are over age and possibly might not finish school. Late entry into grade one and poor enforcement of the regulations lead to overage enrolment. The annual School Census of 2019/2020 showed that 49.5% of the total enrolment are girls. However, 69.9% of all girls in school are over-aged. By gender disaggregation, females have the higher repetition rate (MOE, 2023). Almost one-third (31%) of women aged 15-49 in Liberia have no education, compared with 13% of men. About one in four women and men have attended elementary school. More men have attended high school than women: 40% of women have reached junior or senior high compared with 53% of men. Only 6% of women and 11% of men have gone beyond high school. According to the 2022 Census, about 60 percent of the population in Liberia is literate. This proportion is higher in urban (71.8%) than in rural (45.1%) areas, and higher among males (65.1%) than females (54.6%).<sup>19</sup>

Liberia lags well behind most other African nations in education. According to the 2021/2022 Annual School Census Report, the primary school completion rate was at 10% for boys and 11% for girls. A 2022 UNICEF report on Child Marriage in West and Central Africa estimated that 46% of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 had no education as compared to 15% who had at least a secondary education. Teenage pregnancy contributes significantly to dropout rates of girls. High teenage pregnancy rates also affect educational attainment of girls and women and are attributed to poverty and lack of awareness on reproductive

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<sup>19</sup> Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), 2022. Liberia Population and Housing Census.

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health. An estimated one in seven girls gives birth before age 18. 67% of adolescent girls with no education are mothers, compared to 17% of those with secondary and higher education (UNFPA Liberia, 2022). This suggests that access to education plays a crucial role in reducing teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

The Education Sector Plan (2017-2021) was revised in 2022 (valid from 2023/24 - 2026/27) to accelerate progress and progress and innovation towards delivering on the priorities identified in consultation with education stakeholders. The implementation of this plan targeted steps towards gradually removing fees for early childhood education, improve systems for the inspection of schools, train thousands of teachers and develop a new curriculum compliant with 21<sup>st</sup> century realities. The ESP 2023/24 - 2026/27 has the following goals which include a focus on gender equality in education: Increase equitable access to education by reducing overage population at the ECE level and reduce the percentage of out of school children at all levels with particular attention to gender and regional disparities; Increase the quality of teaching and learning by increasing access to stem and TVET to all and expand access to quality, inclusive gender sensitive TVET align to the job market.

The new National Policy on Girls' Education (NPGE 2021–2026) seeks to advance gender equity and equality through the educational system and to ensure that enough girls have access to a high-quality, reasonably priced education. The NPGE 2021 -2026 was developed to minimize gender disparities in the education sector and support the implementation of specific interventions to curtail gender imbalances and barriers to girls' education. However, national efforts to prioritize girls' education in Liberia have been hampered by, among other things, insufficient budgetary allocation, shortages in technical expertise, and inadequate coordination. The MGCSP in collaboration with the MOE also implemented out a Vulnerable Girls Education Program in 2013-2020 for girls between the ages of 12-16 in eight counties, (Rural Montserrado, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, Grand Bassa, Nimba, Bong and Lofa).

To increase accountability among educators the GoL introduced a Code of Conduct for Teachers and School Administrators in Liberia (2018) which prohibits any sexual romantic relationship between students, teachers, and school administrators, developed a dress code and defined exploitive behaviors. School counsellors were trained to provide support to students. In addition, A Student Well-Being Program developed by the MOE offers the following to address school related GBV: a hotline with anonymous reporting channels; creation of a blacklist of convicted teachers; community engagement; development of a clear referral process for victims; conduct regular school inspections and increase the number of female teachers.

The Accelerated Learning Program, ALP (2017-2021) seeks to increase access to quality education services for out-of-school children and adolescents. The program supports communities to improve education for out-of-school learners by offering ALPs that condense six years of the primary education cycle into three years. Girls represented 55 percent of ALP beneficiaries (MOE, 2020).

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Additionally, 5,000 girls have benefitted from the Gender Equitable Education Program (GEEP), a partnership between UNICEF and the MOE, which seeks to promote access to education and increase the retention and completion rates of adolescent girls in grades seven through nine (aged 12-15). The GEEP offers a two-hour academic tutorial four days a week, providing extra support to students who are at risk of dropping out due to limited family support, or low learning performance in the four core subjects of mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. In addition, the GEEP also provides life and leadership skills for girls through an all-girls club established at each school in which it is implemented. Profits from small-scale income generation activities by the Girls Clubs go toward the purchase of learning material or paying school fees and supporting girls' return to school.

In 2022, Liberia developed and validated a Liberia National TVET Qualification Framework (LNTQF) consistent with TVET Policy 2022 and Bill. TVET enrolment figures suggest an equal gender distribution in education of 53% men to 47% women, subjects are segregated along traditional gender roles. The GoL acknowledges there are challenging gender perceptions in TVET, and women face barriers, taking courses in traditionally male-dominated areas where learning environments do not consider girls' specific needs. The GoL also mainstreams and monitors gender in ICT programs through programs like through specific programs established in various universities and vocational institutions to encourage women in ICT.

### **What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?**

Liberia has integrated gender perspectives into its COVID-19 response and recovery plans. This includes targeted support for women-owned businesses, particularly in sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, such as agriculture, retail, and informal trading. The government has provided grants, low-interest loans, and capacity-building programs to help women entrepreneurs recover and thrive. The government has expanded social protection programs to address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls. These programs include cash transfers, food assistance, and healthcare subsidies specifically targeted at women-headed households, who are often more vulnerable to economic shocks. In response to the pandemic's impact on health and education, Liberia has launched initiatives aimed at maintaining access to essential services for women and girls. This includes ensuring the continuity of maternal and child healthcare services, as well as supporting remote learning and safe school reopening plans that prioritize the needs of female students.

Recognizing the increase in GBV during the pandemic, Liberia has strengthened its prevention and response mechanisms. This includes establishing more safe spaces for survivors, increasing access to legal and psychosocial support services, and launching public awareness campaigns to combat gender-based violence.

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### Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

#### Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

The State Party has prioritized reduction of SGBV by strengthening public awareness and access to services including prevention and response through GBV observatories, Women and Child Protection Sections (WACPS) case management, and the establishment of safe homes. Significant progress has been made by through the implementation of the Government of Liberia/United Nations (UN) SGBV Joint Program.

The Government established a National SGBV Taskforce comprising of ministries and agencies, local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), relevant UN entities and development partners. The Taskforce meets once every month to review progress and share ideas or information on mitigating Gender Based Violence perpetrated against women and children. Also, the taskforce working alongside the national machinery has developed a National SGBV Communication Strategy and communication materials and messages which includes the Referral Pathway that sensitizes the population on the prevention, management, care and reporting of GBV cases, as well as the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that are specific to each county. The Taskforce members periodically undertake joint monitoring of GBV interventions across the country.

Criminal Court “E”, of the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial Circuit Montserrado County, exercises exclusive authority over all cases of sexual offenses in Montserrado County. It has exclusive original jurisdiction over crimes of rape, gang rape, aggravated involuntary sodomy, involuntary sodomy, voluntary sodomy, corruption of minors, sexual abuse of wards, sexual assault and other crimes that may be added, as sexual offenses. The law establishing Criminal Court E authorizes it to try cases of sexual offenses with the provision that rape cases be tried in camera. Accordingly, judges have the rights to seal the names and addresses of rape victims. The GoL, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection expanded SGBV units to nine of fifteen political sub-divisions in Liberia. These units are mandated to support the local circuit courts in prosecuting SGBV cases. Beyond prosecution, the SGBV Crimes Unit raises awareness among traditional and community leaders, and trains law enforcement officers and medical examiners on SGBV reporting. The training includes courses on SGBV crimes and laws, SGBV Referral Pathway, 24-hour hotline, psychosocial services, and victim-centered approach in handling SGBV cases, prosecutorial services, and case adjudication.

An increase in the reporting of SGBV cases is attributed to increase public awareness and education. However, there are delays in prosecution due to compromises of the cases by parents and subsequent withdrawal of cases from the courts. In most instances, parents cannot afford funds

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to pursue cases and distances from their communities to the courts are too far. Trainings and awareness on SGBV reporting procedures and referral pathways ascertained that SGBV referral pathways are accessible and user friendly. High incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in schools forced GoL to be organized Joint SEA focal Persons and Buddy Clubs in schools to report, prevent and implement peer SEA & SGBV awareness programs. Awareness is to educate teachers of the provision of zero tolerance against SEA. However, school-based reporting and referral mechanisms need to be strengthened.

Phase III of the NAP-GBV (2018-2023), as revised and modified summarizes intervention measures to be followed for prevention and management of GBV in Liberia by building on the successes, mitigating pitfalls, and incorporating emerging issues derived from the implementation of Phase II. Phase III of the NAP merges GBV interventions into three critical pillars; Psychosocial & Coordination, Legal & Protection and Health.

Challenges in implementation of the NAP-GBV Phase III (2018-2023) specified an apparent lack of a unified, coordinated, and centralized data collection system. All implementing bodies of the NAP-GBV III are answerable to the President of Liberia. Phase III of the NAP-GBV provides for the coordination of all GBV actors engaged in data management, through an information management system in Liberia. The MGCSP is responsible for the management of safe homes as secure accommodations for GBV survivors as they go through the justice system. The MGCSP reports most of the homes are not operating or unable to meet the needs of all survivors because of funding.

The Inter-Ministerial Anti-Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Taskforce was formed by directive of the President of Liberia and compiling the Government of Liberia & Partners for the Anti-GBV Roadmap (2020-2021) which was developed as a response to GBV in the COVID-19 pandemic. The roadmap aimed to integrate GBV into all current and future humanitarian responses and government programs through a holistic approach. It addressed the long-term implications of infrastructure, such as safe homes, and procurement, like DNA machines, by considering the training and maintenance of qualified staff to ensure sustainability. Notably, a DNA machine was procured and installed at JFK Hospital. Furthermore, it prioritized enhanced funding and implementation of existing response mechanisms to support survivors and their families in accessing justice, recovery, and reintegration.

### **In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?**

In 2008 the government through the MGCSP established the SGBV Division to coordinate activities relating to the prevention and management of SGBV interventions, collect, analyze data and report SGBV cases. The Division collaborated with partners and adopted Phase III of the GBV NAP (2018-2023) for the Prevention and Management of GBV in Liberia. To adequately coordinate all SGBV interventions and service providers, a National SGBV Task Force, chaired by

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MGCSPP, was subsequently established at national and county levels to ensure the implementation of the NAP.

Other strategies employed include the continued enforcement of legal instruments and implementation of policy frameworks. The legal framework improved in the last five years with the passage of the Domestic Violence Act (2019), the SGBV Roadmap that provides various steps survivors of SBV can follow to access security, medical and legal services, the SGBV Standard Operation Procedure (SGBV-SOP) which outline the response mechanisms put in place to care for SGBV survivors and the role and responsibilities of all SGBV actors, and the National Anti SGBV Roadmap of 2020 that is designed as a comprehensive national policy framework which integrates the coordination and implementation of SGBV prevention and response interventions as well as increase accountability amongst duty bearers to enforce policies that will reduce SGBV against women and girls in Liberia. Since its adoption in 2020, funding of the roadmap implementation has been provided through the national budget and it demonstrates the government commitment in the fight against SGBV.

Engagement of men and boys in GBV prevention is also prioritized. In addition to the integration of this strategy in GBV programming, an annual “All Men’s Conference” is held to intensify advocacy on male’s involvement and engagement in the fight to eliminate GBV and to promote positive masculinity, including preventing parental alienation, abuse, homelessness, suicide, violence, and promoting male’s health in general. Liberian men have organized “HeForShe” champions in their communities to complement GoL’s efforts to end VAWG.

Additionally, strategies have been designed include training the security forces to prevent and respond to SGBV incidences and the establishment of gender and social inclusion units in all the security institutions to mainstream gender in the security institutions. The security institutions with functional gender and social inclusion units include the Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Justice, the Armed force of Liberia (AFL), the Liberia National Police (LNP), the Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), the Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (BCR), Liberia Drugs Enforcement Agency (LDEA) and the Liberia National Fire Service (LNFS). Additionally, the LNP has a specialized Unit called the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) that handles women and children’s issues such as SGBV, domestic violence and child rights violation as well as persistent non-support.

The GoL has also established a robust coordination mechanism to coordinate the gender and social inclusion units at the various security institutions. This mechanism is called the Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce (GSSNT) and is co-chair by the ministries of National Defense, Justice and Gender, Children and Social Protection. The GSSNT provides training for staff member of the Gender and Social Inclusion Units in the security institutions and raise awareness on SGBV prevention and management, as well as NAP-WPS.

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According to the Director of the Gender Department at the Ministry of National Defense, six of their staff and three staff from the Gender and Social Inclusion Unit of AFL were trained on gender mainstreaming, human rights, SGBV prevention and management in the AFL. As part of its capacity building initiative on the implementation of the second WPS NAP and with support from the UN Women, the Ministry of Gender trained fifteen master trainers including four members of the GSSNT on human rights, masculinity, gender and raising awareness on the NAP in April 2021.

The Government of Liberia through the MGCSP adopted a Social Behavior Change and Communication Strategy in 2020. 96 community members including traditional and religious leaders, SGBV service providers, representatives of the National Legislators, community and faith base organizations, women, and youth groups as well as civil society organizations from eight of Liberia's fifteen counties were trained on the usage of the Strategy. As the result of the strategy and training provided, SGBV service providers and traditional and religious leaders have begun incorporating into their traditional and religious rites and messages on how to change negative social behaviors that drive SGBV in their respective communities.

**In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?**

In the last five years, Liberia has taken several steps to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, although progress remains limited and data gaps persist. This issue has been exacerbated by the increased use in digital tools, as women and girls increasingly used online platforms for work, education, and social interactions.

Liberia's initiatives have focused on strengthening legislation to protect women and girls online, though enforcement and public awareness remain challenges. The Domestic Violence Act (2019) includes prohibition of online and other electronic means of harassment; however, there have been some progress on drafting legislation specifically targeting cyber-violence, as the legal framework still lacks specific provisions for technology-facilitated violence, leading to calls for reforms and stronger policies. For example, Liberia currently lacks specific, comprehensive legislation explicitly prohibiting the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, such as nude photos, although it has broader laws that address indecency and public decency violations. The Penal Law of Liberia criminalizes acts of indecent exposure and public obscenity, but these laws were developed before the rise of digital platforms and do not adequately cover online abuse like the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

**In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV?**

Liberia has an abundance of women's rights organizations that implement much needed work in the areas of women's economic empowerment, gender-based violence prevention and response,

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women's political participation and leadership, sexual and reproductive health, and rights, amongst others. Despite the significant contributions to Liberia's development, they are not adequately funded.

Funding mechanisms such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, and the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative focus on targeted, localized interventions. These initiatives deepen grassroots women's contributions to peacebuilding by supporting local CSO efforts to protect human rights and combat sexual and gender-based violence. Under the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative (2019-2023), for instance, a specific pillar was established to ensure a coherent, inclusive, and empowered CSO and women's movement framework. During the reporting period, more than 200 women's rights organizations enhanced their organizational skills related to leadership and planning, proposal development, and resource mobilization. In partnership with the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the Spotlight Initiative channeled rapid financing to 46 grassroots women's organizations through small grants to implement programs on prevention of SGBV and harmful practices and the promotion of sexual reproductive and health rights. These interventions mostly took place in hard-to-reach communities.

The Spotlight Initiative has increased opportunities for women's rights groups and CSOs to engage in advocacy for addressing VAWG using social accountability tools. 32 women's rights groups and 68 relevant CSOs, whose capacities in accountability mechanisms were enhanced in 2020, are now contributing to the development of shadow reports for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), universal periodic reporting, and Community Score Cards to support their advocacy and influence policy decisions on SGBV issues. A total of 296 individuals (125 females and 171 males) from 100 CSOs who attended Spotlight capacity-building interventions are continuously engaging with the GoL to advocate for an increase in court sessions from two to at least four terms per year. These groups are also pushing for the government to appoint a special judge in each county to adjudicate SGBV cases, aiming to fast-track cases and reduce the backlog.

With support from the Spotlight Initiative, 200 grassroots women's rights advocates and women human rights defenders enhanced their capacity in 2022 to integrate efforts to end violence against women and girls into development plans. 71 groups received grants to implement advocacy activities focused on fostering gender-inclusive development processes. These grassroots organizations also improved their ability to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate their programs on SGBV and harmful practices. They began to collectively engage in raising community awareness and advocating for the end of SGBV and harmful practices in various communities across Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Nimba, and Lofa counties.

**In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?**



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In the past five years, Liberia has made efforts to address gender bias and the portrayal of women and girls in the media, including social media. Key initiatives include working to strengthen its media regulations with the objective of promoting gender equality. The Liberia Telecommunications Authority and the MGCSP have emphasized addressing harmful portrayals and discriminatory content against women and girls in both traditional and social media. However, these regulatory frameworks are still evolving, and specific gender-sensitive media policies remain underdeveloped. Various campaigns, particularly during the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, have focused on how women and girls are portrayed in the media. These campaigns often highlight the need to eliminate stereotypes and harmful gender narratives. Social media influencers and activists have also taken part in promoting positive and empowering images of women and girls, as part of larger efforts to combat online misogyny and gender-based discrimination.

International and national NGOs such as Internews, Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding (CEMESP), the Female Journalist Association (FeJAL) and UN agencies particularly UN Women, have supported capacity building programs on gender sensitive or gender responsive reporting. These workshops encourage responsible and balanced reporting on gender issues, aiming to reduce harmful stereotypes and promote a more equitable portrayal of women in the media. These actors have also been active in monitoring media coverage to identify bias and gender-based discrimination. With the support of UN Women two radio programs were launched to promote women's political participation and leadership ahead of the 2023 legislative and presidential election. A new program, "Women in Politics," established on Liberia Broadcasting System, airs monthly and raises awareness on barriers to women's political participation and VAWP. Through collaborations with ECOWAS Radio, radio programs have also been developed to spotlight Liberia's commitment to temporary special measures, such as the 30% Memorandum of Understanding signed by the National Elections Commission and Political Parties on women representation in politics, and to address VAWP. These programs have provided platforms for women leaders, civil society organizations, and electoral stakeholders to discuss key issues, reaching broad national audiences.

As part of the efforts to abolish FGM, 40 journalists from various media institutions in Liberia are now enabled to disseminate information, stories, and statistics related to GBV in a way that challenges dominant gender stereotypes. The training emphasized portraying women and girls in diverse roles, breaking away from harmful stereotypes, and reporting accurately, safely, and respectfully to avoid victim-blaming and sensationalism while promoting gender equality. It provided reporters with an opportunity to raise awareness about FGM and SGBV through objective reporting.

To promote positive portrayal of women in media, ongoing efforts also include facilitating access for women leaders to radio platforms, amplifying their voices on the importance of inclusive political participation. Jingles and spot messages featuring women leaders, broadcast across radio

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stations, have contributed to a positive shift in the public discourse on women's leadership and participation. These interventions have not only promoted gender-responsive media reporting but have also played a crucial role in shaping national discussions around the rights and representation of women in Liberia's political landscape.

### **In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?**

The NAP-WPS, revised in 2019, emphasizes protecting women and girls, especially marginalized groups, from GBV. The NAP recognizes the unique vulnerabilities of women with disabilities and includes provisions to ensure their protection and participation in peace processes. Generally, GBV programming aims to also address the needs of women with disabilities. These programs have included training service providers to better accommodate the specific needs of marginalized women and girls in terms of reporting violence, providing access to safe shelters, and ensuring health services are inclusive. Liberia has partnered with organizations such as UN Women and local disabled persons' organizations to implement projects that raise awareness about the violence experienced by women and girls with disabilities. This includes advocacy efforts that highlight the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by these groups. While the DVA generally addresses violence against women, it does not include provisions recognizing the specific vulnerabilities of women with disabilities or LGBTQ people. Enforcement remains a challenge, especially for marginalized groups who face barriers in accessing justice.

The National Commission on Disabilities (NCD) was established in 2005 with the mandate to handle the general welfare and education of PLWD, while the National Union of Organizations of the Disabled was formed in 1995. In 2018, a five-year NAP for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities was developed as a national document to promote the welfare and rights of PLWD throughout Liberia. The NCD, together with the National Union of Organizations of the Disabled, advocate for the rights of women with disabilities, ensuring that they are included in national GBV strategies.

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

#### **In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?**

Liberia is a country with deeply entrenched patriarchal norms in political institutions including political parties and the Legislature, and society which creates resistance to women's political participation and leadership from the local to the national level.

In the executive branch, 30% of ministerial posts are held by women (6 women out of 20), which include the Ministers of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP), Education (MOE), Health (MOH), Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and Defense (MOD), as well as one of the two Ministers of State without portfolio. Women are almost 31% of deputy ministers (just 19 women of 62 posts),

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and 26% (25 of 95) assistant ministers. In the judiciary, while women are 60% (3 of 5) of Supreme Court Justices, they are underrepresented at other levels of the judiciary. For example, of the 15 county attorneys, only 1 is a woman (6.7%)

With respect to the Legislative branch, the First Past the Post electoral system is especially disadvantageous to women. Since the first post-conflict elections in 2005, the percentage of women in the Legislature has fallen from almost 15% in 2006 to 12% in 2012, and 11% in 2018, where it remains in 2024. While Liberia from October-November 2023 held peaceful and largely transparent Presidential and Legislative Elections, like in the 54th Legislature, just 11/103 seats (10.7%) are currently occupied by women in the 55th Legislature. Despite the absence of mandatory gender quotas, the numerical representation of women in the legislature was maintained overall after the October 2023 election, with no change at 10.7%. This stability is attributed to the historic victories of women in two counties: Grand Cape Mount and Grand Gedeh. Grand Cape Mount, which had never elected a woman representative, now boasts three out of four legislators, while Grand Gedeh elected its first woman representative. These gains were achieved despite a low overall participation rate for women, with only 15.5% (159 of 1029) female candidates contesting in the 2023 elections.<sup>20</sup> The number of female candidates in 2017 was 15.9% (163 of 1024), unfortunately showing a lack of progress in deepening the pool of women who are ready and able to run for elected office.

To date, all efforts to pass a legislated gender quota to fast-track gender parity in national leadership positions have been unsuccessful. The 2014 amendments to the New Elections Law (1986) Amended Section 4.5 on Candidate Nomination to say that political parties should “endeavor to ensure” no less than 30% of either gender on their candidate lists and in their hierarchies but as the language is weak and there is no accountability mechanism, political parties do not comply (for example only 1 of 24 parties, alliances or coalitions in 2017 and 2 of 31 in 2023 complied with the 30% quota, which is essentially voluntary. An Act to Amend Certain Sections of the New Elections Law (1986 as amended 2014) would have made 30% gender quota mandatory, but while it was passed the Legislature in September (passed in each House, on 13<sup>th</sup> in House of Representatives and 16<sup>th</sup> in Senate), the Act did not receive executive approval and was sent back to the Legislature where it died with the closure of the 54<sup>th</sup> Legislative session.

The National Elections Commission of Liberia (NEC) effectively mainstreamed gender in the 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections, promoting equity and inclusion in the electoral process. This also contributed to there being no major incidents of violence against women in elections (VAWE) in 2023, owing to a proactive prevention strategy well ahead of the elections. This included the development and signing of a Protocol between the NEC and Political Parties to Address Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE Protocol) signed by 29 political parties between February and December 2022, and the inclusion of VAWE prevention and response in the Revised

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<sup>20</sup> National Elections Commission. 2023.

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Farmington Declaration on Peaceful Elections (2023), signed by the standard bearers or party chairpersons of 25 parties, alliances, and coalitions.

In 2023, a notable milestone in inclusive voter registration with gender parity in voter registration. Women made up 50.1% of the 2,471,617 total registered voters. Additionally, women were 51.8% of the voters on election day. The launch of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Policy in July 2024 is the culmination of the NEC's GESI efforts in the project period. This policy will help ensure that all Liberians, regardless of gender, age, disability, or other differences, can participate in elections with confidence, dignity, and equal opportunity. Although the NEC has reached gender parity in its Board of Commissioners, the policy will help the NEC address the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles related to electoral management at other levels, striving towards 50:50 representation. The policy also commits the NEC to encourage the legislature and political parties to adopt gender parity legal and policy reforms.

Lessons learned include the need to engage and support women who aspire to political leadership early on, well in advance of election cycles. This approach allows for more comprehensive training, mentorship, and networking opportunities, which can significantly enhance their chances of success in the political arena. Following the 2023 elections, the legislature welcomed six new female legislators indicating the importance of working with aspirants so that they can compete effectively for the next election. There is also a need to scale up engagement with political parties to support them to be more internally democratic, while linking them to women's groups and associations to help identify women who might be interested in participating in politics and already have a support base on which they can build.

The electoral reform effort made significant gains because diverse actors shared a broad interest in electoral reforms, including the gender quota. Building a broader coalition of women's organizations and networks together with other civil society organizations and state actors interested in inclusive democratic governance is more effective in advocating for temporary TSMs. However, there is a need to support partners to strategize and re-strategize with partners at all stages of the law reform process. This includes different approaches and tools for the two houses of the legislature and not forgetting the executive branch since there was not a significant shift of focus to the executive when the bill left the legislature. Future electoral reform bills should prioritize a broader scope of gender-sensitive measures, extending beyond candidate nomination alone. While past targets of 30% (1995) and 50% (CSW-65) for women representation are noteworthy, reforms should encompass additional aspects. These include financial incentives for gender-responsive political parties that can be channeled to support women candidates to contribute to gender equality in elected positions. Policy reforms should also be undertaken to address the issue of nomination requirements for independent candidates and candidates contesting on political party tickets should not be the same. Women candidates raise this disproportionately disadvantages women

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independent candidates. Additionally, centralized registration was also prohibitive considering time and financial investment to travel to Monrovia from remote areas.<sup>21</sup>

To ensure sustainability of efforts, Liberia should work to support generation of data and analysis on VAWP and will support an institutionalized approach which includes building local capacity in the area and working with political parties to promote zero tolerance policies.

Women's representation at the local level is also low, where women comprise approximately 11% of local statutory positions in 2024. This is an increase from 8.5% in 2017.<sup>22</sup> There has also been a slight increase in women in customary leadership positions (chieftaincies). The percentage of paramount chiefs has increased from 4.1% in 2017 to 5.7% in 2024; the percentage of clan chiefs has increased from 5.6% in 2017 to 8.8% in 2024; and general town chiefs from 4.6% in 2017 to 8.2% in 2024. In a positive development, women are now 40% (6/15) County Superintendents are now women. Work has progressed with setting up more representative County Councils with representation of women and youth as required by the Local Government Act (LGA, 2018), but gaps remain in women's and youth's representation in local leadership. Women are also not participating equally in local development planning, including the development of district and county development plans, which also contribute to national development. The LGA also seeks to remedy this situation by requiring inclusive participation in local development planning and local governance.

The LGA includes provisions to increase the representation of women, youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.<sup>19</sup> Nine-person County Councils established through the Law must include representatives of various county-level organizations and networks, which translates to at least 33 percent women and 22 percent youth on the Council.<sup>20</sup> In 2024, the first year for which consolidated gender disaggregated data for County Councils, women make up 39% of county council members on average with a high of 56% in Grand Bassa County and a low of 22% in Nimba County.<sup>23</sup> District Advisory Councils, Chiefdom Advisory Councils, Clan Advisory Councils, and Town Advisory Councils should also include women and youth, although a minimum standard is not specified, and there are also merit-based civil service positions that must promote equal representation of women and men. Section 5.2 of the LGA specifies that the "development planning process shall be participatory, gender-sensitive, and inclusive of all citizens, residents, minorities and marginalized communities, as well as civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities." This process requires a local context analysis to identify specific challenges, needs and priorities, an assessment of existing resources, skills and capacities, identification of research areas to support county development and management, and organization and leadership for the development of the County Development

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, EU-EOM 2023 Liberia Elections Observation Report

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs and UN Women, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

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Agendas (CDAs), which are four-year strategic development plans for the counties aligned with national development priorities.

Additionally, in all these areas GEWE must be mainstreamed and specific measures for GEWE and social inclusion must be undertaken. Chapter 6 of the LGA focuses on Inclusive Local Governance and requires the promotion of equal participation of women and men in local government decision-making and in all development sectors (agriculture, health, education, governance, etc.) and service delivery, representation of women, men, minorities, and people with disabilities in local governance structures and service; protection of rights of women and girls including protection from gender-based violence; and capacity development to facilitate equal participation and representation in decision-making, leadership, employment and contractual services, and other opportunities. Further, the LGA requires local governments to “take proactive measures to reverse discrimination by identifying and rectifying discriminatory practices within local government set ups and governance processes that may negatively affect women or men,” and makes special provisions for vulnerable and marginalized groups including persons with disabilities, the elderly, orphaned and abandoned children. 2024 is the first time since the enactment of the LGA that the CDAs and national development plan have been developed. The MIA, MGCSP, MFDP have been working together to complete CDAs plans in compliance with the LGA.

Although the LGA includes these important elements, most of these reforms have yet to be fully implemented. Both at local and national levels, having so few women and youth in decision-making positions have meant that they have little influence on decision-making, development planning and decentralization.

### **In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?**

The process to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media through information and communication technologies has been a collective effort manifested by civil society, media managers, and national government. This effort has greatly been executed by civil society organizations such as: Center for Media Studies and Peace building (CEMESP), the Female Journalists Association of Liberia (FEJAL), Internews Liberia, Press Union of Liberia (PUL), and others.

FeJAL, the umbrella organization of women journalists across the country, has made significant impact in increase women participation. Some of the tool used to achieve this is the “Advancing Women in the Media Strategy”. The institution used this strategy to train more women journalists in urban and rural areas and provide them with tools gargets and equipment to enhance their work. It created fellowship and mentorship opportunities for women in the media to thrive. Media managers were trained on giving women access to key positions in newsrooms. Managers played their parts by granting women access to the decision-making taking at their news entities. As a

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means of having more women in managerial positions in the newsrooms, FeJAL currently has a Gender Ethics Policy that mandates media institutions to have a certain percentage of women in editorial positions. It also requires that women working at these entities be placed on major radio programs, talk-shows, etc. Institutions like Internews, CEMESP and PUL support fellowship programs to advance women's participation in the media.

With respect to ICT, the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS), Ministry of Information (MICAT) and Liberia Telecommunications Corporation (LIBTELCO). This includes greater gender sensitivity in the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICTs including in areas of management and leadership; measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls (e.g. free Wi-Fi hubs, community technology centers); regulations to advance equal pay, retention and career advancement of women within the media and ICT field; and collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis.

The GOL, through LIBTELCO has embarked on mainstreaming and monitoring of a gender perspective in all ICT initiatives. LIBTELCO has several ICT programs to include School Connect which was launched at the University of Liberia main campus; ICT Female Club – a flagship program that have been rolled out in various universities across the country. These programs target the general students' population within the various universities across Liberia. The ratio of male and female in the field of Information Communication and Technology has seen a steady increase since the introduction of these programs. The Liberia Telecommunications Corporation has also instituted internship programs and skills building initiatives and youth empowerment programs at several vocational training and high schools across the country. The YWCA has been one of the many targeted institutions that has been benefiting from the "ICT for girls' programs". This program also attends to young female ICT students "ICT for girls" at the Ministry of Youth & Sports. The BWI and MVTC vocational training programs are also other means that LIBTELCO is empowering women in the areas of ICT. Students from these vocational schools are considered for internship upon their graduation to further enhance their skills with the necessary practical steps and trainings that are meant to prepare them for their different roles in society.

**Please describe your country's current national women's machinery and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to strengthen it.**

As stipulated by the Act that established the MGCSP, the mandate of the MGCSP is to "promote the development, empowerment and protection of women, girls, and children, as well as the welfare and integration of persons with disabilities, the vulnerable, extremely poor, excluded and disadvantaged. Specifically, the Ministry will initiate, develop, and implement and/or coordinate policies and programs aimed at women, girls, and children, as well as those physically challenged, marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded, to ensure that their rights are protected and that they are integrated, and contribute to, and benefit from, the peace, stability, and socio-economic

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advancement of the country.” Amongst its core functions are to ensure the mainstreaming of gender, children and social protection concerns in national government policies, plans, programs and budgets; formulate gender, children and social protection policies and strategies; coordinate the preparation of national gender, children and social protection development plans; design and implement monitoring and evaluation frameworks for gender, children and social protection and programs; ensure national compliance with all international conventions on women and children, as well as on vulnerable, excluded, marginalized groups, and persons with disabilities; develop and implement gender, children and social protection training programs; and promote advocacy of gender, children and social protection issues, amongst others. The MGCSP is headed by a minister who is a member of the Cabinet.

In the last five years, The National Gender Policy (2018-2022) recognizes the need for the MGCSP effective coordination of all major partners to effectively mainstream gender in all national and sector development initiatives. Therefore, the MGCSP will work in close partnership with all the Ministries, Agencies and Commissions, Civil Society Organizations, the private sector and development partners. Given that the National Gender Policy is delivered by multiple stakeholders, it is incumbent upon the MGCSP to strengthen coordination of diverse actors working to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality. In line with the NGP, CSOs are to be engaged as active partners and to provide oversight for accountability and transparency in the implementation of gender-sensitive interventions.

In the past five years, MGCSP has provided capacity building for all gender county coordinators on the implementation, monitoring, and reporting on the implementation of National Action Plans, gender, and human rights-based approach. Additionally, the Ministry has established a Human Rights’ Unit which is capacitated to lead Liberia’s State Party reporting on GEWE (CEDAW, Maputo Protocol, BPFA).

**In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women’s organizations)**

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in collaboration with its partners continues to support gender focal points in all public institutions through capacity building measures and elevating the gender focal points to Gender Units. Currently, the Government has established Gender Units in all ten security institutions as well as some ministries and agencies. The establishment of Gender Units in ten security institutions including, the Liberia National Police (LNP), Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (BCR), Ministry of National Defence (MOD), and in a few other Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; Ministry



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of Agriculture; the Governance Commission; the Liberia Land Authority; and the National Housing Authority).

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

### **If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?**

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

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

### **Peaceful and inclusive societies**

### **In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?**

The Human Rights and Women, Peace and Security Unit was established at the MGCSP is to coordinate and ensure the full implementation of and regular reporting on the NAP on WPS with a focus on Protection, Prevention, Participation and Empowerment, and the promotion of women's peace and security issues. The Unit's immediate task is to work with national and international partners to: Coordinate the implementation of the NAP on WPS; Strengthen collaboration with actors and engender policies across the Ministries, Agencies and Commissions Corporations (MACs) and coordinate treaty reporting; and engage the Legislature and increase awareness to galvanize public support for women's empowerment and protection issues.

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Ten institutions in the security sector, including (INCHR, LNP, AFL, LIS, LAC, LDEA, MOJ, MOD, LNFS, MOGCSP, BCR) under the GSSNT have gender policies that ensure equal opportunities for men and women in recruitment, training, and career advancement and address gender-related crimes. In addition, In compliance with UNSCR 1325 that all contributing countries should have 15% of the troops as female, the AFL conducted pre-recruit training exclusively for females across the country. In 2022 the AFL recruited, trained, and deployed additional females who are currently serving in various capacities. Previously, the percentage of females accounted for 4%; currently, the number has increased to 7.5%., the AFL also included females in peacekeeping missions in the last five years (Mali and Sudan). As of 2023, women make up approximately 21% of the Liberia National Police.<sup>24</sup> Notably, the current defense minister, Brig. Gen. Geraldine J. George (Rtd.), rose from the rank of Brigade commander for the 23rd infantry brigade, deputy chief of staff, and deputy minister for operation, and currently serving as the first female defense minister in the history of Liberia.

Before developing the MOD and AFL Gender Policies in a five-year action plan (2021-2025), AFL had a regulation band on unmarried female soldiers to get pregnant. As a result of the development, validation, and approval of the MOD/AFL gender policy, female officers are allowed to get pregnant which allows for both paternity and maternity leave. Between 2019 and 2024, the AFL has empowered its female officers and enlisted in various capacity building by gaining foreign training from the UAE, USA, China, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, among others. About 30-45 females benefited from leadership, peace, and security training.

Since the Liberian civil war, rebuilding the child protection system has been part of the priority agenda of the national reconstruction process. The GoL has made child protection one of the main cross-cutting issues that shall be mainstreamed across all sectors for society's overall productivity and well-being. In 2022, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in collaboration with UNICEF, launched a five-year National Strategy Roadmap on the Child Justice System in Liberia. The strategy is based on the findings and recommendations from a 2019 study on the child system in Liberia. The roadmap aims to address the absence of specialized juvenile units within the Prosecution Office, Legal Aid, Probation Service, Detention Centers, and Parole Board, as well as the lack of residential care institutions for boys and girls in conflict with the law. It also seeks to strengthen coordination between specialized and non-specialized units. While child-specific SOPs for the WACPS and guidelines on diversion for MOJ social workers have been developed, SOPs and capacity building for prosecutors, judges, defense lawyers, prison staff, and probation officers handling juvenile cases are still lacking.

As to the protection of women and girls from trafficking, the MOJ's Child Justice Section, with support from UNICEF, issues exit clearances to parents or individuals aiming to travel with children especially girls out of Liberia. The Child Justice Section coordinates child justice issues including policy formulation and the implementation of the Juvenile Diversion Program in

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<sup>24</sup> Liberia National Police. 2023. <https://www.lnp.gov.lr>

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compliance with the Children's Law. The Diversion Program seeks to reduce the number of minor and less serious offenses committed by juveniles that create bottlenecks formal justice system. Under this, the state party has established a juvenile court that exclusively hears all juvenile-related cases.

In the past five years, the government of Liberia adopted and implemented its second NAP on WPS, for the period 2019-2023). The overall objective of the second NAP was to create lasting peace and promote women's active and meaningful participation in peacebuilding processes in Liberia. The second NAP was built on five Pillars including: Prevention, Protection, Participation, Relief and Recovery, as well as Coordination and Accountability and it integrates lessons learned from the implementation of the first NAP WPS (2009-2013) and provides guidance for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. The second NAP set 40% target for women's participation in peacebuilding processes over the period of five years. Meanwhile, the second NAP outlined existing and prevailing cultural and structural barriers to women's full and active participation in peacebuilding processes and in the various security institutions and these barriers include weak and inadequate representation of women in national and local decision-making processes, insufficient and unequal access to natural and economic resources, strengthening of gender discriminatory relations within society and the family, and a poorly developed community infrastructure.

In addition to implementing the second NAP and being aware that conflict can be avoided when proper mechanisms are employed, the government of Liberia has established peacebuilding institutions with functional and effective conflict early warning and response mechanisms across the country.

The first institution established is the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) whose mandate is to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights in Liberia that guarantee a lasting peaceful society. Aware that human rights violations lead to conflict, the INCHR recruited and deployed human rights monitors in all the 15 counties of Liberia as an early warning mechanism to monitor and report on human rights violations. The Commission also coordinated the Palava Hut program, a traditional conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanism recommended by the then Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report in 2009 and provides a forum for victims of the civil war who did not participate in the TRC process to meet face-to-face with their offenders and reconcile.

Secondly, the National Peacebuilding Office (PBO) established in 2011 under the oversight of the Ministry of Internal Affairs with a mandate to identify and address potential conflict triggers as well as promote peacebuilding initiatives in local communities. The PBO recruited and deployed trained volunteers in three counties including Bong, Grand Gedeh and Maryland. Each of these counties has two volunteers deployed to monitor and report on potential conflict triggers. According to the PBO, early warning platform established in Liberia has 57 conflict sensitive indicators of which 20% is gender related with specific indicators on the number of rapes, SGBV and domestic violence cases occurring and reported at the community levels.

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Thirdly, the Women’s Peace Hut initiative is an important conflict early warning strategy employed by the government of Liberia that is heavily supported by the UN Women. The peace huts was initially a safe space where women met and discussed issues affecting them in their respective communities. Overtime however, the WPH became more and more actively involved in settling disputes not only in their respective communities but between neighboring communities and or towns. Currently there are over 30 peace huts operating across the country.

The fourth national conflict early warning and response mechanisms are the County Peace Committee (CPC) and the District Peace Committees (DPC). Though established since 2010 at the local levels due to numerous community related conflicts in Liberia, the CPC and DPC continue to help to resolve conflicts in the counties and at the district levels through alternative dispute resolution mechanism (ADR). The CPC which comprises of seven members, is located in each county capitol, while the DPC is located in the district headquarters. Women constitute 42.9% of the CPC and DPC membership respectively. According to a report on “Mapping and Assessing the Gender Responsiveness of Peace Infrastructures in Liberia” (Bangura, 2020), members of both the CPC and DPC received training on peacebuilding, early warning and response mechanisms, conflict management and resolution, trauma healing and the provision of psychosocial support by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Liberian women were actively engaged in the resolution of the civil war in Liberia. Since then, there has been the recognition of the positive contributions of women in peace keeping and security matters. Liberia has built the potential of women to serve in the security sector by developing the Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce Sustainability Framework (GSSNTSF) in 2017, which is to support the GSSNT. It aims to create a gender responsive security sector in Liberia by enhancing the inclusion of women’s perspectives in reforming the security sector and ensuring that initiatives respond to the needs and capacities of women, men, boys and girls. The Taskforce is chaired by the MOJ and co-chaired by the MOD and MGCSP. In addition, the Ministry of National Defense Strategic Plan 2023-2025 advocates for equal opportunity for staff, stating that personnel “appointment, promotion, or advancement shall be unbiased and based on individual merit, to include relevant knowledge, skills, gender sensitivity, and abilities rather than partisanship”.<sup>25</sup> Lastly, the Gender Policy and Action Plan 2021–2025 for the Liberian Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia was produced collaboratively with the MOD and the AFL Gender Unit and aims to promote advance gender equality within the institutions, acting as an important instrument to operationalize commitments made in the WPS NAP 2019-2023.

Several security entities have made progress in increasing female representation. In the Liberia National Police (LNP), 20% of the 5,000 personnel are women.<sup>26</sup>The Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (BCR) has 14.6% female personnel, while women make up 30% of the Liberia

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<sup>25</sup> Liberia Ministry of National Defense, Strategic Plan 2023-2025. Performance Management and Compliance System - Volume 1, pp. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Liberia National Police, 2024.

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Immigration Services (LIS) workforce.<sup>27</sup> For the first time, in May 2024, the LNP has appointed a female police spokesperson. These entities all have gender or gender and social inclusion policies, functioning Gender/Gender and Social Inclusion Units and have made progress in increasing the number of women in their ranks, although the number of women in leadership positions is still far from gender parity. Although it is important that the current Minister of Defense is a woman, of 49 other senior appointments in the security sector, there are 48 men (98%) and only one woman (2%).

### **In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?**

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

Among the initiatives undertaken by the GoL, is the establishment of an Adolescent Girls Division within the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, to specifically cater to the issues of girls and to ensure that girls participate in programs that will build their capacity as well as ensuring that girls are enrolled in school and stay in school without facing any form of discrimination. The GoL also established an Adolescent Girls Advisory Panel that advocates on girls' issues to ensure that their voices are at the Centre of policies that are developed, increase awareness of the needs and potential of girl children, build their capacity through the National Young women and Girls Conference held annually to build their leadership skills, confidence as well as self-esteem.

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

### **In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?**

The impacts of climate change in Liberia require the widest cooperation and participation in an effective and appropriate national response comprising mitigation and adaptation measures that are efficient, concrete, and targeted. Due to the impacts of climate change and the dire need for the adequate national response, the Government of Liberia through the Environmental Protection Agency and its partners, the UNDP, in August 2018, developed a National Climate Change Policy and Response Strategy to guide national response measures in addressing the menace. This policy

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<sup>27</sup> Government of Liberia. [Gender Policy of the Judiciary in Liberia 2020-2024](#).

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highlighted that issues of gender are mainstreamed in all climate change mitigation and adaptation interventions across the country as a means of promoting inclusiveness, equity, and adequate participation of all. Furthermore, the National Adaptation Plan of 2020 of Liberia emphasizes the importance of gender. The NAP process provides the enabling framework for planning and implementing adaptation actions as enshrined in the National Climate Change Policy & Response Strategy (2018) and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs, 2021), all will be done within the context of sustainable development. Improving adaptation planning through the NAP process will help build local adaptive capacity to address climate change (SDG13), which will reduce poverty (SDG1), thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities (SDG1) and improving gender equality (SDG5). Additionally, the NAP helps to provide training, awareness, and education on the SDGs particularly, the environment, natural resource management and climate change perspectives.

Through the EPA and its international partners, the Government of Liberia continues to develop environmental policy tools and programs to enhance gender mainstreaming and capacities. The issues of gender are emphasized in the Sixth National Report on the Convention on Biological Diversity (2019) with a focus on mainstreaming and building the capacity of women, girls, and children to manage the country's resources. Additionally, the National Adaptation Communication Strategy (2024) calls for and promotes equal rights for education, jobs, and other opportunities regardless of gender relating to environmental issues as well as allowing for the participation of women and children in the decision-making of climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

The UNDP Liberia Country Office is providing technical and financial support to the EPA in responding to the risks posed by climate change by conducting and updating relevant climate vulnerability and disaster risk assessments, as well as supporting the formulation of gender-responsive national adaptation policies and action plans (UNDP 2023). Additionally, it is also noted that gender gaps of social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities to climate change exist in Liberia. Women in Liberia are more vulnerable than men to climate change. For example, coastal erosion, with an estimated cost of over US\$250,000,000, causes the destruction of homes, loss of property, displacement, and decrease in income, as well as rise in insecurity and gender-based violence affects women more than men. These adverse effects contribute to increased gender inequalities by exacerbating the challenges women already face, such as family care and food insecurity. Since women derive most of their incomes from agriculture or the sea, they carry the weight of economic fluctuations related to the availability of these products.

Green Gold Liberia with support from UNDP Liberia in partnership with the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in August 2023, graduated 46 women from Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa counties following the completion of its 3rd cycle of the Eco stove production training. The training is important for the successful implementation of Liberia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and the focus of the training on women is very strategic. Liberia's NDC has a target to produce 300,000 (three hundred thousand) eco-stoves or energy-efficient cook-stoves

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by 2030. The use of energy-efficient cook stoves which has the potential to reduce the demand for charcoal and firewood will significantly help to halt and reverse the degradation of Liberia's ecosystems and promote women's health.

The Act that established the EPA in 2003, highlights the relevance of gender. At present, with technical support from UN Women, the Gender Desk of the EPA has transformed into the Gender and Social Inclusion Unit (GSIU), with a focus on institutionalizing gender and mainstreaming gender into all environmental policies, projects, programs and planning. In having a well effective and efficient gender unit, the institution has provided US\$ 20, 000 to develop the gender policy of the EPA. This unit is headed by a female, who is supported by five other females.

Under the UNFCCC, the Action of Climate Empowerment (ACE) was adopted with the overarching goal to empower all members of society to engage in climate action, through its six elements - climate change education and public awareness, training, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation on these issues. For youth representation in climate actions, the EPA has a youth desk, which serves as a Focal Point for ACE's project in Liberia. Through the youth representative, in collaboration with the EPA, and to achieve the NDC, a workshop was held in Ganta City on September 16, 2020, known as the Youth Declaration. The Youth Declaration explicitly layout the role of young people in climate actions. There were thirty-five youth organizations from the fifteen counties who attended the workshop.

Understanding the relevance of women's leadership in climate change action, The Partnership for Environmental Actions on Climate Change and Ecosystem Protections (PEACCEP) Liberia Inc. in collaboration with Baastel and Climate Action Africa launched a capacity-building workshop aims at strengthening the leadership of women-led climate action Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Liberia on June 24-25, 2024 with 15 female participants in Monrovia; and another 15 participated in Kakata, Margibi County from June 27-28,2024. The title of the workshop was "Capacity Building Training on Mainstreaming Gender in Climate Dialogue and Actions in Liberia.

The achievement of gender issues or responsiveness in environmental policies such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation are challenged by the lack of political actions, low-budget or gender-responsive budgeting and planning, low capacity, lack of relevant training, top-down approach to environmental and climate-related issues, limited women and youth participation in environmental and climate change initiatives, limited climate technology, spotty data on gender activities, poor institutional arrangement, poor coordination, collaboration and cooperation mechanisms, as well as poor monitoring, evaluation and reporting of gender issues.

**In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?**

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Liberia is a country that faces many threats such as floods, windstorms, epidemics, coastal erosion, and other man-made hazards. Because of climate change, the country is likely to experience more frequent and intense occurrences of these threats resulting in crop and livestock losses that intensify food insecurity and loss of income. For the most part, women and children are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.<sup>28</sup>

It is an established fact that gender inequality and equity are prevalent in Liberian society as evidenced by women's low participation in decision-making processes, limited access to and control of resources and property, violence, abuse, and denial of basic human rights faced by women, etc. These are even more glaring during disaster situations, which are notably on the increase. Women have limited involvement and participation in decision-making in all phases of disaster management, despite their valuable skills and experiences have had negative impacts on the effective mitigation of hazards (NDMA Gender Policy 2020-2024).

To show its commitment to addressing disaster risk in Liberia, the country passed the National Disaster Management Act 2016. Subsequently, Liberia set up the National Disaster Management Agency in 2016. The Agency has developed a Gender Policy in 2020 as a framework for addressing gender issues, and to mainstream gender effectively at the structural and programmatic levels in all the phases of disaster management. With the formulation of the Gender Policy, the NDMA and its stakeholders are mainstreaming gender in their plans, programs, and activities. An example of such is the recent UN Women-supported training on gender-responsive data collection & Cluster Systems and gender in humanitarian action planning which targeted the NDMA and its stakeholders. These trainings enhanced the Agency's capacity to ensure gender-responsive disaster management activities.

Also, there are various national strategies and plans (Liberia Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Strategy 2020-2030; Liberia Multi-Hazard Contingency Plan 2021, etc.) that have been developed by multi-stakeholders to address disaster risk reduction measures and activities that contribute to reducing risk exposure and vulnerability. The development and dissemination of these documents served as a medium to raise awareness of disaster risks. The focus is on not leaving anyone behind which shifts the primary emphasis on the most vulnerable and women are the first group in this category.

The ECOWAS-funded project, "Recovery and Resilience Building Assistance to families of Vulnerable Communities in Liberia" was implemented in partnership with the National Disaster Management Agency and the National Red Cross Society had a budget of US\$440,465 USD and targeted one 1,878 households of which 1,182 were female-headed households; through cash transfer to household heads to address some of their needs and for minor repairs of homes impacted by flood. This activity targeted 25 communities in Montserrado and five in Margibi Counties. This project was successful in that lots of constructions were done in the communities' cash was given

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<sup>28</sup> GOL. Liberia Risk Reduction and Resilience Strategy, 2020-2030.



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to people to address their exact needs, some damaged homes were reconstructed, and items of beneficiaries were replaced with funds received from the project.

The National Disaster Management Agency and its stakeholders have over the years worked with communities' leadership structures to develop programs and activities that considered gender mainstreaming. An example of such is the formulation of flood anticipatory plans with some communities. There are risk awareness activities ongoing using different medium and implementing other measures that contribute to reducing exposure and vulnerabilities to hazards.

In taking actions to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programs for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience, Liberia is challenged due to lack of political actions, finance or low budget for gender-sensitive climate-related issues and disaster risk mitigation projects, lack of capacity, limited climate technology, poor institutional arrangement, development, review and updates of policies instruments, poor coordination mechanism among governmental institutions, limited participation of women in decision-making on climate change mitigation and adaptation inadequate availability of logistics.

### Section Four: National institutions and processes

**Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.**

Liberia's national strategy for gender equality in the period is mainly articulated through its Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018-2023 and the National Gender Policy (NGP) 2018-2022. The PAPD is Liberia's second national development plan, aligned with Liberia Vision 2030, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It focuses on four pillars: 1) Power to the People; 2) Economy and Jobs; 3) Sustaining the Peace; and 4) Governance and Transparency. Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme across all these areas, aiming to improve access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for women, while addressing entrenched inequalities exacerbated by poverty and conflict. Liberia's efforts are further supported by international development partners, including the UN and the African Union, which align with its national goals for gender equality.

The NGP outlines the national framework to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in Liberia. Its key priority areas include eliminating gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices; Promoting women's political participation and decision-making; enhancing women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities; and strengthening institutional frameworks to monitor and enforce gender equality measures. The policy aims to address structural inequalities and align its objectives with SDG 5, which focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

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Both the PAPD and the NGP are closely linked with SDG 5 and broader goals within the 2030 Agenda. These frameworks emphasize promoting gender equality through poverty reduction, improving education and healthcare, increasing women's participation in governance, and addressing gender-based violence. Funding for these initiatives comes from a combination of national budget allocations, international development aid, and partnerships with bilateral and multilateral agencies.

The Revised National Gender Policy (2018 – 2022) has expired and development of the policy will follow completion of the evaluation and the launch of Liberia's new national development plan (2024 – 2029).

**Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.**

The budget allocated for the national gender machinery has been limited. For example, in 2022, 3.58 million was allocated to the MGCSP, which represented 0.45% of the national budget of 786.6 million; in 2023, \$2.89 million was allocated, 0.37% of the \$782.9 million budget; and \$2.61 million is currently proposed in the 2024 recast budget, which is 0.36% of the total \$721.5 million budget. The 2024 recast budget reduced the budget for the MGCSP from \$3.37 million to \$2.61 million, citing austerity measures. While the budget for the GRBP Unit at the MFDP and for Gender and Inclusion Units has increased from \$380,000 in 2022 to \$569,552 in 2024; however, this is for nine ministries, agencies, and commissions (MGCSP, MOE, MOA, LISGIS, MFDP, MIA, GC, MOJ, MoH).

Liberia has several mechanisms to track GRB which are included in the National Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting Policy (2019 – 2023), but challenges remain with systematic monitoring and reporting on expenditures that contribute to GEWE. In the national budget, there are specific lines identified for the Gender Units/Gender and Social Inclusion Units where they exist, and for the MGCSP (see table below). Expenditures on these lines are tracked by the MFDP GRBP Unit. However, tracking additional programmatic spending on GEWE priorities remains a challenge. With the support of the MFDP and MGCSP, staff of Gender Units have been trained on GRB which includes training on monitoring GEWE expenditures. In addition, UN Women and partners have trained civil society organizations including women's rights organizations to analyze budgets from a gender perspective and to monitor and report on GRBP.

There are still challenges as funding gaps often hinder the prioritization of gender initiatives within the national budget, with many GEWE programs relying on external funding. Additionally, many ministries lack the technical expertise needed for effective GRB implementation and tracking, and there is a lack of reliable data on gender-specific expenditures, complicating the measurement of budget impacts on gender equality.

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Liberia is committed to enhancing its GRB system by increasing transparency in tracking allocations and ensuring that the national budget reflects a strong commitment to gender equality. The government aims to strengthen institutional capacities within ministries for implementing GRB while raising public awareness about gender-specific expenditures. These efforts are crucial for achieving SDG 5 and supporting Liberia’s broader development agenda.

<b>Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection</b>					
	<b>FY2022 Allocation</b>	<b>FY2022 Outturn</b>	<b>FY2023 Allocation</b>	<b>FY2023 Outturn</b>	<b>FY2024</b>
MGCSP	\$ 3,578,446.00	\$ 2,707,226.00	\$ 2,890,006.00	\$ 2,332,686.00	\$ 2,606,936.00

<b>Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting Units</b>					
<b>MAC</b>	<b>FY2022 Allocation</b>	<b>FY2022 Outturn</b>	<b>FY2023 Allocation</b>	<b>FY2023 Outturn</b>	<b>FY2024</b>
MGCSP	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ -	\$ 60,000.00
MOE	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 21,000.00	\$ 60,000.00
MOA	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00
LISGIS	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00
MFDP	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ -	\$ 150,000.00
MIA	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ 60,000.00
GC	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00
MOJ	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ -	\$ 99,552.00
MoH	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	\$ 50,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 380,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 380,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 390,000.00</b>		<b>\$569,552.00</b>

**What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

Liberia has activated formal mechanisms for inclusive participation by different stakeholders in monitoring of the BPFA and SDGs including the Universal Periodic Review every five years. Liberia has also conducted two Voluntary National Reviews in the last five years (2020 and 2022), but the State Party has plans to strengthen coordination mechanisms on GEWE and hold more regular reviews to support implementation and monitoring of the BPFA and SDG5. These mechanisms do ensure that the voices of women, civil society organizations, government agencies, development partners, and the private sector are included in monitoring and reporting on treaties and protocols related to gender equality.

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

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The preparation of Liberia's Beijing +30 State Party Report benefitted from a series of multi-stakeholder consultations related to CEDAW and Maputo Protocol reporting in 2024. These involved reflections and analysis of key achievements, challenges, and lessons learned on GEWE interventions and included governmental ministries, civil society organizations, media outlets, and professional associations ensured that diverse perspectives and expertise were incorporated into the reporting process. The process of Beijing +30 report writing also took a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach, where key stakeholders were actively engaged to ensure that the report captures a comprehensive and accurate assessment of Liberia's progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. Each of these stakeholders was represented by technical experts, policymakers, and gender specialists who actively participated in the data collection, policy review, and analysis stages of the report preparation process.

Several government ministries and agencies played a critical role in the development of this national report by providing data, policy insights, and technical expertise:

- The MOL contributed data on women's participation in the labor market, employment trends, and measures taken to reduce gender-based discrimination in the workplace.
- The MFDP supplied information on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and the allocation of national resources towards gender equality initiatives.
- The MOD and AFL provided details on gender integration within the security forces and efforts to increase women's participation in peace and security initiatives.
- The MOE contributed data on girls' education, access to quality schooling, and programs aimed at reducing gender disparities in education.
- The MOCI shared insights into efforts to empower women entrepreneurs and foster women's participation in Liberia's growing economy.
- The MIA highlighted local governance structures and traditional mechanisms in promoting gender equality at the community level, particularly in rural areas.
- The MICAT played a role in publicizing gender-related initiatives and cultural efforts to address gender stereotypes through national media campaigns.
- The MOJ provided information on legal reforms and the enforcement of laws related to women's rights, including measures to combat gender-based violence and uphold women's access to justice.
- The MOH contributed data on women's health, maternal care, sexual and reproductive health services, and efforts to reduce maternal mortality.
- The DMA and Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission offered insights into gender-sensitive disaster response and resettlement efforts for women and girls in post-crisis situations.
- The EPA provided insights on gender and environmental sustainability, highlighting the role of women in climate action and natural resource management.

Moreover, CSOs and professional associations played a pivotal role in shaping the content of the national report by providing grassroots perspectives, conducting advocacy, and offering direct

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services to women and marginalized groups. Their input was vital to ensure that the report reflects the lived experiences of women and girls across Liberia and captures the challenges faced in achieving gender equality.

WONGOSOL, the umbrella organization for women's organizations, coordinated inputs from women's rights organizations, offering a unified voice for civil society in the report preparation. WONGOSOL provided critical analysis of the progress made on key areas such as women's political participation, economic empowerment, and GBV. FeJAL and Women's TV Liberia contributed insights into the representation of women in media, gender-sensitive reporting, and efforts to empower female journalists in a male-dominated industry. The Liberia Association of Writers represented the perspectives of creative professionals and writers who advocate for social change through literature, contributing to the cultural narrative around gender equality.

The involvement of the state broadcaster (Liberia Broadcasting System) and media outlets underscored the importance of communication and awareness-raising in promoting gender equality. Their role in the preparation of the report was crucial in documenting the progress made, as well as the ongoing challenges in the media's efforts towards achieving gender equality.

To ensure broad-based ownership and accountability, several consultative workshops and validation meetings were held during the report preparation process. These sessions provided platforms for dialogue among stakeholders, enabling them to review the content of the report, address gaps, and make recommendations for improving gender equality in Liberia. These consultations helped ensure that the report captures a wide range of perspectives, including those from marginalized and vulnerable communities, and is aligned with national priorities and international commitments.

In addition to national stakeholders, Liberia worked closely with international development partner the UN Women in the report preparation process. UN Women provided technical assistance, financial support, and global expertise to strengthen the report's alignment with the BPDF and SDG 5.

**Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.**

Liberia has conducted one UPR (2020) conducted two Voluntary National Reviews in the last five years (2020 and 2022). Currently Liberia has no action plan for CEDAW Recommendations, but would welcome technical assistance to develop this action plan as well as support to address the recommendations in a more systematic way.

### Section Five: Data and statistics

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

Over the past five years, Liberia has made some progress in gender statistics at the national level. In 2023, the University of Liberia introduced a Minor in Gender Statistics within the College of Gender Studies and Interdisciplinary Research. Educational data is now disaggregated by sex, providing insights into the enrollment of girls and boys at both primary and secondary levels. Additionally, Gender and Social Inclusion Units have been established in nine ministries, agencies, and commissions since 2018. The country has also piloted gender-responsive budgeting and planning within key entities, including the MFDP, MOH, MIA, MOE, MOA, MGCSP, MOJ, Governance Commission, and LISGIS.

LISGIS represents the only official (census and survey based) entity in charge of statistical production. According to the newly produced Liberia National Gender Statistics Assessment (2024), the data production capacity of LISGIS is, overall, weak. Indeed, timely relevant data availability has been limited to the extent that entities outside the government – such as UN agencies – have been producing their own statistics or undertaking data adjustments to conform with data needs. Data ambiguity exists, sometimes with difficulties in identifying data quality issues as users are not sure about the data coverage, the used concepts, definitions, and methodologies. SDG reporting is not exhaustive, whereas many SDG indicators are not covered. The problem also affects the country's SDG Voluntary National Review (VNR) drafting process. LISGIS has recently (in 2022) established a Gender Unit under the Department of Environment Statistics. The Unit will be upgraded to a department in such a way that it can mainstream gender into all relevant data production initiatives.

It is important to note that the 2018-2022 NGP included the objective of generating and disseminating sex-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. It referred, among others, to the need to facilitate the design of a national tool for collecting quantitative and qualitative sex-disaggregated data in all sectors in order to track progress on gender equality; develop an efficient capacity building plan for statistics units, especially, the LISGIS; develop a gender management information sharing system in all sectors and at national and county level.<sup>29</sup>

As of December 2020 (the most recent data available), only 41% of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective were available in Liberia, with gaps in key areas, in particular key labor market indicators, such as the gender pay gap and information and communications technology skills.<sup>30</sup> In addition, many areas – such as gender and poverty, physical and sexual

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<sup>29</sup> UN Women, 2024. Liberia National Gender Statistics Assessment. Final report.

<sup>30</sup> Women Count Dashboard. Accessible at <https://data.unwomen.org/country/liberia>

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harassment, women's access to assets (including land), and gender and the environment – lack comparable methodologies for regular monitoring.<sup>31</sup> Closing these gender data gaps is essential for achieving gender-related SDG commitments in Liberia. It is expected that further progress in the area of gender statistic will be made thanks to the development of a Women Count Phase II<sup>32</sup> project document, the development of a resource mobilization plan, and a mapping of potential partners.

### **Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?**

Liberia's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics will include enhancing institutional capacity for the MGCSP, LISGIS, and other relevant agencies responsible for collecting and analyzing gender-disaggregated data. Efforts will focus on improving data availability for informed decision-making, fostering collaboration and data sharing, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation of the National Gender Policy and sector-specific policies. Additional goals will include producing and publishing gender and sex-disaggregated statistics, conducting a time use survey, and updating the country's Gender Equality Profile. The use of gender scorecards will help assess and track gender integration across various policies and programs. Specialized training in gender-responsive planning, budgeting, tracking, audits, and monitoring and evaluation will also be prioritized to support these initiatives.

The country's engagement in strengthening the national gender statistical system will also reflect the recommendations outlined in the 2024 Liberia National Gender Statistics Assessment. For example, Liberia will seek to establish a robust coordination mechanism to enhance the overall development of the national gender statistics system. This will involve improving coordination at the central level, linking LISGIS with all other public entities for the efficient collection of administrative data. Additionally, enhancing vertical coordination will help prevent duplication of efforts while expanding and deepening data collection. High-level discussions will address census and survey implementation responsibilities, considering the recent goal of re-centralizing data production in relation to LISGIS's human and financial resources. Efforts will also focus on refining definitions, concepts, and methodologies where challenges persist across sectors and LISGIS. Lastly, the establishment of an external data quality assurance mechanism and investment in decentralized data collection are also key priorities for strengthening the system.

### **What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?**

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<sup>31</sup> Women Count Dashboard. Accessible at <https://data.unwomen.org/country/liberia>

<sup>32</sup> The UN Women flagship program "Making Every Woman and Girl Count" (Women Count) aims to bring about a change in the production, availability, accessibility and use of quality data and statistics on key aspects related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

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The State Party has prioritized the following gender specific indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs, SDGs Goal 5 Indicators (Gender Equality)

- Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
- Number of laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
- Legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
- Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence.
- Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.
- Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national legislature (elected) (b) executive branch (c) judiciary and (d) local governments (currently appointed)
- Proportion of women in senior management positions in agencies, authorities, commissions and state-owned enterprises
- Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care.
- Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
- National system in place to track and make public allocations for GEWE

### **Additional National Priority Indicators (to track progress on indicators in Gender Equality Profile)**

#### Climate change and environment

- Knowledge level of women on climate change
- Sex-disaggregated data on the impact of climate change on women and men in Liberia

#### Education

- School enrolment, retention and completion rate by sex
- Education attainment disaggregated by sex
- Adult and youth literacy rate by sex

#### Health and Related Services

- Incidence and prevalence of gender-based violence by sex, type, county
- The percentage of women and men with access to and utilizing reproductive health services (family planning, prenatal care and maternal health services)
- Gender and age-disaggregated data on substance use and addiction (drugs and alcohol)

#### Public Life & Decision-Making



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- Voter turnout by gender
- Women representation in political parties
- Percentage of female politicians and aspirants who have access to leadership training
- Public perception of women in political leadership disaggregated by sex
- The proportion of women who hold leadership roles in CSOs

### Human Rights of Women & Girls

- FGM prevalence rate by county
- Prosecution and adjudication rate of SGBV cases
- Gender and age-disaggregated crime statistics by type

### Socio-Economic

- Percentage and type of reasons for persistent non-support by gender
- Rate for early and child marriage of teenage girls
- Female-headed households

### **Which data disaggregations are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?**

Major surveys in Liberia routinely provide data disaggregated by geographic location, sex, age, education level, and marital status. This disaggregation has been prioritized to ensure that key demographic and socio-economic variables are captured for informed policymaking. Geographic and sex-based disaggregation, in particular, help address regional disparities and gender inequality, while age, education, and marital status disaggregation are crucial for understanding the needs of different population groups. However, challenges such as limited resources, capacity constraints, and gaps in data collection infrastructure hinder more comprehensive and routine disaggregation across additional variables.

### **Section Six: Conclusion and next steps**

To accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the 2030 Agenda, Liberia is to prioritize evidence-based, well resourced, high-impact and timebound actions (“Country Impact Actions”), in partnership with other stakeholders, and integrate them into its forthcoming national development plan – the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development. It is essential that the government adopts and funds a comprehensive NAP on Ending Violence Against Women, and centers women and girls in the transition to green economies by ensuring they have access to green jobs, skills training, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Accelerating gender parity in national and local government is crucial, alongside bridging the gender digital gap through targeted investments in digital literacy and access programs for women and girls. Transforming the care economy to support caregivers and enhance women’s economic empowerment is also essential. Additionally, driving accountability for WPS commitments and investing in the education, health, and economic empowerment of girls and young women are key.

To achieve progress under these action areas, it will be pivotal to I) establish a detailed national roadmap with concrete targets and engaging various stakeholders, including civil society and

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international organizations; II) support both South-South and South-North dialogue, III) track and report on progress in a timely manner, and IV) commit to serve as a “Trailblazer” country in one or two Country Impact Actions. Furthermore, galvanizing the civil society, organizations of person with disabilities, women- and youth-led movements, will further affirm Liberia’s commitment to implement targeted measures benefitting the most vulnerable categories of women and girls, in alignment with a “Leaving No One Behind” (LNOB) approach. Lastly, an active participation in the Beijing+30 Action Agenda Alliance will help Liberia contribute to the broader Decade of Action for sustainable development, ensuring meaningful advancement towards gender equality.