“All peace and security advocates – both individually and as part of organizational work - should read the 2012 civil society monitoring report on Resolution 1325! It guides us to where we should focus our energies and resources to ensure women's equal participation in all peace processes and at all decision-making levels, thereby achieving sustainable peace.”

-Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations

“The GNWP initiative on civil society monitoring of UNSCR 1325 provides important data and analysis on the implementation of the resolution at both the national and local levels. It highlights examples of what has been achieved, and provides a great opportunity to reflect on how these achievements can be further applied nationwide. In this regard my Ministry is excited to be working with GNWP and its members in Sierra Leone on the Localization of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 initiatives!”

-Honorable Steve Gaojia, Minister of Social Welfare, Gender & Children’s Affairs, Government of Sierra Leone

“The 2012 Women Count: Security Council Resolution 1325 Civil Society Monitoring Report uses locally acceptable and applicable indicators to assess progress in the implementation of Resolution 1325 at the country and community levels. The findings and recommendations compel us to reflect on what has been achieved thus far and strategize on making the implementation a reality in places that matter. Congratulations to GNWP-ICAN on this outstanding initiative!”

-Leymah Gbowee, 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

“The civil society monitoring report on UNSCR 1325 presents concrete data and analysis on the implementation of the resolution at national level. It helps us identify priorities for implementation and allocate resources to ensure women's participation in all peace processes and achieve long lasting peace. A must read for all peace and security actors and advocates. Congratulations to GNWP on this outstanding initiative!”

-Sadhu Ram Sapkota, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Government of Nepal

“A beautifully presented, thoroughly documented accounting of what is happening to a resolution that came from the grass roots, was vetted by the grass roots and was lobbied for by women for unanimous adoption by the Security Council. Cheers to the women of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders for their careful, detailed work. GNWP is also making a unique contribution working at localization. It's about time that some western based organization relied on local women to plan their own peacemaking program. Local women are planning their own strategies in peacebuilding and adapting UNSCR1325 to meet their needs.”

-Cora Weiss (former President, International Peace Bureau, now its UN representative, President, Hague Appeal for Peace)
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I. Women, peace and security profile

Introduction

Although Liberia is making substantial progress since the end of the 14-year civil war in 2003, the country currently ranks 182 out of 187 on the Human Development Index. The HDI of Sub-Saharan Africa as a region increased from 0.365 in 1980 to 0.463 today, placing Liberia below the regional average. While the country grapples with an increasing growth in population, the poverty rate is as high as 83 percent amidst a low literacy rate and a high rate of maternal mortality.

The residual effect of the conflict continues to have a bearing on all aspects of life in Liberia. High levels of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and gender-based violence (GBV) are a major concern. Many of the conflict factors that led to Liberia’s civil crisis are yet to be comprehensively addressed and tensions over ethnicity, land and other issues appear to be resurfacing. Current internal security concerns include an increase in violence and criminal activities, particularly armed robbery and theft in the capital. External security threats in the region remain, and must be considered in terms of interrelated economic, social and security elements. The situation is compounded by high levels of unemployment and pervasive poverty, with few opportunities for legal, gainful employment for the relatively youthful population.

Despite this not-so-rosy picture of Liberia’s Human Development Index, the country has gained a lot of ground in implementing UNSCR 1325, including the development of a National Action Plan in 2009. Moreover, with support from UN Agencies, Liberia is implementing four joint programs (UNJP), including the UNJP to Prevent and Respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, UNJP on Food Security and Nutrition, the UNJP on Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment, and the UNJP on Employment and Empowerment of Young Women. Liberia has also recently qualified for an allocation from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

The peace and security situation of women in Liberia significantly improved with the end of the civil conflict in 2003, paving the way for women’s active participation in the national body polity. No longer contented with performing traditional reproductive functions, the women of post-conflict Liberia are now demanding equal participation in government under the watch of Africa’s first female president.

Today, women hold more positions in government than at any time in the nation’s history. According to a recent Ministry of Gender and Development study, women hold 31 percent of top ministerial posts, 29 percent of the Deputy Minister positions, and 25 percent of the Assistant Minister posts. In this regard, and on account of her continuous strides to promote gender equality and empower women, President Sirleaf was recently honored by the UN for her leadership around the third Millennium Development Goal. Under Sirleaf’s administration, the ratio of female to male enrolment in primary and secondary schools has increased from 72 percent in 2000 to 90 percent in 2009 at the primary level and 71 to 75 percent at the secondary level.

Using a set of indicators developed by Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), this report examines strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The research consisted of quantitative information from Government ministries, civil society organizations, women groups, students and ordinary people. Due to limitation of time, the survey was restricted to mostly urban samplings, eclipsing the voices of the majority rural women who are themselves becoming more politically conscious under guidance of the National Rural Women Structures of Liberia (NRWS).

A. Nature of the conflict

Liberia was founded in 1847 by freed men of color repatriated from the United States of America under the banner of the American Colonization Society (ACS). From 1847 to 1980 Liberia was ruled by Americo-Liberians, a period marked by gross inequalities between the few ruling elites and the majority rural indigenous who constituted the 16 ethnic groups.

Tensions in Liberia first came to a head in April 1979 when the Liberian military opened fire on protesters marching against recent increases in imported rice prices. A year later, in April 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe overthrew President William Tolbert in a bloody coup d’etat that saw the summary execution of 13 influential officials of the Tolbert administration.

In 1985, Doe, a dictator, rigged the elections and begun a systematic campaign of witch hunting opposition politicians and eliminating former coup plotters. The Liberian civil war finally broke out in 1989 when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, invaded the country to oust President Doe. Within a few weeks, the NPFL had assassinated Doe and assumed control over 90 percent of the country. In 1991, the Taylor-backed Revolutionary United Front (RUF) joined the war from Sierra Leone, the NPFL split into smaller factions, and former soldiers from President Doe’s army formed the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO).
In 1996, the warring factions signed the Abuja peace agreement and concurred to hold elections, which Charles Taylor won. Between 1997 and 2000, Liberia experienced a flawed and fragile peace. Taylor was accused of ongoing support for the RUF, which had plundered Sierra Leone into a civil war of its own. In 2000, full-scale conflict erupted again when the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a loose alliance of anti-Taylor groups, invaded Liberia from Guinea to expel the groups of RUF fighters who were still in Liberia. In early 2003, another anti-Taylor group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), emerged in the south. By the summer of 2003, LURD and MODEL had reduced Taylor’s control of the country to a third. Under mounting national and international pressure, Taylor agreed to participate in peace talks to be held in Accra, Ghana, under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). However, amid 17 charges of war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law stemming from the Sierra Leone conflict, Taylor left the talks and resigned from the presidency of Liberia on August 11, 2003. On August 18, 2003, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in Accra, Ghana, and the Liberian National Transition Government (LNTG) was entrusted with running the country and supervising national elections in 2005, which Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won. Madam Sirleaf sought re-election in 2011 and won in a widely acclaimed process that was hailed free, fair and transparent. However, officials and members of the opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) boycotted the November 2011 presidential runoff amidst protests of foul play.

Today, while the Security Sector Reform (SSR) process of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and other security apparatus seems to be gradually progressing, concerns have been raised over the scheduled draw down of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), especially in the wake of recent border skirmishes between Ivorian Government forces and insurgents loyal to ousted President Laurent Gbagbo.7

B. Impact of conflict on women

The extent to which women bore brunt of the Liberian civil conflict is well documented in reports of the erstwhile Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). All of the warring factions are said to have subjected women to rape of all forms, sexual slavery, forced marriages, forced recruitment, and gender-based violations. The TRC, in its final recommendation, in fact, calls for reparation to “communities and individuals, especially women and children, to help restore their dignity, foster healing and closure as well as justice and genuine reconciliation.”8

The gross human rights violations meted against them during the civil war notwithstanding, women and women groups played a yeoman’s role in the peacemaking process. In Liberia, a delegation of eight women from the Liberia chapter of the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MAWOPNET), led by Ruth Sando Perry and Theresa Leigh-Sherman, participated in the peace talks in 2003 as official observers without the power to speak or vote. At a later stage, in Accra, Ghana, the Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET) was also granted observer status, but they had a greater impact as agitators for peace, both during many months of restless social mobilization, sit-ins, vigils and demonstrations, and by physically impeding the delegates from leaving the site of the talks without signing the peace agreement, as powerfully depicted in the 2008 documentary Pray The Devil Back To Hell.9

The various groups of women observers to the talks had convened a one-day meeting shortly before the signing and produced the ‘Golden Tulip Declaration’ (named after the hotel where they had met), which summarized women’s demands and aspirations. However, the women advocated for peace rather than demanding specific provisions on gender justice, which they feared would derail the process.10

The 2011 Nobel Peace award to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and peace activist Leymah Gbowee further affirmed the significant contributions of Liberian women to peacebuilding and the promotion of women participation.11

The Norwegian Nobel Committee at the time chose President Sirleaf for contributing to securing peace in Liberia since 2006, promoting economic and social development, and strengthening the position of women; while Madam Gbowee was selected on account of having mobilized and organized women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war in Liberia, and to ensure women’s participation in elections.

C. Relevant policies

Equality and Non-Discrimination

The Liberian Constitution guarantees to all persons, regardless of ethnic background, race, sex, creed, place of origin or political opinion the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. However, the Constitution also provides that only persons who are ‘Negroes’ or of ‘Negro’ descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization to be citizens of Liberia. No specific definition is given as to what amounts to discrimination or discriminatory practices. Nonetheless, with respect to females, as mentioned above, a National Gender Policy and legislation aimed at enhancing the protection of women against sexual violence have been adopted. Additionally, legislation extending rights of inheritance to women married under Customary Law is in force. Women are also being encouraged to join the police and military forces.

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7 “Debate over UNMIL draw down heats up”, The Heritage Newspaper, 20 July 2012
9 “Pray the Devil Back to Hell” is a documentary film that premiered 2008 at Tribeca Film Festival, where it won the award for Best Documentary. The film is about a peace movement called Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace. Organized by social worker Leymah Gbowee, the movement started with praying and singing in a fish market. Leymah Gbowee organized the Christian and Muslim women of Monrovia, Liberia to pray for peace and to organize nonviolent protests. Dressed in white to symbolize peace, and numbering in the thousands, the women became a political force against violence and against their government during the 14 years Liberian civil war.
10 Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence, UNIFEM 2010 Report
Liberia actually became the second country in Africa (following Côte d’Ivoire) to adopt a National Action Plan in 2009, consistent with implementation of UNSCR1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This Plan, in conjunction with key gender-related policies including the Gender-Based Violence National Action Plan, and the National Gender Policy, provides guidelines for work around gender equality.12

Despite these achievements, gender disparity persists at all levels. Only 41 percent of Liberian females are literate compared to 69 percent of males. Currently, women constitute about 14 percent of the cabinet, 5.3 percent of the legislature and 0.8 percent of the judiciary. Discriminatory laws like the Hinterland Rules and Regulations mentioned above, and discriminatory practices against women still exist.13

For instance, 48 percent of Liberian girls marry by the age of 18 years as a result of the practice of early marriages, sometimes by force.

II. Data presentation and analysis

Desk Review

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

Stakeholders Survey

A written survey was conducted among 247 of 300 targeted respondents in the Monrovia area due to limitation of time. A set of 36 questions relating to the relevant GNWP indicators on UNSCR 1325 implementation was distributed to members of Women Groups, Civil Society Organizations (other than Women Groups), the Media, Government Entities, Private Groups and Ordinary People. The survey interviews were conducted by 10 Field Workers (six males and four females), hired and trained by the Liberia Media Center (LMC) on the relevant GNWP indicators. Following the interviews, the questionnaires were statistically analyzed in specific database programs, and subsequently analyzed by the consultants.

Key Informant Interviews

Interviews meant to elicit specific informed data were also conducted with relevant stakeholders from government institutions and civil society organizations on key issues relating to implementation of UNSCR 1325.

A. Participation

Indicator 1 – Index of women’s participation in governance 2011

According to recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender and Development, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has appointed more women to positions in government than at any time in the nation’s history. However, the country is yet to pass into law the internationally accepted 30 percent Gender Equity Bill.

While many continue to hail the president for promoting women participation in governance, she has also been criticized for her administration’s failure to press for legislation of the gender equity quota Bill. This criticism was heightened during the 2009 senatorial by-elections when President Sirleaf supported a male candidate instead of a female for the vacant Montserrat County seat, against the wishes of women groups and influential females in the country.14 Interestingly, President Sirleaf recently rallied women legislators to lobby their male counterparts in Parliament for enactment of the 30 percent gender quota Bill. Sirleaf’s recent support for the women’s bill however appears to be a somersault from her earlier position to withhold her support for the proposed legislation because according to her, the said bill did not address fully the inclusion of women in politics at all levels in the society.15

In accordance with Constitutional provisions, all appointments to ministries are made by the president and senior level posts are approved by the senate; while all legislators are elected either through candidacy as part of one of the country’s numerous political institutions, or on an independent slot.

Executive/Ministries

Women currently hold 31 percent of top ministerial posts, as compared to 25 percent in 2011, and 22 percent in 2006. Moreover, women today hold 25 percent of the Deputy Minister positions, and 25 percent of the Assistant Minister posts, according to statistics contained in a recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender and Development.16

According to the survey, women head the following Ministries: Justice (Cllr. Christiana Tah); Education (Etonnia David Tarpeh); Agriculture (Dr. Florence Chenoweth); Commerce and Industry (Miata Beysolow); Labour (Vabah Gayflor) and Gender and Development (Julia Duncan Cassell).

Figure 1.1: Comparative illustration of women’s participation in governance (2006, 2011, 2012)

Source: Generated by researcher

13 "The Law governing the traditional court system is included in the Revised Rules and Regulation Governing the Hinterland of Liberia of 2000. Traditional and lay courts exist in the rural areas of Liberia. Trial by ordeal, although officially outlawed, is still practiced in various areas of the country." http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/liberia.htm
14 Interestingly, President Sirleaf recently rallied women legislators to lobby their male counterparts in Parliament for enactment of the 30 percent gender equity quota Bill. Sirleaf’s recent support for the women’s bill however appears to be a somersault from her earlier position to withhold her support for the proposed legislation because according to her, the said bill did not address fully the inclusion of women in politics at all levels in the society.15
15 The Liberian Daily Observer, Friday, June 29, 2012
Women also head 28 percent of 25 key government State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). These include: the National Port Authority (Mathilda Parker); Bureau for Immigration and Naturalization (Abla G. Williams); the General Services Agency (Pearine Davis-Parkinson); Monrovia City Corporation (Acting Mayor Mary Broh); the Center for National Documents and Records (Bloh Sayeh); the Environmental Protection Agency (AnyaaVohiri); and the John F. Kennedy Medical Center (Dr. Wvannie-Mae McDonald).

Several of the key governance entities are headed by women, among them, the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission -LACC (Frances Johnson Allison); National Elections Commission – NEC (Elizabeth Nelson); and the Public Procurement Concession Commission – PPCC (Peggy Varfley Meres).

**Local/Municipal**
Municipal government in Liberia is broken down by county and district levels. The counties are headed by Superintendents, while the districts are governed by District Commissioners. Out of the 15 Superintendents, five are women (33 percent), a slight dip from 2011, when out of the 15 Superintendents, six (40 percent) were women. According to the recent Ministry of Gender and Development survey, three (20 percent) of the 15 Assistant Superintendents are women. All Superintendents are appointed by the President.

**Legislative**
Women’s participation in the Legislature has witnessed a three percent decrease since the first post-conflict Liberian national elections in 2005. Currently, out of 73 representatives elected in 2011, eight (11 percent) are women, as compared to nine (14 percent) women out of 64 representatives in 2005. Similarly, four (13 percent) out the 30 senators today are females, as compared to five (16.6 percent) out of 30 in 2005.

**2011 Elections**
Prior to and during the 2011 elections, several international and Liberian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) partnered with government and international donors to provide support to aspiring female candidates. For example, the National Elections Commission, UNDP and International Alert jointly trained female aspirants in fundraising skills, logistical knowledge and political campaign strategy. Over 400 women participated in the trainings, which were held in five counties. These interventions to political parties’ frameworks that prioritized participation of women saw 49 percent women registration and participation in the 2011 elections process among 1.9 million eligible voters.17

During the 2011 elections, the women again became principal peace brokers when the process was threatened with violence, and the security of the country seemed to spiral downward. Organized under the Women’s Situation Room, the women of Liberia played a highly significant role in ensuring peace and stability before, during and after the 2011 Presidential and Legislative Elections. Established by a Coalition of women, youth and students against Electoral Violence, the Situation Room was set up as a political and objective process that mobilized women, youth and the media of Liberia to actively participate and ensure peaceful and democratic electoral processes as a peace and security measure in accordance with United Nations Resolutions 1325 and 1820. The Lead Coordinator of the process was Counselor Yvette Chesson Wureh, the Establishment Co-ordination of the Angie Brooks International Center (ABIC) for Women’s Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security.18

The Women’s Situation Room is a process whereby all actors and stakeholders including political parties, state entities, civil society, media, students and youth are lobbied and engaged to commit and act actively to prevent all forms of electoral violence, promote peaceful and fearless environment and democratic participation in exercising constitutional rights of citizens. The concept was brought into light by Liberia Women Peace Leaders and Activists and its first ever implementation during the 2011 Presidential and Legislative Elections was supported by UNDP Liberia, Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS), Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET), YWCA among others.

Despite these gains, women’s representation in the 2011 national elections was paradoxically dismal. For example, out of 16 candidates that contested the presidency, only two (13 percent) were females; one female (6 percent) out of 16 candidates ran as vice president; 10 females (10 percent) out of 99 candidates ran on senatorial slots; and out of 795 candidates that contested seats in the House of Representatives, 91 (13 percent) were women.

**Analysis**
Going by the numbers, women participation in government appears low (except for the Executive). However, according to the survey conducted for this report, citizens’ perception of women participation in government is relatively high.

**Figure 1.2. Illustration of respondents’ perception on whether or not more women are participating in Government**

![Image](image.png)

Source: GNWP Perceptions Survey for 2012 Report conducted by researcher

Out of 247 persons asked whether more women are participating in government since 2011 to present, 232 (94 percent) agreed, while 15 (six percent) disagreed.19 The majority of the respondents who disagreed as to whether more women are participating in Government said only a handful of women are occupying positions in Government, while the males still dominate decision processes in politics.

Regarding perception of women participation in Parliament (Legislature), 160 (65 percent) of the 247 respondents interviewed agreed that more women are participating in parliament, while 174 (70 percent) believed more women are participating at the local governance level.20

This perception was amplified during a key informant interview with Wyeatta Moore, Junior Program Officer of the Women’s Campaign International, who disclosed that even within local governance structures, women are being groomed to assume traditional male positions, the framework of the National Rural Women Structures of Liberia (NRWS).

“Although women’s participation in the electoral process dropped in 2011 as compared to 2005, all over the country women are getting more and more involved in politics, even down to the district level. In fact, the rural women themselves no longer allow tradition to hamper their participation in governance. The women of Liberia are galvanizing under the National Rural Women Structures of Liberia (NRWS) to change the political landscape of this country…”

- Wyeatta W. Moore, Junior Program Officer, Women’s Campaign International21

Such positive perceptions of more women’s participation in governance notwithstanding, women still face challenges when it comes to playing a significant role in politics. According to Estella Nelson, Executive Director of the Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC), there has not been much significant progress regarding women’s involvement in government from 2011 to present. “Basically, women involvement in governance in Liberia can only be seen at top government levels; but at medium and local governance levels, women are hardly visible,” she said, noting that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have made a better mark in this direction, especially with women-run NGOs.22

Some women also believe that the failure of authorities to implement the 30 percent women representation, “declared Venetta Harris of the Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET).”23

On the other hand, majority of the survey respondents cited internal maneuverings within political structures, lack of opportunities, traditional perception of women, and especially the use of money to deny women equal or appreciable participation in politics. Many of the respondents believed that the male candidates easily won elections by employing “cash violence” strategies to deny potential women candidates from being endorsed at party primaries. Some of the respondents indicated in a qualitative section of the survey questionnaire that majority of the male candidates received substantial amount of funding from their political parties, as opposed to the few female candidates who were brave enough to contest the 2011 national elections. The respondents said the male candidates used this money for party endorsement during primaries, and later to truck voters from one location in the country to another during the voting period.

Furthermore, the opportunity to do gender mainstreaming in governance at an accelerated pace may have suffered a setback during the 2011 Elections considering the relatively poor performance of women candidates. The percentage of women in the National Legislature dropped from 14 percent to 11.8 percent.

James Mugo Murithi from the UNMIL Office of the Gender Adviser lamented the decline in women participation in the 2011 electoral process when he delivered a paper at the National Elections Commission (NEC) 2011 Lessons Learned Conference held February 23-25, 2012 in Monrovia. He said while meaningful gains were made during the 2011 national elections to train and prepare women candidates, there was a need to establish women’s fund to support political parties nominating 30 percent and above women candidates.24

Indicator 2 – Percentage of women in peace negotiating teams

The women of Liberia were never directly involved as signatories or mediators in negotiating the terms of peace during the numerous peace agreements of the civil war. However, the interventions of Theresa Leigh Sherman, Mary N. Brownell and Amelia A. Ward affected the outcome of peace, so much so that the majority of Liberians today concur that women helped to bring the war to its logical conclusion. This general perception is reflected in findings from a recent stakeholders’ survey conducted to gauge public perception about the implementation process of UNSCR 1325. Out of total 247 respondents interviewed, a whopping 242 agreed, though at varying degrees, that women’s involvement in peacebuilding initiatives had a positive impact.25

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19 Citizens perception survey on implementation of UNSCR 1325 processes, conducted by the Liberia Media Center, 23 August 2102, Monrovia, Liberia
20 Citizens perception survey on implementation of UNSCR 1325 processes, conducted by the Liberia Media Center, 23 August 2102, Monrovia, Liberia
21 Interview with Wyeatta Moore, Monrovia, Liberia, 25 August 2012
22 Interview with Wyeatta Moore, Monrovia, Liberia, 25 August 2012
23 Interview with Wyeatta Moore, Monrovia, Liberia, 25 August 2012
25 Citizens perception survey on implementation of UNSCR 1325 processes, conducted by the Liberia Media Center, 23 August 2102, Monrovia, Liberia
This positive perception notwithstanding, the role of women in peacemaking was reduced to mere observers during the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement in which 17 percent of the observers were women. Unfortunately, no data is available on the number of women involved in the negotiating team. While these numbers are regrettably low, they are also only part of the story. The movie Pray the Devil Back to Hell and other sources document the integral role that women played in achieving peace in 2003.

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

In 2003 another round of fighting erupted. The women's peace movement began around this time, when the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) a program of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) initiated an active protest and began advocating for peace. The movement is known for its diversity, joining thousands of women of various ethnic backgrounds, faiths, etc. under the same cause. Identified by the white T-shirts and head-ties that they wore, women held vigils in churches and mosques, protested at Monrovia's City Hall, UN agencies, Embassies, and held daily sit-ins on the Monrovia Airfield as well as other towns in Liberia. They endured difficult weather conditions – sunshine, rain and thunderstorms — and faced armed forces sent by then President Charles Taylor to disrupt the demonstrations.

When the peace negotiations began in Accra, the women mobilized both in Monrovia and in refugee camps in Ghana to attend. At one point, the women physically barred parties in the building from leaving until they reached an agreement. These actions continue to inform the actions of women in Liberia today. As mentioned earlier, during the 2011 elections the women again became principal peace brokers when the process was threatened with violence, and the security of the country seemed to spiral downward.

Some of the demands made by the women in Accra 2003 included:

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

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Indicator 3 - Index of women's participation in the justice, security & peacekeeping missions

The percentage of women's participation in the Justice and Security Sector seems unaffected since 2011.

Women in Judiciary

According to Liberia’s 2010 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Report, women occupy 0.8 percent of the judiciary. Two of the five Supreme Court judges were women until June 2011 when Gladys Johnson retired. Out of 16 Circuit Court Judges, five are women, and women comprise 13 percent of the total Ministry of Justice staff. Unfortunately, there is no current data on the local judicial officials, known as magistrates.

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Security Sector Reform has been an ongoing process in Liberia. Regarding gender, the Government has set the policy goal of 20 percent women in the army and the police force. In 2011, relevant justice and security sector stakeholders took part in a gender mapping. The report has been validated, and was launched at the end of September 2011.

According to the report, challenges to involving women in the SSR process include: (1) Limited resources available to ensure the effective implementation of gender-sensitive policies; (2) Limited access to remote areas; (3) Lack of logistical support in certain security institutions; (4) Low attendance by senior

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27 http://www.myhero/go/hero.asp?hero=womens_peace_movement_liberia_08
officers in security institutions to gender-related meetings and trainings; (5) Limited recruitment of qualified women in various security institutions; (6) Limited monitoring and evaluating of activities; and (7) Lack of coordination with community-based redress structures.

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

**Women in the Military**

In 2010, out of 2,017 trained soldiers in the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) 74 were female (3.7 percent). Women are excluded from service in the infantry, but serve in support units in 2010. As of 2011, there are six (6.2 percent) female commissioned officers out of 97. The AFL’s recruitment policy was drafted by DynCorp International, a global government services provider in support of U.S. national security and foreign policy objectives, and is currently being reviewed by relevant government ministries.

The low participation of women in the Liberian military has been attributed more to the lack of motivation on the part of Government to lure females into joining the army. Moreover, most women shy away from an army career mainly because of the negative image associated with the Armed Forces of Liberia personnel during the civil crisis, when members of the AFL committed the same atrocities as the insurgents.

**Women in Police**

In 2006, the Liberian Government established a 15 percent female representation quota for the reformed and restructured Liberian National Police, which was increased to 20 percent in 2008. To advance progress on the quota, a Committee for National Recruitment of Women involving relevant ministries of the government, in collaboration with representatives from the United Nations Mission and several agencies, developed a three-month intensive education support program for women aged 18 - 35 interested in joining the National Police.

The program initially identified 300 candidates who completed an aptitude test. A selected 150 candidates received three months of intensive classes resulting in the equivalent to a high school certificate at the Stella Maris Polytechnic in Monrovia, which covered educational materials, a daily lunch and a small monthly stipend. The curriculum was developed by the Ministry of Education and the West Africa Examinations Council, and was followed by a special examination to identify women who were qualified to enroll into the 3-month national police training process. Prior to starting the intensive course, candidates agreed to remain in the police force for a minimum of five years. To retain and promote qualified women within the police and ensure they are not constrained to lower ranks, women have been placed in leadership roles across the police hierarchy and an association of women police officers provides support as well as an institutional body to continue advocacy for women’s advancement in the sector. The program contributed to increasing female recruits, from an average of four recruits in the first 30 educational support classes to over 100 by 2009. Related to this achievement, the percentage of women in the police rose from 13 percent in 2008 to 17 percent in 2010.

According to the LNP Chief of Press and Public Affairs George Bardue, a little over 800 females (20 percent), out of the total 4,000 membership, are enlisted in the police in 2012, as compared to 2011 when the LNP comprised 580 women (14.8 percent) out of the total 3,900 membership.

Since 2011, women occupy key positions in the police. The current Deputy Police Commissioner for Administration is a female. Departments that are headed by women in the LNP include: Records and Identification Unit of the Crimes Services Department; Community Services Department; Women and Children Protection Unit; and the Planning and Research Department. Moreover, the County Commander for Margibi County is a female, while the Detachment Commander at the Roberts International Airport is also a female. Several females also serve as Assistant Commandants at the LNP Training Academy.

To adequately address cases involving women (i.e. rape, SGBV, etc.), Bardue says the LNP has put in place Women and Children Protection Services (WACPS), a unit specifically tasked with addressing violent crimes against women and children. The unit was established in September 2005 through an agreement between UNICEF and the LNP. It has a presence in all 15 counties, and out of 241 officers, 80 (33 percent) are women.

**Paramilitary Institutions**

There is no available data for 2011 on women serving in paramilitary institutions. However, data for 2010 shows that paramilitary institutions are achieving the 20 percent female recruitment goal. Compared to the other security institutions, paramilitary structures are making strikingly good progress. The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) is the only paramilitary institution run by a female.

**UNMIL Military Personnel**

Current statistics obtained from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) show a drop in the total UNMIL strength, from 7,782 in 2010 to 7,460 currently. Out of this number, 177 (2.3 percent) are females, signifying a decrease from the
2010 statistics of 204 females (2.6 percent). Military Experts comprise 217 members (84 Staff and 133 Military Observers), as compared to 130 in 2010. On the other hand, the number of Women Military Experts remains the same as in 2010, with three women military experts for the both periods.  

**UNMIL Police**

Unlike the Military, the Police saw a slight increase in their numbers, from 445 in 2010 to 475 currently. Out of that number, 60 (13 percent) are women. Out of 842 staff in formed police units, 122 (14.4 percent) are women, slightly differing from 2010 statistics where 843 staff comprise the formed police units, and 127 (15 percent) were women. The formed police unit staffing includes the all-female police unit deployed from India, which has received a great deal of international attention since their deployment in 2007. It is difficult to evaluate the full impact of this force, as there does not appear to be a formal study available yet. However, members of the police unit and others believe that it sets a positive example for women who aspire to serve in the security sector.

In addition to these officers, there are also 32 corrections personnel currently deployed in the country, as opposed to 28 in 2010. Out of that number five (16 percent) are females, as opposed to four (14 percent) women in 2010.

**Additional Liberian involvement in peacekeeping**

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

**Indicator 4 - Number and percentage of women participating in each type of constitutional or legislative review (including security sector review)**

Except for the National Elections Commission (NEC) of Liberia, whose Chairman resigned and was replaced by a female during the 2011 electoral process, not much has changed since 2011 regarding the number and percentage of women participating in each type of constitutional or legislative review.

**Land Commission**

6 Commissioners, 3 women (50 percent)

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

**National Elections Commission**

6 Commissioners, 3 women (50 percent) including a female Chairperson

One Commissioner post is still vacant.

As an independent electoral authority, the National Elections Commission’s role is to organize, manage and conduct free and fair elections for all public elective offices.  

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33 Key Informants interview with UNMIL personnel, August 8, 2012, Monrovia, Liberia
34 UN Focus Vol. 7 No 3 March-May 2011 pp 20
35 http://www.ic.gc.ca/
36 http://www.necliberia.org/page_info.php?87d5f44532c6f489b8d8b9e12eb4e
b820=MTAx

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**Governance Commission**

5 Commissioners, 2 women (40 percent)

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

**Law Reform Commission**

3 Commissioners, 1 woman (33 percent)

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

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

9 Commissioners, 4 women (44 percent)

**Independent Commission on Human Rights**

7 Commissioners, 3 women (43 percent)

Read more about the TRC and INCHR under Indicator 9.

**Analysis**

The percentage of women participating in each type of Constitutional or Legislative review seems relatively high. A key informant rationalizes this trend as an indication of Government’s seriousness to institute reforms because, as she puts it, “women bring a whole new depth of understanding to the issues that caused Liberia to go war; especially with the majority of women having been victimized during the war.” This assertion could be supported by the fact that the Liberian president is a woman, therefore giving rise to her Government’s uncompromising stance against rape, and for other rights that women enjoy today. For example, women married under the Customary Laws of Liberia now enjoy all entitlements as those married under the Statutory Law. Moreover, women, especially those in the rural areas, are now entitled to land ownership, just as their male counterparts.
Since 2011, a 17-member Observatory comprising Civil Society Organizations has been monitoring the implementation of the Liberian National Action Plan on 1325. The Observatory is dominated by women rights organization but with few focusing on women peace and security issues. Expertise amongst the constituent members remains acute though the leadership or “Steering Committee” comprises the most influential organizations. Ownership and identity has been quietly disputed with some members of the Observatory claiming the Ministry of Gender and Development singlehandedly recruited the participating organizations. In 2011 the group convened regularly, but the frequency of meetings has since declined.39

The 17-member 1325 Observatory is comprised of the following CSOs:

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

In addition to the 1325 Observatory, there are also National and County Steering Committees that are entirely staffed by government, as well as a Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Taskforce that meets monthly to gather statistics and discuss current challenges and good practices in addressing SGBV in Liberia.40

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**Indicator 5 – CSOs in task forces on SCR 1325 and 1820 (out of total TF members)**

**B. Prevention and protection**

**Indicator 6 - Number of reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); and percentage of cases investigated, prosecuted and decided in conflict and post-conflict situations**

**Legal Definition**

The Rape Amendment Act was signed into law in 2005. According to Section 14.70 of the Rape Amendment Act, a person who has sexual intercourse with another person (male or female) has committed rape if he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus, mouth or another opening of another person with his penis without the victim’s consent. Rape is also considered to be committed if a person (male or female) intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person with a foreign object or with any other part of the body (other than the penis) without the victim’s consent. Also under the Act, rape is considered perpetrated if a person (male or female) has sex with a victim less than 18 years old, provided that the actor is 18 years or older. Under the Act, Gang rape, first-degree felony, is considered committed if a person (male or female) purposely promotes or facilitates rape or agrees with one or more persons to engage performance of conduct, which shall constitute rape.

Liberia’s 14-year civil war left 40 percent of women affected by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).41 While Liberia is on the path to national recovery, rates of SGBV, in particular domestic violence and rape, remain high. Rape still remains the number one crime reported to the Liberian National Police, with most of the victims between the ages of 10 and 19.42 In 2009, the Liberian government and the UN collaborated significantly to reduce SGBV by 30 percent by the end of 2011. Thus far, special courts have been established to hear the backlog of SGBV cases, expediting the legal process and encouraging victims to report SGBV incidents. Despite improvements in the legal system, a study conducted by the UN in Liberia tracking cases of sexual violence found that at the current speed the criminal justice operates, it would take nearly ten years to clear the backlog of sexual violence cases alone.43

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is prevalent and is practiced under the auspices of secret cultural societies known as the Sande society for females. The Sande society is a traditional institution that provides forums commonly referred to as ‘bush schools’, where pubescent girls undergo rigorous training in preparation for adulthood and family life. Involvement in the ‘bush schools’ also affects formal school attendance. There were also reports of women and girls being forcibly recruited into these ‘bush schools’. However, many of the victims as well as local authorities and law enforcement officials were largely reluctant to press criminal charges against the perpetrators due to fear of reprisals.

Cases of sexual violence especially rape are still prevalent and victims are predominantly female children under the age of 15 years. In 2008, a total of 606 rape cases were recorded.

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39 Interview with key informant, 28 August 2012
41 Ministry of Gender and Development, GBV Annual Statistical Report for 2011
42 Ministry of Gender and Development, GBV Annual Statistical Report for 2011
43 http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/un-peacekeeping/missions/liberia.html
by the UN Police. Although cases reported to police usually resulted in arrests of the suspects where they were identified, rates of full prosecution of rape cases remain very low. For instance, only 9.4 percent of rape cases reported in 2006 were fully prosecuted. Reports of withdrawal of rape cases and the tendency to settle such cases out of court are common. This may be attributed to lack of awareness that rape is a criminal offence and in some instances possibly owing to economic hardships, parents were persuaded to accept financial compensation in amicable settlements. On the other hand, as the rape offence may attract a heavy sentence, many victims face societal pressures against pressing rape charges, especially when the persons involved live in the same village. The problems associated with access to justice, health facilities and effective law enforcement also contributed to victims opting to settling cases out of court or low successful prosecution rates.

**Reporting Trend**

Regarding the number of reported and decided cases of SGBV in conflict and post-conflict Liberia, there is very little statistical information of SGBV occurrences during the civil conflict. This may partly be due to a complete breakdown of the judicial system at the time. Additionally, the nature and scope of the war, was such that all warring factions were said to have perpetrated all forms of rape, sexual slavery, forced marriages, etc. However, with the end of the civil conflict, and the attendant restoration of law and order, occurrences of rape are now well documented.

**SGBV Trend Analysis**

Compared with 2011, there is a remarkable decrease in reported cases of SGBV in 2012. According to latest LNP statistics, SGBV cases reported for six months in 2012 (January to July) amount to 240. This number is considerably lower than the total 2,383 SGBV cases reported in 2011. Compared with SGBV incremental statistics for 2009 and 2010, the decreasing trend for 2011 (2,383 cases) and six months of 2012 (240 cases) is a significant departure worth noting. The drop in SGBV cases is in part due to strong organizing by women's groups and other SGBV networks; as well as increased understanding and sensitivity among police and judiciary. In 2011, a total of 2,383 cases of SGBV were reported; while 2,029 cases of SGBV were reported in 2010. SGBV cases reported to the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) in 2011 emanated from SGBV service providers. During 2011, five categories of SGBV cases were recorded. Among these were, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, gang rape and spousal/child abandonment were the most prevalent. Rape constituted the highest number of SGBV violations.

**Access to Response or Referral Services**

Although statistics on access to response or referral services for 2012 were not available, health services and the Liberian National Police/Women and Children Protection Service (LNP/WACPS) were most accessible response services in 2011. Empowerment and legal aid services were the least accessible. Of all cases reported in 2011, medical care and medical reports each were provided to 64 percent of the survivors.

**Prosecution**

Out of the 2,383 cases reported in 2011, 29 percent of the alleged perpetrators were arrested; while 22 percent were taken to court; and 1 percent resulted into conviction of the perpetrators.

The low conviction rate could be attributed to problems with the legal mechanisms in prosecuting rape cases. According to Madhumita Sarkar, advisor at the joint UN-Government sexual and gender-based violence program in Liberia, “the judicial system is plagued by poor resources, ineptitude and rampant corruption. Police officers don’t know how to collect

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**Figure 7.1: Number and quality of gender responsive laws and policies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law Name and Year</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Result of the Law</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 14.70 and 14.71 of Penal Law Relating to Rape (The Rape Law)</td>
<td>To clearly define rape in the statute and provide penalties for gang rape and increase the sentencing</td>
<td>To reduce the incidents of rape by serving as a deterrent</td>
<td>Data Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce cases on the court docket and increase rate of prosecution</td>
<td>To have a separate court to fast track cases around SGBV and rape</td>
<td>Reduce cases on the court docket and increase rate of prosecution</td>
<td>Since 2011, 2083 were reported, 29% of perpetrators were arrested and 22% taken to court but only 1% conviction. All cases originated and ended in 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Inheritance Law of 2003</td>
<td>To draw parity between women married under statutory and customary laws in asserting property rights</td>
<td>Ensure women have equal right to the property of their deceased spouse</td>
<td>Data Not Available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Generated by researcher

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44 Ministry of Gender and Development, GBV Annual Statistical Report for 2011
45 Ministry of Gender and Development, GBV Annual Statistical Report for 2011
46 Ministry of Gender and Development, GBV Annual Statistical Report for 2011
evidence from a rape scene, for instance.” In an opinion and attitude survey conducted as part of this research, most respondents claimed there were existing barriers affecting the reporting of rape cases. The low conviction return rate on rape prosecution cases could have potentially influenced these perceptions. Most respondents correspondingly felt, “out of court settlement” was a barrier to reporting and prosecuting rape cases.

The survey findings support the general view that most gender responsive legislations are generally weak and hence lack effectiveness, though 32 percent of respondents from the survey believed the laws were effective.

**Indicator 7 - Number and quality of gender responsive laws and policies**

Much has not changed since 2011 in terms of improving the quality of gender responsive legislations. Though Liberia has the basic legal and constitutional foundation that should ideally respond to broader equality issues, there remain lingering legal inequities hampering women’s equal access to opportunities.

While legislations in Liberia prohibit sexual intercourse with persons below the age of 18, there are no enforceable laws against female genital mutilation. The Ministry of Gender and Development have been working to increase sensitization in several different campaigns, but entrenched traditional cultures and the fluidity of Liberia’s political system, has made abolition of FGM a very touchy issue.

Nonetheless, efforts to increase attention to women and girls’ protection have seen the Ministry of Justice set up women and children protection units in all fifteen counties. The decrease in crimes and violence against women (as presented in indicator 6) may partly be contributed to the presence of these protection units.

Liberia still lacks a standalone legislation that addresses SGBV issues, and efforts to domesticate key international conventions like CEDAW have yet to get underway. While there are no specific legislations on SGBV issues, the Ministry of Gender and Development have been consulting women’s groups to propose Gender-Based Violence legislation. As mentioned in the 2011 GNWP report, there is also no explicit legislation to address sexual exploitation and abuse in schools, and no punitive system in place for perpetrators. However, two important legislations adopted in the last few years aimed at enhancing protection for women against sexual violence are the amendment of Section 14.70 and 14.71 of the Penal Law.

The 2008 amendment to the New Judiciary Law of 1972 to establish a specialized court to hear rape and sexual offences cases known as “Criminal Court E” are the notable steps the country has taken in recent time to address legal response to rape and SGBV issues.

The passage and adoption of the Inheritance Law in 2003 pertaining to women's property rights in Liberia has been widely criticized as lacking the required harmony in addressing the dual legal problem presented by Liberia’s Customary and Statutory legal systems. With traditional practices and customary laws still a hindrance to women equal access to property rights, the Inheritance Law fails to address this disconnect. Furthermore, customary laws and traditional practices clearly flout the constitutional provision on property ownership. Article 11(a) states: “[a]ll persons are born equally free and independent and have certain natural, inherent and inalienable rights, among which [is] … acquiring, possessing and protecting property”. Article 22 guarantees every person’s right to own property but limits the ownership of real property to Liberian citizens.

Further, Article 23 empowers the National Legislature to enact: “…laws to govern the devolution of estates and establish rights of inheritance and descent for spouses of both statutory and customary marriages as to give adequate protection to surviving spouses and children of such marriages.”

It is instructive to note that in most cases, statutory laws trumps customary law, meaning heritage issues are cognizable before statutory courts though solemnized under customary laws but the statutory courts would not provide remedy sought in customary cases. The property ownership debate is critical as it provides a secure environment within which women can explore economic opportunities.

In 2011, on the eve of the multi-party elections a Gender Equality Bill seeking to allocate 30 percent of legislative seats to women was defeated. After series of protests by leading women groups, the Bill was officially rejected because the parliament claimed more work was required, though analysts insisted it was more a political than technical rejection.

President Sirleaf, who had been accused of doing little to promote the Bill, following her party’s decision to nominate a male candidate against a female aspirant in a by-election of 2009, rallied women Legislators in July 2012 to lobby their male counterparts in Parliament for enactment of the Bill.

On the international front, Liberia is a state party to a number of international instruments. The country has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) without reservations. However, Liberia has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. Despite the ratification of the CEDAW in 1984, it has yet to be domesticated to be operational in Liberian courts.

Liberia has also ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 1966.

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49 Key Informant Interview: Andrew Tehmeh, Deputy Minister of Gender and Development
50 Key Informant Interview: Andrew Tehmeh, Deputy Minister of Gender and Development
52 http://www.africanelections.org/liberia/blogs/?post=850
53 The Liberian Daily Observer, Friday, June 29, 2012
Many analysts believe all the laws intended to offer protection The Liberian Daily Observer, Friday, June 29, 2012 to women are either weak or lack clarity making need for a comprehensive review of the legislations. The rape law has been criticized for the construction of its language and the structuring of its sentencing. A concerned male Liberian, when interviewed about the rape law said, "The way the sentencing clause is drawn, it provides sufficient pretext for judges to avoid a conviction and hence remain very stringent in applying the standard of proof."55

Indicator 8 - Number and nature of provisions/recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and other transitional justice reports on women’s rights

It is barely three years since the mandate of Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission mandate ended.56 As per the terms of a peace agreement (Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement57) brokered amongst various parties to the conflict, recommendations from the commission's inquiry should have been followed through and implemented by the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC), an organization that experienced several false starts, especially regarding confirmation of its Commissioners by the Legislature. It is interesting to note that some of the TRC’s controversial recommendations such as the prosecution of perpetrators of violence and crimes against humanity have been vehemently opposed by some members of Parliament and the Executive, as their past involvement with various warring factions during the Liberian civil war might have them implicated by these recommendations.58

The TRC found that “all factions engaged in armed conflict, violated, degraded, abused and denigrated, committed sexual and gender based violence against women including rape, sexual slavery, forced marriages, and other dehumanizing forms of violations.”59

In addition to recommending prosecutorial and lustration60 measures for alleged perpetrators of these offences, the TRC recommended that reparation is a “desirable and appropriate mechanism to redress the gross violations of human rights and shall apply to communities and individuals, especially women and children, to help restore their human dignity, foster healing and closure as well as justice and genuine reconciliation.”

In the exercise of its conduct and activities, the TRC seemed to have effectively mainstreamed women and gender participation from its statement keeping, truth telling and documentation processes.

One hundred of the 198 statement takers were women. By incorporating women into the TRC’s procedural process, more women were willing to share their stories with the commission. Of the total 22,000 statements coded, 47 percent came from women and more than 200 women testified in TRC public hearings.61

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

- Reaffirms the commitment of the Liberian people to ‘international conventions and protocols relating to the rights and protections of women and children (Preamble, paragraph 12); Calls for the Commission to adopt specific measures to address the experiences of women, children, and vulnerable groups (Article IV, Section 4e);
- Stipulates that no fewer than four of the nine commissioners be women (Article V, Section 7); Explicitly states that the TRC shall be sensitive to issues of gender and gender-based violence (GBV) (Article VI, Section 24 and Article VII, Section 26f);
- Calls for special programs to enable women and children to provide testimony (Article VII, Section 26o); Calls for the provision of witness protection for children and women who may experience trauma, stigmatization, or threats if they tell their stories (Article VII, Section 26n). Women also participated in the TRC’s procedures through active outreach, statement taking, public hearings, and research and investigation.

From the above, it can be noted that the TRC effectively includes gender and women’s rights issues and some of its recommendations regarding women’s rights were well articulated. However, due to disagreements within the government notably between the Executive and the Legislature on who should provide the political direction to the process, implementing the recommendation of the Commission has been slow.62 To further compound the situation, some of the wordings of the commission’s recommendation and the manner and form through which it derived its conclusions have been widely questioned.63

All the same, the Liberian government has come under severe criticism for failing to advance the recommendation of the TRC. Human Rights Watch in a 2011 report stated that “The Liberian government made no progress in ensuring the prosecution of those responsible for war crimes committed during the armed conflicts, and made little effort to implement the recommendations of the TRC.”64

55  Key Informant Interview, August 28, 2012
56  http://www.usip.org/publications/truth-commission-liberia
58  Key Informant Interview, August 28, 2012
61  http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/liberia_2.pdf
62  http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/liberia_2.pdf
64  http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/liberia_2.pdf
Recently however, the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) in Liberia announced it was beginning efforts to implement recommendations of the defunct Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). One area of emphasis has been the Community Palaver Hut program, a less controversial and politically appealing segment of the Commission’s proposed action. The Community Palaver Hut program is intended to bring together members of various Liberian communities in a more informal setting to settle disputes.

Recommendations bordering on gender and women issues have not been addressed and with the INHRC looking light on gender and women issues, chances that these issues will soon take center stage are visibly remote.

**Indicator 9 - Percentage of women (versus men) who received economic packages in conflict resolution and reconstruction processes**

Latest statistics obtained in a 2007 United Nations Development Program Annual Report show that during the first phase of the Liberia Reintegration program, a total of 22,456 adult females (Women Associated with the Fighting Forces – WAFF) received reintegration assistance, while 2,511 young Girls Associated with the Fighting Forces (GAFF) also received reintegration assistance, out of 103,019 formally disarmed ex-combatants. Each female ex-combatant (WAFF and GAFF) received a total of US$300.00 from UNMIL as direct reinsertion fund. The ex-combatants received the first US$150.00 upon disarmament, and received the balance US$150.00 three months after being relocated and reinserted to their communities of choice. Beside this direct DDRR payment, all female ex-combatants were entitled to educational opportunities through formal education, vocational skills training, and apprenticeships. During these trainings, each female ex-combatant, as well as their male counterparts, received a monthly sustenance fund of USD30.00.

With support from the Norwegian Government, female ex-combatants also received additional assistance packages through the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR), allocated under the UNDP Trust Fund, during the final phase of the Liberia DDRR Reintegration Program in late 2007.

Following the official closure of the DDRR program in 2007, it was discovered that 8,789 ex-combatants did not receive reintegration benefits. This residual caseload of disenfranchised ex-combatants consisted of 2,658 females.

The final phase of the DDRR Program dealing with the residual caseload was officially flagged off on February 2008 and it began with the validation of 7388 beneficiaries in all of the 15 counties of Liberia. This figure showed an aggregate of 2,709 females representing 37 percent and 4,679 males representing 63 percent. In June of 2008, career counseling and placement of beneficiaries in different trade areas were conducted by the YMCA with the supervision of NCDDRR and UNDP. Following the counseling exercise, only 5,179 beneficiaries that attended counseling and career guidance session were placed in various training options, which include Agriculture, Vocational Skills Training, Apprenticeship and Computer Training. About 2209 validated beneficiaries did not show-up for counseling and placement.

**Figure 9.1: Illustration of women who received economic packages during the Liberian DDRR program (2003-2009).**

Source: UNDP/NCDDRR Percentage of women who received economic packages during the Liberia DDRR program (2003-2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Package</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
<th>Number of Men</th>
<th>% of Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DDRR Grant (1st Phase)</td>
<td>24967</td>
<td>79,052</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Caseload</td>
<td>2709</td>
<td>4679</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27,676</td>
<td>83,731</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**C. Promotion of a gender perspective**

**Indicator 10 - Number and percentage of pre-deployment training and post-deployment programs for military and police incorporating UNSCR 1325, 1820, international human rights instruments and international humanitarian law**

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) police and the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) began working with the Liberian National Police immediately following the civil war to strengthen its capacity for operational effectiveness with regard to cases involving the protection of women and children. The Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberian National Police was established at the national, county and district levels in conjunction with a Gender Unit at the national level to monitor, advice and report on the implementation of LNP Gender Policy.

Gender-sensitive training has been incorporated into the Police Training Academy’s curriculum and specialized courses have been crafted for all supervisors, staff of Gender Affairs Section, staff of Women and Children Protection Section, and Academy training staff. As part of the 2011 Academy training schedule, the Norwegian Refugee Council has held a workshop every month and UNDP has begun a review of all academy curriculums including SGVB treatment. As of March 2012, 620 women have been trained at the Academy. To incorporate more women recruits, the Ministry of Education has introduced an Accelerated Learning Program for young women who are currently enrolled in school and wishing to join the police force.

Some of the current difficulties facing the efficiency level of this training have included insufficient equipment and logistical resources for training facilities, under-trained training staff, 67 UNDP Final Report on Reintegration Assistance to Liberia DDRR Residual Caseload Beneficiaries – Final Phase, August 2009

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

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

Indicator 11a - Allocated and disbursed funding marked for women, peace and security projects and programs (WPS) to CSOs

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) implementing programs relating to UNSCR 1325 are listed under a 17-member 1325 Observatory.

Besides the SUS$50,000.00 received from the Ministry of Gender and Development by a network of CSOs to implement projects under WPS, NSCR 1325 in August 2012, there is hardly any information on funding to CSOs implementing 1325. This is due to the face that most CSOs are overly cautious of disclosing funding issues with people they consider “outsiders”.

This situation however does not preclude the fact that most CSOs are decriing the lack of funding to implement respective projects relating to Women, Peace and Security. According to 1325 Observatory Secretary General Roberta S. Freeman, there is little or no information forthcoming from the Ministry of Gender and Development regarding donor funding support targeting Women, Peace, and Security. As a result, Observatory members are “left in the blind” as to what projects to implement and how much is allocated from donor support towards such projects.

Indicator 11b - Allocated and disbursed funding marked for women, peace and security projects and programs (WPS) to government

Besides the SUS$6,000,000.00 received from the Swedish International Cooperation Development Agency (SIDA) to implement the second phase of the National GBV Action Plan, there is very little information on other sources of funding for the Government to implement projects relating to Women, Peace and Security.

Case Study A

Media Marginalization: How the Media Covered Women Politicians In the 2011 Elections

In this case study, we pay attention to the media, and look at two successive assessments that have shown a worrying trend with regards to media handling of gender and issues around women. In 2010, a Liberia Media Center (LMC) and Action Aid research drew light on media coverage of women and gender and how institutional barriers at media outlets were directly contributing to sustaining the trend. Most media organizations in Liberia are owned by men and women constitute roughly 24 percent of the staff. Media coverage of issues affecting women was very low and in many instances media reports were gender insensitive and stereotypical.

In spite of widespread publicity of the 2010 report and its findings, the trend continued in the recently conducted 2011 Elections where issues of women and gender constituted a mere 3 percent and 4.3 percent respectively of newspaper and radio reports. A lowly 1.8 percent of media content was generated from women groups. The results were drawn from five months of monitoring of seven radio stations and 11 newspapers by the LMC.

The data shows that women are not only marginalized in terms of coverage, but were also sometimes stereotyped. Women are also rarely used as sources for news, making issues around women candidates far less visible in the media. To illustrate the point, consider the fact that only 29 percent of the captured stories dealt with women issues.

The reporting period also witnessed the stereotyping of women on several occasions. Men were always reported on using their full names, while some women aspirants were not referred to by the proper names. Several publications ran the headline, “Weah’s Baby Ma,” instead of referring to the aspirant as Ms. Meapeh Gono Glay. The piece should have focused on the fact that a woman was contesting in a district dominated by male aspirants, instead of highlighting her relationship with the former World Best Footballer and Presidential Aspirant George Weah.

Media coverage of women and gender issues are often downplayed, and, against their most influential male counterparts, women often do not seem to have the benefits of fair and equal coverage.

On the other hand, the media community strongly argues that women politicians remain passively engaged with the press and more engaged with grassroots mobilization, denying the required space to amplify their messages.

As was eloquently captured in the Mapping the Absent voices report, under-representation of women in the media is a “functional and structural problem which mirrors inequalities that women have long suffered and the capacity challenges they must surmount.”

73 Mapping the Absent Voices: ActionAid, Liberia Media Center
74 Because Accountability Matters: Media Monitoring Report of Elections 2011
75 Mapping the Absent Voices
While efforts have been initiated by groups like the Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC), the Female Journalists Association of Liberia (FEJAL) and the US based International Research Exchange Board (IREX) to reverse the trend; these efforts are primarily aimed at addressing the structural conditions at media houses, thereby reinforcing the need for broader national level effort to help women make more progress. There is no doubt that the visibility of women leaders in the news gives a higher profile to women’s rights in general.

Finally, women must be accorded better prominence in the news and given incentives than they have been exposed to in the past. On the other hand, women groups must rally and become active players in promoting their own visibility through organizing joint events, rallying the female press corps and designing high level strategic media engagements and interventions.

### III. Conclusions and recommendations

As can be seen by the information included in this report, a great deal of progress has been made since the last elections that saw President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf being re-elected. Women participation has increased in key senior-level positions in the current government, while the Ministry of Gender and Development continues to take significant steps to address gender-based violence through the creation of the Gender-Based Violence Unit, and the SGBV Taskforce. Additionally, the MoGD creation of the 1325 Secretariat and the Civil Society Monitoring Observatory are positive indicators that the 1325Liberian National Action Plan is being implemented.

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

#### Recommendations

**Government**

Government should improve efforts to identify and mentor qualified women for appointed positions in national and local leadership. The government should conduct an evaluation of the progress made in implementing policies and action plans related to women, peace and security issues. This evaluation should take into consideration achievements, weaknesses and opportunities for program strengthening. Government should re dedicate themselves to the implementation of the National Gender Policy, as well as all other gender-related policies including the National Gender-Based Violence Plan of Action. The government and other organizations should support mentorship and scholarship programs for female journalists including those working at community radios. The development agenda, both nationally and internationally, should prioritize building the capacity of local stakeholders, including female chiefs and other traditional leaders, to monitor and support programs seeking to improve the economic livelihood and participation of rural women.

**Security Sector**

The Security Sector should continue to work on reaching and exceeding the 20 percent policy goal of women’s participation. The Security Sector, most especially the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Liberia National Police (LNP), must be encouraged by Government and CSOs to incorporate 1325 and other instruments dealing with Women, Peace and Security, into their training programs. The Law Reform Commission, the Legislature and all other relevant government parties should improve the incorporation of the Rape Act and the Inheritance Act into the Liberian Penal Code, especially with regard to the contradictory age of consent question.

**CSOs**

Existing efforts to develop the skills of media practitioners, including women in gender sensitive reporting should continue to be built on. A code of conduct should be developed in consultation with civil society and all other relevant stakeholders to address sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence in the media. CSOs, including the Press Union of Liberia, should work along with the Government and local universities to design advanced gender educational programs for managers and editors.
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“All peace and security advocates – both individually and as part of organizational work - should read the 2012 civil society monitoring report on Resolution 1325! It guides us to where we should focus our energies and resources to ensure women’s equal participation in all peace processes and at all decision-making levels, thereby achieving sustainable peace.” - Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations

“The GNWP initiative on civil society monitoring of UNSCR 1325 provides important data and analysis on the implementation of the resolution at both the national and local levels. It highlights examples of what has been achieved, and provides a great opportunity to reflect on how these achievements can be further applied nationwide. In this regard my Ministry is excited to be working with GNWP and its members in Sierra Leone on the Localization of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 initiatives!” - Honorable Steve Gaojia, Minister of Social Welfare, Gender & Children’s Affairs, Government of Sierra Leone

“The 2012 Women Count: Security Council Resolution 1325 Civil Society Monitoring Report uses locally acceptable and applicable indicators to assess progress in the implementation of Resolution 1325 at the country and community levels. The findings and recommendations compel us to reflect on what has been achieved thus far and strategize on making the implementation a reality in places that matters. Congratulations to GNWP-ICAN on this outstanding initiative!” - Leymah Gbowee, 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

“The civil society monitoring report on UNSCR 1325 presents concrete data and analysis on the implementation of the resolution at national level. It helps us identify priorities for implementation and allocate resources to ensure women’s participation in all peace processes and achieve long lasting peace. A must read for all peace and security actors and advocates. Congratulations to GNWP on this outstanding initiative!” - Sadhu Ram Sapkota, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Government of Nepal

“A beautifully presented, thoroughly documented accounting of what is happening to a resolution that came from the grass roots, was vetted by the grass roots and was lobbied for by women for unanimous adoption by the Security Council. Cheers to the women of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders for their careful, detailed work. GNWP is also making a unique contribution working at localization. It’s about time that some western based organization relied on local women to plan their own peacemaking program. Local women are planning their own strategies in peacebuilding and adapting UNSCR1325 to meet their needs.” - Cora Weiss (former President, International Peace Bureau, now its UN representative, President, Hague Appeal for Peace)