

Annual report

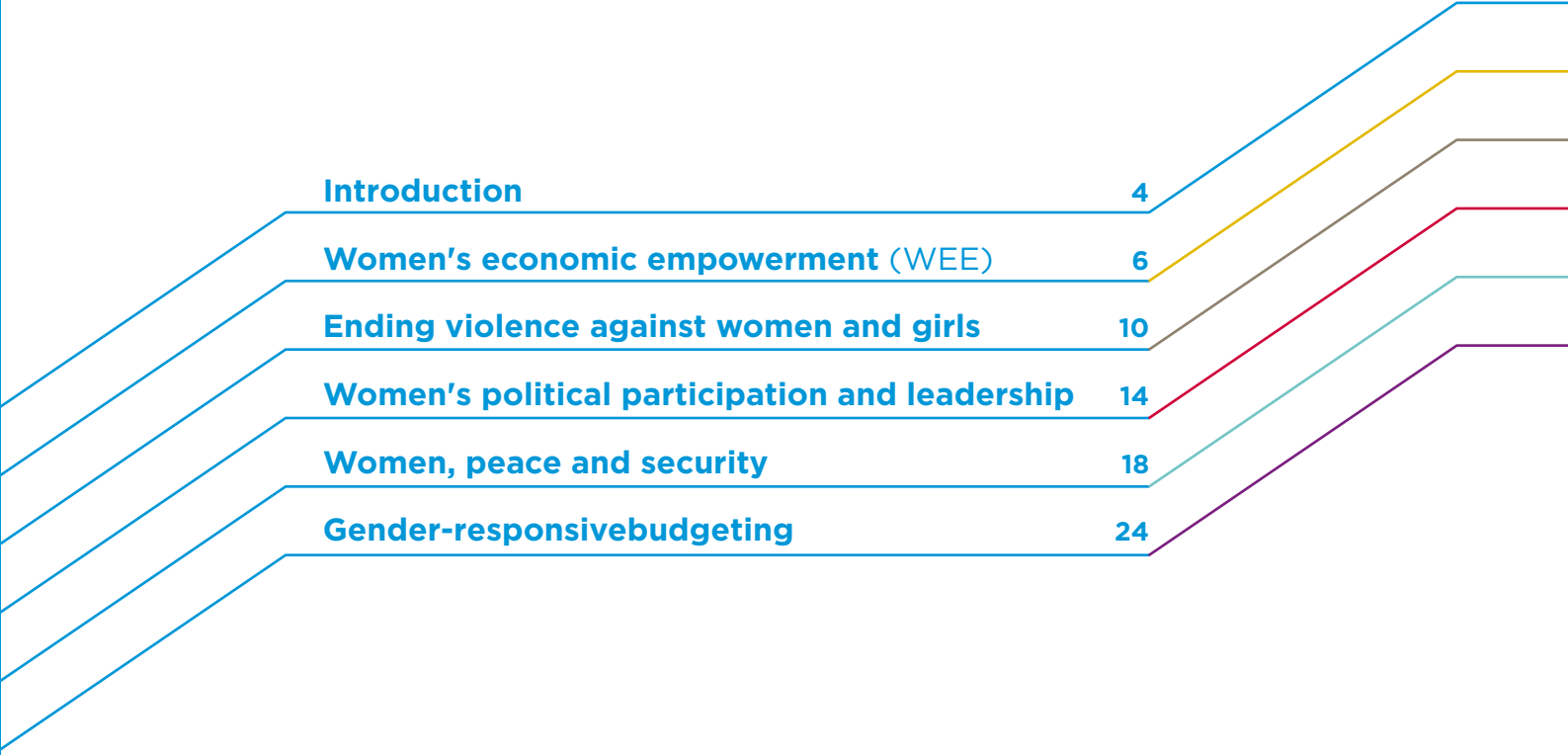
2019



Liberia



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INTRODUCTION

UN WOMEN LIBERIA COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE,
MARIE GORETH NIZIGAMA



UN Women has worked strategically in Liberia since 2004 and its office in the country is one of the agency's largest in West Africa. UN Women works closely with the Government of Liberia (GoL) through several line ministries that include the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and with development partners, civil society organizations, women's groups and other UN agencies to advance gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). The work of the country office (CO) is built around five key pillars, which address the most pressing gender equality concerns for women and girls in Liberia: women's political participation and leadership; women's economic empowerment (WEE); women, peace and security and humanitarian actions; ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG), and gender-responsive planning, policy and budgeting (GRPB). Through these pillars, UN Women plays a leading role in facilitating change.

With appropriate and timely technical and financial support, the CO has been able to record many wins during 2019 that promote GEWE. Achievements include strengthened partnerships with the private sector at national and global levels for WEE; establishment of capacity-building platforms with women entrepreneurs, and enhancing female farmers' and cooperatives' access to information, finance and markets while strengthening digital solutions for improving

resilience to natural disasters among women and smallholder farmers and cooperatives. Partnerships with the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Food Programme to improve rural women's food, nutrition security and income through investments in agri-business were strengthened. Also, in 2019 the Spotlight Initiative, a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union, the UN and the GoL that seeks to eliminate all forms of violence against women was launched. To eliminate harmful practices, the GoL and 112 traditional leaders signed a 7-count policy that calls for the suspension of all Sande society activities, including female genital mutilation (FGM). A database of existing FGM practitioners and Sande schools was also developed.

Other achievements include the formulation of a new election law amendment that includes a 30-percent gender quota on political party candidate nominations by the National Elections Commission and mentorship of 75 young women who enhanced their political leadership skills in order to be competitive in upcoming elections. The launch of the African Women's Leaders Network Liberia chapter, enabling Liberia's women leaders to strengthen their leadership skills on peace and security transformative changes was a notable achievement. Furthermore, Liberia launched the second National Action Plan on women, peace and security for 2019 to

2023. In addition, three institutional gender policies were developed and endorsed: those of the Liberian National Police, the National Disaster Management Authority and the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Despite these notable achievements, a number of challenges remain. Liberia, a country still undergoing post-conflict reconstruction, faces continued peacebuilding challenges due to unresolved grievances linked to the country's two civil wars, 1989-1996 and 1999-2003.

The high prevalence of violence against women and girls poses a challenge to building a climate that respects human rights and

also significantly hinders development efforts. Women are grossly underrepresented in the country's peacebuilding sector as well as in politics and decision-making positions. For example, women represent only 17 percent of employees in security institutions. Liberia is also far from reaching the 30 percent quota stated in the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and in the revised National Gender Policy. The implementation of the second National Action Plan, which was endorsed by the Cabinet in November 2019; the passage of the Domestic Violence Act and elections in December 2020 are expected to address some of the challenges encountered by women and girls in Liberia.

With appropriate and timely technical and financial support, the CO has been able to record many wins during 2019 that promote GEWE. Achievements include strengthened partnerships with the private sector at national and global levels for WEE; establishment of capacity-building platforms with women entrepreneurs, and enhancing female farmers' and cooperatives' access to information, finance and markets while strengthening digital solutions for improving resilience to natural disasters among women and smallholder farmers and cooperatives.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE)

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WOMEN ACCESSED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITH ORANGE AS WOMEN MOBILE MONEY AGENTS

Despite making great contributions to economies, whether as entrepreneurs, as farm workers or carrying out unpaid care work, women remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. UN Women in Liberia works for the social and economic empowerment of women and girls in the country by leading efforts in enhancing income and livelihood opportunities, engaging women with their communities and in institutions shaping laws, policies and programmes that promote their agency at national and subnational levels, and by creating a more gender-responsive policy environment.

Investing in women's economic empowerment (WEE) sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. The Women Economic Empowerment Unit works to support gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) in accordance with international commitments, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in national priorities outlined in the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2019-2023), the National Gender Policy, the National Trade Policy and the Liberia Land Rights Act.

To fulfil its mandate, the WEE Unit implements several programmes and projects, such as the United Nations (UN) Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (JP RWEE), the Liberia Flagship Programme on Climate-smart Agriculture and UN Women's BuyFromWomen Initiative (BfW). UN Women leads the JP RWEE initiative in Liberia in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The Flagship Programme and BfW initiative are closely aligned with the JP RWEE's national priorities and are strengthening ongoing efforts for the economic empowerment of rural women under the oversight of the JP RWEE National Joint Steering Committee. Common through all programmes is the attempt to reach women most in need, such as rural women, the elderly, informal workers and low-skilled women.

RURAL WOMEN FROM LOFA COUNTY INVESTED IN CULTIVATING RICE AND CASSAVA ON 87 HECTARES OF FARMLAND FOR INCREASED ECONOMIC SECURITY AND IMPROVED LIVELIHOOD.



CASSAVA PRODUCTION IN GRAND BASSA



LOREM IPSUM



2019 Goals Realized

During 2019, the WEE Unit realized a number of objectives in accordance with JP RWEE programme outcomes. To improve rural women's food and nutrition security, 636 beneficiaries (576 women and 60 men) gained access to the use of high-quality seeds, tools, and machinery for investing in agriculture. As a result, there has been an increase in productivity for the beneficiaries as they now have rice sufficient (at least 24 metric tonnes, MT) for both consumption and sale. The latter will ensure adequate income through their respective agri-businesses and investment in their respective Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). VSLAs are self-sustaining and self-managed groups of 20 to 30 women in targeted communities who save together and are able to take loans from the collective savings. Furthermore, over 50 rural women from Liberia's 15 counties, aged 25 - 58 years, now have the necessary skills to engage in processing, packaging and marketing cassava and rice. This is the result of a technical workshop on development of cassava and rice value chains, which was carried out with support from UN Women's regional office in Dakar, Senegal. These women are now actively serving as local trainers, passing on newly acquired skills and knowledge to other rural women investing in agriculture as a source of livelihood.

Five hundred young women and adolescent girls attended nine months of literacy and numeracy skills training, inclusive of

business development and financial management skills.

In addition, 200 young women were also able to participate in vocational skills training in tailoring and cosmetology and awareness-raising on sexual and reproductive health, including for menstrual hygiene management.

Sixteen new VSLA groups (comprising 420 rural women entrepreneurs) were formed with rural women farmers who are trading agriculture produce across the southeast of Liberia.

To implement an innovative approach to GEWE in 2019, UN Women Liberia and the telecommunication operator Orange partnered to build the capacities of women entrepreneurs so they could effectively and efficiently develop and manage their business resources using information communication technology (ICT) via the Orange Money (mobile money) platform. In this context, 35 women accessed employment opportunities with Orange as women mobile money agents and a training curriculum was piloted with 749 women entrepreneurs from 35 communities, ensuring increased economic security, financial autonomy and improved livelihoods.

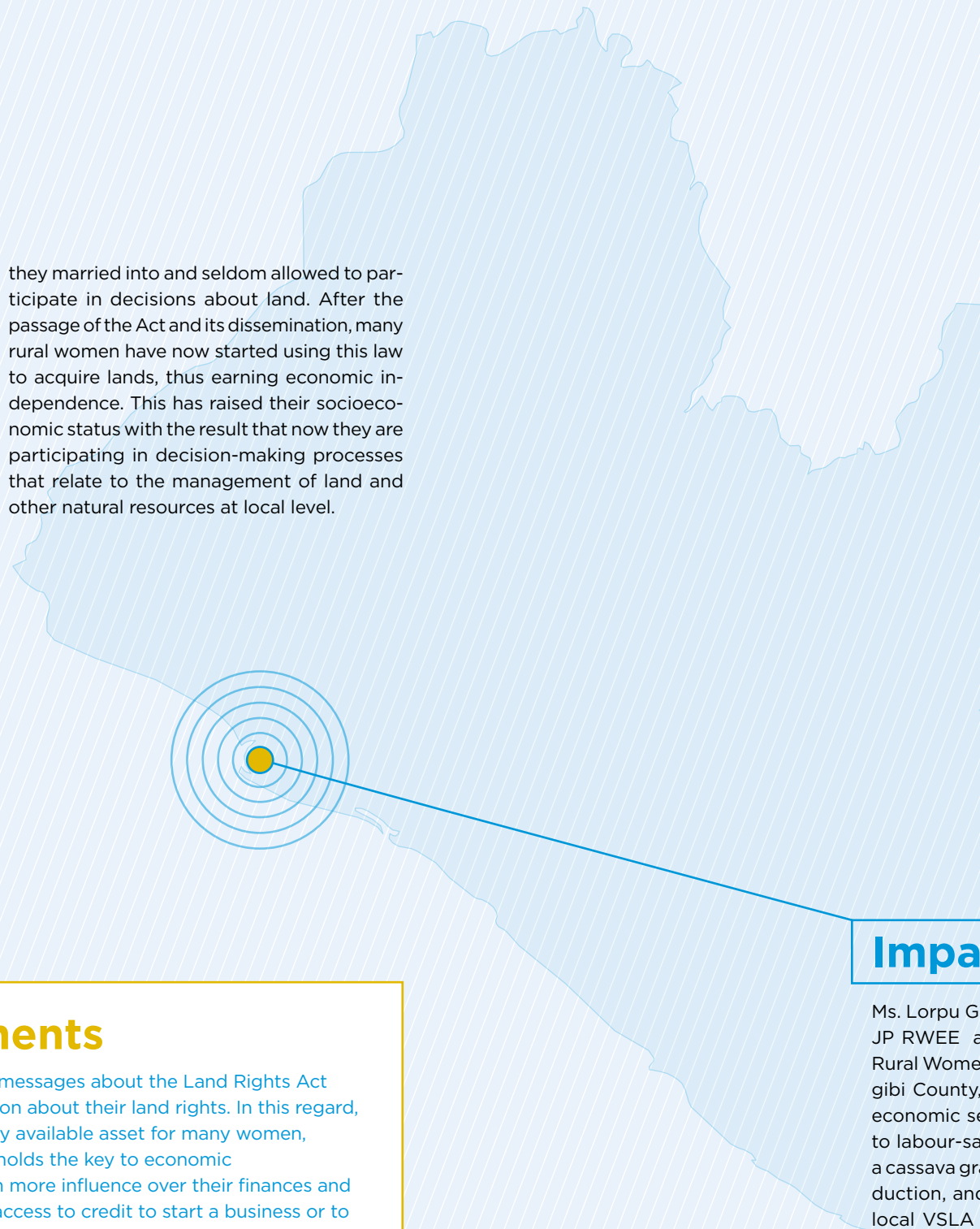
Similarly, the UN Women BfW Initiative is being piloted in Liberia with the long-term aim of connecting small-holder farmers to information, finance and markets via ICT. Development of the BfW Enterprise Platform app is in process for launch and deployment in November 2020.

200

YOUNG WOMEN WERE ALSO ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN VOCATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING IN TAILORING AND COSMETOLOGY

Lastly, to advance the implementation of the Land Rights Act (2018), UN Women supported the simplification and dissemination of key messages on the Act. The Office provided significant technical inputs from a gender perspective in the finalization of the content, as well as in advocating for its passage. Prior to the adoption of the Act, women rarely had access to or ownership of land and were considered outsiders to the communities that

they married into and seldom allowed to participate in decisions about land. After the passage of the Act and its dissemination, many rural women have now started using this law to acquire lands, thus earning economic independence. This has raised their socioeconomic status with the result that now they are participating in decision-making processes that relate to the management of land and other natural resources at local level.



CASSAVA PRODUCTION IN GRAND BASSA



Notable achievements

- Simplification and dissemination of key messages about the Land Rights Act are enabling women to access information about their land rights. In this regard, land is treasured and sometimes the only available asset for many women, especially in rural areas. For them, land holds the key to economic empowerment and security, giving them more influence over their finances and household decision-making processes, access to credit to start a business or to improve productivity with farming investments and, in many cases, the means to support their household.
- Strengthened partnership with the private sector at national and global levels for WEE as it relates to Orange Money (mobile money) capacity-building with women entrepreneurs; connecting women farmers and cooperatives to information, finance, and markets; and digital solutions for improving the resilience of women smallholder farmers and cooperatives to natural disasters.
- Strengthened partnership with FAO and WFP on improving rural women's food and nutrition security and increasing their income through investments in agribusiness.

CASSAVA AND RICE VALUE CHAINS DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTIES.



Impact Story

Ms. Lorpu Gizzie, 57, a beneficiary of the UN JP RWEE and Chairperson of Progressive Rural Women Farmers in Daniel Village, Margibi County, has increased her income and economic security as a result of her access to labour-saving technologies (for example a cassava grater), investing in vegetable production, and serving as Chairperson of her local VSLA group. In the Chairperson role she successfully manages 30 women farmers currently engaged in value chain development with cassava for income generation. Ms. Gizzie, who is self-employed, participates in her VSLA, which provides a neutral platform for women from the community, nearby towns, and villages to come together for individual and collective gains, as both the Chair and a member.

With the income from the sale of vegetables (e.g. cabbage, bitterballs and eggplant) and

processed produce (farina, cassava flour, fufu, etc.), Ms. Gizzie has managed to finance the schooling of her three children, with two attending high schools in Kakata, Margibi County and one attending the African Methodist Episcopal University based in Monrovia.

For Ms. Gizzie and her community, the Progressive Rural Women Farmers group has become a self-sustaining and self-managed organization that contributes to solidarity and equality at the community level. Being part of such a successful local group has led to impressive gains in her social status and that of all its members. These women are starting their own businesses and taking part in community decision-making processes. Being able to contribute financially within their families has put these women on a more equal footing with their husbands.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) is considered one of the most important and urgent priorities for UN Women in Liberia, where strong patriarchal social norms are deeply rooted and violence against women and girls (VAWG) is widely accepted. Reports from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) indicate a general acceptance of the most common forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), such as rape, child marriage, domestic violence, denial of resources and female genital mutilation (FGM).¹ The lack of gender parity is reflected in the Gender Inequality Index (2018), where Liberia is ranked 176th out of 189 countries.²

UN Women is providing technical leadership in efforts to eliminate VAWG, including against members of marginalized groups, such as the disabled, women living with HIV and AIDS and LGBTIQ³ persons, through the Spotlight Initiative (SI), a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union, the Government of Liberia (GoL) and the United Nations (UN). The primary purpose of the programme is to reduce the prevalence of SGBV and harmful practices, and increase women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHRs). In the spirit of 'delivering as one,' the programme is piloting innovative operational and programmatic collaboration across outcomes and between the main UN agencies involved: UN Women,

UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

To advance and realize the programme's efforts, the SI works in a participatory manner with a diverse set of partners in various government line ministries, such as the Ministry of Justice, (MoJ), Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs and Tourism, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Children and Social Protection (MGCSP), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), civil society organizations (CSOs), traditional and non-formal institutions and the private sector. The interventions focus on six mutually reinforcing programming pillars: Pillar 1 — Legislative and policy frameworks, Pillar 2 — Institutional strengthening, Pillar 3 — Prevention and norm change, Pillar 4 — Quality service, Pillar 5 — Data, and Pillar 6 — Women's movement. As the technical lead for SI, UN Women, in collaboration with partners, works to ensure that there are synergies across all pillars through implementation to avoid overlaps and duplication. UN Women also leads the technical team in collaboration with partners on EVAWG. Listed below are key achievements under pillars 1,2,3 and 6. Other key programmes that UN Women works through to end VAWG include the SGBV Joint Programme, a collaborative initiative between the UN and the GoL.

¹ Reports from 2014–2016

² UNDP: Human Development Report (2018) <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>

³ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual, and queer

THE MINISTER OF GENDER, THE UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR, UN WOMEN COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE AND OTHER



Ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) is considered one of the most important and urgent priorities for UN Women in Liberia, where strong patriarchal social norms are deeply rooted and violence against women and girls (VAWG) is widely accepted.

2019 goals realized

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CBOS AND CSOS, PROVIDING INFORMATION ON THEIR LOCATION, THEMATIC FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION SET-UP

During 2019, the SI realized a number of achievements under each pillar. Under pillar 1, (Legislative and policy frameworks), evidence shows that the legislative environment has become increasingly favourable to support actions to end VAWG in Liberia. This is shown by the passage of the Domestic Violence Act (2019) and the drafting of the bill on female genital mutilation (FGM). The Domestic Violence Act is an important piece of legislation as it strives to legally address harassment, offences against the family, emotional, physical, psychological and verbal abuse, and dowry-related violence. The law was passed after many years of advocacy and technical support by UN Women in collaboration with other UN agencies under the SGBV/Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) Joint Programme funded by the Government of Sweden. This programme has been used as the benchmark for the SI.

The FGM bill was drafted through an inclusive process with CSOs and the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia (NACCCEL), both of which are influential concerning issues pertaining to social and cultural practices in Liberia. Under pillar 2, (Institutional strengthening), the SI facilitated solid partnerships and coordination mechanisms between line ministries, CSOs, local authorities and communities to prevent and respond to SGBV and HTPs and promote SRHRs, leading to effective and timely re-

dress of VAWG. The SI also contributed to more gender-responsive sectors (e.g. Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, MGCSP and MoJ) through improved integration of gender-based violence (GBV) in action plans, investigation of cases and resource allocation. Similarly, the capacity of three national security institutions, the Liberia National Police, Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency and Ministry of National Defence, and eight CSOs — in order to develop institutional strategies and costed action plans — were strengthened. In addition, 40 CSOs' capacities were enhanced on gender, budget planning and monitoring of expenditures to promote and advocate for gender-responsive planning and budgeting (GRPB).

The objectives of pillar 3, (Prevention and norm change), were achieved through the development, validation and endorsement of the Comprehensive Prevention Strategy (CPS) by the GoL, CSOs and GBV stakeholders for the first time. Through a holistic approach, the CPS focuses on incorporating all six pillar outcomes at individual, community, institutional and society levels, underlining prevention as a key to ending violence, instead of the current practice of reacting to individual incidents. The CPS is being piloted and used as a reference document in West Africa. Further, considerable progress was also made to reaching the objectives of the pillar through an inventory of traditional groves and zoes, which registered over 1,115 fe-



Notable achievements

- The signing of the 7-Count Policy by the GoL and 112 traditional leaders, suspending all Sande activities, including FGM.
- Development of a database of existing FGM practitioners and Sande schools.
- Passage of the Domestic Violence Act (2019).
- Gender-responsive planning and budgeting offices established in the MoJ, MoH and MGCSP.
- Development and validation of the Comprehensive Prevention Strategy of Sexual and Gender-based Violence.
- Holding of a two-day national colloquium on SGBV prevention and response, the first of its kind in Liberia.

male zoes and practitioners in Liberia. Another step forward was preparation for setting up Heritage and Vocational Centres, which will act as multipurpose sites for alternative economic interventions on climate smart agriculture and skills building. Also, the signing of the 7-Count Policy suspending all Sande activities,⁴ including FGM, for a period of 12 months showcased not only a heightened commitment by traditional leaders to end FGM but also illustrates the enhanced confidence and trust in the SI to address harmful traditional practices that fuel SGBV in the country. The signing of the 7-Count Policy was made possible by UN Women's partnership with the GoL, through the MIA, MGCSP and the NACCEL. Lastly, in pillar 6 (Women's movement), the SI has strengthened partnership and collaboration with CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). This was done, for instance, through countrywide mapping that identified 779 CBOs

and CSOs, providing information on their location, thematic focus and organization set-up. This will enable the programme to direct resources to areas and entities where they are most needed. Furthermore, the development of an innovative civil society secretariat and support to the implementation of prevention and response interventions in all six pillars, such as advocacy, sensitization, awareness-raising, construction and service delivery, was also done.

Activities under the SGBV Joint Programme were implemented in close collaboration with the SI to ensure there was no duplication. Thus, the Joint Programme contributed to ensure key achievements such as the enhanced confidence of community members and leaders on work around prevention of SGBV and HTPs, and the countrywide mapping of traditional FGM practitioners.

⁴ Sande activities refers to a practice where young women and girls are initiated into adulthood through a series of activities including female genital mutilation.

INVENTORY ON TRADITIONAL ZOES IN LIBERIA



Impact story

MONROVIA, Liberia – After 35 years of operating a bush school and initiating young women and girls into adulthood, Yatta Fahnbulleh finally decided it was time to close her doors and find another way to earn a living.

Until recently, Ms. Fahnbulleh was the owner of one of the largest bush schools in Tienii, a community in Grand Cape Mount County in north-western Liberia. She estimates that she initiated more than 200 girls into adulthood through a series of rituals that included FGM.

FGM is a harmful practice that involves the removal or injury of external female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is a violation of women's human rights and can have devastating health consequences that include hemorrhaging, infection, chronic pain, childbirth complications and in severe cases, death. It's performed for financial as well as cultural reasons. Many practitioners, like Ms. Fahnbulleh, rely on FGM for their livelihood.

ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC LIVELIHOODS

In December 2019, the Spotlight Initiative supported the launch of the Alternative Economic Livelihood Programme and broke ground for a vocational and heritage centre in Grand Cape Mount County. The programme teaches new skills to traditional practitioners who operate bush schools, providing an alternative source of income to replace FGM. Once built, the vocational centre will serve as a dedicated learning space.

It's been a welcome development for many practitioners like Ms. Fahnbulleh, who want-

ed to stop performing FGM but didn't know what they would do instead.

"The time has come for me to change after 35 years in the business of bush activities," says Ms. Fahnbulleh. "Many people have asked me to leave bush business but my question has always been, 'What will I do next to help my family?' Now that you people have answered my question, I will join you to raise awareness of the vocational and heritage centre and the new livelihood project for us, the traditional zoes (leaders)."

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND EARN

Vocational and heritage centres present many opportunities to learn new skills, including climate-smart agriculture, business development, literacy, catering, soap-making and tailoring.

"I feel good about the opportunity to learn and to earn regular income outside of the usual thing I have been doing for years," says Ms. Fahnbulleh. "I see the new project as a good opportunity that all the traditional practitioners across Liberia should be proud to receive with both hands."

At the launch of the programme, Ms. Fahnbulleh put her new skills to use. "To serve as caterer, where everybody enjoyed the food I cooked and to receive payment, I consider this life changing," she says.

The new vocational centre is being built on the land where Ms. Fahnbulleh's bush school once operated.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

Despite making up half of the population, women and girls remain underrepresented at all levels of decision-making in most countries. Women and girls in Liberia face similar challenges, which has affected the impact of efforts to fight injustice, promote inclusive decision-making and end abuse and discrimination of all forms, along with and attempts to end poverty in a country that is under reconstruction.

Many international instruments guarantee women's rights to public participation, namely the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform For Action, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UN Women, through its programme pillar, women's political participation and leadership (WPPL) implements programmes aimed at addressing challenges faced by women (non-fulfilment of their right to political participation) and enable their full participation in decision-making and leadership positions at all levels in Liberia.

Seventy-five young women from Liberia's 15 counties were mentored for political leadership following a series of UN Women supported trainings, civic engagements and interaction with political leaders.

WPPL works in close collaboration with key actors and stakeholders to influence and make reality women's effective leadership in politics.

In 2019, the UN Women country office contributed towards:

1. Improving the prospects for endorsing female candidates and consideration of their views in decision-making in the various political parties, through capacity-building, advocacy campaigns and tailored training,
2. Having more women in leadership positions in political parties' executive committees, as a visible outcome of the effective trainings on organizational development,
3. Launch of the Liberian Chapter of the African Women Leader's Network,
4. The development of protocols to deal with violence against women (VAW) in elections and politics,
5. The training of a cadre of young women ready to participate in politics and take up leadership roles in society.

75
WOMEN FROM LIBERIA'S
15 COUNTIES WERE
MENTORED FOR POLITICAL
LEADERSHIP FOLLOWING
A SERIES OF UN WOMEN
SUPPORTED TRAININGS



2019 goals realized

Female candidates have greater visibility and have been able to share their platforms pertaining to promoting gender equality and development of Liberia with various women's networks and electorates. This was made possible through various opportunities provided by UN Women and other partners such as: the Female Candidates Townhall Debate, which brought together former female leaders, diplomats, legislators and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to discuss issues, challenges and way forward for enhancing women's political participation and leadership. This has contributed to increased visibility and action towards making women's voices, presence and perspectives integral to decision-making processes. On the sidelines of the parliamentary session of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held in Monrovia, an event was held with ECOWAS parliamentarians and local stakeholders to amplify the need to adhere to international protocols, as well as national obligations, to advance women's participation. In addition, women in five political parties gained increased knowledge and capacity to engage their political leaders as a result of a series of trainings to strengthen the women's wings of the top five political parties in the National Legislature, under a memo-

randum of understanding signed between UN Women and National Democratic Institute (NDI) in April 2019.

LEADERSHIP MENTORING PROGRAMME ESTABLISHED FOR YOUNG WOMEN POLITICAL ASPIRANTS

Seventy-five young women from Liberia's 15 counties were mentored for political leadership following a series of UN Women supported trainings, civic engagements and interaction with political leaders. The initiative was held under the women's political participation and leadership project with support from the Government of Canada and was implemented through NAYMOTE Partners for Development.

Initiatives advocating for a gender-inclusive legislature in Liberia were also launched. These included the 'Legislature is not for men alone' campaign by the National Young Women Political Council (NYWPC), an apex body formed by the 75 young women mentees to give them ownership of the programme and as a sustainability mechanism so the organization could run independently of funding partners. Civic engagement initiatives meant to influence social norms towards a positive perception and acceptance of women's participation in politics were rolled out by the

THE VICE PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA, JEWEL HOWARD TAYLOR (MIDDLE) INTERFACING WITH THE MENTEES IN BONG COUNTY



75 mentees in their counties, districts and schools. Mentees' engagement in political organizations started with them leading the management of political campaigns of women candidates in the by-elections of July 2019, and then themselves running for elections of their apex council, the NYWPC.

Existing women leaders lent support to the mentees, led by former President, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who pledged to contact other female mayors and leaders so they would coach the mentees, and herself promised to track this group. In addition, the women leaders requested UN Women to continue its support of the mentoring programme. This opened the way for young political aspirants to interact with renowned women leaders in Liberia and Africa (H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia Vice President H.E. Jewel Howard-Taylor and Ambassador H.E. Marjon Kamara), to enhance their knowledge, skills and commitment to engage in politics. Commitment of male legislators as 'HeForShes', to ensure gender was incorporated in legislative proposals, was also elicited by the women leaders and other speakers at the programme.

Following the UN Women-led 'I Know Gender' series of trainings on CEDAW, gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting and transformative leadership for gender equality, the Domestic Violence Bill was brought back before the National Legislature for discussion, after several failures and a long

stalemate since 2016. The training included 20 legislators (5 women and 15 men, or 19 percent of members of the legislature). Also, River Gee County District 3 Representative Francis Dopoh made a statement on female genital mutilations (FGM), which was a contentious issue in debate on the Domestic Violence Bill, during the above-mentioned training in Ganta, Nimba County. Male legislators from both houses of the legislature pledged to work as HeForShes and, after the training on gender-responsive budgeting, they agreed to review the 2019-2020 national budget to ensure gender priorities are allocated meaningful funding.

LAUNCH OF THE AFRICAN WOMEN'S LEADERS NETWORK ON 18 DECEMBER 2019

Liberia became one of 10 chapters of the African Women's Leaders Network (AWLN), an action-oriented initiative formed in 2017 to enhance the leadership of African women in bringing transformative changes, which focuses on peace, security and development. The launch was under the auspices of a high-powered delegation of AWLN patrons: former President H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Vice President H.E. Jewel Howard Taylor, Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee and Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection Hon. Williamatta Saydee Tarr. Launching the network, Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor called on the women of Liberia to take "solidarity and unity amongst us as women."

Notable achievements

- 75 young women mentored and enhanced their political leadership skills in preparation for upcoming elections.
- Launch of the African Women's Leaders Network Liberia chapter, which enabled women leaders to strengthen their leadership skills on peace and security.
- Commitment of male legislators, as 'HeForShes', to ensure gender responsiveness in legislative proposals.

INAUGURATION OF THE AWLN STRATEGIC STEERING COMMITTEE IN MONROVIA, LIBERIA



Liberia became one of 10 chapters of the African Women's Leaders Network (AWLN), an action-oriented initiative formed in 2017 to enhance the leadership of African women in bringing transformative changes.

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

The women, peace and security (WPS) programme aims to promote a more sustained peace and inclusive and sustainable growth and development through strengthened formal and informal institutions by providing

access to effective equitable justice and security services, promoting and protecting human rights, and strengthening social cohesion and reconciliation.

2019 goals realized

ADOPTION OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN (NAP) ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AND RE-ACTIVATION OF THE NAP WPS SECRETARIAT

In November 2019 a cabinet meeting presided over by Liberia President H.E. George Weah adopted the second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2023 (NAP WPS) to advance the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security. The NAP WPS is a peacebuilding policy aligned with global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and UNSCR 1325, which underscores the importance of women's full participation in peace processes. The NAP WPS is the result of a consultative process conducted in a participatory manner led by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP), with

technical and financial support from UN Women and a range of partners, including civil society organizations (CSOs), organizations of people with disabilities, youth organizations, the private sector, donors, UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations. It integrates lessons learned from the previous NAP on UNSCR 1325 and the Global Study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2015). This NAP WPS covers five pillars: 1. Prevention, 2. Protection, 3. Participation, 4. Relief and recovery, 5. Coordination and accountability. The document was simplified and disseminated with support from UN Women.

Within the framework of developing the second phase of the NAP WPS, UN Women hosted a delegation comprised of members of the legislature and Government of Mali to share experiences and best practices on the development and implementation of the NAP WPS

LOREM IPSUM



LOREM IPSUM



in their country. As a result of this collaboration, national and global practices and lessons learned in promoting gender-sensitive security and peacebuilding processes strengthened the capacity of women-led community organizations and national actors in Liberia.

The Secretariat of the NAP WPS, which is hosted by the human rights division of the MGCSP and has the key role of coordinating the policy's implementation, has also been re-activated with technical and financial support from the UN.

ENHANCED CAPACITY OF SECURITY INSTITUTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE NAP WPS

At least 91 percent of staff members of the gender and security sector national taskforce improved their knowledge and skills on relevant gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) issues as a result of a series of capacity-building sessions. These aimed to strengthen knowledge and create an enabling environment to promote GEWE at institutional level, government ministries and security institutions, to implement UNSCR 1325, and to mainstream gender into their institutions. In addition, an awareness campaign and consultations on WPS were held in all seven counties of implementation: Bomi, Cape Mount, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Maryland and Montserrado, to support the

development and implementation of the NAP WPS.

NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

With technical support from UN Women, the MGCSP developed, finalized and submitted its National Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This report is the result of a comprehensive national-level review conducted with participation of stakeholders from government, CSOs and development partners. The report covers the progress made and challenges encountered to date in its implementation. Proposing several recommendations, the report is also being used as the UNCT roadmap for 2020 Generation Equality, a campaign for gender equality.

FEMALE PRE-TRIAL DETAINEES RELEASED

A total of 304 female pre-trial detainees benefitted from free legal aid services resulting in the release of 104 detainees, with support from UN Women.

FEMALE INMATES ENHANCED THEIR SKILLS FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

119 female inmates at the Monrovia Central Prison received skills training in tailoring, tie and dying and soap making through support from UN Women in partnership with local organization Prison Fellowship of Liberia. The

91%

OF STAFF MEMBERS OF THE GENDER AND SECURITY SECTOR NATIONAL TASKFORCE IMPROVED THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS



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PSYCHOSOCIAL
COUNSELLING
SESSIONS WERE
CONDUCTED IN NINE
PRISONS

programme was funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

As a means of rehabilitating female offenders, 23 psychosocial counselling sessions were conducted in nine prisons in Montserrado, Lofa, Nimba, Bong, Grand Bassa, Margibi, Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount counties. 107 female pre-trial detainees benefitted from these sessions, which were intended to prepare them for post-prison life. Feedback from the field revealed that some of the women who had exhibited violent behaviour prior to the introduction of the project were showing signs of refined behaviour and interacting with each other peacefully.

INCREASED CASE REPORTING THROUGH COMMUNITY POLICING STRUCTURES AS A RESULT OF ENHANCED ENGAGEMENT WITH WOMEN AND IMPROVED TRUST AND CONFIDENCE BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND THE POLICE.

At least 316 cases were reported to police through community structures. The overachievement was due to enhanced collaboration between the Community Service Section (CSS) of the Liberia National Police (LNP) and community structures such as the National Peace Huts of Liberia and National Rural Women Structure.

62 trainees of the LNP CSS demonstrated enhanced knowledge in new methods of conducting gender-sensitive, community-oriented policing after an intensive train-

ing organized by UN Women. Also, the LNP Inspector General endorsed and signed the revised Gender-sensitive Community Policing Policy, which was developed in partnership with UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and has institutionalized the capacity-building efforts of UN Women.

In addition, LNP officers have improved community engagement, including community policing forums, especially with women. As a result, early warning and response mechanisms at local levels have been enhanced, ensuring proper flow of information between the communities and the LNP. According to the LNP semi-annual report, a reduction in the number of crime and mob violence cases in Montserrado County in the first half of 2019 was attributable to increased engagement with communities, which resulted in improved trust and confidence between communities and police. Also, more cases have been referred to the police through community policy structures at local level.

APPROVAL OF THE NATIONAL LEGAL AID POLICY

UN Women sponsored the drafting and adoption of the first gender-responsive legal aid policy in Liberia, which recognizes the right of citizens, especially women, to legal aid services. The lack of access to legal aid has over time proven to be one of the major factors for overcrowded prisons and the high rate of pre-trial detention across the country. The policy serves as a guide to drive the process of formulating legal aid legislation. This is a significant effort in Liberia given the high rates of SGBV cases and existing impunity.

ENHANCED CAPACITIES OF RURAL WOMEN ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Institute for Research and Democratic

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RURAL WOMEN WERE
TRAINED ON THE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
SYSTEM, FUNDAMENTAL
RIGHTS AND HOW TO
DEMAND THEIR RIGHTS

Development (IREDD), one of UN Women's civil society partners, supported the LNP CSS to carry out 30 outreach activities in 30 communities in Grand Bassa, Margibi, Rivercess and Bong Counties, within the context of providing legal education, raising awareness on women's rights and enhancing access to justice in communities. These activities have enhanced the knowledge of rural women on reporting cases of SGBV as well as on the available SGBV referral pathways. This has been demonstrated by the increased number of cases referred to the LNP from these communities. Activities included townhall meetings, distribution of information, education and communication materials depicting messages of women accessing justice, broadcasting messages in local vernaculars on radio, and the staging of street dramas. A total of 873 rural women were trained on the criminal justice system, fundamental rights and how to demand their rights. Of the women who received the training, 513 are currently utilizing their new skills by providing education on women's rights to other women in 30 communities. 15 of these women are now delivering specialized legal education services on a range of issues, including divorce, persistent non-support for children, inheritance rights, rape, assault and other forms of violence against women and girls.

With the goal of formalizing, institutionalizing and ensuring their financial sustainability, the National Peace Huts of Liberia were registered and legally recognized as a CBO by the Government of Liberia, and an election was held to select its leadership. Financial sustainability plans were developed for 36 Peace Huts using comprehensive financial sustainability assessments commissioned by UN Women.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF A MODULE IN THE CURRICULUM OF THE JUDICIAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

The Judicial Institute, whose role is to provide continuous professional judicial training to judicial personnel and other justice sector actors, includes in its curriculum training modules on women's human rights. With technical support from UN Women, a module and training guide were developed for a specialized course on women's human rights. All seven trainers of the institute gained additional knowledge and skills on GEWE issues as a result of a training of trainers rolled out by UN Women. The newly developed module was approved and integrated into the curriculum and 30 judges (11 women and 19 men) strengthened their knowledge on women's human rights through a comprehensive training.

SOFTWARE FOR TRACKING SGBV CASES

Since the inception of the women and children protection section (WACPS) in 2005, the LNP has tracked SGBV cases manually, with staff receiving case reports from Liberia's 15 counties and tallying them in an excel spreadsheet. Through funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the Embassy of Sweden, and technical support from UN Women, the LNP now has software and a database to track SGBV cases from police zones around Monrovia.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE WOMEN PEACE HUTS NETWORK

With the goal of formalizing, institutionalizing and ensuring their financial sustainability, the National Peace Huts of Liberia were registered and legally recognized as a CBO by the Government of Liberia, and an election was held to select its leadership. Financial sustainability plans were developed for 36 Peace

Huts using comprehensive financial sustainability assessments commissioned by UN Women. Several Peace Huts mentioned that they have started implementing the plans and are already generating income.

Six new Peace Huts were constructed in targeted counties: Lofa, Ganta Border in Nimba, Barraken in Maryland, Kornia, Tiapa and Nimba.

As a result of UN Women's support, 87 women from Peace Huts are active participants in community policing forums, raising issues such as domestic violence, SGBV, rape and demands for redress.

ENHANCED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OF WOMEN ON ADVOCACY TO INFLUENCE THE LAW-MAKING PROCESS

A four-day workshop was conducted on human rights-based legal review and law

drafting for women from CSOs. As a result, 21 of the 25 women acquired knowledge on CEDAW legal review, which led to the review of the Affirmative Action Bill. Participants also drafted a Legal Aid Bill and a proposed anti-FGM Bill, after the FGM component was removed from the Domestic Violence Bill.

As a result of a two-week training conducted by UN Women with a pool of women on legal aid review, drafting and advocacy, a town hall meeting was organized and attended by H.E. Vice President Dr. Jewel Howard Taylor and representatives from women's organizations. The meeting aimed to clarify various points and views on the recent proposition of H.E. President George Weah to increase the representation of women in the National Legislature. Roughly 50 women attended the meeting at Cape Hotel, including members of the donor community, representatives from UN Women, MGCSP and women from government, civil society and local networks. Participants proposed ways in which they could be involved, and committed to joining forces with the Office of the Vice President and other key stakeholders to advocate for the incorporation of such a proposition in the ongoing constitutional review debate.

Notable achievements

- Adoption of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- Enhanced capacity of security institutions to implement the NAP WPS.
- Development of the national report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- The Women Peace Huts Network of Liberia is legally recognized as a CBO and a sustainability plan developed for it.
- Provision of legal services by Prison Fellowship Liberia, with support from UN Women, leads to the release of 104 pre-trial female detainees.
- 119 female inmates enhanced their skills for soap making and tailoring.
- Approval by the LNP Inspector General of the Administrative Instruction on Human Rights and Gender (Gender Policy).



Impact story

"The sewing machine made me happy in prison"

For 40-year-old Ellen Korpo Jallah from Mount Barclay in Monrovia, Liberia, what started as a sad story of incarceration has turned out to be a blessing in disguise and a life-changing encounter.

Ellen was arrested in April 2019 following a land dispute with a colleague and spent nine months in prison. As fate would have it, her experience in prison from April 2019 to December 2019 helped to transform her life, after she received skills training in tailoring and learnt the art of making dresses, trousers and shirts, something she could not do before she was arrested.

The skills training in tailoring, along with instruction in other skills like tie and dye and soap making, was facilitated by the Prison Fellowship of Liberia with support from UN Women and funding from the Peace-building Fund.

While in prison, Ellen was determined to learn so she spent a lot of time sewing and helping prison officers to fix their clothes. "The sewing machine is the only thing that made me happy in prison," she said.

Through the support of the Prison Fellowship, Ellen managed to purchase pieces of material and made clothes for sale while in prison. "I was released from prison because I managed

to pay back the money I owed through sales and from contributions from my daughter and other family members," Ellen said.

"If I look back, sometimes I feel that it was good for me to be in prison — it was a blessing in disguise. I made good friends like Prison Fellowship and UN Women. They comforted me and I learnt a new skill," she added.

"My wish is to get a machine and a very big shop so that I can start sewing and training other people," Ellen said.

Ellen does not own a sewing machine or have a permanent place to stay. She currently stays with well-wishers from church and rents a machine to make items to sell. This has enabled her to buy a few things for herself. She fears that if she goes to her rural home in Lofa County she will not be able to get a machine and will not afford to travel to help the inmates in prison.

Ellen's daughter lamented that she does not have more money to assist her mother, although she encourages her to continue sewing so that she does not forget what she learnt.

Musa Kargbo, Skills Instructor from Prison Fellowship, explained that the organization's programs are changing the lives of people. "The impact is really felt when they come out and they start to practise what they were taught, and even teach other people," he said.

LOREM IPSUM



GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) brings together two aspects that are not commonly associated, gender equality and public financial management initiatives, and seeks to improve the results of budgets in general and

to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. GRB focuses on key economic and social matters that are often overlooked or obscured in conventional budget and policy analysis and decision-making.

2019 goals realized

The Government of Liberia (GoL), through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), developed a national gender-responsive planning and budgeting policy, the National Policy on Gender-responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB), with technical and financial support from UN Women. One of the goals of public financial management reforms in Liberia is to improve service delivery, leading to effective gender-friendly resource allocation, tracking of expenditures, monitoring and reporting. The policy will improve the GoL's service delivery skills and ensure a gender-friendly allocation of resources.

The GRPB Policy was launched in March 2019, and its development served as the framework for the implementation of GRPB at national and subnational levels. With support from

UN Women, a national coordination unit was established at the MFDP to manage the institutionalization of GRPB in various ministries and agencies. The development of the policy, its roll out and establishment of the unit at the MFDP were a result of a fruitful partnership, as well as technical and financial support from UN Women, through funding from the Government of Sweden and the European Union.

Adoption of a gender policy by the Governance Commission of Liberia in July 2019 will promote and support gender equality within the Commission and enable an effective and efficient discharge of its mandate (gender mainstreaming, integrating gender in the commission's planning, budgeting, operations and organizational culture).

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LAUNCH OF GENDER RESPONSIVE PLANNING AND BUDGETING POLICY BY THE GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA (MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT)



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UN WOMEN'S DEPUTY COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE, SANGEETA THAPA (THIRD FROM RIGHT) WITH COMMISSIONERS AND STAFF OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMISSION DURING THE VALIDATION OF THE COMMISSION'S GENDER POLICY.



Notable achievements

- Launch of the National Policy on Gender-responsive Planning and Budgeting by the Government of Liberia, with a functional unit that will implement the Governance Commission's mandate.
- Adoption of a gender policy by the Governance Commission.
- Establishment of a Gender-responsive Planning and Budgeting National Coordination Unit.



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Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence
against women and girls

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations:

