

# LIBERIA

UN COUNTRY RESULTS REPORT 2023



UNITED NATIONS  
Liberia



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## FOREWORD BY THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR

The year 2023 was a very eventful year marked by commendable milestones including the recent Presidential elections.

I would like to congratulate the people of Liberia and join the world to celebrate the deepening democracy in Liberia through the peaceful conduct of the 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections.

The next phase of Liberia's democratic journey is crucial for nation-building, cohesion, and sustainable development. The United Nations in Liberia looks forward to this next phase, particularly the new national development plan, which would serve as a guide for our new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The peaceful elections paved way for a seamless transition of power with the UN supporting this process in collaboration with our partners. This was accomplished through peacebuilding initiatives, technical and strategic policy advice to the National Elections Commission and political stakeholders to strengthen institutional capacity; support the inclusion of women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups, and promote peaceful, credible, inclusive, and transparent elections.

Additionally, the program reached a number of 128,598 youths (males - 37,905, females - 90,693) in school settings in ten counties, equipping them with with sexuality education, including family planning. At the same time, 150 at-risk adolescents (35 boys, and 115 girls) were enrolled in technical and vocational skills training programs to acquire employment skills and empowerment. Furthermore the program built the capacity of 100 Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) teachers and administrators' knowledge, equipping them on gender-sensitive and inclusion education. The School Feeding Programme implemented by World Food Programme and partners has significantly improved educational outcomes for school-going children and enhanced nutritional intakes for poor households that benefited over 70,260 public primary school children in 289 schools in four counties (Bong, Maryland, Montserrado, and Nimba).

To enhance community access to markets and

other basic social services, about 47,996 kilometres of farm-to-market roads were rehabilitated in Nimba (14.656 km) and Lofa (33.34 km) in 2023 with support from International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Over 24,853 individuals living with HIV received sustained access to treatment, and support services highlighting the tangible impact of sustained care and support services for the well-being of affected populations. In addition, 1,200 female farmers in Lofa, Bong, and Nimba Counties have been transformed through smart and climate-resilient agricultural interventions. Moreover, 17,556 assorted essential farming tools were distributed to over 2,450 individual farmers, including women, youths, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to support their farming efforts within the selected communities.

In the spirit of Sustainable Development Goals specifically no 17, we embrace the principle of partnerships in our work. I extend my warmest appreciation to the Government and people of Liberia for our very strong collaboration in working towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Profound gratitude also goes to all our partners, including the development partners, multilateral development actors, regional cooperation bodies, international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, academia, and others. Going forward, we will continue to work towards developing and implementing a UNSDCF anchored on the National Development Agenda and aligned to the six transition or entry points of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Subsequently, our efforts on collective partnerships and resource mobilization will be reinvigorated. I have no doubt that by continuing to engage in results-driven coordination, we shall make the transformative changes needed to accelerate the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Christine N. Umutoni**  
Resident Coordinator

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW : Liberia at a glance



### Total Population

5,250,187

urban population- **54.3 %** of the population of Liberia is urban (**2,944,140** people in **2023**); rural population- Rural population was reported at **46.94 %** in **2022**.



### Food Security

In August 2022, the Liberia Food Security, Nutrition, Livelihoods and Markets Assessment found **2.2 million** Liberians are food insecure, representing **47%** of the total households; Out of which **39%** are moderately food insecure and **8%** are severely food insecure. Furthermore, the study found that malnutrition in children under 5 years of age remains a concern with highest Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate in Urban Montserrado (**26.6%**), followed by Bomi (**22.4%**), and Grand Cape Mount (**22.2%**).



### Child Marriage and FGM

**24.9%** of girls in Liberia are married before their 18th birthday and **5.8%** are married before the age of **15**.

**8%** of boys in Liberian are married before the age of **18**.

Presently, **31.8%** of Liberian women and girls are living with the consequences of this harmful practice and many more are at risk. These women and girls have little choice in this matter, with reports of forced mutilations being common.



### Education

According to the 2021/2022 Annual School Census Report, the primary school completion rate was at **10 %** for **boys** and **11 %** for **girls**. According to the World Bank and UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the lower secondary completion rate was at **46%** for boys and **42%** for girls in **2017**.



### Maternal and Infant Mortality Rate

54.8183

The current infant mortality rate of Liberia is **54.8183** infant deaths for every **1,000** live births. A **-2.13%** decrease from 2023, when the infant mortality rate was **56.0116** and **9,328** infants died for the year



### Gender-based violence

According to the **2019-2020** Liberia Demographic and Health Survey, **60%** of women age **15-49** have experienced physical violence and **9%** have experienced sexual violence. Less than half (**42%**) of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have ever sought help.



### Nutrition

Rates of chronic and acute undernutrition have decreased in the past six years, but almost one-third of children under five remain stunted and micronutrient deficiencies are highly prevalent. Stunting increases with age, peaking at **42 %** in children **36-47** months in age, and affects males (**34 %**) more than females (**29%**).



### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Access to safely managed drinking water supply under SDG definition remains below **4%** at national level with rural population under **1%** served. According to **JMP 2017**, less than **10 %** of Liberians have access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services.

## UNITED NATIONS UN COUNTRY TEAM

The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Liberia comprises of 19 resident UN agencies, funds, and programmes and 2 non-resident ones. It is headed by the Resident Coordinator, who coordinates the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF, or ‘Cooperation Framework’), the core planning instrument guiding all development activities at the country level. The UNCT’s joint steering committee includes the UN, development partners, and government agencies, and is co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator and the Minister of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP).

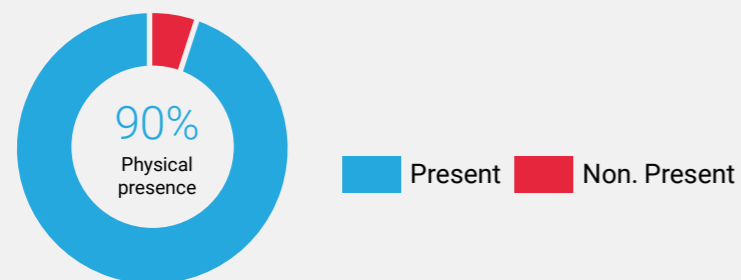
The UNSDCF 2020-2024 is fully aligned with Liberia’s national development plan – the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), and its successor plan of the new government aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 while Leaving No One Behind. The UNCT continues to support the Government of Liberia collectively and coherently to effectively address the immediate and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Liberian economy, livelihoods, healthcare, employment, climate change, and other binding constraints, that continue to push back millions of Liberians into poverty and other social deprivations.

The UNCT continues to strengthen the capacity of the Government to ensure a “reconciled, transformed and prosperous Liberia, anchored on accountable institutions and equitable, inclusive and sustainable development” by 2030. The Team supports the Government in its endeavours to reduce extreme poverty and provide higher incomes and health care for all. By focusing on building more capable and trusted state institutions, the UNCT helps lay the groundwork for a stable, resilient, and inclusive nation with sustained investments in agriculture, human capital, infrastructure, and social protection.

### Resident and Non-resident Agencies



UN Agencies that are signatories to the CF (2020-2025) and have physical presence in Liberia.



## KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS OF THE UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN LIBERIA

The Government of Liberia is the primary partner of the UN. The UNCT also works with development partners, international financial institutions (IFIs), the private sector, civil society, community-based organizations (CBOs), the media, and academia in building strong institutions for improved service delivery and national ownership. With the ongoing transition of the new Government, the UN will continue to play a strategic policy advisory and coordination role in convening development and government partners to support the development and implementation of the ARREST (Agriculture, Road, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation and Tourism) Agenda.

The UN-Government (UN/GOL) Joint Steering Committee, co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and Minister of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), provides policy strategic leadership and direction for successful policy coherence and development coordination in Liberia.

### Key Government/National Implementing Partners:

The National implementing partners comprise of: The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia, Liberia Anti-corruption Commission, National Elections Commission, Governance Commission, National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority, National Commission on Disability and Independent National Commission on Human Rights among others.

### Key Development/Donor Partners:

The UN works with countless development partners in Liberia. It would like to acknowledge all development partners for their support in 2023 despite the challenges occasioned by the global crises in Ukraine and the Middle East. Below are some development partners randomly arranged in no order whatsoever of the amount of financial support provided:



# CHAPTER 1.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN LIBERIA AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS

### Macro-Economic Context

The Liberian economy is resilient, recovering from multiple exogenous shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Ebola which caused a severe drop in prices of its primary exports including iron ore, rubber, and timber as well as the effects of global crises in Ukraine, Israel, and the departure of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2018.

The Liberian economy experienced a real GDP growth rate of 5.2% in 2023, marking an increase from 3.7% in 2022, despite the increased global uncertainties and commodity price shock as a result of the Russian-Ukraine war, the Israeli war, and global supply chain disruptions. On the contrary, the national poverty rate rose to 52.3%, with high prevalence in rural counties compared to urban areas and startling regional disparities. Despite growth in real GDP terms, the government faces a shortage of fiscal space for national development financing with more than half of the national budget being allocated to recurrent expenditure.

The inflation rate remains relatively stable and low declining from 11% in 2022 to an average of 8% in 2024. Sustaining low inflation levels will help Liberian households retain their purchasing power, which will in turn help decrease poverty rates across the country in 2024 and beyond. Although the fiscal deficit rose to 4.3% in 2023, it is expected

to improve in the medium term with reforms to strengthen domestic resource mobilization and consolidate expenditures. In addition, the Government's recent strong fiscal policy reform and tight expenditure management will help narrow the fiscal deficit and maintain it at below 5%.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to affect the delivery of essential social and economic services, especially among more vulnerable households. As a result of COVID-19, approximately 2.3 million Liberian citizens were pushed back into extreme poverty due to high consumption costs and out-of-pocket health expenditures. <sup>i</sup> The COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment shows that people working in the self-employed services sector or vulnerably employed (46.2%) population were affected the most, with the poverty rate increasing by 2.5% for vulnerable workers compared to 1.9% for the more stable employed. Growth in the private sector stagnated with low imports of goods to service the economy. The informal sector continues to decline due to reduced domestic production, mainly in the agriculture, fisheries, and mining sectors. Women experienced lower income earnings and were more affected by poverty.

Young woman preparing food in Grand Bassa County

## Liberia's COVID-19 detection and vaccination drive boosted by Community-Based Response

Monrovia, 23 June — As Liberia tackled community transmission of COVID-19 in 2022, rapid diagnostic testing of community members in locations where newly confirmed cases were reported proved instrumental in breaking the transmission chains. Additionally, through a reactive vaccination approach, efforts were made to reach out to individuals who had not yet received the vaccine and encourage them to get vaccinated. This approach resulted in 15,463 people being fully vaccinated, contributing 0.4% to the country's overall vaccination coverage of 81% of the population by April 30, 2023.

The Community-Based Surveillance and Response (CBSR) reinforced community engagement by integrating testing, vaccination, case management, contact tracing, and addressing misinformation. It also involved the supply of infection prevention kits and home-based isolation and care of confirmed cases.

The World Health Organization (WHO) supported the deployment of mobile health teams thereby boosting efforts in collecting a total of 162,018 samples in the counties of Montserrado, Nimba, Margibi, and Grand Bassa. With support from the World Health Organization (WHO), mobile health teams on a total of 162,018 samples in the counties of Montserrado, Nimba, Margibi, and Grand Bassa. From July 15, 2022, to April 30, 2023, a total of 320 cases were confirmed in these counties, with Montserrado having 166 cases, Nimba with 113 cases, Margibi with 18 cases, Lofa with 12 cases, and Grand Bassa with 11 cases. Additionally, 1,682 contacts were followed up, with Montserrado accounting for 558 contacts, Nimba with 807 contacts, Margibi with 160 contacts, Lofa with 56 contacts, and Grand Bassa with 101 contacts. These efforts were focused on the five counties, which collectively house nearly 50% of Liberia's total population.

With the decline in demand for voluntary COVID-19 testing in Liberia, the community-based response initiative enabled monitoring of epidemiological trends to guide control measures.

The initiative, which uses rapid tests to counter the challenge of identifying COVID-19 cases outside health facilities, was launched in Liberia in July 2022.

"Expanding testing in communities using the antigen tests is helping to provide a better way for the country to respond to the pandemic," says Chea Sanford Wesseh, Assistant Minister for Vital Statistics in



Health workers at Government Hospital in Nimba

Liberia's Ministry of Health, adding that there are plans to broaden their use beyond the three counties.

In practice, the mobile teams targeted community members in places where newly confirmed cases were reported by administering rapid tests to identify other potential cases. The technology is simple, making it suitable for use in all settings.

Anyone who tests positive and requires treatment is linked to their nearest health facility. In cases where patients are either experiencing mild symptoms or are asymptomatic, they are managed under home-based isolation and care, receiving infection prevention and control materials, including information on COVID-19 risk factors and prevention measures such as vaccination and handwashing.

"With testing in communities, we are reaching both the asymptomatic and symptomatic cases. That way we are undertaking timely isolation of confirmed cases leading to a break in the chain of transmission," explains Dr Monday Julius, the WHO team lead for health emergencies in Liberia.

The positive impact on vaccination uptake contributed to Liberia joining Mauritius, Rwanda, and Seychelles as the only four African countries to achieve the 70% global vaccination coverage target by December 2022.

Victoria Dekpah, a student at Nimba University in Liberia, was among those convinced to get vaccinated against COVID-19 when health workers visited her community.

"I didn't think it was important to test. Many people were afraid of knowing their status and what would happen to them. But after listening to the health worker, I volunteered to take the test and it turned out positive. I isolated myself at home and the health worker visited me regularly until I tested negative again. I also got vaccinated thereafter," she says.

Isaac Cole, County Surveillance Officer in Nimba, blames rampant misinformation surrounding COVID-19 for the reluctance among Liberians to

accept testing and vaccination. But working with local leaders who are trusted by their communities, he says, was the game changer in achieving results.

"The people now know that once they are tested and found to be positive, they will be under the care of either the health facility or through the home-based care approach. When we go to communities, health workers also lead by example by being vaccinated first, as one of the ways of dispelling myths about vaccination and its effect on the body," he adds.

WHO has supported 18 other African countries to implement COVID-19 community-based surveillance and response initiatives with guidance to use the lessons learnt in implementing this strategy for improving surveillance and response to other epidemic-prone diseases.



## Healthcare

Liberia Life Expectancy at **65** years

Male life expectancy: **63** years

Female life expectancy: **65** years

**53%** of health expenditures are out-of-pocket.

Only one out of two health facilities have achieved the WHO-recommended Health Service Availability and Readiness Assessment (SARA) benchmark.

Essential medicines for children are available in only one out of two health facilities.




## Education

Only **13%** of children aged **0-4** years attend early education programmes (Urban **19%**, Rural **9.8%**)

**44.3%** of primary school-aged children attend school.

**44.4%** completion of last grade of primary


**81.4%** effective transition rate from primary to lower secondary general education



## Education and Human Capital Development

### Development

Liberia presents some of the worst human capital outcomes in the world, with a Human Capital Index of only **0.32**, meaning a child born in Liberia today can expect to be only **32%** as productive when they grow up as they could have been with access to complete education and full health, according to the World Bank. Liberia is currently experiencing a regression in primary school enrolment and completion rates, with boys representing 33% and girls representing **36%**.



## Agriculture, Food Systems and Security

Liberia continues to suffer from food insecurity, which affects most of the country's households: nearly half (**47%**) of households are food insecure, **39%** are moderately food insecure, and **8%** are severely food insecure. A recent food security and market assessment conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) showed that rural households are more likely to have unacceptable food consumption patterns (**61%**) than urban ones (**44%**).

Expenditure on food is high, with 60% of household spending approximately **65%** of their income on food purchase and consumption, that has increased their vulnerability to food insecurity and extreme poverty. The assessment also found that 28% of Liberians have low dietary diversity (consuming less than four of the seven food groups) and **86%** of households rely heavily on cash to purchase food. The agricultural sector also lacks limited infrastructure, modern farming techniques, and vulnerability to climate change. Deforestation continues to be a major impediment to increased agricultural productivity which leads environmental issues. Agriculture remains the economic engine of Liberia which employs nearly 80% of the labour force, and significantly contributes to the GDP. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the agriculture sector, and especially female-headed households, 85.3% of which experience moderate to severe food insecurity. Furthermore, 70% of Liberia's staple food, rice, is imported to meet the country's needs, costing Liberia

an estimated US\$ 80 million annually. The reliance on imports to meet food needs is a growing risk to achieving Agenda 2030, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8.

Key drivers of food insecurity in Liberia are unsustainable livelihoods, infrastructure, low agricultural production and productivity, land constraints, gender inequalities, and inflation. Liberia's rich and vast forests informally augment livelihood and food security for many families, with the formal forest sector constituting the fourth largest contributor to Liberia's economy and contributing 10% of the GDP. The informal sector share is estimated to be larger and a key source of resilience at the household level. Leveraging Liberia's significant 'natural capital' sustainably will be critical

for continued recovery from COVID-19 and sustaining progress on SDGs. Reducing high food costs, with a focus on production, will be essential for progress on Agenda 2030.




## Nutrition

**29.8%** of children under 5 are stunted.

**3%** of children under 5 are acutely malnourished.

**11%** of children under 5 are underweight.



## Maternal and infant mortality

**37/1000** babies die in their first month of life.

**25/1000** babies survive their first month of life but die before their first birthday.

**63/1000** babies die during their first year of life

**93/1000** babies die before their fifth year of life.

**661/100,000** women having live births die due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

84.5 % of the population has access to improved drinking water.

15.4% of the population has access only to unimproved drinking water.

74.3% of the population has access to basic drinking water services.

10.3% of the population has limited access to drinking water services.

47.6% of residences have improved sanitation facilities.

17.6% of residences have unimproved sanitation facilities.

34.8% practice open defecation.

23.8% of the population have basic sanitation services.

23.0% of the population have limited sanitation services.

Children on a beach in Buchanan



## From Severe Malnutrition to a Healthy Life Learn how nutrition interventions are saving lives in Liberia

### Esther's Story

Esther's smile could light up a room as she giggled and cooed during her follow-up visit to the Ganta community clinic. At just nine months old, Esther had already faced significant health challenges, including severe acute malnutrition. Her grandfather, Wotoe Dahn, who works as a registrar at the clinic, explained that Esther's health had deteriorated rapidly until they sought help at the clinic.

With trained health workers and nutrition interventions in place, the clinic was able to diagnose and treat Esther's malnutrition. Screener Teewon Karnue noted that upon reaching the hospital, Esther was so weak and malnourished that many people in the community doubted that she would survive. However, Esther gradually gained strength and weight, eventually reaching a healthy 5 kg and being discharged from the program.

Unfortunately, Esther's relapse was a reminder that addressing malnutrition requires ongoing support and education. Mr. Karnue explained that Esther's grandparents, who were raising her after the loss of her mother and twin sister, were struggling to provide adequate complementary feeding due to their low income. However, with counselling and education from the clinic, Esther's grandparents learned to incorporate a variety of foods, including plantains, papayas, and eggs, into her diet. The clinic also provided micro-nutrient powder and vitamins to support Esther's nutritional needs.

Esther's story is just one example of the life-saving impact of nutrition interventions in Liberia, co-funded by Power of Nutrition and the Government of Ireland. Through UNICEF's partnership with Action Against Hunger and the Government of Liberia, these interventions are implemented at the county level to identify and treat malnourished children like Esther.

Mr. Dahn expressed gratitude for the support Esther received and emphasized the need for continued investment in local communities. "We don't have much here," he said, "but if we could get seed and tools to plant a garden and grow our food to feed children like Esther, it would really help." Esther's story is a reminder that addressing malnutrition requires ongoing support and investment, but the impact on children's lives can be truly transformative.



Mothers getting nutrition advice for babies at hospital

## Climate Change, Resilience and Adaptation

Liberia is home to 44.9% of the forest areas in the Upper Guinea Rainforest Region in West Africa, a highly biodiverse, carbon-dense, tropical rainforest with an equatorial climatic and spanning diverse topographical regions. Forests make up more than two-thirds of Liberia's land area and half the country's population lives within 2.5 km of a forest, which provides a significant portion of their subsistence, food, and income. However, Liberia remains fragile and highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. High reliance on climate-sensitive activities makes it vulnerable to climate variability, which manifests in higher temperatures, extreme weather events such as heavy rains, rising sea levels, and abrupt elevation changes in low mountains and plateaus. Despite progress towards promoting adaptation and climate resilience and urban and coastal defence interventions to mitigate rising sea levels, Liberia remains highly vulnerable to environmental instability due to its extreme poverty and high dependence on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, and mining. The rural economy largely depends on rain-fed subsistence farming, forest produce, and fishing.

In 2021, Liberia's annual deforestation rate was 0.31%, translating to the loss of 128,000 hectares of natural forest and highlighting the impact of forest cover loss on extreme poverty as people heavily rely on wood and charcoal for primary cooking fuel. Nearly 98% of the country's population uses one of the two, with – 43.8% of households using charcoal (overwhelmingly in urban areas) and 54% using wood (overwhelmingly in rural areas). The average annual charcoal expenditure per household is estimated to be US\$ 171, at 22%.

To mitigate Liberia's vulnerability to climate change and to build climate resilience, the UN supported the Government in revising its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). As a result, the Government has committed to reducing economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 64% below the projected business-as-usual level by 2030 by implementing climate-sensitive agriculture, fishery, and coastal defense initiatives critical to mitigating climate change and its impacts.

## Governance, Social Cohesion, and Reconciliation

Liberia has made tremendous progress in sustaining peace and maintaining development gains. However, the root causes of the civil war – including land disputes, corruption, political violence, inter/intra-community and ethnic tensions, and political tribalism – have remained insufficiently addressed by the Government. The 2021 Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) study revealed that from 2016 to 2021, Liberians have not perceived real change in their social and economic situations or realized an actual peace dividend. The SCORE assessed progress on enhancing good governance and sustaining peace, livelihood, security, and gender equality since the departure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) peacekeepers in 2018.

The SCORE 2021 findings identified rivalry and inter-group tensions among and between several communities and tribal groups undermining effective reconciliation, social cohesion, and peace building efforts across communities in Liberia. The peace-development nexus suggests that peaceful, democratic, and accountable institutions promote growth, employment, and prosperity and address the people's vulnerability to structural threats and insecurity.

## Gender-based Violence

The prevalence of FGM varies with age; as many as 60% of women aged 45-49 have undergone FGM, and 28% of women aged 15-17. It also varies between counties, ranging from 2% of women aged 15-49 having undergone FGM in River Gee County to 78% in Gbarpolu (DHS 2019-20)

Rape remains one of the highest reported crimes in Liberia.

78% of reported cases of GBV were sexual; of these, 70% were child survivors.

## Political Landscape and the 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections

While there have been efforts to promote liberal democracy in the post-war context, Liberia's political landscape remains characterized by several challenges, including political polarization, weak public institutions and rule of law, and corruption. Public trust and confidence in government institutions to deliver basic social services continue to be low.

However, the Presidential and Legislative elections held on 10 October and November 14, 2023, improved Liberia's democratic profile of peaceful elections and transfer of power from one democratically elected government to the next. While it is true that the elections took place in a complex political context and narratives, the 2023 election was a second peaceful election solely managed by the Liberian government which represents a milestone achievement towards deepening political stability, reflecting Liberians' strong expectations for peace dividends.

Furthermore, the UN and its development partners supported the Government's efforts to promote peacebuilding, and social cohesion and to strengthen peace infrastructures at all levels for peaceful co-existence and unity. Specifically, in this context, the UN provided technical and strategic policy advice to the National Elections Commission and political stakeholders to strengthen institutional capacity, support the inclusion of women and vulnerable groups, and promote peaceful, credible, inclusive, and transparent elections.



women at a dialogue for peaceful elections

## Young and seasoned female peace-builders in Liberia share experiences amid calls for peaceful elections

29 August 2023

Young and seasoned female peace-builders in Liberia gathered at the Monrovia City Hall on Friday, 25 August 2023, for an inter-generational dialogue to mark 20 years of peace in Liberia.

The dialogue was held in observance of the 20th Anniversary of the Accra Peace Agreement, signed on 18 August 2003, to end the second civil war in Liberia and to usher in a new era of peace.

Seasoned panelists Vaiba Flomo, Cecilia Danuweli, Dr. Evelyn Kandakai, and Baindu Saturday shared invaluable insights, reflections, and experiences on building and sustaining peace in Liberia. Alongside them, young peace-builders, Hawa Dunor Varney, Nusone Perkins, and Massa Dugulu, had the unique opportunity to engage and connect with the trailblazing women who were instrumental in securing peace two decades ago, fostering a meaningful exchange of experiences and insights.

Unity of purpose, resilience, communication, commitment, and prayer are some of the key strategies that helped the women of Liberia to bring about peace. Other essential aspects spotlighted during the dialogue included the importance of youth engagement, documenting contributions, and bolstering resilience.

One of the resounding messages that emerged from the discussions was to safeguard the hard-earned peace during the upcoming elections. Atty. Facia Harris and Vickjune Wutoh skilfully moderated insightful deliberations.

Christine Umutoni, UN Liberia Resident Coordinator, saluted the strong, indomitable, resilient, and ever-present women of Liberia who are the guardians of the hard-won peace.

As Liberia is heading for elections, Ms. Umutoni underscored the importance of holding peaceful elections. She appealed to all political party leaders and followers to commit to peaceful elections and uphold the principles of the Farmington declaration, including the commitment to fight violence against women.

Comfort Lamptey, UN Women Liberia Country Representative, applauded the women of Liberia for being trendsetters.

“Twenty years ago, Liberian women made history and won the admiration of women worldwide. They demonstrated that women, working together, in unity



women at a dialogue for peaceful elections

and determination, can accelerate a country’s march to peace,” said Ms. Lamptey.

Among other contributions, Liberian women paved the path to peace ushered in Africa’s first female president, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and continue to inspire the world through the Nobel Prize-winning achievements of Madam Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee. The inter-generational dialogue therefore served as an earnest tribute to the pivotal contribution of Liberian women.

Former President of Liberia, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as well as government ministers, officials, members of the diplomatic community, representatives from the United Nations, civil society organizations, women peace-builders in Liberia, and the media, among others, graced the occasion.

The Women’s Mass Action for Peace, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Centre (EJS), the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, UN Women, the Embassies of Ireland and Sweden joined hands to support this critical dialogue.

### SDGs Financial Landscape

The current financing context, characterized by a decline in the volume of public and private resources, presents several challenges and constraints towards total financing and implementation of the SDGs, the national development plan, and the 2030 Agenda. While Liberia’s economy experienced growth in real GDP terms by 5.2% in 2023, the fiscal space continues to decline, and the commercial sectors remain nascent. The informal sector, which accounts for a large proportion of economic activity and provides employment for 70% of the population, remains underdeveloped, and investors’ risk perceptions are high.

Attaining Agenda 2030 requires significant alignment of all resources and stakeholders, both internal and external, towards financing the SDGs. A recent Development Finance Assessment undertaken by the Government shows that 80% of public investment has been financed through

external sources, including grants and concessional loans made outside the national budget. The remaining 20% of capital spending is domestically funded through the Public Sector Investment Plan (PSIP). The assessment recommended adopting an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) to provide the Government with a structural platform for implementing more holistic and coherent approaches to planning and financing the SDGs. The government is yet to implement this recommendation.

Coupled with dwindling Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) flow, the limited capacity for domestic revenue collection and strategic development investments, particularly in infrastructure, are inadequate, due to high recurrent costs and off-the-budget spending. This in turn creates repeated problems in fiscal consolidation, thereby increasing contingent liabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation, further challenging the country’s ability to increase revenue collection and resource mobilization to meet its development targets. While domestic resource mobilization remains a challenge for the Government, the UN in Liberia continues to support SDGs achievement through the UNSDCF, and other transformational joint programmes aimed at leaving no one behind. In this context, the UN conducted a Rapid Food Security, Livelihood, Nutrition and Market Assessment in 2022, with support from the SDG Fund.

# CHAPTER 2.

## UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES THROUGH THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

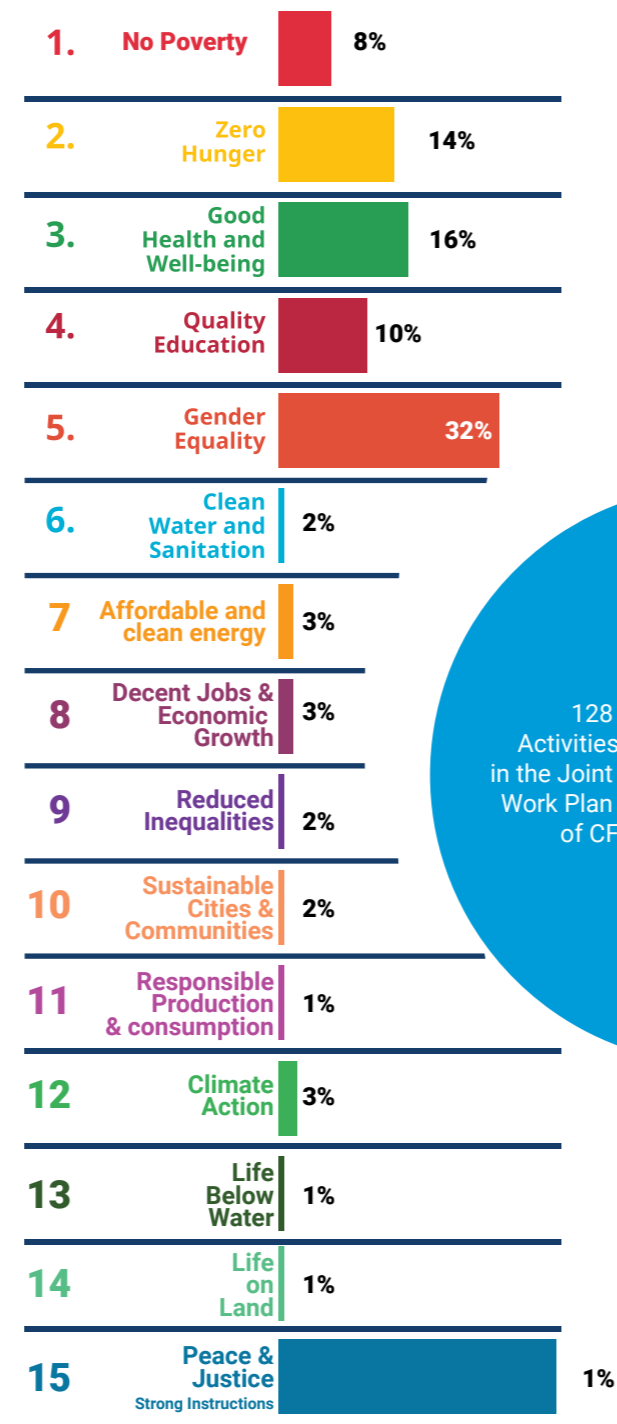
### 2.1. Overview of Cooperation Framework Results

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020- 2024 (UNSDCF, or Cooperation Framework) is aligned with Liberia’s national development plan – the Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) – and calls for “building more capable and trusted state institutions that will lead to a stable, resilient, and inclusive nation through sustained and inclusive economic growth driven by scaled-up investments in agriculture, infrastructure, human resource development, and social protection.”

The Cooperation Framework represents the UN Liberia’s collective offer of support to the Government of Liberia in implementing the SDGs. The framework guides the UN Country Team’s work and its collaboration to support the Government in transforming Liberia and sustaining peace and national reconciliation by addressing the root causes of the conflict and other fragilities.

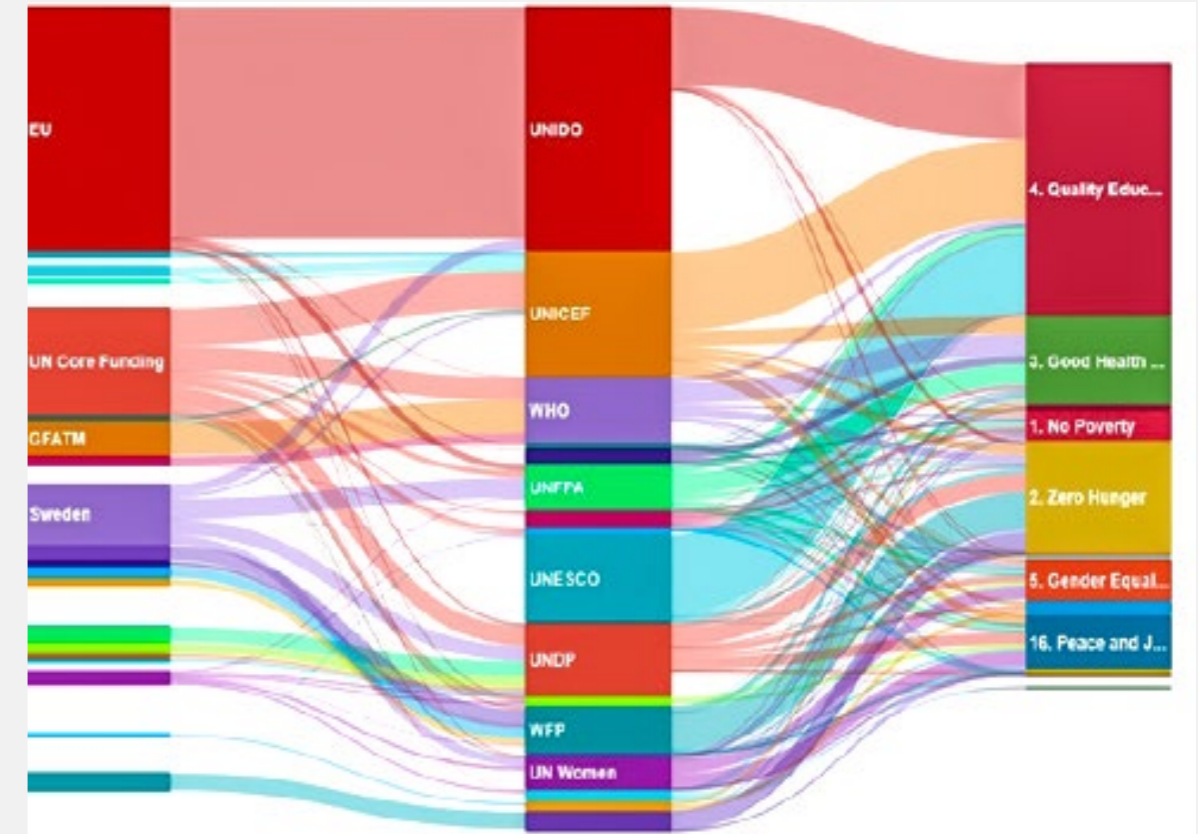
The UNSDCF has four strategic priority/outcome areas that correspond with the four pillars of the PAPD, linking each to specific SDG goals. These include: Human Development and Essential Social Services; Sustainable Economic Development; Sustaining Peace and Security ; and Governance and Transparency.

### Activities in the Joint Work Plan by SDGs



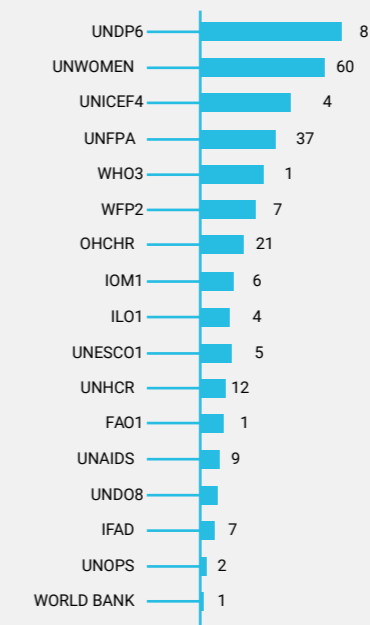
### Leveraging investments to advance the Sustainable Development Goals in Liberia

This graphic shows how UN funding is contributing to the work of different agencies and partners to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The width of the lines represents the relative amount of resources being contributed.

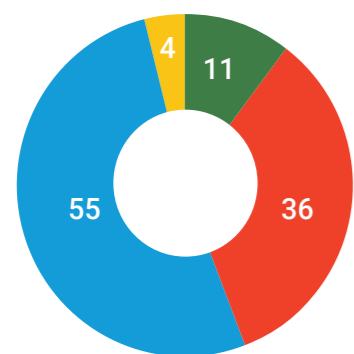


This chart displays the top 20 contributors in the left side. Source: <https://uninfo.org/location/127/funding>

### Number of Activities per Agency in Joint Work Plan

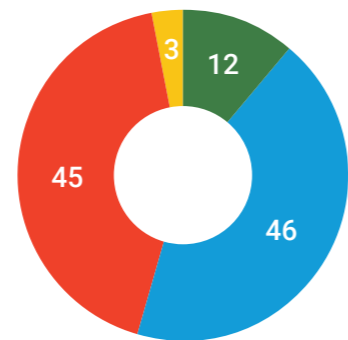


### Activities per Gender Equality Marker



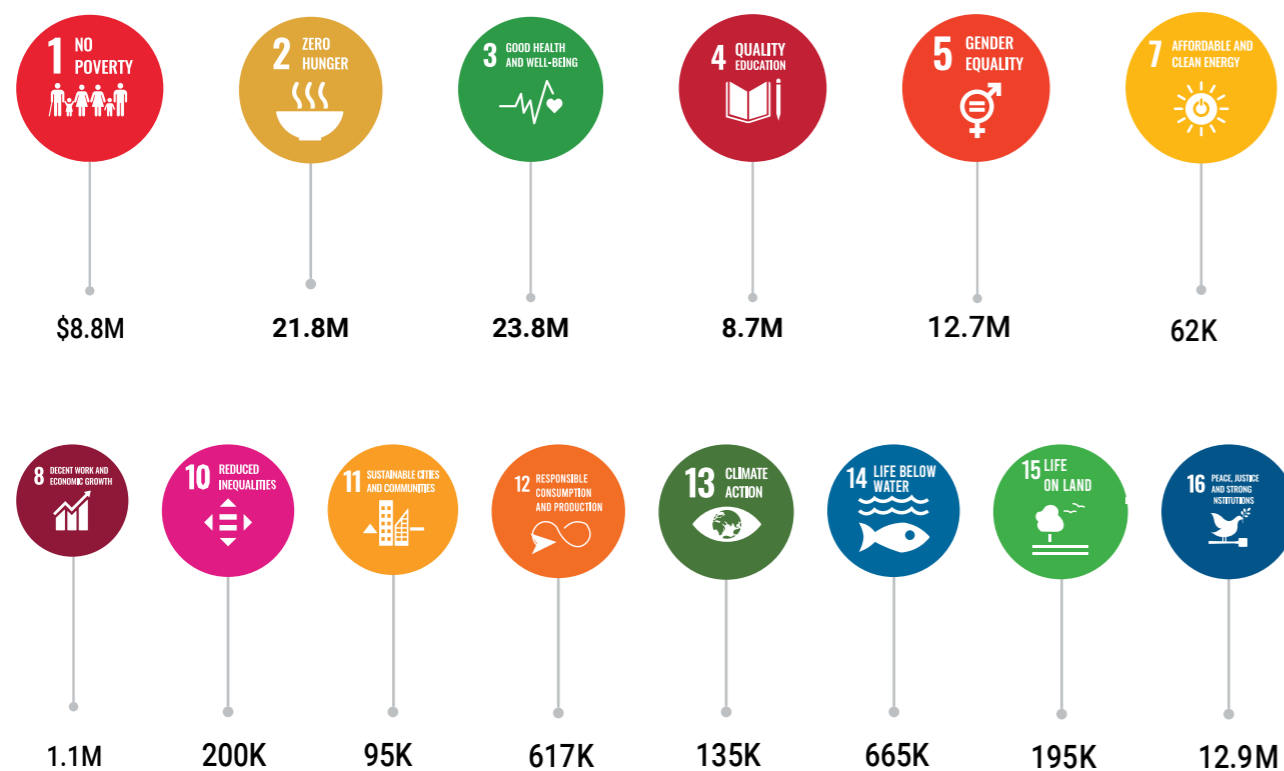
- 0. Not expected to contribute to gender equality/women's empowerment
- 1. Contributes to gender equality/women's empowerment in a limited way
- 2. Gender equality/women's empowerment is a significant objective
- 3. Gender equality/women's empowerment is the principal objective

### Activities per Human Rights Markers



- 0. Not expected to contribute to realization of human rights
- 1. Limited contribution to realization of human rights
- 2. Significant contribution to realization of human rights
- 3. Principal contribution is to the realization of human rights

### Overview of Financial Expenditure by SDGs



## 2.2 Cooperation Framework priorities, outcomes, and outputs

### Outcome 1:

#### Human Development and Essential Social Services

By 2024, the most vulnerable and excluded groups have improved their quality of life with rights-based, gender-sensitive, inclusive, equitable access and utilization of essential social services in an environment free of discrimination and violence, including humanitarian situations.

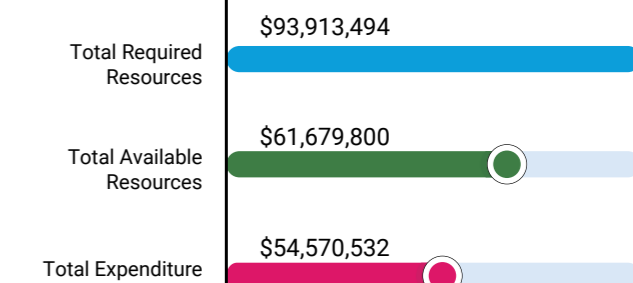
In 2023, capacity of key government institutions was strengthened by the UN system that led to the development of relevant laws, policies, and organizational reforms for increased access to essential social services, including effective and affordable justice and legal aid services, enhanced access to food security and sustainable livelihoods, healthcare, and educational services, particularly to vulnerable populations, such as people living with disabilities, HIV/AIDs, etc.

### Output 1.1:

Institutions are strengthened to develop and implement policies, laws, and strategies that promote human rights and equitable social services and norms.

Several UN agencies, including WHO, UNICEF, ILO, UNAIDS, UN Women, and UNFPA, have actively collaborated to address diverse challenges in Liberia. These collaborative efforts across various sectors underscore UN's System commitment to addressing multifaceted challenges in Liberia, ranging from health and nutrition to labour rights, child protection, and reproductive health. The UN support improved the policy and regulatory environment and increased access to essential health, education, protection, justice, and social services, especially for vulnerable populations. In addition, the UN improved Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) governance and policy to deliver demand-driven and industry-responsive TVET education for the youthful population of Liberia.

### Contributing Agencies: WHO, UNICEF, ILO, UNAIDS, UN Women, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNOPS, UNIDO, UNDP, UNHCR, OHCHR, WFP, IOM



## The Youth Rising Project- helping to promote women & girls in the fields of STEM and TVET

20 March 2023

Finding women in male-dominated fields in Liberia is challenging.

However, as part of the Youth Rising project's goals to increase female participation, we are thrilled to share the inspiring story of Josephine Wata Sama-Roberts on this International Women's Day. Josephine is a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Power Electrical Teacher Trainee, sponsored by the European Union and the Government of Sweden, studying at the Mopani Central Training Centre.

We celebrate Josephine Wata Sama-Roberts and every other woman who is working to increase the representation of women in STEM and TVET fields. These women serve as role models and encourage other women and girls to pursue technical courses, ultimately leading to increased gender equality and economic empowerment.

On this International Women's Day and in line with the global theme "Innovating with Technology to promote gender equality", let us celebrate the achievements of women like Josephine Wata Sama-Roberts, and commit to furthering the progress of women in all areas of society. Happy International Women's Day!

The Youth Rising Project is funded by the European Union and the Government of Sweden, implemented by UNIDO in Liberia.

This story is part of a series from the UNGC in Liberia in commemoration of IWD and Women's Month.

Liberia's first-ever national multisectoral nutrition costed strategic plan (LMNCSP) was developed and validated by the Ministry of Health with technical and financial support from the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, FAO, WFP, UNFPA, Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance of Liberia (SUN SCAL) Initiative, and Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA). The strategic plan provides the policy and operational framework to address the complex challenges of malnutrition in Liberia through the acceleration of nutrition-specific and sensitive interventions. This support has accelerated the implementation of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) to two additional county hospitals, such as Liberia Government Hospital in Grand Bassa and Chief Jallahlone Hospital (Gbarpolu). This initiative has accelerated the promotion of both exclusive and continuing breastfeeding practices at these hospitals.

The capacity of the Ministry of Health (MOH)

was strengthened to develop the new National Immunization Strategic Plan (NIS), which replaced the earlier CMYP. The NIS serves as a comprehensive guide for immunization programming under the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) in Liberia, operating at both national and sub-national levels. As a result, Penta 3 coverage has increased from 78% to 86%, and Measles vaccination coverage from 79% to 82% through the delivery of vaccines to children under five years. The National Multisectoral Costed Plan of Action for Nutrition (NMCPAN) was developed to reduce stunting and improve dietary diversity and exclusive breastfeeding.

A significant portion of Liberia's population lives below the poverty line, leading to limited access to healthcare, nutritious food, and safe housing, and half of Liberians (50.9%) are living in abject poverty; 39.1% are experiencing food poverty and 16.5% extreme poverty, according to the Liberia Household Income Expenditure Survey (HIES, 2016). Unemployment and poverty have a significant bearing on households' access to necessary health services and the high cost of healthcare services. To reduce healthcare access inequality and deprivation, WHO, UNAIDS, UN Women, and partners supported the Ministry of Health (MOH) in conducting the inaugural health equity and social determinants assessment in 2023 which revealed significant inequalities and deprivation in healthcare access and utilization between different sub-groups of the population. This assessment aimed to evaluate the extent of inequality and deprivation within the health sector, encompassing social determinants of health, and informs policy and programmes to address the inequality in healthcare access and service delivery.

In the Government's effort to effectively deliver essential healthcare services, it revised the Essential Medicines List, National Standard Treatment Guidelines, Procurement and Supply Chain Master Plan, COVID-19 Case Management Handbook, Guidelines for Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Health Services Planning Guidelines, National Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Guidelines, WASH Roadmap, Maternal Newborn Quality of Care Improvement Action Plan, Malaria/TB/HIV Strategies, TB Treatments Guidelines and Training platforms, the curriculum for Registered Nurse and Midwives, National Health Promotion Policy and Strategic Plan.

In 2023, 14 standard nutrition indicators and 5 community health standard indicators were integrated into the DHIS2 and Community-Based Information System (CBIS) program at the Ministry of Health with support from UNICEF. This initiative has improved the standard and quality of nutrition data reporting at the community and national level.

Furthermore, with support from UNICEF, the MOH developed the National Community Health Policy

(2022–2023) and the National Community Health Strategy (2023–2027) which were launched at the 2023 Community Health Workers Symposium held development of the Child Survival Strategy and Action Plan (CSSAP 2024–2028) to improve quality of care for Newborn and Children and reduce the prevalence of newborn mortality and under-5 mortality rates in Liberia.

Digitization of healthcare services is a core interest of the Government of Liberia to accelerate enhanced access to health services across the country. To achieve this milestone, the Digital Health Policy was developed by the MOH with technical support from UNICEF, which has harmonized the digital landscape in the health sector for improved access and service delivery in real-time. Following the piloting of this digital innovation, the Ministry of Health will scale up the tool to other health facilities across the country.

The Ministry of Health with support from UNAIDS,

WHO, and UNFPA conducted a Mid-Term Review of Liberia's HIV and AIDS National Strategic Plan II, which resulted in the development of a comprehensive three-year Operational Plan that provides a framework for the allocation and implementation of the New Global Fund grant for Liberia (GC 7). These plans provide the enabling operational environment and policies to improve overall healthcare delivery and outcomes and increase access to essential health services.

Advocacy for the passage of the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights Bill was advanced significantly last year with support from UNFPA in collaboration with the House of Representatives and Senate. In addition, UNFPA supported the development and revision of the reproductive health strategy and supported the Government in finalizing Liberia's FP2030 Commitment and a five-year costed implementation plan (FPCIP) for family planning services. The FPCIP serves as the operational framework guiding the government's FP2030 Commitment which contributed to a new business case for family planning in Liberia, demonstrating a clear return on investment by 2030. The business case for family planning provides a clear justification for investment in FP and return on investment by 2030 for US\$10.3 million for the full implementation of the new FP 2030 commitment. As a result of these increased incremental investments in FP, Liberia's returns will potentially reach up to US\$13.4 million by 2030.

For improved maternal healthcare, the costed implementation strategy for Obstetric Fistula was developed and the first comprehensive review of the maternal perinatal and newborn death surveillance and response system (MPNDSR) was conducted through the technical and financial support of UNFPA. These interventions have improved the quality of care for women and girls receiving delivery or childbirth services, particularly those who experience obstetric fistula complications during childbirth, and the quality-of-care data collection and analysis maternal healthcare sector will be enhanced.

Primary education enrolment rate has jumped from 41.8 percent in 2020 to 43.7 percent, as reported by EMIS in 2022, which reflects the ongoing commitment and support of the UN system in Liberia to support the Government to achieve its national and global education agenda and SDGs, particularly SDG4 by ensuring that a significant proportion of children, particularly in primary education, have the opportunity to access and benefit from quality learning experiences and outcomes.

To further accelerate the implementation of the new Education Sector Plan for 2022-2027, UNICEF and UNESCO forged strategic partnerships with the Partnerships for Global Education (GPE) consummating a partnership compact that

prioritized the provision of foundational teachings and learning that has improved proficiency in literacy and numeracy by grade 3. Through such a strategic partnership, the GPE will provide a grant and multiplier fund to strengthen the educational system with a focus on quality education. Through high-level advocacy and engagements by the UN Country Team in Liberia, the GPE Partnership Compact of foundational learning will support 200 schools to improve the quality of service which will be determined through annual national learning assessments. In 2023, a pilot assessment was conducted for Grades 3 and Grade 6, as a baseline to inform the development and roll-out of the foundational learning program in 2024.

Child protection and access to justice for children in conflict and contact with the law remains a challenge within the justice system of Liberia. In 2023, a significant effort was made to bolster Liberia's child protection system by strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Justice's Children Protection Division, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSPP), the Judiciary (Juvenile Court), Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR), Ministry of Health, and the Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberia National Police to deliver effective juvenile justice and psychosocial services to children who come in conflict and contact with the law. In addition to institutional capacity strengthening, UNICEF supported the revision of the alternative care guidelines, developed a national strategic plan for strengthening the social service workforce, and the implementation of the National Child Justice Strategy.

Furthermore, the implementation of the child protection case management SOPs and advocacy

campaign against violence on children were supported leading to improved access to protection services for children in conflict and contact with the law. Moreover, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights was capacitated leading to the drafting and submission of Liberia's long-delayed 5th to 7th report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the relevant human rights committee. These interventions have improved monitoring and reporting mechanisms on child rights violations and enabled Liberia to develop and submit its much talked about 15-year delayed report on the Conventions on the Rights of the Child to the relevant human rights bodies in 2023.

Liberia's Chambers of Commerce capacity was strengthened leading to the development of its Strategic Plan (2023-2026) that will promote private sector participation in the economy and creation of industry demand-driven jobs especially for the youthful population. Implementation of the plan will strengthen the private sector ecosystem to deliver high-quality services to the business community at both national and local levels. In addition, the capacity of tripartite partners and other key stakeholders was strengthened to advocate for improved international labour standards, labour rights, and quality reporting on ratified conventions implemented for improved private and public sectors in Liberia.



**Output 1.2:**

The capacity of national and sub-national institutions to provide quality, equitable, inclusive, and decentralized social services is enhanced.

## Access to sexual and reproductive health services gives hope to adolescent girls in Liberia

23 March 2023

**Greenville, Liberia** - "I have come to understand that having unprotected sex has serious consequences, including unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. I also know that getting pregnant early will rob me of my future goals and aspirations," says Vistina.

Vistina, aged 17, resides in Greenville, Sinoe County, Southeast Liberia. She is a Grade 11 student and Health Club member at Sinoe Multilateral High School. According to her, through membership in the School Health Club, she gained the information and agency to make informed decisions about her sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### Empowered to make choices

"I have set my future goals and aspirations, which I don't want unplanned pregnancy to delay or rob me of. I am having sex, so the only way to avoid getting pregnant is through family planning [contraceptives], which I am doing," says Vistina.

While Vistina has been able to avoid unplanned pregnancy, some of her peers in Greenville, including Christiana, could not.

"I am not in school now because of pregnancy. I had to drop out of school last year [2022] as my parents asked me out of their house when they realized I was pregnant. As God would have it, I delivered in December," Christiana said.

According to Christiana, she plans to return to school at the beginning of the next academic year, in September. But she is already taking steps to avoid the same situation befalling her again. "On this day, I went to visit a friend. Upon arrival, I met a woman explaining life skills education and family planning. I was interested in the discussion and asked how to get additional information. She invited me to one of her community meetings. The lessons I learned during my first attendance at the community meeting encouraged me to begin taking contraceptives and join the group as a peer educator," Christiana recounted.

Unplanned and early pregnancy remains one

the main factors jeopardizing the rights, health, education, and potential of the Girl Child in Liberia as 30 percent of young women aged 15-19 are already mothers or are pregnant with their first child. Girls with little or no education are at the worst end of the teenage pregnancy rate in Liberia, as 47 percent have begun childbearing, compared with 20 percent of those who attended senior high school.

### Impactful Intervention

In 2017, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, and the Government of Liberia, with funding from the Embassy of Sweden, began the expansion of efforts to ensure that adolescents and young people have access to age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services, especially in Southeastern Liberia, the region which until the start of the intervention, had an average teenage pregnancy rate of 49 percent as compared to the national rate of 31 percent.

But five years on, it has been observed that the "Universal Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme" in the five south-eastern counties, including Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee, and Sinoe counties, has been impactful and has contributed to nearly a 50 percent reduction in teenage pregnancy in these counties which is also a significant contributing factor to the lowering of maternal and newborn deaths in the five counties.

The Programme provides adolescents and young people access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services to prevent unplanned pregnancies. It uses a three-pronged approach, including schools, communities, and health facilities, to reach adolescents and young people with sexual reproductive and rights information and services, including family planning.

The school-level intervention includes the provision of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) at select schools by trained teachers and sexual and reproductive health information by peer educators through School Health Clubs. The School Health Clubs team members are mentored to provide sexual reproductive and rights information in schools to adolescents and young people, distribute condoms and refer their peers to the nearest YFC for services.

The community-level intervention works with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to reach out to out-of-school adolescents and young people with SRHR information and services.

At the health facilities are youth-friendly corners/centers where adolescents and young people access services, including family planning, treatment of STIs, HIV counseling and testing, and post-abortion care.

The UN development system in Liberia assisted the Government in strengthening health systems and services, livelihoods, and reproductive health rights. Additionally, progress was made toward decentralizing service delivery while promoting access to human rights and essential social services.

- In 2023, a total of 128,598 youths (male-37,905, females-90,693) in-school settings in ten counties were beneficiaries of sexuality education, including family planning, HIV counselling and testing, antenatal and delivery care services, STI management and treatment. They were also equipped with knowledge on post-abortion care services, GBV counselling and referral, emergency-obstetric care services, menstrual hygiene management services through 56 youth-friendly centres and corners across the affected counties. Additionally, 1105 out-of-school youths also benefited from sex education in Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Maryland, Grand Kru, and Sinoe. In addition, the Liberian Youth Voices for Accelerating Democracy ICPD (L-YV-4-ICPD) comprising of 45 youth-led and adolescent organizations and networks acted as a platform for advocating for policy

transformation and youth participation in decision-making processes related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), bodily autonomy, and various international commitments, including those related to public health, youth policies, and the sustainable development goals. The sexuality education intervention has changed sexuality behaviour and practices across communities and schools in the five counties and schools affected. The youth networks programme has advanced youth participation and leadership in national decision-making processes. This program elevated the voices of youths and participation in advocacy for the passage of the revised National Public Health Law, development of the National Youth Policy and Action Plan; periodic reviews of Liberia's Commitments for Adolescent and Youth Wellbeing in the SDGs, Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development, National Family Planning 2030 commitments, National ICPD@25 Commitments, the Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration, the Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies & Programmes, the Compact for Engaging Young People in Humanitarian Action,



Young girls at a Youth friendly center in Rivercess County

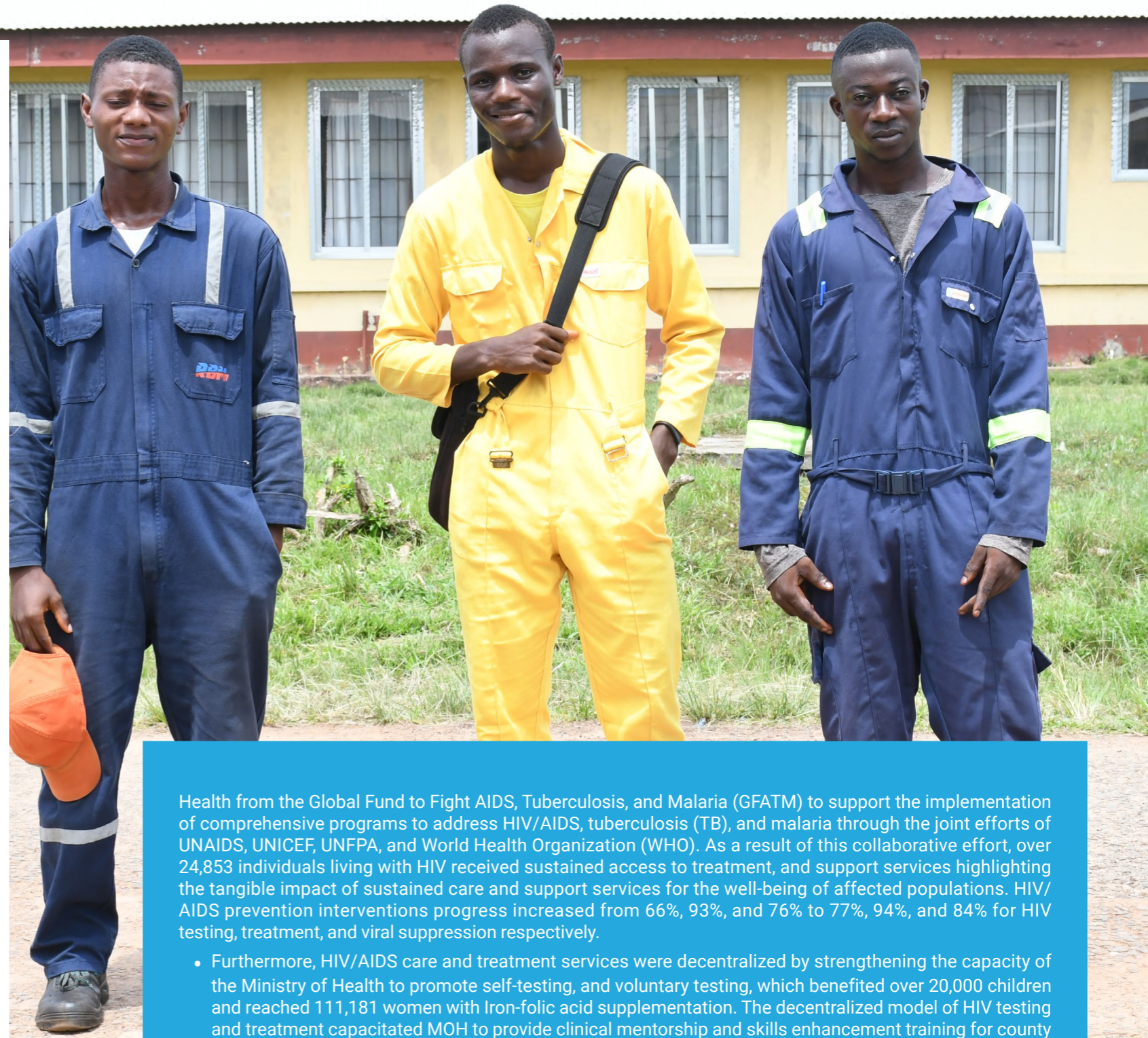


the Youth 2030 and the UN Youth Strategy.

- 10 TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) teachers received advanced training in Finland, and 46 teachers who received pedagogical training in Liberia are now delivering effective TVET education and training services across the country. Another 49 teachers are currently undergoing training in various areas of TVET education across Africa which will increase the number of teachers in the TVET sector of Liberia. Moreover, 3,000 teachers received training at various Teacher Training Institutes in Liberia for advanced professional development to effectively implement the national CPD program. Likewise, 150 at-risk adolescents (35 boys, and 115 girls) are enrolled in technical and vocational skills training programs with support from UNIDO and UNICEF to acquire employment skills and empowerment. Additionally, 100 TVET teachers and administrators' knowledge was improved on gender-sensitive and inclusion education.
- 12 TVET curricula were developed and validated by the government with strong private sector involvement, which will improve the standard of TVET education and management. More importantly, seven (7) TVET infrastructures/institutions
- The majority of the Liberian population has limited access to basic drinking water, especially in slum communities and rural areas in Liberia. To address the water crisis and increase access to safe drinking water, the UN strengthened the capacity of WASH sector institutions to deliver quality WASH services and to ensure sustainable access to water and sanitation services across the country. As such, the WASH Commission and other partners' capacity was supported to conduct a Joint WASH Sector Review (JSR), and the Sector Performance Report was developed which integrated climate-resilient development into WASH sector plans. With support from UNICEF and WHO, the Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (WSSP 2023-2027) was developed and validated to create the enabling policy and regulatory environment for water supply governance.
- A needs assessment for adolescent-friendly services was conducted which led to a provision of training for health professionals to effectively apply protocols for Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (SRMNCAH) continuum of care, leading to improved clinical management for pregnant women and newborns in Liberia. In addition, an online TB case management platform was developed that expanded the integrated HIV and TB treatment to align with the 95-95-95 targets for people living with HIV.
- The School Feeding Programme implemented by WFP and partners has significantly improved

educational outcomes for school-going children and enhanced nutritional intakes for poor households that benefited over 70,260 public primary school children in 289 schools in four counties (Bong, Maryland, Montserrado, and Nimba). In addition, 3,700 school children from vulnerable households received cash transfers as take-home rations that addressed the immediate needs of food and nutrition security. The daily school meals and monthly cash rations also helped families meet additional expenses like textbooks and uniforms. The impact of the School Feeding Programme extended beyond immediate food assistance, by supporting Home-Grown School Feeding initiatives that strengthened the government's capacity to manage hunger solutions. Additionally, social behaviour change communication activities were conducted that improved the nutritional status of vulnerable populations. Furthermore, schoolteachers and out-of-school women were trained in literacy, numeracy, and vegetable production which substantively addressed the educational, nutritional, and livelihood needs and challenges of people in targeted communities. Moreover, 20 schoolteachers in Bong and Montserrado enhanced their capacity in the provision of alternative learning for out-of-school women with 200 rural women received five months of training in literacy and numeracy and vegetable production which improved their skills for alternative livelihoods, and reduced their vulnerability to food insecurity.

- Despite efforts made in the past years to improve the social protection system in Liberia, many challenges remained unaddressed to protect poor households and vulnerable groups against shocks as a result of economic downturns and health pandemics. In 2023, considerable progress was made to establish social safety nets, through the implementation of cash transfer and Social Cash Transfer Program (SCTP) programs. Hence, effective social protection schemes were established to protect the most vulnerable groups and households against extreme shocks and vulnerabilities. However, access to healthcare, income security, nutrition, and educational services remains a major challenge for many Liberians, especially for children from poor homes and persons living with disabilities. In 2023, the UN and its partners undertook transformational efforts to reduce acute and chronic malnutrition, particularly among children through school feeding programmes and other social protection floor interventions. This was achieved by supporting the government to review and revise the national social protection policy to position the country to reduce poverty and lift many households out of the poverty threshold.



Health from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM) to support the implementation of comprehensive programs to address HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria through the joint efforts of UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA, and World Health Organization (WHO). As a result of this collaborative effort, over 24,853 individuals living with HIV received sustained access to treatment, and support services highlighting the tangible impact of sustained care and support services for the well-being of affected populations. HIV/AIDS prevention interventions progress increased from 66%, 93%, and 76% to 77%, 94%, and 84% for HIV testing, treatment, and viral suppression respectively.

- Furthermore, HIV/AIDS care and treatment services were decentralized by strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Health to promote self-testing, and voluntary testing, which benefited over 20,000 children and reached 111,181 women with Iron-folic acid supplementation. The decentralized model of HIV testing and treatment capacitated MOH to provide clinical mentorship and skills enhancement training for county healthcare providers thereby accelerating community awareness and access to testing and treatment services.
- In addition, an Online Training Platform for the National Tuberculosis Program was developed thereby leading to increased access of TB service providers to a seamless training tool. This has enhanced the capacity of laboratory, clinical, and managerial staff and improved quality of TB-HIV collaborative services. It has also improved average testing rates for Early Infant Diagnosis, Viral Load, and turn-around time by more than 50%.
- In acceleration of integrated healthcare, more than 107,000 youths, adolescents, and women received effective sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services through various centers in the 15 counties. In addition, UNICEF supported social safety nets initiatives that focused on cash transfer under the Social Cash Transfer Program (SCTP) which has enhanced social protection for vulnerable and marginalized populations and enabled to address healthcare and food security needs.

- Although maternal mortality rates showed little change in 2023, the support by the UN saw an increment in skilled birth deliveries through the strengthening of Maternal Death Surveillance and Response (MDSR) mechanisms. The Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) oxygen plant constructed in Bong County benefited 571,960 women and children across six (6) counties by ensuring the availability of oxygen for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) needs and other emergencies. In addition, some 20,180 (10,785 females; 9,395 males) children received SAM treatment and other services.

The Ministry of Education capacity was also enhanced to develop its Girls' Education Strategy 2023 which resulted in the enrolment of 150 at-risk adolescents in technical and vocational skills training programs. In furtherance to implementing the girl's education strategy, Gender Peer Clubs were established in schools and peers' educators trained to promote peer education on sexual and reproductive health and preventing school-based gender-based violence. The modelling of gender-responsive packages was implemented in 200 model schools in 11 counties that addressed gender-based violence, menstrual hygiene, and WASH issues. The Adolescent Girls Education Project also supported 17 non-formal alternative learning centers and the knowledge of TVET teachers were increased on gender inclusion issues to promote a safer learning environment. The modelling of gender-responsive packages that address gender-based violence, menstrual hygiene, and WASH is being implemented in 200 model schools in 11 counties.

- Safe homes and one-stop centers in various counties were supported to provide effective health, psychosocial, legal, and protection services to child survivors of rape and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Lofa, Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Cape Mount, Montserrado, River Cess, Margibi, and Bong counties. These one-stop centres which are housed in health facilities provided effective integrated health, psychosocial, legal, and protection services to child survivors of rape and SGBV.
- In addition, 27 health facilities across 10 counties received integrated SGBV/SRHR services, and psychosocial services that had enhanced child protection services. As a result, about 5,583 children, consisting of 1,015 boys and 4,568 girls, benefited from multisectoral child protection services encompassing social work, child justice, and various case management interventions.

- The capacity of health workers in refugee-hosting communities was enhanced and strengthened by providing stipends and the government has been able to place nine of these health workers on the government payroll. This intervention has increased skilled deliveries in refugee-host communities from 110,578 in 2022 to 118,735 in 2023, thereby strengthening Maternal Death Surveillance and Response (MDSR) at the national level. In 2023, the UN supported the government in procuring 1.5 million assorted reproductive health commodities, maternal health drugs, and medical equipment, and improved inventory management in several counties, to ensure last-mile delivery in hard-to-reach areas. In addition, UNFPA procured more than 300,000 worth of life-saving maternal health drugs, essential drugs, medical equipment for specialist youth-friendly centers, EmONC facilities, and general maternal health services which benefited 700 health facilities in seven counties, including Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Rivercess, Sinoe, Maryland, Grand Kru, and Rivercess Counties.

- The support to essential health services, including procurement and supply of critical medical equipment, and vaccines, led to increased vaccine coverage, and efficiency in health service delivery. Further, the capacity of MOH was enhanced through effective drug handling and management of the Central Medical Store. These interventions also bridged the gap in timely product delivery between hard-to-reach and easy-to-reach facilities and effectively addressed the challenge of stock out of products for over 25,000 beneficiaries in affected communities.
- The capacity of MOH was strengthened with the donation of thirteen (13) vehicles (pick-ups, buses, and SUVs) that have enhanced routine monitoring of immunization and health surveillance and enhanced coordination and planning within the Ministry of Health and at sub-national.

Students on their way to school in Buchanan

## UN in Liberia Lauds NACCEL for FGM ban in Montserrado County

Feb 6, 2023

The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) has been permanently banned in Liberia following a proclamation by the Chairperson of the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia (NACCEL), Chief Zanzan Karwor during the commemoration of the International Day of Zero Tolerance against FGM in Sonkay Town, Montserrado County on 6 February, 2023.

Declaring the ban, Chief Karwor said, "On behalf of my people, by the power vested in me, as Chairman of all the traditional Chiefs in 15 Counties, FGM is banned in this country." He also called on Chiefs and Elders to share the message around the country.

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Massa Kandakai, Head Zoe (traditional practitioner) for Montserrado County, accepted Chief Karwor's pronouncement to end FGM. She disclosed that all her Zoes have abandoned their tools and were ready for a new lease of life. "Once our Chief has ordered us to stop, we accept the ban on FGM and we will not do it," said Ms. Kandakai.

Ahead of the ban, traditional leaders conducted a traditional ceremony where all FGM practitioners returned the tools and permits they used to practice FGM. The rituals necessitated them to effect the ban. Similar remedial ceremonies will be performed in the remaining 10 FGM practising Counties to ensure that FGM is totally eliminated in the whole country.

Several pronouncements have been previously made by NACCEL in an effort to eliminate FGM in Liberia. These include the Ganta Declaration to suspend FGM for one year in 2019 and a further three-year ban from 2022 to 2025. The latest pronouncement by Chief Karwor in Sonkay Town is the most emphatic as it is calling for a permanent and not a temporary ban.

UN Women Goodwill Ambassador on FGM and child marriage, Jaha Dukureh, reiterated Liberia's progress on the fight against FGM, adding that Liberia is no longer focused on suspension of FGM for three years but on banning it. Ambassador Dukureh, a stalwart in the fight against FGM, congratulated the females zones "for standing up for the rights of African women by freely accepting to prohibit FGM."



Traditional women turn over tools previously used during FGM

the landmark decision to end FGM. The Head of the European Union Delegation to Liberia, Ambassador Laurent Delahousse said, "If I were a little girl born in Africa, I would be happy today. Happy as all the little girls of Montserrado County because today marks the entry of your beautiful county into a new era, the era when modernity is reconciled with tradition, the era of initiation without mutilation."

Furthermore, the Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard Taylor commended Chief Zanzan Karwor, traditional leaders, Ambassadors, UN, and friends of Liberia for the achievements. She appealed to development partners to help furnish the vocational and heritage center in Montserrado County where the event was held.

Through the United Nations, European Union and Government of Liberia Spotlight Initiative, UN Women established four vocational and heritage centres in four Counties, namely Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa and Nimba to provide alternative

economic livelihood programs to traditional practitioners as part of interventions to eliminate FGM in Liberia. The centres will serve as dedicated learning centres for traditional practitioners and young women and girls to acquire new livelihood skills.

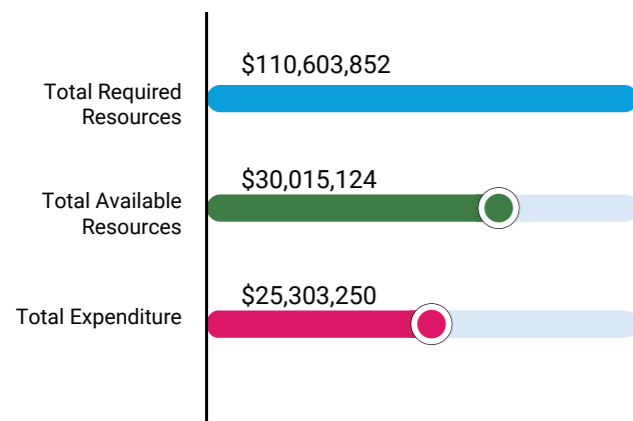
UN Women Liberia Country Representative, Ms. Comfort Lamptey, read the UN Secretary-General's message in observance of the International Day of Zero Tolerance against FGM in which, the SG called on all "men and boys everywhere to join in speaking out and stepping forward to end FGM for the benefit of all."

The United Nations and European Union have been supporting the Government of Liberia to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls including harmful practices such as FGM through the Spotlight Initiative.

## Outcome 2: Sustainable Economic Development

By 2024, Liberia has sustained, diversified, and enabled inclusive economic growth driven by investments in agriculture, food security, and job creation, and is resilient to climate change and natural disasters.

**Contributing Agencies:** FAO, UNDP, IFAD, WFP, IOM, WB, ILO



### Output 2.1:

By 2024, targeted national institutions can develop an evidence-based, cross-sectoral, and gender-responsive policy framework and accountability mechanisms that promote sustainable livelihoods, food security, and resilience to climate change.

The UN support enabled the Government to carry out strategic policy reforms that promote sustainable climate-resilient agriculture to enhance food production and access to sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable populations and rural farmers. While most of the population is still food insecure, the UN empowered relevant institutions and rural smallholder farmers, including women farmers to increase food, vegetable, and fishery production. The UN also supported the rehabilitation of farms-to-market roads to promote high-value chain systems, as well as improving the management of natural resources to

reduce the impact of climate change and vulnerability on agriculture and vulnerable communities.

- In 2023, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) supported the Ministry of Agriculture to effectively implement the Targeted Cocoa Extension Project (TCEP&TCEP-II), and the Building Climate Resilient Project (BCRP). As a result of these interventions, 18,953 smallholder farmers' households were supported in cocoa production, with TCEP accounting for 4,089 beneficiaries, TCEP-II for 5,333, and BCRP for 1,944. Out of these numbers, 9,422 farmers' households benefited from replacement programs, while 1,944 were
- new beneficiaries under the BCRP. 31% of the cocoa farmers supported were females while 32% represented youths.
- Furthermore, climate-resilient agricultural and livelihood initiatives that were enhanced led to the cultivation of 10,483.88 hectares of land using climate-resilient practices for improved cocoa production. In addition, the Farmers' Field School programme enhanced the knowledge of 95 Lead Farmers in nutrition training and trained Lead Farmers and smallholder farmers in the project communities. Moreover, 5,627 agricultural inputs were distributed to smallholder farmers to boost sustainable livelihoods and address food security concerns. Nutrition training was provided to 95 farmers in project counties.
- Additionally, IFAD in collaboration with the MOA and partners conducted a gender gap assessment that informed the formulation of a gender action plan and gender financial inclusion in agriculture programs which is currently being implemented across the Ministry of Agriculture's Programmes. To accelerate the implementation of the agriculture-related gender action plan, the Women Symposium on Agriculture was organized by MOA in 2023 with support from IFAD which served as a pivotal platform for advancing agricultural development, particularly for women farmers and other vulnerable populations across the country.
- To identify diverse livelihood opportunities for viable alternatives to safeguarding the biodiversity of forestry landscapes in Liberia, FAO conducted a comprehensive Agrarian Systems Analysis and diagnosis in the Northwest and Southeastern Forestry Priority areas covering fourteen communities situated near the protected forest areas.
- The capacity of Ministry of Education staff was strengthened by WFP to review the national school feeding policy and advocate for the incorporation of a budget allocation in the national budget for school feeding initiatives.



Market woman selling her products in Zwedru Market

• In relation to natural resources management and livelihoods for farmer household heads, there has been significant progress made. In this regard, 150 households experienced enhanced natural resource management through agroforestry, training, and the provision of farm inputs. This initiative specifically focuses on the development of lowland rice using the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), enabling rice production in under three months, and delivering immediate and short-term livelihood benefits. Under the long-term cocoa scheme, a 'proof of concept' has been established thereby demonstrating that communities reliant on forests can coexist harmoniously with forest ecosystems, with the provision of viable alternatives for income generation. Following the launch of this initiative in 2023, over 500 farmers heads of households have had increased

access to sustainable livelihood and income opportunities, which is expected to double in the coming years.

- Moreover, the lives of 1,200 female farmers in Lofa, Bong, and Nimba Counties have been transformed through smart and climate-resilient agricultural interventions with support from UN Women. In addition to providing essential tools and knowledge to these female farmers for improved productivity and sustainable livelihoods, their capacity was also strengthened in disaster risk reduction (DRR), resource governance, and environmental preservation, which has enabled them to effectively manage their resources and safeguard local ecosystems. Hence, these women's financial inclusion initiatives had potentially broken credit barriers female farmers faced in

## How the UN in Liberia is working with Government and Communities to address Food Insecurity

11 September 2023

“The FAO, in its latest Crop Prospects and Food Situation report, noted that hunger is at an alarming rate in Liberia

This has affected a staggering number of citizens with approximately 21,500 people projected during the June to August 2023 in emergency food insecurity levels – and over 531,000 people facing acute food insecurity, associated with high food prices due to high international commodity prices and elevated transport costs. According to Liberia’s Rapid Food Security, Livelihoods, Nutrition and Markets Assessment, August 2022, (WFP) Liberia faces significant food insecurity, with more than two million people living below the poverty line, accounting for around 47% of the total population of Liberia and a substantial proportion of the population (about 424,000 people) experiencing severe food gaps or insecurity.

Over the last six months, FAO trained a total of 2,687 smallholder farmers and rural individuals in sustainable agricultural practices. Among them, 1,966 smallholders received support for income-generation activities and benefited from agricultural inputs and equipment (including fingerings, improved rice and vegetable seeds, power tillers, and water pumps). The focus was on empowering women, youth, and vulnerable rural populations, with women accounting for 71% of the beneficiaries.

The Home-Grown School Feeding programme, implemented by the World Food Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, addresses food security and education needs, providing a holistic approach to alleviating poverty and hunger. Over the past 6 months, WFP reached over 42,000 schoolchildren across 180 schools with onsite meals from locally produced food commodities such as rice, palm oil, Garri, and cowpeas. In addition, 3000 vulnerable families of school children also receive monthly cash assistance through a take-home ration. Additionally, under the WFP resilience programme, about 4000 vulnerable smallholder farmers have received cash assistance with a transfer value of \$45 to support them in improving their food and nutritious status. These smallholder farmers are engaged in asset-creation activities such as the development/rehabilitation of low land for rice and vegetable production. They also receive marketable skill training to diversify their livelihood.



Farmers cultivating cabbage garden, Nimba County

- securing loans for meaningful agricultural investments, and agri-businesses. In addition, the economic empowerment of women farmers not only promoted their financial stability but also contributed to the overall community prosperity fostering social inclusion and community spirit. As a result, communities are more resilient with enhanced food security, which has showcased women’s crucial role in economic growth and

**Output 2.2:**  
By 2024, national and subnational capacity to deliver sustainable natural resource management and strengthen climate-aware initiatives

In 2023, the capacity of relevant institutions was enhanced to effectively manage natural resources and promote climate-resilient agriculture and livelihood initiatives, including disaster reduction and management strategies. Relevant policy and institutional frameworks were developed to improve disaster resilience, natural resource governance, and management at national and subnational levels.

- In 2023, 10 natural reserves (comprising of one natural reserve, four community reserves, and five proposed community forests) were mapped by the Government of Liberia with support from IFAD. This was achieved by the recruitment and training of 30 forest monitoring guards who provided on-the-ground information regarding encroachment activities by community residents

on natural resources. As a result, a total of 42,445.56 hectares in project communities of Nimba were mapped with the help of specialized forest monitoring tools such as the Liberia Forest Cover Map (2018), SEPAL, and Geo-Earth software. The project increased awareness of deforestation and natural resource governance and management.

- The National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) was supported by UNDP to establish a Regional Disaster Management Hub in Tubmanburg, benefiting Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, and Gbarpolu counties. The disaster management hub was used to train disaster management committees in these areas that had enhanced disaster management preparedness and response capabilities at both county and community levels.

- Furthermore, disaster resilience in rural Liberia has been strengthened through the empowerment of 1,200 female farmers in 17 agricultural cooperatives across Lofa, Bong, and Nimba counties. The local farmers and national authorities were trained on the implementation of community-focused Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies and the DRR Plans in a gender-sensitive way to improve disaster management and reduce vulnerability to environmental hazards and climate change. This initiative shows that women can play a leading role in disaster risk reduction and community resilience-building efforts. In addition, coordination mechanisms were improved among key actors in emergency preparedness and response.

- County disaster management plans for all 15 counties were developed with the support of UNDP which has strengthened early warning and disaster risk management mechanisms at local levels. The forest conservation vulnerability maps and Forest Reference Emissions Level Policy were also developed to improve land use and value change development as well as community forest management.

**Output 2.3:**  
By 2024, access, awareness, and sustainable use of appropriate resources, assets, services, and Markets by poor and rural producers, households, value-chain actors, and communities, including women and youth to improve.

The UN’s contributions resulted in enhanced access to finance, resources, and markets for impoverished rural farmers, with a particular focus on women smallholder farmers, and vulnerable populations. Additionally, there was a boost in value chain development. Empowering rural farmers and communities entailed providing them with improved knowledge and skills to hold duty-bearers accountable for natural resource management and utilization at both sub-national and national levels.

- A total of 20 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in seven diverse counties, including enterprises led by women were each given a catalytic grant of \$40,000 maximum and trained in enterprise and business development for sustained livelihoods and job creation at local levels. In addition, 17 women and youth-led agricultural cooperatives and 25 technicians were trained in Cooperative Development and Management who will cascade the training to 255 members of their agricultural cooperatives in rural communities.

- In 2023, access to market and finance for rural producers, and service providers was increased, with the provision of digressive support to 8 Cooperatives in Nimba that has enhanced their capacity to purchase more cocoa from their members and other farmers in the project communities. Through the purchase and sale of cocoa products, the cooperatives were able to generate over US\$725,307 in revenues and incomes, thereby reducing poverty at the household level.
- The capacity of the Government of Liberia was strengthened by FAO to develop a methodology for measuring, reporting, and verification (MRV) on Liberia's readiness for result-based payments using the Architecture for REDD+ Transaction (ART)/The REDD+ Environmental Excellence Standard (TREES) standard. This involved scoping, gap assessments, and ART-compliant monitoring, thereby resulting in the enhancement of Liberia's national forest monitoring system which is aligned with the ART/TREES standard. In addition, sustainable charcoal production was enhanced through the development of a Kiln Oven by FAO, and 19 charcoal producers were trained on environmentally friendly technology to reduce air pollution through traditional charcoal production and use eco-friendly charcoal production techniques. Furthermore, more than 1,451 farmers, including 975 women received training on VSLA methodology that resulted in the establishment of fifty (50) VSLA groups that enabled increased access to credits/finance by beneficiaries for diversified livelihoods, investments in agriculture, small business start-ups, and support their children's education. As a result, over 1,200 rural women in Lofa, Bong, and Nimba have been granted access to rural credit and financial services which increased their purchasing power and improved food and nutrition security for the beneficiaries.
- The Village Savings & Loans Associations (VSLAs) serve as grassroots financial institutions where rural women can save their earnings, borrow capital, and invest in their agricultural ventures. The integration of VSLAs with the formal financial sector was a groundbreaking step that bridged the gap between informal savings mechanisms and formal banking services. The impact of the integration is profound which ensured that the

financial activities of these rural women are recognized by the formal economy, thus opening doors to larger credit lines and investment opportunities. The support of the UN system has empowered women to take an active role in the agricultural value chain, from production to marketing, thereby fostering investment and growth in this vital sector of the economy. As a result, women are not only able to improve their economic stability but also contribute significantly to the overall development of their communities. This has also enhanced the financial autonomy of women in rural settings ensuring quality standards of living and covering the educational expenses for their children, having access to improved healthcare, and building stronger resilience against economic shocks.

- Moreover, aimed at accelerating food production, IFAD provided 79 power tiller sets to 2,813 farmers for the reduction of labour and expansion of cultivated land areas: 25 rice mills and their accessories for value addition, reduction of post-harvest losses, and increased income for rice producers. In addition, a total of 23 mini rice processing centers were constructed with 20 water pump machines for 20 women groups comprising 200 households involved in sustainable vegetable production. Further, 24 heavy-duty motorbikes were distributed to 15 cooperatives in Nimba and Lofa which enhanced their operational and institutional capacity to collect and transport cocoa beans from the clustered communities in the different districts of the project counties. During the reporting year, the capacity of ten cooperatives with memberships of 400 people was trained enabling them to formalize their cooperatives through the development of their articles of incorporation and business registration with the government of Liberia, thereby integrating into the formal economy.



Market woman with her wares in Buchanan

## UN Human Security Trust Fund Project impacts communities in North Central Liberia

12 July 2023

The United Nations in Liberia is jointly implementing the United Nations Human Security Trust Fund Project "Building Resilience of Youth, Women and Vulnerable Groups using Social Protection Floor with ITC". The project is being implemented by FAO, ILO, UNDP, UN Women and WFP, with support from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), in three counties in Liberia-Bong, Lofa and Nimba.

In this light, a three-day Human Security Workshop on Digital technology with an emphasis on the establishment of Smart Villages, kicked off in Gbarnga, Bong County with participants in high spirits.

The workshop, which takes place from July 11 to July 13, is expected to bring together 40 participants from local authorities, facilitators and beneficiaries from the communities. The workshop hopes to deepen the understanding of Smart Villages and digital technology and explore its role in the broader development context, particularly in agriculture, health, finance and market.

"At the beginning of this project, we did not even know what the SDGs were but thanks to this project, we now know about the 17 Sustainable Development goals and how they impact our lives.", said Ms Quinisier, Commissioner of Forquelleh, Bong County.

Another beneficiary expressed her appreciation for the impact of the project, "Thanks for giving our people the chance and means to cross the bridge of poverty and into prosperity". She noted that in her community, forty-two women, youth and persons with disabilities, can now sustain themselves financially because of the support through training and start-up capital provided by the initiative through the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) initiative.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Christine Umutoni, in her remarks during an interaction with beneficiaries, encouraged them to strive for entrepreneurship. She noted that "no one can make Liberia better, besides Liberians themselves". She noted that the entrepreneurial capacity of 264 vulnerable young women and men on how to start and improve their business has been built using the SIYB tools, and 264 medium-size businesses have been established for inclusive economic and human development in six of the nine selected project communities and an awareness session conducted on the concept and importance of human security and how to mainstream the concept in the county and national development agenda.

She also acknowledged the efforts of the government of Liberia and the UN agencies for the progress of the project that covered the wider consultations with national and international stakeholders (Government, Private Sector, CSOs and ITU) on the SMART Village Concept, the conduct of a digital assessment in all three project communities with the objective of identify digital gaps and the infrastructure requirements for the implementation of the Smart Village Initiative, field assessment at the district and community level to identify and assess the existing conditions of beneficiaries and community engagement workshop on SDGs-related issues and how to digitally address them for inclusivity has been conducted.

She also stated “The SMART Village concept is where the digital technology will be used to promote community-driven e-agriculture (particularly weather and extension services) including food system planning, implementation, and management - education and skills development, livelihood strategies such as income generation, cooperative administration, and health service including health insurance for women, youths, and the vulnerable population. Given the importance of access to markets and finance services in rural communities, these will be given priority in the digital endeavour to be co-created by you all working with private and public sector digital technology actors. ”

The project will complement the UNWOMEN Digital Platform – “Buy from Women” that connects smallholder farmers to information, finance, and markets – that is currently being developed.

**Output 2.4:**

By 2024, public and private sector players have strengthened their capacity to increase economic participation and productivity and inclusively, enable employment, job creation, and enterprise development.

In 2023, strategic partnerships were forged with public and private sector institutions and other stakeholders to bolster agri-business and entrepreneurship development that led to the empowered rural smallholder farmers with skills, knowledge, and tools for increased productivity that created significant employment opportunities for vulnerable households, youths, individuals with disabilities, and other most vulnerable groups.

- Considerable progress has been made to increase agricultural productivity and economic empowerment that created employment opportunities for smallholders, rural dwellers, youths, and other marginalized groups. The capacity of smallholder farmers was enhanced with training in business management skills and integrated farming systems for crop and poultry production. This initiative involves active learning and knowledge exchange and a study tour sponsored by FAO for ten farmers at the Songhai Centre in Benin that enabled farmers to acquire and transfer advanced knowledge and skills in their agricultural practices. In addition, the Government of Liberia through the MOA was supported by the National Tree Crops Policy (NTP) which provided an enabling policy environment to further develop the traditional Tree Crop sub-sector to promote potential tree crop value-chains and improve the agricultural sector.
- To further strengthen the enabling environment for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems development, the capacity of the policy makers, and technical government staff was enhanced in screening responsible Private Investment in Agri-Food Systems in Liberia. This has improved collaboration between the government and private sector actors through the multi-stakeholder platform (MSP). The MSP has also accelerated awareness of RAI for private sector investors in agri-food systems. In addition, 15 government officials and MSP members participated in an online blended learning program on RAI supported by FAO.
- 800 rural women in Lofa, Bong, Nimba, and Grand Bassa have made substantial strides in establishing their agricultural enterprises through the support of UN Women, the National Adult Education Association of Liberia (NAEAL), and Orange Liberia. The active participation of these women groups in specialized training programs in business management and financial literacy led to their success in growing their businesses.
- The educational initiative served as a catalyst for the women, which provided them with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the intricacies of running an agricultural business that provides for jobs for economic stability. In addition, two Agribusiness Centres were constructed in two districts in Bong County as warehouses to improve the storage, processing, and marketing capacity of smallholder farmers. The construction of agribusiness centers and warehouses has increased agricultural production and reinforced food security and sustainability for farmers and community residents in the communities.



Young woman entrepreneur braiding hair

- 120 young individuals serving as eco-brigades received training in environmental conservation and business skills in Lofa and Grand Gedeh counties. The eco-brigades further received financial support from UNDP as startup grants and connected them with local municipalities to contribute to the environmental management and sanitation efforts of their respective cities and counties. In addition, 300 young people received comprehensive business training and were provided with a startup grant of \$500 to launch new ventures for sustained livelihoods and economic empowerment. Furthermore, the Liberia National Tourism Association was also empowered to develop an elaborate website that continues to showcase Liberia's tourism sites globally and promote tourism within the country.
- Five (5) solar-powered boreholes with water towers were constructed and installed in five communities in Bong, Gbarpolu, and Rivercess counties that are providing community

members with unfettered access to safe and environmentally sustainable water sources.

Fourteen (14) farm tractors and 41 sets of post-harvest processing machines were procured and distributed to 14 rural agricultural cooperatives in 6 counties (Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Lofa, Nimba, and Rivercess) to promote mechanization in rural farming activities for increased productivity and improved quality of produce. Moreover, 17,556 assorted essential farming tools were distributed to over 2,450 individual farmers, including women, youths, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to support their farming efforts within the selected communities. Further, one hundred and forty-eight (148) rural farmers were trained in the use of agricultural tools, processing machines, adoption of new agricultural practices, financial management, and good governance as well as financial assistance to ten (10) agricultural cooperatives as start-up business grants to support the early-stage operations and growth of their agri-businesses.

## Community-based Facilitators and Chairs of Women's Peace Huts in Bong and Grand Bassa Counties Benefit from Capacity Strengthening Initiative

26 September 2023

-Monrovia-

The Orange Digital Center (ODC) in Monrovia, UN Women Liberia, and Orange Foundation, in partnership with National Peace Hut Women of Liberia (NaPHWoL), recently conducted a Training of Trainers for five peace huts community-based facilitators and two days of capacity building for three Chairs from the NaPHWoL in digital and financial literacy, digitized Savings and Loan Association (SLA) model/methodology and Orange Mobile Money. The objective of the training was to strengthen the capacity of the Facilitators by providing knowledge and skills to support the implementation of digital literacy classes for rural women in the two Women Digital Centers (WDCs) in Bong and Nimba Counties.

According to the Women's Economic Empowerment Program Manager, Ramon G. Garway, upon completion of the training, the Facilitators are expected to commence the Cycle Three digital literacy classes for 100 (50 per county) new peace hut women and young girls in Totota, Bong, and Tarr Town, Grand Bassa Counties. He mentioned that over the past two years, UN Women Liberia and Orange Foundation have been working to ensure that the two existing WDCs in Bong and Grand Bassa Counties continue to provide peace hut women with access to digital literacy classes and tools. The intervention will address the gender digital divide and promote digital literacy among peace hut women, which is crucial to ensuring equal participation, empowerment, and access to opportunities in the increasingly digital world.

During the training, Aisha Kamara Kolubah, National Project Officer at UN Women, did a presentation on the Buy from Women (BfW) Platform. According to Ms. Kolubah, the BfW Platform is a cloud-based enterprise and e-commerce platform that links women farmers and entrepreneurs to market, information, and finance. It addresses the structural barriers faced by women smallholder farmers, equipped entrepreneurs, and small business owners.

Manager, led the presentation on a step-by-step guide on the operation of Orange Money. These sessions provided knowledge for the Facilitators who will serve as Orange Money Agents to provide extension and advisory on services for BfW and Orange Money activities in the targeted communities.

Also, at the training, Zaza Mulba, the Executive Director of the Orange Digital Center, provided detailed information on the available services at the ODC. The Center provides access to digital technology for young people with or without qualifications. It gives them access to the latest technological skills to strengthen their employability and prepare them for jobs. All of the programs are provided free of charge and open to everyone. They ranged from digital trainings for young people, 90% of which are practical guidance for project bearers, and start-up acceleration.





**Output 2.5:**

By 2024, relevant institutions have strengthened their capacity to increase economic activity and connectivity through energy, air and seaports, water, and sanitation infrastructure improvement.

In 2023, 88.6 km of feeder roads were rehabilitated in three counties thus boosting food productivity and access to markets by rural farmers. In addition, solar-powered irrigation systems were improved bolstering agricultural productivity, energy generation, and improved sanitation services at rural health facilities, markets, and communities which had increased economic empowerment at local levels. Furthermore, the artisanal fisheries sector has been improved for fish processing through the construction of FTT technology in Liberia's two coastal counties (Grand Bassa and Montserrado). This has empowered 200 women fishmongers with improved facilities to process fish for increased income generation and livelihoods.

- To enhance community access to markets and other basic social services, about 47.996 Kilometers of farm-to-market roads were rehabilitated in Nimba (14.656 km) and Lofa (33.34 km) in 2023 with support from IFAD. In addition, smallholder farmers in these counties were empowered in horticulture value chains and 16 rural communities received solar energies through cooperatives that have promoted sustained economic growth and access to basic social services.
- Solar power systems were installed at 12 rural health facilities that have enhanced the effective delivery of healthcare services and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. In 2024, an additional 299 healthcare facilities across the country will benefit from solar panel installation for uninterrupted provisions of essential healthcare and basic social services to the local population, particularly the marginalized groups. Additionally, solar panels were distributed to an oil palm nursery cooperative in Karnplay, Nimba County for irrigation services to the palm nursery farm. In Lofa County, a CSO was empowered to establish a solar-powered vegetable storage facility in Salayea, Lofa County.
- Two farmer cooperatives in Cinta (Margibi) and Zuluyee (Nimba), were provided with two mobile farm units that serve as a cool storage space for approximately 2.0 MT of freshly harvested vegetables, and a storage of lithium batteries and solar-powered irrigation system that irrigates approximately 2.5 hectares of farm plots. Furthermore, FAO in collaboration with a UAE-based company Elite Agro Holdings, established

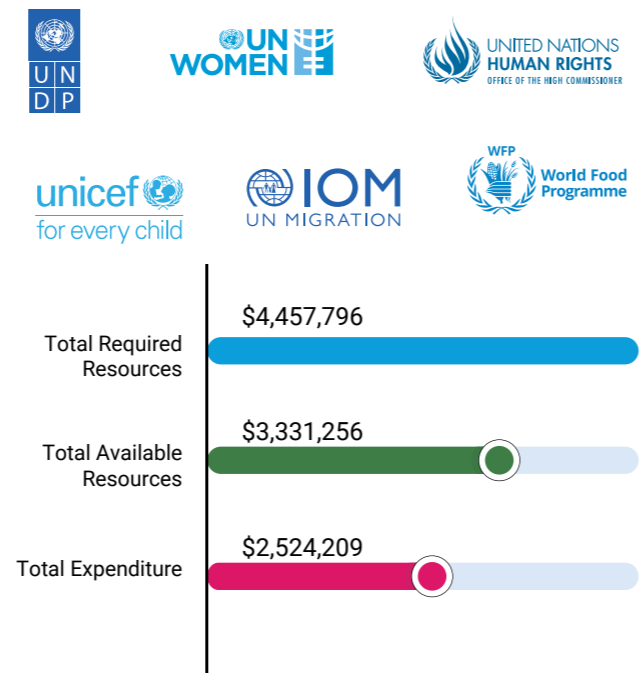
and improved solar-powered irrigation infrastructure at four model gardens within selected project communities. The fishery sector and fish processing practices had been improved through the construction of FTT technology in Liberia's coastal counties, that are benefiting 200 women fishmongers with improved facilities for increased income generation and livelihood. These women have also gained new marketing and leadership skills through capacity building and international exchange visits facilitated by FAO.

**Outcome 3:**

**Sustaining Peace and Security**

By 2024, Liberia consolidates and sustains peace, enhance social cohesion, and has strengthened formal and informal institutions capable of providing access to inclusive, effective, equitable justice and security services capable of promoting and protecting the human rights of all.

Contributing Agencies: UNDP, OHCHR, UN Women, IOM, UNICEF, WFP



**Output 3.1:**

Peace infrastructure at national and sub-national levels is strengthened and coordinated to address conflict, sustain peace, and enhance social cohesion more effectively and inclusively.

Liberia has made significant progress in sustaining peace, promoting social cohesion and reconciliation, and addressing some of the root causes of conflict by strengthening peace infrastructures at the grassroots and national levels. While the drivers of conflict are visible, the UN supported the government by establishing and maintaining early warning and early response mechanisms, including peace huts and district and county peace committees that carry out peacebuilding and conflict negotiation and promote peaceful coexistence interventions. Importantly, this has increased the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding processes.

- In 2023, the capacity of peace infrastructures was strengthened through the empowerment of seven Peace Huts located in Lofa, Gbarpolu, Margibi, and Bong counties. The Peace Huts were capacitated with financial and technical support that led to the establishment of alternative income generating activities sources for peace huts members. This has strengthened their role in peace building, promoting social cohesion and conflict resolution and empowered them as agents of change. These interventions also had women peace structures and increased their participation in peace building processes, allowing them to constructively engage in community dialogues and conflict resolution initiatives. Furthermore, land disputes and other triggers of conflicts have been significantly reduced in conflict hotspots counties, including Maryland, Grand Cape Mount, Nimba and Sinoe counties due to the establishment of alternative dispute resolution structures.
- 10 CLMDCs, and 7 MSPs were established in conflict hotspot communities to effectively resolve land disputes and other community disputes in a more inclusive, gender responsive and transparent manner. These community peace structures played a critical role during the recent presidential and legislative elections by holding pre-election engagements with relevant stakeholders and conducting sensitization campaigns in all 15 counties in over 400 communities. Further, more than 100,000 persons were reached by media (call-in talk shows and views through airing of jingles and posting of awareness content online), while over 50,000 were reached through community engagement, providing key information on voters trucking and other electoral malpractices.

- In addition, fifty (50) persons were trained on voter trucking and other elections malpractices with participants from the Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), the Liberia National Police (LNP), the National Election Commission (NEC), civil society, and the University of Liberia Student Association. Further, over 300 individuals consisting of County Superintendents, Magistrates, Joint Security, Chiefs, and Elders including youth and women groups benefited from the training of trainers (TOT) on 1) Voter Transport and Basic Border Management, 2) Election Integrity, 3) Election Violence, 4) Community Policing, 5) Community Media Literacy, and 6) Conflict Prevention and Resolution. This was followed by distribution of 4000 (four thousand) booklets and stickers of the simplified version of the Farmington River Declaration in Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Bong, Grand Bassa, Bomi, Gbapolu, Lofa, and Nimba counties that increased the understanding of religious leaders, traditional leaders, elders, youth leaders, community leaders and women leaders on conflict early warning and response techniques.
- The capacity of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights was strengthened to the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights to ensure corporations and businesses uphold and respect the human rights of their employees and prevent corporate criminal liability. OHCHR in close collaboration with the Ministry of Justice supported prison reforms at the Monrovia Central Prison to de-congest prisons by reducing the number of pre-trial detainees through fast-track hearing and bargaining processes.

## Liberia's Political Parties Pledge Peaceful Elections in 2023

05 April 2023

As Liberia prepares for its presidential and legislative elections in October 2023, political parties have united and pledged their commitments to peace.

On 4 April, at the Farmington Hotel in Margibi, Liberia, leaders from 27 of 31 political parties signed the Farmington River Declaration 2023, an enhanced and comprehensive declaration designed to ensure a nonviolent electoral process. This builds on the foundation of the initial pledge signed in 2017.

The signing ceremony was organized under the auspices of Liberia's National Elections Commission (NEC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the United Nations (UN). President George Weah attended and signed as a political leader and standard-bearer. Representatives

from the government, civil society groups, the diplomatic community and international organizations were also present at the high-level event.

The UN and ECOWAS signed the agreement as witnesses. On behalf of the United Nations, Ms. Giovane Biha, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Acting Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), signed the agreement. Dr. Omar Alieu Touray, President of the ECOWAS Commission, signed on behalf of ECOWAS.

In her welcome remarks earlier during the program, the Chairperson Davidetta Browne Lansanah said that the signing ceremony "marks another historic moment in the democratic landscape of Liberia in which political actors who are contesting in the upcoming October 2023 general and legislative elections have mustered the courage and enthusiasm to collectively show to the world their ability to continuously contribute to the maintenance of peace in the country by committing themselves to a

She said that the Farmington River Declaration was birthed on 23rd January 2017 and the former President of the Republic of Liberia, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf announced during her annual message to the National Legislature the need for a national political forum for the peaceful conduct of the 2017 general elections.

The NEC Chairperson used the occasion to express the Commission most profound gratitude to the standard bearers, chairpersons, and members of all political parties as well as coalitions and all alliances for the milestone electoral sojourn of the Farmington River Declaration 2017.

In his keynote address at the occasion, President Weah who was dressed in a flowing white gown historicized that "few months before the Presidential and Legislative Elections which were held in Liberia that year, twenty (20) of Liberia's twenty-two (22) registered political parties met here in this place and signed a document which was named as the

In this document, he said "We committed ourselves to an orderly and peaceful elections process in October 2017. We agreed, individually and collectively, to prevent electoral violence, impunity, and injustice; and pledged before the ECOWAS Heads of State, who were present in Liberia at the time attending the 51st Summit of that Organization, that if ever and whenever such conflicts occurred, we would address them through mediation or through legal means," the Liberian leader who was victorious of the 2017 process noted that every party that signed the Farmington River Declaration in 2017 kept true to their word, and the elections were conducted in a free, fair, and transparent manner, without violence; and, moreover, all differences were processed and resolved through the justice system in Liberia, under



Signing of the Farmington Declaration for 2023 Elections

**Output 3.2:**

Capacities of national and sub-national actors strengthened to develop, amend, and implement legislation and policies in compliance with human rights standards.

In 2023, the United Nations made noteworthy contributions by significantly enhancing the capacities of legislative drafting committees, justice and human rights institutions, and civil society organizations. This effort aimed to facilitate the development and implementation of pivotal laws, policies, and regulatory frameworks with a specific focus on gender inclusion and adherence to human rights standards. As a result, there has been a substantial improvement in access to affordable justice and protection services for children, women, girls, and other vulnerable groups. The UN's impactful interventions have positively influenced the legal landscape, fostering a more inclusive and rights-based approach to serving marginalized communities.

- A comprehensive gender analysis was conducted by UN Women which informed the formulation and validation of a gender-responsive strategy and a five-year costed implementation plan for mainstreaming gender into public procurement and concession processes. The strategy has empowered the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC) to foster the participation of women-owned businesses in competitive public procurement processes. Through the implementation of the plan, 62 individuals, including 29 females and 33 males from the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC) trained on incorporating women's ventures and businesses into the public procurement system and removing barriers that hinder their participation in procurement processes.

Local leaders in five selected Liberian counties have received capacity-building to integrate human rights standards into county development agendas. This has enabled local leaders to organize and coordinate joint advocacy efforts for policy development and implementation in alignment with basic human rights standards. Furthermore, the capacity of the Government of Liberia was strengthened to accelerate the reconciliation effort amidst political divisions caused by the 2023 electoral process. This led to the development of a Reconciliation Options Paper, which informed the development of a National Policy on Reconciliation, aimed at promoting reconciliation and social cohesion and co-existence among the country's population.

- In a significant commitment to support gender equality, women empowerment and combat



sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), the government endorsed an anti-SGBV roadmap with the support of UN Women. The roadmap has strengthened the capacity of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to ensure institutional accountability, and survivors' access to justice. In addition, the 2nd phase of the National Action Plan on Women's Peace and Security (NAP-WPS) was developed to reinforce accountability mechanisms within security and justice institutions and promote women's participation in leadership and decision-making processes within government. This will also promote continued efforts by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), and the Governance Commission to mainstream in their programs gender equality and sexual reproductive health rights issues and take steps to eliminate sexual gender-based violence.

- Two safe homes in (Margibi and Bomi) counties were refurbished and equipped with need materials and equipment to adequately respond to SGBV issues. The government also accelerated efforts to combat trafficking in persons by training over 120 TIP Actors from across the country who are promoting advocacy against trafficking in persons and prosecution of perpetrators. Furthermore, fifty female victims of trafficking received psychosocial support, business management training, and microbusiness setup assistance to facilitate their reintegration into their communities with financial and technical support from IOM in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and CSOs actors.

- Supported coordination and organization of the National Mechanism on Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF) which led to the drafting of the state report to CRC committee upon the return of the earlier state report by the committee for not being in line with the prescribed standard. The NMRF is a national multi-stakeholders platform constituted and strengthened by OHCHR to lead on coordination, data collection, engagement, drafting, and reporting of Liberia regional and international human rights obligations. The NMRF as a human rights mechanism finalized the state report on the CRC and ensured the integration of the CRC recommendations into the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) and its implementation follow-up mechanism.
- Moreover, during the year, 25 women were trained in human rights-based legal review and law drafting that has empowered them to actively participate in the review and redrafting of the Domestic Violence Act, the Whistle-Blowers' Protection Bill, and the Corrupt Offences Bill by ensuring their alignment with international and regional human rights standards. The training has also improved the knowledge and skills of these women to influence the enactment of legislation that promotes women's empowerment and protection. These bills when passed into law, will promote the prevention of violence against women and girls and ensure the protection of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of women. In addition, through the advocacy of these women groups, the Government of Liberia adopted the 30% gender quota by political parties for the nomination of women/female candidates to participate in the 2023 general presidential and legislative elections which has increased women's representation in politics. Violence against women in politics was also significantly reduced during the 2023 presidential and legislative elections as a result of the UN support to women political candidates.

**Output 3.3:**

Relevant government authorities and security and justice institutions at national and sub-national levels have better knowledge and capacity to enhance access to justice, including vulnerable groups, women, and girl survivors of SGBV, and especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

The UN supported relevant justice and security institutions and actors to deliver quality and affordable services to SGBV survivors and other vulnerable groups at national and sub-national levels. The UN contributions both enabled duty-bearers to uphold and protect the rights of ordinary citizens to win public trust in justice and security institutions as well as holding duty-bearers accountable.

- Peaceful electoral environment was enhanced during the 2023 electoral cycle by strengthening the capacity of CSOs and government institutions to track, investigate and report on human rights issues, particularly related to electoral violence against women candidates. This enabled the government and CSOs to effectively monitor, document, and report on human rights situations before, during, and after elections, including during the presidential runoff in November 2023. In addition, the Gender and Human Rights Sensitive Legal Aid Act for Liberia was developed with support from OHCHR, UNDP, and UN Women. The Legal Aid Act when passed into law, will ensure increased access to justice and legal aid services for indigents who can't afford fees for legal representation particularly children, persons with disabilities, older persons, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups.

- Also, during the electoral period in 2023, over 3,000 Election Security Officers were trained by the joint security with support from UNDP and UN OHCHR. These officers provided enhanced security during the elections in line with international human rights standards and principles that led to the peaceful conduct of the elections and transfer of power from one democratically elected government to the next in January 2024.
- Electoral integrity mechanism was also promoted by strengthening the capacity of the National Elections Commission, in collaboration with IOM, UN Women, UNDP, and OHCHR which helped ensure peaceful electoral process.
- The capacity of the Liberian National Police was improved in digital crimes statistics and reporting by training LNP officers in online Crime Statistics Information System. The digital crimes information system established in 2021 with support from UNDP has enabled the LNP to effectively collect data on crimes nationwide and generate timely and accurate crime statistical reports. In addition, correction officers were also trained in human rights, prison management, and inmates' care. This initiative has prison management and care of prison facilities across the country, enabling correction officers to respect the human rights of inmates. Furthermore, the capacity of immigration officers of the Liberia Immigration Services (LIS) was enhanced in protecting human rights, anti-human trafficking measures, and border management and control. This enabled LIS officers to effectively manage and control the porous borders of Liberia during the 2023 general elections.

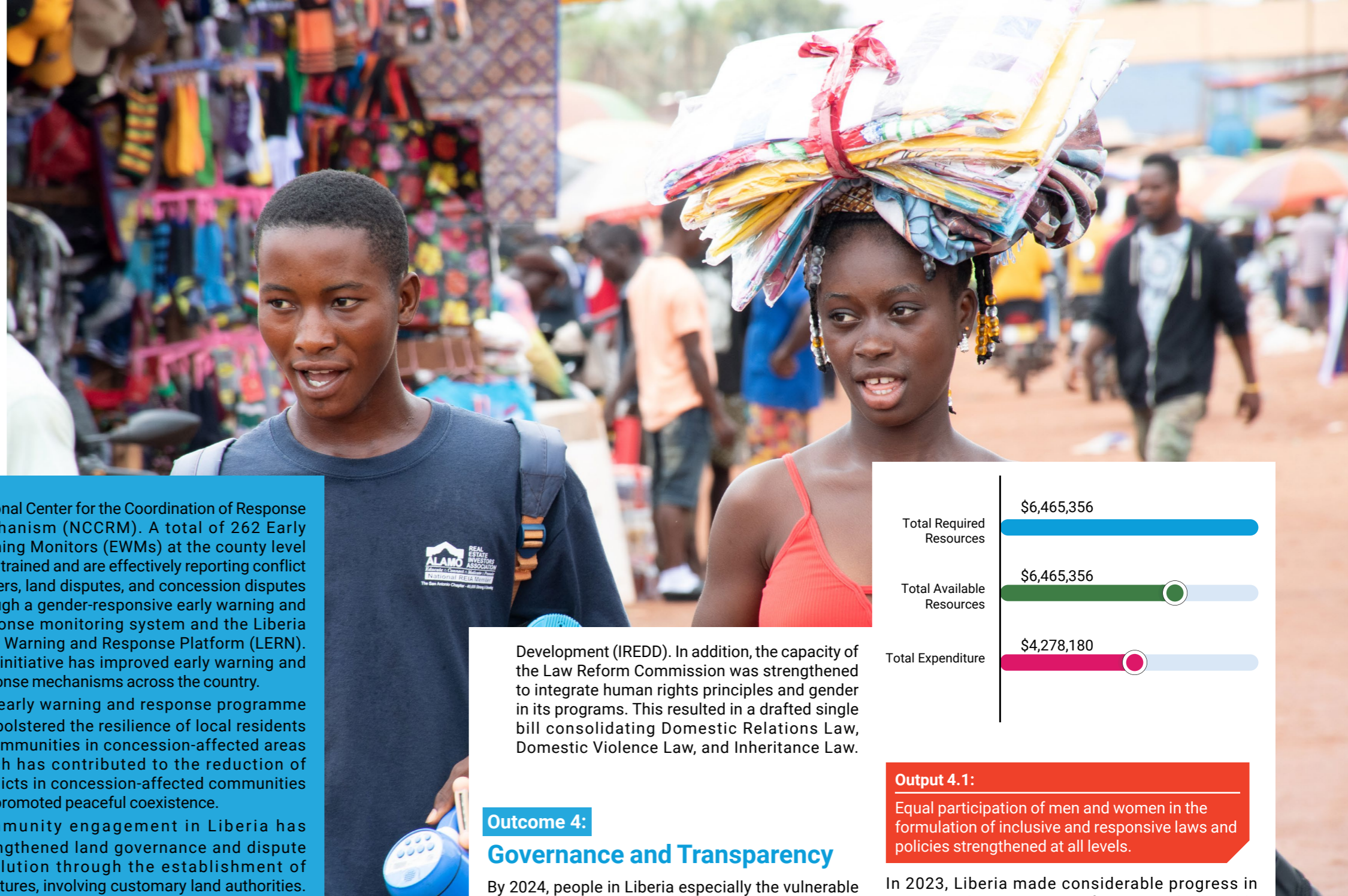
**Output 3.4.**  
Right holders' capacity strengthened to demand /claim their rights and actively demand and engage in justice, reconciliation, and peace-building efforts.

In 2023, the United Nations successfully forged robust partnerships with civil society and community-based organizations, along with networks. This collaborative effort significantly heightened awareness and information campaigns at both grassroots and national levels. As a result, rights-holders were empowered to actively advocate for and assert their rights, concurrently fostering a mechanism to hold the government accountable for its obligations.

- Conflict early warning and early response mechanism was strengthened at the county level by UNDP UN Women in collaboration with the Liberia Peace Building Office (PBO) and the

National Center for the Coordination of Response Mechanism (NCCRM). A total of 262 Early Warning Monitors (EWMs) at the county level were trained and are effectively reporting conflict triggers, land disputes, and concession disputes through a gender-responsive early warning and response monitoring system and the Liberia Early Warning and Response Platform (LERN). This initiative has improved early warning and response mechanisms across the country.

- The early warning and response programme has bolstered the resilience of local residents in communities in concession-affected areas which has contributed to the reduction of conflicts in concession-affected communities and promoted peaceful coexistence.
- Community engagement in Liberia has strengthened land governance and dispute resolution through the establishment of structures, involving customary land authorities. Continued awareness efforts have increased understanding of the Land Rights Act, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, concession agreements, and the land rights of women and youth. A gender-sensitive strategy for communicating women's and customary land rights has been developed and endorsed, focusing on disseminating information and conducting outreach campaigns. More than 2,574 individuals have been reached with awareness of land governance, which has increased understanding of land rights among youths, women, and men across the country.
- Reconciliation and social cohesion initiatives were also implemented by UNDP, and UN Women in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, PBO, INCHR, and other CSOs, including the Institute for Research and Democratic

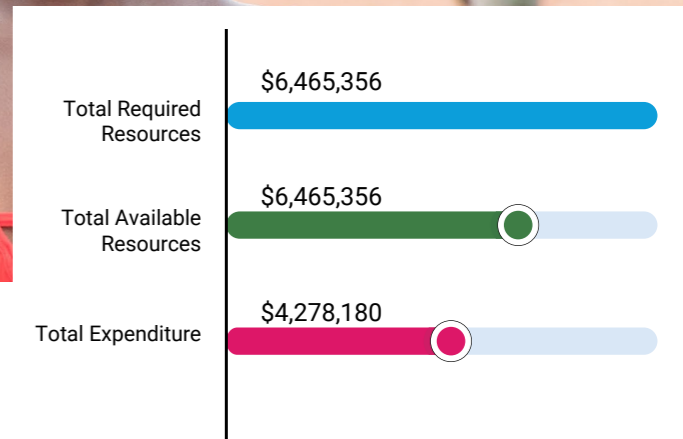


Development (IREDD). In addition, the capacity of the Law Reform Commission was strengthened to integrate human rights principles and gender in its programs. This resulted in a drafted single bill consolidating Domestic Relations Law, Domestic Violence Law, and Inheritance Law.

**Outcome 4:**  
**Governance and Transparency**

By 2024, people in Liberia especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged, benefit from strengthened institutions that are more effective, accountable, transparent, inclusive, and gender-responsive in delivering essential services at the national and sub-national levels.

Contributing Agencies: UNDP, UN Women, OHCHR, WFP, UNESCO, ILO,



**Output 4.1:**  
Equal participation of men and women in the formulation of inclusive and responsive laws and policies strengthened at all levels.

In 2023, Liberia made considerable progress in increasing the participation of women and vulnerable groups in politics and electoral processes. This positive outcome was a result of collaborative advocacy efforts led by the United Nations (UN), civil society actors, and its development partners, which led to the creation of an enabling environment for electoral law and gender-responsive policy reforms, including the adoption of 30% gender quota by all political parties and the government of Liberia. This milestone achievement was a result of the UN Country Team's joint efforts and transformational programs' support to various women's groups and networks in their endeavors to enhance women's participation. These efforts were directed towards formulating inclusive and gender-responsive laws, ultimately aiming to augment women's representation at all levels of government in Liberia.

- During the 2023 electoral period, women's equal participation in politics and national leadership at all levels of government was enhanced with support from UN Women in collaboration with its civil society partners, including Messengers of Peace, NAYMOTE, and Liberia Initiative for Empowerment. More than 6,546 people across nine counties benefited from comprehensive gender-responsive civic and voter education campaigns including street theater, community dialogues, and radio talk shows. In addition, 250 community mobilizers received intensive training in peacebuilding skills, and community dialogues and disseminated gender-responsive and campaign violence extremism (CVE) messages across nine counties. Furthermore, the National Young Women Political Council was empowered enabling it to reach out to a wide range of young women and men across the country, particularly first-time voters and community members on peaceful electoral process and conflict prevention. This initiative significantly enhanced women's access to information and their participation in politics and national leadership. A nationwide dialogue on inclusive political participation and Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE) brought together over 30,000 women leaders, traditional leaders, chiefs, students, and political party leaders from various regions. This initiative has enhanced the capacity of local actors in addressing violence against women in politics (VAWP).
  - In addition, 3,300 persons from women, youths, and community-based organizations across seven counties participated in community dialogues organized by the Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia (WLCL) and WONGOSOL (Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia) which promoted women's participation in the 2023 elections and addressed the cultural stereotypes women face in politics. Further, these efforts also increased women's representation in the national legislature with 10.96 percent as representatives and 10 percent in the Senate from 6.67 percent in 2017.
  - A total of 168 peace hut women from the National Peace Hut Women of Liberia and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WIPNET) trained on mediation and conflict resolution skills in Bomi, Lofa, Gbarpolu, Grand Gedeh, Grand Bassa, and Nimba counties. The training has increased their knowledge of conflict prevention and mediation and led to the establishment of a wider collaborative network for conflict mediation aimed at addressing violence against women in elections (VAWE). Furthermore, the Liberia National Bar Association conducted training for 100 representatives from the National Election Commission, Liberia National Police, Magistrates, County Attorneys, Trial Judges, Prosecutors, Public Defenders, Sexual Gender-Based Violence Unit, National Commission of Disabilities, Ministry of Justice, Liberia Institute for Human Rights, Rural Women Liberia, Peace Hut Women, Traditional Council/MIA, Office of the Superintendent for Grand Cape Mount, International Commission for Human Rights, and Peace Building Office.
  - 30 participants from women-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were trained on gender-responsive planning and budgeting which has enhanced their knowledge and skills in a more inclusive and equitable approach to resource allocation and policy development for women and girls. The training has also equipped the women-led CSOs with essential tools and knowledge to effectively navigate and influence policy development and resource allocation processes that address challenges and opportunities encountered by women-led CSOs in implementing gender equality programs.
  - The capacity of 168 political party members (104 women, 64 men) was enhanced to undertake measures to implement the 30% gender quota in line with Section 4.5 of the New Elections Law and the Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) Protocol. In collaboration with 102 representatives from political parties, the Women's Legislative Caucus Secretariat, women's rights organizations, and the Coalition of Political Party Women, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on implementation of the 30% gender quota outlined in Section 4.5 of the New Elections Law was signed and validated by relevant stakeholders. In addition, 57 representatives from 33 political parties were engaged by UN Women, Medica Liberia, and POWER Liberia which led to the development of a Guidance Note for Gender Responsive Political Parties aligned with the VAWE/P Protocol. This Guidance Note served as a crucial advocacy tool during the election period that promoted increased women's participation in politics and helped political parties formulate gender policies to foster greater inclusivity.
  - A total of 417 persons (including 168 women candidates and campaign team members, and 104 members of parliament) were trained in a transformative leadership training program on feminist principles and the critical examination of power structures. The training equipped female politicians and community leaders with the tools to advocate for inclusivity and tackle systemic inequalities effectively.
- In addition, 25 female politicians were trained in digital marketing by UN Women in collaboration with Orange Foundation. The training enhanced their campaign strategies and enabled them to

use digital and social media platforms to engage electorates and community members within their district thus driving positive change. 148 women aspirants received legal aid assistance during the nomination process preceding the 2023 general and presidential elections with support from UN Women. Additionally, 567 actors from civil society, women and youth groups, political parties, and traditional and religious structures were trained to advocate for women's economic empowerment, ensure access to justice and health services, reproductive health and rights, and legal reforms to end violence against women and girls.

#### Output 4.2:

Integrity institutions are strengthened at national and subnational levels to advocate and assertively implement policies, legal and institutional frameworks, and practices that promote transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

In 2023, the capacity of relevant justice and security institutions was strengthened to increase access to survivors of rape/SGBV and other indigents through integrated protection services. The specialized Court E in Nimba and Bong was empowered to provide effective gender-responsive survivors of SGBV. Further, the Ministry of Justice was supported to develop the Alternative Disputes Resolutions Act and Prison Reform Act which will provide the enabling policy and regulatory environment to improve prison services and increase access to justice for pre-trial detainees.

- The capacity of women-led civil society networks was strengthened to monitor the performance of Criminal Court E and provide support to SGBV survivors in accessing services through integrated referral pathways and protection services. As a result of these efforts, a significant number of rape/SGBV cases were successfully tried and disposed of in the courts, with 26 cases in Nimba County and 12 cases in Bong County. The support to the civil society networks also enabled them to actively monitor the court proceedings, engage with judges, and simultaneously assist survivors in attending court sessions as well as accessing medical and psychosocial services. This initiative has strengthened the justice system's response to gender-based violence and ensured that survivors receive the necessary support and services.
- 120 officers of the Liberian Immigration Service

(LIS) were supported to undergo entry-level exams that facilitated the ranking and promotion process within the LIS, which is aligned with the professional standards expected of security forces. This initiative has enhanced the professionalism of the Liberian Immigration Service and ensured that its officers serve the people with a high level of competence and professionalism in line with established standards.

- In 2023, the Government of Liberia with support from UNDP conducted a comprehensive study to assess alternative approaches to incarceration and pre-trial detention. The study identified strategies and alternative systems that could effectively reduce pre-trial detention rates and address the issue of prison overcrowding within the country. In addition, the Ministry of Justice and Bureau of Corrections & Rehabilitation was strengthened to develop the New Prison Act of Liberia. The new Act which is before the National legislature for consideration when passed into law will establish an independent institution tasked with the management of prisons and correction and rehabilitation services. It will also enhance prison governance and administration thereby advancing improved justice and correction services within the country.
- The technical and operational capacity of the Programme and Planning Management Unit (PPMU) at the Ministry of Justice was strengthened to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services to the public. The Ministry of Justice further developed an Alternative Disputes Resolution (ADR) Policy that is being used as the basis for conducting research on ADR. The Ministry of Justice also supported the development of the ADR Act which has been submitted for passage into law by the national legislature. The Act, when passed into law will support the institutionalization of ADR and promote alternative methods of dispute resolution within the legal framework of the country, potentially contributing to more efficient and accessible justice systems.
- The capacity of two Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Women-led CSO Networks operating in Bong and Nimba Counties were enhanced to raise awareness, monitor the performance of Criminal Court E, and facilitate the assistance of survivors. This assistance enabled the CSOs to provide effective guidance to survivors through the referral pathway to access justice and essential services. This also increased response efforts and the ability of survivors of sexual violence to report perpetrators to the relevant authorities, including the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS), health workers, and prosecution or county attorneys in the counties.



- The National Bureau of Concession was capacitated to receive and provide feedback on issues of concern within concession communities which has enhanced communication and engagement between local communities and the National Bureau of Concession, fostering a participatory approach in addressing concerns and issues affecting these local communities in concession areas.

**Output 4.3:**

Capacities of relevant institutions are strengthened to ensure legal identity for all (civil registration and vital statistics), including free, fair, and transparent elections.

In 2023, NEC's capacity was enhanced in transparent elections management and processes that enabled the electoral body to promote transparency in voters' registration, increased outreach, education, and communications activities on the process leading to the 2023 general presidential and legislative elections that ushered in a new administration. The UN system in collaboration with its development partners supported NEC and political parties to develop and sign the Farmington River Declaration that mandated all political parties to promote a peaceful electoral environment during the campaign period and post-election era. Furthermore, NEC's electoral disputes resolution mechanism was enhanced, and the capacity of the NEC Board of Commissioners strengthened to timely resolve electoral disputes that improved the integrity of the outcomes of the elections held in October 2023. This was achieved through the deployment of trained Election Dispute Magistrates with the support of the UN system to handle electoral campaigns and disputes at the county level.

- The support of the UN and its development partners enabled the National Elections Commission (NEC) to demonstrate a strong

commitment to mainstreaming gender and social inclusion, particularly within the Board of Commissioners (BOC). This support significantly contributed to achieving near gender parity in the biometric voter registration (BVR) process, the first time in Liberia. As a result, sex-disaggregated data was generated during voter registration, that demonstrated the inclusivity and representativeness of the electoral process. Notably, women accounted for slightly over 50% of the total voters registered for the 2023 elections (1,237,257) while men accounted for 49.94% (1,234,360 men), marking a significant milestone. Additionally, 12,399 (0.052%) persons with disabilities registered to vote, reflecting efforts towards greater inclusivity.

- A total of 219 (63% males, 37% females) journalists, including managers, editors, and reporters from newspapers and radio stations were trained on the code of conduct for journalists. The code of conduct enables journalists to uphold ethical standards in media coverage for objective reporting on election-related activities and ensure fair profiling of women candidates during the electoral period. This initiative improved media coverage, fostered conflict-sensitive reporting and promoted ethical standards for journalists throughout the electoral process. It also led to a decrease in inflammatory speeches, reduced dissemination of misinformation, and a more responsible media presence during the electoral period.
- The National Elections Commission (NEC) in collaboration with the Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) supported by UNDP enhanced the capacity of 20 lawyers in election disputes resolution. These lawyers were deployed to the NEC's 19 magistrate offices to serve as election hearing officers. In addition, 22 non-lawyers (6 female, 16 male) were also hired, trained, and deployed as hearing clerks who supported the hearing officers to timely and effectively resolve 48 out of 55 election complaints filed by political parties at the NEC magisterial and BOC levels. While some politicians and political parties filed appeals to the Supreme Court, the hearing officers enabled the NEC to resolve electoral disputes in a professional manner that increased the credibility of the NEC and elections results. Furthermore, the Communications Unit of the National Elections Commission (NEC) received technical and financial assistance, which included the hiring and deployment of a communication specialist. The communication specialist enhanced the capacity of the section's staff in drafting press releases, social media posts, and other communication outputs. As a result of this support, the NEC adopted an improved internal and external communication approach. With its staff refined skills, the Communication Section developed fifty-seven (57) press releases and disseminated over two hundred (200) social media posts daily in 2023.
- The Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) also trained 200 persons in Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR) dialogues to enhance their capacity in administrative hearings and courtroom litigation processes, as well as raised awareness campaigns in Grand Bassa, Nimba, and Grand Gedeh Counties respectively. This also enabled political parties and campaign managers to have a deeper understanding of the procedures for filing and handling election disputes, and subsequent appeal process to the NEC Board of Commissioners and the Supreme Court. As a result, political parties were able to file elections complaints in accordance with NEC guidelines and relevant sections of the civil procedures.
- With support from the Liberia Elections Support Project (LESP), 24 (13 male / 11 female) 174 NEC staff, including magistrates, and other stakeholders were capacitated in a "Train the Facilitator" (TtF) module by the Building Resources in Democratic Governance and Election (BRIDGE). The training strengthened and enhanced the capacity, knowledge, and skills of NEC to effectively plan, organize, and facilitate BRIDGE modules and other trainings, which included Civic and Voter Education (CVE), Gender Integrity and Elections (GIE), and Voter Education (VR). As a result, 12 participants who completed BRIDGE TtF facilitated four (4) BRIDGE modules which include Civic and Voter Education (CVE), Gender Integrity and Elections (GIE), and Voter Education (VR) and were semi-accredited BRIDGE facilitators.
- To further enhance the outreach of Civic and Voter Education (CVE) activities during the election period, the National Elections Commission (NEC) with support from the Liberia Elections Support Project (LESP) established 81 CVE cells and trained 243 community-based organizations from the 73 electoral districts. These cells effectively promoted CVE and biometric voter registration (BVR) activities across the country using campaigns, and community engagement mechanisms. As a result, the project also supplied 250,500 pieces of CVE materials, including banners, leaflets, posters, and information brochures, which were disseminated nationwide. This enhanced the visibility of CVE efforts across the country and contributed to the substantial voter turnout during the 2023 October 10th General Elections.
- Furthermore, the capacity of 19 assistant magistrates, four regional coordinators, and 76 field monitors of the National Elections Commission (NEC) was improved in Civic and Voter Education (CVE) related mechanisms and election procedures. This enabled the magistrates and monitors to increase awareness of biometric voter registration and collected real-time evidence-based information on potential conflict triggers using smartphones that facilitated the immediate resolution of issues encountered during the BVR process and at polling places on election day. This helped improve the operational performance of the NEC and ensured the integrity, transparency, inclusion, and credibility of the 2023 General Presidential and Legislative Elections results.
- NEC capacity was also strengthened in effective records management, research methods, and electronic archiving through the provision of

essential equipment and supplies that set up a digitized archiving system. This support enabled the NEC to begin digitizing sensitive electoral documents, which has increased its operational efficiency and accessibility. Moreover, 694 political party representatives (167 females and 527 males) were trained on election observation procedures that ensured transparency and credibility of the electoral process. This initiative ensured the incorporation of measures to prevent electoral fraud and mitigate election malpractice during the electoral process.

- 167 (120 Males and 47 Females) County Council members from across the 15 Counties were trained in Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB). This training enhanced the capacity of local county council members in local government planning, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), revenue forecasting, collection, and local government revenue sharing formula/agreements for gender-inclusive development at the county level.

#### Output 4.4:

National decentralization policy and regulatory framework developed, adopted, and implemented, and national and subnational institutions strengthened to provide higher quality, inclusive, and gender-responsive services to local populations.

Liberia has made significant progress in achieving fiscal decentralization of basic social services from the capital of Monrovia to county capitals by creating and strengthening county service centres. These centres have increased access to essential services for rural people. The UN supported the Government in reforming key laws and strengthening the policy environment, including the draft Revenue Sharing Bill and Public Financial Management (PFM) Amendment Act. This enhanced the local government's capacity to generate revenues and resources for economic development and deliver essential social services at the County level.

- The county service centres were equipped with solar systems as an alternative energy source through UNDP that enhanced service delivery and promoted citizens' feedback mechanisms. This involved the procurement of specialized equipment that increased citizens' access to documentation services (e.g., driver's licenses and marriage certificates) without travelling to Monrovia, which also increased revenue generation at the local level. In addition, ramps were constructed at four county service centres. The ramps increased access to these centres for physically challenged citizens or people with disabilities, in the spirit of "leaving no one behind". The local communities and

residents were sensitized about the availability of the services at the Service Centers through community engagement and awareness activities. This led to the utilization of the centers by several farmer cooperatives to process their business registration with the Cooperative Development Agency (CDA).

- Further, 1,567 staff were trained in the Local Government Act that strengthened national ownership and enhanced their capacity to accelerate the Government's decentralization plan, and improve service delivery at the local level. This milestone achievement was facilitated through the drafting of the Revenue Sharing Bill and PFM amendment bill that will accelerate implementation of fiscal decentralization and revenue sharing formula to generate and utilize local revenues for development purposes. As a result, over 3,513 (2,061 Males, 1,079 Females) citizens directly benefited from the county service centers. In addition, more than 9,800 people were reached with information on available services at the centers through awareness and distribution of animated posters and communications materials across communities in Bomi, Gbarpolu, Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Nimba, Margibi, Sinoe, Maryland, and Grand Cape Mount Counties.
- 33 County Treasury Officers and county administrators were also trained on fiscal decentralization, revenue-generating strategies, financial accounting for revenue generation, planning, and budgeting which emphasized the overall objectives of the Revenue Sharing Act.
- The capacity of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Decentralization was strengthened and 29 government officials from Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (MACs) were trained in implementation of the decentralization policy and local government Act. This led to the establishment of County Councils in all 15 Counties that are responsible for the approval of all development plans, budgets, local tax administration, promotion of peace, social cohesion and improved social economic development. The setup of the County Councils creates a check and balance as it relates to accounting for development funds, local taxes raised, and supplements the Revenue Sharing Law for local development.



Young woman entrepreneur braiding hair

## Natasha's Journey from School Dropout to Entrepreneur

*The Let Us Learn Programme: Helping Young People in Liberia to Build a Better Future*

Matenneh Kieta and Sam Mensah

16th August 2023

Natasha B. Robertson was a 17-year-old girl who had dropped out of high school and was living on the streets of Monrovia, Liberia. She had been brought to the city from the rural area with the promise of a better education, but instead she was forced to work long hours selling goods on the street and rarely attended school.

Natasha was resistant to change when she first joined the Let Us Learn programme, a UNICEF-supported program that provides education and skills training to out-of-school children and youth in Liberia. She missed her old friends and didn't see the point in going back to school.

But with the help of the peer educators, social workers, and guidance counsellors in the program, Natasha slowly started to turn her life around. She re-enrolled in high school and began attending regularly. She also started taking classes in pastry making, which she had always been interested in.

Natasha's hard work paid off. She graduated from high school and completed her pastry class as one of the top students. She is now a successful pastry chef and owns her own business in Caldwell. She is also a role model for other adolescent girls who have faced challenges in their lives. She aspires to go to the university in the near future.

Natasha's story is a reminder that it is never too late to turn your life around. With hard work and determination, anything is possible. The Let Us Learn programme is a UNICEF-supported program that provides education and skills training to out-of-school children and youth in Liberia. The program is designed to help young people like Natasha get back on track and complete their education. The program also provides skills training in areas such as carpentry, tailoring, and hairdressing. This helps young people to find employment and become self-sufficient.

The Let Us Learn programme is making a real difference in the lives of young people in Liberia. It is helping them to get an education, learn skills, and build a better future for themselves.



### 2.3. Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

UNCT Liberia forged strategic and innovative partnership mechanisms with private sector actors, the Government of Liberia, CSOs, and Development Partners to advance financing and achieving the 2030 Agenda. To foster private sector engagement and resource mobilization to finance the SDGs, the UN, in collaboration with the Liberia Chambers of Commerce, organized a one-day private sector dialogue to discuss private engagement with and contributions towards achieving the Agenda 2030 through joint interventions and partnerships. As a result, an UN-Private Sector Working Group was established – a first for Liberia – which will deepen future partnerships between the UN and the private sector in the country.

The UNCT, in partnership with Presencing Institute, established an SDGs Leadership Team that identified transformative areas for SDGs acceleration in Liberia. The Team comprises of representatives of the Government, UN, CSOs, INGOs, and the private sector.

### 2.4. Results of the UN working more and better together: UN coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency

In 2023, the UN in Liberia established strategic partnerships with the private sector actors, government, and development partners to support the Government of Liberia in conducting peaceful, free, and fair elections and address the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian crisis affecting ordinary citizens, especially vulnerable groups. Delivering ‘as One’, the UNCT continues to collectively support the Government of Liberia under the UNSDCF in a coherent, effective, and efficient manner across the four outcomes or strategic results areas of UNSDCF. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator and Inter-Agency Programming Team (IAPT), the UN achieved significant milestones in promoting a peaceful electoral environment through working with the government, political parties, and development partners. The collaboration enabled the signing of the Farmington River Declaration, supported national reconciliation and peacebuilding; supported advocacy for 30% gender quota as enshrined in the New Elections law, and strengthened civil space through its convening power to promote human rights and civil liberties.

The UN Country Team in Liberia has accomplished several initiatives and flagship programmes in partnership with the Government of Liberia, development partners, civil society organizations, and a wide range of stakeholders. The Accelerated Community Development Programmes are aimed at accelerating rural development, decentralizing services and supporting at-risk Liberian youth through the At-Risk Youth Programme, and other joint initiatives that aimed at fighting violence against women and girls, improving community infrastructures, advancing the SDGs, and creating economic empowerment for women and youth through community-driven agriculture, food systems, and livelihoods services, education, and skills development. Among these transformative programmes are the Transforming Lives Through Decentralization Programme and the Accelerated Community Development Programme.

#### The Liberia Spotlight Initiative (LSI)

LSI accelerated gender equality and women’s empowerment interventions at grassroots and national levels. Since launching in Liberia in 2019, this global UN initiative funded by the European Union to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls has facilitated key reforms in Liberia, including the Domestic Relations Law and Domestic Violence Act. Importantly, the Initiative advocated with the Government to place a moratorium on the practice of FGM in Liberia, alongside engaging with Zoes, traditional practitioners of FGM, to provide them with knowledge and skills to engage in economic livelihood projects as an alternative to practicing FGM for income generation. The initiative led to a temporary ban on FGM and the closure of Sande society ‘bush schools’, where girls and women undergo various rituals including FGM, in Montserrado and other parts of Liberia. Finally, the Spotlight Initiative was also part of the successful advocacy effort for amending the new Elections Law to include a mandatory 30% gender quota.

#### The Inter-Agency Programming Team (IAPT)

IAPT effectively coordinated the development of the flagship Transforming Lives through Decentralization Programme, which will create regional hubs in regions and counties of Liberia that are lagging in terms of national development. The IAPT brought together all UN agencies to review key social and economic indicators that informed the decision to establish three hubs in Gbarpolu, River Gee, and Bong counties to cover auxiliary counties within the three hub regions. IAPT also organized and held the first Results Groups annual retreat, during which progress towards implementing the UNSDCF was reviewed, and a roadmap developed for effective implementation, monitoring, and reporting during the remaining two years of the framework. The

outcomes of the flagship programme development and annual work planning and reporting demonstrate how the UN in Liberia is working together to achieve the SDGs by supporting national and sub-national priorities of the Government to achieve the country’s national development plan.

#### The Operations Management Team (OMT)

OMT successfully strengthened strategic efficiency, coordination, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency in its business operations and common premises agenda, saving the UNCT an estimated US\$5.8 million. The OMT conducted an annual review in which 11 UN agencies collaborate in common premises, including common vehicle rental services, printing, travel, HR, procurement, and financial management services, amounting to 69% of overall cost avoidance or reduction in common services.

#### Partnerships & Financing Working Group

UNCT fostered partnerships and joint efforts with private sector actors, government, and development partners that have strengthened relationships and effective dialogue towards achieving the Agenda 2030, UNSDCF, and national development priorities. To sustainably foster partnership, the UNCT established a Partnership Working Group consisting of representatives from all agencies, funds, and programmes to enable effective dialogues and collaboration to support the implementation of the UNSDCF and SDGs. The Partnership Working Group has developed its ToR and Workplan for the coming two years and is now conducting comprehensive partnership mapping for the UNCT.

In 2023, Partnerships Group engaged more than 400 private sector actors, multinational companies, financial institutions, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through the UN-private sector dialogue that fostered relationships between the UN and private sector actors and explored possible collaboration areas. The dialogue led to the establishment of the UN-Private Sector Working Group to increase joint programming and resource mobilization efforts to implement the UNSDCF and fully achieve the SDGs.

#### Inter-Agency Disability Inclusion Group

In 2023, the Disability Inclusion Working Group (DIWG) focused on the implementation of the disability inclusion strategy that promoted awareness of UNCT leadership indicators and advocated the inclusion of disability issues on the UNCT meeting agenda. The working group also advocated for the inclusion of persons with

disabilities, particularly women with disabilities inclusion in the 2023 election process. This has brought a spotlight on challenges faced by PWDs (accessibility issues, discrimination, etc.), during political and electoral processes in Liberia to access polling places and other public facilities. In addition, the UNCG worked with the Disability Inclusion Working Group to conduct training for the media personnel on Disability Inclusive communications.

The training has increased the knowledge and understanding of young bloggers on disability-sensitive writing and language when writing about disabilities in the media.

#### UNSDCF Result Groups

In 2023, the four Results Groups developed their joint work plan containing priorities of their agencies and the government aimed at implementing UNSDCF to achieve the national development plan and SDGs. In early 2023, the Results Groups organized their annual retreat to discuss progress, challenges, and lessons learned during the years of implementing the Cooperation Framework. As a result, they developed a strategic roadmap to accelerate implementing and achieving the UNSDCF and Agenda 2030.

#### Inter-Agency Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group

The group organized the first ever joint M&E/UNCG field monitoring mission to 40 project sites in four counties that assessed progress made in accelerating implementation and achievement of joint programmes, standalone programmes, and UNSDCF. The M&E Group also supported results groups and thematic groups as well as UNCT in developing the joint work plan, 2023 CCA (Common Country Analysis) Update and reporting results and achievements in UN INFO, the online platform for UN Country Teams. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Working Group trained agency focal points on UN INFO and coordinated the UNCT Annual Results reporting process by collecting, collating, and reporting on agency achievements under their respective UNSDCF Result Groups.

## UN Communication Group (UNCG)

The UNCG increased the visibility of the UN works in Liberia, especially during the 2023 presidential and legislative election which led to the cohesive imagining of the UN, working together to deliver a common message. UNCG raised awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and developed key messages, factsheets, and visually engaging infographics that increased understanding of the SDGs and UN works in Liberia. In addition, UNCG published a quarterly 'One UN' Newsletter with quarterly achievements of the UN Country Team (UNCT) that fostered continued transparency and collective engagement with the Government and other stakeholders. Furthermore, UNCG organized the UN Day and the 16 Days of Activism which demonstrated the collective efforts of the UN agencies in delivering as one.

To increase the reach and understanding of the UN works in Liberia, UNCG arranged bi-annual editors' meetings with the Resident Coordinator (RC) and Heads of Agencies (HoAs) to facilitate meaningful dialogue,

## United Nations Communication Group supports media to amplify SDGs engagement in Liberia

22 September 2023

The United Nations Communication Group (UNCG) hosted a two-day training for more than thirty young journalists in Monrovia.

The training which happened on September 20th and 21st, focused on how journalists can act to rescue the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in Liberia.

Speaking at the training the Chair of the UNCG Mr. Amadou Alassane Cisse cautioned the journalists to maintain their independence and be a more reliable Voice while disseminating information to the public on the SDGs, thereby 'Leaving No One Behind'.

According to the Chair of the UN Communication Group, the partnership with the media is a result of trust and commitment to what they do.

He also stressed the need for journalists to be more balanced in their reportorial duties.

"Keep your voice, keep your commitment, and realize we are not trying to have UN journalists, we are not also asking you to be the United Nations voice but continued to support the efforts to leave no one behind", Mr. Cisse added.

The UNCG also stressed the need for journalists in Liberia to get involved in reporting and engaging the public and decision makers on the 17 Goals.

They highlighted the importance of informing all Liberians about the linkages between the Sustainable Development Goals and national development. The UNCG journalists are crucial in that they have direct engagement and interaction with the larger society.

Reporter Carson Mehn, one of the beneficiaries, applauded the United Nations Communication Group for the training describing it as "very impactful".

"The training reminded us of our ethics as journalists and broadened our understanding of the SDGs, Disabilities Inclusive Communications, Elections Reporting, Principles of Reporting on Children's Rights, Managing Social Media During Elections, among others" he noted.

The training brought together journalists between the ages of 18 to 35 from various media entities across Montserrado County to exchange ideas, and strengthen collaborative efforts in aligning communication strategies. Media actors were also trained to effectively communicate and report strategic LNOB issues such as Human Rights, Gender, and Disabilities Inclusion.

The UNCG also played strategic crisis communication roles during the 2023 electoral period that promoted a more cohesive image of the UN in Liberia- delivering a joint and common message. These interventions have increased public knowledge and positive perception of the UN as working together as One to support the Government deliver better services for ordinary Liberians. The understanding of the public has also increased on the attainment of the SDGs and new UN Reform in the country.



Young media practitioners at UNCG Workshop

## UN Gender Theme Group

The group produced the 2023 UNCT Gender Equality SWAP Scorecard – the UN’s standardized assessment of gender mainstreaming and performance at the country level – and developed a strategy to support mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment in all UN programmes and agency workplans in Liberia.

## Inter-Agency Youth Task Group

In 2023, the Inter-Agency Youth Taskforce launched the UN Youth Advisory Panel (YAP). The Youth Advisory Panel is the first of its kind in Liberia comprised of 17 young Liberians from diverse regions, representing various youth networks, including rural women’s network, children’s rights, politics and peace, STEM, creative arts, and more. The Youth Advisory Panel serves as a platform additional space for Liberian youth to engage with the One UN System, acting as a sounding board on youth-related developments. The YAP members benefit from training and learning opportunities for personal and professional growth. The Inter-Agency Youth Taskforce has actively engaged the YAP in the One UN System through consultation on peacebuilding fund projects, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse issues facing young people. In YAP recognizing the value of peer-to-peer exchange, opportunities have been availed for YAP members to engage with youth-led organizations from across the continent. They engaged with organizations from Kenya, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, focusing on peace messaging during and after elections. This engagement was integral to the young Liberians in the lead-up to the 2023 Presidential, Senatorial, and Representative elections.

The Inter-Agency Youth Taskforce supported the Government of Liberia in coordinating the At-Risk Youth Empowerment Programme. A proposed 10-year At-Risk Youth Programme aims to rehabilitate, empower, and reintegrate At-Risk Youth (drug-using youths) into society while supporting efforts to prevent young people from falling into drug use. Since the commencement of the programme, 445 at-risk youths have been admitted into the detoxification programme with 269 persons successfully rehabilitated. The UN in partnership with the County Health Teams, Community Based Organisations, and Faith-Based Organisations, affected communities to roll out in supporting the At-Risk Youth programme. In addition, over 100 youths with disabilities, at-risk youth, and university students were engaged to promote the involvement of youths in sustainable peacebuilding, social cohesion, and transformational education that enable them to participate in the social and economic activities of their communities.

## 2.5. Evaluations and Lessons Learned

2023 was an important year for sustaining Liberia’s democratic journey in a complex political context which ushered in an opposition political party that defeated the incumbent president at the polls on November 14, 2023. The UN while supporting the Government’s priorities, implemented the UNSDCF with enormous challenges that affected the effective implementation of key development interventions.

Despite the challenges, Liberia made significant progress towards achieving the national development priorities and UNSDCF. The UN further improved coordination mechanisms and joint interventions that accelerated rural development; improved people’s livelihoods and health outcomes, and promoted gender equality, women’s political participation and leadership, and access to basic social services and the rule of law at local and national level.



The UN also improved internal coordination through the UNCT and IAPT, bringing together all agencies to develop the One UN Flagship Programme through regional hubs aimed at expanding the reach and support of the UN at all levels through various initiatives. The UNCT also promoted human-centered and life-transforming joint programmes through the ‘Smart Village Project’ funded by the Human Security Trust Fund to increase connectivity in rural communities and improve learning outcomes, agriculture productivity, and farm-to-market roads for sustainable development.

However, while internal coordination has steadily improved, the challenges remain, including working silos by agencies and the shrinking fiscal space and limited resource mobilization that affected the slow implementation of transformative interventions. Improving coordination and collaboration within UN agencies and amongst government and development partners through coherent policy and advisory approaches will enable the UN to deliver transformational development that increases the

UN’s collective visibility and impact at the grassroots and national levels. This requires strengthening coordination and communications mechanisms to assess and communicate joint programmes’ successes and impacts at all levels.

The UNSDCF should have ended in 2024, but based on a request from UNCT, the Government of Liberia extended the CF to the end of 2025 to allow the government to develop its national development plan as a successor plan to the PAPD. In preparation for the new CF development, UNCT has developed a roadmap for the final evaluation of the UNSDCF. While carrying out the CF evaluation, the UNCT will continue to support the Government’s ARREST Agenda (Road, Rule of law, Education, Sanitation & Tourism), with a focus on the Government’s 100 days deliverables and subsequent development of a full-scale national development plan with a focus on achieving greater impacts through building synergies and strengthening coordination and accountability mechanisms to work with all partners to deliver effectively.

## 2.6. Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

In 2023, UNCT accelerated its resource mobilization effort and developed its joint work plan that incorporated new joint programmes and agencies’ standalone interventions. The total required resources projected to be mobilized amounted to US\$215.4 million, of which US\$101.5 million was mobilized in 2023. Out of the resources mobilized, total expenditure reached US\$86.7 million, which represents 85%, reflecting a strong delivery rate achieved by all agencies towards implementing the UNSDCF and supporting the government’s national priorities. Outcome 1 has the most considerable resource requirements (US\$93.9 million), out of which US\$61.7 million resources were mobilized and the highest financial delivery rate (88.5%). Outcome 2 has the second largest resource requirement of US\$110.6 million, resources mobilized (US\$ 30 million), and a financial delivery rate of 84.3%. Outcome 4 on Good Governance and Transparency was the third largest performing outcome area, mobilizing US\$6.5 million and delivering US\$4.2 million.

### Total Expenditures Per Results/Outcome Areas

UNSCF OUTCOME AREAS	TOTAL REQUIRED RESOURCES	TOTAL AVAILABLE RESOURCES	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	DELIVERY RATE (%) (AVAILABLE V. EXPENDITURE )
Outcome 1: Basic Social Services	\$93,913,494	\$61,679,800	\$54,570,532	88.5%
Outcome 2: Sustainable Economic Development	\$110,603,852	\$30,015,124	\$25,303,250	84.3%
Outcome 3: Sustaining Peace & Security	\$4,457,796	\$3,331,256	\$2,524,209	75.8%
Outcome 4: Governance & Transparency	\$6,465,356	\$6,465,356	\$4,278,180	66.2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$215,440,498</b>	<b>\$101,491,536</b>	<b>\$86,676,171</b>	<b>85.4%</b>

### Where is the money going?

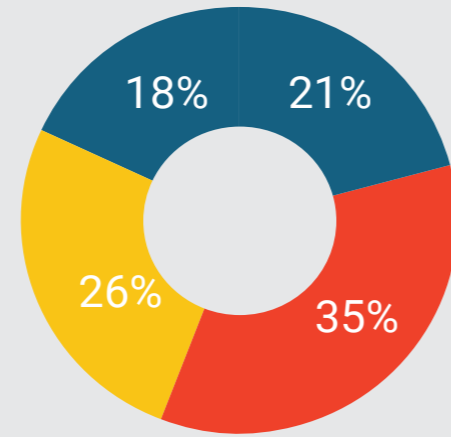
#### How the UN contributes to the SDGs



#### Available Resources \$111.7 million

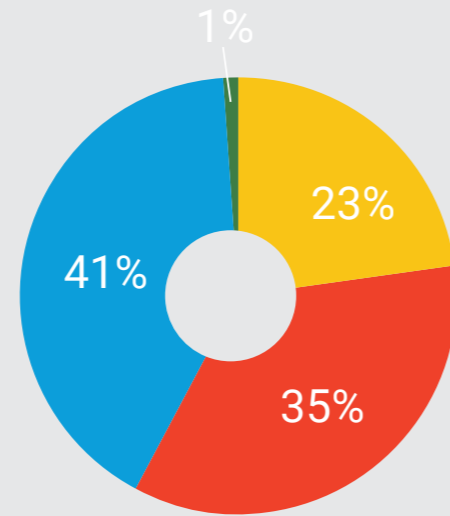
- 1. No Poverty 4.8% of total
- 2. Zero Hunger 18.5% of total
- 3. Good Health and Well-being 14.8% of total
- 4. Quality Education 42.3% of total
- 5. Gender Equality 6.8% of total
- 6. Clean Water and Sanitation 0.1% of total
- 7. Affordable and Clean Energy 0.3% of total
- 8. Decent Jobs and Economic Growth 0.6% of total
- 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure 0% of total
- 10. Reduced Inequalities 0.1% of total
- 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities 0.4% of total
- 12. Responsible Consumption and Production 0.2% of total
- 13. Climate Action 0% of total
- 14. Life Below Water 2.3% of total
- 15. Life on Land 0.1% of total
- 16. Peace and Justice - Strong Institutions 8.7% of total
- 17. Partnerships for the Goals 0% of total

### Expenditure per Gender Markers



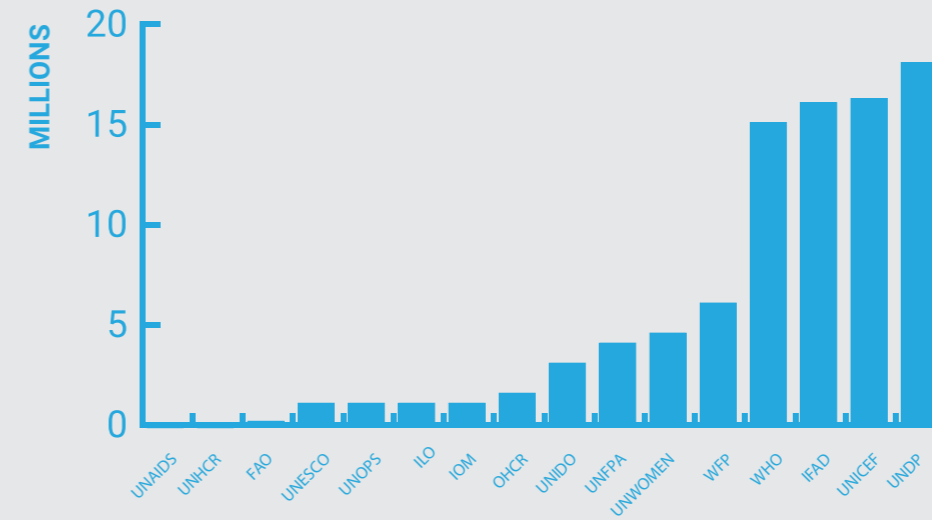
- 1. Contributes to gender equality/women's empowerment in a limited way.
- 2. Gender equality/women's empowerment is a significant objective.
- 3. Gender equality/women's empowerment is the principal objective.

### Expenditure per Human Rights Markers



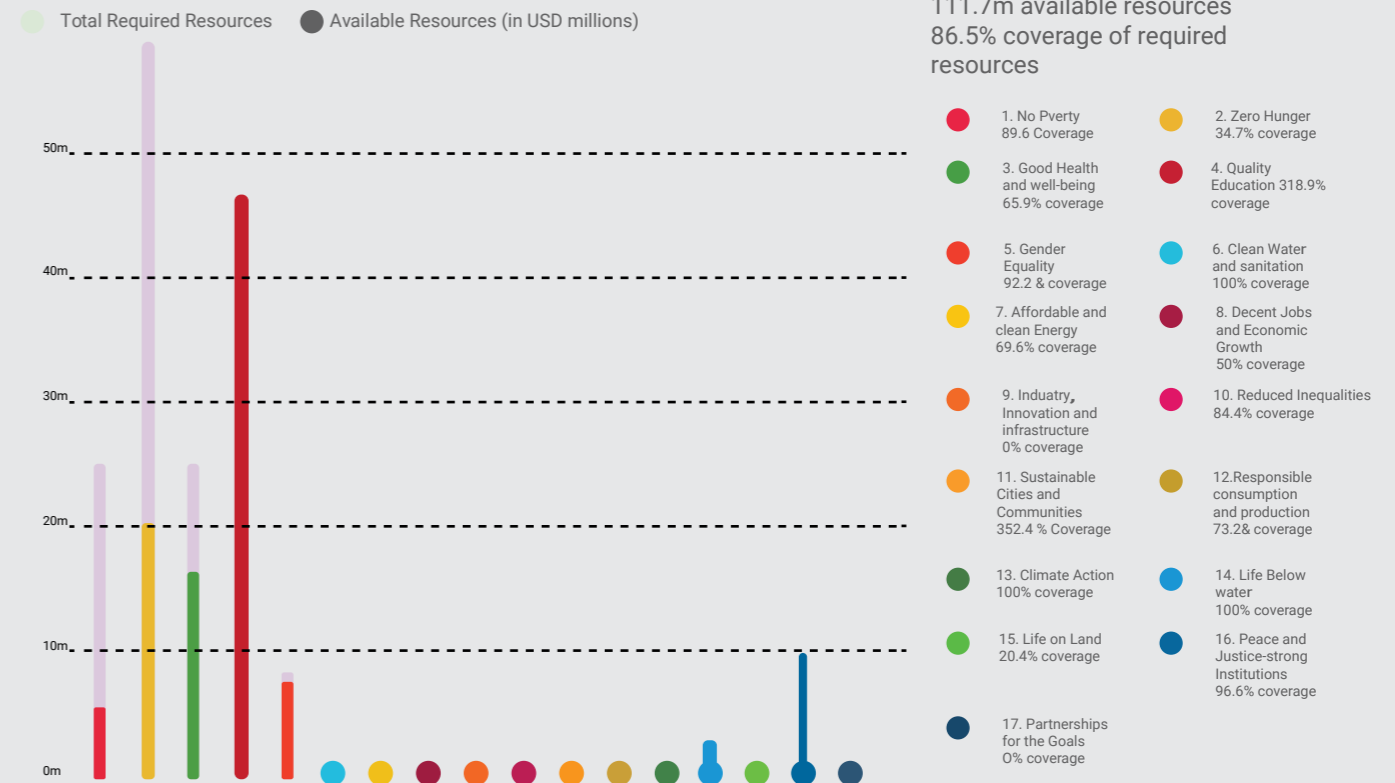
- 0. Not expected to contribute to realization of human rights
- 1. Limited contribution to realization of human rights
- 2. Significant contribution to realization of human rights.
- 3. Principal contribution is to the realization of human rights

### Financial Delivery Per AFP in 2023



The graphic above provides a visual representation of resource allocations dedicated to each SDG, based on the available resources in joint work

### How much we need, how much we have: The UN funding gap by Sustainable Development Goal in Liberia.



This visual represents the funding gap by SDG of the UN's contribution in Liberia for 2023, based on CF Joint Work Plan.

## Joint Programmes and Resources Mobilized

In 2023, UNCT accelerated its efforts to develop joint programmes and built strategic partnerships which resulted to additional funding from the Promoting Inclusive Political Participation and Elimination of Violence Against Women in Politics; Promoting Peaceful Electoral Environment and Community Security in Liberia and Accelerated Community Development Programme and UN Human Security Trust Fund for “Building Resilience of Youth Women, and Vulnerable Groups through Social Protection Floor in Liberia using ICT to address the COVID-19 impact and empower local communities through smart agriculture, agribusiness, livelihoods and peaceful electoral environment. The total resources mobilized in 2023 amounted to \$65.6 million through joint programmes. Furthermore, the UN and Government joint At-risk Youth programme with a budget of \$10 million aims to rehabilitate and reintegrate drug and substance users and provide them with skills training for economic empowerment and contributions to society. In addition, the UN Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Country portfolio also increased considerably eight (8) joint programmes on inclusive women’s political participation and violence against women in politics, legal identity for all people in Liberia, and peacebuilding, social cohesion, and reconciliation, governance, and accountability as well as women’s access to land use and rights. See below the joint programmes table. In 2023, UNCT accelerated its efforts to develop joint programmes and built strategic partnerships which resulted to additional funding from the Promoting Inclusive Political Participation and Elimination of Violence Against Women in Politics; Promoting Peaceful Electoral Environment and Community Security in Liberia and Accelerated Community Development Programme and UN Human Security Trust Fund for “Building Resilience of Youth Women, and Vulnerable Groups through Social Protection Floor in Liberia using ICT to address the COVID-19 impact and empower local communities through smart agriculture, agribusiness, livelihoods and peaceful electoral environment. The total resources mobilized in 2023 amounted to \$65.6 million through joint programmes. Furthermore, the UN and Government joint At-risk Youth programme with a budget of \$10 million aims to rehabilitate and reintegrate drug and substance users and provide them with skills training for economic empowerment and contributions to society. In addition, the UN Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Country portfolio also increased considerably eight (8) joint programmes on inclusive women’s political participation and violence against women in politics, legal identity for all people in Liberia, and peacebuilding, social cohesion, and reconciliation, governance, and accountability as well as women’s access to land use and rights. See below the joint programmes table.

S/N	FUNDING SOURCE(S)	PROGRAMME TITLE	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS	APPROVED FUNDING (US\$)
7	Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	Promoting Peaceful Electoral Environment and Community Security in Liberia	UNDP, IOM, OHCHR	\$3,000,000
8	Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	Delivering Peace Dividends in Liberia: Consolidating National, Regional and Local Reconciliation and Social Cohesion Opportunities	UNDP, FAO	\$3,000,000
9	GOL/PBF/MANCO Liberia	Enhancing Social Cohesion through Rehabilitation and empowerment of At-Risk Youth in Liberia	UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF	\$3,000,000
10	Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	Enhancing peace and social cohesion through the promotion of equitable access to and use of land for rural women in conflict-prone communities and concession areas	UNDP, UN Women, WFP, AEDE (local CSO)	\$3,500,000
11	Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	Empowering citizens and communities to foster social accountability and transparency in governance and public service delivery	UNDP, UN Women	\$3,500,000
12	Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)	Community-Based Forestry and Protected Area Management	UNDP and FAO	\$7,894,569
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>\$65,634,414.48</b>

## Joint Programmes & Resources Mobilized in 2023

S/N	FUNDING SOURCE(S)	PROGRAMME TITLE	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS	APPROVED FUNDING (US\$)
1	Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	The Sustaining Peace and Reconciliation through Strengthening Land Governance and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms Project	UNDP, UN Women & WFP	\$3,996,522.48
2	Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	Promoting Inclusive Political Participation and Elimination of Violence Against Women in Politics	UN Women, UNDP	\$2,000,000
3	The European Union/UN Funded Programme	Spotlight Initiative is a global EU/UN partnership aiming to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices in Liberia and other 24 countries	UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and OHCHR Associated Agencies: UNHCR and IOM	\$26,220,923
4	UN Human Security Trust Fund (UNHSTF)	Building Resilience of Youth, Women, and Vulnerable Groups through Social Protection Floor in Liberia using ICT (UHSTF)	FAO, ILO, UNDP, UN Women, WFP and UNICEF	\$5,000,000
5	Multi-donor Fund (GFATM)	Joint Programme on HIV/AIDs	UNAIDS, ILO, UNDP, WFP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO	\$4,382,500
6	Secretary-General Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	Towards Legal Identity for All in Liberia by 2030 project	UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNHCR, IOM, UN Women & OHCHR	\$139,900

# CHAPTER 3.

## UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

### 3.1. Looking Ahead in 2024 and Beyond:

2024 marks another historic year in Liberia's democratic journey and political transition that saw the transfer of power from one democratically elected government to the next. With the ongoing transition and development of the new Government's 100-day deliverables, the UN Country Team will support the new administration in implementing its first 100-day deliverables and support the development of a new national development plan which will inform the new UNSDCF development in 2025.

The UN system in Liberia supported the government to conduct its first-ever sectoral Portfolio Review in 2023 and the re-engineering of PAPD governance structures. This allowed the government to strengthen the existing governance structures to include Development Partners, Private Sector actors, and CSOs. This exercise also included a brainstorming assessment to identify gains and gaps in PAPD implementation and set the tone for future adjustments and priority setting for the next National Development Plan.

Furthermore, the UN development system will continue strengthening peacebuilding, social cohesion, and conflict prevention to ensure peaceful coexistence and

peace dividends. The UN will also continue to invest in impact-driven and transformational joint programmes to decentralize social services and promote climate-smart agriculture and agri-business, food security, and human capital development to achieve the Agenda 2030, SDGs, and the national development plan.

### 3.2. SDGs Acceleration:

Liberia is committed to domesticating the SDGs in 2016 through a national launch aiming at mainstreaming and localizing SDGs in its national development plan. In 2023, the UN supported the Government in preparing for the SDG Summit. As reported, only 15% of the SDGs targets globally are on track for achievement which requires an integrated approach to rescue the global plan. With support from the UN system, the government conducted consultation with public sector institutions, the private Sector, CSOs, and the communities to review the SDG implementation status and jointly develop the rescue plan through national commitments for the acceleration of SDG implementation in Liberia. Liberia was represented at the summit by the President and submitted the National Commitments for SDG Transformation in Liberia.

## Acronyms

ADR	-	Alternative Disputes Resolution	PWD	-	People with Disabilities
ANC	-	Ante Natal Care	RC	-	Resident Coordinator
CBO	-	Community-Based Organizations	RMNCAH	-	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health
COVID-19	-	Coronavirus Disease 2019	SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
CSO	-	Civil Society Organizations	SGBV	-	Sexual Gender-Based Violence
EMIS	-	Education Information Management System	SRHR	-	Sexual Reproduction Health Rights
EPHS	-	Essential Package of Health Services	TVET	-	Technical Vocational Education and Training
FFPO	-	Forest and Farm Producers Organizations	UN	-	United Nations
GBV	-	Gender Based Violence	UNCT	-	UN Country Team
HIV-AIDS	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus-Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome	UN/GOL	-	UN-Government
IAPT	-	Inter-Agency Programming Team	UNMIL	-	United Nations Mission in Liberia
IFI	-	International Financial Institutions	UNSDCF	-	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
IFAD	-	International Fund for Agricultural Development	VSLA	-	Village Savings and Loan Association
INCHR	-	Independent National Commission on Human Rights	WASH	-	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
INFF	-	Integrated National Financing Framework	WLC	-	Women Legislative Caucus
LACC	-	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission	WPS	-	Women, Peace, and Security
M&E	-	Monitoring and Evaluation	UNFPA	-	United National Population Fund
MFDP	-	Minister of Finance and Development Planning	ILO	-	International Labour Organization
MoA	-	Ministry of Agriculture	IOM	-	International Organization for Migration
MoE	-	Ministry of Education	UNODC	-	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
MoH	-	Ministry of Health	UNCDF	-	United Nations Capital Development Fund
MoJ	-	Ministry of Justice	UNHSTF	-	United Nations Human Security Trust Fund
MSMEs	-	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises	EU	-	European Union
NDC	-	Nationally Determined Contributions	SIDA	-	Swedish International Development Agency
NEC	-	National Elections Commission	PBF	-	United Nations Peace Building Fund
OMT	-	Operations Management Team	GFATM	-	Multi Donor Fund
PADP	-	Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development			
PSIP	-	Public Sector Investment Plan			



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