

**The Liberia Report on General Assembly Resolution  
“Women and Development” with Emphasis on the COVID-  
Intervention**

## **Supporting women's entrepreneurship, expanding existing women-owned and -led micro, small and medium enterprises and facilitating opportunities for new women entrepreneurs**

To improve the economic potential of Liberian women, the Liberian Government in line with a number of multilateral organizations and local groups have worked to address these obstacles. The UN Women's "Next Level Business Program" for Market Women brings skills and financial literacy training to women in the marketplaces of Liberia, providing free childcare as women participate in workshops to learn about budgeting principles for small businesses and how to open a bank account.

The National Petty Trader Union for women in the informal economy also established a partnership with the Central Bank of Liberia to create a credit facility for women traders to receive small loans.

Many women in Liberia faced agricultural resource constraints long before the COVID-19 Pandemic. As a result, women's output remained low despite their enormous presence in the agriculture sector. Solutions to redress challenges affecting women in this area the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture has involved education in crop diversification, access to processing facilities, provision of user-friendly equipment and technologies, seeds, fertilizers, and pest control to help reduce labor costs and farming inputs. Forming partnerships with local non-profit women organizations already engaged in agriculture and economic support services will contribute meaningfully to such efforts.

## **Strengthening and implementing gender-responsive poverty eradication strategies, including social protection systems, to help ensure an adequate standard of living for women and girls, especially in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic**

Gender mainstreaming to include women in crucial decision-making processes and development planning across the country has been a daunting challenge and was mostly felt during the pandemic.

In order to tackle this challenge, The Government launched the Gender Responsive Planning Budgeting (GRP) Policy in 2019 in order to ensure that development planning and implementation in the country is inclusive.

Liberia's national policy on gender-responsive planning and budgeting describes the impediments to national planning and budgeting and recognizes the national budget as a powerful tool when combined with planning interventions for achieving development objectives. Both the budget and planning interventions are indicators of the government's commitment to its policies, especially those promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. This is because the national budget reflects how the government mobilizes and allocates public resources, and how it aims to meet the social and economic needs of the people, particularly those determined by gender-specific considerations.

**Increasing investments in and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes for full and productive employment and decent work for all women, including their participation in and access to labour markets, and addressing women's disproportionate job losses during the COVID-19 crisis in Liberia**

Meanwhile, in response to the economic conditions and as part of the **implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes** triggered by the COVID-19 health crisis, the Liberian legislature approved 25-million of the 2019/2020 fiscal budget to be redirected to support a national economic stimulus program to provide vulnerable households with food, help market women and small informal traders pay back bank loans, and offset other key COVID 19 response costs under the stimulus program.

The Government also developed a national training toolkit used to train senior county officials who will champion gender responsive planning and budgeting in their respective counties.

**Prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women, including in the world of work, including against women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrant women and women with disabilities (paragraphs 16, 43, 44, 47)**

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection, designed and adapted social protection responses to mitigate gendered risks across three domains

- Supporting women in informal employment,
- Tackling the risk of violence against women and girls,
- Confronting the unequal distribution of care work and strengthening care systems.
- . A public hotline service and awareness campaign to respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has also been initiated. Additionally, the ministry has sought to build heavy-duty handwash stations at strategic points targeting women traveling across internal borders and address the special needs of female COVID patients admitted to treatment facilities.

This was achieved by inclusive undertaking pre-program gender analysis to understand gendered needs, risks, and opportunities; engaging and coordinating responses with local actors; and taking an inclusive approach that leads to broader population coverage, with no strict behavioral or eligibility requirements, promoting choice, dignity, and agency

Moreover, although focused on women and girls were paramount, the gender-transformative approach used, addressed men and boys, particularly to change discriminatory gender norms in the household and society.

**Providing equitable and universal access to affordable and quality health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, for women and girls in order to achieve the realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, particularly in contexts of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19**

The Government of Liberia committed US\$10.65 million in 2021 to improve the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents, by supporting and building the capacity of health services providers; providing safe and accessible drinking water, sanitation and hygiene as part of the COVID-19 incidence management system; empowering the adolescent population with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions for their own health care; guaranteeing availability of critical life-saving equipment and medicines to ensure access to quality health care to women, children and adolescents; and protecting the most vulnerable against sexual and gender based violence

Working with the Government to ensure adequate information sharing, health services and life-saving supplies for women, children and adolescents throughout the COVID-19

response and recovery, the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection., the National Public Health Institute, along with the Civil Society Organizations of Liberia,

- Ensures that gender equality is at the heart of the policies for COVID-19 recovery plans and sexual and reproductive rights are fulfilled as a priority;
- Ensures that to assess the quality of social protection and support for citizens, including marginalized and vulnerable groups that is being delivered and working with the Government to strengthen service delivery where required;
- Monitors the disbursement of investments for the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) Pillar of the COVID-19 Incidence Management System and ensure access to safe and clean water, toilets and hand washing facilities in and out of schools and public places is improved; and

In addition, the Spotlight Initiative an EU-UN global partnership to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls was launched in June 2019 by the Government of Liberia, European Union, Civil Society Organizations and the United Nations in Liberia to provide programs through priority interventions, prevent and respond to sexual gender based violence, sexual reproductive health and rights and harmful practices against women and girls by addressing structural causes across six key pillars of legislative and policy framework; institutional strengthening; changing norms and behaviors; delivery of essential services; management of data and strengthening women's movements and civil

Through UNFPA, the Initiative has provided deployment kits for Mental Health Clinicians and Social Workers through the Mental Health and Psychosocial (MHPSS) Pillar under the supervision of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in Liberia.

The initiative is part of efforts to support the mental health and psychosocial needs of COVID-19 survivors, affected communities as well as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The deployment kits include rain gears, nose masks, hand sanitizers, and visibility jackets, among others

In addition to the training and provision of deployment kits to the Mental Health Clinicians and Social Workers, the Spotlight Initiative also provided transportation allowance and recharge cards to the MHPSS service providers involved with the response in five Spotlight counties.

Since the discovery of the first COVID-19 positive case in Liberia, the Spotlight Initiative through the UN has stepped up efforts to ensure that its support toward the reduction in the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices and increase women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health and rights in Liberia remains on track.

Key among these efforts is the support to UNFPA for the establishment of a fully equipped maternal and child care unit and an operating theater at the main COVID-19 treatment unit at the 14 Military Hospital to provide antenatal care, delivery, emergency obstetric care, and postnatal care services for pregnant COVID-19 infected women admitted at the center.

Additionally, the Spotlight Initiative supported the deployment of a roving maternity team to provide care for quarantine pregnant women at Points-of-Cares (pocs), and within the communities. The roving team consisted of trained midwives under the supervision of the Family Health Division at the Ministry of Health.

### **Promoting the transition of women from informal employment to formal employment, including access to decent work, improved wages, social protection and quality childcare**

Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection has prioritized the development of policies to protect female informal workers as well as enable their transition to the formal economy. The government's concrete steps to implement worker protections include signing of the Decent Work Act which sets the basic standards for safe working environments and collective-bargaining rights for workers in the informal sector. The measure also sought to provide skilled and unskilled workers in the formal economy with standardized minimum wages and guaranteed paid leave. The ministry has also worked to improve the working conditions and provide financial and childcare services to women in the informal economy

Historically, the problems facing Liberian women and girls have far less improved due to policy gaps. For example, women were largely excluded from decision-making and management of the County and Social Development Fund (CSDF) until March 2020, when an independent bill was passed that gave women 25 percent delegate seats for the County Sitting .

The Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) recognizes the need to redress gender inequality in the economic sector. The PAPD is a five-year development road map that expires in 2023 and is touted to "bring Liberia closer to the realization of the aspirations defined in the Vision 2030.

Linking national recovery policies to existing economic and development initiatives, such as the County and Social Development Fund (CSDF), has gone a long way in tackling the economic root problems affecting women. The CSDF is a crucial local agency to the PAPD framework and the Sustainable Development Goals (sdgs). It has served as a useful vehicle to drive economic prosperity for women within the financial sector and beyond at the county

levels, by ensuring that concrete gender policy provisions are prioritized in county development agendas and linked to COVID 19 recovery. This approach has promoted need-driven solutions, trigger a sustained flow of resources from the national level, and, over time, yield tangible results.

**Improving and systematizing the collection, analysis and dissemination of high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable disaggregated data, with a focus on women's employment, informal employment, access to decent work and social protection, entrepreneurship, and unpaid care and domestic work through time-use surveys and satellite accounts to assess the contribution of such work to national income**

Integration of Gender Disaggregation Data and Measurable Targets into the Design and Implementation of Life-Saving Interventions and Economic Stimulus Programs can not be over emphasized. There is no question that the Coronavirus affects both women and men in the economic sector. It is also relevant to note that small businesses are barely rooted enough to withstand the economic shock Liberia is experiencing. Also, self-employed small businesswomen and inter-county traders are under severe stress during this period. It is expected that many small businesses may rapidly be declining while others may have breakdown completed. Hence, gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis of the impact of the virus on the economic sector has been necessary to understand how significantly men and women diverge in business capital and capacity and determine who needs what and to what degree. This has also been useful to know how current and future policies can be adapted to promote women's upward mobility in the short and medium to long term. Therefore, the collection of statistics will not be enough to transform women's situation unless measurable policy goals and corresponding indicators complement it. Also, the designation "Market Women" should be well-segmented to ensure many disadvantaged women traders are not excluded from the provision of economic stimulus package during and in the aftermath of the Coronavirus crisis. Some of these women are indebted to banking credit services. Therefore, the loan repayment support initiated under the current economic stimulus package should include provisions for them to recover from any decline their businesses may have experienced because of the pandemic.

**Promoting and protecting women's labour and human rights in the workplace through targeted measures, including universal minimum wage, social protection and equal pay for work of equal value, reducing occupational segregation and gender pay**

## **gaps and ensuring collective bargaining and recruitment, retention and promotion of women**

Seventy-four percent of all female workers in Liberia are informal laborers, facing challenges such as a lack of access to credit and banking services, limited financial literacy and business training, and few social protections or childcare options. The government is prioritizing the development of policies to protect female informal workers as well as enable their transition to the formal economy by The government's concrete steps to implement worker protections included the June 2015 signing of the Decent Work Act—the country's first labor law since the 1950s—which set basic standards for safe working environments and collective-bargaining rights for workers in the informal sector. The measure also sought to provide skilled and unskilled workers in the formal economy with standard minimum wages (\$5.50 and \$3.50 per hour, respectively) and guaranteed paid leave

## **Promoting and protecting women's and girls' right to education and ensuring their safe and equal access to and participation in education throughout the life cycle and at all levels, given the prolonged suspension of educational activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and redressing the attrition of women and girl students**

The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Cultural Information and Tourism, the Gender Ministry and its relevant partners,

- Conducted information campaigns on the importance of continuing education for all learners during school closures,
- Provided equipment and guidance to parents to support learning at home
- Supported to parents and educators by equipping families to support learning at home
- Conducted communications to reinforce the value of girls' education and prevent sexual abuse, child marriage
- Adapted adolescent girls' programs—focused on mentoring, support networks and providing vocational and life skills training—to a virtual format to reach girls at home

## **Integrating a gender perspective into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes and providing adequate resources to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all levels of decision-making and implementation in these areas**



The Government of Liberia in collaboration with UNDP under the National Adaptation Plan with funding from the GCF, has initiated the conditions to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women with diverse backgrounds in disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation at all levels through these implementations:

- Development of a Gender Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction
- Gender and Social Impact of Climate change in Liberia
- Climate Change Gender Action Plan

Based on the above plans and policies, series of actions have been ongoing

Gender focal points trained in climate adaptation and disaster reduction have been assigned to relevant line ministries and agencies that have are tasked with gender mainstreaming.

- Trained gender machineries on climate change and disaster risk management.
- Training of personnel to respond to the needs of the community pre and post disaster and create awareness raising campaigns in order to sensitize the communities
- more ambitious action taken on climate change mitigation and adaptation to limit the impacts of climate change on all persons
- assurance of overarching women's rights (to land, natural and financial resources, services, and income)
- address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence in the context of climate change
- Take measures within relevant bodies and processes under the united nations framework convention on climate change to ensure gender-responsive mitigation and adaptation.
- increase the effectiveness of climate action by funding and developing an improved understanding of the differentiated human rights impacts of climate change on women: through disaggregated data collection, development of gender-specific indicators mapping the effects of climate change and disaster risk upon women, men, girls and boys; poor, rural and remote communities,