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A. Introduction

1. This report was prepared by the United Nations Country Team in Liberia with technical support from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Country Office. It is an independent joint UN assessment of Liberia UPR record highlighting the implementation progress of the 196 recommendations made to the government of Liberia.
2. It is important to note that, out of the 196 recommendations made, the government of Liberia accepted 155 of the recommendations. The report further calls attention to the challenges faced in implementing the recommendations.

B. Emerging human rights issues

1. Impeachment of Justice of the Supreme Court

3. On 28 March 2019, in the impeachment proceedings conducted by the Liberian Senate, Associate Justice Kabina Ja'neh of the Supreme Court of Liberia was found guilty of official misconduct and gross breach of duty in line with the Constitution of Liberia¹.
4. The impeachment proceeding was initiated in the Liberian Senate, when the House of Representative passed a bill of impeachment against the Associate Justice Ja'neh of the Supreme Court². The impeachment was based on, amongst other allegations, the Justice granting a writ of prohibition based on a petition submitted to the court by petroleum dealers to stop the collection of road funds imposed on petroleum products.
5. The impeachment process of Associate Justice Ja'neh was flawed with gross irregularity as the Senate acted ultra vires the constitution, which states that the rules governing impeachment must be adopted jointly by both Houses of the Legislature in a single document. The process failed to adhere to the rules of impeachment as set out in the constitution resulting in a direct attack on the rule of law and separation of powers principle.

2. Response to growing wave of protests and threats of protests.

6. Even though the Constitution of Liberia makes provisions for the rights and freedoms of assembly and expression³, these guaranteed rights, unfortunately, cannot be translated from paper to actual enjoyment as conflictual legislations such as the Liberia National Police Act of 2015⁴ takes away the essence of protests and demonstrations.
7. On 2 January 2018, students of the University of Liberia (UL) staged a protest that later turned violent with burning of tires in the main streets, obstructing traffic, and holding up placards, charging that the UL administrators were preventing them from registering for classes even though they had already paid their fees through the bank as required by the institution. This conduct by the university violates the Constitution of Liberia and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁵ on the right to education. However, the Liberia National Police in this instance did not intervene to thwart the demonstrations. During a second protest staged on 5 February, the Liberia National Police allegedly used excessive force to disperse the protesting students while eight students were arrested, resorting to their usual modus operandi notwithstanding that in the first demonstration they had allowed room for freedom of assembly and expression.
8. On 7 June 2019, a coalition of opposition parties under the umbrella of the Council of Patriots (COP) led thousands of Liberians in the streets of Monrovia to protest what they termed as "wide spread corruption and creeping dictatorship in the country". In response to the protests, the Liberia Police shut down the internet and thwarted the demonstrations in direct violation to the Constitution, which allows for the right to freedom of expression and protest, as well as Article 21 of the ICCPR, which provides for the right to peaceful assembly.
9. On 24 June 2019, in Kakata, Margibi County, Riot police shot and killed one person whilst the other suffered bullet wounds at a citizen protest that came about as a result of suspected corruption in the police force leading to the release of ritual murder suspects.

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¹ Article 43 of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia

² The House of Representatives on August 28, 2018, during the 52nd day sitting of the 54th Legislature, voted to pass a Bill of

³ Impeachment against Associate Justice Kabineh Mohammed Ja'neh

⁴ Liberia National Police Act of 2015, Part III, Section 22.86 (A) and (B)

⁵ Article 13 A and Article 15 A and Article 17 of the 1986 Constitution of Liberia

Recommendations: *The Legislature must align the Liberia Police Act to the Constitution, which provides for respect and promotion of civil and political rights of the citizenry. Alignment will take away the conflicting provisions of the Act to the constitution.*

3. Elections and Human Rights

10. On 10 October 2017, the National Elections Commission (NEC) of Liberia conducted the Presidential and Legislative election without the United Nations technical and security support. None of the presidential candidates won the majority vote in the first round of votes. Therefore, the top two candidates, Ambassador George Weah and then Vice President Joseph Boakai contested in re-run election on 26 December 2017. Before the re-run, Counsellor Charles Brumskine, of the Liberty Party, who had come third in the initial election challenged the result of the first election in the Supreme Court.^[2] The Supreme Court in a majority verdict dismissed the petition allowing the re-run to proceed. Ambassador George Weah won the election, winning 14 of the 15 counties and a 60% total of the votes cast. The inauguration of President George Weah on 2 January 2018 marked the first peaceful transfer of power in Liberia since 1944.
11. Following the victory attained by President George Weah and Vice President Taylor, the Montserrado and Bong county Senatorial seats became vacant and had to be filled in order to complement the senatorial seats. The election for these seats could not be immediately held due to the high cost of conducting the election. The UNDP together with other funders managed to finance the senatorial elections, which were then conducted on the 31st of July 2018. Saah Joseph won the election in Montserrado, whilst Dr.Tokpa was elected in Bong County. Both elections witnessed no incidences of politically motivated violence or any other complaints related to the electoral procedures.
12. The election of Saah Joseph as Senator in Montserrado County further created a vacant seat in district 13 Montserrado County and this also meant that another bye-election had to be conducted to fill up the vacant seat. The same was the case with Sinoe County where Senator Joseph Nagbe was nominated by the President and confirmed by the Liberia Senate to the position of Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, creating another vacant seat.
13. To fill up these seats, bye-elections were held on the 20th of November 2018. During these elections, there were allegations of electoral fraud and irregularities specifically in the Sinoe County bye-election. Investigations of the allegations were initiated by NEC, and after investigations, no evidence of electoral fraud was found. The NEC went on to declare Augustine S.Chea as the winner of the Sinoe County senatorial by election. In Montserrado County, there had been earlier reports and complaints of intimidation and harassment before the election date. However, on the day of the election, no cases of violence or intimidation were reported. Edward Papié was declared the duly elected senator for Montserrado county district 13.
14. On July 29, 2019, the NEC conducted a combined Senatorial and Legislative by-election for Montserrado County vacant Senatorial and Representative Seat for district 15. The elections campaign period leading to the by election was characterized by violence and verbal attacks from both opposition and ruling party supporters.
15. Further, to the violence that characterized the election campaign, the elections were poorly managed with the government failing to adequately finance the election, resulting in the election materials failing to reach the polling stations on time. These serious shortcomings contributed to a re-run of the same election on the 26th of August 2019 after allegations of gross irregularities were reported against the NEC. In the re run election, Abraham Darius Dillon and Abu Kamara were duly declared the winners in the election.

Recommendations: *The National Legislature should consider the 17 recommendations for amendment of the Electoral Laws of Liberia submitted to them by the Liberia Elections Coordination Committee on August 27, 2019. These recommendations if considered have the effect of strengthening the Country's "fragile electoral laws and will further enhance the democratic participation of all citizens.*

4. Major policy interventions and programmes by the Government aimed at protecting human rights:

16. On October 27, 2018, the Government of Liberia launched the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development 2018 to 2023 (PAPD)⁶. The PAPD is the second in the series of 5-year National Development Plans (NDP) anticipated under the Liberia Vision 2030 framework. It follows the Agenda for Transformation 2012-2017 (AFT) and is informed by lessons learned from both the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy 2007 (iPRS) and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2011) implementations. The PAPD has four pillars of interventions:

- ♣ Power to the People,
- ♣ Economy and Jobs,
- ♣ Sustaining the Peace, and
- ♣ Governance and Transparency.

17. Pillars one and two aim towards contributing directly to income, security and empowerment goals; while Pillars three and four contribute to the building of a peaceful and united country pursuing a new vision of full integration into the African continent both in culture and in vision.
18. In a related development, Liberia has continued the implementation of the Joint Justice and Security Programme (JJSP), which aims at enhancing access to justice and security at regional and county levels through the maintenance of Justice and Security Regional Hubs. Currently, five security hubs are operating in Liberia despite recent complaints of funding constraints.
19. With the presence of human rights monitors and CSOs in collaboration with the women and children's desk established at the hubs, human rights continue to be monitored.
20. In December 2018, the National Human Rights Action Plan 2013-2018 (NHRAP) ended. **A new five-year was drafted and launched on December 10, 2019, during the national celebration of the UDHR day in Liberia. The draft document was reviewed by the NHRAP steering committee, validated by stakeholders, and launched by the Government of Liberia.**
21. The NHRAP prioritizes human rights issues and concerns, including compliance with regional and international human rights obligations.
22. With support from partners, Liberia continues to make steady progress in the implementation of its Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan 2014-2019. This five-year renewable national action plan allows for a more effective fight against trafficking in human beings.
23. The Minister of Labour is the head of the Anti-Human Trafficking Taskforce, with a functional trafficking in Persons (TIP) Secretariat as a monitoring unit on trafficking cases. The Ministry of Labour is actively engaged in programs including: the adding of "trafficking in persons" into the Ministry's 2018/2019 Plan of Action, and the successful setting up of an operational "trafficking in persons" taskforce which includes the Liberia National Police, the Liberia Immigration Service, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Ministry of Labour as well as other international partners.
24. From September 4-6, 2019, the Government of Liberia with funding from UNDP and other partners hosted a 3-day Economic Dialogue⁷. The 3-day dialogue, which was attended, by stakeholders and partners sought to rally behind the national consensus on feasible short & medium-term policy measures, strategies, programs and a time-bound road map to strengthen economic recovery, growth, peace and reconciliation. The dialogue focused on four interrelated areas;
 - ♣ Mobilization and management of public finance;
 - ♣ Promoting investment and growing private sector business;
 - ♣ Tracking existing high employment rate amongst the youthful population and the shortage of appropriate skills;
 - ♣ Sustaining the peace to bring about genuine reconciliation.
25. Amongst the short and medium term recommendations from the dialogue is the call for the establishment of a war and economic crime court by the Government of Liberia.
26. In 2019 the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection led the validation and endorsement of the second phase of the five-year strategic plan (2019-2023) of Liberia's National Action Plan (LNAP) on Women, Peace and Security. The plan outlines the government's commitment to the United Nation's Security Council's Resolutions on women, peace and security, as required by Article 25 of the United Nations Charter.
27. In 2009, after subscribing to the provisions of the UNSCR 1325, Liberia adopted its first NAP, a vital Human Rights instrument referred to as the Women Peace and Security, which guarantees an inclusive society where the rights of women and girls are protected; and ensures their full participation in peacekeeping and nation building.
28. The second plan contributes to goal #3 of the Government of Liberia's Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development and emphasizes building an inclusive society where women's rights are protected; women and girl's empowerment, as well as the promotion of women full participation in national decision-making.
29. These strategies and programmes are geared towards improving socio-economic conditions, strengthening the rule of law and ensure access to justice. However, implementation of these initiatives and access to justice for rural communities and vulnerable groups remain a serious challenge.

Recommendation: *Ensure people's full participation, mostly women in the strategies and programmes implementation including monitoring and evaluation.*

C. Recommendations made in the UPR 2nd Cycle- progress and remaining challenges:

1. Acceptance of International Norms

30. In 2019, the INCHR, with support from international partners, initiated a dialogue with stakeholders including Legal practitioners, Members of the Legislative drafting Committee, Government officials, and CSOs to discuss the need to abolish the death penalty in its entirety in line with the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, including the amendment of the new “Arm Robbery Act.”⁶

2. Cooperation with treaty bodies and special procedures

31. In 2016, the Government completed and submitted its first ICCRP report and in 2018 presented its report to the Committee in Geneva.
32. In May 2019, the Government, with support from OHCHR and UNWOMEN, completed the long overdue CRPD report. The report was on September 30 submitted to the CRPD Committee in Geneva through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
33. In 2015 during Liberia UPR 2nd session, a standing invitation was extended to the special procedure by the Liberian Government delegation, and in 2018, Liberia received the Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Expression and opinion.
34. In 2019, Liberia received a delegation from Sub-committee on Prevention of Torture. The government granted the committee access to prisons and detention facilities around the Country.

3. Constitutional and legislative framework

A. Alignment of legislation to international human rights standards

35. In 2017, Liberia adopted the National Child Welfare and Protection Policy, which its goal is to articulate a common vision and agenda of the government that can guide the process of building an effective child welfare and protection system in Liberia. This Policy framework was developed to ensure anticipated improvements in the welfare of children and their families, as per the Children’s Law of Liberia. Accompanying the Policy the the 4 year National Action Plan for Child Welfare and Protection for Liberia (2018-2022) which is yet to be adopted. The plan includes advocacy for the ratification of the three Optional Protocol of CRC (i: on the sale of children, child ii: prostitution and child pornography; iii: on the involvement of children in armed conflict and iii) on communications procedure as well as the 1993 Hague Convention No. 33 on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, and International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 (1973) concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. While this National Action Plan was adopted and resourced (with an accompanying budget), implementation is slow including this action point which UNICEF continues to support the government in its implementation. ii. At a two-day Presidential-Legislative Retreat held from August 16-17, 2019, Liberia President urged the National Legislature to prioritize passage of the bill before the Legislature and called for amendment of certain provisions of the Liberian Constitution. It can be recalled that in 2012, Former President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf initiated a Constitutional review and appointed a five member Constitutional Review Committee that at the end of several nationwide engagements and extensive consultation with national and international partners submitted 25 recommendations currently before the Legislature for endorsement and subsequent testing in a referendum.
36. At a two-day Presidential-Legislative Retreat held from August 16-17, 2019, Liberia President urged the National Legislature to prioritize passage of the bill before the Legislature and called for amendment of certain provisions of the Liberian Constitution. It can be recalled that in 2012, Former President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf initiated a Constitutional review and appointed a five member Constitutional Review Committee that at the end of several nationwide engagements and extensive consultation with national and international partners submitted 25 recommendations currently before the Legislature for endorsement and subsequent testing in a referendum.
37. In March 2019, the Government of Liberia passed into Law the "The Kamara Abdullah Kamara (KAK) Act of Press Freedom." The law, named after the late journalist Kamara Abdullah Kamara abolishes criminal defamation by amending chapter 11 of the Penal law of 1978 repealing sections 11.11 on criminal libel against the president sedition and criminal malevolence.
38. Although Liberia has acceded to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness conventions, the codification into national law has not been fulfilled. Since 2015, a proposed amendment to the 1993 Liberia Refugee Act to include the provision on determining status and protection of stateless persons was submitted to the National Legislature and remains without any deliberations or passage into law.

B. Sexual and gender based violence

39. In 2019, the Government of Liberia finally signed into Law the long delayed Domestic Violence Act. The Law as a legal instrument aims to abolish all forms of violations meted against women, children, and men and categorically recognizes domestic violence as a serious crime against individual and society. However, the portion of the law which proposed to criminalize the practice of FGM was removed from the Bill before its passage into Law.
40. A stand-alone anti-FGM Bill, criminalizing the practice of FGM in Liberia, is being concluded for submission to the National Legislature for consideration and passage into Law. The proposed FGM bill drafting is being led by the Ministry of Gender Children and Social protection in collaboration with other line ministries, Women Rights advocates and groups, CSOs, and the INCHR with support from partners.
41. The Children's Law is relatively strong and in line with the CRC. However, gaps persist in some areas, including the criminalization of FGM. Although the Government of Liberia has publicly stated its commitment to the abolition of FGM, the decision of the National Legislature to remove the FGM portion from the 2019 Domestic Violence Act is contrary; and while Article 6 of the Children's Law (2011) prohibits the forceful conscription and initiation of children under 18 years of age into secret societies, this prohibition has yet to be legislated.
42. The National Child Welfare and Protection Policy and its accompanied National Plan of Action for Child Welfare and Protection for Liberia (2018-2022), developed with support from UNICEF, clearly articulates the existing gaps in laws (including the Liberian Children's Law) and emphasize the need to harmonize the legal framework for child protection in line with regional and international human rights treaties (namely the CRC) to which Liberia is a signatory.
43. The Ministry of Justice Sex Crime Unit with support from UNICEF ensures that the majority of child victims, mostly girls, are provided not only with access to child and gender sensitive justice services but also other psychosocial support through the Victim Assistance Officers of the Sex Crime Unit.

C. Equality between women and men

44. The Government with support from partners is combating gender-based discrimination through the revised National Gender Policy and the GBV National Action Plan. Concrete action in this direction is being achieved through different programmes and interventions including GoL - UN joint programmes such as the UN Joint Programme on SGBV and the Spotlight Initiative. Additionally, to address the issue of gender disparities in education, SDG 4.5, the government through the Ministry of Education, with technical support from UNICEF, is creating conducive policy/legislative framework for implementation.
45. The Ministry of Gender, Women NGO Secretariat, and the Women Legislative Caucus are supported by the UNDP, Under the Gender and HIV project, to enhance women capacity in decision-making and women political participation. In addition, under the inclusive security project, women in the security sector capacities were built to take up a leadership position and promote the enrollment of women in the security sector.
46. On December 8, 2016, Liberia launched a strategy in line with the African Union Agenda 2063, mainly to protect girls from child marriage. The Domestic Violence Act and the Liberia Children Law 2011 further protect girls against child marriage.

D. Child Labor

47. In 2016, the Government of Liberia, with support from UNICEF, developed the National Child Welfare and Protection Policy and its accompanied National Plan of Action for Child Welfare and Protection for Liberia (2018-2022). This is the overarching Policy document and National Plan of Action in which reference is made to the National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Work Forms of Child Labor (2018 – 2030), which was supported by ILO. The policy documents assist staff in understanding the corporate responsibility of the Heads of State enterprises (HSE) and the individual responsibility of each staff member as to their role and responsibility in promoting children's welfare, protecting children from abuse and neglect and reporting child welfare concerns correctly and promptly.
48. The accompanied National Action Plan provides specific guidance for oversight and advocacy for the implementation of policies and national strategies and other action plans as regard child welfare and protection issues' which again includes the Liberia National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2018 – 2020).

E. Death Penalty

49. In 2005, Liberia acceded to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Under the Protocol, Liberia was required to impose a moratorium on executions and amend its laws to eliminate the death penalty. However, Liberia's Constitution requires that international agreements be ratified by the legislature.

50. Liberia's Ministry of Justice continues to argue that accession, though a legitimate exercise of the executive authority, does not legally bind Liberia until the instrument is legislated. It can be recalled that in 2008, Liberia reintroduced the death penalty only for armed robbery, terrorism, and hijacking resulting in death, all offences which had been death-eligible under the 1976 law. Murder is punishable by death under the 1976 Penal Law but was not made a capital offence under the 2008 amended criminal law. However, there has been no death sentence carried out.
51. The Government currently has an existing moratorium on the death penalty in compliance with the Second Optional Protocol of the ICCPR, signed in 2004 and ratified in 2005. Considering that this issue borders on the constitutional amendment, the Ministry of justice is engaged in discussions with relevant national, regional, and international partners that will lead to a national referendum to amend the Constitutional provision on the Death penalty. This is particularly a matter of urgency for the abolishment of the death penalty and life imprisonment without parole for girls and boys of 16 and 17 years of age, whom are considered as adults and not treated as 'juveniles'.

4. Institutions & policies

A. Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR)

52. The INCHR was established by an Act of the Legislature in 2005 and is funded in the National Budget. In 2015 the second badge of commissioners were appointed in line with the Act establishing the Commission, which conforms to the Paris Principle. However, following the resignation of the Chairperson, a new Chairperson is yet to be appointed by the President. The Government has also reduced funding of the Commission citing the declining economy.
53. In 2016, the Commission with support from United Nation Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Human Rights Protection Service HRPS and other partners completed its complaints handling manual to effectively respond to complaints and/or issues of human rights.
54. In 2017, INCHR received an A status accreditation from Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and with technical and advisory support from OHCHR and other partners has deployed Human Rights Monitors in all 15 Counties of Liberia as well as Regional Coordinators in 3 of the 5 regions.
55. In 2018, the commission underwent an institutional capacity gap assessment carried out by the GANHRI.
56. In 2019, a peer review was conducted by the Kenyan National Human Rights Commission with recommendation to enhance the capacity of the Commission. OHCHR also carried out a joint assessment with INCHR on its capacity needs and challenges in nine of the fifteen Counties and has initiated a system audit of the INCHR internal operations and systems to inform appropriate intervention to further strengthen the commission's capacity to effectively implement its mandate. As a result of the joint assessment, OHCHR with donor support is currently providing logistics and material support to enhance the commissions' operations, in addition to the ongoing technical and advisory support and training.

B. Human rights capacity of government agencies

57. In 2016, the former UNMIL HRPS supported training and capacity enhancement of the Ministry of Justice Human Rights Division staff as well as funding the setting up of the first human rights resource center within the division. The Ministry of justice human rights division, with support from UNDP and OHCHR, continue to monitor human rights situation at detention facilities and prisons around the Country, while at the same time play its role as Secretariat of the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP), coordinating the NHRAP drafting and monitoring implementation. With OHCHR, technical and advisory support the division coordinates the Government Treaty and reporting obligation.
58. Since 2015, with UNDP and other partners' support, the Judiciary continues to provide training for magistrates at the Judiciary Institute and have graduated two classes (120 Persons) to date. The graduates were deployed to the 15 counties of Liberia. The magistrate-sitting program, where minor cases are heard and expeditiously adjudicated, is also being extended to all prison facilities in the country to address the high rate of pre-trial detainees at prison facilities around the Country.
59. The Armed Forces of Liberia, received support from UNMIL HRPS for the setting up of a human rights section, now headed by office of the Judge Advocate General. Officers of the section were initially trained by and they now, as a human rights section, are responsible to HRPS train and assign human rights monitors to various units of the Army. In addition, the section continues to conduct Human rights training for all units under command and to troops going on UN missions.

C. Investigation of human rights violations committed by state security agents

60. The Liberia National Police continue to strengthen its professional standard division by upholding recommendations from the division regarding investigations into alleged police misconduct. In this regard,

several senior and junior police officers have been dismissed or disrobed and forwarded to court for prosecution on established charges of misconduct or excessive use of force in contravention of the police code of conduct and standard operation procedure.

61. In 2018, Police Commander, Roosevelt Dehmie Kiidor, accused of killing motorcyclist Beyan Lamin, was arrested, investigated, charged and suspended before being sent to Court for prosecution. Court proceedings are yet to be concluded while defendant Kidor remains suspended and remanded at the Monrovia Central Prison in line with the Penal code of Liberia.
62. In 2019 disciplinary measures were taken against several officers: Sergeant Joseph Abdullah was disrobed for illegally discharging his firearm which resulted in the death of a man identified as Mohammed Kamara in the Fish Town Community on July 4, 2019;
63. Police Chief Inspector Humphrey Kahn was disrobed for illegally discharging his firearm in the St. Michael, New Georgia, Gardnersville on June 25, 2019, while attempting to arrest a stolen motorbike suspect. Officer Kahn and the head of the PSU, Wadell Kwabo (U-121) were immediately disrobed and turned over to the Professional Standards Department for investigations after which they will be charged appropriately and sent to the court;
64. Chief Inspector Peecho F. Worjloh was dismissed for illegally discharging his firearm while under the influence of alcohol in the Budget Bureau Community on 30 June 2019.
65. In another case, appropriate measures were taken against several Senior and Junior officers involved in a shooting incident in Kingsville, District #1 Montserrado County on 24 June 2019. The shootings led to the death of a young boy and serious injury to another person. Following investigations into the incident, four officers were disrobed and turned over to the Crime Services Department for criminal investigation, while, the responsible PSU Team Leader, was also dismissed for breaching the LNP Duty and the Police Support Unit Standard Operating Procedures.

D. Vulnerable Groups

66. The Government of Liberia-UNICEF country programme document (2013 -2019) was designed to address bottlenecks and barriers, which prevent children from realizing their rights. The overall goal of the programme is to ensure that Liberian children, one of the most vulnerable groups in Liberia, and especially the most disadvantaged children and their families, access quality social services and have a fair chance in life.
67. Since 2016, the start of the UN Joint Programme on SGBV, the number of girls reported and reached has steadily increased- from 907 girls in 2016; 1,052 girls in 2017 and 1,563 girls in 2018. While the increased number of girls being victims of SGBV is a major concern, a contributing factor is the availability of a holistic prevention (GBV observatories) and response (One Stop Center) services coupled with the functional GBV IMS, which has made it easier for people to come forward to report rather than hiding and compromising on the cases.
68. The One Stop Centers include emergency medical services, at least one PSS counseling session, and police interviews that are conducted in a child-friendly manner and all in one location. While the One Stop Center in the hospital is yet to be operational 24/7 and over the weekends, all relevant staff (WACPs Officer, nurse and PSS counsellors) are on call/standby during the weekends. Furthermore, child victims of rape/SGBV are treated at the emergency unit in the hospital after office hours (after 4 pm) and during weekends.
69. The United Nations Joint Programme (UN JP) supported by Swedish International Development Agency provided at least twelve One Stop Centers that are providing holistic emergency care and protection for sexual abuse victims in seven counties (Montserrado, Bong, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Rivergee, Grand Gedeh and Bomi). UNICEF's contribution to the One Stop Centre has been to ensure that the child victims/survivors are provided with case management support and support to specialized services. For this also operational support such as transportation and accommodation, support was provided to the child victims/survivors.
70. Concerted efforts made through the UN Joint Programme on SGBV have resulted in the GBV Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (IMS) becoming a functional database generating timely, quality and accessible data about GBV in Liberia. At least one data entry officer exists in the county office of MOGCSP under the supervision of the Gender County Coordinator. The number of SGBV cases reported increased sharply in 2018 to over 2000. Statistics are as follows: 2013 (2,159 cases); 2014 (1,392); 2015 (1,555), 2016 (1,413), 2017 (1,685) and 2018 (2,105). The analysis of this increase in the number of cases reported can be partially attributed to an increased awareness on SGBV issues at community level and service provision.

5. Countering Discrimination

A. LGBTI

71. The Ministry of Health with support from the UNDP Rule of Law program, through the Liberia National HIV Prevention Strategy 2017 – 2022, is working to provide an enabling environment that promotes access to justice for members of the LGBTIQ community at risk of discrimination and victimized from abuses.

B. EBOLA Survivor

72. Much anecdotal evidence was found that many EVD affected children were subjected to stigma, discrimination and rejection by the communities. However, the government and its partners, including UNICEF conducted awareness and social mobilization interventions, which provided adequate information about the prevention, infection and management of the disease. This has alleviated the fear and families have started to feel more comfortable to care for the children of their relatives and next of kin who got infected or died of the disease.
73. Through UNICEF's support, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection have placed almost all of the 8,000 plus orphans of EVD in family-based care, where they are cared for by family members and friends/neighbors.
74. UNICEF through its partner provided one-off cash grants to these families to help offset the costs initially for feeding and enrolling the children in school due to the families lack adequate financial resources to provide for all the needs of the children.

C. Gender based violence Legal Framework

75. A Comprehensive Prevention Strategy to address SGBV and Harmful Practices has been drafted and will be validated for implementation soon. The Domestic Violence Bill was signed into law on August 13, 2019. The law provides for stricter punishment for perpetrators of domestic violence and provides protection for victims/survivors.
76. The Ministry of Internal Affairs prohibition on trial by ordeal is still being enforced. A separate Bill for the criminalization of FGM has been drafted after the section on FGM was removed from the Domestic Violence Bill before it was passed into Law.

D. Sexual Violence

77. Since 2016, the start of the 3rd phase of the UN JP on SGBV, the number of girls reported and reached has steadily increased- from 907 girls in 2016; 1,052 girls in 2017 and 1,563 girls in 2018. The availability of a holistic prevention (GBV observatories) and response (One Stop Center) services coupled with the functional GBV IMS, which has made it easier for people to come forward to report rather than hiding and compromising on the cases accounts for the increased number of reports of girls being victims of SGBV.
78. The Government of Liberia, under the Spotlight Initiatives "Promotion of gender empowerment and equality" led by the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, with technical and Advisory support from partners, is empowering and strengthening women led organizations, women movements to advocate and lobby for change in policies and promotion of laws that protects the rights of women and girls.

E. Awareness Rising

79. The Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection led the organization of GBV observatories comprising of 252 volunteer community members in selected 12 districts of six counties (Montserrado, Margibi, Bong, Grand Geddeh, Grand Cape Mount, and Nimba). The GBV observatories have also been instrumental in preventing SGBV and other traditional harmful practices through conducting awareness rising sessions in the communities and detecting and referring possible cases of SGBV against children to the Gender County Coordinators. So far in 2019, at least 4,712 community members including girls, boys, women and men have benefited from awareness activities to promote access to services to respond to incidents of GBV (e.g. how, where and why to access services for GBV).
80. WACPs officers are also stationed at the One Stop Centre, which provides emergency medical services, at least one PSS counselling session, and police interviews that are conducted in a child-friendly manner and all in one location for SGBV victims/survivors. While the One Stop Center in the hospital is yet to be operational 24/7 and over the weekends, all relevant staff (WACPs Officer, nurse and PSS counsellors) are on call/standby during the weekends.
81. Furthermore, child victims of rape/SGBV are treated at the emergency unit in the hospital after office hours (after 4 pm) and during weekends. There are at least twelve One Stop Centers that are providing holistic emergency care and protection for sexual abuse victims in seven counties (Montserrado, Bong, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Riverge, Grand Gedeh and Bomi) thanks to the UN Joint Programme in which UNICEF is also providing operational support to the child victims/survivors who come to the One Stop Centers.
82. Long-term sustainable solutions to girl victims of sexual violence (approximately 73% of cases are under 18 years of age) are equally important but not sufficient in Liberia, which necessitates specific care and protection as compared to women victims/survivors of rape. MOGCSP with the technical support of UNICEF is providing selected girl victims and their families socio-economic empowerment activities, including vocational skills trainings that are aimed for long-term sustainable support so that the girl victims and their families recover, are

rehabilitated and reintegrated back to their old or new communities or families. This support is being provided in the second part of 2019 under the auspices of the Spotlight Initiative. This support needs to be extended to other counties as well.

83. GBV observatories had been established with at least 252 volunteers in selected 12 districts of six counties (Montserrado, Margibi, Bong, Grand Geddeh, Grand Cape Mount, and Nimba) where FGM is widely practiced. The GBV observatories have also been instrumental in preventing SGBV and other traditional harmful practices through conducting awareness raising sessions in the communities and detecting and referring possible cases of SGBV against children to the Gender County Coordinators. So far in 2019, at least 4,712 community members including girls, boys, women and men have benefited from awareness activities to promote access to services to respond to incidents of GBV (e.g. how, where and why to access services for GBV).

F. FGM and harmful practices

84. No law expressly criminalizes the practice in Liberia. On 19 January 2018, former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf signed Executive Order 92, temporarily banning the practice of FGM in the country for one year. Although this ban was a step in the right direction, it only covered girls below the age of 18 and imposed lenient penalties on perpetrators.
85. The temporary ban came to an end on January 19, 2019, leaving Liberian girls and women open to the risk of undergoing FGM once again. With the FGM sections removed from the Domestic Violence Act of 2019, girls and women in Liberia remain at serious risk.

G. Nationality and Registration

The Ministry of Health is mandated to ensure the issuance of birth certificate free of charge for age 0 to 13 and for all persons in health centers, and at the Bureau of vital statistics and county level service centers across the country for Birth Registration and Death Certificate. One of the main bottlenecks of low birth registration rates in Liberia has been the inaccessibility of birth registration service centers which prior to 2017/2018 was only located in the county level. Since end of 2018/2019, birth registration centers are established at hospitals and health facilities in district level, as a way to ensure accessible, universal and free birth registration especially for all children under the age of 13.

6. Conditions of Detention

86. Ministry of Justice through its Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (BCR) continue to receive UNDP support to improve prisons living condition. This has been done through critical infrastructural improvements to reduce over crowdedness, provide life skills through vocational training. To strengthen its oversight and independence, the BCR with support from UNDP is seeking to amend the Law establishing the Bureau to have independent/autonomous status. In addition, the Ministry of Justice with UNDP support is seeking to establish a plea bargaining system that will permit the courts to accept pleas of guilty to a lesser charge, thereby reducing the volume of cases that will go to trial.
87. Civil Society organizations with UNDP support are providing free legal aid services including representation to the poor and disadvantaged groups to increase access to justice as well as regularly monitor the performance of justice and security institutions to significantly reduce the number of arbitrary arrests, pretrial and prolonged detention
88. With support from partners, CSOs have continued to provide awareness on the rights of persons held in detention through their monitoring and consistent follow-ups with relevant stakeholders. Consequently, these monitoring have resulted in necessary steps being taken by the relevant authorities to address prison conditions.
89. The Ministry of Justice with support from UNICEF is working to ensure that children in contact with the law have access to child-friendly justice services that promote the prevention of offences, restoration, and reintegration of children into community and/or family-based care and prosecution of perpetrators.
90. As a result of the Ministry of Justice Child Justice Section introduction of a diversion programme, that diverts children away from formal judicial proceedings to avoid stigmatizing children as criminals and to address offending behavior through protective and educational measures rather than through a sentence of the court, So far as of June 2019, 65 per cent of cases of children in conflict with the law did not reach detention either through mediation or restitution.
91. Of the 301 child offenders who conflict with the law, 196 children (146 boys, 50 girls) were diverted at WACPS/LNP level mainly through restitution and mediation; and 70 children (60 boys, 10 girls) were released from prison at the pre-sentencing stage. This is a slight decrease as compared to 2018. As in 2018, 80 per cent of cases of children in conflict with the law did not reach detention either through mediation or restitution, as of the 696 child offenders who were in conflict with the law, 558 children were diverted at WACPS/LNP level mainly through restitution and mediation and 138 children were released from prison at the pre-sentencing stage.

92. The INCHR, with partners support, between 2017 to 2019, made a number of direct interventions with various justice actors at courts and correction centers in a number of facilities across the country. These interventions resulted to the release from various detention facilities of a total of 155 pretrial detainees in the year 2018 to present, 2019.

7. Right to an Effective Remedy, Impunity

93. The government, through the UNDP and OHCHR (Joint rule of law Programme), UN Women and UNICEF (through the UN JP on SGBV and Spotlight Initiative in Liberia), is supporting the operations and capacity strengthening of the Sexual and Gender Based Violence Crimes Unit at the Ministry of Justice, the Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberia National Police, and the Specialized Criminal Court E, created only for the adjudication of sexual offences. Through the UN JP on SGBV and the Spotlight Initiative, UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women are strengthening the capacity of these units.
94. Technical support from UN and other partners has strengthened capacity building in the areas of evidence gathering, crime scene investigation, trial techniques and psych- social counselling. This has improved prosecution and increased the level of conviction rate.

8. Economic, Culture, and Social Rights

A. Right to an adequate standard of living – general

95. The Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) on 25 June 2019, signed a contract to collect social data in four of 15 counties, which aims to qualify 'extremely poor people' for social services, and social cash transfer. The program is being supported by the government and partners. Information gathered will inform the setting of a registry in four Counties (Nimba, Maryland, Bong and Bomi) specifically dedicated to social data information issues and directly focused on the poorest of the poor for social development.
96. In the case of education, the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Education remains committed. The Ministry of Education, in continuation of the Government policy on the provision of free and compulsory basic and primary education policy in all public schools across the country, with support from partners, provides hot meals to 280,709 school children in 1,316 pre-primary, primary, and community schools across the 15-counties.

B. Right to social security

97. In 2016, the Liberian Government enacted the New Chapter 89 of the Executive Law establishing the National Social Security and Welfare Corporation (NASSCORP) to replace the old Chapter 89 of the Act. The New Chapter 89, which became effective in 2017, outlines the government five years social security plans to ensure that the programs at NASSCORP are functioning properly.
98. Under this new Chapter, the Government is to establish a robust and integrated system for the coordinated delivery of protection programs.

C. Right to Work

99. In 2018, the Liberian government, through the Ministry of Youth and Sports, launched a National Youth Employment and Empowerment Program (NYEEP) plan, interventions aimed at developing thousands of youth across the country.
100. The three interventions, Youth Opportunity Project (YOP), Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Project (YEPP), and Liberia Employment and Entrepreneurship Program (LEEP), with support from donor partners, targets youth are that meet a set level of vulnerability owing to their poverty status, determined through a set of eligibility criteria and seek to ensure an overall 50/50 participation ratio for male and female beneficiaries across Liberia.
101. In 2019, the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) launched, through a National Microfinance Support and Entrepreneurship scheme, an Intervention aimed at supporting and financing youth interested in doing business both in the formal and informal sectors. The scheme is guarantee through an Access to Finance Mechanism and explores innovative business ideas that provide an increase in employment opportunities for youths.

D. Right to health

102. On 27 June 2018, the Government of Liberia and partners launched the National Action Plan for Health Security, the National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance and the One Health Coordination Platform Governance Manual. These initiatives aim to improve the Liberian population health status through building a resilient health system that contributes to the achievement of equitable health and complements the National Health Policy and Plan.

The National Health and Social Welfare Policy and Plan 2011–2021 (Basic Package of Health Services) and The Republic of Liberia Investment Plan for Building a Resilient Health System 2015 to 2021 reinforces the provision of mental health and addiction services and states that the MOH will have the following Strategic Objectives (SO's) for the Mental Health Policy and Increase access to and utilization of a comprehensive package of quality health and social welfare services of proven effectiveness, delivered close to the community, endowed with the necessary resources and supported by effective systems;

103. Ministry of Health with UNICEF support is implementing the Child Friendly Communities/Real Time Monitoring Approach in Grand Gedeh. This approach is based on 5 key pillars.
 - Integrated multisectoral community systems to improve feedback loops and program adjustments
 - Local Governance for improved social accountability mechanisms
 - Quality Service Delivery
 - Real Time Monitoring
 - Effective Partnerships

This approach delivers an integrated package of Child Health, Nutrition, WASH and Child Protection activities to communities by MOH Community Health Assistants, which are monitored and tracked by the community with a focus on increased accountability by the Local Governance Structures.

104. In 2018, OHCHR presented, on behalf of the former UNMIL, a DNA analysis machine to the Liberian Government through the Ministry of Gender, Children, and social protection. The machine, which is meant to be used to analyse forensic evidence of rape within the country to aid in prosecution, is stationed at the JFK Medical Center in Monrovia. The DNA machine was procured in 2017 by UNMIL, under the UNMIL HRPS support to the Ministry of Gender SGBV Unit, but delivered in 2018 after final closure.
105. To ensure health care system has a nationwide coverage, bearing in mind that 29% of the Liberian population lives greater than 5 km away from the Health Facility, the Liberia Government developed the National Community Health Policy and Strategy 2015-2021.
106. To continue supporting the Government to improve access to basic health - care services, especially for antenatal care and patients affected by HIV and the Ebola virus, UNICEF supported the MOH to build the capacity of Health Workers to provide integrated Maternal and New-born child health and HIV services during ante natal care (ANC). This included the testing of all pregnant women for HIV at ANC.

E. Right to Education

107. President George Weah in 2018 declared “free tuition for all undergraduate students” at all public universities. This measure according to the Government is intended to increase enrollment at public Universities and encourage students to remain in school until graduation.
108. The Government has to continue measures to ensure quality education for all through its policies including the Free and Compulsory Basic Education (1st to 9th grades), the National Technical Vocational Education and Training, the Girls Education that stress education of girls, the Alternative Education, the National School Health policies amongst others. The Ministry of Education, with support from UNICEF, working towards the protection of the right of all children to education as enshrined in the CRC and continues to support the implementation of the Girls' Education Policy, which was developed in 2013 and is currently under review. At the high school level, Ministry of Education is modelling the Gender Equitable Education Programme (GEEP) in 45 schools in six counties. This programme has resulted in improved learning outcomes for the girls and boys and also increased access to education, retention and transition to the next grade levels for grades 7 to 9 in the intervention schools. Ministry of Education with UNICEF support intends to scale up the model and influence both pre-and in-service teacher training in order to reach mores students in the country.
109. The government has also initiated the payment of fees for all Liberian Students sitting the West African Senior School Certificate Examination.
110. The Education Management Information System (**EMIS**) annual school census shows that the overall school enrolment increased to 1,415,106 in 2016 compared to 996,779 in 2014 and are steadily increasing due to other recent measures being put in place by the Ministry of Education. The 2016 education data showed 689,010 female and 762,096 male in early childhood education through senior secondary education across the country, unlike 2014 data, which showed 478,082 female and 518,697 female.
111. In 2016, the Government developed a four-year education plan "Getting to Best Education Sector Plan (2017-2021)" to address the most urgent challenges facing the education sector in Liberia. This plan is being used by the Government to implement a series of strategic, evidence based and innovative programs to improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning for all students by June 2021 with measurable impact.
112. Ministry of Education and sector partners, working with UNICEF, from February 2015 ensured the reopening of schools after they had been closed for over 6 months during the EVD Crisis.

F. Business and Human Rights

113. The Liberian Government, through its Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development of July 2018, committed to “developing and implementing a national action plan for implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.”
114. In 2016, the Ministry of Lands and Mines, with support from UNMIL HRPS, developed a business and human rights checklist for use by the Ministry field monitors and trained field monitors to the use of the checklist. However, the checklist has yet to be endorsed by the Ministry leadership for use by the Monitors. Also in the same year, UNMIL HRPS facilitated the establishment of a Business and Human Rights Secretariat comprising State and non-state institutions including the National Investment Commission (NIC), Liberia Chamber of Commerce (LCC), MoJ, the Business and Human Rights Network and Resource Center, and the CSOs human rights advocacy platform, a network secretariat aimed at coordinating joint advocacy and engagement on issues and concerns of business and human rights.
115. In 2017, the NIC drafted a clause, reviewed by OHCHR Geneva office, to be inserted into the MOU usually entered into Between NIC and Government Investment Incentive Beneficiaries relative to building the capacity of Youths from the Government T- VET Programs. However, the insertion of the clause is yet to be endorsed by the NIC management.
116. In July 2018, the INCHR, with support from the OHCHR Liberia office, facilitated a round table discussions aimed at establishing a stronger business and human rights network involving the INCHR, CSOs, Liberia Chamber of Commerce, Business Associations, Worker Unions, and government institutions to lead in advocating the implementation of business and human rights standards in Liberia.
117. From 15-16 February 2019, the Ministry of Justice, with support from the OHCHR Liberia office, steered a two-day high-level forum with government institutions, selected businesses, other relevant partners, and INCHR. The two-day high-level forum initiated the drafting of a work plan and roadmap to begin the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) for Business and Human Rights mentioned in the Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development of July 2018. A work plan and roadmap has been developed pending validation for implementation.

9. Children’s Rights

118. In 2017, the Liberian government finalized a draft National Action Plan on Child Labor and launched the National Child Welfare and Protection Policy that focuses on the implementation and enforcement of child labour laws. The government also operates a shelter and case management system for vulnerable street children.
119. The Decent Work Act of 2015, which needs an amendment to further strengthen protection against all forms of child labour, is the only legislation prohibiting forms of child labour. With support from partners, the Ministry of Labour through its Child Labour Division is making minimum progress towards the realization of the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

END.