



**WOMEN'S RIGHTS SECTION**

**CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS  
OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**MISSION TO LIBERIA, 12-15 JUNE 2006**

**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXPERTS**

*Note: The present report was compiled and synthesized from experts' individual reports by the Division for the Advancement of Women.*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following a request from the Government of Liberia for support in the implementation of the obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention), an internationally recognized panel of experts participated in a mission to Liberia in June 2006. The mission was organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.

The purpose of the mission was to identify gaps and challenges faced by the Government in its efforts to implement the Convention and to develop appropriate recommendations for priority action by both governmental and non-governmental bodies.

The present report contains the experts' assessment of the situation in Liberia with respect to implementation of the Convention, followed by a set of recommendations for follow-up action. The report also contains a description of the discussions held during the mission in Liberia. The report was compiled by the Division from the individual reports (summaries of discussions, assessments and findings, and recommendations) of the four experts who participated in the mission.

The report covers a number of substantive areas, including constitutional and legal reform, discriminatory traditional practices, awareness-raising, temporary special measures, violence against women, education, labour and health as well as civil society. It also contains a number of selected recommendations. The report also contains a descriptive account of the meetings held. A major focus of the report is on ways to strengthen the catalytic role of the national machinery for the advancement of women in highlighting the objectives of the Convention, strengthening commitment and enhancing action for its full implementation. The recommendations contained in this report are also intended to form the basis for a follow-up programme in Liberia by the Division for the Advancement of Women to strengthen capacity for the implementation of the Convention. It is hoped that the recommendations will also encourage other institutions, organizations and donors to support the promotion and protection of women's human rights in Liberia.

The mission to Liberia and the planned follow-up work are part of the Division's programme to support countries emerging from conflict in the implementation of the Convention. The mission to Liberia was made possible from funding by the Government

of Ireland and the Division thanks the Government of Ireland for its continued support of the Division's programme in countries emerging from conflict.

## **1. BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This report outlines the outcome of high-level consultations on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW or the Convention) held in Liberia in June 2006.<sup>1</sup> These consultations were the first part of an overall effort by the Division to support and strengthen the capacity of the Government of Liberia, at its request, to put in place laws and policies and identify strategies for implementation of the Convention. The purpose of the mission was to identify the gaps and challenges faced by the Government in its efforts to implement the Convention as well as to develop appropriate recommendations for priority action for enhanced implementation. The high-level consultations were also guided by the desire to strengthen the catalytic role of the national machinery for the advancement of women in ensuring that the Government as a whole embraces the objective of implementation of the Convention and its wide dissemination.

The first part of the report outlines the background and purpose of the mission. This is followed by an assessment of the situation in Liberia in relation to implementation of the Convention and recommendations for priority action by the State party are then presented. A descriptive account of the meetings held is also provided.

### **1.2 The international legal framework**

Liberia is party to the seven international human rights conventions, of which four were ratified in September 2004.<sup>2</sup> It acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 17 July 1984 without reservations and signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention in 2004. Other instruments that have been signed but not yet ratified include the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Liberia ratified the African Charter on Human and

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<sup>1</sup> The Division for the Advancement of Women is indebted to staff of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), in particular Ms Joana Foster, for the excellent substantive and administrative support she provided both before and during the mission. The Division also expresses its appreciation to Ms. Vabah Gayflor, the Minister for Gender and Development for her encouragement and Ms. Annette Musu Kiawu, UNIFEM/ the Ministry for her efficient support.

<sup>2</sup> Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Peoples' Rights and more recently became a party to the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa. Liberia has not submitted its initial and subsequent periodic reports under article 18 of the Convention. The only report submitted by Liberia so far has been that under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was examined by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in May 2004.

The scope of the Convention requires an ongoing and concerted effort on the part of the State party to achieve compliance with all Convention provisions. Such an effort should be based on an initial comprehensive review of national legislation, administrative rules and procedures and practices to determine the degree of compliance with the terms of the Convention. During such a review, attention needs to be paid to each of the substantive provisions of the Convention to assess the extent to which the rights guaranteed are being enjoyed by all women. Based on the results of such a review, clearly stated and targeted policies need to be elaborated and priorities set that are consistent with the provisions of the Convention. Public discussion of Government policies should be encouraged to strengthen the involvement of various sectors of society in the formulation, review and implementation of these policies. A State party's initial report, due one year after entry into force, should establish the constitutional, legal and administrative measures to give effect to the Convention, explain the measures adopted to give effect to it and demonstrate the progress made in ensuring enjoyment of its provisions by the women within the State party.

### **1.3 Multi-phased programme of technical assistance**

Following a request by the Government of Liberia through the Minister of Gender and Development, Ms. Vabah Gayflor, the Division for the Advancement of Women proposed a multi-phased programme of technical assistance to support the Government of Liberia towards enhanced implementation of the Convention.

The first phase, in the form of high-level consultations and meetings of experts with various stakeholders, was intended to sensitize and raise awareness amongst key roleplayers on the provisions of the Convention. The national machinery for the advancement of women was to be an integral part of this phase so as to enhance its capacity for follow-up and coordination in the development of targeted policies and programmes.

The subsequent phases of the programme, based on the recommendations in this report, include the delivery of training for Government and non-governmental officials as well as

targeted support in the preparation and finalization of the State party's initial and combined report. The Division would use the recommendations in this report to formulate adequate follow-up training programmes in Liberia within its available resources. It is also hoped that the recommendations made in this report will facilitate further support by other institutions, organizations and donors for the promotion and protection of women's human rights in Liberia.

#### **1.4 Implementation of phase one: mission to Liberia**

Phase one of the programme of technical support, the high-level consultations with key ministries and other stakeholders, took place from 12-15 June 2006. A team of internationally recognized experts in the provisions of the Convention visited Liberia and met with a number of key ministries and other stakeholders in order to:

- assess the current status of awareness about the provisions of the Convention;
- review the provisions of the Convention and their implications for the work of the respective ministries;
- discuss challenges in implementation of the provisions of the Convention;
- identify opportunities for using the Convention and its provisions as a strategic tool in legislative and policy processes and in programme development to enhance adherence to its provisions;
- discuss coordination mechanisms to facilitate collaboration between the Ministry of Gender and Development and other ministries, as well as with civil society to monitor progress in implementation of the Convention; and
- develop a set of recommendations to priority action for implementation of the Convention in Liberia.

The following experts participated in the mission to Liberia:<sup>3</sup>

- Dr. Charlotte Abaka, former chairperson and member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;
- Ms. Dorcas Coker-Appiah, member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;
- Ms. Elizabeth Delpont, consultant and member of the faculty of law, University of Pretoria, South Africa; and
- Professor Joseph Oloka-Onyango, member of the faculty of law, Makerere University, Uganda.

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<sup>3</sup> The biographies of the experts is attached as appendix one.



Ms. Saras Jagwanth, adviser in the Women's Rights Section in the Division for the Advancement of Women, and Ms. Carolina Vizcaino, associate human rights officer in the Division, accompanied and supported the team in Liberia.

The experts held meetings with the following ministries: Ministry of Gender and Development, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and Ministry of Internal Affairs. They also met with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Parliamentary Committees, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, including agencies, and the Human Rights and Protection Unit of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

The group of experts also met with President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who expressed her full support for the mission and for the protection of women's rights.

## **2. ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN LIBERIA IN RESPECT OF THE CONVENTION: GAPS AND CHALLENGES**

### **2.1 Liberia in context**

Liberia suffered almost fourteen years of conflict which ended in a total breakdown of all institutional and governance structures including the judiciary, the police as well as traditional institutions. There is a complete destruction of infrastructural services and Monrovia, the capital, has not had electric power or water for nearly ten years. The new Government's priority is focused on reconstruction of infrastructure and restoration of social services. Governance, rule of law and security are other priority areas for the Government. There is an 82 percent unemployment rate and an 85-90 percent illiteracy rate in Liberia. There is an acute shortage of financial and human resources required for effectively protecting and promoting the rights of women in Liberia, and for putting in place time-bound measures and effective policy coordination and implementation mechanisms.

In November 2005, Liberia elected the first woman President in Africa. The election of Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is regarded as a victory for all women in Africa and has also met with applause in the international arena. Setting the tone in her inaugural address, President Johnson-Sirleaf has made it very clear that the promotion of gender equality is a priority. In April 2006, she presented the 150-Day Action Plan, which includes activities to be completed in the short term, as well as a strategy for reconstruction and

development in the longer term. The plan does not have a section covering women's issues, but the Ministry of Gender and Development is involved in various of its aspects, including in the facilitation and return of refugees and internally displaced persons, the revitalization of agricultural production, strengthening of the judiciary and the rule of law and establishing a caucus for women legislators.

While there is much political support for women's human rights, Liberia's commitment to international human rights standards remains to be translated into domestic law and policy aimed at the practical realization of principle of equality between women and men (see article 2(a) of the Convention). Discrimination against women is pervasive and women are subject to discriminatory and harmful customs, prejudices and other practices. Discrimination is more prevalent in the rural areas where the laws of the hinterland or traditional justice continues to supplement civil law. The practice of trial-by-ordeal exists, in which severe pain often amounting to torture continues to be applied against people, including women and girls suspected of witchcraft. Sixty-six percent of female heads of household have no or only elementary education. While 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, most of the poor are found in the rural areas where subsistence farming is the main source of livelihood. The majority of the farmers are women.

Violence against women, especially sexual violence, is very prevalent and is linked to women's low position in society, reinforced by discriminatory cultural values that see women as inferior and subject to the control of the male family member. While the civil war has devastated Liberia, its effects were felt particularly acutely by women and girls. Thousands of women and girls were subject to widespread and systematic sexual violence during the war, including rape and sexual slavery. Even though security has improved, women are still at risk of suffering human rights abuses and violations, including sexual exploitation, transactional sex, rape and domestic violence.

Within civil law, statutes and practice are embedded in patriarchy, and laws are often interpreted by the justice system in a manner resulting in deprivation by women of their human rights. Women's access to justice is limited by multiple factors such as the weakness of the judicial system, historical unwillingness to investigate and prosecute cases of domestic violence or property disputes, the absence of legal aid services and the lack of awareness amongst most women of their rights. The legal system remains unable to effectively address sexual offences against children, including girls, in a context where communities often accept such acts as hazards of life rather than serious crimes.

The situation in Liberia remains fraught with difficulties. Yet, prompted by the election of a woman President and the priority she gives to gender issues in the course of her work, there is considerable political will and desire to implement the Convention and advance women's rights in Liberia. Many of the ministries that were visited strongly gave this impression. However, without considerable further resources and human capacity, the prospect of serious change is grave. The United Nations Mission in Liberia offers some back-up and support, but the international community, bilateral donors and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a greater role to play in supporting Liberia to implement fully and effectively the obligations it assumed by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

## **2.2 National machinery: the Ministry of Gender and Development**

General Recommendation 6 encourages the establishment of national machinery to promote the advancement and development of women in all States parties. The mandate of such machinery should include advice on monitoring progress in compliance with international human rights standards. Under the Beijing Platform for Action, Governments are required to create and strengthen national machinery for the advancement of women at the highest possible level of authority to perform policy analysis, undertake advocacy, communication, coordination and monitoring of implementation. The national machinery set up in Liberia is the Ministry of Gender and Development (MGD), which is responsible, inter-alia, for coordinating the implementation of the Convention. The MGD coordinates the advancement and development of women, as well as acts as a catalyst to the other key Government institutions that must be part of eradicating inequality between women and men in the country.

The MGD has instituted strong links with some line ministries and civil society, but there is also the need to ensure greater and more effective inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration as well as cooperation with civil society and international organizations. The MGD needs to be more involved with the different processes of policy formulation taking place in each individual line ministry. For instance, the MGD was not involved in the process of formulating the national policy in the Ministry of Education. The role of the Ministry in facilitating gender mainstreaming in all other Government departments needs to be further developed. The Ministry must take a lead role in developing a national gender equality strategy and coordinating its implementation. In addition, the capacity of

the staff of the MGD, including their catalytic role in implementation, needs further development, especially on the Convention. There is also need for the appointment of persons with legal training in the MGD, including so that they can undertake, inter-alia, an analysis of the impact of all legislation on women.

The many challenges facing the MGD must be acknowledged. There is an acute shortage of both human and financial resources in the Ministry. Lack of resources is attributable to a number of factors, including budgetary constraints and prioritization of areas other than equality between women and men as the country struggles to reconstruct its society, economy and state institutions after years of devastating conflict. Financial and human resources are needed to support the national machinery for the advancement of women to adequately fulfill its role to advance and protect women's rights in Liberia.

### **2.3 Law reform and constitutional review**

Article 2 of the Convention, inter alia, provides that States parties must eliminate legal discrimination against women by revising existing and enacting new legislation, and by abolishing customs, traditions and other practices that discriminate against women. The legal system in Liberia discriminates against women and there is a need for the country to harmonize its laws to conform to the provisions of the Convention. De jure and de facto discrimination against women continues to exist in law and in practice. The situation is complicated by the fact that the Liberian legal system consists of civil and customary laws which conflict with each other and result in discrimination against women. The rules and regulations governing the hinterland in particular provide for a number of traditional practices which are harmful to women. These include for example 'trial-by-ordeal' of persons suspected of witchcraft, guidelines for the payment of dowries, payment to the husband in the case of adultery and a different legal age for marriage.

These laws and practices violate the Constitution, which provides in article 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph), inter alia, that any law or custom inconsistent with the Constitution shall be void and of no legal effect.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, among the grounds on which discrimination is prohibited by the Constitution is sex (see article 11(b)). The implication of these provisions is that the rudimentary tools for designing an effective approach to engaging with discriminatory cultural practices already exist, which prevails over other countries

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<sup>4</sup> Article 2 of the Constitution of Liberia, 1986, states: Any laws, treaties, statutes, decrees, customs and regulations found to be inconsistent with it shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void and of no legal effect. The Supreme Court, pursuant to its power of judicial review, is empowered to declare any inconsistent laws unconstitutional.

that do not proscribe discrimination (particularly on matters of family law and succession) on the basis of sex or gender.

Positive steps have been taken towards law reform, such as the establishment of the Law Reform Commission to examine the compliance of Liberian legislation with its international commitments. The amendment to the Penal Code regarding the issue of gang rape is a notable development.<sup>5</sup> However, the role of the MGD in the law reform process needs to be examined. The MGD was, for example, not involved in the Rule of Law Task Force that submitted its report on the sector to the President in June 2006. While there is some reference in the report to issues concerning the rights of women, for example, with respect to the training of judicial officers and support staff and to the creation of a civil society database, the need to ensure the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach to the process of law reform cannot be over-emphasized. Steps are necessary to strengthen institutional links so that the MGD becomes directly involved in the law reform process to ensure that gender equality concerns are given high priority.

The process of constitutional reform also needs to be considered. Various views on undertaking constitutional reform were expressed and ranged from those who felt that there was nothing wrong with the Constitution to those who felt that constitutional reform could be undertaken after the emergency issues in legislation had been dealt with. However, the post-conflict reconstruction stage provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that the Constitution reflects the aspirations of society. The advantage of constitutional reform at this stage would mean that Liberia would take full advantage of the reconstruction phase to align its Constitution with the provisions and obligations of the Convention and other human rights treaties. A constitutional review process could reassess and rebuild the normative framework and structures of the constitutional system. Such a reform process could aim to create a strong basis in the Constitution of a prohibition of discrimination against women and temporary special measures as foreseen in the Convention. Furthermore, if broad-based participation could be secured during the review and reform process, a sense of ownership of the population in the Constitution and other laws could be built. A massive public participation campaign, including the full

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<sup>5</sup> See An Act to Amend the New Penal Code Chapter 14 Sections 14.70 and 14.71 and to Provide for Gangrape. It is notable, however, that this law uses a rather outmoded definition of rape that confines it to penetration (Section 3). In the landmark case of *Prosecution v. Jean-Paul Akayesu* (Case No. ICTR-96-4-T), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda held that rape was not limited to the physical invasion of the human body and may involve acts that do not involve penetration or even physical contact. This underlines the point that it is necessary to go beyond a human rights analysis of legislation and conduct a gender audit.

involvement of the women in Liberia, could also be designed as part of the process of constitutional reform and to educate the public on constitutionalism.

#### **2.4 The rural/urban divide and discriminatory traditional practices**

The Convention protects the rights of rural women in article 14 and provides that States parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by them and their significant roles in the economic survival of the families. Article 2(f) and article 5(a) refer specifically to the need to abolish all social and cultural patterns of conduct which constitute discrimination against women.

Perhaps the most resilient of the structures of discrimination and inequality that operate in the Liberian context are those that emphasize the division between the rural and the urban and negative traditional practices that are harmful towards women. It appears that Liberia has essentially created two parallel worlds governed by two parallel legal regimes: one for the urban areas and one for the hinterland, which has serious implications for the elimination of discrimination and realization of equality between women and men in Liberia. Invariably negative and harmful traditional practices target women much more regularly and consistently than they do men.

Much of the discussion around the issue of harmful and discriminatory traditional practices was on female genital mutilation/ cutting, although there are other practices such as the subordination of women and girl children that are known to exist and operate, particularly in the rural areas. Among them are levirate marriage, trial-by-ordeal and polygamy. Some steps have been taken to deal with certain discriminatory traditional strictures to women's autonomy and equality but there was a great deal of ambivalence over many forms of discriminatory traditional practices, particularly amongst members of Parliament and in some ministries.

Dealing firmly with harmful traditional attitudes and practices is essentially a matter of political will, which is frequently expressed in Liberia. This requires, however, Government to commit adequate resources and take pro-active measures, including the passage of laws, in order to demonstrate that it is genuinely committed to the eradication of these practices. A combination of legislation outlawing the practices, awareness-raising within the communities that condone and support the practices, and devising alternative methods of addressing what the practices stand for, are essential, with special emphasis on the rural areas.

## **2.5 Civil society**

The existence of civil society in Liberia is important for the promotion of women's rights and advocating for and monitoring the Government's implementation of legislation, policies and programmes aimed at achieving equality between women and men. Improving the capacity of civil society organizations will not only strengthen the ability to address social and economic inequalities, but also ensure that pressure is continuously maintained to make certain that the existing political will does not wane. Liberia has a vibrant civil society that plays an important role in the promotion of women's rights. There is however a need for closer collaboration among the civil society groups operating in Liberia so that scarce resources can be pooled and joint efforts for gender equality undertaken. The capacity of non-governmental organizations in terms of conducting research, carrying out advocacy and influencing policy also needs to be addressed. Strong cooperation and linkages between the MGD and civil society on gender equality issues would further strengthen the role of the MGD in coordinating the implementation of gender equality policy across all sectors of Government. This necessitates knowledge, commitment, resources and political will, and all different groups and institutions must be mobilized towards this goal.

Issues that are being addressed by NGOs in Liberia include violence against women, sexual abuse, skills training, HIV/AIDS, law reform, access to justice and sexual exploitation. There are very few organizations that deal directly with female genital mutilation/ cutting. Civil society organizations seem to face several challenges in their work, the greatest of which is the prevalence of discriminatory customary laws and practices. A correct understanding of the Convention's provisions and commitment to long-term, sustained implementation of these rights is needed throughout Government and society. However, the level of understanding and knowledge of the Convention was limited amongst the NGOs, underscoring the need for awareness-raising on the Convention as well as its simplification and translation into local languages.

## **2.6 Access to justice**

The formal justice system, particularly in areas outside Monrovia, was destroyed during the civil war, and the courts remain chronically understaffed and under-resourced with inadequately trained judicial officers, poor working conditions and low levels of remuneration. Access to the formal justice system is limited for most Liberians and women in particular lack access to the formal court system. Poor implementation of laws that are in place by an under-trained and gender-insensitive judiciary remains a challenge.

Considerable resources and capacity-building efforts are required to re-build the justice system to a level where it can function adequately, particularly for the protection of women's human rights. To that end, matters pertaining to women and justice, including women's access to justice, need to become a priority in the MGD and Ministry of Justice, which need to make greater and more systematic use of the Convention and enhanced responsibility for women's issues. Lack of knowledge and awareness of the Convention and women's human rights among the judiciary and law enforcement officials need to be addressed through capacity-building and awareness-raising efforts.

### **2.7 Awareness-raising**

The mission's purpose did not include an assessment of the level of awareness of women's human rights and discrimination against women among the general public, but experts gained some insights through discussion with various groups. There is a significant lack of awareness that discrimination against women is a violation of women's human rights and of the State's international legal obligations under the Convention. There is also a lack of understanding of the concept of equality embodied in the Convention and the State party's responsibility to identify and eradicate both de jure and de facto discrimination against women in all spheres. This limited awareness of the persistence of inequality, discrimination and disadvantage of women, and of opportunities to use the Convention as a tool for promotion of gender equality across all areas of Government requires immediate and urgent means of redress. These should include in particular broad-based discussion on gender equality as a societal responsibility, and specific capacity-building initiatives for staff in the MGD and other line ministries.

### **2.8 Temporary special measures**

Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention provides for the use of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women. General Recommendation 25 encourages States parties to employ more temporary special measures, such as preferential treatment or quotas to accelerate achievement of women's equality in fields such as education, the economy, politics and employment. General Recommendation 25 further advises States parties to establish quotas and targeted recruitment procedures and appointments to particular posts, such as the judiciary, in order to overcome the cultural barriers that remain, after de jure compliance has been achieved.



Temporary special measures remain to be put in place by the Liberian authorities. There needs to be a greater understanding of the nature, focus and objective of temporary special measures as one of the critical areas that will need to be the subject of concerted attention. Against the backdrop of the situation in Liberia where even before the conflict the situation of women was difficult, it is necessary to use such measures to accelerate the realization of women's equality in various fields of endeavour.

## **2.9 Violence against women**

In General Recommendation 19, the Committee noted that gender- based violence is a form of discrimination that inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms equally with men. The General Recommendation stated that the full implementation of the Convention requires States to take positive measures to eliminate all forms of violence against women committed by both public authorities and private actors. As violence against women impairs a number of other rights and freedoms (such as the right to life; the right not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to equality and equal protection; the right to liberty and security of the person; and the right to the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health) its continued significant prevalence in Liberian society in the post-conflict period negates the full enjoyment by women of the rights guaranteed under the Convention. Violence against women, including female genital mutilation/ cutting, rape, incest, sexual slavery and domestic violence are human rights violations in terms of international instruments such as the Convention and other international instruments.

Violence against women was deliberately used as part of the war strategy during the conflict. During the war, women in Liberia were subject to a number of gender-specific abuses, including rape, sexual violence and forced marriages. A study on sexual violence and gender-based violence conducted by the United Nations Development Programme and NGOs indicated that between 60 -70 percent of the population had suffered some form of sexual exploitation during the conflict. Violence against women, including rape and domestic violence, is also prevalent outside of the war context in present-day Liberia, and is cause for grave concern. Liberia has no domestic violence legislation, but a new law was drafted to extend the definition of rape. If violence against women is not effectively addressed, Liberian women may find that gender equality remains an elusive goal.

Meetings attended during the mission revealed a number of Government initiatives aimed at addressing gender-based violence. A number of NGOs focus on gender-based violence

in their activities. However, these activities seem to be disparate and it is not clear if synergy has been developed between civil society and Government initiatives.

## **2.10 Education**

A high illiteracy rate, low school enrolment, the lack of suitably qualified teachers and infrastructure, such as the lack of suitable school buildings, pose serious challenges to the education of girls. Although boys and girls are affected by these challenges, factors such as cultural bias, gender-based violence, early marriages, preference for the education of boys and poverty result in girl children being at a greater disadvantage. Literacy levels of women and girls in Liberia are alarmingly low.

The existence of systemic discrimination against women in the field of education in Liberia was widely acknowledged. It was also acknowledged that this discrimination is partly rooted in age-old gender-role stereotyping and harmful traditional and religious practices. To eradicate such discrimination, the authorities are required not only to put in place appropriate measures – including legislative and administrative measures – but also to undertake educational campaigns to persuade society to change these discriminatory traditional attitudes and practices. While Liberia's recent political history and current financial resources limits the services it can make available to its citizens, significant efforts are needed for Liberia to meet its obligations under article 10 of the Convention.

The Education Ministry appears to have moved quickly to address many of the issues of discrimination and inequality that relate to its mandate, culminating in a policy to govern the operation of the Ministry with regard to schools and other educational institutions at every level. However, as pointed out in section 2.1, the MGD was not involved in the drafting of the policy. It is necessary for the MGD to examine the policy and determine the extent to which the policy is compliant with the Convention, particularly with respect to access; curricula reform involving the elimination of gender stereotypes; scholarships; continuing education; drop-out rates; sexual harassment; family education, and education for rural girls and women.

As is the case with the other institutions visited, there are other infrastructural issues including the provision of schools and dormitories that require attention in the education sector. There is a particular opportunity for special attention to be paid to the needs and interests of young women and girls with respect to this process. Other issues include the re-schooling of pregnant girls (often an area of punitive rather than progressive action in Liberia) and on the need to build new dormitories for house girls who have previously

stayed away from school on account of the long distances they have to travel each day and the many dangers they are likely to confront en route and back.

## **2.11 Labour**

Article 11 of the Convention provides that States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment. This includes the right to work, same employment opportunities, free choice of profession and employment, equal remuneration, social security and the right to protection of health and safety.

Employment opportunities in the formal sector are very scarce, particularly for women. Women predominate in the informal sector and it is estimated that they are responsible for 80 percent of production in the subsistence agriculture sector. There is a great need to increase employment opportunities for women, including through adult literacy and basic adult education and childcare facilities that will allow women to function more effectively in the marketplace. Some initiatives have already been introduced to improve the situation of market women, including the setting up of a special fund for market women. The market women emerged as an important sector – and one in need of support and protection – as women in this sector are often subjected to harassment.

The Ministry of Labour reflected the considerable degree of commitment and political will that existed elsewhere in the Government, albeit the constraints within which it operates are formidable. This was particularly evident in regard to the conditions on the rubber plantations. Women and children on the plantations are virtual slaves, forced to work for their husbands and fathers in order for them to be able to fulfill their daily assignments. A report on the findings and recommendations of a task force set up to investigate human rights abuses on the plantations was presented in May 2006.

Issues affecting women in the labour force, including exploitation in the plantations, the informal sector and equal pay for equal work were well understood by the Ministry. There was a solid awareness of the country's international obligations, as well as a manifest commitment to ensuring that Liberia conformed to them. Although the Ministry appeared to be on the right track in addressing some of the violations taking place in this sector such as the condition of labour on the rubber plantations, an assessment of the level of compliance of the Ministry's policies with the Convention could be undertaken by the MGD. This would have to consider the right to work and conditions therein; employment opportunities; free choice of professions; equal remuneration; social

security; health and safety, and pregnancy and maternity leave in line with article 11 of the Convention.

## **2.12 Health**

Article 12 of the Convention provides that States parties should take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure equal access to health services, including those related to family planning. In addition, article 14(2)(b) of the Convention provides that adequate health care services, including information, counselling and services in family planning, be extended to rural women. General Recommendation 24 provides that States parties' compliance with article 12 of the Convention is central to the health and well-being of women, and that access to health care services should be provided to women throughout their life cycle.

It is estimated that less than 10 percent of Liberians have access to health care. Women in Liberia particularly lack access to adequate health services, especially in the provinces. Women suffer from a number of health-related problems. Liberia's maternal and infant mortality rate is among the highest in the world, and the health system is unable to adequately deal with the effects of the conflict on women. Currently, there are less than fifty doctors nationwide to serve a population of about three million. Because of the devastating nature of the armed conflicts, living environments, sanitation, drinking water and nutrition are in most cases unacceptable.

Despite the significant resource constraints faced by the Ministry, it was encouraging to note the commitment of the Minister of Health and Social Welfare to promote women's health and to integrate a gender perspective into policy and planning. Such efforts need to be supported by the donor community. Emphasis is being placed on policies and programmes to improve women's access to adequate health care services. Some of these include gradual rehabilitation of health facilities and infrastructure, training of local people in the communities to provide health care services, massive immunization awareness programmes, training of traditional birth attendants to make their services safer and more hygienic and working towards the elimination of discrimination and stigma against people living with HIV/AIDS. The registration of birth is now being vigorously carried out. As part of its 150-Day Plan, the Ministry is undertaking a rapid assessment of its health facilities, human resources, management services and capacity to deliver health care. Working groups on eye, mental, dental and reproductive health have been set up to assess the challenges and gaps in conjunction with the general population.

The lack of resources in all these areas, in terms of personnel, drugs, and health negatively affect the programmes.

### **3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION**

Despite the significant resource and institutional hurdles, there are also important opportunities available for enhanced implementation of the Convention. Among these are the following:

- The transitional period in itself is an opportunity to be taken advantage of. The election of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf challenges the stereotypical attitude about women and this presents an important strategy that should be used to promote their status. During this period of rebuilding, emphasis needs to be placed on the economic and physical infrastructure as well as structures of governance. All branches of the State party need to be aware of and involved in efforts aimed at the practical realization of the principle of equality between women and men.
- The MGD needs to assert and strengthen its catalytic role to coordinate the integration of gender perspectives into all sectors, but line Ministries have clear and active roles and responsibilities to fulfill the specific obligations in the Convention according to their mandates. Attention needs to be given by all Ministries to existing laws with discriminatory provisions, the need to pass new laws, to implement policies and programmes to eliminate negative customary practices and other measures to promote the rights of women.
- As a country emerging from conflict, Liberia faces the daunting task of rebuilding its society and institutions of State. The process of post-conflict reconstruction also offers a major opportunity to reassess and rebuild the normative framework, institutions and structures, and the legal system. The reconstruction phase also provides an excellent opportunity for ensuring that gender equality issues are an integral part of the initial planning and design phase in all policy areas.
- The MGD should use the preparation of the combined initial to sixth report under article 18 of the Convention to highlight, at the international level, the challenges and obstacles to implementation of the Convention. The process of preparing the report enables States parties to review existing laws, policies and programmes and their impact on women; ensures that States parties regularly monitor the actual situation with respect to each right in the Convention; provides States parties with the basis for the elaboration of clearly stated and targeted policies; permits public

scrutiny of Government policies and encourages the involvement of various sectors of society in their formulation and review; provides a baseline against which States parties can evaluate the progress made in respect to implementation of the Convention; enables States parties to develop a better understanding of the problems and shortcomings involved in the progressive realization of the aims; and enables the Committee and States parties as a whole to identify the most appropriate means by which the international community might assist them.

- The MGD should use the opportunity, during this period when sector ministries are preparing their short and medium term plans to assert itself and play its coordinating role to ensure that women's rights issues and issues relating to implementation of the Convention are clearly and explicitly reflected in the sector ministries' plans and programmes.
- There are a large number of civil society organizations, both local and international, which are already working specifically on women's issues and the MGD should reinforce strategic cooperation and networking with such organizations for greater impact and better outcomes for women.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION**

On the basis of the findings of the mission, the following key recommendations are made as long, medium and short-term strategies for prioritising women's enjoyment of their human rights in policy and programme design and enhancing implementation of the Convention in Liberia. While there is considerable political will in Liberia, the recommendations below cannot be implemented by the Liberian Government alone. It is hoped that entities of the United Nations system, donor agencies, as well as international non-governmental organizations will provide funding, capacity-building and other forms of technical assistance to the Government of Liberia, and especially the MGD and other stakeholders involved in the efforts to implement the Convention and eliminate discrimination against women. The MGD needs to be supported in the further development and strengthening of its catalytic role as coordinator for the implementation of the Convention and its role as policy adviser on gender equality and women's empowerment. Not only should this support focus on the provision of the necessary human and financial resources for the Ministry to ensure that it is able to play the role of coordinator, but also with respect to supporting the recruitment, placement and continued training of the gender focal points who will be assigned to the different Government departments. The recommendations made in this report are selective and do not exclude the urgent adoption of other important measures to enhance the position of women in

Liberia, such as policies and programmes for women and girls to become literate and continue in schools.

#### **4.1 Review of national laws and policies and the Constitution**

Legal and policy reform and review of the Constitution must be high on the State party's agenda if it is to comply with its obligations under the Convention. The review of all national laws, policies and the Constitution to ensure their conformity with international principles of human rights and the specific obligations enshrined in the Convention should be undertaken and completed without delay. The law and policy reform and review of the Constitution should include the following:

- The MGD, together with the Ministry of Justice, should be directly involved in any effort to conduct a gender analysis of major legislation, as well as ongoing law reform, to ensure that the principles of non-discrimination on the basis of sex and equality of women and men are reflected in all laws. This should include a full review of the laws of the hinterland. The recruitment of persons with legal expertise in the MGD should be concluded as soon as possible;
- Specific laws should be adopted prohibiting violence against women, female genital mutilation/ cutting and other practices that constitute discrimination against women throughout the life-span, such as early marriages and wife inheritance, so as to ensure complete and effective conformity between the domestic legislative framework and the provisions of the Convention;
- The formulation and revision of existing national policies on the advancement of women and gender equality, including the adoption of a national action plan. While the MGD will play an instrumental role in the development of the national action plan, Government as a whole must actively contribute to and adopt the plan;
- The adoption of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention, as an integral part of legislative and policy measures to accelerate achievement of substantive equality;
- Constitutional review should be undertaken as part of the process of law reform. This would involve the opportunity to examine the provisions of the Constitution as part of the overall process of legislative reform and engage in widespread consultation about its content.

## **4.2 Preparation of Liberia's combined initial to sixth report under article 18 of the Convention**

If carried out correctly, the preparation of Liberia's combined initial to sixth report would assist in establishing a clear picture of the current situation of women in Liberia. It could also be a valuable learning and capacity building exercise for all stakeholders in the pursuit of equality between women and men in Liberia. Such a report would be a valuable tool as it would provide the baseline information necessary for identifying areas for priority intervention, and would be essential for monitoring progress. While the MGD has identified preparation of the report as one of its short-term goals, the process of report writing must be one in which all other line Ministries are actively involved. All Ministries have responsibility under the Convention to compile information in relation to their areas of mandate to contribute to the report. It is recommended that UN agencies support the preparation of the initial to combined sixth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention. The Division for the Advancement of Women should provide the necessary longer-term technical assistance to the MGD in order for it to be able to prepare its report. This would involve a Committee expert spending a period of time in Liberia, facilitating engagement and consultation with the relevant sectors inside and outside the Government and providing support and guidance in the preparation of the report.

## **4.3 Training and capacity-building, and institutional development**

The Government, together with other roleplayers, is encouraged to proceed with the design and implementation of a comprehensive training programme on the Convention for the following groups and sectors:

- Staff of the MGD and gender focal points in other line Ministries. The training programme should enable staff of the MGD and gender focal points to carry out their function as catalysts for gender equality. In particular, the training should aim to familiarize them with the full content and meaning of the articles in the Convention; develop their skills to enhance collaboration with line ministries and cooperation and coordination between Government agencies and civil society organizations; and enable them, including through illustration of good practice examples from other countries, to develop national strategies and action plans, policies and programmes for the advancement of women, as well as to initiate law review efforts. The approach to take would be a training-of-trainers model. Those trained in this fashion could then design and embark upon a process of training



others in the key Government departments, the judiciary and elsewhere including civil society.

- Staff in other line ministries, including their ordinary staff. The training programme should focus on the relevant provisions of the Convention and their applicability in various sectors, including education, economic and development planning, justice and health. The integration of gender perspectives in the development of all policy and programming, gender-sensitive resource allocation (gender-sensitive budgeting), the collection of sex-disaggregated data should also be included in this training. This training would be carried out by staff trained as trainers.
- Parliamentarians, the judiciary, law enforcement officials and prosecutors should be targeted. This training would include the use of international human rights law, in particular the Convention, including violence against women, in the domestic legal process and decision-making.

#### **4.4 Awareness-raising**

There is an urgent need for awareness-raising in Liberia on women's human rights and the Convention across all sectors and levels of Government. Steps should include:

- Media campaigns to promote awareness about women's human rights and the persistence of discrimination against women, and to make the Convention more widely known.
- Educational measures and awareness-raising campaigns to facilitate an enhanced understanding of equality between women and men.
- Targeted programmes and activities designed to raise awareness of and eliminate violence against women and harmful practices and stereotypes, including female genital mutilation/cutting.

#### **4.5 Supporting civil society**

It is recommended that civil society organizations be supported and strengthened, particularly in the framework of Government-civil society partnerships in support of gender equality. There is a need to provide the necessary support to civil society organizations active in combating discrimination and ensuring equality between women and men. Bilateral and multilateral donors are especially encouraged to support joint Government-civil society activities and pilot projects for gender equality.

## **5. DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF MEETINGS HELD**

### **5.1 Ministry of Gender and Development**

The meeting began with a presentation by the Deputy Minister, who stressed the commitment of the Government to implement the Convention as reflected in the objectives of the 150-Day Plan of Action. The Minister of MGD was in the process of reactivating the National Gender Forum, which consisted of all stakeholders involved in women's activities, to provide guidelines for policy formulation on gender issues. The reactivation of the NGF would, inter alia, be used for discussion on gender issues for Government officials including gender focal points in line ministries and NGOs. County gender coordinators have been appointed in fourteen out of fifteen counties who responded directly to the Minister. Steps were being taken to develop a national action plan. Part of the plan included strengthening the capacity of the gender focal points in the line ministries, as well as the gender coordinators in the respective counties. The MGD was currently in the process of assessing the capacity of the gender coordinators to identify ways to empower them. The Minister stressed excellent cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs which she described as her parent Ministry. The issue of lack of capacity and resources, human, financial and structural, was repeatedly mentioned.

Members of the panel of experts made short presentations on various aspects of the Convention. Ms. Abaka noted that Liberia had signed the Convention without reservations. She commended the Ministry for the advocacy campaign undertaken in 2005 to promote registration to vote among women that resulted in 51 percent of vote. Ms. Abaka's presentation included an overview of the Convention and she urged the Ministry to use the Convention as a tool to achieve equality between women and men in all sectors. She stressed that the Convention was not an abstract concept of equality but one that expected States parties to take concrete measures to deal with discrimination. Laws, while not enough, were necessary in eliminating all forms of discrimination.

Ms. Coker-Appiah stressed that the obligation to implement the Convention resides with the State as a whole rather than exclusively on the national machinery for the advancement of women. The Convention required the elimination of discrimination against women in both the public and private spheres. The Government was required to pay particular attention to the non-discrimination principle. Ms. Coker-Appiah drew attention to the predominance of gender stereotypes and the prevalence of discriminatory customary practices and traditional beliefs that affect many women in the African region.

In order to achieve de jure and de facto equality, Liberia needed strong political will to revise legislation that discriminated against women, the effective enforcement of laws and the implementation of policies for the advancement of women. The Government was encouraged to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

Prof. Oloko-Onyango pointed out that Liberia could learn from other countries about strategies for effective dissemination. It was important to be strategically organized and prepared during the law review process to ensure that all laws which discriminated against women are repealed or amended. He suggested a review of all laws and the development of a catalogue of those that needed to be repealed or amended. The catalogue should be fed into the law review process. Sharing the South African experience, Ms. Elize Delpont underscored the need for the Ministry to be strategic in its activities. The Ministry needed to engage both allies and those who would be against attempts to promote women's rights.

During the discussion that followed, some of the challenges with regards to the implementation of the Convention were raised. Representatives of the MGD indicated that the gaps included limited interaction between the MGD and the other line ministries and branches of the State; lack of human and financial resources; absence of a national action plan and a gender mainstreaming strategy; and lack of capacity of gender focal points in line ministries. Representatives also highlighted as a challenge the need to harmonize the laws and Constitution with the provisions of the Convention. The main obstacles obstructing the respect and enjoyment of human rights by Liberian women included the lack of awareness about human rights and particularly the Convention, among Government officials and the public in general; the existence of a dual legal system, in particular the hinterland laws, that obstructs the implementation of the Convention; and the prevalence of traditional and customary practices that discriminate against women.

In closing the experts highlighted the following:

- Take advantage of the strong political will expressed by the President to ensure that the intention to advance the status of Liberian women is shared and pursued at all levels of Government.
- Design and implement a national action plan that includes efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in the national policies of line ministries.
- Translate the provisions of the Convention into simple language to promote awareness and disseminate knowledge about women's human rights at all levels.

- Take into account lessons learned and good practices of other countries' efforts to implement the Convention through technical assistance from United Nations departments and entities.
- Build coalitions and engage those groups that are more likely to be resistant to women's advancement including religious and traditional leaders, and paramount chiefs.
- Strengthen efforts to increase the participation of women at all levels particularly at the superintendence levels in the counties as a strategy to ensure the impact of policies.
- With regards to the initial report:
  - Use the process of preparing the initial report to assess the main challenges and opportunities to promote women's human rights.
  - Be frank and transparent so as to identify opportunities for technical assistance.

## **5.2 Ministry of Education**

In his introduction, Prof. Oloka-Onyango raised questions about article 10 as well as article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention, and specifically in relation to access to education, dropout rates, curriculum reform, scholarships, sports and physical education and literacy rate among rural girls and women. Ms. Delport discussed the issue of priority for girls' education, HIV/ AIDS, teenage pregnancies and sexual harassment in schools.

The Minister of Education noted that discrimination against girls and women was affected by discriminatory cultural factors and traditionally parents were reluctant to send girls to school. The war in Liberia had significantly aggravated the problems in the educational sector, and many qualified teachers had fled the country, leaving a number of poorly qualified teachers in the system. The Minister also referred to the Ministry's policy on education of girls that was launched together with UNICEF.

Access to education was different for rural and urban areas, with access in rural areas being limited. Factors such as poverty, preference for boys' education, early marriages and teenage pregnancies contributed to the high drop-out rate. There were insufficient schools, especially secondary schools, in the rural areas and children were forced to leave their rural villages and move to larger communities if they wished to continue their secondary education. However, girls who left their rural villages became vulnerable to engaging in transactional sex and were at a high risk of falling pregnant. Attempts have been made to build special dormitories for girls who have to attend school away from

home. The possibility of evening classes for pregnant girls so that they could continue with their education was raised, and the Ministry was considering a pilot project in Monrovia.

The issue of temporary special measures was also raised. Under the policy on girls' education, while numbers were not yet established, a quota system will be introduced for a certain percentage of girls to access secondary and tertiary education. However, there was some concern about the use of temporary special measures at this time as such measures could limit the zeal of people to succeed on their own. Women were in a better position to succeed now than in the past, which limited the need for temporary special measures.

Illiteracy in general, but specifically in the case of women and the girl child, was a serious challenge. Adult education had been in place in Liberia prior to the war. The literacy rate in 2002 was 20 percent for males and 14 percent for females. Support for adult education was being provided by the Government of Italy and was part of the national policy on girls' education.

### **5.3 Ministry of Health and Social Welfare**

Ms. Abaka briefed the officials on the Convention and particularly on article 12 as well as articles 4(1), 5 and 14(2)(b). She asked the officials on the measures being planned in the following areas: discriminatory traditional practices that affect women's health, mental health care, family planning and reproductive health, maternal and infant mortality. She also enquired whether Liberia is benefiting from the UN Global Fund for AIDS and the extent and prevalence of tuberculosis.

Ms. Coker-Appiah discussed access to health care and the need to integrate gender perspectives in all health policies and programmes. She also enquired about planned actions to address female genital mutilation/cutting, and talked of the strategies to overcome the cultural resistance to stop these practices, including the fact that female genital mutilation/ cutting affects the health of women and girls. The importance of this Ministry in implementing the Convention in alliance with other entities such as the Ministry of Gender and Development and civil society groups was also raised.

The Deputy Minister explained that a national health policy and a health plan were being drafted. The preparatory stages of the national health policy included a one- week consultation with health officers of all counties with the aim of ensuring a participatory as

well as a nation-wide rapid assessment to assess the institutional, manpower, and management capacity of health officials. Another preparatory stage of the policy design included visits to various counties to identify the main issues affecting peoples' health.

Working groups have been established to design and develop effective policies in the following areas: nutrition, reproductive health, mental health, dentistry and optometry. Responding to the question on HIV/AIDS and access to the Global Fund, the Deputy Minister stated that unfortunately mother-to-child prevention care was not included in the national budget.

The Deputy Minister was aware of the problem regarding actions to address discriminatory traditional practices that affect women's health and the role of the Ministry. More than a problem of resources was the existing mentality, and there was a need to first understand the behavioural practices in order to address them. Women that undertake female genital mutilation/cutting were also midwives, and actions to eliminate the practices had to be very carefully planned. Among the ideas being considered to raise awareness was the use of radio programmes, as most of the population continues to be illiterate, and the informal education system used by the ethnic groups. He highlighted the need to design policies on the basis of sound research and investigations. The aim was to fully understand and identify the causes that lead people to undertake these practices in order to effectively address them.

#### **5.4 Ministry of Labour**

In her opening, Ms. Coker-Appiah stressed the need for the State to take appropriate measures in the labour market, which included the formal and informal sectors. She stressed that the responsibility under the Convention was that of the Government as a whole and not only the MGD. Prof. Oloka-Onyango enquired about women in the informal sector, including the provision of vocational training to them, women in the rubber plantations, the HIV/AIDS infection rate, sexual harassment, labour laws, maternity leave and equal pay.

The Minister of Labour stressed the political will of Government as a whole to implement the Convention. The challenges facing the labour market were enormous, including the inheritance of a State that was destroyed by the conflict. Resources, including capacity and equipment, in the Ministry were lacking. In addition, employers and employees were not familiar with labour laws. The Ministry had obtained the support of the American Bar Association to print one thousand copies of some of the laws. Furthermore, under its 150-

Day Plan of Action, the Ministry was due to take emergency action to review outdated laws on the statute books.

The Liberian Emergency Employment Programme was targeting the informal sector and women's improvement, including micro-credit and loans. This included standardizing vocational training to ensure quality training so that persons who went through the training will be employable. The proliferation of international NGOs was also leading to the formation of vocational centres. The decentralization of these efforts to the counties was important.

The Minister also raised the situation of women working in the rubber plantations. There were recurrent problems on the plantations especially regarding the lack of protection for women and children. The conditions on the rubber plantations compelled people to bring their families to help them do their jobs. A task force, with various line ministries, was charged with preparing a comprehensive report and Government plans. Partnerships across all relevant sectors demonstrating commitment to ending the problems on the plantations, which have a multi-sectoral approach including gender issues, would have to be built to address this issue as a serious cabinet problem.

### **5.5 Ministry of Justice**

In his opening comments, Prof. Oloka-Onyango highlighted the issues of law reform in the areas of the hinterland and the rural areas, trafficking, adoption of children and temporary special measures. Ms. Coker-Appiah stressed the need to look at culture and customary practices in law review and noted in particular the plural legal system which provided for different laws in the hinterland and urban systems. She noted the need to review some of these practices towards strengthening and developing their people. The legal framework could provide an avenue and a basis for change of outmoded customs and traditions.

The Deputy Minister described the Constitution as very good because it gave a choice which system (civilized or hinterland) to choose. She noted that those from the hinterland fought to keep their cultural values intact with their own traditional way of resolving conflicts, including in the tribal courts. She ascribed most problems in the legal regime to discriminatory cultural and traditional practices. The Deputy Minister also brought up the issue of female genital mutilation/cutting. She noted that it was part of the culture of the communities.

The Deputy Minister stated that all laws were being examined to consider the position of women under them. The Association of Female Lawyers was assisting in the gender impact analysis of all the laws. The Ministry had only 5 lawyers but they need 65, and they were trying to build the capacity of women to be part of the senior staff (mainly male at the moment) in the Department. She also noted that much of the international aid was channeled to NGOs and the need to ensure resources for the Government.

## **5.6 Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs**

In her introduction, Ms. Abaka provided an overview of the Convention with particular emphasis on articles 11 and 13. She noted that the majority of Liberian women were engaged in the informal sector and seemed to have very limited opportunities to enter other sectors of the labour market. Ms. Abaka urged the officials to seize the opportunity of reconstruction to plan and implement policies to protect women's rights, including those of women working in the informal sector by providing them with better market places, facilities for toddlers and breastfeeding in the work place, toilet facilities and access to child care. She insisted on the importance of providing access to social security, loans and credit and inquired about the current efforts in these areas. She also drew attention to the importance of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a way to ensure the implementation of policies, to address corruption and to obtain financial support from donors.

The Deputy Minister briefed the experts on the challenges that the Ministry faced which included absence of policies as well as the lack of qualified staff to design and implement them. Overall the officials demonstrated commitment to women's rights. The Government was taking actions to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Convention will also be taken into consideration. One of the priorities of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MPEA) was to train officials. Although policies to address the need of rural women had been in place since 2004, these were never implemented.

The Deputy Minister agreed with concerns about women in the informal sector and expressed the commitment to overcome them. Initiatives such as the building of new market spaces that included child care facilities were already in place. While credit facilities in the national banks were an option, the absence of collateral and the lack of capacity of small holders to pay back loans presented problems. Currently there were no programmes or schemes in this area. He stated that the political commitment and capacity of staff to implement its policies were also key in the achievement of policies.



## **5.7 Ministry of Internal Affairs**

In her opening address, Ms. Elize Delpont provided an overview of articles 6, 7 and 14 and asked about the level of women's representation in the counties. She also addressed the issue of gender-based violence and harmful practices against women. Ms. Abaka stressed the key role of the superintendents as well as the importance of strengthening the collaboration channels between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Gender and Development, Ministry of Health and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She also suggested that interaction and collaboration between the superintendents and the chiefs could be strengthened and inquired about the possibility of training chiefs to become development focal points.

The Minister expressed reluctance about some of these ideas but shared the concerns of the experts regarding inequality between women and men in Liberia. The election of a woman President was already a demonstration of the commitment of the Liberian people to gender equality. He further indicated that while the Constitution guaranteed equal rights to women and men, human behaviour was the main barrier to ensure gender equality.

The number of women at the superintendent level was low, with only 5 women. Superintendents were appointed by the President and one of the goals of the Ministry was to put in place a new electoral process for their appointment as well as to achieve representation of 50 percent of women in the next 2 years. Some of the challenges included lack of capacity and education of women, as well as the lack of skills of the gender coordinators located at the superintendent level to ensure that the gender perspectives were taken into account in the development of all county policies.

The Minister agreed on the need for education to address the problems related to women, including gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation/ cutting. He further reiterated that every society had harmful practices and that changes of traditions do not happen overnight.

## **5.8 House Standing Committees on the Judiciary, Human Rights, Gender and the Women's Caucus**

Ms. Abaka, Ms. Coker-Appiah, and Ms. Delpont provided an overview of the Convention and focused on articles 2, 3, 5 and 16. Prof. Oloka-Onyango stressed the strategic position of Parliament and encouraged Parliamentarians to use the opportunity to ensure

that the gender dimension is taken into account in legal reform. He also recommended that they start by promoting women's rights within Parliament.

The discussion focused on women's rights and discriminatory traditional practices. Parliamentarians wondered whether legislation to eliminate discriminatory traditional practices would not be an infringement of rights and stressed the necessity to first educate people before legislating. Traditions had been in place for hundreds of years and it was unlikely that a law will be able to remove them. It was suggested that the right approach was to change the mentalities of the people and to ensure their understanding of the need for change. The incidence of early marriages and polygamy was also raised as practices that infringe women's rights. Other challenges identified were Parliamentarians' low awareness and knowledge about the Convention and lack of capacity to implement the rights contained therein.

In responses, experts clarified the obligation of the State upon ratification, and specifically the obligations under article 5, and noted the principle of equality endorsed in the Liberian Constitution. Implementation of the Convention would not entail an end to traditions but rather achieve equality. Parliamentarians were encouraged to work towards the harmonization of national legislation with human rights principles and obligations. The importance of conducting research on the origin of the traditions and to understand its original purposes was raised. Experts also highlighted the importance of political will to promote women's human rights, and encouraged Parliamentarians to request technical assistance to deal with the challenges and to collaborate closely with the Ministry of Gender and Development in the process of legal reform.

### **5.9 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)**

Ms. Abaka presented the Convention and stressed the need to ensure that the work of the TRC was in line with the principles of the Convention, i.e. non discrimination, equality before the law, and equality between women and men. The provisions of the Convention must be taken into account in the rehabilitation of victims of the war. Prof. Oloka-Onyango sought information about (i) the way in which the TRC will conduct hearings in the country, (ii) the approach that it will apply when dealing with traditional institutions, (iii) ways to ensure that internally displaced persons and refugees have an opportunity to be heard by the TRC.

The Chairman shared the aims and challenges of the TRC. He indicated that the TRC plans to take into account the lessons learned from other countries. The TRC is

committed to provide special attention to women and children at all stages (before, during and after the crisis) for which it is trying to establish a close relationship with the MGD as well as with NGOs. The intention is to have a participatory process in the hearings and the full involvement of civil society in the functioning of the TRC.

Offices will be established throughout the country to conduct the hearings, although the Chairman recognized that logistics and infrastructure are challenging. There are plans for TRC members to travel to the Ivory Coast, Ghana and Guinea to promote the work of the TRC among Liberian refugee groups living in these countries.

The Chairman highlighted the challenge of making known the work of the TRC. High levels of illiteracy made it necessary to use communication sources such as radio and drama schemes. The TRC has limited financial resources and lacks specialists in women's rights and gender equality. Among the factors impeding the respect for women's rights was the persistence of discriminatory traditional practices, such as early marriages, and the low bargaining power of women to use contraceptive methods.

A commissioner discussed the situation of women at the end of the conflict. New dynamics and survival mechanisms observed were emerging in the refugee and internally displaced camps where women are taking a leading role, for example in the distribution of relief efforts.

### **5.10 Civil society**

Twenty-one representatives of 14 NGOs, including 3 international and 9 local organizations, and the University of Liberia attended the meeting. NGO representatives briefed the experts about their organizations and their areas of work which included women and peace building, children, victims' health assistance and advocacy.

Ms. Coker- Appiah provided an overview of the Convention and Ms. Abaka focused on the role of NGOs in the implementation of the Convention. Prof. Oloka-Onyango focused his questions on 4 areas: (i) the influence of stereotypes and the re-emergence of discriminatory traditional harmful practices after the war, (ii) sexual exploitation of children, including street children and child soldiers, response of the Government, and the incidence of abuses by peacekeepers (iii) accountability for war crimes including rape and gender-based violence; and (iv) the need for legal and constitutional reform. Ms. Delport sought information about the incidence of HIV/AIDS, the availability of legal aid services, involvement of women in the formal economy, whether research was being

conducted and used in the design of projects and the incidence of female genital mutilation/ cutting. Ms. Abaka inquired about ongoing activities in the area of mental health.

The NGO representatives informed the experts of the following:

- Role of NGOs

The role of NGOs was limited, among other factors, because of decrease of funding due to the end of the emergency phase. There was limited capacity for gender equality in many areas, including within Government and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

- Discriminatory cultural practices

Discriminatory cultural practices and religious beliefs were some of the main factors which contributed to human rights abuses. Many organizations found customary laws and practices to be the main challenge to their work, including in their efforts to provide access to education, economic resources and health and to tackle early marriage. The incidence of female genital mutilation/cutting was high and a source of income for many women. However, not many organizations appeared to be dealing with the problem of female genital mutilation/ cutting.

- Sexual exploitation

During the 1990s poverty and the shortage of food forced people to look for alternative ways for survival including the encouragement by parents to their daughters to marry soldiers and/or to engage in 'transactional sex' for food. Comprehensive information was provided about cases of sexual exploitation in camps for refugees and internally displaced people. Some organizations emphasized that sexual exploitation still existed in the camps, as well as in some resettled communities and that the perpetrators included peacekeepers, staff of humanitarian services and men in the communities.

- Rape

The adoption of the rape law had little or no effect on many people, given the high level of impunity and the complete distrust in the court system, lack of dissemination of information and enforcement of the law. A main obstacle to the work of NGOs stemmed from the high illiteracy rate among the population and especially among women. The main challenge in relation to rape as a war crime was shaped by the culture of silence resulting from many years of conflict and the idea that it is 'better to forget the past'.

- Knowledge of the Convention

Most participants felt that they had limited or no knowledge of the Convention and suggested that the Ministry undertake awareness raising on the Convention and simplify it into local languages.

#### **5.11 Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General**

The experts had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Luiz Carlos da Costa, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) who briefed them about the current situation in the country and specifically about the Government's plans and challenges. Mr. Da Costa discussed in particular the country's 150-Day Plan.

Mr. Da Costa noted that the task force of the Law Reform Commission, which had been initiated with the National Transitional Government, had completed three reports (i.e. strategy, implementation, and bench mark costing). Elements of these task force reports were included in the 150-Day Plan of the current Government as priorities, including the establishment of a constitutional and legal reform commission, the need to strengthen the judiciary including with infrastructural support, and the establishment of the TRC.

#### **5.12 Human rights and protection section, UNMIL**

Ms. Dorota Gierycz, Chief of the Human Rights Protection Section (HRPS), UNMIL gave a brief overview of the work of the HRPS. The section had previously assisted the Government in the preparation of a report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The section was conducting a human rights audit of legislation and had met with the UNCT to begin the legal review. The Constitution would not be part of this audit. The plan is to review all the codes and a consultant will be hired for this task. This process was an exclusive UNMIL activity and the HRPS had no plans to involve the Governance Reform Commission or the Law Reform Commission. However, Government entities are aware of this process and the HRPS was trying to find ways to link with them. The findings of the human rights audit will be shared with Government entities and NGOs and will be submitted to the President.

The gender adviser of the section briefed the experts on the main challenges that women faced, including sexual and gender-based violence at all levels, absence from decision making, poverty and lack of education.

#### **5.13 United Nations Country Team (UNCT)**

The meeting began with an introduction by Mr. Jordan Ryan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Recovery and Governance and United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Liberia, who briefed the experts on the

current situation in Liberia and the UNCT efforts. He emphasized the political will of President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson to implement the rights of women. He further noted that the Government's intention to mainstream gender perspectives in the 150-Day Action Plan, which is based on four pillars: (i) expanding peace and security; (ii) revitalizing economic activity; (iii) rebuilding infrastructure and providing basic services; and (iv) strengthening of governance and rule of law. This plan will also be used as a basis of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper that is currently being drafted. The preparation of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) was underway, whose aim was to ensure a conflict sensitive approach in order to address the drivers of conflict and to address the needs of the victims of war including women and girls. Mr. Ryan urged the Mission to avoid the duplication of efforts and ensure that any follow-up action is done in conjunction with the work plan of the UNCT.

Following Mr. Ryan's introduction, Ms. Abaka asked about efforts to translate the Convention into more simple language and support to the Government and NGOs to comply with the reporting obligation. Prof Oloka-Onyango asked about current efforts to undertake a constitutional review, implementation of temporary special measures as required in article 4.1 of the Convention, and programmes on reproductive health care, specifically to address female genital mutilation/ cutting. Ms. Delpont sought information about the most prevalent forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in Liberia and about the incidence of trafficking. Ms. Coker-Appiah sought information about the prevalence of prostitution and its extent. A question regarding efforts to collect data was also raised.

Members of the UNCT reported on latest developments, specific programmes of the respective agencies underway, main concerns and responded to questions raised as follows:

- Legal reform  
UNIFEM intended to sponsor a comprehensive review of the existing legislation. According to the UNCT there were no current plans to embark on a review of the Constitution.
- Gender- based violence (GBV)  
The UNCT was supporting the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHSW) and providing technical and financial assistance for the establishment of a GBV secretariat, as well as technical support to the Institute of Statistics to include a domestic violence component in the upcoming health survey. Results are expected for June 2007. According to the UNCT, a main concern in the area of

gender-based violence was the lack of coordination among key stakeholders including the Ministry of Justice, MHSW, and MGD.

The most prevalent forms of violence reported were domestic violence, sexual violence and forced marriage. Preliminary results of an assessment made by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) indicated that 80 percent of women interviewed said they were victims of rape during the war and 6.9 percent were forced to engage in early marriage. The assessment was undertaken in the 15 counties and will be finalized by August 2006.

- Discriminatory cultural practices

There are a number of such practices in Liberia, including female genital mutilation/ cutting, which was a serious area of concern and a highly sensitive issue among the population. It was prevalent in most of the counties. Early marriage was prevalent in Western Liberia but there were no advocacy activities to harmonize customary age of marriage with the statutory age. Legislation on minimum age for marriage varied according to whether it is hinterland or civil law.

- Rape Law

The adoption of the rape law has raised awareness about the issue among the population, but violence against women, including rape, continues to be prevalent. One of the shortcomings of the law is the lack of a provision on marital rape.

- Trafficking in women

The UNCT recognized that it was difficult to confirm the existence of trafficking in the country. However a major concern was the irregularities in child adoption procedures and the lack of basic standards in orphanages.

- Health

UNFPA was supporting the drafting of a national health policy by the Ministry in consultation with NGOs. The policy will include rights to reproductive health. The agency has also provided support to the Ministry of Education in the past to address the issue of early pregnancy that is prevalent in Liberia. WHO noted that mental health is an area of serious concern and it has been taken into account in the work plan of the agency.

- Availability of data and data collection

The quality and availability of data and statistics was very poor and large gaps in information existed due to the 14 years of war. Reliable data was important for efficient national development and planning. UNDP was currently supporting the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning in an initiative to address this situation.

#### **5.14 Wrap-up meeting with the Minister of Gender and Development**

At the end of the mission, the experts shared their perceptions, experience and findings with Ms. Gayflor, Minister of Gender and Development, officials of UNIFEM and the Office of the Gender Adviser of UNMIL.

Experts reported that the knowledge of the Convention was still very scant in ministries, non-governmental organizations and Parliament. They welcomed the commitment shown by the ministries to address women's rights, but expressed concern about the position of some Ministers with regard to discriminatory traditional practices. After a presenting a brief analysis of the meetings, experts pointed out that the MGD had a strong role in coordinating the ministries' efforts to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated in all policies and laws. As a strategy, experts suggested to involve the gender focal points at the planning stages. Experts highlighted the following additional suggestions for the MGD:

- underscore the legally binding nature of the Convention at all levels and the State party's obligation for its full implementation and dissemination among key stakeholders;
- prepare a national action plan as an immediate priority;
- take a prominent role in law reform and constitutional reform;
- together with the Ministry of Education, to put in place efforts to improve access to education and prevent drop-out of teenage mothers;
- sensitize Government officials and the population in general about the Convention;
- take strong measures to overcome discriminatory customary practices that violate women's human rights and to focus on the role of women in the family; and
- work closely with Parliament in their review of laws and allocation of resources in line with the Convention.

Minister Gayflor thanked the experts for their findings and agreed with the challenges identified and the steps needed to enhance women's rights. She underscored the need for a national gender action plan. The main challenges included the lack of financial and human resources.



## **BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF THE EXPERTS**

**Dr Charlotte Abaka** is the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights in Liberia, a post she has held since October 2002. Dr. Abaka was a Member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) from 1991-2002, and was Chair of CEDAW from 2000-2002. She was a Consultant and Advisor to the World Health Organization for its 1999 International Conference on Tobacco and Health in Kobe, Japan. For five years (1989-2002) she served as Chair of the National Women's Machinery organization in Ghana and eleven years (1978-1989) as a Member of National Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Ghana. Dr. Abaka served as Chairperson of UN Expert Meeting on the Critical Area of Women's Health in Tunis in September-October 1998. She is a dental surgeon based in Ghana.

**Ms Dorcas Coker-Appiah** is currently the executive director of the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre in Ghana and a serving member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. She was also a consultant in law, gender and development. She is a member of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF). From 1986 to 1991 she served as Vice President and President of FIDA, Ghana. She is actively involved in women's issues both nationally and internationally and has spoken at numerous conferences and workshops around the world on women and the law. She is the author of a number of publications including on family law and violence against women.

**Professor Elizabeth Delpont** is a gender advisor and consultant in the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria. She is a former member of the Commission on Gender Equality of South Africa, where she headed the gender justice portfolio. During her time at the Commission she was responsible for making submissions to Parliament with regard to the gender and development implications of proposed legislation and policy, and for monitoring South Africa's implementation of international human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She has extensive experience in gender and human rights at the international and regional levels, including involvement and participation in the activities of the United Nations and the African Union. She serves as a technical advisor to the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa and has significant expertise on the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

**Professor Joseph Oloka-Onyango** is professor of law and former dean at the faculty of law at Makerere University and Advocate of the Courts of Judicature in Uganda. He is the director of the Makerere University Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIEPC). He has been a visiting professor at law schools throughout the world, including New York University and the University of Cape Town. He was a member and Special Rapporteur on Globalization and Human Rights of the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, and is a Trustee of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. An internationally acclaimed scholar of human rights and international law, Professor Oloka-Onyango is actively involved in several international human rights organizations and has written, edited and contributed chapters to a number of books and is the author of numerous articles.

## **Annex 2: Lists of attendees**

### **Ministry of Gender and Development**

1. Vabah Kazaku Gayflor, Minister, MGD
2. Annie J Demen, Deputy Minister, MGD
3. Benetta Tah, Deputy Minister, MGD
4. Oliver Dupley, Personnel Officer, MGD
5. Louise Sumo, Director Administration, MDG
6. Jestina Kouie, Accountant, MGD
7. Ndebelmolio Boilay, Coordinator National Gender Forum, MDG
8. Simon Kutrin, Planning Officer, MGD
9. Kataline Kun, Planning Officer, MGD
10. Steven Furkgba, Comptroller, MGD
11. Annete M Kiaru, National Gender Programme Officer, MGD/UNIFEM
12. Miatta Sheriff, Planning Officer, MGD
13. Muriel Nelson, Assistant, MGD
14. Daniel G Mulbah, Special Assistant, MGD
15. Fuitina Coope, Communications Officer, MGD

### **Attendees debriefing**

1. Vabah Kazaku Gayflor, Minister, MGD
2. Fuitina Coope, Communications Officer, MGD
3. James M Muriah, Gender Officer, UNMIL DGAI
4. Joana Foster, Gender Advisor, UNMIL
5. Kagwira Mbogori, Programme Manager, UNIFEM
6. Benetta Tarr, Deputy Minister Planning and Administration, MGD
7. Daniel G Mulbah, Special Assistant, MGD
8. Annete M Kiaru, National Gender Programme Officer, MGD/UNIFEM

### **Ministry of Education**

1. Joseph Korto, Minister

### **Ministry of Health and Social Welfare**

1. S. Mohammed Sherrif, Deputy Minister
2. Atty. Vivian J Cherve, Deputy Minister
3. ST Varpilah, Deputy Minister
4. Victoria B Wana, Assistant Director

**Ministry of Labour**

1. Samuel Kofi Woods, Minister
2. Regina I W Dor, Deputy Minister
3. Vivian R Swaray, Director, General Employment Service
4. Emma Benson, Director Public Affairs
5. Biepho Scott, Acting Minister Special Assistant

**Ministry of Justice**

1. Ceaniah Clinton-Johnson, Deputy Minister

**Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs**

1. Mulah Reeves, Deputy Minister
2. John Wolobah, Planning Officer
3. Abel Massacu, Senior Demographer
4. Stephen Koizou, Assistant
5. D Sleh, Official

**Ministry of Internal Affairs**

1. Ambullah Johnson, Minister
2. Soko v Sackor, Deputy Minister of Administration
3. Yah Kialim, Deputy Minister of Operations
4. G Nathaniel Fair, Assistant Minister
5. Ernest R Verje, Assistant Minister
6. Samuel Kamara, Director RDP
7. Arthur M Tartue, Director
8. Peter N Jimmy, Director
9. J. Esther Leemu, Gender desk
10. Peter P. Lenyea, Director of Personnel
11. Charles D F Frateh, Director Public Affairs
12. Edward Walker, Director Culture Affairs
13. Duoko Homo, Director
14. Paul Taylor, Director Security
15. Beatrice Gonkatec, Director RDP

**House Standing Committees on the Judiciary, Human Rights, Gender and the Women's Caucus**

1. Victoria Lynch, Representative Mo County

2. Nom Kidau, Representative Numba County
3. Regina S Teah, Representative Mont County
4. M Jallabah, Representative Loga County
5. Armah Sarnor, Chairman
6. Emanuel J Nuquay, Representative
7. Hon. Siryon, Representative Bomi County
8. Hon. A Ennos, Representative Mont County
9. Hon. C Barclay, Representative Bong County
10. Hon M Ses Tananpolie, Representative Mont County
11. Hannah Brend, Representative Mont County
12. Senator Jewel Howard Taylor, Co Chair Gender Committee
13. Senator Joyce Freeman, Chairman

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

1. Clr. Jerome Verdier Chairman
2. Millicent O Gergli, Special Assistant
3. John H T Stewart, Commissioner
4. Oumu Syllah, Commissioner
5. Pearl Bull, Commissioner

### **Civil Society**

1. Esther Boimah, Chairperson, Logan Town, Community Women
2. Edna Didi, Assistant Chairperson, Logan Town, Community Women
3. Bernice Freeman, International Rescue Committee, International Rescue Committee (IRC)
4. Musue Oberly, IRC
5. Sara Siebert, IRC
6. Comfort B Medal, Board member, Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI)
7. Kalimatu Jabibe, Board member, LWI
8. Tina Roberts, Secretary, Light Association
9. Linda Pearson, SV Nurse Benson Hospital, Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) Spain
10. Rev. Christopher Tue, Managing Director, Musunama Development and Empowerment Programme
11. Nelly Cooper, Musunama Development Programme
12. Pearl Fafunbulleh, Executive Director, National Women's and Children's Association of Liberia (NAWCAW)

13. Peral W Fahnbulleh, National Women's Commission of Liberia, (NAWOCOL)
14. Cecelia T Danuweli, Field Sup., Women in Peace Building Network
15. Faith O Nimineb, Child Rights Protection Officer, Save the Children UK
16. Steve Morgan, Country Director, Save the Children UK
17. Steve M Jubwe, Dean Liberian College, University of Liberia
18. Korpu Howard, ULRW
19. Henrietta Suma, Administrative Assistant, West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP)
20. Edith Yomfar, Gender Focal point, Women and Children Development Association of Liberia, (WOCDAL)
21. Sernice Freeman, Women in Peacebuilding (WIPNET)
22. Edith Yosebar, WOCDAL
23. Etmonia Tarpeh, National Director, World Vision
24. Jeanet Sarsili, WUL
25. Roseline K Toweh, Women's Christian Association Liberia, (YWCA)

#### **Human Rights Protection Section (HRPS), UNMIL**

1. Dorota Gierycz, Chief HRPS, UNMIL
2. Pursui Sadiki, Gender Adviser, UNMIL
3. Ketevan Gagnidze, Human Rights Officer, UNMIL
4. Surya Dhunger, Rule of Law Adviser
5. Bipin Adhikari, Adviser, Human Rights
6. N Namboka, Protection Adviser

#### **United Nations Country Team**

1. Jordan Ryan, Deputy SRSG
2. Kagwira Mogbori, UNIFEM
3. Vina Nadjbulla, Advocacy manager, UNIFEM
4. Isopold Zekene, Country Coordinator, UNAIDS
5. Eugene Nyarko, Country Representative, WHO
6. Ahmed Ferej, Officer in Charge, UNESCO
7. Rosa Gakuba, Representative, UNFPA
8. Elizabeth Odoor-Noah, Deputy RR, UNDP
9. Louis Imbleau, Reprseentative, WFP
10. Keith Wright, Officer in charge, UNICEF
11. Dorota Gierycz, Chief Human Rights Protection Section, UNMIL
12. Zole Sherman, Program Manager, UN Habitat

13. Jonathan Andrews, Assistant to the DSRSG, UNMIL