CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY PA LAMIN BEYAI .......................................................... 3

UNDP IN 2018
BY THE NUMBERS ................................................................. 5
YEAR IN REVIEW ................................................................. 6

SDGS
PRO-POOR AGENDA ................................................................. 8

PILLARS
GOVERNANCE & PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS ...................................... 10
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ..................................... 18

CROSS-CUTTING WORK
PROTECTING PEOPLE & PLANET .................................................. 26
GENDER .................................................................................. 32

UNDP IN LIBERIA
YOUTH ........................................................................................ 37
UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS .................................................. 38
UNDP & THE UN ........................................................................ 39
PARTNERS .................................................................................. 40
GOING FORWARD ........................................................................ 41
LIBERIA REACHED A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE IN 2018 with peaceful transition of power from one democratically elected leader to another for the first time in over 70 years, while also marking the end of over 13-years of UN peacekeeping mission. It was in this transition that UNDP reinforced its partnership with Liberia reiterating its commitment to helping the nation on its path towards sustainable development.

Over the year, Liberia laid the foundation for continued peace and stability with the launch of President Weah’s Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). Developed with support from the UNDP, the PAPD is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), stating that, “for development to be pro-poor, it must be inclusive with all Liberians having the opportunity to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from national development.” The Agenda echoes the SDGs’ mantra to leave no one behind and reach the furthest first.

Notwithstanding the foundations for stability laid after the transition, there is still work to be done to safeguard the development gains Liberia has made while continuing to tackle existing and emerging development challenges that the nation is faced with, including poverty, vulnerability, inequality, fragility and conflict, macroeconomic instability, and social exclusions, low human development among others. Despite considerable progress toward development, the UNDP’s Human Development Index puts Liberia in the low human development category, with a rank of 181 out of 188 countries in 2018. The economic stability and prosperity of its citizens, bolstering social cohesion, strengthening government systems (including social accountability and tackling corruption), and addressing the threats posed by changing climate, are among the most vital development issues for the current administration, and UNDP and its partners.

UNDP in 2018 undertook a rigorous assessment of programme delivery capacity culminating in the recruitment of key positions and a robust resource mobilization drive to meet expectations of Liberia’s stakeholders. In tandem with efforts toward the formulation of the UN Development Agenda Framework (UNDAF), UNDP began preparing its new Country Programme Document (CPD-2020-2024) for presentation to the Executive Board in September 2019.

With weak macroeconomic stability and low GDP growth rate, albeit the possibility of recovery of 3.8 percent by 2020, to be largely driven by the agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors, UNDP provided technical assistance to the government to help in unravelling the challenges and options for improving economic stability and sustained growth. This is against the backdrop that without sustained recovery, Liberia will be unlikely to meet
the annual 7 percent growth rate target set to achieve the SDGs. With a conducive business climate, the private sector also has to play a big role in Liberia’s prosperity and, indeed the achievement of SDGs. To this end, UNDP has continued to support the development of a vibrant private sector through the provision of business opportunities such as micro grants for SMEs, business enterprise trainings, as well as legislative engagement that would reduce bottlenecks for foreign direct investments in Liberia.

To foster peace and progress, Liberia passed two longstanding and important pieces of legislation regarding land rights and local government reforms, both of which reinforce needed structural reforms. Furthering the national aims of sustainable development, UNDP and its partners assisted the Government and Liberians with key initiatives like the Community Justice Teams, cross-border security, elections, constitutional reform, decentralization, climate adaptation, and economic projects to name a few; all of which contributed towards a robust 2018 partnership with Liberia.

During the 2017 elections and the post-election transition in 2018, the UNDP, through its partnership with the European Union, supported Liberia’s democratic transition endeavor and provided expertise in capturing lessons learnt for future elections.

Lastly, in 2018, UNDP and the UN System underwent their own ambitious transformation globally. Through this transformation, UNDP remains a steadfast partner and the leading UN agency in development around the world and in Liberia. By delinking from the Resident Coordinator’s Offices in late 2018, UNDP—within the UN system—has flexibility with its #NewUNDP restructuring, and is launching exciting fit-for-purpose initiatives such as the SDG Accelerator Labs and investments in innovation in development. In this light, UNDP-Liberia is at the forefront of providing trusted solutions to the development needs of the country and its people, and we look forward to building on our new country programme to ensure no one is left behind. As the Integrator, UNDP plans to coalesce support from key development partners to support Liberia’s development.

We remain grateful to the Government of Liberia and our main partners such as European Union, Germany, Global Environment Facility (GEF), Ireland, Japan, Sweden, USAID, among others.
UNDP BY THE NUMBERS

2018

1,600 jobs were created with 658 women benefiting from UNDP’s BOSS project.

1,243 people received legal aid of whom 744 are women.

Over 36,500 people accessed basic government services from the County Service Centres.

1,000 metres of coastal wall constructed to protect communities along the shoreline.

1,000 trees planted in vulnerable coastal areas.

599 cases successfully mediated outside the formal justice system.
In 2018, the Government of Liberia agreed to a new UNDP Country Programme Document 2020-2024, the guiding agreement for UNDP to work alongside Liberia. UNDP’s CPD is in line with the UN’s Development Agreement Framework (UNDAF) and is also aligned with the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

To help the Government define and execute its agenda, UNDP provided technical and advisory support. Following a UNDP-supported cabinet retreat in May, UNDP’s help led to the exploration of a costing and funding exercise, the results of which will inform resource mobilization strategy for the PAPD. This is vital to move forward as the PAPD has a budgetary shortfall of around US$1.5 billion.

In addition to traditional development partnerships with the international community, UNDP Liberia branched out to innovation facilities, joint programming, and multi-donor funds to finance its mandate. Through UNDP’s Country Office Investment Facility fund, Liberia’s team
ACCELERATING THE SDGs

secured US$400,000 to support core government function projects. UNDP also received funding through the global Spotlight Initiative to work jointly with UN Women, UNICEF and UNFPA, to address issues of sexual and gender-based violence. To support the UN reform, UNDP Liberia accessed the Liberia Multi-Partner Trust fund.

UNDP’s current Country Programme Document (CPD) is anchored on two major pillars, namely, Inclusive Governance and Public Institutions, and Sustainable Economic Transformation. The work under these two pillars encompasses strengthening governance systems and rule of law, ensuring the ongoing peace and security outlook, and bolstering economic stability and opportunities. These key pillars are further strengthened by integration of gender and social inclusion principles ensuring the most vulnerable in Liberian society have access to equal opportunity. Furthermore, UNDP in Liberia is one of the key actors in addressing the changing climate and helping Liberia reduce risks attributed to environmental instability.
UNDP led the support to the new government’s design of its medium-term plan, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) with technical and advisory services, helping align it with the SDGs with a key focus on inclusive growth.

This was anchored in an earlier ‘Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support’ (MAPS) initiative through which a roadmap for the domestication of the SDGs was developed articulating Liberia’s strategy in advancing Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, guided by the New Deal.

UNDP’s support helped the government articulate a pro-poor growth agenda driven by job creation to meet the priorities of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan. The support ensured an inclusive and participatory process via regional consultations, which helped to build consensus on key priorities and aspirations. This is anchored in the recognition that Liberia’s future depends upon sustaining the peace and its development model is focused on the same—securing, upholding and protecting the peace.
With support from the Facility for the Implementation of the SDGs in Fragile Situations, UNDP also facilitated a review of the PADP’s financing strategy as well as options for a domestic resource mobilization. In anticipation of the launch, roll-out and mobilization of resources for implementation of the PAPD, the government with support from UNDP, reviewed and validated both the NGO and National Aid Policies. Representatives from local and international NGOs, and development partners including USAID, EU, World Bank, African Development Bank, Sweden, UN Aids, UNICEF, and UNFPA participated.

All inputs made were consolidated and incorporated into the final draft policies. Both the NGO and National Aid Policies will provide guidance to all stakeholders to promote aid effectiveness and increase mutual accountability. At its launch held in Ganta Nimba County, President Weah, acknowledged the PAPD’s alignment with the SDGs. Overall, UNDP’s support ensured that the PAPD was aligned with the SDGs, with targets and indicators directly drawn from the global SDGs indicator framework.

A government training was conducted for over 75 senior and middle level technicians from line ministries and agencies involved in data collection and analysis with the aim of building and improving their statistical capacities within the framework of the government’s Pro-Poor Agenda.

It was held under the theme Enhancing the Statistical and Analytical Foundations for Pro-Poor Agenda/SDGs and conducted under the auspices of the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.
UNDP is regarded as a long-term trusted, neutral partner particularly in electoral support, local governance, rule of law and security, and public institutions. Through its expansive knowledge and expertise, UNDP in Liberia has supported several key governance initiatives, namely decentralization, peacebuilding, constitutional review, and land reform, among others.

A comprehensive governance portfolio review in 2017 confirmed that UNDP Liberia has a strong comparative advantage in the governance, electoral support, rule of law and peacebuilding domain and made a series of recommendations. UNDP was also well positioned with strategic government counterparts, such as the Governance Commission, National Elections Commission, and the Ministry of Justice.

Strategic advisory support is critical to deepening UNDP’s good governance initiatives and bringing about fundamental changes/reforms in the institutional framework of the state.

1,000 officers and other security officials have been trained in human rights

Over 1,200 people received legal aid

36,500 people accessed basic government services in county service centres
EXERCISING HER SAY IN DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

A woman in Monrovia shows her blue finger after casting her ballot in the 2017 runoff election. UNDP Liberia supports the National Elections Commission in SDG16 targets.

Photo: UNDP Liberia
Strengthening Liberia’s Elections Systems

Carrying on from the successful elections in 2017, UNDP continued its support to Liberia’s electoral and constitutional processes. With support from the Elections Basket Fund (Canada, European Union, Ireland, and Sweden), UNDP provided technical assistance, policy support and long-term capacity development to the National Elections Commission (NEC).

Following the 2017 elections, UNDP worked closely with NEC to assess lessons learned, and identify opportunities and needs for future support. Coupled with the research and publication of electoral recommendations from observer institutions, NEC produced the Electoral Legal Reform Paper, currently awaiting Board approval.

With help from UNDP, NEC also undertook a reform process setting out its objectives in a roadmap in 2018. As part of the process, NEC has taken steps to reduce voter registration errors and potential fraud through digitization. NEC is collaborating with the National Identification Registry to use its registry for NEC’s future database. Furthermore, NEC commissioned a report on how to improve electoral laws and potential capacity development opportunities.

NEC installed and launched the Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) with support from UNDP. This administrative platform informs finance, human resources, procurement and fixed assets management departments of NEC. When in full use, the ERP will register financial data in real-time, reflecting the business flow and securing fast and accurate financial reporting. Connectivity across modules enables trace of transactions to their origin, so it can be verified and analyzed immediately or on demand to support external or internal audits. UNDP also supported technical assessment and inventory of the voter registration equipment retrieved from field offices by the NEC.

UNDP contributed to the peaceful and successful turnout of the Senatorial by-elections held in two counties, Montserrado and Sinoe. NEC then introduced modern administrative systems and procedures, enhanced communications and public outreach, supported voters’ registration and election results management processes. NEC also enhanced the participation of women in the elections and in political activities and supported civic and voters’ education.

Decentralization

Access to basic government services became a lot easier in 2018 with the full roll out of County Service Centres (CSCs) in all 15 counties across the country, under UNDP’s Liberia Decentralization Support Programme (LDSP). Prior to this, Liberians in need of these services had to travel to Monrovia sometimes great distances and at great expense if they wanted documents like passports, birth, death, and marriage certificates, and business licenses. With the establishment of the CSCs, they can now access these services close to home.

The establishment of the CSCs was mostly funded by the European Union, Sweden, USAID, UNMIL and UNDP. In 2018, the Government allocated the operational costs in their annual budget. This is important as it only does not contribute to the continuous operation of the centers, it also shows the government’s commitment to the overall decentralization process.

In 2018, over 36,500 people accessed 13 fully operational County Service Centres to obtain documents ranging from birth certificates to marriage certificates. As a result of people accessing services, the government generated over US$1.3 million.
Constitutional Reform

In efforts to reform Liberia’s Constitution, citizens were consulted, and recommendations were made resulting in defined propositions for referendum. However, until validated by the National Legislature, this process is on hold. UNDP continued to engage the government, taking advantage of the recently reinforced commitment expressed in the State of the Nation address by President Weah. UNDP intensified its engagement with civil society organizations and other stakeholders to advocate for constitutional reform. With support from UNDP, the Law Reform Commission proffered recommendations to the National Legislative on the current constitutional and legal framework. This was the outcome of a two-day dialogue held with key stakeholders - government, civil society and other pro-democracy groups (women, youth and marginalized groups) to exchange views on the best probable options to pursue in advancing the review process.

Peace and Reconciliation

In 2018, the Ministry of Internal Affairs through UNDP, worked jointly with the Peace Building Office and an international think-tank, Center for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD) to implement phase two of the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE) Liberia. Several town hall meetings and dialogues were conducted aimed at implementing recommendations of the 2016 SCORE, which found that coexistence and civic trust, political tribalism and violent tendencies were key issues to address. The consultations helped deepen participants’ perspectives about peace, security, rule of law and reconciliation, and to ensure that citizens take ownership of the National Reconciliation Program as a tool.

This Index further examined factors that undermine social cohesion, along with evidence-based predictive methods to be identified. The Index quantified Liberia’s socio-political fragility by providing predictive assessments of strategic peacebuilding interventions that hold the greatest potential for sustaining peace in Liberia. The assessment expanded both its scope and sample size by adding a governance assessment and collecting data from over 6,000 Liberians (60 percent men/30 percent women). This represents an almost threefold increase from the pilot phase in terms of number of respondents, allowing for deeper disaggregation and more robust modelling. Furthermore, context-specific measurements were introduced to monitor progress for SDG 5 and SDG 16, as well as inform debate on transitional justice in the country. Ultimately, SCORE was adopted as the tool to measure social cohesion goals in the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. Findings from the 2018 SCORE study were approved by the government. Results are expected to be translated into policy reforms to promote peace and national reconciliation dialogues.

Strengthening access to justice

Having access to justice is a key pillar to rebuilding trust in a post-conflict Liberia. To increase and decentralize access to justice in outlying communities and counties, UNDP helped to put in place a comprehensive mechanism and strengthened partnership with a wide range of civil society and community-based organizations to provide quality legal aid and assistance, legal literacy and monitoring the performance of the justice and security sector institutions, thereby ensuring socially disadvantaged groups and individuals, especially vulnerable women and girls can receive fair and equitable legal and protection services.

Under the UNDP Rule of Law, Justice and Security Programme, the Governments of Sweden and Ireland support the effective use of the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism in communities in four counties. Mediators involved with alternative dispute resolution work with the community to keep the peace.

In partnership with Accountability Lab, the Community Justice Teams (CJTIs) are actively working in four densely populated communities in West Point and Logan Town in Montserrado County, Bassa Community in Kakata, Margibi County as well as Demieta / Kokoyah Road in Gbarnga, Bong County.

The cost-free (to the client) CJT centers were established to help citizens reduce the extensive bureaucratic impediments in accessing the formal justice system by mediating their cases and reducing the strain on the system.

UNDP also provides support to Accountability Lab Liberia to train mediators who form part of the Community Justice Teams. The Centers handle misdemeanor cases like disorderly conduct, simple assault, debt, domestic issues, and sometimes boundary disputes outside the formal justice system.
Evetta Kesselee, 18, and Patience Dixon, 20, are close friends and have known each other since they were little. They usually get along, but after one particularly angry row, they stopped talking. Their fight didn’t sit right with Evetta who sought help from the UNDP-supported Community Justice Team.

“I decided to go to the centre because a friend told me that they can look into my case free of charge,” Evetta says. “If we had gone to the police, we would have been asked to register our case, and maybe transport the officer assigned to make an arrest.”

The mediators were able to help and the friends found the peace they were looking for.

With four offices across Liberia, the Community Justice Teams want to expand across the country. Rockson Wollor, chief mediator in Logan Town, says people can’t afford to pay for courts or police, so the justice teams are helping people who otherwise won’t seek justice. He also says that despite their usefulness in resolving disputes, more serious crimes are always referred to the formal justice sector.

Case study #2

Maima*, age 36, was abandoned by her husband, Dave, after she became pregnant with their second child. For years, she hoped that he would return but he stayed away and refused to provide any child support. After several failed attempts to resolve the matter through mediation, Maima filed a complaint against Dave for abandonment and persistent non-support at the nearest police station. The LNP invited Dave for a conference with his ex-wife but he refused to speak to her. They then enlisted the help of one of the local NGO legal aid providers. They again invited Dave for a meeting but he did not show up. This led one of the legal aid lawyers to petition the local court to compel him to support his family. After hearing the case, the stipendiary magistrate ordered Dave to pay US$ 50 per month in spousal and child support, in addition to all the school fees. According to Maima, Dave has since been providing the monthly support as ordered by the court.

Case study #1

Sieh*, age 73, and her late husband were married for over 40 years and lived in a house on land given to them by her father-in-law. After the death of her husband a couple of years ago, her sisters-in-law plotted to oust her and her children from the house and land. To that end, they sued Sieh in the Magisterial Court in Buchanan (Grand Bassa). Marital Law (1998) prohibits any restriction of a widow’s rights after her husband’s death. Represented by one of the NGO’s legal aid lawyers during the court proceedings, Sieh prevailed, with the judge dismissing the case and ruling in her favour. “I am very grateful to all the staff at the legal aid clinic for helping me to get my property back, because, after the death of my husband, all his family members turned against me and wanted to move me from the land and house my husband constructed over 40 years ago,” Sieh explained.

Regulatory frameworks - UNDP supported the development of the Regulations and Administrative Instructions of the Liberia National Police (LNP) and the Liberia Immigration Services (LIS), which was reviewed by their respective Policy Management Boards. Consequently, these were approved by the Minister of Justice as well as the President. This paved the way for UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to roll out an extensive awareness raising campaign.

The next step is the establishment of the Civilian Complaints Review Board, an external complaints’ mechanism to be chaired by the President of the Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA). In recognition of the need to foster a certain level of specialization to effectively and professionally handle exceedingly complex cases of sexual and gender-based violence, UNDP continued to invest in the Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberia National Police.

Specialized training - In partnership with the International Law Development Organization, UNDP delivered training for specialized police officers to improve performance. The training focused on the preparation of case files, ensuring they contain all the information required to support a successful prosecution, but also touched upon how to properly investigate crime scenes and prepare witnesses for trial. As a result of the training, investigators are properly cataloging, compiling preparing and storing case files.
RULE OF LAW PROJECT CASE STUDIES

Case study #1

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Case study #2

Sieh*, age 73, and her late husband were married for over 40 years and lived in a house on land given to them by her father-in-law. After the death of her husband a couple of years ago, her sisters-in-law plotted to oust her and her children from the house and land. To that end, they sued Sieh in the Magisterial Court in Buchanan (Grand Bassa).

She initially sought help from the county superintendent but he referred her to the legal aid clinic operated by a local NGO. The NGO filed a motion on her behalf to dismiss the complaint on grounds that the amended Equal Rights of the Customary Marriage Law (1998) prohibits any restriction of a widow’s rights after her husband’s death. Represented by one of the NGO’s legal aid lawyers during the court proceedings, Sieh prevailed, with the judge dismissing the case and ruling in her favour. “I am very grateful to all the staff at the legal aid clinic for helping me to get my property back, because, after the death of my husband, all his family members turned against me and wanted to move me from the land and house my husband constructed over 40 years ago,” Sieh explained.

* Names have been changed to protect identities

GOVERNANCE & PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Connecting civil society – In 2018, UNDP launched a Civil Society Initiative aimed at strengthening the rule of law and ensuring compliance with national and international human rights norms and standards. Owing to an extensive outreach campaign, UNDP and OHCHR admitted 74 CSOs and CBOs to the Civil Society Roster, following a rigorous process. Many of them are active in rural counties. UNDP and OHCHR are building civil society capacity to actively monitor the performance of the different justice and security institutions, by observing policing and court proceedings, and regularly inspecting prisons and other detention facilities.

In addition to assessing the performance of rule of law institutions, CSOs are encouraged to monitor the performance of the whole sector, tracking cases as they make their way through the justice system. CSOs conducted 684 monitoring visits, including to local courts and police stations. Among other things, these CSO/CBOs are to be involved in increasing legal literacy among local communities, and fostering accountability through various research, reporting and advocacy initiatives.

Capacity assessment of the Legislature – UNDP and OHCHR commissioned an in-depth capacity assessment of the Liberian Legislature, which formed the basis of a new capacity-building programme for the Legislature that will be implemented in conjunction with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF). The assessment, prepared by DCAF’s International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT), found that the Legislature continued to have severe capacity deficits and was still largely unable to provide proper oversight of the justice and security sectors.

Moreover, lawmakers were found to have limited interaction with constituents, a lack of resources to undertake their jobs, and gaps in knowledge, leading to weakened support to parliamentary support. The assessment also looked at management and accountability challenges faced by the Liberian Legislature. Based on the capacity assessment, UNDP, OHCHR and DCAF have developed a comprehensive capacity-building programme for the Legislature. In addition to offering training and mentoring to members of the different security, justice and defense committees, UNDP, OHCHR and DCAF intend to develop practical guidelines on parliamentary oversight, compile lessons learned from former members, and facilitate meetings with local constituents.
Pushing Liberia’s Legal Frameworks Forward

President George Weah signs the Land Rights and Local Government Acts in Monrovia. The President said the Acts are key components of his administration’s development agenda.

“I want to thank the both Houses, the Speaker and our international partners who have been with us throughout this difficult task. I think it was necessary for the time it took (for the passage of the laws at the Legislature), now we are realizing the dividend. I hope that our people will own the land, respect the rules and guidelines surrounding land and make sure that it brings economic dividend to the generation and the country,” said President Weah.

With political backing from the now-defunct UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and funding from the EU, Sweden, USAID, and Assessed Funding Contributions among others, UNDP has over the years significantly invested into these programmes.

Justice & Security Hubs

Five regional hubs for justice and security services were constructed and operational. So far, 1,000 police, immigration and corrections staff have been trained in service standards, human rights and sexual and gender-based violence (at least 25 percent of whom are women). UNDP in 2018 continued to support the Ministry of Justice through the regional hub approach by deploying 10 trained personnel (six prosecutors, two case liaison officers and two victim support officers). The recruitment and deployment process enforced justice related services and improved access for the people.

Professionalizing Public Procurement & Public Service

To deliver the best possible public services to the people of Liberia, UNDP assisted the government to train staff through the first Regional Training Centre of the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC). With help from UNDP, over 300 procurement, finance, and human resources staff from government and UNDP received accreditation from the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, based in the UK, providing a standardized procurement training to key staff members. In 2018, 32 procurement staff graduated in CIPS Level 4 under a flagship initiative with the PPCC.

The first ever Regional Training Center under the Liberia Institute for Public Administration was opened in Buchanan, and 60 senior Internal Auditors were trained on new internal auditing practices. Forty environmental focal points from key sector ministries were trained in gender, adaptation planning and environmental compliant reporting, and a tool was produced for national staff.

This capacity development approach is intended to 1. Improve skills of procurement officers in public procurement; 2. Enhance efficiency in public procurement; 3. Provide relevant professional qualifications for procurement staff; 4. Professionalize the procurement profession; and 5. Address the human resource constraints faced by many institutions.
**Institutions of Integrity**

UNDP supports the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) in its efforts to ensure that there is good governance through transparency and accountability. In 2018, LACC investigated and completed five cases of corruption, recommending four for prosecution to the Ministry of Justice and obtaining a guilty verdict in one high profile case that involved a sitting lawmaker.

Twenty investigative staff members of the LACC received advanced training in digital evidence recovery, gathering and management thus strengthening their capacities to investigate cyber related crimes and fraud. This training, coupled with other awareness raising events on corruption prevention, combats corruption holistically. The LACC investigated payroll irregularities at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning resulting in restitution made by five employees.

UNDP also provided state-of-the-art equipment to aid LACC in fighting corruption in Liberia.

**Security Through Stronger Borders**

Security forces from Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire conducted joint patrols in River Gee and Maryland counties in Liberia. UNDP and IOM partnered to provide support to both countries to increase confidence between security forces and border communities, and increase intra/cross-border cooperation and peaceful co-existence within the two countries.

The patrols are designed to help prevent illegal entry of people, arms, drugs, and other substances. They are also intended to promote peace, improve security, build trust and confidence amongst border security personnel and communities in both Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire. The patrols included police officers, immigration officers, drug enforcement agents and national security personnel from both countries.

With funding from the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UNPBSO), the project is aimed at increasing cooperation and trust between Ivorian and Liberian border communities.
SMALL INVESTMENTS GO A LONG WAY IN LIBERIA’S ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

With a small grant, thousands of entrepreneurs could operate income-generating businesses in some of the most rural areas. In 2018, UNDP assisted over 1,600 small businesses with capital, equipment or training.

Photo: UNDP Liberia
UNDP’s Sustainable Economic Transformation work in Liberia ensures that growth benefits the marginalized and most vulnerable segments of society. It also supports the creation of meaningful jobs and livelihood opportunities across key productive sectors in the Liberian economy.

UNDP’s work includes: (a) strengthened evidence-based planning, monitoring and reporting (b) support to enhancing the formation of small and medium-sized enterprises and (c) effective natural resource management.

The SET Programme tackles some of the structural factors impeding productive employment of a rapidly growing and young population while also anticipating the next generation of development challenges connected to expanding extractive industries, especially with regard to effective planning.

1,626 JOBS WERE CREATED

658 WOMEN ACCESSED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

1,097 PEOPLE IMPROVED THEIR SMALL BUSINESSES WITH EQUIPMENT GRANTS
Business opportunities aid poverty reduction

The Liberian economy has to contend with a domestic private sector that suffers from a lack of tax incentives and a conducive regulatory and legal environment, limited access to financing and inadequate capacity and management skills of entrepreneurs. Moreover, the absence of financial services for low-income Liberian micro-enterprises, coupled with their lack of access to larger markets, hinders their competitiveness, both nationally and at a regional level. Poverty reduction through micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) is one way to reach the furthest behind. In line with Liberia’s Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, the Business Opportunities through Supports Services (BOSS) project stands as UNDP’s flagship entrepreneurial initiative. It is through linking the MSMEs into the formal sector that poverty reduction can be strengthened.

In 2018, 60 young people had the opportunity to further develop their skills by learning entrepreneurship and how to develop business plans. To further inspire them, a business plan competition was developed in collaboration with the Booker Washington Institute to inspire technical students to work towards developing model plans that would lead to innovative start-up companies. At the end of the school term, five companies comprising 24 students with the best plans were awarded seed-funding to start and grow their businesses proposals.

In the absence of micro-finance institutions to implement access to finance through revolving loans, UNDP adopted new strategies that provided small businesses with access to micro finance through capital grants by supplying several processing machines and equipment to entrepreneurs and cooperatives (with over 150 members). This process has succeeded, especially for cooperatives (75 percent of which are owned and run by women) and entrepreneurs, thereby creating direct and indirect jobs for the participants.

In collaboration with the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC), BOSS also provided sector specific capacity development for 50 local entrepreneurs in public procurement bid development to enable them to apply for and win government and private sector bids. At the same time, 40 entrepreneurs were trained in cassava processing to promote sustainable supply chain and value addition in an effort to encourage rural industrialization. Most of these innovations were made successful due partly to a South-South tour to Kenya conducted with UNDP, government partners, and private sector actors.
Snapshot of the BOSS project

With the adoption of new strategies that provided small businesses with access to microfinance through capital grants, 1,097 (439 men; 658 women) beneficiaries now have access to much needed materials and equipment for their businesses. This has enabled one entrepreneur to access a loan from an existing micro-finance bank, which was previously impossible before UNDP’s intervention. Eighty members (60% women and 40% men) of a rural cooperative involved in various agri-businesses, especially swamp rice and palm oil production, have seen the prospects for their businesses improve due to the supply of a rice mill. Women specifically benefit from this as over half of the beneficiaries who will access the mill are women. This further strengthens their economic power to provide for their homes.

Equipment provided under BOSS has given entrepreneurs the headstart they need to make a success of their small businesses. PHOTOS: UNDP Liberia
Mewaseh Behyee runs his family-owned Menwo Soap Production Centre in Ganta, Nimba county. Behyee was among over 200 entrepreneurs who benefitted from the UNDP Business Opportunities Support Service Project (BOSS) training in 2017.

Behyee says that prior to the training, he lacked basic accounting and managerial skills to properly run his soap-making business.

According to him, the UNDP training has added value to the daily running of the business. “The UNDP training helped me a lot, to an extent that I know how to manage a business and to keep a very good record system,” Beyhee says.

He is assisted by other members of his family (six) including his wife Agnes, who is the Assistant General Manager to run the soap factory. Other family members serve as advisor, marketing manager and sales agents.

Since 2014, Menwo Soap has been operational selling hand-made soap to customers locally and even from as far away as Monrovia. Behyee is excited that with the knowledge acquired from the training, he’s able to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with his business and is proud to report that profits have also improved. “A good record system helps a business to grow and it maximizes profits,” he says.

The company sells soap both on a wholesale and retail scale. A bar of soap sells at less than US$1 and a carton containing 60 pieces is sold at US$9. Each month, they earn about US$500 from selling about 8,000 bars of soap.

The training also helped Behyee gain trust in the government. “At first, I was afraid to register my business. I had thought that when my business is registered, the government would collect too much from me. But, now I know that registration of my business will protect my business and gain the trust of partners working with me,” he says.

In 2018, UNDP helped Behyee to buy an automated stamping machine, which cuts down production time from 3-5 minutes per bar to 10 bars per minute. This was part of UNDP’s efforts in 2018 to further boost businesses and co-ops with machinery, access to bank loans and help repaying loans.
Surveying Liberia’s most vulnerable

Baseline data is vital to monitoring and evaluating the progress of the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, UNDP supported nation-wide household surveys, the results of which provide insight on the food security situation in the country, and helps Liberia in proposed policy measures to be taken.

UNDP supported the initiation of the Thematic Analysis of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) data by providing training for 50 people (15 women; 35 men) in data analysis and the use of analytical tools. This capacity built is now being applied in the conduct of five thematic analyses of the HIES data, which will culminate into a final report in 2019.

One of the five themes focuses on is gender and other cross-cutting issues. The analysis looks at the role of women in the economy and what roles gender plays in income generation and utilization across the economic spectrum.

UNDP also supported the conduct of the Food Security and Nutrition Survey, leading to the launch of the final report in late 2018. The survey is important because it provides important baseline data to aid Liberia in monitoring progress of the Pro-Poor Agenda and SDGs.
Community cohesion impacted by extrative industries

UNDP supported two multi-stakeholder platforms around land concessions in Liberia. These brought SDGs to life by enabling stakeholder engagements through harnessing knowledge and facilitating collective and integrated actions on emerging issues of common concern.

With support from the Peace Building Fund, UNDP facilitated the establishment of nine multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs), working with the National Bureau of Concessions, concessions and communities in the oil palm sector in Western Liberia to ensure the affected communities contribute to conflict prevention and peace promotion.

They became instrumental in identifying and resolving conflicts often linked to the concession agreements, mostly around jobs, land rental fees, compensation and social services. Overall, these platforms were successful in ensuring harmonious relationships between concession companies and local communities.

With UNDP’s support, monitoring and verification for compliance of three concessions; Sime Darby Plantation, EPO/LIBINC and Liberia Forest Product Inc./EPO, was conducted. A result of the monitoring exercises and other UNDP interventions has to a large extent culminated in some level of positive change in accountability and transparency at these concessions. Data collected can now be used to inform the negotiation and review process of new and old concessions; while at the same time the geo-spatial data generated are used to update the concession information management system (CIMS). Concession committees are now provided with options to renegotiate most of the reviewed concessions.

This exercise has also led to increased benefits/revenue accruing from investment made by the three concessions. UNDP supported the development of the land use map in Bomi and Grand Kru counties. The maps for the two locations use rural planning parameters to determine accessibility on infrastructure and services, housing and informality, safety, etc.

Concession and community land boundaries have been successfully identified to help address conflict and enable informed decision-making. Out of 30 concession agreements/contracts under consideration for review by the Presidential Special Review Committee, 15 contracts were completed.
Empowering youth through innovation

Through the support from UNDP, Liberia continued to actively implement YouthConnekt-related activities taking a notch higher the country’s efforts in empowering young people with a focus on digital solutions, innovation, dialogue and knowledge networking.

The Country Office sponsored three Liberians (two women, one man) to the Africa YouthConnekt summit in Kigali. The purpose of the summit was the creation of a Hub for youth innovation. Among the discussions was the possibility of countries pulling resources to expand opportunities for African youth entrepreneurs with innovative start-ups that have potential to scale-up across Africa.

The roll-out initiative is to begin in five countries with Liberia being one. Through its commitment developing youth talent the Ministry of Youth and Sports with support from UNDP upgraded the YouthConnekt Desk to a full programme in 2018.

The Ministry launched the YouthConnekt programme by first establishing a digital lab where young people can receive mentorship and host conferences to share ideas across the continent.
The effects of climate change are being felt around the world, but those hit hardest by the effects of a warming planet are the developing nations. In Liberia, storms are getting stronger and more frequent, droughts are pushing farmers to the brink, coastal erosion is harming livelihoods, and biodiversity loss is harming the flora and fauna unique to Liberia.

Pushing the climate adaptation agenda is embedded into the President’s Pro-Poor Agenda, aligned with the SDGs. In 2018, UNDP helped Liberia accelerate their National Adaptation Plan, assisted local governments tap into the early warning systems that will provide resilience to climate vulnerable people, and has helped provide relief to survivors of devastating floods.
PLANTING THE FIELDS BEFORE THE RAINS COME
Moussa has seen his yield and income fall as flooding inundates his fields in Zwedru.

Photo: UNDP Liberia
Energy and the Environment

UNDP supported the government’s efforts in the ratification of the Paris Agreement as well as the finalization and publication of the National Climate Change Policy and Response Strategy. As a result of the ratification, UNDP will continue to support government efforts in accessing climate finance for implementing adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

With UNDP’s support to Liberia’s National Adaption Plan—the National Policy & Response Strategy on Climate Change—was rolled out. This plan aims to safeguard long-term development in critical sectors i.e. agriculture, fisheries, energy that are vulnerable to climate change. This will provide an overarching guidance and coordination framework of management. Ratification of the Paris Agreement by the Liberian Legislature has demonstrated Liberia’s commitment to the UN’s framework convention on climate change and its commitment to lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

Training was conducted for 51 (27 women; 24 men) participants, including vulnerable youth, from seven counties on the production of energy efficient cook stoves. The training raised awareness on the environmental and health benefits of using energy efficient stoves. Participants acquired much needed innovative skills which enabled them to produce 30 stoves at the end of the training. Participants are now producing these stoves, also improving their economic status. Strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities and coastline ecosystems is important to ensuring sustainable and inclusive development.

To support sustainable climate knowledge and planning, UNDP provided training for 12 staff (5 women and 7 men) from government entities, universities and research institutions in Liberia at the Galilee International Management Institute, Center for Agriculture, Environment and Water in Israel. The training covered climate-resilient agriculture, coastal and flood defense engineering and environmental management.

UNDP supported the development of a community-based training manual on climate change and natural disasters, followed by the training of more than 200 youth, women and men who applied community-based approaches to climate change adaptation, including the planting of 1,000 trees in four coastal cities in Liberia (Monrovia, Robertsport, Buchanan and Marshall). The exercise has raised momentum for community led initiatives and partnership with local city administration in building resilience to threats like flooding, sea erosion and storms.

With UNDP support, Liberia has completed a climate vulnerability and risk assessment of the impact of climate change on the critical sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The report, which identifies adaptation options and project concepts—provides an evidence base for long term support and adaptation in these sectors that are critical to livelihood and economic development.

Water and Sanitation in Liberia

UNDP’s programme for Governance, Advocacy and Leadership in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (GoAL WaSH) addresses issues such as supporting decentralization processes in countries with limited resources and capacities, developing sustainable and affordable tariff systems in impoverished areas and unifying people and institutions to think that water and sanitation is a common good that needs to be sustainably managed.

In 2018, the GoAL WaSH programme in Liberia assisted the Government in setting up its Liberia National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Commission, as well its member board. The Commission’s mandate is to drive the development of the water sector, which will help Liberia’s aim to reach SDG 6: clean water and sanitation. GoAL WaSH provided officials with water governance orientation in August 2018. The session was an early step toward medium-term mentorship for the newly appointed Commission executives.

Further in 2018, a WASH Pool Fund Feasibility study was conducted as the first step in providing insight to government and partners on how to improve the sector’s financing as stated in the Liberia WASH Compact, 2012 commitments. The final report is to be mainstreamed and aligned with the government’s 2019-2023 Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development. Technical support was also provided to the Commission in organizing a strategic planning session comprising WASH technicians and development partners. The draft report from the planning session is to be validated by stakeholders in early 2019.
Liberia’s coast is a hub of economic activity, providing livelihoods and secure housing for thousands of people. But climate change is eroding that precious coastline putting these thousands of families at risk. To reduce this risk of disaster, UNDP has supported government’s efforts to combat erosion by creating buffers against the sea.

One-thousand metres of a coastal defense wall was built along one of the capital’s most erosion-prone areas in the vulnerable community of New Kru Town, which hosts two major medical and educational institutions, Redemption Hospital and the D. Tweh High School.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF)-UNDP’s support to the Government of Liberia’s efforts to combat climate change through coastal defense was intended to complete a 1,000 metre coastal wall to help reduce the risk of sea erosion.

Liberia’s President, George Weah, was on hand to recognize the work.

“We must ensure that D. Tweh is safe and do our best to succeed because our vision is for us to help our people out of poverty and that is our major concern in running our government,” says President George Weah.

“The community is assured of protection for the next 50 years,” says Pa Lamin Beyai, UNDP Resident Representative.

This is part of bigger efforts to ensure that Monrovia will be better prepared, protected and responsive to climate change risks.
Good Growth Partnership for sustainable oil palm

UNDP supports the Good Growth Partnership oil palm platform and forum. This national platform and stakeholder forum provides space for stakeholders from the private sector, government and civil society to collaborate on issues like oil palm certification and sustainable agriculture practices. This Partnership is initiated by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and led by UNDP’s Green Commodities Programme. It is designed to tackle the root causes of deforestation from agriculture commodities, specifically palm oil in Liberia.

UNDP Liberia Resident Representative, Pa Lamin Beyai believes that this project will provide systemic solutions through interventions that will improve food security and conserve the forests.

Dr. Beyai says the agriculture sector is expected to contribute meaningfully to the priorities of poverty reduction, employment, increased personal income and foreign exchange.

“Unfortunately, the contribution of agriculture to national economic growth and development has been limited over recent years by structural constraints, inadequate policies etc. Agriculture including the oil palm sector continues to be a mainstay and is of vital importance for Liberia,” Dr. Beyai says.

The Good Growth Partnership, financed by the Global Environment Facility’s Integrated Approach Pilot programme, aims to promote collective action for change through a National Oil Palm Strategy & Action Plan and a road map to guide investments and activities. It also delivers multi-sector coordinated action for sustainable oil palm production.

“Given the strong relationship between growth in agricultural productivity and poverty reduction, future efforts in Liberia need to focus on enhanced productivity and associated measures with a pro-poor focus that increase incomes,” Dr. Beyai says.

ECO-STOVES

Energy efficient cooking will make a huge difference for those who rely on burning wood to cook. Under UNDP’s National Adaptation Plans project, more than 50 people were trained to build these eco-stoves and learned about environmental and health benefits of the new stoves.

Photo: UNDP Liberia
The Humanitarian-Development Nexus in Action

In 2018, heavy rains caused one of the worst floods to occur in Liberia. More than 52,000 people were affected by the rising waters. The Government of Liberia launched an appeal to help those in need. The UN answered the call.

While World Food Programme (WFP) led the food relief programme, UNDP and the National Disaster Management Agency worked together to provide immediate relief to over 450 households in one of the hardest hit areas.

People received food, household goods and cooking oil to carry them through the emergency phase.

A Multi-hazard Preparedness and Response plan which was developed under the Multi-partner Trust Fund (MPTF) project is being implemented by IOM, UNDP, FAO and WHO and aims to strengthen the government’s capacity and resilience to mitigate, prevent and respond to multi-hazard threats (epidemics and disasters) and disaster risk reduction.

Cross-cutting Support to Climate Change

The complexities of addressing climate change require a cross-cutting application of activities. In Liberia, with the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP delivered a comprehensive capacity development package for the Government of Liberia to help policy-makers and stakeholders to address environmental issues through awareness raising.

As part of these campaigns in 2018, regional stakeholders’ consultative and awareness training workshops were held on the Rio Conventions (biodiversity, climate change and sustainable land use) to strengthen consultative and decision-making processes.

The proposed strategy on the Rio Convention mainstreaming project sets out to meet barriers identified in Liberia’s 2006 National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA), which was undertaken through a consultative process and participatory approach that involved numerous stakeholders from various sectors. Through the inclusive and consultative process of the NCSA, stakeholders have been able to identify many areas that highlight the difficulties in fulfilling the obligations of the Rio Conventions.
GENDER & SOCIAL INCLUSION

GENDER EQUALITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION ARE DRIVERS OF CHANGE

In Liberia, women and girls are extremely vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), social and political exclusion, and a lack of services especially in regards to access to justice. Persistent inequality and a culture of patriarchy is reflected in Liberia’s ranking in the global gender equality index: 177 out of 188 nations.

Yet, work is being done on the ground by UNDP to accelerate women’s equality and social inclusion reflected in SDG 5. As the UNMIL closure, UN realignment in Liberia, and UNDP’s new country programme occurred together in 2018/2019, UNDP Liberia took this opportunity to align its gender equality principles externally and internally.

The formulation of UNDP’s country programme document drew from the lessons learned, particularly with the recognition that sustainable development in Liberia will remain elusive without eliminating violence against women and supporting integrated country platforms to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of achieving the 2030 agenda and in line with UNDP’s Gender Strategy.

299 CASES OF SPOUSAL OR CHILD SUPPORT WERE SUPPORTED BY UNDP

48 PERCENT OF REGISTERED VOTERS ARE WOMEN

320 SURVIVORS OF REGISTERED VOTERS ARE WOMEN AND VICTIMS OF SGBV RECEIVED LEGAL AID ASSISTANCE
RURAL WOMEN IN LIBERIA FACE LACK OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

UNDP’s economic support gives women a chance to become the breadwinners in Liberia’s hard to reach areas.

Photo: UNDP Liberia
Joint programming on gender

UNDP works closely with several UN agencies to implement gender-focused programming. UN Women and UNDP in Liberia have officially partnered to jointly work on shared goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

UNDP also partners with IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF, and UNFPA for various programmes including the Spotlight Initiative. Spotlight, funded by the European Union, to address issues of sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia.

Gender-responsiveness and security sector reform

Nothing for Us Without Us, a joint programme with UNDP, IOM, and UN Women, supports the government to promote gender equality in the security sector, and improve the capacity of the national justice and security institutions to prevent and respond to violence against women. The project helps Liberia implement gender-sensitive international and national policy and legal frameworks such as the Liberia National Action Plan (LNAP) on Women Peace and Security (WPS). A Gender and Security Sector Reform Compendium toolkit was also developed.

In addition, UNDP strengthened the capacity of 60 sexual and gender-based violence service providers including nurses, psychosocial counsellors, county attorneys, victim advocates, and staff from the government’s Women and Children Protection Unit.

UNDP helped assess the gaps and capacities of the within national security institutions. A questionnaire of 34 staff members identified a lack of institutional memory (60 percent of staff members spent less than two years on the job before moving on), and that there was an overall deficit in gender literacy in international and national gender frameworks.

With support from UNDP in 2018, the Secretariat of the Gender and Security Sector National Taskforce (GSSNT) is now fully operational with a Chair from the Ministry of Justice and gender, communications and administration and finance task members. The Secretariat is empowering and building the knowledge base of 40 gender focal points from 10 security institutions on gender, information and technology, gender mainstreaming, project cycle management, leadership and monitoring and evaluation.

A sustainability plan for the GSSNT has also been developed following a consultative workshop organized by the Secretariat of the Task force. The Sustainability Plan was developed with inputs from 30 representatives (19 women and 11 men) from more than 10 security institutions.

UNDP and UN Women along with implementing partners designed and rolled-out specialized training on effective investigation and filing, which targeted 30 police officers of the Women and Children Protection Section in LNP (all women). The training enables more gender-sensitive cases to be properly recorded and filed. Additionally, 42 sexual assault cases investigated by the SGBV Crimes Unit, with all cases reaching the courts. The State successfully won convictions in half of the cases.
Gender-responsive procurement

Gender mainstreaming is paramount when strengthening the procurement capacity of newly appointed government officials. UNDP trained 143 government officials (30 women, 113 men) in gender-responsive procurement. Furthermore, 40 Liberian business owners were trained in bid tendering processes (20 participants women). The Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC) trained 162 participants in bid tendering processes, 43 of whom are women.

Women in peace building

Women are drivers of peace building, and in Liberia, women were key to ending the civil war, and in efforts for sustainable peace. In 2018, UNDP supported the training of 80 women in conflict prevention and participation in decision-making processes. The women participate in high-level community discussions with concession companies on resolving conflicts between communities and concession companies, especially the youth. Four multi stakeholders’ platforms were established involving women drawing on Educare and rural women structures.

People with disabilities

With UNDP’s support, the National Action Plan for inclusion of people with disabilities was developed and endorsed by the president on 3 December 2018. This five-year plan is in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Gender and climate change adaptation processes

Liberia is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The risk and severity posed by natural hazards to the country have been documented and recognized. Men and women are both victims of climate change and sometimes agents of environmental degradation, data concerning the differential impact of climate change on them must be available. Their resilience and skills in coping with disasters though they differ, offer a valuable resource in disaster risk reduction. Then, with the aim of supporting sustainable management of natural resources’ in counteracting the adverse effects of climate change, UNDP has under the National Adaptation Plan Project (NAP) funded by Green Climate Fund (GCF), and in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has initiated the development of gender-responsive adaptation processes. A study on risks and vulnerability study on “Gender and Social Impact of Climate Change” was conducted in the fisheries, forestry and agriculture sectors in counties considered as key agro-ecological zones. Also, the Liberia NAP trained 50 government environmental focal points on gender-responsive adaptation.

Internal UNDP alignment

In 2018, UNDP Liberia brought on board a gender advisor to ensure gender is integrated and mainstreamed across its new programme portfolio and operations, and that UNDP fully promotes gender equality and women’s empowerment. Further, UNDP deployed two programme staff tasked with implementing a fully dedicated Country Office gender-responsive programmes including HIV/ AIDS and people with disabilities.

Awareness raising on corporate gender requirements and strategic documents, capacity building of staff on gender equality, and gender-responsive planning and programming are well in place in the Country Office. In 2018, further training of 61 staff (45 programmes, 14 operations and 2 partners) - on gender and development, sexual and gender-based violence, sexual harassment at the work place, and gender-sensitive communication and procurement not only consolidated staff capacities in planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting gender throughout a programme cycle, but also contributed to creating a gender-friendly, conducive and trustworthy working environment free of discrimination and fear. These accelerated efforts also help in UNDP Liberia’s application for the Gender Equality Seal Certification.

GENDER PARITY AND INCLUSION AT UNDP

Half of UNDP’s leaders and staff across the world are women. Our commitment to gender equality runs deep and plays a central part in UNDP’s new People 2030 strategy, designed to enhance how we attract, train and retain world-class development talent. But we know there is more to do, because a better workplace means better results. In 2018, new policies and measures on gender parity, sexual harassment and disability inclusion advanced a more inclusive, equal and respectful workplace. A new talent programme for young professionals with a disability – the first of its kind in the UN – was launched by UNDP and UNV.
Early warning systems protect farmers against floods

Liberia is vulnerable to natural disasters. With some of the highest rainfall in the world and the rapid pace of deforestation, Liberia is prone to widespread coastal erosion and devastating flooding. Floods can wipe out livelihoods and personal belongings, and they can be deadly.

Farmers in Zwedru know all too well this new climate. Victoria Banks, 53, is the chief of her zone. Her plot of land is in a low-lying area that floods every year, but with each passing season, the flooding becomes unpredictable.

“We usually know when to plant, when to harvest, and when to wait,” Banks said. “Before we could harvest right before the floods, but now the floods can come at any time.”

This unpredictability costs them their harvests, valuable produce that gets wiped away and they have to start all over again. This is why it’s important for Liberia’s farmers to be weather ready and climate smart. UNDP’s support to an early warning weather system across the country is helping farmers and others to become more resilient in the face of the changing climate.

Weather tracking systems are in action across the country at 11 stations. The technology captures data about everything from lightning, rainfall, wind direction and speed, temperature and humidity.

Funded by the Least Developed Country Fund under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and UNDP, and led by the Ministry of Transport and the Environmental Protection Agency, the project uses technology to capture real-time data, analyze it and feedback evidence-based forecasting. If red flags appear in the data, the early warning calls are sent to the at-risk communities.
Keeping it clean

In a quick one-month community clean-up and sensitization project in 2018, led by the Government of Liberia, and supported by UNDP and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), 1,600 youth (50 percent women) were mobilized to clean the streets.

Abraham Sheriff is one of the young people chosen to lead the groups. He says that the short-term project helped empower him to see the value of taking charge of his own future rather than waiting for others to do it for him.

“We as young people now want to take ownership of a project for this national clean-up campaign whether it is supported by donors or not,” he said.

Led by the government, this rapid empowerment initiative had young people as agents of social change, helping their communities understand the importance of clean and green spaces.

The Youth Engagement for Improved Community Sanitation and Revitalization project saw 54 youth leaders trained in sanitation, safety and youth opportunities. They went back into their own communities to lead 54 teams comprising 1,620 young people to clean up the streets, and let other young people know what they can do to engage in their own well-being and growth, whether schooling or work.

Young voices of peace

Liberia’s youth comprise 60 percent of the population of 4 million, and a large number of them are under- or un-employed. Theirs were powerful voices during the 2017 elections, and helped elect President Weah, who ran and won on the promise of meaningful and sustainable work for youth.

Liberia’s youth are vulnerable, particularly those living in the biggest slum, West Point. They face violence, ill health, exclusion. But they’re wise. They know what they want and they know what isn’t working for them. When the election came around, many of them were excited to get the vote out. They knew they had a part to play.

“I talked to my friends, families, including my parents. I told them that violence was not good and they should be willing to accept whatsoever results that will come from the elections for the good of Mama Liberia and our future,” said Angeline Nyumah, a young woman from West Point who often visits the Women’s Health and Development Centre in the heart of the community.

“I even met a woman on Kru Beach (a notoriously violent area in West Point) who never wanted to vote because she never had money to transport herself to where she had registered to vote. I transported her and told her to go and vote anyone of her choice and avoid violence,” Angeline said.

Angeline was one of twenty youth trained by the West Point Women’s Health and Development Centre under UNDP’s Gender and HIV project. With funds from UNDP, West Point’s youth were trained to see the warning signs, defuse simmering anger, and put an end to it. They talked to their friends, strangers, parents.

“Some of the people didn’t want to listen at first, but when I kept encouraging them and talking to them, they eventually listened. Yes, they listened to us and they promised to cast their votes without violence,” Jophina Baysah, 18, said.

The kids say they didn’t care if their candidate won or lost, it was more important to stay peaceful and accept the results.

They know that violence simmers just under the surface. West Point is rife with violence, particularly against women and children.

UNDP’s Gender and HIV project engaged with over 20 young people to become emissaries of peace. This they could do. Struggling to stay in school, these kids are at risk of violence, and girls say they face harassment and sexual violence daily.
The UN Volunteers Programme (UNV) works under a dual mandate – to mobilize volunteers for the United Nations System and to advocate for the importance of volunteerism in development worldwide. In Liberia, 46 UNVs are deployed to various agencies coming from diverse professional backgrounds, including human rights, laboratory science, project management, sexual and gender rights, engineering, and architecture.

These volunteers work as financial experts, communications officers, and programme officers in both Monrovia and rural parts of the country. This is especially important given the closure of the UN Mission to Liberia in 2018 as UNVs in the counties serve as the main UN presence in rural areas. The collective impact has been that the Resident Coordinator's office continues to receive timely information from these counties that it uses to inform UNCT programming in Liberia.

- **Women's Rights**: Four volunteers work with UN Women on sexual and gender-based violence, women's political participation and project management. These interventions have contributed to the incidence of violence against women being more readily reported and improved the statistics of women getting more actively involved in political processes.

- **Governance and Community Development**: Nine UNVs working under the Resident Coordinator's office are based outside Monrovia where they provide critical support to local government authorities in the areas of human rights, governance and peacebuilding.

- **Building Resilient Communities**: Eighteen UNVs work with UNDP supporting the UN peacebuilding, and projects for decentralization and climate change.
UNDP'S ROLE IN THE UN
LIBERIA'S UN COUNTRY TEAM

UNDP has had a longstanding presence in Liberia helping the government tackle some of the most challenging and sensitive reforms, such as justice, peace and security, constitutional reform, decentralization, national reconciliation, and support to elections.

UNDP supports Liberia's national development agenda within the framework of achieving the SDGs. It works closely with national institutions through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) and local communities to promote, advocate and contribute to good governance, peace and security. UNDP work focuses on engendering national initiatives and strategies that help facilitate long-term development transformation in the lives of the people of Liberia. UNDP offers global perspectives, complementary support and ideas on strategic development projects and capacity building in continued efforts to promote and protect human rights and improve environmental management.

The Liberia Country Office has transitioned from being one of the largest in Africa with an annual Country Office delivery of some US$60 million dollars (both core and non-core resources) at its peak in the mid-2000s. After this, the office witnessed a gradual drop in the delivery through the end of the last programme cycle 2013 to the present US$28 million. The transition to a new programme cycle that started in 2013 was characterized by the closure of a number of large-scale post-war recovery programmes, with reduced resource inflows.

UNDP is integrated in the management and coordination structures of the UN family through avenues such as the Strategic Policy Group, UN Country Team, and United Nations Communications Group (UNCG).

In the United Nations Country Team, UNDP leads the Operational Management Team and Information, Communications and Technologies working group, charged with exploring opportunities for greater adoption of common services. UNDP provides coordination support to each of the UN agencies, and provides financial service support to programs and projects of sister agencies and other development partners. At UN Country Team meetings, key UN assistance issues are discussed and decisions are made concerning the UN system's contribution to the achievement of the national development agenda.

In the latter part of 2017, the UNCT underwent a thorough capacity review in line with the objectives of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan and Joint Government UN Transition Plan. As a result, UNDP was identified as one of the main agencies in Liberia that would be pivotal, due to its mandate, strong existing partnerships, and access to resources in place, in filling the gap left by UNMIL's departure.

As part of the current cycle, the country office adopted a programme approach narrowing the focus to consolidate its portfolio on fewer but more strategic programmes to maximize its substantive and operational results. With the full withdrawal of United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2018, UNDP is now tapped to play a more critical role in the areas of security, peace and reconciliation, rule of law, decentralization, land reform, constitutional reform, capacity development, and others. A mapping exercise conducted in 2017 revealed that UNMIL's departure has created gaps not only in these areas but in others such as political liaison, national development planning and donor coordination, youth, gender and macroeconomic policy. These areas constitute the core of UNDP's institutional mandate and comparative advantage.

2018 saw the delinking of UNDP Resident Representative from the Resident Coordinator’s (RC) Office. However, the United Nations Resident Coordinator remains the chair of the UN Country Team, comprising all the heads of UN agencies. The RC provides overall leadership for strategic UN initiatives and the operational framework for development assistance. The effectiveness of the UN Resident Coordinator System is central to providing the high quality services to programme countries to enable them accelerate progress on the SDGs, advance peace and stability and achieve sustainable human development. UNDP is also the acting manager of the UN House in Liberia, the country office under a One UN principle where all agencies' head offices are housed.
A special thank you to all development partners who supported UNDP’s work in Liberia

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GOING FORWARD

Going into 2019 and 2020, UNDP seeks to consolidate its role as the strategic partner for sustainable development in Liberia with capabilities to partner at scale and deliver the much-needed knowledge and technical expertise to Liberia; its government, citizens, and partners.

As part of the UN in Liberia, UNDP seeks to deliver integrated services and promote a coherent UN system approach to the SDGs. Within the context of a new Country Programme, UNDP articulates a credible and strategic vision and programme offer aligned with the PAPD, the strategic plan and the UNDAF. The new CPD will position UNDP as a nimble and innovative thought leader capable of identifying and managing risk.

Drawing from its strategic review, the Country Office will continue to invest in initiatives that sustain the peace, reduce poverty and vulnerability especially those experienced by women, youth and people living with disabilities. It will do so through a programme offer that focuses on the twin pillars of sustainable economic transformation, and inclusive governance and sustaining peace. The pillars are founded on a strong theory of change and target three key elements: institutional change, behavioral responses, and policy initiatives.

It will seek to strengthen coordination within the justice sector, address the concerns of vulnerable groups, improve the informal justice system and reduce corruption across the justice chain. Specific attention will be paid to diversifying livelihood options, reforming the extractive sector and stimulating climate resilient, adaptive technologies as well as macroeconomic stability, key in promoting inclusive growth.

It will also continue to support core government functions as well as other structural reforms especially those for which a last mile effort is needed, decentralization, land, constitutional review, reconciliation, etc. It will seek to be louder in promoting voice and participation including gender empowerment.