STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND INCLUSIVE GREEN GROWTH

Liberia Annual Report 2023
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2023 was an epic one for Liberia. The country conducted exemplary elections peacefully with accepted outcomes. UNDP Liberia Electoral Support Project (LESP) with funding from Sweden, Ireland, and the European Union (EU), along with other partners, supported the Liberian Government through the National Elections Commission (NEC) to successfully conduct the 2023 Presidential and Legislative elections. This assistance covered, amongst others direct capacity-strengthening support to the Commission and electoral stakeholders, focused on strengthening electoral integrity, providing support to women’s participation, and communication and enhancing advanced areas of electoral operations. LESP also helped strengthen national capacities in the areas of campaign financing, Electoral Dispute Resolution (EDR), monitoring and evaluation, evidence-based electoral planning, knowledge management, as well as ICT and BVR processes. The Project assisted Civil Society Organizations and NEC in conducting Civic and Voter Education (CVE) resulting in the registration of over two million eligible voters (2,471,617) using a Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) System. Fifty percent (50.06% or 1.24m) of those registered were women, forty-nine percent (49.94%) were men, and at least 1.0% People Living with Disabilities (PWDs). Nation-wide CVE largely contributed to the high voter turnout – 78.9% in the first round and 66.12% in a run-off Presidential election.

The Liberia Decentralization Support Programme made remarkable progress during the year in the rollout of the Local Government Act (LGA), specifically the strengthening of local government structures nationwide. A major milestone was the establishment of County Councils in all 15 Counties in line with Chapter 2 of the Act. The setup of the County Councils completes a major objective of the LGA which is to strengthen decentralized structures, put in place adequate checks and balances and to build the capacity of councils to manage and account for development funds and local taxes.

The UN Joint Rule of Law programme provided technical and financial support to the Liberia National Police and the Judiciary which have propelled their transition from a manual to a digital case management system. At the Judiciary, the online Judicial Case Management System fully rolled out in Montserrado County, allows the Judiciary to easily track cases and the performance of courts. At the Liberia National Police, the Crime Statistics Information Management System is being used to digitally collect crime statistics nationwide. The digital systems make information available to all authorized users worldwide with easy and quick access to case information.

The Spotlight Initiative in Liberia funded by the European Union has transformed the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) response in the Country. Lofa County now has a newly renovated Court E with support from UNDP. Court proceedings are now streamlined, and survivor support rooms in four of the fifteen Circuit Courts are equipped for safe interactions, Judicial actors are trained in SGBV, and are providing counseling services to survivors from the Victim Support Officers (VSOs), including follow-up visits to the survivors’ homes and safe houses. Justice for SGBV survivors is gradually improving through a robust investigative journey by the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Crimes Unit (SGBV-CU) at the Ministry of Justice.
The Livelihood and Employment Creation Project continues its efforts to engage poor and vulnerable populations in socioeconomic schemes to improve their lives by investing millions of dollars as co-financing grants to MSMEs to help them grow their businesses and through cash for work and youth Eco-brigade programs. UNDP Liberia’s model of the Growth Accelerator continues to attract other donors. In 2023, UNDP mobilized one hundred thousand United States dollars (US$100,000) in new funding from the European Union to support a new cohort on forest enterprises to promote livelihood and income opportunities for forest fringe communities in Liberia.

Another remarkable landmark of UNDP’s support is that, in 2023, the Liberia Land Authority issued statutory land-titled deeds and maps to eight customary communities in Nimba, Sinoe, Maryland, and Grand Cape Mount Counties. This followed a series of processes on boundary harmonization, confirmatory land survey, and mapping supported by UNDP under the Peace Building Funded project titled “Sustaining Peace and Reconciliation through Land Governance and Dispute Resolution Mechanism”. During the mapping exercises in the targeted counties, all existing boundary points between and amongst adjacent communities, including disputed boundaries were identified.

On gender, the Country Office in 2023 demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing gender equality, resulting in the achievement of a Bronze-level certification in the 2021-2023 round of the UNDP Gender Equality Seal. With a notable improvement from a baseline score of 33% to a final score of 60%, fulfilling 18 out of 30 benchmarks, the office showcased substantial progress. The commitment of the Country Office to promoting gender equality was evident in strategic programmatic interventions in its Inclusive Governance and Green Growth portfolios covering the justice sector, empowering women traders, and mainstreaming gender into the National Action Plan for Persons Living with Disabilities 2023-2027.

All we have been able to achieve in 2023 came because of partnerships and collaboration, and we remain deeply grateful for the trust, confidence, and support of the Government of Liberia and all our national and international partners.

Louis Kuukpen
UNDP Liberia Resident Representative a.i.
IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS
Elections

The 2023 Presidential and Legislative elections in Liberia were successfully conducted by the Government of Liberia through the National Elections Commission (NEC). The processes leading to this milestone achievement were supported by UNDP Liberia Electoral Support Project (LESP) with funding from Basket Fund Donors-Sweden, Ireland, the European Union, and other partners. This support covered, amongst others, direct capacity-strengthening of the Commission, and support to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to conduct Civic and Voter Education.

The first-time roll-out of a newly introduced Biometric Voter Registration (BVR system) resulted in the registration of over two million eligible voters (2,471,617). Fifty percent (50.06% or 1.24m) of those registered were women, forty-nine percent (49.94%) were men, and at least 1% of voters identified as persons living with disabilities. The BVR system was used to effectively detect duplication of registered voters and under-age registrants. It helped improve the transparency and credibility of the election process and the final voter roll. Although the implementation was fully funded by the Liberian Government, LESP provided technical assistance and supported public consultations around the new system.

The LESP support also focused on strengthening electoral integrity, women’s political participation, and communication, and enhancing advanced areas of electoral operations. These include campaign finance, electoral dispute resolution (EDR), monitoring and evaluation, evidence-based electoral planning, and knowledge management, as well as ICT processes. Support also went to electoral security, notably mechanisms in combating mis/disinformation and hate speech, Violence Against Women In Elections and Politics (VAWIE/P), support and coordination of Early Warning and Response (EWER) mechanisms as well as training of security forces.

The transparency of electoral results from polling places to the NEC central system contributed to a credible process monitored by over two thousand international observers and over 8,000 national observers with results peacefully accepted by Liberians, a true measure of a successful process.

“Investing in transparency always pays back. All Election Management Bodies (EMBs) should strive for transparency,” says Davidetta Brown Lansanah, the NEC Chairperson.
2,471,617 voters out of which 1,237,257 (50.1%) are women and 1,234,360 (49.9%) are men; 55% of the voters are under 35 years old, considered youth in the context of Liberia. NEC also collected BVR disability data: about 27,000 persons identified themselves as living with disabilities (1.1%).

**Voter distribution - age and gender**

The signatures of political parties to the Farmington Declaration and related activities supported by the UN system and various partners promoted the conduct of peaceful elections.

LESP supported Civic and Voter Education (CVE) and communication efforts across the Country and worked closely with Local Voices of Liberia, to increase the impact of fact-checking efforts using the iVerify system to mitigate the negative effect of mis/disinformation. Over two hundred claims/incidents were tracked and reported using iVerify System (WhatsApp tipline) to counter dis/misinformation and hate speech and fact-check stories about the electoral process. Local Voices fact-checked and published 51 fact-check reports and conducted training for journalists and mobile fact-checkers on the use of the iVerify tool. Local Voices also produced a weekly radio program on OK FM to promote the iVerify system and counter election disinformation.

LESP provided technical advisory support to the NEC and engaged Orange and MTN companies to ensure more robust dissemination of CVE messages. Over one million eligible voters (527,271 women and 654,202 men were reached through a CVE grant awarded to 8 CSOs. From the same total, there were over eighty-four thousand first-time voters reached (41,432 women and 42,645 men). Persons living with disabilities were 3,469 men and 1,929 women.
NEC, in collaboration with UNDP and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Liberia organized voter education for one hundred and thirty-five people (87 women and 48 men) from marginalized groups through a campaign under the theme: #includedonotexclude specifically targeting women, young people, and persons with disabilities. The campaigns enhanced their knowledge of the electoral process and gave them a clear understanding of their rights to vote. The primary objective was to advocate for inclusive electoral rights and improve voting access for underrepresented groups. The campaign was also used to raise awareness about the obstacles faced by these groups and how to address them.

The national Electoral Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (EDR) strengthened, to resolve electoral disputes. It focused on distinguishing between courtroom litigation and administrative hearings. Training for relevant stakeholders including Magistrates, Lawyers, Political Parties, Media, and CSOs increased awareness of the EDR process and enhanced the capacity of NEC magistrates to resolve disputes in line with international best practices and standards. The NEC and the Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and UNDP subsequently signed a contract with LNBA that allowed the Association to host EDR public dialogues and awareness sessions. This activity enhanced awareness of the complaint process.

In partnership with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN-OHCHR) and the US Embassy, LESP supported the training of over 3,000 security forces to address the issues of electoral security, deployment of security personnel during the conduct of the elections, and crowd control.

LESP supported the review, revision, and validation of the Media Code of Conduct on elections in partnership with Democracy International (DI) to improve and professionalize the standards of election-related reporting by the media. Ninety-four Journalists/media executives and auxiliary groups comprising managers, editors, and reporters, from newspapers and radio stations validated the existing Code of Conduct to ensure that it reflects contemporary variables against the spread of misinformation, disinformation, fake news, and hate speech, which could endanger the peaceful conduct of elections.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) developed with support from LESP between media and law enforcement helped reduce tensions between journalists and joint security. As a result, journalists were free to report on the election process as mentioned by the EU Election Observation Mission in its report. Regional training on election reporting and other activities implemented by Internews and LESP contributed to some extent to the quality of media coverage.

MOU with radio stations throughout the country helped NEC to disseminate its messages nationwide. The SMS messages, which were negotiated with the phone companies for free, helped to pass on critical information about the process.

Daily press briefings reduced anxiety and increased transparency and trust around the announcement of results.

The election information desk set up in the media center with support from LESP and Democracy International (DI) contributed to the dissemination of information regarding the electoral process and its regulatory framework.
LESP supported the training of over four hundred (261 men and 166 women) Early Warning and Early Response actors, including field monitors, analysts, call center volunteers, and eminent persons.

The Integrity Watch campaign finance dashboard supported by the UNDP Elections project helped track shortcomings and breaches relative to the legal and regulatory framework on campaign finance as well as developed useful statistics in addressing the challenges in the future. Over nine hundred (987) campaign finance reports were submitted by monitors across the 15 counties. More than two hundred of the reports constituted issues on abuse of state resources, over five hundred related to contribution and expenditure, and the rest covered information disclosures.

Former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf launched the Women Situation Room (WSR) aimed at promoting a peaceful electoral environment and community security in Liberia, before, during, and after the electoral period. The flagship program is implemented by the Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC) for Women’s Empowerment, Leadership Development, and International Peace and Security. It is supported by the European Union, UNDP, and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. The setting up of a call center to monitor the elections, and track, and report incidents of political violence, and hate speech, was part of efforts to enhance peaceful co-existence during and after the elections process. Also, the Women’s Situation Room through its coined program the «Talking Bus» held stakeholders’ engagements and dialogues with local and community leaders, youth, and women groups and gauged the public through CVE outreach on the elections.
2023 recounts remarkable progress in the rollout of the Local Government Act (LGA), specifically the strengthening of local government structures nationwide. As part of these efforts, County Councils were established in all 15 Counties in line with Chapter 2 of the Act. This is a major milestone achieved through sustained cooperation and engagements by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Governance Commission with support from UNDP. The setup of the County Councils completes one of the primary objectives of the LGA, to strengthen checks and balance and the capacities of the councils to account for development funds and taxes raised, and supplements the Revenue Sharing Law which will contribute to local development. The County Council is required by law to approve development plans, and budgets, levy local taxes and fines to support social and economic development as well as promote peace, unity, and reconciliation. The Council is comprised 9 members including, one representative from women groups, persons with disabilities organizations, CSOs, and chiefs. Moreover, the Ministry of Internal Affairs with support from the Liberia Decentralization Support Programme conducted County Council orientation workshops to provide an opportunity for County Council members and Superintendents to understand their functions and responsibilities as well as clarify all issues related to their respective roles at the subnational level.

Scaling up Decentralization Efforts

Other Highlights

76 financial management officers

Capacity building for Ministries, Agencies, and Commissions (MACs) strengthened and enhanced the operational efficiency of the county treasury frameworks and subnational structures. 76 financial management officers (70 men & 6 women) from Nimba, Bong, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties treasuries received refresher training on fiscal decentralization with a focus on the overall objectives of the Revenue Sharing Act.

33 technicians (25 men and 8 women) from local administrations in Sanniquellie, Greenville, and Harper trained on revenue-generating strategies, financial accounting for revenue generation, planning, and budgeting. Capacity-building training was also conducted for two M&E staff (male and female) from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The training covered thematic areas such as concepts, principles, processes, and frameworks of M&E, and designing M&E plans. It reinforced basic M&E principles and the development of related M&E tools and frameworks through experiential learning. These capacity-building exercises have contributed to the efficacy of local government efforts in improving service delivery and strengthening accountability and productivity through regular reporting.
The project supported awareness campaigns on the benefits of the Local Government Act which is seen as the foundation of the national decentralization plan. Citizens were sensitized about the importance of the Act and the progress made thus far with decentralization reforms. These engagements and campaigns were rolled out through town hall meetings, radio talk shows, jingles aired on 22 radio stations, the distribution of more than 9,800 animated LGA posters and FAQs across Bomi, Gbarpolu, Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Nimba, Margibi, Sinoe, Maryland, and Grand Cape Mount Counties directly targeting over three thousand people (2,061 men and 1,079 women).

Four regional policy dialogues held in Ganta, Gbarnga, Kakata, and Buchanan brought together 150 participants (51 women and 99 men) to provide an overview of the Revenue Sharing Law, its benefits, and obligations in the context of sources of revenues for local governments including the payment of taxes by citizens nationwide.

Over 1,038 citizens were directly sensitized about the Citizens Feedback Mechanism (CFM) in Nimba, Grand Bassa, Lofa, Gbarpolu, Maryland, Bong, Grand Gedeh, and Sinoe counties through town hall meetings, radio talk shows, and jingles as well as the distribution of simplified Information, Education & Communication (IEC) materials. The awareness activities increased citizens’ knowledge of the CFM platform and how to report and demand better and improved public services.

In continuation of the Real Estate Tax Expansion Project, the Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) signed a Letter of Agreement (LOA) with UNDP valued at USD 150,000 to support the rollout and implementation of the Real Estate Tax Expansion project in Grand Bassa County. Ninety (90) tax agents were recruited, trained, and deployed in District #3 in Grand Bassa County including Neekreen, Harlandsville, Central, and Upper Buchanan areas. Tax Agents utilized the Kobo Collect and Electronic Mass Automation Appraisal System (EMAA) to capture over three thousand (3,021) real properties.

Technical capacity training conducted for County Service Center staff to maintain Solar Power Systems. Twenty-five (25) technicians (24 men and 1 woman) from 13 County Service Centers were trained on major systems and components of solar system operation, solar maintenance systems, and practical assimilation exercises on solar installation.

The Bong County Service Center received 2 desktop computers, 2 sets of printers, and 2 pieces of universal power supply (UPS) from the project for use by the marriage certificate section as part of efforts to improve operational capacities.

Tax agents recruited, trained, and deployed to capture real properties in Grand Bassa County
The UN Joint Rule of Law Programme supports access to essential justice services and respect for human rights by strengthening the institutional capacity of security, justice, and judicial institutions and promoting gender equality and the rights of women, children, and vulnerable groups to ensure their physical and legal protection. It addresses weaknesses in the rule of law sector, enhances capacities, and builds public confidence in justice and security institutions. The Programme also empowers a wide range of civil society and community-based organizations to actively support citizens to demand their rights and access justice through legal awareness, the provision of legal aid, oversight of state institutions, and influencing national policies. It also addresses weaknesses in justice, security, integrity, and anti-graft institutions, the prevalence of Gender Violence and other human rights violations, and the limited ability of citizens, particularly of vulnerable groups to access justice.

In continuation of these efforts, the programme in 2023, contributed to improving the technical and institutional capacity of the Judiciary, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Liberia National Police (LNP), the Liberia Immigration Services (LIS), and the Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (BCR). It supported the establishment of systems and the development of the human resource capacity of these institutions that now allow them to perform more efficiently and effectively. It has also made significant progress towards putting in place mechanisms to prevent and respond to GBV/SGBV and pre-trial detention in targeted counties in Liberia, especially Bong and Nimba Counties where it has continued to support efforts to strengthen the capacity of women CSO networks to monitor the performance of Court E, create awareness on Court E and to educate communities on GBV/SGBV including its prevention and response.

Utilizing Digital Platforms to Dispense Justice

To effectively manage cases in its jurisdiction, the programme supported the Judiciary in training clerks of magisterial courts and other judicial officers on the use of the Case Management Information System (CMIS), a digital, online platform that facilitates electronic data collection, entry, and analysis in real-time. The CMIS, since its establishment in 2021, has been piloted in the 14 magisterial courts of Montserrado County. The training of clerks of court from the other magisterial courts in 2023, has now extended the reach of the system to the rest of the 14 counties around the country. Pre-trial detention significantly contributes to prison overcrowding in Liberia, with pre-trial detainees constituting 65.4% of the inmate population. The problem is high in Margibi and Montserrado Counties, constituting 77.1% and 71.3% of the inmate population, respectively. The population of inmates currently overwhelms
the capacity of prisons by 57.7% nationwide, with the current inmate population of over 3,000 against the current capacity of prisons of over 1,351 inmates. The CMIS is helping the Judiciary to collect and organize information on cases more effectively, thereby supporting the timely adjudication of cases on its dockets. By extension, this effort is contributing to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Judiciary in accessing information and acting on cases in real-time, thus reducing the time it would normally take to dispense justice. Lawyers and magistrates at magisterial courts in Montserrado County are now using the system to assist them plan and assign cases. This is expected to lead to the reduction of cases on the courts’ dockets and by extension to the reduction of pretrial detainees in prisons.

At the Liberia National Police (LNP), the UN Joint Rule of Law Programme continued to strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of the LNP to inform the public on the dynamics of crimes in Liberia and to provide essential gender-sensitive protection services to the public.

Since 2021, the programme has supported the Liberia National Police in establishing and operating an online database system called the Crime Statistics Information System (CSIS) which facilitates real-time data collection and reporting using digital devices such as phones and tablets that allows the LNP to expeditiously prepare the Crime Statistics Report. As part of these efforts, the programme in 2023, trained additional police officers (36 officers-5 women and 31 men) on the use of the CSIS in other counties, following the successful piloting of the system in five counties-Bomi, Bong Grand Bassa, Margibi, and Montserrado. The support has enabled the LNP to expand the system in the remaining 10 counties. The transition from manual data collection to real-time, digital data collection and reporting has significantly reduced the time it takes to produce the Crime Statistics Report, making it readily available to partners and the public. It is used for decision-making and contributes to improving data integrity. The CSIS report contains information on the prevalence and incidents of crimes including the type of crimes, location of the crimes, information on perpetrators, and time of the day the crime occurred, etc. It helps the Liberia National Police to prevent and respond quickly to crimes by properly mapping crime hotspots, prevalence, and incidents across the country, thereby reducing response time and deterring criminals, which by extension contributes to reducing crimes. The LNP compiles and publishes the Crime Statistics Report twice a year covering January-June and July to December.

From January to June 2023, the police registered and investigated over two thousand (2,907) crimes, either sent to court, withdrawn, or pending further investigation in line with the Penal Code of Liberia. Most of the crimes occurred between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., accounting for 77% of all crimes committed during the period.

**2,907 crimes**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Crime Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft of Property</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Assault at a Distance</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</table>

**Time of Commission of Crimes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m.-12: p.m.</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Men constituted most of the perpetrators at 86%, while women accounted for 10% and those whose gender was missing accounted for 4%. Young people between 18 and 35 years constitute two-thirds (64%) of the perpetrators. Those between the ages of 18 and 24 committed most of the crimes (31%), followed by those between 25 and 29 at 17%; and those between 30 and 34 at 16%.

Police officers use the Crime Statistics Information System (CSIS) to track and report crimes.

Other Highlights

- Facilitated a coordination meeting with national and international partners on strengthening the CSIS. The idea is to integrate or merge digital platforms used to collect, synchronize, and manage the same data, information, or reports to avoid duplication.

- Supported the validation and printing of the Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (BCR) five-year Strategic Plan (2023-2027) by partners and stakeholders. The Plan was developed with technical and financial support from UNDP and strategically positions the BCR to plan and deliver interventions to inmates more effectively by addressing some of the pressing concerns facing the prison sector of Liberia. With the Strategic Plan, the BCR can strategically engage partners to mobilize resources and deliver interventions with clear objectives and results that respond to the needs of the inmates more systematically. Here is the link to the Strategic Plan.

- Supported refresher training for probation and correction officers to increase their knowledge and understanding of services and the applicable laws and procedures, that contribute to reducing prison overcrowding. Training was also conducted in investigation and basic report writing, required to help officers prepare an accurate and adequate Pre-Sentence
Investigation Report (PSIR). The PSIR allows Probation Officers to provide proper information to judges about the offender’s history to facilitate appropriate sentencing. Fifty-four (54) Probation Officers from seven counties participated in the training.

Supported the validation of a report on a study on Alternatives to Imprisonment (ATI). Representatives from the Ministry of Justice and BCR including probation officers, public defenders, prosecutors, attorneys, as well as civil society and partners from the Swedish Embassy reviewed and discussed the Study on ATI which offers enhanced knowledge and understanding of alternatives to imprisonment as a tool to decongest prisons and address prolonged pretrial detention in Liberia. It is designed to also raise awareness of the importance of the study and its human rights implications.

Supported institutional and technical capacity of the Liberia Immigration Services (LIS) to provide professional immigration services to the public- Liberians and non-Liberians traveling through Liberia’s borders and those residing in the country. Part of this support witnessed the administering of professional ranking exams to commissioned and non-commissioned officers across the country in line with the 2016 Act establishing the LIS. The exams were administered to 1,951 officers (365 women and 1,586 men). Over three hundred (309) commissioned officers and 1,453 non-commissioned officers passed. The LIS is currently carrying out an analysis of the results of the exams which will subsequently be submitted to the Minister of Justice and the President of Liberia who are responsible for the recommendation and promotion of the officers. This approach is necessary to allow the LIS to synchronize its ranking system with other immigration agencies in the region while adopting and conforming to a standardized approach as provided by the 2016 LIS Act.

Supported the training of 140 LIS officers who had not gone through the basic immigration training formalities and procedures as required by the LIS policy. These apprentice officers were recruited into the LIS at different periods but did not go through the basic, formal entry-level program as required by the LIS professional standards and international best practices. The training was part of ongoing efforts started in 2019 based on findings of a security sector reform assessment that identified 1,178 out of the 1,847 LIS personnel who fall in this category. This has impeded the professional operations of the LIS, leading to a technical shortage of manpower to provide professional services. Moreover, the Leadership could not fully hold untrained personnel fully accountable for unethical transgression and poor performance. This necessitated the need to support the LIS to become more professional and bring it on par with other personnel in the region and globally. The training of these officers has provided the opportunity for the LIS leadership to assign them in any professional capacity and hold them fully accountable for their actions.

Training conducted for officers of the Liberia Immigration Service
Distribution of LIS Commissioned and non-Commissioned Officers who sat the LIS Ranking Exams by County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>FEMALES Commissioned</th>
<th>FEMALES Non-Commissioned</th>
<th>MALES Commissioned</th>
<th>MALES Non-Commissioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bomi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbarpolu</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Bassa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Cape Mount</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Gedeh</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Kru</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Sinoe</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td><strong>285</strong></td>
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Made significant progress towards putting in place mechanisms to prevent and respond to GBV/SGBV and pre-trial detention in targeted counties in Liberia, especially Bong and Nimba where the UN Joint Rule of Law Programme continued to support efforts to strengthen the capacity of women CSO networks to monitor the performance of Court E, create awareness on the Court and to educate communities on GBV/SGBV including its prevention and response.

Established and supported a network of women CSOs and the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INCHR) to provide awareness on prevention and response to SGBV and monitor the Courts’ E. The partnership with the Development Education Leadership Training in Action Human Rights Foundation (DELTA-HRF) and the Efficient Research and Development Institute (ERDI) enhanced capacities to support and mentor women CSOs in Bong and Nimba counties to monitor the performance of the criminal justice system (police, courts, and prison), ensure that cases are processed and support SGBV survivors access justice and needed services in their communities through referral pathways. Psychosocial support is also provided for survivors and witnesses to access the court and community awareness is conducted about the existence and functions of Court E.

Women CSO networks in Bong and Nimba Counties conducted community awareness on GBV and Court E through radio and community engagements and sensitization. The messages reached 12,258 people (4,390 men and 7,868 women) via community outreach and an estimated 80,515 others through radio jingles. Access to such information has contributed to the identification, prevention, response, and reporting of GBV and human rights abuses in communities as well as the referral of the cases for support and redress.
The women CSO network identified and reported 17 cases in Bong County - 6 persistent non-support cases, 4 land disputes, 2 alleged rape cases, and 5 debt cases. Through the intervention of the women CSO network 9 of these cases including 4 cases of persistent non-support, 4 cases of debt, and 1 land dispute case were successfully resolved out of court. The two cases of alleged rape are currently on the docket of Court E pending trial. Legal services and medical and psychosocial support were provided for the survivors. On the monitoring of the court’s performance, the network reported 29 cases on the docket out of which 6 were disposed of. This accounts for a 15.4% disposal rate.

In Nimba County 24 GBV (non-rape) cases were identified out of which 21 of them were successfully resolved. The CSO network followed up and supported 15 survivors by providing psychosocial support and mediation services to all non-rape and criminal cases identified. Rape and criminal cases were referred to the police for investigation and processing by the court. On the performance of the Court, the CSO reported that 8 out of the 24 cases on the docket were disposed of, accounting for a 33.3% disposal rate.
Spotlight Initiative

The Spotlight Initiative Project, funded by the European Union, during the year, made steady progress in supporting SGBV response and coordination at the county level, despite challenges.

Justice for SGBV survivors is gradually improving through a robust investigative effort by the Sexual and Gender-based Violence Crimes Unit (SGBV-CU) at the Ministry of Justice. Lofa County can now boast of a refurbished Criminal Court E. This improvement, along with streamlined proceedings, survivor support rooms equipped for safe interactions in four of the fifteen Circuit Courts, and the training of 55 judicial actors (including magistrates and civil society representatives) on SGBV, contribute to a more supportive environment for survivors. Survivor support services are also being provided by Victim Support Officers (VSOs), including follow-up visits to their homes and safe houses.

As of July 2023, Criminal Court “E” in Liberia reported 138 cases on its docket, transferred from various police stations. Prosecutors indicted 21 cases, with 20 proceeding to the true bill stage. The Grand Jury found no probable cause for two cases, resulting in ignoramus rulings. Two cases went to trial, with no guilty verdicts for the prosecution but one win for the defendant. A hung jury in one case led to a new trial. The court dismissed 22 cases and granted the prosecution’s request to dismiss 8 cases through Nolle Prosequi. Additionally, 6 cases were admitted to bail, and 55 cases are pending indictment.

Other Highlights

- 50 Criminal Law Chain Actors trained in Grand Gedeh to strengthen their capacity to integrate gender perspectives and improve accountability for SGBV, HP (Harmful Practices), and SRHRs (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) violations.
- Distribution of judicial supplies and IT equipment set up in courts of Lofa and Grand Gedeh Counties.
- Evaluation conducted to assess the performance of the justice and judiciary systems in preventing and responding to SGBV in the 5 Spotlight Counties.
- Constructed a Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the Liberian National Police (LNP) facility in Grand Gedeh County and is awaiting an official handover ceremony.
- Supported the development of the National GBV Accountability Framework document, printed 350 copies, and delivered them to the Ministry of Gender.
- Supported various engagements on the review and validation of the national GBV Accountability framework document and sustainability of the Spotlight project. The documents reflect on enhancing accountability and coordination among government ministries leading the implementation of anti-GBV interventions. The exercises provided a platform for stakeholders to critically review the national GBV coordination mechanisms and programming strategies, strengthen institutions and make recommendations for improving accessibility and quality services for all survivors of SGBV. They were also used to sustain the achievements made through the EU Spotlight Initiative and expand partnerships with other key line ministries to achieve desired outcomes.
Mary was the third most powerful traditional woman in the Sande Society, which is a traditional school that initiates young girls and women into adulthood by performing traditional rituals including female genital mutilation (FGM). She lives in Kpaytuo Town in Nimba County, Northern Liberia. She inherited the rank from her grandmother and has practiced FGM for over 30 years.

As the third most powerful woman in her Chiefdom, the 55-year-old mother of seven was responsible for mobilizing adolescent girls for initiation and aided her contemporaries in performing FGM rituals.

She had no idea that FGM is a violation of the fundamental human rights of women and girls. Mary was unaware of the consequences and complications associated with FGM, which include severe pain, excessive bleeding, infection, infertility, increased risk of HIV transmission, and even death.

Her behavior and attitude regarding the Sande Society initiation rites began to change with the intervention of CHESS-Liberia, a local CSO working in Nimba County that promotes access to good health and well-being of women and girls.

The organization, with support from UNDP under the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative against gender violence, launched a series of focus group discussions, community engagements, and public awareness in hotspot communities on harmful traditional practices such as FGM in a bid to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

The awareness creation was used to encourage behavior change on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), FGM and other harmful traditional practices, and the reproductive health rights of women and girls. CHESS-Liberia also strengthened and supported rural women networks in FGM hotspot communities by mobilizing women to raise awareness of these practices, promote women’s well-being, and end SGBV.

“I was initially reluctant to participate in the awareness activities because of my status. But after two sessions that taught me about the harmful effects of FGM, I took the risks and joined the CHESS focus group discussions and FGM awareness activities,” said Mary. “It was risky for my family and me because of my rank in the Sande society.”

Now, Mary works with her Sande colleagues to ensure that awareness of SGBV and FGM reaches women in rural villages and towns within her chiefdom. Mary is now a full-ranking member of the Kpaytuo rural women’s group working to reach all women and girls with anti-FGM awareness.

The entire chiefdom is astonished and in disbelief by Mary’s openness to the advocacy around the fight against SGBV and FGM her status.

“Something is wrong with Mary. We can’t believe that as a traditional Chief, she is against the traditions she once practiced. This is unbelievable because this woman had been encouraging young girls to join the Sande and always showing how powerful she was during Sande bush practices. Still, now, she is the one actively conducting house-to-house awareness on harmful traditional practices,” said a young woman who was affected by FGM.

Her presence in the Kpaytuo group has motivated many women, especially young women aged between 18 and 28 years who were her victims, to join the fight against FGM.

“The engagement of the third most powerful Sande Society traditional woman in Kpaytuo town has encouraged and motivated many women who have practiced the Sande rituals over the years to join the group network as active members raising awareness against SGBV and FGM,” said Ma Oretha one of the new members.
The Palava Hut Approach to Peace and Reconciliation

The Peacebuilding Reconciliation and Social Cohesion project focuses on consolidating and sustaining peace, while at the same time enhancing social cohesion that promotes and protects the human rights of all, including women. Reconciliation and peace-building mechanisms are expanded and integrated into the governance structure at the national and sub-national levels.

Steady progress was made in 2023 in the areas of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The project conducted five (5) civic engagements and town hall meetings with local leaders and community members in Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Bong, Lofa, and Grand Bassa Counties and one palava hut hearing for the Mel Linguistic Group in Bopolu District, Bong County.

During the civic engagements, open discussions were centered on reconciliation, the elections process, and sustaining peace using the traditional methods to reconcile victims and perpetrators of crimes of lesser gravity during the 14-year civil conflict.

Over a hundred people (86 men constituting 69% and 38 women constituting 31%) were selected as participants from civil society and religious groups, Liberia National Police, Liberia Immigration Service, Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency (LDEA), youth representatives, women’s organizations, District Commissioners, County Inspectors, County Planners, Liberia Marketing Association (LMA), People With Disabilities, traditional leaders, county peace committees, the media, motorcyclists union, Rural Women, peace huts women, and heads of community colleges.

The groups discussed electoral violence and its prevention, human rights violations and prevention, the role of the electoral management body, and the challenges facing youths in Liberia. These discussions were relevant to calming pre-electoral tensions and resolving existing conflicts among communities as the country prepared for the 2023 Presidential and Legislative elections which subsequently contributed to the peaceful conduct of the process.

The Palava Hut hearing held for the Mel Linguistic Group in Bopolu District, Bong was done in three sessions in Henry Town, Tumuquelleh, and Sappimah Town consistent with the traditions of the Mande linguistic group. The District Palava Hut Committee heard 28 out of 55 cases and amicably resolved 27 of them. Two cases were disqualified as the person who had appeared as a perpetrator/offender was impersonating. One case was unresolved as the accused denied the allegation against him. The resolved cases involved 26 victims and 20 perpetrators/offenders. The victims were 10 women and 16 men, while the perpetrators were all men. The perpetrators/offenders were accused of arson, destruction of property, looting, forced labor, torture, stabbing, assault, forced displacement, extortion, and killing of cattle. In one of the cases, a resident complained of being ostracized by the community.

The Kpelle tradition forbids an older offender from apologizing publicly to a younger victim. If the older person admits guilt, the young person offended submits by either bowing to or hugging the older offender and is advised against publicly announcing that the elder expressed regret for his/her actions.

Before the hearing, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INHCR) with support from UNDP mobilized the communities and raised awareness about the benefits of the Palava Hut program which contributes to fostering post-conflict healing, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence. It brings victims and alleged perpetrators face-to-face in a safe atmosphere or space to tell their stories, exchange apologies, forgive each other, and resolve to live peacefully.
Excerpts from the Hearings. The names are not real

1. Noah accused Reeves of killing his nephew and burning his home during the period of Liberia’s civil war. During the conflict between government forces and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Noah narrated that Reeves was dispatched to his hometown by his commander. “When Reeves and his friends entered the town, they started shooting and they killed my nephew in front of me. We ran into the bushes. They burned many houses including our home,” Noah narrated. Perpetrator: “War means many things. We were taking orders from our commanders and were forced to take drugs. It has been a long time and I am a Town chief now. I didn’t know that people still live with the hurt and hold it against me. This Palava Hut program is good. I apologize to Noah and all the people I wronged.” Reeves bowed and held Noah’s feet, pleading with the Palava Hut Committee members and elders observing the hearing to intercede on his behalf. Noah forgave him.

2. John explained that Johnson, alias Bad Devil was a child combatant fighting for LURD rebels in Bomi County who accused him and others of being spies for the government forces at the Klay Market ground on the Monrovia-Tubmanburg Highway. “I was one of the small boys in the group. Johnson told his commander to throw us into the river to drown. But his ‘General’ instead forced us to tote boxes of ammunition. Unfortunately, I fell while carrying the last 6 boxes and sustained an injury on my foot. I was begging Johnson to let me rest because of the pain, but he got angry and inflicted my pain further using a bayonet at the nose of his gun. Up to now, I still suffer the pain resulting from that injury. Perpetrator: “That is true. I apologize to him. I feel bad and guilty anytime I see John. I’ve tried several times to be good to him so that he can forgive me. He and I were working for the same company, and I attempted many times to get close but was afraid of his reactions. I wronged him. I need his forgiveness,” said Johnson kneeling before John and pleading for his forgiveness. John finally did.

The assumption that war victims and their families have put the past behind them and are moving on with their lives without harboring any grudge or plan of seeking reprisals, has been contrasted by victims participating in the Palava Hut hearings who did not only confess the hurt and hate they still carry against the offenders, but also revealed that they would have had to revenge at the appropriate time, had they not had the opportunity to participate in these hearings.

So far, the conduct of these hearings has disproved the notion that the program has the potential to reopen “old wounds”. There is now a unanimous call for the continuation and expansion of the program which many believe is an effective approach to sustaining the peace.
Human Security- Protection and Empowerment

The Human Security Project was established in 2023 jointly by UNDP, FAO, ILO, UNWomen, and WFP in collaboration, with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to assist local farmers, and small and medium-sized businesses in sustainably improving food production, marketing, and service delivery by deepening their understanding of Smart Village and digital technology in the broader development context, particularly in the areas of agriculture, health, finance, employment, education, and markets which are central to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The project promotes the concept of human security using protection and empowerment measures as the most appropriate approach. It targets 3,000 household heads comprising men, women, youth, and people living with disabilities as direct beneficiaries and hopes to reach 10,000 indirect beneficiaries.

The implementation of activities of this project commenced with a series of training for over one hundred stakeholders and beneficiaries including women, youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups representing the targeted counties of the North-Central region of Liberia in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba at the community level.

The training exercises explored the use and benefits of digital technology, its relevance to achieving SDGs, and raising awareness on how digital technology can be used as an opportunity to accelerate progress towards building community resilience, and social protection and increase confidence in local communities.

Participants included state and non-state actors, chiefs, elders, representatives of civil society organizations, farming communities, health practitioners, and educators who shared experiences and elevated the issues and challenges they face with accessing digital technology within their respective localities. They unveiled the untapped potential of digital technology and how state and non-state actors can leverage the huge benefits of digital technology to create savings for citizens, governments, and businesses by reducing transaction costs, increasing efficiency, and driving innovation in service delivery, particularly to the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in society.

As part of the workshop’s strategy, the team engaged local authorities, People with disabilities, traditional leaders, community dwellers, and civil society representatives to carry out a robust awareness about the SDGs and the concept of Human Security within their respective towns and villages.
ACCELERATING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
The five-year Accelerated Community Development Programme (ACDP) is a renewed vision by the Government of Liberia to implement priorities of its national agenda. Launched on 24 October 2022 (UN Day) by the Liberian Government, the ACDP aims to address the real and pressing needs of the most vulnerable rural populations.

It is expected that when fully implemented, it will have an immediate impact on reducing poverty while accelerating socio-economic development in rural communities. Additionally, it will help strengthen human capital and resilience to shocks and pandemics, as well as facilitate the implementation of the national agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

The ACDP in 2023, made considerable strides in advancing its goals and objectives by successfully delivering WASH infrastructures and agricultural equipment to farmer cooperatives working in close collaboration with partners UNIDO and the Ministries of Public Works and Mines and Energy in some areas of support.

Other Highlights

- Fully completed the drilling of four (4) boreholes in Bong, Rivercess, and Gbarpolu counties while drilling of one borehole in Totoquelleh, Gbarpolu is still ongoing. Construction of water towers has been completed in Bong and Gbarpolu counties with the installation of solar system, chlorination unit, and water tanks in Donfah, Bong County while the construction of a water tower commenced in Yarpah Town, Rivercess County. Five beneficiary communities were identified for additional solar-powered boreholes, pending geophysics study and prospecting to identify potential sites for drilling and water tower construction. Once these sustainable water sources are established, they are expected to provide unrestricted access to clean and safe drinking water for over 15,000 rural community residents thereby
addressing the prevalence of waterborne diseases and promoting a healthier lifestyle among them. This initiative will also ease the long distances that community residents, particularly women and girls, must cover to access safe drinking water. The construction of the mechanized boreholes and installation of the solar system and chlorination units is expected to be completed in 2024. The construction is closely and regularly monitored and supervised by a team of local engineers drawn from the Ministries of Public Works, Mines and Energy, the WASH Commission, UNIDO, and UNDP. The team of engineers initially conducted a thorough assessment of the communities hosting the initial five solar-powered boreholes to identify strategic water distribution points for the construction of kiosks.

To promote mechanized farming activities, ultimately increasing productivity and improving the quality of produce, the project procured and delivered 14 farm tractors and trailers and 41 sets of post-harvest processing machinery to 14 beneficiary agricultural cooperatives. Over two thousand (2,400) individual farmers including women, youths, and People Living with Disabilities across Bomi, Bong, Gbapolu, Lofa, Nimba, and Rivercess counties also received essential farming tools. The post-harvest processing machinery included rice mills, cassava mills, rice throwers, sugar cane mills, rice harvesters, rice de-stoners, power tillers, harrows, disc plows, and stump removers that can be mounted on tractors for efficient land preparation. The provision of farming equipment has transformed the mindset of rural farmers to embrace mechanized farming as opposed to subsistence farming. The idea will make rural farmer cooperatives more efficient by reducing high labor costs and intensity of farmwork, extending the life expectancy of rural farmers, and at the same time creating job opportunities for rural dwellers to earn money for improved livelihoods. Farmers are now proactively organizing into agricultural cooperatives to cultivate larger farms. To maximize the benefits of this investment in agriculture, the ACDP sourced the training services of a specialized agrotech consulting firm to train agricultural cooperatives in tractor operation, maintenance, and repair. Over a hundred (148) farmers (75 men and 73 women) acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to operate the machinery and perform basic maintenance and mechanical repairs as required. They gained additional knowledge in pre-cooperative formation, good governance, and financial management in keeping with the Cooperative Development Agency’s (CDA) standards in Liberia. These technical trainings were facilitated by partners, including the Cooperative Development Agency (CDA), iCampus, and GroGreen Inc.

To empower the selected agricultural cooperatives and facilitate their growth towards becoming viable and vibrant entities, the ACDP, in collaboration with the Growth Accelerator project, disbursed $20,000 to each of the first group of 10 agricultural cooperatives as start-up business grants intended to support their early-stage operations and growth. The Cooperatives are using the grants specifically for the construction of operational offices, the purchase of motorcycles for ease of movement, supplementary farming and processing equipment, and other day-to-day operational expenditures.

To promote communication and visibility, the project hired the services of a multi-media firm-Vivacious Consultants to develop and implement an ACDP-specific communication strategy. The firm produced short videos, radio jingles as well as branded visibility, and printed items including billboards, t-shirts, caps backpacks, etc. Currently, the jingles produced in simple Liberian English and local vernaculars are being broadcast on community radio stations with wide coverage areas in urban and rural communities. The jingles highlight the project’s interventions in rural communities and counties. Giant-sized billboards have been designed and strategically mounted at 14 selected project locations across the six intervention counties. These billboards amplify the project’s visibility and elevate awareness. The firm will also conduct rigorous awareness and sensitization campaigns in project communities to generate additional interest and a sense of ownership of the project by beneficiaries.
CREATING SUSTAINABLE AND VIABLE INCOMES
UNDP in addition to its core resources mobilized additional funding and technical partnerships to support the creation of sustainable and viable income-generating opportunities, for the most vulnerable population through its Livelihood and Employment Creation Project. Low-income women and youth especially continue to benefit from the scheme because they suffer the most from devastating pandemics and are the ones mostly affected by multidimensional poverty. The informal agriculture sector and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises remain the target with the intent to spurring the local economy. This program and other collaborative initiatives implemented by UNDP and its partners including the Ministries of Commerce and Youth and Sports, Accountability Lab (Icampus), Business Start-up Center, and Society for the Conservation of Nature (SCNL) have helped to solidify the groundwork and build trust within government and amongst partners.

**Growth Accelerator**

UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Accountability Lab (Icampus) launched Liberia’s Growth Accelerator Programme three years ago. The aim is to support existing MSMEs and Agriculture Cooperatives with training, coaching, mentoring, and finance as a way of spurring growth and development for Liberian institutions through the strengthening of their business operations, providing access to finance to improve marketing, procuring major equipment, improving, and expanding production as well as employing needed skills and talents to improve business services and increase revenue and profits.

In its third year in 2023, the Growth Accelerator Programme mobilized an additional one hundred thousand United States dollars (US$100,000) from the European Union to support MSMEs in the forestry sector while attracting collaboration from other development partners and local banking institutions.

Building on the gains from the interventions in 2022, UNDP Liberia’s Growth Accelerator Cohort III provided grants worth over US$600,000 to 20 MSMEs including 10 agricultural cooperatives, 5 MSMEs engaged in clean and renewable energy, and 5 general MSMEs following a rigorous business plan competition.

Each MSME in the general and clean and renewable energy categories won a grant of US$40,000.00 and those in the Agri sector won a grant of $20,000 each after developing growth implementation plans with milestones covering legal and compliance documentation, invoices of needed materials, equipment covering the grant funds mentioned, and a twenty percent (20%) matching funds by the businesses.

To date, each of the businesses has received the total committed funds and is reporting steady growth with investments made in new equipment, machinery, structures, facilities, production, staffing, sales, and revenue. Ninety percent (90%) of the businesses have procured the needed assets, equipment, and machinery for their operations as verified through procurement documentation (pro formas, cash transfers, receipts), for the assets.

As part of the expansion of their operations, seven out of the 10 agribusinesses now have new and or rented spacious facilities verified through ownership deeds, rent payment receipts, and lease contracts from the lessor and have employed an additional staff of over 40 people (25 women and 19 men).

An average increase in monthly production and sales is recorded at 22% and 13% in the agri-business and energy-related enterprises respectively.

Over the last three years since the programme was launched in 2021, 38 small businesses have received a total of US$1.3 million disbursed with the sole intent of helping MSMEs scale up and improve. Five (5) businesses were selected in 2021, thirteen (13) in 2022, and twenty (20) in 2023.

The model of the Growth Accelerator continues to attract other donors. USAID is implementing a similar initiative under its Liberia agribusiness incubator and development activity program with an investment of approximately 5 million over two years.

In 2024, the program is expected to scale up investments for local business development as well as livelihood and employment of women and youth, which will improve conditions at the country level to attract additional resources to close the investment gap. These efforts will complement activities on energy access, financing, and stakeholder engagements.
Youth Business Start-up

The Youth Startup Business Plan Competition is designed to provide a platform for aspiring young entrepreneurs in seven counties of Liberia (Montserrado, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Grand Cape Mount, and Sinoe) to develop and showcase business acumen, innovation, and leadership skills. Since 2021, the initiative has provided grants, mentorship, training, resources, and guidance, to businesses to help them refine their business concepts and develop comprehensive business plans.

In its third year in 2023, over six hundred youth across the seven counties won US$500.00 up to US$3,000.00 in grants to start, expand, and scale up their enterprises after a thorough selection process as part of the business plan competition.

Finalists from among more than one thousand applications (women constituting 49.7% and men 50.7%) presented their business ideas to a panel of esteemed judges, with the opportunity to secure grants and other technical resources to launch their ventures.

The winners constituting 70% start-up businesses and 30% existing businesses also received capacity-building training and mentorship in business development and management to spur economic growth through entrepreneurial ideas in strategic sectors including agriculture, information technology, transportation, healthcare, education, etc.

The training detailed key components of planning and identified key markets, basic financial management, and sales forecast as essential learning points for the startups and exposed the entrepreneurs to business management concepts that have changed their mindset on how to do business.

With this support, ninety percent (90%) of the Startup businesses have invested the grants in purchasing supplies, machinery, equipment, seeds, fertilizers, clothing, dry goods, and packaging materials to add value to their businesses. A monitoring visit conducted showed that ten percent (10%) of the startup enterprises reported improving sales and generating profits. Monitoring is important for business sustainability, helping to identify risks and ensuring that mitigation strategies are taken to avoid the collapse of these businesses.

Winners of the Growth Accelerator and BSC grants receive training and mentorship in business development and management.
Sophie Gmantan used her US$500.00 grant from the UNDP Liberia /BSC MOCI business plan competition to start a home-based small business. Three months onward, she gets an average monthly profit of LD5,000.

“Sophie has been helping to provide daily food money for the family and other financial contributions,”

confirms her husband Sylvester

Viola Peeloma Seidi, a mother of two kids in Zwedru, has been able to scale up her beauty salon business and increase her monthly profit from US$50.00 to US$150.00 using a BSC grant from UNDP Liberia. She has successfully invested in more products and services and increased her workforce.

“I aim to establish additional branches,”

says Viola

20-year-old Naomi Y Barh is a 10th-grade student in Sinoe County who aspires to be a lawyer. With her grant of US$500, she has managed to pay her school fees, stay in school, and assist her mother with some domestic responsibilities from the income she gets from selling sugar, pepper, onions, and other dry goods after school hours. Naomi has a monthly savings of US$ 30.00. She is dedicated and has confidence that her business will continue to grow.

The Community Empowerment Innovation in Agriculture (CEIA) used the Growth Accelerator grant to increase the production of seedlings, from 3,000 to 15,000 bags. Sales increased from 50% to 95% within a year. Seven staff (3 women and 4 men) were recruited, and members of the cooperative increased from 52 to 123 with more than 90% women and 2 persons with disabilities.
Antoinette N. Weah is a junior student at the African Methodist Episcopal University AMEU in Liberia’s capital, Monrovia studying biology and chemistry. She is a recipient of both the Business Start-Up grant and the UNDP/Global Environment Facility small grants program of US$500 each. She used one of the grants to get started as a budding entrepreneur with a fast-growing ice cream business in her home county, Grand Bassa, and the other to improve the business.

She said many people ask her how she will combine the two, but she is clear – she envisions having a chain of hospitals and clinics in every county as well as many other businesses.

Rural Agriculture Promoters Cooperative Society in Salayea, Lofa County is using the Growth Accelerator grant to drive innovation in the agricultural value chain sector using solar-based vegetable cold storage to improve preservation.

Two young recipients of the Business Start-Up used their capital to set up a fruit production company. Their ginger bar product is popular on the local market in Gompa City, and the company is generating US$75.00 in average monthly profit.

“My biggest dream was to be a healthcare worker but now business is drawing me in,”

the 21-year-old said
Cash for Work

More than 400 youth, women, and People Living with Disabilities across twelve (12) communities in Nimba County (50% women 50% men) benefitted Cash-For-Work (CFW) to earn income while improving local community infrastructure like access to markets to increase local food production and environmental services.

Residents of Lao Clan between the ages of 18-40 years received tools from the project to support their work. The Cash for Work (CFW) program creates community ownership through the direct participation of community dwellers in the repair of damaged bridges, temporary patching of potholes along the roads, and roadside brushing among others.

Even though this employment and income generation initiative is short-term, it lays the foundation for social protection and a long-term self-employment programme that helps beneficiaries invest the cash received in small businesses.

This intervention has spurred small-scale community-based investments in petty trade, pastry, and transportation businesses by recipients. Over 85% of the beneficiaries have reported using more than 50% of the US$125,000 cash received to start these income-generating activities with the rest of the cash used for subsistence in food, health care, and school fees.

More than 40% of the beneficiaries have reported that they have started earning profits from their businesses.

At the start of the initiative, UNDP mobilized the leadership of the 12 communities. The mobilization meetings were used to educate the residents about the importance of keeping their communities clean, safe, and healthy. In addition to the tools provided, the communities agreed on a monthly schedule for general clean-up in each of the communities. Through this project, Community discussions are held regularly to sustain the momentum and the gains made.

In Lofa and Grand Gedeh Counties, a hundred and twenty (120) young people (over 50% women the rest men and People with Disabilities) from 28 communities were recruited and trained as youth Eco brigades in environmental stewardship and business management skills. As part of the training exercises which included the establishment of Village and Savings Loan Schemes, the Eco-brigades engaged in a twenty-day compulsory clean-up, tree planting, and community outreach campaigns in their respective cities using toolkit materials provided by UNDP.
Following the training and field exercise, each member of the 60-batch Eco-brigade in Lofa and Grand Gedeh Counties received a UNDP business start-up capital grant of US$400 as a sustainable source of income while safeguarding their environment.

Sixty-nine (69) Eco-brigades (57.5%) in the two counties have established small businesses in dry goods (provision stores), gasoline, animal husbandry, tailoring, transportation, hairdressing, and investment in land, while 36 persons (30%) have expanded their existing businesses.

Over one hundred of the Eco-brigades are now supporting households of more than five hundred people as indirect beneficiaries of the grant.

The establishment of Eco-brigades in Lofa and Grand Gedeh Counties brings the number to five across the country with the others in Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, and Sinoe.

Toward this end, an evaluation and monitoring of the Eco-brigades by UNDP and its partner Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) was conducted to assess and verify the quality of the work and the use of the grant received.

The findings of the exercises revealed that at least forty percent (40%) of the beneficiaries have started to realize some profits from their investments. Over thirteen percent (13.8%) are using their profits to expand their businesses, and 54.6% of them have deposited their savings in bank accounts.

Over ninety-five percent (95.3%) of the beneficiaries say the program has made them good environmental stewards for their cities. More than sixty-four percent (64.8%) mentioned that they are now taking full responsibility for the basic needs of their families.

This shows steady progress of the program in meeting its target of empowering and improving the well-being of the Youth Eco-brigades through the small business start-up grant.

As legal bodies established in keeping with the laws of Liberia and in the spirit of volunteerism and the goal of the project, the Eco-brigades continue to engage in bi-monthly clean-up exercises in their cities and communities.
Upgrading and Utilizing the Electronic Payment Switch

The Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) has embarked on a program of reforms to modernize the National Payments System (NEPS) and bring the systems in line with international standards for safety and efficiency. The large value and retail payment systems are important components of the reforms as they are necessary to support CBL’s financial stability and financial inclusion goals. Payment services are often the gateway to the use of banking and other financial services, facilitating access to credit and supporting economic development, especially among the rural poor.

In furtherance of the Central Bank of Liberia’s goal in this regard, UNDP through its Livelihood & Employment Project provided support toward the operationalization of the national strategy on financial inclusion and the upgrade of the electronic payment switch.

Through this support, the Central Bank was able to set up a governance architecture, including technical and Policy-level committees to facilitate the operationalization of the NEPs in Liberia to improve financial services, delivery, and financial inclusion.

As part of the process, a consultancy firm CERFODES was recruited to support reforms in the legal and regulatory framework of the payment system. The Bank built the capacity of its staff to manage the NEPS, producing an upgraded NEPS scoping report and consolidated action plan, and conducting a stakeholders’ forum to further bolster the technical and advisory services it needs to manage and implement the NEPS upgraded framework and action plan.

Support of this initiative has increased the uptake in the use of electronic payment systems and reduced paper-based and check-based payment options.

Now, the Bank can easily handle volumes of transactions of ATMS, debit and credit cards, direct deposit, direct debit, and electronic checks.

Lessons and experiences gained from other payment systems in Africa now inform Liberia’s Payment system development and modernization, promoting digitization and reducing cash-based payment transactions.
PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PLANET
Biodiversity, Conservation, and Forest-Fringe Communities

The Community-Based Forestry and Protected Area Management (CBFM) project launched in 2022, is strengthening the management of community forests and protected areas in Liberia through improved governance of community forest management bodies. It also conducts capacity building of forest regulatory institutions and empowers national CSOs, NGOs, and Forest and Farm Producer Organizations as well as integrates natural resources management and promotes sustainable livelihood incentives for forest fringe communities.

The four-year Community-Based Forestry and Protected Area Management (CBFM) project funded by Sweden and implemented jointly by FAO and UNDP during the year, witnessed the harvesting of 7.5 acres of lowland rice farm (System of Rice Intensification) in three communities, namely, Benduma (2.5 acres), Yandohun (2.5 acres) and Lukasu (2.5 acres) with a total number of 160 small holders’ lowland rice farmers (110 women and 50 men) organized into three cooperative groups. These groups were trained not only to increase the yield of rice farms but to also develop the mindset of integrating the training and practices into community initiatives. Additionally, a total of 2,500 cocoa seedlings and 500 heads of plantains were planted on 2.5 acres of land in Lukasu. The cocoa farm is managed by a group of 55 beneficiaries (25 women and 30 men) organized into a cocoa farmers’ cooperative. These are part of ongoing activities expected to be expanded into different communities throughout the project’s lifespan.

The project also trained and deployed eighty (80) local community Eco-guards (34 women and 46 men) in the North-West landscape (Lofa, Gaborpolu, and Grand Cape Mount counties) in partnership with the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL), a consortium (SCNL, LCC & CHAP).

The enlisted eco-guards provide environmental stewardship, facilitate visitor tours, and biomonitoring, and protection of community-driven conservation and management of Protected Areas and Proposed Protected Areas. They receive a monthly stipend of Fifty United States Dollars ($50.00) as a temporary incentive/ income to support livelihood activities for eco-guards who conduct forest monitoring and protection within the landscape in collaboration with Forestry Development Authority assigned rangers. The aim is to minimize the adverse effects on forest ecosystems and protected areas by forest-dependent communities and to create viable agriculture-based livelihoods. Twenty-five dollars from the amount is withheld or retained to be received at the end of the project.

Energy and Environment

Through its Energy and Environment (E&E) Programme, UNDP is supporting the government through relevant Ministries, Agencies, and Commissions (MACs) to address environmental issues and mitigate their impacts to support the collective growth and development of the country. The Programme is tackling these challenges within a broader development context that would facilitate synergies in the areas of livelihood diversification, disaster resilience, Climate Change, biodiversity, conservation, ecotourism, land management, renewable energy access, and waste management.

Additionally, it provides support to promote diversified, and inclusive economic growth along a low-carbon and climate-resilient pathway. It is underpinned by investments in sustainable and environmentally friendly agriculture, food security, job creation, and improved resilience to climate change and natural disasters in Liberia.
Other Highlights

Hydrological equipment procured and delivered to the Ministry of Mines and Energy for hydrological Services. The equipment is expected to improve hydrological data collection in the country.

The endorsement letter for the PPG of the USD10 million allocated to Liberia under the Global Environment Facility’s Least Developed Countries Fund for urgent climate change adaptation needs was signed and submitted. The concept paper (PIF) was completed and submitted and is awaiting approval by GEF.

Supported capacity-building training for the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) in mainstreaming environment and climate activities into budgetary allocation to pave the way for robust coordination within the Aid Management Unit at MFDP.

Agribusiness and Fish processing schemes manuals completed, and training conducted for 95 women (51 in agriculture and 44 in fish processing) in Lofa and Rivercess counties.

The County Environmental Action Plan for Bomi and Grand Cape Mount Counties was completed and submitted.

Community engagements held on the completion of an eco-based ecotourism facility. A print for the facility was completed and a contract was offered for the construction of a women-led eco-based guesthouse in Sebehun, Grand Cape Mount County to promote eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation.

The development of the Africa Minigrid Program project proposal was completed, and validation is pending.

The Green Climate Fund Solar for Health funding proposal completed, submitted, and awaiting approval by GCF. For Liberia specifically, with support from the Ministry of Health, the national ambition is 288 healthcare facilities. Liberia is requesting a total of $36 M GCF grant. Government co-financing will be finalized during the first phase of implementation of the project.

Agreement signed with a CSO to carry out a waste management project in 4 urban centers in Lofa County. Work is ongoing.

The process for the setting up of three WASH windows at three county service centers in Bong, Lofa, and Nimba Counties, is completed, and some of the items were delivered to the WASH Commission. 14 motorbikes are to be delivered to the incoming leadership.

Established the multi-stakeholder waste resource recovery platform to improve coordination in the sector.

Forty-five women, drawn from Margibi, Grand Bassa, and Bong trained in producing eco-stoves. Each of the 45 women produced ten (10) eco-stoves totaling 450 pieces. Each county received 50 stoves as a start-up for business and designated as Green Gold Liberia representatives in the counties. The rest were distributed to vulnerable communities in Kakata. Under the same initiative, the construction of a production center was completed.
by Green Gold Liberia in Gbarpolu County. Statistically, a total of 111 women from 7 counties have been trained over 3 years to produce 1,110 eco stoves. In 2021, twenty women from vulnerable coastal communities in Montserado County produced 200 eco stoves. In 2022, forty-five women from rural communities of Cape Mount, Bomi, and Gbarpolu Counties produced 450 Eco stoves, and in 2023, forty-six women from Margibi, Bong, and Grand Bassa Counties, produced 460 Eco stoves.

The Monrovia Metropolitan Climate Resilience Project (MMCRP)

The Government of Liberia (GoL) with funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) through UNDP launched the Monrovia Metropolitan Climate Resilience Project (MMCRP) in 2021 in West Point to reduce the vulnerability of coastal environments to climate risks. The MMCRP is expected to protect coastal communities and infrastructure at West Point against sea erosion, and increasingly frequent high-intensity storms, Institute capacity building and policy support for the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) across Liberia, protect mangroves and strengthen gender-and-climate sensitive livelihoods to increase local adaptive capacity in Monrovia.
Other Highlights

- Completed data collection (met-ocean data collection) by the firm (EARTHTIME) to conduct the hydro-engineering study and detailed design (HESDD).
- Hosted the first phase of community meetings in project areas to prepare the communities for the project.
- The final design, structural analysis, bill of quantities, and cost estimate prepared by the Ministry of Public Works for the renovation of the proposed Education & Innovation Centre (EIC) in West Point were cleared.
- Data and relevant information being prepared for the Environmental Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and the baseline report to conduct the Social and Environmental Safeguard Monitoring (SESM) submitted by Prime Africa.
- Contract finalized to develop the high-resolution multi-criteria vulnerability mapping to inform the development of Integrated coastal zone management.
- IEC messages and topics on climate change impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation practices in coastal and wetland areas drafted and finalized to conduct sensitization and awareness.

The devastating effects of sea erosion in slum communities in Monrovia
Facilitating Youth Employment Opportunities

Liberia has an estimated population of over 5 million with the youth constituting at least 63% of this total demography, making this group a key driver of development and transformational change. Unfortunately, unemployment and underemployment are major socio-economic challenges in Liberia. In most parts of the Country, many educated youth, women, and men, are not matched by the available number of jobs. This has always been translated into inequalities and has in many instances undermined the Country’s social fabric. It is estimated that less than 15% of the total tertiary graduates annually obtain some access to formal or informal job opportunities leaving the rest wandering for jobs for years. This enormity of graduates’ unemployment and the challenges posed to the State is being addressed with utmost urgency.

The National Cadet Program was introduced to bridge this gap as a significant contribution to national development. It provides mentorship, job readiness and training, and sustainable employment and livelihood sources for young Liberians. The overarching goal of the program is to contribute to youth employment and career development.

In 2022, the National Cadet Programme managed by the Ministry of Youth & Sports with support from UNDP Liberia-funded Livelihood & Employment Creation project enrolled 75 youths in the cadet program.

Over three months, the cadets were provided mentorship, career guidance through on-the-job training, and monthly stipends, to add value to their professional expertise.

In 2023, Seventy-three of the young professionals graduated from the 2022/2023 National Cadet Programme, after completing the three-month work placements with 52 public and private institutions as well as civil society organizations.

Out of the 73, two-thirds of them (49) managed to secure full-term employment with their host organizations because of outstanding performance.

“

The high level of retention by the host institutions goes to show that there is a high demand for university graduates,

the National Coordinator of the Cadet Programme, Samuel K. Mappy IV, said during the graduation ceremony held at the Samuel K. Doe Sports Complex in Monrovia.

In continuation of the programme, the 2023 cycle supported by UNDP in partnership with YEP Business and Leadership Consult Inc. recruited and enrolled another batch of over a hundred (55 men and 52 women) university and vocational institution graduates from Montserrado, Grand Bassa, Nimba, Lofa, and Grand Cape Mount Counties.

The interns participated and engaged in an intensive and comprehensive curricular-based internship covering work readiness, professional skills, and personal development. The internship provided a valuable opportunity for young graduates to gain practical experience and enhance their skills. In addition, a monthly stipend of US$200.00 as financial support to the selected candidates for the 3-month internship helped cover living expenses while learning and working on their respective assignments.

Young professionals attending a UNDP sponsored training under the National Cadet Program
GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND INCLUSION
The Country Office during the year demonstrated strong management commitment to gender equality through robust leadership, a well-represented Gender Focal Team, and initiatives like gender screening mechanisms for projects. This commitment resulted in the achievement of a Bronze-level certification in the 2021-2023 round of the UNDP Gender Equality Seal. The Country Office showed substantial progress in fulfilling 18 out of 30 benchmarks from a baseline score of 33% to a final score of 60%. The Country Office’s commitment to promoting gender equality was evident in its strategic interventions, such as supporting the justice sector, empowering women traders, and mainstreaming gender into the National Action Plan for Persons Living with Disabilities 2023-2027.

Ongoing efforts include the establishment of strategic partnerships with women’s civil society organizations, contributing to evidence-based advocacy efforts across the country, and continuous engagement and communication to ensure staff buy-in and the implementation of gender-responsive policies.

The Country Office is uniquely positioned as a leader in Multi-Agency Coordination to advance gender equality, leveraging the certification to propel progress toward the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The next steps involve sustaining and building on the achieved certification, with ongoing initiatives to reassess and enhance performance, guided by a commitment to transformative reporting and continuous improvement in gender equality outcomes.

Empowering People Living with Disabilities

According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES, 2016), the prevalence rate of People with Disabilities (PWDs) in Liberia is 14.1%. The National Action Plan (NAP) for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities recognizes the need to empower PWDs to afford them a way out of poverty, which would mean improving the lives of an estimated 700,000 people. Skills development is critical to promote an inclusive society where people with disabilities can reach their full potential and participate in the day-to-day life of a community. The NAP, 2018-2022 shows that PWDs lack physical access to jobs and are discriminated against based on functional limitations. The PWDs are often excluded from participating in everyday life activities which mostly stem from the way society is organized, and limited awareness of exclusionary practices. The attitude towards disability in Liberia is largely negative.

Other Highlights

To promote the gender 30% quota, the UNDP Liberia Electoral Support Programme (LESP) mainstreamed gender in all its activities implemented. The inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups, as well as persons with special needs, was a prerequisite to the implementation of all activities. LESP ensured that implementing partners mainstreamed gender in most of the supported events. With support from DI, the sign language interpreter was assigned to the party agents’ training. LESP also engaged in preparing the training of trainers for the tactile ballots. The CVE cells on the ground had obligatory demographics to ensure women, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups were included. UNDP’s electoral project supported women’s political participation through direct capacity-building support to the National Elections Commission for gender-disaggregated data reporting and enhancing women’s political participation. Although the level of women winning elective positions has not improved, the number of women registering and participating in the electoral process as voters has increased. The numerical representation of women in the legislature is at 10.7% indicating a drop. A total of nine female candidates were up for re-election, but six lost their seats. Out of the seven women legislators, only four are newcomers to the political arena, while three are returning lawmakers who secured re-election. Grand Cape Mount elected 3 out of 4 legislators as women and Grand Gedeh elected its first female representative.
The Accelerated Community Development Project (ACDP) recognizes the importance of ensuring that there is fair and equal representation of men, women, youth, People with Disabilities (PWDs), and marginalized groups among the project beneficiaries. To this end, it has consistently strived to achieve gender balance and inclusiveness in its interventions, including the leadership of various community structures set up within the project locations. The project has also taken deliberate steps to maintain gender balance and inclusiveness when selecting participants or beneficiaries of its activities including capacity building throughout its implementation. During the year under review, the ACDP conducted a series of capacity-building training in various modules and distributed assorted farming tools across its intervention communities, benefiting a total of 148 agricultural cooperative members and 2,434 rural farmers respectively. Of the capacity-building training participants, 73 were women and girls, representing 49% of the total participants while 1,002 of the total beneficiaries receiving farming tools were women and girls, constituting 41%. Among the beneficiaries were People with Disabilities (PWDs).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiaries of capacity building interventions / trainings</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiaries of assorted farming tools distributed</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
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Gender mainstreaming to achieve gender equality is central to the mandate of the EU/UN Spotlight Initiative and fundamental to its implementation approaches. Notably, efforts have been made to integrate gender perspectives and advance gender equality across program activities. One of the noteworthy achievements is the incorporation of the SGBV (Sexual and Gender-Based Violence) manual into the training curriculum of the Liberia National Police Academy. This strategic move aims to ensure that law enforcement training includes gender-sensitive approaches. Moreover, the active participation of the National Steering Committee in discussions regarding a clear roadmap for the program is an indication of a commitment to stakeholder engagement. This approach emphasizes the importance of involving various stakeholders, including those with a focus on gender issues, in decision-making processes and strategic planning. In terms of internal commitment to gender mainstreaming, the Program Officer’s active participation in the UN Gender Theme Group meetings and leadership of the Gender Parity Taskforce are noteworthy. These activities reflect a clear dedication to gender equality, both within the program and the broader UN system, ultimately contributing to the ongoing promotion of gender mainstreaming within program activities. The development of a Gender Awareness and PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) training presentation with notes and its subsequent implementation across various counties by Program Staff demonstrates a proactive approach to raising awareness about gender issues, promoting gender equality in agriculture and community development, and preventing instances of sexual exploitation and abuse within communities. The Program Officer’s nomination as a member of the Global Change Agents for the 10-Point Action Agenda represents a broader commitment to advancing gender equality, nationally and globally, particularly in crisis settings. This engagement underscores a strategic approach to addressing gender-related challenges on a larger scale. It underscores a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming across a spectrum of program activities and collaborative partnerships.

The implementation of the Human Security Project provides more opportunities for rural women to increased access to resilient food systems for sustainable and inclusive economic and human development. Moreover, UNDP’s partnership with Liberia’s Land Authority (LLA) paved the way for women’s participation in land governance. The Project has provided an opportunity for women
to own land. It places them in decision-making processes and inclusion in land governance and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as well as engagements with concessions. These communities now have women participating in leadership roles and positions on Community Land Development Management Committees (CLDMC).

Four sets of Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB) training supported by UNDP’s decentralization project and organized for County Council members brought together 120 Men and 47 Women from across the four regions of the 15 Counties. The training led by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning with expertise from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, and UN Women, created the platform for County Council members to understand the importance of GRPB at both national and local levels thereby promoting inclusiveness as Liberia moves towards actualizing full decentralization. The training also enhanced the capacity of County Council members in the areas of development planning, budgeting, and public financial management as the government embarks on the implementation of the Revenue Sharing Act.

GonetAfrica with support from UNDP Liberia and in collaboration with the Liberia Environment Protection Agency (EPA) built the capacity of persons with disabilities in Glaroe, River Gee County in handicraft and business skills.
Trust me when I say it has been a bit overwhelming and difficult at times, especially with the current situation with disabilities. But throughout the whole process, I am still grateful for the support provided by UNDP and its partners for the high level of support, cooperation, and understanding. This is a call for the government and NGOs to work efficiently to assist with business development grants through projects for the disabled community.

a participant stressed
PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

UNDP Liberia extends appreciation to all partners for contributions made in 2023 and beyond.

2023 UNDP Liberia Funding Partners.

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<tr>
<th>PARTNER</th>
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2023 UNDP LIBERIA REGULAR RESOURCES

| TRAC 1                                             | 5,364,549.17                         |
| PROG RESOURCES                                     | 2,345,724.7                          |
| COVID RFF FROM CORE PROGRAMME                      | 22,211.68                            |
|                                                   | 412,938.36                           |
A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS WHO SUPPORTED UNDP’S WORK IN LIBERIA