National gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods
Beneficiary in Grand Gedeh County harvest corn under ECHO Project.
Recommended citation


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Validation Workshop of the Country Gender Assessment of the Agricultural Sector
The social status of women, particularly those in the rural areas are persistently undermined by gender inequalities. Government efforts as well as those of development partners have not been sufficient to mitigate the overarching challenges they face year after year. The disadvantaged status of rural women and the prevalence of gender stereotypes limits women’s access to power, decision-making, resources and fulfilment of rights. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has developed a national gender policy to help facilitate gender mainstreaming across all ministries, departments and agencies. However, in order to achieve gender transformation that will accelerate sustainable development, it is critical that the underlying factors that hamper the progress towards equality are addressed.

I take the opportunity to present to you this Country Gender Assessment Report, prepared by the ECOWAS Commission and FAO, in partnership with the Government of Liberia within the framework of their Technical Cooperation Project on “Gender Responsive Regional and National Agricultural Investment Plans for meeting the Zero Hunger Challenge in the ECOWAS region”. This assessment reminds us of the gender gaps inherent in the Liberian agricultural and rural development sector, and provides guidance to policy makers and development partners on the need to incorporate gender responsiveness in the work they do.

This report is therefore timely in providing us with a baseline and roadmap for effective gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector. It will help us keep track of gender mainstreaming in the ongoing formulation of the second generation of national agricultural investment plans in Liberia, while providing a good baseline against which progress in reducing gender inequalities in the agricultural sector can be tracked. It will also help us monitor more effectively from a gender perspective the Sustainable Development Goals related to agriculture, food and nutrition security, and management of natural resources, so that no one is left behind.

With all the analysis and information contained in the report, we will go well prepared to the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women which will take place in March 2017 at the United Nations Headquarters, focusing on the priority theme “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work”.

I pledge the commitment of the Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Gender and Development working with the Ministry of Agriculture and other Ministries to address the gender gaps highlighted in this report. I also advocate with all partners to commit to the elimination of gender inequalities in agriculture in order to increase food security to the citizens of Liberia. It is my belief that if the findings and recommendations of this report are internalized and utilized by the different actors, we will see an enhancement of livelihoods of families, reduction of rural poverty and an improvement in economic and social empowerment of women in Liberia.

Hon. Julia Duncan Cassell
Minister, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
Liberia has overcome a turbulent past and has made great strides in the country’s economic development, where the agricultural sector has contributed significantly towards the recovery and development efforts, central to peace building in Liberia. Agriculture is the economic bedrock for Liberia, providing food and employment, thus sustaining the livelihoods for the majority of its citizens. Although, Liberia still suffers from high importation rates, in 2008 the Government of Liberia endorsed a national strategy for food security and nutrition, within the framework of the Government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The Ministry of Agriculture seeks to contribute toward food security and poverty reduction by increasing the income of women and men smallholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs on a sustainable basis. Women play a pivotal role in agriculture, providing 80 percent of agricultural labour, and rural women constitute the majority of that workforce, but continue to be challenged by gender inequalities that marginalize them from equal income and employment across productive sectors.

The Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP) identifies priority areas for investment in agriculture and targets gender mainstreaming as a cross cutting dimension. It also recognizes the burden women in rural communities face in agriculture and household work, and that promoting gender equality can reduce poverty as well as increase economic development nationally. However, limited availability and use of sex disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators has been an important hindrance to proper monitoring of progress in achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in the agricultural sector, as it leads to important policy gaps and poor implementation of programmes targeting rural women. A renewed commitment to collecting and analysis gender equality in all agriculture related interventions is therefore essential.

It is with this background that the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have jointly undertaken a Country Gender Assessment of the agricultural and rural sectors in Liberia as an important step to ensure that women and men’s needs and priorities are adequately addressed agricultural policies, programmes and investments. The report explores the existing gender relations and gaps in the various sub sectors of agriculture, their possible causes and impact on food security, nutrition and rural poverty reduction. It reveals gender disparities in access to critical agriculture and rural resources, knowledge, opportunities and markets. It also highlights success stories in empowering rural women in agriculture.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda provides a renewed commitment to end hunger, malnutrition and poverty. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will create opportunities to address gender inequalities in the agriculture and rural sectors, in food security and nutrition. This report is very timely as it provides a credible baseline for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs and the ongoing formulation of the second generation of National Agricultural Investment Plan.

Moses M. Zinnah
Minister of Agriculture
Acknowledgements

This country gender assessment (CGA) was prepared within the framework of the FAO-ECOWAS technical cooperation project on “Gender responsive regional and national agricultural investment plans for meeting the Zero Hunger challenge in the ECOWAS region”. The project is implemented in the fifteen ECOWAS member countries under the leadership of M. Bukar Tijani, FAO Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Africa, and Dr. Fatimata Dia Sow, ECOWAS Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender.

Both FAO and the ECOWAS Commission recognise the centrality of gender equality for achieving food and nutrition security for all for a zero hunger generation, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and providing better livelihoods to rural populations.

The development of this CGA was conducted under the championship of M. Marc Abdala, FAO Representative in Liberia, and the overall coordination and technical guidance of Ms. Tacko Ndiaye, FAO Senior Gender and Rural Development Officer and Dr. Bolanle Adetoun, Principal Program Officer for Gender, Department of Social Affairs and Gender, ECOWAS Commission. Ms. Thelma Dahn Debrah, Assistant Representative and Gender Focal Point in the FAO office in Liberia also provided technical support for the preparation of the CGA.

This country gender assessment benefitted from the contribution of a wide range of stakeholders from Government, United Nations organisations, civil society organisations, farmers’ groups and academia at various stages whose interest and commitment were a great asset to the report. Firstly, we commend all the informants and all those who participated in the validation meeting (see lists in annex). The information, data and comments they provided enriched the report.

Special recognition and thanks go to the representatives of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, UNFPA, UN Women, WFP, Action Aid and Danish Refugee Council for affording time to discuss with the consultant and providing information for the assessment.

FAO is indebted to the intellectual contribution of Dr. Fatmata Sesay Kebbay, International Gender Consultant who was commissioned to prepare this CGA. Her dedication to excellence in undertaking this challenging yet exciting assignment is shown in the quality of the report. Appreciation also goes to Ms. Clare Pedrick, who edited the report, and Mr. Pious Asante and Ms. Colleen Obino, consultants at the FAO Regional Office for Africa who contributed to the finalisation of the report. FAO would also like to thank Sadhana Ramchander and her team at BluePencil Infodesign for the editing and design of the report.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAI</td>
<td>ActionAid International</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>AAIL</td>
<td>ActionAid International Liberia</td>
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<td>AFT</td>
<td>Agenda for Transformation</td>
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<td>ALICOR</td>
<td>Association of Liberia Community Radio</td>
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<td>ARD</td>
<td>Alliance for Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPFA</td>
<td>Beijing Platform for Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAADP</td>
<td>Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARI</td>
<td>Central Agriculture Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC GAP</td>
<td>Climate Change Gender Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAAS-Lib</td>
<td>Comprehensive Assessment of the Agricultural Sector of Liberia</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGA</td>
<td>Country Gender Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFDC</td>
<td>Community Forest Development Committee</td>
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<td>CPF</td>
<td>Country Programme Framework</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Danish Refugee Council</td>
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<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAPS</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCI</td>
<td>Foundation for Community Initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>FED</td>
<td>Food and Enterprise Development programme</td>
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<td>FFS</td>
<td>Farmer Field School</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female genital mutilation</td>
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<td>FLY</td>
<td>Federation of Liberian Youth</td>
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<td>FSNS</td>
<td>Food and Nutrition Policy Strategy</td>
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<td>FUN</td>
<td>Farmers Union Network of Liberia</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-based violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>GFP</td>
<td>Gender Focal Point</td>
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<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDI</td>
<td>Gender Development Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GII</td>
<td>Gender Inequality Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>GoL</td>
<td>Government of Liberia</td>
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<tr>
<td>HANDS</td>
<td>Health, Agriculture, Nutrition Development for Sustainability</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immune Virus</td>
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<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>LASIP</td>
<td>Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDHS</td>
<td>Liberia Demographic and Health Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRM</td>
<td>Liberia Reform Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoA</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoGCSP</td>
<td>Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPI</td>
<td>Multidimensional Poverty Index</td>
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<td>NACUL</td>
<td>National Charcoal Union of Liberia</td>
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<td>NAIP</td>
<td>National Agricultural Investment Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCSCCL</td>
<td>National Civil Society Council of Liberia</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAIS</td>
<td>Natural Agricultural Innovations System</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGP</td>
<td>National Gender Policy</td>
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<td>NMTIP</td>
<td>National Medium Term Investment Programme</td>
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<td>NRWP</td>
<td>Natural Resource Women Platform</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>RHRAP</td>
<td>Rural Human Rights Activists Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRI</td>
<td>Rights and Rice Foundation</td>
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<td>SAMFU</td>
<td>Save My Future Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDI</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and gender-based violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Traditional birth attendant</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCP</td>
<td>Technical Cooperation Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDAF</td>
<td>United Nations Development Assistance Framework</td>
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<td>UNW</td>
<td>United Nations Women</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDG</td>
<td>United Nations Development Group</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>United Nations Office for Project Services</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOV</td>
<td>Voice of the Voiceless</td>
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<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIPNET</td>
<td>Women in Peace Building Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>WONGOSOL</td>
<td>Women NGO secretariat of Liberia</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSS</td>
<td>Water Supply and Sanitation</td>
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</table>
This Country Gender Assessment (CGA) was jointly undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, within the framework of their Technical Cooperation Project on Gender responsive national and regional agricultural investment plans for meeting the Zero Hunger Challenge in ECOWAS member countries. The purpose of the Country Gender Assessment is to analyse the gender dimensions and inequalities that exist in agriculture, food and nutrition security, natural resource management and rural development, as well as in access to and control over productive resources, services and markets. It also aims to give policy recommendations for expanding women’s opportunities in inclusive agricultural growth as a pathway to rural poverty reduction. The assessment will inform the formulation, implementation, financing and monitoring of the second generation of National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) from a gender perspective, and provide a solid baseline for monitoring implementation of the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP)/Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) 2025, the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The process of conducting the Country Gender Assessment combines an in-depth analysis of gender gaps in agriculture and rural sector policy and institutions, based on thorough document analysis, use of available sex disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators, and a gender aware participatory policy diagnosis. A detailed review of policies was conducted, taking into account existing international, regional and national gender and agriculture data and reports. Bilateral interviews and discussions were held with key officials from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Ministry of Agriculture and other ministries, FAO and other development partners working in, or providing support to the agriculture sector in Liberia.

The socio-economic and political context of the country is reviewed from a gender perspective, informed by the following key documents: (i) the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and ECOWAS Gender Policy and Supplementary Act relating to equality of rights between women and men for sustainable development in the ECOWAS region; (ii) the Analytical Framework for Assessing Gender Integration in NAIP prepared by the Directorate of Agriculture of the ECOWAS Commission; (iii) the FAO guide to preparing a Country Gender Assessment (iv) national and international instruments on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The review shows that considerable progress has been made in advancing the landscape of laws and public policies to promote gender equality and women’s rights in agriculture. In spite of new laws and policies, longstanding customs and traditions continue to restrict women’s development opportunities at local level in rural areas and undermine their participation in agricultural decision-making. Access to land, credit, inputs, extension services and decision-making in Liberia could contribute to increase rural output. Improved participation of women in decision-making (observed in this study) and increased economic opportunities for rural women will have a positive effect on household welfare and poverty reduction.

The NAIP/ Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP) has also been reviewed with a gender lens to assess its relevance in relation to Liberia’s gender equality commitments; its effectiveness, in using gender assessment in shaping the programme interventions; its efficiency using different tools and systems for ensuring gender mainstreaming in programme design and implementation; the likely impact and possibility of the programme’s contribution to closing the gender gap; and the sustainability of incorporating gender mainstreaming in all interventions in the agriculture sector.
Liberia has made significant progress in advancing national legislation and public policies to promote gender equality and women’s rights in agriculture. The country’s agricultural policies and programmes are consistent with regional and international instruments that promote gender in agriculture, such as NAIP/LASIP. However, structural constraints to enforcing legislation, building the relevant knowledge and skills to mainstream gender into development priorities/programmes/projects, and developing effective extension services and education all contribute to the persistence of gender inequality and inequity in the sector. In addition, limited national gender disaggregated evidence in agriculture contributes to an enormous gap in baseline data against which policies/programmes/projects will be monitored for progress and change. Financial services to reduce poverty for rural women are predominantly based on microfinance, but the percentage of rural women who access this source is uncertain, as such facilities are not readily available to rural women. Women and men usually possess different types of knowledge in food production value chains, since different activities
are carried out by different genders, and there is a visible knowledge gap between the two sexes. Social protection is crucial for enabling women to improve their families’ health and nutritional status, the school attendance of their children, and reducing hunger in the household.

Key recommendations highlighted include the need to address the knowledge gap in food production value chains. Knowledge held by both men and women should be harnessed for improved value chain processing of agricultural goods. Social protection packages should therefore be comprehensive and not limited to food/cash-for-work and school feeding programmes. There should also be a standalone initiative that addresses gender inequalities and women's empowerment issues, so as to close the existing gap, as well as a mainstreaming approach that can foster the integration of gender into development priorities and programmes. Financial services for women should not be limited to microfinance, but women's access to financial services at all levels should be promoted. Legislation, policies and programmes, including budgetary allocations, should promote gender equality and women's rights in agriculture. Rural women should be offered capacity-building, to enable them to participate in agricultural community processes, governance and management, so that they can claim their rights and hold government accountable.
A farmer displaying grains of rice in his hand.
SECTION I

THE COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Liberia is located on the western bulge of Africa, bordered to the north by Guinea, to the east by Côte D’Ivoire, to the west by Sierra Leone, and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. The country occupies 96,917 square kilometers, and has a population of 4,092,310 (July 2014).\(^1\) Monrovia, the capital, is the seat of the central Government, and the country is further divided into 15 administrative units known as counties. Rainforest occupies roughly 45 percent of Liberia’s land area and is the source of its timber. The plateaux occupy 27 percent of land area and are cultivated for agriculture, while the mountains – including Mount Nimba and Putu Mountain – have mineral resources, especially iron ore, gold and diamonds. The Cavalla River, St. John River and the St. Paul River offer potential for hydroelectricity (GoL, 2013).

Agriculture is the economic bedrock of Liberia, and provides food, employment, raw materials, tax revenues, export earnings and a market for non-farm goods, securing the livelihoods of the majority of the population.\(^2\) The agriculture sector is central to Liberia’s vision of economic transformation and wealth creation to enhance poverty reduction. The annual growth rate of this sector was less than 4 percent in 2010-2011 (GoL, 2013). The country is endowed with rich natural resources, which include vast and diversified forest resources, fertile land and water, with rainfall that is estimated at 5,000 mm per annum. The country has many inland swamps and lowlands suitable for rice and vegetable production.\(^3\) In spite of the favourable natural conditions for agricultural activities in terms of fertile soil, good climatic conditions, adequate arable land and abundant water resources, less than 5 percent of land is under permanent cultivation, and less than 1 percent is irrigated. Natural resources are underused, due to the almost total lack of irrigation infrastructure and appropriate technologies. Food security still threatens the country’s stability, as approximately 60 percent of food consumed is imported. Crop yields are low in the country due to limited quantities of improved planting materials, absence of integrated nutrient and pest management, lack of credit and high post-harvest losses.\(^4\)

The once strong potential of Liberia’s agriculture sector was seriously affected by the prolonged civil war that devastated the country during the 1990s, before ending in 2003. The conflict badly damaged the country’s infrastructure and institutions and led to the mass displacement of people from rural to urban areas and to neighbouring countries. As a result, the land was left unproductive for several years. In 2006, the country started on the path to recovery and reconstruction, with a focus on consolidating peace and national security, reactivating the mining, agriculture and forestry sectors, rebuilding infrastructure for the provision of basic services, especially in rural areas, and the promotion of institutions for good governance. Agricultural growth for poverty reduction was placed high on the agenda of national development in the post-conflict phase, with an emphasis on programmes aimed at the provision of food security and nutrition and increasing farmers’ employment and incomes. In 2010, in a statement by the President of Liberia at a symposium on the Global

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2. Post Ebola livelihood recovery through women association food and income security empowerment, TCP document.
Agriculture and Food Security Development Initiative, she stated that, despite the Government’s efforts to
develop and implement policies and strategies, the population was still highly vulnerable to food insecurity
as a result of physical and human capital constraints and poor management of natural resources.5 It is a
well known fact that when productive resources are scarce or poorly managed, women tend to suffer more,
because their access and use is limited.

Women play a pivotal role in agriculture, and provide over 60 percent of agricultural labour. They contribute
76 percent of labour to cash crop production, 93 percent to food crop production and 85 percent of all labour
for marketing and trading (GoL, 2009). In the agriculture sector, women make up over half of crop farmers
and constitute less than one-third of workers in livestock, poultry and fisheries. In forestry, the ratio of men
to women is 4 to 1 and in the services sector, it is 3 to 2 men to one woman, respectively. Only in agriculture
and fisheries are men and women employed on an equal basis – on a 1 to 1 ratio. Women play a pivotal
role in linking rural and urban markets through informal networks, thereby enhancing crop production for
income generation. In addition, women have primary responsibility for enhancing household food security
and fetching wood and water, as well as for transport and marketing activities. Rural women are charged
with taking care of reproductive work – cooking, cleaning, the well-being of the family, childbearing and
rearing, taking care of the sick etc. These tasks increase women’s burden of work, and women continue to be
challenged by a lack of new or improved technology to reduce drudgery. Despite women’s crucial contribution
to the agriculture sector, they own less land than men, a critical productive resource in agriculture. The land
tenure system is challenging in Liberia, and lack of title deeds increases women’s vulnerability in times of
economic crisis, family conflict, marital breakdown or widowhood.

To address food security and nutrition situation in the country, in 2008 the Government of Liberia (GoL)
endorsed a national strategy for food security and nutrition, within the wider framework of the Government’s
Poverty Reduction Strategy. The Food and Nutrition Strategy aimed at: i) enhancing food availability by
addressing production, processing and marketing constraints of small-scale farmers and maintaining
predictable and stable food imports; ii) improving access to food, by enhancing opportunities for employment
and increased incomes and improving infrastructure, so that Liberians have better physical access to food;
and iii) promoting better food utilization and improving nutritional status, through better prevention and
more systematic monitoring of malnutrition, as well as supplementary and therapeutic feeding actions aimed
at young children and pregnant and lactating mothers.6

The Government adopted the Cooperative Development Act 2010 and the accompanying Liberia Cooperative
Development Regulations of 2010, to inform the future growth and development of the agriculture sector.
These documents have provided an enabling institutional and legal environment for the development of
autonomous, viable and demand driven cooperative organizations. The UN Joint Programme on Food Security
and Nutrition undertook analytical work, on comprehensive food security and nutrition surveys in both rural
and urban areas, generating the first ever data in Liberia’s history aimed at improving and enabling the food
security and nutrition effort. The programme offered a coordinated response to the challenge of boosting
Government food security, nutrition and poverty reduction efforts, bringing about real and measurable
improvements in the lives of the most vulnerable.7 Special attention was paid to women, who account for
the majority of smallholder producers and the agricultural labour force in general, with the aim of enhancing
women’s access to, and control over, natural and productive resources. The Joint Programme also allows for
a fast funding mechanism.

1.2 Purpose of the Country Gender Assessment

This Country Gender Assessment (CGA) was jointly undertaken by FAO and the ECOWAS Commission within
the framework of their Technical Cooperation Project on Gender responsive national and regional agricultural
investment plans for meeting the Zero Hunger Challenge in ECOWAS member countries. The project was

5. A statement by Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia on The Role of Agriculture in Post-Conflict Recovery: The Case
of Liberia. Delivered at a Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security of the Global Agricultural Development Initiative http://allafrica.com/
stories/201005240880.html.
6. Fact sheet-Food security and nutrition in Liberia.
7. Fact sheet-Food security and nutrition in Liberia.
successfully launched in New York on 16 March 2016 during a High Level Ministerial event on the margins of the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The purpose of the CGA is to analyse the gender dimensions and inequalities that exist in agriculture, food and nutrition security, natural resource management and rural development. It highlights gender gaps in access to and control over productive resources, services and markets, and offers policy recommendations for expanding women’s opportunities in inclusive agricultural growth as a pathway to rural poverty reduction. The CGA provides a solid baseline for monitoring implementation of ECOWAP 2025, the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). It will also inform the formulation, implementation, financing and monitoring of the second generation of National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) from a gender perspective.

1.3 Objectives of the assessment

The objectives of the assessment were to:

• Analyse the different experiences and constraints experienced by men and women in accessing productive resources, assets, services and opportunities, and identify discriminatory practices that undermine women’s rights in agriculture.

• Provide recommendations for the Government, the ECOWAS Commission and FAO on addressing gender issues in agriculture and rural development.

• Inform new guidelines for more gender responsive formulation, financing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the second generation of NAIP.

• Inform the preparation of the ECOWAS Action Plan on Gender and Agriculture, the FAO-ECOWAS regional publication on gender in agriculture, food security and nutrition, and other ECOWAP/CAADP 2025 processes at country level.

• Provide a baseline for monitoring implementation of agricultural and rural development policies, and the SDGs in Liberia.

• Inform ECOWAS Commission and FAO’s programming, policy assistance and capacity development activities at country level, and facilitate reporting on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) report with up-to-date and objective information on the situation of rural women in the country.

1.4 Methodology

This country gender profile combines an in-depth analysis of gender gaps in agriculture and rural sector policy and institutions, based on thorough document analysis, use of available sex disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators, and a gender aware participatory policy diagnosis.

The review of documentation included strategies and policies, as well as existing national gender and agriculture data and reports. Primary data, obtained through key informant discussions and in-depth interviews with technical officers from Government, UN agencies and partner organizations, provided additional information to support the desk review.

The CGA was informed by the following key documents: (i) the FAO policy on gender equality and ECOWAS gender policy and Supplementary Act relating to equality of rights between women and men for sustainable development in the ECOWAS region; (ii) the Methodological guide of the second generation NAIP drafting process prepared by the Directorate of Agriculture of the ECOWAS Commission; and (iii) the FAO Guide to preparing a Country Gender Assessment. A summary of these documents and their relevant contents for the assessment is given below, and will serve as the guiding framework for the assessment.

1.4.1 FAO policy on gender equality

FAO’s current mandate is to achieve equality between men and women in sustainable food production and rural development, and reduce hunger, poverty and injustice in the world. To help achieve these objectives, the agency aims to reduce gender inequalities in the agriculture sector on a global scale. FAO has demonstrated its
commitment to reduce gender inequalities in agriculture by developing a policy on gender equality, aimed at enhancing gender mainstreaming into all its programmes and projects. FAO’s gender equality policy serves as a framework to guide the organization’s efforts to achieve gender equality in all its technical work, and to assess results. FAO recognizes that agricultural production relies heavily on the interdependence, complementarity and partnership that exist between women and men within the family (FAO policy on gender equality, 2012). Its gender policy asserts that “closing the gender gap in agriculture would produce significant gains for society by increasing agricultural productivity, reducing poverty and hunger and promoting economic growth”.

1.4.2 ECOWAS gender policy and Supplementary Act relating to equality of rights between women and men for sustainable development in the ECOWAS region

ECOWAS adopted a gender policy in 2004 and a gender management system in 2005, and put in place a strong institutional framework for addressing gender in all its policies and programmes. These include an ECOWAS Department on Social Affairs and Gender and an ECOWAS Gender Development Centre. There is also an ECOWAS Plan of Action on Gender and Trade and an ECOWAS Plan of Action on Gender and Migration. All these documents and frameworks have informed the Supplementary Act relating to equality of rights between women and men for sustainable development in the ECOWAS region.

1.4.3 The FAO gender marker

The gender marker system has been introduced in FAO with the purpose of better tracking, monitoring and reporting initiatives on gender equality trends in planned results and budget allocations, as well as raising awareness on gender equality. The Country Gender Assessment, which has also analysed the National Agricultural Investment Plan, has used the gender marker system to indicate the level of gender integration in the various issues addressed in NAIP. The following criteria for assessing results (outputs) and activities of the NAIP documents was used:

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<tr>
<td><strong>G0</strong></td>
<td>The Product, Service or Activity does not address gender equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G1</strong></td>
<td>The Product, Service or Activity addresses gender equality only in some dimensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G2a</strong></td>
<td>The Product, Service or Activity addresses gender equality in a systematic way, but this is not one of its main objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G2b</strong></td>
<td>The Product, Service or Activity addresses gender equality and/or women’s empowerment as its main focus</td>
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1.4.4. Analytical framework for assessing gender integration in a NAIP

FAO proposed various entry points for gender mainstreaming in the formulation of the second generation of NAIP. These include: (i) the preparation phase, which assesses the extent that the process of developing the NAIP fulfilled the criteria of (a) inclusion and equitable participation of stakeholders working on women’s empowerment and gender equality (b) consideration of the country’s gender policy, gender aspects in the constitution and the gender dimensions of sectoral policies (c) activities to build the capacity of stakeholders, and (d) the use of sex disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators; (ii) formulation of the NAIP, which addresses, among many other factors, the extent to which the priorities and needs of women as well as their strategic interests were taken into account in formulating the NAIP. This part also reviews the strategic planning, budgeting and financing strategies and the validation of the NAIP; and (iii) implementation and potential impact, which reviews the initiatives to be implemented under the NAIP framework and to what extent they will have an impact on women’s empowerment and gender equality. This also informed the CGA, especially in the analysis of the NAIP/LASIP section.

1.4.5 Guide to preparing a Country Gender Assessment

The guide on how to prepare a CGA is detailed and presents the general objectives of a CGA, together with the methodology, key steps to be followed and a proposed structure for the report. This guide has been systematically followed in preparing the current report.
1.5 FAO presence in Liberia

Over the years, FAO has provided policy and technical support to Liberia in production value addition and marketing (upland and lowland rice, vegetable gardening, roots and tubers, fisheries and livestock) (GoL & FAO, 2012). It has also provided humanitarian support to strengthen local agricultural production in areas with refugees and displaced persons affected by conflict and post-conflict conditions. FAO Liberia has a staff strength of 40 officials.

FAO Liberia continues to play a leadership role in many different areas: sectoral analysis, needs assessment, policy dialogue and training in crop cultivation, as well as in post-harvest crop management, distribution of high quality seeds and tools to improve access of vulnerable farmers to key agricultural inputs, capacity-building for local institutions, advocacy and fund-raising for the agriculture sector (GoL & FAO, 2012). Priorities for FAO Liberia for the period 2012 to 2016, as defined in its Country Programming Framework (CPF) – which is closely aligned with Liberia’s food and agricultural intervention areas – are:

- Improved and sustainable availability and access to adequate food and forest products to support national growth and development.
- Improved and diversified food production and distribution system.
- Improved natural resource management.
- Increased human and institutional capacities of the public and private sectors and civil society organizations for coordination, planning, delivery and monitoring.
1.5.1 FAO Liberia Country Programming Framework 2012–2016

The FAO Liberia CPF is a planning tool that guides, prioritizes and manages FAO’s work at country level. The priority areas in the CPF are:

- CPF priority area A: Sector and subsector policy assistance and advocacy;
- CPF priority area B: Production, productivity and competitiveness (production, productivity, competitive, value addition and diversification);
- CPF priority area C: Sustainable natural resource management and utilization;
- CPF priority area D: Strengthening human and institutional capacities in the public and private sectors, and civil society organizations for coordination, information management, planning, delivery and monitoring.

Liberia CPF is aligned with key national and international development priorities. These include the national medium-term development priorities articulated in relation to the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP), which set out the priority policies and investments of the Government for achieving growth, employment and prosperity, and the Millennium Development Goals. The CPF addresses the main development issues identified by the country that relate to agriculture. The intervention areas are also consistent with the country programme outcomes, outputs and indicators, developed in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Liberia (GoL & FAO, 2012).

1.6 Organization of the report

The first section of the current report provides the background, purpose and objectives of the CGA. An explanation of the methodology is also given in the introduction, in addition to a rapid assessment of the FAO
CPF. The second section presents a detailed country context with regards to gender (in)equality. The country context section highlights the main demographic, socio-economic and political characteristics of the country. This section is key to the entire report, as it contains general information that serves as a background for an analysis of the study results.

Section three presents a gender analysis of the agriculture and rural sectors. This section describes existing policies, as well as institutional arrangements for the promotion of gender equality. A discussion of the main stakeholders in the agriculture and rural sectors is presented in Section four, followed by a fifth section, which analyses the Liberia National Agricultural Investment Programme (NAIP), referred to as the Liberian Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (LASIP). The final section presents the main findings and recommendations of the study.
Farm workers harvesting rice.
2.1 Human development and gender

This section presents available data on demographics and human development aspects, disaggregated by sex, age and urban-rural factors, as well as an assessment of key themes that are fundamental for decent livelihoods in Liberia.

2.1.1 Demographics

In 2014, Liberia was estimated to have a population growth of 2.52 percent, a birth rate of 35.07 births/1 000 population and a death rate of 9.9 deaths/1 000 population. The total population was estimated at 4 503 000 in 2015. The Gross National Income (GNI) per capita was recorded in 2012 as US$370, and the percentage annual growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was estimated at 5.5 from 1990-2012. GNI per capita (PPP international $, 2013) was 790. The average percentage annual rate of inflation from 1990 to 2012 was 29.2. The population below the international poverty line of US$1.25 per day (percent) from 2007 to 2011* was 83.8. Total expenditure on health per capita (Intl $, 2014) was 98, and total expenditure on health as percentage of GDP (2014) was 10.0 (Global Health Observatory, 2014).

2.1.2 Liberia’s HDI value and rank

A composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living, recorded 0.387 and 0.491 in men and women respectively. Liberia’s Human Development Income (HDI) value for 2014 was 0.430, ranking the country at 177 out of 188 countries and territories in the human development category. Liberia’s HDI value increased from 0.359 to 0.430, an increase of 19.7 percent, or an average annual increase of about 1.29 percent between 2000 and 2014. The GNI per capita decreased by about 31.1 percent between 1980 and 2014 (Human Development Report, 2015). Liberia’s life expectancy at birth increased by 14.9 years, the mean years of schooling increased by 2.6 years and expected years of schooling decreased by 1.2 years between 1980 and 2014.

2.1.3 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)*

Liberia’s Multidimensional Poverty Index is 0.484. Details are as follows: MPI poor 0.839 percent; average intensity of deprivation, 0.577. There are about 3 million poor people, as defined by the criteria of multidimensional poverty; 84 percent of the population is said to be income poor – living on less than $1.25 a day.9

2.1.4 Gender Inequality Index (GII)

The Gender Inequality Index for Liberia is 0.651, and Liberia ranked 146 out of 155 countries in the 2014 index. This is a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. The number of deaths due to

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* Retrieved from [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/SLE.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/SLE.pdf). The 2010 HDR introduced the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which identifies multiple deprivations in the same households in education, health and standard of living. The education and health dimensions are based on two indicators each, while the standard of living dimension is based on six indicators. All the indicators needed to construct the MPI for a household are taken from the same household survey.

9. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), Liberia Country Briefing 2010
pregnancy related causes is 640 per 100,000 live births (UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Group, 2014). The proportion of the country’s working age population (aged 15 and older) for men and women who engage in the labour market, either by working or actively looking for work, expressed as a percentage of the working age population, is 58.2 and 64.8 respectively (ILO, 2015a). The proportion of seats held by women in the national Parliament expressed as percentage of total seats is only 10.7.

2.1.5 Gender Development Index

The Gender Development Index (GDI) is defined as a ratio of the female to male HDI. GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health, education and control over economic resources. The 2014 female HDI value for Liberia was 0.387, compared with 0.491 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.789 (Human Development Report, 2015).

2.1.6 Gender Empowerment Measure

The Gender Empowerment Measure captures gender inequality in three key areas: the extent of women’s political participation and decision-making, economic participation and decision-making power and the power exerted by women over economic resources (Gender Empowerment Measure, 2016). From the review of national documents, and specifically the country’s National Gender Policy, women in Liberia experience gross inequalities in three areas monitored by the GEM. These put the country’s gender empowerment indicators among the lowest in the world.

2.1.7 Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)

The HDI is an average measure of basic human development achievements in a country. Like all averages, the HDI masks inequality in the distribution of human development across the population at country level. Liberia’s HDI for 2014 was 0.430. However, when the value was discounted for inequality, the HDI fell to 0.280, a loss of 34.8 percent, due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices (Human Development Report, 2015).

2.1.8 Employment

Women make up 54 percent of the labour force in formal and informal sectors, and continue to be challenged by gender inequalities that marginalize them from equal employment across the productive sectors. When employed, they are not given equal remuneration in line with their male counterparts. Survey reports indicate serious gender imbalances in the representation of women in the public sector. In 2005, a study of 33 government agencies revealed that only 23 percent of the 19,635 civil servants interviewed were women. In 2008, out of 81 procurement directors trained from various ministries and agencies, only 11 were women, with a declining rate of women at senior management levels. As mentioned in the background of this study, in the agriculture sector, women account for more than half of crop farmers and constitute less than one-third of the workers in livestock, poultry and fisheries. In forestry, the ratio of men to women is 4 to 1, and in the services sector, it is 3 to 2 men to women, respectively. Only in agriculture and fisheries are men and women employed on an equal basis – on a 1 to 1 ratio, and even in this situation, access to and control over productive resources is a challenge for women. A similar trend can be seen in the wholesale or retail sectors, where women make up over two-thirds of workers, and account for less than one-third of service workers in electricity, gas, water, construction, transport, storage, communication, financial and community services. The gender employment ratio by the manufacturing sector is 2 men for every 1 woman. In mining and planning, more than 9 men are hired for every 1 woman (GoL, 2009). Gender inequalities in employment, coupled with women’s reproductive responsibilities within the home, make women less able to remain in full-time employment.

2.1.9 Women’s voice and political representation

Governance and the rule of law guarantee women and men equity in the enjoyment of their human rights, enable full and equal access to resources of the country to all citizens and allow for equal participation of citizens in decision-making10 (GoL, 2009). Women account for 52 percent of the population, but they are not fully involved in the decision-making processes, due to the prevalent structural inequality, and the

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marginalization of women in elective and appointive structures and systems of government. There is a huge capacity gap among women leaders at national and local levels. Women are visibly under-represented in politics at national and local levels. For example, in the 2005 elections, women accounted for only 14 percent of the 806 candidates nominated for election, though they accounted for 50 percent of the total registered voters. The election results showed that 5 out of 30 Senators elected were women, while 9 out of the 64 seats in the House of Representatives were won by women. In the presidential race, 2 women and 20 men contested the position of president, and one woman won. At least one woman contested the senatorial race in each of the 15 counties, while in the lower House of Representatives, 44 women contested, compared with 441 men (GoL, 2009).

Political will and leadership exist for promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. Liberia is the first African country to have elected a female head of State, who is also the first woman ECOWAS Chair. In addition, the President of Liberia is championing the Empowering Women in Agriculture (EWA) initiative. There has been an increase in the participation of women in senior and junior ministerial positions, and in key decision-making positions in the public and private sectors. Despite efforts made by the Government to increase women’s participation in governance, there is room for improvement in the attainment of the 30 percent target for minimum representation of women at all levels. But significant gains have been made in increasing women’s voices in decision-making at almost all levels.

2.1.10 Basic infrastructure

Poor water and sanitation pose a challenge to rural communities, and expose rural dwellers to disease, lack of privacy, indignity and poor hygiene (GoL, 2009). When outbreaks of disease, such as diarrhea, cholera etc. occur in the country, rural women are particularly affected, because they not only have to take care of themselves, they also have primary responsibility to look after the sick. Girls are withdrawn from school to help their mothers care for the sick, or attend to domestic chores while the mothers take on this role. Lack of toilet facilities and clean water in many schools, particularly in rural areas, also undermines girls’ attendance in school, and has an overall impact on national development.

Despite the fact that infrastructural programmes received the largest amount of funding during the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) period, the country is still challenged by a poor road network and power supply. In the World Bank’s Doing Business 2012 survey, 59 percent of respondents identified poor access to electricity as a major constraint, and 39 percent identified inefficient transport in similar terms. Poor roads limit the ability of farmers to deliver their goods to markets, and also limit the development of some of Liberia’s most promising sectors – agriculture, tree crops and forestry. An inadequate road network limits transportation, with the result that poor people in rural areas, especially girls and women, have to walk to reach schools, health centres and markets, and fetch water and fuelwood. Women and girls may be at risk of sexual and gender-based violence while walking to and from markets, school, or fetching wood and water, etc. The country is only connected through seasonal laterite roads and served by an occasional electricity supply, mainly in the urban areas (GoL, 2013). Lack of electricity increases post-harvest losses in rural areas, and specifically affects women who sell horticultural produce.

2.1.11 Education

The country’s literacy rate, disaggregated by region and gender, shows that men in both rural and urban areas are more educated than women. The literacy rate for women in rural areas is 26 percent, compared with 58 percent men, and 62 percent for women in urban areas, compared with 81 percent men (Demographic and Health Survey, 2013). The literacy rate among adult men and women is 70 percent and 40 percent respectively. The difference is much larger among the older generation, as only 17 percent of women aged 45-59 are literate, compared with 62 percent of men. Unequal access to education between boys and girls is an underlying cause of the high illiteracy rate among women and girls. Cultural barriers, such as preference for educating boys rather than girls, early or forced marriage, as well as sexual and gender-based violence which can lead to teenage pregnancy, all undermine the education of girl children. Work burdens for girls and women, coupled with responsibilities for taking care of the sick, also hinder girls’ school attendance rate, and impact the gender gap in secondary school attendance rates in both rural and urban areas. The gap is particularly high
in rural areas, with a low 6 percent net attendance ratio for girls, and 13 percent for boys, compared with 29 percent for girls, and 32 percent for boys in urban areas (GoL, 2009).

A number of initiatives have been set in place by GoL to address the country’s educational challenges. These include the Five-Year (2012–2017) Medium-term Plan for Education Reform and Development, aimed at restoring basic education (grades 1–9) through expanding access and improving the quality of education by rebuilding facilities, providing learning materials, training teachers and introducing accelerated learning for older learners. The 2009 Education Sector Plan calls for a free and compulsory nine-year basic education, comprising six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education. The Education Reform Act of 2011, and the draft Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy of 2011, provide a framework that includes pre-primary/early childhood education, as well as post-basic education and skills development.

Following sensitization on the need for girls’ education, there has been some improvement in the literacy gap between boys and girls in younger generations. For example, in the case of men and women aged 15–19, 50 percent of females are literate, compared with 72 percent of males (GoL. 2013). The adult literacy programme launched by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Gender and Development, and supported and implemented by NGOs, enrolled about 70 percent of women. The National Development Plan – Agenda for Transformation aims to ensure equal access to high-quality free and compulsory basic education, and to a variety of post-basic education and training opportunities. The National Development Plan – Agenda for Transformation recognizes that education helps to reduce poverty and lower fertility rates among women, since they will be better positioned to negotiate safe sex, space their children and nurture offspring with better outcomes.

In spite of the Government’s commitment to addressing education, existing patriarchal or discriminatory cultural practices undermine girls’ and women’s access to education. Current interventions do not sufficiently address patriarchy and discrimination perpetrated by cultural practices.

2.1.12 Health

According to the 1999/2000 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (LDHS), of the 36.2 percent of pregnant women giving birth at a health facility, only 15 percent were delivered by skilled health personnel. Women in rural communities do not have access to skilled maternal care, so they largely rely on traditional birth attendants (TBAs). Some 75 percent of births occur outside health facilities, with an estimated 85 percent of deliveries performed by TBAs. The infant mortality rate declined from 144 deaths in 1986 to 73 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2009, and the under-five mortality rate also declined, from 220 per 1 000 live births to 75 per 1 000 live births in 2012 (WHO, 2008). The maternal mortality ratio per 100 000 live births was 770 in 2010.

Infant and maternal mortality is associated with a shortage of skilled medical personnel, leading to inadequate obstetric care. Very high numbers of teenage pregnancies, inadequate supply of drugs and equipment, low use of contraceptives, poor nutritional status of pregnant women and high fertility rates are all areas that require urgent attention (GoL, 2009). Women who survive childbirth can nevertheless develop complications that will lead to lifelong disabilities, such as vesico/recto vaginal fistulae and secondary infertility.

Women account for 60 percent of people living with HIV/AIDS. It is important that Liberia pays attention to the intersection between gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS, and works to improve women’s decision-making capacities in the self, private and public spheres. Women should receive capacity-building to help them to negotiate safer sex, and be protected from sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as practices that make them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. When women test positive for HIV, they should not experience gender-based violence as a consequence.

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)

An epidemic of Ebola Virus Disease (commonly referred to as Ebola) occurred in Liberia from 2014 to 2015. The disease caused hundreds of deaths during this period and led to a considerable number of people falling back into poverty, since the agriculture sector was affected. Adolescent girls and young women were the worst affected by the Ebola virus, as females’ poor social and economic status further limits their access to

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12. Human security initiative in the most neglected communities with the integration of efforts by the UN Country Team in Liberia, TCP document.
health care services and information. As part of the reproductive roles of women and girls, they take care of the sick, which puts them at risk while feeding, bathing, and cleaning relatives. Girls and women are generally the last to receive information, and with little or no awareness and without gloves, goggles or masks, they are vulnerable to contracting Ebola themselves. Direct social transfers, such as cash, food, agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer) and assets (tools, livestock), including emergency safety nets, have had a positive impact. Such measures have helped to address acute food shortages, particularly among the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children at risk of malnutrition.

2.2 Socio-economic and political landscape

Gender equality and discrimination undermine women’s socio-economic and political status in the country, as highlighted in earlier sections of the study. On the economic front, challenges include complex and expensive requirements for business registration and public tendering; limited capacity of technocrats to mainstream gender perspectives in macro-economics; low literacy of women in issues of economics; unequal benefits to women in trade; low representation of women in formal employment; cross-border trade issues for women, and discrimination against women in labour markets. Liberia’s priority plan identified financial marginalization as a key factor that undermines economic empowerment of women. Rural women make up the majority of the country’s agricultural workforce, play a critical role in bringing communities together, linking rural communities to market and maintaining social cohesion. Yet they have access to limited or no economic and financial resources. Despite their contribution, rural women are particularly vulnerable to economic insecurity.

Women continue to experience violence, discrimination and violations of their human rights, and this holds back their social development. This is reflected in their low level of participation in decision-making and lack of access to legal and judicial services, as well as in their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS (GoL, 2009). Traditional laws and practices reinforce discrimination and inequalities in the areas of marriage, property rights, sexual offences, education, justice, health care, employment and decision-making. Negative or harmful cultural practices undermine women’s participation in decision-making in both the private and the public sector, as men are usually considered leaders and make key decisions in rural communities. Women are not only constrained in making decisions within their households, but they also face obstacles in accessing elected positions. The situation is particularly serious for rural women, who have little or no say in decision-making in rural communities, in spite of the critical role they play.

The socio-economic and political status of women in Liberia is sustained and maintained by a patriarchal system, together with structures that promote male dominance and the subordination of women. This is evident in discrimination seen both in the private and public sectors, as well as in the gender division of labour, women’s multiple roles in the family, combining productive and reproductive responsibilities, their low level of participation in decision-making at various levels of governance, and their limited access to natural and productive resources for agriculture.

2.3 Legal and policy frameworks

The first part of this section presents the review of key international instruments that Liberia has ratified or committed to at international, regional or subregional levels. The second part is a gender assessment of relevant national policy documents on agriculture and related sectors.

2.3.1 International legal frameworks

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) advocate for sound policy frameworks at all levels, based on pro-poor and gender responsive development strategies to support accelerated investments in poverty eradication actions. Liberia’s President Hellen Johnson Sirleaf co-chaired the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, joining other members of the panel to advocate for the new development framework that plans to ‘leave no one behind’. There are 17 SDG, 5 of which are particularly relevant to the CGA of the agriculture sector. Goal 1 on poverty eradication strives to ensure that all men and women

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13. Human security initiative in the most neglected communities with the integration of efforts by the UN Country Team in Liberia, TCP document.
have equal rights to economic resources, access to basic services, technology and financial services and ownership and control of land and other forms of property and natural resources. Goal 2 on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture specifically addresses the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, as well as pregnant and lactating women. It aims to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of women small-scale food producers by 2030, through secure and equal access to land, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering women calls for recognition of the value of their unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, together with the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and family, as nationally appropriate. Women's participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making is also essential. This is consistent with one of the transformative shifts in development, reflected in a determination to 'leave no one behind' by deepening efforts made to meet the MDGs, thereby reducing or ending extreme poverty, in all its forms, and, most importantly, ensuring that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities.

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Liberia ratified CEDAW in 1984, but the country has not ratified the optional protocol on violence against women (SIGI, 2014). CEDAW addresses discrimination and exclusion experienced by women in twelve critical areas of economic, social and cultural rights, gender stereotyping, equality in law, etc. In particular, Article 14 specifically provides protection for rural women, ensuring their right to participate in development programmes, “to have access to adequate health care facilities,” “to participate in all community activities,” “to have access to agricultural credit” and “to enjoy adequate living conditions.” Article 14 further demands that policy-makers pay attention to women’s legitimate demands for equal rights and their aspirations for a decent life and a better future.


The passage of the Children’s Law (2011) and the New Education Reform Act, is consistent with Liberia’s commitment to accept key provisions of the CRC. This enshrines the right of children to be protected from involvement in armed conflicts and violence, and places a special focus on the rights of the girl child.


This promotes women’s economic and political empowerment, education and training. The Beijing+20 review, held in 2014/15, reported on selected areas with regards to rural women’s empowerment, food security, nutrition etc., concluding that women continue to face disproportionate barriers to the equitable ownership, control of and access to natural resources and land. The review also commented on the negative impact of the actions of extractive industries and multinational corporations on women’s rights to land and natural resources. Key issues include the disregard of rural women’s environmental knowledge and skills, and their role in agricultural decision-making, and the need for extensive mainstreaming of gender, including equitable consideration of the needs and vulnerabilities of women and men, girls and boys, in relation to climate change and natural disasters, etc. In this regard, the Beijing+20 process recognizes the diversity of women in all societies, and the fact that the most disadvantaged rural women are in need of specific measures to improve their status and access to productive resources. It affirms that gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women is fundamental to achieving human rights and for equitable, gender responsive, inclusive and sustainable development for the benefit of all persons and societies. The review notes an overall reduction in the proportion of girls and women living in extreme poverty, as well as improvements in food security for both.

Vienna Convention (1993)\textsuperscript{16}

This convention promotes women’s rights as human rights. Its critical pillars are human rights to education, equal status of men and women, and human rights of women, migrant workers and indigenous people.

National Action Plan on UN Resolution 1325

UN Resolution 1325 (2000) calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making, including in national, regional and international institutions, in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. The Liberian National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 has provisions in place to ensure that women are included in the country’s economic revitalization, with a strong emphasis on women’s empowerment and their involvement and participation in management of community natural resources.\textsuperscript{17}

Rio commitment

This stresses women’s central contribution to environmental management, acknowledging women’s suffering due to environmental depletion, which has now assumed alarming dimensions in the context of climate change. The commitment further highlights that environmental depletion is caused by intensified pollution driven by wasteful consumption, unprecedented growth in human numbers, persistent poverty and social and economic inequalities. This major commitment, signed by nation states, including Liberia, intersects with gender and the environment. Yet to date, very little has been done to address climate change issues for women, who are more vulnerable to natural disaster, with little capacity for recovery.

Regional instruments

Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)

On 16 October 2009, Liberia signed the Comprehensive Africa Development Programme (CAADP) Compact after several days of intense roundtable meetings in Monrovia with agricultural experts, policy-makers and international donor partners. This shared framework for the development of the agriculture sector in Africa will assist in the design of future national development planning in Liberia. The main objective of CAADP is to help African countries achieve higher economic growth through agriculture led development, thereby eliminating hunger, reducing poverty and ensuring food security.

CAADP is the main vehicle for accelerating African agricultural growth, through promotion of public and private sector investment, creating a conducive policy environment and institutional capacity strengthening. The initiative has also been instrumental in refocusing national and global development support to agricultural development, and has become a platform for a wider stakeholder consultation that involves national governmental bodies, continental and regional organizations, development partners, the private sector and civil society. The CAADP framework provides a common platform for African countries to address agricultural transformation and eradicate hunger and malnutrition, enabling the expansion of exports, and supporting environmental resilience.

In 2014, the “Sustaining the CAADP Momentum: the CAADP 10-year results framework” was launched with the aim to accelerate country implementation of CAADP, based on three levels of results. Level 1 on “Agriculture’s Contribution to Economic Growth and Inclusive Development” deals with wealth creation, economic opportunities and prosperity through jobs and poverty alleviation, food security and productive safety nets, nutrition and environmental resilience and sustainability. Level 2 on “Agricultural Transformation and Inclusive Agricultural Growth” addresses agricultural production and productivity, agriculture and food markets, agro-industry and value addition, and management and governance of natural resources for sustainable agricultural production. Level 3 on “Strengthening Systemic Capacity for Effective Execution and Delivery of Results” focuses on policy design and implementation capacity, effective and accountable institutions, evidenced based agricultural planning and implementation processes, coordination, partnership and alliances, investments in agricultural value chains and data quality.

\textsuperscript{16} Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (available at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Vienna.aspx).
\textsuperscript{17} Human security initiative in the most neglected communities with the integration of efforts by the UN Country Team in Liberia, TCP document.
Declaration on 2015 Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063

In June 2015, African leaders from across the continent gathered in Johannesburg for the 25th summit of the African Union (AU), on the theme: Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063. Participants recognized the growing number of women who are accessing the labour force, as well as their involvement in decision-making processes, and the attention and investment being made to ensure that girls have access to education. The declaration contains commitments to: enhancing women’s contribution to and benefits from formal agriculture/agribusiness value chains; improving women’s access to health; advancing women’s economic empowerment; promoting the agenda on women’s peace and security; enhancing women’s participation in governance; enhancing women and girls’ access to education, science and technology; enforcing mutual accountability for actions and results; and strengthening the AU Commission to support delivery on these commitments.

The ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP/CAADP)

ECOWAP/CAADP represents the ECOWAS countries’ efforts to accelerate implementation of regional and national agricultural programmes in the light of CAADP. It is the coordinating framework for implementation of CAADP in West Africa. Fifteen National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIP) and a Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) represent the instruments of ECOWAP implementation. The investment plans (regional and national) address issues and national and regional dimensions of agriculture, natural resource management and food security. They cover the agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry subsectors. The Regional Partnership Pact for the Implementation of the ECOWAP/CAADP 2025 adopted during the Conference on “ECOWAP+10 and Prospects for 2025” held in Dakar in November 2015 made commitments to improve the governance of agricultural policy by strengthening compliance with the principles of gender equality and equity, and accountability.

The Malabo Declaration on accelerated agricultural growth and transformation for shared prosperity and improved livelihoods

This declaration, adopted by heads of state during the AU Summit in June 2014, acknowledged the persistent efforts made in implementation of CAADP at national and regional levels, and the positive growth performance of the agriculture sector in recent years. The declaration calls for deliberate and targeted public support for all segments of the population, particularly women, youth and other disadvantaged groups, to participate in and draw direct benefits from growth and transformation opportunities to improve their lives and livelihoods. It also raises concerns about high levels of hunger and malnutrition, especially among children, and the limited progress made in agro-industries and agribusiness development, which hampers value addition and the competitiveness of African products in local, regional and international trade, thus depriving African women and youth of gainful employment opportunities. The implementation strategy and roadmap of the Malabo Declaration has been developed to guide its effective implementation.

The voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security

These guidelines, adopted by the Committee on World Food Security in 2012, call upon states to ensure that women and girls have equal tenure rights and access to land, fisheries and forests, independent of their civil and marital status, and provide policy, legal and organizational frameworks that are non-discriminatory. The guidelines further invite states to address the obstacles faced by women and girls with regard to tenure rights, and to take measures to ensure that legal and policy frameworks provide adequate protection for women, calling for laws that recognize women’s tenure rights to be implemented and enforced. They advocate for states to facilitate the full participation of users of land, fisheries and forests in tenure governance, including the formulation and implementation of policy, law and decisions on territorial development.

2.3.2 National laws and policies that promote gender equality

Here it is worth noting a summary of the policy environment as it pertains to the promotion of gender equality. In early 2006, Liberia made a Statement of Policy Intent for the Agricultural Sector, together with a short-term action plan for agricultural recovery. These were quickly followed by the Comprehensive Assessment of the Agriculture Sector – Liberia (CAAS-Lib) project, which evaluated the role and contribution of the sector
in recovery and development. The results and other relevant information were used to develop the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (NFSNS) and the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS). These analytical and strategic documents are now helping the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to better lead and coordinate agricultural development. In line with the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), FAPS promotes private sector led growth (GoL, 2008). The ultimate goal is long-term sustainability, both in food self-sufficiency and competitiveness in agricultural export commodities, driven by increased investments in the sector, particularly in value chains such as processing, storage and marketing, with efforts concentrated on smallholders. Below is a more specific assessment of a list of relevant national laws and policies formulated to increase the agriculture sector’s contribution to national development. The assessment includes the extent to which such policies attempt to address gender equality in general, and women’s empowerment in the agriculture sector in particular.

**Agenda for transformation: Steps towards Liberia Rising 2030**

Gender equality was addressed under cross-cutting issues included in the Agenda for Transformation (AfT), with the goal of improving the socio-economic and political status and capacity of women in Liberia. The main objectives of the response is to improve the capacity of women to respond to gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, increase women’s participation in the community decision-making process, and strengthen women’s participation in income generation and employment opportunities in agriculture, fisheries, micro, small & medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the formal sector. The Government of Liberia committed to this work by allocating budgets to specific gender interventions. These budgeted interventions seek to: equip and recruit staff in addressing gender-based violence (GBV); promote women’s access to seed production and distribution systems; promote women’s access to cash crops, greater access to with greater access to extension services; train women in business skills and financial literacy; and train health personnel in gender responsive planning, management and budgeting. It is evident that GoL has made a political commitment to gender related issues in agriculture through the cross-cutting pillar, and the marginalization of women was described as a ‘special poverty issue’. The acknowledgement of the marginalization of women as an issue that undermines poverty reduction and overall development has been effective. However, instead of addressing gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, a gender assessment and analysis should have been undertaken for every pillar or issue discussed or programmed in the National Development Plan, to ensure that each one was addressed more comprehensively.

**Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme**

The Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP) identifies priority areas for investment in agriculture. The areas identified include: food and nutrition, competitive value chains and market linkages, institutional development, institutional capacity and land and water management programmes, as well as the cross-cutting issues of women and youth (GoL, 2009). This programme aligns with national objectives in the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS), the Agenda for Transformation and the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). LASIP attempts to address women’s concerns in agriculture in Programme 1.

**Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy**

The agriculture sector is making a significant contribution to recovery and development efforts, and is central to peace-building in Liberia. The Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS) addresses five key issues in the agriculture sector: 1) Instituting improved governance; promoting civil society organizations, and decentralized and demand driven service delivery; 2) Establishing a functional, efficient and effective public sector support framework in agriculture (for coordination, planning, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation); 3) Reducing risks and improving coping mechanisms; 4) Mainstreaming gender and youth in agriculture and rural development; and 5) Ensuring sustainable use and management of natural resources. Key issue number 4 sets out to mainstream gender and youth issues in agriculture and rural development, and seeks specifically to intervene in the following areas: 1) Ensuring that women and youth have equal access to land and water resources, credit and other support services; 2) Ensuring that all agricultural development...
programmes and projects include provisions for women’s empowerment, equal access to decision-making, and respect for gender differences in roles and activities in the sector; 3) Establishing programmes for women and youth (e.g. youth agriculture clubs) to facilitate gender balance and create sustainable livelihoods; and 4) Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture in gender mainstreaming.

The policy seeks to promote widespread empowerment of women, with enhanced access to credit, land, technology and market information, and an established and functioning system by which women have access to extension services aligned with their traditional gender roles, and receive capacity-building to enable their participation in productive and commercial ventures. The policy acknowledges the constraints that women encounter in agriculture. These include gender disparities in access to and ownership of assets; lack of, or limited access to and ownership of land; limited access to credit, agricultural extension, skills and business management training; the high illiteracy rate among women that hampers them from developing entrepreneurial activities; lack of political support in allocating sufficient resources for the development and empowerment of girls and women; inadequate attention to existing gender-based violence against girls and women; and cultural practices that undermine women’s participation in decision-making and productive activities, as well as those that restrict rural women’s socio-economic and political development.

As in the case of the Agenda for Transportation and LASIP, gender issues fall within the domain of cross-cutting issues in this policy. Farm activities have unquestionably enhanced food security and assisted in sustaining resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and conflict affected communities, as well as in creating employment for women and youth. However, the Ministry of Agriculture missed an opportunity to strengthen food security by mainstreaming gender into all the other strategies. Key issue 4, which aims to mainstream gender into agriculture, should have been used as a standalone intervention for women, to address the current gender gap in the sector. Again, rather than communicating the notion that gender is a cross-cutting issue, a gender assessment should have been carried out for each and every objective or intervention area, to develop gender responsive strategies, indicators and outcomes. Until this approach is adopted by the GoL in the implementation of development activities, the country may encounter challenges in ensuring adequate delivery on gender issues. For example, in one of the intervention areas in the Food and Agriculture Policy – access to land and tenure system – women’s limited access to land was analysed. One of the result areas under the intervention seeks to “strengthen the capacities of poor farmers, especially women, to claim and defend land rights through legally accountable institutions and systems”. However, the same policy makes no provision for women under strategies to address water concerns faced by women. This is because the output on water resource development failed to conduct a gender assessment of the issue. The fact that gender is not systematically integrated into all the strategy’s result areas could be attributed to the lack of gender analysis of all the key result areas.

In order for the Food and Agriculture Policy to deliver on its ‘cross-cutting mandate’ on gender, the Ministry of Agriculture should revisit its policy to ensure that a thorough gender analysis is carried out for all result areas that include access to credit, land, technology, market information, extension services, cultural practices that promote discrimination and marginalization, agricultural employment, etc. Until these result areas are comprehensively assessed from a gender perspective, the policy will be inadequate to address gender concerns in the food and agriculture sector. Gender concerns on land and agriculture should not only cover land issues. They should also address traditional gender roles that undermine women in agriculture, and capacity-building should also focus on productive and commercial ventures.

**Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Project**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Programme Management Unit (PMU), NGOs WelthungerHilfe, Africare and Concern are seeking to contribute to food security and poverty reduction through the Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Project (ASRP) being implemented in Maryland, Grand Kru and Grand Gedeh. The objective of this project is to increase the income of smallholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs, including women, on a sustainable basis. The project addresses three areas – agricultural infrastructure rehabilitation, agricultural production and productivity improvement, and project management.19
This project introduces a commercial farming approach, and aims to improve smallholder farmers’ capacities in the area of business skills, help them connect to markets and access market information. It also seeks to improve smallholder farmers’ and rural entrepreneurs’ income and the quality of their livelihoods. The project has had a direct impact on the effects of several human security threats in the region. FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) are providing technical backstopping, given their expertise in these intervention areas.

Water supply and sanitation

The Water Supply and Sanitation policy acknowledges that water is life and sanitation is dignity. GoL has made it a priority to improve water supply and sanitation (WSS) coverage because article 20 (a) of the Liberian Constitution proclaims that “no person shall be deprived of life”. Data collected in 2011 revealed that 89 percent of the urban population and 60 percent of the rural population used improved drinking water, and 30 percent of the urban population and 7 percent of the rural population used improved sanitation facilities. However, in recent years, there is evidence that water quality is deteriorating due to mining, logging, farming and industrial activities. When family members become ill as a result of unsafe water, it is the responsibility of women to take care of them. By the same token, when water is contaminated, women have to travel further to fetch supplies for consumption and farming activities, and this increases their work burden.

The policy covers ongoing efforts to improve water supply and sanitation, including the formation of new entities such as the Water Supply and Sanitation Commission (WSSC), the Water and Sewer Corporation, the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme and the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme. It was observed that the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme requires the interim support of the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy and the Ministry of Education (Education Facilities Unit). The Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGCSP) is not included in the list of line ministries required to provide interim support to the board. Another observation is that the National Water Resources and Sanitation Board (NWRSB) is chaired by the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy. Other ministries that are a part of this board are Finance and Planning, Decentralization, and Fisheries and Forestry. MoGCSP is not included on this board, even though water is crucial to women, and they play an important role in its provision and management.

Although there is no effective gender analysis in terms of water and sanitation, attempts are made in the policy document to reference the impact of lack of water and sanitation on women. For example, the policy acknowledges that safe water sources near homes reduces the time-wasting drudgery of fetching water (a burden borne disproportionately by women and girls), as well as providing opportunities for poor families to engage in small-scale productive activities, such as market gardening. GoL has also made a commitment to undertake a gender assessment and analysis of all levels of participation of men and women in the WSS planning process. From an economic standpoint, the inefficiency of water supply facilities affects the productivity of firms or industries that are dependent on water for their operations, and increases their cost of production.

Forestry policy

The forestry policy acknowledges gender inequality in the sector and recognizes the need to pay attention to women’s involvement in forest governance and management. Throughout the policy, statements are made on the inclusion of women in public meetings concerning forest management. However, these statements are vague, leading to the conclusion that Liberia’s forest policy, laws and regulations lack a comprehensive gender analysis. The result is that the lack of gender analysis makes the policy statements appear superficial, as there are no concrete actions, strategies or mechanisms formulated to increase women’s participation in forest management. There is only one direct mention of women’s participation in the Community Rights Law. This comes in section 4.2 (a), which states that “a five member Community Forestry Management Body shall manage the day-to-day activities of community forest resources. At least one member of the body shall be a woman. The body shall have a chief officer, secretary and a treasurer”. However, this provision does not advocate for equal representation of women in forest management. The policy itself reinforces gender inequality in participation, since women only have the minimum requirement of one representative,
2.3.3 Gender responsive policies

2.3.3.1 The National Gender Policy

The overall goal of the National Gender Policy (NGP) is to “promote gender equitable, socio-economic development and improve national capacities for enhanced gender mainstreaming in the national development processes”. Through the policy, the Government of Liberia makes a high level and strong commitment to address gender equality and women’s empowerment issues in an effective manner. The vision of the policy is “a just society where girls and boys, women and men enjoy their human rights equally on the basis of non-discrimination; where the full potentials of all, irrespective of sex, are harnessed towards achieving equitable rapid economic growth and equal access to social, financial and technological resources.” The rationale for the Liberia’s National Gender Policy is to promote gender equality as a development strategy to reduce poverty levels among women and men, improve health and living standards, and to enhance the efficiency of public investments. The Government shifted from its previous approach of not fully addressing gender equality issues after realizing that the attainment of gender equality should not only be seen as an end in itself – and a human rights issue – but is also a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development.

2.3.3.2 Liberia’s gender-based violence National Action Plan

The people of Liberia experienced gross violations of human and women’s rights during the conflict. However, evidence indicates violence is continuing, even in peacetime, as women continue to experience sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). This impairs their ability to make meaningful contributions in communities. Specifically, the plan of action being reviewed seeks to: strengthen the health sector to ensure an effective and efficient response to gender-based violence (GBV) case management, documentation and reporting on clinical evidence. It also aims to reform the legal system to deal more efficiently and expeditiously with violence, particularly regarding the security of women and girls; set up systems and outreach services offering psychosocial support and safe homes for survivors of GBV; provide appropriate skills to social and health professionals; and offer support for women and girls’ economic and social empowerment. The document seeks to raise awareness of both GBV and the harmful traditional and cultural practices that perpetuate violence against women, including those experienced by women in agriculture when accessing natural and productive resources. GoL makes a commitment to ensure that all planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation processes are supported by gender responsive data and analysis.

2.4 Brief summary of the policies reviewed

In the past, Government policies and laws have been developed using a top-down approach. However, increasingly communities are now consulted during policy formulation, even though women’s active participation cannot for the most part be ascertained, or the extent of their participation cannot be verified. The majority of the documents reviewed accord women and men the same rights. In practice, however, gender differences exist in the agriculture sector, and these need to be tackled if policies are to be effective in addressing gender inequalities in the sector. The lack of gender assessment in these laws and policies could be explained by the fact that development planners are themselves not gender aware, with the result that most assessments leading to the formulation of policies disregard gender considerations. Development planners, policy-makers, programme or project managers and civil society organizations may not have the tools and skills to undertake gender analysis, or they may also not be ‘compelled’ to do so. The lack of gender analysis in national policies has led to inadequate interventions on gender in policy and laws, and poor implementation of policies, programmes and projects that were initially intended to address the needs of men and women. Men and women’s concerns should be integrated throughout the development process in all policies and projects, to enable development planners to design activities aimed at empowering women in agriculture.

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20. Interview with representative from ActionAid for this study.
Laws and policies should be aware of existing gender gaps in the agriculture sector, and efforts should be made to implement projects that can address the specific needs of women. The Ministry of Gender and Development has drawn up a policy which adequately addresses gender concerns, and which should be implemented across all development sectors. However, the Ministry is challenged by limited capacity and poor resources. National and sectoral policies related to agriculture should provide training to personnel on gender, and a system should be set in place for the mainstreaming process. In the abridged version of the National Gender Policy, a commitment for a 30 percent budgetary allocation is made for gender, but there are no details of how the policy and programmes will be monitored and evaluated.

The implementation of laws, policies and programmes is a key component in ensuring the inclusion of gender in agriculture. The design of policies and laws may be seen as gender responsive, but the reverse may be the case if a gender responsive monitoring framework is not developed to be used in policy implementation. According to some of the respondents, ‘the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system used for all projects implemented by the Ministry of Gender does not capture gender related information, and there are no gender related indicators developed. The Ministry of Gender respondent interviewed for this study on the contrary noted that there is an M&E system in place. However, the Ministry has just started discussing the development of gender indicators to monitor gender related issues across all development areas in the country’. There is clearly a need to build capacities in the lead ministry in charge of mainstreaming gender, so that it can develop gender disaggregated monitoring indicators and undertake gender assessment in all sectoral work, and provide further training to gender focal points in key ministries related to agriculture. It is also evident that most of the agriculture related ministries have taskforces or boards that oversee the implementation of programmes. The Ministry of Gender and Development is noticeably absent from these structures. As a result, there is a need to ensure that the Ministry is represented on key agricultural boards, committees etc., so that it can continue to make the case that men and women should benefit from equitable distribution of agricultural resources.
Beneficiary in Grand Gedeh County harvest corn under ECHO Project (2)
3.1 Agriculture and rural development

Considerable progress has been made in advancing laws and public policies to promote gender equality and women's rights in agriculture. Even with the existence of new laws and policies, longstanding traditions continue to restrict women's development opportunities at local level in rural areas. These social customs limit women's mobility, constrain their participation in decision-making and undermine their involvement in productive activities. Efforts to improve women’s access to land, credit, inputs, extension services and decision-making power in Liberia may contribute to increased rural output. Similarly, lifting social barriers and addressing social and cultural biases that confine women to narrowly defined social and economic roles will help them to participate in profitable sectors, such as cash crops or forestry, and improve rural livelihoods, contributing in turn to poverty reduction. Improved participation of women in decision-making will contribute to more effective and efficient programmes and policies, by adjusting these to the often overlooked needs of women farmers. This may in turn contribute to improving productivity. In addition, increased economic opportunities for rural women will have a positive effect on household welfare and poverty reduction, and this underscores the importance of female expenditure on food and education.

3.2 Institutional level

Institutional framework for Food and Nutrition Policy Strategy (FSNS) implementation

The Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee is made up of key ministries, as well as of two representatives of bilateral and multilateral agencies who work on food security. The Minister of Agriculture chairs the committee. The Technical Committee was tasked to develop strategic priorities and to plan appropriate responses to crises emerging in the short term, together with gaps in intersectoral coordination. The committee also has a responsibility to see that a database on food security and related projects is maintained, ensuring that information from relevant external institutions on food security and nutrition is added. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) is part of the committee, which should take advantage of the presence of the MoGCSP to mainstream gender into its programmes. This institutional structure provides an opportunity for Liberia to collect gender disaggregated data to be used to promote work on women and food security.

The food security and nutrition monitoring system analyses and generates information that describes the exposure to risks affecting the food security situation of vulnerable groups and communities across Liberia. The monitoring system is dependent on data supplied by line ministries. National institutions from which data is collected include the Ministry of Agriculture (agricultural production), Ministry of Commerce (imports/exports and national stocks), Ministry of Health (facility-based growth monitoring data) and the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (economic, social and cultural rights to food). At household level, the surveillance system collects data related to access and utilization, and outcomes and changes of household economic status is measured annually. A market information system collects data on main food and cash crops in 22 markets across the country, including two in Greater Monrovia, on a biweekly basis. Data from the market information system are analysed simultaneously with information from the household surveillance system.

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system, aimed at assessing the impact of price fluctuations on household food security status over time. Although implicitly, the monitoring system will analyse exposure to food insecurity risks for vulnerable groups, often mainly women, this should be explicit in the document. MoGCSP is identified as among the national institutions that are required to monitor and collect data on food security and nutrition.

There is also a Food Security and Nutrition Stakeholders’ Forum, which includes public institutions, national civil society organizations, international NGOs and bilateral and multilateral agencies that have a stake in food security. The document is, however, not specific as to the CSOs that are a part of the forum. There is a need to include representation from women farmers’ cooperatives/groups/activists etc., as part of the institutional structure for food security. There is also an action plan in place for implementation of the strategy.

Joint programme on food security and nutrition

In response to the global food crisis, and guided by the framework of the national Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, the Government, in collaboration with UN agencies, has formulated a Joint Programme on Food Security and Nutrition. This programme is often cited as a good practice, since it attempts to bring together Government and UN agencies to provide a comprehensive and well coordinated response to food insecurity and malnutrition, supporting the national objectives on food security and nutrition. The programme provides a coherent response to the problem of food insecurity and malnutrition, avoiding duplication of efforts, and maximizing the impact of all interventions in supporting national objectives. Among the interventions undertaken are fiscal measures to ensure an adequate supply of rice; efforts to increase domestic production by distributing inputs; capacity-building and the introduction of new technologies at production and post-harvest levels, with a focus on smallholder producers; and the expansion of social protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups (including women), such as employment generation schemes, school feeding and nutritional initiatives.

The Joint Programme recognizes that women constitute the majority of smallholder producers and the agricultural labour force in general, and thereby seeks to enhance their access to own, and co-owned agricultural land and other resources and ensure that interventions take account of their special needs.22 The formulation of the programme demonstrates Government’s commitment to food security and nutrition. FAO, the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), now UN Women, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), WFP, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank signed the Joint Programme with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs in June 2008. Although UN Women – the UN’s leading agency for gender equality and women’s empowerment – is part of the coalition, it is worth noting that the Ministry of Gender and Development is absent from the collaboration. The gender Ministry should also have signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU), given its role as the government machinery in charge of gender equality issues. Since the marginalization of women was identified as a special issue in the attainment of poverty reduction and overall development, the absence of the gender Ministry represented a missed opportunity for making gender issues critical in the coalition, and is one that needs to be revisited.

3.2.1 National Agriculture Innovations System

To address the current gap in agricultural research and extension services, GoL made a commitment to invest in a Natural Agricultural Innovations System (NAIS), to enhance responsive, pluralistic, effective and efficient agricultural development related research and extension services. NAIS, and its integral organizations, including the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI), are expected to improve services and assure service sustainability. Extension and advisory services will be improved by putting in place new technologies, innovations and information in rural communities. Agribusiness services will be harnessed and information centres established at strategic locations across the country to provide information to farmers on a demand basis. The Government also aims to formulate a national extension strategy that promotes decentralization and competitive outsourcing of services.

22 Fact sheet, Food security and nutrition in Liberia.
3.2.2 Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection

The Government of Liberia is making ongoing efforts, articulated in the National Gender Policy (NGP), to eradicate and eliminate all forms of gender discrimination. These efforts are anchored in the provisions of the Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

At institutional level, the NGP specifies that all sectors must apply a gender lens to the diagnosis of respective sectors, and considers how gender equality could be achieved in the implementation of sector plans. Below, as contained in the NGP, is a detailed explanation of how other sectors outside MoGCSP could contribute to gender mainstreaming.

Line ministries, government agencies and private agencies: All sectors (including public and private institutions) and Government agencies are responsible for overall implementation of the NGP, with coordination support from MoGCSP.

The National Gender Forum: A multi-disciplinary policy advisory body, this forum is responsible for advising on gender equality issues nationally and monitoring progress toward fulfillment of national and international commitments on gender equality. To facilitate the National Gender Forum’s monitoring role, County Gender Forums and regional forums will be established to share information, evaluate the effectiveness of women’s empowerment programmes, and reach more women at local level.

The National Children’s Council: This council will be established to fulfil the NGP’s mandate on the development and protection of children and child rights. This includes monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the performance of institutions responsible for children’s development and for applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in a national context. This will provide opportunities to better address specific issues faced by the girl child.

Political parties: The NGP specifies that manifests and programmes should include explicit reference to their position regarding gender equality and women’s empowerment across all thematic and sectoral areas.

The Ministry of Agriculture should take advantage of this NGP implementation structure to ensure the integration of gender into all agricultural related work.

3.2.3 Partnerships in gender and agriculture

Gender and agriculture is a broad area of work that requires and involves the intervention of a wide range of stakeholders. This section, though not exhaustive, presents the initiatives of different stakeholders and describes their efforts on behalf of agriculture in general, and towards reducing the gender inequality gap in agriculture in particular.

FAO

FAO Liberia is the leading UN agency in the country’s agriculture and rural sectors, providing technical support to the Government of Liberia in the following areas: sustainable intensification of crop production and increased sustainable livestock production; sustainable management and use of fisheries and aquaculture; sustainable management of forests and trees; sustainable management of land, water and genetic resources; improved response to global environmental challenges affecting food and agriculture; and improved food security and nutrition23 – all of which have strong gender dimensions. FAO has played a coordinating role in areas of needs assessment, policy dialogue and field coordination and leadership. The UN agency’s capacity-building programme in crop cultivation methods, as well as in post-harvest crop management and distribution of high quality seeds and tools, has had a strong impact on crop production, and women and men farmers’ access to agricultural inputs. FAO also makes significant contributions to the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP). Through the food and nutrition programme, FAO contributes to the enhancement of productivity of food crops, improved nutritional status and management of food emergencies, fisheries and livestock development, promotion of tree crops and agroforestry, and value addition. The agency has the capacity to support enhanced land husbandry, as well as expansion of irrigable land as part of land and water development, and to organize and convene stakeholders with high


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level Government authorities to ensure participatory planning processes and equitable management of the forest sector as part of the forestry programme. FAO’s role in supporting GoL is also reflected in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). This identifies FAO as the lead agency for agriculture, forestry, environment and food security, under pillar two on sustainable economic transformation. In addition, FAO contributes to the rehabilitation and development of rural agricultural infrastructure and technology, as well as to market and enterprise development. Together with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UN Women and WFP, FAO is one of the implementing agencies of the ongoing UN joint programme on “Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” (RWEE) which focuses on four outcomes: improved food and nutrition security; access to income and wealth creation; rural women’s increased leadership in shaping laws, policies and programmes and in rural institutions; and gender responsive policy environments.

**United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**

The USAID Food and Enterprise Development programme (FED) has supported Liberia’s efforts to refine and implement a country led comprehensive food security strategy to reduce hunger and increase economic growth through market driven agricultural development. This programme, which ended in 2016, aimed to improve the value chains of staple crops such as rice and cassava, including the phases of production, processing and linkage to markets. Another initiative undertaken by USAID is implementation of the five-year Health, Agriculture, Nutrition Development for Sustainability (HANDS) project, which addresses key causes of chronic food insecurity in rural districts of River Gee and Grand Gedeh counties through health, nutrition, agriculture and infrastructure activities.

**Danish Refugee Council (DRC)**

DRC is operational in 85 communities in four counties, namely Maryland, River Gee, Nimba and Lofa, covering a total population of approximately 127,500 individuals. DRC works on the following issues in Liberia:

- Cross-border initiatives to strengthen resilience, community-based protection and conflict prevention capacities in the border areas with Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone.
- Protection and border monitoring through Community-Based Protection Committees, with particular focus on women, children and Ebola survivors and establishment of referral pathways with service providers.
- Reinforcement of early warning systems in fragile border areas with a past history of forced displacement and Ebola flare-ups.
- Empowerment of adolescent girls through cultural activities, livelihood initiatives, community mobilization and engagement of local stakeholders and male groups.
- Community led recovery and peace-building.
- Improving livelihood opportunities, food security, water and sanitation (WASH), with a special focus on adolescent girls, women and children.
- Integrated response to the aftermath of the Ebola epidemic through a cross-border recovery approach (Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea).

According to the representative interviewed, five of the eight projects are related to agriculture and directly impact men and women in communities. Three of the five projects related to agriculture either prioritized women, or ensured that men and women benefit from the programme.

**UN Women**

The key informant interviewed from UN Women highlighted the fact that this UN agency works in four areas in Liberia: (i) political participation of women at all levels, including agriculture; (ii) economic empowerment of women; (iii) peace-building and peace consolidation, scaling up on the area of humanitarian assistance, and addressing SGBV; and (iv) gender responsive budgeting, which cuts across all three areas of focus, working with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Gender and Development. In addition, the agency is actively involved in ongoing national initiatives to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in these processes. These include: (i) development of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) transition plan; (ii) the National Recovery and Stabilization plan developed by the Government; (iii) the 2017 elections, which
will require preparation for women, including rural women; (iv) national efforts on decentralization and deconcentration, influencing Government to allocate more resources to the subnational level, providing new opportunities, especially for women in rural areas; and (v) the Constitutional review process.24

UN Women also plays a normative role in the country, leading gender equality and women’s empowerment campaigns, coordination of programmes and serving as chair of the UN Gender Theme Group, to ensure that all agencies are held accountable for gender. Regarding coordination, UN Women has established a donor partnership on gender, ensuring that international cooperation agreements have gender embedded in the document. However, UN Women recognizes implementation challenges, and supports external coordination beyond UN agencies, to include national development partners.

UN Women has developed substantive partnerships with both NGOs and community- based women’s organizations (such as gender country coordinators and local police in fighting GBV) and networks, as well as other development partners present on the ground. Among civil society partners working in more than ten communities are Educare, DEN-L, Johnsey Empowerment, Rural Women’s Structure, the Association of Women in Cross Border Trade, Children Smile, WONGOSOL and WIPNET. UN Women has done substantial work with community peace huts (women led community conflict resolution mechanisms), women’s empowerment centres (dedicated spaces for women to come together to address their priorities and needs) and through grassroots associations, such as the Association of Women in Cross Border Trade. The goal is to holistically address some of the multiple human security challenges through actions fostering increased leadership skills among women in the area of conflict resolution and mediation, engagement with security sector institutions, increasing literacy and numeracy skills and promoting access to finance.

Through ongoing projects, UN Women has formulated a curriculum to work with women on savings and loan associations, literacy and business classes, as well as for community-based leadership and peace-building training for women. The UN agency also plans to launch a Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project, with the intention of using water and hygiene facilities as a source of income generation for women, in contrast with the traditional approach, which sees women as recipients of such services. UN Women hopes to build the capacity of women in this area. Through the joint Human Security project implemented by UN Women, WFP and FAO, women from other peace huts, business classes and savings and loan associations (previous beneficiaries of UN Women projects) will become mentors and trainers for women beneficiaries identified in the targeted areas. In this way, the initiative will expand upon the growing network of grassroots community-based women’s groups, building peace and security from the ground up, ensuring sustainability and a connection between women from the targeted communities and a wider network of support. Additionally, the agency’s programming to support women in cross-border trade will be linked to women in the targeted communities, ensuring they are fully engaged with the Association of Women in Cross Border Trade representatives and connected to the association’s activities and support. This is expected to lead to an increase in women’s access to economic opportunities, markets for agricultural products, loans from financial institutions and legislative aspects of economic empowerment.

**ActionAid International (AAI)**

AAI works on a number of strategic objectives. One of these is to help ‘women and girls from communities living in poverty and exclusion gain power to secure their rights’. Other strategic objectives seek to ensure the integration of gender. In addition, a Women’s Rights Strategy serves as a guide for gender equality and women’s empowerment interventions. According to respondents interviewed from AAI for this study, 60 percent of the agency’s resources are allocated to women. As part of the approach to empower women, AAI provides economic livelihood options for women.

In collaboration with MoA, AAI has provided technical agricultural training for women partners, and distributed farm inputs and tools to them. The agency works closely with women smallholder farmers and their associations and cooperatives. It replicates this approach at country programme level, making it a strong partner for FAO, since the UN agency needs to work directly with women farmers, women’s cooperatives/ groups/ associations. ActionAid International is one of the leading international organizations to have mainstreamed gender in its work. This is done in each of its thematic areas, in addition to a standalone

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24. Key informant interview with UN Women.
initiative, the women's rights theme, which has been repositioned as the priority theme in order to achieve poverty reduction. AAI is currently implementing a project on women’s participation in forest governance and structure. This was launched to address the knowledge and skills gap among women in forest governance, and aims to give women farmers a voice, as well as to promote women’s rights in forestry.

World Food Programme (WFP)

WFP is one of the leading agencies in mainstreaming gender in agriculture, in terms of commitment and existing capacity to mainstream gender in their work. The Programme Officer and Gender Focal Person (GFP) interviewed provided comprehensive information on gender concerns in agriculture. This can be partly explained by WFP’s experience in integrating gender in agriculture in Liberia, and the agency’s participation in different gender related joint programmes. WFP has worked on gender and protection, and in most of its programmes has ensured access to participation and decision-making by men and women in agriculture. According to the respondent, WFP has adopted additional measures that ensure gender mainstreaming in the organization’s work. Examples include an institutional change, introducing implementation of a Gender Expenditure Analysis, and the agency’s global requirement that each country allocates resources to gender.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP’s Community-Based Recovery Programme (2003–2005) focused on capacity-building, livelihoods and basic services, under which water supply was strongly supported in five counties. The UN agency made it a policy to have a water and sanitation component in all schools that it rehabilitated. The programme closed in 2007. Lack of access to drinking water and toilets during the school day affects the learning environment for both students and teachers. Adolescent girls, in particular, are unwilling to use school toilets that are dirty or lack privacy, especially when they are menstruating, and this affects their attendance.
United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF’s country programme (2008-2012) focused on child survival, basic education and gender equality, and child protection. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) was one of the clusters under child survival. The initiative aimed to increase effectiveness in policy and strategic planning, achieving results at scale and leveraging resources. Working at three levels, the cluster focused on: (i) sectoral financing and policy; (ii) training and monitoring of service providers to participate in the design and implementation of targeted capacity development efforts in the health, education and WASH sectors, and to implement high-impact, low-cost WASH interventions at scale; and (iii) finding rapid and efficient approaches to fast track at scale the promotion of basic hygiene, sanitation and safe water usage at household level. Lack of access to WASH facilities at home and school has a negative impact on children’s education. Opportunities for learning are lost when children have to spend time collecting water or finding a safe place to defecate or urinate in the open. This is especially a problem for girls. Children miss school completely when they are sick with WASH related diarrheal diseases. Fully accessible, child-friendly and gender segregated WASH facilities should be considered an essential component of education programmes.

Civil society organizations (CSOs)

The Civil Society Organizations Working Group on Land Rights in Liberia advocated for the release of the land rights legislature that has been held up by lawmakers over accusations of corruption. This group highlighted the impact of secure land rights on people and the stability of the country. The Land Rights Act, which aimed to secure local people’s rights to their forests, had offered hope to entire regions. The CSO consortium on land rights includes the following organizations: Rights and Rice Foundation (RRI), Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), FAO, National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCL), National Charcoal Union of Liberia (NACUL), Search for Common Ground, Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU), Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI), Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), Women NGO secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL), Association of Liberia Community Radio (ALICOR), Natural Resource Women Platform (NRWP), Alliance for Rural Development (ARD), Rural Human Rights Activists Programme (RHRAP), Parley, Farmers Union Network (FUN) of Liberia, Voice of the Voiceless (VOV) and the Liberia Reform Movement (LRM). The coalition can play a key advocacy role in effective implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security in Liberia.
Gender disparities in the different sectors related to agriculture and food and nutrition security

This section describes the main sources and issues regarding gender inequality in the different agricultural subsectors and areas of rural development. Gender equitable social and institutional arrangements at local level are a precondition for maintaining a sustained path of development in rural areas of Liberia. As in many African countries, pre-existing practices discriminate against women and young men in rural Liberian society, exerting an impact on various aspects of life, among them access to assets, labour – including their own – and decision-making (GoL, 2007). As highlighted in the section on gender and agricultural labour, women and men undertake different roles and responsibilities in food production and provision in rural communities, and this results in different needs, priorities and concerns. In spite of the gender division of labour, women and men also play complementary roles.

Women are also crucial to rural and urban trade, bringing rural produce to urban markets, facilitating the basic functioning of the economy. Women comprise the vast majority (over 60 percent) of those involved in petty trade/ small-scale business, and sales of food in rural areas. In addition, women’s associations and informal networks represent one of the most important channels for taking agricultural produce to urban markets (e.g. through urban based ‘market women’, who buy rural women and men’s products). In Liberia’s current context of depleted infrastructure and market breakdown, these networks, although incipient and informal, play an important role in the basic functioning of the economy (GoL, 2007).

It is well documented that the patriarchal norms shape gender roles and responsibilities. In rural communities, these roles are usually rigid, and place a heavy work burden on women (Arora, 2014).

In addition to farm production, women also undertake off-farm activities, such as indirect and direct care services. Women have responsibility for the welfare of their families, including taking care of the sick. Women cook, fetch water and fuelwood and launder clothes (often at relatively remote water sources) (IFAD & FAO, 2011). Unlike men, the majority of women are responsible for domestic work. The time constraints that women face may limit their ability to perform activities such as weeding, which results in lower productivity or quality of produce, and this in turn limits their food security and that of their children. Time constraints also mean that women may be too busy to provide adequate care for their children, take up decent employment opportunities or engage in income-generating activities. Social customs limit women’s mobility, constrain their participation in decision-making and determine their involvement in productive activities in a narrow manner. More specific gender dynamics in rural areas in agriculture, food security and nutrition, social protection and climate change are discussed below.

4.1 Gender and food security and nutrition

Chronic malnutrition among women and children in rural areas could be attributed to food insecurity in the country. While food security in rural Liberia has remained at the same level, with about every second household having poor or borderline food consumption, food insecurity, as observed in 2009, had increased in the greater Monrovia area due to food price hikes and the country’s dependency on food imports (GoL, 2009). Almost 40 percent of children are growth stunted due to poor nutrition in the region. About one-third of under-fives are severely underweight, and recent estimates indicate that one in five deaths in children
under-five is attributable to malnutrition. Women have the primary responsibility for children’s nutrition and health care, subsistence agriculture, manual food processing and water fetching, so when the country is food insecure, or family members are malnourished, this imposes an additional burden on women to provide food and take care of the sick. Rural women are particularly vulnerable to nutritional and health problems due to frequent childbirth (as a result of women’s inability to ensure safe sex, decide number and spacing of children, etc.), coupled with their heavy workload on-farm and at home.

4.2 Gender and rural development planning

Liberian women are critical to the country’s development. They play a catalytic role for successful transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. Women contribute over 60 percent of the labour force in food production, processing, preservation, marketing and preparation, yet they are not part of key decision-making processes in agriculture (World Bank 2012). Participation in rural development is determined by traditional structures, where local communities are dominated by male chiefs and elders, while women are excluded from community decision-making processes.

Women and gender issues are usually marginalized in rural development planning. The Liberia decentralization policy recognized, but failed to address gender and women’s issues, and their participation as important components of the development planning process. There is limited capacity to mainstream gender in the planning processes, and this is evident in the content of the policies reviewed for this study. This shortcoming is further reflected in the way that programmes are implemented in communities. In rural development planning, specifically, the majority of the planners fail to take into consideration the complex nature of gender relations and gender division of labour in agriculture. There is limited use of gender disaggregated data in most national planning documents.

Men, unlike women, have been ascribed the role of decision-makers, so they are always consulted in planning processes, while women’s participation is undermined. A campaign on women’s involvement in development planning in recent years has led to some attempts to involve women in planning generally. However, as highlighted earlier, in the case of agriculture, women are not always consulted on particular issues, for example those related to land. Where women are consulted in agricultural planning, their active participation cannot be guaranteed, due to the heavy burden of combining farm and reproductive activities. Overall, women’s time burden makes participation in development planning, political processes, community meetings and knowledge dissemination workshops extremely difficult.

4.3 Gender and representation in rural organizations

A number of women’s groups have been set up to represent women in agricultural and trade issues. As part of the FAO, IFAD, UN Women and WFP Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Liberia (RWEE), the Rural Women Structure has been established. Its aim is to articulate the needs and concerns of rural women farmers, evaluate their accomplishments and develop realistic strategies to address challenges that confront them. The Association of Women in Cross Border Trade was established under the Rural Women Structure to serve as an advocacy group for cross-border traders. The joint programme proposed working with the Rural Women Structure to advocate on issues of economic security and women’s rights in key concession areas and farming communities affected by the extractive industries. RWEE seeks to ensure that rural women are empowered, so that they can actively engage in the management of community natural resources, land and social agreements with concession companies, and the sustainability of their local economies, as well as document successful engagements.

The establishment of the Rural Women Structure presents a platform where women exercise their rights to decision-making in rural development and agriculture. This represents a radical move by the Government of Liberia to work together with development partners such as UN Women, FAO and WFP to address women’s limited access to decision-making in the rural agricultural sector, and in other facets of life in rural communities. This important finding emerged from interviews with various key informants who contributed to this study.

25. Human security initiative in the most neglected communities with the integration of efforts by the UN country team in Liberia, TCP document.
However, unanswered questions include whether this structure is now recognized by rural administrators, whether and how this structure is used in development planning in general, and if the capacity level of this structure on gender, gender mainstreaming and gender responsive development planning is adequate.

4.4 Gender and rural finance

Women undertake a disproportionate share of farm labour, but have limited access to new technology, improved inputs, land, farm tools, credit and markets, due to discrimination and cultural practices. They are under-represented in sectors such as timber, mining and rubber, which are key sources of Liberia’s economic growth (AfDB, 2013). Rural women’s low educational status limits their opportunities for profitable investment. They also lack funds and knowledge to diversify production and increase soil fertility for sustainably higher yield levels.

Women are crucial players in rural economies, both within farming systems and in food processing and marketing. However, the importance of their contribution is not recognized in the institutional framework of the country.27 Women face structural challenges, which hinder them from effective participation in economic activities. These include lack of an enabling environment to contribute effectively to the economy, absence from key sectors and employment, such as public works and infrastructure rehabilitation, and male dominance in timber, mining and rubber, which are major sources of Liberia’s economic base (GoL, 2009).

Formal credit facilities are for the most part non-existent, leading to the use of traditional forms of community credit, such as borrowing from friends or susu clubs. Almost 30 percent of rural households interviewed by the Food Security Survey considered lack of cash as a key agricultural constraint. Only 53 percent of rural households have access to credit, of which 38 percent borrow from friends and between 12 and 56 percent, depending on the region, draw on credit from susu clubs (GoL, 2007). Women have to rely on family and friends for money, while men’s main source of credit is susu clubs. Where microcredit institutions exist, women are significantly represented among borrowers, accounting for 52 percent of the 1700 members of the seven community credit unions created by the UNDP Community Based Reintegration Recovery Programme in rural Liberia. In urban areas, women represent 86 percent of microcredit borrowers. This suggests that improving credit services in rural areas will have a significant impact on women’s access to finance, and hence on women’s business development and agricultural productivity (World Bank, 2012).

4.5 Gender and agricultural value chains and markets

Marketing channels are poor in rural Liberia, and limited to surrounding villages or neighbourhoods, due to the inadequate infrastructure discussed earlier.28 In value chains, women and men have different responsibilities in the different stages of production. The division of labour implies that there is gender specific knowledge along value chains. Also, there is often conflict between men and women over rights to access and ability to control productive resources – land, inputs and information.

4.6 Gender and agricultural labour

Women constitute the majority of smallholder producers and the agricultural labour force in general. According to the country’s 2008 PRS, women produce some 60 percent of agricultural products, carry out 80 percent of trading activities in rural areas and play a vital role in linking rural and urban markets through their informal networks. Women’s participation in key areas of agriculture, mainly cash crop production and natural resources, is, however, constrained by a rigid gender division of labour. Men usually dominate cash crop production, mainly through commercial farming. In the production of food crops, women are responsible for planting, weeding and harvesting, while men are in charge of brushing, felling, clearing and fencing. At the start of the agricultural cycle, men usually carry out clearing and felling of land in groups, through communal arrangements referred to as hpu (World Bank, 2012). The inability of female-headed households to contribute to communal labour inhibits them from using the land, as this is generally the reason given by community leaders for not granting women access to land.

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27. Enhancing resilience to climate change by mainstreaming adaption concerns into agricultural sector development in Liberia, TCP document.
4.7 Gender and agricultural extension and rural advisory services

Extension services are the main channels through which information about new and improved technologies is disseminated to farmers. In Liberia, extension work is largely limited, due to ageing and underfunded extension services. This undermines the ability to reach poor rural farmers. At institutional level, extension workers have limited skills and capacities to sustain crop production, prevent food losses during harvest or improve storage, food preservation, marketing, processing and agribusiness. There is a critical shortage in the quality and range of specialization of human resources, together with low enrolment in agricultural colleges and departments (World Bank, 2012).

There may be a number of explanations for the institutional and individual challenges of providing extension services. Agricultural education is a low priority and this negatively impacts enrolment rates, while lack of coordination of agricultural programmes affects the training delivered to farmers. At individual farmer level, there is a high illiteracy rate among rural people, especially women. Farmers and farmers’ organizations lack basic knowledge and skills in land and water management, use of modern inputs, agribusiness, food preservation and marketing. Lack of markets, coupled with high post-harvest losses, high costs of inputs, lack of value addition and poor access to suitable land have combined to undermine the effectiveness of agricultural extension services.

Many of the documents reviewed here did not discuss the gender implications of extension services. However, the country’s food and agriculture policy appears to outline an established and functioning system, through which women receive extension services aligned with their traditional gender roles, as well as capacity-building for productive and commercial ventures. Agricultural advisory services and Farmer Field Schools (FFS) have greatly facilitated farmers’ involvement, and public-private partnerships have helped to ensure that technology dissemination is demand driven, client oriented and farmer led (GoL, 2008).

4.8 Gender and agricultural technologies

Few agricultural operations, including land preparation, post-harvest management and value addition, are supported by mechanization. Farm machines and equipment suited to local conditions are non-existent and technology is limited, with farmers relying on manual tools such as hoes. Where machines do exist, women and men do not enjoy the same access to them. In addition, farmers may not be in position to absorb the high fuel costs involved, or may lack the skills to use the equipment.

This issue is particularly true in the case of women, few of whom are trained to use mechanized equipment, since this is usually considered men’s domain. Given that almost all the country’s land is currently worked using simple hand tools, and that women make up the majority of farmers, it can be inferred that women have to work under hard conditions. Limited access to technology for agriculture – tractors, power tillers and vehicles – means women are also excluded from training programmes. This discrimination is justified and normalized by gender stereotypes and traditional perceptions, based on the premise that women do not have the physical capability to undertake hard work or operate machines.

4.9 Gender and social protection

Liberian women are vulnerable to health hazards in agriculture (mainly in fisheries and aquaculture), and at risk from the use of unsafe water. They generally have no income with which to protect themselves, or health insurance, since most of their work (subsistence farming and cash crop production) falls within the informal agricultural sector, and most of their reproductive work is either unpaid or undervalued. In the FAO supported Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCPs) reviewed, which provided pesticides to farmers, there was no embedded gender component. This highlights the fact that when disaster occurs – for example, if crops are destroyed by insects or pests – provision of pesticides to farmers takes no account of gender implications. Empowerment of women in agriculture is strongly undermined by specific gender inequalities and discrimination, which constantly marginalize and exclude women who seek to access and own productive resources.

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29 Enhancing resilience to climate change by mainstreaming adaption concerns into agricultural sector development in Liberia, TCP document.
4.10 Gender and land and water

Liberia had weak and unclear property rights, due to the history of land rights in the country. Customary land ownership rights were not recognized, or were treated as less important than private deeded land. Land ownership has alternated between communities and the state, and less than 20 percent of the country’s total land is privately titled and registered. A number of efforts have been made by GoL to address the situation. Commercial contract enforcement has proved a challenge for the Government. It adopted the Community Rights Law (2006) and the Community Right Act (2009) during the PRS, in an attempt to formalize community ownership (GoL, 2013). In 2011, the Government established a separate Commercial Court to help clear the backlog of cases and improve contract enforcement. In spite of these initial efforts, Liberia is ranked number 176 out of 183 countries, in terms of ease and cost of registering property.

Rural communities engaged in agricultural practices mostly work on community land that is protected by customary land rights. The land rights policy stipulates that “the customary land rights of groups, families, and individuals within the community will be decided by the community in a way that is fully representative and accountable to all community members, including women, youth, and minorities” (GoL, 2013).

However, in the prevailing situation, in which either communities or the state controls land, very little consideration is given to women. In patriarchal societies and communities, men are involved in the decision-making structures regarding community and/or state land. Although the policy states that women should be part of management committees, they are mainly given less important roles and do not make direct decisions on land issues. The system is still open to exploitation by men, who believe that women should not be accorded the same rights as themselves to own or access land. Rural women are still faced with challenges linked to land inheritance, ownership and access, as well as to resources on land, such as water, which are crucial for agriculture.

Access to water in Liberia is extremely limited. According to information from WaterAid, a leading NGO providing access to water and sanitation in Liberia, 1.1 million out of a population of 4.5 million people have no access to water. Working with local partners, WaterAid is providing access to water and sanitation in remote places, with a focus on reaching women and girls. This group has long been known to suffer the brunt of limited or no access to water, as a result of being subjected to violence and having to spend long hours working to provide basic needs for the family. Women and girls have to care for sick family members as a result of limited or no access to water.

4.11 Gender and forestry

Women do not enjoy the rights granted to them in the constitution and statutory laws with regard to land use and ownership. There are gender differences in land and forest management and the impact of policies on men and women has been overlooked. In many instances, policy-makers do not conduct a gender analysis when developing strategies, partly as a result of limited knowledge in this regard. Often, civil society organizations tasked with ensuring that Government delivers on its commitment do not understand the gender implication of policy on men and women.

Women continue to be under-represented in forestry committees, as evidenced in the composition of the Community Forest Development Committee (CFDC), the body responsible for ensuring that communities’ interests in the forest sector are protected. Seventeen CFDCs were established, and none of these comprises more than two women members, out of a total ten. Ultimately women do not have equal influence in the decision-making process in forestry. Often, they are given nominal positions, such as treasurer and chaplain.

4.12 Gender and fisheries and aquaculture

The fisheries sector comprises marine fishery and artisanal fishing. Inland fishery is exclusively artisanal, and aquaculture is practised in rural areas in fishponds (GoL & FAO, 2012). Fish farming in Liberia dates back to 1952. However, the sector is still underdeveloped, with an inadequate infrastructure for fish smoking, poor storage facilities for preservation and lack of access to improved technology, business development services and credit for artisanal fishermen, fisher folk and fishmongers, etc. There are very few trained personnel, and limited information and training opportunities for potential aquaculture farmers, including youth. Sixty-one
percent of Liberians are involved in artisanal fisheries and 60 percent of these fishers are women. Since women dominate the labour force in this sector, they may be exposed to occupational health and safety risks, but there is generally no health insurance for women.

4.13 Gender and animal production and protection

Research reveals that rural women and men participate in small-scale animal production, but men dominate the management of large animals, whereas women manage poultry and small ruminants (World Bank, IFAD & FAO, 2009). The available literature does not effectively describe the role of men and women in livestock production. Most of the documentation discusses livestock keepers in general. However, the FAO Liberia Country Programme Framework (CPF) highlights some of the challenges encountered in animal production and protection. It observes that Liberia has no livestock sector development policy, as well as a lack of trained personnel to coordinate and manage programmes and projects, low capacity to provide surveillance and control of pests and diseases, or to fulfil market demands, and an inadequate infrastructure to facilitate the development and growth of the sector. It is common for women engaged in this sector to be deprived of access to resources, rights and services.

4.14 Gender and crop production

Agriculture is the main economic activity in rural Liberia, generating 90 percent of all rural employment. Women comprise the majority of agricultural workers, and account for 60 percent of all agricultural production. Within agriculture, women are major producers of food crops, contributing approximately 42.5 percent of labour, compared with 35.3 percent in the case of men. Timber, mining and rubber are considered male dominated sectors. Men are the main producers of cash crops in Liberia. In spite of the gender division of labour, women carry out 31.5 percent of cash crop production, compared with 48.5 percent for men.

4.15 Gender and rural infrastructure

Rural infrastructure is fundamental for business to thrive in a country. This includes markets for post-harvest processing and storage, as well as wholesale and assembly markets. Other rural infrastructures are transport, energy, information and community technology (World Bank, IFAD & FAO, 2009). Following the civil war in Liberia, roads and bridges were severely damaged, and most of them are still in a state of severe disrepair, making access to market during the rainy season almost impossible. Markets are available in cities or regional capitals, but the situation is very different for villages in rural areas, which are located far from the main access roads. Local markets exist in rural areas, where products such as cassava (prepared in attiékè), peppers, bitter-balls, okra and dried fish can be purchased. Men and women are negatively impacted by the long distances they have to cover in order to market produce. However, the situation is worse for women, who mainly sell perishable produce such as fruit and vegetables, as opposed to rice, palm oil and other cash crops sold by men.

4.16 Gender and climate change

The Liberian agriculture policy did not analyse women’s needs, priorities and challenges with regard to climate change, and subsequently, no interventions specifically targeted women. However, Liberia has put in place a climate change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP), which is aimed at ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed into climate change policies, programmes, and interventions. Women are most affected by climate change, because they rely heavily on natural resources for their survival. When women are hit by climate change, they recover at a slower pace, due to limited resources, and they may have to compete with men for scarce natural resources. The Gender Action Plan clearly acknowledges agriculture, coasts, forestry, health, water and sanitation, and observes that energy should be prioritized for women, as there is currently an existing gender gap in the sector (Global Gender Office, 2012).

31. CAAS-Lib Cross-cutting issues (available at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/7675/431760SR0v4Wh1ngTissues1231Feb08.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).
32. Human security initiative in the most neglected communities with the integration of efforts by the UN country team in Liberia, TCP document.
4.17 Gender and disaster risk reduction and management

Women and men experience disaster differently. Limited awareness of the gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction has resulted in women being presented only as vulnerable victims (University of Stavanger, 2012). Women’s resilience and skills in coping with disasters offer a valuable resource that is underutilized by agencies working on disaster risk reduction and agriculture. Women should be recognized as agents of change, and their capacities to cope further strengthened. In disaster or crisis situations, women often organize networks or organizations at community level to address key issues. This was evident in the role they played in raising awareness of the Ebola virus during the recent outbreak of the disease, as well as in their role in peace huts, bringing communities together after the conflict. While gender disaggregated data do not exist on displaced persons in Liberia, women tend to predominate among those who stayed behind in communities during the civil war. The majority of men, including those who migrated during the conflict, never returned, so labour migration out of rural areas is a male phenomenon in Liberia. This means that the female labour force is particularly critical for the country’s agriculture sector.

For instance, the World Bank, the Liberian Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services and the Gallop Organization conducted a series of mobile-phone surveys on the economic impact of Ebola. Respondents indicated that their agricultural harvest for 2014 was smaller than that of the previous years. These surveys also found out, with regard to the employment situation, that women were the most affected as they were engaged in types of jobs (self-employed, working in markets, etc.) that were most affected by Ebola. (Ref: http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/publication/socio-economic-impacts-ebola-liberia accessed 7 March 2017).
Members of the Indashyikirwa group are seen cleaning their poultry farm.
The Country Gender Assessment (CGA) report includes an extensive review of the National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP), which in the case of Liberia is referred to as the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP). NAIPs are one of the main frameworks on agriculture and rural sector development in ECOWAS countries. The results obtained from implementing the NAIPs provide more up-to-date information on the sector. The review of NAIP is conducted in two stages; (i) a review of the NAIP document using a framework designed for this purpose and (ii) completion of the NAIP framework by officials in charge of implementation of the NAIP in the country.

5.1 Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP)

The LASIP priority areas are aligned with the national objectives, as well as with the Malabo Declaration and the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) (GoL, 2009).

5.1.1 National policies

The Government considers agricultural growth to be critical for poverty reduction and tackling the root causes of the conflict that ravaged the country for more than ten years.

The main national development strategy (PRS) informs LASIP, as it provides the overarching architecture for pro-equity approaches and “necessitates a sector environment that is market-driven, socially sensitive, and inclusive of the most vulnerable groups”. According to a Government official, LASIP was also informed by the AFT, Vision 2030, the MDGs, UNDAF and the FAO CPF for Liberia. Also, the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS) informed the LASIP, and this emphasizes progress towards three fundamental goals: i) Improve national food and nutrition security: increase food availability and production to spur local economic development; ii) Enhance agricultural productivity, competitiveness and linkages to markets: strengthen efficiency, encourage innovation, foster sustainability and leverage opportunities in national and external markets, broaden and strengthen private sector participation, increase public investments (mainly in rural infrastructure), and create an enabling macroeconomic environment; and iii) Strengthen human and institutional capacities: institutionalize improved governance, including among other strategies, mainstreaming gender and youth in agriculture and rural development.

5.1.2 Coherence with regional policies

LASIP identifies priority areas wherein investment projects are aligned with national objectives and the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) that was developed and launched in 2009. The CAADP programme is built on four pillars which are: (i) expansion of the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems; (ii) improvement of rural infrastructure and trade related capacities for improved market access; (iii) enhancement of food supply and reduction of hunger;
and (iv) development of agricultural research and technological dissemination and adoption to sustain long-term productivity growth. Consultations and engagements for the formulation of LASIP were held with all stakeholders, including GoL ministries and agencies, private sector actors, farmers, civil society organizations, development partners, the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) Agency, ECOWAS Commission and the AU. Every stage in the development of LASIP was consultative, as stated in the document, but pertinent questions for this CGA include the following: Were women’s organizations, women’s farmer-based organizations and cooperatives targeted for these consultations? Were the processes open, and did women actively participate? The feedback from officials in the MoA emphatically stated that “consultations were made at grassroots level, where individuals and groups participated, including women’s groups. Also, women’s organizations, which represented all the women’s groups, participated throughout the LASIP process”.

5.2 Gender conceptualization in LASIP programme components

LASIP attempts to mainstream gender in agriculture through its commitment to establishing the empowerment of women and youth as a cross-cutting issue. It recognizes the burden of care on women in rural communities for agriculture and reproductive work, the marginalization of women in the agriculture sector and the gender discrimination that leads to denying women the same rights to access land and productive resources as men. LASIP intends to address these cross-cutting issues by i) strengthening institutional framework and capacities, particularly in MoA and MoGCSP, to address gender issues in rural policies and programmes; ii) collaborating with MoGCSP and development partners to develop and implement a Rural Women Empowerment Programme to enhance women’s decision-making powers and access to credit, land, extension, technology and market information; iii) ensure that gender issues are mainstreamed in all agriculture policy formulation, planning programming, and propose interventions at national and subnational levels; iv) intensify research and adoption of programmes for agricultural technologies that increase women’s labour productivity without undue physical exhaustion; and v) support women’s participation in promotion of and training in agribusiness services.

This marks a commendable step by GoL to address gender concerns in agriculture. However, establishing gender as a cross-cutting issue alone is not an effective means to address gender concerns in the different subsectors of agriculture. In mainstreaming gender, the issues should be discussed in all four programmes and components of LASIP: Food and nutrition, Competitive value chains and market linkages, Institutional development, and Land and water management programmes, as well as through the cross-cutting issues on women and youth.

Specifically, a detailed analysis of the four LASIP subprogrammes from a gender perspective is presented below:

Programme 1: Food and nutrition

This programme discusses the challenges to food and nutrition under six key components: (i) Food crop production and productivity enhancement; (ii) Improved nutritional status and management of food emergency; (iii) Smallholder tree crops and agroforestry development; (iv) Sustainable fisheries subsector development; (v) Livestock development and promotion; and (vi) Special women and youth initiative. According to LASIP, the constraints faced by women and youth in agriculture are the result of discrimination and inequality. The analysis of the food and nutrition programme acknowledged that ‘women are often marginalized. Despite recent advances on the legislative and policy fronts, as well as dominance in agriculture, there are still gender disparities in access to land, ownership of assets, access to credit, extension services, skills, and business management training’. Programme 1, subprogramme 6 on women and youths specifically plans to empower women as agricultural producers and value chain creators, and increase youth involvement in agriculture related activities. Specifically, this subprogramme aims to: (i) support women’s role as agricultural producers and participants in the creation of rural value chains; (ii) promote women’s participation in new economic areas; (iii) strengthen the institutional framework to address gender issues in rural policies and programmes and remove social barriers that limit the contribution and participation of women; (iv) develop and implement an integrated youth in agriculture programme that includes sensitization about opportunities in the sector, provides skills-based training, and supports accessibility to input and output markets; (v) promote effective participation of youth, particularly graduates of programmes such as the Centre Songhai and the Sineo and
Tumutu Agricultural Training Programmes, in outgrower or smallholder schemes and similar undertakings. *It is worth noting that this is the flagship initiative of the four programmes that addresses women, with clear targets and interventions that will directly address the condition and position of women in agriculture in Liberia.*

**Programme 2: Competitive value chains and market linkages**

Interventions for competitive value chains and market linkages are discussed under three subprogrammes: (i) Rehabilitation and expansion of rural roads; (ii) Rural agricultural infrastructure and labour saving technologies; (iii) Market and enterprise development and rural financial services. Inaccessible markets and the underdeveloped value chains have been attributed to poor rural infrastructure, such as roads, storage, drying and processing facilities, and food safety and quality control systems. Limited information on markets, as well as poor links between producers and markets, prevents farmers from being aware of market opportunities, or contributes to them making unwise market decisions. The severe limitation of agricultural credit also undermines rural finances for farmers.

Rural agricultural infrastructure and labour saving technologies are primarily useful for women, helping to reduce their work burden in agriculture. Further clarity is required on the type of labour saving technologies that have been provided through implementation of LASIP, and an analysis of the capacity for the effective utilization of such new technology and management of agricultural innovations/machinery is required, as is an assessment of rural finance/credit in relation to men and women in agriculture. Extension services generally target men, who are considered the main cash crop producers, even though women also contribute to cash crop production. In terms of accessibility to the market, only the expansion of transport and agriculture has been discussed as channels for improving market linkages. Women are mostly cross-border traders, and they face challenges such as exploitation by border patrols and sexual harassment from drivers, on the road to market their produce. In addition, women are mostly involved in subsistence farming, and they mainly sell perishable products that are affected by lack of storage and cooling facilities. As a result, the challenges and limitations regarding market access in rural areas are likely to affect women the most.

Rural finances are particularly accessible to women, who do not own natural resources such as land that will help them to secure loans for agricultural purposes. In terms of smallholders and other value chain participants, LASIP is committed to building their capacity, as well as that of staff in MoA and relevant line ministers/agencies, to enforce international commitments. It should be noted that smallholder farmers and personnel in MoA and related ministries are not gender neutral. As earlier observed, men are more educated in both rural and urban communities, with the result that women smallholder farmers are likely to be less knowledgeable about value chains.

**Programme 3: Institutional development**

Programme 3 addresses institutional development through its six subprogrammes: (i) Rebuilding the Ministry of Agriculture and improving coordination and management; (ii) Reviewing and upgrading selected parastatals; (iii) Rebuilding extension and enhancing technologies; (iv) Capacity-building of farm-based organizations; (v) Revitalizing agricultural research; and (vi) Agricultural education and training. Subprogramme 3 acknowledges that smallholder farmers are illiterate and live largely in isolated villages, with little or no facilities to receive updated information on agriculture and rural development. However, no assessment was conducted to explore which gender was more vulnerable in terms of access to information and education. As highlighted in LASIP/NAIP, isolated communities have limited access to updated information on agriculture and rural development. However, when information is available, men – who are considered decision-makers and farmers – are the first to receive it, and very little is done to ensure that education and information reach women. Agricultural parastatal organizations currently lack capacity in gender mainstreaming to execute their mandates. However, a capacity needs assessment should have been undertaken to analyse the potential of men and women in these parastatal organizations. In addition, LASIP/NAIP is committed to working in the Governance Commission, but it is uncertain if women are represented in the governance structure of agriculture. If they are represented in this structure(s), an assessment needs to be conducted to investigate the role that women play. It is only by assessing the situation that the LASIP/NAIP intervention to strengthen
women’s capacity for increased representation in the agricultural governance structure can be realized. Women need to be represented in governance structures that make decisions in agriculture, to enable them to influence laws and policies that will positively impact on women’s role in agriculture. Interventions to address discrimination or inequality in education for women will be crucial for the effectiveness of work on extension services and farmer education for farmer-based organizations (FBOs). Moreover, women can only demand extension services if they have knowledge about their rights, and are able to exercise these.

Programme 4: Land and water management

The objective of this programme is to ensure that the country’s endowment of land and water is used to accelerate food production and facilitate income generation through proper planning, development and management. The programme ensures that farmers have access to land and secured tenure, and are able to use this resource in a sustainable manner. Again, improving access to land for farmers would be more effective if the challenges discussed under the cross-cutting theme on women were addressed under this programme. Women depend to a greater extent than men on water, since lack of this resource constrains women’s reproductive roles. For this reason, ensuring the active participation of women in land and water management is critical for the realization of the programme’s results.

5.2.1 Summary assessment of the NAIP/LASIP programmes

A major observation to emerge from LASIP is that there is no consistent gender analysis of the components of all four programmes. The consideration of women’s issues as a cross-cutting theme represented an attempt to achieve this. However, in order for gender to be effectively mainstreamed in each of the components, gender analysis needs to be carried out in a comprehensive manner. The mainstreaming process should be unpacked to include programmatic tools at the design stage, so that gender mainstreaming runs through the entire programming cycle.

LASIP appears to have been informed by country gender assessment. Literature, including the current Country Gender Assessment, indicates that women remain marginalized despite advances in the areas of legislation and public policy. Programmes supporting women’s role as agricultural producers, improving their participation in the creation of rural value chains as new economic areas, and strengthening the institutional framework to address gender issues in rural policies and programmes, are needed but are not strongly articulated. Also, there is a need to address serious social barriers, such as sexual exploitation, which is a major spillover from the civil war, and which still limits women’s freedom to participate in all sectors.

The document noted that in Liberia, women in rural areas predominate in key segments of the value chains of major food, such as cassava, cocoa, coffee, rubber and palm oil, and also serve as heads of families, due to the large numbers of men killed in the war. This represents a missed opportunity for LASIP, given these factors, to seek to address key gender issues in all its four programmes. The focus of subprogramme 6 in Programme 1 leads to the conclusion that the situation of women was considered in the conceptualization of LASIP, with the caveat that this was not consistent across all the programmes.

Gender mainstreaming or women’s empowerment programmes will only be successful if budgetary allocations are gender responsive. Budgetary allocation is not disaggregated by sex to assess gender equality outcomes in terms of reducing existing disparities, prioritizing value chains where women are predominant, etc. A gender responsive budget can help planners and programme managers to be aware of resources that should be allocated to gender equality programmes, and this in turn can have an impact on the monitoring and evaluation processes. A further analysis of LASIP revealed that only bulk budget estimates are available for the four programmes, and that the cross-cutting issues identified in subprogramme 6, under Programme 1 are not costed. Also, even for the activities in subprogramme 6, the number of women who will be targeted is not given in the document. The study only makes an inference that, since issues related to women are discussed under subprogramme 6, some of the budget could be attributed to women specific activities. However, the general conclusion is that there is no gender budgeting in LASIP.

The LAIP assessment also revealed that women are not in the forefront of implementation of NAIP. If they are the most disadvantaged sector in agriculture, their involvement is crucial to the process. Women farmers’ groups/ cooperatives/ NGOs/ activists should participate in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of programmes.
5.2.2 Management arrangement for the implementation of LASIP

Leadership for the coordination and programming of LASIP rests with MoA. Oversight committees are tasked with guiding implementation of LASIP. These committees are intended to ensure continued focus, commitment, coordination, accountability of efforts and resources, and outputs at national, sector and local levels. They are as follows:

• The Cabinet level oversight committee is led by the President of Liberia; this is the stakeholder forum that meets periodically for the purpose of sharing information and experiences of investment programme implementation, reviewing implementation and policy direction that supports implementation, and recommending appropriate programme adjustments to MoA and Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee.

• The Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee, the country's highest sectoral level decision-making body, chaired by the Minister of Agriculture and including relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Central Bank of Liberia, Environmental Protection Agency and the Liberian Business Association.

• The Liberian Bankers Association and Liberia National Federation of Cooperative Societies are to provide leadership and steer LASIP. The Agricultural Coordination Committee is to provide technical assistance in management of investment programmes, while MoA prepares annual plans, drawing from elements of the investment priorities for resource mobilization, allocation and utilization.

• A Donor Working Group that will review progress reports, solicit the views of donors, advocate for resource mobilization within the donor community and reassure donors of the Government’s continuing commitment to agricultural sector growth and development.

• A County Development Steering Committee that will coordinate inputs from county level into MoA annual plans and programmes. The committee will monitor implementation in local communities at subcounty levels. Communities will be assisted through their decentralized structures to organize, contribute to and develop annual plans, as well as participate in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of investment activities.

Despite the massive contribution made by women to the agriculture sector, and the widely held view that gender equality will help to reduce poverty, MoGCSP is not part of the Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee, the country’s highest sectoral level decision-making body for agriculture. The LASIP management team will comprise one Coordinator and four Programme Managers, who are from MoA. The absence of MoGCSP from the oversight committee raises the possibility that there will be no knowledge or tools to undertake gender mainstreaming into the different programmes of LASIP in the course of programme implementation.

5.2.3 Monitoring and evaluation

A MoA monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed to set up targets and indicators specific to the programmes and subprogrammes within LASIP. M&E will operate at two levels. At national level, progress on LASIP implementation will be reported to the Cabinet, the Stakeholders’ Forum and the Donor Working Group, as well as to the County Development Steering Committee at local level by MoA, in conjunction with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. At project level, the M&E unit will report to MoA leadership, the Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee and the Agricultural Coordination Committee, thereby informing all key stakeholders in the rural sector of progress towards planned outcomes.

A key observation regarding the MoA monitoring and evaluation framework is that there is insufficient quantitative and qualitative baseline data against which LASIP should be assessed. Lack of comprehensive gender assessment for each of the LASIP programmes and respective components, coupled with insufficient baseline data, largely explain MoA’s inability to account for the number of beneficiaries who will be targeted for each expected outcome in the M&E framework. Not a single expected outcome had figures for the number or percentage of people to be targeted. The current state of the M&E framework leaves room for

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35. Excerpt of the management structure was extracted from GoL (2009), Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP).
36. This is now the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.
speculation that the interventions might inadvertently widen the existing gender gap, due to the lack of gender disaggregated data on target beneficiaries.

5.2.4 Use of sex disaggregated data for evidence-based planning

A plethora of data sources was used to develop LASIP. However, preparation of this investment programme clearly shows a general lack of gender disaggregated data for evidence-based planning. Previous reports, such as the CAAS-Lib, highlight the paucity of gender disaggregated data for analysis and planning.

LASIP commits to building staff capacity in evidence-based policy development and analysis, M&E, information and statistical data collection and dissemination, agricultural risk and vulnerability management, and programme development and coordination. However, again there is no specific mention of the number of men and women personnel who will be targeted for this type of training. Additionally, the commitment to staff capacity-building does not specify that such training will integrate a gender perspective, a special skill that should be made available to all staff, especially Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and gender ministry programme officers.

LASIP provides a comprehensive data template to inform policies and support M&E. This includes data on women’s participation across all key subsectors, as well as their access to key productive resources, such as land. However, these cells are mostly empty, indicating particular constraints in generating such data for which targeted strategies are required.

5.2.5 Gender sensitive strategies

There are plans for extension services to provide support for participatory and pluralistic extension approaches and gender mainstreaming, as well as for developing an enabling agricultural communication strategy. Capacity-building for producer organizations and rebuilding selected farmer-based organizations are all potential areas for gender sensitive strategies. These are considered in general statements made in LASIP, and there is a need to ensure that they are addressed during implementation.

5.3 Critical issues and outcomes of NAIP (applying the NAIP Assessment Framework)

A framework was developed with key indicators to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, likely impact and sustainability of gender equality provisions in LASIP. The results of the assessment are presented in this section.

5.3.1 Relevance

The section on relevance examines the relevance of LASIP interventions in relation to Government national priorities in the National Development Plans (NDPs), as well as priorities for gender equality in the National Gender Policy. It also addresses food security and nutrition in terms of eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition from a gender equality and women’s empowerment perspective, including efforts to curb food waste and post-harvest losses.

The Agenda for Transformation (AFT) – the country strategy paper – acknowledges the need to mainstream gender in agriculture. Consistent with the AFT, NAIP/LASIP is committed to “ensure gender issues are mainstreamed in all agriculture policy formulation, planning, programming, and proposed interventions at national and subnational levels”. Despite this political commitment, there is a lack of comprehensive gender assessment of NAIP/LASIP programmes. In the case of the cross-cutting issue on women and youth that was analysed, some gender assessment was undertaken, even though this was not exhaustive.

NAIP/LASIP is committed to eradicating hunger and food insecurity. LASIP acknowledges that malnutrition is a critical need identified in the country situation analysis, with activities targeting children, women and

37 During validation of this report, the CAADP focal person at the Ministry of Agriculture noted that the “LASIP did not carry out census. However, there were baseline and mid-term reports prepared. Additionally, Ebola also affected the plans to conduct the evaluations.”
vulnerable poor people, who are more exposed to the risk of malnutrition. A major dimension in addressing hunger and insecurity involves recognition of women’s role in curbing food waste and post-harvest losses. Programme 1 reinforces the link between women’s farm productivity and value chain development as being key to food and nutrition security. It would been more efficient to analyse value chains under Programme 2.

5.3.1a R2: Participation

The relevance of NAIP/LASIP is also assessed on the basis of the level of participation in preparation and implementation of LASIP. Participation in this study is defined as the process of developing NAIPs and in direct implementation, leadership and participation, and monitoring.

The processes followed in developing the document are threefold: Engagements and partnership development; Evidence-based planning and building alliance for investment; and Programme design and review. These processes targeted a broad spectrum of national and international partners. Civil society organizations were among the stakeholders that participated in the formulation of NAIP/LASIP, but the participation of women’s groups cannot be ascertained in the document.38

A major gap in NAIP/LASIP is the failure to acknowledge the participation of women. According the Government official interviewed, women were consulted at all levels. However, there is no data on specific roles played by individual women activists, women farmers/ cooperatives, etc. The role of the gender focal point for MoGCSP is unclear in the preparation of NAIP/LASIP.

In terms of the integration of gender in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the programme, it emerges that gender mainstreaming was not systematic at all stages.

5.3.1b R3: Budgeting

This section addresses agriculture and rural development financing and investments. Specifically, it seeks to assess the budgeting and financing mechanisms for implementation of NAIP, along with their tracking. Budget allocation for interventions to address the cross-cutting issue on women could be estimated in the case of subprogramme 6 of Programme 1. Some generic activities in the other programmes targeted women and men, but supplied no quantitative gender disaggregated data. Gender responsive budgeting could not be maintained in terms of budgetary allocation for men and women’s needs.

5.3.2 Effectiveness

This subsection assesses the effectiveness of the service delivery systems and institutional capacity to deliver gender responsive services that will promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. The effective strategic and programmatic responses are addressed in three dimensions: (i) Review how NAIPs have addressed the need for women and men’s full access to extension and other services; and the capacity of the knowledge support systems to collect and analyse sex and age disaggregated data; (ii) Institutional capacities, as well as those of women’s cooperatives. Capacity of women’s cooperatives will be assessed in terms of women’s ability to take collective action, and to amplify their voices on women’s and agricultural issues; (iii) The agriculture and food systems will be assessed on how NAIP addresses rural women’s access to labour saving and productivity enhancing technologies, agricultural services and skills training.

LASIP generally aims to strengthen FBOs to access services, credit, improved storage, and processing facilities and markets, as well as the provision of labour saving technologies and access to financial services. On the question of gender sensitive research for technology, labour saving transitional devices and technologies will be provided to increase productivity and reduce drudgery, including increasing women’s labour productivity without undue physical exhaustion. However, this does not imply that gender sensitive research will be undertaken in the area of extension services and research. Neither does it imply that labour saving technologies will be gender responsive. The information in the document is therefore not conclusive.

38. During validation of this document, the CAADP focal person of the Ministry of Agriculture provided additional information to refute the claim that women’s groups did not participate in preparation of the document. He added that this information might not have been well captured in the LASIP document. He also mentioned that the compact is the LASIP development and or formulation process, which was characterized by meetings at all levels, with the participation of both sexes.
In terms of institutional capacity-building, there is no commitment to build the capacity of staff from MoA and MoGD. At institutional level, capacity enhancement to develop gender disaggregated data and gender statistics is a challenge, but there are no specific interventions to address it. There is an effective partnership in the implementation of NAIP. However, this is uncertain in terms of partnerships for gender mainstreaming. LASIP aims to “build the capacity of at least 10 farmer-based organizations in each county and strengthen the Cooperative Development Agency”. Today, most of the cooperatives are women’s groups, and associations are being turned into farmer-based organizations in most parts of the country (according to the CAADP focal person, Ministry of Agriculture). Demand driven access to services for women in agriculture requires intense advocacy, which can only be achieved if women have education and awareness, and are able to participate, and be in control of their contribution to agriculture.

5.3.3 Efficiency

This subsection assesses how LASIP addresses resource use efficiency, the provision of ecosystem services and systems such as agroforestry systems, crop-livestock integration and crop-aquaculture production from a gender and youth perspective.

NAIP/LASIP did not incorporate principles of conservation of agricultural resources and biodiversity that taps into indigenous knowledge of rural women. The role and status of women are not considered in the processes of natural resource management, the review noted. There was no provision for alternative energy sources for women to reduce deforestation, and no provision for development of integrated farming systems for women.

In terms of technological efficiency, NAIP/LASIP’s intervention provides farm level efficiency such as fertilizers, seeds, tools etc. for women as part of the intervention for Programme 1. NAIP/LASIP also makes provision for labour saving technologies to promote women’s productivity. With regard to value chain development and access to markets, LASIP aims to improve market accessibility of agricultural products through the construction and operation of rural agricultural infrastructure, such as modern marketplaces, storage and processing facilities, and the development of renewable energy resources. It plans to rehabilitate and construct a minimum of four permanent, modern market structures in each district. While these are potentially useful for women who dominate small-scale agriculture marketing, the facilities need to be affordable for women, as well as men. This strategic action was not specified.

5.3.4 Resource management

The study assessed the extent to which NAIP incorporated principles of conservation of agricultural resources and biodiversity that tap into indigenous knowledge of rural women. Programme 1 in LASIP is based on the principles of conservation of agricultural food security and nutrition to enhance production and the productivity of smallholder farmers, especially women and girls. There is an affirmative response from the review of NAIP on consideration of the role and status of women in the processes of natural resource management. According to the document, most of the tillers in the country are women, hence the importance of their role in natural resource management. Training in areas such as erosion control and agroforestry techniques, construction and stabilization of contour bunds and production and planting of tree species, vetiver and elephant grass along farm boundaries and marginal lands has consistently targeted women and girls. Also, regarding processes for soil and seed management that include women, it is noted that the LASIP formulation process was highly consultative and participatory, from the grassroots village level to the highest policy-making level, through district, regional and national consultative meetings. Women were included at every level in the LASIP process. The response was also affirmative on NAIP’s provision of alternative energy sources for women to reduce deforestation. Paragraph 133 specifically states that “improving utilities – with emphasis on new forms of energy, and the development of local industrial zones”, and paragraph 181 states that “positive environmental outcomes expected from sustainable agro-based enterprises such as more energy-efficient production and safer disposal of agro-industrial waste”.

5.3.5 Likely impact

This section focuses on the likely impact of NAIP/LASIP on decent rural employment and food security. On decent rural employment, it reviews how NAIPs provide for the following: gender equitable decent wage employment opportunities for rural women, men and youth; improvement of working conditions in rural
areas, particularly in respect to maternity protection and child labour elimination; the development of care services for poor households to reduce women’s and girl’s domestic unpaid care work; promotion of occupational safety and health standards in agricultural and informal rural employment; and extension of social protection to cover small-scale producers and workers in the rural informal sector.

NAIP contributes to gender inclusive agricultural transformation in some areas, but this is not systematic in all programme components. Women’s employment is possible only in certain crop value chains, especially cassava and vegetable production, and there are no measures to eradicate negative working conditions for women in agriculture and its value chains. There is no evidence of care services for women farmers, or of any reduction in the unpaid farm labour of women. In terms of social protection, NAIP/LASIP Programme 3 supports the very poor with productive safety nets, such as food-for-work or cash-for-work, vouchers and school feeding. LASIP provides food and nutrition assistance to pregnant and lactating women, among other vulnerable people. There are other dimensions of protection that are not captured, such as health issues as a result of agricultural activities.

In the area of food security, this section reviews how NAIPs address the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition from a gender equality and women’s empowerment perspective, including curbing food waste and post-harvest losses. Using the FAO gender marker to rate the scores of the various issues being analysed on food security, it is noted that NAIP/LASIP will improve national food self-sufficiency and reduce the proportion of the food insecure population which, though to a lesser extent, will reduce the proportion of women among the food insecure population. Reducing the proportion of the malnourished population and making progress towards zero hunger received the highest gender marker score possible, meaning the LASIP will contribute greatly to the Zero Hunger initiative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of analysis</th>
<th>Gender marker score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Will national food self-sufficiency be improved by implementing NAIP?</td>
<td>G2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a reduction in the food insecure population?</td>
<td>G2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a reduction in the proportion of women among the food insecure population?</td>
<td>G1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a reduction in the malnourished population?</td>
<td>G2b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a reduction in the proportion of females in the malnourished population?</td>
<td>G1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero hunger</td>
<td>G2b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.6 Sustainability

Strategy for putting policy into action, including financing

This subsection focuses on financial inclusion and resilience of agriculture and food systems. It reviews special measures undertaken in LASIP to ensure the financial inclusion of women and youth farmers, and their producer organizations and agribusinesses.

NAIP promotes financial support for rural women farmers, through producer organizations and agribusinesses (e.g. women’s trust funds). It is worth noting that NAIP does not make provision for GoL to partner with financial institutions to provide access to credit for women. On the question of the resilience of agriculture and food systems, NAIP/LASIP promotion of sustainable and climate resilient agriculture from a gender perspective is essential. NAIP/LASIP does not make provision to build the capacity of women to practise climate smart agriculture.

39. The gender marker score ranges from a G0, G1, G2a and G2b on the level of gender integration on the issue being discussed. A score of G0 indicates that the activity does not address gender equality, a G1 indicates that gender equality is addressed, but only in some dimension; a G2a indicates that gender equality is systematically addressed, but it is not one of the main objectives; and a G2b indicates that gender equality, and or women’s empowerment, is the main focus of the activity.

40. During the validation workshop of this report, the CAADP focal person at the Ministry of Agriculture noted that LASIP includes provision for public-private partnerships, even though this is not specifically for the provision of access to finance for women. He further observed that there is evidence of increased access to finance for women during implementation of LASIP.
5.3.7 Key lessons learned and recommendations on implementation of LASIP

After a thorough review of LASIP from a gender perspective, the following is a list of lessons learned and recommendations:

• It is evident that LASIP should not limit the capacity-building of staff to personnel from MoGCSP and MoA. All programme staff implementing LASIP should be trained in integrating gender into their work. In particular, staff should be capacitated to undertake gender assessments of all programme areas, develop a gender disaggregated baseline and use monitoring indicators.

• Rather than have women and youths as a cross-cutting issue in LASIP, GoL should create a standalone initiative for women in agriculture – not grouping it together with youth – to address the existing gender gaps in this sector. In addition, there should be a mainstreaming approach that fosters the integration of gender assessment and interventions in all other programmes. In this way, men and women’s needs, priorities and challenges will be addressed in the respective programmes of LASIP.

• Currently, there is only a bulk budget for all interventions under each programme. LASIP should attempt to break this down to show budget allocations for women’s and men’s activities respectively. The process would help planners and the implementation team to focus on programme areas that have not yet addressed gender issues.

• MoGCSP should be incorporated into the management structure of LASIP and subsequent NAIP. In addition, women’s participation in agriculture should be made more visible by the inclusion of women farmers’ groups, cooperatives and activists in key management structures, consultations and direct programme implementation. Women farmers’ groups, cooperatives and NGOs should partner with GoL to implement programmes directly in some of their constituencies.

• More attention should be paid to interventions aimed at addressing gender inequality and discrimination in communities. LASIP highlights the need to strengthen MoGCSP to conduct programmes on gender equality, but UN agencies and international NGOs with the expertise to work on gender and
agriculture issues should also contribute, through technical support in training, undertaking gender assessments, etc.

- All agriculture related line ministries should appoint a gender focal point at senior level to oversee gender mainstreaming. These representatives will provide technical backstopping, and programme staff within these ministries should be trained to mainstream gender into their respective programmes, with this featuring as a key deliverable in their job descriptions.

- If LASIP is reviewed, efforts should be made to conduct a gender assessment of the different programmes. It is imperative that existing national and international documents on gender should inform the gender assessment, as they will provide gender disaggregated data or the gender dimension of the thematic area. In particular, This CGA will be useful to the process, since it attempts to provide gender disaggregated data on the different dimensions to agriculture.
Local inhabitants receiving sacks of seeds from an FAO distribution center.
Liberia’s agriculture has shown increased productivity during implementation of LASIP, but not at the desired level, due to structural constraints, inadequate implementation of policies, and prolonged conflicts that displaced farming communities, degraded transport and roads, lack of basic infrastructure for processing, and diminished productive capacities (assets and skilled personnel). The EBOLA epidemic also posed great challenges to the agricultural sector, in terms of lower harvest and difficulties to access markets, especially for women farmers and traders.

Good agricultural education systems are necessary to build effective capacities to formulate and manage agricultural development programmes, provide sound advisory services, and undertake relevant research and extension activities.

Women are experienced agricultural agents, but they suffer from limitations in farming cash crops and trading their produce effectively. However, given the extensive evidence on the gender division of labour in value chains, strengthening women’s capacity in this sector could increase women’s gains in agriculture.

Enabling women to participate in development processes is not only beneficial for the well-being of women, their families and rural communities. It has an overall impact on economic productivity nationally, given the significant presence of women in agriculture.

The prevalence of high illiteracy rates, especially among women, makes it difficult to reach rural people through extension services using conventional communication channels. Alternative models should therefore be employed to enable women to access extension services.

Social protection is crucial for women to improve their families’ health and nutritional status, school attendance of children, and reduce hunger. Social protection packages should therefore be comprehensive, and not limited to food/ cash-for-work and school feeding programmes.

With regards to forestry, the push for women’s participation in the Community Forest Development Committee was not demand driven by the communities, so implementation and compliance have been half-hearted.

Liberia’s Community Rights Law aimed to increase the role of forest communities in forest governance and management. The law should be strengthened to ensure equal representation of men and women on the Community Forest Development Committee.

In the livestock sector, both women and men participate in small-scale animal production. It is also worth noting that since women and men manage different livestock, they may experience different health and economic risks.

The issue of women’s access to financial services is critical, since women are usually the poorest of the poor. However, financial service facilities are not readily available to rural women. Those available to rural women are predominantly microfinance-based, and the percentage of rural women who access them is uncertain.41

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41. Discussion by participants during validation of this report mentioned the key institutions working on providing access to finance for rural women. These are UNW’s VSLA programme, Access Bank, Brac and FAO. However, the participants agreed that data on women’s access to finance from these institutions are not consolidated.
Women and men usually have different levels of knowledge in the food production value chains, since different activities are carried out by each gender. The knowledge of both men and women should therefore be harnessed for improved value chain development of agricultural goods.

Women do not actively participate in development planning. Both men and women should be actively involved in all agricultural planning, so that the needs and concerns of both genders in agriculture can be addressed in planning processes.

The formulation of the Joint Programme on Food Security and Nutrition demonstrates the Government’s commitment to food security and nutrition. Although UN Women, the UN’s leading agency for gender equality and women’s empowerment, is a programme partner, the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGCSP) is noticeably absent from this collaboration. MoGCSP should also have signed the MoU, since it represents the Government machinery in charge of gender equality issues.

Natural disasters undermine development gains, and impact men and women differently. Measures should therefore be set in place to address the lack of research on gender and disasters in Liberia.

In spite of statements made in the National Gender Policy of the commitment to ensuring a just society that will promote gender equitable socio-economic development, the assessment of the socio-economic situation of women and men in Liberia reveals that women continue to face discrimination and marginalization in all aspect of society, and this limits their potential and full contribution to agriculture.

The unequal access to leadership roles and opportunities accorded to women show that there is a need to better reflect women’s needs and priorities in decision-making processes for agriculture and food security.

6.1 Recommendations

Ministry of Agriculture and other government Ministries

- Extension services based on participatory processes should be implemented, where ministry personnel act as resource persons and not transmitters of obsolete contextually inappropriate messages from Government. Farmers’ associations and cooperatives, as well as NGOs, are key to the success of such a system.
- The Ministry of Agriculture should promote agricultural education and training to bridge the knowledge and skills gaps at institutional level, prepare a critical mass of educated, well trained men and women working in the extension subsector, and enable farmers to cope with the changing demands of domestic, regional and international markets.
- Women need to be capacitated to participate in Community Forest Development Committees and drive this process, so that they can claim their rights and hold Government accountable for their active participation in forest management and governance.
- Financial services for women should not be limited to microfinance. Women’s access to financial services at all levels should be promoted.
- Men and women’s concerns should be integrated throughout the development process in all policies and projects, to enable development planners to design activities aimed at empowering women in agriculture.
- GoL should implement a two-pronged approach to develop programmes in agriculture: a gender mainstreaming approach, which will ensure that gender is embedded in all programmes of the LATA, the second generation of the LASIP, and a standalone approach, to address areas where there are existing gender inequality gaps that require urgent attention.
- The Ministry of Agriculture should improve its capacity to lead policy dialogue in the areas of gender and agriculture. FAO and partners should support the Ministry in establishing/developing a reliable system for gender disaggregated data collection, and a monitoring and information system that can capture disaggregated data for key sectors. In addition, the Ministry should be capacitated to undertake gender analysis, develop gender disaggregated data and mainstream gender into strategic planning processes.
- Setting timeline to formerly endorse and implement the revised Food Security and Nutrition Strategy will provide an example on the integration of gender in agriculture.
- Government of Liberia should build partnerships and pool resources to systematize gender mainstreaming in agriculture. including in the elaboration of the LASIP second generation.
ECOWAS Commission

The following recommendation is made to the ECOWAS Commission:

• Provide technical and financial support to the Government of Liberia for domesticating the Supplementary Act relating to Equality of Rights between women and men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS region, as it relates to agriculture, food security and nutrition.

FAO and other development partners in the agriculture sector

• Development partners including FAO should support initiatives for women’s engagement in cash crop production, processing and trading of cash crops on a larger scale, opening up potential for improved sector productivity.

• FAO Liberia should build capacities of both men and women in the areas of knowledge and skills for value chain development. It should also analyze programme intervention on value chains, so as to be able to foster or facilitate women’s links to market.

• Women’s lack of access to natural and productive resources is a significant driver of gender inequality. FAO should facilitate livelihood support for rural women, which can lead to their economic empowerment. This will enable women to have greater control over their lives, thereby increasing their potential to assert themselves in demanding greater participation in decision-making at all levels – both private and public.

• FAO and partners need to build the capacity of NGOs working on gender and women’s issues. There is a need for capacity-building to strengthen women farmers, women activists and the ability of women’s NGOs to develop and implement an advocacy strategy to mainstream gender in agricultural policies and the LASIP process.

• FAO should support the Government of Liberia to undertake an agricultural census to improve the availability of gender disaggregated data in the agricultural sector to inform sound policies, programmes and investments.

Civil society organizations and advocacy groups

The exclusion of women from decision-making is strongly influenced by systems and structures that accord men power and control, and by the domination and subjugation of women in communities. Facilitating change in the power dynamics will enable increased participation of women. This requires sustained engagement on the part of men, to recognize the contributions that women can make in community decision-making processes for agricultural governance. Advocacy on the role and importance of women’s contribution in agriculture should be reinforced across the country.
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List of people interviewed

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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Validation Workshop of the Country Gender Assessment of the Agricultural Sector

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<td>Fabrice Laviolette</td>
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<td>Moses Kolleh</td>
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<td>Olivia Dennis</td>
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<td>Vivian Innis</td>
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<td>Patrick Tarnue Wozie</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
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<td>Beckie Moore</td>
<td>FAO</td>
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<td>Edward Quirmolue</td>
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<td>Mai Suzuki</td>
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<td>Gracia Reeves</td>
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<td>Barbara Quie</td>
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<td>Jesse Yuan</td>
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<td>Thelma Dahn-Debrah</td>
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<td>Fatmata Sesay</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
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<td>Two representatives</td>
<td>Ministry of Internal Affairs</td>
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Gaps between policy commitment and implementation, and limited availability of sex disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators to inform sound policies, programmes and budgets have kept women marginalized in many sectors. No baselines mean no measurement of progress in effectively implementing the array of commitments towards gender equality and women’s empowerment in agriculture, food security and nutrition, rural development and management of natural resources. This report was jointly prepared by FAO and the ECOWAS Commission within the framework of their technical cooperation project on “Gender responsive regional and national agricultural investment plans for meeting the Zero Hunger challenge in the ECOWAS region”. It reveals gender disparities in access to critical agriculture and rural resources, knowledge, opportunities, services and markets. It explores the existing gender relations and gaps in the various sub sectors of agriculture, and their possible causes and impact on food and nutrition security, and makes policy recommendations to address them.