



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
23 August 2010

Original: English

---

**Human Rights Council**  
**Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review**  
**Ninth session**  
Geneva, 1–12 November 2010

## **National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1\***

### **Liberia**

---

\* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

## **I. Methodology and Consultation Process**

1. The Steering Committee of the National Human Rights Action Plan for Liberia (SCNHRAP) and the Ministry of Justice were responsible for coordinating an inter-ministerial effort towards the preparation of Liberia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) national report. In order to take the lead in preparing the report, the SCNHRAP set up a Human Rights Reporting Sub-Committee (HRRS-c) in December of 2009. The Sub-Committee comprised of Ministries, a representative from the Liberian Independent National Commission on Human Rights, representatives from civil society organizations and non-governmental national and international organizations.

2. To facilitate the process of gathering information and opinions, and in accordance with the guidelines of the UPR, the HRRS-c disseminated questionnaires listing required information to more than 20 civil society organizations and all relevant governmental institutions. The responses to these questionnaires were analyzed and relevant information included in a draft national report.

3. Further, the HRRS-c organized four stakeholders' consultative workshops. The first consultative workshop was held on March 23, 2010 in Monrovia. During this workshop a number of highly visible civil society groups, national & international human rights organizations and media representatives were invited to discuss an interactive human rights questionnaire distributed by the HRRS-c. The remaining workshops were held in Grand Gedeh, Bong, and Montserrdao counties on June 26<sup>th</sup>, July 3<sup>rd</sup> and July 17<sup>th</sup> 2010, respectively. During these workshops the background and objectives of the UPR were discussed and the draft national report was distributed for comments and observations.

4. Participants to these workshops included representatives from all 15 counties of Liberia and were drawn from government agencies, faith based organizations, traditional leaders, youth bodies, women's human rights groups, professional associations, human rights defenders etc<sup>1</sup>.

5. After a stakeholders' validation workshop on August 6, 2010 in Monrovia, the national report was finalized at a HRRS-c retreat on August 14, 2010.

6. Through out the national report drafting process, the HRRS-c engaged the media to reach a broader audience and took a liberal exchange of views, suggestions and information regarding human rights concerns in the country, actions taken by the government to protect and promote the human rights of citizens and the challenges faced by all stakeholders in improving human rights situations in Liberia. Most of the views expressed by the participants and the decisions reached during the consultative workshops are reflected in this report.

## **II. Background of the Country: Brief Description of the Political History of Liberia and its Implication for Human Rights**

7. In 1980, President William Richard Tolbert Jr. was assassinated by members of the Armed Forces of Liberia and a new military government of the People's Redemption Council (PRC), with Master Sgt. Samuel Kanyon Doe as head of State, was established. As the first native ruler in the history of the country, Samuel Doe's government initially enjoyed great popular support. However, the summary public execution of 13 ex-ministers

---

<sup>1</sup> A list of organizations consulted during the national report drafting process is available at the end of the report.

greatly shocked the world and in retrospect, likely set the stage for decades of human rights violations and the breakdown of the rule of law. Over the following years political intolerance and human rights violations compromised the public image of the government.

8. In 1989, several hundred rebels, mostly drawn from ethnic groups persecuted during Doe's regime, invaded Nimba County from Cote d'Ivoire. Shortly thereafter, Doe's troops arrived in Nimba County and indiscriminately killed hundreds of unarmed civilians, raped women, and burned villages. This deadly counterinsurgency led to the fleeing of over 160,000 civilians to Guinea and Ivory Coast and endeared the local population to the rebel group-the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)-which came to be led by Charles Taylor.

9. By 1990, the NPFL has grown into a vast irregular army occupying about 90% of the country. In early July 1990, Prince Johnson broke away from Charles Taylor and formed the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). While Taylor's forces continued to control most of the country, Prince Johnson's guerrillas seized most of Monrovia undermining NPFL's standing as the sole contender for power. Refusing to surrender or even step down as a President, Doe and his troops remained holed up in the Executive Mansion and the surrounding areas. Meanwhile, Liberia lay in ruins.

10. As the stalemate deepened, all warring factions became frantic and exacted their frustrations on the unarmed population trapped in their controlled territories. Massacres, rape, torture, secret killings, abductions, recruitment of child soldiers, forced labor, ethnic cleansing and ethnic profiling, destruction of property and looting became the order of day. Young girls and women were targeted and raped and abducted as bush wives and sexual slaves. Refugees streamed into neighboring countries and many villages and towns were forcefully displaced.

11. In August of 1990, in an attempt to keep warring factions apart and protect the civilian population, an ECOWAS peacekeeping force-ECOMOG-arrived in Liberia. Subsequently, Doe and many of his supporters were wiped out at the Freeport of Monrovia on September 9, 1990 by Johnson's. With both Johnson and Taylor claiming the Presidency, Dr. Amos C. Sawyer was appointed as head of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU).

12. Starting in early 1990, a number of peace agreements were brokered and broken. As more and more factions emerged, human rights and humanitarian crisis in Liberia intensified. After a series of deadly conflicts resulting in devastating human casualties, economic devastation and humanitarian disaster, August 1996 saw the negotiation of yet another peace accord providing for cease-fire, disarmament and demobilization, followed by elections. Election took place in July 1997 and Charles Taylor became the 21<sup>st</sup> President of Liberia.

13. Following the elections, the political scene remained tenuous. By late 1998 all former faction leaders except Taylor were living in exile and power became increasingly consolidated in the presidency. Liberia continued to experience a string of extra-judicial killings and crackdown on the press and civil society activists.

14. In 1999 dissident groups launched armed incursions setting off a new round of low-level fighting. Peace was further shattered with devastating outbreaks of fighting in 2002 and 2003. Finally in August 2003, with dissident groups-LURD and MODEL<sup>2</sup>-controlling much of the country and under pressure from the international community, Charles Taylor

---

<sup>2</sup> Respectively, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy & the Movement for Democracy in Liberia.

went into exile in Nigeria. A transitional government assisted by UN peacekeepers and headed by Charles Gyude Bryant was established.

15. In late 2005, Liberians again went to the polls. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won the presidency becoming the first woman to be elected president anywhere in Africa.

16. The tasks facing the current government are massive: resettlement of vast number of displaced persons and refugees; complete rebuilding of the country's government, economy and infrastructure; strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights. It is in the backdrop of the country's long history of human rights violations and brutal conflict that the accomplishment and constraints highlighted in this national report should be viewed.

### **III. Background of the Country: Demographic & Social**<sup>3</sup>

17. Liberia is located in the West of Africa. It borders on Guinea in the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the south, Cote d'Ivoire to the east and Sierra Leone to the west. Liberia occupies an area of 111, 370 kilometers and typically has tropical rainforest vegetation, characterized by a predominance of leguminous trees and small volume of timber trees.

18. Liberia has an estimated population of 3,476,608 million with an annual growth rate of 2.1%. The population is spread throughout the country in 15 administrative areas-Counties-with three counties, namely, Montserrado, Nimba and Bong, holding 55% of the population. Women account for 49.9% of the population.

19. Over half of the population of the country (62.6%) is below the age of 20 years and children less than 10 years of age account for 41.9% of the population. Although infant and under-five mortality rates have fallen since 1999/2000, maternal mortality still remains high.

20. There are 16 major ethnic groups in Liberia: Bassa, Belle, Dahn (Gio), Dei, Gbandi, Gola, Grebo, Kissi, Kpelle, Krahn, Krao (Kru), Lorma, Mandingo, Mahn (Mano), Mende, and Vai. While the official language of Liberia is English most Liberians speak one of the 16 ethnic dialects.

### **IV. Normative and Institutional Frameworks for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

#### **A. Constitutional Framework**

21. Chapter III of the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, among others, provides for the promotion and protection of the following fundamental rights: right to life; right to personal liberty; right to security of the person; equality before the law; right to be free from slavery and forced labor; right to freedom of movement; right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; right to freedom of expression and the press; right to privacy and family life; right to peaceful assembly and association; right to equal opportunity to work; right to due process of law, including the right to trial by jury and reasonable bail; right to access to justice, including legal aid services to indigent citizens; right to be free of torture

---

<sup>3</sup> The information contained in this section is based on the final results of the 2008 Population and Housing Census.

and inhumane treatment; right to own private property within Liberia<sup>4</sup> and right to freedom from discrimination.

22. Since 2005, within the framework of the Constitution, Liberia has implemented a number of domestic legislation such as: act to amend the new penal law to provide for gang rape; act establishing criminal court E (Special Court for Rape); act to amend certain provisions of the judiciary law to provide financial autonomy to the judiciary; act to amend certain provisions of the judiciary law, the civil procedure and the criminal procedure law to provide for the amendment of the law relating to juries; act to ban trafficking in persons; act to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; act to establish a national commission on disabilities; act to establish the Liberian anti-corruption commission, act to establish the land commission; act to ratify the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; act establishing the Liberian extractive industries and transparency initiative, etc.

## **B. State Authorities and Human Rights**

### **1. Legislative Authority**

23. The legislature of Liberia consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The legislature has the power to vote on all laws and approve treatise, conventions and other international instruments negotiated or signed by the Republic of Liberia.

24. In 2006, Liberia established the House Human and Civil Rights Committee. The Committee has the responsibility to ensure that the human rights implications of every bill passing through the Legislature are properly scrutinized and that proposed bills comply with the national and international human rights obligations of Liberia. Thus far, the Committee has conducted workshops for members of the legislative staff on observance of human rights and relevant international conventions and protocols when drafting bills, concession agreements, ratifying portions of the Constitution, etc.

25. Since its establishment, the Committee also has successfully conducted a public hearing on a proposed Children's Act. This Act is currently before the Senate awaiting approval.

### **2. The Judicial Authority**

26. The Judicial power of the Republic is vested in a Supreme Court and any other subordinate courts that may be established by the legislature. In accordance with standards enacted by the Legislature, the courts apply both statutory and customary laws. The judicial authority has the duty to deliver justice and implement the fundamental rights provided for in the Constitution.

## **C. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights**

27. Following the Accra Comprehensive Agreement of 2003, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) was created by the passage of the Act of 2005. Soon after the establishment of the Commission, a vetting process of individuals to serve as commissioners was started in earnest. After a vetting process involving nationwide

---

<sup>4</sup> Article 24 of the Constitution allows for derogation from this fundamental right where expropriation may be authorized for the security of the nation, in the event of armed conflict or where the public health and safety are endangered.

participation, the initial nominees for commissioners were rejected by the Senate. In March of 2010, an Independent Committee of Experts was set up to carry on a new round of vetting process. Presently, the President has nominated 7 commissioners from a shortlist of 14 provided by the Committee of Experts for subsequent confirmation by the Senate.

28. While awaiting the confirmation of commissioners, the Secretariat of the INCHR continues to carry out the important role the Commission is expected to play in the protection and promotion of human rights in Liberia. The Secretariat investigates and monitors human rights complaints, makes recommendations to the Government, liaises with national & international NGOs and governmental institutions to address human rights concerns in the country, and organizes human rights awareness raising campaigns and workshops.

#### **D. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)**

29. The Liberian civil conflict is characterized by gross human rights violations affecting a wide segment of society. Reflecting the country's will to investigate these human rights violations and reaffirming Liberia's commitment to peace and justice, the TRC of Liberia was established in May of 2005. The Commission, composed of representatives from civil society organizations, political parties and regional and international non-governmental organizations was mandated to investigate human rights violations perpetrated by warring factions during the period January 1979 to October 2003.

30. After 3 years of statement taking, public and in camera hearings throughout Liberia and the diaspora, the final report of the Commission containing a historical analysis and the root causes of the conflict in Liberia as well as 142 recommendations intended to redress human rights violations was released and published on June 30, 2009.

#### **E. Non-Governmental Organizations**

##### **Civil Society Organizations**

31. In addition to government bodies, Ministries, institutions and committees with competence for human rights, Liberia has a wide array of civil societies that monitor human rights and raise public awareness of Liberia's regional and international human rights obligations. Currently, there are 338 registered civil society organizations in the country, including 227 women's associations, 32 religious associations, 66 youth associations and 13 general advocacy groups.

#### **F. Scope of International and Regional Obligations**

32. Liberia has signed or ratified/acceded to numerous regional and international human rights instruments as well as a number of International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions. A list of these treaties and conventions is available at the end of the report.

### **V. Domestic Implementation of International Treaty Obligations**

33. Despite a history of human rights violations and a crippling civil conflict, Liberia has taken some commendable measures to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nation and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For example, Liberia is currently engaged in researching and compiling all regional and international human rights

instruments to which the country is a party with a view of revising the country's statutory laws to better comply with regional and international obligations.

34. Further, in keeping with the recommendations of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, the country has set up a Steering Committee to develop and adopt a national human rights action plan for Liberia. The Steering Committee, consisting of Ministries, governmental agencies, the Legislature, and civil society organizations, currently has two technical sub-committees-the Human Rights Reporting and the Data Collection Sub-Committees-which are actively engaged in projects that will help develop a systematic strategy and concrete plans for advancing human rights in Liberia.

## **VI. Cooperation with Human Rights Mechanisms**

35. In an effort to cooperate with human rights mechanisms, the country has taken the following measures:

- Submitted its initial report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2002;
- Submitted its combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2008 ;
- Submitted its combined second, third and fourth periodic report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2009;
- Received a visit from the Independent Expert on Liberia in 2004;
- Received a visit from the Independent Expert on Liberia in 2005;
- Received a visit from the Independent Expert on the Technical Cooperation and Advisory Services in Liberia in 2006;
- Received a visit from the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Liberia in 2007; and
- Received a visit from the Independent Expert on Human Rights in Liberia in 2008.

## **VII. Human Rights Situation on the Ground and Responses to Human Rights Situation on the Ground: Achievements & Best Practices**

### **A. Civil and Political Rights**

36. Articles 1, 11, 14, 15, 17, 20 and 21 of the Constitution guarantee, respectively, the right of citizens to choose their leaders; every individuals right to liberty and security of the person; right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; right to freedom of expression, association and assembly; and right to due process of law, including the right of the accused and detainees.

37. Since the democratic election of 2005, Liberia has taken a number of measures to protect and promote the following civil and political rights of all individuals in the country and restore public confidence in the country's dedication to human rights.

**1. Right of Citizens to Elect their Leader**

38. In order to secure the right of citizens to elect their leaders, the National Election Commission (NEC) was established by the Constitution of Liberia Chapter X; Article 89. In the last four years the Commission, which is represented in all 15 counties of the country, has conducted 8 successful by-elections, launched extensive voter education campaigns, particularly targeting communities previously excluded from the political process, and constructed 5 new regional head offices and a national headquarters in Monrovia.

39. Further, in order to resolve the problem of the multiplicity of cities, clans, townships and chiefdoms and pave the road to successful municipal elections, the Commission has concluded a county boundary harmonization exercise. The result of this exercise was drafted into a series of bills and submitted to the Legislature for enactment.

**2. Right to Liberty and Security of the Person**

40. One major consequence of the civil conflict of Liberia is a substantial destruction of the judicial system infrastructure and a breakdown in the security apparatus. As a result, the conflict is marked by security forces flagrantly violating the human rights of citizens, a judiciary unable to dispense justice and maintain the rule of law, and citizens resorting to mob violence to secure justice.

41. In order to transform institutions to public bodies that enjoy civic trust and protect human rights, Liberia has: strengthened the Professional Standard Division within the Liberian National Police (LNP), which investigates allegations of professional misconduct and refers cases of criminal misconduct for prosecution; instituted human rights education and training to law enforcement, police, military and prison personnel; and undertaken a vetting process in the security sector to exclude past human rights abusers from public positions.

42. Further, Liberia has created human rights units attached to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Gender & Development to accept and investigate human rights complaints, take appropriate measures and/or recommend cases for prosecution, and closely work with the judicial arm of the government to monitor the progress of cases through the criminal justice system.

43. To protect individuals from mob violence, a major challenge to the liberty and security of Liberians, the country has engaged in extensive training for law enforcement personnel to improve efficiency and professionalism and subsequently restore public confidence in law enforcement. The country has also reactivated the linkage between law enforcement, civil society organizations and the community to disseminate information regarding human rights and continues to conduct regular community outreach campaigns to speak against mob violence.

**3. Access to Justice and Legal Reform**

44. At the end of the civil conflict, Liberia was faced with the challenge of rebuilding a substantially broken down judicial system with negligible budgetary allocation, corruption, low level of accountability and key positions filled with individuals lacking the requisite level of legal training. Signifying the country's commitment to establish a State based on the rule of law, Liberia has taken the following steps towards legal reform and protecting and promoting access to justice.

*(a) Legal Reform*

45. Following the recommendation of the Rule of Law Task force<sup>5</sup> and in accordance with Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Law Reform Commission was established on June 11, 2009 by Executive Order No 20.<sup>6</sup> Since its establishment the Commission has reviewed and recommended major revisions to, among others, the Commercial Code, the Insurance Law, the Civil Procedure Law, the Judiciary Law, the Property Law and the Prison Reform Act. Further, the Commission has researched and compiled the customary laws of the country and collected and indexed the opinions of the Supreme Court of Liberia. Currently, the Commission is reviewing the Hinterland Regulations, the Law on Persons with Disabilities, and examining the codification of the laws of the country.

46. The Republic of Liberia understands that citizens could face problems accessing justice because citizens are not aware of their rights, justice institutions are remote, slow and unaffordable, or because they are biased and discriminatory. Accordingly, Liberia is taking the following measures to promote citizens access to justice.

*(b) Geographic Access to Justice*

47. Liberia is examining the idea of basing the allocation of courts on population as opposed to geographic calculations. Currently, the country is in the process of developing a project that will change the distribution of magisterial courts in a manner that will ensure geographic access to justice to all Liberians.

48. Further, the Ministry of Justice is working with county attorneys and city solicitors to ensure that representatives of the Ministry are present in each county of Liberia and continues to solicit the support of international partners to construct new court houses, police stations and prison facilities in different parts of the country.

*(c) Access to Competent and Independent Judiciary*

49. In January of 2008 Liberia established the James A.A. Pierre Judicial Training Institute. The Institute, which aims to improve the qualification and competency of all judiciary actors, has quarterly training programs for Judges, Magistrates, public defenders and court reporters. Further, the Professional Magistrates Training Program (PMTP), which was launched in March 2010, is currently providing a year long training program to more than 60 college graduates to serve as qualified magistrates across the country. At present, Liberia has managed to assign qualified county attorneys and public defenders to all counties.

50. In a positive development to improve the independence of the judiciary and curb corrupt practices, the country has increased the salaries and benefits of qualified judges, magistrates and associate magistrates and has significantly improved the Judiciary Inquiry Commission and The Grievance & Ethics Committee-institutions respectively established to investigate cases of judicial impropriety & corruption and lawyer's professional misconduct.

51. Additionally, in April of 2010 Liberia held a national conference on access to justice. Based on the recommendations of a wide range of stakeholders that participated in

---

<sup>5</sup> The Rule of Law Task force was established in November 2005 with the aim of developing a strategy to strengthen the rule of law and address impunity. The Taskforce was chaired by UNMIL Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General and included the Ministry of Justice and the Chief Justice of Liberia.

<sup>6</sup> In June of 2010, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf issued an Executive Order extending the work of the Law Reform Commission for an additional two years.

the conference, the country has established a committee to develop strategies to improve citizens' access to justice, including working with existing customary justice systems that complement the formal justice system while respecting the human rights obligations of the country.

#### **4. Right of Persons Deprived of Liberty**

52. To tackle the problems of pre-trial detention in Liberia, in October 2009 Liberia convened the Pre-Trial Detention Taskforce. The Taskforce, which has the participation of all relevant governmental institutions, has established: the Magistrate Sitting Program, which sits in the Monrovia Central Prison six days a week and processes cases of detainees who have been held longer than the statutory period without trial; the Alternatives to Incarceration Sub-Committee which is currently exploring ways to implement existing Liberian laws that allow for alternatives to incarceration, such as parole and probation and the Police-Prosecution Coordination Sub-Committee which aims to strengthen the collaboration between police and prosecutors, including knowledge sharing in the area of investigation and evidence collection.

53. In order to redress poor prison and detention center conditions throughout the country Liberia has allocated additional financial resources for renovating and improving detention centers; constructed and refurbished prison facilities, among others, in Sinoe, Sanniquelle, Zwedru, Tubmanburg; initiated literacy and vocational programs and psycho-social counseling for detainees; as part of the regular curriculum, instituted human rights training to prison guards and other correctional officers incorporating themes such as the right of all detainees to be free of torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment; facilitated prison and detention center monitoring activities of national & international human rights organizations in Liberia and launched new interactive public education programs using mass media to educate citizens on the rights of prisoners.

#### **5. Freedoms of Expression, Assembly and Association**

54. Since 2006, various printed press, public and private media, political parties and civil society associations and organizations have been established and operate without hindrance. The protection and promotion of freedoms of expression, assembly and association has served as an instrument of accountability and has created channels for citizens to report and express their opinions and interact with the government and other stakeholders.

55. While Liberia is committed to protecting and promoting freedoms of expression, assembly and association, given the current stability level of the State, the country has put in place certain restrictions, particularly when an activity might cause public unrest. For example, in order to ensure that law and order are maintained and the normal order of business of the public is not disrupted, the Ministry of Justice requires a clearance, which approval is not unreasonably withheld, before groups can hold public demonstrations.

### **B. Economic Social and Cultural Rights**

56. The extended civil conflict in Liberia has greatly impacted the country's economy. Despite the abundance of natural resources, the socio-economic status of the average citizen in the country remains poor. During the conflict basic infrastructures, including about 70% of schools, were destroyed and even to date, the majority of the country has no electricity and piped water.

57. As a result of the conflict Liberia has experienced significant internal migration from rural to urban areas. This internal migration of communities, often lacking in basic

levels of literacy and marketable skills, has created a loss of productive labor on farms in rural communities, undermined rural agricultural production and income generation, and has led a large segment of society to engage in informal and other micro-income generating activities for economic survival.

58. Liberia is committed to revitalizing the economy and providing an environment for speedy economic growth and social progress. Accordingly, Liberia has taken the following initiatives in the areas of agriculture, job creation, and education.

## 1. Right to Work

59. In an effort to reduce the staggering number of unemployment, in 2006 Liberia launched the Liberia Emergency Employment Program (LEEP) and the Liberia Employment Action Program (LEAP). These programs, which are decentralized in 9 of the 15 counties of the country, engage in promoting emergency or short term employment opportunities as well as long term sustainable programs. While the emergency component of the programs has currently ended, LEAP, in a merger with the Bureau of Employment Services, has been transformed into the National Bureau of Employment (NBE) and continues to create short-term employment opportunities in and outside of Monrovia.

60. Recognizing the high level of unemployment among Liberians, the country has strengthened the implementation of the Liberianization policy<sup>7</sup>. In this regard, the Ministry of Labor has created a database of Liberian professionals and made it easily accessible to employers, has required all employers to advertise professional vacancies, and has set up an inspection committee and a fining system to ensure that labor work permits are not issued to aliens for positions qualified Liberians can occupy.

61. Liberia acknowledges that intrinsic to the right to work is the right to fair and favorable conditions of work and the right of workers to organize into trade unions. Accordingly, the country has repealed PRC Decree 12 of the Labor Law which prohibited workers from striking; formed the Liberian Labor Congress, a national labor center which represents all labor unions in the country and provides mediation services to labor disputes in the country; reconstituted the Minimum Wage Board within the Ministry of Labor to set a new minimum wage for the private sector; conducted extensive capacity building trainings for labor inspectors; engaged in numerous work site inspections to ensure compliance with applicable safety laws and amended Section 1508(3) of the Labor Law which previously gave employers the power to dismiss employees without cause.

62. To further achieve steady economic and social development, Liberia has adopted a “one stop shop” concept to facilitate private investment in the country. Through the National Investment Commission and the Investment Incentive Code, the country is removing bureaucratic hurdles to investors and providing the right incentives to enterprises that utilize Liberian manpower at all levels, contribute to advancing local skills through training schemes and increase employment all over the country. As an integral part of the effort to promote investment, Liberia is taking steps to incorporate the concept of business and human rights into the country’s investment policies. In this regard, the National Investment Commission is presently training the staff of the Commission and exploring ways to promote corporate social responsibility in the country.

63. In addition, the President of Liberia is currently reviewing a proposed draft bill-The Decent Work Bill. The passing of this bill into law is expected to significantly improve the rights of workers as well as provide protection to casual laborers.

---

<sup>7</sup> The Liberianization policy aims to give employment preference to qualified Liberians over non-Liberians.

## 2. Youth and Employment

64. Liberia has a high unemployment rate among the country's youth. While employment for a greater percentage of Liberian youths remains a great challenge, the country has taken the following significant measures to address the problem:

- Reactivated the Ministry of Labor's Apprenticeship and Liberia Vacation Job Programs. These programs, which aim to expose students of all ages to practical work experiences and inform them of career choices, place Liberian youth in both public and private institutions around the country. In 2009, the Liberian Vacation Job Program was able to provide job opportunities for more than 5000 youth.
- Created the National Youth Volunteer Services and the Volunteers for Peace Programme. These programs provide training and employment opportunities for Liberian youth as peace ambassadors, teachers and mentors. Further, the Ministry of Youth & Sports, through the Monrovia Vocational and Training Corporation, provides trainings for unskilled youth in the areas of carpentry, auto-mechanics, masonry, tailoring, etc.

## 3. Right to Education, Human Rights Education & Awareness

65. In 2006, Liberia relaunched the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Program (FACPEL). The aims of the program are: to ensure that all children start primary education at the national school starting age of 5 and complete primary level education, to provide all children access to primary education that improves learning and cognitive skills in an environment conducive to their physical and mental wellbeing, and to ensure that no child is denied the right to primary education as a result of age or other circumstances.

66. With a view of promoting basic education<sup>8</sup> to all, the country is implementing the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). The program targets individuals ages 8-15 whose primary education was interrupted as a result of the conflict and has effectively increased over-age school enrollment. Additionally, Liberia has completed the Non-Formal Education (NFE) curriculum. The curriculum, which targets individuals age 15-35, covers literacy, numeracy, life skills and work readiness.

67. Furthermore, Liberia has incorporated Peace, Human Rights and Citizenship Education (PEHCED) program into the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools and trained teachers in the methods for teaching the program. The PEHCED program includes concepts such as human rights and responsibilities, peace and humanitarian law, sense of nationhood and other similar concepts.

68. Other measures taken by Liberia to improve access to and quality of education include: building and renovating educational facilities in different parts of the country, providing tuition assistance to students attending teacher colleges, producing and distributing textbooks and other teaching and reading materials, implementing the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) program, which provides early reading intervention assessment and support in 15 education districts, and drafting a policy to develop an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Curriculum to ensure that children ages 0-5 have access to quality ECD services and programs.

---

<sup>8</sup> Liberia has included grades 6-9 to reflect the definition of basic education. Programs previously targeting primary education are currently being adjusted to address basic education.

#### **4. Right to Food**

69. In order to ensure the right to food, Liberia has taken several initiatives. Some noteworthy initiatives include: providing technical and training support to farmers around the country; providing seeds, fertilizers, and farming equipment to farmers; in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, identifying population and agricultural centers to build feeder roads connecting areas with high agricultural production with Liberian markets; providing freestanding warehouses and warehouses connected to technology centers for the safe storage of agricultural products; and, appreciating the lack of trained personnel in all areas of the agricultural sector, extensively training Ministry of Agriculture staff in modern techniques relating to planting, harvesting, food storage, and fisheries.

70. Further, the Division of School Feeding of the Ministry of Education provides hot meals and take-home rations to primary school children in public schools around the country. In addition to alleviating short term hunger, these programs have helped attract and retain more children, especially girls, in school.

### **C. Women**

71. During Liberia's civil conflict women were victims of forced displacement, killing, assault, abduction, torture, forced recruitment, extensive destruction of property, and were disproportionately targeted for rape, sexual abuse, sexual slavery, and forced pregnancy. In the aftermath of the conflict, women continue to suffer the physical, emotional, psychological and economic effects of the conflict, face high incidents of rape and sexual violence, and confront significant traditional and cultural challenges to maintain meaningful participation in public and political spheres. In order to advance the protection and promotion of women's rights and meet the immediate post-conflict needs of women, Liberia has taken the following measures.

#### **1. Women & the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

72. The Act establishing the TRC explicitly calls for the participation and inclusion of women in the TRC process. Accordingly, in 2006, a Gender Committee to advise the TRC was set up. The Committee consisted of governmental and non-governmental institutions with general expertise on women's issues and particular expertise on issues faced by female survivors of sexual violence.

73. The creation of the Gender Committee greatly increased the participation of women in the TRC process. Women were not only encouraged to come forward and share the full spectrum of their experiences during the conflict; they were also actively recruited to work as statement takers. Further, the Gender Committee provided psycho-social support during and after statement takings and testimonies, engaged male partners to promote behavioral change and provided medical and child reunification referrals. The final report of the TRC includes a chapter dedicated to the experiences of women during the conflict, including specific recommendations to address the physical, psychological, social, political and economic needs of women.

#### **2. Violence against Women**

74. Taking into account the high incidence of rape against girls and women in post-conflict Liberia, in 2005 the government enacted legislation to amend the new Penal Code of 1976- the Rape Law. In the following year and under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender and Development, a National Gender Based Violence Plan of Action was launched. The main objective of the National Plan is to prevent the high incidence of gender based

violence in different communities and provide physical, psychological, economic and legal support to girls and women victims of gender based violence.

75. In 2008, Liberia took further decisive measures to combat gender based violence in the country. In early 2008, the Special Court for Rape and Other Forms of Violence was established in Monrovia. Soon after, the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Unit was created under the Ministry of Justice. The Unit is responsible for the coordination and prosecution of cases in the Special Court for Rape and provides community outreach and awareness-programs as well as 24 hours victims' hotline services. Going forward, Liberia plans to expand the work of the Unit to handle cases from a wider geographic area and create permanent SGBV Units around the country.

76. With regard to health services to victims of sexual violence, Liberia has developed standard protocols for clinical management of rape, which are being used to provide specialized trainings to health service providers at various health facilities around the country and has integrated SGBV prevention and response activities in all national health and psychosocial programs.

77. In an additional effort to eliminate violence against women, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act was passed in 2005. In order to enforce the Act, Liberia has taken the following measures: established a Ministerial Task Force to supervise the fight against trafficking in persons, set up focal points in different Ministries and governmental agencies for effective networking, built the capacity of senior law enforcement officials to better prepare them to respond to trafficking cases as they arise, signed the ECOWAS Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, conducted public education and awareness campaigns in numerous communities, and built the capacity of 35 civil society organizations to help design grass root programs to combat trafficking in persons.

### **3. Women and Education**

78. Liberia acknowledges that education is the key to the empowerment of women. While historically some Liberian women have achieved higher education levels and occupied prominent positions in the public sector, women's participation in the national educational system is biased due to sociocultural and economic environments.

79. To further build the capacity of women and continue on the path of progress, Liberia launched the National Policy on Girls' Education in April of 2006. The main objectives of the policy are, by the year 2015, to ensure that boys and girls will have equal access to all levels of education; to reduce obstacles impeding the enrollment and retention of girl students; to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' primary, secondary, and tertiary education completion rates by increasing the availability of scholarship opportunities to girl students; to offer life skills at school that will increase the self esteem of girl students; and to end the impunity of teachers who commit sexual and physical abuses against students.

80. The impact of the National Policy on Girls' Education, along with the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Policy, has been an increase in girls' primary and secondary school enrollment rates, respectively, by 82% and 16% between 2005/06 and 2007/08.

81. In order to reduce teenage pregnancy drop-out rates, Liberia has launched the Special Girls' Education Initiative (SGEI), an all girls' night school program for pregnant students and teenage mothers. Further, the country plans to establish a "preventing and reporting" system under which counseling centers will be set up in public primary and secondary schools to monitor cases of teenage pregnancy, school drop-out rates as well as gender based violence and other human rights abuses.

#### **4. Women and Political Participation**

82. Appreciating the sociocultural and economic factors excluding women from politics, Liberia has taken effective measures to ensure women's political participation. For example, through the National Election Commission, Liberia has engaged in civic and voter education campaigns that target women and address sociocultural factors that limit women's political participation.

83. In addition, in an effort to facilitate women's participation in elected assemblies, the Equity Bill is currently before the House of Representatives awaiting approval. The Bill mandates a minimum of 30% women representation as national elected officers, heads of principal and subsidiary organs and structures of each registered political party in Liberia and requires that women should be reflected on the list of candidates submitted to the National Elections Commission by all registered political parties.

#### **5. Women and Economic Empowerment**

84. The State of Liberia has made considerable efforts to promote the economic empowerment of women. In March of 2010, the country officially launched the Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls Project. The goal of the project is to provide adolescent girls and young women economic skills training with emphasis on non-traditional sectors such as security, construction, mining and business. Further, the country is currently implementing a Rural Women's Empowerment Project. This project, which aims to strengthen the institutional capacity of female producers' and entrepreneurs', provides skills and business training, technical assistance and business support services, market information and access to credit to women around the country.

85. To mainstream gender in the national development process and create mechanisms that provide women equal access to and control of resources, Liberia has formulated the National Gender Policy. Specific objectives of the policy, among others, include: supporting women's participation in development and decision-making processes, promoting recognition of women's multiple roles in national development, and facilitating the domestication of regional and international instruments of gender equality.

86. Moreover, law reforms undertaken by the country have helped advance the economic conditions of women in Liberia. For example, reforms to the Inheritance Law have significantly improved the property rights of women married under customary law.

### **D. Children**

87. During the protracted civil conflict, children were disproportionately affected and suffered the majority of the human rights violations committed. Some of the major human rights violations against children include abduction, assault, forced displacement, forced recruitment, forced labor, sexual violence, rape, sexual slavery, sexual abuse and being forced to witness unspeakable atrocities.

88. Recognizing the devastating effects of the civil conflict on Liberian children, and following the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Republic of Liberia has taken the following measures towards the protection and promotion of the rights of children in the country.

#### **1. Children & the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

89. The Liberian TRC was given an unprecedented mandate to systematically include children in all aspects of the Commission's truth seeking and reconciliation process. In order to ensure child-sensitive and child-friendly mechanisms, the TRC identified and

formally collaborated with child protection agencies in the country as well as the Liberian Children's Parliament.

90. As a result of these collaborations, the TRC was able to engage in a variety of training activities on child issues and child-sensitive mechanisms for Commissioners and statement takers, organize awareness raising activities to promote the participation of children and their families in the TRC process, and hold regional hearings and statement takings exclusively focused on children and children's issues.

91. The final outcome of the above efforts is a Children's Chapter in the final TRC Report reflecting the experiences of Liberian children before, during, and after the conflict with recommendations that place the needs of children within the international child rights framework.

## **2. Protection of Children without a Family & Child Trafficking**

92. In order to monitor the alternative care for children without a family, Liberia has formulated regulations and set in place minimum standards for the operation of orphanages and child care institutions in the country. To ensure compliance, the country has assigned social workers to all 15 counties and has taken appropriate measures against orphanages and child care institutions found in violation of established standards.

93. Liberia, through the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, has also provided trainings to orphanage managers and caretakers to build their capacity in child care services; held a series of stakeholders workshops and awareness raising activities regarding regulations on alternative care for children without a family and established an inter-Ministerial network with the Liberian National Police, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Gender to facilitate the protection of children without a family.

94. With regard to child trafficking through adoptions, Liberia created an ad-hoc adoption authority to monitor adoption practices in the country. After a two month country-wide public awareness and consultation campaign, the adoption authority recommended placing a moratorium on all adoptions until protective adoption laws are put in place and advocated for the closure of adoption agencies suspected of child trafficking.<sup>9</sup> The authority also recommended that the country become a party to the Hague Adoption Convention.

## **3. Child Labor & Child Abuse**

95. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Liberia has made considerable efforts to protect children from child labor. Since 2007, the country has sponsored a series of awareness raising workshops on child labor in all 15 counties; assigned Child Welfare Officers (CWOs) in each county to create long-term awareness of child rights, including child labor, and initiated the establishment of 480 community based Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) to monitor and report child rights violations and promote children's rights within their respective communities.

96. With regard to child abuse, in addition to the activities carried out by CWOs and CWCs, Liberia has established a Child Protection Network (CPN). This network, which is composed of Ministries, governmental agencies and local & international non-governmental organizations, holds monthly meetings to share information, discuss issues and design a common approach to prevent child abuse.

---

<sup>9</sup> Based on the recommendations of the ad-hoc adoption authority, the President of Liberia placed a moratorium on adoptions in 2009.

#### **4. Protection from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation**

97. To address sexual abuse and exploitation against children, the country has established a Gender Based Violence Unit within the Ministry of Gender and Development. The Unit regularly collaborates with relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders as well as gender based violence task forces located at county levels to address issues of sexual abuse and exploitation. Further, the Unit holds regular public awareness campaigns exclusively dedicated to issues that affect the rights of children.

98. In addition to the above examples of progress, Liberia has taken measures towards the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a starting point, the country has distributed over 10,000 copies of the Convention to individuals, schools, hospitals and other public places; established an inter-Ministerial steering committee to ensure effective implementation of the Convention and following the 2009 country report to the CRC Committee, distributed tracking forms to relevant Ministries to make regular reports on the implementation of the Convention.

99. Further, to facilitate the right of children to participate in the decision making process, the country has established 15 Children's Assemblies and the Liberian Children's Parliament. The Children's Assemblies, which are located in every county of Liberia, and the Parliament help monitor and report child rights concerns and advocate for the promotion of children's rights.

#### **E. Persons with Disabilities**

100. In November of 2005, Liberia established the National Commission on Disabilities (NCD). Since its establishment the Commission has consistently carried out the task of protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Currently, the Commission is involved in: providing financial assistance to registered and accredited disability centers, individuals with disabilities engaged in self-sustainable income generating activities and students with disabilities; advocating and lobbying for the creation of job opportunities for persons with disabilities; conducting nation wide awareness raising and sensitization campaigns; engaging in agricultural activities to ensure food security for persons with disabilities and taking an active role in the implementation of Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). Further, the NCD has made a significant contribution in formulating the Disability Sensitive/Inclusion Document under the Security Pillar of the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy.

101. Liberia has also empowered more than 20 disabilities institutions to form the National Union of Organizations of the Disabled (NUOD). The NUOD, in collaboration with the NCD, successfully lobbied for and achieved the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008.

### **VIII. Responses to the Human Rights Situation on the Ground: Challenges and Constraints**

102. Despite Liberia's commitment to improve the human rights of citizens, the country continues to face, among others, the following challenges and constraints:

- Lack of human rights awareness among large segments of society;
- High illiteracy and unemployment rates;
- Shortage of trained and qualified manpower;

- Severe destruction and lack of basic infrastructures, such as electricity, potable water, road networks, health and educational facilities, court houses, police stations, correctional facilities, etc.;
- Severe destruction of livelihoods, especially the agricultural sector;
- Destruction of the family and community structure;
- Sociocultural perceptions and practices;
- Existence of dual justice systems;
- Continued existence of discriminatory laws;
- A culture of impunity and corruption;
- Lack of public trust in the judiciary and the law enforcement system, often resulting in mob violence;
- Delays in domesticating regional and international human rights conventions;
- Inadequate financial resources to implement crucial human rights projects, etc.

## **IX. Further Initiatives**

### **A. The Governance Commission**

103. In 2007 Liberia established the Governance Commission. The Commission is mandated to promote good governance by advising, designing, and formulating policies, institutional arrangements, and frameworks required for achieving good governance and to promote integrity at all levels of society within every public and private institution. Since its establishment the Commission has engaged in the drafting of the National Public Sector Reform Policy Statement; conducted countrywide workshops on the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance; liaised with the Ministry of Planning in the Peace Building/State Building Initiative and produced an issue paper on reforming Liberia's legal and judicial system towards enhancing the rule of law.

### **B. The Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC)**

104. Following Liberia's 2006 National Anti-Corruption Strategy, the Anti-Corruption Commission was established in August of 2008. Since its establishment the Commission, which plays a leading role in the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy, has investigated and forwarded cases for criminal prosecution and engaged the public and other stakeholders through awareness raising campaigns, distribution of educational materials, inter-active forums at learning institutions and by establishing free hotlines for citizens to report allegations of corruption.

### **C. Land Commission**

105. The Liberian Land Commission was established in August of 2009. The general mandate of the Commission is to propose, advocate and coordinate reforms of land policy, laws and programs in Liberia. In furtherance of its mandate the Commission has duties and functions to determine the needs of land users, recommend remedies for inadequacies in land policies, laws and institutions and propose legislation as deemed necessary.

## **X. Key National Priorities**

106. Based on nation wide consultations with a variety of stakeholders, Liberia acknowledges the following should constitute key national priorities:

- Provide periodic human rights education to citizens;
- Enhance human rights awareness among public officials, particularly among law enforcement and prison officials;
- Continue strengthening the capacity of Ministries, governmental agencies and all other institutions with competence for human rights;
- Incorporate human rights education into the curriculum of all primary, secondary, and tertiary schools around the country;
- Ratify human rights conventions not yet ratified;
- Take all necessary actions to domesticate ratified human rights conventions;
- Ensure the development and adoption of a national human rights action plan for Liberia;
- Ensure the effectiveness and full independence of the Liberian Independent National Commission on Human Rights;
- Implement TRC Report Recommendations without legal and constitutional implications;
- Continue protecting and promoting the due process rights of citizens, for example by building prison facilities, police stations, court houses and continuing to strengthen the capacity and professionalism of the judiciary and law enforcement;
- Ensure the effective implementation of the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Program;
- Ensure that schools are staffed with qualified and adequately compensated teachers and administrators;
- Continue efforts to improve the standard of living for all Liberians by providing decent housing, better health care, improved educational opportunities, electricity, potable water, road networks, etc.;
- Reinforce efforts to protect and promote the rights of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly; and
- Reinforce efforts to create jobs, especially for the youth and persons with disabilities.

## **XI. Liberia's Expectations for the Country in Terms of International Assistance**

- Training and technical assistance to enhance the human rights awareness of citizens and public officials;
- Training and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of relevant institutions to design and implement human rights related policies and projects;
- Training and technical assistance to develop and adopt a national human rights action plan for Liberia;

- Training and technical assistance to advance the law reform process;
- Training and technical assistance to strengthen rule of law institutions;
- Training and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies, including trainings in the use of advanced law enforcement techniques and equipment;
- Assistance to improve infrastructures in the country, particularly paved road networks, electricity, potable water, court houses, prison and detention facilities and health care facilities; and
- Training and technical assistance in the working methods of treaty bodies and in treaty body reporting.

## **List of Organizations Consulted During the National Report Drafting Process**

### **Governmental**

- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Gender & Development
- Ministry of Health & Social Welfare
- Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Justice-Sexual and Gender Based Violence Unit
- Ministry of Labor
- Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy
- Ministry of Youth and Sports
- James A.A. Pierre Judicial Institute
- Anti-Corruption Commission
- Governance Commission
- House Human and Civil Rights Committee
- Land Commission
- Law Reform Commission
- Liberian National Police (LNP)
- National Election Commission
- National Disability Commission
- The Independent National Commission on Human Rights, the Secretariat
- The Supreme Court

### **Non-Governmental**

- Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia
- Carter Center
- Center for Media Studies & Peace Building
- Defense for Children International
- Disability Taskforce
- Foundation for Human Rights & Democracy
- Foundation for International Dignity

- Foundation for Liberian Youth
- Handicap International
- Liberian Council of Churches
- Liberia Democratic Institute
- National Muslim Council of Liberia
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- People against Poverty International
- Press Union of Liberia
- Prison Fellowship Program, Liberia
- Sustainable Livelihood Promoters
- United Methodist Church
- United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Mission in Liberia, Legal and Judicial System Support Division
- United Nations Mission in Liberia, Human Rights Protection Section

## **Regional and International Human Rights Instruments Signed, Ratified or Acceded to by the Republic of Liberia**

### **Regional Human Rights Instrument**

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and People's Rights;
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on Rights of Women in Africa;
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
- African Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption.

### **International Human Rights Instruments**

- Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child prostitution and Child Pornography;
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty;
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others;
- Final Protocol to the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others; and
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## **ILO Conventions**

- Forced Labor Convention;
  - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention;
  - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention;
  - Abolition of Forced Labor Convention;
  - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention;
  - Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention; and
  - Labor Inspection Convention.
-