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EVALUATION REPORT

COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

LIBERIA STRATEGIC NOTE

2020–2025



COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

LIBERIA STRATEGIC NOTE 2020–2025



**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION, AUDIT AND
INVESTIGATION SERVICES (IEAIS)**

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE (IES)

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EVALUATION TEAM :

Cyuma Mbayiha, Regional Evaluation Specialist and co-team leader, West and Central Africa Regional Office

Florencia Tateossian, Evaluation Specialist and co-team leader, headquarters

Abraham Billy, National Consultant

Jerry Dearest Kollie, National Evaluation Intern

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPE	Country Portfolio Evaluation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IBSA	India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Funds
IEAIS	Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCT-SWAP	United Nations Country Team System-Wide Action Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VSLA	Village and Saving Loan Association
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WPP	Women's Political Participation
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Purpose, objectives and scope

The Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS) of UN Women conducted a Country Portfolio Evaluation of the Liberia Country Office's Strategic Note 2020–2025 as part of the revised UN Women Corporate Evaluation Plan (2021–2025).¹ This was coordinated alongside an internal audit of the country office. The evaluation aimed to assess UN Women's contributions to gender equality and the empowerment of women in Liberia, combining both evaluation and audit data collection to streamline both processes in the same country; enhance accountability and learning; and reduce the burden on the Country Office.

The CPE assessed the relevance and added value, coherence, effectiveness, organizational efficiency and sustainability of UN Women integrated normative, coordination and operational portfolio, while also examining the extent to which human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion principles were embedded across programming processes.

The scope covered all four of UN Women's impact areas – Women's Political Participation (WPP), Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW), Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and spanned interventions in all 15 of Liberia's counties, with field visits to Montserrado, Nimba, Bong, Grand Cape Mount and Grand Bassa.

Primary intended users of the CPE are the UN Women Liberia Country Office, the Regional Office for West and Central Africa and headquarters divisions, alongside government partners, civil-society organizations, donors and the UN Country Team, who can draw on the findings to inform strategic planning, resource mobilization and coordination efforts.

Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation employed a theory-based, mixed-methods approach grounded in OECD/DAC criteria² and UN Women's

evaluation principles to answer key questions and sub-questions as defined in the evaluation matrix (see Annex 6). A reconstructed theory of change (see Annex 3) and an evaluation matrix (see Annex 6) guided data collection and analysis. Methods included document review, financial and human-resource analysis, 205 stakeholder consultations (145 women, 60 men), two surveys and focus group discussions, ensuring triangulation across sources and perspectives. Particular attention was paid to leave-no-one-behind considerations by actively seeking inputs from women with disabilities and in rural constituencies, and by validating emerging findings with the Evaluation Reference Group. Ethical safeguards included informed consent, confidentiality assurances and remote participation options where travel or safety constraints applied. Limitations, such as potential recall bias and modest external survey coverage, were mitigated through data triangulation and a robust in-country mission, which significantly expanded access to key informants.³

Context

Liberia is a post-conflict country of 5.2 million inhabitants with near equal gender distribution⁴. The country ranks low on the Human Development Index (177/193)⁵ and Gender Inequality Index (161/193), reflecting persistent challenges in health, education and women's empowerment. Maternal mortality remains high (652 deaths per 100,000 live births)⁶, and gender-based violence and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation are still widespread. Nonetheless, Liberia has made meaningful strides in advancing gender equality. It has ratified key international instruments such as CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325; and adopted progressive national laws and policies, including the Domestic Violence Act (2019), the Land Rights Act (2018) and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (2020–2024). Implementation remains uneven, but these frameworks provide a solid foundation for transformative change.

Opportunities for further progress lie in Liberia's recent political transitions and its active engagement in regional policy dialogue on women's rights and peacebuilding. Although women's representation in the national legislature remains low (11 per cent), women's presence in ministerial leadership (35 per cent) and deputy ministerial

1. The CPE covered the period from 2022 to 2025. The CPE-A was initiated in February 2025 and completed in June 2025.

2. The evaluation used the following criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, sustainability, gender equality and human rights and organizational efficiency.

3. Recall bias refers to potential errors that occur when stakeholders participating in the evaluation have differing abilities to accurately remember past events or experiences. Data triangulation refers to the process of using multiple data sources or data types to confirm and strengthen findings, ensuring a more comprehensive and reliable evaluation and avoidance of potential biases.

4. Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, Census 2022: <https://lisgis.gov.lr/document/LiberiaCensus2022Report.pdf>

5. Human Development Report 2023–2024 available [here](https://hdr.undp.org/en/data/stories/SDG08); Beijing+30 National Review Report available [here](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/data/stories/SDG08).

6. World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2024.

roles (31 per cent) offers a platform for advocacy and reform⁷.

Economically, Liberia has benefitted from modest gains in women's participation, with the economic participation index increasing from 0.64 in 2014 to 0.895 in 2023⁸. At the regional level, Liberia contributes to the Economic Community of West African States' efforts on gender equality and peacebuilding, and has the potential to serve as a subregional example of post-conflict reconstruction with a gender lens. Leveraging its political will, legal frameworks and regional partnerships will be critical to closing the remaining gender gaps and translating commitments into sustainable outcomes.

Conclusions

CONCLUSION 1:

UN Women Liberia has demonstrated a strategically relevant, normatively grounded and coherent approach to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Liberia. UN Women's coordination role within the UN system and its convening power among civil society, government and development partners have also amplified its influence to drive gender equality and women's empowerment change in the country. Taken together, these normative and coordination roles provide a pathway for the Country Office to strengthen its impact in Liberia going into the next Strategic Note period.

UN Women Liberia's alignment with international (CEDAW, UNSCR 1325) and national frameworks (Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development [PAPD]) has established the Country Office as a key actor in both policy influence and community-level change. By bridging normative commitments with practical interventions – such as Peace Huts, land rights training and economic empowerment initiatives – the Country Office has ensured its programming resonates with women's lived realities. UN Women's normative and policy support restored Liberia's international credibility by closing a decade-long reporting gap to CEDAW and Beijing+25, while fostering inter-ministerial dialogue, civil society organization (CSO) engagement and integration of gender norms into national systems, including the UNSCR 1325 Action Plan and Armed Forces gender policies. Programming under WPS and WEE has contributed to peacebuilding, inclusive governance, climate action and rural resilience, while consistent capacity-building has strengthened civil society, government and women's groups as networks of change agents. UN Women's co-leadership of the United Nations Country Team Gender Theme Group and trusted partnerships with CSOs and donors further consolidated its central role in Liberia's gender equality landscape.

CONCLUSION 2:

Across its four impact areas, UN Women Liberia has shown that adaptive, locally rooted strategies can translate global gender norms into tangible progress. However, the same agility that drives short-term successes has not always been matched by the institutional leverage needed for durable, system-wide change.

UN Women Liberia's impact area portfolios demonstrate the Country Office's strong comparative advantage. Women's Leadership and Political Participation (WPP) has translated political opportunities into local leadership gains; WEE has opened new economic avenues for marginalized women; EVAW has integrated legal reform with survivor-centred services; and WPS has expanded women's roles in peacebuilding through community legitimacy. These successes reflect UN Women's strength in coalition-building, innovation and its convening power. However, challenges persist. Weak data systems, political sensitivities and limited linkages to markets for economic empowerment programmes hinder broader effectiveness in changing the lives of target populations. Community platforms thrive locally but struggle to influence national policy. The Country Office's effectiveness will require institutional commitment and securing sustainable financing, along with strong partnerships with the government.

CONCLUSION 3:

The long-term sustainability of gender-equality advancements now rely less on the initiation of reforms and more on the institutional and normative capacity to embed and uphold these reforms beyond the lifespan of current interventions. Under UN Women Liberia's Strategic Note, commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment have moved from aspirational pledges to concrete, self-sustaining measures. These efforts reflect an increasingly institutionalized model of shared accountability across national governance frameworks, decentralized structures and private-sector engagement.

This is evident in platforms such as the Peace Huts and women-run cooperatives that now operate independently. However, durability remains contingent on two key factors: adequate resources (including incentives) and accountability. County budgets still marginalize gender investments as discretionary rather than core services; critical infrastructure lacks dedicated maintenance funding; and market linkages for rural women remain too fragile to absorb price volatility. Risks remain that some reforms might erode in the event of legislative backsliding, stalling decentralized revenues or private partners' withdrawal.

7. Liberia National Legislature, 2024.

8. World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2023.

CONCLUSION 4:

UN Women Liberia has established enabling mechanisms that promote efficient delivery of results, mainly through strategic partnerships, decentralized implementation, joint programming and monitoring and evaluation. These foundations have allowed the Country Office to achieve short-term results, often with limited resources. However, operational bottlenecks have sometimes prevented the full achievement of results.

UN Women Liberia effectively leveraged partnerships with UN agencies, the private sector and local women's groups to maximize resources and promote local ownership, particularly in WPS and WPP.

However, internal inefficiencies, such as delayed fund disbursements, rigid procedures and personnel gaps have hindered programme execution and often limited trust. Monitoring and evaluation systems have shown foundations for planning but are still limited in adaptive learning, with limited use of data for course correction and sometimes limited connection between evaluation findings and results tracking. Limited personnel and staff turnover (especially in monitoring and evaluation) have further strained capacity, affecting accountability and the credibility of reported outcomes.

CONCLUSION 5:

While UN Women Liberia consistently prioritizes disability inclusion and leave no one behind principles in its programme design, there is a clear need for more systematic and consistently applied strategies at the implementation level.

This includes developing more tailored approaches for specific marginalized groups; ensuring the accessibility of all materials; improving granular data disaggregation; and integrating inclusion beyond project-specific initiatives to foster truly transformative and sustainable change across all programming. Future interventions would benefit from conducting thorough vulnerability and marginalized group assessments and by using intersectionality tools to guide comprehensive programming and accountability.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: UN Women Liberia should build on its demonstrated relevance and coordination mandate by scaling up gender equality monitoring and data provision, supporting the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, and strengthening joint programming. Stronger monitoring systems will enhance visibility of gender-related results and better showcase UN Women's contribution in Liberia.

RECOMMENDATION 2: UN Women Liberia should strengthen and step up its normative work to translate it into tangible results by creating road maps within each impact area that link normative work with practical implementation. These

road maps should align with UN Women's triple mandate and integrate (a) capacity-building methods with clear indicators to monitor progress and inform decisions on scaling up interventions; and (b) advocacy and technical support as the main strategies for normative work. The Country Office's convening role should be leveraged to maximize its relationships with the government and civil society.

RECOMMENDATION 3: UN Women Liberia should work with national and local authorities to consolidate the effectiveness of its Women's Leadership and Political Participation, Economic Empowerment and Elimination of Violence Against Women interventions by supporting closer integration between grassroots platforms and public institutions. To translate localized progress into systemic change, UN Women should facilitate national actors' uptake of gender mainstreaming tools; promote legal enforcement mechanisms; and help institutionalize successful pilot models within public service and governance frameworks. Stronger disaggregation of results by geography, literacy and age group, and targeted follow-up mechanisms, will also be critical to ensure inclusive impact and sustained progress.

RECOMMENDATION 4: To secure the sustainability of gender equality and women's empowerment results achieved under the Strategic Note, UN Women Liberia should support national and county-level authorities in institutionalizing service delivery and accountability platforms (e.g. Peace Huts, heritage centres, solar agro-units) within public planning and financing frameworks. In parallel, the Country Office should help catalyse cross-sector incentives that align government actors, civil society and private-sector stakeholders around shared gender equality and women's empowerment priorities. Sustaining legislative momentum (e.g. on the Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Bill and the quota law) and strengthening women's cooperatives to access larger markets will require UN Women's continued advocacy, technical assistance and coordination support, while primary leadership and accountability remain with national institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 5: UN Women Liberia should strengthen its results-based management by repositioning the monitoring, evaluation and learning function under the Country Representative, streamlining indicators and harmonizing reporting. Joint field verifications, data checks and quarterly reflection sessions with partners will embed accountability, foster adaptive learning and ensure credible results narratives.

RECOMMENDATION 6: UN Women Liberia should strengthen its approach to disability inclusion and intersectionality by taking a more systematic approach. This approach should be embedded into programming by developing a road map for initiatives that acknowledge the varied needs of marginalized stakeholders, especially women with disabilities. This will lead to enhanced inclusivity and long-lasting social transformation in vulnerable communities.



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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope

IEAIS conducted this Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) to assess UN Women's contributions in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in Liberia over the course of its Strategic Note 2020–2025 to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience. This was coordinated alongside an internal audit of the country office to streamline evaluation and audit processes in the same country; increase the usefulness and impact of these important exercises; and, very importantly, reduce the burden on the Country Office.

The CPE provided an (a) independent and systematic assessment of the contributions made by UN Women Liberia to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level; and (b) assessment of organizational efficiency, to feed into learning on what strategies worked well and what needs strengthening. The primary intended uses of this evaluation are:

- Learning on what strategies work best to advance gender equality in the context of Liberia to support effective decision-making.
- Accountability for UN Women's contribution to advance gender equality in Liberia, in coordination with other UN agencies.

The primary intended users of this evaluation are the UN Women Liberia Country Office and their key stakeholders including the government, civil society organizations (CSOs), development partners and other UN agencies; and the UN Women Regional Office for Western and Central Africa, UN Women headquarters, including the Senior Management Team and IEAIS. The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Liberia may also use the findings of this evaluation as key inputs in development of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

Evaluation objectives and scope

The specific objectives of the CPE were to:

- Assess the relevance and added value, coherence, effectiveness and organizational efficiency and sustainability of UN Women's portfolio in Liberia.
- Identify lessons and good practices to be shared.
- Provide actionable recommendations to inform the development of the new Strategic Note.

The CPE focused on the current Strategic Note cycle (2020–2025). The entire programme of work and UN Women's integrated mandate was assessed, including the

Country Office's contributions to UN Women's normative, coordination and operational mandates. Due to their priority in the Strategic Note, the geographical scope of the evaluation included all 15 counties in Liberia (see Annex 5) including Montserrado, Nimba, Bong, Lofa, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh and Grand Cape Mount, with visits to selected sites. This notwithstanding, the evaluation focused on interventions designed to contribute to the results frameworks of both the next 2026–2030 Strategic Note and UN Women's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

The CPE was primarily intended to be a formative (forward-looking) evaluation to support the Country Office and national stakeholders' strategic learning and decision-making, including evidence-based advocacy, when developing the new Strategic Note. The evaluation is expected to have a secondary summative (retrospective) purpose to support enhanced accountability for development effectiveness and learning from experience.

1.2 Evaluation approach and methodology

The CPE employed a mixed-method, theory-based and gender-responsive approach. The evaluation answered key questions and sub-questions as defined in the evaluation matrix (see Annex 6). The evaluation team applied the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, organizational efficiency and sustainability along with a human rights and gender equality and disability inclusion criterion. A reconstructed theory of change used for the evaluation is included in Annex 3.

The analysis focused on a forward-looking exploration of how UN Women in Liberia contributed to advancing women's empowerment looking at the breadth of interventions centred on the four impact areas of WPP, WEE, EVAW and WPS. A leave no one behind focus was incorporated into the analysis to understand how UN Women strives to reach the most marginalized groups such as women with disabilities. A strong participatory approach ensured the evaluation's maximum utilization by stakeholders and the inclusion of their perspectives.

The CPE was transparent and participatory, involving relevant UN Women stakeholders and partners. The analysis applied a human rights and gender-responsive lens by integrating the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on Human Rights and Gender Equality⁹ in evaluation that suggests analysing links with guiding normative frameworks (e.g. CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action), underlying power dynamics, institutional structures and barriers to gender equality.

9. UNEG Guidance is available [here](#).

1.3 Data collection and analysis

Data collection was driven by the key evaluation questions and data was selected with the aim of providing the most useful information possible to the Country Office. Primary data collection was largely qualitative, with quantitative data collected through two surveys (the evaluation matrix is available in Annex 6 and sample data collection tools are included in Annex 9). Multiple sources of data were obtained: 205 stakeholders from across stakeholder groups were consulted (145 women and 60 men); and two surveys were conducted – a UN Women personnel survey with a 53 per cent response rate (n=21/39; 12 women, 9 men) and a survey sent to the Country Office's external partners with a 26 per cent response rate (n=16/61; 6 women, 10 men).

Before collecting any data, an explanation of the purpose and use of the evaluation and assurances about the confidentiality of the information obtained was provided to participants. Rights holders were consulted about whether they were in a safe space to speak, and their oral consent was requested in their local language. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to opt out of participation or skip any questions.

Multiple methods of analysis were carried out using both primary and secondary data to triangulate evidence, including desk review, quantitative and qualitative analyses, and UN Women's financial and human resource analyses.

The evaluation undertook a contribution analysis to assess the extent to which programmes contributed to observed outcomes, linking them to UNSDCF outcomes and based on the reconstructed theory of change. The contribution analysis allowed the evaluation team to test the theory of change with the evidence gathered throughout the data collection phase, and understand the Country Office's contribution to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

Strategic Note

The Strategic Note is the main planning tool for the programme office to support its normative, coordination and operational work. The Liberia Strategic Note 2020–2025 is aligned with the UNSDCF 2020–2025, including its strategic priorities:

- I. By 2024, the most vulnerable and excluded groups have improved quality of life, with rights-based, gender-sensitive, inclusive, equitable access and utilization of essential social services in an environment free of discrimination and violence, including in humanitarian situations (UNSDCF Outcome 1).
- II. By 2024, Liberia has diversified and inclusive economic growth underpinned by investments in sustainable and environmentally friendly agriculture, food security, job creation and improved resilience to climate change and natural disasters (UNSDCF Outcome 2).

III. By 2024, women, girls, men and boys in Liberia experience more sustained peace and inclusive and sustainable growth and development, through strengthened formal and informal institutions providing access to effective and equitable justice and security services, promoting and protecting human rights and strengthening social cohesion and reconciliation (UNSDCF Outcome 3).

IV. By 2024, people in Liberia, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged, benefit from strengthened institutions that are more effective, accountable, transparent, inclusive and gender responsive in the delivery of essential services at national and subnational levels (UNSDCF Outcome 4). The capacity of the Government of Liberia and key stakeholders to assess progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other global normative and policy frameworks strengthened. (Normative mandate).¹⁰

V. By 2024, the UN system in Liberia coherently and systematically contributes to progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (UN Coordination mandate).¹¹

There were no changes in the Strategic Note during its period of implementation and to date.

1.4 Evaluation constraints and limitations

Overall, the CPE consulted a large and diverse range of stakeholders. A key risk identified during the inception phase was the challenges in securing interviews with key stakeholders, both internal and external. A robust visit to the Country Office, and the joint nature of the assignment as a CPE mitigated this limitation, resulting in a high number of interviews conducted. The recall biases interview respondents may experience when recounting past events and experiences was mitigated with the use of multiple data sources. Data collection was triangulated between sources and methods and validated with the Country Office and the Evaluation Reference Group to ensure validity and reliability.

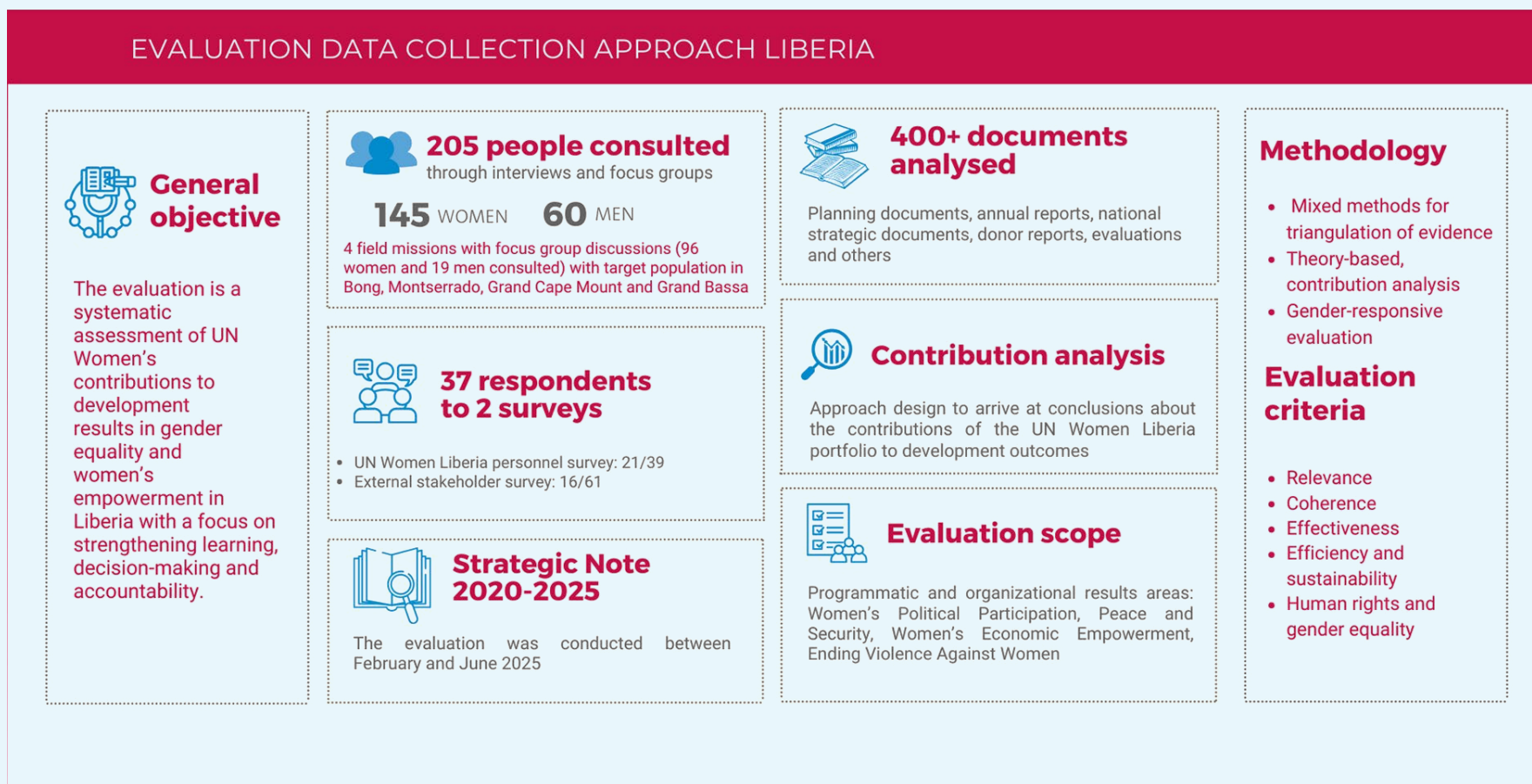
The survey sample for the external partners survey was limited in size, which challenged the interpretation of results and its conclusions. The evaluation mitigated this limitation with strong triangulation through key informant interview data and a desk review.

1.5 CPE governance and quality assurance

UN Women evaluations follow established mechanisms to ensure high-quality evaluation processes and products in line with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Handbook and according to UNEG established norms and standards. All products are subject to quality review by the Director, IEAIS and Chief of Evaluation, a peer reviewer, the Evaluation Reference Group and Evaluation Management Group. The Evaluation Reference Group included UN Women programme staff, national government and UN agencies.

10. The capacity of governments and stakeholders is strengthened to assess progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and other global normative and policy frameworks, and Strategic Plan Output 3: Knowledge on gender perspectives is expanded through provision of substantive inputs and dialogues to global intergovernmental processes.
11. This outcome is part of the 2024 version of the Development Results Framework but it was absent as an outcome in the 2020 version of the Strategic Note.

FIGURE 1. Sources and methodology for data collection



Source: Compiled by the evaluation team



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2. EVALUATION CONTEXT

2.1 Liberia Context

Liberia covers an area of 111,369 square kilometres on the Atlantic Coast of West Africa and has a population of approximately 5.2 million, with a near equal gender distribution (50.4 per cent male and 49.6 per cent female).¹² Poverty (less than US\$ 2.15 per person per day) remains a significant challenge, with 34.2 per cent of the population classified as poor.¹³ Rural areas experience higher poverty rates (71.6 per cent) compared to urban areas (31.5 per cent). Male-headed households have a higher incidence of absolute poverty (52.3 per cent) than female-headed households (46.3 per cent).¹⁴

Liberia has made significant strides in promoting gender equality through international and national commitments. The country is a signatory to key treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Maputo Protocol and UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Domestically, Liberia has established robust legal frameworks, including the Gender Policy and Action Plan (2021–2025), Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy (2020–2024), Revised National Gender Policy (2018–2022), the Domestic Violence Act (2019) and the Land Rights Act (2018). The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection plays a central role in coordinating gender mainstreaming efforts across sectors, ensuring that both women and men benefit from development programmes.

Liberia ranks 177 of 193 countries on the Human Development Index, reflecting significant challenges in healthcare, education and economic conditions.¹⁵ The Gender Inequality Index ranks Liberia 161 of 193 countries, highlighting persistent disparities in reproductive health, labour market participation and empowerment.¹⁶ Maternal mortality rates remain alarmingly high at 652 deaths per 100,000 live births, and adolescent birth rates are significantly higher than in more developed countries.¹⁷ Women and girls continue to face barriers in accessing education, healthcare and property, with only 76 per cent gender parity achieved across economic, educational and health dimensions.¹⁸

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive issue in Liberia. In 2019, 66.1 per cent of women aged 45–49 reported undergoing female genital mutilation (FGM), reflecting deep-rooted cultural practices that perpetuate violence against women.¹⁹ The Domestic Violence Act (2019) and other legal reforms have been introduced to address GBV, but enforcement remains weak due to limited awareness and capacity among law enforcement agencies. Efforts to combat

GBV include training for law enforcement agencies, educational outreach and advocacy campaigns aimed at transforming societal attitudes towards violence against women.

Economic opportunities for women have improved slightly, with the economic participation index rising from 0.64 in 2014 to 0.895 in 2023.²⁰ However, significant gender disparities persist in workforce participation and access to resources. The Land Rights Act (2018) introduced some equity in property inheritance but enforcement remains weak, particularly in rural areas where awareness of the law is low. Women's access to credit and entrepreneurial opportunities is also limited, hindering their economic empowerment.²¹

Liberia has seen some progress in women's political representation, particularly in the executive branch, where women hold 35 per cent of ministerial positions and 31 per cent of deputy ministerial roles.²² However, women's representation in the National Legislature remains low, with only 11 per cent of seats held by women.²³ Efforts to introduce a mandatory gender quota law for political parties have stalled, despite a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2023 to ensure 30 per cent female representation in political parties' candidate lists.²⁴ Women's participation in peacebuilding and security, as outlined in UNSCR 1325, has been a focus of National Action Plans but challenges remain in translating these commitments into tangible outcomes.²⁵

Liberia's challenges, including civil unrest and climate issues, have impacted gender inequalities, particularly for rural women and girls. Targeted development efforts in rural and post-conflict areas have aimed to improve access to healthcare, education and economic opportunities, but gaps persist due to limited resources and infrastructure. Women and girls in humanitarian settings face heightened risks of GBV, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to protect their rights and ensure their participation in recovery and development processes.

While Liberia has made strides in establishing legal and policy frameworks for gender equality, challenges remain. Socio-cultural norms that promote traditional gender roles persist, limiting women's participation in various aspects of public and private life.²⁶ Efforts to address these challenges include capacity-building initiatives, advocating for gender quotas and strengthening legal frameworks. However, continued commitment from the government, civil society and international partners is essential to achieve meaningful progress.

12. LISGIS, 2022 Census result. Available [here](#).

13. *African Economic Outlook (AEQ) 2024*.

14. LISGIS, Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2016. Available [here](#).

15. UNDP Human Development Report 2023–2024 available [here](#).

16. UNDP Human Development Report 2023–2024 available [here](#). Beijing+30 National Review Report, available [here](#).

17. World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2024. Available [here](#).

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2023. Available [here](#).

21. World Bank, Liberia Gender Assessment, 2023. Available [here](#).

22. UN Women Annual Report, 2024.

23. Liberia National Legislature, 2024.

24. National Elections Commission, 2023.

25. Government of Liberia, Second Phase National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2019–2023).

26. UNDP Liberia: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (2022–2025).



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3. PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

3.1 Financial analysis

Background

The UN Women Liberia Country Office operates at the national level, with a programme that includes specific interventions and projects both at national and regional levels. The main areas of intervention are WPP, WPS, WEE and EVAW.

Financial and human resources

The total Country Office budget during the period under evaluation was US\$ 45 million. The target budget was US\$ 54 million, reflecting a 10 million funding gap.

Over the same period, the total amount spent by the Country Office was US\$ 38.5 million, giving a financial delivery rate of 84.3 per cent. It is also important to note that the budget and expenditure increased by approximately US\$ 2 million between 2020 and 2021. However, since 2021, there has been a steady decline in budgets and expenditure, reaching their lowest level in 2024. There is a slight increase in 2025, however the Country Office is facing challenges in terms of mobilizing resources, as actual budgets fall short of target budgets.

The funding portfolio consists mostly of non-domestic sources, including contributions from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund-Spotlight Initiative Fund (US\$ 9 million), Swedish International Development Cooperation (US\$ 8.4 million), UN Peacebuilding Fund (US\$ 7.1 million), the Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office (US\$ 2.8 million), Government of Canada (US\$ 1.4 million) and United Nations Development Programme (US\$ 1.3 million).

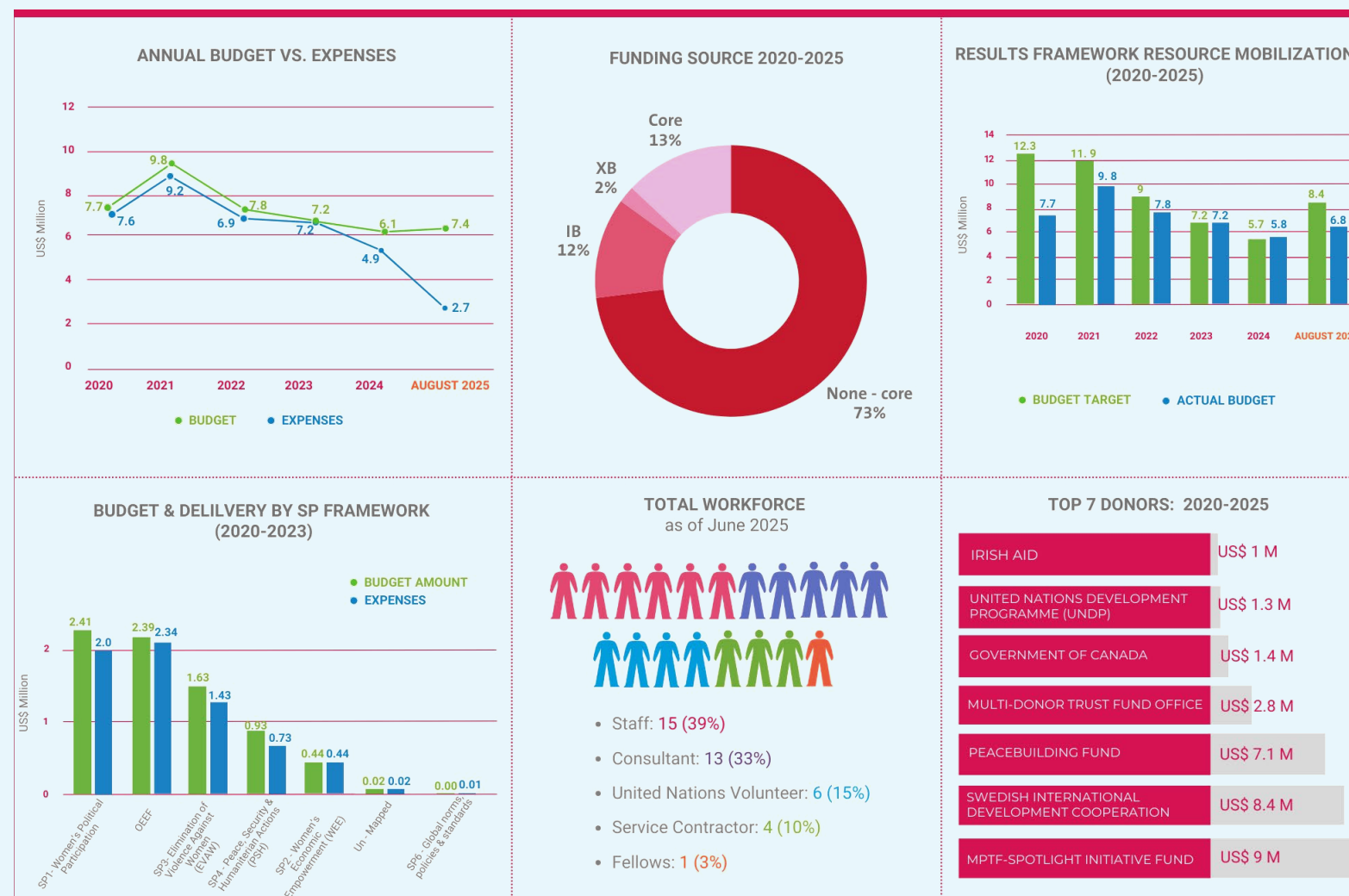
The Country Office workforce is of 39 personnel in 2025. These personnel include both national and international personnel under various contractual arrangements. As of June 2025, the workforce includes 10 per cent of personnel on service contracts, 39 per cent staff, 33 per cent consultants and 15 per cent UN Volunteers and 3 per cent of UN Fellows. As per the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, in terms of financial resources, most budget is targeted on WPP (US\$ 2.41 million) followed by EVAW (US\$ 1.63 million).

Figure 2 summarizes the Country Office's human resources and financial resources portfolio during the Strategic Note period 2020–2025.



Photo©UN Women Liberia

FIGURE 2. Liberia Country Office portfolio analysis 2020–2025



Source: For 2023-2025, data was sourced from UN Women's corporate system Quantum, UN Women, Delivery Report, as of August 28, 2025. Data for 2020-2022 was collected from UN Women's corporate system, Atlas (currently discontinued), as 2020-2022 data is not available from the Quantum Delivery Report.

3.2 Key partners

The evaluation team mapped the different categories of stakeholders engaged by the Country Office through data collection. The main stakeholder groups are as follows:

- UN Women Liberia Country Office team: responsible for implementation of the Strategic Note.
- UN Women West and Central Africa Regional Office: collaborating and supporting implementation of the Liberia Strategic Note.
- UN agencies: collaborating organizations within the UN-system in Liberia, and partners in joint programmes.
- Government partners: relevant federal government bodies and officials at the national level and primary duty bearers responsible for leading the country's development.
- Civil society organizations: non-governmental organizations and women-led organizations that contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment results in Liberia.
- Donors: donors of UN Women's work in Liberia.



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4. FINDINGS

RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

Is the Country Office's thematic focus and implementation strategy the most relevant and coherent to advance gender equality and women empowerment?

FINDING 1

The overall focus of the UN Women Liberia Strategic Note shows consistent alignment to international frameworks, national priorities and the needs of target populations, ensuring its relevance to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.

Across several survey questions, respondents assessed the Country Office's work to be both relevant and results oriented. Alignment with national priorities, UNSDCF commitments and the needs of women and girls drew near-unanimous assent: most external respondents (88 per cent; N=16) agreed that the Country Office's portfolio targets the right issues and beneficiaries.

Overall, internal and external stakeholders²⁷ agreed that the Country Office's Strategic Note and key areas of work were relevant and aligned to key international frameworks, national priorities and target population needs. The Country Office has consistently focused on supporting normative developments in Liberia for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

The evaluation found that UN Women's programming in Liberia is well aligned with key international normative frameworks such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the WPS agenda under UNSCR 1325. Review of programme documentation highlights the Country Office's strong commitment to reference or integrate international instruments, particularly in the WPS and WPP thematic pillars.

UN Women has served as a critical partner to the Government of Liberia, particularly through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, in meeting its obligations under international and regional gender equality frameworks, including CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol and the Beijing+25 Review. Its support has been instrumental in enhancing the government's capacity to fulfill its reporting obligations and remain engaged in global gender accountability processes.

Two national reports (the 9th and 10th CEDAW periodic reports) and CEDAW progress reports were drafted with UN Women's support in 2024. These were Liberia's first submissions since 2014, bridging an almost 10-year gap in reporting. The Beijing+25 Review report was also completed and submitted in 2024, enabling Liberia to

participate in global stocktaking efforts. UN Women supported Liberia's report on implementation of the Maputo Protocol, further strengthening the country's engagement with regional human rights mechanisms.

UN Women convened multiple technical validation sessions and stakeholder consultations, involving representatives from over 40 institutions, including government ministries, CSOs and development partners. UN Women provided financial support for at least three major reporting-related workshops from 2022 to 2024, as well as sustained technical support to the Division of International Reporting and the Women, Peace and Security Division within the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

The evaluation examined the relevance of UN Women's work in the country to the extent it has influenced broader gender equality policy processes in Liberia. Liberia's re-engagement with international gender reporting mechanisms has been made possible largely through UN Women's sustained involvement. This has restored the country's credibility to a certain extent in international forums and enabled the country to reassert its commitments to gender equality. The reporting process, particularly for Beijing+25 and CEDAW, acted as a trigger for inter-ministerial dialogue and CSO engagement. During interviews with government stakeholders, it was noted that the inclusive consultation processes supported by UN Women had helped clarify institutional mandates and promote dialogue on policy coherence. Through its technical advisory services, the Country Office has helped institutionalize international gender frameworks within

27. Across internal and external stakeholder types consulted in interviews and through the external and internal surveys.

national systems. For example, the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 draws from lessons and frameworks discussed during UN-supported reporting exercises.

A qualitative review of programmatic initiatives, such as support to the Armed Forces of Liberia in developing and operationalizing a Gender Policy reflects commitment to UNSCR 1325 and institutional gender mainstreaming in post-conflict security reform. Key informant interviews with security sector officials and Country Office personnel underscored that this initiative not only influenced internal Armed Forces of Liberia policy but also improved the gender-responsiveness of military training modules (see also Finding 7 under effectiveness).

Similarly, programming under the WPS and WPP pillars supports the global agenda for inclusive peacebuilding and democratic governance, with activities such as the development of standard operating procedures for addressing electoral violence and supporting women candidates, aligning with international standards on electoral integrity and gender equality.

In the area of land governance, interventions integrating gender equality into customary land tenure systems reflect commitments to SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). The WEE pillar links directly with SDG targets on economic inclusion (8.5), decent work (8.3) and climate action (13), particularly through its focus on climate-smart agriculture and green entrepreneurship. These efforts are further reinforced by multi-stakeholder platforms and capacity-building efforts such as gender-responsive budgeting workshops, which not only promote compliance with international standards but also contribute to institutionalizing gender equality across national systems.

The evaluation also examined how UN Women Liberia's programming was aligned with Liberia's national development frameworks, including PAPD, the Liberia National Action Plan on WPS and sectoral policies such as the Land Rights Act (2018) and the Local Government Act (2018). Approximately 78 per cent of reviewed projects under the WPS and WEE pillars were directly traceable to PAPD targets, particularly those addressing peacebuilding, inclusive governance, economic participation and rural resilience. These alignments are most evident under:

Pillar One: Power to the people – specifically Outcome 1.2 (Increased empowerment of women and girls) and Outcome 1.4 (Increased participation of youth and women in peacebuilding and national development).

Pillar Two: The economy and jobs – particularly Outcome 2.1 (Increased access to jobs and income-earning opportunities for women and youth) and Outcome 2.5 (Improved food security and resilience, especially for rural women).

Pillar Three: Governance and transparency – where programming supports Outcome 4.1 (Enhanced inclusive and accountable governance) and Outcome 4.3 (Strengthened decentralization and local governance through inclusive participation).

These strategic linkages reinforce UN Women Liberia's contribution to the country's inclusive development agenda,²⁸ particularly in promoting gender-responsive peacebuilding, economic participation and rural resilience. WPS programmes emphasize peacebuilding, transitional justice and civic engagement, directly supporting Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction priorities; contributing to prevention of conflict recurrence; and building social cohesion in local communities.

The WPS and WPP pillars have prioritized the enhancement of women's leadership in local governance and peace infrastructure. These programmes have supported the establishment and institutional strengthening of Peace Committees and Women's Situation Rooms during electoral cycles, which has enabled women to play active roles in conflict monitoring, tension mediation and the advocacy of nonviolent, participatory political processes. Such initiatives have not only reinforced democratic governance but also ensured that women's voices are embedded within both community-level and national decision-making spheres.

Similarly, the WEE pillar aligns with the Liberia Strategic Note and Liberia's Nationally Determined Contributions,²⁹ addressing climate-smart agriculture and digital inclusion. Development and implementation of the Nationally Determined Contribution is being led by Liberia's Environmental Protection Agency and the Forestry Development Authority. The WPP pillar's interventions on electoral participation and gender-responsive budgeting support decentralization and democratization as outlined in the Local Government Act.

Through qualitative interviews with national stakeholders, including government ministers, technical directors, civil society actors, development partners and donors, it was repeatedly acknowledged that UN Women Liberia's support in women, youth development, security reform and gender policy advocacy was relevant. There was near-unanimous recognition of the relevance and usefulness of UN Women's contributions to areas such as security sector reform, gender policy development and community-based economic resilience.

However, persistent coordination challenges were also identified, particularly regarding the extent of government involvement in the early stages of project design and planning. Several key informants noted that some line ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and the Liberia Land Authority, were not consistently engaged during the conceptualization and prioritization phases of some projects, leading to siloed implementation.

28. Also noteworthy is the technical support provided to Liberia during the design of its new National Development Plan, the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development in 2024, whereby UN Women embedded a technical expert within the Ministry of Finance to facilitate gender mainstreaming across the entire planning process.

29. Available [here](#). Nationally Determined Contributions are at the core of the Paris Agreement under which countries, including Liberia, committed to limit global warming.

The absence of inclusive planning mechanisms limited the ability of government actors to guide the sequencing and sustainability strategies of interventions, thereby undermining long-term impact. Key stakeholders emphasized the importance of early and structured engagement, such as through joint needs assessments, inter-agency steering committees or sector working groups as a means to ensure that projects are responsive to national realities and build existing institutional capacities.

The evaluation found compelling qualitative evidence from four communities which had benefitted from UN Women interventions, supported by testimonies from over 40 participants of focus group discussions and 25 key informant interviews that UN Women's interventions are closely aligned with the needs and priorities of women and marginalized groups in communities. A survey sent to UN Women Liberia personnel also confirmed this with 65 per cent (n=13/21) of respondents agreeing that the Country Office's work aligns well with the most pressing needs of women and girls in Liberia. Participants consistently reported that programmes such as Peace Huts,³⁰ land rights awareness and livelihood support directly addressed their most pressing issues such as land tenure insecurity, lack of participation in decision-making, economic exclusion, and sexual and gender-based violence. The Peace Huts, in particular, emerged as the basis for women-led community peacebuilding and early intervention,

contributing to both peace prevention and women's empowerment efforts.

Women participating in Peace Hut activities highlighted improved local conflict mediation and increased trust in community structures. Evidence from testimonies during focus group discussions revealed that over 30 of 40 participants found the Peace Huts "very effective" in preventing violence and promoting community dialogue. Training content on land rights, business development and leadership responded directly to what women identified as gaps in their lives. The women engaged in land rights training reported increased knowledge of the Land Rights Act, with over 20 participants in the focus group discussions stating they now felt more confident asserting claims to ancestral or marital land.

UN Women's work in Liberia exhibits strong alignment with the lived realities of women at the grassroots level. The Country Office's multi-tiered approach of combining normative policy work with practical community interventions helped to ensure both strategic and operational coherence. Evidence shows that UN Women engaged local women, community leaders and other key stakeholders through community dialogues from the beginning to understand what challenges women were facing and what support they truly needed.



30. Peace Huts are community-based platforms that provide a safe environment where women convene to mediate local disputes, prevent GBV and lead grassroots peacebuilding efforts. Peace Huts also serve as hubs for psychosocial support, civic education and economic empowerment, hosting activities such as village savings groups, skills training and micro-finance schemes. These structures have become vital entry points for women's leadership and for wider development initiatives in post-conflict Liberia.

COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

How does UN Women Liberia leverage its coordination role and added value vis-à-vis other actors involved in gender equality and the empowerment of women efforts?

FINDING 2

UN Women Liberia has been able to effectively leverage its coordination mandate for gender equality and the empowerment of women in Liberia through co-leadership of key UN system coordination mechanisms and joint programmes.

Two thirds (N=16) of respondents agreed, and a further third fully agreed, that UN Women's coordination mandate is clearly recognized and does not duplicate other agencies' work. Three quarters rated joint efforts with sister agencies at Level 4 or 5 on a five-point scale, citing UNDP and UNFPA as frequent partners. Membership in formal gender coordination structures is less widespread, only one third of UN respondents sit on the UN Gender Theme Group; however, the majority still perceived UN Women as the actor that "keeps gender equality and women's empowerment on every agenda."

Joint programming attracted more "not sure" responses than other items, hinting that partners would welcome stronger articulation of each agency's comparative advantage.

Based on evidence from key interviews with internal and external stakeholders, survey results and the desk review, the Country Office has successfully leveraged its coordination mandate and has added value to drive gender equality and women's empowerment across the UN system and in collaboration with national and international partners. Overall, stakeholders agreed that the Country Office has served as a central actor in Liberia, coordinating efforts towards gender-responsive programming and support to policy implementation, mostly among UN agencies, but also among government partners.

As part of UN coordination, along with UNFPA, UN Women Liberia is co-leading the UN Gender Theme Group (see Box 1). Stakeholder interviews and survey responses indicated high levels of satisfaction with UN Women's leadership and ability to foster collaboration within the Gender Theme Group. Effective practices such as clear Terms of Reference, annual joint workplans and budgets aligned with UNCT priorities, regular meetings and informal knowledge-sharing platforms (e.g. brown bag sessions) have contributed to sustained alignment and momentum. This structure supported the integration of gender equality in the Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF, and increased accountability within the UNCT. Similarly, UN Women's coordination support to the Resident Coordinator in driving implementation of the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan was acknowledged and appreciated by

internal stakeholders. While learning sessions were held to socialize the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan within the UNCT, this area was identified as needing further reinforcement to expand the plan's reach and influence at the national level.

UN Women Liberia has played a leading role in facilitating implementation of the UNCT System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) Gender Equality Scorecard and annual assessments (2022–2024). While the 2024 process faced challenges related to evidence quality and justification of ratings, progress was nevertheless observed across several key indicators. These included joint programming, where the number of gender-responsive joint initiatives had increased; and improvements in resource allocation and tracking of gender-related expenditure. Notably, Liberia's UNCT-SWAP performance exceeded minimum requirements in areas such as gender analysis and intersectionality, leadership for gender equality and civil society engagement. Initiatives such as the Spotlight Initiative, Women's Support in Elections and the Land Rights for Women project were highlighted as examples of successful partnerships with women's organizations.

However, certain areas in the scorecard indicated a need for attention such as achieving gender parity in UN staffing, where female representation declined slightly between 2022 and 2023; and more structured engagement with

government counterparts, which saw a regression in scorecard ratings.

While joint programming has increased, stakeholders noted that actual implementation often occurred in silos, suggesting the need for more integrated inter-agency collaboration beyond the design and planning stages. The survey sent to internal UN Women Liberia personnel indicated that 47 per cent (n=10/21) perceived the conceptualization and implementation of joint programmes as very effective; while 33 per cent (n=7/21) saw it somewhat effective; and 14 per cent (n=3/21) as ineffective. Interviews with stakeholders and past evaluations confirmed these perceptions, particularly regarding the Spotlight Initiative. Evidence highlighted the complexities of Spotlight as a multi-stakeholder partnership, particularly in navigating different institutional procedures, ensuring coherent implementation and managing relationships with various partners, including government, civil society and donors.³¹

Challenges due to working in silos were noted to be prominent also within the Spotlight Initiative, particularly under UN Women's specific role in strengthening CSOs and supporting the women's rights movements. The thematic assessment³² of the Spotlight Initiative indicated that the allocation of this pillar solely to UN Women, unlike the shared responsibility for other pillars among multiple Recipient United Nations Organizations, may have caused work related to women's movements to be siloed and

potentially deprioritized by other agencies. Some stakeholders perceived Pillar 6 as primarily a "UN Women thing", and there was a lack of consistent understanding across the Recipient United Nations Organizations regarding how the Spotlight Initiative supported women's movements and its feminist approach. This uneven understanding and buy-in across different agencies presented challenges for coherent coordination and implementation of activities aimed at engaging civil society and women's movements.³³

The evaluation found that joint programming in Liberia has been broadly effective, and an effective strategy to coordinate operational work to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women was a partner in nine joint programmes during the Strategic Note period,³⁴ and led five in WPS and WPP (see Table 1 for a list of joint programmes). The joint nature of these interventions and collaboration across agencies and national partners have ensured good synergies across areas and was an effective way to pool resources and expertise. Joint programmes reduced duplication and leveraged the comparative advantages of different agencies. Interviews noted that while joint programming was an effective strategy to coordinate work, agencies have sometimes worked in silos when implementing their specific outcomes. This has led to challenges, particularly in systematically involving certain marginalized groups such as women with disabilities.

Sustainability of results after the end of joint programmes has also been challenging mostly due to the lack of

BOX 1. UN Women Liberia UNCT roles

UN WOMEN LIBERIA

LEADS

The UN Results Group Human development and Essential Social Services

CO-CHAIRS

UN LIBERIA GENDER THEME GROUP
UN-GTG with UNFPA

PARTICIPATES

Human Rights Thematic Group
HIV/AIDS Thematic Group
Disability Inclusion Thematic Group
Communication Working Group

Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group
Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Working Group
Data for Development (D4D) Working Group

UNCT results groups:
Sustainable Economic Development (RG2)
Sustaining Peace and Security (RG3)
Governance and Transparency (RG4)

Source: Developed by the evaluation team at the bottom

31. Spotlight Initiative Mid-Term Evaluation; EU-UN Spotlight Initiative cumulative report Liberia 2019-2023.

32. Thematic Assessment: Assessing Spotlight Initiative's contribution to the engagement of civil society, the implementation of "Leave no one behind", and movement building, 2024, Social Development Direct and Spotlight Initiative.

33. Ibid.

34. The Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards Economic Empowerment of Rural Women was extended until 2021, and the joint initiative on preventing sexual and gender-based violence ended in 2021.

incentives for community-level mechanisms and the need to involve more women-led organizations and the government. Results from the external stakeholder survey confirmed this as 70 per cent (n=11/16) of respondents perceived that the conceptualization and implementation of joint programmes has been somewhat and very effective.

Overall, all external survey respondents affirmed that UN Women Liberia effectively fulfilled its coordination mandate, and 80 per cent (n=17/21) of internal survey respondents

perceived that the UN Women Liberia Country Office has effectively contributed to accountability on women's empowerment through the UNCT-SWAP and Gender Theme Group. Its convening power, technical expertise and advocacy have positioned the Country Office as a key driver of gender equality within the UN system in Liberia, although ongoing efforts are needed to further institutionalize progress, strengthen joint implementation and close remaining gaps in gender parity and government engagement.

TABLE 1. Joint programmes in Liberia including UN Women during the Strategic Note period

Title	UN Agencies	Lead (Y/N)	Area	Budget (US\$)	Star Date	End Date
11965 - Accelerating Progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women (RWEE)	FAO, IFAD, UN Women, WFP	Yes	WEE	965,015.00	01/07/2013	31/12/2020
10418 - Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress toward the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women	UN Women, FAO, and WFP	Yes	WEE	11,669,797.20	01/07/2020	31/12/2021
11850 - GOL/ UN JP Initiative to Prevent and Respond to SGBV and Harmful Traditional Practices in Liberia	UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNMIL	Yes	EVAW	1,804,577.00	24/11/2016	31/08/2021
12633 - EU-UN Spotlight Initiative - Liberia	UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, OHCHR	No	EVAW	7,917,460	06/08/2018	31/12/2023
13045 - Advancing implementation of UNSCRs on (WPS) through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)	UN Women, OHCHR	Yes	WPS	1,238,577.60	01/01/2020	30/06/2021
13065 - Advancing implementation of UNSCRs on (WPS) through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and (GRB)	UN Women, OHCHR	Yes	WPS	2,087,727.82	02/12/2019	27/11/2021
13075 - Sustaining Peace and Reconciliation through Strengthening Land Governance and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms	UN Women, WFP, UNDP	Yes	WPS	1,150,000.00	17/12/2019	15/01/2023
13739 - Promoting Inclusive Political Participation and Elimination of Violence Against Women in Politics	UN Women, UNDP	Yes	WPP	1,300,000.00	07/10/2021	07/01/2024
14458 - Enhancing peace and social cohesion through the promotion of equitable access to and use of land for rural women in conflict-prone communities and concession areas	UN Women, UNDP, WFP, AEDE	Yes	WPS	615,946.00	24/08/2023	09/10/2026
14601 - Accelerating Digital Opportunities for Youth Civic Participation as a lever for Building and Sustaining Peace in Liberia	UNFPA, UN Women, OHCHR	No	WPS	358,266.45	29/12/2023	25/01/2026
14423 - Empowering citizens and communities to foster social accountability and transparency in governance and public service delivery	UNDP, UN Women	No	WPP	11,669,797.20	10/10/2023	05/10/2026

Source: Developed by the evaluation team on the basis of data provided by the Country Office

FINDING 3

UN Women's value added in Liberia lies in its women's empowerment mandate and ability to leverage its coordination and normative mandates to advance the integration of women's issues across the UNCT and its processes. UN Women is known for its convening power in facilitating CSO-government relations and empowering local leadership.

The evaluation assessed the value-added of UN Women Liberia with respect to other actors working in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the country. Interviews and survey results, along with the desk review, confirmed that UN Women's value-added lies in its mandate as the entry point for gender equality. UN Women Liberia is viewed as a reliable and trusted partner, mostly in the domains of advocacy and convening, and strengthening national capacity in gender equality.

Most stakeholders interviewed for this CPE also confirmed that the Country Office has cultivated a strong reputation and recognition among stakeholders. The Country Office is seen as accessible and responsive, and through its triple mandate, a "trusted adviser" for government, donors and civil society partners. CSOs particularly mentioned that UN Women appears a natural partner in advocating for issues regarded as "culturally sensitive" such as the FGM ban law.³⁵ Donors and UN agencies highlighted UN Women's great convening power in mobilizing partnerships around joint issues which can further influence change at different levels, including partnerships at the ministerial level; and also confirmed that the foundation for much of the work related to gender equality in Liberia, including related to the elimination of FGM movement, was led by UN Women.

Another aspect of UN Women's added value in Liberia lies in its coordination mandate and co-leadership role at the UNCT level (see Finding 2). Stakeholders usually agreed that UN Women had the capacity to rally entities on issues related to gender equality, and effectively promote UN coordination and coherence on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Evidence shows that UN Women also plays an important role in supporting normative frameworks (as seen in Finding 1). Both coordination and normative work, mostly seen as policy advancement, have been considered a niche for UN Women in Liberia. This is also confirmed in the survey of internal personnel where 76 per cent (n=16/21) of respondents perceive that the UN Women Liberia Country Office has been effective in contributing to the achievement of its normative mandate in building capacity; 80 per cent (n=17/21) of respondents see effectiveness in providing technical support; and 71 per cent (n=15/21) of respondents agreed that UN Women Liberia has been effective in advocacy and

community mobilization as it relates to the normative mandate. Similarly, external stakeholders also perceive UN Women Liberia as effective in supporting the development of gender equality policies in the country (69 per cent n=11/16). Throughout the evaluation, the Country Office's support in developing national and sectoral gender equality policies has been recorded as a key achievement, notably in the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Youth and Development, Ministry of Gender and the Land Commission. All the government institutions mentioned above have developed and implemented a gender policy advancing gender equality in their respective institutions (see also Finding 7 on effectiveness).

Evaluations of Country Office programmes also point to capacity-building and the empowerment of women and institutions as an added value of UN Women in Liberia.³⁶ UN Women has successfully managed to reinforce the capacity of civil society representatives and officials who are now acting as change agents within their communities and institutions. This includes supporting capacity-building of gender focal points in ministries and agencies to promote gender-responsive institutions, especially in the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and Ministry of Gender. Similarly, through the Spotlight Initiative, UN Women contributed to the enhanced capacities and skills of over 68 women's rights groups and 136 CSOs.³⁷ In the context of land rights, through the Sustaining Peace project, UN Women contributed to increasing women's capacity for effective participation in land discussions, decision-making, dispute resolution, leadership, community development and peacebuilding activities. The Country Office was also successful in improving women's knowledge of land rights and access to and understanding of the Local Government Act and the Land Rights Act.³⁸

Finally, partners highlighted some challenges in how UN Women is viewed in Liberia. Evidence from key informant interviews related views that UN Women's processes are seen as being inflexible and bureaucratic, sometimes with inadequate coverage for management costs. There were also mixed views on the gender equality expertise of UN Women when it comes to leading on substantive issues either through personnel or external consultants.³⁹

35. Sometimes referred to as the "blanket ban", it relates to the declaration by traditional leaders in 2023 that all bush schools in Liberia should close and that FGM should stop being practiced. This ban was enforced through customary authority, not through legislation. The "Anti-FGM Bill" is a separate, formal piece of draft legislation introduced in the Legislature to criminalize and outlaw the practice of FGM nationwide. It is meant to turn the ban into statutory law, enforceable by the courts.

36. Evaluation of the GRB/WPS Joint Project: Advancing implementation of UNSCRs on WPS through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and gender-responsive budgeting, UN Women 2022; Final Report of the endline evaluation of the project promoting inclusive political participation and elimination of violence against women in politics, May 2024; Mid-term review of women's political empowerment and leadership project, March 2020.

37. Thematic Assessment: Assessing Spotlight Initiative's contribution to the engagement of civil society, the implementation of "leave no one behind" and movement building, Spotlight, 2024.

38. Final Evaluation report of the project "Sustaining Peace and Reconciliation through strengthening land governance and dispute resolution mechanisms in Liberia", UN Women, 2023.

39. Some challenges were noted in UN Women's ability to lead the drafting of the Gender Profile, which may be attributed to internal capacity constraints.

These appear to stem from the organization's broad engagement across complex policy areas (such as parliamentary processes and efforts to address FGM).

This was interpreted as indicative of a lack of commensurate depth in technical expertise or sustained leadership focus within each domain.

UN Women's contribution to the country's Universal Periodic Review submission appeared to reinforce this perspective.

EFFECTIVENESS

To what extent have UN Women Liberia's contributions advanced gender equality and the empowerment of women, including through UNSDCF outcomes?

FINDING 4

Between 2020 and 2024, UN Women Liberia made a modest but meaningful contribution to advancing women's political participation in Liberia. While national-level representation of women in elected office remained largely unchanged, the organization's multi-pronged approach contributed to enabling conditions for women's political engagement, particularly at the subnational level and within institutional frameworks. These efforts supported progress under UNSDCF Outcome 4, which focuses on inclusive, accountable and transparent governance.

Less than half of external survey respondents (44 per cent; N=16) rated UN Women's support as "very effective" in mobilizing constituencies around the gender agenda. Technical assistance for gender mainstreaming and the Country Office's advocacy role around landmark reforms, such as the electoral quota and anti-FGM bills, also received strong marks: the majority of respondents (63 per cent; N=16) deemed performance "very effective," and only two recorded any level of dissatisfaction. Between 81 and 94 per cent (N=16) of respondents were "somewhat" or "very" satisfied with how well programmes address root causes of gender inequality, identify marginalized groups and provide integrated policy advice.

Capacity-strengthening efforts mirrored that pattern: more than four fifths felt UN Women was at least somewhat effective in supporting national and UN partners, although confidence dropped slightly (to two thirds positive) when rating support to local government.

UN Women's approach was both strategic and adaptive, implemented through six interlinked projects that spanned from 2021 to 2024. These initiatives were designed around three core pillars: promoting inclusive participation and protection from political violence; advancing gender-responsive electoral processes; and fostering transformative leadership and social accountability. Through these pillars, the Country Office addressed both social and institutional barriers to women's political empowerment.

The first pillar focused on creating safer and more inclusive political spaces for women. Projects such as "Supporting electoral processes and electoral commission on gender integration and addressing EAW in politics" worked to reduce violence against women in politics and promote

women's leadership at the grassroots level. The second pillar targeted systemic change within electoral institutions. Through the Liberia Electoral Support Projects, the Country Office collaborated with the National Elections Commission to mainstream gender across the electoral cycle, develop gender-sensitive protocols and enhance voter education. The third pillar emphasized building leadership capacity and accountability. Initiatives such as the Transformative Leadership for WPP project empowered grassroots women to participate in local governance and peacebuilding, while a parallel project on social accountability integrated gender perspectives into local governance and anti-corruption efforts.

At the institutional level, the Country Office supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Women's Legislative Caucus and the National Elections Commission in advocating for a 30 per cent gender quota in the Elections Law. Although the proposed amendment has not yet been passed, these advocacy efforts contributed to development of the National Elections Commission's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy and the widespread adoption of the Protocol on Violence Against Women in Elections and Politics,⁴⁰ which was signed by 29 of 33 political parties. However, enforcement of these commitments has been inconsistent. In the 2023 elections, only two of nine political parties met the 30 per cent quota, and women made up just 15.5 per cent of all candidates.⁴¹

Despite stagnation at the national level, where women continued to hold only 10.7 per cent of the 107 seats in the legislature,⁴² localized improvements were evident. In Grand Cape Mount County, women won three of four House seats, and in Grand Gedeh, a woman was elected for the first time in District #2.⁴³ These successes coincided with intensive campaign training provided by the Country Office,

which supported over 160 women candidates and campaign team members.⁴⁴ Additionally, women's representation in appointed positions improved. Between 2023 and 2024, the proportion of women in ministerial roles increased from 26.3 per cent to 35 per cent, and deputy ministerial roles rose from 23 per cent to 31 per cent.⁴⁵ At the county level, women held 11 per cent of appointed positions, up from 8 per cent the previous year (LISGIS 2024, Table 7.2).⁴⁶ These gains were supported by UN Women's training and policy engagement, particularly through work with Peace Huts in Gbarpolu and Grand Gedeh counties.

UN Women Liberia also played a key role in strengthening coordination and institutional practices. As a convener of the Electoral Gender Task Force and a partner to the National Elections Commission, UNDP and civil society, the Country Office helped improve gender mainstreaming in electoral processes.⁴⁷ Notably, the 2023 elections marked the first time the National Elections Commission published gender-disaggregated data on voters and candidates, following capacity-building efforts led by UN Women.

BOX 2. Summary of WPP efforts undertaken by the country office

Key streams of work (outputs 4.4-4.6) Women Leadership and Political Participation

- Capacities of institutions: Strengthened capacity of political institutions and electoral stakeholders have strengthened capacity to promote gender balance (National Legislature, National Elections Commission and political parties) and strengthen legal and policy frameworks to enable women's leadership and participation.
- Capacities of individuals/women: Women leaders in Liberia, including aspirants and elected women, have increased technical capacity to engage in leadership contests, apply leadership skills and mentor young women.
- Advocacy: Communities and civil society have an increased understanding of gender equality and women's right to political participation through advocacy and social mobilization

Total investment: US\$ 2.41 million

Key initiatives

- Supporting electoral processes and the elections commission on gender integration and addressing EVAW in politics, including advocacy for mandatory quotas and capacity-building, jointly with UNDP; community transformation interventions; capacity-building training on transformative leadership; advocacy skills and mediation and conflict resolution to women leaders, peace hut women and local community-based organizations; and work to advocate with male leaders and influencers at local level promoting increased participation of women in electoral process and local peace building efforts.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

40. According to UNDP, "29 out of 33 registered political parties signed a Violence Against Women in Elections and Politics (VAWiE/P) protocol" committing to prevent and respond to electoral violence against women (UNDP, 2022).

41. Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, 2023, p. 8.

42. IPU Parline: global data on national parliaments, September 2024.

43. UN press release on International Women's Day 2024, UN Liberia website, March 2024.

44. Annual Work Plan Report – 2023, statement in response to Question 1.

45. UN press release on International Women's Day 2024, United Nations Liberia website, March 2024.

46. LBR Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services. 2023 Annual Gender Statistics Bulletin. Feb. 2024.

47. UN Women Liberia's role as a convener in advancing women's political participation is widely recognized by public institutions, media and civil society stakeholders. For example, its partnership with the National Elections Commission on combating violence against women in politics was highlighted by Women Voices Newspaper (2023). [Women Voices Newspaper, "NEC with VAWIE-P: We Can Effectively Fight Violence Against Women in Politics," 2023.]

However, systemic challenges remain. Weak enforcement of voluntary quotas, limited access to campaign financing⁴⁸ and entrenched patriarchal norms within political parties continue to hinder transformative progress.

UN Women Liberia's WPP portfolio has laid important groundwork for advancing women's political participation.

While national-level representation has not significantly improved, the Country Office's efforts have fostered localized gains, strengthened institutional frameworks and empowered women at multiple levels of governance.



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48. Although the new IBSA-funded project will not tackle the financial underfunding of female candidates, it is designed to empower women legislators in Liberia. Supported by BRICS funding channeled through the IBSA Fund (India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation), the US\$ 1 million project "Promoting Voice, Leadership, and Gender-Responsive Governance" focuses on strengthening Liberian women representatives to: (i) Integrate gender perspectives into legislation and advocate for laws advancing women's empowerment; (ii) advance gender-responsive budgeting and hold authorities accountable for rectifying gender disparities in government policies, programmes and service delivery; and (iii) enhance representation of constituent interests while promoting increased women's participation in politics, public leadership and elections, contributing to sustainable development.

FINDING 5

UN Women Liberia's Women's Economic Empowerment portfolio contributed meaningfully to the UNSDCF objective of diversified and inclusive growth. This was achieved through expanded climate-smart livelihoods, digital markets and foundational skills, i.e. literacy for rural women. Community platforms such as Peace Huts and Village Savings and Loan Associations strengthened women's agency and enhanced local participation in economic decisions. However, limitations in outcome tracking and systemic integration constrained the evaluation's ability to fully assess long-term impact and sustainability.

BOX 3. Summary of efforts on WEE undertaken by the country office

Key streams of work (outputs 2.2.1-2.2.3)

- Rural women, including young women, rural communities and local authorities are aware of their rights and existing accountability mechanisms under the Land Rights Act for their equal access to, control and ownership of land for agricultural production.
- Rural women have access to Second Chance Education, vocational skills, finance and are better organized in strong cooperatives around agricultural value chains.
- Women entrepreneurs, including young women, have increased access to markets for their products through digital literacy, financial and digital services (ICT) (e.g. Buy from Women, Orange Money).

Total investment: US\$ 612,109

Key initiatives

- Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women
- Digital Inclusion for Women's Economic Empowerment

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

Between 2020 and 2024, UN Women Liberia implemented a WEE portfolio that contributed to the national goal of diversified and inclusive economic growth. Through two initiatives – Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women and Digital Inclusion for Women's Economic Empowerment (D4WEE) – the Country Office supported the expansion of rural women's access to functional literacy, financial services, digital markets and climate-smart agricultural practices.

These initiatives were strategically aligned with the UNSDCF, and aimed to foster inclusive growth and resilience. They introduced tools such as the Buy from Women platform and Women's Digital Centres, while also strengthening traditional community structures such as the

Peace Huts and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). Together, these efforts enhanced women's agency, economic participation and access to productive resources.

The reach of the WEE portfolio appeared notable with over 1,161 women reportedly having participated in literacy and business skills training; more than 3,600 women reportedly benefitting from agricultural support by 2024; and 98 cooperatives supported to engage in post-harvest value addition.⁴⁹ Interviews with women in the field reported transformative changes in their lives such as increased confidence; ability to read and write; and greater involvement in community decision-making (see Box 4).

49. The number is reported by the Country Office in its 2024 Annual Report.

BOX 4. Notes from the field visit – sua-yelle multipurpose cooperative (gbartala; bong county)

Participants spoke about the benefits of the literacy training they had received. They expressed how proud they were of being able to read, write and use numbers. They also mentioned their newly acquired business skills, which help them to start businesses and, in turn, provide food and pay school fees. One woman spoke about how after learning to read and write, she felt more empowered to speak up at meetings. She feels that her voice is now heard, and due to this empowerment, she became a Clan Chairlady. Other woman spoke about how learning to read, write and use numbers led to learning about land measurements, which allowed her to have her own business on land measurement. Her earnings are used to pay for food and school fees.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team based on the field visit.

Partnerships played a critical role in scaling these efforts. Collaborations with Orange, the Central Bank and rural cooperatives facilitated access to mobile banking, digital marketplaces and renewable energy technologies. In 2024, the Country Office reported that Buy from Women platform generated over US\$ 182,000 in revenue,⁵⁰ supporting more than 600 women entrepreneurs in accessing digital marketplaces. Although modest at individual level, field testimonies indicate that even such gains have begun to translate into tangible benefits: women described using profits to buy farm inputs, pay school fees and register small businesses, citing greater confidence and voice in local decision-making as a result.

D4WEE introduced Women's Digital Centres in Bong and Grand Bassa; and reported supporting more than 3,000 women in accessing digital services; and facilitating 207 new user registrations on the Buy from Women platform in 2024. Additionally, 450 women reportedly joined mobile banking platforms via Orange.⁵¹ Interviews with internal UN Women personnel emphasized that effective implementation could be seen in practical results: equipment installed and functioning, training delivered and the women interviewed reported confidently using their phones to check market prices and manage messages on their own.⁵²

However, this also highlights a limitation: a focus on output delivery versus outcome post-intervention. Regular data collection on income trends, or improved market access among users was limited, making it difficult to draw conclusions about sustained empowerment. As already uncovered by an impact assessment by D4WEE,⁵³ digital access and literacy challenges may have hindered equitable uptake, particularly among women in remote or under-served areas. These constraints mirror broader findings in another evaluation,⁵⁴ which noted that some tech-enabled initiatives were introduced without sufficiently robust needs assessments or user co-design processes, potentially leading to misalignments between platform features and actual user needs.

Although these efforts expanded access, outcome verification remains an area for growth. Using measures such as digital literacy improvement, frequency of platform usage or volume of online sales could significantly strengthen future programming.

In the agricultural empowerment and climate resilience area, UN Women Liberia invested in improving rural women's access to agricultural equipment, climate-smart techniques and processing support. Participants interviewed during the field visit reported increased activity in cassava and vegetable value chains as evidence of impact; although the absence of baseline yield data and follow-up measurement limited the evaluation's ability to fully quantify the impact. External factors, such as severe flooding during 2020–21, also created challenges for implementation in some counties.

Nutrition was not framed as a stand-alone component in the Strategic Note or project documents. Instead, outcomes in this area were achieved indirectly through agriculture and energy initiatives. For example, women's cooperatives supplying diverse crops to school feeding programmes, and the use of clean energy solutions for food processing and cooking. The D4WEE programme further contributed by equipping 17 cooperatives with solar dryers, stoves, and agro-processing tools, thereby strengthening food security and sustainable livelihoods. In addition, a cohort of women was trained and engaged as Orange Energy Agents.⁵⁵ However, these outcomes were not systematically tracked. UN Women Liberia's WEE portfolio demonstrated strong alignment with national development goals and achieved visible progress in expanding access, piloting innovations and fostering partnerships. To fully realize and sustain these contributions, future programming must strengthen outcome monitoring, ensure equitable access and deepen integration with local economic systems.

50. The numbers were presented as part of the 6th Technical Committee Meeting of Digital Inclusion Initiative for WEE (17 December 2024). This was not verified by the evaluation team.

51. Ibid.

52. Reflections session on the D4WEE in May 2024.

53. Sustainability and Impact Assessment of the D4WEE Project in Lofa, Bong, and Nimba Counties, Dec. 2023, p. 11.

54. Corporate formative evaluation of UN Women's approach to innovation, IEAS, 2021.

55. Orange Energy Agents refer to women that have been trained as part of the partnership with UN Women to provide/market for both mobile money services and renewable energy equipment. Reported as part of the D4WEE partnership with Orange, October 2023 pp. 3,4

TABLE 2. Key interventions and reported achievements

Initiative and location	Core support areas	Illustrative achievements 2020–2024
Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (WEE-10418) in Bong, Nimba, Lofa and Grand Gedeh. Leveraging Digital Inclusion for the Economic Empowerment and Resilience to Disasters of Rural Women (D4WEE) in Bong, Grand Bassa and Montserrado.	• Functional literacy and business skills. • Productive assets and climate-smart farming inputs. • Access to finance via Village Savings and Loans Associations and cooperatives. • Legal and rights awareness. • Digital literacy and Women's Digital Centres. • Buy from Women e-commerce platform. • Mobile banking and financial services. • Climate-resilient technologies (solar dryers, energy agents).	– Literacy and business modules delivered to rural women. – Farming groups equipped with tools, seeds and post-harvest support. – Village Savings and Loans Associations expanded women's ability to save and borrow, with testimonies citing higher confidence and household decision-making. – Buy from Women connected rural cooperatives to online buyers. – Women's Digital Centres provided ICT training and market-access coaching. – Solar dryers and other technologies supplied to enhance post-harvest resilience.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

FINDING 6

UN Women Liberia contributed to the national EAW agenda by supporting advocacy for the abandonment of FGM; strengthening community-based prevention; and influencing national policy and coordination frameworks. However, challenges remain in ensuring consistent coverage, sustained funding and full implementation of legal and policy commitments.

Several survey respondents added open comments calling for a broader geographic footprint beyond the five Spotlight counties and for longer funding cycles to protect advancements made through community platforms such as the Peace Huts and heritage centres.

UN Women Liberia's Strategic Note focuses on ending violence against women and girls mainly through the Spotlight Initiative, with particular emphasis on uprooting the social norms that enable FGM, intimate-partner violence and other forms of violence against women. This strategic focus responds to Liberia's persistently high rates of violence against women and the continued social

acceptance of such practices, as detailed in the Section 2. of this report.⁵⁶ The Spotlight Initiative was launched in 2019 and blends advocacy for stronger legal and policy frameworks with community-driven prevention campaigns and survivor-centred services, linking national-level reform to grassroots change.

BOX 5. Summary of EAW efforts undertaken by the country office

Key streams of work (Output 1,1; 1.2, 1.3.1.4) EAW

- Advocacy: Community members and networks have increased knowledge about their rights and responsibilities on gender norms, attitudes, behaviours and on the negative impacts of sexual and gender-based violence, Harmful Practices and HIV/AIDS.
- Capacity-building: Enhancing the capacities of key decision makers, including traditional and religious leaders, Paramount Chiefs and traditional practitioners (including Zoes), the media, private sector institutions (including key decision makers), and women's rights and relevant CSOs (organizational capacities) to advocate to end violence against women and girls, including FGM.

Total investment: US\$ 1.63 million

Key initiatives

The Spotlight Initiative was the main programmatic tool for addressing violence against women: efforts range from strengthening capacities of CSOs, advocacy, building vocational and heritage centres, developing prevention strategies.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

56. See Section 2. Evaluation Context on prevalence of violence against women and attitudes.

UN Women was formally assigned leadership roles in four of the six inter-connected outcome areas of the Liberia Spotlight Initiative (see Table 3), giving the entity substantive responsibility for the normative, prevention and civil-society strands of the programme, while sharing institutional-capacity work with UNDP. Two of Spotlight's components, legal reform and survivor services (Pillars 1 and 4) have shown how targeted interventions can begin to shift institutional practice. UN Women Liberia helped equip police investigators, medical examiners, prosecutors and court clerks in the five Spotlight counties with survivor-friendly protocols and mobile equipment to facilitate reporting and improve the flow of prosecutable files to the fast-track court system. Meanwhile, almost 300 former FGM practitioners in Bong, Nimba, Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount and Lofa were reported to have completed alternative-livelihood training in climate-smart agriculture, business management and tailoring. With support from the Spotlight Initiative, they became leaders in the vocational and heritage centres which advocated for transforming initiation practices without mutilation under the mantra "Initiation without Mutilation".⁵⁷ While the criminalization of FGM remains pending and enforcement

of the Domestic Violence Act could benefit from more systematic tracking, these initiatives represent positive steps towards legal and policy coherence. Service delivery mechanisms – including one-stop centres and referral systems – expanded into five counties (Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Nimba, Lofa and Grand Gedeh), establishing tangible platforms that can be further institutionalized with time and investment. While physical hubs and referral platforms are effective entry points, their ultimate impact depends on continued investments in county budgets and regular skills-building for police, health and social workers.⁵⁸

In the area of institutional capacity (Pillar 2), efforts to train over 900 personnel⁵⁹ and strengthen coordination frameworks marked an important commitment to system-building. While sustaining these capacities beyond project timelines remains a known challenge, these initial investments have created a critical foundation upon which longer-term institutional partnerships can be built. Work on transforming social norms (Pillar 3), contributed to broad outreach through community dialogues and male engagement platforms. Although evaluations⁶⁰ suggest

BOX 6. Summary of EVAW efforts undertaken by the country office

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

A national moratorium issued in February 2022 suspended all FGM for an initial three-year period while legislators considered a permanent law. UN Women used this breathing space to intensify community dialogue and help 300 former cutters transition to climate-smart farming, tailoring and small retail, backed by four vocational and heritage centres. Traditional leaders then declared a comprehensive ban on 6 February 2023 that applies to all FGM rituals in every community under their authority and publicly surrendered their tools in four high-prevalence counties. The next step will consist of translating the ban into a statute that criminalizes FGM nationwide. This implies partnering with the National Coalition Against Harmful Practices to draft and lobby an Anti-FGM Bill, organizing constituency consultations and engaging with the Women's Caucus in Parliament.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT (DVA)

Liberia's Domestic Violence Act, adopted in August 2019 with UN Women's technical support, broadened criminal liability to include physical, psychological and economic abuse and set felony penalties for aggravated offences. Implementation, however, is uneven. To operationalize the law, the government and UN partners launched the Anti Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Road Map in 2021 and police investigators, medical examiners and court clerks were trained on case-flow management. Spotlight 2.0 will strengthen a nationwide data system and help the Ministry of Justice embed indicators related to the Domestic Violence Act in the national crime statistics platform.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

57. [Field visit report](#) from Sonkay Town Vocational and Heritage Centre.

58. Follow-up interviews with UN Women personnel.

59. Spotlight Initiative 2019–2023 Final Narrative Report, p. 12.

60. Spotlight Initiative, Mid-term Assessment Report, 2021; Spotlight Initiative Thematic Assessment on the contribution to the engagement of civil society, the implementation of "leave no one behind" and movement building, 2024; UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office, Final Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative (2017–2023), October 2024.

shifts in attitudes will take longer to materialize, the awareness raised and partnerships forged offer an encouraging basis for deepening future prevention strategies. Pilot programmes introducing alternative rites of passage for FGM demonstrated culturally sensitive innovation, even if their geographic reach was limited in this first phase.

Systemic enablers were also addressed through data and civil society engagement (Pillars 5 and 6). The standardization

of GBV indicators and integration of gender-disaggregated data into national systems showed growing awareness of the value of evidence-based policy.⁶¹ Similarly, the funding of 71 CSOs and establishment of county-level secretariats strengthened grassroots capacity and promoted collaboration between state and non-state actors. While some partners noted the need for earlier and more sustained engagement, overall, the Spotlight Initiative helped elevate the role of women's rights organizations in Liberia's EVAW context.

TABLE 3. The six outcome pillars of the spotlight initiative

Spotlight pillar (outcome area)	Lead/co-lead agency	Focus
1 – Legislative and policy frameworks	Lead: UN Women (co-lead UNFPA)	Drafting, amending and advancing laws that criminalize FGM, strengthening the Domestic Violence Act and closing other legal gaps.
2 – Institutional strengthening	Lead: UNDP (co-lead: UN Women)	Building the capacity, budgeting and accountability systems of justice, security and social service institutions.
3 – Prevention and social norms	Lead: UN Women (co-leads UNICEF and UNFPA)	Large-scale behaviour-change and male-engagement campaigns that challenge harmful norms and promote positive masculinities.
4 – Quality, essential services	Lead: UNFPA (co-lead UNDP)	Expanding survivor-centred health, psychosocial and legal services.
5 – Data and evidence	Lead: UNFPA (co-lead UNICEF)	Strengthening national GBV data systems and evidence-based policymaking.
6 – Women's movements and civil society	Lead: UN Women (co-lead UNDP)	Funding and coaching CSOs to advocate, monitor and hold duty bearers accountable.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

61. Liberia's progress in GBV data coordination (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Health), standardized reporting, trend analysis and development of a manual GBV Information Management System are detailed in "Liberia Spotlight Initiative - Final Narrative Programme Report" p.43

FINDING 7

UN Women Liberia's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) portfolio evolved into a two-pronged strategy that simultaneously supported grassroots engagement and institutional reform. This approach enabled the Country Office to engage across both community and policy levels, positioning it as a key actor in Liberia's post-conflict peacebuilding landscape. While the portfolio has made significant advances in expanding women's participation in peace and security processes, the coherence between its support to community-based interventions and policy-level reforms needs further development.

UN Women Liberia's WPS portfolio has been characterized by a two-pronged approach that supports both local engagement and institutional reform. Community-driven projects⁶² focused on reconciliation and women's grassroots visibility, while institutionally focused initiatives complemented these community projects by targeting systemic levers such as gender budgeting, policy planning and regulatory frameworks. For instance, the Gender-Responsive Planning and Land Governance &

Sustained Peace initiatives promoted a systemic (i.e. both institutional and structural) understanding of WPS by engaging with public financing and land governance institutions representing a distinct approach compared to interventions centred on service delivery and training. This strategic combination reflects the recognition that peacebuilding in post-conflict Liberia depends on effective land tenure reform, natural resource governance and gender-inclusive policy processes.

BOX 7. Summary of WPS efforts undertaken by the country office

Key streams of work (outputs 4.1; 4.2.1; 4.2.2; 4.2.3) WPS

- Policy and legal frameworks: support to development of the second National Action Plan and policy on gender-responsive budgeting to finance the National Action Plan, gender policies (Land Commission, Armed Forces, Ministry of Youth).
- Capacities: strengthen capacities to promote gender equality at institution level – ministries and security institutions, also at community level on land rights and tracking implementation of National Action Plans, representatives of youth organizations.
- Partnerships and coordination: Gender Security Sector National Taskforce, Land Donor Working Group, Disabled Persons Organizations.
- Community level: Peace Huts standard operating procedures and integration with VSLAs.

Total investment: US\$ 0.93 million

Key initiatives

Advancing implementing of UNSCR on WPS through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and gender-responsive budgeting, as well as interventions on peace and reconciliation through land governance and dispute resolution mechanisms; and integration and participation of youth population for building peace.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team

62. Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund Community Peacebuilding and Legislative Reform & Reconciliation.

While this two-track strategy has broadened the portfolio's thematic scope, linkages between grassroots efforts and policy-level change are still being strengthened. Although efforts to build design coherence are under way, these connections remain under development due to the inherent complexity of integrating multi-level interventions.

At the community level, UN Women invested in strengthening local peace infrastructure through initiatives such as the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund's Community Peacebuilding and Legislative Reform & Reconciliation projects. Over 150 women were reportedly trained as peace monitors in rural areas, supporting early warning and violence prevention across 145 communities.⁶³ During the evaluation field visits, local leaders and community members confirmed that Peace Huts, such as Bo Waterside in Grand Cape Mount County, served as trusted spaces for mediation and collaboration with local police. The Peace Huts' work in domestic violence prevention and their collaboration with the Liberia National Police directly contributed to local early warning systems. Peace Huts and Atayee Centres were reactivated under the *Civic Engagement* initiative,⁶⁴ offering spaces for women and youth to engage in dialogue with political actors and resolve local conflicts. During the field visit, participants in focus group discussions reported no sexual and gender-based violence cases in two years, attributing this to the preventive work of Peace Hut leaders. These platforms also facilitated civic education and dialogue, with women comprising over 50 per cent of participants in reconciliation planning across seven counties.⁶⁵

UN Women Liberia also supported women's involvement in land governance and natural resource management, critical areas in Liberia's peacebuilding context.⁶⁶ Projects such as Land & Concessions for Peace and Land Governance & Sustained Peace supported the formation of 38 community land development committees and supported inclusive land access dialogues.⁶⁷ In Gonzodua, community-led land surveying empowered residents to negotiate with concession companies over unpaid land rental fees. However, challenges such as limited institutional capacity, fragmented coordination and resistance to land formalization continue to hinder the full realization of gender-responsive land governance. These challenges are compounded by broader technical challenges faced by the Government of Liberia in implementing the Land Rights Act and Local Government Act, including limited institutional capacity, understaffed and under-resourced county land offices, and fragmented coordination among sector ministries, agencies and non-governmental organizations.⁶⁸ Overall, gender-responsive land governance programming has increased in visibility and

awareness, but stronger institutional accountability mechanisms are still required.

These efforts broadened the reach and visibility of women in peacebuilding, especially at the community level. While most results were concentrated in horizontal spaces such as local dialogue platforms and reconciliation processes, the groundwork laid by these initiatives, including the reactivation of Peace Huts and Atayee Centres, helped normalize women's active presence in civic and conflict resolution spaces. For example, Peace Hut leaders began contributing to civic education efforts. Although evidence of formal policy influence remains limited at this stage, the establishment of trusted community structures and the consistent inclusion of women in local peace efforts represent important steps towards deeper institutional engagement over time.

Institutionally, UN Women Liberia supported the integration of gender priorities into national and country-level planning and budgeting through the Gender Responsive Initiative. A unique element of the WPS portfolio emerged from this initiative, which sought to strengthen the structural foundations of the WPS agenda by integrating gender priorities into core state functions – specifically national and county-level planning, public budgeting and institutional accountability systems. The Country Office reported⁶⁹ that five ministries and agencies (including one security institution) allocated a 2 per cent funding increase (US\$ 250,000) for justice and security services protecting women, specifically aimed at enhancing gender-responsive budgeting practices in their planning and budget management. This was accompanied by enhanced technical capacity among planning officers to apply gender-responsive budgeting tools. Interviews with governmental stakeholders confirmed the positive contribution of UN Women Liberia in strengthening governmental officials' awareness of gender-responsive budgeting.

Additional normative progress was observed in the security sector through UN Women's advocacy and capacity-building support, including direct engagement with the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Gender Security Sector National Task Force. This collaboration drove concrete policy reforms and measurable⁷⁰ increases in women's participation: female representation in the Armed Forces of Liberia rose from 3 per cent in 2022 to 7 per cent in 2025. Policy changes now allow pregnant servicewomen to remain on active duty with maternity leave protections. These institutional shifts – advanced through sustained partnership with the Armed Forces of Liberia's Gender and Social Inclusion Department, the Ministry of Defence and

63. Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund Community Peacebuilding, project report of December 2023.

64. Digital Civic Engagement, project report of November 2024.

65. Legislative Reform & Reconciliation, project report of December 2021.

66. Land & Concessions for Peace and Land Governance & Sustained Peace.

67. Land Governance & Sustained Peace, project report of June 2023.

68. Evaluation of the Land Governance & Sustained Peace Initiative, project report of July 2023.

69. UN Women Liberia, Annual report 2024, p.3.

70. Interviews indicated that the Armed Forces of Liberia increased female representation from just 3 per cent in 2022 to 7 per cent in 2025, with the goal of reaching 15 per cent by 2028.

the Task Force – are contributing to transforming gender norms in Liberia's security architecture. Related reforms were also supported within the Liberia National Police, Liberia Immigration Service and the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Broader perception shifts were also documented, such as increased social acceptance of women's land rights and leadership, as captured in the WPS team perception study⁷¹ conducted in 2024. Notably, a Gender Security Sector National Taskforce Secretariat was established within the Ministry of Justice and made operational.

UN Women Liberia also contributed to expanding women's access to justice and protection. "Peace desks" were established in three counties, and a mobile app for confidential GBV reporting was validated.⁷² Legal aid and psychosocial support services reportedly reached 53 women,⁷³ and 150 women were reported as trained in legal advocacy, resulting in five legal reform proposals submitted to national committees.⁷⁴

While these efforts were both relevant and timely, reflecting a strong commitment to expanding access to justice and survivor support, they were limited in scale. At the time of reporting, evidence of prosecutions, formal redress or structured follow-up services resulting directly from these initiatives had not yet emerged. Similarly, advocacy led to

the drafting of two human rights-based laws, although these proposals had not advanced to parliamentary debate or enactment. Given the complexity of these outcomes and the institutional shifts they require, such results may extend beyond the current Strategic Note period. While the interventions contributed to improved procedural access and legal awareness, the deeper institutional accountability needed to sustain these gains had not yet fully materialized.

In addition, linkages between community-level support mechanisms – such as Peace Huts and paralegal referrals – and the formal justice system are still evolving. Strengthening these connections offers an opportunity to ensure that grassroots efforts translate into more durable, system-wide protections for women and girls – an objective that may also require continued engagement beyond the existing programming cycle.

A key challenge across the portfolio has been the sustainability of community-based platforms. While Peace Huts, councils, land committees and CSO coalitions played vital roles in peacebuilding and civil engagement, few projects included mechanisms to institutionalize or finance these structures beyond the life of the project, according to implementing partners and interview participants. For example, the Digital Civic Engagement evaluation revealed that some CSOs trained to engage in civic dialogue lacked basic eligibility (such as bank accounts) for future funding or grant partnerships.⁷⁵ Similarly, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund Community Peacebuilding and Legislative Reform & Reconciliation initiatives did not establish mechanisms to integrate Peace Hut activities into local government planning or budgets. Despite this, youth and women-led organizations involved in the Digital Civic Engagement project benefitted from digital literacy and advocacy training, which reportedly⁷⁶ enhanced their ability to engage in civic dialogue and social media-based peacebuilding.

UN Women Liberia's WPS portfolio has made important contributions to both grassroots peacebuilding and institutional reform. It has expanded women's visibility and participation in conflict resolution, land governance and security sector reform. However, to fully realize the transformative potential of this work, stronger linkages between community-level initiatives and formal policy systems are needed, along with sustained investment in institutional accountability and the long-term viability of local peace platforms.

BOX 8. Advancing the WPS agenda through youth-led digital innovation

Launched in 2024, the Youth Promotion Initiative was designed to digitize youth-led Atayee centres and women-led Peace Huts and turn them into civic tech hubs for peacebuilding. Through training on digital advocacy, storytelling and campaign design, the initiative aimed to expand digital access for 2,000 young people across Lofa and Montserrado counties; instill renewed energy in community organizing; and provide stronger youth visibility in peacebuilding dialogues.

However, as seen in WEE-related digital initiatives, the translation of access to technologies into sustained empowerment remains a work in progress. Institutional absorption of these digital efforts is still nascent, and the platforms' long-term viability may depend on continued investment, connectivity infrastructure and integration with formal governance systems.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

71. Perceptions, Gender and Power Analysis: Endline analysis of the "Sustaining Peace and Reconciliation through Strengthening Land Governance and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms" Project.

72. Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund Community Peacebuilding, project report of March 2024.

73. Land & Concessions for Peace, evaluation report of July 2023.

74. Legislative Reform & Reconciliation, project report of December 2024.

75. A financial and technical assessment conducted under the Digital Civic Engagement project revealed that of 12 CSOs assessed, three had no bank accounts and the others lacked standard financial management systems – highlighting gaps that could limit their eligibility for future funding.

Digital Civic Engagement, progress report of November 2024.

76. Digital Civic Engagement, project report of November 2024.

FINDING 8

UN Women Liberia is following a credible pathway to sustaining and deepening gender equality and women's empowerment results beyond 2024. Gender-responsive national policies and budgets have been institutionalized; women-led community structures raise and manage their own resources; and private-sector partnerships for women's economic empowerment increase the potential for market incentives. However, these successes will only be sustained if the emergent measures are protected from legislative backsliding, under-financed infrastructure and uneven market access.

There are encouraging signs that the gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes supported by UN Women in Liberia are likely to be sustained over time. At national level, gender-equality commitments are no longer project promises but institutional commitments. The National Elections Commission's 2024 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy sits inside the new electoral-support project budget, complete with departmental mandates and annual performance targets.⁷⁷ The Violence Against Women in Elections and Politics protocol, endorsed by 29 of Liberia's 31 political parties,⁷⁸ continues to operate through a joint National Elections Commission–Liberia National Police complaints platform that issues quarterly public reports. Complementing these reforms, five ministries and one security agency have raised their gender-responsive budget lines by 2 per cent, earmarking approximately US\$ 250,000 in Fiscal Year 2024/25 for justice and security services that protect women.⁷⁹ Because these provisions are fully costed and planning officers have been trained to apply gender-responsive budgeting tools, there is a realistic chance that funding ear-marked for gender will remain in national planning and budgeting documents. This is indeed an instance where a programme is successfully embedded in national systems.

The durability of gender-responsive reform is further reinforced by domestic champions. The National Council of Chiefs and Elders is believed to have continued to uphold the February 2023 nationwide ban on FGM and leads county-level radio outreach to publicize the ban. At community level, local service and accountability mechanisms present a similar picture of self-reliance. Peace Huts, VSLAs and Community Land-Development and Management Committees operate under their own by-laws, collect dues and elect leaders. Field interviews confirmed that VSLAs have already attracted additional groups without donor subsidy, while Peace Huts remain the preferred entry point for domestic-violence mediation, according to community members. Although women-run VSLAs and digitized cooperatives now generate their own working capital, they still face weak bargaining power when negotiating bulk sales, indicating a need for stronger market linkages.

Private-sector engagement adds another layer of sustainability. The Administration of the Buy from Women e-commerce platform has been contractually transferred to Orange Liberia, which is now responsible for hosting, maintenance and marketing. If sustained, this private-sector partnership could expand the customer base.

The outlook is encouraging, yet three potential risks could undermine the momentum if left unattended. First, if the Women's Legislative Caucus sustains the 30 per cent quota debate in Parliament using newly secured IBSA funding, this momentum (combined with institutionalized budget lines and visible champions) could significantly reduce the risk of reform rollback once external funding ends. Without a legal requirement, current voluntary compliance by political parties may diminish.

Second, infrastructure maintenance is not yet assured. Agro-processing equipment transferred to the cooperatives (e.g. the Sua-Yelle and Bong Poultry cooperatives) require user fees or local support to be kept in working order. Spotlight-funded vocational and heritage centres now sit under county traditional councils, but field observation and community feedback indicated that solar panels are idle, and water pumps are barely functional, showing that the asset-transfer model requires explicit county maintenance budgets.

Third, market access for women-led cooperatives and groups remains fragile. Although VSLAs, digitized savings schemes and cooperatives such as Sua-Yelle and Bong Poultry have begun generating their own working capital, they continue to face limited negotiating power with bulk buyers and weak connections to larger value chains. The Buy from Women platform, now managed by Orange Liberia, offers potential to address this gap, but its reach is not yet sufficient to guarantee stable markets. Without stronger linkages to national and regional buyers, the gains made by women-led enterprises risk being confined to subsistence-level trading rather than translating into sustained economic empowerment.

77. National Elections Commission Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy (2023–2027)

78. National Elections Commission of Liberia. (2023, October 4). NEC, partners launch protocol to end violence against women in elections [Press release].

79. UN Women Liberia, Annual Report 2024, p.3

GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Has the portfolio been designed and implemented in accordance with human rights and leave no one behind principles, while considering disability perspectives, social and environmental safeguards and development effectiveness principles (ensuring national ownership and sustainability of programming efforts)?

FINDING 9

UN Women Liberia's interventions have been designed with an explicit commitment to disability inclusion and the leave no one behind principle, frequently adopting a gender-responsive and human rights-based approach. However, the effectiveness of this intent has been mixed during implementation, with notable gaps in systematically reaching and integrating the most marginalized groups, particularly persons with disabilities, across all programme stages and at subnational levels.

UN Women Liberia has consistently framed its programmes with an inclusion perspective, aiming to reach diverse marginalized populations including women, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ individuals and people living with HIV/AIDS. Projects such as the Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership Programme and GRB/WPS Joint Project explicitly applied frameworks such as the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy during their review and design phases to assess and promote inclusivity. The Liberian Electoral Support Project also mainstreamed human rights and gender, focusing on inclusion and targeting vulnerable groups such as women and persons with disabilities as strategic priorities. Similarly, an inclusive practice in peacebuilding and security-sector initiatives has brought Disabled People's Organizations into coordination platforms alongside government and donor groups. The Sustaining Peace and Reconciliation Project integrated gender equality and human rights considerations into its design, specifically targeting women and youth and ensuring the participation of individuals with disabilities in data collection processes. This collaborative approach, involving various stakeholders including national commissions on disability, has been a strength in laying an inclusive conceptual foundation. Figure 3 presents external stakeholder responses to a survey question on the level of satisfaction with UN Women's work on leave no one behind. The majority stated they were satisfied with the Country Office's work on leave no one behind (56.3 per cent n=9/16), while 38 per cent (n=6/16) fully agreed and no respondents expressed strong disagreement.

Despite notable advancements, persistent gaps remain in the full integration of marginalized groups across the programme cycle. An Inclusion Audit and Programmatic Assessment conducted by the UN Women Liberia Country Office (2023) found that efforts to include persons with disabilities have largely remained project-based or implemented as parallel initiatives, rather than being

systematically embedded in programme design.⁸⁰ Moreover, a review of project documents revealed limited disaggregation of participation data by intersecting identities, such as adolescent girls with disabilities or rural women experiencing multiple vulnerabilities, thereby undermining the ability to tailor interventions or monitor equity in outcomes. The 2023 report further highlighted that many programmes approached inclusion by focusing primarily on single identity factors, most often gender or disability, without accounting for how these factors intersect in real people's lives. This approach fails to reflect the complex realities of people facing compound discrimination, such as rural women with disabilities, or individuals affected by leprosy or albinism, and LGBTIQ+ individuals, who often experience stigma on multiple fronts (health, identity, social class and geography). Inclusive programming should instead adopt an intersectional lens that understands and responds to how these identity markers combine to create deeper exclusion.

A critical shortcoming has been the limited involvement of marginalized groups during the early stages of programme design.⁸¹ The UN Women (2022) GRB/WPS evaluation report established that the majority of these groups were not involved during programme design and implementation phases. Of more than 40 groups working with people with disabilities, only the National Union of Disabled Organizations was involved in the project design. In 2024, feedback from Organizations of Persons with Disabilities emphasized that physical and communication accessibility were frequently afterthoughts, constraining meaningful participation by persons with disabilities.⁸² Training and information materials were sometimes "too complicated" or "not relevant to their specific needs," hindering effective participation. Similarly, the Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership Programme noted that communities and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, were "not well considered" in Liberia during

80. UN Women. (2023). Inclusion Audit and Programmatic Assessment: Leaving No One Behind in Liberia. Monrovia, Liberia: UN Women Liberia Country Office.

81. UN Women. Evaluation of the GRB/WPS Joint Project: "Advancing implementation of UNSCRs on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)" – December 2019 to June 2021 (18 months), Liberia. Evaluation Report, Version of 19 May 2022.

82. UN Women. Annual Report on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Liberia. Monrovia, Liberia: UN Women Liberia Country Office, 2024.

project implementation and lacked a specific strategy for their engagement.

Key stakeholders, particularly government counterparts, have highlighted persistent gaps in how inclusion and national ownership are operationalized across programming cycles. A central concern raised is the need for UN Women to strengthen its partnership with relevant government bodies, especially in sensitive areas such as the elimination of FGM. Stakeholders emphasized that UN Women should support and work through mandated government institutions, rather than acting as the primary face of such issues. This underscores the importance of local ownership and the legitimacy of national actors in driving change. Similarly, during a workshop in Ganta, participants recommended that women's economic empowerment initiatives be channelled through the Gender Empowerment Division to ensure alignment with national frameworks.

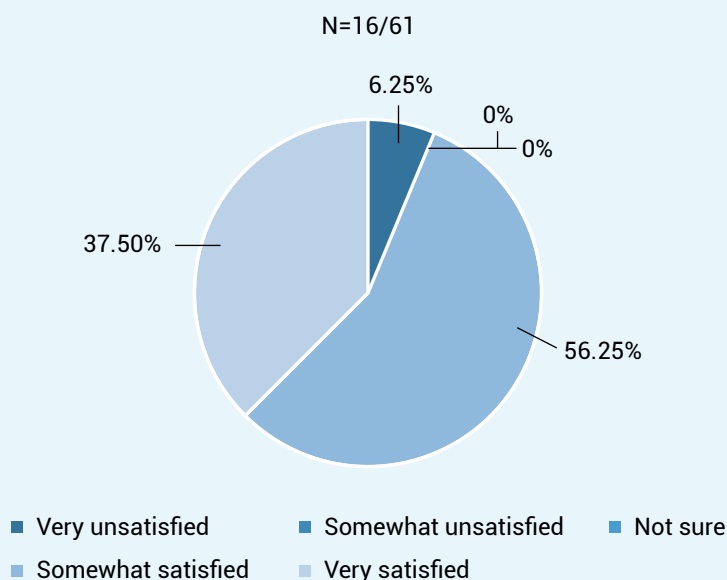
Analysis of project documents (lists of implementing partners and target population revealed that under major pillars such as WEE, WPS and WPP, there was no formal institutional support to national disability structures/associations.

Another core challenge lies in the lack of disaggregated data and intersectional outcome indicators, which significantly constrain evidence-based programming.⁸³ While there was commendable support for women political candidates, no explicit strategy was in place to support women with disabilities in electoral processes, nor were polling stations assessed for accessibility. Some of UN Women Liberia's implementing partners noted that no persons with HIV or disabilities were supported in the electoral process, despite inclusion being stated as a priority. These gaps underscore the need for systematic application of intersectionality tools, such as the UN Gender Equality Marker+ and the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Intersectionality Tool to strengthen planning, targeting and evaluation across all programmatic areas.

Despite these challenges, some community-led innovations supported by UN Women Liberia demonstrated strong potential for sustainability and scalability. The Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) piloted county-based gender desks and youth platforms, which enhanced local accountability, increased responsiveness to community needs and improved grassroots advocacy.⁸⁴ According to a

FIGURE 3. Level of satisfaction of external stakeholders with the country office's work on leave no one behind

IDENTIFICATION OF THE MOST MARGINALIZED AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN LINE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF "LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND"



Source: Developed by the evaluation team.

83. UN Women. Inclusion Audit and Programmatic Assessment: Leaving No One Behind in Liberia. Monrovia, Liberia: UN Women Liberia Country Office, 2023.

84. UN Women. Annual Report on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Liberia. Monrovia, Liberia: UN Women Liberia Country Office, 2024.

desk review and interviews, these gender desks and platforms provided a structured and accessible channel for community members, particularly women and youth, to report issues, voice concerns and engage with local authorities. The initiative fostered greater transparency and improved the responsiveness of county officials to gender-related challenges. It also strengthened grassroots advocacy by empowering women's groups and youth networks to participate more actively in civic discussions. These groups gained greater confidence and capacity to advocate for their rights and push for inclusion in county-level decision-making. The "Promoting Inclusive Political Participation and Elimination of Violence Against Women in Politics" project specifically made considerations for people with disabilities to participate in its programmes, and the "Sustaining Peace and Reconciliation Project" highlighted the active participation of diverse stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, affirming non-discriminatory processes. The Spotlight Initiative also made efforts to identify and reach marginalized groups through mappings and consultations, successfully engaging them in remote/rural areas.

However, these promising practices have yet to be institutionalized within UN Women's broader programming or coordination architecture. Similarly, while the digital literacy and peacebuilding training sessions conducted for Organizations for Peoples with Disabilities in 2024 were valuable, they remained disconnected from national or county-level development strategies, (a) risking limited long-term impact; and (b) the ability to meaningfully address the systemic exclusion of marginalized populations, particularly persons with disabilities, was limited. Without integration into broader planning frameworks, including the national or county development agenda, such initiatives risk being isolated and unsustainable.



ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Does UN Women Liberia have adequate organizational structures, systems and governance, and resource mobilization capacity to ensure good use of resources to deliver results?

FINDING 10

UN Women Liberia ensured efficiency in delivering results through strategic partnerships, decentralized implementation and cost-effective resource use. However, challenges such as funding unpredictability, procedural delays, coordination gaps and human resource limitations continue to constrain the full realization of operational efficiency and sustainability.

UN Women Liberia has effectively utilized joint programming with UN agencies such as UNDP, FAO, UNIDO and WFP, aligning efforts to reduce duplication and maximize effective contribution to results. These partnerships have enabled geographic and thematic targeting, particularly in the areas of WPS and WPP. Collaborations with private-sector actors in women's economic empowerment (e.g. Orange Liberia) and local women's networks (e.g. Peace Huts, WONGOSOL) have enhanced community-level engagement and ownership, contributing to the sustainability of interventions. The use of decentralized networks and community mobilization has allowed for the delivery of training and awareness programmes, even with modest funding, mostly in the areas of political participation through the Liberian Electoral Support Project Joint programme, and in WPS with the Central Emergency Response Fund.

While joint programming improved efficiency in some areas, coordination gaps persist, particularly with national institutions and government agencies. Misalignment of priorities, lack of technical personnel's involvement in programme design and unclear consultant deliverables were cited as barriers to effective collaboration during data collection and key interviews. In some cases, partners also mentioned challenges with high-level steering committees related to joint programmes, especially in convening on a regular basis, delaying strategic decisions and oversight.

Despite limited budgets, interventions such as the Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership Programme⁸⁵ achieved strong results within short time frames, often described as cost-effective and laying the groundwork for future programming.

Evidence from decentralized evaluations also pointed to delays in fund disbursement, ranging from two to four months, and confirmed these were a recurring issue across multiple projects (e.g. Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership, GRB/WPS, Spotlight Initiative).⁸⁶ These delays were often attributed to UN Women's internal procedures and partner liquidation delays. For example, the evaluation of the Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership Programme in Liberia highlighted internal delays from UN Women and UNDP in disbursing funds to programme partners, sometimes up to two months, which impacted the construction of some Peace Huts and their delivery.⁸⁷ The GRB/WPS Joint Project also experienced reported delays (up to four months) in the disbursement of funds from UN Women to programme partners in the communities, including the Peace Huts involved. The main reasons provided for these delays were said to be UN Women's internal procedures and processes, as well as constraints related to COVID-19 restrictions. These delays reportedly resulted in some planned activities not being implemented according to schedule or in a timely manner and, in some cases, leading to a loss of agricultural goods for women involved in farming activities.⁸⁸ For the Spotlight Initiative in Liberia, delays in disbursements from UN Women to programme partners were also noted. This was attributed in part to inefficiencies in UN processes and procedures, as well as challenges with programme partners' liquidation of previous funding tranches affecting subsequent disbursements.⁸⁹

Interviews with partners during the data collection phase in Liberia also mentioned rigid corporate agreements as a factor limiting flexibility at the country level, impeding adaptive responses to emerging needs.

85. Evaluation of the GRB/WPS Joint Project: Advancing implementation of UNSCRs on women, peace and security (WPS) through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), UN Women 2022; Final Report of the endline evaluation of the project promoting inclusive political participation and elimination of violence against women in politics, May 2024; Mid-term review of women's political empowerment and leadership project, March 2020; Final Evaluation of the Joint project Inclusive Security: Nothing for Us without Us, July 2019.

86. Final Report of the endline evaluation of the project promoting inclusive political participation and elimination of violence against women in politics, May 2024; Mid-term review of women's political empowerment and leadership project, March 2020; Evaluation of the GRB/WPS Joint Project: Advancing implementation of UNSCRs on women, peace and security (WPS) through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), UN Women 2022.

87. Final Report of the endline evaluation of the project promoting inclusive political participation and elimination of violence against women in politics, May 2024; Mid-term review of women's political empowerment and leadership project, March 2020.

88. Evaluation of the GRB/WPS Joint Project: Advancing implementation of UNSCRs on women, peace and security (WPS) through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), UN Women 2022, p.40.

89. Spotlight Initiative, Mid-term Assessment Report, 2021.

Decentralized evaluations and interviews with Country Office personnel and partners described how projects often lacked dedicated human resource budgets, leading to overstretched personnel and high turnover, particularly in Monitoring and Evaluation roles. This affected the quality of results-based management and hindered the institutionalization of gender-responsive practices. Similarly, evidence highlighted that government institutions and national partners, especially at the county level, were frequently limited in their technical capacity and equipment to implement and monitor interventions effectively.

UN Women Liberia has developed a strong internal monitoring and evaluation function, with detailed monitoring plans and donor trackers that were positively reviewed by stakeholders. However, joint monitoring mechanisms with government and UN partners were underfunded and inconsistently implemented, limiting their effectiveness. There was limited evidence that monitoring data and evaluation recommendations were consistently used for timely decision-making, reducing the ability to adapt to changing contexts.

FINDING 11

There is a noticeable disconnect between reported achievements, particularly in subnational economic empowerment, and outcome monitoring data, which remains largely static, occasionally regresses or is affected by persistent data gaps. This misalignment points to weaknesses in results-based management systems, prompting questions about the reliability and coherence of reported progress.

The evaluation found that while the Country Office has made steady and often meaningful contributions⁹⁰ to gender equality and women's empowerment, these achievements were not consistently reflected in the results monitoring system.⁹¹ This misalignment was mostly reflected in the economic empowerment portfolio but was evident across thematic areas and reflected in the results monitoring system.

In gender-responsive governance and women's political participation, the evaluation learned of notable progress, including stronger candidate pipelines; increased ministerial appointments (from 26 per cent to 35 per cent⁹²); and institutional reforms such as the National Elections Commission's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy and the VAWiE/P protocol. However, national legislative representation remains stagnant at 10.7⁹³ per cent, and voluntary party quotas remain unenforced. While output indicators show some success (8 targets surpassed), the corporate results dashboard classifies most outcome indicators as stagnant or regressing (15 stagnant, 7 regressed), mirroring the enduring lack of transformative progress in national representation and quota enforcement, indicating persistent systemic barriers as identified by the evaluation. This suggests that headline indicators, such as seat counts, may be too narrow to capture upstream institutional and behavioural shifts. Incorporating proxy indicators for institutional capacity and political practice change could enhance the system's sensitivity to intermediate progress. Economic empowerment highlights the most significant disconnect. The evaluation identified innovative pilot initiatives and early livelihood gains, yet the results monitoring system records regression for seven of nine

output indicators and shows most outcome indicators as unreported. It signals limitations in outcome tracking, equity in digital access and sustainability risks. However, the results monitoring system reports regression in seven of nine output indicators and lacks outcome data for most indicators (five unreported or inapplicable), with the only reported outcome indicator also regressing. This stark contrast points to limitations in tracking sustained economic empowerment and equity in digital access, and raises concerns about the system's ability to capture transformative change.

There is less contrast in the areas of EVAW and WPS. In EVAW, the evaluation notes contributions to national efforts, including support for the FGM moratorium, GBV service expansion in five counties and transitioning 300 FGM practitioners. However, it also highlights challenges such as inconsistent service coverage, underfunded infrastructure and stalled legal reforms. While some output indicators surpassed targets (five), outcome indicators largely regressed or stagnated (two each), reinforcing the evaluation's findings of some implementation deficits and sustainability. The mixed indicator trends make it difficult to discern whether negative shifts reflect actual backsliding, improved reporting or short-term fluctuations.

Similarly, WPS indicators show one outcome rising and another falling, yet community platforms were found to be flourishing while policy linkages fell behind. The evaluation describes a dual strategy supporting grassroots structures (e.g. Peace Huts, land committees) and institutional reforms (e.g. increased female representation in the Armed Forces)). Limitations include fragile community structures, weak links to formal justice systems and stalled legal

90. See Section on Effectiveness

91. RMS/Plan 2022 – 2023, 2024–2025

92. gender data.world bank.org

93. IPU Parline: global data on national parliaments, September 2024.

proposals. Indicator trends reflect this balance: one outcome improved, one regressed and output indicators were evenly split (three surpassed, three regressed), suggesting unresolved fragility and the need for better tracking of how local mechanisms influence institutional change.

Overall, across the portfolio, a sizeable share of outcome indicators remain “not applicable” or “not reported,” which inevitably limits the learning potential of the reporting system. However, the monitoring framework is not fundamentally flawed – it simply needs to evolve so that quantitative signals and qualitative reports reinforce, rather than contradict, one another.

In conclusion, while the results-based management system captures some outputs and localized gains, there are limitations in its use⁹⁴ to adequately track progress towards transformative national outcomes. To improve strategic learning and accountability, the results monitoring system must evolve to integrate more nuanced, intermediate indicators that reflect institutional change, behavioural shifts and sustainability.



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94. This is what emerged from a closer look at the Country Office's Results Management System (RMS). The evaluation team's analysis consisted of extracting Development Results Framework indicators from RMS covering all strategic outcomes, several of which correspond directly to corporate outcomes in the Strategic Plan. Apparent variations in indicator values were then interpreted through triangulation: RMS figures were read alongside what is known (from desk reviews and field work) about broader programme design, performance and context.



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5. LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation highlights the following lessons learned.

LESSON 1

INTEGRATING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT WITH WPS INITIATIVES IS KEY TO ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY AND ENSURING SUSTAINABLE RESULTS.

UN Women Liberia's experience through projects such as "Inclusive Security and Sustaining Peace" demonstrated that directly linking economic interventions, e.g. VSLAs and livelihood opportunities, with peacebuilding efforts significantly enhances outcomes. For instance, integrating VSLAs into Peace Huts not only provided economic empowerment but also contributed to the sustainability of these community-led peace spaces. Similarly, linking livelihood components to interventions such as the home-grown school feeding programme and training on using agricultural waste for economic production boosted opportunities for target populations, showing that economic stability is a pathway to peace and economic advancement. This can apply to post-conflict or developing contexts where insecurity, conflict and gender inequality are deeply intertwined with economic marginalization. It highlights that sustainable peace and gender equality cannot be achieved by addressing security or rights issues in isolation; rather, interventions must strategically integrate economic opportunities to tackle the underlying drivers of vulnerability and foster long-term change.

LESSON 2

ENGAGING TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AND OFFERING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES ARE IMPORTANT, IF NOT VITAL, IN ADDRESSING DEEP-ROOTED HARMFUL SOCIAL NORMS.

UN Women Liberia's work on ending violence against women and harmful practices, particularly FGM, showed the need for an inclusive approach that goes beyond gender machineries and civil society organizations. Engaging non-traditional allies such as traditional and religious leaders, and even the practitioners themselves, was crucial for elevating discussions and achieving breakthroughs such as the FGM ban in Liberia. A key insight was that participatory design, where former FGM practitioners suggested interventions such as literacy, business and digital skills capacity-building, led to more relevant and effective programmes. The adoption of the "Initiation without Mutilation" concept provided a culturally sensitive pathway for change, allowing communities to preserve cultural identity while abandoning harmful elements. This is highly relevant for interventions tackling deeply entrenched harmful traditional practices or discriminatory social norms in any cultural context. It demonstrates that effective change requires engaging a broad spectrum of community actors, including those traditionally seen as barriers, and designing solutions that are culturally sensitive, locally informed and offer viable alternatives, especially economic alternatives, rather than simply imposing external mandates.

LESSON 3

SUSTAINING AND STRATEGICALLY LEVERAGING ESTABLISHED WOMEN'S NETWORKS AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS AS DIRECT PROGRAMME TARGETS IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR ACHIEVING BROAD REACH, LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES.

UN Women Liberia found that actively designing programmes around existing strong women's networks, such as the Peace Huts and various women's rights groups, and utilizing them as primary programme targets and implementing partners, amplified impact and fostered greater local ownership. These networks also served as effective platforms for community engagement and information dissemination, ensuring broader reach and relevance.

LESSON 4

SYSTEMIC INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING BEYOND INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY-BUILDING IS ESSENTIAL FOR CONTRIBUTING TO GENDER EQUALITY.

UN Women Liberia's work demonstrated that for gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives to be truly sustainable, efforts must extend beyond training individuals to systematically strengthening institutions. Initiatives aiming for profound and lasting gender equality changes must invest in multi-faceted institutional strengthening. This involves not only equipping individuals with new knowledge and skills but also working directly with government bodies, security institutions and other public service providers to develop, revise and implement gender-responsive policies, procedures and accountability frameworks. Such an approach fosters an environment where gender considerations are not merely add-ons but are integrated into the core mandate, operations and decision-making processes of institutions, thereby creating self-sustaining mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment.

LESSON 5

DATA-DRIVEN MONITORING PROCESSES ARE CRUCIAL FOR TRANSFORMATIVE GENDER EQUALITY RESULTS.

UN Women Liberia's experience highlights the necessity of robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems, coupled with effective data management, for demonstrating and achieving transformative results in gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, the Spotlight Initiative implemented web-based questionnaires via the Kobo Toolbox, which facilitated the collection of sex-disaggregated data and GPS coordinates even in remote areas, significantly enhancing the documentation of activities and beneficiary feedback. Recognizing limitations in partners' reporting capabilities, continuous mentoring and capacity-building in results-based management should be prioritized in programme implementation. To effectively drive and demonstrate transformative gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes, interventions must prioritize the development and consistent application of robust, data-driven monitoring, evaluation and learning systems.

LESSON 6

COMBINING HIGH-LEVEL ADVOCACY WITH EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE LEADERS AND TRANSFORMATIVE ENGAGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL MALE LEADERS IS CRITICAL TO INCREASING WOMEN'S APPOINTMENTS IN GOVERNANCE, WHILE DURABLE GAINS IN ELECTED REPRESENTATION REQUIRE LEGAL REFORMS.

In Liberia, this dual approach contributed to the rise of women's appointments in the cabinet and county-level positions, alongside women assuming roles such as town and clan chiefs. However, progress in elected representation remained limited, as legislative paralysis stalled the Gender Quota Bill and few women candidates succeeded in elections. While advocacy and training can open pathways to appointments, durable gains in elected representation require legal reforms and structural changes within political parties and electoral systems.



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6. CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSION 1

UN Women Liberia has demonstrated a strategically relevant, normatively grounded and coherent approach to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Liberia. UN Women's coordination role within the UN system and its convening power among civil society, government and development partners have also amplified its influence to drive gender equality and women's empowerment change in Liberia. Taken together, these normative and coordination roles provide a pathway for the Country Office to strengthen its impact in Liberia going into the next Strategic Note period.

UN Women Liberia has effectively aligned its work with international frameworks (CEDAW, UNSCR 1325) and national priorities (PAPD 2018–2023 and the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development 2024–2029), positioning itself as a key actor in both policy advocacy and grassroots change. The Country Office's value-add is its coordination work as the entry point for gender equality in the UN system in Liberia through its co-leadership of the Gender Theme Group and as a trusted partner to CSOs and development partners.

A key strength lies in the Country Office's **normative and policy work**, which has been instrumental in helping Liberia meet its international reporting obligations, bridging an almost 10-year gap in submissions to CEDAW, Beijing+25 and the Beijing +30 reports. This support has not only restored the country's credibility in international forums but also spurred crucial inter-ministerial dialogue and CSO engagement within Liberia. This has facilitated the institutionalization of international gender norms into national systems, such as the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and gender policies within the Armed Forces of Liberia. Interventions in land governance and women's

economic empowerment further underscore this alignment with global goals such as SDGs 5, 8 and 13.

At the **national level**, the Country Office's programming is directly traceable to Liberia's national priorities (PAPD 2018–2023 and the ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development 2024–2029) and other key national frameworks, contributing significantly to peacebuilding, inclusive governance, economic participation and rural resilience. For instance, the WPS programme has played an important role in promoting inclusive peacebuilding through community-level peace dialogues, supporting transitional justice and enhancing women's leadership in local governance and electoral processes. Similarly, the WEE pillar aligns with climate action and digital inclusion efforts, supporting initiatives such as climate-smart agriculture and green entrepreneurship.

The Country Office's emphasis on capacity-building has reinforced the skills of civil society representatives, government officials and women's rights groups in gender equality and women's empowerment creating a network of change agents across various sectors.

CONCLUSION 2

Across its four impact areas, UN Women Liberia has shown that adaptive, locally rooted strategies can translate global gender norms into tangible progress. However, the same agility that drives short-term successes has not always been matched by the institutional leverage needed for durable, system-wide change.

At their best, UN Women Liberia's impact area portfolios demonstrate clear comparative advantages: the Country Office's WPP work turns political windows into subnational leadership gains; WEE pilots open fresh economic pathways for excluded women; EVAW combines legal reform with survivor-centred services; and WPS leverages community legitimacy to broaden women's role in peacebuilding. These achievements highlight UN Women Liberia's convening power; its capacity in brokering multi-stakeholder coalitions; and its willingness to test innovative models, from digital platforms to early-warning networks, which together constitute a credible engine of gender transformation.

However, some vulnerabilities were evident across impact area portfolios and outcome-level evidence is weakest where interventions rely on nascent data systems

(especially digital WEE), while national-level reforms lag behind when political sensitivities are high (WPP quotas, EVAW enforcement). Market linkages are yet to be strengthened; county budgets still do not prioritize gender; and community platforms struggle to influence central policy, even as they thrive locally. In effect, UN Women Liberia succeeds when it can link donor demands with community needs and institutional support; however, it still needs to link these efforts with normative support.

Taken together, these strengths and weaknesses suggest that the effectiveness of programmes relies less on designing interventions than institutional buy-in at government level and that financial inputs are essential. Future strategic achievements will depend on converting proven pilots and local momentum into national systems that can withstand political turnover and budget cycles.

CONCLUSION 3

The long-term sustainability of gender-equality advancements now rely less on the initiation of reforms and more on the institutional and normative capacity to embed and uphold these reforms beyond the lifespan of current interventions. Under UN Women Liberia's Strategic Note, commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment have moved from aspirational pledges to concrete, self-sustaining measures. These efforts reflect an increasingly institutionalized model of shared accountability across national governance frameworks, decentralized structures and private-sector engagement.

This is evident in platforms such as the Peace Huts, Rural Women's Structure and Mano River Union Women's Structure, some of which now operate independently. The sustainability of gender equality reforms depends on two key factors: sufficient resources and strong accountability. Gender equality investments are still not fully incorporated

in county budgets; infrastructure sometimes lacks funding for maintenance; and rural women face unstable market access. These vulnerabilities risk reversing progress if legislative support weakens, local revenues decline or private partners disengage.

CONCLUSION 4

UN Women Liberia has established enabling mechanisms that promote efficient delivery of results, mainly through strategic partnerships, decentralized implementation, joint programming and monitoring and evaluation. These foundations have allowed the Country Office to achieve short-term results, often with limited resources. However, operational bottlenecks have sometimes prevented the full achievement of results.

The Country Office made good use of strategic alliances with UN agencies, private-sector actors and local women's groups to stretch resources and enhance local ownership. These collaborations, particularly in WPS and political participation, demonstrate the potential of decentralized networks to deliver results even under constrained budgets.

However, delayed fund disbursements, procedural rigidities and human resource limitations have also undermined the full realization of these efforts. Funding delays across multiple programmes such as Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership, gender-responsive budgeting/WPS and the Spotlight Initiative were found to be commonly cited as recurring issues usually attributed to internal inefficiencies. These delays disrupted implementation timelines and affected local trust.

Institutionally, the Country Office's internal monitoring and evaluation structures are strong on planning and donor compliance but limited on evidence-based programming. The

persistent gaps in joint monitoring and the limited use of evaluation findings for course correction revealed missed opportunities to make the system truly learning-oriented. There is also a significant disconnect between evaluation narratives and the results monitoring system, particularly in economic empowerment, where innovation and early success stories coexist with indicator regression and unreported outcomes. This points to a monitoring system that has yet to mature to reflect institutional changes, thereby limiting its utility for oversight.

While UN Women has made important progress in monitoring and evaluation, the evaluation highlights a valuable learning opportunity in this area. Strengthened staffing would enhance results-based management practices, improve knowledge transfer and preserve institutional memory. Addressing these gaps which seems to be linked to a fundraising challenge, will help ensure smoother implementation; bolster partner capacity and accountability; and reinforce the credibility of reported results.

CONCLUSION 5

While UN Women Liberia consistently prioritizes disability inclusion and leave no one behind principles in its programme design, there is a clear need for more systematic and consistently applied strategies at the implementation level.

Disability inclusion and leave no one behind principles are prioritized in project design, but implementation lacks consistency. Future programming must adopt more

systematic, intersectional approaches to ensure accessibility, data disaggregation and transformative inclusion across all initiatives.



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7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Presentation of the preliminary findings took place with the UN Liberia Country Office to inform the recommendations and suggested steps presented below. Each recommendation is linked to corresponding findings. The level of priority and timeline for implementation are indicated below each recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Country Office should prioritize its comparative advantage in coordination by scaling up the monitoring of gender equality trends; providing data and statistics to the UN system; and supporting implementation of the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan. In parallel, the Country Office should continue to strengthen joint programming as it has consistently added value in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Liberia. Increased visibility of gender-related results through stronger monitoring processes would allow UN Women to showcase its contribution to advancing gender equality in the country.

BASED ON FINDINGS 1, 2, 3

PRIORITY

HIGH

TIMELINE

SHORT-TERM

Key actions for consideration:

- Deepen the Country Office's coordination role as a provider of data and statistics on gender equality for the UN system. Deepen the office's coordination and substantive role in key UNSDCF processes (i.e. Common Country Analysis, Country Gender Equality Profiles) and continue integrating recommendations from CEDAW observations and the UNCT Scorecard.
- Continue to engage with the UNCT to identify opportunities for joint programmes and ensure efforts are focused on maximizing synergies, building on the added value of UN Women in the gender equality and women's empowerment space.
- Invest in strengthening the gender expertise of personnel and consultants to ensure high-quality technical support.
- Launch quarterly learning exchanges to share best practices across agencies and partners.
- Strengthen government engagement through formalization of regular coordination.

To be led by: Country Office Management Team.

Rationale and impact: Continued investment and prioritization of coordination would allow the Country Office to operate on a bigger scale, leading the UN system in gender equality and women's empowerment issues.

RECOMMENDATION 2

UN Women Liberia should strengthen and step up its normative work to translate it into tangible results by creating road maps within each impact area that link normative work with practical implementation. These road maps should align with UN Women's triple mandate; and integrate (a) capacity-building methods with clear indicators to monitor progress and inform decisions on scaling up interventions; and (b) advocacy and technical support as the main strategies for normative work. The Country Office's convening role should be leveraged to maximize relationships with the government and civil society.

BASED ON FINDINGS 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

PRIORITY

HIGH

TIMELINE

SHORT-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Road maps should include implementation strategies on how to work with partners based on evidence of how to link across impact areas and normative level efforts. EVAW, WPP and WPS hold potential based on documented models.
- Implementation strategies as part of the road maps should include capacity-building methods, advocacy and technical support as the main strategies, accompanied by clear progress indicators to monitor progress and inform decisions.
- Invest in long-term capacity-building by adapting approaches that move away from one-off training in each individual area to strengthen consistency. This is in line with the Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's approach to capacity development.
- Enhance cross-learning and knowledge-sharing across impact area pillars to increase collaboration when reporting on outputs and results.

To be led by: Country Office Management Team with Thematic Pillars Leads.

Rationale and impact: Deeper integration of normative results through impact areas and into sustainable, community-based programmes will drive long-term empowerment and systemic change.

RECOMMENDATION 3

UN Women Liberia should work with national and local authorities to consolidate the effectiveness of its Women's Political Participation, Economic Empowerment and Elimination of Violence Against Women interventions by supporting closer integration between grassroots platforms and public institutions. To translate localized progress into systemic change, UN Women should facilitate national actors' uptake of gender mainstreaming tools; promote legal enforcement mechanisms; and help institutionalize successful pilot models within public service and governance frameworks. Partnerships with key public and private actors (such as Orange Liberia) should be formalized as time-bound agreements. Stronger disaggregation of results by geography, literacy and age group, and targeted follow-up mechanisms, will also be critical to ensuring inclusive impact and sustained progress.

BASED ON FINDINGS 4, 5, 6, 7

PRIORITY

HIGH

TIMELINE

SHORT-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Support government partners in using gender mainstreaming tools across WPP, WEE and EVAW initiatives, with disaggregated indicators by geography, literacy, age and socioeconomic profile.
- Facilitate national enforcement of legal and policy frameworks (e.g. candidate quota enforcement, VAWIE/P protocols, Anti-FGM provisions) through costed implementation road maps and parliamentary engagement.
- Promote the institutionalization of community platforms (e.g. Peace Huts, VSLAs, women-run cooperatives) within county-level economic planning, public accountability mechanisms and justice delivery frameworks.
- Help formalize time-bound agreements with partners such as Orange Liberia, including clear targets, service standards and exit clauses.
- Strengthen joint monitoring arrangements with ministries, the National Elections Commission and CSOs to follow user trajectories in digital and economic empowerment initiatives.
- Ensure that the scale-up of digital access and livelihood models is accompanied by tailored support for rural, low-literacy and otherwise marginalized women.

To be led by: Country Office Management Team, in close coordination with relevant line ministries, National Elections Commission and private-sector partners.

Rationale and impact: Improving programme effectiveness requires that UN Women's innovations do not remain isolated or donor-dependent but are taken up, adapted and expanded by national actors. Joint monitoring, stronger public-private delivery agreements and embedded legal enforcement will ensure that promising practices lead to structural improvements in women's access to power, income, services and voice, particularly in under-served regions.

RECOMMENDATION 4

To secure the sustainability of gender equality and women's empowerment results achieved under the Strategic Note, UN Women Liberia should support national and county-level authorities in institutionalizing service delivery and accountability platforms (e.g. Peace Huts, heritage centres, solar agro-units) within public planning and financing frameworks. In parallel, the Country Office should help catalyse cross-sector incentives that align government actors, civil society and private-sector stakeholders around shared gender equality and women's empowerment priorities. Sustaining legislative momentum (e.g. on the Anti-FGM Bill and the quota law) and strengthening women's cooperatives to access larger markets will require UN Women's continued advocacy, technical assistance and coordination support, while primary leadership and accountability remain with national institutions.

BASED ON FINDINGS 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

PRIORITY

HIGH

TIMELINE

MEDIUM-TERM

Key actions for consideration:

- Support the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to revise the 2026 Budget Call Circular to require costed one-year workplans for all gender equality and the empowerment of women commitments made by lead ministries; and provide coaching and templates to facilitate compliance.
- Assist the Women's Legislative Caucus and relevant parliamentary bodies in sustaining the 30 per cent gender quota bill effort by producing cost-benefit briefs and facilitating multiparty dialogue.
- Work with County Service Centres and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to embed Peace Hut and heritage centre maintenance budgets in county-level development plans and to assign funds for the upkeep of solar-powered and agro-processing infrastructure.
- Advocate with the Spotlight Initiative Steering Committee to reallocate 5 per cent of Spotlight Phase 2 funds towards a "Zoe" Transition Fund supporting cooperatives led by former FGM practitioners (e.g. in soap-making, farming).
- Provide technical support to cooperative networks in forming federations that can negotiate bulk contracts and leverage the Buy from Women platform for sustained market access.
- Formalize performance-based agreements with Orange Liberia and other private actors, specifying resource contributions, service uptime targets and maintenance obligations for digital centres.

To be led by: Country Office Management Team, in partnership with line ministries, county governments and private-sector actors.

Rationale and impact: Embedding gender equality and the empowerment of women commitment platforms and infrastructure into public systems and budgets would reduce reliance on external funding and protect gains made under the Strategic Note. UN Women's role in facilitating technical solutions, fiscal incentives and coalition-building can help ensure that county authorities, national legislators and service providers internalize these responsibilities over time, making Liberia's gender equality and the empowerment of women commitment outcomes more resilient to political shifts, funding gaps or donor withdrawal.

RECOMMENDATION 5

UN Women Liberia should strengthen its results-based management approach to enhance overall programme monitoring and evaluation and feed into enhanced learning and decision-making.

BASED ON FINDINGS 10, 11

PRIORITY

MEDIUM

TIMELINE

MEDIUM-TERM

Suggested steps to be taken:

- Strengthen the Monitoring and Evaluation function by placing its team under direct reporting to the Country Office Representative to enhance the independence of the function.
- Consider reviewing the current Strategic Note output indicators to reduce and align them to the new UN Women Strategic Plan.
- Strengthen the plan for regular monitoring and validation visits by the Monitoring and Evaluation function to provide continuous support and ensure real-time data collection.
- Continue to work on consistent reporting templates linked to Strategic Note results frameworks to ensure uniform reporting against indicators.
- Enhance learning and sharing across impact area teams and knowledge exchange on results monitoring and evaluation that reflect a shared responsibility among teams.
- Continue engaging partners to allow for deeper reflection sessions and to promote continuous improvement and collaboration.

To be led by: Monitoring and Evaluation team with Country Office Management Team

Rationale and impact: Strengthened results management, monitoring and evaluation would allow for increased data-driven decision-making that will allow UN Women Liberia to track long-term impacts and better communicate successes.

RECOMMENDATION 6 Disability inclusion

UN Women Liberia should strengthen its approach to disability inclusion and intersectionality by taking a more systematic approach.

BASED ON FINDINGS 4, 5, 6, 7, 9

PRIORITY

MEDIUM

TIMELINE

LONG-TERM

Key actions for consideration:

- The Country Office should develop a road map for designing and implementing initiatives through an intersectional perspective, acknowledging the varied priorities and needs of the most marginalized stakeholders, especially women with disabilities.
- Consider reviewing the current Strategic Note output indicators to reduce and align them to the new UN Women Strategic Plan.
- Consider developing more internal capacities within the Country Office on disability inclusion with training provided to all impact area leads.
- Linked to Recommendation 4, explore knowledge exchange sessions for Country Office personnel to discuss good practices related to disability inclusion indicators and ways to measure it effectively in the Liberian context.

To be led by: Country Office Management Team, Focal Point on Disability Inclusion, in consultation with Global Lead on Disability/LGBTQ+

Rationale and impact: Enhanced inclusivity of UN Women's programming, ensuring that marginalized groups are prioritized, leading to long-lasting social transformation in vulnerable communities.



ANNEXES

ANNEXES ARE AVAILABLE
AS A SEPARATE
DOCUMENT.

Produced by the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) of the UN Women Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS)

The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service is co-located with the Internal Audit and Investigation Services under the Independent Evaluation, Audit and Investigation Services (IEAIS). The UN Women Independent Evaluation Service's main purpose is to enhance accountability, inform decision-making, and contribute to learning about the best ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment through the organization's mandate, including its normative, operational, and coordination work. The Independent Evaluation Service also works to strengthen capacities for gender-responsive evaluation within UN entities, governments, and civil society organizations.

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UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA
Tel: 212-906-6400
Fax: 212-906-6705

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