



Government of Liberia

September 2012

General Report on the Human Rights Situation
in Liberia

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The

African Charter on peoples' and Human Rights

1 Introduction

1. Since the end of the crisis in Liberia in 2003, two multi-party democratic elections have been held. The Government of Liberia has started undertaking efforts to reconstruct government infrastructures and their corresponding political institutions and enormous strides have been made in that direction, as well as in the restoration of the rule of law. The economy that was virtually collapsed is now being revitalized and basic and productive infrastructures have been reestablished to the best extent practicable to secure food distribution to the most vulnerable communities.

2. In recognition of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Government of Liberia is taking appropriate measures to meet the many challenges it faces towards implementing the rights enshrined in the Charter.

1.1 Methodology and Consultation Process

3. Liberia remains committed to promoting human rights and the respect for the rule of law as a means of sustaining peace and stability, as well as the means of fulfilling her international obligations, with the overall view of improving the general welfare of the Liberian people. In order to address human rights issues in Liberia in a holistic manner, the Government of Liberia formulated the Steering Committee of the National Human Rights Action Plan of Liberia (SCNHRAP), which consist of line Ministries/Agencies and civil society groupings, including the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR), Co- Chaired by the Ministry of Justice and Foreign Affairs, which are responsible to coordinate amongst others, the drafting of the National Human Rights Action Plan for Liberia. In several of its regular monthly meetings, the issue of reporting to the Regional body was advanced by Representatives from the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) and the idea to draft the Nation's first report to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) was adopted in one of the meetings. Subsequently, The Human Rights Reporting sub-committing (HRRS-c), Technical committees under the SCNHRAP, was task with leading the process of drafting this report.

4. In Accordance with the Guidelines of the ACHPR, which requires the active participation of a wide range of civil society, series of national consultations were held in four regions throughout the Country. These consultations brought together representatives from Traditional

leaders, Faith Based Organizations, the Media, Youth Groups, Concerned Citizens, Marketing Associations, County Officials, Law Enforcement officers, People with Disabilities and other Vulnerable groups as a means of opinion gathering. Information gathered during the consultations is reflected in this report.

5. In addition to the various conferences that were held, the media was engaged to solicit the views of a wider audience, taking into account their views and suggestions regarding the human rights concerns in the country, actions taken by the government as well as ongoing initiatives aimed at protecting the rights of citizens.

1.2 Background of the Country: Social Political Situation and the Human Rights Implications

6. Liberia was established by citizens of the United States as a colony for former-slaves in 1822 and on July 26, 1847, the Colony declared her independence and became a sovereign nation; however, this was not without events. The colonists of African-American descent became known as Americo-Liberians. Not only were many racially mixed and of European descent, but their education, religion and culture made them distinct from the indigenous people, with whom they did not identify. A Constitution was drawn up along the lines of the United States' constitution, denying voting rights to the indigenous Liberians.

7. The Nation, between 1847 and 1980, was governed by the small minority of Americo-Liberians who, in 1878 organized their political power in the True Whig Party, which permitted no organized political opposition. Until 1980, the Americo-Liberians firmly held onto their position of authority, meeting with unremitting uprising, rebellion and riots from the native peoples who accounted for some 95% of the population. The Americo-Liberians recreated a cultural and racial caste system, with themselves at the top instead of the bottom, the same culture which had led the colonist to despair of life in the USA. On the other hand, they believed in racial equality, and therefore, in the potential of all people to become "civilized" through evangelization and education. Like many white missionaries before and after them, they were frustrated by the natives' lack of interest in becoming "civilized". Some local people however assimilated into Americo-Liberian society, often by marriage. Some entire coastal tribes became Protestants and learned English. But most indigenous Africans kept to their traditional languages and religions. Before long, the Americo-Liberian ruling elite was living rather prosperously, sending their children to America for high school and college education, and keeping the indigenous peoples excluded from all political and economic leadership. As a result, relations between colonist and natives were contentious, and eventually contributed to the overthrow of the Americo-Liberian regime in 1980.

8. In 1980, President William Richard Tolbert Jr. was assassinated by members of the Armed Forces of Liberia and a new military government of the People's Redemption Council (PRC), with Master Sgt. Samuel Kanyon Doe as head of State, was established. As the first native ruler in the history of the country, Samuel Doe's government initially enjoyed great popularity and support. However, the summary public execution of 13 ex-ministers greatly shocked the world and in retrospect, likely set the stage for decades of human rights violations and the breakdown of the rule of law. Over the following years political intolerance and human rights violations compromised the public image of the government.

9. In 1989, several hundred rebels, mostly drawn from ethnic groups persecuted during Doe's regime, invaded Nimba County from Cote D'ivoire. and indiscriminately killed hundreds of unarmed civilians, raped women and children and burned villages, this deadly counterinsurgencies led to the fleeing of over 160,000 civilians to neighboring Guinea and Ivory Coast and endeared the local population to the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), which came to be led by Charles Taylor.

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

11. As the stalemate deepened, all warring factions became frantic and exacted their frustrations on the unarmed population trapped in their controlled territories. Massacres, rape, torture, secret killings, abductions, recruitment of child soldiers, forced labor, ethnic cleansing and ethnic profiling, destruction of property and looting became the order of the day. Young girls and women were targeted and raped and abducted as bush wives and sexual slaves. Refugees streamed into neighboring countries and many villages and towns were forcefully displaced. In August of 1990, in an attempt to keep warring factions apart and protect the civilian population, an ECOWAS peacekeeping force-ECOMOG-arrived in Liberia.

12. Subsequently, Doe and many of his supporters were wiped out at the Freeport of Monrovia on September 9, 1990 by Johnson's. With both Johnson and Taylor claiming the Presidency, Dr. Amos C. Sawyer was appointed as head of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU).

13. Starting in early 1990, a number of peace agreements were brokered and broken. As more and more factions emerged, human rights and humanitarian crisis in Liberia intensified.

After a series of deadly conflicts resulting in devastating human casualties, economic devastation and humanitarian disaster, August 1996 saw the negotiation of yet another peace accord providing for cease-fire, disarmament and demobilization, followed by elections. The first Elections took place in July, 1997 and Charles Taylor became the 21st President of Liberia.

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

15. In 1999, dissident groups launched armed incursions setting off a new round of low level fighting. Peace was further shattered with devastating outbreaks of fighting in 2002 and 2003. Finally in August 2003, with dissident groups, LURD and MODEL controlling much of the country and under pressure from the international community, Charles Taylor went into exile in Nigeria. A transitional government assisted by UN peacekeepers and headed by Charles Gyude Bryant was established. In late 2005, Liberians again went to the polls. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won the presidency becoming the first woman to be elected president in Africa.

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

2. Normative and Institutional Frameworks for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

2.1 Constitutional Framework

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

18. Since 2005, within the framework of the Constitution, Liberia has implemented a number of domestic legislation such as: act to amend the new penal law to provide for gang rape; act establishing criminal court E (Special Court for Rape); act to amend certain provisions

of the judiciary law to provide financial autonomy to the judiciary; act to amend certain provisions of the judiciary law, the civil procedure and the criminal procedure law to provide for the amendment of the law relating to juries; act to ban trafficking in persons; act to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; act to establish a national commission on disabilities; act to establish the Liberian anti-corruption commission, act to establish the land commission; act to ratify the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; and act establishing the Liberian extractive industries and transparency initiative.

19. In the same year, Liberia acceded to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which obligates each state party to ensure that no one within its territory is executed and to take all necessary measures to abolish the death penalty within its jurisdiction. Since the accession of this instrument by Liberia, all death sentences have been commuted into life imprisonment by the action of the President, who has the power to authorize execution.

2.2 State Authorities and Human Rights

A. Legislative Authority

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

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

22. Since its establishment, the Committee also has successfully conducted a public hearing on a proposed Children's Act, which was passed by the Senate in 2011.

B. The Judicial Authority

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

C. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights

24. Following the Accra Comprehensive Agreement of 2003, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) was created by the passage of the Act of 2005. Soon after the establishment of the Commission, a vetting process of individuals to serve as Commissioners was started in earnest. After a vetting process involving nationwide participation, the initial nominees for commissioners were rejected by the Senate. In March of 2010, an Independent Committee of Experts was set up to carry on a new round of vetting process and on October 28, 2010, Seven Persons were commissioned by the senate and subsequently commissioned by the president to stir the affairs of the commission with one of them serving as Chair. The Secretariat of the INCHR continues to carry out the day to day activities of the commission, to include investigating and monitors human rights complaints, making recommendations to the Government, liaising with national & international NGOs and governmental institutions to address human rights concerns in the country, and organizing human rights awareness campaigns and workshops throughout the country. Most recently, the first three individuals from civil Society organizations have been vetted and trained to serve as Human Rights field Monitors.

D. Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

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

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

E. Civil Society Organizations

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

F. Scope of International and Regional Obligations

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

29. Despite a history of human rights violations and a crippling civil conflict, Liberia has taken some commendable measures to uphold the principles of the Charter of the United Nation and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as, the African Charter for Human and People's Rights. For example, Liberia is currently engaged in researching and compiling all regional and international human rights instruments to which the country is a party with a view of revising the country's statutory laws to better comply with regional and international obligations.

30. Further, in keeping with the recommendations of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, the country has set up a Steering Committee to develop and adopt a national human rights action plan for Liberia. The Steering Committee, consisting of Ministries, governmental agencies, the Legislature, and civil society organizations, currently is actively engaged in projects that will help develop a systematic strategy and concrete plans for advancing human rights in Liberia.

3. Human Rights Situation on the Ground and Responses to Human Rights Situation on the Ground: Achievements & Best Practices

3.1 Civil and Political Rights

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

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

A. Right of Citizens to Elect their Leader

33. In order to secure the right of citizens to elect their leaders, the National Election Commission (NEC) was established by the Constitution of Liberia Chapter X; Article 89. In the

past eight (8) years the Commission, which is represented in all 15 counties of the country, has conducted 11 successful by-elections, launched extensive voter education campaigns, particularly targeting communities previously excluded from the political process, and constructed 5 new regional head offices and a national headquarters in Monrovia.

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

B. Right to Liberty and Security of the Person

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

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

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

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

C. Access to Justice and Legal Reform

39. At the end of the civil conflict, Liberia was faced with the challenge of rebuilding a substantially broken down judicial system with negligible budgetary allocation, corruption, low level of accountability and key positions filled with individuals lacking the requisite level of legal

training. Signifying the country's commitment to establish a State based on the rule of law, Liberia has taken the following steps towards legal reform and protecting and promoting access to justice.

Legal Reform

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

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

Geographic Access to Justice

42. To effectively decentralize the security and justice services in Liberia, five regional hubs are being instituted throughout the country from where security and judicial services can be easily accessible to the underserved countryside. Each of the hubs will contain a court house, Law enforcement personnel offices and a public outreach and service office. The presence of public defenders, county attorneys, correction and human rights officers, who will be deployed in the hubs as well, further contribute to enhanced justice delivery in the regions.

Access to Competent and Independent Judiciary

43. In January of 2008, Liberia established the James A.A. Pierre Judicial Training Institute. The Institute, which aims to improve the qualification and competency of all judicial actors, has quarterly training programs for Judges, Magistrates, public defenders and court reporters. Further, the Professional Magistrates Training Program (PMTP), which was launched in March 2010, successfully trained and deployed sixty-three (63) college graduates to serve as qualified magistrates across the country. At present, Liberia has managed to assign qualified county attorneys and public defenders, who are law School graduates, throughout the 15 political subdivisions of the counties.

44. In a positive development to improve the independence of the judiciary and curb corrupt practices, the country has increased the salaries and benefits of qualified judges, magistrates and associate magistrates, and has significantly improved the Judiciary Inquiry

Commission and The Grievance & Ethics Committee-institutions respectively established to investigate cases of judicial impropriety & corruption and lawyer's professional misconduct.

45. Additionally, in April 2010, Liberia held a national conference on access to justice. Based on the recommendations of a wide range of stakeholders that participated in the conference, the country has established a committee to develop strategies to improve citizens' access to justice, including working with existing customary justice systems that complement the formal justice system while respecting the human rights obligations of the country.

D. Right of Persons Deprived of Liberty

46. To tackle the problems of pre-trial detention in Liberia, in October 2009 Liberia convened the Pre-Trial Detention Taskforce. The Taskforce, which has the participation of all relevant governmental institutions, has established: the Magistrate Sitting Program, which sits in the Monrovia Central Prison (MCP) six days a week and process cases of detainees who have been held longer than the statutory period without trial; the Alternatives to Incarceration Sub-Committee was able to launch the Probation program under the Bureau of Corrections at the Ministry of Justice, in 2012; the Independent Parole Board has also commenced the preliminary work setting the basis for launching the Parole program expected to take full effect by November, 2012, which will serve as alternatives to incarceration; the probation and Police-Prosecution Coordination Sub-Committee, which aims to strengthen the collaboration between police and prosecutors, including knowledge sharing in the area of investigation and evidence collection.

47. In order to redress poor prison and detention center conditions throughout the country, Liberia has allocated additional financial resources for rehabilitation and improvement of detention centers; constructed and refurbished prison facilities, among others, in Sinoe, Sanniquelle, Zwedru, Tubmanburg, Cestos & fish Town; initiated literacy and vocational programs and psychosocial counseling for detainees; as part of the regular curriculum, institutes human rights training to prison guards and other correctional officers, incorporates themes such as the right of all detainees to be free from torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment; facilitated prison and detention center monitoring activities of national & international human rights organizations in Liberia, and launched new interactive public education programs using mass media to educate citizens on the rights of prisoners. The most recent intervention is the ongoing initiative by the government and her partners to relocate the Monrovia Central Prison to Cheesemanburg, as a means of addressing over-crowding in the prison. Additionally, more Correction officers are being trained to guide the facilities and protect the inmates, also there has been a joint training of Corrections officers and inmates in the manufacturing of hygiene products. A new program, the Mini clinic, has been activated at some strategic prisons, namely, Kakata, Tubmanburg and the Monrovia Central Prison, to

address the health needs of inmates. Finally the Prison Reform Act, which seeks to grant the Bureau of Corrections autonomy, has been forwarded to National legislature for passage.

E. Freedoms of Expression, Assembly and Association

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

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

3.2 Economic Social and Cultural Rights

50. The extended civil conflict in Liberia greatly impacted the country's economy. Despite the abundance of natural resources, the socio-economic status of the average citizen in the country remained poor. During the conflict, **basic infrastructures, including about 70% of schools, were destroyed with majority** of the country having limited or no access to electricity and piped borne water, but the current government, with the help from the international development partners, is making strides at restoring the basic social services to its citizens and improving the education system.

51. As a result of the conflict, Liberia has experienced significant internal migration from rural to urban areas. This internal migration of communities, often lacking in basic levels of literacy and marketable skills, has created a loss of productive labor on farms in rural communities, undermined rural agricultural production and income generation, and has led a large segment of society to engage in informal and other micro-income generating activities for economic survival.

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

A. Right to Work

53. In an effort to reduce the staggering number of unemployment, in 2006 Liberia launched the Liberia Emergency Employment Program (LEEP) and the Liberia Employment Action Program (LEAP). These programs, which are decentralized in 9 of the 15 counties of the

country, engage in promoting emergency or short term employment opportunities as well as long term sustainable programs. While the emergency component of the programs has currently ended, LEAP, in a merger with the Bureau of Employment Services, has been transformed into the National Bureau of Employment (NBE) and continues to create short-term employment opportunities in and outside of Monrovia.

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

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

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

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

B. Youth and Employment

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

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

C. Right to Education, Human Rights Education & Awareness

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

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

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

62. Other measures taken by Liberia to improve access to and quality of education include: building and renovating educational facilities in different parts of the country, providing tuition assistance to students attending teacher colleges, producing and distributing textbooks and other teaching and reading materials, implementing the Early Grade Reading Assessment

(EGRA) program, which provides early reading intervention assessment and support in 15 education districts, and drafting a policy to develop an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Curriculum to ensure that children ages 0-5 have access to quality ECD services and programs.

D. Right to Food

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

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

3.3 Women

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

A. Women & the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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

67. The creation of the Gender Committee greatly increased the participation of women in the TRC process. Women were not only encouraged to come forward and share the full spectrum of their experiences during the conflict; they were also actively recruited to work as statement takers. Further, the Gender Committee provided psycho-social support during and

after statement takings and testimonies, engaged male partners to promote behavioral change and provided medical and child reunification referrals. The final report of the TRC includes a chapter dedicated to the experiences of women during the conflict, including specific recommendations to address the physical, psychological, social, political and economic needs of women.

B. Violence against Women

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

69. In 2008, Liberia took further decisive measures to combat gender based violence in the country. In early 2008, the Special Court¹ for Rape and Other Forms of Violence was established in Monrovia. Soon after, the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Unit was created under the Ministry of Justice. The Unit is responsible for the coordination and prosecution of cases in the Special Court for Rape and provides community outreach and awareness-programs as well as 24 hours victims' hotline services. Going forward, Liberia plans to expand the work of the Unit to handle cases from a wider geographic area and create permanent SGBV Units around the country.

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

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

¹ Criminal court E

C. Women and Education

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

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

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

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

D. Women and Political Participation

76. Appreciating the socio-cultural and economic factors excluding women from politics, Liberia has taken effective measures to ensure women's political participation. For example, during the two presidential and general elections, the National Election Commission engaged in civic and voter education campaigns that targeted women and address socio-cultural factors that limited women's political participation; as a result, Liberia can boast of amongst others, having the First female president of Africa, the Ministers of Justice, Agriculture, Gender, Commerce and Education, all being females; and women forming a significant portion of Military as well as Law enforcement institutions. Etc.

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

E. Women and Economic Empowerment

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

79. To mainstream gender in the national development process and create mechanisms that provide women equal access to and control of resources, Liberia has formulated the National Gender Policy. Specific objectives of the policy, among others, include:

80. Supporting women's participation in development and decision-making processes, promoting recognition of women's multiple roles in national development, and facilitating the domestication of regional and international instruments of gender equality.

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

3.4 Children

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

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

A. Children & the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

84. The Liberian TRC was given an unprecedented mandate to systematically include children in all aspects of the Commission's truth seeking and reconciliation process. In order to ensure child-sensitive and child-friendly mechanisms, the TRC identified and formally collaborated with child protection agencies in the country as well as the Liberian Children's Parliament.

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

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

B. Protection of Children without a Family & Child Trafficking

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

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

89. With regard to child trafficking through adoptions, Liberia created an ad-hoc adoption authority to monitor adoption practices in the country. After a two month countrywide public awareness and consultation campaign, the adoption authority, in compliance with recommendation from the consultation, placed a moratorium on all adoptions. Also, a revised adoption law which is currently at the National Legislature for passage, put in place and ensured the closure of adoption agencies suspected of child trafficking. The authority also recommended that the country become a party to the Hague Adoption Convention.

C. Child Labor & Child Abuse

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

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

D Protection from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation

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

93. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a deeply rooted cultural practice in Liberia, however, the Government of Liberia, opposes harmful traditional practices. Since banning FGM would not prevent its practice, general consensus is pointing out that legislation should be introduced to help safeguard the process of FGM. In this regard, the Government is in the process of implementing the provision of alternative sources of livelihood to practitioners of harmful traditional practices through training and linkage to micro programs in 4 counties (Cape Mount, Lofa, Gbarpolu and Bong). Furthermore, a Taskforce has been established by the Government to monitor and take action to protect children whose parents have deliberately delayed primary education in order for their children to partake in the informal rituals of their tribal secret society. Moreover, the respective Government ministries are actively involved with the health aspects of FGM and the aim is to modify the practice through the use of trained medical practitioners.

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

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

3.5 Persons with Disabilities

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

97. Liberia has also empowered more than 20 disabilities institutions to form the National Union of Organizations of the Disabled (NUOD). The NUOD, in collaboration with the NCD, successfully lobbied for the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, which instrument was deposited with Secretary General of the United Nations on the 26th of July, 2012. The National Commission on disabilities (NCD) is presently partnering with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and relevant Line Ministries, local and International non-governmental organizations to draft a strategic framework for the implementation of the convention in Liberia.

4. Responses to the Human Rights Situation on the Ground:

4.1 Challenges and Constraints

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

- Lack of human rights awareness among large segments of society;
- High illiteracy and ²vulnerable employment rates;
- Shortage of trained and qualified manpower;
- Limited budget: to build more roads, to change to cheaper and affordable hydro-electricity, to extend the pipe borne water service throughout the country, increase man health and educational facilities, court houses, police stations, Correctional facilities, etc.
- Socio-cultural perceptions and practices;
- Existence of dual justice systems;
- Continued existence of discriminatory laws;
- Delays in domesticating regional and international human rights conventions;

²² The recent National Labor Force Survey (NLFS) reported statistic showed high rate of vulnerable employed; meaning people who lively hood can provide the minimum living standard

- Inadequate financial resources to implement crucial human rights projects, etc.

4.2 Further Initiatives

A. The Governance Commission

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

B. The Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC)

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

C. Land Commission

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

4.3 Key National Priorities

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

- Provide periodic human rights education to citizens;
- Enhance human rights awareness among public officials, particularly among law enforcement and prison officials;
- Continue strengthening the capacity of Ministries, governmental agencies and all other institutions with competence for human rights;

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

4.4 Liberia's Expectations for the Country in Terms of International Assistance

- Training and technical assistance to enhance the human rights awareness of citizens and public officials;
- Training and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of relevant institutions to design and implement human rights related policies and projects;
- Training and technical assistance to implement a national human rights action plan for Liberia;
- Training and technical assistance to advance the law reform process;
- Training and technical assistance to strengthen rule of law institutions;

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

ANNEX - The major Regional and International Human Rights Instruments (Signed, Ratified or Acceded to by the Republic of Liberia)

Regional Human Rights Instrument

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

International Human Rights Instruments

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

ILO Conventions

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