



## Raising Poor and Marginalised Women's Voices in Liberia



### Oxfam GB Citizen Voice Outcome Indicator

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## Abbreviations

<b>AFELL</b>	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BAWODA</b>	Buchanan Women’s Development Organisation
<b>CI</b>	Children International
<b>COCISWOL</b>	Coalition of Civil Society Women of Liberia
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>DCI</b>	Defence for Children International
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>FIND</b>	Foundation for International Dignity
<b>FBO</b>	Faith-Based Organisation
<b>GOL</b>	Government of Liberia
<b>IPRS</b>	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy
<b>LAC</b>	Liberia Agriculture Company
<b>LIWMAC</b>	Liberia Women Media Action Committee
<b>LNP</b>	Liberian National Police
<b>LWRC</b>	Lofa Women’s Rights Coalition
<b>MARWOPNET</b>	Mano River Women’s Peace Network
<b>MAWODA</b>	Margibi Women’s Development Organisation
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MoA</b>	Ministry of Agriculture
<b>MoFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MoGD</b>	Ministry of Gender and Development
<b>NACP</b>	National AIDS Control Program
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>OGB</b>	Oxfam Great Britain
<b>OI</b>	Oxfam International
<b>PRS</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy
<b>RHV</b>	Raising Her Voice
<b>SOAWR</b>	Solidarity for African Women’s Rights
<b>SKD</b>	Samuel Kanyon Doe
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNMIL</b>	United Nations Mission in Liberia
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WANEP</b>	West African Network for Peacebuilding
<b>WCPU</b>	Women and Children Protection Unit
<b>WIPNET</b>	Women in Peacebuilding Network
<b>WIPSEN</b>	Women Peace and Security Network
<b>WOCI</b>	Women and Children Initiative
<b>WOLPNET</b>	Women of Liberia Peace Network
<b>WONGOSOL</b>	Women’s Non-Governmental Secretariat of Liberia
<b>WPWHD</b>	West Point Women for Health and Development

## Table of Contents

<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.0 Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1 Key Findings.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2 Recommendations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2 Introduction and Purpose.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.1 RHV Overview.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.2 The context .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.2.1 Politics.....	6
2.2.2 Workforce and access to education .....	7
2.2.3 Violence .....	7
2.2.4 Initiatives .....	8
<b>2.3 Evaluation Approach .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.3.1 Research Methodology.....	9
2.3.2 Data collection.....	10
2.3.3 Limitations .....	11
<b>3 Project Description .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.1 Campaign Rationale.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.2 Campaign Activities .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3.3 Structure and Governance .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3.4 Resourcing .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4 Results of the Impact Assessment.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4.1 First Targeted Outcome – “That Government Hears Our Voice” .....</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1.1 Key Findings.....	18
4.1.2 Causal Stories.....	20
4.1.3 Evidence .....	21
4.1.4 Assessment.....	22
<b>4.2 Second Targeted Outcome – A reduction in men committing GBV and rape.....</b>	<b>23</b>
4.2.1 Key Findings.....	24
4.2.2 Causal Stories .....	28
4.2.3 Evidence .....	29
4.2.4 Assessment.....	30
<b>5 Recommendations .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5.1 Advocacy Programming .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5.2 Monitoring and Evaluation .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>6 Conclusion.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>7 Contribution Scores.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>8 Works Cited .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Journal Articles, Books and Official Reports.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Print and Online Newspaper Articles.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Annex I: Documentation Reviewed for the Impact Assessment.....</b>	<b>34</b>
COCOSWOL Statement Presented to H.E. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.....	34
“13 Counts: An Analysis of the Ministry of Gender and Development Response” .....	34
<b>Annex II: List of Key Informants .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Annex III: Methodology Recommendations.....</b>	<b>37</b>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

'Raising Poor and Marginalised Women Voices in Liberia' is a project that was developed as a part of the global project 'Raising Her Voice (RHV)'. This 17-country project aims at ***promoting rights and developing the capacity of grassroots women to engage effectively in governance***. The global theory of change is that this transformational change for women is possible when there is positive change in three spheres:

- Personal – women have confidence to act
- Political – The informal and formal structures that influence laws affecting women
- Social – The organisational potential for women to unite to promote their causes

Oxfam Liberia is working with two local partners: Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET) and Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) to implement and monitor the activities according to their specific assignments.

The activities designed for Liberia programming can be grouped into four clusters:

- Networking, lobbying and advocacy with poor women activists (WOLPNET)
- Working with public institutions and decision-making forums including traditional structures (WONGOSOL)
- Empowering and building the capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to achieve rights of poor women citizens through campaigns and policy work (WOLPNET)
- Learning lessons and disseminating best practices through innovative media and communications work. (WONGOSOL and WOLPNET)

In Liberia, the 5-year project has been implemented since 2009 in eight communities located in Bomi, Bong, Lofa, Cape Mount, Grand Bass, Montserrado and Margibi Counties.

The methodology used for this assessment is known as 'process tracing', a type of qualitative research that is designed to systematically measure the specific ways a particular cause produced (or contributed to producing) a particular effect. This involves selecting sites where the project has been ongoing/is relatively mature, and doing in-depth research surrounding the intended outcomes of the project, based on the outcomes the project was intending to achieve, based on its most recent theory of change.

Much of the programming was oriented around grassroots advocacy through workshops and production of sensitisation materials. The campaign rationale can ultimately be refined as developing advocacy and sensitisation campaigns designed to 'reach as many women as possible with the message inside the AU protocol'. Thus, the working theory of change is that women's private and public lives will improve through increased public awareness and advocacy that teaches as many people as possible the existence of women's rights as proscribed in the AU protocol.

The targeted outcomes based on this campaign rationale were, because of their adapted theory of change, relatively non-specific. Here I will outline two of the targeted and observed outcomes: 1) that grassroots women can raise their voices towards national politics and politicians so that their demands are heard; 2) that communities perceive there to be a decrease in the incidence of GBV and rape.

### 1.1 Key Findings

1) The first targeted and observed outcome is that grassroots women can raise their voices towards national politics and politicians so that their demands are heard. Evidence of this outcome is found in the story of a coalition of women who mobilised a group of between 200 and 500 women (reports vary) from around the country to march to the Ministry of Gender headquarters and hold a sit-in until the Minister came to speak with them regarding their grievances. The Minister listened to their statement and assured them that their concerns would be addressed, and that future meetings would

be arranged. After this, representatives were invited to a retreat where President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf acknowledged their grievances, and encouraged the Minister of Gender to apologise to the women for their perception that their needs were not being addressed. The Minister apologised, suggested to the women that they 'start from square one' in their dealings, and the women accepted this apology and 'new beginning'. Since then, however, the Ministry has done nothing and the two groups remain in tense relationship, thus indicating an unintended consequence of their targeted outcome.

2) The second targeted and observed outcome is that communities perceive there to be a decrease in the incidence of GBV and rape. The exact causal mechanism for the decrease in these crimes is difficult to pinpoint, and indeed there are a number of causes at play that can result in this outcome. Four stories elucidate the different causes that can be attributed to contributing to this outcome: these stories describe police intervention through counselling, police intervention through arrests, one-on-one counselling with peers, and sensitisation workshops. In many of the program areas, RHV programming was quite weak, yet we still found indications of intended outcomes in these stories. Therefore, assessments of the types of programs implemented in these areas can help inform future RHV programming.

## 1.2 Recommendations

With respect to project activities, it can be recommended that there be increased attention to the development of technical skills like media outreach, writing policy briefs and bills, and lobbying as effective means of voicing concerns against government could benefit the stakeholders. If such training is not possible, then partner organisations would benefit from further sensitization on the scenarios in which to use mobilization and sit-in activity, and the possible negative affects that can result from these. It can also be recommended that more systematic records are taken surrounding specific activities that have occurred through RHV, and more research conducted on other organizations in the area that have had similar interventions in the past, or are planning similar interventions in the future.

It can also be recommended that there be more attention given to monitoring and evaluation of project implementation from all project partners involved. Lack of oversight has inhibited the ability to learn what programs are effective and whether certain outcomes can be attributed to RHV programming.

## 2 Introduction and Purpose

### 2.1 RHV Overview

'Raising Poor and Marginalised Women Voices in Liberia' is a project that was developed as a part of the global project 'Raising Her Voice (RHV)'. This 17-country project aims at ***promoting rights and developing the capacity of grassroots women to engage effectively in governance***. The global theory of change sees progress in women's participation and representation in governance as tied to changes for women in three spheres:

- Personal – women have confidence to act
- Political – The informal and formal structures that influence laws affecting women
- Social – The organisational potential for women to unite to promote their causes

Within these broad goals, RHV enables regional and country-specific adaptations; with the global theory of change as, *'a simple framework for understanding and evaluating the contribution of each element of work, and how each fits with wider change processes within and outside of the realms of*

the project'.<sup>1</sup> OGB's country offices work with local partners in implementing campaign activities. It is assumed that by enabling existing structures and country-specific approaches, the campaign will be effective because it is multidimensional, culturally-specific and more sustainable.

The seven projects in Africa are managed regionally while still part of a continent-wide coalition Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) with a focus on the ratification, domestication and implementation of the African Union (AU) protocol on women's rights. Regional campaign rationales, project goals and activities are thus different. What's more, the different status of the Protocol in each country means that activities and strategies vary, while some countries focus upon campaigning for ratification, some on passing laws to implement Protocol principles, others focus more on monitoring implementation and raising awareness of existing laws so that women actually benefit from them.

As part of Oxfam's "Global Performance Framework", the Liberia project was randomly selected from a pool of mature and closing projects for an impact assessment, using the prescribed "process tracing" research protocol. OXFAM GB has commissioned a more narrow qualitative assessment of the relative successes/ failures of these programs, going on since 2009, focusing on 'case studies' to measure in greater detail the changes taking place, in this particular case:

- The changes that the RHV project is seeking around engagement of poor and marginalised women in governance in Liberia
- The extent to which the RHV project has contributed to these changes.

What follows is the final product of this evaluation – a narrative analytical report that documents the research process and findings, analyzing both the intended and actual outcomes of the project implementation, and the ways that such projects may have influenced change in that community. This is intended to both help inform the methodology used to evaluate other global projects, in addition to providing evidence of the most effective projects that contribute to change, even if they were not the result of RHV, to help inform future RHV programming.

## 2.2 The context

Women in Liberia are disadvantaged in many aspects of their private and public lives; many of these disadvantages can be understood by examining the interaction between indigenous Liberians and the Americo-Liberian elite who ruled until 1979. After Liberia was founded as an independent state, the True Whig Party (TWP) formalised what were perceived to be 'traditions' by non-indigenous Liberians and Americans into customary laws that overlooked many of the important roles that women played in social and political life.<sup>2</sup> The Rules and Regulations Governing the Hinterland, which were produced by the Americo-Liberian True Whig Party (TWP), similar to British-style indirect rule over the rural areas, have been in effect since the 19th century.<sup>3</sup> There have been some notable changes since the end of the war, but women still face great disadvantages in their political, social and personal lives.

### 2.2.1 Politics

Women are severely underrepresented in Liberian politics, despite having a female president. Of course, the election of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2005 was a significant achievement towards women's equality<sup>4</sup>, but the situation for most Liberian women is much different. In 2008 women represented only 14% of the legislature, a percentage that women's groups agreed needed to be much higher.<sup>5</sup> In the 2011 elections, however, while more women ran for office (105 women ran for office out of a total 925 candidates); the total percentage of women who were successful dropped from 14% to 11%.

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<sup>1</sup> Beardon, 'Women's Right to Be Heard', 2

<sup>2</sup> Traditionally, as Moran observes, these inequalities were functional within society: 'Women are always lower than men...but structural inequality is mitigated through institutionalised practices whereby subordinates can act collectively and sometimes individually to air grievances, bring pressure to decision makers and alter their situation'. Moran, *Liberia*, 46-47

<sup>3</sup> Despite this, they are still considered legitimate for rural populations and are overseen by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*

<sup>4</sup> Men and women in equal numbers elected her, in addition to eight women to Congress. D. Harris, "Liberia 2005: an unusual African post-conflict election," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 44, no. 03 (2006): 390

<sup>5</sup> "PRS," 89.

## 2.2.2 Workforce and access to education

Women also face inequalities in the types of jobs they have. During the war, many rural women were forced to take on men's roles in trading and doing business, which has significantly enhanced their role in post-war Liberian business-making, though they still lack the economic decision-making potential within their households.<sup>6</sup> Also, there remain certain cultural trends that discourage women from playing more than their traditional roles in the market, the home and farming. Women also lack equal opportunities to pursue certain livelihoods – nearly 90% work in the informal sector or agriculture. They make up 53 percent of the agricultural labour force; produce 60 percent of all agricultural products in Liberia; 77 percent of women are self-employed (indicating they run their own businesses), yet very few women are employed within the most profitable sectors: infrastructure, public works, cash crop farming, and mining.<sup>7</sup> Women are also grossly unrepresented in the journalistic profession – they represent only 13-16% of journalists in the country, and there are only four women managers at the 40 newspapers and 20 radio stations in Monrovia.<sup>8</sup> Such underrepresentation can have a massive affect on editorial content and the messages that are transmitted throughout the country.

While there are certain cultural barriers to women entering previously male-dominated positions, much of their lack of representation in skilled jobs can be attributed to their lack of education: some studies have found that up to 78% of women are illiterate, and only 8% have completed secondary school.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2.3 Violence

Not only do women have fewer opportunities and a cultural bias against political, professional and educational advancement, they are often victims of sexual and physical violence. During the war, rape, physical abuse, torture and emotional abuse against women and girls was used as a war tactic in order to spread fear through populations, to get information from people, or demonstrate authority or manliness to one's military unit.<sup>10</sup> It was common for soldiers to take girls and young women as 'war wives' who were essentially sexual slaves who underwent days or years of abuse; some women strategically utilised their sexuality in order to survive.<sup>11</sup> Gang rapes increased during Charles Taylor's regime with some reports of victims as young as 8-months.<sup>12</sup>

Since the chaos of the war, incidence of GBV and rape has not necessarily abated; many young men who grew up during the war and regularly saw such abuse have little understanding of it. The issue of rape is also highly stigmatised, and occurrences are thought to be hugely underreported<sup>13</sup> and not often discussed within families. When a woman does make an accusation of rape, the issue is usually chosen to be handled privately using traditional justice mechanisms.<sup>14</sup> Even if a woman chooses to handle the case in state courts, in many areas there is little access to such resources<sup>15</sup> and the process is incredibly slow and painful for victims.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 'In many rural areas... the effect has been a remarkable emancipation of women from their pre-war position. Women are economically freer to choose new partners...' Ellis, *The mask of anarchy : the destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war*, 143-144

<sup>7</sup> World Bank 2006 needs assessment

<sup>8</sup> Advancing Women in the Media Strategy

<sup>9</sup> Advancing Women in the Media Strategy. A 2008 study estimated that only 24% of females were literate compared to 50% of males. "Social Welfare Policy" (Government of Liberia, May 2008), 11

<sup>10</sup> Rape was not used, as it was in other wars, as a strategy of ethnic cleansing. Rather, 'rape was a celebration of a hyper-masculine warrior identity or a wartime "denigration and objectification of women-as-sex (Dilorio 1992:54). Consequently, rape was frequently carried out against any unprotected woman, regardless of whether they had ethnic or political affinity with those who perpetrated this violence'. Mats Utas, "Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78 (2005): 418

<sup>11</sup> Some women 'willingly' became girlfriends of soldiers in order to protect themselves and their families; others saw it as an opportunity to live a 'good life'. Others became fighters themselves; some estimate that up to 10% of the NPFL soldiers were women. *Ibid.*, 405

<sup>12</sup> *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 11.

<sup>16</sup> There are moves to address this, though. *Government Takes Steps to Speed Up Rape Cases* (Government of Liberia, July 31, 2008), <http://allafrica.com/stories/200808010076.html>

In addition, faced with economic difficulties, young women often look for opportunities for relationships with men with money to supplement their family's income. Many young women and girls are pressured into prostitution by their families<sup>17</sup> or into establishing relationships with older, wealthier males, especially expatriates. Girls and young women are at high risk of sexual abuse within schools as well, exchanging their bodies for fees, high marks or certificates.<sup>18</sup> The majority of Liberian females have their first child before reaching the age of 18, largely due to forced early marriages and rape.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.2.4 Initiatives

The Sirleaf government made one of its earliest priorities addressing issues pertaining to gender equality.<sup>20</sup> With regards to women in public life, the government signed a resolution with the UN to reach a 30% target for women in government positions; in 2008 they had reached 14%. The Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) has also launched programs to train and empower 2500 women, representing 6 women's organisations, in leadership, home economics, agro processing and micro-enterprise management.<sup>21</sup> The government has also implemented programs to put all children in primary school for free to deter poor families only sending their sons; initiatives are being taken to increase enrolment of girls in higher levels. There are also a number of initiatives to get women into professions that were traditionally off-limits: lawyers, doctors, police officers and accountants, for example.<sup>22</sup>

The government has also paid serious attention to GBV and rape. In 2007 the government developed a National Gender Based Violence Plan of Action and established a GBV secretariat within the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD).<sup>23</sup> One day after President Johnson Sirleaf took office, the Rape Law was passed which explicitly specifies that rape is a criminal act.<sup>24</sup> She promised that, 'no rapist would go unpunished'.<sup>25</sup> However, the government lacks the means to disseminate the message behind the rape bill to rural areas, and in simplified terms or local languages.<sup>26</sup> Although reports of rape had increased through 2007<sup>27</sup>, there were few convictions. Much of this was due to the inefficiency of the judicial system; a major move was made in July 2008 when President Sirleaf signed a bill into law to speed up the trying of rape cases.<sup>28</sup> She continued to publicly address the problem in high-profile speeches,<sup>29</sup> and has taken part in many other campaigns to spread awareness of GBV and rape.<sup>30</sup>

There still exist many contradictions between customary and statutory laws; while statutory law has jurisdiction and increasingly these contradictions are being addressed by government, the challenge

<sup>17</sup> For example, see 'Monrovia at Night...', *Daily Observer*, 13 June 2008; 'Teenage prostitution Increases', *Daily Observer*, 20 October 2006; 'Peer Pressure, Teenage pregnancy, Chronic societal ills', *Daily Observer*, 04 June 2008; 'Social Vices on the increase: Children addicted to alcohol', 16 Jan 2008; "Prostitutes Seek Gov't Assistance," *The Analyst*, March 6, 2007

<sup>18</sup> "Gender Advocate Abhors Exploitation in Schools," *Daily Observer*, July 30, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> "PRS," 185.

<sup>20</sup> 'The Government of Liberia is strongly committed to gender equity as a means of maintaining peace, reducing poverty, enhancing justice and promoting development in the country. To assure equal opportunities and participation in management and decision-making of all levels of the society, women's and men's different experiences, needs, concerns, vulnerabilities, capacities, visions and contributions must be systematically taken into account'. Ibid., 163-169

<sup>21</sup> Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, "Annual Message to the Legislature" (Capital Hill, Monrovia, Liberia, January 28, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> The government set targets of 20% women in the police force, especially for assistance with rape and GBV cases. "Over 100 Liberian women complete police training under UN-backed initiative," *UN News Service*, December 24, 2007

<sup>23</sup> "PRS," 89.

<sup>24</sup> Prior to this, only gang rape was considered criminal, rape of a male was not articulated, and forced penetration with an object, an AK-47 for example, was not considered rape. Government of Liberia, *Rape Amendment, 14.70, 14.72*, 2005. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, "Liberia's Gender-Based Violence National Action Plan," 2007,

<http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR27/21.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> "Rape victims' voices not heard, aid workers," *IRIN*, April 7, 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=58689>.

<sup>26</sup> *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 14.

<sup>27</sup> According to police statistics in 2008, rape was the most reported crime, and most cases are of girls aged 10-14. David Koch, *Protecting girls and women from sexual violence in post-war Liberia* (UNICEF, November 14, 2008), ReliefWeb, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MUMA-7LE744?OpenDocument&RSS20=02-P>

<sup>28</sup> *Government Takes Steps to Speed Up Rape Cases*.

<sup>29</sup> Sirleaf, "2008 Annual Message to the Legislature."

<sup>30</sup> For example, as early as December 2007 the government and UN launched a campaign to spread awareness: 'Stop Rape, it could be your mother, your daughter, your sister, your niece'. The Ministry of Gender put on a 'Stop Rape' concert in July 2008 featuring a number of local and regional performers. A few newspapers will frequently include a small box in the corner of one of their pages that says, 'Stop Rape, Good Guys Don't Rape', 'Respect your woman', or something similar.

lies in sensitising local populations who have followed customary laws for their entire lives. In 2003 a law was passed which gave rights of inheritance to women married under customary law although, again, it is difficult to inform the public and enforce the law.<sup>31</sup> Other clearly antiquated regulations are only beginning to be seriously questioned.<sup>32</sup> The practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still widespread in Liberia has been highlighted by the ministry of health and social welfare<sup>33</sup> and many international organisations; however, few formal moves have been made to limit or regulate the practice.<sup>34</sup> There have been incidents of the media reporting on such practices, and being threatened in return.<sup>35</sup> In addition to government and UN programmes<sup>36</sup>, there are dozens of international and local NGOs that are devoted specifically to issues pertaining to women and girls; most large NGOs have a 'desk' or 'unit' designated specifically to deal with women's issues.

Clearly, some very important laws are being passed, and community-awareness campaigns are being carried out. In practice, regardless of the illegality of certain gender inequalities and the sensitisation of the public about improving the treatment of women, the extent to which these reforms are effective and enforced, especially in hard-to-reach rural populations is questionable. Many of the ideas being discussed are truly countercultural, especially to a number of younger Liberians who have grown up in a society in war, which might have conditioned them to see the systematic, sometimes violent, subordination of women as acceptable. Therefore, to meet the goals of the government and others, there is great need to further consolidate these reforms among the public.

## 2.3 Evaluation Approach

### 2.3.1 Research Methodology

The methodology used for this assessment is known as 'process tracing', a type of qualitative research that is designed to systematically measure the specific ways a particular cause produced (or contributed to producing) a particular effect. This involves selecting sites where the project has been ongoing/is relatively mature, and doing in-depth research surrounding the intended outcomes of the project, based on the outcomes the project was intending to achieve, from its most recent theory of change. This entails conducting document review, media analysis, field observations, one-on-one interviews and focus groups with people across the social, economic and political spectrum – from politicians and heads of CSOs to teachers, students and non-working widows. With this data, causal mechanisms can be identified in order to elucidate where, for example, an intended outcome was the result of certain programming or, on the other hand, whether the programming for an intended outcome resulted in unintended consequences. It can also reveal, for example, whether the intended outcome was a result of RHV programming or the result of external influences. In short, process tracing ensures that data collected is verified, triangulated and that as many details as possible surrounding the factors that contributed to the measured change are incorporated into the analysis. This will enable Oxfam to assess the extent to which their programming is effective, why it was or was not effective, and also contribute to data collected from future evaluations in order to help plan programming if it appears that other programs were more effective than their own.

An external evaluator with expertise in qualitative research in Liberia led the evaluation with the assistance of three local consultants, also with experience in qualitative research in gender issues in Liberia.

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<sup>31</sup> The major implication of this law was that in the event of her husband's death, she had no rights of inheritance. Often, because they would lose all their property, children, and possessions if their husband died, they were essentially forced to marry another member of the husband's family. *An Act to Govern the Devolution of Estates and Establish Rights of Inheritance for Spouses of Both Statutory and Customary Marriages [Liberia]*, 2003

<sup>32</sup> For example, the regulation allowing trial by ordeal to be used as long as the suspect's life is not at risk was still upheld by the Ministry of Internal Affairs up to 2008, yet it directly violates the statutory law which states a person must not be forced to give evidence against oneself. *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*

<sup>33</sup> "Social Welfare Policy," 11.

<sup>34</sup> "Reuters AlertNet - LIBERIA: FGM continues in rural secrecy," *IRIN*, September 25, 2008

<sup>35</sup> Jina Moore, 'Reporter threatened over female circumcision story in Liberia, PRIs the World', <http://www.theworld.org/2012/03/female-circumcision-liberia/>, 20 March 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Among many of the projects they support through the Ministry of Gender, through the UN Office of the Gender Advisor and the policy of 'gender mainstreaming', UNMIL has helped build capacity of NGOs, integrated gender into the training of security sector personnel, the military, TRC and education sector. They have also contributed to a number of smaller projects, such as building safe houses for abused women and refurbishing schools. [www.unmil.org](http://www.unmil.org)

### 2.3.2 Data collection

The first steps taken in data collection were to meet with the partner organisation leaders to determine their campaign rationale, expected outcomes, and programming that had recently taken place in order to achieve those outcomes. This helped to refine the theory of change, as it may have adapted in the country-context. From there, partner leaders were asked to recommend sites where programming had reached its mature stages, and where outcomes were reported to be significant.

From there, the team leader decided upon sites to visit given the time frame and availability of stakeholders, and with the assistance of project leaders arranged for site visits and collected contact information for local project leaders and other relevant stakeholders.

Next, site visits were planned in three of the project sites, which incorporated projects led by both of the partner organisations. Primary contacts in each site were notified of the team's arrival, and requests were made to make key informants available. Upon arriving at each site, the team first made contact with the relevant city/community leader (district commissioners, chiefs and/or mayors) to introduce themselves and brief them of their intentions. These meetings are a necessary formality in conducting any fieldwork in Liberia, and can often lead to both informative interviews and also the collection of key local contact information. During these initial interviews, the team began with very general questions surrounding major changes in the community, and then focused more on women's issues and finally, detailed questions surrounding the specific project(s) in question. (See appendix for detailed list of questions considered during these interviews).

Then, the team would make contact with the relevant project leaders to determine the intended outcomes and programming that had taken place to reach these outcomes. Also during these interviews, the team collected any relevant documentation. Further contacts were also collected from these contacts, and subsequently interviewed in order to verify the reported outcomes and project activities, in addition to gathering additional opinions surrounding the project rationale. (See appendix)

During these targeted interviews, always conducted by the team leader and with the presence of one team member, the other members of the field team went into the community to conduct random interviews among individuals representing a variety of social, economic and generational groups. During these interviews, informants were asked about their opinions surrounding women's empowerment generally, and then more focused questions surrounding the projects activities were addressed in order to assess the extent to which the project had an impact. (See appendix)

Because much of the programming was based in major towns, but was intended to reach out into more rural communities, additional fieldwork was undertaken in each area in order to measure the extent to which the project had actually reached the areas that it had intended. This involved making contact with the relevant community leaders to make introductions and conduct interviews, and then conducting random interviews with community members surrounding the specific project that was reported to have reached them.

The primary data collector was the team leader, who conducted fifty-five of the interviews either independently or with a team member present. All other interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by the team leader, ensuring quality control of interview questions and answers. Small focus groups of 4-8 people were conducted at each project site; all participants in these groups were chosen at random and were generally 'average' people in the community.

The team of evaluators spoke to 108 individuals – 54 community members and 54 key informants. Of these interviews, most were conducted in person, though five were conducted over the phone, and two were conducted through email correspondence. (See appendix for complete interview list).

When all preliminary interviews were conducted with the project representatives in each area being surveyed, the team leader created a comprehensive list of targeted/observed outcomes identified in each community. The project leaders (regional and Monrovia-based) of WOLPNET, WONGOSOL and COCISWOL were asked for their input in order to create a short list of these outcomes to focus upon for the remainder of fieldwork. Each project stakeholder agreed on the same 'top four' focus outcomes. From there, attention was devoted to examining the possible 'causal stories' – those activities or changes that may have contributed or led to the observed outcomes. These possible

causal stories were initially developed by the team leader based on data already collected during this fieldwork, and also using literature that attributed similar outcomes to certain causes. These causal stories were shared with key stakeholders during initial interviews or in some cases, in follow-up phone calls or personal interviews, in order to refine possible causes and get additional ideas.

From there, research was aimed towards gathering as much evidence as possible to put together the most complete and accurate narrative of the causes that could have contributed to the observed outcome – to determine which of the ‘causal stories’ was most accurate. Special attention was given to differentiating the influences external to RHV programming, and also to discern whether the RHV programming had any additional (unintended) outcomes in addition to that which was targeted. Whatever evidence was gathered was, when possible, verified for accuracy through triangulation of interviewed sources, or through relevant documents. During this phase of focused research, three of the sites were revisited for follow-up interviews with key informants, additional interviews with new informants and also to conduct a broader survey of community members with specific questioning dealing with the outcome at hand.

### **2.3.3 Limitations**

There were no significant limitations that affected the quality of research conducted. There is a vibrant independent print media in Liberia and most major events, workshops, and court cases/crimes are written about in at least one of the newspapers. Moreover, fieldwork in Liberia is relatively easy in terms of accessing individuals for interviews, and nearly all of those persons who were requested an interview granted it to the field team. Of 86 interviews requested, there were only four individuals who we were unable to contact during the time of fieldwork. Two of these individuals had significant roles in the early stages of key programs. While efforts to contact them personally failed, a variety of other persons were interviewed surrounding their role, in order to assess as completely as possible the leadership at the time. Also, media was analysed in order to extract quotations and press releases from these women during the time of their relevant activity.

There was some difficulty gaining contact with certain government officials whose opinions might have contributed to the report, though when these officials were not willing or too busy to meet, they allowed the team to research one of their assistants or representatives, who they assured would ‘give the story’. Further, media was analysed in order to extract formal statements made by government with respect to the issue at hand. Thus, we are confident that the ‘government opinion’ is accurately represented throughout.

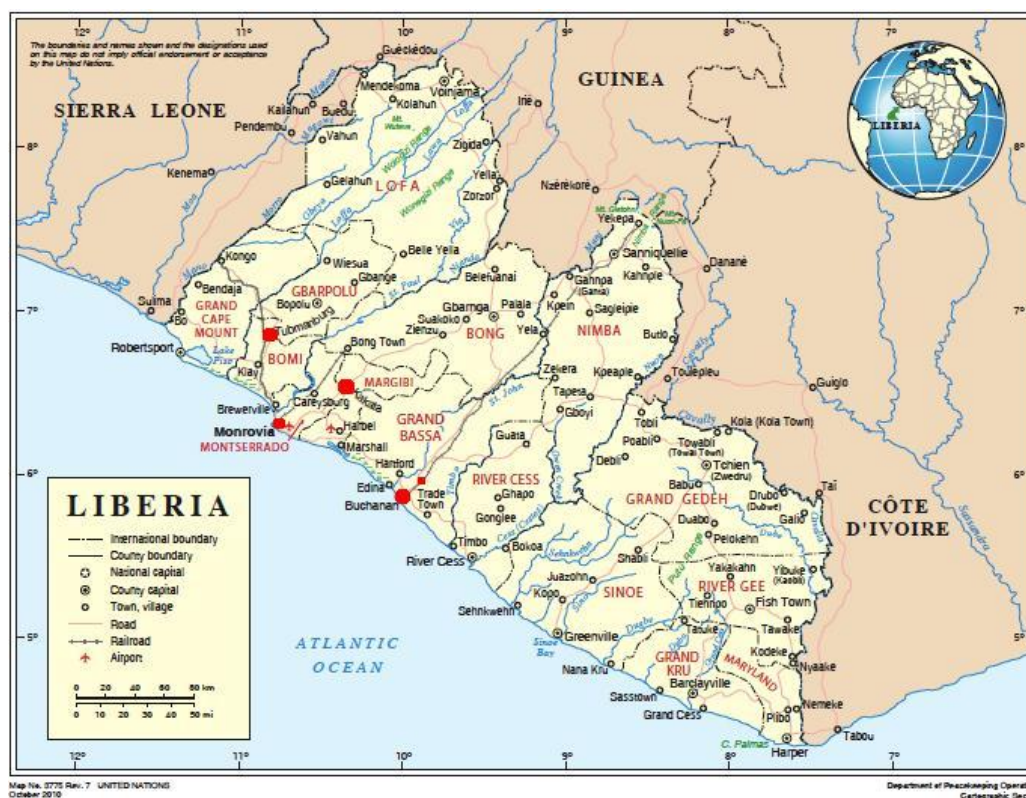
It is also recognised that despite this report being as thorough as possible, there are inevitably some gaps in information, and too few opinions from community-members on the ground. Indeed, the type of rich data that would most benefit such a focused qualitative assessment would be best conducted through ethnography or at least long-term observation in a single project area. Of course, the resources and time required for such a study were far beyond the scope of this project. Still, the report that follows realises these limitations and is careful in making conclusions or assumptions where data is lacking; areas where follow-up research is necessary are expressed explicitly in the report contents.

## **3 Project Description**

In Liberia, the 5-year RHV project has been implemented since 2009 in eight communities located in Bomi, Bong, Lofa, Cape Mount, Grand Bass, Montserrado and Margibi Counties. Oxfam Liberia is working with two local partners on RHV implementation and monitoring: the Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET) and Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL). They define the different activities, in four clusters:

- Networking, lobbying and advocacy with poor women activists (WOLPNET)
- Working with public institutions and decision-making forums including traditional structures (WONGOSOL)
- Empowering and building the capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to achieve rights of poor women citizens through campaigns and policy work (WOLPNET)
- Learning lessons and disseminating best practices through innovative media and communications work. (WONGOSOL and WOLPNET)

Figure 1 - Project sites evaluated for assessment<sup>37</sup>



### 3.1 Campaign Rationale

The campaign rationale can be best summarised in a statement from the acting President of WOLPNET:

*We aim for Liberians and especially women to have been informed about their rights. They should be knowledgeable about the AU protocol. Many should be involved in the electoral aspect and have the knowledge of participation when it comes to governance, both locally and nationally. They should be empowered with all counterparts, 50-50... be aware of harmful traditional practices [female genital mutilation (FGM)].*

The two organisations chosen as implementing partners have an important history in the fight for women’s rights in Liberia. WONGOSOL, the Women’s Non-Governmental Organisation Secretariat of Liberia, began in 1998 in order to consolidate the activities of the many women’s groups in the country, each trying to achieve the same general goal of increased gender equity. WOLPNET, the Women of Liberia Peace Network, was formed in 2003 in response to peace negotiations occurring in Ghana to end the Liberian civil war. WONGOSOL represents a wide array of women’s organisations (seventy-one according to most recent counts) in Liberia and largely serves as a coordinating body for these organisations. The two organisations were contacted by Oxfam GB to implement specific programmes under a 5-year timeline. Specific outcomes outlined for the campaign are:

- A vibrant coalition & voice for poor & marginalised women established in eight counties
- National laws, public policies, & institutions assessed for compliance with Protocol, leading to legal & administrative reform & more responsive governance
- Funding for aims contained in Protocol ring-fenced by at least four national governments
- Protocol retained as a recognised & visible building block of AU & a viable framework for promotion & protection of women’s rights
- Greater public awareness & support for realising rights contained in the Protocol

<sup>37</sup> Original map 3775 Rev. 7 from United Nations Department of Peacebuilding Operations, Cartographic Division, October 2010, available at <http://www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/liberia.pdf> .

- State & non-state alliances built and supported to ensure sustained realisation of women's rights & inclusion in governance
- Public actively engaged on the protection & promotion of women's rights at national & local levels through mass, community, & new media
- Public information materials produced in local languages and widely disseminated among project locations, nationally & continentally

While these goals and indicators are those reported in documentation produced with the support of Oxfam GB, and which implementing partners had copies of and acknowledged that these were the project's prescribed intended outcomes, we found that their attention was on only a selection of these outcomes. The campaign rationale, thus, must be refined for the purposes of this report, in order to elucidate the process by which the intended outcomes were achieved, not the extent to which the project goals were achieved.

The acting president of WOLPNET expressed that her interpretation of RHV was that it is, *'A governance project for the poor and marginalised; so that women are taking action and not left out. We implement the AU protocol, to ensure that all the articles are able to be implemented. We spell out the rights of women. Women are given the rights and privilege to partake in anything, and to establish networks and coalitions so the government will listen to them. To strengthen women to be motivated and activists, to speak for themselves, to be fully involved in the development process.'*

But that,

*'[those who gave us the strategy] did not meet with us before giving us this [binder of guidelines and project targets]. There are a lot of things in here that would not be realistic... [So] the ones we can easily tackle we complete; those we cannot then we start them. But in five years we cannot produce the perfect report.... You can't see the results right there, people have to understand and accept before anything is done.'*

The field coordinator for WOLPNET explained that,

*'We aim for Liberians and especially women to have been informed about their rights; that they are knowledgeable about the AU protocol. Many should be involved in the electoral aspect. Women should have the knowledge of participation when it comes to governance, both locally and nationally. They should be empowered with all counterparts, 50-50.'*

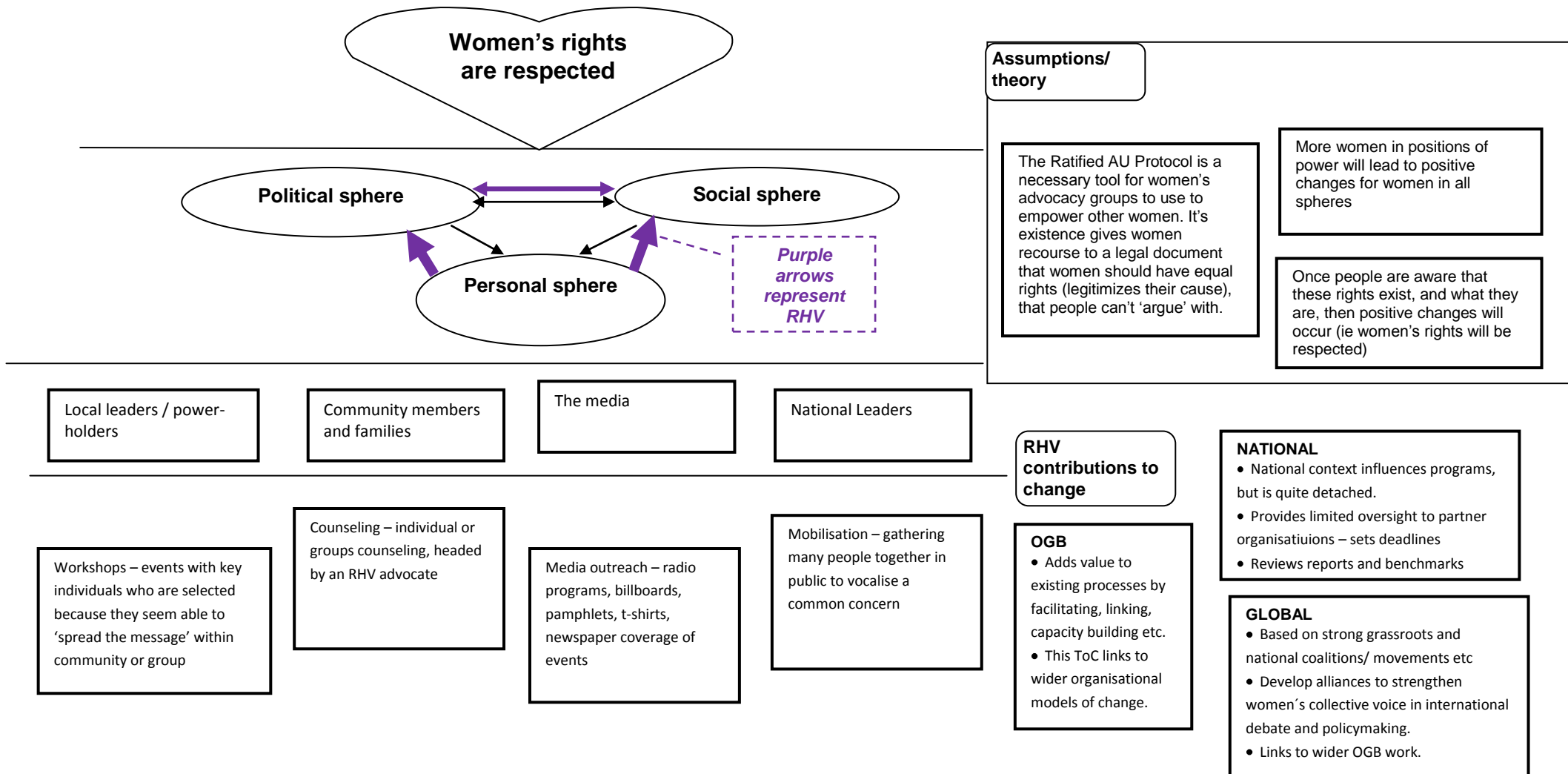
Representatives of WONGOSOL expressed similar sentiments. The acting director explained RHV was,

*'To help the poor and marginalised women know and access their rights. This is based on education. Many women know about their rights; the channels to access them are open. Raising her voice is unique in it helps women to have boldness. Most other don't give women the courage to move and take what's theirs.'*

Thus, much of the programming was oriented around grassroots advocacy through workshops and production of sensitisation materials. The campaign rationale can ultimately be refined as developing advocacy and sensitisation campaigns designed to 'reach as many women as possible with the message inside the AU protocol'. Thus, the working theory of changes is that women's private and public lives will improve through increased public awareness and advocacy that teaches as many people as possible the existence of women's rights as proscribed in the AU protocol.

The campaign activities that were focused upon thus reflect the campaign's working theory of change – reaching out to people with this basic message.

Figure 2 Raising Her Voice Illustrated Theory of Change<sup>38</sup>



<sup>38</sup> Template adapted from Beardon, 'Women's Right to Be Heard', 23.

## 3.2 Campaign Activities

A broad mid-term evaluation of the Liberia project was conducted in May 2011 to assess the extent to which key programs were being implemented, and the relative success they were having at achieving the project goals in three of the project sites. This study found key areas in which campaign activities were achieved, and others where activities were not initiated or done so only partially (see annex for full tables of projects). Up to the mid-term evaluation, the following activities were confirmed to have occurred:

Cluster	Partner	Activity
Networking, lobbying and advocacy with poor women activists	WOLPNET	Establishment of 7 media networks with media institutions on the AU Charter Advocacy strategy developed Worked with women groups in 4 counties Alliance formed with Traditional Council Two town hall meetings Two coalitions established Two women's centers established 3 Workshops on AU protocol 5000 copies distributed of AU protocol
Working with public institutions and decision making forums including traditional structures	WONGOSOL	Baseline survey Gender analysis in one area 2 workshops for rural women Involvement and documentation from women's colloquium Radio program in Grand Bassa Consultation with 10 female lawmakers Lobbying with parliament
Empowering and capacitating CSOs to achieve rights of poor women citizens through campaigns and policy work	WOLPNET	Establishment of 50-50 club for women 2 groups established in Lofa
Learning lessons and disseminating best practice through innovative media and communications work	Both	Awareness meeting on AU protocol for journalists Billboards in Montserrado and Grand Bassa

While it was not possible during this fieldwork to conduct a complete assessment of campaign activities that occurred in the time period after this mid-term evaluation, the following activities were reported to have occurred:

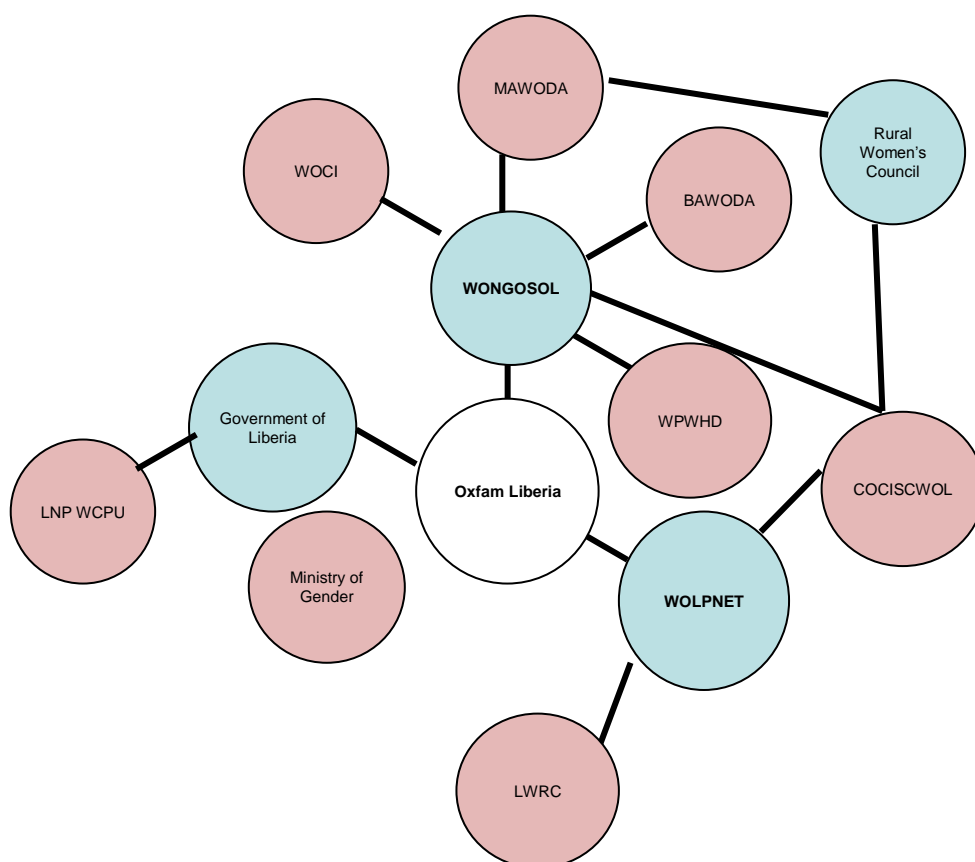
- Support of specific female political candidates in national office (Uma Thompson (WOLPNET) and Martha Kanga (BAWODA) for Senate, Hannah Slokon (MAWODA) for House), all of whom were unsuccessful in the race due to, they claimed, 'lack of finances compared with the men'
- Voter education workshop in Buchanan – to teach people how to vote and the importance of selecting women candidates: 'Because they are the only ones who will understand women's issues'
- Continuation of radio program in Bassa County – This Bassa-language call-in radio program is hosted by BAWODA's President and Founder. Though this radio program itself existed prior to RHV partnership, the programming was strongly influenced to the extent that instead of speaking generally about women's issues in Buchanan, the host devoted each night of the weekly program to a discussion of a single article in the AU protocol. During these programs, listeners are invited to call in and give their opinions surrounding the issue at hand. At the time of research, the radio program had not been broadcast since November 2011 as a result of the late hour (9 pm) the program was broadcast, which the host was having difficulty with. Further, while the program was claimed to be able to reach all of Grand Bassa County, it was confirmed that the signal did not reach standard radios only a short drive (less than 30 minutes) up a dirt road outside of Buchanan to Compound 3, Area B. Residents in this area, who spoke only Bassa, claimed that they could get that station only if they climbed a tree and therefore, they never listened to it and had never heard of the program. In Buchanan, the capital, interviews with community members indicated that only one (out of twenty) listened to this program; most listened to UNMIL radio instead.

### 3.3 Structure and Governance

Oxfam Great Britain (OGB) implements and monitors all its projects through country offices; the Oxfam Liberia country office is based in the capital Monrovia and is staffed by various Liberians and expatriates. There are also regional offices throughout the country who work closely with the head office in Monrovia. RHV is being overseen only within the head office's gender unit, who are also working with the continent-wide coalition Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR), whose focus is on the ratification, domestication and implementation of the African Union (AU) protocol on women's rights. To partner in implementation of RHV, Oxfam Liberia identified two strong local women's organisations that serve the interests of grassroots groups across the country: the Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) and the Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET). WONGOSOL is an umbrella organisation representing the interests of roughly ninety women's civil society organisations in Liberia (exact counts change often). WOLPNET is a similar entity, though both groups work quite separately from one another. At the same time, many members of one group are also members of another. Membership entails paying monthly dues and attending meetings; in return, the organisations offer periodic financial and technical support to the smaller organisations to help implement programs, plan, and empower individuals.

Each smaller woman's group might also serve as an 'umbrella' organisation or a coalition of groups representing the interests of many other women's groups. Again, there may be cross-membership in these structures. Ultimately, being a member of these coalitions serves to be beneficial for smaller women's groups because of their higher likelihood for partnership and direct support. Membership dues are usually nominal compared to the possible benefits they'll get from the larger organisations. The following diagram depicts the relationships between various groups who are somehow involved in the RHV campaign, and which are discussed in this report. Each line depicts formal involvement with one another wherein the smaller organization (pink) is a member or subsidiary of the larger organisation (blue).

Figure 3- Illustrated Organisation Linkages



### 3.4 Resourcing

The nature of organisations with multiple partners and donors like WOLPNET and WONGOSOL makes it difficult to confirm resources expended by projects, especially those that are specifically aimed at promoting the RHV campaign. These organisations partner with county-level organisations who are also often collaborating with other groups including the Ministry of Gender and various INGOs. It is also difficult to confirm the number of staff and volunteers involved directly with RHV campaigns, however, we can identify those organisations which WONGOSOL and WOLPNET claimed to be their main implementing partners for RHV programming (represented above). DFID funds the RHV Liberia program through Oxfam Liberia, which received 12,432 GBP (US \$19,500) over one year in 2009/10; they give each implementing partner an agreed amount one time each year.

Based on fieldwork conducted for this study, the WOLPNET head office is staffed by three individuals – a field coordinator, an acting president and a secretary. The President was out of the country indefinitely. WONGOSOL's office was made up of at least five permanent staff. At the county level, COSCIWOL was staffed by 4 women full-time, Bomi's WOCI was staffed by just one (the previous president had since taken a leave to attend school in Monrovia), Buchanan's office was staffed by three, and Margibi's office was staffed by two. In addition to these permanent staff, each office had a handful of representatives who worked in-kind and for various projects in addition to RHV.

## 4 Results of the Impact Assessment

Based on the results of the MTE, and verified by fieldwork conducted for this study, it can be

concluded that the specific outcomes envisioned by the partners have been met in the personal and social spheres. Very limited progress can be found in the political sphere and as will be outlined below, there might be negative outcomes in this sphere. While we identify progress in terms of increased respect for women's rights in the personal and social spheres, it is difficult to attribute these changes to RHV programming specifically. What follows are the results of the qualitative impact assessment which provide further details into the complicated nature of determining causality in advocacy. Specific attention is given to two targeted outcomes that have been examined in-depth in order to both determine the extent to which RHV contributed to these outcomes, and also what other factors might have contributed. This can help us develop future strategies for effective advocacy.

The targeted outcomes based on this campaign rationale were, because of their adapted theory of change, relatively non-specific. Here I will outline two of the targeted and observed outcomes: 1) that grassroots women can raise their voices towards national politics and politicians so that their demands are heard; 2) rural women and men are aware of certain rights affecting women to the extent that there are increased rights for them in domestic life, particularly by being able to make economic decisions, engage in work, and not be subject to domestic abuse/domestic rape.

## 4.1 First Targeted Outcome – “That Government Hears Our Voice”

The first targeted and observed outcome is that grassroots women can raise their voices towards national politics and politicians so that their demands are heard. The analysis of this outcome, and the causal story, shows that the intended outcome was met, and also that there were unintended consequences that ended up being detrimental to the RHV campaign. There was a group of women who were able to mobilise effectively and ensure that their voices were heard by government. However, they were missing many of the major technical and procedural skills that ensured that the government did more than listen, and also acknowledged and acted upon their demands. Instead of constructive action, the end result – an unintended consequence – was a schism and lack of cooperation between the women's groups represented by COCISWOL and the government.

Targeted Outcome	Extent observed	Extent of project contribution	Specific contribution score* /5	Other evidenced explanations and extent of their contribution (high, medium, low)
1. Women's complaint heard by government ( <b>Monrovia</b> )	High	Medium	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past incidents of women's mobilisation (medium)</li> <li>• Existing grievances among women's groups prior to mobilisation (high)</li> </ul>

### 4.1.1 Key Findings

The Coalition of Civil Society Women of Liberia (COCISWOL) was organised in May 2010 by a group of women who shared the complaint that the government, specifically the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) was acting against the interests of grassroots women in Liberia. According to the founders of COCISWOL, the Ministry was getting most of the donor money, but they were using that money to implement their own programs throughout the country, rather than empowering existing and locally-based groups with financial and technical assistance. As one of the founders of COCISWOL articulated: 'Most funds that come in for women are going to the government. And they have their own organisations to do the implementation. Therefore the majority of the women are not benefiting'. Another co-founder and active member of the movement, also a staff member of WOLPNET, explained:

*'Over the years I think what happened is the Ministry of Gender has not really collaborated with most of the women's groups, like the CBOs (Community-based organisations), NGOs, FBOs (Faith-based organisations) and groups that consist of women. I COCISWOL wanted to get the Ministry of Gender involved, especially when it comes to financial support and activities. The Ministry is implementing according to its own mandate. They try to do everything themselves.'*

The founders of COCISWOL were aware of WOLPNET through previous affiliation with their own individual NGOs, and immediately became a part of the umbrella organisation. They were able to get office space below the WOLPNET office. The founders of COCISWOL attended one key workshop in

2010 put on by WOLPNET which introduced them to the AU protocol, emphasising the importance of 'speaking out' so that this ratified document was fully implemented. From then on, they utilized RHV and the AU Protocol to back their message. Having demonstrated to WOLPNET that they were an effective group, they became a key implementing partner for the protocol, receiving funding and support from WOLPNET for RHV programmes.

The first action of the group was to write a letter requesting an audience with the Minister of Gender. A meeting was planned for Saturday, May 29<sup>th</sup> at a Monrovia-based church with representatives of this group and the Minister, but the minister was instead at a meeting with other women's groups at the SKD Sports Stadium. COCISWOL interpreted this act as a boycott and 'divide and rule' tactic, but what the Ministry explained as a misunderstanding over the planned venue for the meeting. Having invited journalists to this expected meeting, the story of the Ministry's absence appeared in major papers the following Monday and a press statement was released by COSISWOL indicating their impatience with the Minister and calls for her removal. In response, the Ministry released a statement accusing the group of 'sowing discord and inciting women's groups against the Ministry'.

Though MoGD representatives expressed their desire to plan another meeting with COCISWOL, the organisation decided it was time to do something more public. They began mobilising women from across the county, using RHV funds for transportation, food and lodging; as acting President of COCISWOL reported, 'we had the confidence to speak out because of what we learned in the protocol'. On June 4, donning t-shirts and white scarves, they marched down the streets, ignoring police requests that they clear the road, and began their sit-in at the ministry. Twenty minutes passed before the Minister came down to greet them. She listened to a representative (also an acting director of WOLPNET) and read their document: '13 Counts: An Analysis of the Ministry of Gender and Development Response' (see appendix for full text). This document is an outline of eight questions<sup>39</sup> the group had for the ministry, how they perceived the ministry to have responded thus far, the group's critique of this response, and recommendations (though they only provided recommendations for one complaint). The Minister responded that she had heard their concerns and would take appropriate action.

The coalition was re-launched to the Liberian public and the media in October 2010 with the assertion that the Liberian government take seriously the AU Protocol, specifically article 9 that ensures women's right to participation in the political and decision-making processes of the country. Hundreds of women gathered in an auditorium, wearing matching white headscarves and t-shirts displaying: "'Raising Her Voice' Launching the AU Protocol Advocacy Campaign For Women. Equal 50-50 Representation". A statement was made articulating the major concerns of the movement:

*'The formation of the coalition also allows all women to reach their potential, so they can fully and effectively contribute to Liberia's development, growth and sustainable peace. Women are more than 50% of Liberia's population. Women are presently only 10% in the Legislature have such unequal representation is not in favor of women.'*

Having become an official group among Liberian CSOs, COCISWOL prepared a statement to be read to the President at a women's retreat in November 2010. The statement (see full text in Appendix), while lauding the President and repeatedly promising their 'continuous support' also asserted the women's:

*'[D]isappointment and no confidence in the leadership of the MOGD to deliver on the Ministry's mandate and your commitment to women empowerment, enhancement, development and inclusion in governance... does not have the political will to ensure the following: Advance and help sustain the gains Liberia women have made including building a women's movement, fostering positive professional working relationship, encouraging and creating an amicable environment for the growth and utilisation of diverse women potentials and skills especially after your ascendancy to the presidency. Failure to effectively direct the affairs of the Ministry in accordance to the act that created it, particularly the mandate to build alliance amongst women*

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<sup>39</sup> 1. What is the Ministry doing for the women of Liberia; 2. What has the ministry done for the visibility of women's work in Liberia; 3. Why has the ministry selected a particular group of women to work; 4. Why is the ministry not allowing organisations to implement rather than being the implementing body; 5. Why is there so much domineering power at the ministry rather than flexibility to make working relationship easier; 6. Why is it that women are being marginalised; 7. Gender Mainstreaming- what are the disparities; 8. What is the mandate of the MoGD'

*and support the strengthening of their organisations to enable them to play a catalytic role in social cohesion and change. We are Concern [sic] about the Division amongst women as a result of the MoGD poor style of leadership and issues that could affect Her Excellency [sic] support base amongst the women.'*

The President listened to the statement, acknowledged their concerns, and expressed her support for the 50-50 women's participation and representation at all levels of governance in Liberia. She then invited the Minister of Gender and Development to make a statement of support for the women, who acknowledged that the AU protocol was a good tool for legislation that would lead to equal representation. She also expressed an apology to the women for the problems that they had had in the past, and encouraged them to accept a 'new beginning' for their relationship. The women accepted this apology the coalition left the stadium content with the results.

Since the retreat, however, there has been nothing done, according to COCISWOL representatives, to bridge the divides that had previously existed. At the time of fieldwork, COCISWOL representatives had never attended any meetings that the Ministry held, claimed to not be invited to most of them, and continued to view the ministry as 'failing the women of Liberia' and were unwilling to cooperate until they perceived that the ministry was more inclusive.

The Ministry of Gender was contacted during fieldwork for comments surrounding their involvement with COCISWOL. They acknowledged that it was impressive for the women to gather so many people together and the affect that COCISWOL had on their sit-in in their ability to get the attention of the minister and successfully demand that their voices be heard. However, they pointed out one of their main concerns with the style of advocacy with organisations like COCISWOL:

*'They need new strategies and they need to make strategic decisions. There are so many ways to raise awareness that they do not do.... They should be trained on the idea of lobbying and advocacy to government. They don't know how to lobby. They come with good points, but the manner in which they do it is lacking. At most, they take to the streets with placards. They don't know how to lobby at the house. They don't realise that certain groups are the ones to talk to about certain issues. In these sectors, they should bring in experts to talk to them...they need to know the system and if they don't, they need to find somebody who does. The students, the women, when they are upset, they just take to the streets – this should be a last resort. That is to draw more attention, not to make an initial point. Also they should focus more on raising money'*

The Ministry also explained their reasons for selecting certain NGOs to invite to their training sessions and partner with. Of course, they could not work with every organisation so they had made careful decisions on who would benefit from their partnership. 'One of the weaknesses of these NGOs is that they have a problem with capacity... They work on projects and start them, but they are unable to move further, so the Ministry can come in to help them or take over.' Therefore, the Ministry would select a few organisations. Most recently, they had partnered with and trained 26 NGOs from around the country and intend to follow-through with them for the next two years. These NGOs, they explained, would receive continued technical and financial support, strong oversight and in-depth trainings in proposal writing, organisational development, monitoring and evaluation, conducting baseline studies and impact evaluations, and budgeting.

## **4.1.2 Causal Stories**

There are many causal stories for this outcome that were identified by the lead researcher through consultations with stakeholders, and also through review of literature surrounding gender advocacy in Africa. Because of the preponderance of women's rights organisations and advocacy work done in Liberia, a number of 'best practices' strategies were discussed with the key stakeholders and subsequently tested as causal stories. The causal stories deemed most plausible through these consultations are examined below based on the specific factors that led to the actual act of protest: the motivation to mobilise, the financial resources to mobilise, and the idea that they should mobilise with a clear outline of their demands.

### **4.1.2.1 Motivation to mobilise**

The potential causes that led the group to have the idea to mobilise and sit-in at the ministry are:

- 1) they were encouraged by these previous women's movements who had been given positive support from the media and international donors;
- 2) leaders were motivated by one or many workshops and trainings that they had attended over the years in their roles as women's leaders;
- 3) RHV programming in combination with other groups encouraged them to mobilise;
- 4) RHV program specifically motivated them to mobilise

#### **4.1.2.2 Financial resources to mobilise**

The potential causes that led to the group gathering enough resources to mobilise are:

- 1) they had been accumulating member dues, which each of the 75 groups was expected to pay in order to remain a part of COSCISWOL;
- 2) there were members within the group that were willing to fund the mobilisation independently
- 3) the group was able to attract donations from interested parties within Liberia;
- 4) the group was able to attract a grant from an external funding agency/NGO;
- 5) the group had existing funds due to a grant previously awarded from an external or internal funding agency
- 6) the group had existing funds due to a previously established partnership with an NGO or government

#### **4.1.2.3 Mobilisation with demands**

The potential causes that led to the group mobilising with a distinct set of questions, demands, and critiques, documented, printed and ready to be given to the Minister are

- 1) at least one of the leaders attended a training event/workshop on strategies for advocacy hosted by an INGO/Government;
- 2) they hired an external consultant to give them advice and help them draft the document;
- 3) at least one of the leaders attended a WOLPNET training event/workshop on strategies for advocacy that addressed the RHV program.

#### **4.1.3 Evidence**

Based on the information gathered during fieldwork, there is good evidence that the idea for the COCISWOL mobilisation was influenced by previous mobilisations that had occurred in Liberia, but that RHV had a specific role in supporting the women, encouraging their confidence that it was their right to mobilise; supplying them with the suggestion to produce a statement/document to present to government; and also, more practically, providing the financial resources needed to transport so many women into Monrovia, feed/house them, give them t-shirts, and work on the production of the report.

##### **4.1.3.1 Cause to mobilise**

1) It is certainly the case that in Liberia, there is a relatively frequent incidence of women's groups (and other disadvantaged groups) mobilising to 'raise their voices' with respect to a particular cause. Such forms of protest have been occurring since 1991 when WIPNET began mobilising women to protest the war, leading to their largest and most high-profile 2003 protest in which they gathered outside the building where peace talk negotiators were 'wasting time', and demanded that they hurry to reach a resolution. While one cannot argue that their actions alone, or even very significantly, contributed to the eventual peace that Liberia found, it is indeed remarkable that so many women were able to attract attention of very powerful Liberian leaders through mobilisation. There has since been a rich history of women's groups mobilising to voice their demands in post-conflict Liberia.

The Ministry of Gender has not been immune to such protests, either. Earlier in 2010, a group of women calling themselves the ECOWAS Civil Society Women marched on Capital Hill to call President Johnson-Sirleaf to remove the minister because of her 'failure to represent women' and despite these failures, remaining in office since 2003. Most Liberians are aware of the mobilisation of women calling for peace, led by Leymah Gbowee with the Women Peace and Security Network

(WIPSEN), which occurred during the 2003 Peace Talks in Accra. Thus mobilisation in order to make a point is a strategy that Liberians have known since at least the end of the war.

2) The leadership of COCISWOL had, prior to the group's formation in 2010, been active members within their own women's groups. Typically, such women were invited to at least one of the training events put on by the dozens of NGOs working in the country since the mid-1990s. Though not all of these focused on women's mobilisation to speak out against politics, undoubtedly there were some that did.

3) Leaders at COCISWOL articulated that it was the RHV programming specifically that gave them the courage and confidence to mobilise specifically the knowledge that the AU protocol was already domesticated, but they had 'not seen it yet'. Prior to liaising with WOLPNET, they had not known about the AU protocol. Having learned that there was a continent-wide mandate to respect their rights, and that Liberia had formally signed onto this protocol, they felt enabled to '*tell government we want it implemented here. So we put ourselves together as a force so government would implement these issues*'. Indeed, during their re-launching, prior to the meeting with the President in November 2010, they all donned t-shirts with 'Raising Her Voice' written prominently on them.

#### 4.1.3.2 Resources to mobilise

Interviews with project leaders of COCISWOL and WOLPNET indicated immediately that the funding for the mobilisation and much of COCISWOL's activities comes directly from RHV funds.

#### 4.1.3.3 Mobilisation with demands

1) As explained above, many of the project leaders have attended training events that have explained strategies for mobilisation, though none had explained the AU protocol;

2) The acting president of COCISWOL was not aware of a consultant assisting with the mobilisation preparations and document, but she could not be sure. On the front of the document is an emblem for 'Women In Progress' which the team was unable to learn more about.

3) some project leaders had attended a workshop that WOLPNET conducted regarding the AU protocol and these leaders expressed that their skills were mainly learnt from these workshops; specifically that: "*They tell us that advocacy is not just getting out and mobilising to go, you should also do research, find out facts, you should do more than just say something about human rights, there are other things...[RHV] taught us that.*"

#### 4.1.4 Assessment

We can see in this case that though the women were effective in mobilizing to the extent that they were given attention, their specific demands were not addressed and worse, there only remained a tense relationship between them and the Ministry. Part of this can be attributed to the relatively simplistic theory of change that the campaign was working under – that empowered women being vocal will lead to changes in government. Acting president of COCISWOL explained that the focus of RHV was,

*'That the AU protocol is implemented, and all women's rights are being implemented... We want every policy that has to do with women to be implemented to the letter. So we put ourselves together as a force, to be checks and balances on government activities towards the policies... [W]e are trying to tell government that those things they [rights in AU protocol] are saying, we have not seen it [implemented] here. So we want it done. So we put ourselves together as a force so government will implement these issues... we speak out so they will listen... . Mostly I see empowering women means it should be mentally.'*

Though there is a clear understanding of the importance of implementing the protocol, what lacks in their theory of change and subsequent actions is the importance of specific skills surrounding effective advocacy. As the evidence indicates, this unintended (negative) outcome can be attributed

to the RHV programming that empowered and funded these women to ‘raise their voice’, but failed to properly train them for meaningful and results-driven advocacy.

When it comes to mobilisation of women for advocacy, there needs to be more technical assistance with how to write charters/policy briefs, who to talk to and when, the management of expectation from politicians, the art of diplomacy, negotiation and compromise, and the scenarios in which mobilisation and protest is appropriate, and how to best go about it (i.e. with clear demands).

While they can be commended for mobilising and producing a document to present to the Ministry and President, their complaints and demands were very general, and they were unable to back up their claims to have written letters and organise meetings prior to this protest. WOLPNET admitted to have never had a meeting with the Ministry of Gender to inform them about the RHV program and its support of the AU protocol. In turn, the Ministry was able to claim that they had ‘heard nothing of this group’ prior to the event. In response - while the Ministry appeased them by granting them an audience, and further consolidated their power to silence this potentially vocal group by arranging a meeting with the president - they did not change any policies, did not make any effort to engage the group, and criticised their methods of protest.

While the document is rich in data (though lacking any citations) and clear about which issues they are addressing, it is relatively long (twenty pages), in a difficult-to-read table, somewhat repetitive, and makes numerous generalizations. It furthermore provides no actual recommendations (despite creating an entire column for them), and is at times very condescending towards the Ministry’s activities, including calling for ‘a change in leadership’ on the first page. In short, it is a document that would be very unlikely to be read in full, if at all, by government.

A better approach, according to MoGD was for them to produce a policy brief, write a bill and lobby congress. In this case, if the group had been properly trained on what type of document should have been delivered to the minister upon her granting them an audience, they may have been given more attention. Similarly, the document read to the President, though much more brief, was still quite vague in demands and at the same time, guaranteeing total support for the president.

Simply giving women the confidence to speak out and resources to mobilise is not nearly enough and in some cases, might be detrimental to their cause, as we can see in the presently tenuous relationship between the MoGD and WOLPNET/COCISWOL, who otherwise might have been effective partners.

## 4.2 Second Targeted Outcome – A reduction in men committing GBV and rape

The second targeted and observed outcome is that people report a decreased incidence of men committing GBV and rape in these areas. Though we do not have statistics to back up this finding, we feel it is important that every informant *perceived* there to be a significant decrease in these occurrences. Most informants also had stories about how they or someone close to them had experienced positive changes with regards to reducing GBV. The stakeholders agree with the general hypothesis that this has occurred because ‘the people are made aware of laws protecting women from abuse’, particularly through transmitting this basic message through workshops, counselling, and media. The specifics surrounding what type of programming is most effective are not part of any of the stakeholder’s project plans, and they vary in different sites. Therefore, in order to identify what are the best practices for GBV advocacy, detailed research was conducted into individual stories, and the process by which the changes occurred has been traced back to potential sources. What follows are narratives that provide evidence for different scenarios in which workshops, counselling and media can be attributed as potential factors in a decrease in GBV, either for one individual or an entire community. It will become evident that it is difficult to ascertain what particular cause led to the decrease(s) in GBV, and it is especially difficult to ascertain to what extent RHV had a role in these changes.

Targeted Outcome	Extent observed	Extent of project	Specific contribut	Other evidenced explanations and extent of their contribution
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		contribution	ion score* /5	(high, medium, low)
Perceived decreased in GBV and rape in community (Buchanan, Kakata, Tubmanburg)	High	Low	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other NGO advocacy (High)</li> <li>• Ministry of Gender advocacy (High)</li> <li>• Police activity (High)</li> </ul>
Perceived decrease in GBV and rape in community (Compound 3 Area B)	Medium	High	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other NGO Advocacy (Medium)</li> <li>• Ministry of Gender advocacy (low)</li> <li>• Police activity (Low)</li> </ul>

## 4.2.1 Key Findings

Most significantly, we find reports from all of those interviewed and in each of the sites that there has been a decrease in the incidence of GBV and rape in their communities.

Most people explained that there was a decrease in GBV because men are becoming more aware of the rights of women, and are therefore beating them less. After further questioning, additional details were revealed to explain the various processes involved in this complex issue. This section will outline the various narratives shared by men and women before probing into the potential causal mechanisms for this observed outcome. We will see that the combination of factors makes it impossible to deduce whether one causal mechanism is more effective than another, though we can identify situations in which only a few potential causal factors identified did lead to positive changes.

Most of the informants articulated the importance of having a female president in the decrease in GBV. When they described this, it was not so much the programs she was initiating or the funding that was being generated as a result of her calls for gender equity. Instead, it was the mere presence of a female that told people that, 'It's women's turn', and that they deserved respect.

### 4.2.1.1 Police intervention in Tubmanburg - counselling

In one case reported by an LNP WCPU officer, a man often beat his wife and she learned in a workshop that when this type of thing occurred, she should report him to the police because it was illegal. Upon hearing her story, one of the male project officers with LNP WCPU went to the man's house to arrest him. They brought him back to the station and talked to him, then sent him home. This happened four more times; each time they'd arrest him, and keep him overnight. When the LNP officer realised that the man's behaviour was not changing after the third arrest, he began to counsel him when he was apprehended. The officer attributes his knowledge of the proper way to counsel such men to a two-day workshop in 2011 held by the Norwegian Refugee Counsel in collaboration with Defence for Children International (DCI) and the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) at the local Women's Center (built by MoGD) in Tubmanburg. Thirty two people attended this workshop including both leaders and 'regular' citizens of the community. The officer explained, 'At first he did not agree. He said that if he did not beat his wife then she would become disrespectful... and that she always complained... But I explained to him that if he respects his wife then there will be peace in the home... I also explained that he should talk to his wife about the things that she does that can make him upset... so that they have understanding.' The officer showed him the UNDP billboard on the road to back up his claims that men should not beat women and that 'Liberia is not supporting this anymore', and that domestic abuse can lead to further negative effects. 'So after four or five times he started to change. Now the couple is very happy, and there is no more GBV'. More than that, this man has since become an advisor in the community to other men who beat their wives, referred to by the LNP WCPU representatives when cases arise. We spoke to this man who explained that, 'When the people see that someone in their community has changed, then they can see that they too can change. I tell them why it is important to have peace in the home. If men respect their wives, and wives respect their husbands, then there is peace'.

Figure 4 - UNDP Billboard in Tubmanburg



#### 4.2.1.2 Police intervention in Buchanan – arrests and punishment

A community women's president from Buchanan, who has been with Buchanan Women's Development Association since its inception, has been involved in implementing RHV programming for the last year.

One of the most important issues, according to the community women's president, is GBV and rape: *'First, they [women] had a fear that they should keep quiet [when someone harms them]...but now, it is spread over the radio... some of the men, now they know that they are not supposed to ill-treat their women. First, they [men] accused [the host] that she was making the women to be frisky. Because whenever they are beating their women or ill-treating them, the women never used to talk. But now [the women] know how to talk and where to carry their issue whenever they are beaten. They go to the chief... they get in contact with the police and the government'.*

She shared one story to demonstrate the importance of the police in helping decrease GBV: *The men, they know that the GBV, the government is against it. Even if you are a man and you beat your wife at home, and the report gets to the police, then they will come and arrest you. I myself am in the community and I am keeping eyes on the women, when any man beats them, I myself bring the complaint and the police can go get the man... One time, a pregnant lady was beaten and pushed by her fiancé. And the lady had to go to the hospital. The man went there to disturb her, and was boasting outside of the hospital about how he put her there... people saw this happening and they knew me as the one always having meetings with the women, telling them that anyone who carries on violence with them, they should take their complaint to the police station and they will carry them to court. So they arrested the man, brought him to justice, even put him in jail. After I turned my back, he had said that he was sick in the cell and he let him out... he went to take the things that he and the women had [from their house]... the lady called me... so I called the police and they went and got him. The police stressed that they should harmonize it... that he would keep going to jail if this happened again... up to this time, they are*

*alright. He doesn't beat on her again, since he went to jail... Other men can see this and they know it can happen to them, so it has decreased.*

She shared another story in which a woman was killed, and the perpetrator was found and brought to the local police station;

*[T]he women heard about it and had a 'peace march, that we wanted for justice to take due course. And we saw to it. The case was highlighted by the judge and the man was guilty. He's still in jail... men know they can't do this anymore'.*

Informal interviews with community members in Buchanan revealed similar stories, as one woman explained,

*Things have changed [in my life... before my husband used to beat on me. But each time he did it I would take his complain to the police station. The police would invite him for questioning and when he was found guilty of beating me he would be send to jail. This happened on series of occasions. Now my husband is afraid to beat on because he does not want to goes to jail.*

And as one man explained,

*I used to beat on my wife but the police are serious now, so I can't do it anymore.*

#### **4.2.1.3 Intervention in rural Bassa County – one-on-one counselling**

In one small rural community in Bassa County – Area B of Compound 3 – the women's leader of the area described the extent of the community's exposure to advocacy campaigns surrounding women's rights. She explained that she had become the women's leader because her people selected her to when Concern had come in 2008 and they wanted to do a training with a representative from someone in her village. She was the only one willing to go, and the townspeople thought she'd be good to represent them because of her willingness. At this meeting, and two others (one in 2009 and another in 2010) put on by Concern and ICRC, she learned about sanitation, how to respect men, and that men should stop the 'beating business.' Since that point, there were fewer incidents of women getting beaten in the open.

She explained that she had never learned about 'her rights' until she was approached by 'some girls' from neighboring Compound 3 Area A, who were later identified as volunteers for BAWODA and commissioned with delivering messages of RHV through one-on-one counseling in rural areas. The woman leader explained that during this meeting, she learned about what to do if she heard reports of men beating women or their rights being disrespected - they should group with other women and take complaints to their chief. Because of this knowledge that she could voice her rights to her chief, she explained that 'they like it because they can eat inside now, and they can stand in front of men to talk' and that now 'it is okay for women here'.

#### **4.2.1.4 Intervention in Kakata – Workshop**

One story narrated by the Secretary of the GbayetaTown Women's Group and Financial Secretary of the National Rural Women's in her district of Margibi County indicated the importance of workshops in helping sensitise key representatives of rural areas, who were responsible for transmitting the messages they learned to their areas. She had attended a number of workshops concerning women. The first of these in 2007 was a month-long retreat in Monrovia - put on by the Gender Ministry and FAO - where she and thirty other women from around the country learned about agro-processing techniques, skills that she took back to her village to make gari and cassava chips. During this training she also learned about her role as a woman in the workforce. Her next training was a 2008 workshop in Kakata, put on by AFELL, which she described as 'the most influential one' she'd been to. There, she learned 'about our rights as women' and the importance of keeping peace within a marriage to avoid fights that lead to GBV. She explained that another key workshop that helped her learn about strategies to fight GBV and rape was a workshop put on by WONGOSOL in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender. During this workshop she learned about methods to intervene in cases involving domestic abuse: 'They said we should be able to speak our rights, like we shouldn't be in a community where a woman is beat or raped. We should be able to come and talk it out'. More specifically, she learned that the important aspect of reducing acts of GBV and rape is to encourage men to respect women, because 'we are equal now'.

Community members described the benefits of these workshops, too. Two young men narrated how they both used to beat their wives. One of the men attended a workshop put on by the Ministry of Gender in 2009 where 'they told me that if I support my wife and respect her, then she will respect me and we will have peace in the home... I learned that women have a positive idea to share. The workshop really influenced me... I encourage my friends to change their attitudes'. His friend responded, 'I used to beat my wife but my brother here intervened, so I stopped... things are improved... Now I sometimes encourage my friends to change their attitudes'.

Another woman explained that she learned in a workshop (she could not remember who conducted it) that she should talk to men in her family to influence their behaviour, tell them that they should not beat women, and that they should tell their friends the same message: 'I talked to my brother in law who used to beat his wife, but through my influence he has changed'. Another man explained that he attended a human rights advocacy training put on by FIND, who taught him how basic education of men and women can lead to further respect, and a decrease in GBV and rape. An important aspect of this education was sensitisation campaigns like pictorial billboards and pamphlets that clearly depicted that these acts were wrong.

Figure 5 Concerned Christian Community Billboard in Kakata



#### 4.2.2 Causal Stories

A number of causal stories were developed through focused consultations with key stakeholders, informal interviews with community members, and referring to the existing literature on programmes

that seek to reduce GBV. In each meeting with stakeholders, the complexity of the intended outcome was appreciated – that there is no single cause that contributes to the end of GBV but instead a variety of other factors. In these consultations rich discussions were held surrounding the variety of factors that may have been involved. Further, during these consultations we considered how one cause might lead to another in some cases, but not in others. Though this report does not claim to identify the best route towards effective advocacy, we will consider the variety of possibilities (and eliminate those that we identify as being ineffective), which can be further assessed in terms of their ability to contribute to more effective programming.

The causal story that the project was acting under was that the message of the AU protocol - particularly that it was wrong/illegal for men to beat and rape women - would be transmitted to rural populations and then, having heard this message, men would commit acts of GBV and rape less frequently. After this general idea, the details surrounding what *exactly* contributed to this perceived decrease was not clearly articulated by stakeholders, though they acknowledged what the possible factors could be. During these consultations, the following plausible causes were suggested, though no single cause was determined to be more effective than another. Instead, all of these conditions contributed to the intended outcome that men beat and raped women less frequently.

- 1) Man stops beating woman for fear that he'll be arrested and punished by police or local authorities
- 2) Man stops beating woman because he learns to respects her/doesn't want to anymore
- 3) Man stops beating woman because the community looks down on him for it;
- 4) Man stops beating woman because the local authorities/chiefs punish him for it;
- 5) Man stops beating woman because she leaves her husband/person abusing her;
- 6) Man stops beating woman because she changes her behaviour/respects him more/fulfils her responsibilities

### 4.2.3 Evidence

There is evidence for each of these causal stories, evident in the stories reported above, and there have been RHV activities that might be attributed to some of them. But there are undoubtedly other factors at play that can produce the same outcomes. We find reports of a decrease in GBV and rape where the RHV message has undoubtedly never reached. In Buchanan, the only activity for the RHV project is the radio program which, we determined, was not at all widely listened to and had not even been on the air for the previous 3 months. In Margibi, we found that the acting project head had never heard of the AU protocol and had a very vague understanding of what RHV was. Still, in each of these communities, all informants explained that there was a decrease in GBV and rape, and attributed this decreases to one or a few of the causal stories we've identified above.

Certain causal stories deserve special attention, though, because they will help improve or initiate future RHV programming. We found clear evidence of the importance of the radio in delivering messages to rural communities. In Bassa County, we conducted research into the RHV-funded radio program, which entailed a weekly call-in session during which topics covered in the AU protocol were discussed in local dialect. Project leaders claimed that the radio signal reached across the entire county, though it was found that only one hour outside of the capital, one would have to climb a tree in order to pick up the signal. Other informants from rural areas were asked whether they'd heard the program, or even the radio station, and nobody outside of the capital and within 30 minutes knew of it. Within Buchanan, most people spoke English and therefore listened to LAC and UNMIL radio where they had heard about GBV and rape.

We also find evidence that RHV has a more direct impact in certain areas, and this highlights the potential impact it could have if programming were improved. In one village (where we were searching for a signal for the radio station, over an hour outside of Buchanan), we met with the woman's leader of a small village who indicated that once, a few months prior, a woman from the neighbouring town had come to tell her about GBV – specifically, 'it is wrong if your husband beats on you'. This was the first time the woman had heard this message, and she claimed that because this woman came to the village with her new knowledge, the people listened. From then, she claimed, there was no more beating women in this little town. The woman who had talked to her, we found out, was a field

volunteer for RHV who - under the radar - had been visiting villages in her spare time to give them brief counselling about GBV, rape, and sanitation.

#### **4.2.4 Assessment**

This is a particularly complicated assessment because of the huge number of people and groups advocating for an end to GBV and rape – it is nearly impossible to pinpoint exactly which intervention had the most significant effect, and why. Moreover, there are multiple plausible causes that may have contributed to this outcome. However, we have gathered enough evidence to indicate some of the key scenarios in which, it seems, men begin to respect the rights of women and also that it is important for there to be a ‘safety net’ upon which women can fall in the event that they are a victim of such abuse. In towns, the Liberian National Police’s Women and Children Protection Unit (LNP WCPU) seems to be an effective resource. In rural areas, however, the people rely on each other and their traditional structures for protection. In the case of the chief prosecuting the accused abuser, we can see how because he was sensitised through a single intervention by an INGO, a woman was helped.

Another important and relatively conclusive finding was the power of a single intervention upon a rural or otherwise un-sensitised population. It appears that simply because a stranger – who is immediately viewed as an ‘expert’ – has come with the message of ‘knowing something’, the people listen to the message, respect it, and claim to change their behavior because of this ‘new information’. We saw one example in which RHV can be attributed with the successful sensitisation of one village – to the extent that an older woman claimed that there was decreased GBV since – in a rural area of Grand Bassa County. Combined with our findings in terms of the importance of the radio in rural areas, yet the inability to pick up the signal that broadcasts RHV in dialect, the obvious conclusion is that the RHV program should be transmitted on LAC or UNMIL radio, still in Bassa.

To make this even more complex, we acknowledge the existence of many other campaigns – national and based in project areas – that are working towards this same outcome. The frequency of workshops and broad sensitization campaigns put on by such a wide variety of organisations, all speaking strongly against GBV and rape, must be considered to be a major factor that has contributed to the decrease in these crimes.

We are unable to find a link between RHV programming and the decrease in GBV in the story of the LNPWCPU in Tubmanburg – neither the officer, nor the MoGD representative had ever heard of RHV or even the AU Charter. Even the project officer in charge of RHV implementation through their local partner, WOCI, was not sure what the AU Charter was. In 2011, the head of WOCI had left the area to go to nursing school in Monrovia; since then activities had largely ceased. Before that, however, the group was known to have helped women with agriculture and the head of the traditional women in Bomi County recalled one workshop they had in 2010. During the workshop they talked about ‘how to talk to children’ but no further details were recalled by herself or any other informants.

Some detailed stories provide important insights into how programming can have a larger impact. For example, we can show that RHV advocacy did contribute in some capacity to community-led investigations and convictions in certain rape/GBV cases, and that it may have directly contributed to decreased GBV in particular areas where other advocacy projects had not yet reached. Other than that, we can only conclude that RHV programmes are further consolidating a message that has been asserted in Liberia very strongly for the last five years, and projects have the potential to reach out even further.

## **5 Recommendations**

### **5.1 Advocacy Programming**

Based on the findings of this report, a few program modifications and additions can be recommended. First, increased attention to the development of technical skills like media outreach, writing policy briefs and bills, and lobbying as effective means of voicing concerns against government could benefit the stakeholders. If such training is not possible, then partner organisations would benefit from further sensitization on the scenarios in which to use mobilization and sit-in activity, and the possible negative

affects that can result from these. It would also be beneficial to provide further sensitization that is focused on the management of expectations with advocacy – specifically to let beneficiaries know that the act of ‘raising your voice’ and letting government know that you are aware of laws protecting women, does not automatically translate into positive actions by the government.

Second, it can be recommended that more systematic records are taken surrounding specific interventions that have occurred. Further research conducted on other organizations in the area that have had similar interventions in the past, or are planning similar interventions in the future, would also be beneficial. From there, well-organised partnerships could help consolidate the advocacy efforts.

## 5.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

It can also be recommended that there be more attention given to monitoring and evaluation of project implementation and outcomes from all project partners involved. Even where country-level programming does not necessarily match the guidelines proposed by regional and global log frames, the outcomes that are being pursued are still minimally supervised and in many cases, activities stop or are poorly executed. This inhibits the ability to learn what programs are effective and whether certain outcomes can be attributed to RHV programming. In addition to frequent communication between partners, there should be more frequent evaluations conducted on key programmes being implemented. If it seems that partners are not doing evaluations on their own, then it might be useful to assign an external evaluator to RHV projects, responsible for visiting site areas at random times to assess.

## 6 Conclusion

This study first determined that the Liberian RHV theory of change differed from that provided in the global framework. Much of the programming was oriented around grassroots advocacy through workshops and production of sensitisation materials. The campaign rationale was refined as developing advocacy and sensitisation campaigns designed to ‘reach as many women as possible with the message inside the AU protocol’. Thus, the working theory of changes is that women’s private and public lives will improve through increased public awareness and advocacy that teaches as many people as possible the existence of women’s rights as proscribed in the AU protocol.

The targeted outcomes based on this campaign rationale were, because of their adapted theory of change, relatively non-specific. Here I will outline two of the targeted and observed outcomes: 1) that grassroots women can raise their voices towards national politics and politicians so that their demands are heard; 2) that communities perceive there to be a decrease in the incidence of GBV and rape.

It was concluded that the specific outcomes envisioned by the partners were met in the personal and social spheres. Very limited progress was found in the political except for a possible negative outcomes in this sphere. While we identify progress in terms of increased respect for women’s rights in the personal and social spheres, it is difficult to attribute these changes to RHV programming specifically. The results of the qualitative impact assessment examined other influences that provided further details into the complicated nature of determining causality in advocacy.

## 7 Contribution Scores

Targeted Outcome	Extent observed (high, medium, low, none)	Extent of project contribution (high, medium, low, none)	Specific contribution score* /5	Other evidenced explanations and extent of their contribution (high, medium, low)
<b>Duty-bearer Practice Outcomes</b>				
1. Women's complaint heard by government ( <b>Monrovia</b> )	High	Medium	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Past incidents of women's mobilisation (medium)</li> <li>Existing grievances among women's groups prior to mobilisation (high)</li> </ul>
2. Perceived decreased in GBV and rape in community ( <b>Buchanan, Kakata, Tubmanburg</b> )	High	Low	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other NGO advocacy (High)</li> <li>Ministry of Gender advocacy (High)</li> <li>Police activity (High)</li> </ul>
2. Perceived decrease in GBV and rape in community ( <b>Compound 3 Area B</b> )	Medium	High	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other NGO Advocacy (Medium)</li> <li>Ministry of Gender advocacy (low)</li> <li>Police activity (Low)</li> </ul>
<b>Other Final and Intermediate Outcomes</b>				
1. N/A				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Unforeseen Outcomes</b>				
1. Tense relationship between women's group and Ministry of Gender (Note: Negative)	n/a	Medium	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various other women's groups have similarly lacking technical skills and high expectations for advocacy</li> </ul>

### \*Scoring Key – Specific Contribution of Project

Score	Outcome Consideration	Contribution Consideration
5 points	High level of outcome change realised	High project contribution
4 points	Medium level of outcome change realised	High project contribution
	High level of outcome change realised	Medium project contribution
3 points	Medium level of outcome change realised	Medium project contribution
	Low level of outcome change realised	High project contribution
2 points	High-medium outcome change realised	Low project contribution
	Low level of outcome change realised	Medium project contribution
1 point	Medium-low outcome change realised	Low project contribution
0 points	High-none outcome change realised	No project contribution
	Any negative unforeseen outcome change	High to low project contribution

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## **Annex I: Documentation Reviewed for the Impact Assessment**

### **COCOSWOL Statement Presented to H.E. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf at a one-day retreat hosted by H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. SKD Sports Stadium, November 26, 2010**

“We the leaders and women of women civil society organisations constituting a broad based membership and affiliates [sic] in the 15 counties bring you greetings and wish to express our continuous support to your administration and developmental vision of our country and its people.

As Liberian Women working towards this vision and contributing meaningfully to the socio-economic and political development of women including children and the promotion of peace in the larger society, our communities and neighbourhoods at all levels; we reaffirm our commitment to support your vision and aspirations for a better Liberia in which everyone enjoys peace, have equal access to opportunities and women status elevated in all spheres with efforts made to particularly present your administration as a building block for Liberian women at ALL Levels.

We have endeavoured to bring to your attention through an analytical and critique [sic] document on the activities of the Ministry of Gender and Development prepared by COCISWOL and presented to you on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2010 about our disappointment and no confidence in the leadership of the MOGD to deliver on the Ministry’s mandate and your commitment to women empowerment, enhancement, development and inclusion in governance.

It has been realised, acknowledged and regrettably accepted that the MoGD does not have the political will to ensure the following:

Advance and help sustain the gains Liberia women have made including building a women’s movement, fostering positive professional working relationship, encouraging and creating an amicable environment for the growth and utilisation of diverse women potentials and skills especially after your ascendancy to the presidency.

Failure to effectively direct the affairs of the Ministry in accordance to the act that created it, particularly the mandate to build alliance amongst women and support the strengthening of their organisations to enable them to play a catalytic role in social cohesion and change.

We are Concern [sic] about the Division amongst women as a result of the MoGD poor style of leadership and issues that could affect Her Excellency [sic] support base amongst the women.

Finally, Madame President, our Concerns are about how these issues are to be adequately addressed going forward. We are here again as a manifestation of our respect, love, pride and strong belief in your able leadership: THE FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA.

We appreciate your time with us and hope that you will view our thoughts, actions and expressions as well meaning, in the interest of women solidarity and our desire to positively join you and be with you as you strive to leave a good legacy in governing our country.

THANK YOU, OUR PRESIDENT

### **“13 Counts: An Analysis of the Ministry of Gender and Development Response”**

#### **Overview**

The Coalition of Civil Society Women of Liberia (CICISWOL) views the participation and contribution of Liberian women outside of government in various groups and organisations for their development of our country, and particularly enhancing the lives of women, as crucial and important at this important juncture of the Nation’s history.

It is for this reason that we have deemed it necessary to engage the Ministry of Gender and Development (MOGD), which has the mandate to ensure that the perspective of both men and women are central to policy formulation.

In recognition of our critical role as civil society women organisations and groups committed to buttressing the efforts of the government and in particular, the MOGD to promote gender equality, focus on programs for women's empowerment and development of children, it is in the best interest of our nation and as women leaders and heads of institutions (government, nongovernmental organisations and the private sector) to work closely together to actualize not only the mandate of the Ministry but to also sustain the contributions by women in the rebuilding process and development agenda of the government under the leadership of HE President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

COCISWOL considers the elements of support and collaboration which include mutual appreciation, participation, accountability and transparency between women groups and organisations and the MOGD, as fundamental to gender equality, equity and women's development.

Our decision to take unprecedented action to demand answers from Minister Vabah K Gayflor to address herself to pertinent issues and concerns affecting relations between the Ministry, women and women's civil society organisations was the last resort after every attempt at dialogue had failed.

While an effort has been made by the MOGD to respond to the 13 counts presented by COCISWOL, we have endeavoured to critically analyse their responses to ascertain the facts'.

## Annex II: List of Key Informants

UMBRELLA	ORG	LOCATION	POSITION
WOLPNET	WOLPNET	Monrovia	Field coordinator
WOLPNET	COCISWOL	Monrovia	Secretary General
WOLPNET	COSCIWOL	Monrovia / Caldwell	Chaplain
WONGOSOL	WONGOSOL	Monrovia	Acting SG
WONGOSOL	WONGOSOL	Monrovia	Field Coordinator
WOLPNET	WOLPNET	Lofa – Kolahun	Project coordinator
WOLPNET	WOLPNET	Lofa – Porluma	Project coordinator
WOLPNET	WOLPNET	Monrovia	Acting President
WOLPNET	WOLPNET	Bong – Miamu (Totota)	Project leader
WONGOSOL	WCI	Tubmanburg (Monrovia on weekdays)	Project Coord (absent)
WONGOSOL	WCI	Tubmanburg	Program officer (asst director)
WONGOSOL	MAWODA	Kakata	Director
	LNP WCPU	Tubmanburg	Project officer
MoGD	MoGD	Tubmanburg	Project leader
MoGD	MoGD	Tubmanburg	Social worker
RWC	RWC	Tubmanburg / Rural	Acting President
RWC	RWC	Tubmanburg/ #3	Project leader
RWC	RWC	Tubmanburg/ Vixentown	Project leader
RWC	RWC	Tubmanburg/ Clay	Women's leader
GOL	Mayors office	Kakata	AA for Mayor ; Head of SOOP
GOL	MoGD	Kakata	Project coordinator
WIPNET	WIPNET	Kakata	Project coordinator
LNP	WCPU	Kakata	Inspector
YWCA	YWCA	Kakata	Project coordinator
WONGOSOL	MAWODA	Kakata – rural	Project head
WONGOSOL	MAWODA	Kakata- rural	Project head
WONGOSOL	MAWODA	Kakata – Gbaya Town	Secretary General rural
GOL	MIA	Kakata- gbaya town	Female Chief
WONGOSOL	BAWODA	Buchanan Town	AA Bawoda
WONGOSOL	BAWODA	Buchanan Town	Founder/Head
WONGOSOL	BAWODA	Buchanan Town	Advocate
WONGOSOL	BAWODA	Buchanan Town	Co-founder; community women pres
WONGOSOL	BAWODA	Buchanan/#3	Advocate; trainer
WONGOSOL	BAWODA	#3	Female chief
Radio	Radio Dukeh	Buchanan/rural	Producer of programs
Radio	Radio Dukeh	Buchanan / rural	Presenter/producer of programs
LNP	WCPU	Buchanan	Project officer
WOLPNET	COSCIWA	Monrovia	Assistant; present at sit-in
WOLPNET	COSCIWA	Monrovia	Sit-in participant
WOLPNET	COSCIWA	Monrovia	Sit-in participant

WONGOSOL	WONGOSOL	Monrovia	Executive director
WONGOSOL	WONGOSOL	Monrovia/Tubmanbu rg	Torture and FGM victim / brought case to trial
GoL	MOGD	Monrovia	Deputy minister
WOLPNET	WOLPNET	Monrovia	Acting president
GOL	MOGD	Monrovia	Head of women's empowerment unit
GOL	MOGD	Monrovia	Assistant to women's empowerment unit
GoL	MIA	Compound 3 A	Clan Chief (F)
GoL	MIA	Compound 3 A	Paramount Chief (F)
GoL	MIA	Compound 3 B	Clan Chief (M)
GoL	MIA	Compound 3 B	District Commissioner
WONGOSOL	BAWODA	Compound 3 B	Women's leader
Rural women	Ruram women Margibi	Tubmanburg	Secretary of rural women
Equality Now Global	Equality Now Global	Tubmanburg	Head of Equality now
Anon	Anon	Buchanan	Anon
Anon	Anon	Kakata	Anon
Anon	Anon	Monrovia	Anon
Anon	Anon	Compound 3 B	Anon
Anon	Anon	Tubmanburg	Anon
Oxfam Liberia	Oxfam Liberia	Monrovia	Gender Coordinator
Oxfam Liberia	Oxfam Liberia	Monrovia	MEL Officer

54 community members + 56 key informant interviews = 110 total informants

## Annex III: Methodology Recommendations

The methodology used for this assessment was extremely useful, and should be a component of all project assessments. It ensures that findings are built on a thorough exploration of different opinions and alternative explanations in order to make the most complete assessment possible. It also allows for external data to be gathered – that is, even if RHV programs have not been implemented or seem to have had a very minimal impact, the methodology allows for data to be gathered in order to see other causal mechanisms at work in the communities. Simply because RHV programming is weak, should not mean that we cannot learn important lessons from examples of effective (or ineffective) advocacy conducted by other organisations or individuals. Further, allowing an individual to speak freely, unguided by targeted questions, enables both more accurate data to be collected and also allows for new topics to be explored naturally. Finally, the methodology is useful because it encourages them to explore all possible 'causal stories', and ensures that they do not take anything for granted. One possible improvement for the methodology, however, would be to being with a compiled list of 'causal stories' from other sites around the world, so that all options are considered during this step.

One difficulty with the methodology lies within the 'step by step' nature of process tracing. From a logistical standpoint, to adhere to these steps would require at least three meetings with key stakeholders – something that is difficult given the short time-frame. From a reporting standpoint, trying to adhere to these steps creates a disjointed story that needs to be 'reformed', given all the details learnt, to read as a narrative rather than an outline of findings. Perhaps with each 'targeted outcome' section, it would be useful to report the narrative, but then also to include a short section on the particular methodology used in exploring that outcome.