

# UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LIBERIA'S RECONCILIATION AND PEACE BUILDING PROCESSES



Prepared by Genius Solutions Group for the Center for Security Studies and Development (CENSSAD)

July 2024

[geniussolutionsliberia@gmail.com](mailto:geniussolutionsliberia@gmail.com)

+231770984444

+13026857872

# Table of Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS .....   | 3   |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....  | 4   |
| Summary of Key Findings .....  | 7   |
| Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations.....                        | 8   |
| INTRODUCTION.....  | 9   |
| METHODOLOGY .....  | 14  |
| Survey Design .....  | 14  |
| RESULTS AND ANALYSIS .....   | 18  |
| Education Background .....   | 19  |
| Marital Status .....   | 211 |
| Awareness of Reconciliation and Peace-Building Concepts .....          | 23  |
| General Awareness.....   | 23  |
| Perceived Importance of reconciliation & peace-building concepts:..... | 24  |
| Reach and Impact of Awareness Campaigns .....                          | 25  |
| Perceived Effectiveness of Awareness Campaigns.....                    | 26  |
| BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION .....  | 27  |
| INVOLVEMENT .....  | 32  |
| Community-Level Involvement .....                                      | 33  |
| National-Level Involvement.....  | 33  |
| Organizational Involvement .....                                       | 34  |
| PATTERNS AND TRENDS.....   | 40  |
| RECOMMENDATIONS .....  | 42  |
| CONCLUSION .....   | 49  |
| BIBLIOLOGY.....  | 51  |
| APPENDIX .....   | 55  |

# ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

1. CENSSAD - Center for Security Studies and Development
2. CPA - Comprehensive Peace Agreement
3. DDR - Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
4. FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization
5. GPFA-Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa
6. GSG - Genius Solutions Group
7. ILO - International Labor Organization
8. IPI - International Peace Institute
9. LIFE - Liberia Initiative for Empowerment
10. LIWEN-Liberia Women Empowerment Network
11. LPP - Liberia's Peacebuilding Plan
12. LWI-Liberia's Women Initiative
13. MOP - Messengers of Peace
14. SGBV - Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
15. TRC - Truth and Reconciliation Commission
16. UNMIL - United Nations Mission in Liberia
17. UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
18. UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
19. WECC- War and Economics Crimes Court
20. WE4SELF- Women for Self-Development
21. WHO - World Health Organization
22. WIPNET - Women in Peacebuilding Network
23. WONGOSOL- Women NGAOs Secretariat Network of Liberia
24. WPWHDO- West Point Women for Health and Development
25. YWARPD - Young Women's Action for Rights, Peace, and Development

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a competitive bidding process in April 2024, the Center for Security Studies and Development (CENSSAD) hired Genius Solutions Group (GSG) to conduct a survey to identify and understand the barriers to women's participation in Liberia's reconciliation and peace-building processes. The survey was part of a larger project supported by the German Federal Foreign Office Funds through the Zivik Funding Program titled “Amplifying Local Women Voices: Understanding and Breaking Down Barriers to Women Participation in the Liberian Reconciliation and Peace Building Processes.”

Genius Solutions Group is a Liberian-owned entity with headquarters in the United States and offices in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. It has conducted an array of surveys for a variety of private and political organizations across Liberia.

The CENSSAD survey sought insights from women living in six of Liberia’s fifteen counties (Lofa, Sinoe, Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Rivercess, and Grand Cape Mount) specifically to highlight the challenges women face in participating in Liberia’s reconciliation process or whether they have an interest in doing so at all. Based on the data from the survey, this report provides actionable recommendations to enhance women's involvement in these crucial processes.

## ABOUT CENSSAD

Established in 2014, the Center for Security Studies and Development (CENSSAD) is a strategic institution that promotes security sector governance and enhances civil-security relations. CENSSAD's efforts contribute to long-term socio-economic and political stability in Liberia. Recognizing the interconnectedness of development and security, CENSSAD’s initiatives transcend national borders to address the challenges faced by the West African sub-region.

CENSSAD is committed to being a catalyst for security analysis and a facilitator for sector governance, civil-military relations, and democratic governance. The organization is focused on advancing human rights, promoting the rule of law, and fostering peace and conflict resolution. By striving for an efficient security sector accountable to the people, CENSSAD underscores the essential connection between security, development, and the rule of law as fundamental prerequisites for sustainable peace.

CENSSAD operates across several vital thematic areas to achieve its goals, including security and justice, advocacy and awareness-building, conflict and peace-building, and promoting human rights and development. Through its work in these areas, CENSSAD envisions a vibrant, democratically governed, transformed Liberia that ensures holistic security, peace, and human rights for all its citizens.

## **Background on Liberia's Peace and Reconciliation Process**

Liberia has experienced prolonged periods of conflict, culminating in two deadly civil wars that lasted from 1989 to 2003.<sup>1</sup> The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed by all warring factions in Accra, Ghana, on August 18, 2003, marked a turning point, leading to the establishment of a transitional government and paving the way for democratic elections in 2005.<sup>2</sup> It took enormous courage, commitment, and sacrifice on the part of so many Liberians, including women, to bring an end to the brutal civil conflicts. The CPA and Liberia's Peacebuilding Plan (LPP) have since guided the nation's efforts to rebuild and reconcile.<sup>3</sup>

Liberians recently celebrated the 21st anniversary of signing the landmark CPA in Accra. However, twenty-one years later, it is widely believed that Liberia's reconciliation process has not been fully concluded, and the country remains in what many describe as a state of "negative peace."<sup>4</sup> This term refers to a situation where, despite the absence of large-scale violence or armed conflict, underlying tensions and unresolved issues persist, preventing the achievement of genuine, positive peace.<sup>5</sup> Negative peace is characterized by the mere cessation of hostilities rather than the presence of conditions necessary for sustainable peace, such as justice, equality, and social cohesion. In Liberia, this manifests in the continued existence of social, economic, and political grievances that were not fully addressed during the initial post-conflict recovery phase and the post-conflict peace consolidation process.

The 2017 LPP, which feeds into the country's formal peace consolidation process and builds upon the country's 2003 CPA, acknowledges that previous endeavors to achieve the CPA's objective of promoting genuine national healing and reconciliation have been unsuccessful. Despite efforts to foster reconciliation, the main obstacles to ensuring a holistic reconciliation process have been the exclusion of much of the population of Liberia, the difficulty associated with reducing rampant societal inequalities based along ethnic/tribal, gender, economic, and age lines that contribute to strictly defined restraints in modern Liberian society, as well as political elites and high-level former warlords, who have not been held accountable.

The lack of complete reconciliation has left lingering issues that continue to affect the social fabric of the country and the overall peace consolidation process.<sup>6</sup> Ethnic divisions, land disputes, lack of

---

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Sawyer, 2005

<sup>3</sup> Security Council, 2003. UN Peacemaker, 2003

<sup>4</sup> Snyder, 2024

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Sawyer, 2005

accountability, political tensions, and deep-seated mistrust between different communities remain prevalent, and these unresolved tensions threaten to destabilize the fragile peace that currently exists.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the failure to adequately address war crimes and human rights abuses committed during the civil wars has contributed to a sense of impunity, further eroding trust in the justice system and the state's ability to provide security and protection for all citizens.<sup>8</sup>

This perceived negative peace underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive reconciliation process beyond surface-level solutions. Such a process must aim to heal the wounds of the past, address the root causes of conflict, and build a more inclusive and just society. Without these efforts, Liberia risks falling back into cycles of violence and instability because the underlying issues continue to simmer beneath the surface, waiting to ignite.

### **Women's Participation in the Peace and Reconciliation Process**

Women have played a pivotal role in Liberia's peace and reconciliation process. Women groups like the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Movement (WLMAPM) were on the frontlines of efforts to bring peace and significantly contributed to ending the civil war. These groups continue to advocate for the participation of women in issues that affect their growth and development.<sup>9</sup> Despite these efforts, women face significant barriers that hinder their full participation in peace-building and reconciliation activities. Evidence shows that a majority of the ongoing efforts are male-driven.<sup>10</sup> There is broad consensus that reconciliation will only succeed if the entire population feels represented by the process and can express their opinion about the issues that Liberia needs to address to sustain peace. This consensus is particularly true for women, who account for 50% of the population and have a rich knowledge of local threats that undermine reconciliation today.

The importance of women's participation in the peace-building process cannot be overstated. Evidence shows that women's involvement in peace processes globally contributes to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes. According to a UN Women study, peace agreements are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years if women are involved in their creation.<sup>11</sup> Scholarly articles emphasize that women's participation leads to a broader range of perspectives and solutions, increasing the likelihood of addressing the root causes of conflict.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Weah, 2024

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Gbowee and Mithers, 2011

<sup>10</sup> Tripp, 2015

<sup>11</sup> UN Women, 2024

<sup>12</sup> Dixon et al., 2016

The body of evidence suggests a critical need to ensure the active participation of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. It is imperative that if such efforts are to succeed in the Liberian context, focused interventions must be developed to address the barriers to the active participation of Liberian women. However, these barriers cannot be broken until they have been fully understood from the perspectives of the women themselves.

For the reconciliation process to be effective, true gender parity must be considered, and women's rights must be respected. While Liberia has received much international attention around women's rights with the election of Africa's first female president, this has not necessarily resulted in equal participation in other aspects of life, including the reconciliation processes. In order for this grassroots approach to reconciliation to be effective, women's voices need to be meaningfully and deeply included in the process.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The survey was conducted in local communities in six counties in Liberia, Sinoe, Nimba, Rivercess, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, and Lofa, and surveyed 1,200 women. The margin of error for the survey is approximately 2.83%, providing a reliable insight into the views and experiences of the respondents. Here are highlights from the key findings of the survey:

1. **High Awareness:** The survey revealed a high level of awareness among women regarding reconciliation and peace-building concepts. This widespread understanding can be attributed to the extensive outreach and education campaigns conducted by various NGOs and community-based organizations, including women groups, in the aftermath of Liberia's civil wars.<sup>13</sup> A significant number of respondents demonstrated a clear understanding of these terms and their importance in the context of Liberia's post-conflict recovery, reflecting the effectiveness of past and ongoing initiatives.
2. **Major Barriers to Participation:** The survey identified several barriers hindering women's participation in reconciliation and peace-building. These barriers include domestic work responsibilities, spousal denial, fear, lack of education, and cultural issues. Domestic work was the most frequently cited barrier, affecting women's ability to engage in community and national reconciliation efforts.
3. **Support for War and Economic Crimes Court:** There is strong support among the surveyed women for establishing the War and Economic Crimes Court. Many respondents think such a court is essential for ensuring justice and accountability and also critical to ensuring genuine peace and reconciliation in Liberia.

---

<sup>13</sup> UN Women, 2024

4. **Involvement at Various Levels:** Although at the community level, women felt there were significant barriers affecting their participation, they however also believed that generally, women are significantly involved in reconciliation and peace-building efforts at various levels, including local and national levels.
5. **Effective Communication of Awareness Campaigns:** The survey found that awareness campaigns related to reconciliation and peace-building are effectively communicated through various mediums, especially radio messages and community outreach programs. These campaigns have raised awareness and understanding among women about these critical issues.

### **Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the results of the survey, below is a summary of recommendations:

1. **Address Domestic Work Burdens:** Implement programs to reduce the domestic work burden on women, such as community childcare services and creating times when women have fewer chores to free up time for their participation in reconciliation and peace-building activities.
2. **Expand Educational Opportunities:** Develop formal and informal educational programs, including increased participation in workshops/trainings to improve their understanding and engagement in reconciliation and peace-building processes.
3. **Support Individuals Facing Spousal Denial and Cultural Barriers:** Provide support and counseling services for individuals facing spousal denial and cultural barriers. Create platforms for open dialogue where both partners can voice their challenges, seek solutions, and work towards mutual understanding and respect. Engaging both men and women in these discussions can foster a more supportive and inclusive environment for participation in peace-building activities. Engage traditional and local authorities on the reconciliation process and why women's participation is crucial to achieving sustainable peace in Liberia.
4. **Strengthen Awareness Campaigns:** Continuous and expanded awareness campaigns through radio and community outreach, with messages that are clear, relatable, and accessible to all women, regardless of their location, education levels and socioeconomic status, will assist in increased participation.
5. **Further Research and Monitoring:** continuous monitoring of women in reconciliation and peace-building processes to assess the effectiveness of implemented programs and initiatives, will enable partners to learn, adapt, and tailor programs that will effectively increase participation.

# INTRODUCTION

Liberia is a small country in West Africa that has endured significant political instability and conflict throughout its modern history. The nation experienced two devastating civil wars: the first from 1989 to 1997 and the second from 1999 to 2003.<sup>14</sup> These conflicts resulted in widespread destruction, loss of life, and displacement of people.<sup>15</sup> The root causes of these conflicts include historical inequalities, governance issues, ethnic tensions, economic disparities, and corruption.<sup>16</sup>

The first civil war began in 1989 when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) launched an armed rebellion against the government of the late President Samuel Doe.<sup>17</sup> The war later degenerated into a tribal conflict, and numerous factions were contending for power, leading to a protracted and brutal conflict that ended in 1997 with Taylor's election as president.<sup>18</sup> However, peace was short-lived, and a second civil war erupted in 1999, fueled by a power struggle amongst contested armed opposition groups.

The culmination of these conflicts was the Accra Peace Agreement of 2003, which brought together various warring factions to negotiate a ceasefire and establish a National Transitional Government that worked with the international community to ensure the successful disarming of armed combatants.<sup>19</sup> The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) marked a turning point in Liberia's history, paving the way for democratic elections in 2005, when Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected as President on 23 November 2005, following two rounds of elections, also becoming Africa's first female Head of State.<sup>20</sup> While Johnson-Sirleaf has brought a long list of accomplishments that speak to women's interests and participation, with an increase in the number of women being elected to the National Legislature and participating in government since 2005, women's representation in the Legislature declined further below regional averages during elections in 2011, 2018 and 2023, as well as declined further as it relates to their overall participation in local and national governance processes.

Liberia's recovery post-civil war has been marked by efforts to rebuild its institutions and promote national reconciliation. The impact of the wars left deep scars on the country's socio-economic and political landscape. The economy was shattered, infrastructures destroyed, and trust within communities

---

<sup>14</sup> Ellis

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Weah

<sup>17</sup> Ellis

<sup>18</sup> Sawyer

<sup>19</sup> Ellis

<sup>20</sup> (Gbowee and Mithers

eroded.<sup>21</sup> Rebuilding has required substantial international support, particularly from organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank, a number of friendly countries, including Liberia's traditional ally, the United States, West African, Asian and European countries, and various non-governmental organizations.

Liberia's social fabric was also significantly impacted. Families were torn apart, and many individuals still bear the physical and psychological scars of the conflicts.<sup>22</sup> The wars disrupted education for many children, creating a generation that missed out on essential schooling.<sup>23</sup> Addressing these educational gaps has been crucial for Liberia's long-term development and stability.

It has also profoundly affected young people to the extent that the generation that survived the war is often referred to as the 'lost generation'<sup>24</sup> and women are of no exception. This generation, which endured immense trauma and has not yet fully healed or experienced true reconciliation, has now had children of their own. These vulnerable groups, in turn, are also profoundly impacted, facing severe challenges such as extreme poverty and unemployment due to the enduring effects of the war.<sup>25</sup>

Following the cessation of hostilities, Liberia embarked on an ambitious path towards peacebuilding and reconciliation. Over the last few years, the Government of Liberia has embarked upon several programs to promote genuine healing and reconciliation. The CPA and the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan (LPP) have been central to these efforts.<sup>26</sup> These frameworks aimed to address the immediate needs of post-conflict recovery, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, as well as the establishment of institutions to support democratic governance and the rule of law.<sup>27</sup>

The DDR process was particularly challenging. It involved disarming thousands of former combatants (the youngest of whom was estimated to be six years old) and reintegrating them into civilian life, which required significant resources and support systems. Many ex-combatants struggled with the transition, facing post-traumatic syndromes, unemployment, and social stigmatization. Programs aimed at providing vocational training and employment opportunities were essential to help them rebuild their lives.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Weah

<sup>22</sup> Frontline

<sup>23</sup> Dogaru

<sup>24</sup> Global Times

<sup>25</sup> Weah

<sup>26</sup> Gbowee and Mithers

<sup>27</sup> Sawyer

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch

Despite these efforts, the reconciliation process in Liberia remains incomplete.<sup>29</sup> The legacy of conflict continues to impact the social and political fabric of the country. Land disputes, ethnic tensions, and economic inequalities persist, hindering lasting peace. Moreover, the need for justice and accountability for war crimes and human rights abuses remains a contentious issue, with calls for the establishment of a War and Economic Crimes Court gaining traction.<sup>30</sup>

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), created in 2005 and grew from the CPA's outcomes, documented the conflicts' accounts and made recommendations that included land reform, law reform, and setting up a War and Economic Crimes Court. Unfortunately, political elites felt threatened by the recommendations of the TRC and refused to implement the recommendations. This political impasse has held back Liberia's peace consolidation process. However, the need for justice for the victims of the conflict was elevated to another level when President Joseph Boakai signed an Executive Order on May 2, 2024, to establish a War and Economic Crime Court in Liberia.

International support has played a crucial role in Liberia's peacebuilding efforts. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), established in 2003, provided significant support for security, governance, and development until its mandate ended in 2018.<sup>31</sup> UNMIL's presence helped stabilize the country and created an environment conducive to peace and development. However, the formal withdrawal of UNMIL in 2018 increased national institutions' responsibility to sustain and advance peacebuilding efforts.

Overall, Liberia's journey towards peace and reconciliation is ongoing. While significant progress has been made, the need for continued efforts to address the root causes of conflict and promote inclusive development is essential for achieving sustainable peace.

Women have been instrumental in Liberia's peace and reconciliation process. During the civil wars, women's groups such as the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace played a crucial role in advocating for peace and demanding an end to violence. Their efforts, including nonviolent protests and advocacy at peace talks, were pivotal in bringing about the Accra Peace Agreement.<sup>32</sup>

Leymah Gbowee, a prominent Liberian peace activist, led the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement. Gbowee's leadership and the collective efforts of Liberian women were instrumental in pressuring the warring factions to negotiate peace. In recognition of her contributions, Gbowee was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, alongside Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tawakkol Karman.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Weah

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Snyder

<sup>32</sup> Gbowee and Mithers

<sup>33</sup> Walsh

Despite these contributions, women face significant barriers to full participation in peace-building and reconciliation activities. Traditional gender roles, cultural norms, and socio-economic challenges often limit their involvement. For example, societal expectations that confine women to domestic roles prevent many from engaging in public and political life. Economic dependence on male family members can also limit women's autonomy and mobility, further hindering their participation in peace processes.

Yet, the importance of women's participation in these processes globally is well-documented. Research shows that peace agreements are more likely to succeed and sustain when women are involved. According to UN Women, peace agreements are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years if women participate in their creation.<sup>34</sup> Paffenholz (2016) further highlights that women bring diverse perspectives and solutions that address the root causes of conflict, contributing to more comprehensive peace-building efforts.

Scholarly articles have emphasized the transformative impact of women's participation in peacebuilding. For example, in Colombia, women's involvement in the peace process has led to significant advancements in gender equality and social justice, contributing to the broader peacebuilding agenda.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in Nepal, women's participation in post-conflict governance has played a crucial role in addressing structural inequalities and promoting inclusive development.<sup>36</sup>

In Liberia, women's involvement in peacebuilding has extended beyond formal negotiations. Women have engaged in grassroots initiatives, community mediation, and advocacy for social justice. Their roles have been critical in rebuilding trust, promoting social cohesion, and ensuring that peacebuilding efforts are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all community members. For instance, women have organized community dialogues, facilitated reconciliation meetings, and participated in local governance structures, contributing to the creation of more resilient and peaceful communities.<sup>37</sup> Women have also worked across the country to establish Women Peace Huts as platforms for women's voices to be heard on peace building, security, rule of law and human rights.

Furthermore, women's peace-building efforts often address social and economic inequalities, critical for achieving lasting peace. By advocating for education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, women help to create conditions that prevent the recurrence of conflict. This holistic approach to peace-building recognizes that sustainable peace is not just the absence of violence but the presence of justice and equality.

---

<sup>34</sup> UN Women

<sup>35</sup> Meertens and Zambrano

<sup>36</sup> ECP

<sup>37</sup> Gbowee and Mithers

Women's involvement in grassroots initiatives against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has been particularly significant in post-war Liberia, where SGBV has been on the rise.<sup>38</sup> Liberian women have organized protests, such as the "We Are Unprotected" march, to demand justice and protection for SGBV survivors. Additionally, the annual "Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" campaign has seen widespread participation from women's groups, raising awareness and calling for action to combat SGBV.<sup>39</sup> These efforts have brought national and international attention to the issue, leading to increased support for survivors and stricter enforcement of laws against SGBV.

Various segments of the population have remained, by and large, excluded from the reconciliation process, with women being the largest one. Despite their roles in restoring peace to Liberia, there is still significant evidence, some of which are highlighted in the results of this survey, that women still face considerable barriers to full participation in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

This survey is a critical component of the project "Amplifying Local Women Voices: Understanding and Breaking Down Barriers to Women Participation in the Liberian Reconciliation and Peace Building Processes," implemented by CENSSAD, with support from the German Federal Foreign Office's Funds, through Zivik Funding Programme. The survey's findings provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for enhancing women's participation in Liberia's reconciliation and peace-building efforts. By understanding these barriers and leveraging the support for justice and accountability mechanisms, targeted interventions can be developed to promote women's participation in peacebuilding initiatives and, by extension, enhance inclusive and sustainable peace.

The results comprehensively analyze the various barriers women face in participating in reconciliation and peace-building activities, such as domestic work responsibilities, fear, spousal denial, lack of education, and cultural norms. By identifying these barriers, the survey offers a clear understanding of the challenges that must be addressed to enhance women's involvement. This understanding is essential for developing targeted policies and programs that address the specific needs and challenges women face, allowing policymakers and organizations to design interventions that are more effective in promoting women's participation in peace-building efforts. For example, the survey's insights can inform the development of programs that provide childcare support, educational opportunities, and safe spaces for women.

Additionally, the survey highlights the critical role of awareness campaigns in educating and engaging women in peace-building processes. By understanding the effectiveness of different communication channels, such as radio and community outreach, stakeholders can refine their advocacy efforts to reach

---

<sup>38</sup> Carvalho and Agbonifo

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

more women and increase their participation. These findings can be used to advocate for greater support and resources for women's organizations and initiatives, thereby expanding their impact.

Ultimately, we can draw on valuable data on the current state of gender equality and women's empowerment in Liberia. It allows for a broader conversation by highlighting the gaps and areas for improvement and can help stakeholders prioritize gender equality in national and local agendas. This can increase investments in women's education, economic empowerment, and leadership development, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and equitable peace-building efforts.

It establishes a baseline for monitoring and evaluating any future interventions, including those that may be implemented by CENSSAD and other stakeholders. Finally, with this baseline in place, future surveys and M&E programs will have a reference point to measure the impact and effectiveness of interventions<sup>40</sup>

The survey was conducted in six counties in Liberia: Sinoe, Nimba, Rivercess, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, and Lofa. This targeted coverage ensures that the findings represent a diverse range of communities and demographics within these regions. A total of 1,200 women participated in the survey, offering a robust dataset for analysis.

By capturing the voices and experiences of women from these counties, this survey sheds light on the critical factors influencing their participation in reconciliation and peace-building processes. The insights gained from this survey will inform the development of targeted strategies to empower women and enhance their roles in building a peaceful and cohesive society in Liberia.

---

<sup>40</sup> ECP

# METHODOLOGY

## **Survey Design**

The survey was designed as a semi-structured interview, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. This approach is beneficial in capturing a comprehensive range of responses, providing depth and context to the statistical data. Semi-structured interviews are particularly effective in exploratory research, where understanding the reasons behind certain behaviors or attitudes is crucial. This method enables the collection of standardized data while allowing flexibility for respondents to elaborate on their answers, thus enriching the data quality.

The questionnaire included a mix of closed-ended questions, which provided quantifiable data, and open-ended questions, which allowed respondents to express their thoughts and experiences in their own words. This dual approach ensured that the survey captured not only the prevalence of certain barriers to participation but also the nuanced reasons behind these barriers. The survey questions were designed based on a thorough review of existing literature on women's participation in peace-building processes, as well as consultations with experts in the field.

Ethical considerations were paramount in the survey design. All participants were provided with information about the survey's purpose, their rights as participants, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and they were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences.

## **Sampling Methods**

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants from six counties in Liberia: Sinoe, Nimba, Rivercess, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, and Lofa. This sampling method was chosen to ensure a diverse representation of women from different regions, backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher selects participants based on specific characteristics or criteria that are relevant to the study's objectives.

In this survey, the focus was solely on interviewing women. Enumerators reached out to women in various environments such as markets, communities, churches, mosques, events, and other places where they could speak to the women alone to reduce their fear of male intrusion. All enumerators employed to ask the questions were women themselves, which helped to create a comfortable and trusting environment for the respondents.

The selection criteria for this survey included women's age, women living with disabilities, educational background, and marital status. The participants mirror the diversity among Liberian women with regard to socio-economic background, ethnic affiliation, age, education, and profession. Women with disabilities or with specific needs have suffered from even more blatant neglect in the reconciliation process thus far and hence account for some of the respondents. By focusing on these criteria, the survey was able to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences, thus providing a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to women's participation in the reconciliation process. The total sample size of 1,200 women was determined based on statistical calculations to ensure a sufficient margin of error and confidence level for the findings.

The data collection process was carefully designed to ensure accuracy and reliability. Enumerators voluntarily signed up or were recommended by women groups in target counties. They were then trained to conduct interviews in a consistent manner, using standardized questions and procedures. The questionnaire was pretested to ensure data quality. This systematic approach helped to minimize biases and ensure that the data collected was robust and representative of the target population.

#### **Data Collection Process:**

Data collection was conducted through in-person interviews from 27 May-7 June 2024. Trained enumerators administered the survey, ensuring consistency and accuracy in data collection. The interviewers were selected based on their experience and understanding of the local context, as well as their ability to communicate effectively in local languages. Before the data collection, all interviewers underwent a comprehensive training program that covered the objectives of the survey, ethical considerations, and the specifics of the questionnaire. Test interviews helped to detect and address the questionnaire's weaknesses.

The interviews were conducted in a manner that respected the cultural norms and sensitivities of the respondents. Given the importance of capturing honest and detailed responses, interviewers were trained to create a comfortable and non-judgmental environment. This involved active listening, empathy, and ensuring that respondents felt their contributions were valued and confidential. Most of the interviews were conducted in the county lingua franca to ensure that all respondents could fully understand and participate.

Quality control measures were implemented throughout the data collection process to ensure data integrity. Supervisors conducted spot-checks and reviews of completed questionnaires to identify and address any inconsistencies or errors. Additionally, digital tools were used for data entry and storage, reducing the risk of data loss and enhancing the efficiency of the data collection process.

**Tools Used:**

The survey was administered using a structured questionnaire, which included predominantly multiple-choice questions—structured multiple-choice questions with specific, pre-defined answer options. Most questions were aimed at capturing particular data points such as demographic information, levels of awareness, and experiences related to reconciliation and peace-building. In cases where the predefined options did not cover all possible responses, an "Other" category was included to allow respondents to provide additional, unlisted answers.

The questionnaire also sought to capture detailed information about respondents' perceptions and outlook on barriers to participation, as well as support for the War and Economic Crimes Court. The development of the questionnaire involved input from experts in the field, a review of similar studies, and a pilot test to ensure clarity and relevance of the questions.

Enumerators read the questions to each respondent, who then responded verbally. Enumerators were also prepared to clarify questions as needed or simplify them to ensure the respondents had a good understanding of the questions. This approach was particularly important to provide accurate and meaningful participant responses.

All responses were collected on paper forms. This paper-based method was chosen to facilitate the process in various environments, such as markets, communities, and events in very remote rural areas where a lack of reliable internet connectivity and electricity would render digital tools impractical.

Once the data was collected, the paper forms were carefully reviewed and manually entered into a database for analysis. This method ensured that the integrity of the data was maintained throughout the process despite the potential for human error in manual data entry.

**Response Rate:**

The survey achieved a 100% response rate, with all 1,200 distributed surveys being completed. This high response rate enhances the reliability and validity of the findings, providing a robust dataset for analysis. Due to population dynamics, the research utilized a predetermined sample to observe from counties with a huge population. Lofa and Nimba, constituting the largest population as per the 2022 census report,<sup>41</sup> were allocated 250 respondents, while the remaining counties were allocated 175 respondents, respectively. Achieving a high response rate is crucial in survey research as it minimizes the risk of non-response bias, which can occur when the characteristics of respondents differ from those of non-respondents.

---

<sup>41</sup> [LiberiaCensus2022Report.pdf \(lisgjs.gov.lr\)](#)

Several factors contributed to the high response rate. First, the survey was conducted in person, which generally results in higher response rates than mail or online surveys. Second, the involvement of local community leaders and local women's organizations helped build trust and encourage participation. Last, using trained interviewers who were familiar with the local context and languages facilitated effective communication and engagement with respondents.

### **Limitations:**

Several challenges were encountered in conducting the survey. Paramount amongst these were bad roads, lack of electricity and poor internet connectivity, which affected the data collection process. These logistical challenges were managed through careful planning and renting a 4-wheel drive vehicle to facilitate access to remote areas. Additionally, cultural and socio-economic barriers remained a concern because they feared they could hinder or influence the respondents' willingness to disclose their experiences and perceptions fully.

Many men in Liberia believe that women should not bother about politics and reconciliation and actively sought to prevent their wives, daughters, and the community's female members' participation in the interviews. To avoid potential disruptions of the interviews, the enumerators had to often engage some men and explain why women's participation is crucial to achieving sustainable peace in Liberia on-site.

Another limitation was the potential bias introduced by self-reporting, as respondents might have been inclined to provide socially desirable answers. To mitigate this, interviewers were trained to ensure confidentiality and encourage honest responses. Moreover, while the purposive sampling method ensured a diverse representation, it did not allow the generalization of the findings to the entire population of Liberian women.

The sensitive nature of some questions, particularly those related to personal and family experiences of conflict, posed another challenge. Interviewers were trained to handle these questions with care and provide support where needed. To address the potential fear of reprisals, interviews were conducted privately, especially away from male counterparts, to create a safe environment for the respondents. Despite these challenges, the comprehensive and systematic approach to data collection helped in obtaining reliable and meaningful data.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The demographic profile of the survey respondents provides essential context for understanding their perspectives and experiences. Of the 1,200 women from the six counties: Sinoe, Nimba, Rivercess, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, and Lofa, the following subsections detail their age distribution, educational background, and marital status, with relevant cross-tabulations highlighting key insights.

**Age Distribution:** The respondents' ages ranged from 14 to 65 years, with the following breakdown:

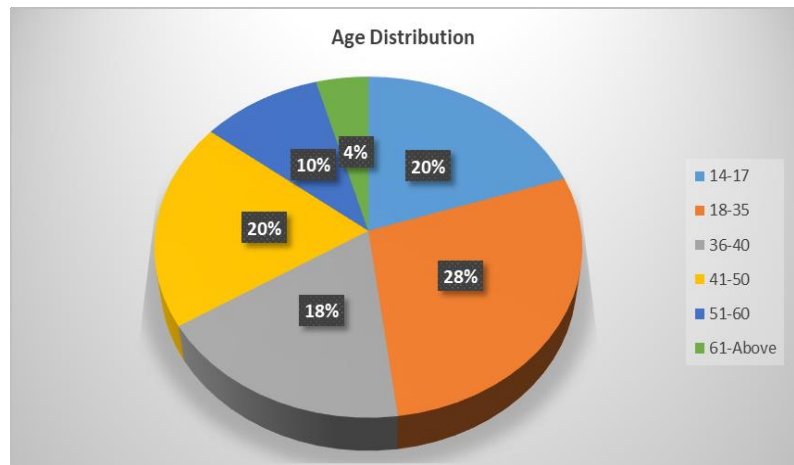
- 14- 17 years: 20%
- 18-35 years: 28%
- 36-40 years: 18%
- 41-50 years: 20%
- 51-60 years: 10%
- 61 years above: 4%

The age distribution shows a relatively young respondent base, with the majority being under 35 years old. To understand how age affects participation, we examined the participation rates across different age groups using cross-tabulation.

The data indicates that younger women (ages 18-35) participate more in reconciliation and peace-building activities than older women (ages 36-65).

Specifically, 20% of women in the 14-17 age group and 28% in the 18-35 age group reported active participation. In contrast, participation rates among women aged 41-50, 51-60, and 60 and above were 20%, 10%, and 4%, respectively.

**Younger women (17-34 years):** Younger women exhibit higher participation rates in peace-building activities. This trend can be attributed to several factors. First, younger women are more likely to have access to educational resources and awareness campaigns, which enhance their understanding of and engagement in peace-building processes. Additionally, younger women may face fewer traditional



gender role constraints than older women, allowing them more freedom to participate in public and political activities.

Middle-aged women (35-54 years): Participation rates declined among women aged 35-54. This age group often faces significant domestic responsibilities and cultural expectations that prioritize their roles within the household. These factors limit their availability and ability to engage in peace-building activities. A woman in the 35-44 age group mentioned, "My family duties take up most of my time, leaving little room for community involvement." Furthermore, middle-aged women may encounter more resistance from spouses and male relatives with traditional gender-role views.

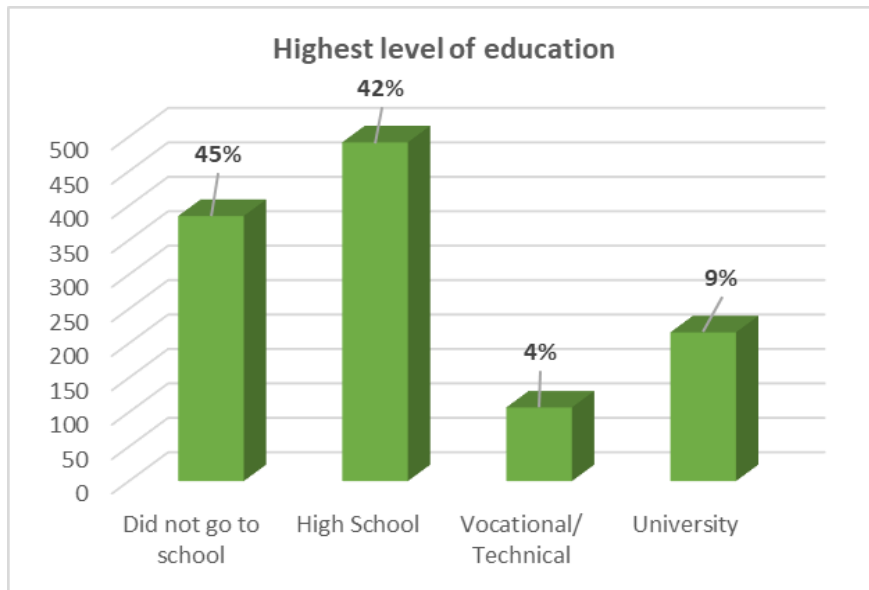
Older women (55-65 years): The lowest participation rates are observed among women aged 55-65. In addition to facing cultural and domestic constraints, older women may also experience physical limitations and health issues that restrict their involvement in public activities. Moreover, this age group may have had limited access to education and awareness campaigns during their formative years, resulting in lower levels of awareness and engagement in peace-building processes.

Overall, the analysis of age distribution and participation reveals that younger women are more actively involved in reconciliation and peace-building activities than their older counterparts. This finding underscores the importance of targeting educational and awareness programs for older women to enhance their participation. Additionally, initiatives that address domestic responsibilities and cultural barriers are crucial for increasing the involvement of middle-aged and older women in peace-building processes. By understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by different age groups, we can create more inclusive and effective peace-building efforts in Liberia.

## **Education Background**

A summary of the education attained by respondents is as follows:

- Did not go to school: 45%
- High School: 42%
- Vocational/Technical: 4%
- University: 9%



This distribution indicates that many women have limited formal education, which could impact their awareness and engagement in peace-building activities. To understand how education affects participation, we examined the participation rates across different educational backgrounds using cross-tabulation.

Women with no formal education show significant participation rates in peace-building activities but face substantial barriers, including lack of access to information and limited understanding of peace-building concepts. Many women in this category may also lack confidence in contributing to reconciliation efforts. A respondent with no formal education noted, "I often feel left out of community meetings because I don't understand what is being discussed." These women still face significant barriers, such as limited access to detailed information and resources.

Women with secondary education exhibit higher participation rates, with 42% actively involved in peace-building activities. Secondary education equips women with essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, and leadership, which are crucial for participation in community and national initiatives. This educational level also provides better access to information and resources, facilitating more effective engagement in peace-building processes. A respondent with secondary education mentioned, "My education has given me the confidence and skills to actively participate in community meetings and advocate for peace."

Women with university education constitute 9% of the respondents but exhibit the highest participation rates, with 70% actively involved in peace-building activities. Tertiary education provides advanced knowledge, skills, and networks, enabling women to take on leadership roles and contribute significantly to reconciliation efforts. Women with tertiary education are more likely to be involved in decision-making processes, resource mobilization, and conflict resolution. A respondent with tertiary education shared, "Higher education has empowered me to lead peace initiatives and make a meaningful impact in my community."

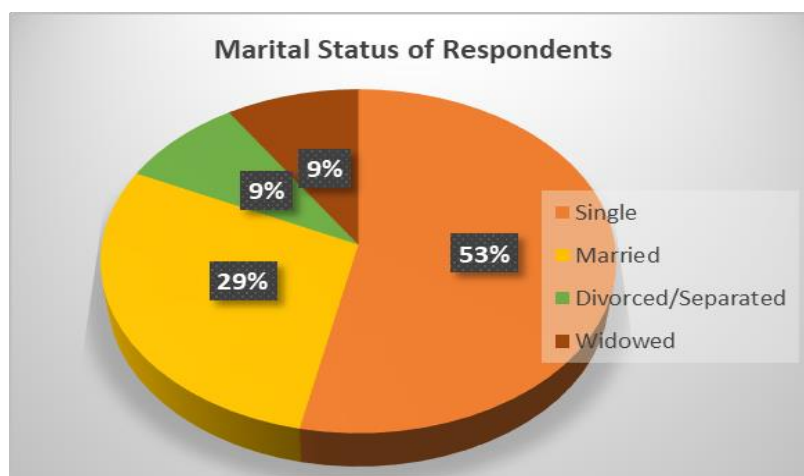
The lowest participation rates are observed among women with vocational/technical skills, with 4% actively involved in peace-building activities. The analysis reveals a clear correlation between educational attainment and participation in peace-building activities. Women with higher levels of education are more actively involved in reconciliation and peace-building processes. This finding underscores the importance of promoting educational opportunities for women at all levels to enhance their participation. Academic programs should focus not only on increasing access but also on providing relevant skills and knowledge that empower women to engage in peace-building efforts effectively.

This presents a particularly significant hurdle since education, especially education for women, is a long-term project that takes several years to achieve. Meanwhile, peace and reconciliation are immediate needs that require urgent attention. Addressing this challenge requires a nuanced approach that balances long-term educational goals with immediate peace-building needs, ensuring that women at all academic levels can contribute effectively to reconciliation efforts.

### **Marital Status**

The marital status of respondents is as follows:

- Single: 53%
- Married: 29%
- Divorced/Separated: 9%
- Widowed: 9%



Marital status can significantly influence women's availability and freedom to participate in public activities. To understand this better, we analyzed participation rates across different marital statuses using cross-tabulation.

Single women exhibit a higher participation rate in peace-building activities. This group often has fewer domestic responsibilities and greater autonomy, allowing them more time and freedom to engage in public and community initiatives. One respondent mentioned, "I have more time to dedicate to community meetings and peace-building activities since I don't have household responsibilities that married women have."

Married women show a moderate participation rate, with many facing significant domestic responsibilities and societal expectations that limit their involvement in peace-building efforts. Cultural norms often place a higher burden of household and family duties on married women, restricting their availability for public activities.

Marital status significantly influenced women's participation in peace-building activities. Single women were more likely to participate in community events and decision-making processes than married women, who often faced more domestic responsibilities and spousal opposition.

A single respondent from Grand Cape Mount remarked, "I have the freedom to attend meetings and be part of community projects." In contrast, a married woman from Nimba shared, "My husband doesn't like me being involved in these activities. He thinks my place is at home." These insights highlight the need for programs that actively engage men in the conversation about gender equality and encourage their participation alongside women. Such initiatives can help shift perceptions, demonstrating the value of shared responsibilities and the positive impact of women's involvement in peace-building efforts. By

fostering a supportive environment where both genders are educated on the benefits of women's participation, communities can work towards more inclusive and effective peace-building outcomes.

Divorced or separated women have varied participation rates, influenced by their socio-economic conditions and support systems. Some women in this category may face stigma or lack of support, which can hinder their participation. However, others may find new opportunities to engage in community activities as they navigate their new social roles.

Interestingly, widowed women generally show the lowest participation rates in peace-building activities. Losing a spouse often increases economic and social challenges, making it difficult for these women to engage in public initiatives. Additionally, widowed women may face isolation and lack of support, further limiting their involvement.

### **Awareness of Reconciliation and Peace-Building Concepts**

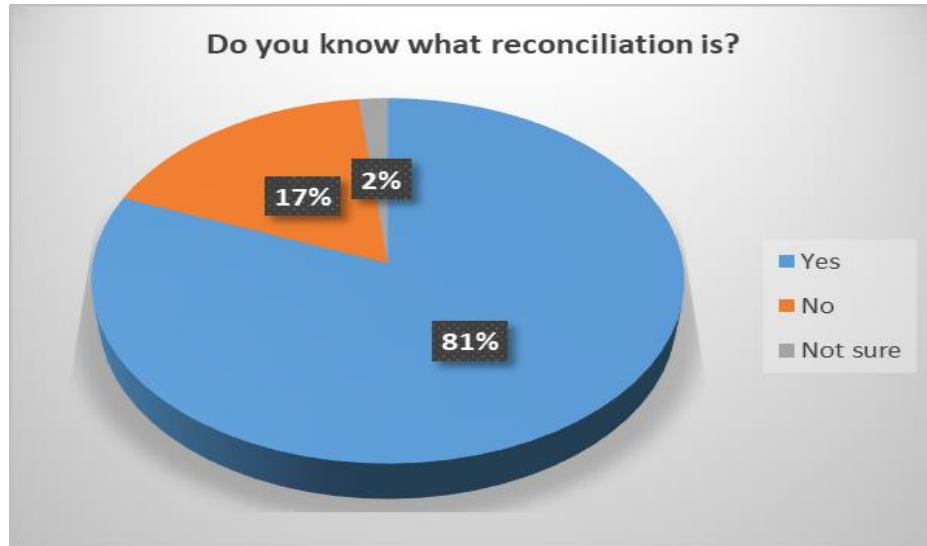
Awareness and understanding of reconciliation and peace-building concepts are crucial for effective participation in these processes. The survey assessed the respondents' familiarity with these concepts and their perceived importance in Liberia's post-conflict recovery. Understanding these concepts allows individuals to contribute meaningfully to peace-building activities and ensures that their efforts are aligned with broader national objectives. Moreover, familiarity with reconciliation and peace-building principles can empower women to take on leadership roles within their communities, fostering a more inclusive approach to conflict resolution and societal healing.

The importance of these concepts cannot be overstated in a country like Liberia, which has experienced prolonged periods of conflict and is still grappling with the aftermath and an inclusive reconciliation. High levels of awareness among women can lead to more robust participation in peace-building efforts, ensuring that women's voices are heard and their unique perspectives are considered. This is essential for achieving sustainable peace, as women's involvement has been shown to lead to more comprehensive and lasting peace agreements. Therefore, assessing the levels of awareness and understanding among women provides critical insights into the potential for enhanced participation and the effectiveness of current educational and outreach initiatives.

### **General Awareness**

The general awareness of women interviewed was as follows:

- 81% of respondents indicated they were familiar with the concepts of reconciliation and peace-building.
- 19% of respondents were unfamiliar with these terms or had a limited understanding.



There was an exceptionally high level of awareness among most respondents, which is encouraging and suggests that existing awareness campaigns have been somewhat effective. However, even though there was a high rate of women who were aware of these concepts, the number of women who lacked familiarity was still large enough to represent a significant portion of the population that needs further engagement and education.

#### **Perceived Importance of reconciliation & peace-building concepts:**

The perceived importance of reconciliation and peacebuilding was as follows:

- 85% of respondents believed that reconciliation and peace-building concepts are important for Liberia's recovery and sustainable peace.
- 10% of respondents were unsure of their importance.
- 5% of respondents did not see them as relevant to their personal or community context.

Among those familiar with reconciliation and peace-building, 85% believed these concepts were important for Liberia's recovery and sustainable peace, 10% were unsure of their importance, and 5% did not see them as relevant to their personal or community context. These findings underscore the general recognition of the importance of reconciliation and peace-building among women. However, the minority who are unsure or dismissive of these concepts highlight areas where targeted educational efforts could make a difference.

Most respondents believe that reconciliation and peace-building are crucial for Liberia's recovery and sustainable peace. This group understands these concepts' broader benefits to their communities and the country. Key reasons cited include community benefit, personal experience, and education. Many respondents believe that peace-building leads to a safer and more cohesive community. Some respondents

have experienced the positive impact of reconciliation efforts in their lives or communities. Additionally, higher levels of education correlate with an understanding of the importance of peace-building.

A few respondents are unsure about the importance of reconciliation and peace-building. The primary reason for this uncertainty is a lack of understanding. Respondents in this group often lack detailed knowledge about what reconciliation and peace-building entail. One respondent shared, "I hear about peace-building but don't fully understand how it impacts me directly." This lack of understanding prevents them from fully appreciating the importance of these processes.

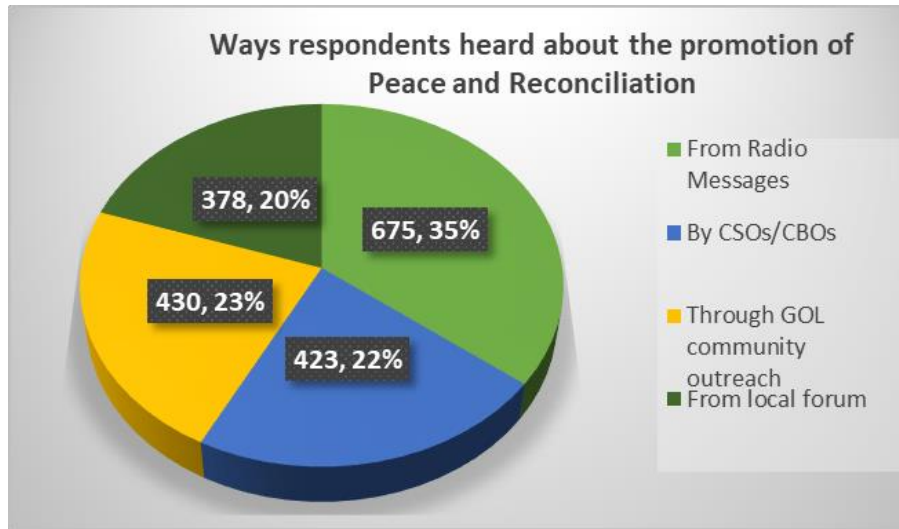
A minority of respondents do not see reconciliation and peace-building as relevant to their personal or community context. The reasons for this perception include the lack of tangible benefits from past peace-building efforts and a sense of disconnection from these concepts. These respondents have not seen how these efforts have made any difference in their community, leading them to question the relevance of reconciliation and peace-building.

The analysis shows that while a majority of women recognize the importance of reconciliation and peace-building, there is a notable minority who are either unsure or dismissive of these concepts. This highlights the need for targeted educational and awareness efforts to bridge the knowledge gap and demonstrate the tangible benefits of peace-building activities. Addressing these gaps can help ensure more women understand and support reconciliation and peace-building efforts, leading to a more unified and practical approach to achieving sustainable peace in Liberia.

### **Reach and Impact of Awareness Campaigns**

Below is a summary of responses when asked if they had benefited from any form of awareness campaigns:

- 35% of respondents reported being reached by awareness campaigns through radio messages.
- 23% received information through community outreach programs.
- 22% were exposed to campaigns via social media and other digital platforms.
- 20% received information from a local forum.



The survey results show that 35% of respondents reported being reached by awareness campaigns through radio messages, making radio the most effective medium for disseminating information. This is particularly significant in rural areas where access to other forms of media is limited. Community outreach programs were the second most effective, reaching 23% of respondents. Civil society and community-based organizations reached 22% of the participants, while 20% of respondents reported being reached from local forums.

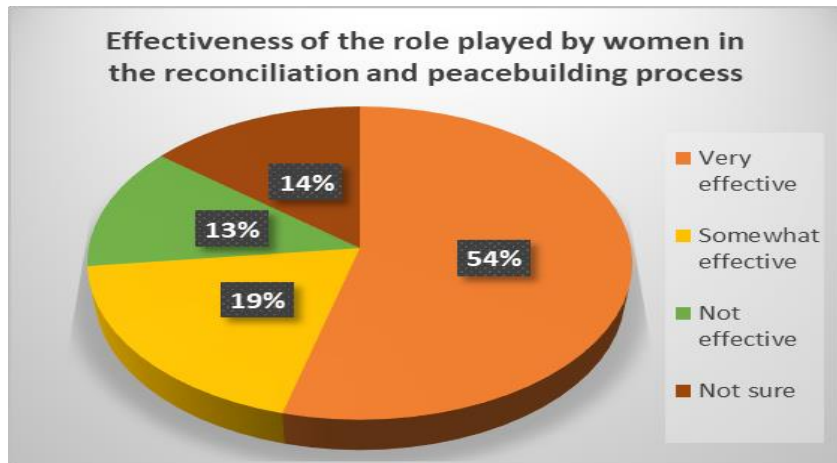
For instance, a respondent from Grand Cape Mount stated, " Radio programs have taught me a lot about reconciliation. I now understand why it is important for our community." This underscores the importance of using radio as a primary medium for awareness campaigns, especially in regions with low digital access. Community outreach programs also played a significant role in educating and engaging women, highlighting the value of face-to-face interactions in building trust and understanding.

### **Perceived Effectiveness of Awareness Campaigns**

We also queried the effectiveness of the campaign amongst respondents who said they had benefited from awareness campaigns in some form. The data below measures the effectiveness of these campaigns:

- 54% found the campaigns very effective in increasing their understanding of reconciliation and peace-building.
- 19% felt the campaigns were somewhat effective but lacked depth.
- 13% did not find the campaigns effective.
- 14% were not sure of the effectiveness

Among those reached by the campaigns, 54% found the campaigns very effective in increasing their understanding of reconciliation and peace-building. 19% felt the campaigns were somewhat effective but lacked depth, and 13% did not find them effective, while 14% indicated they were unsure whether the campaigns were effective. This high level of perceived effectiveness suggests that



these campaigns have been successful in raising awareness, though there is room for improvement in terms of providing more detailed and actionable information.

A respondent from Rivercess remarked, "Community meetings helped me see that peace-building is not just for men. Women have a role to play, too." This indicates that while the campaigns are generally effective, there is a need for more targeted messaging that emphasizes the specific roles and contributions of women in peace-building processes.

The impact of awareness campaigns on women's participation in peace-building activities is significant. Increased awareness has empowered many women to get involved in reconciliation efforts. For example, women who were exposed to these campaigns were more likely to participate in community dialogues and mediation activities. This correlation highlights the importance of continuous and comprehensive awareness efforts to sustain and enhance women's involvement in peace-building.

However, the survey also revealed that some women felt the campaigns did not address the specific challenges they face. A respondent from Lofa commented, "The campaigns talk about peace, but they don't always address the problems we face, like security and education." This feedback suggests that future campaigns need to be more tailored to address the unique barriers women encounter, thereby making the messages more relevant and impactful.

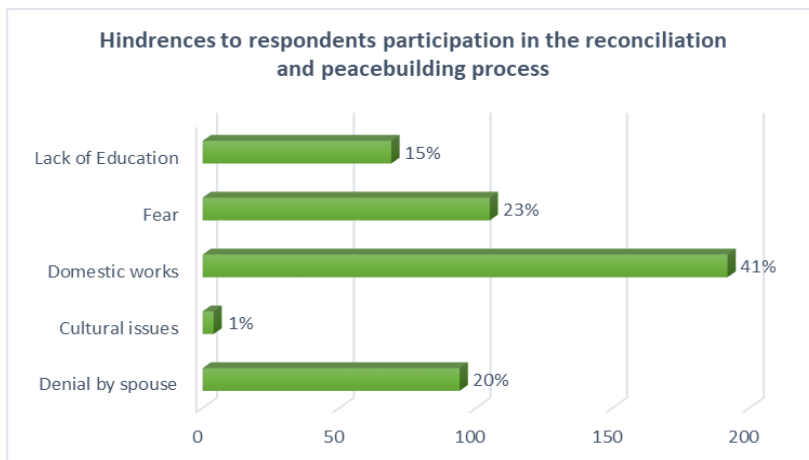
## BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

The barriers to women's participation in reconciliation and peace-building activities in Liberia are multifaceted and deeply rooted in societal structures and cultural norms. Previous attempts to enhance women's role in Liberia's reconciliation process have remained largely unsuccessful because of the lack of knowledge about why women's exclusion prevails. Identifying and understanding these barriers is a key objective of the survey. Therefore, several questions were structured around this issue. As a result, the survey identified several major barriers, including domestic work responsibilities, fear, denial by

spouses, lack of education, and cultural issues, which are the most common barriers to the active participation of women. We address these barriers, starting with domestic responsibilities.

**Domestic Work Responsibilities:** 41% of respondents cited domestic work as a significant barrier to their participation in peace-building activities. This barrier was most commonly reported by married women and those with children. Domestic responsibilities often leave women with little time or energy to engage in public activities, reflecting deeply rooted traditional gender roles where women are primarily responsible for household chores and childcare.

Women are expected to spend their entire day doing house chores, caring for children, preparing food, and tending to their husbands when they return home. The lack of domestic appliances and running water means women spend more time performing tasks manually, which further limits their ability to participate in public activities. Studies have shown that in many developing countries, women can spend up to six hours a day on unpaid domestic work, compared to significantly fewer hours for men. This gender disparity in domestic labor is a significant barrier to women's public participation.



In addition to household chores, rural women are often expected to participate in labor such as farming, fishing, or selling goods to earn an income for the home. These responsibilities mean that a woman's entire waking moment is spent engaged in chores and activities, often leaving her with no time for leisure, unlike their male counterparts. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, women are responsible for producing 60-80% of the food. Yet, their work is often undervalued and unrecognized.

Moreover, traditional gender roles dictate that women must prioritize their domestic responsibilities over any form of public engagement. This societal expectation reinforces the notion that women's primary role is in the home, thus limiting their opportunities to participate in community or political activities. The International Labor Organization (ILO) highlights that women's unpaid domestic work significantly impacts their ability to engage in paid employment and public life.

The burden of domestic work is exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure and public services. In many rural areas of Liberia, women have to fetch water from distant sources and use firewood for cooking, which are time-consuming and labor-intensive tasks. The lack of access to basic amenities not only increases the time spent on domestic chores but also affects women's health and well-being, further restricting their participation in public activities.

Addressing the barrier of domestic work responsibilities requires community-level interventions and systemic changes to redistribute domestic responsibilities more equitably between men and women. Programs that promote shared household responsibilities and involve men in domestic work can help reduce the burden on women. For example, the "MenCare" campaign, implemented in various countries, encourages men to take on more caregiving roles, which has been shown to increase women's participation in public life.

**Fear and Security Concerns:** 23% of respondents expressed fear as a barrier to participation, with concerns about violence, retribution, or social ostracism being common. Security concerns significantly hinder women's willingness to engage in peace-building activities. Men often do not want their wives involved in these activities, accusing women who attempt to participate in activities outside the home of having extramarital affairs or fearing that the woman will become "more powerful." This fear of extramarital affairs can lead to domestic violence, with women facing physical and emotional abuse for attempting to engage in public life.

In certain situations, it is seen as not the role of women to engage in public activities, and men, therefore, deter women from participating in roles seen as important and reserved for men only. Women who persist in participating in these activities are very often victims of domestic abuse. The fear of violence, both at home and in public, creates a significant barrier to women's participation in peace-building efforts.

The larger context of security issues in Liberia also contributes to this fear. Liberia's history of civil conflict has left a legacy of insecurity and violence, particularly against women. According to UNMIL, gender-based violence remains pervasive, and women often face threats of physical and sexual violence when they attempt to participate in public activities. These security concerns create a significant barrier to women's participation in peace-building efforts.

Much of the domestic violence that women face is unreported or underreported because it is seen as a norm not to report the husband or boyfriend for such actions. Cultural norms and societal pressures often discourage women from seeking help or reporting abuse, perpetuating a cycle of violence and fear. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that globally, less than 40% of women who experience violence seek help of any sort. Among those who do, most look to family and friends rather than formal institutions.

Creating safe spaces for women and ensuring their protection from violence and intimidation are essential steps in encouraging their active involvement. Community awareness programs that address these fears and provide support mechanisms can effectively mitigate this barrier. For instance, in Colombia, establishing "Casa de la Mujer" centers have provided safe spaces for women to discuss their concerns and participate in community activities without fear of violence.

**Denial by Spouses:** 20% of respondents reported that their spouses denied them permission to participate in public activities. This barrier was more prevalent among married women with lower educational backgrounds and reflects broader issues of gender inequality and lack of autonomy for women within the household. As mentioned previously, men often fear that their wives' participation in public activities

will lead to extramarital affairs or that the woman will become too powerful. This denial of permission is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures that view women as subordinate to men and restrict their autonomy.

Empowering women through education and economic opportunities and engaging men in dialogues about gender equality are crucial strategies to overcome this barrier. Community-based interventions that involve both men and women in discussions about the benefits of women's participation in peace-building can help shift these dynamics. Studies have shown that when men are educated about the benefits of gender equality and women's participation, they are more likely to support their wives' involvement in public activities.

**Lack of Education:** 15% of respondents identified lack of education as a barrier to their participation, with this barrier being more commonly reported by women from rural areas. Educational barriers limit women's access to information and opportunities for involvement in peace-building activities. Lack of education affects women's ability to understand and engage in peace-building processes, making it difficult for them to contribute effectively.

In many parts of Africa, cultural norms and economic constraints prevent girls from attending school. Girls are often expected to help with household chores or work to support the family, which limits their educational opportunities. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reports that in sub-Saharan Africa, girls are less likely to complete primary education than boys, and the gender gap widens at higher levels of education.

Furthermore, early marriage and teenage pregnancy are significant barriers to girls' education. In Liberia, the legal age for marriage is 18, but many girls are married off at a younger age, disrupting their education. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that early marriage often leads to early pregnancy, which further reduces educational opportunities for girls. Without education, women lack the knowledge and skills to participate in peace-building activities, perpetuating their exclusion from these processes.

The lack of education also affects women's confidence and ability to engage in public discourse. Educated women are more likely to be aware of their rights and more capable of advocating for themselves and their communities. A lack of formal education leaves many women unaware of their potential to contribute to peace-building efforts and unable to navigate the complexities of such processes.

A respondent from Sinoe stated, "I didn't go to school, so I don't know much about these things." I feel left out." This feeling of exclusion due to lack of education underscores the importance of expanding educational programs and creating informal learning opportunities, such as workshops and community education initiatives. Providing scholarships or financial aid for women to pursue education can have long-term benefits in increasing their participation in peace-building activities.

**Cultural Issues:** 1% of respondents pointed to cultural norms and traditions as barriers to their participation, with this issue being especially prevalent in communities with strong traditional practices. Cultural norms that prioritize male leadership and restrict women's public roles pose significant

challenges. In many cultures, women are expected to remain in the private sphere, focusing on domestic duties, while men are seen as the public actors.

Efforts to change these norms require long-term commitment and involvement from community leaders and influencers. Culturally sensitive programs that promote gender equality and highlight the positive contributions of women in peace-building can gradually shift these perceptions. In Liberia, organizations like the Carter Center have worked with traditional leaders to promote women's rights and participation in public life. By engaging respected community figures and using culturally relevant messaging, these programs have been able to challenge and change harmful gender norms.

In addition to general cultural norms, specific traditional institutions like secret societies play a significant role in shaping gender roles and expectations. The Sande Society, a traditional secret society for women in Liberia, plays a prominent role in the socialization and initiation of young girls into womanhood. While the Sande Society provides a sense of identity and community, it also reinforces traditional gender roles that can limit women's participation in public and political life.

The Sande Society, for instance, emphasizes traditional values and roles that often prioritize women's responsibilities in the private sphere. This reinforcement of gender roles can create a barrier to women's participation in peace-building and reconciliation activities. The initiation rites and teachings of the Sande Society focus on preparing girls for their roles as wives and mothers, often at the expense of broader educational and leadership opportunities.

Moreover, the secrecy and exclusivity of these societies can create an environment where dissenting voices, especially those advocating for gender equality and women's rights, are marginalized. The influence of the Sande Society extends to various aspects of community life, including political and social structures, thereby limiting the space for women to challenge traditional norms and participate in public activities.

Efforts to address the impact of secret societies on women's participation must be sensitive to cultural contexts and respectful of traditional practices while promoting gender equality. This sensitivity is crucial because it ensures that interventions are not perceived as attacks on cultural identity, which can lead to resistance and backlash. Instead, engaging leaders of these societies in dialogues about the benefits of women's participation in public life and peace-building can help bridge the gap between tradition and modernity.

Overall, Examining the intersection of these challenges with demographic factors such as age, education, and marital status provides additional insights. For instance, younger women and those with higher education levels reported facing fewer barriers compared to older, less educated women. Married women encountered more significant challenges related to domestic responsibilities and spousal opposition, while single women were more affected by cultural and security concerns.

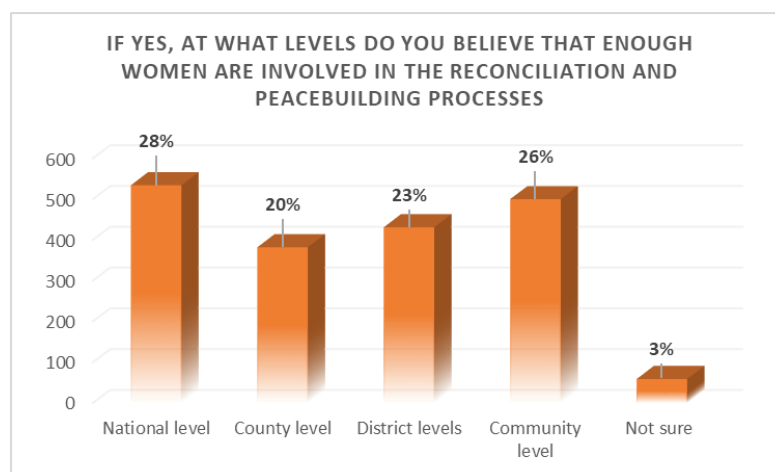
Further, among women with secondary education, 50% were involved in decision-making processes, compared to only 20% of women without formal education. Similarly, single women were more likely to be involved in resource mobilization (40%) than married women (30%). These differences highlight the need for tailored interventions that address the unique challenges faced by different demographic groups.

## **INVOLVEMENT**

Women's participation in reconciliation and peace-building is crucial for achieving sustainable peace and development. It encompasses various levels of involvement, from grassroots initiatives to national policy-making, and includes roles such as conflict mediation, advocacy, and organizational leadership. Ideally, women's participation would mean equitable representation in decision-making processes, active involvement in community-based peace initiatives, and significant contributions to policy development and implementation. It also entails creating an environment where women's voices are heard and their contributions valued, leading to more inclusive and effective peace-building efforts.

Analyzing women's involvement in reconciliation and peace-building efforts provides insights into their contributions, their roles, and the challenges they face in these processes. The survey sought to understand the current level of women's participation in ongoing reconciliation and peace-building efforts at various levels, including national, community, and household levels.

The survey found that women participate in reconciliation and peace-building activities at multiple levels. At the national level, 28% of respondents reported engagement in peace-building initiatives, while community-level involvement, including family level, followed with 26% of women participating in local reconciliation efforts. Additionally, 23% of respondents indicated that they were involved in peace-building activities at the district level and 20% at the county level.



### **National-Level Involvement**

National-level involvement is less common but still significant. According to the survey, 28% of respondents reported participating in national peace-building processes, such as serving on peace committees, participating in national dialogues, and contributing to policy-making efforts. These roles often require higher levels of education, access to resources, and support from family and community members.

Women involved at the national level often bring unique perspectives and experiences that are crucial for comprehensive peace-building. Their participation ensures that the voices of women and other marginalized groups are included in decision-making processes. However, the representation of women at the national level remains limited, highlighting the need for targeted efforts to increase their participation in these critical processes.

In Liberia, national-level involvement has seen women like Leymah Gbowee and her role in the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, which was instrumental in ending the civil war. Such involvement demonstrates the significant impact that women can have when they are included in national peace-building efforts.

### **Community-Level Involvement**

County-level involvement is the most common form of participation among women at 28%. According to the survey, 21% of the respondents indicated that they engage in local peace-building and conflict-resolution initiatives. Many women participate in mediating conflicts within their communities, attending community meetings, and supporting local reconciliation efforts. This type of involvement is often more accessible to women, as it does not require extensive travel or significant time away from domestic responsibilities.

Women's grassroots peace-building activities often include organizing dialogues and mediation sessions to resolve local disputes. For instance, in Liberia, community women have been instrumental in

organizing peace marches, holding community forums, and participating in local councils. They are vital in rebuilding trust and fostering understanding among different community groups.

Examples of the proposed community involvement events in the project documents include organizing town hall meetings to discuss reconciliation strategies, setting up women's peace clubs in schools to educate young girls on peace and leadership, and conducting workshops on conflict resolution and mediation. These activities not only contribute to peace-building but also empower women by providing them with platforms to voice their concerns and solutions.

The importance of community-level involvement cannot be overstated. Women play crucial roles in fostering social cohesion, rebuilding trust, and addressing the root causes of conflict within their communities. Studies have shown that women's involvement in community peace-building initiatives leads to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes. For example, in Rwanda, women's participation in local reconciliation efforts significantly contributed to the country's post-genocide recovery.

Community-level participation is particularly significant, as many respondents take on active roles in mediating local disputes, organizing peace-building activities, and facilitating community dialogues. These grassroots efforts are vital for fostering trust and promoting social cohesion. For example, a respondent from Sinoe shared, "In our community, I help organize meetings where we discuss how to resolve conflicts peacefully." This illustrates the crucial role women play in driving community-based reconciliation initiatives.

At the household level, women's efforts to promote peace and understanding within their families are essential for creating a culture of peace. By addressing conflicts and fostering dialogue at home, women lay the groundwork for broader reconciliation efforts. These contributions, though often unrecognized, are fundamental to sustaining peace-building processes.

### **Organizational Involvement**

Women's involvement in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) is another important aspect of their participation in peace-building efforts. Many women work with these organizations to implement peace-building programs, advocate for women's rights, and support affected communities. Organizations started by Liberian women, such as Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL), Liberia Women Initiative (LWI), Gbowee Peace Foundation (GPF), Liberia Women Empowerment Network (LIWEN) West Point Women for Health And Development Organization (WPWHDO), Women for Self-Employment (WE4SELF), Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), Young Women's Action for Rights, Peace, and Development (YWARPD), Liberia Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), and Messengers of Peace (MOP), have made significant contributions to peace-building efforts. These organizations focus on advocating for women's rights and empowering young women to participate in peace processes.

Organizations like the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) have played a pivotal role in Liberia's peace-building efforts. WIPNET mobilizes women nationwide to advocate for peace and security, engage in conflict resolution, and support victims of violence. The involvement of women in such organizations enhances their capacity to contribute to peace-building processes and ensures that their voices are heard at various levels.

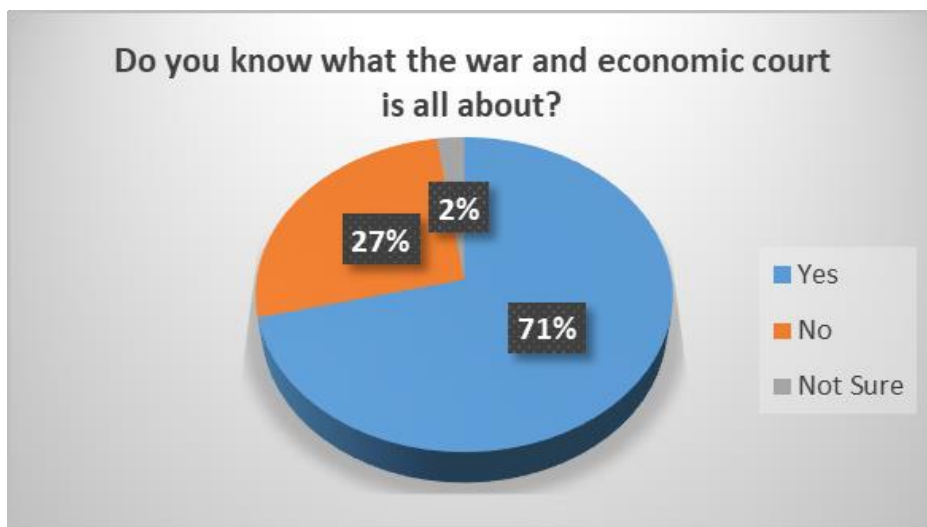
Women working in these organizations often take on leadership roles, manage projects, and coordinate activities that promote peace and reconciliation. Their involvement in organizational structures provides them with the skills and experience needed to influence broader peace-building agendas.

### **Support for War and Economic Crimes Court:**

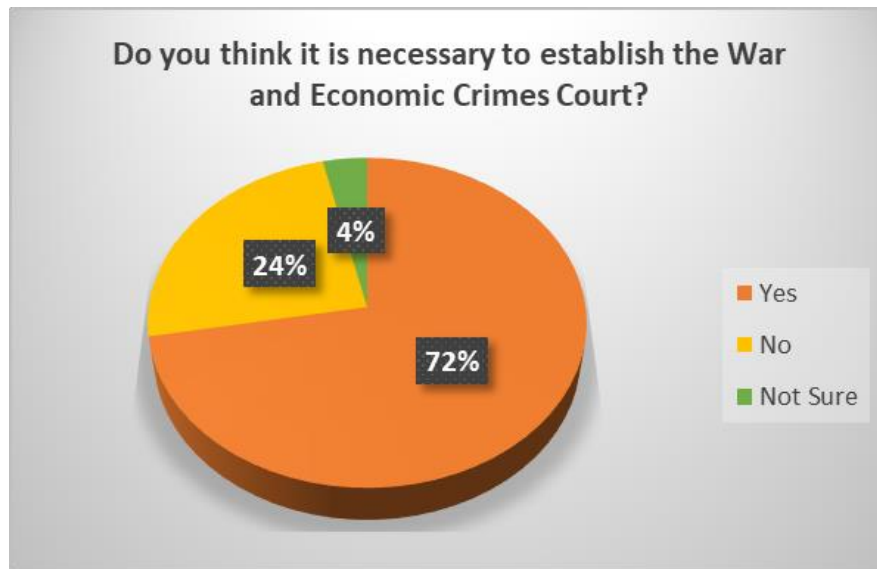
As part of the agreements of the CPA, the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (LTRC) was set up in 2005. In 2009, the LTRC presented its final report containing findings, determinations, and recommendations made by the Commission to the National Legislature. The report contains major findings on the root causes of the conflict, the impact of the conflict on women, children, and the generality of the Liberian society; responsibility for the massive commission of Gross Human Rights Violations (GHRV), and violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights Law (IHRL) as well as Egregious Domestic Law Violations (EDLV).

The LTRC documented accounts of the conflicts and made recommendations that included land reform, Palava Hut Truth Telling and Atonement exercise, Memorialization, and the establishment of an Extraordinary Criminal Tribunal for Liberia; however, political elites felt threatened by the LTRC's recommendations, leading to a political impasse over their implementation. In May 2024, President Joseph Boakai signed an Executive Order to set up a War Crimes Court meant to bring overdue justice to victims of serious abuses committed during the conflict. As part of the survey, respondents were asked several questions relating to the establishment of the War and Economic Crimes Court (WECC), which

is one of the main recommendations of the TRC. These questions were designed to gauge local women's knowledge and understanding of the WECC.



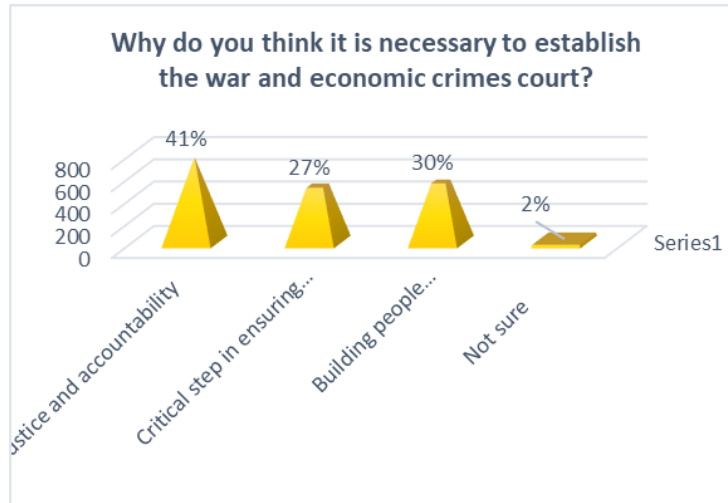
Many women during the survey responded in the affirmative on the question of not just their knowledge about the War and Economic Crimes Court but also what it is all about. Seventy-one percent answered yes to the question. The issue of the War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia has been one of the most common advocacy issues, and women participating in the survey seemed to be more knowledgeable about the establishment of the court. Generally, the perception is that establishing the court will bring full closure to the Truth and Reconciliation process and solve the problem of impunity to crimes perpetrated during the country's civil war. However, a few of the respondents, representing 27%, said they have zero knowledge about what the court is about, while a few more women, 2%, are not sure if they have knowledge about such a court or its significance.



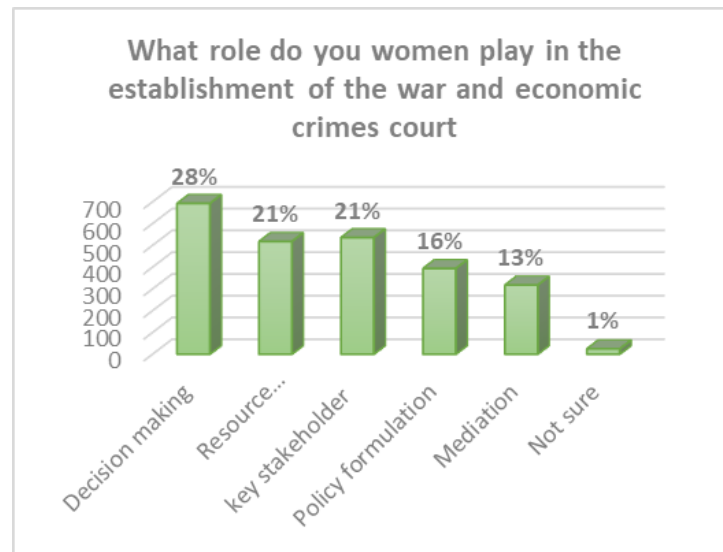
There is strong support among the surveyed women for establishing the War and Economic Crimes Court. Many respondents think that such a court is essential for ensuring justice and accountability and is critical for lasting peace and reconciliation in Liberia.

**Findings:**

- 72% think it is necessary to establish the court
- 24% of the respondents believe that it is not necessary to establish the court.
- 4% of the respondents were not sure about the establishment of the court.

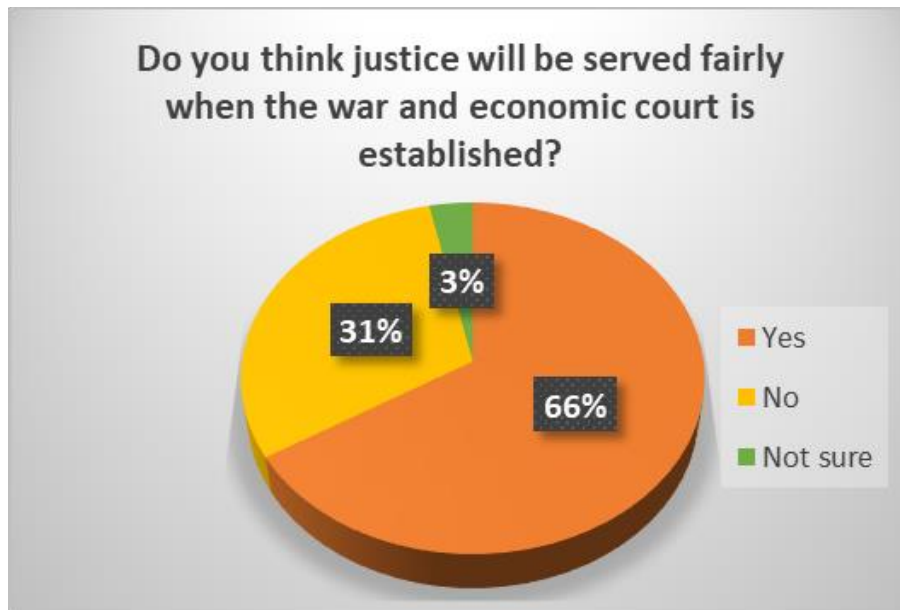


Most of the women interviewed for the survey believe that establishing a war and economic crimes court is necessary to promote justice and accountability in the peace and democracy process of post-war Liberia. Most respondents, constituting 41%, choose justice and accountability, while 27% think establishing the court is a critical step in ensuring lasting peace. Also, while 30% believe this will build people’s confidence in the rule of law in post-war Liberia, a small number of the respondents, 2%, said they are not sure what the establishment of the court will mean for the post-war country.



The majority of the women in the survey are opting for active participation of women in the processes leading to the establishment of the war and economic crimes court in post-war Liberia. 28% of the respondents want women to play decision-making roles in the process, while the call for women to play resource mobilization roles and the call to become key stakeholders in the process both got 21% apiece.

Moreover, 16% of the respondents think women should play a role in policy formulation, while 13% want women to play a role in mediation. Only one percent of the respondents said they were unsure what role women should play in establishing the court.



The majority of the women covered in the survey see the establishment of the war and economic crimes court as the best option for serving justice and discouraging impunity in the country's post-war peace and democracy process. About 66% agree that the court will serve the issue of justice for perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity. On the contrary, though, a huge number of the respondents, constituting 31%, do not think establishing the war and economic crimes court is an assurance of serving justice in the post-war country. Interestingly, a small number of people, 3%, said they were not sure.

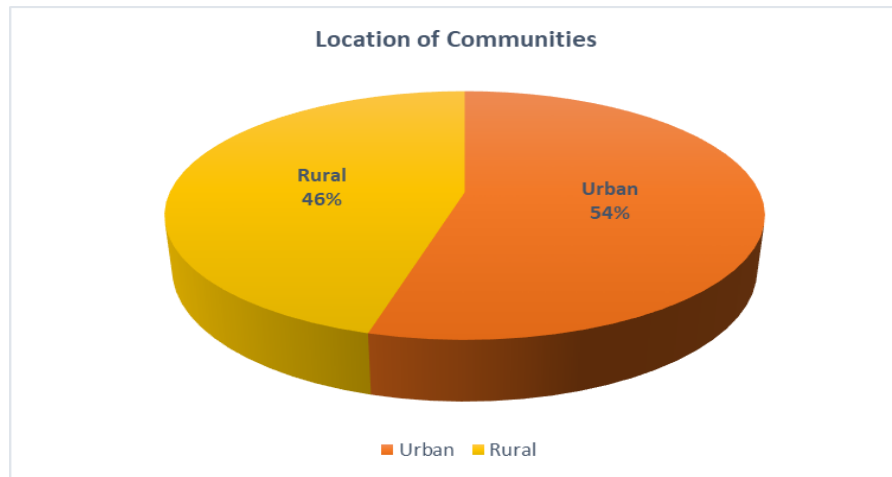
## PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Identifying patterns and trends in the survey responses provides a deeper understanding of how different demographic factors influence women's participation in reconciliation and peace-building activities.

**Regional Differences:** The survey revealed notable regional differences in the barriers to participation. Women in urban areas reported higher levels of awareness and participation compared to those in rural areas. This disparity is likely due to better access to education and information in urban settings. For

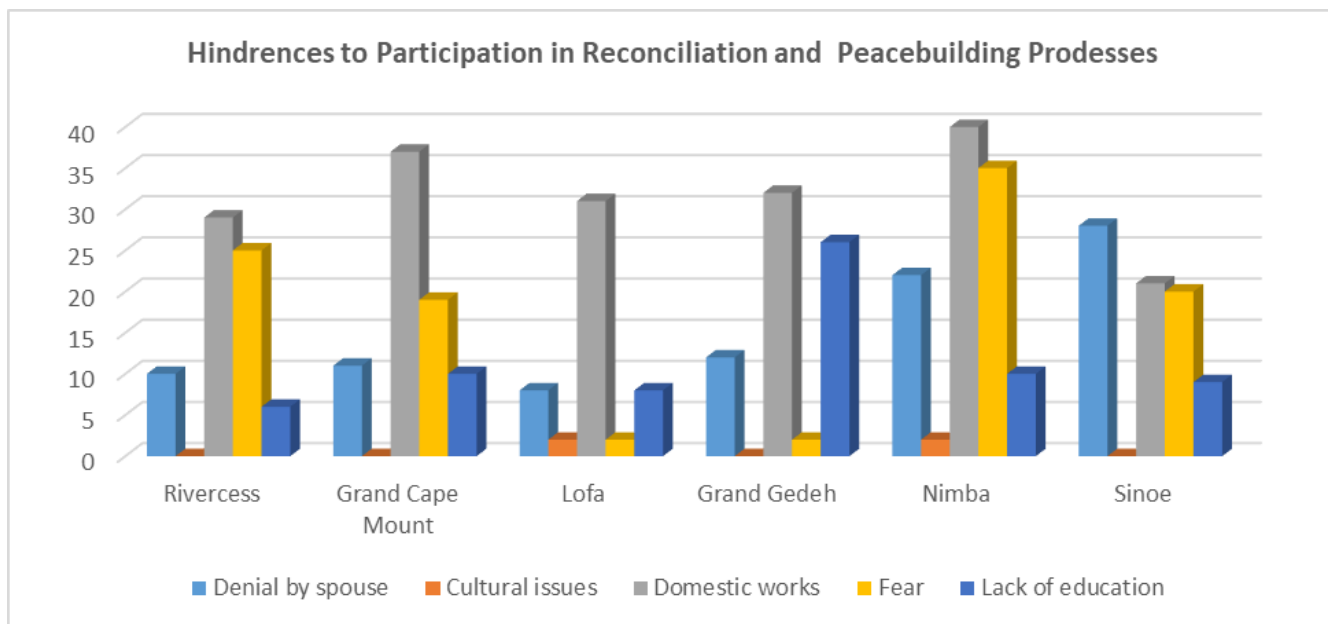
instance, 54% of women in urban areas were aware of reconciliation concepts, compared to 46% in rural areas.

A respondent from an urban area in Nimba noted, "We have more opportunities to learn about peace-



building through workshops and community centers." In contrast, a woman from a rural area in Grand Gedeh said, "We don't have many programs here that teach us about these things." These regional differences, compounded by accessibility issues such as poor roads and lack of infrastructure, highlight the need for targeted interventions. Programs are often more prevalent in accessible areas, leaving rural women fewer opportunities. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that women in hard-to-reach areas have equal access to peace-building activities and the resources necessary to participate fully.

## Regional Differences in Barriers to Participation:



Cross-tabulating the region (county) with barriers to participation can show how geographical location impacts the types of barriers women face.

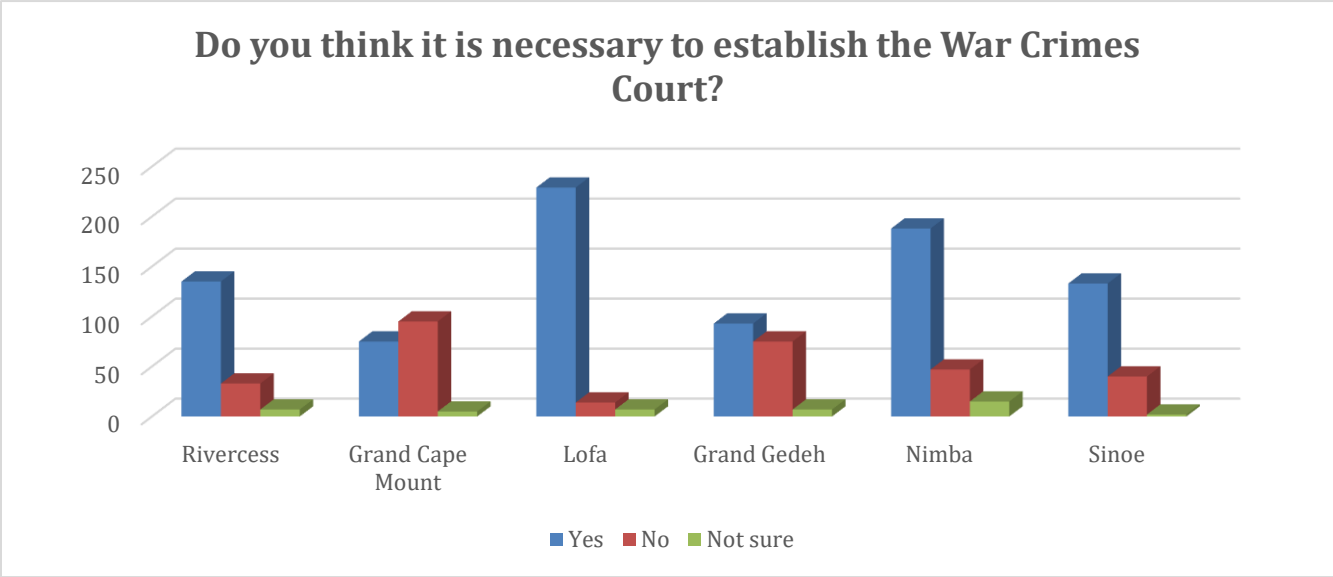
- **Findings:**

- In Sinoe, 27% of women cited domestic work as a barrier, 36% cited spousal denial, 26% cited fear, and 11% cited lack of education.
- In Nimba, 37% cited domestic work, 32% cited fear, 20% cited spousal denial, 9% cited lack of education, and 2% cited cultural issues.
- In Rivercess, 41% cited domestic work, 36% cited fear, 14% cited spouse denial, and 9% cited lack of education.
- In Grand Cape Mount, 48% cited domestic work, 25% cited fear, 14% cited spousal denial, and 13% cited lack of education.
- In Grand Gedeh, 44% cited domestic work, 36% cited lack of education, 17% cited spousal denial, and 3% cited fear.
- In Lofa, 61% cited domestic work, 16% cited lack of education, 15% cited spousal denial, 4% cited cultural issues, and 4% cited fear.
- 

- **Analysis:** Domestic work is a pervasive barrier across all regions, but the prominence of other barriers varies by county. Fear and cultural issues are significant barriers in counties like

Rivercess and Grand Gedeh, while spousal denial is notably higher in Nimba and Grand Cape Mount. These regional differences suggest that localized strategies are necessary to address the specific barriers women face in different areas. Community-specific programs that consider the unique cultural and socio-economic contexts of each region are crucial for effective intervention.

**Cross-tabulating the region (county) with why women think it is necessary to establish the War Crime Court.**



During the research, 1200 respondents were surveyed. Of the 1200, due to population dynamics two counties (Lofa and Nimba) with the highest population, according to the LISGIS 2018 census, were allotted 250 respondents apiece, while the other four counties were allotted 175 respondents respectively. As indicated in the graph above, in Lofa 229 respondents constituting the highest indicated the affirmative. Generally, in all the counties, the highest number of respondents said it is necessary to establish the court with the exception of Grand Cape Mount. Grand Cape Mount and Grand Gedeh counties, that have the highest respondents who indicated that they do not think it is necessary to establish the court. Of all the counties, Nimba has slightly more people who indicated that they are not sure of the necessity of establishing the court. More women in Lofa County are highly interested in the War Crimes Court as indicated by the data collected. 229 women answered yes on the question of the necessity of establishing the court, even though majority of them also, 250 persons, expressed lack of surety about the necessity of such a court, with fewer persons saying no when asked. The second highest number of approvals for the necessity of the court was by women from Nimba County, totaling 188 responses in the affirmative. Interestingly however, a majority of Nimba women also said they were not sure of the necessity of establishing the court, but unlike women in Lofa, more women in Nimba, about 47 persons, compared to 14 in Lofa, said an outright no to the establishment. In Rivercess and Sinoe counties, 135 and 133 responses said yes, while the majority of the women in Grand Cape Mount and Grand Gedeh,

95 and 75 respectively said to the necessity of such a court. Moreover, majority of the responses from the two counties said they are not sure of such necessity. These responses indicate lack of interest in the establishment of the war crimes court by women in Cape Mount and Grand Gedeh. See graph above for further details.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey results and qualitative insights reveal significant barriers to women's participation in reconciliation and peace-building processes in Liberia. Addressing these barriers requires targeted interventions that consider the unique challenges women face in different contexts. Domestic responsibilities, fear of violence, lack of education, cultural norms, and economic dependence emerged as major obstacles hindering women's active involvement. Additionally, the effectiveness of awareness campaigns and the need for supportive social networks were highlighted as critical factors influencing participation.

To enhance women's participation in peace-building, it is essential to adopt a multifaceted approach that addresses these barriers holistically. This involves creating enabling environments, providing necessary resources and support, and challenging deeply entrenched cultural norms. By implementing comprehensive and inclusive strategies, Liberia can leverage the potential of women to contribute significantly to sustainable peace and development.

The following recommendations are based on the survey findings and aim to address the identified barriers, leveraging the strengths and motivations of women to create more inclusive and effective peace-building initiatives. These recommendations cover various aspects, including domestic responsibilities, security concerns, education, economic independence, cultural norms, and access to information.

### Addressing Domestic Responsibilities

1. **Community Childcare Services:** Establish community-based childcare centers to alleviate the burden of domestic work on women. These centers can provide safe and affordable childcare, allowing women to participate in peace-building activities without neglecting their family responsibilities.
2. **Shared Domestic Responsibilities:** Implement programs and campaigns that first aim to build a shared understanding among both men and women of the importance of supporting women in roles beyond traditional domestic duties. These initiatives should emphasize the benefits of redistributing household chores and childcare responsibilities more equitably. By actively engaging men in these tasks, such programs can help free up time for women to participate in public activities, thereby enhancing their contributions to community development and peace-building efforts.

3. **Time-Saving Technologies:** Introduce and promote time-saving technologies and appliances, such as improved cooking stoves and water collection systems, to reduce women's time on domestic tasks. Partnerships with organizations focused on technology for development can facilitate access to these tools.
4. **Support Networks:** Strengthen support networks that provide assistance with domestic tasks. Community initiatives where women support each other in managing household responsibilities can help reduce the burden and create more opportunities for public engagement.

### **Enhancing Security and Reducing Fear**

5. **Safe Spaces for Women:** Create safe spaces where women can gather, discuss, and participate in peace-building activities without fear of violence or retribution. These spaces should provide a secure environment and support services for women facing domestic violence.
6. **Legal Support and Advocacy:** Strengthen legal frameworks and provide legal support for women who are victims of domestic violence. Advocacy programs should focus on raising awareness about women's rights and promoting legal reforms to protect women from violence.
7. **Community Policing and Protection:** Implement community policing initiatives that focus on protecting women and ensuring their safety in public spaces. Training police officers to handle gender-based violence sensitively and effectively can improve women's security.
8. **Men's Engagement Programs:** Develop programs that address men's insecurities regarding their wives' participation in public activities. These programs should focus on promoting gender equality and dispelling myths about women's roles and extramarital affairs. Programs should also focus on getting men to understand why women participation in peace building and reconciliation process is important.
9. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the importance of women's participation in peace-building and the harmful effects of domestic violence. These campaigns can help change societal attitudes and reduce fear and stigma.

### **Increasing Educational Opportunities**

10. **Adult Education Programs:** Develop adult education programs specifically targeted at women who missed out on formal education. These programs should offer flexible schedules and cover topics relevant to peace-building and leadership.
11. **Scholarships and Financial Support:** Provide scholarships and financial support for women to pursue higher education. Partnerships with educational institutions and international organizations can help fund these initiatives.

12. **Community Education Initiatives:** Organize community education initiatives that focus on peace-building, conflict resolution, and women's rights. These programs can be delivered through workshops, community meetings, and radio broadcasts.
13. **Literacy Programs:** Implement literacy programs for women in rural areas to improve their basic reading and writing skills. Literacy is a foundational step towards broader educational opportunities and active participation in peace-building.
14. **Leadership Training:** Offer leadership training programs for women to build their confidence and skills in public speaking, negotiation, and advocacy. Empowering women with leadership skills can enhance their ability to contribute to peace-building processes.

### **Promoting Economic Independence**

15. **Microfinance Programs:** Expand microfinance programs that provide women with access to credit and financial services. These programs can help women start their own businesses and achieve economic independence.
16. **Vocational Training:** Offer vocational training programs that equip women with skills needed for income-generating activities. Training in areas such as agriculture, handicrafts, and small-scale manufacturing can enhance women's economic opportunities.
17. **Market Access Initiatives:** Facilitate women's access to markets by providing training on marketing, business management, and financial literacy. Connecting women with local and international markets can boost their economic independence.
18. **Savings Groups:** Encourage forming savings groups where women can pool their resources and support each other financially. These groups can provide a safety net and promote economic resilience.
19. **Entrepreneurship Support:** Provide mentorship and support for women entrepreneurs. Connecting women with experienced mentors and business networks can help them navigate challenges and grow their enterprises.

### **Challenging Cultural Norms and Promoting Social Support**

20. **Engaging Community, Religious and Traditional Leaders:** Work with community, religious and traditional leaders and influencers to challenge harmful cultural norms and promote gender equality. Leaders can play a crucial role in shifting attitudes and encouraging women's participation in peace-building.
21. **Men as Allies Programs:** Develop programs that engage men as allies in promoting women's participation. These programs should focus on educating men about the benefits of gender equality and encouraging them to support women's involvement in public life.

22. **Women's Support Networks:** Strengthen women's support networks by creating and supporting women's groups and organizations. These networks can provide emotional and practical support, making it easier for women to participate in peace-building activities.
23. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Offer cultural sensitivity training for peace-building practitioners to ensure that interventions respect local traditions and values. Understanding and respecting cultural contexts can enhance the effectiveness of peace-building efforts.

### **Improving Access to Information**

24. **Information Dissemination Campaigns:** Implement comprehensive information dissemination campaigns using multiple channels, including radio, social media, and community meetings. Ensuring that women have access to information about peace-building activities and opportunities is crucial for their participation.
25. **Capacity Building for Communication:** Provide training for women on effective communication and advocacy skills. Empowering women to communicate their needs and perspectives can enhance their participation in peace-building processes.
26. **Digital Literacy Programs:** Develop digital literacy programs to equip women with the skills to access and use digital platforms. These programs can help women stay informed about peace-building initiatives and connect with other participants.
27. **Resource Centers:** Establish resource centers where women can access information, training materials, and support services related to peace-building. These centers can serve as hubs for learning and collaboration.
28. **Community Dramatizations:** Utilize community dramatizations as a method to disseminate information about peace-building. Dramatizations can effectively communicate complex messages in an engaging and relatable manner, making it easier for women to understand and remember the information.
29. **Involving Religious Institutions:** Engage religious institutions in disseminating information about peace-building. Religious leaders can play a vital role in spreading messages of peace and reconciliation, given their influence and reach within communities.
30. **Involving Tribal Leaders:** Collaborate with tribal leaders to disseminate information about peace-building initiatives. Tribal leaders are respected figures in many communities, and their endorsement can enhance the credibility and acceptance of peace-building messages.

### **Involvement of State Actors**

31. **Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for including women's participation in peace-building in national policies and strategies. State actors should be encouraged to integrate gender perspectives into all peace-building frameworks and initiatives.
  
32. **Government Partnerships:** Develop partnerships with government agencies to support women's participation in peace-building. Collaborative efforts can include joint training programs, resource allocation, and policy implementation to enhance women's involvement.
33. **Legislative Support:** Promote the passage and enforcement of legislation that protects women's rights and ensures their inclusion in peace-building processes. State actors should be held accountable for implementing laws that support gender equality and women's empowerment.
34. **Public Sector Initiatives:** Encourage state actors to implement public sector initiatives targeting women's participation in peace-building. These initiatives can include funding for women's organizations, support for female leaders, and public awareness campaigns.

#### **Further Research and Monitoring**

35. **Ongoing Research:** Conduct ongoing research to monitor and evaluate women's participation in peace-building processes. Continuous data collection and analysis can help identify emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
36. **Impact Assessment:** Implement impact assessments to measure the effectiveness of interventions to enhance women's participation. Regular evaluations can provide insights into what works and what needs adjustment, ensuring that strategies remain relevant and effective.
37. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish feedback mechanisms that allow women to share their experiences and suggestions for improving peace-building efforts. Surveys, focus groups, and community meetings can provide valuable input for refining interventions.
38. **Collaboration with Academic Institutions:** Partner with academic institutions to conduct in-depth studies on women's participation in peace-building. Academic research can provide a robust evidence base for policy advocacy and program development.
39. **Public Reporting:** Ensure that findings from research and monitoring activities are publicly reported and disseminated. Transparency and accountability in reporting can help build trust and support for women's participation initiatives.

## CONCLUSION

The comprehensive survey conducted by Genius Solutions Group on behalf of the Center for Security Studies and Development (CENSSAD) provides valuable insights into the barriers and challenges women face in participating in reconciliation and peace-building efforts in Liberia. The findings highlight significant issues such as domestic responsibilities, fear and security concerns, lack of education, cultural norms, and economic dependence that hinder women's active involvement. Additionally, the survey sheds light on the effectiveness of awareness campaigns and the importance of supportive social networks.

Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that considers the unique challenges women face in different contexts. The survey's findings underscore the need for comprehensive and inclusive strategies that address these issues holistically. The recommendations provided in this report aim to offer practical and actionable solutions to enhance women's participation in peace-building processes. By addressing domestic responsibilities, improving security, increasing educational opportunities, promoting economic independence, challenging cultural norms, and improving access to information, Liberia can create an enabling environment for women to contribute meaningfully to peace and reconciliation efforts.

The importance of women's participation in peace-building cannot be overstated. Women bring unique perspectives and solutions that address the root causes of conflict and contribute to more sustainable and inclusive peace. Global research has shown that peace agreements are more likely to last and be effective when women are involved in their creation and implementation. In Liberia, the active involvement of women in peace-building efforts is crucial for achieving long-term stability and development.

**Domestic Responsibilities:** The survey revealed that domestic responsibilities significantly hinder women's participation in peace-building activities. Women often spend their entire day engaged in household chores, caring for children, and preparing food, leaving little time for public engagement. Additionally, the lack of domestic appliances and running water means that women spend more time performing tasks manually. This issue is particularly severe in rural areas, where women are also expected to participate in labor-intensive activities such as farming and fishing. Addressing this barrier requires community-level interventions such as establishing childcare centers, promoting shared domestic responsibilities, and introducing time-saving technologies.

**Fear and Security Concerns:** Fear and security concerns emerged as significant barriers to women's participation. Many women fear violence, retribution, or social ostracism, especially from their spouses. The survey highlighted that men often discourage their wives from participating in public activities due to concerns about extramarital affairs or a fear of women becoming "more powerful." Women who persist in participating in these activities often face domestic abuse. Creating safe spaces for women,

strengthening legal frameworks, and implementing community policing initiatives are essential in addressing these security concerns.

**Lack of Education:** The lack of education significantly affects women's participation in peace-building efforts. Women with higher levels of education are more likely to be involved in these activities. The survey revealed that educational barriers limit women's access to information and opportunities for involvement. Expanding educational programs, providing scholarships, and implementing community education initiatives can help address this issue. Additionally, literacy programs and leadership training are crucial for empowering women and enhancing their participation.

**Economic Dependence:** Economic dependence on male family members restricts women's ability to participate in peace-building activities. Financially independent women have greater autonomy and are better positioned to engage in public activities. The survey indicated that economically independent women are more likely to participate in peace-building efforts. Expanding microfinance programs, offering vocational training, facilitating market access, and encouraging savings groups are critical strategies for promoting women's economic independence.

**Cultural Norms and Social Support:** Cultural norms and social expectations significantly influence women's participation in peace-building activities. Traditional gender roles often prioritize male leadership and restrict women's public roles. Engaging community leaders, developing men as allies programs, and strengthening women's support networks are essential for challenging these cultural norms. Cultural sensitivity training for peace-building practitioners can also enhance the effectiveness of interventions by ensuring that they respect local traditions and values.

**Access to Information:** Access to information is crucial for women's participation in peace-building efforts. Women who have access to information about peace-building activities, opportunities for involvement, and their rights are more likely to participate. The survey highlighted the importance of disseminating information through multiple channels, including radio, social media, and community meetings. Implementing comprehensive information dissemination campaigns, providing capacity-building for communication, and developing digital literacy programs can enhance women's access to information.

In conclusion, the journey towards inclusive and sustainable peace in Liberia requires the active participation of women at all levels. The insights gained from this survey provide a foundation for targeted interventions that address the barriers to women's involvement in peace-building processes. Implementing the recommendations outlined in this report will require concerted efforts from all sectors of society, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and international partners.

**Policy Reforms:** Policy reforms that promote gender equality and protect women's rights are essential for creating an enabling environment for women's participation. These reforms should focus on areas such as domestic violence, education, and economic empowerment. Additionally, policies that promote shared domestic responsibilities and support for working women can help reduce the burden of domestic work.

**Cultural Change:** Achieving sustainable peace requires a cultural shift that values and respects women's contributions to peace-building. Community leaders and influencers play a crucial role in promoting cultural change. Engaging men and boys in dialogues about gender equality and the importance of women's participation can help shift societal attitudes.

**Support for Women's Organizations:** Increased support for women's organizations is crucial for promoting women's participation in peace-building. These organizations provide essential services such as training, advocacy, and support networks. Supporting women's organizations financially and logistically can enhance their capacity to contribute to peace-building efforts.

**Involvement of State Actors:** State actors play a critical role in promoting women's participation in peace-building. Policies and programs that include women in decision-making processes, ensure their protection, and provide resources for their initiatives are essential. Government partnerships with women's organizations can amplify efforts and ensure sustainable impact.

**Further Research and Monitoring:** Continuous research and monitoring are vital for understanding the evolving dynamics of women's participation in peace-building. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms can help refine strategies and ensure that interventions remain effective and relevant.

Liberia can build a more inclusive and sustainable peace by empowering women and ensuring their voices are heard. The active involvement of women in reconciliation and peace-building processes is not only a matter of gender equality but also a critical factor in achieving long-term stability and development. The recommendations provided in this report offer a roadmap for creating an enabling environment for women's participation. By addressing the identified barriers and implementing targeted interventions, Liberia can harness the potential of women to drive positive change and build a more peaceful and prosperous future for all.

# BIBLIOLOGY

1. Barnes, Catherine, and Kate Fearon. "Northern Ireland's Women's Coalition: Institutionalising a political voice and ensuring representation." *Conciliation Resources*, 13 December 2002, <https://www.c-r.org/accord/public-participation/northern-irelands-womens-coalition-institutionalising-political-voice>. Accessed 15 August 2024.
2. CommonWell Institute International. "Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament." *CommonWell Institute International*, <https://www.commonwell.org/download/rwanda-women-hold-up-half-of-parliament.pdf>. Accessed 15 August 2024.
3. de Carvalho, Benjamin, and John Agbonifo. "(PDF) Sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia and the case for a comprehensive approach to the rule of law." *ResearchGate*, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263325554\\_Sexual\\_and\\_gender-based\\_violence\\_in\\_Liberia\\_and\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_a\\_comprehensive\\_approach\\_to\\_the\\_rule\\_of\\_law](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263325554_Sexual_and_gender-based_violence_in_Liberia_and_the_case_for_a_comprehensive_approach_to_the_rule_of_law). Accessed 15 August 2024.
4. Dogaru, Andreea. "Liberia's Challenges in Education -." *Broken Chalk* -, 7 January 2024, <https://brokenchalk.org/liberias-challenges-in-education/>. Accessed 15 August 2024.
5. ECP. "Nepal: a gender view of the armed conflict and the peace process." *Escola de Cultura de Pau*, [https://escolapau.uab.cat/img/qcp/nepal\\_conflict\\_peace.pdf](https://escolapau.uab.cat/img/qcp/nepal_conflict_peace.pdf). Accessed 15 August 2024.

6. Ellis, Stephen. *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*. New York University Press., 2006.
7. "FRONTLINE/WORLD . Liberia - No More War . Facts." *PBS*,  
<https://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/liberia/facts.html>. Accessed 15 August 2024.
8. Gbowee, Leymah, and Carol Mithers. *Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War a Memoir*. Edited by Carol Mithers, PublicAffairs, 2011.
9. Global Times. "Liberia's lost generation." *Global Times*, Global Times, 2014,  
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/862371.shtml>.
10. Hudson, Valerie M. *Sex and World Peace*. Columbia University Press, 2012.
11. Human Rights Watch. "How to Fight, How to Kill: Child Soldiers in Liberia | HRW." *Human Rights Watch*, 2 February 2004, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/02/02/how-fight-how-kill/child-soldiers-liberia>. Accessed 15 August 2024.
12. Meertens, Donny, and Margarita Zambrano. "Citizenship Deferred: The Politics of Victimhood, Land Restitution and Gender Justice in the Colombian (Post?) Conflict." *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, vol. Volume 4, no. Issue 2, 2010, pp. 189–206. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, <https://academic.oup.com/ijtj/article-abstract/4/2/189/2357013>.
13. Paffenholz, Thania, et al. "Making Women Count - Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations." *ResearchGate*, 2016,  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298307917\\_Making\\_Women\\_Count\\_-\\_Not\\_Just\\_Counting\\_Women\\_Assessing\\_Women's\\_Inclusion\\_and\\_Influence\\_on\\_Peace\\_Negotiations](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298307917_Making_Women_Count_-_Not_Just_Counting_Women_Assessing_Women's_Inclusion_and_Influence_on_Peace_Negotiations). Accessed 15 August 2024.

14. "Peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement of Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and the Political Parties." *UN Peacemaker*, 29 August 2003, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/LR\\_030818\\_Peace%20Agreement%20btwn%20GovLiberia%2CLURD%2CMODEL%20and%20the%20Political%20Parties.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/LR_030818_Peace%20Agreement%20btwn%20GovLiberia%2CLURD%2CMODEL%20and%20the%20Political%20Parties.pdf). Accessed 15 August 2024.
15. Sawyer, Amos. *Beyond Plunder: Toward Democratic Governance in Liberia*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005.
16. "SECURITY COUNCIL WELCOMES 18 AUGUST LIBERIA PEACE AGREEMENT, REAFFIRMS READINESS TO DEPLOY UN FORCE BY 1 OCTOBER." *United Nations*, 2003, <https://press.un.org/en/2003/sc7857.doc.htm>.
17. Snyder, David. "State of Peace, Reconciliation and Conflict in Liberia." *Catholic Relief Services*, [https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/state-of-peace-reconciliation-liberia\\_0.pdf](https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/tools-research/state-of-peace-reconciliation-liberia_0.pdf). Accessed 15 August 2024.
18. Tripp, Aili Mari. *Women and Power in Postconflict Africa*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
19. "UN Women." *Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, 2015, <https://wps.unwomen.org/>. Accessed 15 August 2024.
20. Walsh, Colleen. "Sirleaf wins Nobel Peace Prize — Harvard Gazette." *Harvard Gazette*, 7 October 2011, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/10/sirleaf-wins-nobel-peace-prize/>. Accessed 15 August 2024.

21. Weah, Aaron. "Liberia has suffered 20 years of 'negative peace.' It's time for change." *Al Jazeera*, 17 August 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/8/17/liberia-has-suffered-20-years-of-negative-peace-its-time-for-change>. Accessed 15 August 2024.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Questionnaire**

**THIS SURVEY IS ON UNDERSTANDING AND BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO  
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LIBERIAN RECONCILIATION AND PEACE-  
BUILDING PROCESS**

**(RIVERCESS, GRAND CAPE MOUNT, LOFA, GRAND GEDEH, NIMBA, AND SINOE)**

**WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LIBERIA RECONCILIATION AND PEACE  
BUILDING PROCESS SURVEY**

Questionnaire Number:

MM- DD- YY

Date:

Name of Interviewer:

County Code:

Name of District:

Name of Community:

City:

Location of Community: 1=Urban, 2=Rural

**ALL LIBERIAN FEMALES 14 YEARS AND ABOVE ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SURVEY**

**Section A: Socio=demographic Indicators**

| N<br>O | QUESTION                                 | CO<br>DE | CATEGORY                 |  |
|--------|--|----------|--------------------------|--|
| A<br>1 | What is your age?                        |          |                          | <i>Please insert age in the boxes provided</i> |
| A<br>2 | What is your highest level of education? | 1        | Did not go to school     | <i>Please insert code in the box provided</i>  |
|        |  | 2        | High School              |  |
|        |  | 3        | Vocational/<br>Technical |  |
|        |  | 4        | University               |  |
| A<br>3 | What is your marital status?             | 1        | Single                   | <i>Please insert code in the box provided</i>  |
|        |  | 2        | Married                  |  |
|        |  | 3        | Divorced/Separated       |  |
|        |  | 4        | Widowed                  |  |

**Section B: Awareness and Understanding of the reconciliation and peace building process**

**B1. Do you know what reconciliation is? (Single Answer)**

1. Yes (go to B2)

2. No (go to B3)
3. Not sure [Do not read out]

**B2. If yes, what is reconciliation? (Mark all that apply)**

1. A process of making peace
  2. Dispute settlement
  3. Unity
  4. Forgiveness
  5. Compensation
- Other specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**B3. Have you noticed any efforts or initiatives promoting reconciliation in your community? (Single Answer)**

1. Yes (go to B4)
2. No (go to B7)
3. Not sure

**B4. If yes, how did you hear about it? (Mark all that apply)**

1. From Radio Messages
  2. By CSOs/CBOs
  3. Through GOL community outreach
  4. From local forum
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**B5. What type of awareness campaign have you observed in your community? (Mark all that apply)**

1. Forgiveness and dispute resolution initiatives
2. Community engagement and participation in reconciliation
3. Educational campaigns on the importance of reconciliation
4. Women-focused reconciliation efforts
5. Political or faith-based reconciliation activities

**B6. Were the messages of the awareness campaign clear and easy to understand? (Single Answer)**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

**B7. Do you know what Peace building is? (Single Answer)**

1. Yes (go to B8)
2. No (go to C1)
3. Not sure

**B8. If yes, what is peace building? (Mark all that apply)**

1. It is a process of encouraging people to talk and repair relationships
  2. Resolve injustice in nonviolent ways
  3. Solving problem among people after conflict
  4. Breaking barriers
  5. Making sure there is no war or violence
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**B9. Has there been any peace building awareness in your community? (Single Answer)**

1. Yes (go to B4)
2. No (go to B7)
3. Not sure

**B11. If yes, by what medium? (Mark all that apply)**

1. From Radio Messages
  2. By CSOs/CBOs
  3. Through GOL community outreach
  4. From local forum
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**B12. What type of peace building campaign was carried out? (Mark all that apply)**

1. Conflict prevention
2. Conflict management
3. Conflict resolution and transformation and post-conflict reconciliation

4. Women and peace building
5. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**B13. Were the awareness campaign messages clear and easy to understand ?**  
**(Single Answer)**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

***Section C: Role and women involvement of women in peace building***

**C1. Do you believe that enough women are involved in the reconciliation and peacebuilding processes? (Single Answer)**

1. Yes (Go to C2)
2. No
3. Not sure

**C2. If yes, at what levels do you believe that enough women are involved in the reconciliation and peace building process? ((Mark all that apply)**

1. National level
2. County level
3. District levels
4. Community level
5. All
6. Not sure

**C3. What has been the role of women in the reconciliation and peace building process? (Mark all that apply)**

1. Decision making
2. Resource mobilization
3. Stakeholder
4. Policy formulation
5. Conflict resolution
6. All

7. Not sure

**C4. Has the role played by women in the reconciliation and peace building *process* been effective? (Single Answer)**

1. Very effective
2. Somewhat effective
3. Not effective
4. Not sure

**SECTION D: 'Barriers to Women participation in the reconciliation and peacebuilding process**

**D1. Has there been any hindrance(s) to your participation in the reconciliation and peacebuilding *process*? (Single Answer)**

1. Yes
2. No
4. Not sure

**D2. If yes, what has been the hindrance(s) to your participation in the reconciliation and peacebuilding *process*? (Mark all that apply)**

1. Denial by spouse
2. Cultural issues
3. Domestic work
4. Fear
5. Lack of education
5. Lack of Education

***Section EA: Women perspectives of Justice and the establishment of the War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia.***

***E1. Do you think it is necessary to establish the War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia? (Single Answer)***

1. Yes (go to D2)
2. No (go to D5)
3. Not sure

***E2. If yes, why do you think it is necessary to establish the War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia? (Mark all that apply)***

1. Justice and accountability
2. Critical step in ensuring lasting peace
3. Building people confidence in the rule of law
4. All
5. Not sure

***E3. If yes, what role do you want women to play in the establishment of the War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia? (Mark all that apply)***

1. Decision making
2. Resource mobilization
3. key stakeholder
4. Policy formulation
5. Mediation
6. All
7. Not sure

***E4. If yes, do you think justice will be dispensed fairly and impartially when the War and Economic Crimes Court is establishment of in Liberia? (Single Answer)***

1. Yes
2. No (go to B3)
3. Not sure

***E5. If no, why do you think it is not necessary to establish the War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia? (Mark all that apply)***

1. Undermine justice
2. Undermine peace and reconciliation
3. Open old wounds
4. Promote division
5. Promote conflict

- 6. All
- 7. Not sure

***D6. If no, other than the establishment a War and Economic Crimes Court in Liberia what do you want done? (Mark all that apply)***

- 1. Implement the TRC findings
- 2. Promote peace and reconciliation
- 3. Reparation of victims
- 4. Amnesty for perpetrators
- 5. Promote conflict
- 6. All
- 7. Not sure