



UN WOMEN NEWSLETTER
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FOREWORD BY UN WOMEN LIBERIA COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Welcome to the first edition of the UN Women Liberia newsletter for 2022. The newsletter highlights UN Women Liberia's contribution to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the first six months of the year. The newsletter is intended to give our readers a broader insight into our collaborations, activities, achievements and impact in Liberia.

I joined UN Women Liberia in late March 2022 and received a warm welcome from staff, the UN system, the Government of Liberia, members of the diplomatic corps, women's constituencies and wider civil society organizations (CSOs) and the people of Liberia. Taking up my assignment in Liberia was like a homecoming, as I was returning to a country I had served as Chief of the Office of Gender Affairs under the UN Mission in Liberia between 2012 and 2013.

During my orientation meetings, I reiterated UN Women's commitment to Liberia and commended the Government and people of Liberia for the warm collaboration and conducive working environment

that has made our work possible since 2004 when UN Women started working in the country.

Continued progress has been made to integrate gender priorities into the work of national institutions. For the first time in the history of Liberia, the Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Liberia National Fire and Rescue Service (LNFRS) have developed and adopted gender policies that aim to promote equal opportunities for all personnel and advance gender equality within those institutions. In addition, UN Women Liberia supported the establishment of Gender and Social Inclusion Units in the Ministry of National Defense, the AFL and the LNFRS.

UN Women Liberia continues to partner with the Ministry of Finance, Development and Planning and with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MCCSP) to prioritize gender considerations in government-led plans, policies and budgeting processes at national and subnational levels.



*Comfort Lamptey, UN Women Liberia
Country Representative.*

In the 2022 fiscal year, the government agreed to provide funding support for gender equality and women's economic empowerment, for the first time in many years in Liberia. Additionally, the MGCSP also allotted funding from its budget for the implementation of the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Roadmap. As a result of our collaboration with the MGCSP, a total of seven Gender and Social Inclusion Units have been established in government ministries, agencies and commissions.

UN Women's evolving partnership with the private sector saw a collaboration with the Orange Foundation to launch a digital project, entitled 'Leveraging Digital Inclusion for the Economic Empowerment and the Resilience to Disasters of Rural Women Smallholders and Entrepreneurs in Liberia and Mali', for the benefit of rural women. In Liberia the project is targeting approximately 1,200 women and young people, to strengthen their economic empowerment and resilience to climate change, and using new agricultural technologies, while also enhancing access to information and markets by women farmers through the use of digital platforms.

UN Women continues to actively work with partners to prevent violence against women including eliminating female genital mutilation (FGM). In partnership with the European Union, under the EU/UN Spotlight Initiative, vocational and heritage centres are being built in Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Montserrado and Nimba Counties – with the centres in Montserrado and Grand Cape Mount already completed. These centres will serve as training grounds to provide alternative livelihood opportunities to former women practitioners of FGM.

In June 2022, we were especially honoured to host UN Assistant Secretary-General and UN Women's Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Åsa Regnér, who visited Liberia from 26 to 29 June. Her mission was to see at first hand UN Women's work in the country and meet key partners in order to both appreciate their support for UN Women and also reaffirm UN Women's commitment to supporting the Liberian Government to fulfil its international obligations in upholding the equal rights of women and men. While in the country, she visited the Heritage Centre in Todee and the Peace Hut in Sinkor and met with government, UN, CSOs and beneficiaries.

I would like to acknowledge and appreciate the leadership of my predecessor, **Ms. Marie Goreth Nizigama**, for the impactful contributions she made to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in Liberia.

On a final note, I wish to express sincere gratitude to our donor community, including the European Union, the Embassies of Canada, Ireland and Sweden, and the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, for their enormous support in enabling UN Women to deliver on its mandate. UN Women is especially grateful to the Government and people of Liberia for their solid and sustained partnership in building a Liberia where all women and girls can enjoy their equal rights.

Happy reading!

Ms. Comfort Lamptey,

UN Women Liberia Country Representative



Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL AND UN WOMEN DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ÅSA REGNÉR, VISITS LIBERIA

On her first official visit to Liberia, from 26 to 29 June 2022, the Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Åsa Regner, held several strategic engagement meetings with high-level government officials, including the Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor, to reiterate UN Women's commitment to supporting the government and people of Liberia to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.

Ms. Regner also met with the UN Country Team, members of the diplomatic community, development partners and representatives of women's groups, as well as beneficiaries of UN Women interventions in Liberia.

During her engagements, Ms. Regner was accompanied by the UN Women Regional Director for West and Central Africa, Ms. Oulimata Sarr.



Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner and UN Women Regional Director for WCARO, Oulimata Sarr meets with representatives of women's groups to discuss strategies for increasing women political participation in Liberia.

Ms. Regner noted that Liberia has made important strides to advance the rights of women and girls over the past two decades through legislative reforms and targeted programmes to eradicate discriminatory barriers and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, despite challenges.

Ms. Regner had an opportunity to visit the vocational and heritage centre in Todee in Montserrado County in north-western Liberia and interacted with former traditional practitioners of female genital mutilation (FGM). The heritage centre was constructed by UN Women under the EU/UN and Government of Liberia Spotlight Initiative.

The Spotlight Initiative is establishing four vocational and heritage centres, one in each of four counties, to provide alternative economic livelihood

programmes for traditional practitioners as part of interventions to eliminate FGM in Liberia. The centres will serve as dedicated learning centres for



Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner and UN Women Regional Director for WCARO, Oulimata Sarr meets with the Minister of Internal Affairs and team

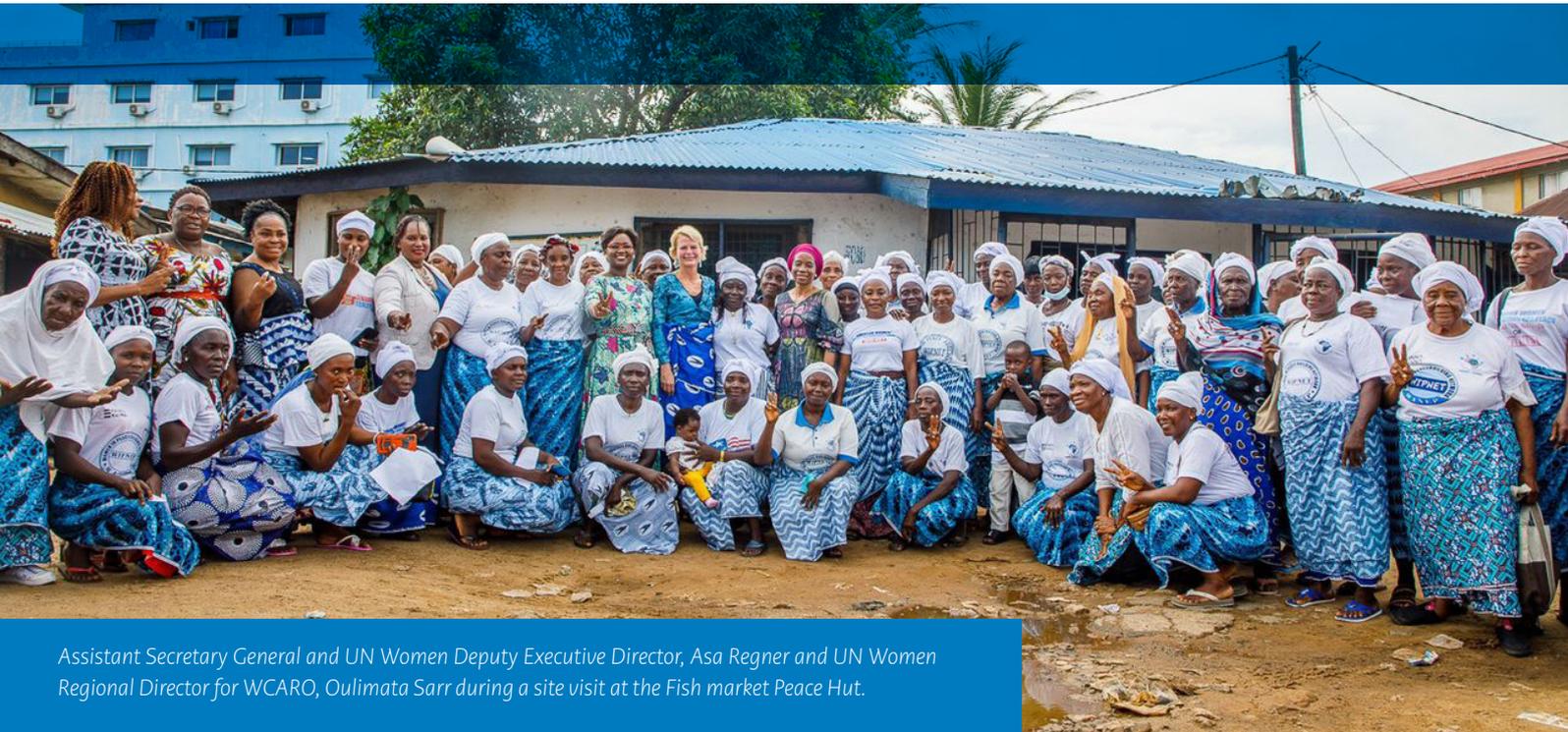


Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner and Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon. Williametta Saydee-Tarr.

traditional practitioners and young women and girls to acquire new livelihood skills.



UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner meets with the Minister of Internal Affairs and his team



Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner and UN Women Regional Director for WCARO, Oulimata Sarr during a site visit at the Fish market Peace Hut.

At least 300 traditional practitioners have benefited from the alternative economic livelihood programme, which was launched in December 2019 under the Spotlight Initiative. The practitioners are now stopping FGM and opting to embark on other income-generating activities such as climate-smart agriculture. “I was seven years old when I was initiated into FGM. It was painful. My two daughters will not go through the same process,” said Helena

David, who experienced FGM at a young age and still has bitter memories of the experience.

“It is important to work towards the elimination of any harmful practices against women and girls,” says Ms. Regner.

In other efforts to eliminate FGM in Liberia, the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia, in collaboration with the government, suspended the practice of FGM in Liberia for three years from 2022 to 2025.

Ms. Regner noted that, although milestones have been achieved, there has been little progress in women’s political participation, leadership and representation in national and local governance. The percentage of women in the legislature has fallen from over 16 per cent in 2006 to less than 11 per cent currently. Ms. Regner called upon the country’s leadership to foster a common agenda to promote women’s political participation and take advantage of the 30 per cent gender quota for political party candidates, as Liberia is preparing for the 2023 elections.



Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner and UN Women Regional Director for WCARO, Oulimata Sarr during a site visit of the heritage and vocational centres in Todee.

As the UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Regner was also delighted to meet various women's groups and young women leaders to discuss opportunities for enhancing women's participation in politics and leadership. She also applauded the contributions made to peacebuilding, justice and conflict resolution by members of the Fish Market Women's Peace Hut, who shared their experience of how they are contributing to strengthening social cohesion and supporting women's access to justice.

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.



Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner and UN Women Regional Director for WCARO, Oulimata Sarr, interacts and listen to experiences of members of the Fish market women's Peace Hut.



Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner and delegation meets with the Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard Taylor.

A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. The entity works to position gender equality as fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and a more inclusive world.



Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Asa Regner and delegation meets with the Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard Taylor.



The new Country Representative for UN Women Liberia, Comfort Lamptey, presents her Letter of Credence to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, at an official ceremony held in Monrovia on Thursday 31 March 2022.

UN WOMEN LIBERIA'S NEW COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE PRESENTS LETTER OF CREDENCE

The new Country Representative for UN Women in Liberia, Ms. Comfort Lamptey, presented her Letter of Credence to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, at an official ceremony held in Monrovia on Thursday 31 March 2022.

Presenting her credentials, Ms. Lamptey expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Liberia for the warm reception she has received since her arrival. She said that taking up an assignment in Liberia was an honourable service that will enable her and the UN Women team to implement the organization's development activities and empower women and girls in Liberia. Ms. Lamptey, who served

in Liberia a few years back as United Nations Mission in Liberia Head of Gender Services, said she was glad to be back on the path of enhancing the capacities of Liberian women. "Our work is to support the activities of the government in assisting women and girls to improve their standard of living. I can assure you of UN Women's unflinching commitment to collaborate in all areas that would bring empowerment to our women and girls," she said.

Ms. Lamptey has an established track record of working to promote women's rights and gender equality at the regional level in Africa, as well as globally. She has served in senior advisory and management positions with different UN entities

in New York, Geneva and countries across Africa. She has worked extensively on issues of governance, peace and security and has been instrumental in helping to establish the policy architecture on gender, peace and security in the context of UN peacekeeping. Prior to taking up her assignment in Liberia, Ms. Lamptey served as UN Women's Country Representative to Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In response, Liberia's Foreign Minister, Ambassador Dee-Maxwell Saah Kemayah, congratulated Ms. Lamptey on her choice to serve as UN Women's Country Representative in Liberia. He highlighted the numerous contributions of UN Women to the welfare, development, and empowerment of Liberian women and girls. "UN Women has been working in a strategic manner since 2004 in close collaboration with the Government of Liberia on Delivering As One through the UNDAF [United Nations Development Assistance Framework]," said Ambassador Kemayah.

He also underscored the commitment that the government attaches to enhancing gender equality in Liberia, as demonstrated by President George Weah's role as Feminist-in-Chief who leaves no stone unturned for the women of Liberia.

UN Women began its operations in Liberia in 2004, collaborating with the UN system, line government ministries, implementing partners, women's groups and Liberians from all walks of life to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women Liberia's strategic direction is tailored towards helping address issues affecting women and girls through five thematic areas: women's economic empowerment; peace, security and humanitarian action; ending violence against women and girls; women's political participation and leadership; and gender-responsive planning and budgeting.



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UN WOMEN LIBERIA COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE, COMFORT LAMPTEY, PAYS COURTESY VISIT ON THE FIRST LADY OF LIBERIA, CLAR MARIE WEAH

UN Women Liberia Country Representative, Comfort Lamptey, paid a courtesy visit on the First Lady of Liberia, Her Excellence Clar Marie Weah, in Monrovia in May this year and discussed areas of possible collaboration on empowering the women and girls of Liberia.

Ms. Lamptey took the opportunity to congratulate the First Lady on the launch of the menstrual and personal hygiene project and the Clar Hope Foundation.

As part of its humanitarian work, UN Women donated some menstrual hygiene kits to the Foundation.

The First Lady, Mrs. Weah, highlighted that her area of interest is that of women's empowerment to ensure that women and girls live a decent life and have food on the table.

Mrs. Weah also took time to highlight some of the projects she is working on under her Foundation. The projects include the 'City of Hope,' where she plans to house, educate and empower young girls. The City of Hope will also provide life skills to street girls and disadvantaged youths, thereby restoring their hope for a brighter future.

"I want to see these girls develop into people who can transform Liberia. People need somebody they can trust and believe in," she said.

Other areas of possible collaboration include supporting women's agricultural activities. The First lady has acquired vast amount of land in Bomi County, which she wants to use to empower women through climate-smart agriculture.



UN Women Liberia Country Representative, Comfort Lamptey paid a courtesy visit on the First Lady of Liberia, Her Excellence Clar Marie Weah at her office in Monrovia.

UN WOMEN COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE ENGAGES WITH PARTNERS

To further enhance broad-based in-country partnerships, UN Women Liberia Country Representative, Ms. Comfort Lamptey, on commencing her official duties in late March, immediately began fruitful, bilateral engagements with several diplomatic missions, the UN system, and international and national organizations in Liberia.

UN Women Liberia's official partnership engagements are highly valued in helping to drive our work. Working 'side by side' with diplomatic missions, international organizations, line government ministries, academia, civil society organizations and beneficiaries is first among UN Women Liberia's many undertakings. Building and maintaining partnerships serves as our main bridge for linking, networking and collaborating with our development actors at home and abroad.

During each meeting, Ms. Lamptey assured esteemed ambassadors of UN Women Liberia's gratitude for their support and collaboration over the years, which has enabled the organization to implement results-based development, economic empowerment, and inclusion and gender equality programmes. She then highlighted the need for UN Women and partners to jointly scale up programmes for and with women and girls mainly in rural parts of the country in the areas of agriculture, skills development, economic empowerment and providing a 'second chance of education for girls' to help reduce poverty among young women.



Engagement meeting with partners



Straven Willie, UN Women Gender-responsive budgeting and planning Programme Specialist, makes a presentation at the partners' engagement meeting.

Among current and former government officials, Ms. Lamptey held discussions with the Vice President, Her Excellency Jewel Howard-Taylor, First Lady Clar Marie Weah, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Justice, Gender, Youth and Sports, and former Liberian President Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, among others.

Addressing a partners' engagement meeting with civil society organizations, Ms. Lamptey congratulated them for collaborating with UN Women to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women is a priority for the government and development partners in Liberia. She also praised the UN and its partners for developing the first Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile, in conjunction with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, which outlines and analyses the pressing issue of gender inequality in the country.

UN Women Liberia is supporting four keys areas, namely: Women's Political Participation, Leadership and Gender Sensitive Governance Systems; Women's Economic Empowerment; Ending Violence against Women and Girls; and Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Actions.



Her Excellency the First Lady of Liberia, Ambassador Clar Marie Weah, gave special remarks during the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women side event for Liberia

LIBERIA HOSTS 66TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection convened the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) side event for Liberia on Thursday 17 March 2022. The event was held at the Ministerial Complex in Congo Town, Monrovia.

A cross-section of people, comprising the representatives of government ministries and agencies, representatives of the diplomatic community, civil society organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations, United Nations, the media, national traditional council and women's groups, attended the side event, which was held under the priority theme 'Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate

change and environmental disaster risk reduction policies and programmes' and the national theme 'Examining the impact of climate change on women and girls in Liberia'.

The side event was marked by a panel discussion that focused on the topic 'Is Liberia on the right trajectory to combat climate change? What action should be taken to correct the odds: lessons learned and experience'.

The panellists comprised Ms. Tarlo Harrington-Kekulah, Gender Coordinator, National Disaster Management Agency, and Ms. Radiatu H. S. Kahnplaye, Policy Adviser, Natural Resource Women's Platform. The panel discussion was

moderated by Ms. Melody Mezay-Ketter, Director of Communications for Bridge Liberia.

Ms. Kekulah highlighted that Liberia is on the right path to combat climate change, because it is a signatory to many international guidelines and agreements that make it possible to formulate policies or strategies in line with those agreements. She highlighted that, although Liberia is on the path to combat climate change, there is still more that needs to be done to narrow the gap between policy and actions at the local level, including awareness-raising.

In contrast, fellow panellist, Ms. Kahnplaye, thinks Liberia is not yet on the right trajectory to combat climate change, because women are not leading the response and are not involved in policy and programme formulation at national and local levels to combat climate change and environmental and disaster risk. She expressed concern that rural communities are already suffering the impacts of climate change. “There is need to have women leaders who will lead the responses to climate change.”

Her Excellency the First Lady of Liberia, Ambassador Clar Marie Weah, graced the occasion and joined the side event virtually to make special remarks.

Ambassador Clar Weah highlighted that the issue of climate change continues to be one of the major threats to development. “I see that many women and girls now have to walk further from their homes to fetch water because the usual nearby creeks and wells are dried up due to the effects of climate change,” she said. “Farms and gardens are affected due to the lack of water, which give less agricultural yield and threatens their food security,” she added and emphasized the need to work together to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change.

Welcoming delegates, the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Honourable Williametta Saydee-Tarr explained that CSW remains a strong advocate in promoting gender equality at the societal level and leads on monitoring and reviewing progress and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, among other gender related issues.

Furthermore, she highlighted that, “Given the entrenchment of gender inequalities in our society and around the world today, it is important to examine the consequences of intensifying and interlinked crises such as climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, pollution, disasters and zoonotic diseases or pandemics such as COVID-19, and the concomitant marginalization of the voice, agency, participation and leadership of women, girls and gender-diverse people and their movements from policy, governance, and decision-making processes and responses to these global challenges.”

In her remarks, Ms. Ghoma Karloweah, UN Women Acting Head of Programs, expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection for rolling out the side event in collaboration with UN Women and to the Swedish Embassy for financial support.

Ms. Karloweah noted that, “Climate change is affecting all of us but a lot of us do not want to take this seriously, because we think it is a western notion.” In view of reports that forecast that the situation is going to get worse, she challenged participants to think about conserving forests and what is being done to support alternative livelihood programmes for women who work in agriculture and fisheries.

Meanwhile, Sweden’s Ambassador to Liberia, His Excellency Urban Sjöström, said it was impressive to be participating in the meeting to discuss climate change.

UN Women supported the event.

UN JOINS GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF LIBERIA TO COMMEMORATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The United Nations joined the Government and people of Liberia to commemorate International Women's Day at an event held at the Ministerial complex in Congo Town, Monrovia, on 8 March 2022.

This year's International Women's Day was held under the global theme 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow' and the national theme 'Liberian women in history: breaking barriers and setting the stage for gender equality.'

The event was characterized by a lot of pomp and fun as artists entertained guests in between dignitaries taking turns to give speeches. The event was also marked by exhibitions from Liberian women who showcased their wares and a march at the start of the event.

The President of Liberia, Dr. George Manneh Weah, graced the occasion and paid tribute to the former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Vice President of Liberia, Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor, government ministers and all women achievers in Liberia.

President Weah commended all women in Liberia for their strength and resilience. "I want to express how proud I am for the strength and resilience of Liberian women. You are still strong despite the challenges that you face. You are collectively shattering the glass ceiling ...We will continue to work hard to ensure that women are empowered," he told the gathering.

Dr. Weah also endorsed the recommendations of most speakers who highlighted that there is a need to increase the number of women participating in politics. "Women's political participation is the key



Delegates attending the International Women's Day commemorations.



Delegates attending the International Women's Day commemorations.

to breaking barriers and promoting gender equality and a sustainable tomorrow," he said.

In his remarks, the UN Resident Coordinator in Liberia, Mr. Niels Scott, commended Liberian women and girls for being strong change makers. "History has shown that you effect change in your communities. We have a Nobel prize winner in Liberia," he said, adding that he recognized the potential of women and girls as well as their resilience and leadership. Mr. Scott, however, noted that, while progress is being made, it is being challenged by multiple generational issues that have led to a public health crisis and an increase in violence against women.

Mr. Scott also emphasized the importance of the full representation of women in the legislature and the need to ensure that women have access to green jobs and to financial resources.

Meanwhile, Ms. Ghoma Karloweah, Acting Head of Programs for UN Women Liberia, presented the International Women's Day message from the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres. "We celebrate women and girls everywhere. We celebrate their contributions to ending the COVID-19 pandemic. Their ideas, innovations and activism that are changing our world for the better. And their leadership across all walks of life," read part of the speech.

The Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon. Williametta Saydee-Tarr, welcomed a cross-section of gender equality champions to the event. She highlighted that this year's celebrations are being held under historic circumstances because of the bicentennial celebrations to mark the arrival of the first free Black Americans in Liberia. Other government ministers and representatives from government departments, members of the diplomatic corps, and representatives of women's groups, civil society, the media, and the women and girls of Liberia attended the event.

The United Nations in Liberia supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to host the International Women's Day celebrations.



Delegates attending the International Women's Day commemorations.



UN COMMUNICATIONS GROUP HOSTS MEDIA WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN LIBERIA

About 30 media practitioners attended a media workshop on promoting gender equality for sustainable development organized by the United Nations Communications Group in Liberia in collaboration with the Female Journalists Association of Liberia (FeJAL) on Wednesday 16 March 2022.

The media workshop was held at the Bella Casa Hotel in Monrovia. It aimed to increase media practitioners' knowledge of issues of gender equality, sustainable development and climate change and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas on how the media can promote gender equality for a sustainable tomorrow.

The media workshop was held in line with the global theme of this year's International Women's Day, 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow',

and the national theme, 'Liberian women in history: breaking barriers and setting the stage for gender equality'.

"The UN recognizes the pivotal role of the media in shaping people's opinions and perceptions and in helping people construct their identities, social norms and values in relation to gender," said Milena Harizanova, Acting Deputy Representative for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Speaking on behalf of the UN Communications Group and the United Nations in Liberia, she said, "We realize that the media are an important stakeholder in promoting gender equality. We are therefore gathered here today to set the stage for gender equality and break all barriers that hinder promotion and achievement of gender equality in Liberia."

Gender equality is Goal 5 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While gender equality is captured as a stand-alone goal, it cuts across all the Sustainable Development Goals and can accelerate achievement of the goals.

The Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon. Williametta Saydee-Tarr, graced the occasion and expressed gratitude to UN Women, UN Communications Group and FeJAL for organizing the media workshop. She also applauded journalists for their role in promoting gender equality.

“Without you, the voice of victims of sexual and gender-based violence, for example, will not be heard across the country, and to that I say thank you,” said Hon. Saydee-Tarr.

She told the media that the doors of her ministry are open to provide information on what the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection is doing: “We hope that we will see more of you coming to us to get information.”

Hon. Saydee-Tarr also highlighted that most of the time people report that cases of rape are going up, but, in actual fact, people are reporting more because of increased awareness. “There is heightened awareness because you are doing a lot of work in reporting and people are coming out more now to report,” she said.

Journalists’ knowledge on promoting gender equality in Liberia was enhanced by various presentations delivered by UN staff and other stakeholders. Mr. Ramon Garway, UN Women Programme Manager for Women’s Economic Empowerment, and Jangai Lisa Gbemie, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Program Support Staff and Gender Focal Person, delivered presentations on promoting gender equality for sustainable development,

while Michael Vawah, World Food Programme (WFP) Resilience and Capacity Strengthening Focal Point, gave a presentation on climate change in the context of Liberia, and its impact on women and girls. Mrs. Siatta Scott Johnson, President of FeJAL, Alexander Cole, National Civil Society Council Communication Officer, and Gloriah Ganyani, UN Women Communications Specialist, delivered presentations on the role of the media in promoting gender equality in Liberia.

Ms. Ghoma Karloweah, UN Women Liberia Acting Head of Programs, facilitated the official session of the programme and highlighted that she was impressed that the number of women in the media is increasing compared with previous years when the field was mainly male dominated.

The journalists who attended the meeting committed to increasing coverage on women’s issues. However, they highlighted that many women were not very comfortable working with the media and recommended that the government, UN and development partners should support them and hold capacity-building sessions on gender-sensitive reporting.

UN Women supported the event in collaboration with the UN Communications Group and FeJAL. The UN Communications Group comprises communications officers from various UN agencies within the UN family.

AWLN CONDUCTS HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE WITH ASPIRING FEMALE CANDIDATES

On 24 March 2022, our partners, the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Liberia Chapter and the Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia, hosted a high-level dialogue to allow past and current aspiring female candidates from various political parties to share experiences and winning strategies in preparation for elections.

The dialogue meeting was held at the Cape Hotel in Mamba Point, Monrovia, with the theme 'The Road to 2023: Finding the way forward with reflections on the experiences of past, current and aspiring female politicians and candidates.'

Addressing participants, Ms. Ophelia Hoff Saytumah, AWLN Liberia Strategic Steering Committee member, highlighted that AWLN's focus is to promote women's political participation and women's empowerment. She noted that men are dominating everything in Liberia and that it's time to change that narrative by getting more women to participate in politics.

Ms. Saytumah highlighted the important role that women play and encouraged aspiring candidates to get involved in the hierarchy of their political parties and push themselves to achieve higher ranks to increase their influence. She encouraged women to read and understand the constitution of their parties so that they can suggest changes that accommodate women's participation and ensure that women have meaningful roles.

In her remarks, Ms. Nyasha Chidau, Women's Political Participation and Leadership Specialist for UN Women Liberia, reiterated that UN Women remains committed to supporting the work of the AWLN Liberia Chapter and the Women's Legislative Caucus of Liberia because their work resonates with the mandate of UN Women, namely to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Ms. Chidau recalled that, in 2018, UN Women and the Women's Legislative Caucus of Liberia had a round table with female candidates to consider the lessons learnt from the 2017 elections and said that she is happy to be participating in a similar exercise where



Participants at the high-level dialogue hosted by the African Women Leaders Network Liberia Chapter and the Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia to allow past and current aspiring female candidates from various political parties to share experiences and winning strategies in preparation for elections. UN Women supported the event.

aspiring candidates can share various strategies to support women in elections.

Ms. Chidau applauded AWLN and the Women's Legislative Caucus of Liberia for their efforts in passing the 30 per cent gender quota for political party candidates, which enables more women to enter the race for elections. She also applauded the female candidates for their continuous courage and commitment to participating in elections in Liberia regardless of the outcomes. "We hope you continue to learn from the lessons of the past and find strategies so that you win elections," said Ms. Chidau.

Participants at the dialogue meeting had a chance to share their experiences, challenges and some of the strategies that they could use in the upcoming elections.

Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

UN Women and the Government of Canada provided technical and financial support for the event.



Launch for the Violence Against Women in Elections Protocol in Monrovia.

PROTOCOL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ELECTIONS LAUNCHED

On Monday 28 March 2022, UN Women Liberia, the National Elections Commission (NEC), registered political parties and partners achieved another milestone for women’s political empowerment when they officially launched the Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWiE) Protocol in Monrovia. The theme of the event was ‘Promoting an inclusive and safe environment for the participation of women in politics’.

The protocol, which is a key operational tool between the NEC and registered political parties in Liberia, aims to engage political parties to take steps to address violence against women in elections and politics throughout Liberia.

During the launch event, NEC commissioners, political parties and women’s groups emphasized the relevance of the protocol and the important roles political parties are to play in promoting and advocating women’s increased leadership and political participation in Liberia.

Launching the protocol, NEC Chairperson, Hon. Davidetta Browne-Lansanah, said, “Voting must and should be done to increase women’s participation in elections, free of violence.” She emphasized that,

“The launch of the VAWiE Protocol is an opportunity to promote equality among men and women.”

For her part, NEC’s Oversight Commissioner on Gender, Hon. Josephine Kou Gaye, urged political actors and institutions and Liberians to see the protocol “as an official tool that we can all use for our respective coordination and advocacies to advance women’s rights and standing in the political landscape of Liberia.”

UN Women’s Women’s Political Participation and Leadership Specialist, Ms. Nyasha M. Chidau, congratulated all stakeholders on the achievement, adding that, “This Protocol is one step in the right direction in demonstrating women’s rights in politics.”

Political parties attending the launch event were unanimous in pledging the readiness of their institutions to embrace the elimination of violence against women in all its forms, including during elections and in politics.

UN Women Liberia is grateful to the Government and people of Canada for the funding assistance that enables it to support women’s political participation and leadership activities in Liberia.

UN WOMEN PARTNERS WITH NATIONAL RURAL WOMEN STRUCTURE TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN POLITICS

UN Women, in collaboration with the National Rural Women Structure, facilitated a three-day workshop from 23 to 25 March 2022 at the Lutheran Compound in Monrovia to enhance the knowledge and skills of rural women in order to promote women's participation and leadership in politics.

Some of the strategies for transformative leadership that participants discussed included the following: rolling out information about women's political rights; identifying strong women with the potential to lead and encouraging them to take up leadership positions; providing a platform for aspiring female candidates to share their vision with other women in the communities so that they can garner support; encouraging aspiring candidates to keep in touch with the grassroots women so that they know their aspirations; and engaging with traditional and religious leaders on women's leadership. The participants highlighted that it is important for women to support other women to increase the chances of more women being represented in all decision-making positions.

The participants also highlighted challenges that rural women face in their communities. Some women are still afraid of contesting political positions for fear of the violence perpetrated against women in elections and politics. Participants noted that some of the aspiring candidates only come to the communities during election times, but they do not visit communities at other times to meet the electorate to understand their needs, share their vision and manifestos, and develop the communities. In places such as Grand Cape Mount, some women do not take up leadership positions because of traditional and religious beliefs that prohibit women from taking up certain leadership positions, while in some counties, there are power struggles among women themselves and this reduces their chances of winning elections.

The President of the National Rural Women Structure, Ms. Kebbeh Monger, rural women leaders from the 15 counties, and Ms. Ellen Blessing Howe, the Mayor of Harper city, Maryland County, attended the meeting.

UN Women thanks the Governments of Canada and Sweden for providing financial support for the workshop.



Workshop on promoting women's participation and leadership in politics.



Launch of the Country Gender Equality Profile

LIBERIA LAUNCHES COUNTRY GENDER EQUALITY PROFILE

On 22 February 2022, the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon. Williametta Saydee-Tarr, launched a comprehensive gender analysis of the situation of women and men in Liberia.

The launch event was held at the Mamba Point Hotel in Monrovia. Various stakeholders, including government ministers, representatives of government departments, Mr. Niels Scott (UN Resident Coordinator), the Ambassadors of Sweden and the EU, Mr. Yawo Maglo (Acting UN Women Liberia Country Representative), representatives of civil society and the media, attended the event.



Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon. Williametta Sayee-Tarr at the launch of the Country Gender Equality Profile

Most speakers at the event congratulated the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) for the development of the Country Gender Equality Profile. They expressed hope that the document will be fully utilized and help to fill gender gaps in all sectors.

The MGCSP led the production of the Country Gender Equality Profile with financial and technical support from the African Development Bank Group Liberia Country Office, European Delegation in Liberia, Swedish Embassy in Liberia and UN agencies, namely; (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

Gender equality is Goal 5 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While gender equality is captured as a stand-alone goal, it cuts across all the SDGs, and gender considerations must be included in all sustainable development work. Gender equality can enable and even accelerate the achievement of all the SDGs.

UN WOMEN AND ORANGE FOUNDATION'S DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (D4WEE) PROJECT SET TO BECOME A GAME CHANGER FOR WOMEN

UN Women Liberia and Orange Foundation Liberia have formed a strategic alliance to adopt innovative approaches for the enhancement of gender equality, particularly around the Buy from Women Initiative and the Women's Digital Center in Bong County.

The 21-month project intervention, which runs from April 2022 to December 2023, is being implemented in Lofa, Bong and Nimba Counties. Partners include UN Women Liberia, Orange Foundation Liberia, the Ministries of Gender, Agriculture, and Mines and Energy, Cooperative Development Agency and National Disaster Management Authority.

UN Women Liberia's Women's Economic Empowerment Programme Manager, Ramon G. Garway, said, "Our collaboration with Orange Foundation is a clear pathway for the enhancement of women's access to three innovative areas, namely provide sustainable support to women in improving access to markets and learning opportunities through consolidation and scale-up of the Buy from Women Initiative; improving access to disaster risk reduction, risk transfer, and finance by enhancing the scope to include mobile-enabled disaster, health and life insurance; and improving access to energy for household and productive purposes, including through PAYGO solar asset financing and strengthening women's skills in the energy sector in Liberia."

According to Mr. Garway, project implementation is progressing well. For example, the digital school initiative for 14 schools has been completed with three more in the pipeline. Phase 2 of the training of trainers sessions, under the Orange Digital School Initiative (ODSI), has ended in Monrovia, with 20 teachers from 10 schools participating.

The ODSI provides selected schools in Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties with digital teaching and learning materials comprising laptops, servers and tablets. The digital kits give students access to educational content in maths, science and English in targeted schools but also improve the teaching materials available to teachers.



Teachers from selected schools in Phase Two of the Training of Trainers session, under the UN Women Orange Digital School Initiative.

Additionally, basic business skills training for cooperatives is ongoing in collaboration with the Cooperative Development Agency, the government agency responsible for the development and registration of farming cooperatives in Liberia, while the Women's Digital Center programme is nearing completion.

The D4WEE project is a potential game changer for women's economic empowerment in Liberia. At the project's inception meeting in mid-June, stakeholders watched a demonstration on one of the innovative digital platforms, the 'Buy from Women Initiative', which aims to provide women-led businesses with opportunities to access markets, information, weather alerts and digital financial services to improve their productivity and income.

Orange Foundation Liberia Executive Director, Ms. Sarah Buchanan, graced the stakeholders' consultation meeting and urged participants to work together to achieve more: "We need to ensure that Liberian women have access to technology and are able to use this tool to make themselves better and improve their lifestyles."

FROM WHERE I STAND “I ENCOURAGE WOMEN TO STAY FOCUSED AND PRODUCE FOOD FOR THE COUNTRY.”

Emily Seward (30) is a farmer from Margibi County in central Liberia and a beneficiary of the climate-smart agriculture skills training programme facilitated by UN Women.

In Emily's words:

“I am specializing in lettuce, cucumber, onion and cassava production.

I encountered a lot of challenges when I started farming. Lack of resources, including transport and machinery, was a challenge. I am now working with some youths to reduce the workload.

We have a big cassava farm, but we don't have a processing machine. We spend the whole day grading cassava with our hands in order to produce garri [cassava flour].

Participating in the climate-smart agriculture training helped me to increase my knowledge of my work. It helped me to practise low-cost agriculture. The quality of my production is now high. I now know that, during the dry season, I should avoid

burning grass because a lot of smoke will pollute the atmosphere.

Being involved in climate-smart agriculture has improved my life. I manage to pay school fees for my 14-year-old daughter using proceeds from the farm. I feel proud of what I have achieved. We started a village savings and loan association with support from UN Women, and this helped me to save some money.

I encourage women to stay focused and produce food for the country. There are a lot of benefits from the soil. As leaders, we prove that we can feed our families.”

Emily Seward is one of many rural women in Liberia who have been empowered to implement climate-smart agriculture initiatives. In 2022, UN Women will mobilize resources to provide smallholder farmers with access to machinery through community-based farming cooperatives to reduce women's workload.



Emily Seward, farmer from Margibi County in central Liberia and a beneficiary of the climate-smart agriculture skills training programme facilitated by UN Women.



Lorpue Gizzie, a smallholder farmer and Chairperson of the Progressive Rural Women Farmers group from Margibi County in central Liberia.

FROM WHERE I STAND “IF WE JOIN HANDS, WE CAN PRODUCE FOOD AND DRIVE AWAY HUNGER FROM LIBERIA.”

Lorpue Gizzie (47) is a smallholder farmer and Chairperson of the Progressive Rural Women Farmers group from Margibi County in central Liberia, 60 kilometres from the capital city of Monrovia. She is leading her farming group in implementing climate-smart agriculture initiatives.

In Lorpue’s words:

“I started farming in 2008. I did not have any support and it was very difficult. I didn’t know anything about climate-smart agriculture. I didn’t know what to do during the dry season and I didn’t have the necessary tools to use. I worked with a small group of 12 people.

Later, I learnt that the government and other partners could help us. I was fortunate to be supported by the Joint Programme [UN Joint Programme on Rural Women Economic Empowerment].

We produce rice, cassava, okra, bitterball and pepper. Through the programme, we received training on climate-smart agriculture and a cassava-processing machine for producing farina and cassava flour.

In addition, we have been trained on village savings and loan associations to enable us to increase our income. Through the savings, I have been able to send my children to school and I can feed my family. Farming has improved my lifestyle.

I encourage women to invest in farming as a business and be able to provide food for the country. Women are hardworking and focused. If we join hands, we can produce food and drive away hunger from Liberia.”

Lorpue Gizzie is one of many women farmers in Margibi County who are leading climate-smart agriculture initiatives. UN Women has been empowering rural women to invest in climate-smart agriculture and to increase women farmers’ access to higher added value markets.

WHY DOES UN WOMEN USE MOTORBIKES FOR PROGRAMMING?

UN Women Liberia’s extensive presence in rural parts of the country is driven by the organization’s desire to reach the unreachable and most-at-need beneficiaries in a country where the bad road network and poor connectivity are perennial features of its programming, especially during the rainy season.

Ramon Garway, Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme Manager at UN Women, stressed the relevance of motorbikes not only in project implementation and monitoring but also in documenting best practices and lessons learned. He explained that motorbikes enable easy access to project sites in communities that are difficult to reach by car: “For hard-to-reach communities, inaccessible by cars, motorbikes make it possible to reach those communities.”

He noted that motorbikes have also been very effective in the field and are more eco-friendly than other vehicles. Without them, it would have been an uphill task to follow up and report on activities in remote project locations such as Passama, Bellemu and Gbelaygeh in Lofa, Bong and Nimba Counties, respectively.

In Monrovia in late April 2022, UN Women Liberia donated five off-road Honda motorbikes to the National Adult Education Association of Liberia (NAEAL) for use in its vocational and adult literacy skills training programme for rural women in Liberia.

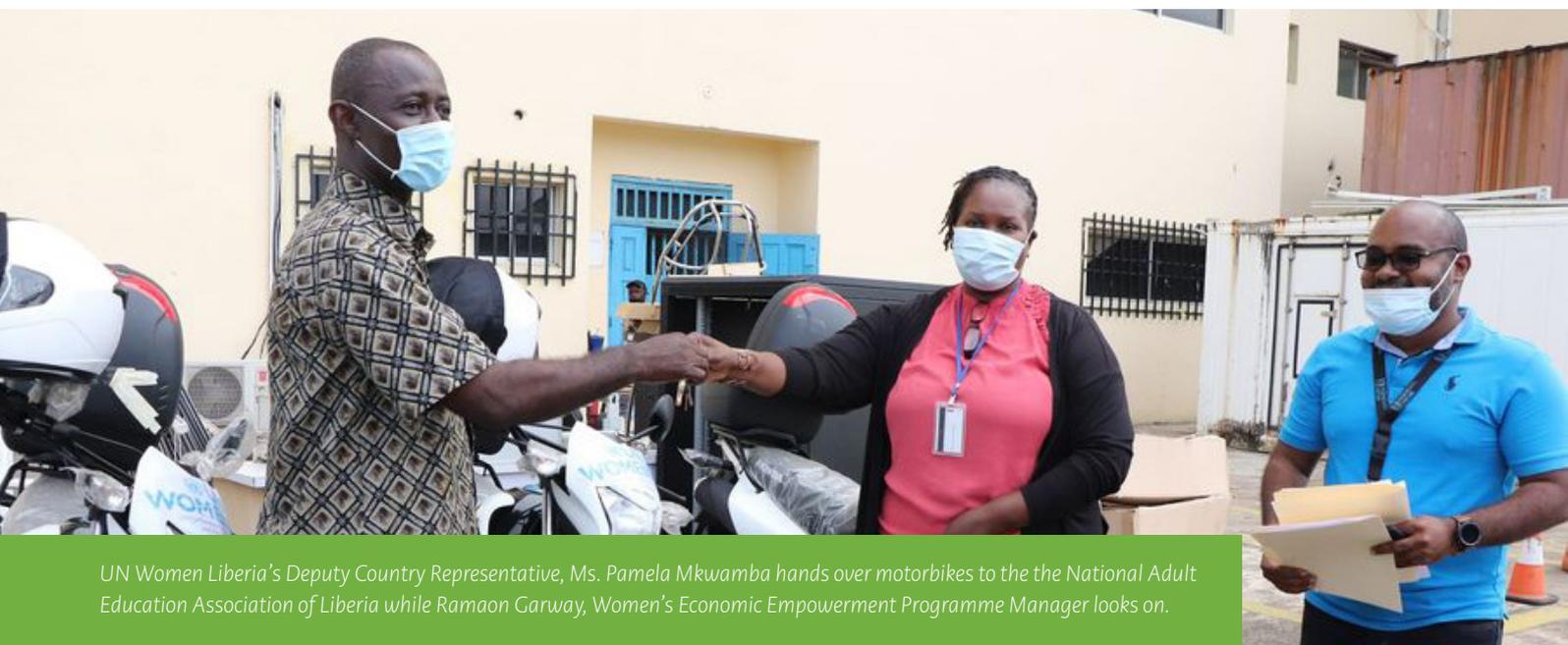
would therefore make it easy for NAEAL to access rural communities.

Ms. Mkwamba underscored the significance of UN Women’s intervention: “Our intervention on rural women’s access to business development skills is transforming small market tables into profitable businesses across Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi, Grand Bassa and Montserrado Counties.”

Ms. Mkwamba expressed her gratitude to the Government and people of Sweden for supporting literacy, numeracy and business skills interventions for rural women in Liberia.

Accepting the motorbikes, NAEAL’s Programme Manager, Joseph Yoko, lauded both UN Women and the Government of Sweden for the donation. He emphasized that NAEAL was very pleased to receive the motorbikes and that his organization will use them to support women’s empowerment programmes in Liberia.

UN Women has been supporting NAEAL to empower rural women with adult literacy skills training programmes since 2010. The Government of Sweden provided financial support to assist rural women beneficiaries to access training in literacy and numeracy skills to increase their socioeconomic empowerment.



UN Women Liberia’s Deputy Country Representative, Ms. Pamela Mkwamba hands over motorbikes to the the National Adult Education Association of Liberia while Ramaon Garway, Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme Manager looks on.



Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor officially launched the national anti-SGBV call centre and handed over motorbikes and other vehicles to the anti-SGBV taskforce at the Ministerial Complex in Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia.

VICE PRESIDENT JEWEL HOWARD-TAYLOR OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES THE NATIONAL ANTI-SGBV CALL CENTRE

On Monday 21 February 2022, Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor officially launched the national anti-SGBV (sexual and gender-based violence) call centre at the Ministerial Complex in Congo Town, Monrovia, to intensify efforts by the government to eliminate gender-based violence in Liberia.

The call centre will be used to address various issues including sexual and gender-based violence, maternal care and child protection. Survivors or anyone who needs support can call 116 to get assistance.



Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor officially launched the national anti-SGBV call centre and handed over motorbikes and other vehicles to the anti-SGBV taskforce at the Ministerial Complex in Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia.

Her Excellency Jewel Howard-Taylor highlighted that the national call centre should be the first stage of of intervention and encouraged stakeholders to share information so that the whole country is aware of the developments.

“We call on the Spotlight Initiative to launch a serious information dissemination initiative,” she said. She also appealed to the media to make spot announcements and play their role in disseminating information widely.

The call centre is supported by the Spotlight Initiative, funded by the European Union, United Nations and Government of Liberia.

At the same meeting, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection also handed over motorbikes and other vehicles to the anti-SGBV taskforce to enable them to reach all parts of the country in discharging their duties.



Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor officially launched the national anti-SGBV call centre and handed over motorbikes and other vehicles to the anti-SGBV taskforce at the Ministerial Complex in Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia.



Vice President of Liberia, Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor officially launched the national anti-SGBV call centre and handed over motorbikes and other vehicles to the anti-SGBV taskforce at the Ministerial Complex in Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia.



A delegation from the Embassy of Sweden visited the Bo Waterside Peace Hut during a learning visit to Grand Cape Mount County in western Liberia on 30 March 2022.

DELEGATION FROM THE EMBASSY OF SWEDEN VISITS BO WATERSIDE PEACE HUT

A delegation from the Embassy of Sweden led by Johan Romare, Head of Development Cooperation and Deputy Head of Mission, visited the Bo Waterside Peace Hut during a learning visit to Grand Cape Mount County in western Liberia on 30 March 2022.

Bo Waterside Peace Hut is one of many peace huts in Liberia being supported by UN Women with funding from the Embassy of Sweden.

Members of the peace hut chronicled how it has positively transformed their lives and impacted their community. “We are helping people to resolve conflicts in the community. Cases of gender-based violence and child abuse are reducing because of our interventions,” said Jebbeh Sambola, Chairperson of the Bo Waterside Peace Hut.

Most members highlighted that they previously did not know about their rights as women, but now they are aware of their rights, as a result of being trained and mentored by UN Women. “We did not know that women can own land but through the

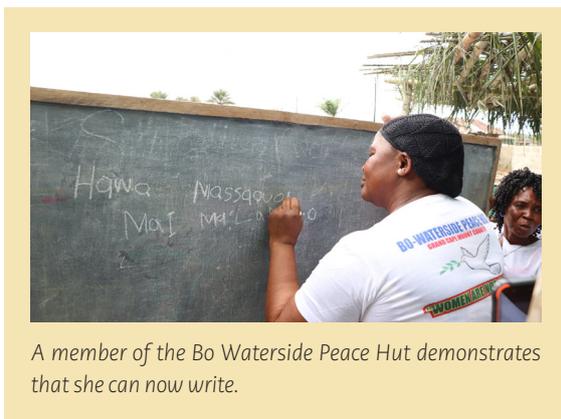
Peace Hut, UN Women taught us about women’s land rights,” says another member, Kadiatu Lumeh. Most members said they did not know that women can also be leaders, but now they are aware, and some are even aspiring to be senators. “The Peace Hut also taught us that women can also stand for elections,” members said.



Members of the Bo Waterside Peace Hut in Grand Cape Mount, Liberia welcomes a delegation from the Embassy of Sweden



Members of the Bo Waterside Peace Hut in Grand Cape Mount, Liberia



A member of the Bo Waterside Peace Hut demonstrates that she can now write.

Women from the Bo Waterside Peace Hut are grateful that they can now write their names and count a few numbers, something they could not do before. Some members took the opportunity to demonstrate their newly acquired skills.

The village savings and loan association (VLSA) has also transformed the lives of many women from the Bo Waterside Peace Hut, who acknowledged that their lives have improved for the better. “I used to suffer a lot and could not sleep properly, but I am now running my own business and I can now sleep peacefully because my life has improved,” said Hawa Massaquoi, a member of the peace hut. Through the VLSA, Ms. Massaquoi managed to borrow some money from the peace hut to boost her business and she is now building her house with proceeds from the VLSA.

Some members said they had never travelled, but through the VLSA they have been able to travel to countries such as Guinea and Sierra Leone to buy goods for sale.

The Head of Development Cooperation for the Swedish Embassy, Johan Romare, highlighted that the delegation had come to learn from the women

of Bo Waterside Peace Hut and he was happy to see how the women are articulating their wish to be more in control of developments in Liberia, including political participation. “They want to have economic empowerment and to be self-sufficient. They want to see change but they do not just sit and ask for change. They want to be the change they want to see. We are so inspired by the work UN Women is doing with the peace huts. This is really the hope for Liberia. Women of Liberia are coming together to be the change they want to see,” he said.

With funding from the Embassy of Sweden, UN Women has been supporting women to set up peace huts to enhance women’s participation in peacebuilding and to empower them economically. Peace huts have helped to empower rural women to participate in various economic, leadership and vocational training programmes, such as adult literacy and VLSAs.

Peace huts are community centres that women use for conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. The Bo Waterside Peace Hut has 178 members comprising 18 men and 160 women.



A delegation from the Embassy of Sweden visited the Bo Waterside Peace Hut during a learning visit to Grand Cape Mount County in western Liberia on 30 March 2022.



Members of the Weala Peace Hut

DELEGATION FROM THE IRISH EMBASSY VISITS GANTA BORDER AND WEALA PEACE HUTS

A delegation led by Comfort Lamptey, UN Women Liberia Country Representative, and Kate O'Donnell, Charge d'Affaires at the Embassy of Ireland, visited Gompa local authorities led by Amos Suah, and the Ganta Border Peace Hut in Nimba County on Thursday 12 May 2022 to gain a better understanding and learn more about women's peace huts and how they are supporting community development.

Explaining the purpose of the visit, Ms. Lamptey said, "We want to have a conversation with the community, especially women in the peace huts, to learn more about the platform and how they are functioning and supporting community development."

Peace huts are centres that are used by women in the community for conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding.

Kate O'Donnell, from the Embassy of Ireland, explained that her organization, was interested in localized work and was very keen to see what is happening with women in Gompa.



Debriefing session for the Irish Embassy and UN Women Delegation

"We want to hear from local authorities and from women's peace huts so that we understand what is working well and what is not working in this county," said Kate O'Donnell.

"We have been supporting work in Liberia. We want to know how we can transition from interest in working with the organizations to supporting change and development," she explained.

Among the issues discussed, lack of education was cited as one of the reasons hindering many women from taking up leadership positions. The city authorities, however, noted that women were taking up leadership positions at their institution. Two women are in top leadership positions in Gompa local authorities.

Other issues affecting the community include early pregnancies leading girls to drop out of school. Boys drop out of school to earn an income by running motorbike businesses. Cases of sexual and gender-based violence were previously high but are now falling owing to the increase in awareness-raising campaigns on gender and women's rights.

It was recommended that the Gompa local authorities should collaborate with the women's peace huts.

GANTA BORDER PEACE HUT

Members of the Ganta Border Peace Hut had an opportunity to interact with Comfort Lamptey and Kate O'Donnell to share their experiences of how their peace hut is functioning, their role and how the hut has impacted their lives and to discuss how



Members of the Weala Peace Hut

the peace huts can help to ensure that the upcoming 2023 elections are held in a peaceful manner.

Peace huts are centres that are used by women in the community for conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.

Several activities have also been taking place at the peace huts. UN Women has supported women from the peace huts with leadership training, capacity-



Comfort Lamptey, UN Women Liberia Country Representative



Kate O'Donnell, Charge d'Affaires at the Embassy of Ireland

building, vocational skills training, and economic empowerment and creating village savings and loan associations with funding from the Government of Sweden and the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund.

Irish Aid is providing funding to UN Women under the project 'Supporting community engagement on women's political participation'. Over the years, UN Women has been supporting women in the community to set up and enhance women's participation in peacebuilding and to empower them economically with funding support from the Government of Sweden.

WEALA LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities from Weala in Margibi County reiterated their commitment to supporting women to take up leadership positions in local governance structures. They highlighted the need to educate and empower women to take up leadership roles, stating

that most women were not comfortable being in leadership positions.

The authorities were sharing their experiences at a meeting with a delegation from UN Women Liberia and its funding partner, the Embassy of Ireland, at the Weala Elders' Centre in Margibi County on Friday 13 May 2022.

The delegation met and interacted with the local authorities to understand and learn more about their collaboration with members of the Weala Peace Hut, to promote women's political participation, and the challenges they face in the community. The delegation also discussed opportunities for collaboration with the peace hut to strengthen women's participation in politics and leadership positions and to overcome the barriers to women's leadership in the community.

The authorities mainly work with the Weala Peace Hut to resolve conflicts that occur in the community. They also expressed their willingness to support women to take up leadership positions.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WEALA PEACE HUT COMMIT TO ENSURING FEMALE REPRESENTATION AND PEACEFUL ELECTIONS

Representatives of the Weala Peace Hut have expressed their commitment to ensuring female representation and peaceful elections in 2023. They told a visiting delegation from UN Women Liberia and the Embassy of Ireland that, when women are in leadership positions, they can easily articulate and speak about issues that affect them.

Sharing their experiences, Weala Peace Hut Chairperson, Hawa Kango, highlighted that, during the 2020 senatorial elections, members of the Weala Peace Hut took the initiative to conduct awareness-raising campaigns on electoral violence. Their main message was to encourage the electorate not to fight for their candidate. Members of the peace hut mobilized their own resources and printed flyers and purchased loudhailers to use during their campaigns.

Members also conducted awareness-raising sessions on rape and ending violence against women. “The community was vulnerable because many women

were victims of domestic violence. Cases of gender-based violence have gone down in the community because of awareness campaigns and interventions. We are now focusing on peaceful elections,” says Victoria Gulley, Peace Hut Adviser.

Peace huts are centres that are used by women in the community for conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding. The women’s peace huts are now being used for various women’s empowerment and skills training activities.

UN Women has supported women from the peace huts with leadership training, capacity-building, vocational skills training, and economic empowerment and creating village savings and loan associations with funding support from the Government of Sweden.

Irish Aid is providing funding to UN Women in support of the project ‘Supporting community engagement on women’s political participation’.



Members of the Weala Peace Hut

UN WOMEN MEETS YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS



UN Women Liberia Country Representative, Ms. Comfort Lamptey addresses young women at the strategic dialogue meeting

A group of young women leaders from various sectors met the UN Women Liberia Country Representative, Ms. Comfort Lamptey, and her team for a strategic dialogue at a local hotel in Monrovia on Wednesday 18 May 2022.

The meeting aimed to enhance collaboration and engagement between UN Women and young women leaders by discussing issues that affect young women and mapping the way forward, leading to building synergies, promoting the empowerment of women in Liberia and furthering the 'Generation Equality' agenda.

Some of the issues discussed included mentorship of young women by women leaders; lack of funding for women-led organisations and of support for women's businesses; the need to establish and engage young men; and supporting each other as young women as agents for change.

Most young women acknowledged that they had benefited from mentorship programmes, and they highlighted that mentoring helps to build their capacity and enhance their confidence. The young women said that, if they are trained, they can also train other young women to be Generation Equality champions. They also highlighted the importance of supporting each other as women, motivating each other and encouraging each other and not fighting one another.

The young women also highlighted that funding was a major challenge hindering them from implementing many activities.

Another issue of concern discussed was that of the low representation of women in politics and other leadership positions. It was noted that most women fear intimidation and hence end up shying away from politics.

The use of information and communication technologies was cited as one area that young women could leverage to access information and promote their work, as most of the information they need is available on the Internet. Young women were also encouraged to communicate effectively, use communications strategically and brand themselves effectively on social media.

Ms. Lamptey expressed gratitude and appreciation for the chance to interact with the young leaders. She noted that UN Women cannot do much or go far in its work unless the organization works with the young women who are the change makers. "When we think of the sustainability of what we are doing, there is a limit to what we can do and the success we can achieve unless we work with young people," she said.

Mr. Ramon Garway, Programme Manager of the Women's Economic Empowerment pillar, gave a presentation on UN Women's operations in Liberia, and Ms. Ghoma Karloweah, Women, Peace and Security Specialist, gave a presentation on 'Generation Equality'.

The strategic dialogue was the first in a series of activities that young women leaders will conduct to engage with UN women this year.



Strategic dialogue meeting for young women leaders from various sectors in Liberia and UN Women Liberia Country Representative, Ms. Comfort Lamptey.



Jebbeh Sambola, Chairperson of the Bo Waterside Peace Hut in Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia.

FROM WHERE I STAND “THE PEACE HUT TAUGHT US THAT WOMEN CAN STAND FOR ELECTIONS.”

Jebbeh Sambola (45) is the Chairperson of the Bo Waterside Peace Hut in Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia. This is one of many peace huts being supported by UN Women to enhance women’s participation in peacebuilding and to empower them economically.

In Jebbeh’s words:

“The main activities conducted at the peace hut include conflict resolution and provision of counselling services.

We provide adult literacy classes for members. Most women did not know how to read and write, but they can now write their names. I feel good because I can also write my name, something I could not do previously.

We did not know about our rights. We now know that women can own land. Through UN Women, the peace hut has empowered us to have more information. The life that we used to have has changed.

We have also been taught to establish village savings and loan associations (VLSAs), which help us to earn some money. We are now doing business, and most members are now able to take their children to school. We have established two shops as members of the peace hut. We use the profits to make contributions to the VLSA as well as maintaining and sustaining the peace hut.

The peace hut has made me strong. I can now talk in front of people. I did not know that women can contest elections as candidates. The peace hut taught us that woman can stand for elections.”

The Bo Waterside Peace Hut was established in 2019 and has a membership of 178 people (18 men and 160 women). UN Women has supported women from the peace huts with leadership training, capacity building and vocational skills training, as well economic empowerment, to enhance gender equality.

UN WOMEN DONATES EQUIPMENT TO THE ARMY WIVES ASSOCIATION VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

UN Women has donated equipment comprising 15 sewing machines, 24 baking pans, a laptop and a printer to the Army Wives Association Vocational Training Centre at the Edward Beyan Kesselly Military Barracks in Margibi County, Liberia.

The donation was made in fulfilment of a pledge made by UN Women Liberia Country Representative, Ms. Comfort Lamptey, during the launch of the vocational training centre by the First Lady of Liberia, Her Excellency Clar Marie Weah on 13 April 2022.

Handing over the equipment, Ms. Pamela Mkwamba, UN Women Deputy Country Representative, congratulated the Army Wives Association for its great initiative, which other people can emulate, not only in Liberia but in Africa as a whole.

She highlighted that her organization, UN Women, had come back to fulfil its promise to support the operationalization of the training centre.

“We hope that the donation is the beginning of a great partnership between UN Women and the Association,” said Ms. Mkwamba, who reiterated her organization’s commitment to working with all stakeholders in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of young women in Liberia.

Mrs. Josephine Kowo, President of the Army Wives Association, expressed her appreciation to Ambassador Clar Weah and UN Women for their



UN Women donates equipment to the Army Wives Association Vocational Training Centre at the Edward Beyan Kesselly Military Barracks in Margibi County, Liberia.

support. She said that the materials will be used to enhance skills and empower the women.

Similarly, Ms. Kayea Dorbor, Social Services Coordinator in the Office of the First Lady of Liberia, expressed gratitude to UN Women for the donation and called on other stakeholders to emulate its work and support women and girls in communities, including the Army Wives Association.

The Army Wives Association Vocational Training Centre was established in 2019 as a self-help initiative to empower the spouses and dependents of personnel in the Armed Forces of Liberia so that they can contribute to the upkeep of their homes and society.

The training centre provides an opportunity for women and men to acquire income-generating skills in catering, tailoring, cosmetology, computing, interior decoration, soap making and closed-circuit television (CCTV) installation, among other things, explained Mrs. Alfreda Nmah, Administrator of the Army Wives Association Vocational Training Centre.

UN Women is collaborating with the Office of the First Lady to empower women and girls in Liberia.



UN Women donates equipment to the Army Wives Association Vocational Training Centre at the Edward Beyan Kesselly Military Barracks in Margibi County, Liberia.

UN WOMEN LIBERIA SUPPORTS WOMEN'S GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE SECURITY SECTOR

The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Liberia National Fire and Rescue Service (LNFRS) are two security sector entities that UN Women Liberia is partnering with to increase women's participation in the security sector.

UN Women Liberia's assistance has recently led to the development and launch of the gender policies and action plans of both the AFL and the LNFRS.

According to UN Women, women's participation in the peace and security sector in Liberia is low, with women making up only 4.4 per cent of AFL personnel. Gender equality is a key component of the human rights framework and is required for the attainment of sustainable development, peace and reconciliation.

In March 2022, the AFL launched its gender policy and five-year action plan, while the LNFRS unveiled its own policy and action plan in April 2022 before an array of government officials, military and fire service personnel, and other stakeholders.

The objectives of introducing gender policies within the security sector are to promote gender equality, to empower the women in the security sector and to serve as frameworks for the sustainable participation

of women in the military, fire service, police and other security entities. The launch of the gender policies is also an opportunity for the senior leadership of the AFL and LNFRS to reaffirm their commitments to mainstreaming gender in their services.

Speaking during the ceremony launching the AFL policy, the Swedish Ambassador to Liberia, His Excellency Urban Sjostrom, emphasized the importance of investing in gender equality so that men and women have the same opportunities, particularly in terms of rights, representation and resources.

At the LNFRS launch event, UN Women Liberia's Deputy Country Representative, Ms. Pamela Mkwamba, congratulated the senior leadership team of the LNFRS for their commitment to promoting gender equality in the service. She expressed happiness that "The LNFRS has taken the first step towards achieving this goal through the creation of a gender and social inclusion department as well as the development of a gender policy and action plan."

She also expressed satisfaction over the current training of new LNFRS recruits, in which 65 out of 140 recruits are women. Ms. Mkwamba applauded the LNFRS leadership for their positive action.



Launch of the gender policy and five-year action plan for the Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia

UN WOMEN LIBERIA AND PARTNERS SUPPORT COMMUNITIES TO ENHANCE GENDER EQUALITY AND PEACEBUILDING IN MARYLAND COUNTY

Rural women of Liberia residing in Maryland County are gradually being allowed to form part of discussions around land issues and property inheritance, and they do take part in decision-making at household and community levels.

The women said that this achievement is a result of awareness-raising and training support they received on the new Land Rights Act, Local Government Act and gender-based violence from the 'Sustaining Peace and Reconciliation through Strengthening Land Governance and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms' initiative, jointly implemented by UN Women, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Food Programme (WFP) with funding from the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

During a recent monitoring mission to five project communities in Maryland County, rural women – buttressed by their male counterparts – said that the PBF project was empowering them by becoming more aware of their rights as women and their role as members of the communities in which they live.

“In the past the old law did not include us women, but the new land rights law that was passed in September 2018 allows women and youth to form part of land discussions,” said Patricia Dennis of Kaken-Gbolobo in Maryland County.

In addition, Wleetibo Dennis highlighted that, “In the past, women never discussed or owned land but today, women, men and youth can sit together with the elders and decide issues on land ownership.”

The beneficiaries in the county, in separate gatherings, appealed to UN Women Liberia to expand its outreach and to organize more engagement in the awareness-raising campaigns on land rights and ownership and education on gender-based violence and women's participation in local leadership and decision-making.

Liberia Land Authority Administrator for Maryland County, Robert H. Moore, said that land conflicts



Participants at the media workshop on promoting gender equality for sustainable development organised by the UN communications group

arising out of farming, mining and ownership rights were widespread and that women's participation in dispute resolution mechanisms was now inevitable. According to him, unlike previously, when women used to be marginalized, they are now involved in decision-making. Now, when the husband dies, they are no longer ejected and denied property.

Under this PBF joint project, UN Women Liberia leads on raising awareness of the Land Rights Act and Local Government Act, including components on the rights of communities over customary land, women's land rights and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The WFP is responsible for enhancing livelihoods for concession-affected communities through agricultural activities – providing seedlings, farming equipment and training for communities. The UNDP handles the capacity strengthening of land governance institutions at national and local levels, as well as customary land formalization, boundary harmonization and confirmatory surveys. The project, funded by the PBF through the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, is implemented in close collaboration with the Liberia Land Authority, other national institutions and civil society organizations.



Decontee Kollie, driver in the UN Women Liberia.

“I ENJOY WORKING WITH MEN BECAUSE I CHALLENGE THEM.”

Meet 38-year-old Decontee Kollie, the only female driver in the UN Women Liberia office.

For Ms. Kollie, working in the male-dominated field of driving makes her happy, because there is nothing that a man can do that she cannot do. Her background and upbringing has a bearing on the person she has become today.

Ms. Kollie says:

“If there is a tyre puncture on the road, it’s my responsibility to fix it. There is no difference between what I do and what my male counterparts do, because we have the same job. I do any work that my supervisor asks me to do. We work as a team. Sometimes colleagues help me but, if there are problems, we find solutions together.

I grew up as the only female child among boys. I am the only girl in a family of eight. I grew up among men. My brothers feel proud of me. They feel I have gone the extra mile to develop myself.

I started playing football when I was 12 years old and still in school. I played football for a girls league for almost 10 years. I played for the Liberian national team. My coach used to encourage us to act and move like men. I believe this background could have contributed to what I have become today. I left the game because there was no money in it.

I also learnt how to drive a vehicle when I was young. A male friend, Willie Peter, taught me how to drive and I learnt how to drive in one day. After that, I started driving.

I am so excited to work for UN Women. I enjoy working with men because I challenge them. The drivers that I work with are impressed with my work and they welcome me.

Driving is my career. It's not a common thing. When you are driving, you are carrying people's lives and property. Driving is supporting me and my family. We survive on it. I have a passion for driving.

My best experience in the field is that of the excitement when people in the rural areas see a woman driving. They like to make friends with me. They are happy to interact with me and take photo with me because they enjoy seeing a woman do what men can do.

When we go for training in the field, I participate, and I help to organize. I remember I took a colleague to Nimba for training and a woman came to me and asked me to teach her daughter to drive. I was so excited, and I felt very proud. I promised to teach her daughter to drive. I was very happy to see myself in that position. I felt appreciated. There are many girls who have talent, but they don't want to use it. They want to depend on men or use their bodies. If I have a career, I don't have to depend on men. I can depend on my career, and I can support my family.

My ambition is to grow professionally so that I become programme assistant and also attain higher levels. I am learning from people. I want to go to school but I do not have time because of the work.

I am learning a lot of things in the office. When I am less busy, I assist with photocopying and scanning documents. I can send documents via email.

I learn from people, get good advice from people and work with people. I have to be calm when dealing with people.

One of the challenges I encounter in my work is driving in bad road conditions. The roads are bad during the rainy season, but we still try to do the work and come back.

My advice to aspiring young drivers is that they should be focused and, if you have a career, put it to use. Don't sell your body. Have a career that can give you a better life. I encourage young women who aspire to be drivers to take driving seriously, because driving is a career where you carry life and property.

My recommendation to UN Women is to organize training for UN Women female drivers, because we have different experiences, and it is good to know each other's experience."

Before joining UN Women in January 2020, Ms. Kollie worked for organizations such as UNICEF, GIZ (German Agency for International Cooperation), Medica Model and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Ms. Kollie has a very supportive husband and a 12-year-old son. Her husband motivates her and encourages her to go to school to develop herself.

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Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations

