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LIBERIA**

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UNITED NATIONS LIBERIA

In the ever-evolving tapestry of Liberia's journey towards a brighter, more equitable future, the United Nations stands as an unwavering beacon of hope. Our mission to facilitate progress across the spectrum of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is at the heart of what we do, and it's a mission that constantly renews our faith in the human spirit.

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These stories are just a few examples of the many ways that the United Nations is working to support Liberia in achieving the SDGs. We are committed to working with the government, civil society, and the private sector to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all Liberians.

We invite you to read these stories and learn more about the work of the United Nations and its partners in Liberia. Together, we can build a better and more sustainable future for all Liberians.



People of Gbarpolu county

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



HOPE ON THE HORIZON: IMPROVING IMMUNIZATION ACCESS IN HARD-TO-REACH AREAS OF LIBERIA

In the heart of Liberia, lies Gbarpolu county. Though the youngest of Liberia's fifteen counties, it is the seventh most populous, with a growing population of over 104,000 people. Unfortunately, due to its remote location, healthcare services are a challenge to come by, especially for the vulnerable under 1 and under 5 population. However, there is hope on the horizon, thanks to the Parenting of Poorly Performing County Project.

With the average distance walked to a health facility in Gbarpolu county being 5 hours, approximately 68% of the population, particularly those in Belleh, Kongbah, and Bokomu areas, must walk more than 60 minutes or five kilometres to reach the nearest health facility. The project tackled this issue by mapping out all hard-to-reach communities and planning vaccination sessions with the communities. The outreach services were conducted at convenient hours and days agreed upon by the community and the vaccinator. The outreach services were held at least once a week in hard-to-reach communities, and community health assistants or volunteers

were involved in planning, sensitization, and mobilization of communities for outreach.

During the outreach services, the identification of under-immunized clients was targeted, staff met and had discussions with immunization networks and community workers, and awareness on immunization was created in the community. Mr. Clarke, the Community Health Department Director, expressed his appreciation to UNICEF and partners for prioritizing the county and supporting them technically and financially.

The Parenting of Poorly Performing County Project has brought hope to the people of Gbarpolu county, and the impact of this intervention has been significant. The project has improved the accessibility of healthcare services, reduced morbidity, and mortality of vaccine-preventable diseases, and strengthened community participation in the planning and implementation of immunization services. The success of this project is proof that with a little help and support, we can make a significant difference in the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society.





County Peace Committees, EWER Committees, youth groups and religious and traditional leaders use the knowledge acquired from human rights training to identify human rights issues in their counties and early warning signs.



The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in collaboration with the Liberia Peacebuilding Office (LPBO) and the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR), conducted successful regional trainings in Buchanan, Grand Bassa, Gbarnga and Bong counties. The training enhanced the understanding of the participants' of applying a human rights-based approach to early warning concerns and strengthening peace structures, improving coordination and reporting of human rights violations.

During one of the training, Sheikh Kamara, the Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) Analyst/Coordinator from the Peacebuilding Office, highlighted the office's commitment to supporting member organizations during the electoral period.

He said, "There are three major issues such as civic space, youths and the illegal trade/use or abuse of drugs that influence violence during electoral processes in Liberia. We have to work with you, our community and traditional people, CSO, CBO, CSO EWER volunteers to ensure that you report issues that could lead to the outbreak of violence in your communities during these critical times in our country's history".

Making remarks on behalf of the local authorities, Chiefs Koffi Czar and Peter Gbarlon thanked OHCHR and the partners for the training as it will

help to enhance their skills in mainstreaming human rights while responding to early warning issues in the counties. "Peace cannot be achieved in the absence of national in the absence of human rights as all the actors, including the police, immigration, the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency (LDEA) and other national security and community actors, have obligations to promote and protect human rights," said Koffi Czar, Chief Zoe of Rivercess County.

On his part, Chief Gbarlon of Nimba County thanked the OHCHR, the donor and the partners for the training, as holding a peaceful election is key to sustaining the peace and stability of the country. "I want to appeal to participants to apply what we learned as we monitor and report on human rights issues, including intervening in issues coming out of the election in communities, towns and villages".

Since the end of the trainings, OHCHR has received information from the participants regarding human rights concerns during the biometric voter registration period. Information and concerns received include the issue of vote buying and trucking of voters in the counties. OHCHR has consulted with relevant authorities and groups to identify solutions to the concerns that will ensure peace is maintained throughout the election period.





©ESTHER G.I.

Esther G.I. Javillie, a civil engineer by profession



ESTHER G.I. JAVILLIE: BREAKING STEREOTYPES AND EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CARPENTERS

Esther G.I. Javillie, a civil engineer by profession, has defied societal expectations and embarked on a new journey as a professional carpentry and joinery instructor. Despite initial skepticism about training in furniture making, Esther recognized the immense value in pursuing this path. She reflects on her initial doubts, saying, "When I was selected to do training in furniture making, it didn't make sense to me at first." However, her determination to challenge norms and make a meaningful impact led her to embrace this unexpected opportunity.

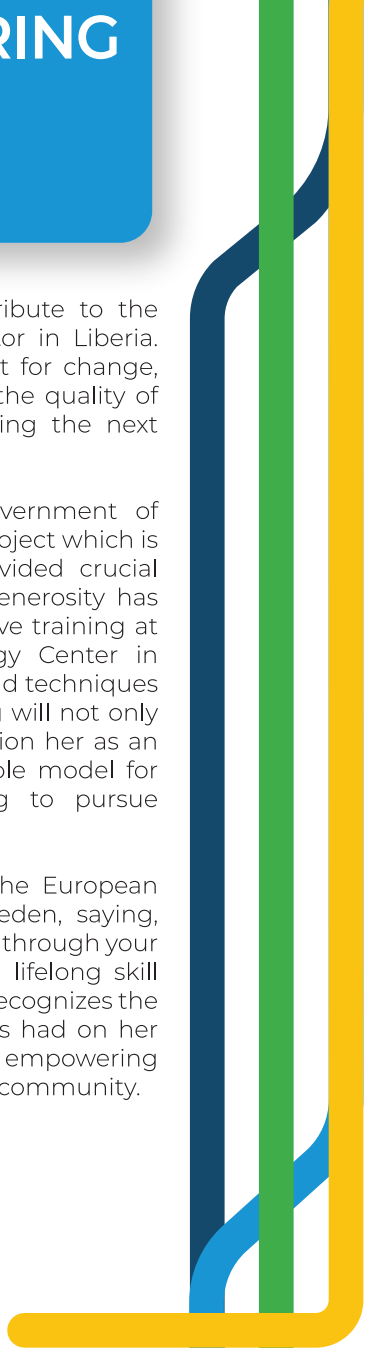
Esther is a driven and talented young woman who has fearlessly taken on the challenge of teaching carpentry. As a TVET teacher trainee under the Government of Liberia Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) program, she is currently undergoing comprehensive training to acquire the necessary skills to become an effective and inspiring instructor. Through this program, Esther is not only honing her technical expertise but also learning pedagogical techniques to effectively transfer her knowledge to others.

Before her carpentry training, Esther possessed no prior knowledge or skills in the field. However, with her training from a prestigious technical institution in South Africa, she has acquired the neces-

sary skills and confidence to contribute to the advancement of the carpentry sector in Liberia. Esther envisions herself as a catalyst for change, playing a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of carpentry education and empowering the next generation of skilled carpenters.

The European Union and the Government of Sweden, through the Youth Rising project which is implemented by UNIDO, have provided crucial support to Esther's journey. Their generosity has enabled her to receive comprehensive training at the renowned Furniture Technology Center in Cape Town, South Africa. The skills and techniques she has gained through this training will not only shape her own career but also position her as an effective carpentry teacher and a role model for numerous young females aspiring to pursue male-dominated trades.

Esther expresses her gratitude to the European Union and the Government of Sweden, saying, "Thank you for your generous gift. It is through your contributions that I am acquiring a lifelong skill that will help me better my life." She recognizes the profound impact their support has had on her personal and professional growth, empowering her to make a positive change in her community.





Women-led businesses in Liberia

5 GENDER EQUALITY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

UNOPS HOLDS POSSIBILITIES FORUM-TARGETS WOMEN-LED & WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES

A number of women-led and women-owned businesses in Liberia operate in the informal sector of the Liberian economy. Many of them lack basic knowledge about public procurement processes and the opportunities thereof, and some of them are not fully knowledgeable of the processes relating to bidder's qualifications and other requirements to enable them access to competitive public procurement processes. To address these challenges and support women-led businesses in Liberia to achieve equal opportunities in the marketplace, in May 2023 UNOPS held the UNOPS Possibilities Forum (UP Forum) for Liberia.

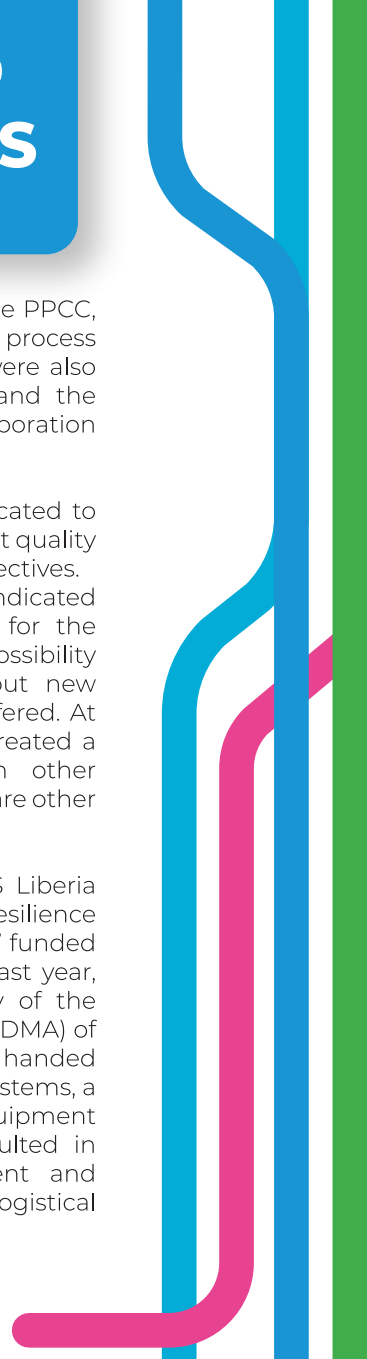
UNOPS possibilities is a sustainable procurement initiative that proactively engages the private sector, identifies barriers, and works towards building capacity in order to increase the number of diverse suppliers (MSMEs) being awarded UNOPS tenders and UN tenders at large. The event was held in partnership with UN Women Liberia, who is supporting the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC) of Liberia to mainstream gender in public procurement. This was the first time a UP forum was held in partnership with another UN agency.

The event took place on May 9th - 10th 2023 at Bluecrest College in Congo Town, Liberia and a total of 33 women representing as many women-owned businesses (WOBs) attended the event. The topics discussed in the forum include business opportunities in the UN, hands-on session on how to register on and navigate the United Nations

Global Marketplace (UNGM), the role of the PPCC, and the WFP vendor platform, registration process and requirements. Other presentations were also given by the Liberia Business registry and the National Social Security and Welfare Corporation (NASSCORP).

Furthermore, a specific session was dedicated to improving business-owners' skills to submit quality bids both from PPCC's and UNOPS' perspectives. Feedback received from the participants indicated a great satisfaction in the event, both for the content and learnings as well as for the possibility to network, share ideas and learn about new business opportunities that the forum offered. At the end of the event participants even created a WhatsApp group to help keep each other informed about new opportunities and share other useful updates.

Additionally, on 31 May 2023 the UNOPS Liberia Office concluded the project "Building Resilience to Flooding and Coastal Erosion in Liberia" funded by the government of Japan. Over the past year, the project had supported the capacity of the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) of Liberia. At the end of the project, UNOPS handed over two trucks with tanks, battery bank systems, a diesel generator and some additional equipment for office maintenance. The project resulted in strengthening disaster risk management and dissemination mechanisms as well as logistical capacity for the NDMA.





STRENGTHENING LIBERIA'S HEALTH SYSTEM – WHO DONATES THREE VEHICLES TO THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

As part of efforts to enhance the quality of health care services in Liberia, the World Health Organization (WHO) with support from the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, today donated to the Ministry of Health two (02) ambulances for use at the National Infectious Disease Center, and one (01) land cruiser pick up to support oxygen plant operations. Last year, WHO supported the Ministry of Health to establish two modern oxygen plants at the Liberia Government Hospital Tubmanburg in Bomi and Star Base in Montserrado. The Bomi and Star Base plants can produce up to 9Nm³/Hr (~20 cylinders/day) and 50Nm³/Hr (~100cylinders/day) of medical grade oxygen, respectively.

The duplex plant at Star Base plant is the largest oxygen plant in Liberia. "We are very pleased to receive these two ambulances and the utility vehicle—thanks to the WHO and German government. As you know, we began operations at the oxygen plant at Star Base, and we are now able to provide oxygen within and around Monrovia as other plants are operational.

The utility vehicle will be used to collect and refill oxygen cylinders at Star Base, making sure that no facility struggles with oxygen supply," said Dr. Wilhelminah Jallah, Honorable Minister of Health. The WHO, as an advisor to the Ministry of Health, has been

instrumental in strengthening Liberia's health system in and out of public health emergencies. Recently, WHO announced the downgrading of the COVID-19 pandemic as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). "This time COVID-19 is no longer a Public Health Emergency of International Concern- Let me reiterate that the declaration does not mean that COVID-19 is over; however, it means we need to address COVID-19 in an integrated fashion and not as an emergency in itself. This is critical because the resources from COVID-19, such as these, will increase access to services and improve the system overall", said Dr. Peter Clement, WHO Representative in Liberia.

Speaking at the event, the German Ambassador to Liberia, His Excellency Dr. Jakob Haselhuber, demonstrated his excitement and that of the people of Germany in being part of this project, which focuses on strengthening Liberia's health system, and pledged his government's continuous commitment to the cause. "Germany, together with the Canadian government and other donor partners, has been critical in supporting the Liberian government through various initiatives such as the installation of oxygen plants and the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines, which contributed to Liberia's high vaccination rates in West Africa", said Ambassador Haselhuber.





Mimi Watson at her market stall



“Start and Improve Your Business” training empower women in North-central Liberia

A Joint Project “Building Resilience of Youth, Women, and Vulnerable Groups through Social Protection Floor in Liberia using ICT,” which is jointly being implemented by FAO, ILO, UNDP, UN Women and WFP, aims to address the complex multi-sectorial and inter-connected challenges of human insecurities particularly food, social, and economic issues for the most vulnerable and neglected populations of the North-Central region of Liberia at the community level. The project is promoting the concept of human security through implementing this initiative as a model human security with “protection” and “empowerment” measures as the most appropriate approach.

As one of the pathways to achieving the project’s outcome, a step-down training for entrepreneurs on how to start and improve their business (SIYB) has been started. To roll-out this training, the ILO-Abuja Office engaged certified SIYB Trainers to review the

level of preparations and capacity of beneficiary candidates and support the organization and step-down of SIYB training to 108 entrepreneurs in the initial six project communities of Lofa, Nimba and Bong Counties.

Mimi Watson is a single mother from Bahn, Nimba County.

She has started a small business, thanks to business training and startup capital from the ILO SIYB. “I have been trained in how to grow my market and know my principal from my interest. At first, I used to just use all the money but now, I know the difference between my interest and principal”, she said. Mimi expressed gratitude because she uses the petty market to send her children to school, payrent, amongst others.

Mimi concluded that her ultimate goal is to grow her business and have a bigger shop.





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The United Nations in Liberia commends NEC on the signing of an MOU on Section 4.5 of the Elections Law

The United Nations in Liberia, through the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) commends political parties and the National Elections Commission (NEC) on the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Section 4.5 of the Elections Law, which governs the nomination of candidates for elective positions in the upcoming elections. The signing of the MoU on 11 May 2023, is a significant milestone towards greater inclusion of women in the 2023 elections as it strengthens the commitment of political parties to ensure not less than 30 percent women on their candidate listings.

The United Nations also recognizes the important role of the Interparty Consultative Committee in drafting and validating the MoU. This MoU on candidate nomination follows the signing of the Farmington Declaration which reaffirms the commitment of political parties to implement the Violence Against Women in Elections Protocol, and to foster peaceful, more inclusive elections. Liberia is currently ranked 162 out of 185 on the Inter-parliamentary Union's list of women in national parliaments.

Despite women and girls constituting around 50 percent of the population, women in Liberia occupy less than 11 percent of the 103 seats in the Legislature. The percentage of women has fallen since 2006 – a trend which correlates to a decrease in the percentage of women on candidate listings over time.

The United Nations commends national partners – the NEC; Women's Legislative Caucus; the Ministry

of Gender, Children and Social Protection; women's rights organizations; and other civil society organizations - for their efforts to promote reforms of Liberia's Elections Law. The concerted and continued efforts of these partners and their engagements with the Legislature and the political parties have paved the way for Legislative passage of Amendment 4.5 of the Elections Law, and for the signing of the MOU by political parties to include a minimum of 30 percent representation of women on their candidates list.

The United Nations further commends those political parties that have taken concrete steps to include 40 percent or more women on their candidate listings. This demonstrates a strong commitment to fostering more internally democratic political parties and to achieving a more inclusive and equitable Liberia.

The United Nations calls on political actors to consistently enforce the MOU and stands ready to support national partners – including Ministries, Agencies and Commissions, local government structures, and political parties – to develop or reform laws and policies that provide for temporary special measures, including gender quotas for elected and appointed positions, in line with Liberia's international, regional, and national commitments. The United Nations in Liberia acknowledges the partnership and support of the European Union, Government of Sweden, Government of Ireland, and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund in promoting greater gender equality and women's engagement in political and governance processes in Liberia.





Vice President Howard-Taylor & UNFPA Liberia Rep Bidishai Pillai at the launch of the initiative



ADOLESCENT GIRLS SMILE IN SOUTHEAST , AS SANITARY PAD BANKS ARE OPENED

About 24,670 Adolescent girls from Rivergee, Maryland, Grand Kru and Sinoe Counties were in joyous mood as Vice President Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor officially opened Sanitary pad banks in six schools. The Sanitary pad bank project which is led by VP Howard-Taylor is a continuation of the Spotlight initiative funding implemented by UNFPA through Plan Liberia in collaboration with the Office of the Vice President.

The project under the theme: “Reducing Girls Absenteeism in schools through the establishment of Sanitary pad banks and Menstrual & Health Hygiene Awareness” is necessary to ensure that adolescent girls and young women in schools and communities are provided essential services including quality Sanitary pads (Reusable and Disposable), Sexual Reproductive health rights information, menstrual hygiene awareness, training on distribution and usage of Sanitary pads in an efficient and effective manner.

While in the Southeast, a total of 15,500 beneficiaries received Reusable pads, 9,170 beneficiaries received disposable pads, and 155 beneficiaries received family planning items in six schools across four counties.

Speaking with beneficiaries across the counties, Liberia's Vice President emphasized that this project helps to ensure that girls in school Absenteeism is minimized by providing them the materials needed to remain in school during Menstrual periods and focus on their educational sojourns.

At the official handover ceremony before departure to the Southeast, Vice President Howard-Taylor and UNFPA Country Representative, Madam Bidisha Pillai highlighted the importance of girls being knowledgeable about their bodies and understanding the choices they make including menstrual health and menstrual hygiene.

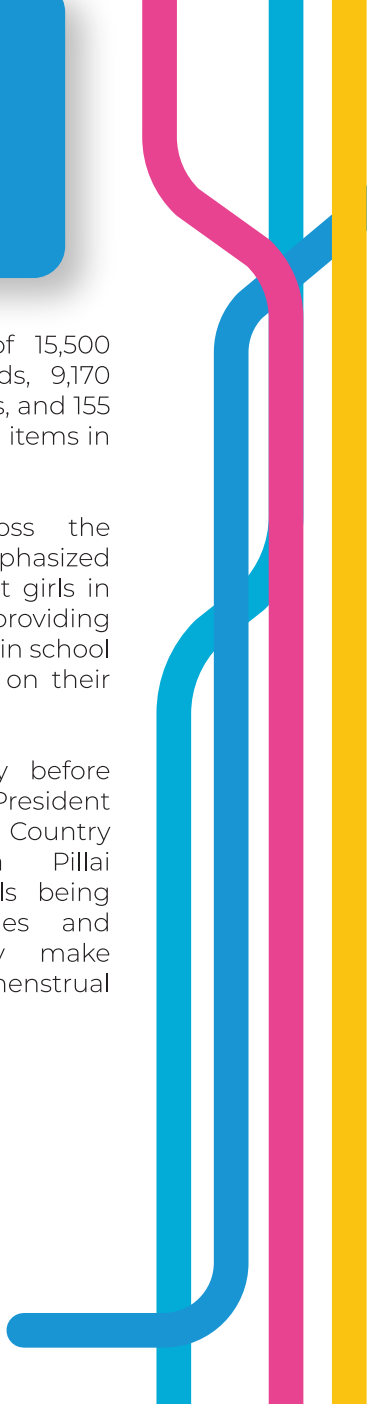




Photo Cred: WHO



LIBERIA'S COVID-19 DETECTION AND VACCINATION DRIVE BOOSTED BY COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSE.

As Liberia tackled community transmission of COVID-19 in 2022 rapid diagnostic testing of community members in locations where newly confirmed cases were reported proved instrumental in breaking the transmission chains. Additionally, through a reactive vaccination approach, efforts were made to reach out to individuals who had not yet received the vaccine and encourage them to get vaccinated. This approach resulted in 15,463 people being fully vaccinated, contributing 0.4% to the country's overall vaccination coverage of 81% of the population by April 30, 2023.

The Community Based Surveillance and Response (CBSR) re-enforced community engagement by integrating testing, vaccination, case management, contact tracing and addressing misinformation. It also involved the supply of infection prevention kits and home-based isolation and care of confirmed cases.

With support from World Health Organization (WHO), mobile health teams on a total of 162,018 samples in the counties of Montserrado, Nimba, Margibi, and Grand Bassa. From July 15, 2022, to April 30, 2023, a total of 320 cases were confirmed in these counties, with Montserrado having 166 cases, Nimba with 113 cases, Margibi with 18 cases, Lofa with 12 cases, and Grand Bassa with 11 cases. Additionally, 1,682 contacts were followed up, with

Montserrado accounting for 558 contacts, Nimba with 807 contacts, Margibi with 160 contacts, Lofa with 56 contacts, and Grand Bassa with 101 contacts. These efforts were focused on the five counties, which collectively house nearly 50% of Liberia's total population.

With the decline in demand for voluntary COVID-19 testing in Liberia, the community-based response initiative enabled monitoring of epidemiological trends to guide control measures.

The initiative, which uses rapid tests to counter the challenge of identifying COVID-19 cases outside health facilities, was launched in Liberia in July 2022.

“Expanding testing in communities using the antigen tests is helping to provide a better way for the country to respond to the pandemic,” says Chea Sanford Wesseh, Assistant Minister for Vital Statistics in Liberia’s Ministry of Health, adding that there are plans to broaden their use beyond the three counties.

In practice, the mobile teams targeted community members in places where newly confirmed cases were reported by administering rapid tests to identify other potential cases. The technology is simple, making it suitable for use in





Photo Credit: UNICEF



LIBERIA'S COVID-19 DETECTION AND VACCINATION DRIVE BOOSTED BY COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSE.

all settings.

Anyone who tests positive and requires treatment is linked to their nearest health facility. In cases where patients are either experiencing mild symptoms or asymptomatic, they are managed under home-based isolation and care, receiving infection prevention and control materials, including information on COVID-19 risk factors and prevention measures such as vaccination and handwashing.

"With testing in communities, we are reaching both the asymptomatic and symptomatic cases. That way we are undertaking timely isolation of confirmed cases leading to a break in the chain of transmission," explains Dr Monday Julius, the WHO team lead for health emergencies in Liberia.

The positive impact on vaccination uptake contributed to Liberia joining Mauritius, Rwanda and Seychelles as the only four African countries to achieve the 70% global vaccination coverage target by December 2022.

Victoria Dekpah, a student at Nimba University in Liberia, was among those convinced to get vaccinated against COVID-19 when health workers visited her community.

"I didn't think it was important to test. Many people were afraid of knowing their status and what would happen to them. But after listening

to the health worker, I volunteered to take the test and it turned out positive. I isolated myself at home and the health worker visited me regularly until I tested negative again. I also got vaccinated thereafter," she says.

Isaac Cole, County Surveillance Officer in Nimba, blames rampant misinformation surrounding COVID-19 for the reluctance among Liberians to accept testing and vaccination. But working with local leaders who are trusted by their communities, he says, was the game changer in achieving results.

"The people now know that once they are tested and found to be positive, they will be taken care of either at the health facility or through the home-based care approach. When we go to communities, health workers also lead by example by being vaccinated first, as one of the ways of dispelling myths about vaccination and its effect on the body," he adds.

WHO has supported 18 other African countries to implement COVID-19 community-based surveillance and response initiative with guidance to use the lessons learnt in implementing this strategy for improving surveillance and response to other epidemic prone diseases.





Lucinda Rouse/BBC

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RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS FINALIZE FIRST NATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE SEA CUCUMBERS

Sea cucumbers along Liberia's coast need special attention for sustainable management.

The National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority of Liberia (NaFAA), and its local and international partners have reviewed, finalized, and validated the draft Fisheries Management Plan for the sustainable Sea Cucumber fishery in Liberia.

The validation process took place at a two-day workshop in Monrovia, attended by other national authorities, sea cucumbers fisherfolks, national and regional fishing associations, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders on 10-11 April 2023. FAO's aquaculture experts from Senegal and Rome facilitated the workshop.

The government of Liberia identifies sea cucumber fisheries as one of the key fisheries in the country with its potential to provide opportunities for income diversification and a source for nutrition. However, its fishery practices as well as ecologies are under-documented. FAO's technical support is in response to a request from NaFAA to assess the current status of the sea cucumbers fisheries operations and to advise on the need of a more formalized management framework and necessary actions to enhance the livelihoods and the quality of life of the sea cucumbers fisherfolks.

On the first day of the workshop, the government and stakeholders reviewed and finalized the final fisheries management plan as a national framework for sustainable sea cucumber fisheries management. On the second day, the main results of the project were presented to a wider audience including local and international partners. The results included the very first national sea cucumbers Fisheries Management Plan, a practical guide on safe hookah diving, a Liberian sea cucumbers processing manual into bêche-de-mer, and a sea cucumber aquaculture pilot business plan, developed by FAO in collaboration with NaFAA.

"Sea cucumber fisheries in Liberia was not well documented, although there is a suggestion of overfishing leading to depletion of stocks and even local extinction of high-value species in some localities" said Ms Mariatou Njie, Representative, FAO Liberia. "Consequently, sea cucumber fisheries require the support of a management framework to conserve stocks and allow equitable and sustainable access and trade to the resources." Madame Njie thanked the technical teams of NaFAA and FAO for the collaboration that made possible the successful implementation of the project and expressed





Lucinda Rouse BBC

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RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS FINALIZE FIRST NATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE SEA CUCUMBERS

deep appreciation to NaFAA for the strong support and cooperation.

“Implementing this plan will serve as a source of revenue for the government and will create job opportunities for Liberians. This is the first time that we are having a species-specific management plan in Liberia, and we want to assure our partners that this will not be the last,” remarked Mr. Augustine M. Monaballah, Deputy Director General for Administration of NaFAA. He also assured that NaFAA stands ready to implement fully the management plan to ensure sustainable sea cucumber harvest and fisheries activities in the country.

“Many actors were involved in the implementation of this project from the very start. NaFAA, international organizations and bilateral partners, universities and, of course, the sea cucumber fisherfolks proving the importance of joining forces for our only main priority: enhancing the quality of life and livelihoods of the small scale fisherfolks while we ensure the conservation of the target species,” said the facilitator/presenter of the “Assessment of the sea cucumber fisheries along the coast in Liberia” Project, Ms Paula Anton, Fishery and Aquaculture Officer, FAO Sub-regional Office for West Africa.

National authorities and stakeholders, finalizing the fisheries management plan for sea

cucumbers, identified key tasks to follow in accordance with the plan. One of the tasks is to spread and highlight the importance of the Fisheries Management Plan for the conservation of resources and sustainable fisheries. Others are to establish an effective mechanism between fishermen and the national authority to register, share and compare data from catches and to improve knowledge on stocks and conduct continuous trainings for divers and processors for a safe and sustainable value chain development.

Following the validation workshop, the FAO expert group will conduct hands-on training in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County to continue providing support for the sustainable sea cucumber fisheries on the ground. The training will target fishmongers and processors in the coastal communities to build their capacity on safe hookah diving activities, sea cucumber handling and processing and to sensitize them on the new fishery management plan.





Photo Credit: FAO



FAO, GOVERNMENT, AND PARTNERS COMMEMORATE WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY 2023

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Government of Liberia (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, National Standard Authority), and other partners officially commemorated the World Food Safety Day (7 June).

“Food safety is critical to attaining several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” said Emmanuel Kapee, FAO Project Coordinator and Partnership Specialist attending the World Food Safety Day Awareness Program at the Ministerial Complex in Monrovia, Liberia on 7 June 2023, on behalf of FAO Representative a.i. in Liberia. “This means that ending hunger is about all people having access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food at all times and that there is no food security without food safety. Safe food contributes to economic prosperity, boosts agricultural transformation, and contributes to market access, tourism, and sustainable development.”

FAO has supported and continues to support the government on a number of sub-sector interventions. One of these interventions included our recent Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) on food safety - Improved public health, and trade of food and food products in Liberia (2019-2022). Support under this project included consultative meetings with

relevant line government ministries and agencies and capacity-building workshops on Microbiological Risk Assessment and Management, with more than 50 technical staff from public laboratories, research, and academic institutions benefitting. The project further procured 80 sets of assorted equipment and laboratory supplies (reagents; high-tech autoclaves; analytical scales; pH meters; spectrometers; distiller units; ovens; Electric Vortex Shakers; blenders; refrigerators; etc.) for the national standard laboratory; including practical training on the use of these high-tech equipment and supplies. Key regulatory instruments such as edible oil regulations of Liberia, fruits and vegetable regulations of Liberia and meat regulations of Liberia were developed and validated.

A new TCP project over the next three-year period (2023 – 2025) seeks to strengthen the National Food Control System by ensuring the safety of food and trade improvement in Liberia. The goal is to build solid and sustainable Codex systems in Liberia to effectively contribute to Codex activities.

In addition, the ongoing TCP titled “Enhancing the National Abattoir System and Strengthening the Productive Capacity of Rural Smallholder Producers” (2021-2023) completed a comprehensive assessment and is capacitating



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GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



FAO, GOVERNMENT, AND PARTNERS COMMEMORATE WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY 2023

the National Abattoir System, focusing on facilities - 2 national slaughterhouses and 4 slabs, procedures and inspectors, and the enabling environment such as policy, institutional and legal framework. As part of this technical cooperation project, in March 2023 FAO conducted Technical Training for Selected stakeholders on Animal Health, Surveillance, and Good Production Practices; benefitting over 20 national stakeholders, including inspectors, lab technicians, animal health surveillance officers, and butchers from Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba, and Lofa Counties and increased their knowledge on Good Hygienic Practices (GHPs), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs), and Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs), among others.

In the fishery sector, FAO in Liberia also conducted capacity development of female fishmongers and fish processors on food safety and good hygiene in the fishery value chain. In the past two weeks, FAO has provided training sessions with a total of 60 female fishmongers from Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties on good hygiene practice. This is to keep the products safe and in good quality in the process of fish handling, processing and packaging, to align it with the international food safety standard. The training was part of the project funded by the Government of Japan

which successfully introduced the country's first FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique (FTT), an efficient fish processing technique developed by FAO to lift the livelihoods of coastal communities in Liberia.

The campaign to raise awareness of the importance of food safety continued throughout the week, with the government and partners rolling out a week-long public sensitization in Liberia.

In alignment with the FAO strategic framework supporting the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems, FAO continues to prioritize food safety as an integral part of its work in Liberia and remains committed to supporting and partnering with the Government of Liberia on these critical interventions.



OHCHR, EU AND INCHR at the Motorbike handover ceremony under the Spotlight Initiative.



SUPPORTING SPOTLIGHT COUNTY MONITORS TO FOLLOW UP ON SGBV CASES.

On 29 May, OHCHR, with support from the Spotlight Initiative Program, a partnership between the European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, handed over five new motorbikes to the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR).

At the handing-over ceremony, OHCHR Country Representative Christian Mukosa spoke extensively about the violence against women and girls (VAGWG) and how it affects the full realisation of their human rights. “Violence against women and girls remains a concern in Liberia, and there is a need for all partners to address the concerns collectively. These motorbikes will serve as a tool to assist INCHR field monitors to go in remote communities in 5 counties (Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Montserrado and Nimba) to monitor, investigate and document human rights violations with emphasis on violence against women and girls”, said Mukosa.

The Head of EU Governance, Mr Jyrki Torni, stressed that a little gesture, such as donating five motorbikes makes a massive difference in the lives of those women and girls whose rights are being violated and that the motorbikes would help INCHR fulfil its mandate to improve respect for human rights.

The Chairperson of the INCHR assured all partners that the motorbikes would be utilised to monitor and ensure respect for human rights in the Spotlight counties where the program is being implemented.

One of the monitors in Nimba County who received one of the motorbikes share a personal perspective on how the motorbikes will be used and how they will also impact the lives of those who are working to address SGBV cases in Liberia. “ Now INCHR field monitors will be much visible as I will be able to participate in other activities held far off and I can regularly travel to many of the far-off places to monitor Sexual and Gender Based Violence cases and help in expeditiously responding to human rights concerns in the county .





HUMAN RIGHTS 75: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE

On 4 July 2023, OHCHR collaborated with the National Commission on Disabilities (NCD) and the National Union of Organizations for the Disabled (NUOD) to hold a dialogue for women with disabilities on their participation in public and political life. The UN Resident Coordinator, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Labor participated in the event attended by 98 women with disabilities.

The Resident Coordinator noted that although there is progress in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, more needs to be done to have women with disability participate in public and political life. She said, “Women with disabilities are even more underrepresented due to discriminatory norms and attitudes based on gender and disability. Women’s equal & meaningful participation is not only a right but necessary for women’s interests to shape public decisions”.

Speaking on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR Deputy Representative Ms Pasipau Chirwa said, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights inspired the equal and meaningful participation of women in all their diversity. Therefore, to deliver on its promise, there is decisive action we can take. We must challenge the deeply engrained social norms and traditions holding women’s participation back and increase women’s representation at the political table through quotas. And zero tolerance

for harassment and violence against women and girls in public, private and political life”.

The Government representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP)-Gender and Human Rights Section and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) assured the participants of the Government’s commitment to ensuring the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, including in supporting those seeking to take up public and political offices.

The Chairperson of the NCD, Ambassador Daintowon Domah Pay-Bayee, gave her testimonial of how she overcame fear and barriers against women with disabilities during her political campaign for district representative post in the 2018 elections and had this to say, “I use my testimony to help inspire and motivate other women with disabilities to get involved and advocate for their rights, while also highlighting the importance of their contributions to society.”

OHCHR had an opportunity to speak to a few women. “I felt good, appreciated, and I learnt something new. I no longer feel like a woman with a disability. We didn’t know our rights this well until we had the dialogue. I will no longer limit myself, and from now on, I will be bold and move forwards in participating in the electoral processes,” said Rose. Dargbeh one of the women



5 GENDER EQUALITY



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



HUMAN RIGHTS 75: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE

with disabilities who serves as the executive secretary of the NCD.

"I am from the wheelchair basketball association. I learnt many new things, such as the Ministry of Justice's effort to make sure the roads include sidewalks and restaurants to be disability friendly. Also, no matter my condition, I can always make it as a public or political figure and represent all people equally", said Maria Gaye.



The UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Christine Umutoni, OHCHR Deputy Rep. Ms Pasipau Chirwa and NCD Chairperson Amb. Daintown Domah Pay-Bayee

To bring this discussion to the fore, the NCD and its affiliate organisations will put forward a Human Rights 75 pledge for the government's consideration during the August National Human Rights 75 Dialogue discussions.

Caption: The activity was implemented as one of the year-long Human Rights 75 Initiative, and the focus for June was on Women and Girls' participation in public and political life. The NCD and its affiliate organisations will submit their proposed HR75 pledge to the Government for consideration.



LIFE-CHANGING QUESTION TRANSFORMS WILDLIFE HUNTER TO FOREST ECO GUARD



Sam Jomah, 41, is a sixth-grade school dropout in Lukasu Village, Lofa County. He is married with six children.

He resorted to hunting wildlife to secure a livelihood for his family. But this changed early this year when confronted with the question: "Have you ever seen a rich hunter before?"

The question was posed by the Society for the Conservation of Nature, Liberia (SCNL) while mobilizing community members for training leading to the recruitment of some of them as Eco Guards for the Gola Forest National Park and the proposed Foya protected area.

"I was confused because I was a hunter and used to stay in the forest to kill animals to feed my children and support my family. After thinking, I realized I did not know any hunter who is rich," he told UNDP during a recent visit to Lukasu.

It was at this point that he decided to join other community members to be hired and trained as a forest eco guard. The training was about how to identify high-conservation wildlife species and identify illegal human activities within the protected area.

They were also given camera traps training, GPS operation skills, and a compass which are all geared toward making bio-monitoring effective. The camera traps will be deployed in the forest for a period of a month to monitor the different species of the landscape.

Today Sam is an Eco Guard, trained, skilled, and equipped to patrol and monitor the forest for any illegal activities such as poaching. He is paid a

stipend that enables him to provide for his family, and even save up to start a business, possibly a green business.

"Thanks to the community-based forestry project, today I know how to spell my name and my father's names. I even know how to use a GPS and a compass," Jomah said.

Asked if he is now able to provide for his family without having to resort to hunting, he smiled coyly saying: "Thanks to the project for where it has taken us from and where it is taking us."

Sam is among 80 community members who have been recruited and trained as Eco Guards in the Northwest Region of the country covering Lofa, Grand Cape Mount County, and Gbarpolu Counties.

These eco guards will be equipped with tablets, tents, and other assorted items to aid them to conduct research as well as to monitor the forest for illegal activities.

They are one of the activities being undertaken by a Swedish-funded community-based forestry management project being implemented by UNDP and FAO in partnership with Liberia's Forestry Development Authority (FDA).

The project is aimed at strengthening community involvement and participation in the governance of protected and community-managed forests.





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