

PRIORITIES FOR RECONSTRUCTION
INPUT TO THE LIBERIAN INTERIM POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY (IPRS)
FEBRUARY, 2007

OVERARCHING OBSERVATIONS

- There is a great deal of interconnectedness among the pillars that must be recognized. Security will not exist without economic development, improved health, and education. Similarly, without security, economic and social development are stifled.
- With that in mind, within the context of the national budget and iPRS, it is critical not to over-emphasize support and funding for defense at the expense of health and social programs that will rebuild communities as well as a local sense of progress with reconstruction.
- Understand that women's inclusion isn't only about guaranteeing women's representation. Rather it is about recognizing the different perspectives, skills and needs that women can add to the dialogue. It also is about recognizing the unique leadership Liberian women offer and training them to participate effectively in governance at all levels.
- Many issues are women's issues but they are also national priorities. The absence of an effective justice system is a major problem. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS undermines national progress in myriad ways.
- In realizing the iPRS, it is essential there be close partnerships and cooperation among all implementers and that Liberian NGOs are fully involved in implementation.

PILLAR I: ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY

1. Women must be major stakeholders in security sector reform. In addressing national security, a broader view of human security must be embraced, particularly in light of the increasing incidence of gender based violence, particularly rape, and continued insecurity in local communities. Women will bring that broader concept of security and that connection to local communities to iPRS implementation and to PRS development.
2. The 20 percent quota for women's inclusion in the police and armed forces is commendable, as are the specific efforts to increase recruitment of women using education programs to qualify them for basic training. The quota should be realized at all levels within the security sector to ensure women a presence in local police stations, within all districts, and at the national level. Additionally, the quota should be gradually increased as part of the reform process.
3. All new security sector policies and all training should be gender sensitive and provide for trauma healing and reconciliation. This will help ensure that the police and military are ready to serve all citizens equally well.
4. Women should be full partners in the creation of the National Security Policy, the National Defense Strategy, and related strategies and programs for training. To ensure this, the Governance Reform Commission should involve gender experts in planning as well as create mechanisms for consultation with non-governmental organizations and local communities nationwide. Women's groups stand ready to assist these efforts.
5. The need to resolve competing land claims has to be recognized as critical to security. In resolving those claims, particular attention must be paid to addressing the reality that women often lack traditional tenure rights and to ensuring that women-headed households retain land and housing.
6. Reintegration efforts must be better structured to facilitate the re-creation of communities by providing trauma counseling (to include indigenous efforts such as traditional healing ceremonies) and reintegration programs to ex-combatants, the war-affected, and the communities receiving returning combatants. Additionally, a greater portion of training and employment programs should be undertaken in receiving communities so that those communities feel the benefits of accepting combatants and the stigma of participating in combatant programs is reduced.

PILLAR II: REVITALIZING THE ECONOMY

1. The focus on private sector development and in that context, the commitment to develop a comprehensive national land reform policy, is positive. It will be critical that the reform processes include a specific assessment of possible impacts on women's ownership of, access to and control of land. Additionally, programs to raise awareness about land tenure reform will be needed to ensure an awareness of rights throughout communities. For land reform to fully benefit women it will need to be tied to the provision of training and resources including tools, technology and financing for micro and small business.
2. To guarantee that Liberia is able to track the impact of reconstruction on women and men, all government departments should introduce gender budgeting that includes, at minimum, gender disaggregated tracking of resource allocation, program implementers, and beneficiaries, consistent with commitments regarding accountability made in Paris in 2005.
3. The efforts to increase the women's economic status through the Liberia Emergency Employment Program (LEEP) and the operational programs foreseen in the iPRS are commendable. Women should be even more significant participants in the Liberia Employment Action Plan (LEAP), particularly in areas outside of Monrovia. In generating employment, greater emphasis should be placed on attracting women to non-traditional jobs and on ensuring women compensation for work done in traditionally female roles. Affirmative efforts also should be made to include female youth in equal proportion to male youth, and to involve women returnees in economic programs.
4. Capacity development programs should include at least 50 percent women. Special attention should be paid to ensure the targeting of women is not limited to artisan and other traditional sectors, but includes information technology-related industries.
5. All data collected by the national statistical system and information management of the government should be disaggregated by sex. In particular, ensure that women's contributions to the economy are captured, especially informal sector contributions.

PILLAR III: STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW

1. The emphasis on the need for gender equity in Liberia is important and greatly appreciated, particularly the need to develop a national gender policy related to all sectors and to address gender-based violence. Implementation would be strengthened by creating a collective sense of responsibility and accountability for implementation of the strategy in all Government ministries. This could be achieved by:
 - a. creating an inter-ministerial mechanism for monitoring progress towards the achievement of gender equality and holding line ministries accountable;
 - b. strengthening the Ministry of Gender and Development and enhancing its capacity to operate under a decentralized system of government;
 - c. financing implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence and the Gender Justice Plan of Action; and
 - d. creating mechanisms to ensure attention to gender and consultation with women in the planning and operation all commissions, including the Law Reform Commission and the Governance Reform Commission.
2. The civil service reform and manpower development planning processes must ensure distinct and special attention to the needs of women. To that end:
 - a. women must comprise 50 percent of the trainees in all capacity building programs;
 - b. women must also comprise 50 percent of those contracted nationally and internationally to provide training and services; and
 - c. monitoring and evaluation must be undertaken on a gender and age disaggregated basis to ensure that benefits accrue to all groups in society.
3. To advance the commendable goal of addressing gender inequity, 30 percent representation of women must be mandated at all levels of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government. Particular emphasis should be placed on increasing gender sensitivity throughout the legal system.
4. The elimination of corruption at all levels, including in local communities, is undoubtedly critical to the future of Liberia. As corruption is addressed, it will be important that monetary payoff is not the only form of corruption combated. The demand for sexual services for jobs, cross-border trade, access to credit, and transport to markets must also be addressed and may require alternate anti-corruption strategies.
5. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission must buttress its ability to reach out to women. For example, the TRC should explore strategies to ensure protection and psychosocial support for witnesses and victims, and to establish dialogue and cooperation with local women's organizations.

PILLAR IV: REHABILITATING INFRASTRUCTURE AND DELIVERING BASIC SERVICES

1. The national HIV/AIDS strategy should:
 - a. include education programs focused on the impact of violence against women such as rape and domestic violence on the transmission and management of HIV/AIDS;
 - b. acknowledge and accommodate the unique needs of women who suffer from HIV/AIDS while also bearing the burden of being primary caregivers to those affected by HIV/AIDS; and
 - c. improve access to free and low-cost anti-retroviral drugs.
2. The focus on girls education policy is commendable. The policy should be fully funded and implemented, and complemented by adult literacy programs for women.
3. A significant number of women should be included in groups of teachers and community leaders trained to manage, repair, and service infrastructure.
4. As part of returnee reintegration programs, the particular needs of women returnees should be met. Those needs include physical security, housing, livelihood training, and initial funding for basic needs, school fees, and business start-up. Programs should also acknowledge that women refugees returning to Liberia are often their family's primary caregivers.
5. Violence against women safe houses in each county should be funded to counsel victims and assist them in pursuing legal recourse. National and international NGOs should work as partners in this regard.
6. The focus on improving Liberia's correctional system is commendable. The revitalization of prison infrastructure and the training of staff must address the unique needs of women and men.
7. Construction of low cost housing units, especially for women-headed households, should be supported.
8. Public facilities such as schools and government offices should be made accessible to the physically challenged.
9. The focus on reducing infant and maternal mortality is commendable.

PART THREE: IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY AND FULL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPER ROAD MAP

1. Place emphasis on working with regional organizations dedicated to peace and security. For example, a number of very strong regional women's organizations have led peace-building programs.
2. Women should be recognized and more extensively involved in managing security risks. Women's organizations have particular skill in:
 - Advancing local reconciliation;
 - Connecting efforts across local communities and with the national government;
 - Building and nurturing within communities a sense of belonging and voice to contribute to local and national reconstruction processes;
 - Reaching out to youth; and
 - Building bridges locally, regionally, and across the continent.
3. A peace fund using a public/private partnership should be established to fund and support efforts to promote local reconciliation, community-based reintegration efforts, and other efforts to consolidate peace nationwide. The fund should particularly focus on supporting the efforts of women's organizations.

For Additional Information:

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