A PARTICIPANT SPEAKS UP DURING CONSULTATIONS ON RESILIENCE IN LOFA COUNTY

# Documenting the Resilience of Liberians in the Face of Threats to Peace and the 2014 Ebola Crisis

## Frameworks for Assessing Resilience

**LIBERIA COUNTRY NOTE**

**Platform for Dialogue and Peace (P4DP)**

**November 2015**

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## About The Platform for Dialogue and Peace

The Platform for Dialogue and peace (P4DP) is an independent, non-governmental, research-based Liberian peacebuilding organization that was founded in 2012, following six years of collaboration as an integral part of a joint Interpeace-United Nations engagement in Liberia. P4DP has worked in the fifteen political sub-divisions of Liberia. The Peacebuilding work of P4DP started in what was considered the epicenter of the Liberian violent conflict – Nimba County. In 2007, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) requested Interpeace to design a project to address inter-ethnic tensions in Nimba County, which were the result of the dynamics of war that fuelled unresolved property and land disputes between returning Mandingo refugees and Mano and Gio inhabitants in the County. As an organization committed to making Liberia a society based on good governance and broader civic participation, P4DP diligently adapted Participatory Action Research[1] (PAR) methodology in strengthening the capacities of State and non-State actors to prevent, manage and transform conflict through collaborative action. Through this approach, P4DP endeavors to see a Liberian society that is characterized by equality, social cohesion and respect for all. P4DP commenced its work with Interpeace on the implementation of the 'Frameworks for Assessing Resilience' (FAR) Programme in Liberia, in early 2014.

## About Interpeace

Interpeace is an international peacebuilding organization based in Geneva. It was initially established in 1994 by the United Nations to develop innovative solutions to build peace and became independent in 2000. Interpeace has been supporting peace building through 'inclusive and nationally-led processes of change' that foster durable peace and development dividends. A cardinal principle of Interpeace's peacebuilding message is 'peacebuilding must be led and driven from within societies that are experiencing conflict and not be controlled from the outside'. Today, the organization supports locally-led peacebuilding initiatives in 22 countries across Central America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Interpeace has been P4DP's international partner since 2012 and both organizations continue to work collaboratively on various initiatives, including the current FAR project, which is coordinated by Interpeace and implemented by P4DP, in Liberia.

## About The Frameworks for Assessing Resilience (FAR) Programme

The FAR Programme is a two year programme created by Interpeace and funded by SIDA, to develop tools that deepen the understanding of resilience and seeking means of assessing it in conflict-affected societies – as defined by the populations of these societies themselves. It focuses on the positive capacities that contribute to resilience for peace, rather than only on the sources of fragility and potential fault-lines for conflict in any country. In its first phase, the project engages local populations in defining and assessing resilience for peacebuilding. The project is currently being implemented in Timor-Leste, Liberia and Guatemala.

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1   Based on the idea that solutions to the challenges faced by post-conflict societies need to be developed and owned by the societies themselves in order to bring effective remedy. The methodology facilitates the development of inclusive solutions by the societies and creates a culture of dialogue that helps to improve the relations among –sometimes antagonistic- groups through repeated meetings, joint analysis of the challenges and design of solutions. The approach is also based on the assumption that such a process equips participants with listening and dialogue skills that will contribute to the peaceful management of conflicts in other conflicting contexts.

# FORWARD

The Platform for Dialogue and Peace in Liberia (P4DP), with support from Interpeace, specifically the regional office for West Africa and the Frameworks for Assessing Resilience program Steering Committee, is delighted to release this report which highlights the resilience of Liberians. After fourteen years of civil war that led to the death of over 250,000 people and the massive destruction of essential national infrastructure, Liberians are gradually 'bouncing back'. However, overcoming the effects of the crisis has not been an easy journey for a low income country heavily reliant on foreign assistance. Much has been written on the recovery process, but insufficient attention has been given to understanding the resources, capacities, skills and strategies that are endogenous to Liberia, whether at the individual, family, household, community and national levels. The Framework for Assessing Resilience (FAR) program is a cross-country endeavor aimed at documenting and understanding the sources of resilience in society that can be leveraged for building durable peace. FAR seeks to shift the conversation from one exclusively concerned with state fragility and the fault-lines for violence and conflict, to one that looks at both existing and potential assets and strengths within societies and institutions that enable people to recover from, overcome, and prevent violent conflict. Based on an inclusive consultation process with Liberians, FAR seeks to identify and document the assets, resources and capacities that are embedded within Liberian society, so that peace can be strengthened and consolidated from within.

Since the end of the civil war in 2003, there has not been any significant large scale or destabilizing re-emergence of violence in Liberia. However, the key factors that under-pinned the war in the first place, as well as "conflict drivers" that pose new threats to peace and stability, persist to this day – keeping Liberia in a state of "fragile peace". Therefore, although Liberia enjoys a delicate post-war peace today, the process of building and consolidating long term peace remains an uphill endeavor. Recently, despite more than a decade of this relative peace, the vulnerability of the Liberian States came to spotlight, with the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic. The health crisis exposed the weaknesses of the

State in its inability to provide basic social services; the severe and ongoing deficiencies in State-society relations; and the ruptured post-war inter-relationships, within society as well as within traditional value systems.

This study reviewed the most pressing challenges to peace in Liberia today and documented the ways in which individuals, families, communities, institutions as well as the government, are coping with, adapting to, or in some instances even transforming these challenges into creative and innovative opportunities. Through the perspectives of the ordinary Liberians consulted, this has framed the working definition of "resilience for peacebuilding" that the FAR program has sought to document and reflect. The research team probed respondents about their perceptions of peace – both before and after the war – as a way of understanding the major threats they see to peace and stability, as well as to better grasp the nature of the mechanisms of resilience to conflict. Resilience is therefore defined in this study as **the capacity of individuals, households or communities to anticipate risk, resolve challenges collaboratively and non-violently across societal divisions, respond creatively to conflict and crisis, and steer social change in ways that foster shared benefits of peace and development**. Individuals' and communities' reasons, motives and decisions to sustain peace rather than to return to large scale conflict are reflected in the kinds of strategies and resilient actions that they developed and adapt.

Recognizing that there are many possible ways of interpreting and classifying the threats to peace, this study has used the following three umbrella themes: (a) Shifting gender roles and identities of women within existing patriarchal structures in Liberian social life, which was seen to contribute substantially to a lot of individual and household-level conflict and risks of violence; (b) the weakness of the state manifested in the inadequate provision of public goods and a perception of governance failures, and the consequent erosion of trust between the State and society; and (c) increasing pressure on land and the absence of effective regulation, which resonates with past causes of conflict, and fuels

new conflict and the potential for violence. In addition to these three threats, the Ebola crisis as an external shock, and the ways in which it has emulated part conflict in undermining social cohesion and trust, is an additional conflict driver that exacerbates and overlaps with the three identified threats described here.

Using a participatory 'action research' methodology throughout the 15 counties in Liberia, P4DP's team consulted 1,152 Liberians, from diverse social, economic and political backgrounds. Those consulted included local governmental and non- governmental authorities, community leaders, local and national religious and traditional leaders, disabled people, youth, women, the elderly, as well as other citizens and community residents. P4DP was at pains to ensure the inclusion of members of the national security sector, various county authorities, CSO groupings, Ivorian refugees in the southeastern frontier region, as well as international NGOs. Even though extra conscious efforts were made by the team to ensure an optimal balance in gender representation, only 36% of those who participated in the consultations were female while 64% were male.

In an attempt to further discuss and corroborate findings from the study, a one day 'validation forum' was held on the 29th of April in Monrovia. This consultation meeting brought together representatives from different sectors of society, including participation from the House of Representatives, the Governance Commission, the Secretary General of Liberia Motor Circle Association, representatives of Council of Chiefs, participants from the private sector, a representative from the African Union, the Honorable Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Morris M. Dukuly, as well as community representatives from each County in Liberia. There was a strong appreciation and affirmation of the research by the participants. In his opening remarks, Minister Dukuly said that the research undertaken resonated because it acknowledges "the difficult past of Liberians coupled with their determination to grapple with their current realities, and that it cannot be over emphasized that Liberians are resilient people." At the end of the session, participants tentatively sought to prioritize eight resilience mechanisms that were identified as having the greatest potential to contribute to the strengthening of peace in Liberia. They also provided P4DP with the authority and orientation to pursue the research in a second phase, consisting of a dialogue based process through

the establishment of a National Working Group… with the objective of making concrete suggestions for programmatic and policy actions. Based on consultations with participants, P4DP drew up proposed terms of reference for this Working Group, and shared these with potential members of the group. On June 10, 2015 the first National Working Group meeting took place and members of the Group have divided themselves into thematic sub-groups to meet bi-monthly, for a period of five months.

Most importantly, heartfelt thanks and gratitude go to the 'resilient people' of Liberia, for their committed participation during the consultation and validation phases of the research – especially considering this was during the very trying period of the Ebola epidemic – and for confiding in P4DP their strategies as well as challenges in dealing with the legacies and risks of conflict and violence. Without their dedicated engagement, we could not have achieved this result. It is hoped that we can further count on their trust and that the cooperative spirit experienced in the field continues until we Liberians, through these endeavors, can find solid anchors of peace.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
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| **AfT** | Agenda for Transformation |
| **APA** | Accra Peace Agreement or Accord |
| **CDC** | Center for Disease and Control |
| **FAR** | Frameworks for Assessing Resilience |
| **FGD** | Focus Group Discussion |
| **EVD** | Ebola Virus Disease |
| **IDPs** | Internally Displaced Persons |
| **IDPS** | International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding |
| **KII** | Key Informant Interview |
| **MOH** | Ministry of Health |
| **P4DP** | Platform for Dialogue and Peace |
| **NPFL** | National Patriotic Force of Liberia |
| **SIDA** | Swedish international Development Cooperation |
| **WAO** | Interpeace West Africa Office |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **UNMIL** | United Nations Mission in Liberia |

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

*"The people of Liberia have suffered greatly*
*since this disease took hold.*
*But we are a strong and resilient people.*
*As their President, I will not rest until we defeat Ebola.*
*To Liberians my message is simple - we are fighting back"-*
President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

The Liberian president, Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, asserts that "Liberian people are resilient people." Liberia went through fourteen years of civil unrest that resulted in the death of 250,000 persons and hundreds of thousands more who were displaced[2] amidst the destruction of all its physical, political and socio-economic institutions. Yet, after 14 years of violent conflict, Liberia recently celebrated ten unbroken years of peace. However, the unprecedented scale and severity of the recent Ebola outbreak in Liberia and neighboring countries has raised concerns and has shown that Liberia remains a *fragile state*. With hospitals closed and only forty five doctors available to serve a population of 4.5 million people,[3] even common illnesses like malaria and the common cold became fatal as there was no capacity or health infrastructure to accommodate both non-Ebola and Ebola-related illnesses, signaling a total collapse of the health system.[4] This had repercussions on the economy, political stability, the social fabric and security of Liberia. Nonetheless, months after the peak of the crisis, Liberia seems to be managing the outbreak much better and the Liberian people have demonstrated immense courage and resilience, in the face of what was perhaps one of the worst public health crises of this decade.

While the notion of **resilience** is quite a broad concept, using the lens and experiences of individuals, communities and institutions to come to a better appreciation of 'why things are not worse?' or 'why the

popular response to these crises, stresses and shocks is not necessarily violent?' will definitely help to shift the dominant discourse of national and global conversations around peacebuilding and state-building in Liberia. In particular, it is important that this notion of resilience is understood and appreciated in relation to the legacies of past conflict, as well as in relation to current aspirations to consolidate peace and address the risks of reemerging or new conflicts, rather than exclusively being seen as responsive to natural disasters or external shocks. A core value of this study is precisely the manner in which these manifestations of 'endogenous' forms of resilience, enable us to better grasp the complex and nuanced inter-relationships between natural disaster, conflict and state fragility.

Prior to the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in Liberia, P4DP and Interpeace had already launched a study to explore resilience to conflict as part of the FAR Programme – a cross-country project aimed at understanding the sources of resilience embedded in societies, that can be leveraged for building and consolidating peace. The FAR Programme's intention was to shift the focus of conversation from one exclusively focused on fragility and risk factors for violent conflict, to one that examined both existing as well as potential assets and strengths within communities, institutions and societies, that enable people to recover from, overcome, and prevent such violent conflict.

This country note documents the FAR project findings from the consultations carried out across all fifteen counties of Liberia between June 2014 and February 2015. P4DP engaged over one thousand Liberians on the question of the existing assets and strengths that enable them to overcome past conflict and prevent further violence in their families, communities and society. People were engaged across political, religious and

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2    Liberia Country Profile-overview ( June 30, 2015)    [Available online at:  http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13729504]
3    International Crisis Group (2014), Statement on Ebola and Conflict in West Africa    [Available online at: http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2014/africa/statement-on-ebola-and-conflict-in-west-africa.aspx ] September, 23 2014.
4    There are only approximately 0.5 doctors, nurses and midwives per 1000 population, far below the World Health Organization's (WHO) 2.3 per 1000 benchmark associated with achieving an 80% coverage rate of deliveries.

ethnic divides because, as noted above, Liberia remains a highly polarized nation. As such, building and restoring trust and social cohesion requires 'inclusive politics' at every level of society – participatory processes and consultations, as well as respect for diversity. This research was therefore designed with the dual objective of making the voices of Liberians audible and placing them at the center in defining resilience in their country and in their communities, as well as engaging policy makers – at both national and international levels – on the development of assessment frameworks for resilience, specifically as it relates to peacebuilding.

This document is also feeding into a follow-up phase of the project, which will see the formation of a National Working Group in Liberia that will deepen the research findings and develop a programmatic 'action and policy road map' to strengthen resilience for peacebuilding in Liberia. Following the completion of the qualitative field research and consultations, a one-day validation forum was held bringing together participants from the country's fifteen political subdivisions, including government representatives, civil society leaders and organizations, as well as donors and international partners, etc. During the forum, initial findings from the research were presented, setting out the key resilience elements that emerged from the field consultations, followed by sub-group discussions aimed as recommending priority issues for the consideration of the national working group. This document therefore also provides some reflections from the multi-stakeholder forum that took place in April 2015.

At the outset, this research was designed to elicit and examine how Liberians are coping with, adapting to, and transforming, the long term and structural threats to peace that exist to this day – even as Liberia celebrates more than ten years of peace since the end of the civil war in 2003. Like many other post-conflict states, Liberia is still struggling with ethnic, religious and class-based polarization associated with histories and enduring legacies of distrust, as well as issues of bad governance that pre-date the war. Since the Accra Peace Agreement (APA) that led to the cessation of hostilities and ushered in a new democratic dispensation, significant efforts have been made to address the structural threats to peace that could provoke a relapse to conflict. While significant gains have been made in this regard, insufficient attention and resources have been allocated to rebuilding social cohesion and encouraging locally-owned and community-led peacebuilding initiatives.

The outbreak of an Ebola epidemic and the ensuing state of emergency had the potential to dramatically alter the situation, as the country faced an acute health crisis that threatened to unravel the peace that had just been celebrated. The unfolding of events as from July 2014 – with the declaration of a state of emergency, a highly militarized response including the establishment of military curfews, and incidents such as the shooting of a young boy in West Point during clashes between angry inhabitants of the quarantined slum community and the Liberian Army – all against a backdrop of uncollected cadavers in the street and a general state of panic and paranoia, signaled the potential fragility of Liberia's peace. But if the peace is fragile, so too are the people resilient: for all that Liberia has gone through in the past, as well as the enduring economic hardships and social challenges, there is a remarkable steadfastness to be observed. If Liberia was initially the most affected of the three West African countries hit by the Ebola epidemic, it was also the first to be declared Ebola-free and notwithstanding the obvious failures of the Liberian State and the health sector in particular, the shock of the health crisis did not translate in a return to conflict or to the reemergence of significant levels of violent conflict.

Liberia must now also prepare for the drawdown of the UNMIL peacekeeping force from the country amidst the intermittent reoccurrence of Ebola cases, barely a month after the Country was declared Ebola-free. This will be a further significant test of Liberia's delicate peace and stability, which, though primarily dependent on the collective efforts of Liberians themselves, is nonetheless also seen to be heavily reliant on support from regional and international stakeholders. The FAR program's consultative research, which looks at the endogenous strengths that Liberians possess individually and collectively, and how these can be better leveraged for peacebuilding efforts, and the initially unplanned but real-time observation of how Liberians responded to the health crisis, could therefore not have been more timely and relevant.

## Aims and Objectives of FAR

The Framework for Assessing Resilience (FAR) Program seeks to make a contribution to address some of the critical gaps and problems which characterized existing work and international understanding of how to assess peacebuilding and statebuilding in the national and global context of contending issues of fragility and resilience. Although there have been some important advances in the development of shared indicators through the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS), as well as the undertaking of fragility assessments in several countries of the G7+, there has been no clear definition of indicators and methodologies to assess resilience as such. The FAR programme seeks to undertake a comparative, but context-specific analysis of resilience, to learn about the existing capacity Liberians have to deal with conflict (whilst undertaking similar exercises in Timor-Leste and Guatemala). The specific objectives include: ensuring the participation and ownership of local/national stakeholders in the definition of resilience in practice and where possible providing narratives to aid the development of nationally-owned and context-specific criteria for assessing resilience and its contribution to peace, that can be shared with, and adapted to, or inform the process of doing this globally or at least comparatively in the countries involved in the FAR program. In addition, the FAR programme aspires to draw on these pilot studies in order contribute to international policy development, particularly on how to assess fragility and resilience, particularly by ensuring the substantive engagement and audible voices of local actors from fragile and conflict-affected societies themselves.

## Rationale for FAR in Liberia

In addition to the overall objective of the FAR programme, P4DP has formulated a set of six objectives that are specific to the Liberian context and consistent with its organizational mandate to guide the implementation of the research at country level. These are to:

1. **Identify local and national structures that aid in building lasting peace and enhance social cohesion**

2. **Complementing the Objectives and Implementation of the New Deal**

3. **Lift local voices into the policy arena, both nationally and internationally**

4. **De-emphasize fragility and promote the concept of resilience**

5. **Contribute to filling the gap that the eventual draw-down of UNMIL will cause**

6. **Draw attention to the specific vulnerabilities that women face**

### *Identify local and national structures that aid in building lasting peace and enhance social cohesion*

For too long Liberians have depended on externally designed and macro capacities and assets and have tended to forget that people at all levels have strengths and capacities that they have been using to manage conflict and carry on with life in Liberia after the war. The UN-led intervention and the generous supports of the donor community have tended to both dwarf and distract from the individual and community-based efforts of ordinary Liberians in navigating the peace process and mitigating the prospects of renewed conflict. In the context of such externally-led peacebuilding approaches, it is arguable that regional, national, and community-level 'endogenous' knowledge have not found effective channels to influence and inform the international decision-making process – despite the theoretical commitment to "local ownership" in peacebuilding. The real challenge that confronts the United Nations and international actors lies, in translating these principles into practice in terms of peacebuilding and statebuilding mechanisms, processes, and programs[5]. Indeed, the FAR Programme in Liberia specifically endeavors to identify institutions and structures that Liberians rely on for survival and governance in diverse aspects of their lives for the sustenance of peace, that seldom come to the fore or garner the attention they warrant. In partnership with its international partner and fellow practitioners in the

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5    Sulleabhain, A. (2015), Leveraging Local Knowledge for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. International Peace Institute [Available online at http://www.ipinst.org/2015/03/leveraging-local-knowledge-for-peacebuilding-and-statebuilding-in-africa]

other pilot countries in this programme, P4DP is not only using FAR to profile the perspectives of local and regional actors, but is also trying to contribute to the development of contextual tools and structures that consolidate the bond between and among individuals' communities and the state in the interests of a lasting peace in Liberia.

## Complementing the Objectives and Implementation of the New Deal

The specific development challenges of fragile and post-conflict states have become more visible to the international development community in recent years, not least because of the increasing advocacy role of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). It is the first forum of its kind to bring together countries that self-identify as fragile and conflict-affected (G7+) along with their international partners, to identify, agree upon and endeavor to find more effective ways of supporting transitions out of violent conflict and building peaceful societies. Members of the IDPS agreed to a New Deal for engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states at Busan, South Korea in November 2011, which built on several rounds of dialogue and which previously produced the Dili Declaration (2010),[6] and the Monrovia Roadmap (2011).[7]

While these global efforts are crucial and provide useful insights toward issues around state fragility and means through which they could be mitigated, in Liberia, there is a lack of national level conceptual understanding of fragility although one fragility assessment was done through USAID support, in 2012.[8] By focusing on how to identify and assess the sources and manifestations of resilience in Liberia, it is believed that FAR can creatively complement the attention to fragility and the implementation of fragility assessments in Liberia, deepening the participation in these processes and helping Liberians to focus on the positive attributes for consolidating peace, alongside the awareness of fragility

and the fault-lines or risk factors for conflict and/or violence. Understanding sources of resilience elements and building on them can help reduce the associated impacts of poverty and conflict in Liberia.

## Lift local voices into the policy arena both nationally and internationally

As stated above, some effort has been made, largely by external actors, to assess and document the sources of fragility in Liberia. With the exception of Sawyer who argued that: "understanding social capital among local people may offer insights for building institutions from the bottom up in terms of war"[9], there has not been any substantial effort to document the voices and perspectives of the Liberian population on resilience. Thus, in this study, we try to use the lens and experiences of individuals, communities and institutions as the starting point in developing a framework to understand and assess how resilience manifests, operates, and potentially transforms fragility over time. More importantly, this study will not only help donors and practitioners to make better informed decisions, but will also help broaden the discussion by engaging a wide range of societal stakeholders, to reflect and appreciate how they can leverage their existing strengths and capacities for peacebuilding and state-building processes in a conflict-affected society with a fragile state.

## De-emphasize fragility and promote the concept of Resilience

The debate surrounding the concept of fragility in the peacebuilding discourse had over time focused on preventive measures and strategies to mitigate further conflicts, especially in States that have experienced war. Peace and conflict literature widely acknowledged that countries that once experienced war may likely slide back after about 5 to 10 years of fragile peace, as most of the causes of the war remain ubiquitous[10]. Donors and peacebuilders have raised concerns over the scant attention given to the fiber of resilience that holds society

6    International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding; 'Dili Declaration: A new Vision for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding', (2010). This Declaration builds on the statement agreed by the G7+ group of countries on 8 April 2010 in Dili. [Available online at: http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/45250308.pdf]

7    The Monrovia Roadmap was adopted by at the second meeting of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State Building held in Monrovia on June 15-17, 2011

8    Locke, R. (2012), DRAFT Liberia Fragility Assessment; USAID/Washington: Report commissioned by the Government of United States and Sweden (as New Deal pilot co-leads) and Civil Society for consideration by Government of Liberia.

9    Sawyer, C.A. (2004). Social Capital, Survival Strategies and their Implications for Post-Conflict Governance in Liberia. Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis Indiana University. 3rd Workshop on the Workshop Conference, July 2 – 6 2004, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 40408

10    Collier, P. et. al. (2003). Breaking the Conflict Trap Civil War and Development Policy: A World Bank Policy Research Report. A co-publication of the World Bank and Oxford University Press.

together despite prevailing social dislocations that could trigger conflicts in fragile states.

Liberia has enjoyed 10 years of peace and there has been no large-scale violence that mirrors the years leading to the 14 years civil conflict. There are concerns that the current peace that Liberia enjoys is not sustainable because it is heavily rested on the United Nations' presence and therefore qualifies Liberia as a fragile state. Further, Liberia's body politics is characterized by ahistorical center–periphery divide which has been a major source of conflict. Against this backdrop however, Liberians have carried on, and powered through, in an impressive demonstration of resilience.

Support given by international actors are helpful in aiding the Liberia Government provide some basic social services to its citizenry thereby building peace by mitigating the potential for violent conflict. However, if peacebuilding is about increasing the resilience of societies to prevent and manage conflict, then there is a need to focus on those things that aid people to 'bounce back' rather than placing so much emphasis on state fragility. Thus, by focusing on resilience, the FAR project seeks to shift the debate by de-emphasizing fragility and looking at resilience mechanisms in Liberian society and how they can be more useful for continuous peace-building consolidation.

## Contribute to filling the gap that the eventual draw-down of UNMIL will cause

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been providing security for Liberia since the cessation of the war 2003, with military troops and civilian officers[11] according to the UN mandate. This focuses on inclusive "strengthening of state institutions," or state-building, as a necessary component of sustainable peace. Having spent twelve years in Liberia, UNMIL is now gradually reducing the number of both military and civilian personnel. The Liberian government is expected to take over provision of security for the entire

country by July 2016 with skeletal UNMIL's support. Such transition demonstrates some level of confidence in the national security apparatus. However, there are increasing localized pockets of security challenges and the recent Ebola outbreak - noticeably the fatal West Point clash with the national security - epitomizes the poor or weak ties between state security apparatuses and those who they are to protect. In the face of this critical moment in the transition and the ambivalent relationship between domestic security institutions and sectors of the population, this study of the sources and capacities for resilience (both positive and negative) have vital implications for peacebuilding strategies after UNMIL – and particularly for ensuring that these are diversified beyond just highly 'securitized' approaches to building durable peace. Engagement of diverse population groups to ascertain and understand their coping mechanisms, can offer opportunities to harness these attributes in support of more durable solutions.

## Draw attention to the specific vulnerabilities that women face

No society can develop successfully without providing equitable opportunities, resources, and life prospects for males and females so that they can shape their own lives, achieve their potential, and contribute fully to their families and communities.[12] Although Liberia has made some efforts in reducing gender inequality, patriarchal cultural value systems continue to give unfair advantages to men, while at the same time these values undermine women's opportunity to compete with men equitably. Discrimination against women and sexually-based violence are some of the problems that work against the female gender. Documenting and understanding the specific attributes of women's resilience in a male dominated society is critical to addressing gender inequality as well as building lasting peace.

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11    United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the stabilization force called for in resolution 1497 (2003), for a period of 12 months, and requests the Secretary-General to transfer authority from the ECOWAS-led ECOMIL forces to UNMIL on 1 October 2003, and further decides that UNMIL will consist of up to 15,000 United Nations military personnel, including up to 250 military observers and 160 staff officers, and up to 1,115 civilian police officers, including formed units to assist in the maintenance of law and order throughout Liberia, and the appropriate civilian component

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12    USAID (2012), Gender equality and female Empowerment, POLICY Brief: MARCH 2012

# 2 COUNTRY CONTEXT

Modern day Liberia was founded in 1847 with the settlement of returned slaves from America popularly called 'Americo-Liberians'.[13] Upon settling, the Americo-Liberians established a system of political rule that excluded the native people (referred to as the 'country people') from power. This form of government establishment created a system that fed itself through deep political marginalization, mistrust, disproportionate distribution of the nation's wealth and educational opportunities in favor of the privileged few Americo-Liberians. The Liberian government was solely controlled by the Americo-Liberians, and ran a discriminatory system of rule that one African scholar referred to as 'Black imperialism'.[14] This system maintained an unrestrained domination for over a century, until 1980, when Samuel K Doe – a "country boy" who had found a career in the military –, led a violent and bloody coup that ousted the age-long government of the Americo-Liberians. However, the leadership style adopted by Sergeant Samuel K. Doe created further social cleavages and bad blood in the polity between the indigenous people and the Americo-Liberians. Charles Taylor, a former government minister of Americo-Liberian descent, who had been hiding out in neighboring Côte D'Ivoire, invaded the country in December 1989 with his National Patriotic Force of Liberia (NPFL), hoping to topple the Doe government. This instead led to the first Liberian Civil War which only ended in 1996 with the Abuja Accords. Peace would only be temporary for Liberia however. The following year, Charles Taylor was elected President, but his tenure was fraught with insecurity and political turmoil that created concern even for the International Community. Taylor's authoritarian style of leadership generated opposition which manifested itself in the formation of factional rebel groups. In 1999, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a dissident rebel group backed by Guinea appeared in Northern Liberia and this sparked the second Liberian civil war. The LURD were joined by other groups and by mid-2003, invaded Monrovia- forcing Taylor to seek refuge in Calabar Nigeria thus paving the way for the deployment of UN Peace keeping troops and the peace process that led to the Accra Peace Accord that same year. The first democratic elections in post war Liberia were held in 2006 and were won by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

## Liberia's Fragile Peace

Twelve years after the end of a protracted civil war that destroyed almost every facet of the country, requiring that every major sector 'start from scratch', Liberia is still recovering. Two successive democratic elections have been peacefully held between 2005 and 2011 with the support of UNMIL. Prior to the Ebola outbreak, economic indicators showed that the country's economy was rebounding and that people were rebuilding their lives. While this is encouraging, it can be deceptive: Liberia still faces economic, environmental, political, social, and security risks that have the potential to undermine the 'fragile peace'[15]. There is a lack of effective social infrastructure, as became evident in the health sector, as well as inadequate human and institutional capacities to deliver other basic services. While such challenges might be common to most developing countries, they are particularly severe and chronic in fragile and conflict affected countries, such as Liberia.

The recent Ebola crisis has shown how central these issues are to trust and confidence in the State as well as within the wider society. The unavailability of these services not only creates the conditions for innovation and resilient crafting of alternative living strategies in complex situations, but according to one commentator, they also pose a big challenge to peace, stability and economic development.[16] Part of the problem is that prevailing

13    Dennis, P. (2006). A Brief History of Liberia. The International Center for Transitional Justice. [Available online at: www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Liberia-Brief-History-2006-English.pdf ]
14    Akpan, M. B. (1973). 'Black Imperialism: Americo-Liberian Rule over the African Peoples of Liberia, 1841-1964' *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* Vol. 7, No. 2 pp. 217-236. Canadian Association of African Studies.

15    Republic of Liberia (2013), Agenda For Transformation: Steps Towards Liberia Rising 2030, Ministry Of Finance, Republic Of Liberia.
16    Habib Ur Rehman, M. (2014), 'The Journey Towards Resilience Continues: g7+Priorities to Confront Ebola, Implement the New Deal and Influence the Post-2015 Agenda' , Journal of Peacebuilding

FGD with People with Disabilities in Bomi County

post-conflict reconstruction strategies in Liberia typically focus on identifying and repairing formal organizations and physical infrastructures, and tend to ignore the informal arrangements that serve to sustain people over years of state retreat or failure. Thus, this study posits that Liberia's current state of fragility, and the Liberian people's resilience in the face of risks of renewed conflict, must be assessed with reference to how historical drivers of conflict interact with, and influence the contemporary challenges.

Liberia is often described as a fragile state, characterized by massive corruption, nepotism, mismanagement of public resources, and the unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities of the nation, characterize the social condition that Liberians have to contend with.[17] It is

important however, to reflect on the concept of state fragility, which is often too loosely used. There are a plethora of notions and understandings, when it comes to defining and identifying 'fragile states'. As Brinkerhoff notes, the majority of conceptualizations of fragile states treat fragility as a spectrum or question of degree between two poles: state failure and collapse at one extreme, and states characterized by serious vulnerabilities at the other.[18] The image conveyed is one of weak capacities at every level of the state and an ongoing threat that the country could slide back to crisis. Liberia, once called 'rogue state, pariah state, failed state; is now conveniently referred to as 'fragile state'.[19] While these nomenclatures

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17    This statement was made by Morris M. Dukuly Sr., who was Speaker of the Transitional Legislative Assembly (1994-1997), in a public letter published on the website of the New Dawn, a local newspaper. , [Accessed online at:  http://www.thenewdawnliberia.

com/feature-op-ed/letter-to-my-compatriots/4749-refcorruption-a-nepotism-in-liberia ]

18    Brinkerhoff, D. W. (2008).  From Humanitarian and Post-conflict Assistance to Health System Strengthening in Fragile States: Clarifying the Transition and the Role of NGOs; USAID.

19    The World Bank defines fragile states as states characterized by very weak policies, institutions and governance. Aid does not work well in these environments because governments lack the capacity or inclination to use finance effectively for poverty reduction.

have changed over time – based on national, regional and international dynamics – most characterizations contend that fragile states have governments that are more or less incapable of ensuring basic security and justice for their citizens, fail to provide basic services and economic opportunities, and are unable to garner sufficient legitimacy to maintain citizens' confidence and trust.

Whereas Liberia has experienced more than a decade of relative peace without slipping back into the trap of large scale violent conflict,  the provision of basic social and economic services for the population of just over 4.5 million[20] remains a notable challenge. In this regard, Liberia has yet to secure a positive peace[21] and remains vulnerable to future conflict. In the face of these difficult conditions that continue to threaten the country's stability, Liberians are determined to forge ahead in spite of the many challenges they face, showing that they truly are a resilient people.

*Conducting Resilience Research during Public Health Crisis (Ebola)*

Considering the health risk brought about by Ebola and the public trauma it caused, it was obviously challenging for P4DP's team to conduct research in various communities. The state of emergency restricted people's movement and limited gatherings requiring that P4DP take additional precautions when conducting consultations. However, a resilience research was all the more pertinent in order to observe how people cope, survive and resist the escalation of conflict when a humanitarian emergency exacerbates the conditions that contribute to state fragility. These were breeding tensions that could escalate to violent conflict. The Ebola situation was an additional test of resilience because of the ways in which the health epidemic interacted with and often exacerbated existing sources of tensions in Liberia. For example, during the peak of the epidemic in 2014, it was alleged that the Liberian government decided to sell out the remaining oil blocks that could be reserved for the benefits of majority of the Liberian population. This

action by the government led hundreds of youth to the capitol building to challenge the law-makers in making such decision. Similarly, the twin incidents of West Point and Dolo Town[22] Communities, both quarantined because of Ebola, exposed the lack of trust in the government, and illustrated the risk that violence could be quickly and easily triggered. These incidents, as well as the state of emergency more generally, presented a mirror image of situations resembling those of the war, triggering traumatic memories and sending shock waves into the spine of ordinary Liberians.

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The World Bank (2005); Fragile states – good practice in country assistance strategies. Board Report 34790 - 19 December 2005. World Bank, Washington, DC.
20    Country-Liberia Population.
[Accessed online at: http://countrymeters.info/en/Liberia ]
21    Galtung, J. (1967). Theories of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking; p.12 – Galtung distinguishes between negative peace, which is the absence of violence, and positive peace where the underlying structural factors that fuel violence are addressed.

22    Located in Margibi County, Dolo town was also placed under quarantine for two weeks ago. Like West Point, residents became increasingly resentful and described the action by government and its partners as placing them in "Ebola jail".

# 3 METHODOLOGY

This section of the country note explores the design and methods deployed in collecting data as well as analysis. In the implementation of the FAR programme in Liberia, there are three phases: the consultation phase which the outcomes of which are reflected in the findings of this; the validation phase where information gathered were validated by various stakeholders who provided the data during the consultation; and the National working group phase where all findings are further being explored for action-oriented policy recommendations and new engagements towards building resilient institutions for durable peace. Issues highlighted in this section include, community entry, pre-testing, identification trips, consultation, the role of local facilitator, methodological constraints and P4DP coping strategies.

## 3.1    Research Design

The design for this study is qualitative, grounded in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach and utilizes Focus Group Discussions (FGD), observation techniques, as well as Key Informant Interviews (KII), and the use of camera and digital audio recorders to capture live pictures and voices of participants. Small group meetings were also held in some cases, where neither of KII nor FGD was obtainable. Research protocols were designed to guide the teams in their engagement with local stakeholders. These sessions were inclusive and participatory, as participants were selected from various backgrounds and were free to express their views in the most candid manner. Participants were also free to leave the discussions as and when they felt the need to do so.

## *Community Entry:*

Local leaders in each locale were contacted and local facilitators recruited to support the teams in their work as a way to build trust, and to foster inclusion and local ownership. Field trips were carried out prior the consultation phase to engage community leaders and local facilitators who helped guide the research team in the earmarked communities so that local communities would not perceive the research teams as strangers who invaded their communities to extract information. This process was stalled by the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease after successful initial visits to seven counties, including Montserrado.

Community entry was initially done through a letter from the P4DP Director to the Minister of Internal Affairs, and was emailed and also hand delivered to the County Superintendents, district commissioners, sectoral stakeholders and community leaders during the identification visits. This action was followed by telephone calls to all relevant local authorities. This attention to proper entry is critical to ensuring that the community is respected and allows for a more meaningful and legitimate engagement with local stakeholders.

## *Pre-testing exercise-*

A pilot testing exercise was undertaken in two communities of Montserrado County. These were: Peace Island, a suburb slum community near Monrovia, mainly inhabited by ex-combatants; and Whein Town community, another suburb community near Paynesville City. The essence of this exercise was to validate some of the study assumptions about coping mechanisms as well as the study protocol, and to test the data collection instruments. This pilot testing helped the study team strengthen the data collection tool by rephrasing some of the working questions in order to be more accessible to respondents and fine-tune strategies to engage communities. Whilst respecting the principle of the 'blank sheet method', whereby the facilitator goes to the participants without predesigned questions, some guidance tools were prepared to open and stimulate discussion.

## *Consultation*

This comprises of the real work. Two teams were deployed for the exercise which entailed detailed fieldwork that spanned into weeks. The process took the teams eight months to complete this phase of the FAR project. Initial consultation started in June but was truncated

and delayed by the outbreak of Ebola and the logistical problems and constraints this imposed on the process. The consultation exercise took the research teams to all 15 Counties where consultations were held. All discussions were opened with the question "In Liberia there has been relative peace for about 10 years; what does that peace mean to you and your community, looking at the situation both before and after the war"? Later, the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic led to modification of the questions, and a second question was added thus: can you please share with us your experience about the outbreak of the Ebola virus in Liberia?

## Reflection Session:

This exercise is synonymous with what some refer to as: 'Knowledge Action Practice' (KAP) – largely intended to improve the quality of work and outcomes. The session is also to ensure quality control and share notes among team members. It is a means to collectively review the general field activities, including the conducting of KII and FGD sessions, and to help the team ascertain what went right or wrong, if there were particular challenges from the discussion, etc. It was also intended to improve work and social relations among team members as well as local facilitators. Reflection on this work was usually done at two levels: first in the field, and then when the teams returned to the office in Monrovia. Each team had regular reflection sessions immediately after every meeting and field visit. This debriefing session was always guided with a reflection form to capture relevant information.[23]

In addition to internal reflection, P4DP also engaged regularly with Interpeace and the Global FAR team in order to ensure coherence with overall research objectives. In light of the Ebola outbreak and subsequent state of emergency, additional meetings were held to think through and adapt the research objectives and approach. Following the lifting of the state of emergency and before going to the last eight counties in the southeast, some modifications were made in the design, particularly on the means to increase gender representation and engage participants on their assets and resilience rather than peace, security and cross border issues.

## Data Analysis

All data was managed by the team and the Manager of Research and Operations was the custodian of all data. In the office, a desktop computer was set up and dedicated to keeping the FAR audio, picture and transcription text files. Three templates were designed to capture data in the field apart from recording and note-taking. There is attendance template to recording particulars of participants, reflection template to review each session for important lesson and also to capture crucial information as soon as the session is over. There is also transcript and photo capture template which was meant for tracking completed audio and text work with photo labelling. After transcription, there were matrixes that capture data based on thematic area, the resilience table that organized finding into levels and a schema that graphically linked all findings. These templates made data management easy and more organized.[24]

## Stakeholder Validation Forum

On the 29th of April 2015, P4DP in collaboration with Interpeace, organized a one day stakeholder forum so as to present the preliminary findings and key analyses of the consultation to representatives from the fifteen counties where consultations took place, government officials, members of civil society, and key actors working in peacebuilding in Liberia and the West African region. This event served the purpose of ensuring that the findings resonate with actors working on resilience and peacebuilding issues, as well as the consultation participants. Secondly, it served as a platform for further reflection on the resilience mechanisms uncovered during the field research so as to orient the National Working Groups.

## National Working Group

The National Working Group (NWG) consists of scholars, policy experts, civil society leaders, youth, traditional leaders and key representatives from various sectors within Liberian Society, who directly or indirectly participated in the consultations and who have specific skills and expertise required to process and deepen the research findings. Members are to consolidate the findings as well as translate recommendations made by Liberians

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23    A copy of the Reflection Guide is provided in annex

24    The Analytical Matrix is provided in annex

into programmatic actions and policy recommendations toward sustaining the peace. The NWG is expected to achieve a two-fold objective: 1) to deepen the research, especially around resilience mechanisms identified by Liberians; and 2) to propose policy recommendations and help develop a programmatic plan of action, aimed to support measures to strengthen resilience for sustainable peace in Liberia.

### 3.2 Methodological Revision following the Ebola Outbreak

Following the initial identification trips to various regions including Montserrado, the Ebola epidemic peaked in Liberia and the government imposed a 'State of Emergency' (SOE) with curfews prohibiting any forms of assembly that could bring people together and restricting people's free movement in all parts of the country. In light of these restrictions, P4DP initially scaled down external field operations and focused on Montserrado. However, even this was challenging and it became impossible to conduct focus group discussions, the primary vehicle and chosen approach of the consultation process. In addition to government restrictions, heightened suspicion and fear of the spread of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) made participants unwilling to attend such activities.

This situation undermined the initial consultation plan and a revised plan was developed by P4DP with support from Interpeace. The revised plan included the adaptation of the working questions to the new Ebola situation in order to learn about the strategies Liberians were deploying to cope with the deadly virus and to take advantage of the new circumstances to try to test, in real time, the relationship between resilience to the shock of natural disaster and resilience in relation to conflict and fragility. Following a series of workshops with Interpeace and improving conditions on the ground, a new set of questions - which now included a greater focus on the impact of and coping mechanisms related to the Ebola epidemic -[25] were tested in Monrovia, Montserrado County – the only easily accessible County at the time. Some of the operational changes necessitated by the new conditions included: the reduction of Consultation participants numbers from 20-25 per session, to roughly 6 per focus group; the increase in the number of Key informant interviews with notable stakeholders; and

starting the consultations in Montserrado instead of the more remote Southeast region.

Monrovia and Montserrado County were the epicenter of the Ebola crisis and the research was approached differently. Furthermore, although occupying a very small land mass, this area hosts the largest and the most diverse population among the fifteen Counties. Before the war, Montserrado had a population of approximately four hundred thousand, but subsequently the population has increased to nearly 1.5million inhabitants of mixed tribes, and nationalities, from diverse counties. Urbanization is clearly a critical factor in understanding resilience. Montserrado, in which the capital Monrovia is located, is congested and the side-effects of the 14 years' war, in terms of population displacement is still prevalent. Its uniqueness lies in its status as the 'melting pot' for all tribes and social cleavages. Monrovia, the capital city, is also the live-wire of the Liberian economy thus, attracting varied populations- an essential element no other county capital city possesses. Capturing resilience through the experience of the County's diverse population dynamics, unique urban characteristics in combination with the impact of Ebola, has produced unique and extraordinary resilience narratives.

### 3.3 Selection process of FGD and KIIs Participants

Strategic locations for conducting consultations were identified with due consideration to the criteria of how much they were affected by the civil conflict and the Ebola crisis: both areas that were highly affected and those less affected were selected to allow for comparison. Focus group discussion participants were chosen among community residents who have lived in these communities for more than two years and represent different sectors of these communities. Care was taken to ensure gender balance in the selection of participants. Key informants for interviews were selected purposively from among community leaders and opinion leaders who mainly were identified after the FGD sessions. In some cases, outspoken individuals, noticeably unafraid to speak their minds, even at the risk of criticism, were recruited to provide alternative perspectives and to enrich the discussion rather than having the views of only recognized community dwellers. Selection criteria[26] for

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25 The facilitation guide including the initial and revised questions are provided in the annex

26 Participants must have experience of the war, and who

participants were developed following an actor mapping exercise designed by P4DP with support from Interpeace during a planning workshop in June 2014.

Focus group discussion sessions were held in an open area or outdoors to make participants more at ease and in order to minimize the risk of spreading Ebola. When this was not possible, sessions were conducted in community Town halls and other public building depending on the situation. In some of these discussions especially with traditional authorities, language was a barrier but the Local facilitator did the translations from local dialect to simple Liberian English and vice versa.

### 3.4 Analysis of Participants

The consultation participants in FGDs and KIIs consisted of: County authorities, community leaders, womens group leaders, people with disabilities, NGOs, businessmen and women, cross-border traders, Ebola Task force managers, County attorneys, immigration officials, police officers, religious groups, tribal leaders, Ivorian refugees, and youths. See figure 1 below for the distribution of participants by sector. The youth and the disable group were the most consulted, followed by women and traditional leaders. A total of 1,152 participants were consulted- 715 are males (64%), while 437 are females (32%).
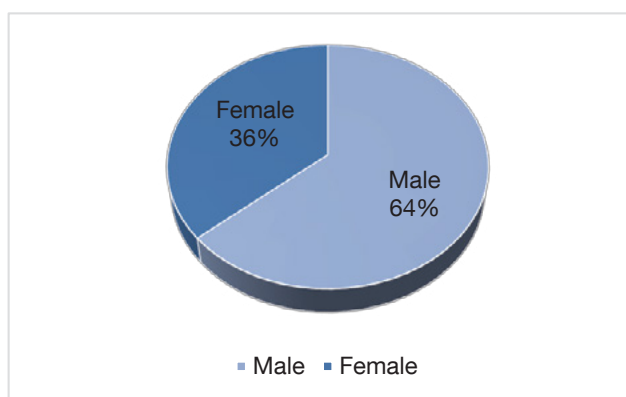
Although enormous efforts were made to ensure a fair if not equal gender representation, because of fear and probably the particularly negative effect of Ebola on women during the early phases of the outbreak, compared to their male- counterparts, women were not as easily accessible for public discussion. Also, most women were pre-occupied with their household responsibilities-example preparing meal and fetching for their homes. Disrupting the trend would require in some instances 'paying siting fees' to compensate for the loss in daily livelihoods. We do not pay sitting fees although we provide light refreshment but this was not enough to cater to the dependents of recruited participants. In some communities, women do not easily participate in public discussion where their male counterparts are involved out of cultural imperative. All these factors impeded our ability to have a gender balanced participants.

P4DP eventually was able to consult more participants than we had planned when anticipating the impact of the Ebola epidemic. The gradual decline in the number of new Ebola cases meant that meetings scheduled for 6 participants were mostly attracting more participants. For instance, in one case the team organized a 6-woman consultation through a renowned traditional Zoe[27] woman in Central Monrovia – Mama Tormah – but the group turned out to be large mixed focus group discussion that recorded more than twenty participants. A similar experience was recorded in Zoewuleh ELWA Community in a mixed group FGD. Moreover, as the rates of Ebola transmission began to decline and more workshops were being organized by MSF, WHO, CDC, MOHSW and other NGOs in communities, participation improved considerably and the consultations witnessed larger turnouts. There was some risk of bias in this selection, as the team felt it was honor-bound not to turn participants back when initially the teams had been begging them to participate. However, some of the participants were discouraged when they later discovered that it was not money-making sitting.



Female 36%

Male 64%

■ Male  ■ Female

**Figure 3: Gender composition of consultation participants**

understood what the situation was and how it has changed over time, must have lived in the community for at least two years and must have interest in the research. A full list of the selection criteria is provided in the Annex

27   Zoe- a tradition woman head of the *Sande* Society who wields enormous powers and heads the women arm of the traditional school that prepares young ladies for adult and mother roles.
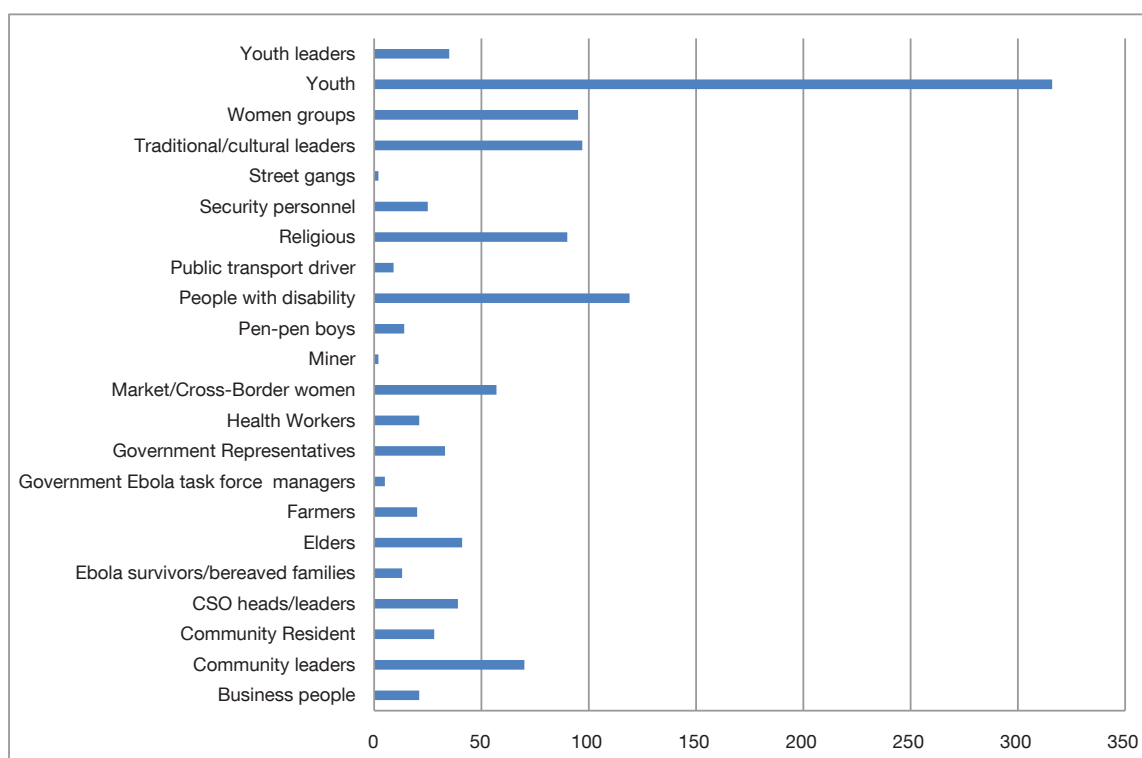
Figure 2 Consultation Participants by sector

### 3.5    Composition of research Team

There were two teams deployed for the data collection nation-wide during the course of the consultation process. The teams comprised of five males and three females. Each team had four members: one lead researcher who headed each team; two junior researchers; and the manager for research and operations who is the supervisor, but who alternated between the two teams. The Executive Director joins or follows the teams in the field, separately or move together in order to fill in for the research manager when he is with one of the teams in other region. This was a way of striking a balance in the team's composition. The driver is trained as a photographer.

Local facilitators were selectively engaged after a thorough screening process. The role of the local facilitator is very cardinal to the whole consultation process. The local facilitator is key-holder to all engagements in community settings the research team visited. S/he contacts the participants and organizes venues and other logistical arrangements before meetings are held. In every location, appropriate training was provided to local facilitator to align their knowledge with the FAR project in order to carefully and adequately select the consultation participant groups. Certain criteria are set in

the selection of a local facilitator. These include someone who understands community issues, must have lived in the community for more than two years, someone with unquestionable character, and a consensus figure who can bring people together irrespective of their ethnic, religion or political diversity or backgrounds. He or she are expected to at least speak the local dialect in order to serve as translator, at times. The research team has strong existing contacts in most of the counties, thus it was not difficult to liaise with them and organize ahead of the team arrival having contacted the relevant county and local authorities. The Civil Society Organisations (CSO) platform contact was helpful in counties where the study team had limited contacts. To balance the dynamics,

The Executive Director is the overall leader of the teams, and he was always engaging with authorities at Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and following up with calls to high authorities at the County level. This two-way engagement helped the teams a lot especially after the Ebola outbreak that teams have to be cleared at inter-county check points during travels to the interior parts of the country. He also alternated with the Manager for Research and Operations in terms of supervision in some case when the need arose.

## 3.6    Challenges and opportunities

### Challenges

Some of the challenges in the consultation process included:

a. *Ebola outbreak-* This was the greatest of all the challenges as it not only halted the work for a long time, it led to several changes in methodology (see above) as well as operational plans. The outbreak of the virus also reshaped how P4DP teams were perceived and received, when entering affected areas and communities in the pre-consultation phase, and how they were later welcomed after the outbreak had declined.

b. *The Declaration of a state of emergency:* The declaration of a state of emergency by the GOL, created a tension-filled and war-like atmosphere for the country in general. For the teams, as well as people more generally, even going to work was intimidating and traumatic due to the presence of military in the streets.

c. *Deplorable state of roads.* The team started pre-consultations at the beginning of the rainy season amidst roads in deplorable condition. This influenced the order of consultations as well as caused delays to the schedule.

**'Resilience is defined** *as the capacity of individual, household or community to anticipate risk, resolve challenges collaboratively and non-violently across societal divisions, respond creatively to conflict and crisis, and steer social change in ways that foster shared benefits of peace and development'*

### Opportunities

If the Ebola outbreak was a devastating challenge to the country and created many obstacles for the P4DP research team, it also provided a unique opportunity for the live observation of the interface between a humanitarian emergency and peacebuilding. In order to respond to the reality of the ebola outbreak, P4DP and Interpeace redesigned the research to look at how a momentous crisis (Ebola) interacts with long term structural drivers of instability and conflict. The research team used the consultation process to document how Liberians were coping with the crisis and the strategies put in place to prevent the epidemic from devolving into a threat to peace.

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### Resilience of P4DP team

The outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease was a really trying moment for the P4DP team and a true test of their resilience. In the course of this research, the team had to adapt to circumstances that were sometimes hazardous, frequently obstructed and inevitably emotionally difficult and traumatic in light of what Liberian society was suffering during the Ebola epidemic. The team's adaptive capacities were not just illustrative of resourcefulness, innovation and commitment in undertaking to sustain the work. They were also illustrative of resilience in practice – in the real-time encounter with Ebola, and the logistical and psychological navigation of these stressors.

In light of the improvement in the management of the EVD which resulted in decline of cases, the team extended the consultation into other counties, outside the Monrovia. These measures were diligently followed by the team until the County-wide consultation was completed. In one of the team's discussion, this was how a community leaders described P4DP team's resilience; *"Other groups that came here to talk to us usually keep their distance, they won't sit with us but prefers to stand and when we are coming towards them, they twist so that we can't touch them; it's only P4DP who prefers to sit like this with us, this organization is really a Peace Building Organization."[28]*

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28    FGD Participant in Soul Clinic Community, Montserrado County  10/8/2014

Interview with a young boy who survived Ebola, Black Jinnah Community, Paynesville City

# 4 FINDINGS

Whilst resilience as a concept may offer a binding approach to better integrate and connect humanitarian, developmental work and the operations of their agencies and governments, it is precisely in the need 1. To integrate the crucial conflict and violence dimensions that are often ignored in these conversations; and 2. To base this integration not on the assumptions or needs or external actors or governments alone, but on the perspectives, insights, actions and capacities of local people themselves; that the true value of the concept may be found. . That is the goal of FAR and the key overarching finding of this work in Liberia too

In this study, resilience is understood *as the capacity of individuals, households, communities and the wider society to anticipate risk, resolve challenges collaboratively and non-violently across societal divisions, respond creatively to conflict and crisis, and steer social change in ways that foster shared benefits of peace and development.* This increasingly popular concept has offered an alternative to the traditional drivers of conflict approach to peacebuilding by focusing instead on assets and strengths manifest in communal, societal or institutional capabilities that enable Liberians to withstand or cope with different stresses that they experience. This study has sought to understand the ways in which a resilience lens can be leveraged for peacebuilding processes. As such, the findings section of this study begins with a brief overview of how Liberians understand peace.

Liberians have various ways of describing peace and the distinctions are often aligned with particular timelines associated with the civil war in Liberia: what peace meant before the war was somewhat different to what peace means after the war. Furthermore, notions of peace are understood slightly differently since the deadly health crisis occasioned by Ebola Virus Disease appeared to threaten the very existence of the Liberian State.  In the study, we therefore engaged different groups to elicit and understand their notions of peace, as a precursor to coming to terms with their resilient mechanisms and capacities. Interestingly, some of those who experienced the war described peace *as:* "access to all the good

things of life in the midst of freedom to choose,"[29] whilst others indicated that peace was manifest in "the absence of guns of war"[30]. For most youth, peace means employment opportunities and their ability to meet their daily needs. Since the Ebola crisis, most Liberians said they are apprehensive and they view peace as "when there are no siren noises from ambulances and people are free to visit each other in the usual way[31]". Ordinary Liberians therefore reflect the wider conversations in most post-conflict societies and within the literature on peacebuilding, which debate important distinctions between "negative" forms of peace, which relate only to the ending of violence, and "positive peace" which goes more to the underlying causes of conflict.

The majority of people believe that ten years of peace should not only be understood as the mere absence of guns, but their abilities 'to make ends meet'. Others see the peace to be a fragile peace. Across the 15 Counties, participants noted that the peace Liberia enjoys today is still fragile because it is heavily reliant on the presence of UNMIL as succinctly observed in the quote in the text box below. There was a general feeling amongst participants that complete peace is a longer term endeavor or aspiration and is only achieved when marginalization, lack of good governance and other social problems that brought the war, are no more. One respondent in Sinoe County puts it this way: "if marginalization and other things that caused the war do not go, we will go back to war."[32] Peace was also described by a notable Muslim cleric as 'salt': "it cannot be appreciated without mixing it with other ingredients. There can be no peace if our culture and diversity are not taken into consideration."[33]

Liberians have described resilience in relation to conflict and peace in diverse ways. During the field consultation exercise, both were described differently by participants coming from different regions, tribes, religions and ethnic, social and political groups. Nonetheless there

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29    Mixed Youth FGD Gbarnga Bong County 11/24/2014
30    Mixed Youth FGD Sanniquellie, Nimba County 11/22/2014
31    Women FGD Ganta City, Nimba County 11/21/2014
32    FGD held in Greenville, Sinoe County, on 2/ 9/ 2015.
33    Muslim Cleric, Monrovia, 10/11/2014].

was considerable convergence in connotation but no clear English meaning compare with the vernacular. In Southeast Liberia, for example, where there are three major languages (Kru, Sapo/Krahn, and Grebo), resilience is variously defined as *Pla-wor-cou-wa*[34], and *plou-won-peh*[35], in the Krahn language, meaning 'unmovable in the midst of challenging situations' and being satisfied in heart' while peace to them is: 'living together in freedom and be in unity'. In Nimba County, the traditional source of resilience is described as: *gbazier*[36] in the Mano language, whereas peace is defined as *kwakeaba*[37], which means 'togetherness'. In Lofa, resilience is described as 'the Inner courage to withstand a difficult situation and survive'. In Bong it is *Yapalolei*[38] – 'how one survives during hardship'. From the point of view of this group, they see themselves as one common people, and therefore seek to protect one another, in midst of the prevailing challenging situations. In Grand Bassa and River Cess, resilience is defined in the Bassa language as *un-mu-wlo-cun*[39], meaning 'I will hold my heart', whereas peace is defined as *Nyon-wloh-dehyee*[40], which means 'our hearts are satisfied'. And, in Grand Cape Mount County, resilience is defined in the Vai language as *saabia*[41], meaning 'hold your heart'. Finally, in Montserrado County where the common language is English, resilience in this County is defined as 'to bounce back'[42], whereas peace is defined as: 'being in harmony'.

In spite of the nuances across all the Counties, resilience

is understood as the capacities that people or institutions develop over time to cope with conflict, crisis, or other form of disruptions, with the potential to transform these situations in ways that enable individuals, communities, institutions and the state to move and adapt. Peace across all fifteen counties is also seen as when people are not in crisis and are working together, which is also widely viewed as crucial to building resilience.

During the consultations Liberians described many threats to peace or drivers of conflict, but these can generally be grouped into three broad categories: (1) Shifting gender roles and identities of women within existing patriarchal structures in Liberian social life, was seen to contribute substantially to a lot of individual and household-level conflict and potential violence; (2) the weakness of the state manifested in the inadequate provision of public goods, and a perception of governance failures, associated with the erosion of trust between the state and society; and (3) increasing pressure on land and the absence of effective regulation of land tenure, fuels conflict and potential violence. In addition to these three threats, the Ebola crisis as an external shock, and the ways in which it has undermined social cohesion, has been an added factor that exacerbates the three underlying threats described above. The findings on resilience are organized in relation to the threats as described here; as it is in respect to these that the resilience of Liberians is being documented and analyzed. The impact of Ebola is treated both as a theme that cuts across these three drivers of conflict and as an independently important phenomenon for understanding resilience in Liberia, warranting a separate and distinct section of this report. Liberians also identified the capacities, assets and structures they have used over time to manage threat to peace include including Ebola that are presented in this section as well.

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34   Mixed FGD held in Fish Town River Gee County, 2/11/2015
35   FGD held with Traditional Group Toe's Town Grand Gedeh County, 2/14/2015
36   Gbazier is the name of a snake, in whose name a sociocultural group is formed and named, mentioned in Women FGD held Ganta City, Nimba County, 11/21/2014
37   Mixed Youth FGD Ganta City, Nimba County 11/21/2014
38   FGD with Traditional Group, Gbarnga City, Bong County, 11/25/2014
39   FGD with Mixed Youth, Cestos City, River Cess County, 11/2/2014
40   FGD with Traditional Group, Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County, 11/1/2014
41   FGD with Elder, Sinje City, Grand Cape Mount County, 11/3/2014
42   ELWA Mixed FGD, Paynesville City, Montserrado County, 10/17/2014

# People with Disabilities have a distinct perspective on Resilience

Pervasive social inequalities in Liberia's social landscape is said to also be an impediment to the inclusion of all groups. Disabled persons, and especially women face even more challenges than most as they are highly marginalized in all institutions that fail to cater to their specific needs. In separate FGD with some members of the Christian Association of the blind in Tubmanburg, a female participant also mentioned the various kinds of social injustices meted out against them, with these words: "We don't have educational and health facilities for disabled women , no care for the special needs of disable women'."[1] Furthermore, some of the disabled women expressed disappointment over the lack of opportunity for their children to acquire some skills to better of their lives and feared that their children will eventually become criminals, beggars and wicked politicians will continue to use them for their own motives'. Though, these people don't necessarily present a threat to unleash violent conflict, if such alienation continues, it could undermine efforts at building social cohesion at the community level because people are inter-connected and dependency syndrome is very high. Further, perception of 'we against them' could also develop, which is divisive and counterproductive for promoting long term peace at community level.  The coordinator of the disabled of Bong county, Joseph Jacob (blind individual), said:

"whenever, we feel excluded, we make our way to these important international meetings and forcibly make our claims and if they refuse to allow us in, we call the press and remind them of some of the international conventions on the rights of the disabilities"[2].

Similarly, another disabled person in Ganta city, Nimba County informed the team that one of their disabled sister in a wheel chair was knocked down by a motorcyclist but no measure was taken by the county authorities to bring the perpetrator to justice.

[1] FGD with the Blind- Tubmanburg, Bomi County 11-1-2014
[2] People with Disability FGD, Gbarnga Bong County, 25/11/15

**Box 1: Resilience from the perspective of people with disabilities**

### 4.1 Marginalization of women in the Liberian Patriarchal structure

Liberian women are more vulnerable to violence- both manifest and structural and this is in large part due to the patriarchal norms that sometimes encourage men to engage in aggressive and misogynist behavior[2]. In Liberia, traditional value systems have venerated men to a level that places women not as equal partners but as subordinates. As a respondent noted during one of the discussion sessions, "a man was fully responsible to take care of his family…those were normal days, people were working. The father would bring the money straight to the mother because the mother is expected to take care of the home."[43] This patriarchal image of masculinity has served to undermine the rights of women and the contribution they make to the society in many ways. In separate sessions across the country, women spoke of the continuous high level of domestic and sexual violence experienced by women, especially those in rural communities. For instance, in a small group discussion with some members of Medicale Mondiale (an international NGO working on women's Issues); it was mentioned that most women in the community suffer domestic violence at the hands of their husbands and also that rape is a common practice in the county. It was further noted that rape laws are not being enforced at the community level to help bring the perpetrators to justice for the women to be in peace.[44]

*"We women are marginalized in high offices at the county level, rather, we are placed in City Mayor Position which requires keeping the city clean. I vied for the District Commissioner position, but the men worked against me saying that women cannot perform at that level".*
**Participant during a Focus Group Discussion in Zwedru**

In addition to being a social issue, the marginalization of women as well as these patterns of abuse, has important economic consequences. Some sources indicate that the GDP growth of the country suffers by as much as six percent when women cannot participate equally in the labor force, or are excluded from management positions.[45]

In Liberia, women are underrepresented in mainstream sectors but mostly involved in the informal sector, which also leaves them with little protection and few options for organized articulation of their grievances and about their abuses. For example, many women engaging in illicit cross-border trade experience sexual harassment by male border guards. A female participant in Grand Gedeh County noted that

> "…women are exploited financially- our goods confiscated and sometimes compelled to sleep with border securities."[46]

The failure of the state to effectively ensure the protection of women in practice and in policy, creates the perception that government sanctions most of the indignations they experience – particularly when these are at the hands of males government officials. This is reinforced by the fact that throughout the country-wide consultations, and especially in rural areas, women expressed that they are being directly marginalized from active involvement in the operation of political offices. For example in Gbarpolu and Cape Mount counties, in mixed focus group discussions of community elders, women expressed the feeling of being excluded due to their gender. One of the female participants noted:

> "…tradition is still keeping our counties behind, women are not seen as anything, only man can do government work. From Town chiefs to paramount chiefs, are all men."[47]

During the recent Ebola crisis, women suffered disproportionately in comparison to men. Women were seen still performing some of their traditional roles as care givers. They were the ones taking care of sick families and relatives in most cases at homes, quarantine centers and at the various Ebola Treatment Units across the country. Women bore the brunt of the economic hardship that resulted in job losses due to the government policy to eliminate all non-essential jobs during the Ebola outbreak because the pressure and expectation shifted to them to make ends meet in the home when the income from the men dried up. At the same time, women were working in greater numbers as nurses and caregivers, both in

43    KII with Health Worker, St. Paul Bridge Zuboah Town, Montserrado County.13/10/14
44    Small Group Discussion- Greenville, Sinoe County on 2/9/15
45    World Bank(2014).  Update on the Economic Impact of

the 2014 Ebola Epidemic on Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-[Available online at http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/macroeconomics/publication/economic-update-ebola-december ]
46    FGD in Grand Gedeh County  2/13/2015
47    FGD in Bopolu City Gbarpolu County, 10/31/2014

hospitals and clinics where Ebola patients were being cared for, and in homes and communities. According to one female participant in a FGD in ELWA community: "most women died because of their role as housewives, market women and nurses."[48] These roles made women more vulnerable than their male counterparts during the fight against the deadly Ebola disease. Moreover, the death of female patients was often more disruptive to the social balance as children became orphaned of their primary caretakers. Considering how widespread these experiences were and the ways, in which they were exacerbated by the Ebola crisis, surely it is impossible to simply talk about Liberia as a post-conflict society when half the population is still subject to such systematic exclusion and high degrees of vulnerability. A gender perspective shows us how 'conflict' and the risks of violence may be displaced into domestic relationships.

Nonetheless, an evolution of gender roles is to be observed: while men were conscripted into fighting forces by warlords, some women took on the role of getting food and other basic necessities for their families and in the context of the conflict and often the absence of their men, claimed the roles of household heads that they may previously have been denied. Similarly, during the Ebola outbreak as government and other institutions shut down major operation, lots of men were out of jobs, again the women often filled the gaps by carrying out petty trade and other activities to keep their families stable. This has contributed to the transformation of women's roles from housewives and caregivers, to breadwinners and decision-makers. Furthermore, in the last ten years since the end of the civil war, there has been an effort to promote the education of women, their participation in the workforce and politics, as well as important advances through the restoration of courts, statutory mechanisms and legislation to better protect the rights of women. Skills training by NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs have also contributed to empowering women. Moreover, Liberia is a party to many international instruments that provide for the protection of women's rights and gender equity, including the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Liberia signed as early as 1984.

In spite of what is arguably progress in the treatment of women in Liberian society, they continue to be

disproportionally affected by violence. A participant noted that the rape of women and girls was a common form of torture alongside other abuses during the civil war, and that in many ways this still continues till date: "today, there is an increase in domestic violence at household and community levels."[49] In the recent Ebola crisis, women were disproportionally affected as the primary caregivers. The discrimination of women at all levels of society, and their resulting vulnerability undermines the overall social fabric and in this regard taints the standing of Liberia as a peaceful or post-conflict society.

Women have come up with many initiatives and strategies in order to face these situations, many of which have the potential to address the source of the problem, and have proved to have the potential to be transformative both at the individual and community level. Examples include community dialogues to enhance solidarity and overcome political marginalization, making backyard gardens to sustain subsistence, organizing themselves into village savings clubs and "Susu", and migrating to areas where there are more opportunities (which they usually referred to as "going to USA") in order to overcome the risks of economic marginalization. Women also described adopting the "slow way" - the use of illegal routes to cross international borders for the purpose of trade, as a coping mechanism. These coping mechanisms are explored in detail below.

### 4.1.1 Women jointly holding community dialogues

Holding of community dialogues have become useful and important resilience mechanisms throughout Liberian society, in both urban and rural communities. Women have adapted the strategy of dialogue to voice their concerns, discuss and find solutions to their discrimination in society, manifest in their marginalization from some political offices, limited access to land, property and educational facilities, sexual harassment at border checkpoints as well as frequent exposure to rape, and domestic violence. One participant illustrated the importance of these coping mechanisms when she noted that:

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48    FGD in ELWA Zouwleh Community, Montserrado County 10/17/2014

49    KII with female Community leaders- New Kru town,Montserrado County, 13-10-2014

*"The Heart of Mano Women is the name of our dialogue group; this is where we bring all our problems for discussion"*[50]

This has proved to be positive and a useful way of contributing to peace by women establishing platforms where they share information, discuss challenges to peace building and sometimes come out with suggestions to their problems. It is crucial to note that these community dialogue sessions have helped to transform lots of ordinary women into advocates, human rights campaigners, mediators and community leaders, in ways that have greatly enhanced their lives**.** This has helped to give women a sense of belonging and contributes to fostering a shared understanding of issues at community and national levels.

"Now women know their rights through these dialogue sessions. Unlike before the war, when women were not allowed to speak nor do anything except be the house wife due to cultural practices and norms."[51]

At national, regional and county levels, there are proliferations of several women solidarity groups engaged in constructive dialogues as a means of finding their way or having their voices contributing to long term peace. For example, at the national level, the Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) as the umbrella organization for all legitimate women groups in the country, has at the core of its activities advocacy, and capacity building that does not only champion the cause of elite women at higher levels of government or in parliament. Also, through community dialogues, training and awareness raising, women's groups have helped to transform the mindset of women, to help them reach beyond the traditional roles as subject to the power of men and as housewives and caregivers ascribed to them by societal values and systems. Instead, women are increasingly visible as contributing partners to peace. As gathered during the FAR consultations, with the vision of partnership and the aspiration to have equal representation and voice in the work of building peace in Liberia, women have organized groups in most of the counties to help create awareness of their rights amongst women, to create livelihood networks and to use these organizations to engage stakeholders on some of the

problems they faced as a way of contributing to peace in Liberia. The WOGONSOL is nationwide with pocket of various women-focused CBOs across various sectors such as SEWODA, BAWODA, Rural Women Association among others.

At the same time, on the wider national political stage, strong advocacy has agitated for 30% representation of women in key political positions and within parliament; a move they have proposed into a Gender Equality Bill in the Liberian Parliament but yet to be passed. If this target is achieved, it will support the design of some of the critical policies and strategies necessary to address key gender issues paramount to the sustainability of the peace in the country. Certainly, this will enhance women participation in the peace building process in post conflict Liberia.

In the rural areas of all 15 counties, there exist strong women's groups called Rural Women's Associations: these Associations exist in the western region (Bomi, Gbarpolu and Cape Mount counties), in the southeast (Grand Gedeh, Maryland, Sinoe, River Gee, Grand Kru Counties) as well as in other regions of the country. The main aim is to support the meaningful participation of rural women in agricultural activities and community development initiatives. They explained that women put themselves in Kuu groups[52] in order to help each other with their respective farming activities, and that in addition to the physical support received, the group provided a space for socialization and sharing each other's problems. This in turn deterred women from resorting to illegal activities. The transgenerational paybacks of this are also that it has benefits for the upbringing of their children and insulates children from absorption in violent lifestyles. As one female participant pointed out:

"…actually, it is the dialogue that is helping these women, we bring our problem and talk it together."[53]

They organize peace dialogues where women seek to settle disputes amongst themselves, as well as discussing the challenges they face as women and brainstorming

50    Women FGD, Ganta City, 22/11/2014
51    KII community Leader, Gbarpolu County 2/11/2014

52    See the following section for a more detailed description of the Kuu system
53    Mixed FGD, Harper City Maryland, 9/2/2015

on options and solutions to mitigate these problems. For instance, in the words of Madam Mary Varney, president of Bomi Rural Women:

> "…we organized skill training for some of our women and young girls so they can be able to find something to do, some of these women lost their husbands during the Liberian civil war. Also we form ourselves into farming cooperatives."[54]

These groups help to transform rural women in a very useful ways by strengthening and building their capacity in a manner that enable them respond to issues of political marginalization, exclusion and economic hardship.. Meanwhile, these groups at the county level are not only involved with dialogue initiatives but work as peace ambassadors for women.

Also, in all of the 15 counties of Liberia, there are women's civil society groups that use their resources to help women address some of the political, economic and social challenges such as forced marriage, land and property ownership, succession disputes, rape and other forms of sexual violence. For example, in the Southeast of Liberia, they have the Southeastern Women Association (SEWODA) and in the north they have the Concerned Women of Ganta city. These organizations build women's capacities to challenge traditional orders and gender role stereotypes, especially limiting their social and economic rights. For those women who are involved with dialogue platforms, they believe that the old days of taking the back seat are gone. In a female FGD session in Ganta city, Nimba County, a participant declared that

> "…gone are those days when women were back benchers, cannot own properties and girls were forced into early marriage."[55]

However, with the formation of these women civil society groups developing the capacity of women, it also serves as a potential source of conflict in families and communities because some of the men feel their power and authority are being contested by their female counterparts.

### 4.1.2 Solidarity Arrangements for economic development: Susu clubs, Kuu System and Village saving Associations

In addition to the regional and county level associations mentioned above, there are also the creation of financial solidarity groups in all of the counties, communities, villages, towns and cities amongst women across all tribes and religions to specifically address some of the social and economic vulnerabilities and experiences of inequality. "Susu Club" is a membership-based financial group, where members contribute money regularly and the pooled amount is given to individual members on a rotational basis. This enables members to access enough money to increase and improve the size of their undertaking. This is a common practice amongst grass root women involved in petty trade and in small-scale economic activities such as the sale of charcoal, cold water, and bread at street corners. It is usually practiced amongst women involved in the same line of work or the same user-group or religious group in the fifteen counties of Liberia. A participant from one FGD captured this way:

> '…some of us are helping ourselves through our own Susu club. For example, one of our groups is called the "voice of Mano Women". We first started by putting dishes together and carry to one person every month, but now we have graduated from that stage of carrying dishes to putting money together every two week. We paid 4,600 Liberian dollars ($50 US) after every two weeks to a person and we are thirty one (31) persons in the group'[56].

With the Susu Club arrangements, some of these women are transformed from petty traders at street corners to women selling in a more organized manner at markets or in shops. Moreover, this arrangement builds on and reinforces solidarity at the community level and in this regard, strengthens the organizational and mobilization capacity of women.

During consultations, women also reported partaking in 'Kuu', a solidarity group in which they take turns to jointly work on each member's farm with the purpose of increasing the farm size and productivity whilst maintaining social cohesion among community members. A key informant claimed that:

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54    KII with Rural Women Head, Tubmanburg, Bomi County, 11/2/2014
55    Women FGD, Ganta City, 22/11/2014

56    Women FGD Ganta city, Nimba County, 22/11/2014.

FGD in Zoewloh Community, Paynesville City, Montserrado County.

"Kuu makes lot of women in this community to live like one family… we share rice seeds with each other and sell our Kuu proceeds to persons who need it most."[57]

The Kuu originates in the agricultural sector but can be used for other social purposes. It serves as the binding element among women through which other members of the community also benefit socially. When a member lost a family member, the group sympathizes with them to maintain social solidarity. The same applies to marriage and child-birth.

Women also formed another economic solidarity group called 'Village Savings Associations'. This can be likened to Susu clubs, but are distinctive in that they are mainly driven by non-Governmental Associations as a way of enhancing the financial capacity of local farmers

to purchase farm tools and improve their agricultural livelihoods. Village savings Associations are more formally structured and are generally well documented. It is a financial association where members make a deposit with the sole purpose of borrowing with interest to improve their economic lives. Many community women who have benefited from this service have successfully transformed their lives and roles in the family from that of housewife to becoming economically active. According to one women Leader in Todee, Montserrado County"

"…village savings has empowered lot of our women to the point where they are helping their family with some of the money problem."[58]

In many rural communities, this gives women a sense of belonging with voices in the home and community, but can lead to men feeling disempowered as their relative

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57     Women FGD in Konia, Lofa county 22/11/2014

58     KII with Women Leader, Todee Montserrado County.

power in the household is lowered. This can in turn fuel conflict in the homes and at the community level. In Grand Cape Mount, a traditional leader noted that:

> "…because of human rights our women cannot respect us anymore due to the fact they feel that they can take care of themselves without. This is worrisome as it has diluted our powers to be in total control."[59]

During the period of the Ebola crisis, some of these Susu Clubs transformed themselves into more charitable roles, rendering aid to non-members in the form food and non-food items, especially to women who had given birth or whose immediate family members had succumbed to the virus or been quarantined. Demonstrating how community arrangements can be activated and innovated for crisis response, one female participant in a mixed focus group discussion in ELWA community, Paynesville, Montserrado county, put it this way:

> "Our Susu club help some women that are not part of us, we give food items, soap and small money to help our neighbors in need in this Ebola time."[60]

### 4.1.3 Migrating to better opportunities

*Migration to the "USA"*

With the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease and the increased economic hardship, some women began to migrate to communities in the South East (Grand Gedeh, Maryland, River Gee and Sinoe) considered as Ebola free zones and which they usually referred to as 'USA',, in order to overcome the risk of the epidemic and the economic marginalization this also entailed. Some of these areas also included mining and concession communities. According to some informants, one of reasons for girls 'going to the USA' was to earn money to settle the debts of their parents, and especially their mothers. These internal migrants were therefore driven as much by economic factors as the immediate risks of the disease itself. Furthermore, whereas men also 'go to the USA' in search of economic opportunities, in most cases they use their wives as 'bids' to take loans, because

it is easier for women to access credit or loans in most rural communities. Women display greater sensitivity to the disgrace of unsettled debts and as a result are more reliable in selling and paying back their debts. Therefore, migration to the USA is not exclusive to women, it is a gendered phenomenon as women are at the heart of this coping strategy, both because of their disproportionate vulnerability, and their asset as trustworthy credit recipients. A woman in a FGD, Ganta reported;

> "Some of our men use us (women) as means of getting money. They will lure the woman to borrow money with interest only for them to run away to the USA in the guise for seeking better opportunities. Again some of the men can send their wives there to make money but what happens is usually different from what is obvious as women get involved in immoral behavior because they want to make money."[61]

It should be noted that youth, who are also disproportionally affected by the dearth of economic opportunities are also important "clients of the 'USA programme'. During a separate interview with a youth from the 'Government Camp' gold mine in Sinoe County, he indicated that because of his inability to obtain a teaching job with the government, he had since found work on the gold mine, where he has now become self-reliant and at the same time supportive to other family members. In his words:

> "I am a college drop-out but have since been looking for job, even if it meant teaching in government school. But, I have tried and every time I made efforts, the principal and others will ask me to bribe them. Since I did not have the money, a friend of mine encouraged me and I went to the mine. Right now, I wouldn't say I am rich, but at least I can feed myself, my children and other family members."[62]

However, such movement has some negative outcomes such as the breakup of families, (which fuels domestic violence) drug addiction, prostitution, alternative health hazards, exposure to cross-border trafficking and tension between migrants and resident populations associated with the perceptions that migrants will bring negative

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59   KII with Traditional Zoe- Grand Cape Mount County, 11/3/2014
60   Mixed FGD, ELWA  Community Paynesville City, 10/17/2014

61   Women FGD Ganta City, Nimba County 11/21/2014
62   KII with Youth in Greenville City, Sinoe County, 2/9/2015

influence. The prevailing perspective amongst the people we consulted was that these economic migration trends may threaten social cohesion and generate conflict. For example, girls who are involved in drugs and prostitution are less likely to develop their full range of capacities and participate in economic and public life. Migration to lucrative areas creates mistrust and suspicion between husbands and wives to the extent of sometimes fueling violence and furthermore exposing children to greater vulnerabilities. At the same time with mass movement of people to 'USA', there is a tendency where community will be exposed to other forms diseases, which could impede progress made toward the health of the community. According to Sam G. Garwo, camp master at a FGD in Barterjam, a mining camp in Grand Gedeh County:

> "…some of our girls come here just to work as prostitutes and lot of them are on hard substances."[63]

These patterns of economically driven migration to "USA" in the context of the Ebola epidemic, clearly reflect some degree of resilience in the resourceful responses of the migrant communities – and may (although not necessarily) also entail some degree of escape by women from traditional roles and relationships in their home communities and families. However, the impact and potential disruption of community, familial and domestic relationships associated with these sorts of migration patterns are not uncommon, certainly not unique to Liberia or to this part of Liberia, and nor are some of the potential tensions between migrant and host communities that result. However, in the context of the historical relationship between migratory patterns and past conflict in Liberia, as well as its particular role in the evolution of the conflict in some regions of the country, these processes may be particularly loaded in this context, whilst also potentially producing their own more local and distinct patterns of conflict. In both instances, the consequences of these resilient responses may produce both positive and negative outcomes as regards the patterns of conflict and potential violence that results.

### *'Go Slow way'*

The closure of the border with Côte D'Ivoire at the height of the Ebola crisis greatly affected the livelihoods of cross-border women traders in the southeastern part of Liberia.

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63    Mixed FGD Barterjam Camp Grand Gedeh, 14/2/2015

In an effort to survive, they started using illegal routes to cross the international border for trade purposes. In the local parlance, this strategy came to be known as the 'slow way'. One female participant in Maryland County at a mixed focus group discussion explained that:

> "…it is very hard for us to even describe how we are making things work but I can tell you we are doing 'Go by Chop' and 'slow-way'…, we make way out of no way, because we want to survive."[64]

The 'slow way' mechanism- a way maneuvering difficult situation be it security, war, food shortage or any problem has been helpful at the community, and county level because it was the only option for traders to access commodities in light of shortfalls in the importation of goods. This was especially useful for the Southeastern region of Liberia which is far from the port city of Monrovia. However, it cannot be viewed unambiguously as a form positive resilience that contributes to sustainable peace, because women engaging in "slow way" trade were exposed to sexual harassment, rape, torture and financial exploitation with greater frequency than their counterparts in Monrovia. Moreover, the illicit nature of this activity demonstrates a disregard for the law on the part of the population and the lack of livelihood opportunities offered by the state.

### 4.1.4    Make it to the "Next Level"

In central Liberia (Bong County), a population of market women whose economic activities were disrupted as a result of the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease, started to mobilize household members to plant pepper, butterballs, grains and corn at the back of their houses as a means to compensate for the food shortages resulting from reduced importation of these goods from neighboring Guinea due to border closures.[65] 'Backyard gardens' are not a new or entirely alternative livelihood strategy, but gained increasing popularity in light of the Ebola crisis.

Ebola had a devastating impact on the economy: the World Bank in 2014 estimated a growth rate dropped from 5.9 percent to 2.2 percent from what obtained the

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64    Mixed FGD Harper City, Maryland, 2/9/2015
65    Deaf and dumb of Virginia, Montserrado county-FGD and the Group of 77nd and Christian Association of the blind all of Tubmanburg, Bomi county in separate FGD sessions

previous half of the year prior Ebola.[66] This was felt at the personal level in the form of the closure of government offices, restrictions on the movement of people and embargo on goods imposed by neighboring countries and international carriers that led to a scarcity of basic goods on the local market. It became difficult to reach market centers because the government prohibited mass gathering in an effort to curtail the spread of the Ebola disease. Even though stopping people from going to the market center was a necessary strategy/ mechanism to put into place to save lives during the Ebola crisis, it had a negative impact on not only the economic life of ordinary Liberians, but also the social life and patterns of social cohesion. Market days and centers are fundamental and vital to community relationships, especially for rural populations. During these periods of the exemption of markets, people could no longer visit, interact and exchange with loved ones and relatives. Women, who are the key players in market activities, were disproportionally affected because as a rule they make up a greater portion of the sellers and buyers in the markets and these markets are an important site for socialization and other cultural activities among women: these are cardinal in the lives and empowerment of ordinary women.

Furthermore, these ordinary market women of Bong county have become proactive and took on a 'next level' attitude -meaning, 'do not remain where you are each year'- to transform their lives. The concept is: if you are a sidewalk seller, get on the market table; if you are a petty trader, get a shop. The idea is to not go backwards but rather to 'bounce forwards to the Next level'. This 'next level' attitude has given women the impulse to become economically proactive and can be leveraged to empower women to become more engaged in the social and political arenas too. For example, Madam Victoria M. Cooper, Superintendent of Bong County Marketing Association, related that:

> "…because of my ideas of 'next level', president Ellen John Sirleaf  called me DR. Bitter ball and placed me on the board of the Bong County Community college with all the PhD holders."[67]

The 'next level' attitude and discourse has also

empowered women to play a key role in economic decision-making in their homes. Typical of this was the illustration how, in the course of the Ebola Crisis, government institutions and other employers asked non-essential staff to stay at home or resign, thereby putting many primary breadwinners – typically men – out of jobs. Consequently, families have had to depend on petty trade and back yard gardens to acquire food and basic necessities for the families. These activities are usually led by women, and echo a war-time trend when women took the lead to fetch food and other basic necessities for the families because men and boys had been forced into military service by warlords. Although the circumstances are tragic ones, these times of crisis have in fact contributed to the emancipation of women from restrictive traditional roles in the home to roles where they can participate meaningfully in decision making in the household as well as in society. Unfortunately, the empowerment of women often produces a backlash and can fuel domestic strain. Frustrated by their diminished comparative power, men often resort to violence as a means of affirming their manhood and commanding respect in the household. A woman in Ganta illustrated this point as she noted during a group discussion:

> "We women can make our sell market, sometimes travel to Guinea and use the proceeds the way we wish especially for our children upkeep and education which some of our men are not comfortable with."[68]

This reflects shifting patterns of conflict and potential sources of violence as societies and communities very gradually shift these dominant practices and norms.

Nonetheless, the "Next Level" attitude is a powerful source of inspiration and driver of women's resilience. It empowers women to take the initiative and transform their lives. It can be a basis for cultivating a new and evolving vision of the role of women in a peaceful Liberia.

### 4.1.5   Priorities for National Working Group

On April 29th, 2015, during the validation forum, the subgroup participants debating and analyzing the responses and findings on resilience mechanisms

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66    World Bank-update on the Economic impact of the ebola outbreak on Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, Dec., 2, 2014.
67    KII with Bong County Market Superintendent Madam Victoria M. Cooper; Gbarnga City, Bong County, 11/24/2014

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68    Female Participant FGD Ganta City, 11/21/14.

for peacebuilding on the theme: *Shifting gender roles and identities of women,* recommended two resilience mechanisms that need to be deepened for programmatic and policy actions by the National Working Group. These two resilience mechanisms were selected among several others that came from the consultation. They were:

1. The courage and determination of women in their "next level" attitude that helps them to overcome marginalization and increased vulnerability; and

2. Community Dialogue initiatives that women have developed and relied on to discuss and improve their social, political and economic circumstances.

According to the stakeholders, the reason for choosing the courage and determination of women in their 'next level' attitude (that helps them to overcome marginalization and increased vulnerability) is, that this is the most singular phenomenon that shows the oneness of women in their quest for emancipation across the country, irrespective of their locations (rural and urban) and socio-economic and political backgrounds.

The importance Liberia attaches to gender issues was demonstrated by the establishment of the Ministry for Gender and Development in 2001. It is also important to note that Liberia was the first country to develop a National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Resolution 13256. As a result, every Liberian woman wants to rise to the occasion where they can have a voice, equal participation and ownership, and this resonates strongly with national and global policy priorities as well.

Again, community dialogue initiatives that women have developed and relied on to discuss and often improve their circumstances were recommended to P4DP to be prioritized during the National Working Group deliberations as a unique source of resilience. Critically analyzing the Liberian context, it was widely accepted that dialogues have been a useful traditional tool for peace-building based on respect and dignity, across all Liberian cultural contexts. Also, these processes are viewed as the most accessible vehicles for dispute resolution – considerably less adversarial and more socially cohesive than the formal court system, which is often seen to divide parties and communities and which is also time consuming as well as expensive socially and

financially. More importantly, stakeholders advanced that where they specifically provide platforms for women, dialogue processes involve learning exercises, training and enable participants to easily identify their challenges and suggest way forward together in a more peaceful manner.

In the manual titled 'Make Room for Peace-a guide to Women's participation in peace processes,'[69] the author defined gender as the socially constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women, keeping in mind that when utilizing a gender approach the focus is not on individual men and women but on the system that determines gender roles and responsibilities, access to and control of resources, and participation in decision making. The assignment of gender roles in the Liberian society has always been done through masculine lenses that have established patriarchal norms at the expense of women's meaningful participation in decision making processes and access to and control of resources. As a result, women are systematically marginalized in all spheres of society and are disproportionately affected by the violent consequences of disaster and war. In response, women have innovatively developed strategies to deal with their vulnerabilities. Whereas some of these initiatives are defensive or adaptive in an immediate sense, these may also be or become transformative for the women involved and for the wider society. As such, they have the potential to contribute to peace in a positive way. However, some of the coping mechanisms explored above can also expose women to more violence and feed into the gender disparities that have the opposite effect of undermining the fragile social fabric and emancipation of women in Liberia.

### 4.2 Perception of a Weak State: Governance Deficits

> "A weak and failed state is a country with a government that cannot or will not deliver general political goods and essential public services to its citizens."[70]

69    Nilsson, I. (ed.) (2011). Make Room for Peace-a guide to Women's participation in peace    processes. The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation

70    Rotberg, R. I. (2013).Failed and Weak State Defined [Available online at: https://robertrotberg.wordpress.com/2013/02/11/failed-and-weak-states-defined/]

Inadequate provision of public goods and delivery of services, unequal distribution of wealth and the lack of employment opportunities, has created mistrust between the citizens and the state. The enduring presence of UNMIL and sustained reliance on international support are seen as an indication of sustained dependency on the international community and weakening of the State's responsibility for governance. Despite the pledges of international actors to aid effectiveness and commitments to principles such as those contained in the New Deal requiring the alignment of donor funds with national priorities and a dedication to inclusive politics, a strong feeling was expressed by participants that international actors have not always been effective in holding the government accountable for the aid it receives. These views exacerbate the existing mistrust in the government and contribute to the frustrations of Liberians who feel that they do not hold the reins of their society.

The people consulted during the study lamented the low level of public service delivery at both the national and county levels. There are several reasons why this is the case, but a common perception is that this is a direct consequence of bad governance Youth in Grand Bassa County illustrated this when they evoked the example of alleged mismanagement of funding and anti-Ebola materials, as primary reason for the inadequate response to the crisis in their county. Other participants went further in this argument, pointing out that – contrary to the principles of inclusive political and economic systems, an entrenched patronage system offers preferential treatment to elites at the expense of the general public. Although perception is not always reality, the lack of basic social service in local communities is fueling this mistrust of the central government. This view cut across all counties where the consultations were held.

*"We are cut off during the raining season as if we are not in Liberia. We do not feel the presence of government or our own representatives who should be there for us. They do not include us in their planning. They will say one thing and do another and how do we trust them when they cannot deliver on their promises?"*- FGD, Grand Kru County

The state's weakness and incapacity to provide adequate access to public goods is seen by many to contribute to undermining the socio-economic wellbeing and standard of living of Liberians. For many informants, this is seen to be manifested in the form of the high rates of youth unemployment in the country, including illiteracy, apathy, illicit cross-border activities and insecurity as well as social problems such as teenage pregnancy. Government is widely seen as responsible for not addressing these concerns, according to many of the informants.

Many youth expressed dissatisfaction over the level of unemployment being experienced. They attributed their ordeal to the lack of relevant skills and opportunities, in addition to the centralization of university education, which could have empowered them to be responsible and useful citizens. During consultation with the youth of Lofa County, they complained of the lack of these forms of education that are critical to the development of any nation, and especially post-war nations like Liberia. While the citizens applaud efforts by the government to establish community colleges in some parts of the country, they yearn for vocational education programmes and other important programmes such as political science and government, computer science and business (e.g. accounting, management, and economics). Even though Lofa has a community college, the government is yet to establish community colleges in River Gee, Sinoe, and River Cess. Our consultation discovered the lack of vocational education and training programmes in the southeastern region of the country, especially in Sinoe, River Gee, and Grand Kru Counties. During the discussions, young people expressed the need for vocational institutions and training programmes, in order to substitute for the lack of community colleges and university education. This is in spite the contribution from the donor community, as well as revenue generated internally. Bulk of Liberia's population is classified as youth (nationally defined as persons below 35 years of age), 63 per cent is less than 25 years old, about 42 per cent is under 15 years of age and 32.8 per cent is 10-24 years old[71]. The 2013 Fragility Assessment for the New Deal indicated that youth unemployment was one of the key factors contributing to continued interpersonal violence and organized crime. This is noteworthy, not only because it highlights a crucial area of youth risk and resilience, but also because it illustrates very powerfully

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71    Republic of Liberia (September 2011c) – 2008 Population and Housing Census: Analytical Report on Youths and Adolescents,

that the sources of risk and fragility for new patterns of conflict, do no simply reflect the historical divides in Liberian society, but have shifted to new threats of conflict and manifestations of fragility. This is very strongly represented by the patterns of both formal and informal organization of criminality. This also challenges us to think about both the positive and negative forms of resilience and social cohesion that may substitute for the sentiments of exclusion that young people experience and that we were hearing from the various FGDs and interviews we conducted.

This is of significant significance, not only because it highlights a crucial area of youth risk and resilience, but also because it illustrates very powerfully that the sources of risk and fragility for new patterns of conflict, do no simply reflect the historical divides in Liberian society, but have shifted to new threats of conflict and manifestations of fragility. This is very strongly represented by the patterns of both formal and informal organization of criminality. This also challenges us to think about both the positive and negative forms of resilience and social cohesion that may substitute for the sentiments of exclusion that young people experience and that we were hearing from the various FGDs and interviews we conducted. Government officials are often the only ones who can afford to send their children abroad to pursue tertiary education. In Lofa County, it was discovered that the community college only offers agriculture, nursing, and engineering, whereas those graduating from the engineering department of the only state-own university are yet to be absorbed in terms of jobs. In light of the decentralization of a full university education, a youth and student leader at the Lofa Community College noted in an emotional tone that:

> "We ourselves desire to study government and serve as leaders of our country. We are tired waiting on children of government officials to continue returning and ruling us; this is our country and we can be capable to lead too."[72]

The lack of economic opportunities for youth and the poor education system are one manifestation of the weak capacity of the state to put in place and sustain effective policies. If this was the most common illustration used by youth, participants living in rural areas, and who

are reliant on the sale of their agricultural produce for their livelihoods cited the inaccessibility of farm-to-market roads in rural communities as the consequence of the government's uneven commitment to improving infrastructure throughout the country, in spite of donor support to the overall recovery process of the country. The poor state of roads continues to impede business activities and results in the lack of access to markets and the loss or damage to farm produce. The majority of the respondents expressed frustration at being unable to survive and blame the government for being insensitive to their plight the citizens. According to them, this issue has caused them many losses in terms of investment in the agricultural sector and farming business, and at a more basic level, has caused them to go without a full day's meal on many occasions. They blame the current government for not following the paths of its predecessors, who during their reign encouraged farming activities by providing farming supplements to their fore-parents and as well boosted the sale of produces from their farms. This has not only caused them economic hardship, it is also responsible for the level of poverty in the country:

> "Those days governments used to give our fore-parents farming implements, which include seeds and tools, in order to do farming and be able to feed and send their children to school. But today, the government has ignored all of these programmes and that our parents do not have money enough to do large and proper farming; thus making livelihoods very difficult in the hinterland."[73]

The 2014 Ebola outbreak dramatically reinforced the sentiment that the government lacks the capacity and perhaps commitment to enact the policies required to enable the Liberian people to live more dignified lives. The health crisis exposed the vulnerabilities and fragility of the Liberian state and in particular its dysfunctional public health system. The health sector crumbled because of poor (health) infrastructure in most parts of the country and especially in the rural areas where the reach and accessibility of the state was tested the most. Many informants complained that there were simply insufficient government clinics or hospitals in their communities, in spite of the international aid allocation and support that the government has received for this very purpose.

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72    Youth FGD, Voinjama, Lofa County 11/23/2014

73    Focus Group Discussion, Konia, Lofa County; 11/24/2014

The lack of equipment and effective public health care was responsible for the death of many Liberians during the Ebola crisis. Out of fear and paranoia, sick patients who did managed reach health centers were often refused treatment. As a result, people died from common and easily curable ailments such as typhoid and even headaches while many children become orphans.

A further serious perception of the governance deficit experienced by Liberians was the concern and lack of trust about how funds allocated for the Ebola Response were said to be diverted and mismanaged by the government. Although this was referred to in regard to the Ebola crisis funds, it was also symptomatic of the general concerns and perceptions of corrupt and self-serving government elites. A participant observed that the government key officials use Ebola as money making thing for themselves; she stated: "the things that could bring war are joblessness/unemployment, land issue, man and woman business. The fact that we are hearing all the money coming into this country to fight Ebola and we are not seeing any result will bring conflict. Only people in government have access to this money and Ebola materials"[74].

In addition to pointing out specific areas of policy and service delivery where they felt the government was not living up to its responsibility, the persons consulted also explained, in more general terms, why they perceived the government to be weak, noting the heavy reliance on external actors, as well as pervasive corruption, particularly as it regards the utilization of funds. For instance, many participants in the South East of the country (Sinoe, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland and River Gee Counties), were of the view that the current stability can be attributed to the physical presence of the UNMIL, rather than the capacity of the Government of Liberia to ensure physical and social security. They also denounced the huge misapplied and misappropriated international support that Liberia receives as responsible for the lack of national ownership of peacebuilding and development efforts. Many participants suggested that the true test of a nationally owned peace would be if Liberians can themselves preserve the peace for at least five years after UNMIL leaves. Echoing a sentiment heard throughout consultations in the South East, a participant in Fish Town, River Gee explained:

"We have not really own the peace as Liberians. This is because we still have UNMIL here doing bulk of the job. So before we celebrate the peace we have, we should wait until UNMIL leaves and we can keep the peace for at least four or five years".[75]

This situation and the combination of frustrations and issues described above, angered Liberians, and they expressed their dismay and frustration in various forms. The anger among citizens during the early months of the Ebola outbreak reached a peak with the West Point incident, when government forces used fire-arms that led to the death of a young boy and the sustaining of major injuries by many in response to protest against quarantine regulations; thus graphically illustrating both the mistrust and the potential for violence that can ensue. In the words of the residents, they expressed extreme disappointment in national authorities, and especially their local authorities and elected legislators, who according to them demonstrated no interest in their wellbeing during the dark days of the Ebola virus. A community leader expressed his disappointment thus; 'We are not happy about our situation here because our leaders are not always there when we need them. We do not have job they cannot provide any, Ebola came they cannot provide buckets for residents and awareness for the community. If not for some NGOs and community effort our people will just be dying when we have some of the government officials living in the community'[76].

*"We do not have any government-run clinic or hospital in our community and have never had one since I got to know myself in this community; it is Dr. Swaray clinic that has been helping us from 8:00am to 4:00pm, even during the ebola time."* **- KII with community leader, Montserrado County**

The Ebola crisis revealed the extent to which a crisis of governance is responsible for the inadequacies in the provision of basic social goods such as education, health and viable economic opportunities. It also exposed how rapidly this can feed into dangerous systems of patronage and ultimately devolve into a security threat. A country

74    FGD Participant, Mt. Barclay Community, Montserrado County, 10/8/2014.

75    FGD, Fish Town, River Gee. 2/11/2015
76    KII with Soul Clinic Community Leader, Paynesville City Montserrado County, 10/29/2014

whose governance system has a protracted history of the doctrine of elitism manifested by all manner of exclusionary and discriminatory practices, such as corruption, the lack of accountability and transparency, nepotism, marginalization, limited participation of citizens in the governance of the state, food insecurity, etc., all combine to present a cumulative threat to fragile peace. Notwithstanding a government that often generated the defensive notions that 'either you are for or against us' or 'either you are in the upper class or the bottom of the social ladder', amongst its population –and the serious threat this poses – there was in fact relatively little resort to violence either horizontally or directed at the state from ordinary Liberians. It is impressive therefore that Liberia "held it together" and that the country did not spiral into violence. The following section explores the strength and resources that Liberians draw on, utilize or turn to as the means of preventing the escalation of violence in the face such severe shortcomings which profoundly affect their wellbeing.

### 4.2.1 Finding alternative livelihoods and means of accessing public goods

Liberians have devised various means of dealing with the consequence of these governance deficits on the part of the state. The ways in which different groups have devised strategies for accessing or creating new livelihoods and other opportunities are illustrative of how Liberians in general have found alternatives outside of the State for accessing public goods such as healthcare, education, employment and economic opportunities and security. The following are major strategies developed by Liberians, in this context.

*Reliance on traditional sources of livelihood (agriculture/ farming, poro training and eating bush meat)*

As a result the high cost of living, which was further increased by the outbreak of the Ebola virus, many Liberians and especially those residing the in rural areas relied on traditional sources of livelihood. Amongst the traditional sources of livelihood are farming/agriculture, the conduct of poro training, and the eating of bush meat. Even though part of the measures to curb the spread of Ebola was the prohibition on eating and even coming into contact with bush meat, most of those consulted during the study indicated a continued reliance

on bush meat for survival. It was argued by many of those we consulted that since government had provided no alternative food sources, and in light of this deeply ingrained cross-generational practice, many simply defied the ban relying on it not being enforceable by a state which did not have the reach, and in the hope that this would prove not to be instrumental in spreading the disease. Many participants even went as far as saying that if the virus indeed comes through bush meat, they prefer to die. In the words of a traditional chief in River Cess County:

> "My parents used to eat bush meat until I was born, and my children and I have been eating bush meat since I born them. For the government to stop me from eating bush meat and without giving me something else to eat, we will continue eating the bush meat until all of us die."[77]

*Reliance on remittances*

Remittances are an important part of many people lives around the world. Unlike other financial flows, remittances go directly into family incomes, and thus have an immediate and direct impact on the livelihoods of receiving households. In terms of the Liberian diaspora's economic remittances, Pheiffer (2013) quoted World Bank 2012 diaspora remittances from Diaspora Liberian in 2012 amounting to US $378 million- a growth of 18% over the previous year.[78] The lack of economic opportunities makes many Liberians dependent on remittances from friends and family members in the United States, Europe, and other parts of the globe as an important source of income. During the consultation, most of our informants claimed that since the end of the war, they have relied on support from friends and family members in the United States, Europe and other parts of the world, and that such reliance became even more pertinent during the Ebola period when economic opportunities were further restricted and the cost of life increased dramatically. This was illustrated by the highly symbolic issue of the affordability of rice, the staple diet in Liberia. As one female participant in River Gee County notes:

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77    An Elder in an FGD, Cestos City River Cess County 11/3/2014
78    Liberia: Moneygram - Liberia Remittance Key Facts 2012/2013, *The New Dawn*, Article published on 24th January 2014; [Accessed online at http://allafrica.com/stories/201401240035.html ]

**Mixed Youth group Sanniquellie,Nimba County**

"Before the Ebola we used to buy the big bag of rice (e.g. 50kg), but now we cannot even buy the half bag (25kg). At least, it was sold for LD$1,400 (US$16.50) and we used to try. But now, it is sold for LD$1,925(US$ 22.74) and we can't buy it. Even a cup of rice if being sold for LD$100 (US$ 1.18) in some areas, and in some it is LD$50-75((US$0.70 – 0.90)".[79]

This issue of rice prices is not just an indication of indigence or desperation during the Ebola outbreak, but is more symbolic and significant because of the history in Liberia of conflict reaching a breaking points on previous occasions, associated precisely with the issues of rising rice prices and unavailability.

Even though remittances provide much needed financial support to families and communities, they create dependency and discourage local growth and development activities. The example of remittances is a very strong representation of how resilience in these situations of desperation, may actually be less transformative in the long term and more rooted in a 'survivalist' approach. It is important therefore to promote locally driven sources of revenue by investing in local employment and entrepreneurship in ways that will enable Liberians to take control of and transform their economic situations.

*Motor-bike riding*

Many informants noted that young people often seek to take advantage of skills training programmes offered by NGOs, church groups and the government to equip themselves with marketable skills. However, the implementation of and access to these programs is uneven and not all youth are able to benefit. Furthermore, skills training does not guarantee jobs as there is a mismatch between the needs of the labour market and acquired skills. Consequently, many trained people find themselves unemployed and frustrated. In an effort to generate income, and give their lives meaning, young people often turn to riskier, albeit often appealing livelihood strategies for instance through participation in 'gangs' such as the Pehn-Pehn Boys. This group, often called the motorbike gang, engages in an important economic activity, employing its members as motorbike taxi drivers,

thus helping them to generate an income. In addition motor-bike riding as Pehn-Pehn boys, provides young people with a sense of belonging and a group identity that is empowering.

During the focus group discussions held across the country, the majority of motorcyclists consulted asserted that motor-bike riding does not only help the riders or young people alone, but also their families, relatives and dependents. Notwithstanding the value of the group for its members, Pehn-Pehn Boys are easily mobilized by politicians for self-interest and by their colleagues for 'self-defense'. The majority of motor-bike riders in the country are without formal education, thus making them susceptible to manipulation by politicians – most of whom eventually exploit the illiteracy of the young people for their own personal and political goals, often recruiting them as potential violent foot-soldiers. These resilient youngsters are creative and resourceful in the face of their vulnerability and marginalization – but the forms of social cohesion and the economic activities that they choose, combined with the fact that young people are less risk averse, may lead them to play out roles that are either positively or negatively resilient. In other words, they could become engaged in activities that could either add to exacerbate conflict and risks of violence, or the opposite As a result, they are often seen to be disruptive and violent rather than 'positively' resilient.

*"We are not riding motor-bike because we feel like; it is only because of the lack of skill trainings and the right kind of job opportunities for young people like us in the country. So, if we are given skills and the right kind of job, most of us will leave the bike riding and do other better things with our lives." - **FGD, River Gee County**

### 4.2.2    Organizing community initiatives

The study also discovered the organization of varied community initiatives and actions in the face of insufficient efforts by government to protect and develop communities. Throughout the consultations, we observed that many community initiatives were put in place by residents in an effort to reclaim ownership of their lives and property and to assert a role and a stake in development programmes and initiatives. In other

79    KII with SEWODA Head, Fish Town, River Gee County, 2/11/2015

cases, they initiate these actions to ensure accountability, including ensuring protection of their lives and property.

## Security Services

Most communities continue to experience violent crime in the face of limited manpower of the Liberia National Police (LNP), which has the statutory responsibility of providing security for the citizens. Therefore, communities and their leaderships have devised alternative means of ensuring their safety such as through the formation of community defense groups (vigilante). In most cases, these groups provide security for their communities against thefts and armed robberies, as in most cases residents get wounded and in some instances killed by thieves and robbers. While these community groups may run the risk of preying on some community members, there is usually huge community supports towards them including from traditional chiefs and elders.

## Religious activities

Religion and places of worship are an important rallying point for Liberians and provide support and strength in difficult times. In a FGD with the Muslim community in Margibi County, they were said to employ the means of prayer and reliance on God for a change of their situation. According to Imam Mohammed T. Kromah:

> "We Muslims are aware that everything that happens is the will of Allah… even ebola. Therefore, we go to Allah for the solution. We pray regularly and carry out our normal activities, even though we do not do it in huge number. Meanwhile, because most people look to Allah, we change the time of prayer and even added some prayer time to our normal praying hours. This is intended to help those that go to find food and may not be able to attend at the normal time".[80]

Similarly, in the Soul Clinic Community, a pastor noted that despite the fact that everyone observes and respects the preventive health measures; most of the church worship services are nonetheless full of people. In his words:

> "We even have two services now, because of the huge number of people".[81]

Meanwhile in Careysburg Township, community dwellers organized themselves into prayer and gospel musical groups. These groups took turns to visit their members and other families for the purpose of conducting bible studies and prayer meetings, throughout the Ebola epidemic - thus teaching total reliance on God, during such critical times.

In times of crises, community organizations of various forms display both solidarity and innovation to both deliver effective crisis responses, but also to sustain the social cohesion of affected communities. During the Ebola outbreak, communities crafted strategies such as contact-tracing teams, in order to assist the government in curbing the spread of the Ebola virus. Communities also formed task forces that provided supervision and support to individuals and families with members who had been put under quarantine due to being suspected of suffering from Ebola. This was more than just a security initiative: the task force was also responsible for the care of those under quarantine, ensuring for instance that they were fed, even if not adequately. In an effort to achieve this in the face of the lack of resources, communities were involved in fundraising, often from outside their own communities. In Montserrado County, most communities within Brewerville, Gardnersville and other parts explained that they sought funding from outside the county in order to maintain and care for their quarantined community members. In Mount Barclay for example, one participant at the focus group discussion indicated that:

> "When we discovered that some members of our community were coming down with the signs and symptoms, we decided to quarantine them by ourselves and feed them."[82]

### 4.2.3    Speaking out against government's failure

In addition to finding everyday responses to largely address the symptoms of the problems experienced (as illustrated by the examples of the youth livelihood issue, road infrastructure and health services described above),

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80    FDGD with Muslim Community in Kakata, Margibi County, 10/31/2014

81    KII with Soul Clinic Religious Leader, Paynesville City Montserrado County, 10/29/2014
82    FGD Mount Barclay Community, Montserrado County, 10/8/2014

ordinary Liberians were also proactive and organized in targeting the roots of the problem itself – and proved keen to express their discontent or find alternative sources of leadership. Their actions ranged from passive forms of resistance such as 'no voting' during elections, to actively engaging with the government officials. Moreover, Liberians often bypassed the government structures and turned to customary and traditional leadership and more accessible sources of authority instead. When all else fails, communities also demonstrated that they would not shy away from protest actions either, some of which did risk becoming violent.

### Media Advocacy and Hataiye shop discussion

The consultations revealed that many young people participate in intellectual discussions and engage their leaders in 'hataiye shops[83]' discussion around the country, including through media advocacy (e.g. radio talk-shows). They believe that consistent advocacy and communication that express their plight yield more positive results than resorting to arms or taking to the bush. Participants also noted that popular sports tournaments such as the county meets can serve as constructive socialization platforms for the youth and have been important in promoting peaceful co-existence and social cohesion over the past ten years under President Sirleaf, often in the face of life-challenging situations created on one hand by the government, and on the other hand by nature.

*"In terms of peacebuilding efforts, the Konia issue is a practical example of why we have explicit confidence in our local leaders, as well as traditional chiefs and religious leaders. When the incident in Konia occurred, the government immediately employed a western means of resolution, which did not help until the involvement of Interfaith Religious Council, which comprised of traditional chiefs and religious leaders. At their intervention, the issue was resolved with contending parties hugging each other and shaking hands."* **- Mixed FGD, Lofa County**

### Leadership of Local and traditional chiefs

Families and communities rely heavily on the guidance and support of local leaders and especially traditional chiefs to carry out development projects as well as

address conflict-related matters. In their article <u>Formal and informal justice in Liberia</u>, Pewee Flomoku and Counselor Lemuel Reeves argue that "most Liberians still rely on traditional justice. But, its structures have been weakened over time and by the war." They further indicate that "the lack of resources and unclear mandates have undermined the ability of chiefs and elders to resolve local disputes."[84]

Nonetheless, some of the respondents indicated that they trust local leaders and traditional chiefs, more so than they do the formal government structure and its officials. This trust is based on two factors. The first is that traditional chiefs and religious leaders demonstrate high interest in issues affecting them as individuals, families and communities by being physically present and devising ways to handle their difficulties. And the second is that traditional chiefs and religious leaders are always concerned with seeking and promoting peace, reconciliation and development within the community, including strategizing for the protection of the communities from further harm or danger. The roles of chiefs and elders range from the establishment and support of vigilante groups against theft and destruction, to mediating conflicts and disputes.

The confidence that people have in their local chiefs and traditional leaders is a remarkable asset for Liberia's peace. They play a key role in preventing disputes from degenerating into widespread violence, even when the government cannot. Speaking of a violent conflict that erupted in February 2009 in Konia District, Lofa County, participants related that in spite of intervention by the government the case remained unsettled until the involvement of the Interfaith Religious Council of Liberia and the Lofa Traditional Council. Whereas the government's intervention was lengthy and ineffective, the intervention by traditional chiefs took a very short time

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83    These are shops for selling locally brewed gin that attract young adult mainly male, where they discuss current socio-cultural and political issues. They are focal points for political mobilization at the grassroots. They are found all over Liberia. Sometime they are called Intellectual halls.

84    Flomoku, P. and Reeves L. (2012). 'Formal and Informal Justice in Liberia', in Conciliations Resources (ed.); Accord Issue 23: Consolidating peace: Liberia and Sierra Leone. [Available online at: http://www.c-r.org/accord-article/formal-and-informal-justice-liberia ]

and successfully led to a solution. Moreover, to this date, there have been no reprisals by the parties.[85]

Arguably, the leadership role of customary chiefs may nonetheless seem problematic in some instances as it creates a parallel structure to that of the existing government, and further distances communities from the government leadership. However, many of these traditional chiefs derive their legitimacy from traditional values that have held communities strongly united prior the outbreak of the 14 years of armed conflict. These traditional structures are very important because of how accessible they are, especially when the state is remote or absent. In so far that they are able to help manage conflict creatively, they are of particular value to the current research on resilience from a peacebuilding perspective. It should be noted however that such structures are also often resistant to change and not always inclusive. Hence, it is important to find ways in which these local chiefs can effectively coexist alongside the formal government as well as serve as a bridge between the state and citizens rather than undermine the state.

*"We have been having hataiye shop discussion on several issues including discrimination, and we will continue to have it, including engaging the process on radio communication on having our community college and better road network. This is because we strongly believe that it is the best way to express our hurts than being violent". - FGD, Sinoe County*

### Violent demonstration

"When gentility fails then brutality prevails".[86] These are the words of a youth in River Cess County, during one of the consultations. The study discovered that in few cases, young people resorted to violent demonstration in order to express their frustration, disappointment and resistance. This violent demonstration of such feelings was discovered in most parts of the country but mainly in Grand Bassa, Nimba, and Lofa Counties, where citizens gathered against concession companies and the government, in an expression of their frustrations at their unattended plight. Citizens under the banner of the 'Aggrieved Bassa Citizens (ABC)' and leadership of the youth community was formed and carried out numerous violent demonstrations calling for the immediate resignation of the various county authorities, especially the superintendent and deputy for development.

According the group's head, county authorities had mismanaged a little over US$200,000.00 provided by the national government (from its ebola trust fund), concession companies operating within the county, as well as international partners from the United Nations (WFP) and other humanitarians.[87] As they demanded the resignation of their leaders and with the backing of members of the Legislative Caucus of the county, the group moved to the administrative building in demand for their leaders to leave the county. As a result, the leaders involved fled and went into hiding.[88].

Such violent protest by the community was also seen in Nimba County, prior to the outbreak of the virus. In this instance the target was a multinational corporation – Mittal Steel –whose compound was ransacked by the youth of Nimba County, for what they regarded as the failure on the part of the company to live up to its social responsibilities to the community, including facilitating development programmes and projects within the community[89]. This act on the part of the youth of the county resulted in a rift between the legislative and executive branches of government, and specifically between the Nimba County Legislative Caucus and the President of Liberia, who then ordered the restoration of the properties of the company through a seizure of the county's development fund. The case was highly referenced by the youth in their discussion with the research team.

In essence, the desire to change what is perceived to be wrong with the government is a healthy expression of democratic sentiment, and indeed potentially of transformative resilience as well. However, some strategies promote violence whereas others do not, reinforcing the view that that resilience can and does actually manifest if various forms, some more inherently benevolent than others.

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85    Male participant in an FGD in Konia Lofa County, 11/24/2014)
86    FGD Participant, Cestos City, River Cess County, 11/2/2014

87    FGD with Youth, Buchanan City Grand Bassa County, 11/1/2014)
88    Our team spoke with the development superintendent, who confirmed that he was  in hiding for fear for his life (KII with ABC Youth Leader, Buchanan City Grand Bassa County, 11/1/2014)
89    Bayjay, N. (2014); Beyond the Arcelor Mittal Violence: Behind-The-Scene, Future Lessons To Pick, The Perspective. [Accessed online at http://www.theperspective.org/2014/0710201401.php ]

KII with Magistrate of Bong County

### 4.2.4   Priorities for National Working Group

Recognizing that strengthening state capacity and accountability so as to allow for the more effective provision of social goods and build the confidence of the population in the state is a challenge that is both broad in scope and enduring in execution, those present during the Stakeholder Validation Forum identified two very concrete and specific priorities for the national working group. Noting however that these must be developed and researched with the broader goals of building trust between the state and society, participants argued that a more focused mandate would lead to more actionable recommendations.

The two strategies prioritized for further research during the Stakeholder Validation Forum were:

1) the development of skills among youth as a means of empowering them to find solutions to the lack of public goods provided by the state;

2) The development of dialogue and advocacy initiatives and programmes at the community and national level, through which people can voice out their concerns regarding the governance deficits.

According to stakeholders at the forum, the development of the skills of the young people, coupled with the availability of relevant job opportunities will best service the durability of peace in Liberia. Liberians – and especially Liberian youth – believe that with these two priorities, if developed into policy and programmes, would best serve for sustaining peace in Liberia and fostering development.

Our consultations illustrated that Liberians are quick to link their everyday hardships and the lack of access to public goods to structural issues such as inadequacy of public policies and diverse forms of corruption that beset all levels of government. Some of the many means devised by Liberians to salvage the hardship have been explored above, and these range from the conservative, such as reliance on remittances to the risky, such as the participation of youth in motorcycle gangs. The role of the community and importance of solidarity and social cohesion is not to be overlooked, as in addition to being a resource, it also provides an empowering sense of belonging. In addition, Liberians are keen to get to the source of the problem and speak out against corruption and make their discontent heard. In all instances however, there are examples of strategies that fuel violence. In assessing resilience therefore, it is important to look at which survival, coping and transformational activities are more likely to contribute to peace and which, instead, undermine long term peace.

### 4.3 Increasing pressure on land and the lack of effective regulation

Land is a key resource that people depend on for various uses. For many Liberians, land is their greatest asset: the source of food and water, the site of their livelihoods, and the heart of their history and culture.[90] However, it has also been a source of violent conflict in both urban and rural Liberia due to the increased pressure on land. Land and property disputes are found in all parts of Liberia but there are some areas or regions where land disputes have degenerated to large-scale violence, involving families, conflicts between communities, and sometimes even counties. In some instances these conflict have revolved around active mining concessions, primarily because of the lack of means available to regulate property rights and access, and to address land disputes. In the absence of such regulatory measures this prompts people, communities, organizations and companies to resort to violent measures such as land grabs, which in turn fuel ripostes and sometimes degenerate into further violence.

The conflict over land takes different forms from region to region, with a marked distinction between urban and rural areas. In urban Liberia and particularly in rapidly developing cities, land and property disputes are related to the 'front-view philosophy'[91] and to (fraudulent) multiple sales for the same plot of land. Double land sales by unscrupulous land dealers have led to deadly interpersonal conflicts and endless litigation, especially in the major cities as a result of urban expansion. Disruptions of the operations of multi-national corporations, ethnic/community tensions and family feuds resulting from land/property disputes have culminated in major conflicts in some parts of Liberia. Some of these disputes are localized while others end up in disputes at the Supreme Court in Monrovia. Unresolved land/property disputes resulting from multiple title-holding have also led to ethnic rivalry, for example, among the Mandingoes and Gio in Nimba County.

On the other hand, rural land disputes take the form of communal and family farmstead holding disputes between families and/or between two or more communities. Moreover, in the rural setting, there is also a growing contestation over land use between Multinational Corporations operating large-scale concessions in palm oil, rubber, or forests for logging, and communities that live on these lands and play host to them. These communities have accused these corporations of 'land grabs', desecration of sacred areas of the forests, and using threat and other unlawful means to enforce their continual stay on the land[92]. In many instances community people have accused the government of colluding with these companies to dispossess them of their land without adequate compensation or the provision of alternative employment opportunities. According to a key informant in Harper, Maryland County:

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90    Knight, R et.al. (2012).Protecting community lands and resources Evidence from Liberia, Mozambique and Uganda: Executive Summary. International Development Law Organisation, in partnership with Namati. [Available online at http://www.idlo.int/sites/default/files/Protecting%20Community%20Lands%20and%20Resources%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf ]

91    Front-view philosophy- belief and tendency of people to prioritized the land space and property situated along the main road/business hub of the city.
92    Buntzel R. and Topor. E. Wollor (2013). Large-Scale Land Acquisition in Liberia. Case Studies of Legal aspects on the Palm Oil Sector. Study conducted by the authors together with students from the Williams R. Tolbert, Jr. College of Agriculture and Forestry University of Liberia(WRTCAF) with support of FINN Church Aid and The Fellowship of Churches & Church Councils in West Africa(FECCIWA)

"Our lands have been taken away from us with our government's support and our young people do not have access to jobs in these companies operating the large concessions."[93]

Land grabbing is, however, not limited to the Multinational corporations alone. Elites have taken advantage of the pre-war statutory land holding systems to take over land from the underclass. People from privileged class have used their connections with authority to acquire land and property from impoverished communities for commercial purposes which have fueled resentment and local uprisings.

Even when these corporations attempt to engage the communities, the government sometimes steps in, in ways that alienates the local population. For example, the government deliberately did not consult the local communities when negotiating a concession agreement with the Golden Veroleum of Liberia (GVL) in the Numon-Poe area located in Sinoe County. Whereas the government claimed that it could not conduct consultations because the community members were themselves divided and unable to resolve their own conflicts. The citizens found this to be a poor excuse for circumventing an inclusive process that could would interfere with the personal gains of those involved in the deal. A Numon-poe resident present during a focus group discussion in Greenville, Sinoe County explained:

"We are asking GVL to leave Numon-poe until we can come to one understanding among ourselves; because if it is only for the government, they only want to eat money and we don't care whether the government agree with them or not."[94]

The variable nature and character of these conflicts, as well as the different types of stakeholders that are parties to land disputes means that the solutions can never be straightforward or one size fits all. In Liberia, it is in fact the lack of effective regulatory processes and adequate dispute settlement mechanisms that makes land issues particularly incendiary. The pervasiveness of land grabs in Liberia, a common characteristic of countries with weak land institutions, dubious governance and sometimes failed states,[95] is symptomatic of the weak land

regulatory framework and an out-of-date, neglected, and discriminatory statutory tenure system.[96] The breakdown of statutory land tenure is especially problematic in post conflict contexts where displaced populations attempt to re-access lands, try to access new lands, or retake historical lands that have been re-assigned with formal title deeds. Moreover, weak governance, powerful elites and a culture of corruption enable land and property speculation and fraudulent practices such as reselling the same land numerous times, and falsifying deeds, titles, or other property document to take advantage of the crippled formal tenure system.[97]

In Lofa County for example, the citizens in a mixed focus group accused their law-makers and the central government of engaging in fraudulent practices and failing to consult with citizens concerning a concession agreement for 6,000 hectares of land in Qua-dro-bonie. The senior Senator, who by statute has full jurisdiction over the county, denied being a part of the signing of the document, claiming that he was absent from office on the day of the signing ceremony. The local community opposed the signing of the agreement because the concession would impede upon their farming activities, while proceeds from the deal would benefit only those in authority of the county. Against this backdrop, the citizens called for the resignation of the senior Senator on the grounds of the statement made on national radio. In the words of the youth representative,

"There is a need for our leaders to be changed because Hon. Sumo Kupee is creating more tension in our county."[98]

The Ebola crisis further increased pressure on land due to migration and the widespread resort to farming as a survival strategy in the face of other livelihood options evaporating. Also, the migration of people living around the crematoriums and the mass-burial burial grounds for victims of Ebola, ignited passionate concerns associated with land issues for Liberians, and illustrated some

Rights and the Rush for Land. Finding of the global commercial pressure on Land Research Project. IIAED/CIRAD/International Land Coalition, Rome. Document available online at www.landcoalition.org/cpl/CPL-synthesis-report
96    Unruh, J. (2010). Land Rights And Peacebuilding: Challenges And Responses For The International Community. International Journal of Peace Studies, Volume 15, Number 2, Autumn/Winter 2010
97    Ibid.
98    Youth FGD Voinjama City, Lofa County, 11/22/2014

93    KII with Acting City Mayor of Harper City, 2/9/2015
94    FGD, Greenville, Sinoe County 2/9/2015
95    Anseeuw, W.A., Wila, L.,. Cotula, M. Taylor (2011): Land

of the sensitive and controversial impacts of Ebola in respect to land. In Johnsonville community, where the government designated land for burial grounds for Ebola victims, the community residents initially protested and later deserted out of fear that the land had been contaminated with the Ebola virus. There was a clash with health authorities over ownership of the land used as burial grounds.[99] Some private land developers fearfully claimed that Ebola would remain in the land and thus constituted a health hazard to them as they developed the properties.

Key informant participants in areas experiencing land and property disputes revealed various mechanisms they have been using in an attempt to address these. While some are specific to urban or rural settings, other strategies can be observed everywhere. There are four main resources that participants identified as having effectively been used to settle land and property disputes; (i.) Community dialogue and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms (ii.) NGO interventions, (iii.) Judicial System and (iv.) government interventions

### 4.3.1 Traditional conflict mediation mechanisms to solve land disputes

One of the most common ways of resolving land disputes throughout the fifteen counties of Liberia, according to a wide spectrum of participants in the consultations, is the traditional method or community dialogue using the palava hut. This strategy, widely regarded as effective, relies on the willingness and full cooperation of the disputants and dates back to pre-war Liberia. The real asset and value addition of this dispute resolution mechanism is that it brings to the negotiation an array of stakeholders who are linked by various social ties.

Most Liberians consulted confirmed that the traditional method brings peace to the table while resolving land disputes. In Grand Gedeh, Southeast Liberia, a key informant noted:

> "The best way we resolve our land and boundary conflicts is using our local chiefs, elders and other stakeholders at the county and national levels to

settle aggrieved parties and whatever decision that is reached is mostly abided by the feuding parties."[100]

The importance of the palava hut and town hall-meeting in resolving land and property disputes was further highlighted in one of the key informant interviews. In Ganta City, Nimba County where land and property disputes have been recurrent and confrontational, an elder also claimed that:

> "The Elder Council has done a lot to resolves most land cases in the post-war time which has greatly contributed to the reduction in land cases and fights between disputants. We have been able to bring aggrieved parties to sit in the same palava hut to settle land issues without further appeal and both parties were always satisfied."[101]

The Development superintendent of Grand Gedeh County further highlighted the role of traditional leaders when he noted that "with traditional Elders, consultations are being made continually to resolve land disputes."[102] People obey and respect the view and judgement of the elders and their traditional councils as final.

While there are other options open for resolving land disputes, forums organized by elders are crucial because they have high regard for the traditional structures/authorities. Affirming the efficacy of the traditional mechanism of resolving land conflict, a county authority stated thus: "land disputes are resolved the traditional way. We rarely go to court because our people respect our traditional judgment."[103] Palava hut and community dialogues initiated by traditional leaders were described as very effective means of mediating land and property disputes and seen to be means that are trusted by the population. The Palava hut is a symbol of dispute and non-violent conflict resolution throughout Liberia.

Once aggrieved parties submit to this council and agree that the decision reached by the Council is final, there will be no further appeal or the resuscitation of the case in other ways.

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99    Seaklon, T. (2014) Liberia: Ebola Victims Finally Buried in Johnsonville. The Inquirer, 5 August 2014 [Article Available online at: http://allafrica.com/stories/201408060530.html]

100    KII with Grand Gedeh Development Superintendent 13/2/2015
101    KII with Elder Council Head, Ganta Nimba County- 23-11-2014
102    KII with Development superintendent of Grand Gedeh County 14/2/2015
103    KII with *Acting Superintendent, Grand Kru County* 2/11/15

It is important to recognize that the traditional dispute mechanisms that exist in Liberia are an asset and an important source of resilience for individuals and communities that have few alternatives for resolving their land and other disputes by peaceful means. However, having recourse to such mechanisms rather than the formal legal system risks further undermining the state legitimacy and capacity by bypassing it altogether. Moreover, although much of the customary conflict resolution methods promote social cohesion among community members, they can sometimes marginalize and mete out resolutions that are biased against minority groups or which further prejudice instead of addressing the marginalization or exclusion of women, particular tribes, young people, or people living with disabilities, etc.

### 4.3.2 Government solutions to land disputes: The Land Commission and the judiciary

In Liberia, formal title deeds are granted by the government through the issuance of documents duly endorsed by relevant authorities. The most common way of resolving a dispute over land ownership is by verifying which party possesses authentic documents issued by the authorized government agency or ministry. The Government of Liberia, both through the formal legal system and via special committees and the *Land Commission (LC)* does offer some regulation of land acquisition and ownership in an organized and formal way. Recently, the Land Commission and National Legislature enacted the Criminal Conveyance Law, which criminalizes double land sales, a hydra-headed problem in urban Liberia, particularly Monrovia and Paynesville, cities with very large populations. The LC has good laws that protect the weak, but its functions and visibility is rarely known to those in the interior as they only operate in few counties. Generally speaking, throughout the fifteen counties, the authority of the government over land was duly recognized but with mixed feelings. It is important to note that Liberian law allows the government to use the power of 'eminent domain' to take any land in all parts of Liberia. In regions where there are active concession activities, community members are especially wary of the government's power regarding matters of land ownership. For example, youth in an FGD in Maryland noted that:

> "The government does not consider the title-holding rights of community people and access

to job opportunities seriously because most of the benefits do not trickle down to youth and host communities."[104]

The community outcry over land and other natural resources' acquisitions through the government is not different. Communities felt alienated from the concession agreement negotiation process and do not see the companies operating in the communities' interest.

The government has also given out compensation as a means of resolving land disputes, particularly in cases opposing community members to mining concessions. In Grand Kru County, a female key informant claimed that:

> "In my community, we have received compensation from the Golden Veroleum for our crops, though it wasn't adequate but it was better than nothing so we do not have problem with that totally."[105]

But in Nimba, even though government paid some compensation, people felt the payments were inadequate. As was observed by a youth participant:,

> "Some form of compensation was being paid by the government over land some time ago but it was all along tribal line and people that were really affected did not get their due payment."[106].

Compensation often creates serious tension among the population because people have high expectations, but inevitably discovers that the compensation is 'inadequate.' The problem is that 'adequate compensation' has not been clearly defined even by those asking for it. Most times compensation outcomes are counterproductive and create new problems that can lead to further conflict

Formal adjudication of land and property disputes follows the modern legal system and most people consulted acknowledged the role of the judiciary as the last arbiter that settles land and property cases once an aggrieved party requests a competent court to do so. However, they also noted that they only go to court when they are not satisfied with a ruling of the traditional council or community authorities, as some of them are biased in their judgement. Moreover, although the judicial system

104    Youth Mixed FGD, Harper City Maryland  County 2/9/15
105    Youth Mixed FGD, *Grand Kru County* 2/11/15
106    Youth  Mixed FGD Ganta, Nimba County- 23/11/2014

is seen as a legitimate arbiter of land disputes, many of the consultation participants observed that the process usually lingers longer than necessary to give justice when it is really actually needed. In Ganta, a women noted in one of the FGD sessions: '

> "We know the court system can work but it takes eternity to get justice and most times it is not for the poor man who cannot pay."'[107]

The judiciary also has the responsibility of enforcing land enactments and interpretation of the same. All pronouncements from government or its agency need judicial backing before they can be enforceable.

The fact that people resort to the court system in spite of its perceived shortcomings shows that people affords at least some legitimacy to state institutions, here the judiciary specifically. Ensuring that courts remain credible and working to increase their effectiveness can help to build people's confidence and trust in the state, something which, as evidenced in the discussion on governance, is deeply lacking in Liberia.

### 4.3.3 Multistakeholder processes promoted by NGOs are helping to resolve some land disputes

Most respondents consulted during the consultation noted that Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have played a pivotal role in regions where land disputes are very volatile. Working with different stakeholders, they have created the corridor for peaceful negotiations and have established mediation structures to help resolve land and property disputes between community members as well as between multi-national corporations and communities. For example, the Carter Center, an international NGO working in Liberia partnered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to organize a five-day seminar in South Eastern Liberia to mediate the land conflict between Grand Gedeh and River Gee Counties. According to our key informant who related this event, the seminar was attended by a multi-sectoral audience.

These structures draw inspiration from and engage both formal, governmental institutions and traditional, customary structures to ensure that a viable level-playing field evolves to deal with the land and property disputes and that creates avenues for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The explicit effort of NGOs to engage multi-stakeholder processes strengthens vertical and horizontal relations that exist across various sectors and this lays the foundation for inclusive peacebuilding. NGO intervention has really contributed to peace and social cohesion as claimed by an Elder in Ganta:

> "Apart from the Liberia Land Coordinating Center (LLCC), Tetra Tech DKP is another organization that is also helping to reduce land conflicts. It trains people so that they will not have to be taking cutlasses to settle land issue. At the community level they have a sub- agent and it is called Community Forum (CF), which serves as early warning mechanism, so when they see something developing they can put a stop to it before it explodes. The forum had been here for more than a year. Also, we have the Nimba Peace Organization- they are involved in Palaver Hut discussions where they get people views about issues in the community or the county."[108]

Resolving land conflicts through NGOs and government agency in communities show a tripartite arrangement where the groups- community, civil society and the government work together to finding solutions to land problems.

### 4.3.4 Priorities for the National Working Groups

From the subgroup discussion at the validation forum held on the 29th of April, 2015, stakeholders recommended to the working group to look at two key issues to deepen the research and strengthenpolicy and programmatic actions on land disputes. These mechanisms for resolving conflict non-violently were selected among arrays of others that came out of the consultation. They include;

1. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

2. The judicial system.

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107    Female FGD Nimba County- 23-11-2014

108    KII- Elder  Nya Taylor, Elder Council Head, Ganta, Nimba County- 23-11-2014

The rationale for choosing ADR is that it is an inclusive process involving a wide spectrum of stakeholders such as traditional authorities, NGOs, community leaders, aggrieved parties and government officials. Furthermore, it is based on dialogue rather than litigation and provides a platform for discussing a range of solutions on a consensual basis. The subgroup strongly recommends that P4DP should prioritize ADR as it possesses strong traditional values that people can easily relate to. Moreover, ADR gives people the opportunity to resolve disputes expeditiously in contrast to the slow and corrupt judicial process evidenced by the life-span of cases lying in the court and the perception that formal justice favours the elites. It is easier to make ADR accessible to people living in remote areas, than it would be to provide access to formal justice.

Participants recommended further research on strengthening the judicial system as a priority for resilience and peacebuilding, noting that although flawed, it is a necessary institution for the proper regulation of land and dispute resolution, and must not be bypassed. Rather, efforts must be dedicated to making it more effective and enhancing its legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Participants noted that judicial backing is needed for enforcement as well as legislative enactment of resolutions reached through ADR processes or through any commission or committee.

The various land disputes that Liberians continue to experience in their different communities are in many ways linked to the legacy of the protracted period of civil war between 1989 and 2003. The search for effective dispute resolution mechanisms manifests itself in the form of two competing justice systems: the customary, and the formal that are trying to coexist. This is in many respects, an integral part of the post conflict recovery process. When looking to find solutions to land conflicts, Liberians resort to, in order of preference, both the customary dialogues of their local chiefs and the formal state institutions. The efforts by civil society, through the work of NGOs and CBOs, to develop conflict resolution structures that draw on both the customary and the formal is especially important as it has the potential to create additional peace dividends by strengthening social cohesion both at the community level and between communities and the state. It is also important to recognize that there is deliberate commitment by Liberians to take positive actions in sustaining the peace

by working collaboratively to find non-violent solutions to land conflicts and promote long-lasting peace in Liberia. In so far that conflicts related to land and the regulation of property rights are an enduring source of tension and therefore a threat to durable peace, an analysis of resilience for peacebuilding must take into account the existing mechanisms in place, whether formal or customary that exist in Liberia. Each of those described above – whether traditional chiefs, the formal legal system or community based initiatives led by NGOs – have relative merit depending of the specific case, but it is in the coherence of these different systems, and how they mutually reinforce rather than jeopardize each other, that the potential for greater resilience to violent conflict lies.

### 4.4    Responding to Ebola in a fragile state

This research took place in the midst of the Ebola crisis in Liberia, and unlike structural and long term drivers of conflict, this manifested as a sudden and unpredictable, external shock. Ten years of continuous relative peace in Liberia was disrupted by the outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus, which affected the health sector first and foremost, but also had an impact on the state, the polity and the economy more generally.

#### 4.4.1    The political impact of the Ebola crisis

The public health system, as a component of the state, enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of citizens and can be seen as effective, when it is accessible, responsive, accountable and transparent. Most participants consulted during the study believe that corruption in the public health sector is rampant and that this therefore leaves them with little choice but to explore other means to meet their health needs. They complained that bad governance, characterized by corruption and other social vices, were the factors responsible for high levels of citizen mistrust toward the government.

The Ebola crisis was more than a public health emergency; it also severely undermined the dividends of peace and development that the nation had built up over time. The Ebola crisis exacerbated longstanding conflict drivers such as embedded systems of patronage and networks within the state, weak delivery of state social services, and land disputes, in addition to fermenting new conflicts as well.

Group Picture with women in Gbarnga, Bong County after an FGD session.

The response to the crisis, particularly in its initial stages was not sensitive to the Liberian context and tore apart lots of Liberian cultural norms and values that embroidered everyday life. Some of the most prominent examples raised by those consulted include: the forced replacement of burial ceremonies with cremation, and the effective ban on traditional burial practices (mat-sitting); 'no eating something', other prohibition of public gatherings including attendance at traditional bush schools (poro and sande), state schools, markets, churches and mosques; and the disruption of socio-economic activities.

All of the places of gathering and public belonging were effectively shut down. Moreover, the highly militarized initial response to Ebola through the establishment of a state of emergency, curfews, the closure of borders, and the deployment of troops - especially when associated with bodies on the streets that were not being claimed or removed - mimicked war time practices and revived traumatic memories of the country's past violence conflicts. All of this also contributed dramatically to weakening trust and social cohesion in Liberia, and as such, struck at the very core of the social fabric of communities.

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The Ebola crisis also dramatically reshaped Liberia's standing in the outside world, emulating the way the country was perceived during the civil war, including the stigmatization that produced widespread isolation and called for international intervention once again.

> "We are not fighting Ebola with arms" so why are soldiers all over the places and at check points with arms? Why don't we have health workers there instead? The US soldiers that are coming make it seem like we are in a war, why more soldiers not doctors."[109]

The impact of Ebola was felt more in some counties than others: Lofa, Montserrado, Margibi and Nimba were the hardest hit, significantly shifting the way of life in response to the epidemic. In contrast, in Maryland, River Gee, River Cess, Grand Kru, the impacts of Ebola was more remote as these were the 'green-zone' counties where many were seeking refuge.

Although there is no reliable data to explain the factors that led to higher fatality and infection rates in some counties as opposed to others, but evidence from the genealogy of latest spread points to 'entrenched religious and cultural practices'[110] are responsible for the spread of the virus. The reasons for relatively higher rates of infection tend to be anecdotal and are often specific to each county. Lofa has a huge Muslim population, most of who engage in traditional religious practices, such as bathing the bodies of the deceased and performing various rituals before burial. The county also shares a

*"If you trust someone to do something and they are not doing it, you lost trust in that person; and if that person wants to force you against our will, there will be noise"*-Female KII, Montserrado County

border as well as linguistic and cultural ties with Guinea, where the EVD is said to have originated. The latest wave of Ebola outbreak in West Africa started from Guinea from through relatives who attended a burial ceremony Guinea of a deceased sister[111]. The lack of effective public health centers, undoubtedly contributed most significantly to the high infection rate in Lofa. Like Lofa,

Nimba also shares a border with Guinea and similarly has a large Muslim population and similarly was among the counties that was worst affected by the epidemic. Some immigration officials stationed at the Guinea-Liberia border noted that they have tightened security at the border to monitor movement because Guinea has high cases of Ebola. Also because of the cross border trade and ethic ties between the two countries it is hard to control the crossing which most people have said is a specific contributing factor for the spread of the EVD in Nimba due to many illegal entry points[112].

In the case of Montserrado, it is the urban setting with its high population density that was responsible for the rapid spread of the EVD. Monrovia had a relatively small population prior to the war. Mass rural-urban migration and war-induced displacement have contributed to the rapid urbanization and population growth of Monrovia: today the little peninsula accommodates over 29 percent of the Country population.[113] Consequently, people are living in congested neighborhoods and once the epidemic broke out, the disease was rapidly transmitted. Although Monrovia is very cosmopolitan, by virtue of the fact that people from all walks of life have settled there some inhabitants still engage in their traditional ways of life. Some of these cultural practices, such as washing of dead bodies and "mat-sitting" also contributed to the spread of the virus. In addition, the governance deficit, characterized by the lack of good health care and corruption in the public health system, increased the city's vulnerability to the epidemic, as treatment was difficult to access.

Although the virus itself is an external threat and can be seen as a natural disaster, it is important to point out that the existing fragility of the state, manifest in the lack of health infrastructure, corruption and most importantly the lack of trust in the government, played a very important role in the magnitude of and proportions of the outbreak. The statement made by Minister Konneh and cited above is consistent with this observation. .

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109    KII with Fulani Governor of New Kru town, Montserrado County. 11/25/2014
110    Statement On The Declaration Of A State Of Emergency By President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, R.L. AUGUST 6, 2014[Available online at: http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/sdseg.pdf ]
111    Grady, D.; Fink, S. (2014). "Tracing Ebola's Breakout to an African 2-Year-Old". *The New York Times, 9 August 2014;* Retrieved 12 October  2015

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112    Discussion with Liberian Immigration officers at the Liberian-Guinean border, Ganta City, 11/23/2014
113    2008 Census- LISGIS

## 4.4.2  Economic disruption by the Ebola outbreak

The Ebola outbreak seriously disrupted economic activities, mainly based on dramatic changes in human behavior due to government regulations, fear, and growing mistrust. In addition development agencies reoriented their activities towards the fight against Ebola. Cumulatively, this led to a sharp increase in the rate of unemployment, creating economic hardships for most families, in both rural and urban settings. In 2014, foreign direct investment slowed down due to the Ebola outbreak and the GDP understandably suffered significantly. The World Bank has estimated the growth rate 5.9 percent recorded at second quarter of 2014 had dropped to 2.2 percent[114] a decline rate that affected the GDP of the County.

The main agricultural activities across the country were affected, and this was especially devastating in rural settings where livelihoods were largely dependent on subsistence agriculture. The Kuu systems, which facilitated large scale farming activities, were also completely abolished. For example, farmers in the Mount Barclay community pointed out how they would have increased farming activities had the virus not broken out in Liberia. In the words of a female participant and farmer:

> "If not for the Ebola crisis, by this time our farming work would have gone far. By July/August, we used to have our seeds on nursery so that by September we would have finish planting and some of our plants would have been high at this time. The Ebola caused seeds not to be on the market and when you ask your friend for seeds, they will say that they do not have it."[115]

In urban areas, many employees and contractors were made redundant as businesses and offices closed down. The Liberian government temporarily retrenched most of its employees referring to them as non-essential staff. Women, already marginalized as economic actors, were doubly penalized during the crisis. Many women depended on informal activities to secure their livelihoods, and the imposition of state of emergency and

restriction on movement was especially problematic for them as it invariably hindered their ability to cater for their households and engage in various income generating activities. A number of market women and farmers in separate focus group discussions, expressed how their families incomes had been affected because some of them cannot get their farm products harvested and sold, as in the past. Business women could not access goods, communities were quarantined, roads were blocked, and borders closed:

> "There is completely scarcity of goods and services, all we doing now are hand to mouth, no profit."[116]

According to a study undertaken by Mercy Corps, out of the people that were working in in the first half of 2014, 60 percent of women and 40 percent of men had ceased to work by December.[117] The same report indicated that unavailability of cash – rather than rising costs – had has constrained households' ability to maintain consumption, especially in remote rural areas where access was restricted due to the contagion control efforts.

Businesses, in particular small businesses, were practically incapacitated during the crisis. Road blockades made it difficult for rural farmers to carry their vegetable products to Monrovia for sale. In addition, selling prices for local vegetables dropped, resulting in the loss of income due to lack of access to market. This in turn affected loans and savings initiatives as members were not able to payback their loans. Sharing her thoughts in a FGD, Giadyes Collins, market women president Maryland county, said:

> "Some of us, Central Bank trained us and gave us loans, but we are unable to pay back the loans, because no business now."[118]

The closure of border with Ivory Coast in August 2014 further compounded the problem as it cut off access to essential goods. The ban on sale and consumption of bushmeat also had a negative effect on petty trade and commerce.

The temporary halt in local business activities as the result

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114  World Bank-update on the Economic impact of the ebola outbreak on Liberia, sierra Leone and Guinea
115  FGD Female Participant, Mt. Barclay Commununity,10/8/2014

116  KII with Head, Cross-border women, Zwedru City, Grand Gedeh County, 13/2/2015.
117  MercyCorps, Economic Impact of the Ebola Crisis on Select Liberian Markets, Focus on Monrovia and Lofa and Nimba Counties 2014).
118  Mixed FGD, Harper City Maryland County, 9/2/2015

of Ebola outbreak, to a large extent, undermined efforts of ordinary Liberians to secure a decent livelihood and made worse, a situation that was already difficult. In 'normal' times, small traders, and especially the market women, would have to contend with very poor infrastructure, such as the lack of paved roads connecting the Southern Counties with Monrovia, leaving them isolated, especially during the rainy season. Ebola made it almost impossible to provide support to their households, etc.

At the policy level, the health crisis constituted a big threat to the Agenda for Transformation (AfT), the development policy roadmap of the Liberian Government, which had been set up to usher Liberia into the league of middle income countries by 2030. This is the instrument through which bilateral and multi-national donors channeled most of their resources to address poverty and to mitigate the potential relapse to conflict in Liberia. Most – if not all – of the issues contained in the AfT were put to test in the wake of the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).

### 4.4.3   The Social and Cultural impact of the Ebola Crisis

The Ebola outbreak also had a profound social impact as it forced the suspension of many traditional activities that were at the heart of Liberian culture and custom. One of the most important practices to be halted was the dignified burial of the dead, deemed too dangerous as it became known that dead bodies infected by Ebola could transmit the disease.  In addition, the traditional 'mat sitting' to mourn the dead, as well as the bathing and dressing of the deceased, were all effectively banned.

In order to prevent the transmission of Ebola by infected corpses, measures were taken to enforce cremation in place of burials. This policy created some rancor and acrimony. The sudden cessation of people's age-long tradition of burial and its accompanying rites with conviviality and its pomp and pageantry, has opened new wounds that will take a very long time to heal. Cremation was an unfamiliar or alien practice for most Liberians, and its sudden introduction to Liberian society in lieu of deeply rooted and fundamental burial rituals - especially in time of national emergency and widespread mourning - was painful and unacceptable to many segments of the

society, and actively opposed by the conventions and leaders of tradition. As one informant said:

> "Ebola has brought some strange things in our country, like that cremation, it is against our culture and tradition and it is very wrong. After this Ebola there is going to be a major conflict; people need to know what happened to their relatives' bodies."[119]

Liberia is a society where people revere their loved ones at death: well-wishers, relatives and friends show their love and sympathy while others socialize. It is also an important business for funeral homes and others who organize logistics for such occasions. Even at the national level, Memorial Day is a special day set aside by the national government for citizens to honor their dead and celebrate their lives. The extent to which the Ebola epidemic and the regulatory responses to it struck at the heart of deeply-rooted customary practice and cultural norms – indeed, at the very sources of long standing traditional and cultural vehicles of resilience in the face of loss  - cannot be overstated. Ebola therefore produced confusion and widespread distress for those whose loved ones had to be buried in unknown graves, in remote locations or cremated without any memorial processes or references.

In addition to rituals related to burials, everyday interactions that could lead to transmission were effectively prohibited as a precautionary measure. This included many of the cultural norms and practices that would otherwise contribute to strengthening social ties. The Liberian handshake,  which is form of connectivity as well as sign of friendliness and acceptance among Liberians, was effectively  prohibited.  There was also the slogan of 'no eating something' which was the symbolic appeal of the Ministry of Health to Liberians to abstain from sexual activities, which symbolized the intrusion of this epidemic in to the most fundamentally intimate practices of Liberian life, arguably weakening the bonds in some homes,  between couples, and frequently identified as a source of increasing marital conflict. Suspension of group activities such as  weaving  and attending organizational meetings and  workshops, further contributed to the weakening of social ties amongst community members, and this also disproportionately impacted on women. All of

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119    KII with Community Leader, Montserrado County, 8/10/2014

these these restrictions adversely fueled high levels of mistrust, suspicion and stigmatization, both between people within these communities, as well as directed by citizens and communities across the country, towards the government. The extent of this disruption struck at the heart of social practice and even divided families. This was powerfully illustrated by the experience recounted by one focus group participant:

> "I went to see my mother in Sinkor, she refused for me to enter her house because I came from Molton corner, Brewerville, popularly known as an Ebola affected community."[120]

### 4.4.4    Coping Mechanisms Developed by Liberians

Whilst the Ebola crisis struck at the heart of these fundamental everyday practices of social cohesion, economic production and community life, it also powerfully prompted, reflected and demonstrated the alternative resourcefulness of Liberians. Moreover, because of the many ways in which the crisis is linked to more fundamental issues of trust and social cohesion, some of the mechanisms used to defensively cope with Ebola, also appear to have been employed and to have evolved as part of more long term strategies to positively transform society, to prevent the escalation of conflict under these circumstances, and to reinforce these endogenous capacities for peace.

### '*Stranger-father phenomenon*'

The crisis associated with the Ebola epidemic led to the resuscitation of "traditional security measures", in the form of what had become known as 'the stranger-father phenomenon' - where a new-comer is linked with the person who brought him or her into the community. The "stranger-father phenomenon" had historically developed as a means of maintaining social cohesion and internal trust in communities in the midst of conflict or where there is a high risk of conflict, by ensuring that everyone was known within the community, rendering the probability of strangers coming into the community to

foment trouble or to commit crime, more unlikely. This effective 'security practice' is regained impetus during the Ebola outbreak, and illustrates how people become innovative in 'rediscovering and reinventing' systems they have developed previously when confronted with the shocks and stressors associated with conflict. This has become a common practice in many of the communities across the society and was seen to help to reduce Ebola transmission as well as preventing other forms of criminal activity. In Montserrado, interviewee stated that 'We do not allow new comers into this community without someone being responsible for their entry and stay as we do not know where the person is coming from and his or her status because of the Ebola. People are running away from highly affected areas to relatives in less affected areas. Our new rule agreed upon by the whole community is when a visitor comes in; the host takes his or her guest to the community leader who monitors the situation, after one week of no symptoms we allow the person to stay.'[121].

### *Community Initiatives*

One extraordinary manifestation of this was in the widespread development of effective community task forces on Ebola, which played a key role in helping communities to watch over themselves. At the peak of the crisis, the task forces promoted religion (prayers) to help people persevere, prevented visitation that might contribute to the further spread of the Ebola virus, and undertook contact and communication strategies to help community members to trace loved ones and monitor themselves through increased use of social media and mobile phones, as well as to pass on preventive and educational messages about the disease. Community initiatives spearheaded by local leaders and other highly motivated community members, such as backyard gardens, reliance on and distribution of previous savings and remittances, etc. were also critical in sustaining livelihoods in the face of interruptions to normal economic activity. Many of the practices and associations established during this crisis, also appear to have been further developed or sustained in the wake of the Ebola crisis. This organizational capacity at the community level is not to be overlooked as it has the potential to be truly transformative. It is not coincidental that the epidemic began to slow down when the government and

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120    Participant, youth FGD Brewerville, Montserrado County 10/10/14

121    KII with Task Force Leader, Caldwell m New Georgia Community, Montserrado County. 10/2/2014.

international actors started working more closely and consistently with and through community organizations. A youth leader in Mt. Barclay asserted that; 'through our community initiatives we have been able to stopped people from stigmatizing one another, doing contact tracing and helping to call the emergency numbers. It was after we started that the representative came to assist by bringing buckets'[122].

Ebola prevention measures channeled through community initiatives and organizations, such as the banning of new entrants to communities and the promotion of new hygiene measures (regular hand washing, etc.) have proved more effective at containing the spread of the virus, without compromising social cohesion to the same extent. The importance of such sensitivity is reflected in the fact that cremation has recently been replaced with dignified burial, accompanied by programs for reconciliation and remembrance. These show respect for those who lost their loved ones during the Ebola crisis and enable them to preserve memories for their dead and overcome stigmatization in Liberian culture that was associated with not having proper graves for their loved ones.

Successful community strategies could be leveraged for other purposes, including future programs for development or helping to spread peace messages and building relevant community hubs to coordinate activities. Meanwhile, developing programs that promote good values and norms to enhance work around cultural alteration that Ebola created can contribute to consolidating peace in the long-term. This theme plays at the level of the individuals, the community and through institutions.

> *"Right now, we are taking in jo-lo-gbo (bitter leaf) and as well using what we called klu-wah (pumping into us the jo-lo-gbo with pepper). We cannot go to the hospital because they will call the Ebola people on us. Also, nurses at the clinics don not touch us, and when you go to the hospital, they will just prescribe drugs for you to go and buy."* - FGD, Grand Gedeh County

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122    Youth Leader in an FGD Mt. Barclay Community, Montserrado County 10/8/2014

## *Self-diagnosis and traditional medicine*

Not all the coping mechanisms that Liberians resorted to were necessarily effective or benevolent. The resort to self-diagnosis and medication through herbs had dangerous consequences. The unavailability and difficult access to conventional healthcare also meant that Liberians have had to find alternative treatments to cope, both physically and psychology with such an immense public health crisis. Even before the Ebola outbreak, many Liberians resorted to several means of self-prevention and cure for common illnesses - many of which display Ebola-like symptoms – such as high temperature, , coughing, vomiting. During the Ebola crisis, Liberians across the country and especially those unable to flee the country and obtain good healthcare services turned to these home remedies that often included the use herbs to treat themselves. This gained popularity also because people did not want to report their symptoms out of fear of being quarantined as well stigmatized by their communities, when they emerged from or survived the quarantine. Some of the participants consulted indicated that the Ebola task force teams did not always conduct tests, but immediately took even malaria patients to the Ebola Treatment Union (ETU) on the basis of the symptoms, such as high body temperature, vomiting and coughing (signs that are also malaria-related). Moreover, they strongly stated that medical practitioners at the various community clinics and hospitals refused to touch them; instead they (medical practitioners) only prescribed drugs to be purchased. Therefore, even those who would not have otherwise done so, resorted to using herbs and non-conventional remedies. One participant in an FGD session in Grand Gedeh County explained:

> "Before the 14 years of war, I used to go to hospital for treatment, because for me I was really afraid country herbs. Not that I did take it, but it was very hard for me, and I used to be afraid to give it to my children too. Before the Ebola, it was the same. I used to like the hospital because, when you go there, the nurses and doctors would touch you and carry out some tests. But, since the Ebola came and doctors and nurses started refusing to touch people thereby leading to the death of some of them, I changed my mind and decided to use country herbs like jo-lo-gbo for example. I also decide that my children and myself will continue with the herbs for three main reasons. The first one is that I don't want

to be called Ebola patient and taken to Monrovia and die. I heard that by the time you are carried to Monrovia, you cannot come back. Secondly, I have seen the power of the country herbs, as it has helped me and my children since the Ebola time. Lastly, it is because I don't have trust in the hospital again, since in fact plenty people went there and died."[123]

Therefore, it was often out of fear of stigmatization that Liberians engaged in self-diagnoses, prescription and the purchase of drugs for use. Unfortunately they sometimes purchased the wrong drugs or took the wrong dosages and as a result experience negative outcomes.  , Blind belief in traditional medicine, often vehicle by rumors, sometimes contributed to spreading the virus further. There was a famous case in Nimba, when a young traditional herbalist claimed to have the cure for Ebola. The local herbalist's self- proclaimed cure was not tested but lots of people consulted him. According to a local government official, close to two thousand people directly or indirectly consulted him. Nimba County attempted to acquire a licensee from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to allow the local herbalist apply his cure nationally. However, the herbalist eventually died from the virus and it is believed that transmission rates in Nimba County were greatly affected as a result of the number of f people who interacted with him directly and indirectly.

Despite such practices being medically unadvisable and dangerous, community residents expressed high confidence in and employed such method during the ebola outbreak. In some respects, this is a strong display of the resolve of Liberians, but it also exposes the degree to which they were vulnerable and desperate, and showcases the dangerous extent to which Liberians went and would go during any such outbreak. In some respects, it can be observed that the very resilience of traditional beliefs that helped people feel united and encouraged them to get through crisis, produced adverse effects. This is important to our analysis of resilience, in pointing out the need to distinguish

*"Everyone is afraid to touch each other and even the nurses. Therefore, no one wants to go to the hospital. As a result, we diagnose our own cases, prescribe and purchase our drugs, even if we did not know what we were doing. These few days, when I got sick I purchased drugs from the pharmacy and took them and immediately began experiencing that my eyes were turning. This was simply because I overdose myself."* -FGD, Montserrado County

instances when structures and processes contribute to social cohesion and greater wellbeing, and when they in fact create more harm.

### 4.4.5  Priorities for the National Working Group

From the subgroup discussion at the stakeholder validation forum, two resilience mechanisms were identified as having the particular potential for positive resilience and hence priorities for the national working group:

1. The need to sustain, support and nurture the community cohesion and impetus for community based networks that were originally formed to provide assistance and awareness during the Ebola Crisis

2. Draws on strategies that around good health developed as a result of the Ebola crisis, to strengthen the health sector.

According to the participants the rationale for the first point is because it gives ownership to ordinary Liberians at the community level and it puts into motion sustainable actions and responses. Secondly, the focus on community level initiatives helps to ensure that actions and policies are respectful of socio-cultural norms, which as illustrated during the Ebola Crisis, is a necessary condition of effective policies.. Meanwhile, the health sector needs to be strengthened because the population faced the impact of its vulnerability due to the Ebola outbreak. Physical, material and human resource capacities need to be enhanced to meet contemporary public health demand beyond societal imagination.

In an effort to survive the outbreak, both Government and citizens at various community levels undertook several

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123    Female participant in Toe Town, Grand Gedeh County 2/14/2015

**FGD with youth in Gbarpolu County**

measures. Some of these strategies were not peace-sensitive in that it undermines the social cohesion of the state and its people on one hand and on the other hand it affected relationship among community inhabitants (negative forms of resilience). However, some of these measures, such as the establishment of community task forces, and the revival of traditional security systems, and the other creative responses noted in this section, were an important display of the positive resilience assets and resources that already exist in Liberian society and that can be used, both for effective crisis response and long term peacebuilding.

# 5  CONCLUSION

This report has documented the resources, capacities and strategies that Liberians deploy in order to cope with, adapt and transform the threats to peace that exist in their everyday lives. Overall, the consultations revealed that Liberians *do* have the capacity to help themselves in ways that prevent conflict and manage their lives. With regards to the specific threats identified, the study noted that women experienced disproportionate marginalization and therefore adopt a courageous and resilient stance described as "next level" attitude. Against the backdrop of a weak state that does not provide basic public goods,  the consultations uncovered a strong sense of solidarity and effective leadership at the community level: whether to organize security through vigilante groups or relying on traditional chiefs to solve conflicts as well as initiate joint dialogue aimed at speaking out to the government. Land disputes are an ongoing threat to peace in Liberia because of competing legal regimes – customary and modern – which compromise effective regulation. Whereas land disputes can often devolve into violent clashes, it is comforting to note a proliferation of initiatives by NGOs and CBOs to work in collaboration with government institutions, traditional leaders and communities in order to find solutions that bridge the divide between the two competing regimes and promote social cohesion both at the community level and vertically, between the state and citizens.

In addition to the longer term drivers of conflict and the resilience of Liberians that this research has explored, the outbreak of Ebola also disrupted and undermined some of the social values that have long held Liberians together. The outbreak necessitated some control measures imposed by the government that underscore a clash between modernity and traditional values as Liberians have lived with for ages. However, communities became more cohesive to work for the protection of their common good by re-introducing the stranger-father-phenomenon, contact tracing, task force team e.t.c just to curb the further transmission of the disease. Most of the instituted measure gave rise to new hygiene practices that will help society to combat future outbreak with similar magnitude.

The particularity of this project and indeed its added value is the fact that it approached peacebuilding from a resilience lens and sought to focus on the existing and endogenous capacities, resources and strategies that Liberians possess and are developing in order to overcome the legacy of past conflict and prevent the recurrence of future violence. This exercise is especially relevant to Liberia given the remarkable progress that has been accomplished since the end of the civil war: it is necessary therefore to acknowledge the resilience of nation and its people whilst continuing to build on these to work towards an enduring peace. In particular, attention needs to be given to local and national structures that enhance social cohesion and contribute to the New Deal objectives of legitimate and inclusive politics, lift local voices into policy arena nationally and internationally, de-emphasize fragility and promote the concept of resilience, fill the gap that the eventual draw-down of UNMIL will cause and understand what practical measures women use in dealing with marginalization and other forms of violence. The participatory action research (PAR) methodology was deployed to give community people the opportunity to play active role by placing them in the driver's seat in providing information and reflect on the solutions to their common problems, which foster ownership of the process by participants.

In documenting and analyzing the different capacities and resources that make Liberians resilient, we now have a better understanding of the prevailing patterns and dynamics at different levels of society. This can help guide future action in peacebuilding. For example, we have shown that there can be both negative and positive patterns of resilience. In the case of women's efforts at overcoming their marginalization, we noted that migration to the 'USA' as a coping strategy can be detrimental to stability of the home and the community and can go as far as fueling violence. Some men sending wives to the 'USA', as coping strategy for economic survival portrays modern exploitation of women by men in patriarchal society. Whilst it does provide an option to access economic opportunities, the risks are far greater than the peace dividends. Similarly, the communities are

increasingly relying on their own capacity to organize for common good by taking initiatives through local leaders to get things done for themselves in the light of the weakness of the state to provide public goods for all citizens. Though this seems to show the tendency of communities to rely less on the state which creates weak state-society relations, it promotes social cohesion and empowers communities for the overall development that make them more resilient. Meanwhile most young men resorted to riding motor-cycle that offer alternative livelihoods measure in the absence of the state's inadequate job opportunities and them good sense belonging. This group of young men are a force that can be easily mobilized for violence due to the bond, but can be leveraged into a force that will valuable in terms of maintaining stability in society.

Further, the measure of resolving land disputes using the traditional dialogues introduce the dynamism in bringing feuding parties over land to sit and find a common solution in ways that enhance resilience in communities. This method of dispute resolution creates alternative for people to tap into their own capacities inherent in their communities that prevent conflict. While the outbreak of Ebola was counter-productive to Liberian traditional values and the society at large, it reinforces measures that promote improved public hygiene awareness and re-introduced the simple practical measure of the *stranger-father phenomenon* that can be applied to building a stronger community response long term peacebuilding and crisis prevention in Liberia.

This research took place against the dramatic outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in Liberia. The Ebola outbreak devastated the whole health sector, slow down economic development, fractured public trust on the government and weakened social cohesion in communities. Drastic measures were instituted to stop the spread to the virus and these infringed on certain highly respected societal values which led to resistance from communities at the outset of the outbreak. As seen in the study, the team did not only carry out this study in a detached manner but felt that it was important and to some extent unavoidable to take stock of identified resilient mechanisms and the ways in which Liberians responded. On the one hand, the Ebola outbreak exposed many of the existing threats to peace such as the inability of the government to provide basic health services and adequate security in an emergency. On the other hand, it also showcased

the tremendous solidarity and determination of people creatively organized themselves into Ebola Task force team for contact tracing, community security watch team and promoting effective social mobilization within communities. However, the epidemic also forced people to adapt new sanitary measures that have promoted culture of hygiene that have the potential to help people control any public health disease in the future.

Following the end of the consultation in February, the main findings of the research were then presented at a validation forum in April. The validation forum proposed national working groups that have since started broadening the findings of the research. The essence of the groups' work is to achieve two main objectives: to deepen the research especially around resilience mechanisms identified by Liberians; and to propose policy recommendations and programmatic plan of action. In this respect, four key issues are being selected and extensively deliberated. The outcomes of these deliberations will set the basis for concrete program development and policy options aimed at transforming and strengthening identified resilient mechanisms.

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# 7 ANNEXES

*7.1  Annex I: Facilitation Guide for Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews*

<u>*FAR Consultation Working Questions used to guide Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews*</u>

**Greetings,**

Hello my people, my name is _____ and I work for the Platform for Dialogue and Peace (P4DP) in Liberia. I am a member of the research team.

**What P4DP is and what it hopes to achieve?**

P4DP is an NGO that works with communities by contributing in finding solutions to problems and challenges communities have. Our aim is to make Liberia become a country that is peaceful and never go back to war or civil conflict. We do this by listening to your views in order to understand the problems and challenges that you are living with. Through this way, we can all look for solutions and answers to the problems.

**Purpose of the study**

The main purpose for the study is to help us develop tools that will enable us to have better understanding of resilience ( the positive capacities and the assets that keep us together as individual, community and nation) despite all the problems and difficulties to move forward and 'bounce back' rather than slipping back into large scale conflict). Another reason why we lunched this study is we want to understand how the Ebola Virus Disease affects individuals, communities and the security and peace of Liberia and the resilient strategies that people and communities adapt to cope with the epidemic.

**What we are interested in?**

We are here to carry out a study on resilience in terms of Disaster and Conflict in Liberia. This exercise is intended to help us understand how families, organizations and communities are still living together in spite of the problems they are faced with because of the potential threats Ebola poses to peace and security.

As stated in our purpose, we are interested in engaging individuals, communities and national institutions to understand how they respond to conflict and disaster, especially Ebola with the ultimate aim of making recommendations that will strengthen and support local and national institutions' capacities to manage disaster and conflict.

**Disclaimer:**

Please, we are not medical people, political party or government institution; and we are not here to take side. We are not sent by the government; however, we believe that whatsoever you recommend or comes out of our discussion could help us, the government and even the International Community to know how to help our country achieve durable peace and security.

## Issues of confidentiality

Please note that whatever we will do here will not be given to the media – newspapers, and radio station, for earning money. It will be shared with key stakeholders (communities) for all of us to see and agree that whatever we write is exactly what we agreed on.

**So, do you have any other questions for clarity?**

Can we start now?          Yes    No

Can you allow us use our working tools (recorder, camera) only for note taking purpose?      Yes      No

**Working Questions**

*Part I: Broader FAR Questions*

1. **In Liberia there has been relative peace for about 10 years; what does that peace mean to you and your community, looking at situation before and after the war?**

   a. What has changed, and why do you think it has changed?

   b. Do you feel that you/your community has recovered, rebuilt, and transformed? Can you explain how?

   c. Is there a return to the normal days?

   d. What are you happy or sad about and why?

   e. Can you tell us about some of the things that keep you going and living together as a community?

   f. How can the community build on such things to make a more united and peaceful society?

2. **In the period you have experienced peace, what has helped you to overcome the effects of the past conflict and contribute to strengthening peace? (a way of getting into the conversation by referencing to points a-f)**

   a. How has family connections assisted you?

   b. How have the systems in the community helped in achieving the peace you are experiencing?

   c. How have the leaderships helped you coped?

   d. How have your farming/businesses helped achieve peace as a community and people?

   e. How have your relationships with other communities or people helped you to cope (with the problems/issues of the past), and as well adapt (helped you strengthen the peace you now enjoy)? Note: this will consider the negative effects of the strategies employed)

3. **What are the things that you are doing to keep things going peacefully?**

    a. How have traditional institutions helped you?

    b. How have family connections assisted you in going on peacefully?

    c. How have the systems in the community helped you in achieving the level of peace you now have?

    d. How have farming and other businesses assisted you in achieving the peace you enjoy?

    e. How have your relationships with other communities or people helped to cope and adapt? Note: this also includes looking out for the negativity of the strategies employed.

## *Part II (added following methodological revisions in light of the Ebola Crisis)*

1. **Can you please share with us your experience about the outbreak of the Ebola virus in Liberia:**

    a. How are citizens involved in the fight against the virus?

    b. How was the situation (relationships in the community, level / effectiveness of the local health/government services, etc) before the outbreak?

    c. How is the situation now with the outbreak?

2. **Is the Ebola outbreak provoking new areas of conflict?**

    a. Does it play into mistrust or suspicion leaders and the citizens

    b. How is it affecting relationships between citizens and the state? And community and institutions/structures?

    c. Do you think that Ebola is feeding of mistrust and suspicion that was already there from before?

    d. Is there any way in which the Ebola crisis is activating old conflicts? Which ones/why?  Or starting new ones? Which/ why?

3. **How are different groups being affected by the Ebola outbreak (e.g. women, youth, elderly, children, physically challenged, orphans, etc.)?**
    *(Prompt the respondent to provide answers on the following – in terms of infection, death and survivors).*

    a. Can you give some examples? (What they think it is doing to their community, families, social institutions, country, relationships, etc.)

    b. How are people coping?

4. **How are (local) households/ institutions/structures/systems (facilitator picks form these) responding to the Ebola outbreak?  Which are the most effective in responding, and why?**

   a. What are some of the changes you observe in your/their activities?

   b. Can you give some practical

5. **In which ways are government officials in this community involve in the fight against Ebola?**

   a. What are they doing within the community?

6. **How are victims/survivors received in your community (prompting for what hold holds/separate people/ communities)?**

   a. Can you give some practical stories?

7. **What is the impact of Ebola on the Economy?**

   a. How would you describe the effects of Ebola on Community livelihoods?

   b. What was the main source of livelihoods before the Ebola outbreak?

   c. What are the new sources?

## 7.2 Annex 2: Selection Criteria and Target Sample Size per Region

**Selection Criteria**

Participants will be selected based on their knowledge of the severity of the EVD in each County, and how the situation affects each stakeholder's group using the three layers of **individual**, **community** and the **state**. Counties in the Southeast are the least affected by the EVD as current situation report shows. Thus, we may include some of them later as we monitor the situation. See table 3 below for the participant selection breakdown, focal point and timeline for the field operation.

Key Sectors/Groups to be engaged:

| 1 | Community leaders |
| 2 | *CSO heads/leaders |
| 3 | Traditional/cultural leaders |
| 4 | Religious |
| 5 | Health Workers |
| 6 | Security personnel/Ebola Task Force Committee |
| 7 | *Head of international organizations |
| 8 | Community rights advocates |
| 9 | Youth leaders |
| 10 | Women groups |
| 11 | Ebola survivors/bereaved families |
| 12 | Government reps 2 |
| 13 | Street gangs |
| 14 | People with Suspected cases but tested negative 2 |
| 15 | Government Ebola task force  managers |
| 16 | People with disability |
| 17 | Pen-pen boys |
| 18 | Farmers |
| 19 | Market women |
| 20 | Public transport driver |

### 7.3   Annex 3: Safety Protocol for Protection against the Transmission of the Ebola Virus

**The following procedure were observed during field operations:**

1. All staff MUST wear long-sleeve shirts while going to the field and foot wear that covers your feet.

2. No handshake with no one either on the team or participants

3. No hugging and do not touch an infected/sick person

4. Do not allow stranger board your operation vehicle

5. Always wash your hands before you enter anywhere around the field

6. Use hand sanitizer whenever you enter the vehicle

7. Always keep napkins around you

8. Before you start any session, always tell your participant(s) about the preventive measures of EBOLA.

9. No KII/FGD should exceed 1:30 mins for safety reason.

10. Do not let anyone else hold your recorder any other item on the field. Always place your recorder in a good position that you would not move it


PROTECT YOURSELF, EBOLA IS REAL AND IT KILLS FASTER THAN YOU THINK!

In case there are issues, please revert to the office immediately for directives from the Executive Director

## 7.4 Annex 4: Reflection Template

Date:
Location:
Facilitator:
Note-taker:

Type of Discussion:        __ Key Informant interview        __ FGD

1.      Key Issues (One line per key issue; underline those that were most emphasized)

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2.      Coping and adapting mechanisms:

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3.      Quotes:

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4.      Observations

    a. Overall Dynamics of Groups:

    b. Composition of the Group:

    c. What was not said:

    d. KII character:

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    e. Points of Convergence, Divergence and contradiction

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f. Others

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5.      Key persons and participants (Name, contact and phone number)  - may be contacted to participate in National Group Meeting

6.      Challenges

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7. Recommendations for the team:

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## 7.5    Annex 5: Template for recording attendance during Focus group Discussions

# PLATFORM FOR DIALOGUE AND PEACE

**FAR Project (KII/FGD)**

## Attendance Sheet Template

Date: _____

Meeting Location: _____

County: _____

| No. | Name | Sex | Age | Ethnicity | Category | Settlement | Contact # | signature |
|-----|------|-----|-----|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | | | | |
| 6. | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | | | | | | | | |

## 7.6 Annex 6: Number of participants in consultations, organized by County

| Region | County | Gender Composition | | Total | Percentage | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Males | Females | | Males | Females |
| South East | Grand Gedeh | 93 | 57 | 150 | 62% | 38% |
| | Grand Kru | 25 | 19 | 44 | 57% | 43% |
| | Maryland | 32 | 24 | 56 | 57% | 43% |
| | River Gee | 22 | 19 | 41 | 54% | 46% |
| | Sinoe | 20 | 9 | 29 | 69% | 31% |
| | Total | 192 | 128 | 320 | 60% | 40% |
| North Central | Bong | 75 | 42 | 117 | 64% | 36% |
| | Lofa | 85 | 36 | 121 | 70% | 30% |
| | Nimba | 110 | 43 | 153 | 72% | 28% |
| | Total | 270 | 121 | 391 | 69% | 31% |
| South Central | Grand Bassa | 27 | 8 | 35 | 77% | 23% |
| | Margibi | 15 | 20 | 35 | 43% | 57% |
| | River Cess | 25 | 5 | 30 | 83% | 17% |
| | Total | 67 | 33 | 100 | 67% | 33% |
| North West | Bomi | 62 | 41 | 103 | 60% | 40% |
| | Gbarpolu | 29 | 20 | 49 | 59% | 41% |
| | Grand Cape Mount | 18 | 32 | 50 | 36% | 64% |
| | Total | 109 | 93 | 202 | 54% | 46% |
| Central | Montserrado | 97 | 43 | 140 | 69% | 31% |
| Grand Total | | 735 | 418 | 1153 | 64% | 36% |

*P4DP-FAR Analytical Matrix*

| Historical Conflict (What it is and how it manifests) | Responses by Liberians that allow them to face/cope with conflict Driver | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Relationship between Ebola (and response to Ebola) and the conflict driver | Nuances by region and constituents | Levels • Individual • Community • institutional | Type of response: • Absorptive, • Adaptive • Transformative • Etc | Positive or negative, i.e. does it hold potential for new risk? |
| Marginalization of women in the Liberian Patriarchal structure | | | | | |
| Perception of a Weak State: Governance Deficits | | | | | |
| Increasing pressure on land and the absence of effective regulation fuels violence | | | | | |
| Relationship between Ebola (and responses to Ebola) and the Conflict Driver | | | | | |

FGD WITH ELDERS IN CESTOS CITY, R-CESS


interpeace


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**In Partnership with the United Nations**