



YOUTH LED RESPONSE – LIBERIA NATIONAL VOLUNTARY REVIEW

**Supported by Girls Advocacy Alliance – Liberia (Plan
International Liberia and Defence for Children Liberia)**

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Introduction:

The major objective of this report is to provide a youth led response to the Government of Liberia first Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs)– Agenda 2030. Member States of the United Nations adopted the Agenda for Transformation 2030 in 2015 and Liberia was a signatory to the document. The meeting, it was agreed that each government will do a voluntary review of the 17 SDGs on an annual review. However, five years, Liberia will for the first time report on the achievements made in achieving 17 goals of the SDGs by 2030. As such, it is prudent all stakeholders – Civil Society Actors Youths, Traditional leaders, etc. be a part of the process, so as to present the actual state of challenges and progress made from a holistic perspective. However, due to the prevailing pandemic, Liberia’s report was limited to a desk review but without youth participation and input.

In view of the above, 20 young people from several youth-led organizations, supported by Plan International Liberia and Defense for Children International under the auspices Girls Advocacy Alliance Project met to brainstorm and prepare a youth-led report on the implementation of the SDG Agenda 2030 in Liberia since its adoption in 2015.

This report focuses on four of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals – Goal 4 on Quality Education; Goal 5 on Gender Equality; Goal 10 on Reduced Inequalities; and Goal 16 on Peace Justice and Strong Institutions.

The national progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Liberia has been mixed with political transition, in 2017, two years into the adoption of the SDGs and a struggling economy. However, overall enrolment in primary schools have increased across the country, but same cannot be said about secondary schools where the number drops continuously before final year of High school, especially for the girl child. The lack of a standardized and decentralized TVET program for young people is also a major area of concern in relation to youth empowerment.

Gender equality is still a far-fetched achievable goal. In spite of legislations and policies adopted to ensure women and girls equal participation and empowerment in all sectors, the political and economic will to ensure the full implementation of these legislations and policies is still lacking. Many young women in urban, peri-urban and rural areas do not have access to Sexual and Reproductive health commodities and services. In terms of political

participation, Liberia currently have 10 female Legislators out of 103, representing 9.7% in the Liberia Parliament: Only one out of 30 Senators; and 9 Representatives of 73 in the House of Representatives. At the Executive level, there are only two female Ministers represented in the Cabinet.

All of these can be attributed to the level of inequalities existing in the country which prevents people from having access to quality education, healthcare and other basic social services.

This report was prepared by young people from across the country. Contributors to the report include: Grace, Success, Tom, Sanctus, Mariah, Divinna, Miatta, Faith, Demaris and 11 other young people.

The program manager of the Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) Project at Plan international Liberia, as well as the Executive Director of Defense for Children International Liberia were consulted throughout the drafting of this report and they gave their invaluable support whenever they were call upon.

GAA Thematic Response to Liberia VNR Report - Goal 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

The VNR report under goal 4 states that the participation of youth in educational activities decreases substantially after their 18th birthday”.

This report didn't state what exactly are the reasons for the decrease of the interest in education and what is government doing in that regard?

Within our various communities, young people exhibits immense passion for education, but with the lack of support and financial backing they turn to labor force. However, there are several factors such as poverty, lack of scholarships/ financial aid programs for less fortunate youths, inadequate access to good learning environment, little or no access to institutions of higher education as well as TVET centers mostly in the rural areas, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation in schools that the Government did not outline in her report and needs to be work on. We recommend that:

- Government increase the education budget in other to build and maintain students in schools after their 18th birthday.
- Government include extra curriculum activities as part of our educational curriculum such as, Debates, Quizzing, spelling bee, awards programs for higher grade scoring student, sports competition and career day programs be decentralized.
- Government provide sexual exploitation and abuse hotline in all schools with effective monitoring system, teach students and teachers about SGBV so that students can know what to report.

“The VNR report indicated that nearly two thirds (61.5%) of schools in Liberia do not have a library”. This report did not adequately explain why is this so? What's the cause? What are they doing to solve this problem and how are they committed to ensuring quality education in Liberia? We recommend that:

- Government construct more libraries in various public learning institutions.
- Government equip existing libraries with the rightful educational materials.
- Government construct public libraries that will be used by students that have no access to books and the internet.

3. The report states that, **at the higher grade levels, retention of female students is a challenge**". This report did not expand on this issue nor state the causes of low retention of female students and why is it a challenge? The report also did not explain state measures taken by government to eliminate the challenge. This is a major issue and needs to be address comprehensively.

As youth of Liberia, we have observed, that females face a lot of challenges staying in school. They are faced with sexual exploitation and abuse, bullying, intense home chores, limited number of female teachers who should serve as motivation to keep them in school, unsafe/unsanitary restrooms, high tuition, early marriage, school violence, unfriendly curricula for females, stereotype, traditional norms, etc. Against this, we recommend:

- Government should include compressive sex education academic curriculum.
- school administrators hold regular career day programs in various high schools to help students to discover their career path.
- Administrations of schools establish or revamp school health clubs.
- Government develop an Anti- Bully policy for schools that will prevent students from being bully. This policy will include disciplinary punishment for any student caught in the act of bullying.
- Government make a policy that requires the presence of guardian counselors in all learning institutions.

4. **This report also mentioned, that 48% of schools are owned and operated by the government**". This statement is true, but this report fails to mention that those learning institutions are sub-standard. Liberia Minister of Education some high ranking government officials including legislatures own and operate private school. This is a conflict of interest because our government schools that supposed to be the lead in the educational sector of Liberia has become less important. With private schools being in good conditions, because key decision makers are not going to allow the public schools to be up to standard so they improve their own schools and attract more students to their schools and leave government schools unattended to. To this we recommend that:

- Education ministers, government officials, and lawmakers turn over all schools own by them to the government.
- Ban be place on all government officials from owning and operating schools.

5. The Government in the VNR report made mentioned there is a **'Dropout prevention policy that is awaiting approval'**. This report didn't provided much information on this policy, why is it waiting approval, and when will it be approved?

- We recommend the government further explain what the dropout prevention policy is, how can a policy be drafted on our behalf without our inclusion or input? Why it has not been approved and when will it be approved?

6. "In the report the government stated, they provided **to 1,920 teachers sexuality education and classroom observatory tools for sexual exploitation**". They did not state what are the mechanisms put in place to monitor if those teachers are actually serving as guidance to students about sexual exploitation?

Liberia has a rape culture and most rape cases are perpetrated by people familiar to the victims/survivors. Teachers in our various schools have this saying, "Touch one touch all". This means that whenever a teacher is sexually harassing a student and that student complain to higher authority the student become a target for all the other teachers in the school. Most times that student end up dropping from school due to torment from other teachers and they are intentionally made to repeat the class.

- We recommend there be a sexual exploitation booth posted on all school campuses with a trusted team of police, gender specialist and a nurse who will make sure sexual harassmet reduced in the various schools? This booth should be accessible to all students.

7. **"This report consistently brag about free education in Liberia"**. This isn't the reality in Liberia, the public school holds the banner "free" but students paid between LD 2,000 or (\$US10.00 equivalent) to Liberian dollars (US\$25.00 equivalent) to enroll in public schools. Students are required to purchase uniforms from the school at a higher price than that of the local markets. Public school are mostly overcrowded and most building especially in the rural areas need renovations.

On this issue, we recommend the following:

- DEOs be proactive especially during registration periods to ensure that students do not pay money as instructed by the government of Liberia.
- Special taskforce of students be set up to report incidents of fraud without the complainant identity being expose.
- Government need to rehabilitate public schools which are in deplorable conditions to give school going youths especially girls the decent environment they need.

8. The government said they are **'committed to providing Liberians lifelong learning opportunities through market driven TVET and Alternative Learning skills.** This report fails to recognize that TVET is not just an alternative but a major learning sector in Liberia, responsible for training engineers, electricians and others important people. To this end, we recommend that:

- Government improve TVET programs by employing qualified teachers and provide technical materials for the TVET programs.
- Government ensure graduates from TVET programs have internship opportunities or start-up kits. Most students who graduate from TVET institutions cannot make use of their skills due to lack of opportunities
- The establishment of the Liberia Technical and Vocational Training Commission be established so as to standardized curriculum system for all TVET programs in Liberia.

9. "This report states, **'women remain woefully underrepresented in the makeup of the instructional staff, serving as major factor for the retention of females in school.'** This report did not state what the government is doing to recruit more female teachers? And why are there less female teachers in schools. We recommend that:

- Government through the Ministry of Education invest more in the training of qualify female teachers and give them incentive so as to improve women participation in the educational sector.

- More scholarships opportunities be given to females wanting to attend teachers training institutions, female teachers be given the privilege to attend fellowships and workshops as compare to their male counterparts.

GOAL 5: GENDER EQUALITY

Laws and policies mentioned in the VNR report lacks proper implementation and the reality of these laws are yet to be seen in the lives of the young people of Liberia.

The report mentioned that there has been no research as it relates to gender equity. This shows limited commitment of government in achieving SDG Goal #5.

The report did not mention anything about the rapid increase of rape cases over the past years and how they are effectively tackling those laws.

Youth access to friendly SRHR services is understated and the provision of sanitary products taking into consideration the high cost attached.

The reports overstate women in leadership and politics. They limit the progress made to the election of the first female president and vice-president when majority of the women are still being held back due to the social and cultural norms, tradition, belief, lack of proper skills and being discriminated.

Women empowerment is also overstated. It states that about employment of 375,000 women in Liberia which is unrealistic.

The report is not clear on programs or entrepreneurship and innovation programs for young women and girls. In view of the above observations on Goal 5, we recommend that Government of Liberia should:

- Increase in budgetary allocation for girls' education and mentorship throughout the country.
- Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the MOGCSP gather current statistics on the inclusiveness of women and girls in all sectors of society and the impact of discriminatory on their economic development.

- MOGCSP and other related Ministries should simplify and popularize policies like the Domestic Violence Law 2019, National Gender Policy (NGP), the Liberia National Children's Law Liberia and other laws that govern women and girls from all forms of violence as well as programmes like the National action plan which address's gender equity and equality through the sensitization of girls and women so as to give firsthand information on laws policies and programmes that are meant to benefit them. This should be done both in urban and rural communities.
- National Election Commission (NEC) be supported to provide more education and awareness on women's political participation and create a pleasant platform to encourage more female participation in the political space as well as other leadership positions.
- Government through the national Legislature and Executive should put mechanism in place to enable the effective implementation of laws and policies so that it directly affects he lives of young people especially females.
- Fast-track courts be constructed and supported in all political sub-divisions to enable speedy and fair trial of rape and other cases of violence perpetrated against women and girls.

SDGs GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Introduction: It is clear that the world cannot hope for sustainable development without peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, based on the rule of law.

Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals aims to significantly reduce all forms of violence; end all forms of violence, abuse and trafficking of children; ensure equal access to justice; reduce illegal financial and weapons trading; reduce corruption and bribery; develop transparent institutions; promote participation of all people in decision-making; strengthen participation of developing countries in global affairs; provide legal identity for all; and make sure there is public access to information **(GOAL 16:1.1-1.10)**.

The youth and children of Liberia highly appreciate the Government of the Republic of Liberia for the rectification of the UNCRC, CEDAW, the Liberian Children Law of 2012, and the ACRWC, among other national and international human rights protocols and

mechanisms. We also applaud our government for the establishment and creation of the National Defense Art, Liberia National Police Art, Liberia Immigration Services, Civilian Complaint Review Board, and the Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

These are all laudable efforts, notwithstanding the questions remains “How many Liberians (youth and children) know and understand the functions and working of them? How many of us even know that there are laws guiding everything that we do? How many Liberian girls know about CEDAW? How many children in Liberia know that there is a Children Law in Liberia? Or, how many of them are knowledgeable about the Liberian Children Representative Forum?” For Liberia to get on path with other developing countries in terms of achieving the SDGs, youth and children must be included in every decision making process of our country.

We have observed from the government’s report on Goal 16 of the SDGs that figures and statistics recorded, where not referencing any source, thereby making it to appear unfair and misleading. Figures were also underestimated and in some instances overestimated. For instance, we are yet to know where in Liberia the Peace/Palava Huts Forums to foster planning, implementation and decision-making took place. The Government of Liberia also made mention of forums conducted to foster togetherness in the fight of serious crimes against girls and women with emphasis on SGBV, and County Peace Committees at district and county levels to promote social cohesion, peace and Reconciliation among women group, youth, elderly and traditional council, to reduce conflicts; and other Peace and Reconciliation Dialogues and Civil War Memorial constructions for promoting peace and reconciliation – we are yet to remember when our government call we as youth to discuss peace and reconciliation. We believe that all of these are considered violence against young people in Liberia. Youth low participation in major decision making processes in Liberia remains just another major challenge for our government. Evidence to this is the absence of youth and disabled inputs and participation at various levels of the government report to the HLPF/VNR.

1. On Monday, May 4, the Institute for **Research and Democratic Development (IREDD)** released its survey conducted in 2019 – an unprecedented Open Budget Survey (OBS) of the Executive and poor oversight of the Legislature, including a very low citizen’s participation in the budget process. The 2019 OBS is the first survey

under President George Weah, which means the government began with “massive failures” in **transparency, oversight and citizen’s involvement of the national budget**. The survey shows that the Liberian government scored **38% in transparency, 48% in budget oversight, and 6% in public (citizens) participation**. The budget also pointed out that Liberia scored **40%, 43%, 38%, and 36%** in **2010, 2012, 2015, and 2017**. **(IREDD 2019 Open Budget Survey)**

2. Since 3rd December 2008 the Liberian Government established a court in Liberia (Montserrado County), to handle sexual violence cases (Criminal Court “E”), with funding from the Government of Denmark, we are yet to know when the government will start to think in a direction of extending this court to the remaining fourteen counties of Liberia. All we see from the Government is commitments to start the establishment of this court in just two additional counties (Bong and Nimba). What then becomes of the remaining twelve counties, owing to the fact that “Rape remains one of the most frequently reported crimes in Liberia.” (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection) Besides, the GAA should be ending this 2020?

“The fight against gender violence must claim the attention of all and that unless practical measures are put in place to entrench the rule of law, setbacks are inevitable in the nation’s development.” – Former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

3. Under police and security of persons, the Liberian Government is also boasting of how it aims to reduce crimes by increasing numbers and capacities of community police and maintaining a gender balance in the membership; have been provided to 53 security actors from Liberia National Fire Service (LNFS) and Liberia National Police (LNP) and that it completed the review of the Gender Police for Equal Opportunities by the Liberian Immigration Services (LIS). The government further provided that LIS has completed the review of its Gender Policy for Equal Opportunities, which will address gender issues and promote gender equality for all.

Again, all of the information provided above does not have a reference or source and everything is just a lot of promises. It is agreed that Liberia has LNP, LNFS and even LIS but the LNP for instance is hardly seen in other communities in Liberia at night, especially outside of Montserrado County. These errors occurred simply because young people, children and women were marginalized and left out of the compilation

of the reporting.” We know that peace cannot be decreed solely through treaties – it must be nurtured through the dignity, rights and capacities of every man and woman. It is a way of being, of interacting with others, of living on this planet,” Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said in his remarks to the HLPF on the Culture of Peace convened by the General Assembly.

4. Liberia, on the Atlantic coast of Africa is classified as a least developed low-income food-deficit country. It ranks 176 out of 189 countries in the 2019 Human Development Index. Poverty and food insecurity are high across the country and are particularly acute in Liberia’s rural areas where 51% of the population lives. Some 83.8% of the population lives on less than US\$1.25 a day. Food insecurity affects 16% of households, including 2% that are severely food insecurity. For one fourth of Liberian families, food accounts for more than 65% of their total expenditures. 18% of households use emergence coping strategies (mostly beginner) to meet their food needs. The country is heavily dependent on foreign aid and investment. Income from exports, mainly of natural resources, is not currently sufficient to support the population’s development needs. Agriculture is focused mainly on the cultivation of food crops and export commodities. Livestock farming is small-scale, poorly resourced, and unable to meet local demand for meat. 80% of the population depends on fish for protein. Management and harvesting of marine sources, however, are now threatened by rising sea levels and coastal flooding due to climate change. In Liberia, the World Food Program (WFP) aims to provide safety nets to strengthen food and nutrition security through school feeding and social protection measures, and to strengthen Liberia’s capacity to own and implement hunger solutions. (2015 Emergence Food Security Assessment).
5. The Liberian Government also admitted that trafficking of children continues to be a concern and related laws are not properly enforced, but failed to also provide corroborations like the number of children who have been trafficked over the past and why. The government did not do justice to its report as well by laying out measures that have been taken to curtail occurrence of child trafficking and where exactly the high rate is taken place. This again proves that our government has not much interest in ending or reducing trafficking in Liberia.

Going further, a lot of recommendations have been made by **Refworld 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report on Liberia** and even **the U.S Department of States 2019 Report on Trafficking Persons Report on Liberia**. The most repeated phrase in both reports is **“The Government of Liberia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.”** The most emphasized recommendations given were “Liberia should train and equip law enforcement, immigration officers, and social workers to identify, investigate and prosecute trafficking offenders; provide operating and victim protection budget to the anti-trafficking task force; increase efforts to investigate, persecute and convict traffickers; amend the 2005 anti-trafficking law to remove the requirement of a demonstration of force, fraud, or coercion in child sexual trafficking cases and to prescribe penalties for adult trafficking that are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with the penalties for other grave crimes; and enforce the 2005 law requiring restitutions be paid to trafficking victims.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having absorbed critiquing the Government’s own report and highlighting some major components that needed to be included, the youth working group with focused on goal 16 of the SDGs hereby recommend the following to the Liberian government, as our own contributions to the report at the HLPF/VNR:

- Liberia should begin to duly implement all national and international human rights protocols and mechanisms (UNCRC, ACRWC, CEDAW, Liberian Children Law of 2012, etc.) that it is a signatory to;
- The Liberian Government should prioritize children, youth women, and disabled participation in every decision making process that affects or will affect the country;

- The Liberian Government should harmonize the Statutory and Customary Laws of Liberia on Marriage, by clearly stating that no child (any person under the age of 18 years old) should be given for marriage, or no child must get married;
- Liberia should implement the recommendations on Refworld 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report on Liberia and the U.S Department of States 2019 Report on Trafficking Persons Report on Liberia.
- Liberia should begin to collect and develop annual reports of data and statistics on trafficking of persons, disaggregating gender, age and county;
- In order to help confront the increasing wave of sexual violence in the country, the Liberian Government should establish Criminal Court “E” in all the fifteen counties of Liberia;
- If the Agricultural sectors of Liberia are to improve, the government needs to invest in Agriculture by providing more scholarship opportunities with compensation to students and this will also encourage most children and youth to pay more attention to the sciences (STEAM). The government needs to hugely support mechanized farming.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries;

1. “The government continue to work to protect of rights of all citizens including religious minorities”

- *According to the Liberian Constitution*

All persons shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment thereof except as may be required by law to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

- From the above constitution, Non-discrimination is enshrined in the Organic law of Liberia but the UN HR committee has asked to adopt comprehensive legislation that prohibit based on National or ethnic Origin, Religion or Disability etc. Women and Girls rights are not effectively protected, particularly under traditional law; and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence as well as impunity is high.

They usually come across discrimination and stigmatization by citizens because of their habits/attitudes.

2. “Minorities enjoy the same rights as members of other communities in Liberia”

- In Liberia today, the minorities do not have full rights to the justice system due to financial barriers and limited knowledge of the rule of laws.

- Rural communities' dwellers do not have access to adequate educational facilities, transformational services and good road connectivity as compared to people in the urban areas which is also a high contribution to inequalities.

“Women and girls’ rights are not effectively protected, particularly under the law; and sexual based violence, as well as impunity, is high.”

- In addition, discrimination against women and girls in term of education, access to justice, receiving salaries as male counterparts on same job, are all forms that continue to jeopardize the reduction of inequality.

3. “The May 3, 1955 referendum further granted the right to all women to be elected into parliament”

Women and girls in Liberia have been denied leadership opportunities and the need to occupy political spaces. Despite Liberia being the first African State to produce a female president, for the last five years, women and girls are not fully represented at political levels due to cultural or traditional beliefs. For example, there is only one female senator in the Liberian House of Senate. The lack of confidence in women leadership and shaming threats from male counterparts. Even during the recently ended regime of former female presidents, women leaderships were not prioritized. During her second term of Presidency, she appointed 3 women out of 18 ministers in her cabinet. Only four of her 21 cabinet officials were women and none of them occupied strategic ministries like Defense Ministry, Finance Ministry, Education Ministry or Ministry of Public Works.

In 2018, during President George Weah’s inauguration he stated " We believe that women can compete, and we believe that the Liberian women in our society can also perform. When they were requesting for 30 percent women, I was proposing 50 percent women participation”

Many of us believed at the time that his statement was an indication of his commitment to secure equal participation for women in the leadership of his government. Yet, 24 hours after his inauguration, he announced his first set of cabinet appointees—all men. Now, more than two years into his presidency, an increasing number of appointed positions were being filled, and only two out of the 17 nominated cabinet ministers were women.

This declining trend in the political participation of women does not come as a surprise, as Liberia remains a largely male-dominated society. Despite the decade-long leadership of a female president, a broader culture of women in positions of political authority never developed.

This discretionary power is clearly unsustainable as a means to expand female participation in government, though, as it leaves those decisions at the mercy of the president. Even now, while President Weah’s pro-poor agenda has gained a lot of visibility on social media and in the public space, he seems to lack a pro-women agenda.

These developments call for sober reflection on the prospects for ensuring gender parity in political participation. Over the past 12 years, women became more visible in and out of

political settings. Despite the absence of a culture of continuous female leadership, feminists and women survived and thrived in the space that even the past regime created.

4. “The Local Government Act (LGA) enacted in 2018 provides the legal regulatory framework for the decentralization and local governance reform in Liberia. The government is also committed to improving the operational capacity of the 15 counties service centers (CSC) as a means of improving efficiency in service delivery at the CSCs”

In the last five/ten years, Liberians in the rural areas faced major challenges when it comes to getting important documents like Passport, National ID-Card, Birth Certificates, Marriage Certificates and vehicle License/registration. Rural Liberians have to travel for days to come to Monrovia just to access such documents.

Currently, we only have four active counties service centers out of 15 counties and they are Bong County, Grand Bassa County, Margibi County and Nimba County out of the four only two (Margibi and Grand Bassa County) are very active.

In today’s Liberia, most Women, children and young girls in the rural area do not have access to some national documents because of the failure of the government in decentralizing service centers throughout Liberia. In most instances, governments lose revenue in the rural areas because of the absence of the Liberia Revenue Authority in the rural areas. Consequently, people who do business in these areas do not pay taxes to government.

5. Recommendations:

- Our constitution supports the rights, protect lives, give both job and educational opportunities, and give justice to all Liberian citizens.
- The government should provide equal participation, inclusiveness, access to justice, educational opportunities and protection of the lives of all Liberian.
- The government must enact laws that will Promote Access to Justice for Women and Children through the ministry of justice and the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection.

Recommendations for women and girls in leadership and politics:

- Liberia is the first African country to elect a female president as head of state, Liberia has all legal documents to support female participation in both private and public sectors yet the women and young girls still face serious challenges when it comes to getting a job.
- The government of Liberia needs to make strong and supportive recommendations for women participation in all sectors that will empower young women and girls in both formal and informal educational opportunities.

- Government should create a safe space for all women and young girls, appointments in the executive branch of government should be 50/50 and women should play a major role in these places.
- Government should Empower women and young girls as men and boys are Empowered. The government should make sure that all women and young girls receive equal salaries as their male counterparts received on the same job.
- Government should promote women and young girls' participation in parliament, starting with the upper house, every county in Liberia has two senators which means that the Liberian Senate are 30 in number and of all, we only have one female senator. The government must pass a law that will support every counties should be represented by a male and female senators which is 15 male and 15 female.
- The government must support women participation in politics, this must be done through the rural areas create an educative community program that will make the voters understand why women should get involved with leadership and politics

Recommendations for decentralization and LGA:

- There should be available copies of the Local Government Act to be distributed on all CSOs, youth led groups, local community's dwellers, schools, and even public places so citizens can know what the LGA is all about and how it can benefit them.
- The Liberian governments should build/ reconstruct all its decentralization centers throughout the fifteen counties to help reduce the burden on local dwellers coming to Monrovia to access documents.
- The government must improve the workings of all counties' service centers and provide resources for operators. In order to make decentralization effective, the government of Liberia must develop a system to evaluate the performances of all counties' centers.

CALL TO ACTION – GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA

Admits the review of Liberia's report, we the youth realize that there is a great deal of inequality among men and women. this is due to the fact that social and cultural norms couple with high level of gender-based violence including rape and child marriage is still preventing girls from achieving their full potentials. If nothing is done to bridge the gap between male and female, it will be difficult if not impossible for Liberia to achieve the SDGs. In view of the above, we the youth call the government of Liberia to take the below actions:

- **ACCESS TO SRHR INFORMATION TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE STARTING AT AGE 10**

Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information, commodities and services is a major challenge to teenage girls and young women across the county, in the urban areas and especially the rural parts of the country.

We the young people do call on the Government of Liberia to support and ensure that government run health facilities have designated areas within the facilities with trained SRHR practitioners to respond to young girls and women seeking SRHR information, commodities or services. When girls are informed of the impact of early sex and child marriage they will be in the position to make informed decisions on when and to whom to get marry and when to have children. With SRHR information, girls can remain in school and achieve their full potential and occupy political spaces in society

- **COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

Teenage pregnancy is a major concern for young girl in Liberia. Due to teenage pregnancy, most girls are unable to complete their elementary, junior or secondary education. Teenage pregnancy often ends the future of a promising young girls and also impact their participation in decision making and other public and matters.

We believe that the principal cause of teenage pregnancy is mostly due to the lack of early information and education about sex. With African parents finding it difficult to talk to their children about such very important issue which impacts the life of children and shape their future, we believe that the schools are the better option to teach children about sexual education. Therefore, we the young people of Liberia are calling on the Government of Liberia to ensure that Comprehensive Sex Education and SRHR becomes an integral part of primary and secondary education in the national curriculum; and with trained teachers and Guidant Counsellors to make learning comfortable for students.

- **INVESTMENT IN GIRLS' EDUCATION**

In Liberia the girls often have a higher ratio as compared to boys in primary school, but that changes as they progress to junior and secondary school, as many girls' dropout of school before high school graduation. There are many factors which influence the dropout of girls from primary and secondary school. Ranging from financial support, family pressure, early and forced marriage, sanitary conditions of schools, etc.

To deal with this issue, we the young people are therefore calling on the government of Liberia to make more investment in the education sector specifically targeting Girls Education. We believe that with huge investment and programs to strengthen girl's education in Liberia, this will not only bridge the gap of inequality, but also promote women participation and empowerment.

- **ESTABLISHMENT OF FAST TRACK COURTS IN ALL COUNTIES IN LIBERIA**

With only one fast track court to prosecute cases of rape and other forms of violence and abuse in the country, it only makes the trial longer due to the overcrowded cases on courts' docket. This is also unfavorable to survivors of rape and other forms of violence and abuse whom most often do not get to see justice done to alleged perpetrators of their acts because the trial process is very slow and they become less interested the case and sometimes even lost evidences. For those survivors residing in counties far from the capital, Monrovia, they do not even have access to a fast track court.

It is in view of the above, and the continuous increase of cases of Sexual and Gender based violence and abuse that we, the young people of Liberia are calling on the Government of Liberia to ensure the establishment of Fast Track courts in all counties to prosecute cases of Sexual and Gender Based Violence in the early possible time so as to give survivor a sense of relief that justice have been served and to also serve as a deterrence to would-be violators of such acts.

We also call on the Government to take action and work with partners to establish safe-homes for survivors of SGBV who are awaiting trial and to be safe from the reaction of perpetrators or their families and associates until after the trial period.